A Fine Line

by ChaoticWanderer

Summary

Starts at the end of Season 1.

The loss of the Matrix has caused Optimus Prime to revert to his pre-war self - Orion Pax, a mech who dared to love a gladiator and revolutionary. They say it's a fine line between love and hate and Megatron finds himself in the rare position of getting a second chance.

Notes

Originally started as a fill for this prompt http://tfanonkink.livejournal.com/11776.html?thread=13278720#t13278720 and moved over here. I'll be tweaking it and trying to find all my mistakes over here. Please feel free to point out anything I might miss.
Chapter 1

Red optics glanced down at the mech that had been his enemy for far too long - a beloved enemy at that. The red, blue, and silver frame heaved as vents frantically tried to cool over heated components. He could end this once and for all, now, while the Prime was recovering, but something stayed his servo as he gazed down at him. And then the Prime lifted his helm and blue optics peered at him over a battle mask and his own vents stuttered in disbelief as delight crept into those bright blue orbs.

“Primus, what sort of slag did we get up to now?” the mech asked in a tone that was lighter and more carefree than one he had heard in what seemed like a lifetime of stellar cycles. A voice that he thought he would never hear again.

“Orion?” Megatron finally managed to gasp out.

“Don’t tell me you don’t know how we got here either! I don’t remember us drinking any high grade, but apparently it was far more potent than we thought!”

His spark clenched in disbelief and he helped his enemy, no maybe not that, not anymore, to his stabilizers. Optimus was gone and Orion was back!

Orion wobbled a bit and one servo clanked against his battle mask and then he gingerly probed along the edges of it.

“What have we been doing? When did I get a battle mask?”

He glanced over at Megatron and realized that they were nearly the same height now.

“Did I get an upgrade? I don’t remember anything like that! Primus! What is going on?”

The sounds of rocks being moved and voices brought Megatron out of the trance he had fallen into. Taking Orion by the arm, he led his former lover further away from where the Autobots would be breaking into the cave even as he activated his comm system.

:Soundwave, I need a ground bridge immediately.: 

“Megatronus? Where are we? What happened?”

“No time to explain now, Orion. Do you trust me?”

The former leader of the Autobots managed to retract his battle mask and gave him a smile, one that made his spark contract with joy. “That’s a silly question - of course I do.”

The green swirling energy of the ground bridge lit up the area and Megatron headed towards it with Orion now moving easily beside him. The grip on the former Autobot’s arm became instead the clasping of hands and for once they were nearly matched in size.

“Optimus!”

Orion glanced back at the call and his optics widened at the motley crew of ‘bots attempting to reach them. He didn’t know what an Optimus was, but he clutched Megatronus’ hand tighter as they stepped into the roiling field of energy.

“What is an Optimus and why are those ‘bots chasing us?”
Megatronus’ snort of amusement brought another smile to his faceplates.

“They are calling you that and they are trying to stop us from leaving. The Council took you away from me once, I won’t let them do it to me again.”

Orion swung his helm back just before the portal closed behind them. Whoever they were, they didn’t look like Council mecha.

He expected to find the familiar sounds and sights of the arena around them when they stepped out of the bridge, but instead they appeared to be on a ship of some sort. His gaze swept around the area and only one thing or should he say there was only one bot that he recognized, Soundwave. Although their relationship had never been close, it was good to see a familiar face besides Megatronus and he smiled and nodded at the silent mech. A small head incline was the response he got.

“My lord,” a seeker said with an angry rise in his tone, bordering on becoming a screech even. A mech that was unfamiliar to him, at least he didn’t remember seeing him in the arena before.

Megatronus held up one hand and that seemed to forestall any further comment.

“This is Orion Pax, my honored guest and all of you will accord him the respect due him. Do I make myself clear?”

“But!”

“Starscream,” his lover growled. “Enough. I need to talk with him before we air any opinions. Come, Orion. We have much to discuss.”

He nodded, afraid to break the fragile peace here and didn’t release his hold on Megatronus’ hand as he was led further into the belly of the ship. They passed a group of mechs eerily similar in shape and color and it was obvious they were watching them closely and muttering amongst themselves. Although many times he had been told he was oblivious in most social situations, even he could tell that there was a great deal of unease amongst Megatronus’ people and for some reason it seemed to be about him. He vented in relief when the silver mech finally opened a door and they entered a large room with a berth and a single desk and chair in it. It was as spartan as the quarters below the arena although these were bigger and in much better shape than those. He sat down on the edge of the berth and his spark leaped when Megatronus joined him there.

“Are we on a ship? Above Cybertron?”

The slumped shoulders made his lover seem far older than he should have been.

“Orion, what is the last thing you remember?”

He paused as he accessed his most recent files only to find that the date did not match up to the current time on his chronometer. That sent a tingle of unease down his back struts.

“Oh, I know I had just left Kaon and you after finally getting you to agree to begin the process in order to spark-bind with me. I remember you arguing with me that if you were executed you didn’t want my spark to go as well and I said that a world without you would be beyond cruel and I didn’t want to remain in such a place. And then you said yes, and I was so happy! But I had to return to Iacon for work so we only had that one spark merge before I left. Let’s see when I finally made it back to the archives, I remember Alpha Trion met me and he said I had been summoned to see the Council and I thought they had found out about us and they were going to send me for reformatting. I nearly ran, but Alpha Trion must have seen something in my face and he told me that I wasn’t in
trouble so I went with him in spite of my fear. And then the Council had some crazy idea that I should be a Prime and wanted to give me the Matrix -”

Megatronus gripped his hand tighter. “Why did you agree to it? Did they force it upon you?”

Orion shook his helm vigorously. “No - I remember thinking that if I had any sort of power then I could protect you and our movement for once. If I was Prime then we could break that wretched caste system once and for all. How could the Council forbid me to love you then?”

“So you did take the Matrix - and you took the name Optimus Prime.”

“Those others! They called me Optimus - then why can’t I remember anything about them or why we were there or -”

He fell against Megatronus and where as before his head would fall below his lover’s, now instead they clunked against one another. The feel of those strong arms around him had him shuttering his optics as he struggled to come to grips with losing so much of his memories, of himself.

“I first thought it was the Council that had tampered with your personality core. I had long thought that they had changed you - I just didn’t suspect it was the Matrix that had changed you and not just in frame, but now I know it,” Megatron said as his vents hissed out in anger. He paused for a moment as he struggled to maintain his composure before he started again. “You and I - we were at war with each other for more vorns than I wish to count.”

Orion bolted upright with a strangled gasp of his vents. “War with each other? We were going to start the revolution together! Primus! What happened to me? To us?”

“I took the name of Megatron after you returned to me because I could not bear to hear the name Megatronus spoken by what you had become.”

“What did I do?” Orion asked and his vocalizer crackled before he managed to reset it.

Megatronus, no - now it was Megatron, offered him the data port on the back of his neck. A sign of trust that Orion wasn’t sure he deserved anymore.

“Jack in and I will show you my memories of that day.”

His fingers trembled as he un-spooled his data cable and gingerly plugged it into the port. It only took a moment and then he was being guided to deep into the long term memory core. A file was opened and he watched the scene play out from the optics of his lover. He saw a frame that looked sort of like him, but much bigger and bulkier. He had to assume that was the new form he now wore.

“Megatronus, our association has come to an end. You will not contact me anymore. Cease and desist all of your subversive activities or else you and those that follow you will be arrested and held for numerous counts of terrorism.”

“Who are you to demand that of me?” he heard in Megatronus’ voice.

“I am Optimus Prime, formerly Orion Pax and any changes in laws will be made through the proper channels not by radicals who live in the gladiator pits.”

And then Optimus Prime strode out nearly as quickly as he had come in. He saw how Megatronus dropped his helm into his servos before he lifted it again with a roar.

“They will pay for this!”
Orion couldn’t remove his cable fast enough and he keened at what he had become, at what he had done to the mech he had wanted, no needed in his spark.

“I’m so sorry. I don’t know why I can’t remember any of that. I just know that wasn’t me! I love you, I would never - never do that to you!”

Megatron wrapped his arms as best as he could around the former Prime.

“I know. I started the war shortly after that. I have to assume that they thought to stop our revolution by giving you the Matrix since it changed not only your frame, but also who you were.”

“So did I become the leader then?”

“Yes, and when we were dubbed Decepticons, and you took the name Autobots for your people. Our war has been brutal and long. Right now, my ship is flying over an organic planet where your forces had retreated to since there was energon here and our world no longer has any.”

Orion, he couldn’t think of himself as Optimus - that mech was a monster, nodded. “Can you contact the Autobots? This war is over if I have anything to say about it.”

Megatron ex-vented. “I doubt it will be that easy, but I will see if Soundwave can find a way for you to talk with them.”

Orion watched as Megatron stood up and pushed a button on the console on the desk.

“Soundwave, I need you to establish a connection with the Autobots. Patch them through to my console when you can. Usual safety measures in effect.”

“Acknowledged,” came the monotone reply.

A familiar amused snort escaped Orion and he grinned at the answering smile from Megatron.

“He’s still a mech of few words, I see.”

“True, but I couldn’t have survived this long without him,” Megatron said before returning to his place beside his former lover.

Orion cradled Megatron’s helm in his servos. “Then I owe him a debt that I can never repay.”

“I was thinking the same thing about Unicron.”

Orion leaned away from him and his optics spiraled wide open. “Unicron? Pit! What does he have to do with all this mess?”

“Optimus and I formed a temporary alliance to bind him back into the core of this planet. I can only think it was the draining of the power of the Matrix to seal him inside once more that freed you from its grip. I must confess that while you were recovering I nearly took my vengeance on you, but something stayed my hand and then when you spoke - I knew my beloved had been returned to me and all I knew was I couldn’t let them take you away - not again.”

Orion nodded. “I don’t know why you don’t hate me, after everything -”

Megatron grasped the helm of the former Prime. “I did hate you, well the other you, at first. The more I thought about it and replayed that scene - I just knew that the Council had done something to you and then I hated them for what they had done to you.”
Orion’s plating rustled in the silence. “I know that for you too much has happened since that day so long ago - but I want you to know that my spark will always be yours. Somehow I will earn yours back again.”

He fell into Megatron’s arms when they wrapped around his still trembling frame.

“Your spark is all I had ever wanted or dreamed for, but I will warn you - there is a darkness in mine after everything. I will gladly share it with you after you have been caught up on everything.”

Orion opened his mouth, but a buzz from the console interrupted him and he let his arms fall to his side so Megatron could answer it.

“Yes?”

“Connection established. Signal encrypted,” droned Soundwave.

He forced himself to his pedes and his steps were halting as moved towards the desk to join Megatron. How was he supposed to talk to the Autobots when he couldn’t remember them and they only knew him as the Prime. The screen lit up and a face that looked older than he last remembered looked out at him and their bright blue optics spiraled wide as they caught sight of him.

“Optimus!”

“Ratchet, thank Primus, finally someone I recognize besides Megatronus, I mean Megatron.”

The mech in question dropped an arm around his shoulders. “Megatronus is fine for you.”

“Megatron, what have you done to him? I demand you release him at once!”

Megatron’s laugh was harsh. “Calm yourself, medic. I did nothing to him. Your Optimus used the Matrix to trap Unicron once more and drained it of all its power which then freed my Orion from its grip.”

Ratchet’s optics widened even further, if that was even possible. “Orion?” Cries of dismay echoed behind the medic as he waved one hand back at those making the noise.

“Yes, I have no memories of my time as Prime. I can only remember the events leading up to my taking up the Matrix,” Orion said with a nod of his head. “And well, finding myself in a cave with Megatronus just recently.” He threw a grateful smile at his lover.

“Oh, Primus -”

“Primus should be damned if the Matrix changes a mech so much that they don’t remember their life before it,” Megatron said with an angry rev of his engine. “I knew the Council had done something to him, but I had no idea it was the Matrix - a supposed relic of Primus - that did this to him!”

Ratchet narrowed his optics at the Decepticon. “What do you mean?”

Orion put a hand on Megatronus’ shoulder and stepped in front of him.

“The day that I received the Matrix, I had just returned from Kaon and from asking Megatronus to be my spark-mate. He showed me his memory of how he next saw me, as Optimus Prime.” Orion dropped his helm in shame at how callous he had treated his lover. He ex-vented before raising his helm and catching Ratchet’s optics with his own. “I told Megatronus that our association was over and if he didn’t stop his activities that I would arrest him and all of his followers and try them as
terrorists against the state. I don’t know how, but I do know I would never say that to him. I believed in his revolution and have helped him, or well I guess it is now had helped him by whatever means I could.”

Ratchet narrowed his optics and gazed from Megatron to Optimus. “I need to check him myself and make sure you haven’t done anything to him.”

Megatron’s engine gave a nasty rumble. “I have done nothing to him.”

“So you say,” Ratchet said with a snort.

Orion placed a hand on his lover’s arm. “I will meet with you, but then you need to agree to at least a truce for now. I will not partake in any fighting against Megatronus and his people. This war can be over now, if we work together.”

“I’ll send you the coordinates and time to meet.”

“Somewhere out in the open, Autobot. I will not let you steal him back,” Megatron added.

Ratchet rolled his optics but nodded. Orion ex-vented in relief when the call ended, now he knew why his lover had said this wasn’t going to be easy.
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Anyone curious can go here: http://tfanonkink.livejournal.com/13772.html?thread=15490764#t15490764 to see the original posting of what I had done on this story already. I have made some small changes to it and am going to be adding an additional chapter to what is already out there before we get to all new stuff.

Ratchet vented heavily and rubbed one servo over his chevron. The rest of the Autobots hovered around him along with their human friends. This was a mess that he knew that he wasn’t qualified to deal with.

“Tell me he’s lying,” Arcee demanded as she stood with her arms crossed across her chassis.

“About what? You’ll need to be more specific than that.”

The blue and pink femme glared at the medic. “That whole heap of slag about Megatron and Optimus - Orion - whoever he thinks he is now and them being together.”

The processor ache just intensified and he rubbed his helm a little harder. “To be honest, I don’t know. I mean, I knew they were friends and I had helped Orion a few times get down to Kaon to meet up with Megatronus, as he was known then. I warned him. I didn’t agree with the caste system, but I knew if it ever became known they both would end up reformatted.”

“Wait! You guys had segregation? How would that even work and why?” the oldest of the human children asked.

“Yes, Jack, we were separated by our function, being a medic I was one of the skilled and higher tiered individuals. Orion, was an archivist and in a tier below me. Megatronus, well, supposedly he had been sent to the arena to pay for the crime of killing his overseer and was in the bottom tier of our society.”

The single female human in the base bounced up to Ratchet, her hair swinging about her face. “Arena? Like what sort of punishment was that? He have to clean it or what?”

“Miko, the arena was one of the worst ideas our people have ever had,” Ratchet said with a heavy ex-vent. “Megatron had been brought online as a miner and was sent there to die - but he proved to be a quick learner in the death matches and he thrived in the arena. And it was there that he began his revolution. I don’t know how Orion first met him -”

“It sounds like, and I hate to say this, but maybe Megatron was fighting for something that you should have been,” the oldest of the children said with his hands on his hips.

A small gasp came from Miko. “What! You can’t agree with Megadork!”

The red and white mech gave a short nod. “Perhaps if he hadn’t wanted to burn the whole government to the ground in order to start over I might have, and after Orion became Prime, well, what he actually did made his rhetoric seem mild.”
“Enough of the history lesson! More importantly - how do we rescue Prime and get his memory back?” the largest of the remaining Autobots asked as he clunked his huge servos together.

“Without knowing exactly why he lost his memory, I don’t know what can be done, Bulkhead. It’s not like he left a backup of his processor core with me,” Ratchet said as he threw his hands up in the air.

“He did leave this with me,” Jack said as he held up an intricate metal device. “He said it was the key to the groundbridge, but where does it take you?”

Ratchet kneeled next to the smaller human as he took a closer look at the object. “Oh, thank Primus. That’s not a key to a groundbridge - that’s a Key to Vector Sigma.”

“And that is?” Miko asked as she gazed over at what Jack held in his hands.

“One of our world’s most important relics and quite possibly our only chance at bringing back Optimus’ memory. Vector Sigma is said to contain the memories of all the Primes that have ever been - don’t ask me how, I only know what I’ve been told, so in theory we should be able to restore Optimus’ from it as well.”

Jack tried to hand it to the medic, but Ratchet just held his hands up. “He left it with you for a reason - now we just need to find a way to get you to Cybertron so we can save our Prime. And I still have to meet with Orion to make sure that his memory is the only thing wrong with him.”

“Well, the ‘cons had a space bridge before - wouldn’t they make another?” Bulkhead asked with a shrug of his massive shoulders.

A smile crossed the medic’s face. “Well then, we have a plan of action. We need to look for any signs of activity and send a team to scout the area when we do spot one. Bulkhead, you’ll work the groundbridge while Bumblebee and Raf keep an optic on the scanners. Arcee, you are going with me when I meet up with Optimus.”

“Why don’t you just grab him then and drag him back with you?” Bulkhead added.

Ratchet shook his helm. “If he was in his old frame I might be able to pull that off, but there is no way I can overpower Optimus, and I doubt Megatron is going to let him meet me alone. To be honest, I’m surprised that he is allowing this at all, but I’ll take this opportunity to talk with Optimus face to face.”

The medic turned toward his work area, but Arcee stepped in front of him.

“I’ll back you up, but what if you find evidence that someone has tampered with Prime. What then?”

Ratchet’s mouth flattened into a grim line. “We do what we have to in order to get our Prime back. I told Megatron to meet us in thirty minutes so I need to get my things together.”

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Megatronus looked up from the console. “We have thirty minutes before we meet with your medic.”

Orion’s mouth opened and closed before he finally turned to his lover. “Uh, what exactly does that mean? I mean, the thirty minutes part? Did they institute new measurements while I was uh, gone?”

His lover punched a few more buttons and a file opened up and he guided him into the chair. “Here, familiarize yourself with some of the more commonly used Earth terms.”
“Earth?”

The familiar rumble of jet engines as Megatronus stood behind him soothed him as he took the seat.

“Yes, Earth - that’s the planet we are currently above. Your former team has, uh, adapted to many of
the ways of the inhabitants.”

Orion tipped his head up to gaze at his lover and gave him a little frown. “You know, this was not
how I planned to spend our time waiting.”

The soft laughter brought a smile to his face.

“Well, thirty minutes is only about half a groon -”

“Not nearly enough time, what with a brand new frame to test out.”

“Definitely not enough time for what I plan to be a very through exploration. I’ll leave you to your
study while I go yell and be yelled at by my officers.”

Orion turned in his seat as his lover stalked towards the door. “This is not the reunion I had hoped
for, just so you know.”

“Well, I look forward to finding out what you had planned later then,” the silver mech said with a
smile just before the door slid closed behind him.

He sighed and turned his attention back to the file in front of him.

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Megatron’s long strides brought him rapidly to the bridge. Starscream and Airachnid barely let him
walk into the room before they both turned towards him. A rumbling warning from their leader’s
engines did nothing to stop either of them from speaking.

“Are you insane? You brought the Prime here? What happens when he remembers he is supposed to
pound you into scrap?” Starscream hissed.

“I don’t normally agree with him, but he has a point. Nothing good will come of bringing him here.
You should have ripped out his spark when you had a chance,” the femme said with a wave of
several arms.

The glare their leader leveled at them brought silence to the bridge for a moment.

“I will say this only once, so pay heed to my words. The Matrix lost its power and without it
Optimus Prime is now the mech I knew long ago. One, who was very important to me and our
movement in the beginning. And as such, you will treat him with respect or else. Do I make myself
clear?” Megatron said with an angry snarl of his engine.

He could see the dislike in their optics, but at last they both gave a curt nod. With that settled, he
turned towards the last remaining officer on the deck. Soundwave gave a quick nod and he gave his
old friend a quick smile.

“We have a meeting with the Autobot medic in less than thirty minutes. Starscream, I want you and a
team of your best flyers on standby. If they so much as scuff Orion’s paint, I want you to rain down
on them with everything you got. I will not allow them to take what is mine.”
The seeker nodded. “Of course, my lord. We will be ready.”

“Soundwave, I know you have been working on the Iacon database - set up a terminal for Orion so he can help you with it when we return - concentrate on anything that might fix our home world. Airachnid - take a team and get that space bridge completed - I want us to be able to return to Cybertron when we have a plan of action for restoring our world. Any questions?”

At their continued silence, he dismissed them with a wave of one servo. At last, they might finally be able to win this war and what remained of the Autobots would be left behind on this wretched world if he could arrange it. After everything that had happened, they did not deserve to see a new Cybertron.

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Megatron stepped out of the groundbridge first and scanned the area. A cloud of dust heralded the approach of what had to be the Autobots. A gust of wind cleared the air for a moment and the sturdy frame of a red and white ambulance became visible along with a smaller blue motorcycle.

:Any other readings Autobot or otherwise, Soundwave?:

:Negative, Lord Megatron.:

:Send Orion through then.: 

Orion walked out and smiled at him before his optics took in the strange world that they stood on. “I wish we had access to those when we were meeting. Would have saved me lots of wear and tear on my tires, not to mention given me more time with you.”

Megatron chuckled. “As do I. I will remain by your side in case they try anything.”

Orion shook his helm and a small frown crept across his face. “I don’t think Ratchet will, and anyway I’m bigger than him now. But I do feel better knowing you are here with me.”

The two vehicles skidded to a halt a short distance from the pair and transformed into their root modes. Orion smiled at his old friend and offered a small nod to the femme at his side. He took a step towards the pair.

“Ratchet!”

“Optimus -”

The silver mech mirrored the former Prime’s movement and in turn was matched by the much smaller femme that stood with the medic. He arched an orbital ridge at her, but kept his focus on the two mechs as they approached each other.

“His name is Orion and how is it as his friend that you never suspected that they had changed him?” Megatronus said and there was a rumble of anger in his tone.

The medic flinched a little under the glare and words before he returned the look with one of his own. “Because they told everyone who knew Orion that the Matrix gifted the Prime with the memories of all the previous Primes and that was bound to change anyone a little.” He waved a servo at his friend. “So Primus only knows what else he was keeping from me after he took the Matrix; and he was always secretive about his association with you - to keep me safe he would say to me.”
Ratchet pulled out a scanner and took another step towards Orion. “Now let me check you over real quick.”

Red optics gazed down at the defiant blue ones as the femme kept close to the Decepticon leader. Her stare was impressive for her size, but it wasn’t nearly enough to stop him. His lip plates curled into a sneer.

“So tell me,” he said with a wave of his servo towards his lover, “what is his favorite treat?”

Her optics narrowed at him. “What? You don’t know?”

“I do, but I am curious if your answer will match mine is all.”

Her gaze shifted a little towards where the medic was busy checking over the former Prime. “Rust sticks. He loves them best.”

Orion shook his helm with an overly dramatic shudder. “Ugh, I’d sooner lick the arena floor then eat those.”

The laughter that reverberated through the Decepticon’s chest echoed harshly around them. “Something as basic as that didn’t send up any warnings to you, medic? Now, if you offer Orion an energon goodie with copper shavings, well, all I have to say is you better have more than one.”

“Hey! I can stop after one! Sometimes.”

Ratchet shook his device, but the readings still came back the same. From every scan he did, the machine gave him the same response - *system operating within normal parameters*. Only one other thing to do.

“Orion, will you let me plug in and check your systems more in depth?”

The worried expression in his friend’s face had the former Prime patting the medic’s shoulder.

“Is something the matter?”

“I just want to make sure there are no hidden problems after you had to stop Unicron and everything else that has happened.”

“Medic, if you harm him -”

“The designation is Ratchet, so enough with that medic slag. I will not harm him.”

Ratchet wasn’t sure what the proper response should be to the look that passed between the former Prime and Megatron, but when Orion offered up his port he settled on doing his job. A quick scan of his firewalls showed that they hadn’t been breached. Self-repair was already making headway on the numerous little things that had been damaged, but otherwise Orion was in good shape.

He unplugged and his spark clenched at the words that had been spoken around him. He knew Orion’s favorite treat, but had put down the change in taste to the mech maturing into the Prime that he was, well, had been. However, now it seemed as if the Orion he had known had simply been dropped into this new frame and Optimus had never been. Now he wasn’t so sure that he should just drop to his knees and apologize to his friend instead.

“Are you satisfied, medic, that I have done nothing to him?”

The red and white mech grumbled, but finally nodded and took a step back. Orion stopped him with
a grip on his shoulders.

“Ratchet, it’s okay - I’m sure you just thought -”

“No, it’s not. And as much as it torques my struts, the Decepticon is right. I should have realized, should have seen -” Ratchet’s optics shuttered closed for a moment. “I’m sorry, Orion. You have your truce for now. Come on, Arcee - let’s go.”

The medic shifted to his vehicle mode, and without waiting for his companion, took off back through the desert. Orion watched his friend leave and there was an air of sadness about him as Megatronus steered him towards the portal that opened up behind them.

“Maybe now they will finally see what I have always known.”
Chapter 3

The pair stepped out of the vortex of energy and back onto the bridge of the warship. Orion stopped with a heavy ex-vent. Megatron turned and waited for him to tell him whatever was bothering him.

“I feel like a useless piece of scrap. I don’t want to go back to the Autobots. I don’t even know most of them and they would expect me to take up the mantle of leadership along with beginning the fight again. Yet, it’s obvious I make your people nervous by just being here. I may have a new frame and as Prime I must have fought you, but I just don’t remember any of that and I don’t want any part of that role. To be honest, I’m grateful I can’t remember any of that scrap. At spark I’m just an archivist, but I don’t know what use I’ll be to anyone now.”

The silver mech nodded at that before dropping a servo on Orion’s shoulder. “Here is where you belong, where you always should have been. My people will realize soon enough that you are not the mech they knew. Now as for what you can do, tell me, what do you think should be my next course of action?”

The tenseness in the former Prime’s frame eased a little at his words. And then he watched as there was the familiar tightening of his optics and the way he tapped one finger against his chin - that was all Orion in his usual thinking hard about a problem pose and it reaffirmed to him that this was the bot he knew and loved oh so long ago.

“Well, you did say our world had been destroyed? If we were on Cybertron and if the old archives still stood, I could begin searching to see if there was a relic or something we could use to start healing our planet.”

“And that was my thought as well -”

“Oh! Well we should head to Cybertron then, it’s probably a long trip -”

A soft laugh escaped him at his companion’s enthusiasm.

“Orion, we have a copy of the Iacon database on board. Soundwave has been trying to decode it, but even he is having problems with it. I would like you to help him and then once we have a solution and our space bridge is finished, well, we will use that to travel home and begin fixing setting it right.”

“Oh, well that’s even better. I can do that,” Orion said with a smile.

His feet moved hesitantly towards the broad shoulders of his lover until only a breath stood between them. Although he knew that Soundwave would still be able to pick up any words that were said between them, the few others that were working around them would not be able to hear the former Prime.

“Thank you, for giving me a chance. I don’t know why you believe in me so much, but I am grateful -”

A battle-hardened finger pushed against his lips forcing him to stop. “After everything I have seen and heard, I believe now more than ever that somehow the Matrix supplanted another personality core into you. How else do you explain the fact that your memory holds nothing of your time as Prime? It is as if you ceased to exist when the Matrix entered you and it merely used your spark to power the pretender that took your place. For a long time, I had assumed that the Council had tampered with your core personality and if that had been true then you would have truly been lost to
Orion’s plating rattled in a whisper of metal as Megatronus’ idea settled into his processor. “I was a fool to take the thing then.”

“I would have done the same thing, thinking as you did that now our ideas would have some power behind them. But the Matrix is drained and you are free. Yes, your frame is the one I have grown to hate, but as I have watched you,” His servo cupped the former Prime’s cheek, “as I have interacted with you, the more I see the mannerisms and actions of the mech that I had come to love so long ago under the arena.”

Orion’s optics dropped down to his chest. “If I could, I would rip the shell of that thing out of my chest, but I think that might be a bad idea.”

“We can have my medic look at it and see if there is anything that can be done. I agree with you though, I do not like it being there either.”

~+~+~

The medic that inhabited the ship was a far cry from what the former Prime had expected. A very shiny, very red mech grinned at the pair upon their arrival. He hustled Orion over to the med-berth, but turned to Megatronus as soon as he had the former Autobot there.

“My lord, what can I do for you today?”

“Knock Out, this is Orion Pax. He has a question for you.”

He quirked an orbital ridge at that, but dutifully turned towards his patient on the berth.

“And that would be? Need a repair, a new emblem? Don’t keep me in suspense, after all, it’s not often I get a former Prime in my bay.”

Orion gazed around the medic and at Megatronus’ nod he settled onto the berth.

“I want you to see if there is anyway of removing the remnant of the Matrix from my chest, well, without ripping out my spark in the process.”

The medic’s smile reminded him of a sharticon and Orion wondered if it was too late to call Ratchet and ask him instead.

“Well, that has to be a first for any medic. Open up and I’ll see what can be done.”

Megatronus dropped one servo onto the red mech’s shoulder. “I don’t need to remind you that you will be careful, as careful as you would want me to be if I was handling your spark.”

The medic’s smile wavered a little, but he nodded at his leader’s words. Orion sent the commands and the plates covering his spark slid apart, but instead of the normal glow he expected, the light from it was dim, almost as if it was guttering out. He craned his neck to see even as the medic and Megatronus leaned forward to view one of Cybertron’s most famous relics - the Matrix of Leadership. It had none of the presence that he remembered from when he first saw it, instead it appeared to be just an odd mechanism attached to part of his spark chamber.

“Well, that is rather unattractive,” the medic mused.

“Is there any energy in it still?” the Decepticon leader asked.
Knock Out grabbed a scanner from a nearby table and held it over the metal object.

“The only thing I’m detecting is Orion’s normal spark energy. It’s reading as inert metal, although unusual metal at that.”

“Good,” Megatronus said while he moved to stand closer to Orion’s head and let one servo rest on his shoulder.

Red was all he could see when the medic moved in closer to examine the object. Orion gripped the sides of the berth when he felt light touches around his spark. A gentle caress of his finial brought his gaze from his chest and up until he caught the optics of his lover and he gave Megatronus a grateful smile for the distraction. He vented in relief when the medic finally moved away from his spark.

“Go ahead and close up. I’m afraid there is nothing I can do. Oh, I can remove it, but it would compromise the spark chamber so much so that it would likely collapse and as you can imagine, that would be bad.”

“I see. Thank you, Knock Out.”

The leader of the Decepticons then turned to Orion and idly traced the symbol that graced his shoulder. “Have you thought about changing this?”

The red and blue mech gazed at the face that adorned his frame and frowned. “We put strange faces on our frames now? I noticed that yours is different.”

“That is the symbol of the Autobots, mine is for my people, the Decepticons.”

“If you hope to rebuild a Cybertron that is truly free, shouldn’t we discard the factions that have separated it for so long?”

“A fair point, but I’ll keep mine for now, since my army needs me to be their rallying point, at least until we have saved our world.”

“In that case, perhaps I think I will take the first step and remove mine, showing that I’m a free Cybertronian.”

Before he could even ask, the medic appeared with a cloth and a jar of paint remover. Orion held out a servo and the red mech dutifully dropped the objects into his waiting palm. Megatronus’ smile widened as the hated emblem disappeared from his lover’s chassis. As soon as he finished, he slid off the berth and stepped towards the door. He dipped his helm to the medic.

“Thank you for your time.”

The sharkticon was back if that toothy smile was any indication. “My pleasure. Feel free to come back for a repaint and buffing. My skills with a buffer are legendary after all.”

Megatronus shook his head as he ushered Orion out. “I’m sure he’ll learn soon enough about the special relationship you have with your buffer aboard this ship.”

The amusement in Orion’s face as soon as the door slid shut, brought another smile to his.

“Really?”

The grey mech nodded and leaned in closer. “If I want to punish him, I take it away. He whines more about that then when I separate him from his lover. I’m not sure it is healthy for him to be so
attached to it, but that’s how he has been since he joined the cause. Are you ready to head to Soundwave’s station and begin your search to find a way to bring back our world?”

Orion’s steps faltered for a moment. “I do want to help, but would it be alright if I took a few minutes to try and get my processor around everything that has happened?”

“Of course, you have been through a lot, I should have thought of that myself. Do you wish to be alone somewhere?”

Orion ex-vented heavily. “With you - if you can spare the time.”

The silver mech nodded and pointed down a hall. “There is nothing more pressing at the moment and spending time with you is hardly a hardship. My quarters are probably best. Perhaps some energon as well?”

“Yes, that sounds perfect. All of a sudden I feel like I’m running on fumes even though I can’t remember doing anything strenuous.”

Megatronus chuckled. “Well, we did lock Unicron back into the planet’s core, so I think that would count as tiring.”

The red and blue plating trembled a little. “I think I’m glad I can’t remember facing the Unmaker.”

~+~+~

The ambulance tore through the groundbridge and into the base with a squeal of tires. The yellow bot scooped up the small human beside him as the vehicle sped towards them.

“What’s the matter with him, Bee?” the boy asked from his perch in the Autobot’s hand.

Bee shrugged his shoulders and answered with a chorus of beeps.

“What did he say?” Jack asked from where he stood on the platform set up for the humans.

The motorcycle that had been behind the medic transformed and walked towards where the others had gathered. All eyes and optics were still turned towards where the red and white vehicle disappeared into the little room he had taken as his own. They could hear the sound of transformation and then the door slammed shut and it echoed through the now silent base. Attention then turned towards the femme. An air of defeat hung heavy around her.

“What happened out there?” Jack asked and the concern in his brown eyes had Arcee ex-venting heavily.

“To be honest, I’m not sure I know myself.”

“So tell us what happened! Did big and spiky put the whammy on Prime or what!” Miko said with an enthusiastic slam of her fist into her palm.

Arcee shook her head slowly. “Not right now, I need to talk to Ratchet first. Go back to watching for ‘con activity while I deal with our medic.”

She strode down the hall, but kept her audials tuned to the sounds behind her. Satisfied that they were doing as told, she turned her attention to the door in front of her. She banged on it with her fist.

“Go away!”
“Not happening, Ratchet. Open it up or I’ll do it my way and then you’ll have a pit of a time ever closing it again.”

The answering snarl of an engine could be heard through the door and then Ratchet opened it up just a crack.

“Can’t you just leave me be? I need some time alone right now.”

“I don’t fraggin’ care. We don’t have that luxury. Fowler will be here this afternoon and we need to have a plan before he shows up.”

The medic barked out a harsh laugh. “Well, we either betray my old friend or our Prime and then we throw ourselves at the mercy of the ‘cons. Wait - scratch that, we’ll have to do that regardless, except we’ve both seen Megatron’s mercy.”

“Ratchet, let me in. This is not a discussion I want to have through a door,” Arcee hissed at him, trying to keep her voice down.

A heavy cycling of his vents and then the waft of heat that came through the crack indicated just how upset her teammate was. The crack widened into a gap that allowed her to slip through it and he shut the door behind her.

“You want to explain what the scrap you meant about betraying your friend?”

The red and white mech paced about the small space before finally sinking down to sit on the berth.

“Megatron was right. I’ve been friends with both Orion and Optimus for far too long and I pushed aside any misgivings I had about the changes between the two because it was easier to just assume it was normal. After all, he came to rely on me more and more after he became Prime and I knew I would follow him through Pit. How could I even question him about the differences, I mean I don’t think Optimus was aware of it and Orion just now figured it out. This is a fraggin’ mess.” Ratchet vented heavily and his helm dropped into his servos as he shuttered his optics.

“I’m sure it was just the Matrix -”

“Yes, exactly that. The Matrix - I don’t know,” he said with an angry wave of an arm, “suppressed Orion to such a degree that as Prime he became a completely different mech. Why else would he loose his memories of being Optimus with the Matrix drained?”

“What about Megatron? Maybe he did something to him.”

The medic lifted his head and shook his head. “There was no evidence of any attack like that from my exam and besides, from what you said, he wouldn’t have had time to try and hack into Optimus before you and the others broke into the chamber they were in.”

“So what do you want to do?”

“I can’t do it, Arcee. I can’t be the leader in this. My medic coding says do no harm and bringing Optimus back feels too much like it will harm Orion. I know he willingly took the Matrix the first time, but I seriously doubt he would agree to it now.”

“Ratchet, you’ve always been Optimus’ second in command, if not in name, then in action. We need you now.”

“I know,” he said softly. “but it feels like a choice between the two of them, who lives and who dies
and I just can’t do it.”

She placed her servos on the wide pauldrons of the medic and when she caught his gaze, she gave him a firm shake. “I don’t give a scrap. There are only four of us now. We haven’t heard from Wheeljack or any other Autobots in longer than I care to think about. What does your spark tell you is the right choice?”

Ratchet shuttered his optics. “I don’t know if I can trust my spark anymore.”

“Without Prime, how long can we stand against the ‘Cons?”

“Maybe Orion.”

“Right, because Megatron has always been easily swayed by those around him. No, we can’t count on Orion having that much, if any, influence over him. So tell me what other option do we have?”

“None, we have to bring Optimus back; Primus help us all,” the medic said in a voice barely above a whisper.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

And here is where we earn the M - for a little tactile, little sticky and some sparks. As always, feel free to point out any mistakes and comments are always welcome.

The trip back to Megatronus’ chamber was short and held no further encounters. The room was just as austere as he remembered it and not wanting to take the only chair from its owner, Orion sank down onto the berth instead. His optics never left Megatronus as he pushed on a notch on the wall and a panel opened up. The Decepticon threw a grin over his shoulder towards his companion before he reached in and pulled an ornate bottle out of it. The former Prime scooted over with a smile when he realized that his lover was going to sit beside him. Blue optics widened when he got a closer look at the bottle that the silver mech had grasped in his servo. It was the same brand that he had purchased as a present for Megatronus, what would have been vorns ago now, for them to drink in celebration when they had finally crushed the caste system. It had been the best that he could afford at the time from the salary he had earned in the Archives, which still hadn’t been that great.

“Is that the same -”

“The very same. I kept it, thinking I would open it when I finally destroyed the last of the Autobots. Now, I think I would rather share it in celebration for the return of someone I thought I had lost forever.”

“Still no cups?” Orion asked with a grin as he gazed about the area.

“As you can see, my quarters aren’t exactly used for social gatherings, so I never saw the need to bring any in. After the war started, I figured I would drink this bottle alone when I finally won it.”

“You could have shared it with Soundwave at least, well if I hadn’t come back.”

The Decepticon leader opened the container and took a long pull from it before handing it over to the brightly colored mech.

“Yes, he has been a good and loyal friend all this time - even when I lost my way for a little while,” the silver mech said with a long ex-vent.

Orion took a much smaller sip before holding it out toward his companion.

“What happened?”

Megatronus rubbed his helm above his optics with one servo while the other grasped the bottle. “I did not always stand against Unicron. At one time I was allied with him.” At the surprise in those bright blue optics, he hung his head. “I was a fool and thought I could use him to utterly destroy the Autobots, but then I realized he was using me and meant to destroy Cybertron as well as this world. That’s when I approached Optimus and that’s how we are here now.”

“It’s a good thing you have him as your second-in-command then.”

One corner of his lip-plate lifted. “Actually, he’s my third at his insistence.”
“Really? Why?”

“He said that he could get more done and he wouldn’t have to worry about Starscream’s power trips. Although, unofficially I consider him my second regardless of what he says. His loyalty to me has always been a foundation on which I could build my army. Of course, with you among us once more, there is going to be speculation on where you fall and if you aren’t fragging your way up the chain of command.”

Orion’s splutter of laughter eased some of the tension in Megatronus’ frame.

“I think you can safely put me down as your resident archivist. Honestly, I am not cut out for military things and am perfectly happy to be working behind the scenes. As for the other charge, well it’s not so much fragging my way up to the top, but rather me staying there, well, hopefully if you are still willing that is - I mean -”

“You’re babbling,” Megatronus cut in with a soft laugh, “and I meant what I said earlier.”

The whoosh of an ex-vent brought another chuckle from the Decepticon. “It’s just that I realized that I shouldn’t be hurt if you had moved on, after all, you said it was vorns ago that I became Prime.”

“Orion, I did, but only in the sense that I accepted that you were dead to me and letting another near my spark after you was not something I wished to do.” The silver mech tossed back the last of the bottle and placed it on the floor.

“Oh.”

Their optics caught and the pull between them could not be denied any longer. Frames tilted and their lips crashed together with a little more force than either had intended, but neither of them cared. Clever, but larger digits than the last time they had been together slid along hidden seams and wiring that had been untouched in far too long, causing Megatronus’ engine to rev loudly. There was no doubt about who the mech was that was with him, only Orion had ever mapped his frame so thoroughly. He rewarded his lover by falling back against the berth and drawing him down as he went.

“You’ve not forgotten -”

“It’s not been that long for me and how could I forget anything I learned after that memorable afternoon when you allowed me to explore you to my spark’s content.”

The jet engine rumbled even louder. “And I remember telling you that your curiosity was the best thing ever.”

Orion’s grin brought a smile to his face as well. “Can I frag you?”

Megatronus’ reply entailed palming the former Prime’s helm with one servo and pulling him down for another kiss. His fangs caught and tugged on his lover’s lip plates and he was rewarded with an answering rumble of a truck engine.

“I thought that was an already established conclusion,” he said as he pulled away a little from that delectable mouth.

Orion’s answering moan had him drifting his mouth lower, for such a pacifist; his lover did enjoy the feel of sharp teeth along sensitive cabling and lines.

Their cooling fans whirled to life nearly together as the heat between their frames spiked even higher.
“No - I mean, yes,” Orion gasped, “yes, oh, yes I want that, but what I meant was can I spike you?”

That brought Megatronus out of his haze and he gazed up at nervous optics watching him.

“I always thought you didn’t like to -”

Orion shook his helm. “No, I just felt inadequate before, but now -”

“Then by all means, show me what you have.”

The delighted grin had his spark pulsing in anticipation. Instead of reaching directly for his array cover, those clever digits headed straight for a spot on his hip and he gasped as they stroked and tweaked the cables there. Heat streaked through his frame at a rate that made him feel like a youngling that had just discovered the pleasures of his array. He’d forgotten about how sensitive that area was, but it was obvious that Orion hadn’t.

“Slagger, stop teasing me.”

Orion’s chuckle sounded closer to his audials than he remembered. When had his optics shut down? He brought them on again to find a playful grin above him even as Orion kept up the delightful assault on his frame.

“Not my fault that you have this amazing spot right here that is just so much fun to play with.”

He heard rather than felt his panel slide open and then those wonderful fingers found his now exposed port. They ghosted along the rim drawing a frustrated growl from him.

“It’s been too long, Orion. I will not last.”

The chuckle was much deeper than he remembered it being, but the delight threaded through it reminded him that this was his lover and not the pretender who had stole him away. “Then don’t.”

The plunge of digits into his port accented those words and his fans screeched even louder as he fought to keep down the charge that had built far too fast through his system. Calipers gave under the gentle assault.

“I’m not fragile - fraggin spike me already,” Megatronus growled out.

Orion huffed a little laugh. “And you used to be the patient one.”

“I’ve waited too long already.”

And then the sensors in his port lit up, row after row, as Orion finally pushed home. It was too much and not enough at the same time and he could only cry out as he felt the loss before he was filled once more. Pleasure erupted throughout his sensor net and he let the charge rush faster and faster through him. All too soon the lightning that danced along his plating coalesced and overload slammed through him. He gasped his lover’s designation, but doubted anyone could have heard it over the sound of overworked fans and revving engines. A few more thrusts, and Orion followed him over and his charge sent another burst of electricity racing along his sensors and he moaned even as he clutched the former Autobot tight to his chest.

He felt his lover pushing up and off his frame before toppling ungracefully beside him. He onlined his optics and rolled over and threw one arm across his lover’s chassis.

“Megs -”
“No.”

“Megsy?”

“If you ever utter either of those names again, I’ll be forced to shoot you. I’ll list it as a mercy killing in the official forms.”

“Really? I mean, I think they are cute nicknames.”

“See, that’s what you get for thinking, brat.”

Orion’s laugh had him chuckling along with him.

“Megatronus, will you share your spark with me?”

Megatronus felt a shudder ripple down his back struts. Did he dare let Orion see the darkness that had built up in him over the vorns?

“I don’t know. My spark - I’ve done things that have brought a darkness into me.”

Orion’s palm cupped his face. “Then let me bring some light into it. You always said I was the brightest thing in the Pit.”

He didn’t trust his vocalizer so he nodded as he unlocked his chest plates. The whirring noise of gears moving heavy armor pieces had Orion smiling as his own plates shifted to reveal his spark. It danced brightly behind the partial cage that the Matrix had made around it, but with a few careful shifts of their frames, they were able to bring the two sparks together.

A different sort of pleasure coursed along his system. Joy, love and devotion being pushed into him at this most basic level by Orion. A soft sob escaped him at the acceptance he felt from his lover and pulsed his own fierce love back to the red and blue mech. The ecstasy that spiraled higher and higher between the two sparks finally erupted into a fierce cry as overload crashed through them once more. Distantly, he felt his plates close once more around his spark and he barely had enough processor power left to send a single message over the internal comm system.

:Soundwave, Orion will be available tomorrow during first shift.: 

:Acknowledged.: 

He was pretty sure there was a silent laugh in there somewhere, but he didn’t give a damn right now. Instead, he pulled Orion closer to his frame and shuttered his optics. Recharge came to him, peacefully for the first time in a long time.

~++++~

The gentle hum of a system at rest and heat from another frame in his berth had Megatron powering up fast as battle protocols engaged. His optics onlined and he took in the form of the red and blue mech curled on his side next to him. He cancelled the warnings and released a soft ex-vent. It had been too long since he had last shared a berth and last night he had forgotten to update them. Oh, he had had trysts, but most he had never trusted enough to recharge next to them. A different alert pinged and it reminded him that he had less than thirty minutes before he was due on the bridge. He brought the hand that had been resting on Orion’s hip up to gently stroke along one cheek. Optics lit up, gradually turning the deep blue he had grown to love.

“I’m afraid it is time to get up. We have just enough time to hit the wash racks and grab some
energon before heading to the bridge.”

A groan greeted his statement and he chuckled at the familiar grumpiness of a not quite awake yet Orion. He threw an arm over his helm as he tried to burrow down into the berth, another classic Orion move. Megatron used his servo to now reach over and smack his lover’s aft with a resounding clang.

“I have no desire to walk this ship with lovely red and blue streaks on my frame and I’m sure you would like to get rid of all the silver marks on yours.”

Orion peeked out from under his arm and there was a glint in his optics. “Nope, I rather like mine. I’d rather have another breem or two right here instead.”

Megatron couldn’t help but laugh. “Insubordination already?”

“A certain gladiator taught me that sometimes you have to stand up for what you believe in.”

He rolled out of the berth and stood beside it. “I don’t believe I meant for you to use that argument for more recharge time.”

The brightly colored mech attempted to roll further away from the edge. “You fight your battles and I’ll fight mine.”

Megatron caught an arm and pulled him towards the edge before he dragged him to his feet. Some more grumbling came from the other ‘bot, but he followed his lead and soon stood on his own.

“There are perks of being in charge, namely I have my own private washroom.”

“Thank Primus for that at least.”

The creaking of hydraulic lines as they activated after being inactive for so long accompanied several full body stretches that Orion did before he nodded that he was ready to move. Megatron sent a data packet with the codes for his quarters to his lover before he had even reached the door for the wash racks.

“Oh.”

“You don’t wish to share quarters with me?” Megatron asked, but refused to look back as he stepped into the small room.

“Of course I do. I just wasn’t sure if that was allowed since you know - everything that I did as Prime. I mean, slaggit, I need energon before I can form coherent lines of code in my processor.”

He turned at that and grinned at the obvious struggle his companion was going through. “What better way to keep you under tabs than keeping you close to me.”

Orion’s lip plates quirked upward at that. “Yes, that does sound like the perfect solution to me.”

“Good. Now, let’s get cleaned up.”

~++~

The pair made it to the bridge with only moments to spare. A fact that nobody was willing to comment on. Orion slid into the space next to Soundwave while Megatron began sorting through his reports. His optics kept drifting over to the corner where his third and lover stood shoulder to
shoulder discussing something on the console before them. Alright, Orion was doing most of the talking, but yet somehow Soundwave seemed to be contributing. A snort of amusement from his elbow had him turning his head to find Starscream smirking next to him.

“Are you done going through the reports or are you too busy ogling Prime’s aft?”

“His name is Orion, Orion Pax if you feel the need to be formal. And as for the other - I have gone through the reports and still nothing from Airachnid?”

“No. We can’t get anything from any of the team down there.”

“Take a squad and go see what that femme is up to.”

“I’m supposed to be going over the patrol list.”

“Dreadwing will take care of that. The space bridge is far more important. Keep me informed and do not hesitate to call for back up. We can’t let anything happen to it.”

Smirk still in place, Starscream bowed before leaving the bridge. He sent a notice to Dreadwing of his new responsibility before turning his attention to yet another report. Thankfully, nothing else was more pressing at the moment and he could instead observe his lover. He probably should have gone to the site himself, but he found himself unwilling to leave Orion’s side just yet. He opened another report while he kept half an optic on the pair off to the side. The comm system pinged him as his second reported in.

:Starscream to the Nemesis.:

:Go ahead, Starscream,: Megatron said over the channel.

:It seems Airachnid didn’t like her assignment. She slaughtered her team and is no where to be found.:

:Are you sure she did it?:

:The vehicons were webbed to their consoles and stabbed through the spark.: Megatron growled out loud and the crew on the bridge sent wary glances his way.

:What about the spacebridge?:

:She set us back a few weeks, but nothing that I can’t fix.: 

:Good. Set up whatever you need to finish it and order extra security as well.: 

“She slaughtered her team and did some minor damage to the bridge. Alert everyone that she is KOS, and to notify me personally regardless of the time if they spot her. I’ll have her head on the wall for what she did. I’m sure I don’t have to tell you, but make sure all entry codes are changed and distributed to the rest of the crew.”

“Acknowledged,” Soundwave said with a small tilt of his helm.

The mech turned back to the console and in a matter of moments had carried out his leader’s orders. That action completed, once more he opened up the database they had been deciphering. Orion glanced back towards their leader.

“Does that happen often?”
“Not really, well, if you don’t count Starscream’s attempts to take over, but he usually is only trying to off me and not the rest of my people.”

Orion’s optics widened at that statement. “Why in the name of Primus did you make him your second then?”

“Because I can better keep his schemes under control if he is near by.” He waved a servo towards the screen the pair had been working on, from here it all looked to be gibberish. “Will you be able to decipher that mess of information we downloaded from Iacon?”

The former Autobot smiled. “Yes, we’ve already broken the first layer of encryption. Fortunately, so far they all appear to be based off of ones I know so I just need to find the differences and adjust.”

“Excellent! At least that is going right.”

Orion nodded and there was a grim cast to his face. “If there is a way to restore Cybertron, we will find it.”
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

And this is a completely new addition to what was previously published over on the kinkmeme. Sorry if this sort of ends on a cliffhanger, but it was getting too large and felt unwieldy to me.

Feel free to point out any mistakes I missed and I hope everyone has a great Thanksgiving tomorrow!

Megatron stretched for a moment where he stood. This light cycle had been the quietest he had had in a very long time, thanks in part to Starscream being off the ship. His gaze fell once more on the pair working diligently at a console. Each had a data cable plugged into it so no vocalizations were necessary, but the red and blue mech still waved a hand now and then as he emphasized something or other to his companion. He didn’t think he would ever grow tired of seeing Orion working here on his ship, where he should have been from the start. The warning notice on his HUD brought him back to the realities of life, time to drag his lover off for energon and hopefully another pleasant evening in the berth. He grinned at that thought and stalked over to the pair, of course Soundwave was already turning towards him before he had even taken two steps. The red and blue mech turned as well to see what had caught his companion’s attention and smiled at his approach.

He chuckled as he dropped a hand on Orion’s shoulder. “One of these days I’ll catch you by surprise.”

Soundwave gave a small shake of his helm. “Negative. Soundwave: superior.”

Megatron laughed. “That you are my friend. Time to call it a day and refuel. Ready, Orion?”

Orion turned back to the console and punched in a few commands. “Now I am. See you tomorrow, Soundwave.”

The dark blue mech nodded before turning back towards the console. Megatron ghosted his palm along the spymaster’s back struts, being careful to not actually touch any of the sensitive panels.

“I meant for you as well, my old friend. Refuel and rest, the hunt can wait until tomorrow.”

The console shut down and the mech disengaged his cable.

“Acknowledged.”

Together they exited the bridge, but Soundwave turned one way while the other two headed in a different direction. Orion watched the other mech walk away before turning to the mech at his side.

“He still doesn’t refuel in public?”

Megatron shook his head. “No, he prefers to consume his energon in private still. I told him he could take whatever time he needed to have his facial plates repaired, but so far he has refused.”

“Maybe he will after we have our own world back.”
As they neared the dispensary, the sound of numerous voices could be heard even in the hallway. Megatron laid his palm over the keypad and the door slid open. He stepped inside and the noise level dropped a little, but when Orion followed him, the chatter dropped to a faint murmur. His lover’s optics glanced about and the hesitant smile he offered to the current occupants made his spark clench.

“We can take our ration and return to our quarters,” he said softly to Orion.

Orion shook his helm with a determined glint in his optics. “Let’s sit here. Maybe if they see us here they’ll, uh, get used to me. What did I do?”

Megatron ex-vented heavily. “While we were at war there were few who could stand against you when you took to the field. That is who they know and not the gentle archivist that you were before the Matrix took over your frame.”

They grabbed their rations and Orion led the way to an empty table that was dead center in the room. Although he rarely used this room for refueling, even he knew the one that Orion had selected was the least favored one because of its location.

“Are you sure you wouldn’t rather move to a side table? You normally don’t like sitting in the open like this.”

The red and blue mech stared down at the cube in his servos. “I don’t. But if I’m going to find my place here, I need to show them I’m not who they think I am.”

“I can order them -”

The former Prime shook his helm. “You can’t order someone to not fear or hate another. No, I just need them to see that I’m not the Prime that they knew and it will be better if they come around on their own. I’m just grateful that Soundwave accepted me so quickly otherwise working with him might be difficult.”

Megatron took a sip from his cube as his optics gazed around at the other tables. His people were watching their table with undisguised interest, but at least the talking had resumed somewhat.

“That would be because I went to him with my suspicions back in the beginning and after some study he agreed with me; Orion Pax and Optimus Prime were two different mechs that somehow had used the same frame. Of course, we assumed they had done at least a partial reformat of your processor and overwrote your core personality. And as much as it appalls me that it was a supposedly holy relic of Primus that did it to you; I’m glad that it was that, otherwise I would have lost you forever.”

“Oh, well, that explains why he seemed so receptive to me. I thought maybe you had ordered him to be nice, well, as nice as he normally is or was.”

The silver mech snorted in disbelief. “Soundwave is still my spymaster and communications officer, as well as my friend. Trust me, if he thought you were faking it or some other such slag, he would do whatever he thought was necessary to minimize any threat regardless of what I said. He’d just be far more discrete about it.”

Orion gave him a small grin. “Right, I remember seeing a few of his fights. Note to self - do not get on Soundwave’s bad side, it will not go well.”

The Decepticon leader tossed the last of his energon back and pushed himself to his pedes before offering a servo out to his lover.
“Ready to go?”

Orion gulped down the last of his ration before taking his servo. “Yes. Are you sure your troops won’t riot if they see us holding servos?”

“I can take the scandal, if you can.”

The snort of amusement from Orion brought a soft laugh from him.

“I think I’ve faced worse,” Orion said as he joined the silver mech. “Remember the first time I came to Kaon -”

The laugh that escaped the Decepticon rang loudly through the room drawing the optics of the rest of its occupants. “Like Pit, I could ever forget that particular cycle. I couldn’t decide if your processor had been damaged from excessive use or if you were just that brave.”

The red and blue mech grinned back at him. “I think it was a combination of the two. When you stalked towards me and that other gladiator that had me pinned against the wall; I was sure I was just going to be dismantled by a bigger sharkticon than the one who had a hold of me at the moment.”

The pair stepped into the hall and the door slid shut behind them. They remained unaware of how those still sitting in the room had been avidly listening to their conversation.

“And if you remember, it was Soundwave who told me where to find you and that you might need a rescue.”

“I do. That’s why the next time I visited I brought him and his little minions as many treats as I could fit in my sub-space. You know, I don’t think I’ve seen any but Laserbeak around and he’s just been latched to his chest.”

“That is because that is the only one he still has left.”

“Oh. I’m sorry to hear that, what happened to them?”

Megatron opened the door to their quarters and ushered in Orion. “The war. Give your condolences to Soundwave tomorrow, he will appreciate someone remembering them with him. I’d rather spend tonight making new memories with far more pleasurable activities.”

His lover nodded once before pulling him towards the berth. “I think that is an excellent idea and I know just the thing. Since we have been apart for so long, I had best thoroughly explore your frame.”

The twinkle in his lover’s optics only further revved Megatron’s engines.

“You’re going to slagging tease me again, aren’t you?”

“What can I say, I like having you at my mercy and who are you kidding, you love it.”

He pulled Orion’s helm in towards his own. “It is you that I love.”

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A pair of vehicons strolled down the passage outside their leader’s quarters on their way to meet up with some of their comrades when the noises from behind the closed door had their own cooling fans whirring to life. They shared a glance and a grin before heading towards a small storage room for a little privacy of their own. A quick message was pulsed to their friends that they wouldn’t make it to
game night because something had come up. Hopefully, no one else would need to use the trysting closet anytime soon.

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The red and blue mech’s back struts creaked as he stretched. Okay, all the stiffness wasn’t just from standing for long periods of time during his shift, since the previous night cycle’s activities might have played a part in the aches in his frame. Not that he would have changed a thing about what they had done, he thought with a grin. The stream of glyphs on the screen in front of him blurred together in a meaningless jumble and he shook his helm trying to clear it. The slender blue mech beside him quirked his helm in such a way that he knew he was asking a question.

“I need to step away from this for a moment. Maybe taking a walk will clear my processor. I just can’t see how to break this layer of encryption. I’ll be back in a few breems, err minutes. Slag it, I’m still not used to those terms.”

“Acknowledged. Soundwave: Accompany?”

“No, that’s okay. Back in the Archives I frequently walked in order to work out a problem, maybe it will help now. Alpha Trion often told me I did my best thinking while on my pedes.”

Soundwave inclined his head and turned back to the console, but as soon as the red and blue mech disappeared off the bridge he disengaged the mini-con from his chest plate with a simple command: watch and protect. Laserbeak dipped his wings before he took off after the mech in question.

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Orion’s path wandered all over, although he had downloaded a map of the ship, he had no destination in mind. Megatronus was busy overseeing a shipment of energon and he didn’t want to disrupt his lover at work so he just let his pedes take them where they will.

Ahead, he spotted one of the numerous similar colored workers that inhabited the ship. Finally! Maybe, he could make a positive impression on the mech. He made sure his mouth was set in a friendly, but not too friendly, smile as he approached.

“Good light cycle to you.”

The visor made it hard for him to judge how his greeting had been received and his smile wilted a little.

“Are you lost?”

“What? No, I’m just stuck on working through a problem with Soundwave and I thought a little stroll around would help me think.”

“Oh. Well, if Soundwave let you out -”

Orion chuckled softly. “You make it sound as if I were a prisoner.”

“You’re not? I mean, I’m sure -”

The former Prime shook his head with a grin. “Let’s start over. Good light cycle. I’m Orion Pax, former Archivist.”

“Um, you can call me Steve.”
“That is an unusual designation.”

“I sort of picked it out myself. A bunch of us did since we didn’t like the serial codes we were assigned when we were brought online.”

The red and blue mech nodded his helm. “Megatronus did the same thing.”

“Megatronus? Don’t you mean Megatron?”

Orion smiled. “Yes, but he first chose Megatronus and later shortened it to Megatron. However, when he was brought online it was with the simple designation of D-16.”

“Wow, and I thought ours were bad. Did that stand for dangerous or Decepticon?”

“He was supposed to be a miner and most of them tended to have a short functioning so the D stood for disposable.”

The red behind the visor brightened and his mouth opened and closed. “Really?”

“Yes, he never told you about that?”

Steve shrugged his shoulders. “No, he never seemed interested in talking about his past before. By the Unmaker, until last night we didn’t think he even knew how to laugh, well not a real happy laugh anyway. I mean he was always good at the whole ‘you’re slagged now’ kind of laugh.”

Orion shuttered his optics for a moment. “I guess I should apologize for that.”

“Because you became left him to become Prime -”

“Yes and no. Yes, because I willingly took the Matrix, but it inserted its own core personality into my frame and I was no longer the mech driving, so to speak.”

“So that’s why your allowed free rein of the ship, because you aren’t,” Steve said with a wave of his arm, “that mech anymore. You mean, you don’t remember anything about the war?”

The red and blue mech ex-vented. “Not a thing. My last memory before I woke in that cave down on the planet was right before I accepted the Matrix. After that - nothing. Luckily, Megatronus, err, Megatron still has need of an archivist. We, I mean, Soundwave and I, are searching for a way to restore our world.”

“Really? That’s great! I can’t wait to tell the others! Earth isn’t too bad, but we’d rather not have to deal with humans anymore.”

Orion gave a soft laugh. “Well, once we finish breaking through the encryption, then we can begin the real search.”

“Perhaps you should return to your duties then, Autobot” growled a new voice.

Orion and Steve swiveled to find a dark blue flyer with gold trim in the hall with them. He would have been handsome if not for the dark scowl on his faceplates.

“I’m not an Autobot, I’m a free Cybertronian,” Orion said as he squared his shoulders to face this new individual.

Steve, however, quickly took a few tentative steps away from what was sure to become a battleground.
“Why Lord Megatron allows you to roam freely is beyond me. Know this, should you step out of line even a little, I will be there to put you back in your place. You were involved in the death of my twin; so you owe me, Autobot, and one day I will collect.”

“I’m truly sorry for your loss. I can’t imagine the pain of losing a spark brother. It might have been this frame, but it wasn’t me. As I was explaining to Steve, when I accepted the Matrix, it took control with its own persona.”

“You might have the others fooled, but I’m not so gullible. There is nothing in the history of our people to show that such a thing is even possible.”

Orion quirked an eyebrow ridge at that. “Really? You think both Soundwave and Megatron are so easily duped? I shared my spark with Megatron, both before I took the Matrix and since my return, if what I say was not true, do you not think I would be in a cell?”

The scowl only intensified and he stalked towards the former Prime, one servo raised in a fist. Before he got within range though, the whirring of a small engine could be heard and a small figure flew into the corridor. Lasers fired in front of the pedes of the dark blue seeker and the rage on his face increased.

“Back off, drone.”

The former Prime squared his shoulders. “Laserbeak is not a drone.”

The smaller flyer alighted on the shoulder of the red and blue mech and Orion cupped a protective hand in front of him.

“I would suggest you not harm him, Soundwave is not someone I would trifle with.”

As if summoned by name alone, the rather delicate appearing mech stepped into the hall. Laserbeak rose from his current perch and returned to the slot on his host with an audible click.

“Dreadwing: Desist. Vehicon: Leave.”

Steve bobbed his helm and quickly backed out of the hall, glad to be dismissed. The seeker turned towards the Decepticon TIC.

“Why do you protect him, Soundwave? Was he not instrumental in the death of my twin and the war that ravaged our world?”


“He is Optimus! How can you believe that slag of two mechs being in the same frame?”

Several long strides brought Soundwave in front of Orion. Although he was smaller and far slimmer than the other mech, it was obvious his intent was to protect the former Autobot.

“Optimus/Orion: Multiple discrepancies in traits. Conclusion: Not same. Matrix: Controlling frame.”

The seeker’s wings shifted upward for a moment before he turned on his heel and strode away.

“I’ll find proof that this is all slag and then his spark will be mine to crush.”

Orion’s spark pulsed in relief at the exit of the flyer. He knew Soundwave was a formidable opponent, but the seeker seemed to be a force to be reckoned with as well. Although he had never fought during his functioning, he would have done what he could to aid Megatronus’ officer against
him.

“Thank you, Soundwave. I don’t think I would have fared well against him. I’m sorry for his loss and I do understand why he hates me so.”


The red and blue mech shook his helm. “No, I don’t want to learn how to fight. I thank you for the offer, but that is not who I am.”

Soundwave inclined his helm. “Acknowledged. Suggestion: Orion remain near Soundwave or Megatron.”

“Yes, that is probably best until I can show him that I’m not that mech.”

One slender arm pointed in the direction of the bridge and with a soft sigh, Orion turned and headed in that direction. A concise montage of recordings from both Laserbeak and himself were forwarded to his leader as the spy strode next to his companion.
An incoming data packet from Soundwave marked urgent caught Megatron’s attention as he watched over the arrival of the vehicons. He opened the file and the scene between some vehicon and Orion began to play out. Steve? Really? When had they started to name themselves and with such stupid designations? However, his tank churned uneasily at the arrival of Dreadwing. The seeker was a formidable fighter and not a mech to be taken lightly, and he knew that he had been searching for someone to take his revenge on in an attempt to ease the pain in his spark. A futile quest he knew from vorns of personal experience. He watched as Orion attempted to explain the situation and the seeker’s refusal to listen.

The viewpoint changed and he knew that he was now watching it from Soundwave’s optics. His third backed Orion and had to resort to physical intimidation in order to get Dreadwing to leave. Orion’s refusal to learn to fight only reaffirmed to him his identity. He ex-vented heavily. He respected and valued Dreadwing as part of his army, but he would not allow the seeker to harm his lover. Venting heavily, he sent a ping to the other flyer.

:Dreadwing, report to the training room immediately.:  

:Yes, my Lord.:  

He handed his datapad off to one of the numerous workers with a terse ‘you’re in charge’ before heading out to meet with Dreadwing. If he had to use force against him at least that location would minimize any damage to the ship. He arrived to find the seeker as the sole occupant of the room. The dark blue mech inclined his head at his entrance and he returned the nod.

“Dreadwing.”

“Lord Megatron. I assume you called me here to discuss my meeting with that Autobot.”

“I have always been able to rely on you and your brother, whether it was following orders or giving them.”

Megatron strode towards the seeker with his servos behind him.

“I understand your need for vengeance -”

Fire flashed in those red optics and the seeker’s engines rumbled.

“That Autobot was involved in the death of my twin! And you let him wander freely!”

His own engines growled a warning. “He is not an Autobot, not anymore. I know it is hard to believe -”

“Yes, I heard what he said, but that is impossible!” Dreadwing blurted out as his wings hiked upward in an angry display. “There is no record of the Matrix ever doing something like that before!”

The grey mech held up a his hand. “And has there ever been a time when the Matrix has been
drained of all its power? No, of course not. If it became known that it was capable of inserting its own persona in a mech, do you think anyone would willingly take it? I know it is true because I’ve seen into Orion’s spark. It holds no memory of what the Matrix and the Prime it created did.”

He could see Dreadwing’s frame tense and he feared the worse, but then his wings dropped a little and the dark blue seeker shuttered his optics for a moment. “I have always been loyal to you and our cause. I will trust your judgment in this.”

Megatron clasped the other mech by the shoulders. “Thank you. I know this isn’t easy for you. We will have our revenge on the Autobots in the best way possible. I plan on leaving them to rot on this planet while we reclaim Cybertron for ourselves.”

Dreadwing nodded. “I wish Skyquake’s frame had been recovered at least. No one seems to know what happened to it.”

“I will look into it personally. If it all possible we will recover it for you.”

“Thank you, my Lord.”

“It is the least I can do for one of my most loyal soldiers,” Megatron said with a nod as he exited the room.

The outcome of the meeting had gone better than he had expected. Dreadwing had pushed aside his grief to listen and he hadn’t been forced to take drastic measures to ensure Orion’s safety. Spark lighter, he strode through the halls towards the bridge.

Everything was as it should be when he arrived. Monitors were being watched or in the case of Orion and Soundwave, they stood huddled together in front of their console.

“Soundwave, Orion, a moment of your time please.”

The pair turned towards him and he offered a nod of his head.

“I need you to contact the Autobots, Soundwave. Orion, if you would talk to your former comrades, perhaps we can find out what happened to Skyquake’s frame. His brother would like to give him a proper send off and they were the last ones to be near it.”

“Of course. What happened? I mean, he said that I - that the Prime had something to do with his death.”

The console shifted and a clip played on it and it showed the initial encounter with the other Decepticon. Orion kept glancing over at him as it played out until it ended with the arrival of the Autobots, Optimus Prime and another ‘bot that was bright yellow with black stripes.

“So why did you and Starscream leave?” the red and blue mech asked his companion before turning towards his lover. “And why weren’t you there to help him, Megatronus?”

“I had been badly damaged and my spark was near guttering when Starscream woke Skyquake from stasis. While my second was attempting to convince him that he was in fact the new leader, Soundwave had picked up my signal. When Skyquake refused to work with Starscream, Soundwave convinced him that he had to check out the signal and he followed him to make sure that my oh, so loyal second didn’t decide to finish me off if I was still alive.”

The red and blue mech nodded. “So it was assumed that he had been off-lined by the Autobots?”
“Yes, Soundwave lost his signal and when he sent a team to find out what had happened, there was no sign of his frame anywhere. We assumed the Autobots took it in order to preserve their cover as they have attempted to blend in by taking Earth based vehicles. Of course, when Dreadwing arrived on Earth, he confirmed that Skyquake had been killed. They were spark-split twins and he felt his brother’s death.”

“Right then. I think I understand better. I will ask them if they have his frame still.”

At the nod from his leader, Soundwave sent a ping to the channel he had used before. A few moments later, Ratchet’s face appeared on the screen.

“Orion! Are you okay? Are you ready to return home finally?”

Orion smiled and nodded. “I’m good, Ratchet, and I am home, but I do have a question for you though.”

“Ask,” the medic said although his optics narrowed with a suspicious glance over to Megatron.

“Skyquake, I know he fought well this frame and that yellow Autobot over there -”

“That would be Bumblebee.”

“Right, well did we kill him?” Orion asked with a slight tremble in his vocals.

“Yes, you did. Why?”

“His brother is here, his spark-split twin in fact, and would like to have a proper funeral for him but he needs his frame. Do you have it?”

Ratchet’s optics widened a little and he turned to face Megatron. “Didn’t you send anyone to fetch it?”

“I was in no shape to do anything at the time, but yes, Soundwave did send a team, but there was no trace of it when they got there. We assumed you had it.”

“No, we didn’t take it. The humans -”

“MECH,” he said with a snarl.

“MECH,” Ratchet said with a shudder.

“Who is that? Is there another Cybertronian on this world that takes our frames?” Orion asked as he gazed over at Megatron.

“No, it is a group of humans that call themselves that; however, they are obsessed with stealing our technology for their own use and using it against their own kind,” Ratchet said with a heavy ex-vent.

“If they were able to reverse engineer his weaponry, or worse find new ways of disabling us from range,” Megatron added.

“Of course, they wouldn’t have much information on us at all if someone had rescued one of their own instead of leaving it to us.”

“Trust me, Autobot, I regret that decision,” he said with a heavy rumble of his engines.

“And once more, we are going to have to clean up your mess -”
Orion placed a hand on Megatron’s shoulder. “Enough, both of you. Are they that much of a danger to us?”

“Very much so and they are a concern to the local government as well. I’ll talk with our contact and see if he might know where we might find them.”

“If you find out, contact us and we will assist.”

The former Prime beamed at the two of them. “See we all can work together.”

Ratchet snorted. “There is a reason the Matrix gave you the name of Optimus, but yes, for now, we can work together on this. I’ll contact you on this frequency when I have any information.”

Megatron nodded and the screen went blank. There was nothing else to do but wait now.

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By the time the Autobots contacted the Nemesis the sun had begun its descent below the horizon. The console lit up and Ratchet appeared prominently in the screen, but an adult human stood behind him on a special platform. The medic nodded and his optics glanced over for a moment to where Orion stood with Soundwave.

“Megatron, we have several possible locations.”

“Excellent. Give them to me and we will check them out.”

The human leaned over the railing with a glare that wouldn’t have scared a cybermouse.

“Hold on right there. How do I know you won’t just go in there and blow up all the areas without even checking? I’m not putting civvies at risk.”

He bit back the snarl for Orion’s sake, for him, he would try and be civil.

“I give you my word that we will recon only and will consult with the Autobots before we launch our attack.”

“And your word means nothing ‘Con -”

His engine revved, but before he could snap back at the human, Orion had moved to his side and placed a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll vouch for him. If he breaks his word, we will accept punishment for our transgressions.”

“Orion,” he hissed in a low voice.

“Done,” Ratchet said with a smirk. “If you break your word, Megatron, Orion returns to us.”

“Agreed,” the former Prime said.

He mutely nodded, not trusting his vocalizer to remain calm. He wanted nothing more than to be able to smash that grin off the Autobot’s face, but he had to play nice, for now. A quick glance over at Orion and the reassuring smile did nothing to appease his rising annoyance with the whole situation, but he stuffed that line of code down.

“Soundwave has the best chance of finding them, transmit the locations and he will check them out,” he ground out with a glare at the medic.
Three coordinates appeared on the screen and in a matter of moments a green swirling vortex appeared on the bridge. Between one step and another, the lanky mech became a slender plane and with a roar of engines took off into the portal and within a few moments, a camera feed popped up on the main console. He punched in a few codes and the images were shared with the Autobots.

“There, is that transparent enough for you, Autobot?”

Ratchet’s smile was brittle. “Thank you, Decepticon.”

His lover shook his head and gave him a look that said he was disappointed in him and he gave him one that promised there would be words later once they were alone.

The plane swept gracefully over the area a few times before a ground bridge opened in front of it and Soundwave’s thrusters kicked in as he sped into it. The spymaster exited out over a different area and once more the plane dipped and wheeled about in the sky. When the mech was satisfied that it had been checked thoroughly, only then did another vortex opened up.

Soundwave soared over the last area and unlike any of the previous fly-overs, after a moment Laserbeak could be seen breaking off from his host. The smaller flyer fell into a dive and swooped low over the ground.

:Anomalous energy readings detected. Laserbeak: Investigate,: Soundwave said over the open channel.

The images that were broadcast back now were that of a flyer skimming along the ground at what seemed like a break-neck speed. A groan of discomfort had Megatron’s optics switching over to the screen in the Autobot base. The human behind Ratchet appeared to be swaying on his feet.

“Problem, human?” he asked with a soft laugh.

“I’m fine,” the man said as he straightened up and looked away from the console. “I can fly airplanes and helicopters, but god help me if I’m on a roller coaster and watching that makes me feel like I’m on one.”

Laserbeak cut his engines and landed near what appeared to be a gopher hole, but a probe pushed into it showed the hole was far too uniform to be natural.

“That’s a vent. There must be a structure at least partially underground.”

“My thoughts exactly, Agent Fowler. And there is no record of any legitimate human activities in this area?” Ratchet asked.

“None. That has to be it. Can you find their entrance?”

:Scans of area indicate extensive underground structure. Access point at the northwest corner,: Soundwave said even as he pushed the image he had constructed from his readings to both the Autobots and the Decepticons.

:Soundwave, see if you can find their communication array and bring it down. When that is done, Dreadwing and myself will head to the entrance.: Soundwave, see if you can find their communication array and bring it down. When that is done, Dreadwing and myself will head to the entrance.

“We’ll meet you there. I need to be present to ensure that any humans that surrender are turned over to my government.”

A location on the map that Soundwave had provided lit up after a few keystrokes. Megatron nodded
and tamped down the annoyance that now he would definitely have to watch where he put his pedes.

“We’ll rendezvous there and you can follow behind with the ground team.”

“The Autobots will accompany you,” Ratchet said with a firm nod.

“And which of you have been able to stand against me in combat before?”

At the glances between the Autobots, he gave them a grin. “That’s what I thought. None of you have the armor or armaments that I have. And the only reason I’m letting Dreadwing accompany me is I want someone I can trust watching my back struts. We know from what happened to Breakdown that they have some sort of energy pulse that can put us temporarily into stasis. Let us break open their building and flush out these turborats, then you can move in. My people will have orders not to kill any human that surrenders.”

“Fine, we’ll let you take the lead.”

He turned away from the console and headed to where his team waited while Orion kept pace with him.

“I should go with you.”

The Decepticon leader snorted and shook his helm. “No, you are not a warrior and I will not risk you in a situation with this many unknowns. Oh, and we will be discussing you putting yourself on the line when I get back.”

His lover’s smile wobbled a bit. “I appreciate you not yelling at me in front of everyone about that.”

“I would not give the Autobots the satisfaction of seeing us arguing, but I do not need you to protect me; I have been living with the results of my actions for a very long time now.”

The grip of a hand on his arm pulled him to a halt.

“I know that, but you don’t need to stand alone anymore. I’m here and I want to help share your burden.”

Megatron stopped and turned to face the former Prime.

“You do, by just being here; my spark has been lighter and my processor clearer than it has been in a very long time. That is why I can’t risk you.”

“Really?” Orion asked with a warm smile. “That means a lot to me. And I have faith that you won’t break your word to them which is why I didn’t think it was that big of a deal.”

“We will finish this discussion later. You can watch from the bridge, Soundwave will be monitoring the situation and can keep you up to date on what is going on. But for now, we have a frame to retrieve and some humans that need to be taught a lesson on dealing with Cybertronians.”

His lover pulled his helm down for a kiss and his engine revved as he returned the embrace.

“And we will definitely be discussing ‘that’ later as well.”

“Now that discussion I will be looking forward to,” Orion said with a grin.

~+++~
Several mechs stood waiting on the flight deck along with several eradicons and vehicons. Dreadwing stalked towards him.

“Do we have a location?”

“Yes,” he answered before turning towards the rest of his team. “Dreadwing and I will take the front to clear the way. The rest of you will wait with the Autobots until we give the all clear before joining us. Knock Out: you and Breakdown scan for anything that is Cybertronian and retrieve it. The rest of you are to follow those two and assist them as needed. Any humans that surrender are not to be harmed, however, and instead delivered to the Autobot’s pet human.”

“Really? They are going to get to live after what they did to me?” Breakdown asked as his one golden optic blazed with fury.

“We have an agreement with the Autobots,” he said with a low growl, “and while you are allowed to defend yourself, there is to be no wholesale slaughter of the fleshies. If you do anything to break it, the Autobots will be the least of your worries. Do I make myself clear?”

The mechs all inclined their helms with a, “Of course, Lord Megatron.”

:Communication down,: Soundwave broadcast.

Before he could request a groundbridge, one opened up on the flight deck.

“Decepticons, rise up!” he said as he transformed just before he shot through the vortex.

Dreadwing was only a moment behind him with the rest of his people not far behind. The Autobots arrived not far from their location and he shifted to root mode before striding over to them.

“Ready?”

“Yes, just remember we are watching you.”

“As if I could forget, medic,” he said before turning to Dreadwing. “Let’s go show these humans what scraplet nest they have stirred up.”

“With pleasure, Lord Megatron.”

He leaped into the air and transformed and shot away with a roar of his engines. Dreadwing flew just off his right wing and it wasn’t long before they arrived at what appeared to be a large metal door set part way into a hillside. They both returned to root mode and with a nod they both slammed a fist into the metal until they could get a grip on the panel and together they wrenched it out of its frame. The interior lights cut out and Megatron snorted a soft laugh.

“Stupid flesh things think that will make a difference.”

Already his old mining protocols for navigating in a dark area began to build a display for the room from his other system’s input. The flash from gun muzzles sparkled in the darkened room, but for the most part the bullets glanced off the two warriors. Dreadwing plucked a few devices out of his subspace and with a twist of his hand sent them flying in different directions. A few moments later, explosions rocked the room and screams echoed dully around them. The survivors could be seen scurrying deeper into the compound.

:Front is clear, heading further in,: Megatron said.
Right, we’ll sweep in behind you: Ratchet answered.

The passage narrowed a bit and they had to hunch a little and walk single file as they began methodically checking every little niche they came across. Although many of the rooms showed evidence of humans being in them recently, all were now empty. Megatron pulled up the image of the map that Soundwave had constructed and realized they were coming to the end of the complex. They opened a door and Dreadwing’s optics widened and his wings slumped against this frame as he took in the sight of at least part of his brother’s frame draped across a table.

“Skyquake, what have they done to you?” he murmured.

Megatron activated a private channel to his third. :Have you been able to download and destroy all of their research?:

:Affirmative. Virus uploaded to eliminate all evidence of our existence.: 

:Excellent. What were they attempting to do with Skyquake’s frame?:

:Hypothesis: reverse engineer weapons, understand Cybertronian processors with goal of controlling them.: 

:Good work, Soundwave. We can’t let the humans discover any weakness about us.: After a pause, Megatron spoke over the open line, :Skyquake’s frame, at least part of it, has been located near the back of the complex on the southeast side. Knock Out, retrieve it. Continuing on.: 

“Come, let us end this,” the Decepticon Commander said with a servo on his comrade’s shoulder.

“Of course, my lord.”

Another door barred the last area, a few slams of their fists and they were able to wrench it open much as they had done at the front. Once more, gunfire erupted upon their entrance, however, heavier caliber weapons must have been located in this area as some of the bullets actually began to penetrate their armor. He snarled and turned towards where the heaviest concentration of resistance was located.

“Down!” Dreadwing roared even as he felt the weight of the other’s frame force his own into the floor.

When Dreadwing failed to move he knew the other had been incapacitated. He rolled out from under the unresponsive mech, and a quick glance showed that at least his frame wasn’t greying, so it must have been the pulse weapon that brought him down. Realizing that the initial weapons fire had been a feint to pull his attention from where the real danger was, he pulled his blaster out of his sub-space and fired in the direction Dreadwing had been facing. An explosion rocked one corner when he hit a large machine, most likely their energy weapon and a few screams could be heard amidst the yells of a few humans to retreat.

:Dreadwing is down but still functional. Their pulse weapon at least is destroyed. There must be a few smaller access tunnels as some of the humans are retreating into them,: Megatron said.

He turned his attention to the few humans that had been left behind by their comrades.

“Surrender and you’ll survive this day at least.”

One of the humans opened fire on him. “We’ll never surrender to you! You are meant to serve us!”
He gave the human a feral grin. “Right then.”

A single shot from him blew the human into a crumpled, leaking mass of flesh.

“Anyone else?” he asked with a quirk of his orbital ridge.

The remaining humans quickly threw down their weapons and raised their arms into the air. He motioned with one hand for them to gather together and they obediently huddled together near the entrance while he checked on the other flyer.

:Lord Megatron, should I come there to attend to Dreadwing?: Knock Out asked.

:Have you found all of Skyquake yet?:

:Not yet.:  

:I can check on him while he finishes recovering the parts.: Ratchet said.

:The Autobot can check him over. Dreadwing wants his brother’s frame, first and foremost. Bringing the prisoners out.:  

He stowed his weapon and quickly scooped up the humans into his servos. Their squawks of outrage had him chuckling as he stalked back through the corridor. The red and white medic passed him and the human trotting at his heels stopped when he saw what he had in his grasp. The handful of humans that had failed to escape and had surrendered were dropped at Agent Fowler’s feet. One of them groaned and then pointed up at the Decepticon leader.

“He’s a monster! He killed John! How can you use them against your own kind?”

The dark skinned human put his hands on his hips. “I thought you agreed that you wouldn’t kill anyone who surrendered!”

“I didn’t,” he said. “When I cornered this lot, I told them their choices. One said he would never surrender to the likes of me and fired on me, so I killed him. The rest happily threw down their weapons then.”

Fowler groaned and rubbed one hand over his face. “Ethically -”

“Do not lecture me on ethics, human. How ethical is it for them to capture Breakdown, a sentient being, and cut into him, cut out his optic, while he is alive and awake? The death I gave their comrade was quick and painless, far better than he deserved.”

“They are machines! Machines are meant to be tools for us!”

“And you are a disgusting bag of various chemicals, and I’m not sure what use you are to the universe besides fertilizer for your own world.”

Several of the Autobots joined Fowler and confident that even they could handle a few unarmed humans, he turned and stalked back towards where Dreadwing lay. The Autobot medic hovered over the seeker, his scanner cheerfully beeping away.

“How long until he recovers?”

“Maybe thirty minutes. I can shorten that time if you give me permission to force a reboot on him.”

Megatron shook his helm. “No, I don’t think he would take kindly to an Autobot in his system. We’ll
let him come online under his own power. I’ll watch over him until then.”

Ratchet straightened up.

“I’m surprised Orion didn’t insist on coming along since he was being so helpful during the negotiations,” the red and white mech said with a smirk.

“Oh, he asked, but I told him to remain on the ship where it was safe.”

“Well, if you want him to be safe, you should return him to us. Primus knows what would happen if Dreadwing, for instance, decided to harm him.”

“Orion is perfectly safe at my side,” Megatron said and then paused for a moment to glance at the medic, “and in our berth.”

“You fragger,” Ratchet hissed in a low voice, “if you’ve forced him in any way.”

Megatron laughed a soft rolling laugh. “Oh, trust me, everything we do in there is very - very - consensual.”

The Autobot shot him another glare before stalking off to join his comrades. Well, that had been an illuminating conversation, Megatron thought as he watched the medic walk off.

Knock Out sauntered in with the rest of his team, each of them held parts in their hands while Breakdown carried the majority of a seeker frame.

“We’ve recovered all of Skyquake. We even found Breakdown’s optic, however, the fraggers had cut it apart in such a way that I can’t repair it.”

“No part of a Cybertronian is left anywhere in here?”

“No, we took ever last bolt and wire.”

“Good,” he said before he opened the main channel.

:Soundwave, we need a groundbridge. We have what we came for. I’ll leave dealing with the humans to you, medic.: 

:Acknowledged. Groundbridge active just outside the entrance.: 

He hoisted the seeker’s frame over one shoulder with a grunt. Thankfully, he had been framed for heavy labor and although his burden was awkward, it didn’t overtax his systems. He led his people outside into the night and the swirling green energy field was a thankful sight. He stepped into it and found himself on the flight deck of his warship after only a few steps. Orion’s worried optics met his as he hurried towards him.

“Will Dreadwing be okay?”

“Yes, he just needs a little time to recover.”

“Bring him to the med-bay, my lord. I’ll take a look at him myself,” Knock Out said as he walked behind Megatron.

It was an odd procession of mechs with parts that trailed through the Nemesis. Orion kept pace beside him and although Dreadwing’s body blocked him from seeing much, he could sense his lover next to him, and every now and then felt the gentle touch of a servo touching various spots on his
“I’m fine,” he said softly at the latest touch as he realized that Orion was checking him over.

“Bullet holes?”

“Most of them didn’t even penetrate, self-repair will have everything fixed soon enough.”

“I think Knock Out should look you over.”

“He’s right, my lord. We wouldn’t want anything to rust, now would we,” the medic said with a hint of a laugh.

He grunted at that and made a mental note to threaten to hide Knock Out’s buffer later.

“All I want is to hit the wash rack and attempt to get those irritating bits out from under my plates, wretched things feel like scraplets stuck in there.”

The medic managed to stifle his chuckle into a cough. “Perhaps that would be best, I can check you tomorrow if there are any lingering problems.”

“Yes, that would be best,” he said, thankful that he wouldn’t have to resort to blackmail to get the slaggin medic to not agree with his lover.

A door slid open and he stepped into the med-bay and placed the seeker down on the closest berth with a grunt. He rotated the shoulder that had carried the majority of the weight of Dreadwing.

“Did you pull something?”

He shook his helm. “No, just stretching the cables. Now, let’s leave Knock Out to his patient.”

“Are you sure?” Orion asked, and even though his optics held only concern, Megatron only wanted out of there. “Maybe Knock Out should look at that.”

“No, and if you are that concerned about my well-being, then you can help me get those blasted metal things out before they drive me mad,” he said even as he took Orion by the servo, fully prepared to throw him over a shoulder if need be.

“All right, let’s go. I can see you are about to get cranky about this.”

He didn’t try and contain the smirk that he had at least won this round and together they headed for their quarters. His steps quickened the closer they got to his one true refuge and he didn’t even stop until they were inside the wash rack. He turned the solvent on and even the first burst of cold wasn’t enough to deter him. As soon as it had heated up, his plates lifted and a few bits of metal pinged as they hit the floor. Perhaps more had made it under his plating then he had first thought.

“Oh my, those do look like they would be terribly uncomfortable. Turn around and I’ll get to work on your back.”

The silver mech sighed in relief as his lover took a brush and began methodically cleaning him. He placed his servos against the wall and let his helm droop as he relaxed into the gentle scrubbing. His cares and irritation dropping away from him as each of the metal objects was removed. He had nearly fallen into recharge by the time Orion finished with his back.

“Turn around and I’ll get your front.”
He did as he was told and let his optics shutter as his armor shifted to allow his lover to clean him.

“Am I forgiven now?”

He ex-vented. “Orion, your frame is not something I am willing to negotiate with. You know that Knock Out and Breakdown were with me and they have every reason to hate those humans, and if they had done anything that caused the Autobots to claim I had broken my word, you would have felt obligated to return to them and I’m afraid I would have locked you up and broken that truce in order to prevent that from happening.”

“Oh. I hadn’t thought of that,” Orion said with a thoughtful hum.

“Use our private channel if we are ever in that situation again so that I might explain all the nuances before either of us say something we might regret.”

“I will. Feeling better?”

“Yes,” he said as leaned against the wall.

It had been far too long since someone had tended to him in such a manner and he refused to call the gentle hum of his engines a purr. The tender ministrations of his lover had him wanting recharge nearly as much as he wanted Orion’s spark. He onlined his optics when Orion shut off the spray and guided him until he stood in front of the drying vents and warm air blasted his frame. Once that was complete, his lover led him to their berth and he rolled onto it and pulled the red and blue mech down with him.

“Your spark, that is all I need right now.”

“Of course,” Orion said as his plates slid open to reveal his spark.

It took a few moments for them to arrange themselves such that their sparks could touch, but then the pulse that was Orion pushed into his and he let his own love join with his lover’s and together they soared away into the night.

Chapter End Notes

This ended up being much longer than I had originally anticipated. I hated how they handled Skyquake and Dreadwing in the series and thought it terribly illogical that any of them would have left a crashed Cybertronian lying around and since Fowler knew where it was I figured MECH would as well (you know they had to have someone on the inside).

Hopefully I found and corrected any mistakes, but feel free to point them out if I didn’t. Comments are always appreciated.
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

This is the last of what I had posted over on the kinkmeme so after this it is all new stuff.

Even though I try and post a chapter every week, next week I'll be out of town so there will be no update, but I do hope to have one done for the following week though (the week of the 21st).

Thirty solar days had passed since Orion had been returned to him. That amount of peaceful time suddenly seemed too short as Megatron wondered what the remaining Autobots were up to after their defeat of MECH. They hadn’t heard from them since then and he although he didn’t wish to change that, it bothered him that even Soundwave had not been able to figure out what they might be up to.

The only thing that concerned him was if they came for Orion. His spark tightened at the thought of them trying to reclaim their former companion. No, Orion was safe here. Their ship was hidden from their sensors and Orion had never made any mention of wishing to leave or even wanting to call that medic again. No, his lover enjoyed their time together as much as he did and seemed to relish the task of trying to restore their home world. Now their biggest issue was the fact that the shell of the Matrix seemed to have slowed down the whole process of forming sparkbond, not that that had stopped them from trying.

“We found it!”

Megatron’s optics leapt up from the datapad he had been staring at to find an elated grin on the former Prime’s face.

“What is it?”

Orion typed a few commands and a large structure was displayed on the main viewing screen and all the crew stopped what they were doing to watch.

“It’s called the Omega Lock. And it appears to have been built by the ancients for specifically this sort of situation. It will in effect, reboot Cybertron.”

“Excellent! Once the bridge is finished we can head for it.”

His lover shook his head. “From what we can decipher, it requires four keys to be activated. We are still working on finding those still, but at least we now know it is possible. We can bring our home back to life once more.”

“Good work you two. Let me know when you finally decipher their locations.”

He turned his attention back to the datapad he had been working on. Pulling up a new screen, he set about making a list of priorities for when they would be able to return to Cybertron.

:Starscream to the Nemesis:
Go ahead, Starscream.: Megatron said.

Spacebridge is fully functional. I would like to test it to make sure that there are no nasty surprises that I missed.:

Do it. I want to take no chances when we actually need it.:

Of course, Lord Megatron. We’ll test it immediately.: 

The feral uptick to his lip plates would have sent the Autobots running for cover, if there had been any near by. Soon, he would leave them and this horrid planet behind and they would never see their world again. He paused for a moment and watched his crew go about their work. Things were finally progressing as he had envisioned it, so long ago. The Autobots were all but neutralized and Orion’s presence by his side was a good part of the reason why.

Nearly an hour later and it took considerable will power not to drum his fingers on the railing of the bridge as he waited for Starscream to report on how the test had gone. A heavy ex-vent and he pushed himself away from his station and strode towards where Orion and Soundwave continued to work on the database. His lover glanced over with a smile at his approach as he did nothing to hide the sound of his pedes.

“Any progress?”

“Some, but it doesn’t make any sense.”

“How so?”

“I expected the coordinates to be on Cybertron or a nearby colony, but if we deciphered this first entry correctly, at least one of those keys is here on this planet.”

“Alpha Trion must have thrown the relics of our world further a field than we suspected. Give them to me and I’ll take a team to check it out.”

The laughter in those bright blue optics let him know that his lover knew he was waging a fight with boredom and losing. The growl that rumbled through his chassis only had his lover struggling harder not to laugh at his ploy.

“It’s very impolite to laugh at your esteemed leader,” Megatron said with an air of disdain.

The coordinates were pushed to him and he took the red and blue mech by the waist and pulled him tight to his frame.

“I’ll deal with your insubordination, later.”

Orion pulled his head towards his own and pressed their lips together in a rather chaste kiss. “I look forward to it.”

He gave his lover a knowing smirk before he turned on his heel. He had almost made it off the bridge when the call he had been waiting for finally came through.

Starscream to Nemesis.:

Report, Starscream.: Megatron said as he continued walking down the hall.

The bridge is fully functional and stable.:
Excellent! Return to the ship as I’ll be off hunting down the first of the relics we need.

Of course, if Soundwave opens a ground bridge for me, I’ll make sure everything is running smoothly while you are gone.

“I’m sure you will,” he muttered to himself.

Starscream, I don’t have to remind you not to touch what isn’t yours, do I?

He chuckled as he heard the other mech’s angry splutter over the comm.

Of course not, Lord Megatron.

That’s good to hear. I’ll make sure you get your bridge.

~+~+

The clack of metal on metal announced the arrival of a new mech on the bridge, but the pair at the console failed to acknowledge him. His wings rustled as he stalked over to where they were working.

“So you discovered something to restore our world?”

The red and blue mech jolted a little at the sound of a voice closer to him than he expected.

“What! Oh, yes, Starscream. We found this, and all the information we’ve been able to find points to it doing exactly what we need.”

The silver flyer smirked at the other ‘bots jumpiness. The former Prime really wasn’t that intimidating without the Matrix and with no Megatron hovering nearby he could finally learn some more about him. Soundwave turned and gave the seeker a blank screen, but returned to the console after a moment.

“And what exactly is that?” Starscream asked as he leaned towards the larger bot.

“It’s called the Omega Lock. It’s supposed to channel the energy of Primus back into the planet which will bring it fully back to life, we just need to find the keys to activate it.”

“Ah, that’s what has pulled our leader away from the bridge and from your side. It was as if he was afraid you would run away if he left you alone.”

Orion snorted a small laugh. “Hardly, I’m sure the truce with the Autobots has left him bored is all and hunting a relic was a nice diversion.”

Starscream reached between the two mechs to point at part of the structure on the screen, but he pulled his servo back quickly when Megatron’s voice boomed out next to him.

“Starscream, I don’t have to remind you not to touch what isn’t yours, do I?”

The flier swung around to look behind him, his wings nearly smacking both of the other mechs as they both hastily ducked away from him, but there was no sign of that pain in the aft. His wings hitched up higher as he realized that the voice had come from Soundwave.

“You recorded our conversation? Of course you did,” he said with a resigned sigh. “I was merely curious at what you two had discovered is all. I have been away from the ship working on an important project, after all, and haven’t had a chance to see the newest member of our army in
Huffing a little, he stalked towards where several others stood monitoring Decepticon sites. With Soundwave playing guard, there was no way he could have a nice little chat with the mech. Nothing else to do but catch up on his favorite novel then. Sighing, he reached into his subspace to pull out the datapad he had been reading, but instead his fingers found nothing. He must have forgotten it down at the bridge.

“Scrap!” Starscream snarled and turned to the mech who was closest to him and gestured with a servo. “You there, open a channel to the team at the space bridge, I need to ask them something.”

The mech nodded and opened the channel, but only silence greeted their hail. The seeker leaned over the operator and opened the channel again.

“If you bolts for processors down there are recharging while on duty, I’ll make sure that Megatron personally slags the lot of you!”

“Uh, we just had a little technical glitch is all,” a voice said with a hesitant hitch in it.

Starscream’s optics narrowed at those words. “What sort of issue?”

“It’s all sorted out now, sir. We’re fine now, how about you?”

The flyer muted the channel before turning towards the TIC. “Soundwave, open a ground bridge for me. I’ll go see what those scrap heaps are doing.”

The vortex of swirling green energy appeared on the bridge and Starscream stalked through it. Orion had barely turned his attention back to the database when Starscream’s shrill voice rang across the main channel.

:Autobots at the space bridge! Send reinforcements immediately!: The former Autobot cursed and turned to Soundwave.

“Open the bridge and let me go see if I can settle this with the minimum amount of laserfire. We can’t afford the bridge to be damaged now.”

The mech gave a slight nod and a ground bridge opened up near them. Orion strode through it without pausing. Soundwave contacted Megatron as the bridge shut down once more.

:Autobots at space bridge.: He heard his leader cursing, but he didn’t wait for him to give an order.

:Starscream on site.: he paused for a moment before playing Orion’s words back to Megatron.

:Unicron take them! Open a bridge at my location to their location. I’ll rip their sparks out if they try to take him!: ~+++~

The red and blue mech stepped out of the portal to the sound of blasters going off all around him. He threw himself to the ground while his arms covered his helm.

“Hold your fire!” a familiar voice yelled.
He peeked up to find Ratchet standing near him.

“Ratchet! What in the name of Primus is going on here! Why would you break the truce?” Orion said as he climbed back up to his feet.

The other Autobots kept their blasters aimed at a spot that he had to assume was where Starscream was, but allowed the former Prime up.

“We had to use the space bridge and we knew Megatron would never allow it.”

Orion huffed through his vents. “You could have approached me. This bridge is too important to risk stray blaster fire with, so everyone needs to go.”

He moved to Starscream’s spot behind a pillar and pulled the seeker out. He turned to find the Autobots milling about looking between him and their medic.

“I mean it. Out. All of you.”

Starscream smirked and watched with obvious amusement as the team was torn between listening to their former leader and Ratchet.

“You heard your former leader, time to go!” the flyer added with a wave of his servos.

Ratchet shook his helm. “We can’t leave yet. We are waiting for Arcee and Jack to return out of the bridge.”

Another swirling energy field opened near the entrance of the cave and Megatron jumped out with a feral snarl just as the space bridge disgorged two more beings into the cave.

“Unhand him, Autobot!” Megatron yelled as he charged towards Orion.

The former Prime stepped between his lover and the others.

“It’s okay, Megatronus. They aren’t here for me. They needed use of the bridge and they assumed you would say no.”

Megatron’s optics swept over Orion and once he was assured that he was indeed fine, he turned a glare towards the medic.

“They assumed right. They need to leave now if they wish to remain functional.”

“We need to move past this if we want this truce to last.”

“Megatron isn’t interested in peace, Orion,” Ratchet said.

“The only peace I want is one free of Autobots,” the silver mech said with a low growl.

Orion stood between the two and placed his servos on Megatron’s shoulders. He could feel the tension in the frame under his hands begin to ease.

“Uh, Ratchet. What now?” a small timid voice asked.

Orion turned and found a small organic in some strange get-up walking towards them with something cradled to its chest.

“Primus! Ratchet, you let an organic through the space bridge? Are they even rated for them?”
The former Prime hurried towards the small figure and dropped to one knee to examine the figure up closer.

"Are you okay?"

"I’m fine, thanks. This is yours. You asked me to hold it for you and now I can give it back."

The figure opened his hands and an intricately shaped metal object glowed from his hands. Orion bent down further to get a better look at what was being held out. The Prime must have given it to him, but why and then his optics spiraled wide as he realized what it was. He fell to both knees as his chest plates opened of what seemed to be their own accord as the device recognized the Matrix shell hidden within his chest. A loud buzzing filled his helm, but faintly he heard his lover screaming his designation before everything went dark.

The light beam that speared Orion had Megatronus roaring his name in rage, but already he could see it was too late, somehow they had restored the Matrix. He turned towards that wretched medic and with one slam of his hand sent him flying into a wall. He rushed the red and white frame and seized him by the neck and bashed him into the rock. Blaster fire went off around him as the Autobots attempted to stop him from dismantling his prey. His plating absorbed the worst of damage and the pain from it was nothing compared to what his spark felt like at this moment.

"You betrayed your friend and now I’ll remove that treacherous spark of yours and crush it in my servo."

"Megatron!" Optimus Prime roared. "Let him go!"

The Decepticon leader snarled as the Prime grabbed his arms and pulled them away from the frame that had been frantically beating at him trying to free himself from the servos bent on his destruction. The grim visage on the face held no trace of his lover and he turned his rage towards him. The two figures grappled for a moment amidst the sounds of laser fire. Optimus released Megatron just as suddenly as he had grabbed him, his optics widening with something that he couldn’t quite place. Did his lover lurk somewhere inside still? Could he be fighting to free himself even now?

The two titans stared at each other a moment before moving towards their people.

"Autobots, retreat!"

The medic’s vents wheezed as the energon lines that the Decepticon had begun to crush worked hard to force the vital fluid to his processor. He climbed to his feet and then Optimus was there and took him by the arm. Megatron watched as the Autobots disappeared down their own ground bridge. He turned towards the seeker, but his second was unharmed.

"You let them go! After everything they have done! You’re going soft!"

"Silence, Starscream. I am in no mood for you right now. Make sure the space bridge is functional still."

:Soundwave, ground bridge now.:  
:Acknowledged.:  

The hulking silver mech stalked through the portal without a glance back at the cave where his lover had been lost once more to him.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Vehicons plastered themselves against the wall in an attempt to stay out of his way. It did nothing to appease the silver mech, as he stalked through the ship with a scowl and a snarl rumbling through his chassis towards their quarters. No, not that, now it was his alone, once more. His fist slammed down on the entry pad and the door slid open revealing a space that held no warmth in it. The coldness of the room seemed to drain all the anger out of him and he felt devoid of all energy. He couldn’t even muster up any anger at Soundwave for letting Orion go down there. He knew in his spark that he would have allowed it as well, there was very little he could refuse him and they both knew that the Autobots would never harm his lover. Who could have guessed that they had found a way to bring the Matrix back to life.

He forced himself to lie on the berth. It seemed so bleak and barren now, and his spark ached as he tried to force his system into recharge. One servo pressed against his chest when suddenly Soundwave pinged his private channel for admittance to his quarters. Not moving, he sent the command to allow the other mech inside. Soundwave stepped inside and cocked his helm at the sight that greeted him.

“Soundwave: Failed.”

Megatron turned his helm to gaze at his friend. “And I would have done the same thing if he had asked me. Neither of us could have guessed that there was a way to bring power back to that artifact. I was right there and even I couldn’t stop it.”

He shuttered his optics as his spark clenched once more.

“Query: Megatron unwell.”

A soft ex-vent left him. “I’m as well as to be expected.”

“Suggestion: Med-bay.”

“I doubt Knock Out has anything to cure what ails me, old friend,” he said as a slight tremor coursed through his frame. “How can I fight Optimus now that I know that Orion is still trapped in there? It was easier before when the Matrix gave him his new frame and it was different enough from his original and I still believed that he was lost to me for good, but now - now that I’ve been intimate with that one and I know -”

“Suggestion: Continue with plan to return to Cybertron.”

His vents cycled harshly in the quiet of the room. “I suppose that would be the most prudent course. Did the team at least finish retrieving the first key?”


His optics onlined and he gazed over at the dark blue mech. “You think the pain in my spark is that?”

His third inclined his helm and offered a ration he had been carrying. Megatron rolled to a sitting
position, took it, and downed it without tasting it.

“Fine, let’s go see Knock Out and hear how long I have to suffer with this on top of everything else.”

They trudged through the halls, the only sound was that of their pedes until they reached the med-bay. Leave it to Soundwave to manage to clear the corridors for him. The door slid open at their approach, but silence filled the room and only a few lights provided any illumination of the area. He was about to send a ping to find out where the medic was when the red mech in question sauntered into view.

“My lord, Soundwave said that you are having some problems related to your spark?”

“It aches. He thinks it might be related to a sparkbond breaking. How long will this last?”

The medic hummed as he sorted through his tools that sat on a nearby tray. “Hard to say. Really depends on how strong the bond was to begin with, although to be honest, it shouldn’t be breaking, after all neither of you is dead.”

“Like most everything that has happened today, I think we can throw blame at the Matrix.”

“That is a possibility. If I may run some scans I’ll probably be able to give you a better answer.”

“Do it.”

Knock Out picked up a scanner and ran it over the center of his chassis. After a moment he gave the device a hard smack with his hand before turning towards the back room that served as his personal quarters.

“Breakdown! I thought you said you calibrated all the scanners!”

“I did,” the hulking blue mech said as he stalked out of the back.

The red mech snorted and tossed the device to his partner. “Well it didn’t take on that one.”

The medic went to a cabinet and pulled another handheld scanner out and returned to Megatron. It beeped when he turned it on and ran it over the plates above his spark. The red mech gazed at the reading for a moment before he walked over to where Breakdown stood holding the first device. He peered at both of them for a moment before returning to his leader’s side.

“My lord, if you would please expose your spark chamber so that I can get a better reading. I think your armor is causing some issues since both machines are giving the exact same results.”

“Told you I calibrated them,” Breakdown muttered.

With a heavy ex-vent, Megatron sent the commands to expose his spark chamber. It seemed fitting that everything seemed to be going wrong now. The day had started with such a joyous note, but now the universe seemed intent on having problems crash down around his helm at every turn. He off-lined his optics as he waited patiently for the medic to finish.

“Do either of you see what I see?” Knock Out asked in a timid voice.

He heard the clank of pedes as the other two moved closer. Oh good, maybe his spark would explode and put him out of his misery.

“Affirmative,” Soundwave said in what sounded like a reverent tone.
“Breakdown, bring a mirror. My lord, you need to see this.”

He brought his optics online and gazed at three sets, okay one and a half plus a visor, of optics staring intently into his spark. “What in the name of the Unmaker is in there that has you three so unhinged?” he asked as the first tinge of worry crept up his back struts.

He took the mirror that Breakdown thrust towards him and angled it so he could see inside his spark chamber. His processor stuttered as it attempted to make sense of what he saw, two smaller sparks were peeking in and out from behind the larger spark that was his.

“Newsparks?” he asked. “How?”

Knock Out started to laugh but choked it down at his leader’s glare.

“I know how they are supposed to be created, but I thought they were just stories made up by the rich and powerful to show their superiority over everyone.”

“Negative. Newsparks: real but very rare. Most sparklings: sparks from AllSpark and placed in sparkling body,” Soundwave said.

“The ache then wasn’t from a bond breaking?”

The medic shook his helm. “No, it appears to be due to the newsparks. However, I’m not sure why as I do not have any real experience with sparklings of any sort.”

Megatron let his chest plates shutter over the sparks. “Can you build frames for them?”

“If I had the right materials I don’t see why not, but we are sadly lacking in several important components.”

“Make a list of everything you need and we’ll try and scavenge what you need on Cybertron.”

“Of course, my lord. We’ll get to work on it right away.”

“Soundwave, with me,” Megatron said as he exited the bay and strode down the hall. “It sounds like you have some knowledge. I confess, I never paid much attention to the stories.”

The mech nodded. “Soundwave: share.”

They returned to his room and Soundwave watched as Megatron paced about the small chamber with a renewed energy.

“Remember when those Council members stated that the reason that there hadn’t been any newsparks even from the AllSpark was because our protests were upsetting the natural order,” Megatron said with a feral grin. “Stupid slag eating idiots. I bet their sparks are spinning in the Well to know that the leader of the Decepticons is carrying not one, but two newsparks.”

“Newsparks: precious gift. Query: frequency of merges before?”

He ran one servo over his spark. “Yes, they are. The only thing I have of Orion’s to be quite frank, well, besides my memory files. As for the merges, we did so every evening when we retired. He was as anxious as me to formalize our bond. That infernal Matrix seemed to make that nearly impossible as well.”

Soundwave’s position didn’t change for several minutes and then his visor brightened.
“Hypothesis: newsparks require energy for proper growth. This night cycle failed to provide for
newsparks, no merge, no refueling - newsparks forced to pull more heavily from your spark.”

“Of course, I shall have to make sure I refuel regularly then.”

Soundwave nodded. “Suggestion: Increase ration. Single spark now forced to provide energy alone.”

“Yes, I’ll make sure to do that. I will let nothing happen to them if I can help it.”

“Suggestion: Announcement. Newsparks: proof that Cybertronians will not go extinct.”

“Yes, I suppose you are right and there is no way to keep news of this sort quiet for any length of
time.” Megatron said. He groaned and rubbed his helm with one servo. “Starscream is liable to be a
pain in the aft. You know he will call for me to step down, saying its either for my health or for the
well-being of the newsparks.”

Soundwave nodded but remained silent for a few minutes before his visor brightened once more.
“Suggestion: Tell Starscream in private. Acknowledge: his abilities, increase responsibilities.”

Megatron ex-vented. “Do you think that will be enough?”

The lanky blue mech lifted and then dropped his shoulders. “Possible. Soundwave: Will support
Megatron.”

“I know and for that, I thank you. Let me call Starscream now.”

He pinged the seeker and when he received a ping back he opened a channel to him.

:Starscream, report to my quarters. We are having an impromptu officer’s meeting.: 

:Of course, lord Megatron, I’m sure a little recharge is not that important in your grand scheme of
conquering the Autobots.: 

“Oh yes, Starscream, your sarcasm is just what I need after everything else today,” the silver mech
muttered to himself.

Although the flyer complained as if his recharge had been interrupted, he still arrived in a timely
manner after Megatron had contacted him. He strode through the door when it opened for him and
his optics swept the room. He cocked a hip and rested one servo on it.

“Well, isn’t this cozy. So what is so important that it couldn’t wait until the shift tomorrow?”

“I have just returned from seeing our medic and I wanted you to hear the announcement I will be
making in the morning, from me personally.”

The seeker’s optics shifted from Megatron to Soundwave and back.

“Well? Don’t keep me in suspense here!”

The silver mech nodded. “I thought I was suffering from the breaking of whatever bond Orion and I
had managed to form, but Soundwave insisted I visit Knock Out anyway. It turns out it was
something completely different. Newsparks - I’m carrying newsparks.”

Starscream laughed loudly and a bit shrilly. “Right. Although I appreciate the laugh, tell me what is
really going on here.”
“I’m not joking,” Megatron said even as his engine rumbled a warning.

The seeker glanced over to Soundwave who merely nodded at the obvious question directed at him.

“How? Scratch that, I mean I know the stories, but I thought that’s all they were.”

“As did I.”


“Wait, you said newsparks, as in plural?”

“Yes, two to be exact. As my second there will likely be times when you will have to stand in for me and there will be more responsibilities placed in your capable servos.”

The flyer’s shoulders lifted and his trademark smirk became a genuine smile. “Of course. What are your initial plans?”

“As soon as Knock Out gets together a list of what we need to build the sparkling frames, I’ll take a team to Cybertron to hunt for the components. While I’m doing that, Soundwave will continue the search for retrieving the keys for the Omega Lock, so that means you will be in charge of running the rest of our forces.”

“Of course, Lord Megatron. How long will you be gone?”

The tension in the silver mech eased a little, like always Soundwave’s plan appeared to be working.

“It is hard to say, without knowing exactly what we will have to find, it might be a few Earth cycles at the least.”

“Suggestion: Open space bridge at designated times calibrated to Earth time.”

“Excellent idea, Soundwave. Tomorrow, I’ll make the official announcement and we can begin to execute this next phase of our plans.”

His officers bowed their helms as they departed and once more he reclined on his berth, but at least now he had something positive to focus on as he fell into recharge.

~+~+~

The happy faces all around him should have made him smile as well, after all it was good when the team was happy. There was just one problem, he had no idea why they were this way or what they had been doing in that cavern with the Decepticons. He turned to his oldest friend, perhaps he would know what had happened to him.

“Ratchet, perhaps you could explain what we were doing there and why I cannot remember anything,” he paused for a moment as he rechecked his chronometer, “that has happened for the last thirty days. My memory files are oddly blank.”

The medic sighed and rubbed his optics. “Come with me. I need to check you over anyway and I’ll try to explain everything while I work.”

The smallest of the children beamed up at him from where he stood next to the ground bridge controls with his laptop. “It’s good to have you back, Optimus.”
“Thank you, Rafael. Were you the one who was operating the bridge?”

“Yes, I modified a program so I could operate it without needing to use your controls. Would you like to see?”

“Thank you, Raf, for manning the controls for us. We couldn’t have retrieved Prime without everyone’s help,” Ratchet said.

The medic took Optimus by the arm and steered him towards the back room where he had his equipment laid out. He purposely shut the door behind Prime just as Arcee and Miko attempted to come inside. When Ratchet didn’t meet his optics after a few moments, he gently laid a servo on his shoulder.

“What is it, old friend? What has happened?”

“I, uh, how are you feeling? Any warnings or any other unusual notices?”

“Other than the loss of time I seem to have experienced, no, there do not appear to be any other problems.”

Ratchet nodded as he picked up a scanner and began to run it along his frame. He gazed at the read-out before placing it down on the table.

“At least tell me if we were successful in locking Unicron away?”

“Yes, you were,” the medic said with a quiet ex-vent. “Megatron told us that you drained the Matrix of all its power in order to keep the Unmaker from breaking free.”

He nodded his helm. “I remember making that decision. I’m glad that it worked then. Have I been off-line since that happened?”

The medic finally gazed into his optics. “No, thankfully that didn’t happen. You lost your memory when you used the Matrix and reverted back to Orion Pax and have been with the Decepticons since then.”

His vents cycled furiously as he tried to come to terms with this revelation. “The Key to Vector Sigma I left with Jack - you used that to bring the Matrix back and make me Prime again.”

“We did. Although we had a temporary truce with Megatron, but without you we knew we couldn’t stand against them if, well when, Megatron took any hostile action.”

“That was their space bridge then.”

“Yes, we managed to take control of it and send Arcee and Jack through and they were able to find Vector Sigma and use the Key and get it back to you.”

“How did you manage to free me from my prison? I cannot see Megatron allowing me anywhere near any of you.”

A small shudder drifted down the medic’s frame. “I know this might seem a little odd, but can you access any of your memories from before you took the Matrix, when you were Orion Pax?”

The red and blue mech paused at the odd request, but dutifully attempted to find those older files. He had never needed anything from them before, but it quickly became apparent that those files were shielded from him.
“I cannot, but that does not seem right. Those are mine, why cannot I see them?”

“I’m sorry, Optimus,” Ratchet said with a soft ex-vent.

“What is going on?”

“As best as we can tell, you were created by the Matrix when Orion Pax took it to become Prime.”

“How? How is that possible? I am - me,” he said with a soft ex-vent.

Ratchet took his servos in his. “Of course you are you. For some reason the Matrix created a new personality matrix when Orion took it. Maybe it has always done that, and nobody has ever figured it out before. We just don’t know why it did it.”

His optics shuttered as he tried to come to terms with this information. This frame was not his, had never been his in any real sense.

“I was not a prisoner, was I?”

“No, you were not.”

“How did I get to the space bridge then?”

“You were ground-bridged in.”

“Why would they send me there? Was I going to fight you?”

Ratchet’s optics widened. “Primus! No! You were there asking, okay, telling us to leave. You were worried about the bridge being damaged since we were trying to hold off Starscream.”

“I was a Decepticon then?” Optimus asked with a slight tremor in his voice.

“No! Do you see their symbol on you?” Ratchet asked as he pointed to one of his shoulders.

He glanced over and the sight of a bare shoulder plate was a welcome sight. “No, thank Primus for that at least. Why would I go with the Decepticons though? Megatron and I have been at war for a very long time and he has tried to kill me numerous times before.”

Ratchet sank down on a crate. “Back in the beginning, he assumed the Council had altered Orion’s personality core when he became, well, you, but when he found out that it was instead the Matrix and when it was drained and you had reverted to Orion, well, he convinced Orion to join him and that is where you’ve been since then.”

“Oh. I see. I think I need some time to come to terms with all of this. If you will excuse me, I think I will head to my room now.”

The red and white mech stood up and opened the door for him. “Of course, Optimus. I’m here if you need to talk.”

He could only nod. “Thank you, Ratchet.”

His quarters were just a few steps down the hall and ignoring the looks of the rest of his team, he stumbled into his room. He let the door shut behind him and dropped onto the berth. The gentle rasp of metal on metal resonated around him as his helm fell into his servos. What was he? Of course, now the Matrix decided to be silent unlike earlier when he had stopped Megatron from killing his friend. The rage on the Decepticon’s face had been uncharacteristically aimed at the medic instead of
at him. It had stirred a fierce anger in him and his thoughts had drifted to stopping Megatron permanently, but then the Matrix had forbade him from doing that. Why would the Matrix now want to make sure Megatron lived when it had never done that before? Or was it Orion somehow bleeding through this time.

With a heavy ex-vent he curled onto his side. Why had the Matrix gone dormant now when he needed guidance more than ever? When had things gone so very wrong?

Chapter End Notes

Hope everyone has a wonderful holiday, however you choose to celebrate it! I appreciate all of the support, comments, follows, whatever - thank you! And as always feel free to point out any mistakes I missed.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

This chapter grew much bigger than I originally anticipated.

Oh, and pretend Megatron’s speech is far more inspiring, *cough* awesome *cough* than what this poor author came up with. I mean he’s supposed to be charismatic and what not - ha, new occupation for him - Motivational speaker!

As always comments are always welcome and feel free to point out any mistakes I missed.

The silver mech stood proudly in front of the small gathering of his army that was currently stationed on the bridge. Soundwave and Starscream flanked him while Laserbeak perched nearby in order to transmit his words and image through the rest of the ship.

“Decepticons, we stand on the cusp of a new age for our people. Yes, we have suffered several losses recently, but still we persevere. We may have lost Orion, when his supposed friend betrayed him, but before that happened he had found the means for restoring our world. But that is not the only thing my lover has gifted us with - I have only just found out that I am carrying two newsparks.”

Murmurs rose from the gathered mecha as they glanced between themselves and their leader. Megatron lifted one servo and the crowd quieted.

“Like you, I too, believed that newsparks were propaganda perpetrated by the elite to show their power and wealth to those of us in the lower castes. They are not. The AllSpark that was controlled by the priesthood and the Council may be lost to us, but now we know extinction is not a certainty, not anymore. We will reclaim our world, we will prevail!”

The cheers were gratifying, it had been at least a vorn since he last had given a speech and it was nice to know he hadn’t lost his touch. An incoming request from his medic had him turning to his two Lieutenants.

“Knock Out wishes to see me; I’ll be back as soon as I know what information he has for me.”

“Of course, you must take care of yourself now, my lord,” Starscream said with only a slight sneer on his faceplates.

He swung his servo and slapped his second on the back, perhaps not quite hard enough since the seeker only stumbled a little.

“Why, thank you, Starscream. Your concern is most touching.”

He stalked off the bridge. If that flying glitch thought that he was somehow weakened by the newsparks, then perhaps if he shoved the seeker’s wings up his own aft that would clear up that little bit of misconception quickly. If anything, the thought of someone harming the new life forming near his spark brought all his battle protocols online in a sparkbeat.
Knock Out waved him over to a chair when he arrived in the med-bay.

“Thank you for coming so promptly, my lord. After extensive search of all the databases on this ship, all I can say is I still haven’t got the slightest idea of how old the newsparks are or even how long it typically takes them to develop enough to be framed.”

Megatron stared at the smaller bright red mech and he resisted the urge to bring a fist down on him. “So you called me down here to tell me you really have no idea on how long the sparklings have before they need to go in a frame and what, are we are going to have to guess?”

The medic nodded and took a step backwards, hopefully out of servo range. “I never had any dealings with sparklings of any sort before the war and there is absolutely no information to be had on the ship. But I have an idea, my lord, there is a Cybertronian within communication distance who might know something, the Autobot medic, Ratchet. The Autobots are notoriously sentimental about sparklings, they might help.”

Megatron threw his head back and laughed long and hard. Knock Out waited, unsure if this was true humor or something darker.

“Oh, this is too good. Then I suppose we shall have to contact the Autobots, won’t we?”

The medic nodded and tried not to flinch when the large servo of his leader landed on his shoulder. For such a big mech, he moved far too fast.

“The sooner, the better, Lord Megatron.”

The silver mech herded Knock Out out the door. “Of course, let’s do this now.”

“I can contact them by myself if you would rather not have them find out they are yours.”

Megatron shook his head with a grin. “This is not something I would want to miss.”

“Yes, my lord. And what if he refuses to help at all?”

“If it comes to that, well, then we will have to take him and get the information we need however we can.”

Knock Out’s smile was as toothy as his own was.

“Excellent plan, my lord.”

~+~+

Starscream raised an orbital ridge at their arrival, but kept his comments to himself as the pair approached Soundwave.

“Contact the Autobots, Knock Out has a question or two for them.”

The slender mech inclined his helm and after a moment, the Prime’s face appeared on the screen. Megatron squared his shoulders as he steeled his spark against the sight and nodded to his enemy.

“Prime, we have a question to ask of your medic.”

Blue optics peered at him and then at those gathered around him.

“After the brutal attack I witnessed not long ago, I think not.”
Megatron waved a servo at the medic. “Knock Out.”

The red medic took a short step forward.

“I need to know about newsparks and he is the only source of information currently available.”

The Prime’s optics widened over his battle mask. “If this is some sort of twisted joke, it is not humorous in the least, Megatron.”

“Soundwave, I assume you made a recording the other evening?”

At the mech’s nod, Megatron’s smile broadened. “Well then, share it with them.”

It only took a moment for the file to appear in front of the Autobot leader, but he didn’t open it immediately. He typed in a few commands and Megatron tried not to tap his pede as he waited for what was sure to be an explosion that would rock the Autobot base. He could tell when the Prime realized what it was he was seeing - newsparks, ones that hovered behind his own spark.

“Primus. Is that - you?”

“Me,” he said with a nod.

A moment later, the red and white mech stomped into view.

“What is so urgent, Optimus?”

“This,” Prime said as he pointed to the screen.

Ratchet leaned in closer and then staggered backwards and his optics jumped to the Decepticon leader’s face and then down to the screen again.

“No, it can’t be.”

“Oh, but it is,” Megatron said with a purr of his engines. “And here we were told only those close to Primus could kindle newsparks.”

The medic snorted in disdain even as a slight tremble could be seen in his frame. “Any medic worth their oil could tell you that was slag.”

“And those of us who lived in the lower echelons and didn’t have access to the Academy, well, we were told that information on newsparks wasn’t relevant to those we repaired,” the bright red mech said with a sneer.

Ratchet sighed. “I never did agree with that, all information should have been shared in our field. Newsparks are rare, but only because you need a convergence of things to occur - the creators need to be well fueled and content and have frequent merges to get a newspark to form which is why they were normally only found among the affluent.”

“So can you tell how long we have before we need to have the frames done?” Knock Out asked.

“Do you have actual scans of the sparks? It’s impossible to tell visually. If those are split-spark then they will be inherently smaller than just two sparks generated.”

“Is that even possible? I mean two separate sparks being generated at the same time?” Knock Out asked as he transmitted the file from the previous night cycle.
“There is not a single thing about the creation of a newspark that won’t have you asking ‘is that possible’,” the Autobot medic said with a grunt while he scanned the new data.

A rustle of metal could be heard on the warship bridge as the silver mech shifted his pedes as he waited. The crew had long ago gone silent as they listened in on the discussion.

“How many newsparks have you dealt with personally, Autobot?”

“You know my designation; use it if you want your information.”

The snarl of his engines had those closest to him shifting away. Optimus stepped closer to his medic and placed a servo on his shoulder. The touch might have been calming for the red and white mech, but it tore at Megatron’s spark.

“Ratchet, please, these newsparks are a gift from Primus and as Autobots we must do what we can to ensure their survival.”

The red and white mech nodded before he dropped his gaze back down to the file. “To be honest, unless you have resources that we do not, there is no way to build the frames they need and they will gutter.”

His optics narrowed as he glared at the medic. “How long do we have to build them?”

Ratchet ex-vented. “Based on these readings, they appear to be split-spark and you have roughly four to five months before they have to be framed, that range is partly dependent on their growth.”

“Is that only a function of fueling for the carrier?” Knock Out asked.

The red and white medic shook his helm. “You’ll need to up the rations -”

Megatron noticed the pause and honed in on it. “What else?”

Ratchet dropped his gaze and shuttered his optics. “Besides remaining well-fueled, frequent spark merges would push the time frame to the shorter end.”

“Well, we both know that merges are no longer possible, don’t we, medic?”

The Prime’s optics shifted from Megatron to Ratchet. “What does he mean by that? Who is the co-creator? The last Decepticon that was off-lined was Skyquake, but that was when Megatron had been assumed destroyed as well.”

“Oh, do tell him, Ratchet,” Megatron said with a smirk that did little to hide the pain in his spark.

The glare that the Autobot medic sent his way would have melted a hole in his chassis if it had been a laser. The Autobot leader’s optics spiraled wide when the realization of the truth hit him.

“You didn’t tell him everything, did you?” Megatron asked as he took in the Prime’s expression.

“I told him what he needed to know!”

“It was when I became Orion, wasn’t it?” Optimus asked. “Were you two -”

Megatron turned away from the view screen even as he was determined to share his pain. “How does it feel to be a construct of that artifact, Prime? Tell me, did it even care that he was happy to be at my side when it took him over the second time? Did it even give him a choice? And now he will never know about the new lives that he helped to create.”
The Decepticon leader glanced over at his medic and gave him a brief nod. “Find out what you need to.”

His steps echoed dully in the quiet of the bridge as he strode out. He wasn’t sure when he had lost control of the situation. He had thought it would help the ease his pain to know that others were suffering as he was, but now it just felt like a hollow victory.

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A hoarse yell preceded the blade that shattered the training dummy. With one sweep of his servo, it flew across the room to land in a heap with several others all in various states of ruin. He had long thought he was in control of his own fate and even that of others, but now it seemed that perhaps no matter what he did, he would not be able to save the new lives that Orion and he had created and it tore at him until he wanted to rain destruction onto everything around him.

The training room was silent except for the whirl of his fans as they worked to cool his frame. His optics swept the area and he found one last model to vent his frustration on. He stalked towards it, but the opening of the door gave it a temporary reprieve from its fate. Knock Out entered the room with a small bow as he took in the sight of all the destroyed training aids.

“My lord, the Autobot provided us with all the information we need. We can go to Cybertron whenever you want to find the components for the frames.”

Megatron nodded and turned towards the red mech. “What do you think our chances are for success? Is this a fool’s errand?”

The medic cocked a hip and gave him a grin. “Before our talk with the Autobots, I would have said slim, but that old medic gave us a solid lead.”

The silver mech’s optic ridges raised at that. “Really? I find that hard to believe.”

“I know, but after a bit of prodding from Orion,” the glare from his leader had him stepping backwards, “I mean the Prime, he gave us the coordinates for a sparkling frame center. Apparently the rich didn’t trust just anyone with them and its location was only known to a handful of mecha, mostly medics, in an attempt to keep undesirables from stealing either components or whole frames for themselves.”

He refused to get his hopes up, yet. “And he thinks that we might be able to recover what we need there?”

“It’s located underground on the outskirts of Iacon. He thought that one was most likely to be intact, but he gave us coordinates of several other similar places around Cybertron. Between them all, I think we have a very good chance of finding everything we need.”

A genuine smile crept across his face as one hand crept up to cover his spark. “That is good news indeed. You and Breakdown requisition whatever supplies you need.”

“We will need extra firepower as well, no telling what we might run into.”

“Yes, we will. I personally plan on going and I’ll have Soundwave assign a few vehicons to us as well. However, I don’t want this to become too large as it might draw unwanted attention to us. How soon can you be ready?”

“Of course, my lord. We’ll gather all the supplies we need and should have everything ready by the end of today.”
His blades retracted back into their specialized sheaths as he returned his battle systems back to stand-by.

“Excellent. Be on the flight deck at the start of first shift tomorrow.”

If he found out that the Autobot had given them faulty information, he would find a way to pry the mech away from the Prime’s side and turn him into so many spare parts.

~++~

The screen went mercifully dark and Optimus shuttered his optics. He was glad the base contained only him and Ratchet right now; it would be easier to get answers from him before the others returned from delivering their charges to their homes.

“Why did you not tell me?”

The harsh cycling of vents blasted hot air around them for several minutes before the medic finally answered.

“How was I supposed to tell you that Orion had been sharing a berth with our enemy when you looked like you wanted to purge your tanks at just the thought of being aboard their ship for the past month?”

His helm dropped down towards his chassis. His thoughts drifted to what he had hoped to do when the war finally ended. He had always thought that eventually he might have the chance to be a mentor. Of course, that was now an impossible dream. After all, it would only be right for this frame to be returned to Orion, since he had generated newsparks already and he deserved to be with them. He sent a questioning pulse towards the artifact, but it remained silent.

“For what it’s worth, I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I honestly didn’t expect that they would have been able to create newsparks together.”

His optics brightened and he turned them towards the medic. “Why not?”

“Can you picture Megatron being at peace in his spark enough in order to create newsparks? I know I couldn’t.”

“Why are they with him and not my spark, or should I say this spark?”

Ratchet tapped his chest plate and he obediently opened them. The Matrix shone brightly into the area and his friend pointed at it.

“That right there is the best reason why. Even inert it would have covered up at least part of your spark up so my guess is their energy coalesced around his because of it.”

“I suppose I should be thankful that they did not form a true spark bond during their time together. That would have been - most awkward.”

The red and white mech nodded. “Agreed. Again, I would say that the shell of the Matrix is the reason why you don’t have to deal with that on top of everything else.”

The gentle whirl of gears brought his chest closed once more as he turned and placed his servos on Ratchet’s pauldrons. The medic’s optics narrowed at him and he heard the gentle hum of a scanner as Ratchet raised a servo with one in his grasp.
“Are you okay, Optimus? How can you be so calm?”

He had a very long war in order to learn how to push aside his wants and needs for others so he just gave his friend a weary nod. “I am fine. We need to discuss the changes -”

“Changes, what changes?”

“Megatron is to be unharmed -”

“What! I don’t fraggin think so!”

He lowered his battle mask, which brought the medic’s spluttering to a halt.

“When I became aware down in that cave, I saw the rage that Megatron normally sent my way being directed towards you and an anger surged in me and the only thought in my processor was that I would end him if he harmed you.”

Ratchet’s mouth opened and closed and he pressed on while his friend was still stunned.

“When I first grabbed him, the Matrix did nothing, but then it came alive in my chest and it told me in no uncertain terms that he was not to be harmed. It did not tell me why, but now I am sure that it sensed the newsparks.”

Ratchet’s optics narrowed. “I know it guides you, but it doesn’t me and all I have to say is if it comes down to either you or him, I will always choose you even if it costs me my own spark.”

A soft smile crept across his face. “I would not think he would want to kill me now that he knows Orion still exists in this frame with me. And I would never want one of you to sacrifice yourself for me; it is my duty to protect all of you.”

Ratchet made a rude noise with his engine. “You can take that line of code and just delete it. And you’re glitching if you think any of us will not take out that insane megalomaniac if we are given a chance! You know what he did to our world!” The medic’s servos waved about his helm as his voice rose in volume.

“What we did to our world. We played a part in it as well.”

“Yes, because we tried to stop him!”

His mouth opened, but a single digit pushed against his chest plate hard enough that it stopped him from saying anything else.

“I have followed you, believed in you, for more vorns than I care to count and I don’t care what that slaggin piece of metal wants - you are my priority, not it.”

“Hey, why are you two fighting?” a new voice interjected, the deep gravelly voice could only belong to Bulkhead.

They moved apart with a small jolt and found that the others had returned and even now were gathered around them. Optimus rubbed his optics.

“We were not fighting, merely having a discussion,” the red and blue mech said.

“No, we were fighting,” Ratchet said with a snarl. “That glitching artifact in his chest has its priorities all screwed up!”
“The newsparks -”

“May never even make it into a frame!”

“Whoa! Newsparks? Who?” Arcee asked as she moved closer to the pair.

“Newsparks? Wow, I thought they were just a myth,” the hulking green mech said as his optics shifted between the faces of his superiors.

The youngest of them, the yellow and black mech beeped and whistled an enthusiastic comment.

“No, they are not a good thing,” the medic said with a snarl.

“They are a gift from Primus,” Optimus said.

“And I stopped believing in Primus a long time ago!”

“How can you say that, Ratchet? You have stood with me as I have stood for him.”

“No! I was with you! I believed in you! And I don’t give a scrap what that thing wants!”

The angry rev of his engine filled the area and he turned on his pede and stalked off to his room.

“Uh, what has doc-bot so worked up?”

Bee whistled a single long note to which Optimus could only nod.

“I suppose I should start at the beginning. While you were out, we were contacted by Megatron.”

“What does that old rust bucket want now?” Arcee said as her optics narrowed.

“They were seeking information on newsparks. Their medic has no experience with them so they contacted us.”

Bulkhead’s servo clanked against his forehead. “Who got sparked up over there? Please tell me it’s not Breakdown. I think I’d have to throw myself in a scraplet pit if that was true.”

“I’ll purge if it is Starscream.”

Optimus held up his hand once more and shook his head. “No, it is Megatron who carries two newsparks next to his.”

“Scrap.”

“What she said. That is seriously messed up.”

Bumblebee’s beep sounded dangerously close to a wail.

“And the co-creator, please tell me it’s not you,” the femme asked softly.

“Orion, they belong to him. Ratchet disagrees with my order that Megatron is not to be harmed.”

The three of them exclaimed in unison a variation of ‘no’ that had him wincing. He held up a hand and eventually they quieted.

“The Matrix was quite clear that he is to be unharmed and I am sure it is because of the newsparks. As Autobots, we are sworn to protect the innocent and that is exactly what they are.”
The slender blue femme crossed her arms in front of her chassis with a scowl. “No wonder Ratchet is torqued. No and more no. I’m with him. I don’t care what that scrap of metal has ordered. As far as I am concerned, those are two baby ‘cons and with him as their creator they will be just as bad as him!”

He gazed down at the blue femme and her optics only narrowed at him. “How can you say that, Arcee? They are innocent sparks that have done nothing but been created between two lovers.”

“And under his guidance, exactly what do you think they will be turned into?”

“If that is how you feel, then every one of you that thinks that will have to remain in the base should we be called upon to deal with the Decepticons.”

“NO!” the medic said with an explosive roar of his engine. “You don’t think he wouldn’t take advantage of your soft-spark to end you?”

Optimus swiveled to find that the red and white mech had stomped back into the room.

“Ratchet, if that was true, why did he not do so when I was recovering after we had stopped Unicron?”

“Because he’s a stupid fragger as well!” he said with a wave of his arms. “I don’t know, all I know is you can’t leave us behind. We are a team!”

“Then you have to trust me and follow my lead.”

Ratchet’s optics dimmed and after a few minutes the tension drained from his frame and he nodded.

“Agreed. Right - Arcee, Bulkhead, Bumblebee?”

The three Autobots glanced amongst themselves before dutifully nodding at their leader and some of the tension in his frame eased.

“Thank you, I know this will be a difficult time for us all.”

The medic grasped his arm with a desperate strength. “Just promise me you won’t leave us behind.”

He laid his hand over the servo on his arm and gave it a gentle squeeze. “Not if I can help it.”

“So how are we going to explain this to the humans?”

Ratchet’s groan echoed his.

“I’m so not explaining this to Miko.”

“If it becomes necessary, than Ratchet and I will do so.”

Ratchet shook his helm. “Thanks for volunteering me, but he’s right. The less the humans, all of them, know about how things work for us the better. I can’t see their government being happy to hear that one of their main enemies is about to spawn two new sparks.”

“They are innocent,” Prime said and his words were punctuated with a sharp rumble of his engine.

“We know that, but as far as most humans are concerned, we are machines therefore they are going to see them as mini-Megatrons regardless of the fact that Orion helped form them as well.”

The blue femme leaned one hip against the bulky green mech beside her.
“Yes, but is that a good thing?”

“Of course it is!”

The medic stomped over to the femm. His glare did nothing to change her posture as she watched him approach.

“I know you don’t know Orion, but I did - do. He is a kind and gentle spark.”

“Then what the frag is - was he doing with Megatron?” she asked.

Bulkhead’s optics swung between those two and their leader.

“This is giving me a processor ache trying to keep everything straight. Hey, boss, can you know feel Orion in there now that you know about - you know - everything?”

Optimus swung his head. “No. The only presence I feel at times is that of the Matrix when it wishes to impart something to me.”

Ratchet’s optics dimmed a little at his words before he turned back to the blue femm.

“That is something you’ll have to ask him. All I can say is he must have seen something that we did not. Now, if there are no more questions, Optimus and I need to come up with a story. So get some recharge or whatever it is you three do at night.”

He watched the three retire to their rooms and he laid a servo on the medic’s shoulder.

“Thank you for your support. I did not wish to do this alone.”

“I’m here for you. And I’ll watch out for you even when you are being an idiot.”

His soft chuckle brought an answering smile to the medic’s face.

“I am grateful then and I hope I will not veer too far down that road.”

“You and me both. Now as for our other problem, I already have an idea of what to tell the humans if it becomes necessary. The humans would probably glitch out if they knew we engaged in what they would consider sexual behavior so I suggest we tell them that the newsparks were created from excess spark energy in a sort of budding process.”

“Do you think they will believe it?”

“We make sure everyone says the same thing and I can throw out some numbers on just how rare it was on our world before the war so they shouldn’t worry about suddenly being overrun with giant alien robots. Oh, and you get to tell the Decepticons the cover story. Just in case. I’d rather not take any chances.”

“I will contact them tomorrow then. Good recharge, old friend.”

He gently squeezed the warm metal under his servo before heading to his room.

“Same to you, Optimus,” Ratchet said.

He hoped it would be, another night cycle with an incomplete defrag would have his friend yelling at him once more. Ratchet cared strongly about those under his care, an excellent thing for a medic, but also difficult for one trapped in a war. He hoped these newsparks would be able to help heal the rift
that divided their people. A brief pulse of heat from the Matrix at his thoughts had him smiling as his systems shut down.
Hope everyone had a Happy New Year!

Oh, and I know the code is terribly unoriginal, but hey I wanted an excuse to throw 42 in there.

As always feel free to point out any mistakes as comments are always welcome.

Megatron stood on the flight deck well before the appointed time of departure. His optics studied the horizon as the sun began its journey through the blue of the sky. His subspace was stuffed with extra rations, weapons and some basic medical supplies. He had learned the hard way that sometimes he could only rely on himself in dangerous situations and now there were two sparks that he had to ensure that would survive besides his own. The rest of his team arrived together: three vehicons, the medic, and his partner. The large blue mech transformed and the vehicons loaded several crates into the bed of his alt mode. The sound of the transformation sequence rang across the deck as the rest of the party assumed their vehicle forms.

:Soundwave, bridge us down and then open the space bridge to the first location.: 

:Acknowledged.: 

The familiar vortex opened and they passed through the energy field which deposited them in the cave that housed the other bridge. Not slowing for the land based members of his party, the silver jet roared through the stone cavern towards the entrance to the space bridge. Already he could see that the device was active from the glow that brightened the area. He dove through the field and his engines stalled as he found himself above the ruin that was his world. He shifted to his root mode and dropped down to the surface. The squealing of brakes echoed around him as his team came to a screeching halt behind him.

“This is the location, Knock Out?”

The red sports car revved his engine and the gleaming vehicle looked out of place among all the destruction. “Yes, my lord. According to Ratchet, there is a service entrance hidden nearby.”

“Locate it. I’ll do a sweep of the area to ensure that there is nothing near by while we work.”

“As you wish, Lord Megatron. Alright you three, unload Breakdown and get to work setting up a perimeter,” the medic said as he shifted back to root mode.

The silver mech leaped into the air, transformed and the jet tore off through the sky. In gradually larger and larger circles, he swept over the area, but nothing moved below him. He shifted back and dropped down onto the largest remnant of a skyscraper left in the vicinity. His optics swept the area and a pang of guilt swept through him. He shuttered them for a moment before opening them once more. He forced himself to take in the destruction all around him. At the time, it had seemed right to destroy every last vestige of this society, but now he could see that he had let his pain and rage rule
him rather than the other way around. A small part of him was glad that Orion couldn’t see what he had wrought upon their world first hand, and guilt surged up in him again at that thought.

“I’m sorry, Orion. I played a large part in the ruin of our world before. I’ll try to do better this time and not let my anger destroy everything around me again. If not for you, then for our newsparks so that they might have a world, whole and safe to live in even if you can’t be a part of it.”

One servo drifted up to rest over his spark and although he tried, he couldn’t feel anything more than his own spark below it. He would have to ask his medic if he had gotten any other useful information out of the Autobot.

He stepped off the edge and as he fell, he transformed once more before turning his nose back towards where he had left his people.

~++~

The vehicons and Breakdown worked together to move rubble while the medic stood watch atop a large slab of what used to be a roof. The silver jet flew over their heads before circling around and dropping down to join them.

“Nothing is moving and I’m not sure that is such a good thing,” Megatron said as he strode over to the others. “We have less than twelve hours before Soundwave reopens the portal and I want us to be ready to go through it then if at all possible.”

“Yes, Lord Megatron.”

He studied the area they were working in and watched as the beam they had been trying to move fell back into place for the second time. Shaking his helm, he moved in and lifted it up until he could get his shoulder under it. The scraping of metal parts shrieked in the area as he hauled it away from the section his team had been trying to clear. He let it fall and turned to find the others waiting for him.

“Ah, I will have to think on that then. What else did you learn from him?” the medic asked even as his optics never stopped their sweep around them.

Knock Out shook his head. “According to the Autobot, they won’t and can’t pick one for themselves until they are much older.”

“He chuckled at the disdain in Knock Out’s voice. “I shall endeavor to do as my medic bids. I had
been wondering if I would be able to sense them or if that was just part of the stories as well.”

“A creator bond is a real thing; it’s just stronger for newsparks and their creators since they are
formed from the energy of their sparks, so it is likely to get lively inside your spark with two of them
pulsing at you.”

The silver mech resumed the shifting of debris. “That could be a problem in a fight.”

“Actually, it is recommended that you stay out of any fighting as any negative emotions can put them
in distress.”

That brought his helm up. “Distress? What about when I was venting my anger in the training room?
Did I harm them with that?”

“They are fine, at least from what we can tell from the scans. When you can feel them, you’ll be able
to tell for yourself when something bothers them. Of course, positive emotions will do the opposite
for them, so time for you to practice to be an Autobot,” the red mech said with a snicker.

He shook his helm. “Ah, I see you have grown tired of your buffer again. I’ll happily give it a new
home -”

“My lord! I meant -”

He chuckled and glanced over at Breakdown while the red mech spluttered in fear. “What do you
think? Who would watch over it for him?”

A smile crossed the blue mech’s face. “Oh, I think you should give it to me so I can keep an optic on
it.”

“Excellent plan, I don’t suppose he brought it with him?”

“Sadly, no, but I’ll make sure to retrieve it when we return.”

“Evil - both of you are simply evil,” the red mech muttered as the vehicons laughed.

Still chuckling, the group returned to moving rubble. The pile moved slowly and after a few hours,
Knock Out rapped his prod on his perch.

“Time for an energon break. I’d rather everyone keep their tanks topped up in case empties or worse
come shuffling out of the ruins.”

The three vehicons moved slowly around in a circle while their visors catalogued everything around
them.

“I thought those were just stories?” one asked in a soft voice.

Megatron dropped down onto a piece of wall as he pulled some energon out of his sub-space.
“Sadly, no, empties were real - starving Cybertronians left to fend for themselves by the government.
I doubt any have survived, but Knock Out is right, so grab a ration and take a break.”

If the vehicons chose spots closer to his own than he expected, he decided not to remark on it. He
focused on the energon in his servo instead before turning his processor inward as he tried to feel
even a tiny wisp of emotion from the newsparks, but still only his pulsed in his chassis. His optics
swept up and over to his companions. If he truly wanted to change his ways, then he would have to
start as soon as possible and beginning with those that followed him seemed only right.
“So what designations have you three chosen for yourselves?” he asked with a wave of his servo towards the vehicons huddled together.

The closest one’s visor brightened. “Us, sir? Uh, I chose Ivan.”

The one next to him raised his servo just a little above his cube. “I picked Raoul.”

“I’m Brad!” the last one said with a grin.

Ivan pushed Brad with a laugh. “Just because you chose a name that has a popular human attached to it doesn’t mean you are as well.”

“It can’t hurt!”

“I am curious, why didn’t you pick more traditional names that have to do with your alt mode or even your function?”

Brad nodded at his words. “Well, when we first started to think about new designations we were told all the good ones were taken so we figured it was easier to just pick ones from Earth because nobody would be using those.”

“I see,” he said.

Apparently no one had told them that with so many of their people now gone that there would be names available, Megatron thought with a shake of his head.

The middle one glanced over at his leader. “Sir, I just want to say we were all sorry to hear about what happened to Orion, he seemed like a nice mech.”

“Yeah, what Raoul said,” the first one said.

“Thank you. Yes, Orion is very special.”

“Uh, sir, if it isn’t too -” Raoul started before Ivan poked him with a harsh hissing of vents.

He arched an orbital ridge at that. “Finish what you were going to ask.”

The middle mech shot a glare at his companion. “Orion told Steve that he was an archivist. And the story that you two were talking about in the refueling room, just why did he go to Kaon? Was it to record one of your matches for posterity?”

Megatron chuckled. “Hardly. The government had sent me to the pits of Kaon to die. The fact that I didn’t just angered them. No, they had no interest in that.” He paused as his processor helpfully pulled up those old files. “It wasn’t long after I began my second function as a gladiator that I began speaking about how as both a miner and a gladiator I had no prospect of being anything else but what those in charge said I could be and any freedoms I had been granted were just an illusion designed to keep me in that position. I had already met Soundwave and he agreed with what I said, and with his help I had begun to post my thoughts on the info-net. Orion found them and after much digging on his part discovered who had written them; because after all, Soundwave had to hide who we were and where we were or we would have been reformatted at the very least.”

The entire group watched him with anticipation and he shook his helm with a small smile before he started again.

“That story that you heard was his first trip to Kaon and it was very nearly his last, but Soundwave’s
symbiotes alerted us to his troubles. Luckily, it was someone I had bested before so he released Orion, who was smaller than the frame you know now, when I showed up. I escorted him back to my ‘quarters’ - it could barely hold the size of berth I required, but it was as private as I was allowed. Soundwave did what he could to make sure it was good enough that we were relatively safe for at least a little while."

“Was that when he joined the movement?” Raoul asked.

The silver mech’s frame shook as he laughed. “Pit no! There was no movement then, not yet. Orion had been intrigued by my writings and wanted to meet the mech behind them. He agreed with my thoughts and we became friends even as we argued over how best to change society.”

When his thoughts began to swing into what ifs, he shoved it aside and swallowed the last of his energon before standing up.

“Enough of that old story. Time to get back to work.”

Raoul drained his cube first and followed him back to the rubble. The rest of his team followed and soon the sounds of their efforts rang around them. Although it had been many vorns since he had used the skills he had been onlined for, the team followed his direction and the broken pieces of old buildings were moved away. He could have taken Knock Out’s position, but if he was honest to himself, he enjoyed the labor and the puzzle of how to remove debris without having it cascade back in on itself.

His chronometer helpfully reminded him that they had about five hours before the portal would be opened when they finally managed to clear the area. To his optic there was nothing indicating there was anything more to be found at this location and the first stir of panic began to weave through his struts.

“There is nothing here!” he said as he stalked about the area.

“The Autobot said it was well hidden. Let me see.”

Knock Out stooped down to look at a small patch of the ground that looked much like its neighboring area. He carefully placed his palm down on a section.

“Medic Override: Solus, Prima, Quintus, thirteen, one, forty-two.”

The ground lit under the medic’s hand and the grinding of gears could be heard. Not far from where the red mech crouched a hole began to emerge, at least until the light dimmed and then went out completely. The opening began to shrink back until Megatron leapt towards it and jammed his hands against the two panels.

“Grab something to brace it open,” he said as he strained to enlarge the entrance.

The blue mech joined him and took one side while he shifted to the other and between the two of them, they managed to widen the hole enough that they would be able to pass into it. The vehicons dragged over a large beam and maneuvered it into the space until it could be used to jam it open. Once in place, he descended down the steps with Knock Out right behind him.

“At least the power lasted long enough to start the door opening. Oh, and it was a good thing that I was a registered medic long ago, otherwise you would have had to have the Autobots along for this little excursion.”

“Ah, I was wondering about that. They never changed your designation?”
“No, although I would never have been able to get into it anyway since I didn’t know the code or that this sort of place even existed.”

“Which way now?”

The red mech stepped in front of him and headed deeper into the dark, but light speared into it when he turned on his headlights.

“There. That’s better. Now, he said that the room we want looks like a maintenance closet. It has a hidden compartment where they stored any frames that were being constructed.”

“And you can open it?”

The medic’s helm nodded, although the light never wavered. The rest of his team followed the red mech’s lead and soon the whole passage was brightly lit. Doors were left open and there were signs that someone had tried to remove anything of value at some point were evident wherever they looked. He tried not to dwell on that, but if this place was their best hope and it looked barren of anything of use, what hope did he have of saving his newsparks?

“Ah-ha!”

Megatron peered into the door and saw a few empty containers of cleaning fluids. Apparently, someone had left those behind, but the medic stepped inside anyway. He watched as the mech ran his fingers carefully along the far edge of the wall until they caught and he wiggled at the plate until he could pull up on it, and underneath sat an old-fashioned lock, one that did not require power. The medic’s fingers flew as he worked the device until a distinctive metallic snick could be heard.

“There! Now, let’s hope we have something inside it.”

Megatron stood tall enough that he could see over the red mech’s helm, but all he saw were three plain boxes and his spark plummeted. Knock Out reached in, pulled the top one out, and gave it a little shake. The noise it made indicated that at least there was something still inside it.

“Take this one, but don’t open it. We have no idea what all is floating around down here after so long. Which reminds me, everyone reports to the med-bay for a through decontamination when we get back.”

Low groans could be heard from those at the back of the group. Megatron took the box from him and noted that it had some sort of seal along the lid before he handed it to Breakdown who stood just behind him.

“What are these?”

“Partial frames if we are lucky and full frames if we are really lucky. Ratchet said that the ones still being worked on would be on the top and if there was one finished it would likely be at the bottom.”

Megatron snorted at that. “If there is a whole frame, I might have to just start believing in Primus.”

Knock Out laughed. “You and me both.”

The medic pulled the next container out and gave him a grin as he held it out for him to take. The weight of it had him returning the medic’s expression. It was heavy! Far heavier than the first one, perhaps a little luck was falling their way after all. He passed it back and the widening of that single optic let him know that the dark blue mech felt the difference too.
“Be careful with this,” Breakdown said gruffly as he handed it off to the mech behind him.

“Yes, sir!”

The voice sounded like Ivan’s, but he wasn’t positive. No matter, he knew his people would take care of the frames as if they were their own. And then he was cradling the last one in his servos. Another heavy one! He almost didn’t let Breakdown take it, but no, his skills as a fighter might be needed. It too was passed down until all the vehicons carried a similar case.

“Knock Out, bring up the rear. Breakdown, follow me, then the rest of you.”

His blades descended and he let battle protocols take over. He hoped it wouldn’t harm the little ones, but he was not taking any chances. It took some maneuvering, but he managed to work his way past the others and then they began the process of making their way out. Nothing moved outside the hatch and he carefully levered himself out as he scanned the area and then motioned for the other to join him. They took up position around the door and then helped the vehicons come out with their burdens. The medic joined them and then kicked the brace so the door slid shut once more.

“My lord, since we still have a few hours to wait, would it be possible for Breakdown and I to search for another optic for him?”

His first instinct was to say no, but he knew how important this was to them and if he had taken his capture seriously than he might never have lost it in the first place. There was only one thing he could do.

“I will take you, Knock Out. We can cover more ground as I can carry you in my alt form. Breakdown, you are in charge while we are gone. The four of you will remain here and guard what we have collected. Comm us if there is trouble of any sort or if the portal opens.”

“Yes, sir.”

The blue mech’s single golden optic watched them as Megatron transformed and hovered while Knock Out climbed up onto him. The medic gave his partner a wave and then he roared away from the little group.

“I assume you have an idea of where to start?”

“Yes, I’ll send you the coordinates.”

He accepted the incoming transmission and locked on the destination.

“Hold on.”

The medic’s servos clutched at the leading edge of his wings, but not hard enough to damage it, while his legs clamped down on his fuselage. His thrusters kicked in and he shot off in the direction indicated by his navigation system. He rocketed through the ruins as fast as he dared while still being careful of his passenger. Everywhere he scanned, the scene was the same, ruined buildings, although not much in the way of frames. The coordinates led to another pile of rubble and he carefully hovered over it while the medic jumped down. He joined him and together they began moving rubble away.

“What is this place?”

“Well, Swindle had a secret vault here. I’m hoping he didn’t get everything out of it before he left.”
“How do you know about it?”

“I sometimes had to go outside the system to get supplies and I came here several times with him to fetch my goods.”

“I see. Let us hope our luck holds then.”

He kept his sensors tuned to their surroundings even as they dug through the debris. He tried not to watch his chronometer count down, but the passing of every minute weighed on him as they worked. The red mech snarled and kicked at a piece of metal when they uncovered an already open hatch that led to an obviously empty hole.

“Frag it all! Now, we are going to have to do this the hard way.”

“Which is?”

“Try and find a frame with usable optics for me to take.”

He nodded and shifted back to his jet form and hovered while the medic clambered aboard once more.

“Where do you want to start?”

“Start around here before we return to the others and please stop at anything that looks promising that we spot.”

This time he flew low and as slow as he could so that nothing would be overlooked, from a pede sticking out from under a wall, to the few scraps of a frame left in what had once been a street. The pair traversed the wreckage of their world.

Time clicked by ever faster it seemed as they hunted for what seemed like an impossible thing. Optics they had discovered always seemed to be either shattered or missing. He was about to call off the search so that they could return to the rendezvous point when the medic banged a servo on his wing and pointed off to one side.

“Over there! I see something gleaming.”

He banked and headed towards where he was directed. Something twinkled in a pile of debris and shiny metal typically didn’t indicate a fallen frame, but he stopped over what had caught the medic’s optic. The red mech dropped down onto the rubble and he joined him, and together they moved rock and debris. A metal can proved to be the glittering object; time had wiped away the decorative covering until only the metal showed which is what had shimmered in the light, however it was empty. Knock Out hurled it far away with a snarl. Megatron watched its flight and then its fall as it bounced off what appeared to be a servo.

“A frame,” he said as he pointed to where the can had landed.

They skidded down the pile and jogged over to the spot. Some spark had been buried under the remnants of a building. He heaved at the piece of wall and pried it up enough for the medic to see under.

“Yes!”

“Hurry. I can’t hold this for long,” he said as the strain on his systems forced his words out with a whine.
A saw shrieked through the dead of the rubble as it cut through metal and then Knock Out was crawling out from under the edge of the wall that he had been holding up. As soon as the medic was out, he released the piece and its impact made a loud whump sending a plume of dust up all around them. They both coughed as they tried to clear their vents.

“I’m surprised the frame was intact.”

Knock Out shot him a grin. “It wasn’t, but his head had fallen into a little crevice so it was saved and that wall appeared to have kept the scavengers at bay.”

“Let’s go.”

He initiated the transformation sequence and waited while the medic crawled up on his frame with his grisly prize clutched against his chassis. Spark lighter, the coordinates for the portal were inputted before his thrusters engaged and he lifted out of the debris still mindful of his passenger. His sensors picked up the medic shifting back and forth as he scanned his frame and then a soft noise of distress came from him.

“You’re not really going to take my buffer away, are you?”

His laughter reverberated throughout his frame.

“I’m sure Breakdown will be happy to help you repair all the damage you received today on his behalf.”

“Yes, of course he will,” the medic said and he could hear the relief in his words, “if he knows what’s good for him. It was a good day’s work, my lord.”

“That it was.”

They cruised along, but he kept his sensors constantly checking around him. Over one last fallen building and they saw where the rest of his team waited. Optics were turned their way as they watched the pair approach them. A cheer went up from the rest of the team when Knock Out held aloft his prize, much like he had done in the arena so many vorns ago. It felt like something had come full circle, but instead of dwelling on that, he focused on his people as they made room for them. Three boxes lay next to each other in the middle of the group and he waited for the red mech to drop off him before returning to his root mode. He leaned over and ran the palm of his servo along the three plain looking objects as he wondered how many more would they have to find to make the frames they needed.

“Nothing has happened to them, sir,” one of the vehicons said.

Raoul he thought was the speaker this time.

“I know. Just reassuring myself that they are real.”

“Yes, of course he will,” he said with a grin. “We are looking forward to seeing sparklings on the ship since none of us have ever seen one.”

“As am I.”

Returning to the Nemesis with their prizes and in high spirits seemed like an impossible win after the crushing loss of losing Orion.
The vehicons stood in the center of the group, each holding a crate cradled in their arms, while Knock Out waited near them with his own prize. Letting the boxes from the sparkling center ride loose in the back of Breakdown’s alt form was not a risk he was willing to take with them; so the remaining supplies they had brought with them were being left behind.

In a few minutes, the portal would open and those four had been ordered to go through first as they were too encumbered to fight effectively. He was not taking any chances when they were this close to leaving. The light atmosphere crackled as the vortex opened and not waiting for his order, his troops hurried through it. Together he and Breakdown backed into it, sweeping their weapons back and forth as they moved. As soon as they had passed through, he opened the channel to the ship.

:Soundwave, we are through. Close that one and open one up to the ship.:

:Acknowledged. Query: Mission successful?:

:Yes, although we aren’t sure what we have yet, but we are not coming home empty-servo at least.:

The portal shut down and another one opened near them. They walked into this one with a much lighter step and he returned his weapon to his subspace. Between steps they arrived on the empty deck of the Nemesis.

“Remember, med-bay and decon first and foremost!” Knock Out said.

He heard a few soft moans and shook his helm with a small smile; it was apparent that they had hoped the medic had forgotten about that.

“Yes, sir,” the vehicons said together.

Their path remained clear and they strode down the hall to the special cleaning facilities that had rarely been used, however, today it was about to be put to good use.

“Sir, do we bring the boxes in with us?” Ivan asked, at least he was pretty sure that was who it was.

“Yes, just keep them closed, but we might as well clean their outside now,” the medic said.

The red mech opened the room up while he tucked the disembodied helm under one arm like a lob ball.

“Everybody in.”

They filed in and the boxes were placed in the center. Knock Out sent a command code and hot cleanser sprayed down on them.

“All right everyone pair up and make sure no plating is left un-scrubbed! If someone comes down with rust, I’ll have the lot of you cleaning my bay with one of those miniscule organic brushes! Well, except you, of course, lord Megatron.”

The three vehicons glanced between themselves and one pushed another towards the third.
“Go on, I know you’ve been watching him for a while now.”

That sounded like Ivan again and he was apparently the odd one out. Breakdown was already busy scrubbing his partner so he beckoned the last vehicon over with a single digit.

“Come, the sooner we finish, the sooner we can see what we have returned with.”

“Yes, sir! If, uh, you could lower yourself a little so I could reach your back, sir, that would be great.”

He bent his knees until he kneeled on the hard floor and soon felt the tentative touch of a brush against his back. He grunted and shook his helm.

“Harder, we are scrubbing potential contaminants and my plating is tough so you will not hurt me.”

“Of course, sir,” Ivan said.

The brush started up again and attacked his armor with enthusiasm now. His helm lowered as the vehicon worked. The feel of the brush soothed some of the tension out of him after the stress of the day. His attendant began to hum a tune, a stirring piece that his processor couldn’t place and after a moment the other two joined in. He cocked his helm and gazed back at the vehicon.

“I don’t recognize that piece.”

“It’s from the humans,” Raoul said from where he stood scrubbing down Brad. “We found it on what they call their internet and we like to work to it.”

Ivan looked up at him. “The words seemed fitting for us.”

“I shall have to see if Soundwave saved any music from our world for you to learn.”

Ivan dipped his helm, three set of shoulder’s dropped and then their visors all dimmed a little and a soft ex-vent left him. They must have taken it as a reprimand.

“Yes, sir.”

“You may continue to hum your tune if you want. I merely wanted to make sure that you were exposed to our culture since that seems to be somewhat lacking.”

The tune restarted and after a bit he even found himself humming along, stupid organic song. Ivan stepped in front of him and began to clean his front plates. When the vehicon finished, he stood there clutching the brush against his chassis looking rather flustered if the way he shifted from pede to pede was any indication. He held out his servo and Ivan carefully placed it on his palm. He gestured with his free hand and the vehicon dutifully swiveled about giving him his back. The brush swept across Ivan’s kibble even as he made sure to scrub every inch of the smaller mech. Although he was anxious to finish, he took no short cuts and was glad to see that the others were being just as meticulous as well when he finally finished.

Not dropping his brush, he stepped closer to the box nearest him and began scrubbing it down. Knock Out moved to the one by him and began to work on it. The vehicons leapt into action at seeing their superiors doing menial labor and thoroughly cleaned the last crate. Breakdown, meanwhile, had the helm they had retrieved in servo, and was hard at work dousing it in cleanser while he scrubbed away at it. The medic carefully inspected each container and satisfied at their work, he shut the solvent off.
“Alright let’s get these to the med-bay so we can see what we have and then you three are dismissed.”

“Yes, sir,” Raoul said.

Once more, three visors dimmed nearly in unison. Being more thoughtful of his people was going to be more work than he expected.

“Is there a problem?” he asked.

“No, sir. We just sort of hoped we could see what is in them. But it’s okay, we’ll go.”

“If Knock Out doesn’t mind you standing around his med-bay, I have no problem with you staying. After all, you were ordered to risk your sparks for this mission.”

“Actually, we volunteered,” Ivan said.

Brad nodded with a grin. “We were the fastest to respond to Soundwave’s request is all.”

The three then turned their gaze to the medic who merely huffed.

“Fine. You can stay, just don’t get under-pede.”

He took one of the boxes in his arms, the heavy weight of it brought a rather visceral satisfaction to him even as the vehicons quickly snatched up the other two. The bright red mech led the way as they exited the room, however the halls weren’t empty now. From the looks of it, it looked like a good portion of his off-duty personnel were now lining the corridor. Before he could order them to disperse, Knock Out was in front of their little group waving a servo at them all.

“Well since you are all here, you must be bored. Grab brushes and start cleaning where we walked down from the flight deck. I’m not taking any chances with us bringing something nasty back.”

The looks went from annoyed to worried, but they did as their medic ordered. Raoul, Ivan, and Brad seemed to be enjoying their brethren’s discomfort if their grins were anything to go by. At least Knock Out’s order had the hall clearing up. A warning must have spread through the ship that the medic would put anyone seen loitering about to work because the halls stayed clear.

The med-bay, however, wasn’t empty. Laserbeak perched on top of a storage cabinet and chirped a greeting at their arrival. His helm swung back and forth as his bright red optics scanned over the objects the arriving party carried. Megatron shook his head and stifled his chuckle. Leave it to Soundwave to find a way to watch without actually leaving his post. He turned his gaze directly up at the little flyer.

“You know you can take a break and come see in person if you wish.”

Laserbeak’s helm canted to one side for a moment before he launched himself from his perch and zipped out of the room. The others turned towards him.

“Wait a moment. I suspect Soundwave will be showing up shortly.”

Knock Out rearranged the boxes as he inspected each of them, and by the time he had finished sorting them, the door slid open once more. The spymaster wasn’t alone though, as Starscream sauntered in right behind him. The seeker waved a servo towards crates arrayed on the table.

“Those are what has this ship in such an uproar? They don’t look like much. Are you going to open
them or are we supposed to pay homage to them or some such slag?"

“We were waiting on your arrival,” the silver mech said as evenly as he could manage. “Knock Out.”

“Right. Let’s see what’s in the lightest one first. I’m hoping it has parts in it.”

The medic carefully broke the seal and peeled the lid off.

“Ah, yes. Small enough that they have to be for sparkling frames.”

Megatron took a step forward and peered over the top of the medic. The objects looked tiny enough that it seemed that they should belong to something the humans had built and not for a Cybertronian. Knock Out took a step to his left and began to work on the seal for the next box. He tore his optics away from the mesmerizing view of those tiny bits over to the second box and his vents stalled as the cover was removed. Cushioned in special foam lay a sparkling frame.

“Appears to be a grounder frame, and from the looks of it, it is nearly complete. See here,” he said as he pointed to one of the legs, “looks like it is missing the knee actuator, I’m guessing the first box has the parts for it. I suppose they didn’t want to damage the frame so they kept them separate.”

He took in every aspect of it when Knock Out carefully lifted it out of its tiny berth. Soon this frame would hold one of the sparks he carried and he couldn’t help but think that the tiny helm looked a little like his own. He hoped the optics would light up with the color that Orion’s had been.

“What colors are you going to paint them, sir?” Ivan asked.

“Paint?” Knock Out said with a snort. “We don’t paint them. Paint is a temporary solution at best; color nanites are the only permanent way to give them color. I’ll take a sample of Lord Megatron’s nanites and the frames will take them up according to the newsparks coding. Optimally, you would have cultures from both creators, but that isn’t likely to happen for these sparklings.”

He resolved then and there, that he would personally ask Prime for exactly that, he thought to himself. Orion deserved to have as much influence on the newsparks as he could arrange. It wasn’t like he thought the other mech might say no, since Prime seemed willing to do just about anything for the soon to be sparklings.

“Oh, speaking of Prime, he contacted us while you were gone,” Starscream said. The smirk on the flyer’s face had him rethinking about keeping his second in one piece, however. The seeker tested his patience in ways he had never realized before.

“And what did he want?”

“How should I know! He wanted to talk to you. I’m your second, not your personal assistant.”

“And as my second, your job is to deal with everything when I am gone,” he said with an angry snarl. “The Autobots don’t tend to just call for a little quiet conversation!”

The seeker’s optics widened a little. “Of course, my lord. Shall I call them back now?”

He waved a servo as he fought to quell his frustration. Maintaining a calm demeanor for the newsparks was going to be a challenge if he had to deal with Starscream for any extended amount of time. “No, I’ll deal with it later. Open the last box, Knock Out.”
The medic broke the seal on the last box and lifted off the cover. Another frame lay cushioned in its special packing, but this one had small wings and a tiny visor. That was an unusual combination, but what drew his attention were the tiny audial fins, reminiscent of the ones that graced Orion’s helm.

“A flyer,” Starscream said and his voice was much softer than the warlord expected.

“Most likely,” Knock Out said.

“They’ll be able to transform?” Ivan asked.

“No, but in preparation for when they can, sparkling frames have to have at least vestiges of the kibble they’ll need later on; so in the case of flyers they have winglets filled with sensors.”

“Is it complete?” Megatron asked. That was the only important question as far as he was concerned.

“Looks to be. I’ll need to do a more thorough examination to be sure.”

“Of course,” the silver mech said as his optics caught the sight of the helm sitting off to one side. “Repair Breakdown first so he might better aid you in your efforts. Give me a full report when you are finished. Starscream, you have the bridge for now. Soundwave, with me.”

He strode out of the room and his third fell in step beside him. As soon as they were well away from any others, he turned to Soundwave.

“Show me the call.”

His spark clenched as he opened the file sent to him and Prime’s voice and visage filled his processor.

“I need to speak with Megatron, Starscream.”

“He’s not here, Autobot.”

“He went to Cybertron?”

“How did you know that?” the seeker asked in a rather shrill tone.

“The space bridge was activated recently. You cannot completely hide the energy pulse now that we know where it is located.”

“Oh, of course. Well, there is no telling when he’ll come back. I’ll be sure to let him know you cared enough to ask - if he returns,” the seeker said with a laugh before the signal was disconnected.

“Yes, he sounded so despondent at the thought that I might not return. No, matter, I’ll deal with him later. Right now, I need you to patch me through to Prime on my private console,” Megatron said with a shake of his helm.

“Affirmative.”

He really just wanted to top off his tank before falling into recharge, but he needed to know why the Autobots had contacted him and to put in a request of his own. Their path remained clear, whether naturally or at Soundwave’s intervention, he honestly didn’t care right now. He gratefully placed his palm on the control panel and the door slid open on his space. He gazed about the small area and he realized that soon he would have to make adjustments in here. Although those frames were small, there was no room in here for a pair of little berths or even a small living area for them to share. The list of things to do seemed to grow faster every moment.
Soundwave stepped around him and over to the desk. His fingers flew across the machine and it hummed to life. While the spymaster worked, he let his frame settle into the sole chair as he waited. Venting, he began the methodical cleaning out of his subspace and cracked open a cube while he lined up his supplies on one side of the desk.

The screen lit up and the face of Optimus Prime appeared in front of him. He scooted his chair closer as Soundwave stepped back. He held up a hand and motioned for his friend to remain.

“Prime, what is it that you wanted?”

“Megatron,” the red and blue mech said with a small nod, “it seems likely that we will need to have an explanation ready for the humans on exactly how two sparklings are on your ship, or even what they are.”

“True. Although, I fail to see how that affects us.”

Prime’s helm fell a little.

“In the off chance that enough of MECH survived or really any other group of humans captures any of our people; we thought it best if we had a single story for all of us to tell. Just in case.”

He nodded. “A fair point. Send me your explanation and I’ll make sure Soundwave spreads it through the ship.”

A data file pulsed down the connection and he shunted it to Soundwave.

“Thank you, Megatron. For what it is worth, I hope your mission was successful.”

“Thank you, it was. And please pass along my gratitude to your medic for his information, we recovered two frames because of it.”

He paused for a moment as he gathered his resolve, but for once the Autobot didn’t seem to be in a hurry to end the call.

“Along those lines, I have another request for you.”

“Ask.”

“It has come to my attention that the frames will need color nanites, preferably from both creators. Would you be willing to provide a sample of them for the newsparks?”

Blue optics spiraled wide over his battle mask.

“I - of course, I will see that Ratchet prepares them and will contact you when they are ready.”

“Thank you, Prime.”

He pushed the power button and closed the connection and swiveled to face the lanky blue mech.

“I’m going to have to either expand my quarters into a neighboring room or move to a different area all together, aren’t I?”

Soundwave bobbed his helm. “Suggestion: Allow Soundwave to create suite suitable for Megatron and sparklings.”

“Your time is too valuable for that. I’ll get some vehicons to help me muddle through it.”
“Soundwave: Anticipated. Plans complete. Approval required only.”

He chuckled. “Thank you. Forward me the plans and consider it approved. Task it to however you see fit. I can see now that this space will be too small in a few months.”

“Agreed. Suite: Finished before framing day.”

“Again, thank you, and rest well, old friend.”

Soundwave inclined his helm and exited the room. He lifted the cube and drained the last of it before settling on his berth. He had nearly fallen into recharge when it suddenly dawned on him, what if the little ones had Orion’s curiosity! His servo clanged against his helm.

“Orion, you slugger! If they get into half the trouble you did in Kaon, they will surely be the death of me!”

He groaned at that thought and decided then and there he would have to enlist help, preferably several individuals patient enough to deal with sparklings. He really needed to sit down with Knock Out and find out exactly what sort of programming the sparklings would come online with. Now, more than ever, he felt Orion’s loss. His lover had vast stores of information that he could have shared with the little ones. Refusing to dwell on that anymore, he forced his systems into recharge.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I picture the vehicons spending their free time surfing the web and watching human TV.

As always, comments are appreciated and feel free to point out any mistakes I missed!
Chapter 12

The gentle warmth of the Matrix in his chassis pulled the red and blue mech pleasantly out of recharge. It had been late last night when he finished what had to have been one of the most polite conversations he had ever had with the Decepticon warlord. Rolling off his berth, he took a moment to fully stretch his frame before stepping out of his room. Soft conversations filled the main area where his team lounged about while sipping their meager rations and he joined them there. He nodded a greeting to them while he took a swallow of his energon as he waited for the others to head out on patrol. As soon as the last one had exited, he turned to their medic.

“Ratchet, can you take samples of my color nanites?”

“Of course,” the medic said with a soft snort. “Why do you need them and exactly how big do you need it to be?”

“Well, Megatron returned my call late last night, and by the way he sends you his gratitude.”

That brought another grunt from the red mech as he took another swallow from his cube. “If he wants to thank me, he could share some energon with us. I take it that wasn’t all he said though.”

“No, it was not. He asked if I would contribute my nanites for the sparkling frames, and I said yes.”

Ratchet rubbed his chevron. “Of course you did. Did you even think about maybe asking for something in return?”

“No, I wanted to keep the conversation as non-confrontational as possible. Perhaps I can ask when I give them to him.”

The sigh from his old friend had him frowning. “Do you not agree with my decision?”

“I have no problem with you helping out the sparklings. Primus, I’m surprised he unbent his struts enough to even ask instead of just trying to kidnap you and get them that way! However, we work on barely enough fuel to keep us functional here, and yet you just give away any advantage we might have.”

“I do not patrol, I can share my rations -”

Ratchet placed one finger on his chest while his optics narrowed into dangerous slits.

“No! You want to donate nanites, well, you’ll need energy to encourage re-growth in the bare area so you’ll need all of your ration. If those areas are left bare than you run the risk of an infection.”

“I see. Take the samples, I will discuss the matter when I hand them over then.”

“Fine. Come on let’s get this over with, it will take a few days before they are ready to hand over because I want to make sure they are growing well. I won’t send over anything less than optimal material. I’m not giving that red menace any excuse to take his own samples!”

The Matrix pulsed feelings of approval to him. He wondered if that is what Megatron would feel when the creator bond finally connected the newsparks to the Decepticon leader. The red and white
mech waved him over to the exam table in the little alcove that served as their med-bay. He lowered himself onto it and watched his friend bustle about arranging his tools just so.

“Where do you want me to take them from?”

“Will the location make a difference?”

“Only in that the area will be irritated until the nanites repopulate the spot.”

“Then the front of my shoulder and the outside of my leg for the blue. Those are the areas that I am most used to having damaged.”

Another grunt from the medic and then he swept a scalpel along the edge of his shoulder scraping a long line of his finish into a little dish. It stung a little, but nothing that would cause any issues with his functioning. The dish was covered and placed to one side before he grabbed another empty container and another shriek of metal on metal filled the area as his friend took a sample of the blue from his leg. Before Ratchet moved away, he laid his palm on his friend’s arm.

“It is my hope that perhaps this miracle might finally end this war, something that the Matrix wants as well.”

The medic sank down onto a crate. “Yes, but how does it end for us? Alone, starving on this planet while trying not to be captured by humans? They have a warship and control of the only space bridge. I could make one, but we don’t have the parts or the energy to run it.”

“Do you think he will be able to leave us behind now that he knows Orion is - well, in stasis - inside me? What about the sparklings? Will they not be curious as to who is their other creator? Is it not possible that they will be able to wrest a change in him that nothing else has been able to?”

The medic’s shoulders drooped. “I honestly don’t know and as much as I wanted you back; I wonder if I haven’t made things worse with my decision to energize the Matrix once more.”

“I am sure you did what you thought you had to in order to keep the Decepticons in check.”

Ratchet’s optics dimmed as he swung his head from side to side. “No, I’m sorry I did it for selfish reasons, Optimus. I couldn’t bear the thought of leading the Autobots by myself.”

Optimus pushed off the berth and dropped down next to the medic. “You are one of the least selfish individuals I have ever known, Ratchet.”

The medic’s helm hung lower. “Then you need to get out and meet more Cybertronians. Optimus, I brought you back at the cost of a ‘bot I called friend, because I didn’t want to be here - alone.”

“Ratchet -”

“No - don’t say it. I know you’ll tell me some such slag that that spark is not your own. Well, just how is it supposed to end for a Prime? Are you allowed to love or are you above all that?”

It was Optimus’ turn to shutter his optics.

“The Matrix won’t leave my chest until my spark begins to gutter from the knowledge it has passed on to me.”

“Then I killed Orion. Not you. Me. It was my decision.”

His back struts creaked as he pushed himself to his full height. He wanted to comfort his dearest
friend, but there did not seem to be a good way to do that.

He ex-vented softly. “Exactly what were they up to while I was - indisposed?”

The medic’s servo drifted upward to rub at his chevron again. A sure sign his friend’s stress levels were high.

“We aren’t real sure. They were quiet for the most part and they only contacted us twice: the first time was when Orion let us know he was back and then to find out what happened to Skyquake’s frame. They had let it fall into MECH’s hands and we helped them get it back. The Matrix can’t access Orion’s memories, can it?”

He sent a questioning pulse, but the artifact remained quiet.

“It is not responding, so I think that is a good thing, I would not want it to be able to access my memories. Was Orion able to -”

“No, he had no memories from when you were Prime. I would have to guess that it only knows what you experience when it had energy but can’t actively invade your storage files. However, it must be able to shunt Orion’s core processor into some sort of dormant state allowing you full control of the frame when it is active. Primus, that is bizarre to even say much less think.”

“Agreed.”

His optics shuttered as he considered the words Megatron had lashed out at him with during the call about sparklings. He could not even guess what Orion experienced when the Matrix bloomed back to life, but for him it had felt like a hard reboot in a combat situation as he had come online with all his systems in a battle ready state.

“Was Megatron different in any way during that time?”

The medic gave a harsh laugh. “Cockier, if you can believe it. Like he knew that he had finally won, what with you effectively gone so there was nothing to stop any of his plans.”

“And your friend, Orion?”

The ex-vent was long and seemed to come from the very depths of Ratchet’s spark.

“He - I really only saw him face to face the one time and he was understandably confused about everything, but the looks he gave Megatron - they seemed real, even if I thought they were misguided.”

“They shared sparks, several times if Megatron is sparked now, would he not have seen the darkness in him then?”

“He had to have.”

“Perhaps then your friend is not who you thought he was.”

Ratchet’s helm swung from side to side violently.

“No! Orion may be a naive, misguided glitch, but his spark is good - I have to believe that.”

He just barely heard the red and white mech say as he turned away from him, ‘Primus, what have I done,’ before the sounds of him working to set up the cultures filled his audios. He sent a silent plea to the Matrix, Primus, I need guidance. The artifact remained silent and his helm bowed under the
weight of his thoughts.

~++++~

Boredom was going to be a problem, he realized as he stood and watched the monitors on the bridge. Construction had begun on his new suite and the vehicons had that well underway. In fact, there were a lot of them in there, more than he expected. Meanwhile, Soundwave continued to hunt for the next key, but there was nothing for him personally to do to help him. He had tried to assist, but found that searching the database and trying to decipher it made his processor ache. Which is why he now watched monitors as the bridge crew scanned for the next source of energon to mine. Starscream, thankfully, had left on patrol so the bridge was peaceful at the moment. He took a few steps closer to Soundwave.

“I’m bored and I can’t even go start something with the Autobots,” he said in a low voice.

The visored mech turned towards him and the way his shoulders trembled a little hinted that the slagger was laughing at him.

“Suggestion: Enjoy.”

“Do you know that I was kindly and politely shooed out of the construction zone of my new room with some sort of nonsense about not enough space in there for all of us. Did you put them up to that?”


His snort of disbelief had the lanky blue mech shaking his helm.

“I figured this was some sort of plot of Starscream’s to drive me slowly insane from inaction.”

“Negative. Megatron: Vehicons loyalty increased.”

“What do you mean, it’s not like they showed any interest in defecting before?”

The spymaster stood silent for a moment.

“Vehicons: More involved. Megatron more connected to them. Sparklings greatly anticipated.”

He chuckled at that. “Bet they change their processor on that thought when they realize what sort of slag they can get up to. If they have even a little of Orion’s curiosity -” he paused and let an overly dramatic shudder rattle his armor plates.

“Sparklings: Curiosity necessary.”

He waved a servo. “Yes, I know. Knock Out chased me out of the med-bay earlier with threats of bringing the Autobot medic in for a consult, but at least he gave me a data file to read first. Can you believe that he said my ‘looming’ was distracting!”

“Megatron: Concerned Knock Out inadequate?”

“No,” he said with a shake of his helm. “I was just curious as to the progress on the frames since he spent yesterday repairing Breakdown. I confess that the sight of those tiny things partly terrifies me even as it thrills me. Does that even make sense?”

“Megatron: Concerned?”
He ex-vented slowly. “I haven’t been able to come up with a single designation I like for either of them. I can’t even feel them yet. What if something goes wrong -”


He snorted softly. “At least you left Starscream off that list, the slagger always smirks at me now. I think he’s trying to goad me into ripping his wings off so he can bring up again how I should step down.”

“Soundwave: Minimize interactions when possible,” the spymaster said with a nod of his helm.

“Thank you. I told Orion before that I wouldn’t have succeeded without you. Now so more than ever. While I am grateful for the vehicons support - do you know how many of them have come up to me and suggested names?”

“Suggestions: good.”

“Well, yes, if they weren’t insisting on using Earth names. Let me list off a few of those names - Norm and Cliff, Bert and Ernie, Fred and Ginger - while I appreciate the fact that those last two were at least real individuals and considered talented for their kind; I am not naming them after a pair of fleshy dancers!”

He couldn’t stop the grin from forming while he watched his friend attempt to rein in his laughter if the subtle shaking of his frame was any indication. Nearly a minute later, the spymaster finally managed to regain control. Trying to get an outright laugh from the mech was nearly impossible, but he kept trying.

“Suggestion: Choose designations of Cybertronians important to Megatron.”

“Oh, well one vehicon did suggest something like that as well, however, I am not naming them Orion the second and Orion the third. Apparently, the humans will do that - name their offspring after themselves with a number to denote who came online first. Can you imagine how confusing that would be? Although I did thank them for that thought.”

He paused for a moment as his processor brought up a very old file from his time as a miner and he knew then what to call his sparkling.

“You remember how I ended up in the arena?”

The visor brightened as Soundwave tilted his head towards him.

“I only ever told Orion why I killed that overseer and that was because the glitch wouldn’t stop prodding me about it. As far as I was concerned, my reasoning was of no consequence since my status ensured I was at fault, after all I freely admitted that I killed the slagger. Even those of us in the mines had mentors, someone to teach us beyond what had been coded in us. I actually had a pair assigned to me, not bonded though since bonding wasn’t done in the mines - no one wanted to feel the death of another in their spark and death followed us wherever we went in those tunnels. Topspin and Twin Twist had been miners for many vorns when they were assigned to me. Unlike me, they had been onlined with real designations, and they were the first to encourage me to choose one for myself.”

“Megatron: Chose Megatronus then?”

He shook his helm. “No, not then. I couldn’t decide, nothing seemed right. I would think of one and ask their opinion and Topspin would just laugh and ask me if it felt right to me while Twin Twist
would roll his optics at us both. The day I chose my name started out much like every other. We headed into our designated tunnel, but Twin Twist halted us before we reached the few crystals we could see.”

His optics dimmed until only a soft red glow came from them as he re-played that file.

“Wait here, he said before he commed the overseer in charge of our section. He told him that his sensors indicated that our tunnel was unstable, but that slagger didn’t care. He told us to make our quota or face losing our rations. So in we went.”

His ex-vent was long and he shuttered his optics completely.

“I was carting out the first load of crystals. They had insisted that day that they do the actual mining since they were more experienced. It didn’t matter. I hadn’t even made it all the way out of there when the rumble of a cave-in began. I dropped the load I had and ran back towards them, but I was too late. Where they had been working was now just a wall of rubble. I commed the overseer with what had happened, but he only ordered me to another tunnel.”

A gentle touch of a servo had him powering his optics back up. He gave his friend a grateful nod.

“I refused even as I worked to clear the passage, and I opened the private channel that we three had always used while we worked. They were online still, barely, but even so they still told me to obey my orders since their sparks would soon be returned to the Well. I ignored them too. I wasn’t going to let them perish alone under all that slag if I could help it. It wasn’t long before guards accompanying the overseer came down to force me to leave. I turned and flung my pick at the fragger and it pierced his spark chamber killing him. Rather than reformat me, they decided to make an example of me and sent me to the pits of Kaon. When I arrived at the arena, I chose the name of Megatronus - as it seemed that I had fallen far in such a short period of time.”

“Soundwave: Found official report, wondered at the veracity of it. Appreciate Megatron sharing.”

“But, now I know what to name the newsparks, I think the little flyer will be Topspin and other will be Twin Twist. I don’t think my mentor’s frames were ever recovered. I heard them bolstering each other over the comm until their sparks finally guttered just before they managed to subdue me. They were good sparks and deserved better than what they got. I’ll do everything that I can to make sure that their namesakes have a better functioning than they did.”

“Miners: Under-appreciated.”

He grunted. “Don’t I know it. No one believed me when I told them my rations were bigger as a gladiator than they ever had been as a miner. Seemed like everyone believed us energon miners were swimming in high-grade or some such slag and no one wanted to hear the truth.”

Another ex-vent hissed out from him. “Enough of that, that is at least one thing off my list, but now back to the other problem. How am I going to keep tabs on two sparklings that already have programming coded for exploration and learning and then you add to that Orion’s proclivities - well, those two are liable to be a servo-full.”

“Laserbeak: Assigned protector.”

“He’s good, but he will need help. I was thinking I should arrange for a retinue of handlers to keep tabs on them, especially if I have to leave the ship. Suggestions?”

“List prepared. Suggestion: Interview candidates.”
The slender mech pulled a datapad out of his subspace and held it out to him. He palmed the device and powered it up. A list of his crew appeared on it, top of said list sat the mech he was currently standing with. A soft chuckle started deep in his chassis as he scanned the contents and it quickly rose.

“This many? And of course you are at the top of the list, that is a given. When do you find time to do everything,” he asked as he waved his free hand towards the console and then back to the pad.

“Soundwave: Superior.”

He laughed at what was definitely a smirk that lingered in the spymaster’s voice. A name popped out at him and he knew where to start.

“And you even have the vehicons listed by their serial number and their chosen designation - very handy. I don’t suppose you know where Raoul is now?

The visor dimmed a little for a moment.

“Raoul: Currently at refueling room.”

“Excellent. I’ll start with him.”

He threw a grin at his friend and strode over to his console and typed in a few commands before sending a ping to the vehicon.

“I’m assigning Raoul to me and I’ll be in the meeting room on deck five if you need me.”

“Acknowledged.”

Chapter End Notes

I knew I wanted to use a canon character for Megs and OP's spawn and when I was thinking of what sort of character that should be, well, Wrecker popped into my head so I went to my copy of the Last Stand of the Wreckers and found Topspin and Twin Twist. Everything about them just seemed right to me so that's why I saddled poor Megs with twins. Obviously, Megatron's backstory has had liberal amounts of creative additions to it.

As always comments are always welcome and feel free to point out any errors I missed!
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Took me a bit longer to get this ready - hard to write after shoveling snow. Anyway, comments are always welcome and feel free to point out any errors I missed.

A lone vehicon shifted from pede to pede as Megatron strode into the room. There were no distinguishing colors or kibble to separate him from the rest of his forces, but his curiosity reminded him of Orion.

“Sir! Your orders, sir?”

He shook his head as he settled into a chair and waved the other into one near him.

“Raoul, I’ve assigned you to me as my personal assistant until further notice. I need to arrange for enough - well, sparkling watchers for when I have other obligations. I was impressed with how you handled yourself on our mission to Cybertron. You were willing to ask questions and listened to what was said, so I thought you would be perfect to give me your input on the candidates that Soundwave gave me to look over.”

“Yes, sir!”

Megatron smiled at the eagerness in those two words.

“Good, I’m going to put you in charge of setting up the shifts when I finalize the roster, so in effect you’ll be receiving a promotion since all of those assigned to this duty will answer to you directly. I don’t think it has to be said, but I’ll say it this time - I do not want to have to worry about who is watching the twins when I’m attending to my duties.”

Raoul’s helm bobbed up and down. “Of course not, sir. I’m honored to be in charge and I’ll do whatever it takes to keep them safe.”

“Excellent, now let’s go over this list and narrow it down. I need individuals who are vigilant, but patient. Sparklings are coded to be inquisitive and add to that Orion’s nature - well, you can see the little ones are likely to get up and into all sorts of slag. Not only will they have to watch out for danger, but also keep them entertained with educational materials so hopefully they won’t get into anything they shouldn’t. Do you understand what I am looking for?”

“I think so, sir. You want someone who will not only watch over, but interact with the sparklings, correct?”

“Exactly.”

Raoul’s visor dimmed a little for just a moment before it brightened again.

“Ideally then we would need at least two per rotation, preferably one for more hands on work while the other kept watch. Is that acceptable, sir?”

“Yes, that would work. Perhaps have just one available to assist me if I need it.”
“Of course, sir. I think I understand.”

“Good. Let’s get to work then.”

~++++~

Four hours later, Megatron finally thanked the last candidate and shut the door. Soundwave hadn’t been exaggerating when he said that the vehicons were excited by the prospect of newsparks aboard the ship. He returned to his chair and pulled out the datapad he had used to make notes.

“Sir?”

“Yes?”

“How likely is it that there will be a threat against the little ones, sir?”

“Well, Airachnid is still unaccounted for, so she is at the top of my list of danger to them. Starscream - I don’t think he would harm them, but use them against me - that he would do.”

“Right, I’ll put him on the ‘not to be left alone with them’ list then. Anyone else on the ship we should watch out for?”

His engine rumbled at the thought of his second near the twins. That would be a fatal mistake on the seekers part. His lover wouldn’t have understood how he could have let their supposed revolution turn into something where he had to prioritize danger to newsparks, his newsparks. He shook his helm trying to rid himself of the negative emotions.

“No, I don’t think so, but take no chances on board. Now, as for the Autobots - again I don’t want to take any chances even though I don’t think they would actually harm them. While the humans are a threat, but so long as they can’t find us, then I would think it would be fairly low from that front.”

“Then two per shift should be plenty onboard, sir.”

“Yes, if they should need to leave the ship for any reason, then I would increase the number of guards. Now, I want to go through the list and I want your thoughts on my selections.”

“Of course, sir.”

He powered the device up and scrolled down to the first name, Brad.

“Will there be any problems having Brad report to you?”

Raoul’s ducked his helm. “I don’t think he will have a problem with that, but I’ll rearrange the schedule if he does. I would recommend him for one of the more instructional positions. He’s very good at telling stories, sir.”

“Excellent. Ivan?”

“I would think he would be better suited as a guard, he’s used to that position when we get mine duty, sir.”

“You three have worked together before?”

“Yes, sir. We are usually assigned as a unit.”

The console lit up with an alert for an incoming transmission and the silver mech accepted it. The
“Megatron, I have the cultures you asked for. Forwarding you the coordinates to meet me at in ten minutes.”

“Excellent. I’ll be there.”

The screen flickered and returned to black, but he knew that Soundwave was aware of the communication.

“I’ll be back in a little bit. Here is the list, I’ve noted my first choices. I want you to go through it and give me your recommendations for each.”

“Sir? Should I come with you?”

“Not necessary. He’s giving me the color nanites I asked for is all.”

“It might be a trap, sir.”

Megatron shook his head as he pushed away from the table. “I don’t think so, and Soundwave will be watching over me. Your diligence is appreciated though. I’ll rest easier knowing you are watching out for my sparklings.”

He slid the pad over to Raoul before stalking out of the room.

:Groundbridge me down, Soundwave.:  

The vortex opened up in front of him and he strode through it and found himself standing on a barren plain. His optics and sensors swept around him, but he was alone. The heat from the sun felt good on his plating and he briefly toyed with the idea of transforming and taking a small flight. He ex-vented and settled down to wait.

The slight vibration in the surrounding air alerted him to the start of another energy vortex forming. The appearance of the green field near him had him stepping backwards. Optimus Prime stepped out of it and he gave him a simple nod of his helm. The Prime returned the motion, but the battlemask over most of his face still seemed out of place after his time with Orion. The flash of silver on one shoulder that should have been red indicated just where at least one sample had been taken.

“Prime. I was beginning to think that your medic had refused your order.”

“Megatron,” the Autobot said with a shake of his helm, “I did not order. I asked. Ratchet wanted to make sure the nanites were growing well before he was ready to hand them off.”

“Ahh. I’m a little surprised that you still have a bare patch then.”

The red and blue mech took a step closer to him and he strained to see even a hint of Orion in the mech in front of him. The Prime extended his hand and held out two containers that glittered in the sun.

“Yes, about that. Our rations are a little short so re-growth is on the slow side. I thought that this gesture of cooperation might encourage you to do the same for us.”

“I see,” he said, even though he made no move to take the nanites. “May I ask you something first?”

“What is it you want now, Megatron?”
“The Matrix - does it communicate with you?”

The blue optics spiraled a little wider over the battlemask. “It can. Most times it guides me with feelings it sends me, rarely I will hear a voice in my head.”

He shuttered his optics for a moment before he opened them again and squared his shoulders. “Ask it for me - is there even a chance that Orion might be freed once more?”

“It knows what I do, Megatron.”

“I see. And?”

“It is silent at the moment. I am sorry,” Prime said and his optics dimmed a little, “but the knowledge it passed to me long ago showed me that when this spark is guttering then the Matrix will leave this frame and not before.”

“Thank you for that truth at least. Then as far as I am concerned, you are the caretaker for Orion’s frame and spark even if he never gets use of them again. I’ll return in a moment with your payment.”

:Soundwave, bridge me up:.

:Acknowledged:.

The swirl opened up, but before he could step through it, he heard the Prime shift behind him.

“Thank you for believing me.”

He turned to look at his opponent. “If you had told me there was a chance, I would have known you were lying.”

“I see. I do not require payment for this. I only hoped you might be willing to share.”

“Calling it a payment makes it more palatable,” he said and then he strode through the vortex and back to his ship.

He lengthened his strides as he headed for the nearest energon storage area. He knew exactly how big a stockpile they had amassed, although the ship and her crew did use far more than five Autobots would. Two guards stood at the entrance and saluted him as he approached.

“Sir?” the one on the right asked.

“I have need of some energon.”

“Of course, sir! Where shall we have it delivered to?”

“Get, say, twenty cubes and follow me.”

A glance passed between the pair and then the one on the right opened the area and gathered the cubes he requested. The vehicon pulled a small trolley out laden down with the requested materials.

:Soundwave, a groundbridge down to the same coordinates:.

The crackling green energy field spun open in front of him and he stepped through it yet again with the vehicon right behind him. The red and blue mech stood silently although the creases around his optics suggested at least there was a small smile hidden beneath that mask.
“Sir?”

He shifted his optics down to the vehicon at his side and found that the mech’s helm was swiveling between him and the Autobot leader.

“Put it in the middle and then step back.”

He studied the Autobot while his rival watched the vehicon with his burden approach him. He took a step closer to the mech and held out his servo, palm up. Prime took several steps towards him and closed the distance between them and he watched as those containers approached his hand.

“Thank you, Megatron.”

“Thank you, Prime.”

The containers were warm as they were placed in his servo and he only felt the gentlest brush of the other’s hand on his, but in that instant, it felt like high voltage had been sent directly into his spark and he stumbled a little. The vehicon’s words were a distant buzzing to the sudden influx of emotions of elation and joy from his spark. He would have dropped the two samples if not for the sudden grip of Prime’s hand over his, holding them securely between their palms.

Finally! Why they had chosen this moment to make themselves known, he didn’t know, but he blamed Orion. His lover’s sense of timing had always been sadly lacking. He shuttered his optics and focused on the two tendrils of life connected to him and sent his own joy and love back to them and their happy buzz brought a smile to his face. It was then that he realized there was another presence indirectly touching them and his optics flew open and he gazed up to find the Prime’s blue orbs reflecting shock and amazement to him.

“You feel them?” he asked and he hated how weak his voice sounded.

“I do. Primus -”

“Primus is a fragger!”

“Unhand him, Autobot!” the vehicon said with a snarl.

He was impressed at the strength of conviction in those three words by the mech, but he needed to stop him before he got himself slagged.

“Stand down. The Autobot merely stopped me from dropping the nanites.”

“Yes, sir. Knock Out will be here shortly, he’s gathering his gear.”

It was then that he realized that he now knelt on the hard surface of the ground. Several warnings flashed through his processor as his systems adjusted to the additional input from the newsparks. Deciding that falling on his face was too near to becoming a reality, he shifted until he sat on the ground. How long had he been focused inward? That thought shot a spark of fear through him which then cascaded through the two little sparks and he felt them tremble a little, but a projection of calm helped steady the twins which in turn helped him. His optics narrowed and shot up to where the Prime stood and the mech nodded at him. He clutched the vials carefully and pulled his hand away until he could cradle them against his own chassis. The little sparks pulsed in confusion and worry as the Autobot leader took a few steps away.

He held up his hand. “Stay. The twins -”
“Of course,” Prime said and slowly lowered himself until he sat next to him.

Their plating barely touched, but that was enough as the newsparks buzzed about with happiness now that they could still feel the gentle brush of the spark energy that resonated with them.

“Ratchet is on his way as well.”

“Yes, well, I don’t remember him saying anything about something like this happening,” he said as he glanced over at the Prime, “so my confidence in him isn’t as great as your own.”

The Autobot ex-vented. “He is the best chance we have of ensuring the newsparks survival.”

Vortices appeared on either side of the two leaders as their respective medics jumped out of the energy fields. He nearly laughed at the disdain that each mech projected towards their rival before they both turned their baleful glares towards him.

“What in Primus happened?” Ratchet asked.

“What you don’t know everything?” Knock Out asked. “I’m surprised, Autobot.”

“Stuff it up your tailpipe, ‘con.”

The medics stalked towards him, each wielding a scanner in one servo. He held up his own to keep the pair of them at bay.

“I’m fine. Just the shock of the creator bond forming threw a few error messages my way. My only question is, why can Prime feel them? According to that file I was given I thought that only a sparkbond would allow that?”

Red and blue optics widened as they shifted between him and the mech at his side, but at least they stopped their movement towards him.

“Tell me everything, no matter how insignificant you think it might be. We are well into the territory where no one has gone before,” Ratchet said as he stepped forward once more.

Knock Out matched his strides to the Autobot’s, and he watched his counterparts actions closely.

“We were handing off the nanites and Prime’s hand just barely grazed mine. I stumbled when I first felt the elation and joy from the newsparks and it was then that I felt another presence, like at the other end of a tunnel.”

“I grasped Megatron’s hand when it looked like he might drop the cultures and only vorns of experience with the Matrix kept me upright when I too felt the little one’s happiness pulse my way. It was rather unexpected.”

“Prime attempted to step away, but that upset the twins and I asked him to remain next to me. They are content now that - I guess they can feel his spark.”

“Yes, content is how I would put it as well.”

A hand reached up to rub the medic’s chevron. “We need to get you both to a med-bay so we can check all of you over.”

“My lord, I agree. We should move to the Nemesis immediately, we are too exposed out here.”

“No! I don’t trust any of you with our Prime. Our base is sufficient for this.”
He shook his head. “No, we have to return to the ship. If I leave now for an undetermined amount of time, Starscream is bound to try and wrest control and I’d rather not leave Soundwave to deal with that slag alone.”

Prime nodded at his words, but directed his gaze towards the red and white medic. “I will accompany Megatron back to his ship. Send Bulkhead to retrieve the energon, unless you do not wish to join us.”

The glare that the Autobot medic shot at his leader made him grin.

“Remember when I said I would try and keep you from veering off into idiotville? Well, this is you going full speed down that road, but I’m not letting you do it alone. I’m going with you.”

It was obvious the Autobots had contacted their base when the big green mech ambled out of the vortex that the medic had recently used and his optics swept all around him.

“Uh, boss?”

“Take the energon back to the base and wait for further instructions. Make sure someone is on the comms at all time,” the Prime said.

The green mech nodded and pulled the cart through the bridge. As soon as the Autobot had carted off the cubes, Megatron forced himself to his pedes. He swayed a little, but remained upright. His own medic turned his scowl on him.

“My lord, I was about to call for a transport for you.”

“No, I will return under my own power. I will not give Starscream any more ammunition today.”

Hydraulics creaked as the Prime shifted to stand beside him.

“Since stepping away distresses the newsparks, I can assist you if necessary, discreetly, of course.”

A soft ex-vent escaped him. This was not how he wanted to return to the ship, but he saw no other recourse and he gave the Prime a brusque nod.

:Soundwave, open a groundbridge and alert the ship that we have a few guests arriving with me that are under my protection.:

:Acknowledged.:

The vortex opened up and after deleting the error messages currently displayed, he took a step towards it. The Autobot matched his stride and the brush of a shoulder against his was reassuring even as more error messages cropped up. It felt like the newsparks were darting in and around his own and his system was treating it as his movement which made his tanks roil. Another wave of calmness pulsed along the still tenuous connection to the newsparks and the pair settled a little. He ex-vented and took another step. At this rate, it would take an hour to make it to the med-bay.

“How long will it take before the newsparks cease to affect my systems so negatively?”

The red and white mech looked positively gleeful - evil fragger.

“Didn’t you read the file? It’s hard to say, it’s more of an individual thing. Some adjust after the bond solidifies and some suffer to some degree or another until the newspark is framed.”

He gritted his denta. He would conquer this. Before he could decide how best to do that, he felt a
hint of amusement that filtered down through the newsparks to him and he turned his glare towards the Autobot beside him.

“They seem to respond better to gentleness. You cannot force them to bend to your will as you would one of your troops.”

“I know that, Autobot. I was attempting to get my own systems under control. I didn’t realize I was projecting so much.”

“Yes, the newsparks seem to amplify everything.”

He schooled his thoughts and concentrated on walking. Another step and then another and then finally they were through the vortex at least. He sighed in relief as he realized they were on the main hall near the med-bay. Knock Out strode ahead of the main party and had the door open and was yelling for his partner before they reached it.

“Breakdown! We need to move two berths together! Now!”

A helm popped out of the backroom and optics widened at the strange party moving at an abnormally slow speed towards him, but he leapt to the red mech’s side and together the pair moved the furniture. Megatron paused for a moment at the door. He felt Prime take a step behind him and the barest brush of a hand on his shoulder.

“Go. I will be right behind you.”

Well, that solved the problem of how to get two big mechs through one door. Apparently, too much processor power was being shifted to coping with the new bonds, but he forced his pedes forward once more. His fans whined as if he had been out racing seekers all day by the time he managed to climb onto the nearest berth. It seemed terribly unfair that Prime’s systems weren’t being so affected, but it was worth it to know that the newsparks were being harbored in his frame. The thought that they could have ended up with the Prime instead of him had him cupping his empty servo over his spark. Another reassuring pulse poured down the connection.

“You and the little ones are safe now. Perhaps we should work out a truce since we will have to work together for at least a little while?”

“Knock Out, take the nanites,” he said as he held out the two containers.

“Of course, Lord Megatron. I’ll make sure they are placed into the frame pods with your nanites,” the red mech said with a grin.

He watched as the medic distributed the contents between the two pods that were just big enough to hold the two frames they had recovered. A soft ex-vent left him as the nanites joined the growing cultures. Neither pod held a frame yet as the medic hadn’t finished going over them yet, but soon the pair would be placed inside to allow the nanites to colonize the frames in preparation for when they would receive a spark of their own. He turned his optics over to the Autobot waiting patiently beside him on his own berth. A truce was a given at this point, but there were other things he needed to know first.

“First I suppose we need to find out how long we must remain in physical contact to one another.”

The red and white Autobot stepped up beside the Prime.

“In a bonded pair, they typically would spend at least half an orn together before physical separation didn’t upset the newspark. Since most of them didn’t have shift work, it wasn’t an issue.”
“So after a week, we will be able to go our own ways?”

Ratchet ex-vented and rubbed his chevron. “For short periods, yes, but I fear that if it is too long it might cause a problem.”

His optics narrowed. “What are you not telling us?”

Another long ex-vent from the medic before he sank down onto a nearby stool. “When I was put in charge of my first kindled newspark, I had Orion help me find every last case in the archives and there was one that didn’t have a happy ending.”

“Orion? My Orion?”

“Yes, he was the archivist assigned to my request. That was how we became friends. Anyway, we found one case where a bonded pair that had kindled, but not long after they found out about the newspark, the co-creator was killed in an accident. The creator bond was slow to form with the creator spark and it was believed at the time that it was due to the pain of the broken sparkbond interfering in the process. Now, based on what I saw with you two, maybe it was due to the newspark being unable to form its own bond with its co-creator.”

His orbital ridges crept up. “That’s why you told Knock Out to contact him if I hadn’t felt anything in a week or two. But I thought you said it didn’t end well.”

The medic nodded and after a moment stood up.

“Yes, delayed formation of the creator bond would’ve been an indication that something was wrong. That newspark made it into its first frame, but never made it to the second one. It was too weak.”

“So what are you saying? We have to remain beside each other until framing?”

The red and white mech stalked back and forth in front of them. After several passes, Megatron nearly snarled at him to stop, but refrained when he felt the newsparks react to his irritation.

“I honestly don’t know. There was never an instance of a non-bonded pair being able to kindle anywhere in our entire history. You have managed to do what no one else has. What I am saying is that you need to decide just how far are you willing to go and are you willing to work with Optimus in order to make sure the newsparks survive. The same goes for you, Optimus. I know it was Orion who merged sparks with Megatron, but the newsparks don’t know that - they only know what feels like their creator’s spark.”

He glanced over at the frame that only a short time ago had housed his lover and found blue optics watching him closely. His promise to Orion made not that long ago popped up and he knew what he had to do.

“They are all I have left of Orion. There is very little I will not do to ensure that they live a long and happy functioning.”

“There are not many of us left. We need to end this war so that we might concentrate on bringing life back to our species. I am willing to work with you, but only if I do not have to worry about the rest of my people. This is not something that you can force, Megatron. Just as you can feel the newsparks and through them, me - I can sense things about you through them. We have to work together and trust one another, anything less is liable to be harmful to the newsparks.”

“Agreed. As soon as my systems stop giving me error messages we will work out a treaty,” he glanced over at his people and ex-vented at the wide optics he received. “Knock Out, Breakdown -
are you with me or would you rather continue the war with Starscream?”

The pair glanced between themselves and then over to him.

“Exactly what do you mean?”

“I will negotiate for those that are with me, but I know my second and he will attempt to stage a coup when he realizes just how physically weak I am at the moment.”

“Primus, why do you have him with you then?” Ratchet asked with a shake of his head.

“Orion asked the same thing of me. Is there anything you can do to minimize my system errors? The thought of walking anywhere makes me want to purge my tanks still and the med-bay is far too small for all of our people to gather in.”

The two medics took up spots on either side of him, but his was the one that reached for his arm. That was two more of his people still with him at least.

“We are with you. Now, lie back and open up your medical port and I’ll see if there is a temporary patch we can do.”

He shuttered his optics and did as ordered. This felt like the right thing to do, but then why did it scare him so?
The medics had been true to their word and put together a patch that at least temporarily kept the worst of the errors from clogging up his system and making him purge his tank. How long it would last, they weren’t sure. He just hoped it would get him through this meeting as he stood beside the Prime in front of their gathered armies on the flight deck of the Nemesis, well, his army and Prime’s team. Ratchet stood on the other side of the Prime. Meanwhile on his side, Soundwave stood just behind him while Starscream stood next to him with a smirk on his faceplates. The rest of their people milled about in two distinctive groups although they still threw glares over at their long time adversaries. It appeared as if they were gearing up for a real attack - well, he would just put a stop to that now before it got ugly.

“Enough!” he said and his engine revved an angry warning. “We’ve brought you all here to discuss a peace treaty, a permanent one.”

“What!”

He recognized that shrill voice and he ex-vented as he waited for the rest of the seeker’s words to pour out. A glance over and he saw hatred brimming in those red optics, hate directed towards him. Perhaps not telling him ahead of time had been a rash decision on his part.

“I thought you had brought us here to witness the Autobots surrender!”

“Not exactly, but I do mean to end this war for good. We must turn our might towards repairing our world and cease trying to destroy each other.”

The glare turned thoughtful and shifted between him and the Autobot beside him.

“Then why doesn’t the Autobot move away from you? I would expect such behavior if you thought he was Orion again, but we all know that isn’t true. Have they done something to you? Are they holding you hostage somehow?”

Each sentence rose in pitch until it was all he could do not to shut off his audio receptors to spare them any more pain. He held up his servo.

“No, they have done nothing to me and Knock Out can verify that. The newsparks have begun the process of forming creator bonds and the Prime’s spark is Orion’s as well, so he remains at my side for them.”

The snarl from the seeker’s engine had the mech at his back smoothly stepping in front of him, blocking his second’s approach. The flyer’s optics narrowed until they were barely slits of red.

“What happened to all of your great plans to destroy them once and for all? Those newsparks make
you weak and now you will drag us down with you! You said you would free us from their caste system and yet, here we are about to sign over our rights once more!"

“And you show how little you know about me and my plans,” he said and his own engine revved angrily.

The seeker threw up his servos and stalked away from where Soundwave stood silent and steady against the flyer.

“Oh, no. I remember them all! The latest being we were going to repair our world and leave the Autobots behind. So, Mighty Megatron, what happened to that?”

“That is still our plan for the most part, but as Prime has pointed out; we have nearly destroyed ourselves as well as our world. All of us are going to be needed to play a part in rebuilding Cybertron.”

The smirk was back on his second’s face when he turned to face him.

“Somehow I think you are only thinking about your newsparks and not about any of us,” he said with another flamboyant wave of his arm.

“That is where you are wrong. They made me realize some harsh truths about myself and our cause. You are free to walk away right now,” he said and he shifted his gaze out among the rest of his troops, “any of you. However, if you do that, then you will have no say in any negotiations that take place and no place in the society we create.”

“The same is true of my people,” Optimus said and his voice rang out among the gathered crowd. “Any bot that joins us, regardless of faction, will have the chance to agree to what we decide here or they too may choose to leave. I, for one, am ready to begin working towards making our world whole for all of us and know this - there will be no caste system, of that you can be assured.”

“What about reparations?” a voice shouted out.

He wasn’t sure who said it, but it didn’t matter, the answer was the same.

“There can’t be any.”

“What!”

“There are those who will disagree with that, Megatron.”

He turned his head to gaze at the Prime.

“And where would that end? Neither side is saying they won so giving all who sign this agreement a clean slate seems only fair.”

“No!” the blue femme Autobot said as she marched to stand in front of the gathered mecha. “You killed far more than anyone else, you should have to pay for your crimes!”

“And who will pay for those who suffered under the old regime? Those who left miners to die under rubble or those who sent individuals to the Arena to die? And let’s not forget about the countless femmes and mechs left to starve on the streets of so-called civilized cities.”

“I think you can safely say you and yours killed them all,” she said as her optics narrowed at him.

His spymaster turned his visor towards the lithe femme and pointed a single digit at her.

“Soundwave lost four symbiotes to Autobots -”

“They were drones.”

He shook his head. “They might have been smaller and some of them might not be able to communicate as normal mecha, but they had sparks - they were sentient. And Soundwave keenly felt each of their deaths, so are you willing to pay for those deaths for him?”

A blue and gold shoulder pushed through the crowd until the flyer could stand in the open. He raised his servo and pointed at the Prime.

“Prime killed my spark brother. Should he not have to pay for that?”

The yellow and black Autobot scout stepped out of their little group with an angry sounding series of beeps and whistles.

“Bumblebee is technically correct, he landed the killing blow to Skyquake, not I,” the red and blue mech said as he moved forward just a small amount.

Thankfully, it was not enough to send the newsparks into distress. This discussion was more than enough stress for that even with both him and Prime trying to keep them calm.

Dreadwing’s optics shifted to view the much smaller bot.

“You took out my brother?”

“Skyquake refused to consider joining us and attacked us. He was so focused on me that he failed to consider Bumblebee a threat. I did not like that we had to kill him, but we had no choice. He was an honorable mech. Now you all must see why Megatron was right. We will only destroy ourselves with this kind of talk. All who agree to this treaty will be given a clean slate. None of us here have clean servos. We all have had to kill. If we have any hope of finding a way to repair our world, first we must cease the hate between us all.”

“Thank you, Prime. As a gesture of good faith on our part, I will tell you that we found that it is possible to repair our world. Orion discovered the means and we have been searching for the keys necessary to activate it.”

“What! That’s what you were working on while he was with you?” the Autobot medic said as he peered around the front of his Prime.

“Yes, we have a copy of the Iacon database onboard, and he and Soundwave discovered something called the Omega Lock. The two of them were even able to decipher the first location and we now possess one of the four keys necessary to activate it.”

At his statement Soundwave pulled something out of his subspace and held aloft the relic until the light caught it and it shimmered brightly. He felt a pulse of wonderment come from the direction of the Prime and he shifted his gaze towards him. Bright blue optics stared at him.

“The Matrix just confirmed that the Lock will do what you think. We can restore Cybertron to her former glory. We can go home.”

After that, even Starscream seemed content at the idea of peace; or he was waiting for a better opportunity to take over, either way, the rest of the talks were settled quickly. His people dispersed,
returning to their normal jobs, but the few Autobots remained until only the officers were left and they slowly walked towards them.

“Are we returning to base now, boss?” the hulking green mech asked as he glanced at the backs of the departing Decepticons.

“Yes, you are free to go. Ratchet and I will be here for an indeterminate amount of time.”

“What! We aren’t leaving you two alone here!” Arcee said with a scowl directed towards Megatron.

“I cannot leave while the newsparks still need my presence and Ratchet is overseeing the process,” Prime said.

“They are under my personal protection,” he said with a nod. “No one will touch them without facing my wrath.”

There was a snort of amusement and he turned to find Starscream smirking at him. He was beginning to think that was the only facial expression the seeker had.

“Yes, well, I can see you are already slightly swaying so I don’t think you are up to handing out any punishments right now.”

“Soundwave: Fully functional,” the slender mech said while his tentacles slithered out and drifted closer to Starscream.

The seeker took a step backwards. “Of course, none would dare oppose you, Lord Megatron.”

“Starscream, you have the bridge until this flux passes.”

The flyer bowed with an overly dramatic flourish. “Yes, Lord Megatron.”

As soon as his second was gone, Megatron rubbed his optics. “He’s going to be a pain in the aft, but you have my word, Prime and Ratchet will be protected.”

“Like you haven’t broken that before,” the femme said as she moved in front of the others with one servo on a hip.

“And if you recall, it wasn’t me that broke our last truce - was it?”

“Arcee, stand down. It is in Megatron’s best interest to keep us safe and this is something he cannot force me to do. I have to be here willingly. The rest of you are free to return to base -”

“We can find quarters for them if they would rather stay on-board,” he said.

The three glanced between themselves a moment before and all three came to the same conclusion.

“We’ll go back to base for now. Will we be able to reach you over comms if we need to?” Arcee asked.

“We will keep our position hidden from the humans, but we will not block your signals,” he said as he glanced over at his spymaster who nodded at the unspoken command.

A vortex opened up and the three Autobots stepped through it although the yellow one glanced back at his leader one last time. He ex-vented in relief, now he could finally relax.

“I think Megatron’s patch is beginning to wear off,” Prime said, although it sounded further away
than it should have.

He nodded and began the arduous task of walking. He found that it was all he could do to walk normally back to the med-bay where he gratefully sank down onto the nearest medical berth.

“You can return to your quarters, sir,” Knock Out said with a wave of a servo. “We don’t need to monitor you for now.”

“Yes, but this way we can each have our own berth to recharge on while still being close enough for the newsparks.”

“If that is what makes you more comfortable,” Prime said as he climbed onto the berth adjacent to his. “Personally, I do not like med-bay berths, they always remind me of how much time I have had to spend in them.”

“I’m not in the habit of sharing a berth so I fear that would be more stressful than being here.”

Ratchet’s optics narrowed as he watched him, but he finally climbed up on the last empty berth. The newsparks even seemed to be settling down although it felt like they were pulsing along the side of his chassis closest to Prime which made his sensors feel like he was off kilter. That sent a wave of longing through him, and he wished that it was Orion next to him and not Prime then they could have been in their berth and not here. He forced that thought out of his processor unwilling to let the other mech feel his weakness. His optics shuttered and he began the process of powering down his systems as he distantly heard the sounds of the others settling down.

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The hum of an engine near his audio receptors had his battle protocols spinning up fast. The spike of fear that shot through him caused the newsparks to spin in distress until a pulse of calm poured into them and then indirectly to him. He brought his optics online and found himself staring at a red chassis covered by a windshield and he groaned. He turned his helm and found blue orbs watching him and he forced his battle systems into standby with an ex-vent.

“Oh, slag me.”

He pushed himself upright and wondered how he had ended up chest to chest with Prime on Prime’s berth sometime during the night cycle. He rolled back onto his berth and stared up at the ceiling when he heard a soft chuckle from the Autobot.

“Don’t say it.”

“I never would have guessed you liked to cuddle, Megatron.”

He ex-vented. “Of course, you had to say it. I blame Orion’s influence on the newsparks for that.”

“I am sure,” the Autobot said with another soft laugh. “Although I have to wonder how you managed to share a berth with anybot since I felt your battle systems come online before you did.”

“I only ever did with Orion. There is an exception built in for him and I see I’ll have to enable it again.”

“I would appreciate it. The little ones did like the nearness of both our sparks I noticed.”

He turned his helm to gaze over at the red and blue mech. He didn’t doubt it as now the twins were once more pushing towards where the Prime lay.
“You should have just woken me up. Pit, I wouldn’t even have blamed you if you had shoved me off. To be honest, I’m surprised you are awake before me.”

The crinkle was back around the Prime’s optics. “I always awaken at the same time, the Matrix usually pulls me out of recharge, however, this day I awoke to the happy pulses from the little ones and I was enjoying our quiet communion while they were so near my spark since they seemed to find it quite pleasant. As for waking you, I thought about it, but you were not bothering me so I saw no reason to disturb you.”

“Of course they did,” the red and white mech said from his berth on the other side of the Autobot leader.

The medic pushed up from his berth with a heavy ex-vent as he came to stand next to the Decepticon’s berth.

“They are drawn to his spark. If you two were a normal bonded pair, I would be telling you to merge sparks whenever you could as it will strengthen the sparks and their bond to you.”

“Yes, well, nothing much about this is normal, is it? So what is in store for us?”

“I thought I heard voices. Is everything okay?” Knock Out asked as he strolled into the room.

“I’m not sure. I think the universe just played a joke on us. After all, who would believe the fearsome leader of the Decepticons is a cuddlebot.”

He shot a threatening look towards his own medic who wisely kept his thoughts to himself.

“Ratchet, the newsparks - will they be alright without any more spark merges?” Prime asked.

That was the fear he had had after the story that the Autobot medic had shared the day before. His optics watched as the medic absently rubbed one hand over his chevron.

“I don’t know. If that one newspark died because of a lack of a creator bond, then yes, they should be okay. If not -”

“Then we have to decide how far will we go to save them,” he said with a heavy ex-vent.

Sharing sparks with the Autobot leader seemed like a betrayal of Orion even if it was Orion’s spark giving life to that frame. He could almost hear his lover’s voice in his head telling him to do whatever he had to in order to keep the little ones alive.

“The physical presence of the Matrix should prevent a sparkbond from forming .”

His optics shot over to the red and white mech. “Yes, but what about its energy? Is that safe for them to be exposed to?”

A small shudder coursed through his frame. Every time it seemed he had planned for every contingency, something new cropped up and things spun out of his control once more. The twins began to twist about as they reacted to his fears and he shifted his thoughts to his own fierce love for the pair hovering around his spark and they settled once more.

“Megatron, the Matrix will not harm them. It just told me that. Although, sharing of sparks is not something I would do lightly.”

“For me either, Optimus. Those of us whose functions involved death on a daily basis didn’t share
sparks. Orion had to convince me that it was worth it. In the end, he was right. I always thought all his talk about kindling newsparks some day after we had won was just a dream on his part. I guess I now know why he knew so much about them.”

“We’ll take daily scans and if it looks like the newsparks aren’t developing as they should - then you two can decide what to do from there,” Knock Out said with a glance over at his counterpart.

The Autobot nodded. “Yes, that’s the best we can do for right now.”

The door slid open and all helms swiveled to see who was coming through. A single vehicon pushed a cart laden down with energon cubes. He quirked an optical ridge at the sight.

“That seems like a lot of energon.”

“Yes, sir. I was informed that you would be here for an indefinite amount of time so I made sure to bring enough for you and your guests - for awhile,” Raoul said as he stopped in front of him.

“Thank you, Raoul. I appreciate your initiative. Is the list finished?”

“Of course, sir,” he said as he handed a datapad that had been on top of the cart to him.

He took the device and scanned the notes that the vehicon had made.

“Excellent. Make sure there are several guards available to protect our guests.”

“Yes, sir. I set two of them outside the med-bay already.”

“List? Guards? That sounds less than friendly, Megatron,” the red and white mech said as he took a cube and handed it to his leader.

“For your safety, sir. Lord Megatron said you were under his protection. You are free to leave the med-bay, but they will follow you and guard you against anybot who might cause trouble.”

“Ratchet, Optimus, this is Raoul. Like me, he chose his own designation and I’ve made him my personal assistant and he has been put in charge of the guards for the newsparks. That is the list he had. We were selecting individuals for watching out for them when you called to arrange the handoff.”

“Sparklings don’t need guards! They need mentors!” Ratchet said. His servo punctuated each word with a gesture at him.

He ex-vented and shook his helm. “Do you realize how many times Orion nearly got himself slagged when he came to see me in Kaon? Pit! It took Soundwave’s army of symbiotes and myself to keep him safe! I expect sparks of his spark to be much the same. When I need to leave them with someone, I want individuals who will not only make sure that they don’t get into the engine turbines along with teaching them. So yes, I call them guards.”

Optimus held the cube, but didn’t retract his mask. “It sounds as if Megatron expects them to be active and wishes them to be safe.”

Ratchet took a sip of his ration. “Putting it like that, he’s probably right. Any sparks of Orion’s are bound to find trouble. Drink up, Optimus. You need the fuel.”

The red and blue mech’s optics shifted around at the gathered mecha before the metal guarding his face withdrew with a snick.
The sight made his spark clench as it made the Prime look like Orion for a moment before his processor helpfully reminded him that Orion was locked away by the Matrix. He jotted a quick note down on the datapad and handed it back to Raoul. The vehicon’s visor brightened a moment and his helm swung to stare at the Prime before shifting back towards him.

“Sir?”

“You are reading that correctly. Should anything happen to me after the newsparks are put in their frames, then your orders are to make sure that you get them safely to Optimus Prime. His spark is Orion’s after all so that makes him their co-creator.”

A swallow of energon coated his intake enough so the next words that came out sounded more confident.

“I don’t plan on getting slagged, but I like to have contingencies in place for everything that I can. Now let’s finish up our energon and we can begin writing what is bound to be a helm-ache of a treaty.”

The two Autobots looked like he’d just declared himself an apostate of Primus. He gulped down his energon while he ignored the stares. The Prime’s bond with the twins made him the only logical guardian of them as far as he was concerned. He resolutely ignored the pulse of wonder coming from the direction of Prime. It was far safer to focus on the task before them.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

As always, I appreciate all the comments! Feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed.

Five mechs ranged around the table, but in an unusual display, Soundwave had slipped into the spot on his left side, which had forced Starscream to take the seat furthest away from him. His right side already had the big red and blue Autobot leader plastered against it. Even without looking, he could sense where Prime was by the orientation of the newsparks. At least he knew that mech wouldn’t be able to sneak up on him while he carried the twins. The seeker meanwhile had resorted to shooting annoyed looks towards both the spymaster and Autobot. Personally, he would have to find some way to thank his friend later for that extra bit of buffer as the silver mech reclined back in his chair a little.

“Let’s get this over with,” Starscream said with only a hint of his displeasure coming through. He tamped down on his amusement at his second’s irritation, no sense in giving the Autobots any more ammunition than necessary.

“First thing, we must have separate cities and to that end - I propose the Decepticons take Vos.”

Prime shook his head. “In theory, I would say anyone should be allowed to live where ever they wish, however, we just will not have the mecha to support more than one city at least initially.”

“We also have no idea what form the revitalization will take place as,” he said with a nod. “The archive entry was rather vague on how it would work or even how big an area it would create. The entry didn’t even say if it was ever used before so we dare not take the time to search the older records for information, not when we still need to find the rest of the keys.”

Optimus touched the console in front of him and a hologram projection of Cybertron erupted over the table and one area lit up which the Prime pointed to.

“We need to concentrate on the area around the Well; it needs to be the first targeted region to make sure energon flows once more. I would suggest we settle initially in Protihex as it is nearest to it.”

An overly dramatic ex-vent brought all optics down to the flyer.

“Well, that’s all well and good, but I seem to remember a certain mech jettisoning the AllSpark out into space so really the Well is not that important anymore, is it?”

The calm that flowed from the Prime through the tenuous bond from the twins didn’t seem forced and that was terribly unfair as far as he was concerned. Vorns of sharing leadership with the seeker should have made him immune, but it hadn’t - if anything, it had made it worse. Maybe the newsparks found him as irritating as he did and that was why his patience was wearing thin now. Of course, his processor helpfully brought up an image of a pair of sparklings mimicking his glare, which had him coughing into his servo to cover a laugh. That had the twins dancing about and he ignored the look the Prime was currently directing at him.
“I did, however, the Matrix assured me that when the time was right it could lead me directly to it. So when the Well flows with energon once more, I will retrieve it and once more sparks can be generated for our people.”

Starscream leaned into the table with only a slight quirk of his lip plates.

“Well, that’s good to know. I don’t know about the rest of you, but the thought of having to allow myself to be sparked like Megatron made the energon in my tanks curdle. Imagine if we all became as weak as him, why even the fleshies of this world would be able to best us!”

He cycled his vents in an attempt not to backhand the mech into the hull. A low growl began to rumble in his chassis even as Prime attempted to pour more calm down the connection, but a soft laugh disrupted his rising anger and he turned his optics down to where the red and white medic was shaking his helm.

“Unless you have someone you want to sparkbond to, I don’t think that will be a problem,” Ratchet said with a wave of his servo, “besides, only the strongest sparks can create and support a newspark. Once the bonds settle, he’ll be back to normal, so don’t count him out yet.”

His mouth dropped open at the medic’s words before he could remember to shut it with an audible clink. That was support from a source he hadn’t expected. A touch of amusement crept through the twins and that sent them bouncing once more, a feeling he could have done without.

“Back to the treaty,” the red and blue Autobot said, “we need to decide which laws we need to enforce immediately.”

“The obvious ones of no killing or stealing,” he said.

“Why not just use our old laws?” the medic asked.

“Because there are still ones in existence that would forbid movement out of your caste and other stupid slag that we can’t have,” Starscream said.

“Exactly,” he said as he nodded towards his second. “We would have to cull out the ones that started the war in the first place.”

“And no assigning a bot a job based on their alt mode! Although I’m not sure how we are going to get anyone to do the slag jobs without forcing them to do it.”

He glanced around the table. “By making the riskier or more menial jobs have compensation to make individuals want to do them.”

The flyer snorted. “Right, how are we going to pay anyone enough to want to be a miner or sanitation bot?”

“Our economy will most likely be barter for at least a little while. So what sort of things would entice someone to do such a job?”

“When I was a miner, the most precious thing I had was educational materials. Most ‘bots spent anything they managed to save on upgrades to their frames or luxury items, but for me, I craved knowledge,” he said.

“Reduced or free education then, depending on the job,” Prime said with a nod.

“That would give them a way to transition to a different job as well, if they wanted. We should also
make sure they get access to good medics - we are going to be relying on their efforts to fuel us all,”
Ratchet added in.

“I don’t know of any other forged miners that survived, so it makes sense for me to at least do the
initial surveys to get an idea of how fast Cybertron is producing energon.”

The Autobot leader’s optics spun wide open and he snorted a laugh at the pulse of astonishment he
picked up from the other mech.

“At the rate we are finding the keys, the twins will be framed by the time we return to Cybertron. I’ll
be able to leave them with their attendants for periods of time, and I’m sure you’ll be happy to lend a
servo as well from time to time,” he said with a wave towards Prime.

A feral grin crossed the seeker’s face. “We’ll need an army still.”

“No! The whole point of this is to end the war!” the Autobot medic said and his engine revved in
anger.

“Starscream is right,” he said with an ex-vent, “no one wants Cybertron as she is now, but if we
bring her back to life - how long do you think it will be before sharkticons start circling us, especially
if they don’t see any sort of defenses?”

The medic’s blue optics blazed from where they had narrowed into slits. “And you’ll be the one to
lead it? I think not.”

The Prime turned his gaze towards his second. “Ratchet, I am sure we can find a mutually agreeable
solution. But they are right; we need to assume that at some point, we will have unfriendly visitors.”

“Such suspicion,” he said with a soft laugh. “I have no plans to join the military unless we come
under attack and then I will defend our world. I think my efforts are better spent making sure we
have energon so I will return to being a miner so that way at the end of the day I can return to my
family.”

Starscream’s laughter echoed around them. “Oh, that’s too good! Megatron, the Destroyer of
Cybertron has been domesticated!”

The feelings of respect and approval sent the twins spinning happily and he gave the red and blue
mech a slight nod.

An engine stuttered a few times. “That is - unexpected.”

“Perhaps Starscream, I want to be remembered for being more than just a destroyer.”

The Prime’s optics dimmed for a moment, then he punched a few codes into the console until the
Autobot femme’s face appeared and she did not look happy.

“Optimus, Agent Fowler is requesting you return immediately for a debriefing. He has concerns
about our truce.”

The pulse of distress from the other mech was brief before Prime managed to shut it down. That brief
taste was enough to have him turning his optics towards the Autobot leader.

“I’ll return to talk to him. Optimus is needed here to continue working on the treaty,” Ratchet said.

She nodded once before the connection was cut while the medic pushed away from the table.
“I’ll be back as soon as I can. Don’t wait for me; you need to keep working on the truce while I’m gone so the humans won’t wonder why Optimus isn’t coming.”

As soon as the red and white Autobot had stalked out of the room, he shifted a little closer to Optimus. He needed to know what the other mech’s concern was.

“Are the humans going to be a problem? You would think they would be happy we are ending our war while we are on their world.”

A soft ex-vent escaped the Autobot leader.

“I am sure they are concerned about whether or not you can be trusted, Megatron. At some point we will probably need to have you at least meet with their representatives.”

“And what would the point of that be? We did not wage war on them -”

“You have been an alien enemy -”

He laughed and couldn’t stop the grin full of denta at that. “If I had placed them on the list of my enemies, they would have known it. As far as I am concerned, they have no bearing on our truce. Meet with them if you wish, but I have nothing to say to them, Prime.”

A trickle of annoyance filtered through the bond from the twins and he raised an orbital ridge at that. Apparently, the Prime’s threshold for tolerance had reached its limit.

“Megatron, the Autobots have an agreement with the local human government so by extension our agreement becomes yours when we become one people again.”

“Fine. If they insist on it, I will meet with them, but it will have to wait until we can move apart from each other once more.”

“Agreed,” Optimus said before he punched up a new screen on the console, “now let’s work on a list of must have occupations when we return to Cybertron.”

~+~+~

The red and white mech paced through the groundbridge to the familiar surroundings of their little base. The rest of their team stood around with their human charges while their government contact stood on the catwalk watching him approach.

“Agent Fowler,” he said with a nod of his helm.

“Why didn’t Prime return with you? He is your leader -”

He held up a servo. “Which is why he is busy talking to the Decepticons, so I came to address any of your concerns.”

“Well, I have to report to my boss, so tell me, aren’t you concerned that this is some sort of trick?”

Ratchet ex-vented. “No, and believe me that surprises me as much as you.”

Miko bounced up to him with her hair waving about in her excitement. “Seriously? You guys are going to believe anything Megadork is telling you! I would expect that of Optimus, but not you!”

He carefully lowered himself down to one knee. “Miko, I will be keeping an optic on them, but yes, I think Megatron is serious. He shared with us that they have found the means to repair our world
and Optimus confirmed what he said was true. We’ll finally be able to go home and make our world livable again.”

“You’ll leave?” a soft voice asked and he looked up to find Raf staring at him with a concerned look.

“Eventually, yes, we hope to. Right now, we are working out the specifics of the treaty and then we have to find the rest of the relics needed to activate the device they discovered. Raf, this isn’t our world, we don’t belong here.”

Bumblebee scooped up the little boy and placed him on his shoulder with a trill of soothing beeps and whistles.

“Thanks, Bee,” Raf said with a gentle pat on the shoulder he sat upon, “I hope we can keep in touch as well.”

Agent Fowler’s brows meshed together and his mouth curled into a frown.

“And why would Megatron suddenly have this change of heart - mind - whatever it is you bots use!”

With a slight creak of his joints, he pushed himself back up to his full height and his vents cycled for a moment.

“You might say Megatron has had a change of spark, or rather his spark has been changed. There is a very rare process by which our people can create newsparks that isn’t from our AllSpark - it’s called budding. Megatron’s spark has formed two new buds and that has shifted his priorities as coding to protect them has taken precedence.”

“Budding? What in the name of Lady Liberty does that mean!”

“Just like it sounds, Agent Fowler - a spark generates enough energy to create a new spark which hovers around the parent spark until it is strong enough to be put in its own special frame.”

Miko’s gasp was surprisingly loud for such a little thing. “Megadork is making MiniMegs!”

A servo absently swept across the medic’s chevron. “Not exactly - his spark was the genesis of them, but they will be their own mecha.”

Fowler’s eyes narrowed. “Why didn’t you tell me you guys could do this before? How many more baby ‘cons are going to be made?”

He threw his servos up in the air. “What part of very rare did you not understand? I’ve been a medic on Cybertron for longer than your people have been sentient and in that time I’ve dealt with exactly five cases. My first case had me scouring our archives for any information because the process is not understood at all even among us. Our scientists and doctors have tried to replicate the process under controlled conditions and failed every single time, so finally they chalked it up to a ‘gift from Primus!’”

“They are still getting an increase in numbers through space magic or whatever it is that caused this!”

Ratchet laughed and shook his helm.

“Newsparks formed this way are much like your younglings. As soon as they are put in their sparkling frame, which is similar in size to you three,” he said with a wave of his servo towards the younger humans, “they spend the first oh, nearly one hundred of your years learning about the world before they can even get upgraded into an adult frame. They will be a resource drain for the
Decepticons in every way. If Megatron was truly sparkless, he could have had them pulled from his spark when they were first discovered, but he didn’t. I truly believe he is sincere; now Starscream, well, him I don’t trust further than I can lob him.”

Jack’s eyes zeroed in on his optics. “So you lied to us when you said that without the AllSpark you couldn’t make anymore of your kind.”

“Not really. Yes, this process gains us a few new Cybertronians, but it is so rare that we would have died out eons ago if we relied on it as our sole means of creation. We’ve always counted on the AllSpark; any gained from budding were considered extras.”

“Not with your very long lives,” Jack said.

“So does that make Megatron both mommy and daddy?” Miko asked with a grin.

“Ugh! Miko, I really didn’t need that image in my head!” Jack said with a shake of his head.

“I have to admit, the thought of Megatron parenting one of your, uh, newsparks is disturbing,” Raf said.

Bumblebee hummed and nodded at his friend’s comment.

“We use the term mentor or creator and it is considered a great honor to be given guidance of even a newly created adult spark.”

“Yes, but like Raf said, what will they learn from such a mentor?” Jack asked.

“It’s not like they will be locked away from everyone else. In fact, Megatron has already declared that should anything happen to him he wants Prime to be their mentor next. Prime believes he is sincere and they both want to reconcile our two sides and end this war.”

Another ex-vent left him as he sunk down onto one of their makeshift chairs. Primus, he missed the real chairs onboard the Decepticon warship and wasn’t that a fine thing to admit to along with having to defend the warlord to the humans.

“As for your other question, long before Megatron ever rose to power, my people were enslaved by another race, the Quintessons, and we fought a war to free ourselves from their slavery. If we only had budding as a way of rebuilding our numbers, we would have been taken over once more by them or some other species after that. So you see, we have to have the AllSpark if we are going to be strong enough to keep others from conquering us once we bring Cybertron back to life. As Optimus pointed out, we need each other.”

“Prime might believe them, but I still have doubts. We can’t trust any of them, especially Starscream. He’ll stab us in the spark the first chance he gets,” Arcee said with a noise of disgust.

Bulkhead and Bumblebee both nodded at her words and he knew he would need to have another chat with them after the humans left. The human’s boots clanked as he stalked back and forth on the metal bridge.

“So Starscream might attempt to take over? And to what end? Would that end the peace?”

“I’m not sure,” the medic said and his optics dimmed as he considered that question. “If he thought he could take out Megatron now, I’m sure he would, but he’s not a fool; not with both Soundwave and Optimus ready to assist Megatron should he try anything.”
“What! Why would Prime help that ‘con?’

A long ex-vent escaped him. “Because the Matrix ordered him to protect the newsparks.”

Fowler threw up his hands. “You’ve got to be kidding me! I thought that thing was just, you know, a weapon of some sort since he used it to stop that Unicorn guy inside our world. You can’t honestly believe it is some sort of phone to your gods, do you?”

He shook his helm. “That’s Unicron. It doesn’t matter what I think, Optimus has been guided by it since he accepted it and I know it can speak to him, how or who that might be - I won’t guess. I do know that he will obey that command if he can.”

The human rubbed his face with one hand.

“I’ll talk to my superiors, but I doubt they are going to like what I have to say. Optimus needs to talk to them and soon. How long do you think the talks will take?”

“No more than a week or so - I hope,” Ratchet said. He shuttered his optics and sent a silent plea to the universe that the bonds would settle soon. They couldn’t afford to alienate the humans right now.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

This chapter ended up longer than I expected, but hopefully without too many errors.

As always feedback is appreciated!

Megatron rubbed his optics and his fuel tank pinged a reminder that more energon would be a good thing. It was well past the end of the day shift and he was more than ready to retreat to his quarters. He groaned and dropped his helm into his servos. He wouldn’t be going there alone now, a brief cycle of his vents, and he brought his head back up to gaze at the rest of the table.

“I think we’ve hammered out the most important parts. Let’s write it up and present it to our people for a final review.”

“Agreed, I will start the process. We have already have a provision in it for amendments should the need arise. The sooner we get this out to our people, the better,” Prime said as he gathered up several datapads that had been used.

“Well, I’m sure the Decepticons will do whatever Megatron orders,” Starscream said with a wave of his servo.

“Actually, that is one thing that I think Orion had right. He said to me shortly after he returned to the ship - ‘If you hope to rebuild a Cybertron that is truly free, shouldn’t we discard the factions that have separated it for so long?’ He was right, I think when we all sign this we should remove our respective symbols. We need to start thinking of ourselves as Cybertronians and not either Autobots or Decepticons. And this will not be released as an order. I want people to be as invested in this as we are.”

The warm approval that trickled down through the twin’s bond felt better than it should have, after all he had never wanted Optimus’ approval before. However, the newsparks did and basked in the other mech’s energy and radiated their own back to him.

“That is an excellent idea. I will add that in. I know I am in need of fuel, so I am sure you do as well.”

Together they climbed to their pedes and began the trek out. He paused at the intersection that led to the med-bay.

“Prime, would you mind if we recharged in my quarters tonight?”

“I think you can call me Optimus. Afraid your standing with your people will be ruined if the others see you recharge next to me?”

He snorted a laugh at that. “I’m sure Starscream will be busy spreading around my newly arisen domestic tendencies. I would just rather not have everyone seeing my mortification at cuddling my former enemy.”

“Of course, lead on then. And I am pleased with your change in spark. It has long grieved me that
you seemed bent on the utter destruction of our race, because I truly believed that if the war continued on as it had that that would have been the outcome."

He hummed a noncommittal sound as he steered them towards his quarters. The clank of metal steps reminded him that they did have an audience and a quick glance back showed that two vehicons walked behind them. He checked the file that Raoul had given him and found the transponder codes that matched the pair that followed them. At his look, one of them took a step closer to them.

“Sir, should we bring some energon to your quarters for you both?”

“Yes, that would be appreciated. Ping and Dave, correct? Are you the pair on duty tonight?”

“Yes, sir. I’m Ping and he is Dave. We’ll be outside if you should need anything.”

“Thank you,” he said before turning back towards the Prime. “Optimus, will Ratchet be returning tonight?”

The Prime’s optics faded for a moment before those blue orbs brightened once more.

“He says he will remain at the base - there are some things he needs to take care of. He’ll return tomorrow and update us on his meeting then.”

“Make sure that escorts are available for the medic when he arrives tomorrow,” he said with a glance over his shoulder.

“Yes, sir. We’ll make sure the next team is made aware of the situation.”

The vehicons took up positions on either side of his door and it slid open with a simple press of his palm on the panel. He felt surprise as he gestured the other mech inside and the door closed behind him.

“Expecting something else I take it?”

The Autobot’s optics scanned his surroundings before turning back towards him. “This is very - plain.”

He barked out a laugh. “Yes, well, I rarely have company. I do have a larger suite being worked on for when the twins are framed. Thankfully, Soundwave is in charge of that project so I’m sure it will be tasteful.”

Prime let his battlemask drop away and a smile crossed his face - an expression that rang of Orion and his spark stuttered a little. In some ways, it would be too easy to fall into accepting Optimus as something of a stand in for Orion. A fact that disturbed him.

“Are you unwell?”

The question brought him out of that flux and he shook his helm.

“Just tired.”

The door chimed and it only took a simple reach of his arm behind him to open it once more. A vehicon stood in the door with two large cubes held carefully in his servos. The visor swung between the two big mechs who stood awkwardly in the small space.

“Sir?”
“Ah, thank you,” he said as he snatched the rations and handed one to Prime.

A large gulp of energon helped bring his fuel level up. It had gone lower than he had realized while they were working. The little ones pulled heavier on his spark than he had expected. He planted his aft down on the edge of the berth and Prime followed his lead. The vehicon took the hint and ducked his helm before he stepped back outside and the door closed once more. The Autobot took a few more swallows from his cube, but then he turned his optics towards him.

“May I ask a question, Megatron?”

He gave a wave of his free servo. “Might as well.”

“Have you decided on designations for the twins yet?”

That wasn’t the question he expected.

“Yes, I am going to name them after my mentors, Topspin and Twin Twist. One frame we recovered has winglets - that will be Topspin and the little ground based one will be Twin Twist.”

“Those are good designations.”

“Thank you. I know Orion would approve if he was here; he didn’t like what happened to them either.”

“I do not think I read that report.”

He nearly snorted a mouthful of energon into his vents. “See that is your first mistake, thinking the truth could be found in the official report.”

“Will you share their story with me then?”

“I will if you will answer a question for me.”

An ex-vent from his companion had him turning towards the red and blue mech.

“What is it you wish to know?”

“That day you came to me in the Arena - why did you say those things to me as if what was between Orion and I was nothing?”

“I had no frame of reference beyond what the Council had told me. I accepted what they said to me as I was still assimilating the knowledge the Matrix had passed to me. That first orn as Prime was difficult. And then the war started, so it was not until recently that I actually tried to access those files and found I could not.”

“Oh, thank you for explaining. The Council had more to answer for than I realized. You know, I used to think Orion was the biggest victim in this mess, but now I think it might be you.”

The Prime’s helm dipped a little but then his optics bore into his.

“So tell me what happened to your mentors.”

He threw back the last of his fuel and placed the empty cube on the floor. He shuttered his optics as he brought up that file once more.

“Well, I did end up in the Arena because I murdered our supervisor, but that is the only truth in the
official report. Soundwave showed it to me once. We headed into our designated tunnel, but Twin Twist halted us and contacted that slagger to let him know the area was unstable. He ordered us to go in and make our quota or face losing our rations, so we did. I was carting out a load when the tunnel collapsed. They were trapped in the rubble, but still alive. The supervisor ordered me to a new section, but I remained at the site and worked to free my mentors. When he came down with his guards to remove me by force, I threw my pick at him and it hit him in the spark. Turns out I have impeccable aim.”

He brought his optics online once more and turned to find Optimus’ mouth hanging open.

“That is tragic. Were they ever freed from that shaft?”

“No, as far as I know their frames were left to rot in that tunnel where they died.”

The twins twisted uncomfortably in his spark chamber and he pressed one servo over it.

“Perhaps we should talk about something else.”

“Of course. Forgive me for bringing up a painful subject. I did not mean to stress the little ones,” Prime said as he sent another pulse of calm and love down his connection to them. “I am not ready to recharge yet, so I think I will begin writing up our treaty.”

“I’ll move to the inside then so you can sit on the edge. I wonder how my new quarters are going as I can see that this situation with us is going to require us to be in close proximity for a while and it is rather confining in here.”

The Prime’s laugh was soft as they shifted about. “Yes, this is a rather tight fit.”

He settled down as close to the wall as he could to allow more room for the other mech. When he had shared this berth with Orion, they had happily clung to each other, but that was not something he felt comfortable doing, at least intentionally. Before he powered down, he remembered to activate the exception so the Prime’s systems wouldn’t put him into battle stance again upon waking. He let his optics offline to the surprisingly soothing sounds of the other mech working.

Pain twisted through his spark and warnings flashed all over his HUD as he was wrenched out of recharge. Was this an attack by the Prime? He discarded that idea as fast as it had popped up. He powered up his optics and found the concerned face of Optimus hovering over him while his hands held his own against his frame.

“Thank Primus. I’ve been calling to you. Ratchet is on his way and he is contacting Knock Out. I can feel both you and the twin’s pain, what happened?”

The first sound out of his vocalizer was garbled noise. He initialized it again and the error message disappeared.

“Why didn’t you just yell for the guards?”

An orbital ridge quirked upward. “Yes, well I was not sure exactly how much soundproofing your quarters had or how your people would react to the situation. I did not wish to be shot.”

“What was I doing?”

“Clawing at the plating over your spark. That is why I did not dare to release your hands to go to the door myself.”
His optics drifted down and he could see the gouges his claws had rent into his armor. He felt Optimus release his servos and he brought them closer to his face and he saw the bits of silver armor and a few stains of energon on them and his fans stalled at the sight. Distantly he heard the door open.

“What happened?”

He shifted his gaze to find his medic standing beside him.

“I -”

Pain writhed through his spark. It felt like the twins were trying to burrow their way through it and a garbled howl of agony escaped him before he managed to shut off his vocalizer. The press of a large frame held him down when he tried to remove the source of the pain.

“Megatron! Enough!” a voice bellowed out right in his audial receptor it seemed like.

It was then he realized he had been trying to dig at his spark again. Knock Out inserted a needle into a line in his neck and the pain dulled enough that his processor cleared a little.

“What is wrong with them, Knock Out?”

For once, the bright red mech’s visage was grim.

“Open up your plating. I need to take some readings.”

He did as ordered and off in the distance he could hear the wail of a siren. A feeling of relief drifted down the connection at the other medic’s arrival and as he concentrated, he could feel Optimus trying to calm the newsparks as much as him. A shriek of metal rang out as the Autobot medic slid through the door.

“What are the readings, Knock Out?” he asked without stopping his movement towards the berth.

“Erratic and the little scraplets are making it hard to get a good scan.”

The two bent over the device although their words were soft and he failed to hear what they said. When both turned towards him, the fuel in his lines seemed to freeze.

“What is it?” he managed to croak out.

“Knock Out has called for transport to bring you to the med-bay. We need to stabilize your spark first and then we will try and figure out what is going on.”

Breakdown appeared in the still open door along with several vehicons as they tried to maneuvered a large gurney into the room that already had too many mechs in it.

“That’s not going to work. Get in here and give us a hand helping Lord Megatron over to it,” Knock Out said before he tapped his chest. “Close up, sir. We need to move you.”

Whatever they had given him, had him obeying their commands without a sound. He concentrated all his energy on trying to stay upright, but he had Prime on one side and Breakdown on the other to help him to his pedes. At least Prime had left his dignity intact by not picking him up, a feat he knew the other mech was capable of as they had thrown each other around the battlefield before. He gratefully collapsed onto the litter when they reached it.

“Why am I so weak? What did you give me?”
“The drugs are only partly to blame, Lord Megatron. Your spark is fluctuating badly and that seems to be the main problem,” Knock Out said as he paced beside the gurney.

He watched the ceiling go by as he stared up. Pit, he had been in the med-bay too much recently and it hadn’t even been after a good fight. A flitter of movement had him turning his helm to watch Laserbeak twist and turn around the little procession. Well, it seemed Soundwave was aware there was a problem. He opened the private channel to his third.

:When Starscream finds out about this - watch him.:

:Acknowledged. Query: Situation?:

:Spark problems it looks like. Send Laserbeak in with us in case I can’t contact you.:

“Megatron?” Prime asked.

The concern that filled his voice made the Prime sound more like Orion than he had a right to sound. He clenched his fist and forced himself to look at the mech.

“Optimus, I was just warning Soundwave to watch out for Starscream.” He turned his helm to look at his medic, “My second is to be locked out of the med-bay until I’ve recovered.”

“Of course, my lord. I’ll tell him that only essential personnel are allowed in. It is my domain after all.”

The tension melted out of him when they finally reached the safety of the medic’s realm. Too many accidents could have happened in the open halls, but here, this was defensible and right now he had the only mech who had ever bested him in open combat now protecting him. The door shut on the sight of vehicons milling about just outside and Laserbeak alighted on top of a cabinet so there were plenty to watch over him while he was so weak.

Knock Out bent over him and laid a hand on his chassis.

“I’m afraid we are going to have to have you open up again and leave it open for the time being.”

He nodded numbly as he did as instructed. He laid a hand on the red mech’s arm.

“Do whatever you have to, in order to keep them alive.”

“Of course, all three of you are my priority.”

“Our priority,” Ratchet said. “Optimus, move over to that side and let’s see if that will get the bitlets to move over enough so we can get this hooked up on this side.”

He let his optics darken and tried to ignore the soft touches as the two medics hooked various things up to the edges of his spark chamber. He saw the medical override command come through which would keep his chest open indefinitely, baring everything he was to the world. Another spasm rippled through his system and he clamped his mouth shut to keep another embarrassing noise from escaping.

“Optimus, move over there now. Yes, like that. Well, they are tracking you quite well.”

“Tell me something I didn’t already know, medic. He’ll never be able to sneak up on me while I carry them.”

“I had no idea they were quite so mobile. Why are they doing that, Ratchet?”
“I told you they were drawn to your spark. What are the readings now, Knock Out?”

“Leveling out, finally. That last dip correlates to an increase in energy going towards the twins.”

He brought his optics back online and took in the various faces that were around him. “What does that mean?”

His medic shared a glance with the Autobot before he looked at the device in his servos once more.

“Your spark is straining to keep all three of you going. Right now, it looks like they had a surge in growth earlier, probably related to the building of the two bonds and that taxed your spark.”

“Will I have to remain here until they are framed then?”

Ratchet’s hand drifted up to his chevron.

“Remember how I said I researched all the cases? Well, there hasn’t been a set of twins from this process. We honestly don’t know if you’ll be able to keep them alive on your own.”

“There must be something we can do! We haven’t come this far to give up now!”

The panic that threatened to drown him had the twins twisting uncomfortably again.

“I would not like to see the very lives that heralded the first peace in a very long time perish. What can we do?” Optimus asked.

“I don’t know if spark support will be enough to keep your spark going, my lord,” Knock Out said as he kept his optics on the numbers on the little screen in his hands. “If your spark fails, so will theirs - they are too little and fragile to go in a frame still or any other means of support we can give them.”

“We are at that point we warned you about. Only a second creator spark providing the energy they require will give them a chance and even that we can’t guarantee will be enough,” Ratchet said as he peered over the red medic’s shoulder.

“They require a spark merge then?” Optimus asked.

His voice was so quiet that he wasn’t sure if he had heard the mech at all at first.

“From the data we have gathered, yes. But they will need it on a regular basis, not just this one time. There is a lot more growth they need still, if they are to not only survive until framing but also the framing itself.”

“I see.”

It felt like a vise had gripped his spark at those two words. Asking for such a thing would been unheard of among casual friends, but former enemies - it would be laughable. His little ones were doomed and that thought had him covering his optics with one hand. He couldn’t keep the despair from creeping into his spark and the twins vibrated unhappily next to his own.

“Megatron, are you willing to share your spark as well as the new sparks? Having them touch my spark would bring them closer to me and already I think it would be hard to walk away and not be a part of their lives.”

Was Prime seriously asking that? He’d thought he had made his stance perfectly clear. He lowered his hand and found a very serious looking Optimus watching him.
“I will do whatever it takes for them, even if it means staying on this berth hooked up to these infernal machines to ensure they live. So yes, sharing them with you is not the worst thing that could happen. I wondered myself if having you walk away would be possible with how they are drawn to you already.”

The red and blue mech nodded. “I wanted to make sure. What do I do? I do not want to hurt them.”

“Let us get these wires off your spark chamber, Lord Megatron. I would prefer if you stayed here, but we can take you back to your room if you would like some privacy.”

“What about if all of you waited back in your office area? I do not relish another ride through the halls on this thing.”

“That would be best,” Ratchet said as he helped the other medic remove the spark apparatus. “Optimus, you can’t hurt them. You know how they follow you? They will instinctively get between both of your sparks where your energy is greatest. I was told by one of my patients that they take over the merge with their own feelings and that is what you will most likely feel the strongest.”

As soon as the last wire was removed, the override was removed and he was able to shut his plates once more. He watched as Breakdown worked to push two berths together. He carefully levered himself upright and turned a grateful look to Optimus when the big mech helped him off the gurney. Together they took the several steps necessary to reach the berths and he let himself fall prone once more. The rest of the room took the hint and quietly walked to the back of the bay.

“I am not sure -”

“Orion and I found that it was easiest with one of us lying down and since a sparkling could knock me over at the moment, it will be up to you to do the maneuvering.”

He sent the command happily this time and the plates over his spark split once more. It had barely opened enough to let the glow of his spark to escape when the newsparks danced as far towards Optimus as they could without leaving his energy field and the little tendrils that connected them to him. Prime knelt next to him and gazed down with a look of amazement at the sparks laid out before him. The red chassis split down the middle and the radiance of the Matrix burst out causing odd shadows to appear all around them. The spark behind the artifact was a dull ember compared to it, but the sight of it mesmerized him. He watched with no small amount of nervousness as that energy field grew closer to his own. The little ones exulted in the feel of their creator’s spark finally coming close enough for them to fully bond with and they sent that joy zinging through the connections to both mechs.

The coronas of those two stars had barely brushed each other when the pureness of the two little spark’s love and delight bloomed inside of him. How such small things could contain so much of it seemed impossible, but there it was and a soft laugh left him.

“They are amazing.”

“Yes.”

That one word took all of his strength to mutter. He wasn’t sure how long the merge actually lasted because when he finally became cognizant again he found Optimus prone next to him with both of their chests closed once more. Their fans whirred quietly to dissipate the extra heat they seemed to have generated during the merge, but his spark felt better and the worst of the system errors seemed to have disappeared. The twins were quieter inside his chassis, but their sparks felt stronger for all their inactivity, a fact that had him grinning.
“I feel it too.”

He turned his helm to find Optimus watching him with a smile.

“They feel better, stronger,” Prime said.

“Yes, that was what I was thinking as well. Your connection to them, is that stronger as well?” he asked.

“I think so. They are content at the moment, perhaps I can move away from your side now.”

The big red and blue mech shifted slowly away until he could stand beside the berth. He took a step backwards, but the newsparks didn’t react.

“I will bring the medics out to check you over, but I think this will work,” Optimus said.

He nodded and watched as the Autobot disappeared around the corner, but there was no distress from the twins. In a moment, the medics came trooping around the corner with Prime while Laserbeak flew around their heads. He knew the drill, however, and his plates opened as soon as Knock Out and Ratchet reached his side.

“I feel much better and so do they.”

“Yes, Optimus told us much the same. It’s a good sign that they let him walk away without reacting,” Ratchet said as he waited for Knock Out to finish the scan.

The two mechs huddled around the scanner although both Optimus and Breakdown stood behind them watching as they worked. It had been a short recharge cycle, but oddly he felt refreshed and better than he had in a long time.

“You’re free to leave. I recommend that you not do anything strenuous for the next few solar cycles, but you don’t need to stay here. And don’t let yourself get so drained again, if you feel weaker or the newsparks do - merge,” Knock Out said as he shut down the device.

“Thank you. I will heed your advice.”

“That means both of you need to keep an optic on them. This episode should have illustrated just how much strain they put on Megatron’s spark so don’t be afraid to tell him when he is pushing himself too far, Optimus,” Ratchet said.

“I am well used to telling him when is out of line,” Optimus said with only a hint of a smile twitching around his mouth.

“Oh, and Starscream is waiting outside,” Knock Out said with an aggrieved noise.

“I will deal with him.”

“Not alone. The twins are mine to protect as well.”

“I know, but he needs to know that I can stand on my own now. If you are far enough away from me then he will realize that I do not need to rely on you now and that should make him think twice about any ideas he has.”

The big Autobot ex-vented, but walked to the back of the med-bay to stand beside his medic. Megatron released the lock on the door and it slid open to reveal a very annoyed mech.
“It’s about time! Oh! My lord - I was under the impression that you were in a bad way. I must have been misinformed.”

“Your concern warms my spark as always, Starscream. I was suffering from a few glitches, but as you can see our most excellent medics have repaired the issues.”

The flyer’s optics darted between him and Prime. His gaze dropped down to the furrows still evident on his chassis, but he just grinned at the questioning look from the seeker.

“I see. And you two are no longer forced to be close to each other anymore.”

“Yes, the bonds have settled. We’ll still have to spend time together, but not like it was. In fact, I can take the bridge now so you may go enjoy some time off.”

Optimus strode up to him and stared at his second.

“The twins are bonded to me even if Megatron isn’t. I can feel what they do, so take that under advisement, Starscream.”

The seeker’s mouth dropped open and then shut with a snap. He nearly laughed at the dismay on the mech’s face, but settled for slapping Starscream on the shoulder as he headed up to take the bridge with a spring in his step. It was going to be an excellent day.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Nemesis felt different now. He wasn’t sure if it was the lack of emblems on those who walked her halls or perhaps the fact that some of those individuals had been former Autobots was the reason. Both Optimus and him had been pleased that no one had walked away on signing day, however, peace was still a work in progress though. Tensions rose exponentially when certain individuals got too close to one another. It was rather petty on his part, but it was good to know that even Prime’s patience could be worn down by the actions of their people.

While they were still without a true home, they had settled on leaving Prime and himself as co-leaders while their officers were their council of advisors. It would remain that way until they could return to Cybertron, and a civilian government could be elected by their people. On the plus side, it was now impossible for Starscream to try and wrest control, offing him would only lead to the council stepping into his place until their people could elect a new co-leader. He sometimes still had a hard time grasping that concept, their people, of course so many vorns of war would do that to a mech.

His optics shifted over to watch Soundwave. To the casual observer, it would appear that the slender mech was idle at his console, but he knew that was far from true. As if aware of his regard, Soundwave turned towards him.

“Entry decoded. Location obtained.”

His mouth curved into a smile and he had no reason to tamp down the exultation he felt. The little ones spun happily and he felt just a hint of their co-creator’s elation from the other end. Optimus was at his team’s former base, which they had taken to calling ground operations outpost, working on the same thing as Soundwave had been. Although he wasn’t Orion, he had a knack for working the database which he had quickly turned into his primary job. The Prime’s face appearing on the main screen was almost anti-climatic.

“We need to send a team -”

“One think it would be best to send a mixed group. We need to force them to work together.”

He shook his helm. “That didn’t go so well last time with that energon we sent them to retrieve. Pit, I’m surprised they didn’t end up blowing everyone up!”

“I know, but this is something we all have to work on. Perhaps a smaller team will work better.”

“In that case, I would use Knock Out or Breakdown if it is near a human settlement. If we can send flyers, I would chose Dreadwing.”

Prime’s head shook. “Too close to a city. A fighter jet would be very out of place and liable to draw attention. See if Knock Out will go and I will approach Arcee about working with him. Send him down if he is willing. Also, Agent Fowler is here as well.”

He groaned and rubbed his optics. No wonder Optimus was practically vibrating with glee, he’d finally managed to corner him into meeting with the human. Contacting the Nemesis on the open
channel ensured that Fowler was aware that he was available and not engaged in anything. Fragging Prime had outmaneuvered him.

“You agreed to meet with the humans over a month ago and -”

“Fine. I’ll come down.”

He stalked away from the bridge as he opened a channel to Knock Out.

:We found the next key, I would like for you to retrieve it with the aid of Arcee. Can you handle the assignment or should I find someone else?:

:I’ll do it. It will be good to get out and rev my engine for a bit.: 

:Good. Meet me on the flight deck for the groundbridge down.: 

:You are going with, sir? You’re not supposed to be engaging in anything risky -: 

:Prime finally cornered me into meeting with his human. So if you can convince him that I shouldn’t for medical reasons - I would be grateful.: 

:Sorry, sir. You can’t lie to that mech, it’s like he can see into your spark.: 

He snorted in amusement. :I’ll see you on the deck then.: 

He arrived up top to find the bright red mech waiting for him already. The air shimmered for a moment before the green energy vortex spun open near them and he followed the medic down through it. He glanced around when he stepped out of the tunnel until he spotted Prime standing next to the organic he had been dragged down here to meet. He stalked over to Optimus and gave the human a small nod. 

The battlemask hid the smile that Prime wore, but he was getting quite good at spotting them. The mech turned towards a small area where two of his former team lounged with the small humans that his people were fond of.

“Bulkhead, Bumblebee - perhaps now would be a good time to take the children up to visit Ratchet. The sparkling frames have been put in their nanite pods and you can finally see them.” 

The female jumped up with her fist in the air. “Yes! About time too! I thought Ratchet was just dragging it out to torture us!”

Knock Out sauntered over to the little group. “No, we were triple checking each other’s work. The newsparks need a frame that is perfect in order to survive and neither of us wanted to take any chances.”

Raf looked up at Prime. “Are you sure it’s okay for us to go up there?” 

It only took another step to bring him beside Optimus. “Political talk is often long and boring so I don’t think you will want to be here for that. All of our people know that you are guests and you will be treated as such. Of course, that means obeying rules that those in charge tell you, but you will come to no harm.”

The tallest boy eyed him, but turned to Optimus and at his nod, sighed,”Fine, let’s go and see Ratchet.”

Optimus strode over to the console and the groundbridge opened up once more. The large green
mech carried the two eldest children and Bumblebee followed behind with the smallest of the three. The excited chatter of the humans could be heard until the vortex shut down once more. He turned to find Agent Fowler studying him.

“You know, he doesn’t look any different than from before - well, minus the little purple symbol and his eyes aren’t doing that crazy glowy purply thing now.”

“Well, if that is all you were interested in human, I’ll return to the ship now,” he said and turned on his heel.

“Megatron,” Optimus said with a slightly exasperated sigh.

He turned his helm. “What? The human verified my status and it was very scientific too.” At the disappointed look, a long ex-vent left him. “Fine. What did you wish to discuss, Agent Fowler?”

The expression on the human’s face almost made it worth the trip down. Of course, the joy of the little ones being near Optimus helped his mood a little, even if he didn’t want to be here. The Prime input a new set of coordinates into the console and another vortex opened. He ignored the amused look from his medic as the retrieval team exited the base through the groundbridge before he turned back towards Prime and the human.

“My government has concerns about your intentions. Optimus, they just barely trust, but you - you and yours have caused problems in our world and that is even before that problem with Unicron.”

“We never went after your people, they just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. As for the other thing, you are wrong. I helped Optimus fix that situation. Unicron contacted me, I just foolishly answered him, but when I discovered his plans were not similar to mine, well, then I went to Prime and together we stopped him.”

The human’s hand shook at him. “No, Prime stopped him - he used the Matrix to stop him and then you took advantage of him!”

“How far do you think he would have gotten without me to guide him? How long would he have lasted? And as for that last accusation - Orion returned with me willingly and stayed with me of his own free will and I will rend to pieces anyone who says otherwise,” he said as his optics narrowed into angry slits as he took a step closer to the human.

He felt the warmth of a hand on his shoulder and he stepped back from the human. The newsparks quivered next to his spark, upset at his anger and he fought to even his mood out. The gentle pulses of support from Prime helped settle them further.

“He is correct, Agent Fowler. I do not think we would have succeeded without his help. He led us straight to the spark of Unicron and fought at our side even as Unicron tried to control him.”

Fowler grunted. “Maybe, but he is still considered an enemy of our government.”

His laughter rumbled in his chassis before he threw his head back and let it burst out.

“Oh, human, if I had thought you were my enemy I would have dealt with your kind long ago.”

The human’s face had a reddish tinge develop across it and his hands gripped the railing as if his life depended on it.

“You do not want to test me, you giant walking hunk of a - a engine!”
He could only grin at that. The human didn’t realize he had just complemented him.

“Why, thank you! Tell me, human, exactly how many space capable warships do you have? Ah yes, that would be none,” he said as he paced back and forth. “The Nemesis has a full array of missiles and various other weapons at her disposal, but to be honest, I wouldn’t need to use any of them in order to destroy your people. A few asteroids thrown at your world would do the job nicely, after all, my kind doesn’t need the same sort of atmospheric conditions you do so it wouldn’t bother us.”

“Megatron, you are not helping.”

“On the contrary, Optimus, I’m explaining to him just exactly where his kind stands in the grand scheme of the universe. Imagine what the Quintessons would have done to his world if they had found this planet and not us?”

“Perhaps, but that is not the way to explain it. Although he has said it poorly; he does not want war with your people.”

“No, I do not. As soon as we recover the artifacts that belong to our people that we need and that seem to have landed here; I will be more than happy to leave you to your world and return to my own.”

Fowler grunted and waved a hand towards him. “You really need to take lessons from Prime here on how to relate to others.”

He quirked an orbital ridge at that. “Is there anything else you wished to know?”

“Well, now that you mention it - I expected you to be, you know - thicker,” Fowler said as he moved his hands apart in front of him.

“Thicker? What in the Pit do you mean? My frame has been damaged numerous times, but my medic has always fixed it to within normal parameters.”

“You got two little ‘cons growing inside you! Where are you keeping them?”

His laughter rolled out and echoed around the room. “Why would you think that? Yes, there are two newsparks hovering around my own, but they all fit within my spark chamber, thank you very much. We do not have some sort of machinery inside us to build frames! Newsparks, much like any other spark have to be placed inside a frame that we build for them.”

At least Optimus had the decency to cover his face with one hand in embarrassment. Apparently, the human didn’t quite get the concept of sparks.

“My government would like to verify that there is only two; so can I see them?”

His jaw dropped and he glanced over at Prime who looked just as appalled as him.

“Agent Fowler, you do not ask to see a Cybertronian’s spark! That is considered beyond rude,” Optimus said and held up a hand when the human looked like he was about to say something else. “The closest analogy I can think of is asking a human to disrobe in public. A spark is a private thing and it is not shared lightly.”

For such a dark skinned human, his face got amazingly pale and he would have been amused if he wasn’t still trying to wrap his processor around what the human had asked.

“Oh. Uh, yeah, I don’t want to see any of your private bits. Sorry. So sparks are small then?”
“Yes, they are, even though they are the essence of an individual. I will have Ratchet make up an informational packet for you to explain it better and he can provide visual documentation that there are only the two newsparks.”

“I think we are done here. I’ll see you later, Optimus.”

:Soundwave, get me out of here.: 

Crackling silence met his request and he stopped in his tracks. Unease crawled up his back struts and the twins stirred unhappily once more.

“Optimus, can you contact the ship?”

The Prime’s confusion turned to dismay as his attempt had the same outcome. The artillery shells that blasted into the bunker cemented the situation. Hunks of wall flew everywhere as he dove for cover and his spark sunk as he watched the console for the groundbridge get flattened under falling rock.

“The groundbridge!”

“I see! How did they find us?” he shouted as he ducked behind a wall deeper in the structure.

“I do not know. I will create a diversion so you can escape.”

“I am not running from them! They will learn to respect us today!”

Optimus spun away from a blast with the human carefully shielded in his servos and jogged over to join him behind his wall. His optics became mere slits as he stared at the human in the Prime’s hand.

“Who has the artillery necessary to blast through the walls of this building?”

The human’s mouth gaped open for a moment. “Well us, but I’m sure there are lots of ways for others to obtain bunker busters on the black market. I know what you are thinking, but my government wouldn’t do this! They sent me here hoping to finally corner you into a conversation!”

Another shell blew the wall further open and a few humans poked their heads through. He took aim and fired at them.

“Yes, well, it seems a little coincidental that when I finally do meet with you, we get attacked. Did you betray us?” he shouted over the sound of explosions.

The human had his own little weapon out even as he rode in Prime’s hand. He turned and gave him a very disgusted look if he was any judge of organic expressions.

“Him - I would never betray,” he said with one finger pointed at the Prime, “but no, I didn’t have anything to do with this. And before you ask, I made sure I wasn’t followed.”

“You need to fly out of here and contact the others. You are the only one capable of getting help.”

A low growl rumbled from his engine and he switched to Cybertronian. “The twins and I need you - without you none of us will survive. I will not leave you.”

Optimus quirked one orbital ridge up, but answered in their native language. “Then you better hurry up and get us some help then.”

“And they are most likely waiting for us to come out. It is what I would do.”
“Hey! Talk so all of us can understand it!” Fowler yelled with a glare leveled at him.

“Megatron is being difficult. He thinks it is a trap.”

He snorted even as he kept an optic on the ever widening hole in the outside wall. “Of course it is a trap. With the groundbridge destroyed, we have to make our way out the hard way.”

Prime carefully placed Fowler down behind him. “Wait here. I will draw their fire and then you need to take Agent Fowler to safety.”

“In case you forgot, my alt form doesn’t have a cockpit in it. There is no where for him to ride unless he wants to hang onto my wing.”

“Yeah, that ain’t happening! I’ll take my chances with you, Prime!”

Optimus ducked down a little further. “I will go first. Be ready to follow me.”

He placed a hand on the other’s shoulder and switched back to their language. “I know you trust this human, but you need to realize that even if he didn’t betray us, someone may have betrayed him. Without Soundwave here to check him over, he may be carrying the very means by which they are able to find us. We have to assume the worst. I will follow you, but will say the opposite in case they are listening to us.”

Prime ex-vented but nodded at his words.

“My alt form gives us the best chance of blasting out of here. I’ll go first and you follow with Fowler.”

“Agreed.”

Their transformation sounds were lost under the barrage of explosions directed towards them. Battle protocols engaged and power flowed to all his most important systems and he felt his spark start to strain. This was a risk, but he had no choice if anyone was going to survive the humans. He hovered just behind Optimus as he waited for the human to enter the cab. The rumble of the semi’s engine reached what would have been an audial piercing level if not for the gunfire they were already under. Prime roared out towards the largest hole, the squeal of his tires leaving a trail of burnt rubber behind him. He launched several rounds ahead of the mech, forcing the humans away, hopefully long enough for him to get free, before he fired his thrusters and zoomed out behind Prime. As soon as he cleared the building, he turned his nose skyward and pushed his engines for every last drop of speed they could give him. His system picked up several jets attempting to stay with him, but unlike the organics he was built to take extremes and he used that fact to his advantage. He rolled and spun to avoid the beams being fired at him as he headed for the outer region of Earth’s atmosphere. Their vehicles would be unable to go as high as him and he needed to get out of range of their jammers. He created an emergency broadcast and set it to repeatedly ping out as he flew, and he could only hope that they wanted them alive. The twins rolled unhappily, not only from what he was feeling but also because even he could feel when Optimus’ side fell dormant and he knew Prime was down.

:Acknowledged. All squadrons scrambling. Forces en route.: The voice had him barking out a laugh in relief and his fear turned back to anger. He had lost the humans in his mad dash towards space and he turned his nose back down and plummeted back towards where he had last seen Optimus. Ahead of him, he saw a vortex of energy open up and seekers boiled out of it firing on the humans as they attempted to push the red and blue truck onto a platform. He dropped down to the ground and with a roar smashed through the humans too slow to
avoid him. Agent Fowler lay on the ground near where Prime sat quietly on his wheels. Blood oozed out of the shoulder he clutched.

“I never thought I would be so happy to see a bunch of ‘cons firing around me.”

“Former Decepticons, we are all just Cybertronians once more.”

Starscream landed near him while the rest of the flyers either circled or took up positions around him and Prime. “The humans have fled.”

“Good. Has the retrieval team checked in?”

“No, not yet.”

“Take all the seekers and go find them! Send the ground troops to me.”

“You heard, Lord Megatron! Back up we go! At once!”

:Soundwave, bridge us to the coordinates for the key and send the ground troops to secure this site.: The seeker was frequently an aft, but he was brilliant in the air. The flyers had barely disappeared once more when another vortex opened up and vehicons led by Breakdown and Bulkhead poured out of the bridge. The midnight blue mech transformed and began to check on Prime, but turned his optics towards him after a brief scan.

“Ratchet said to get your aft to the med-bay now while Bulkhead and I get Prime there.”

“You’ll need my help and send someone to bring Agent Fowler as well, he was injured in the attack.”

Bulkhead pushed past him. “We got Bossbot. Ratchet was very clear that you were not to do anything more strenuous than walk sedately to the med-bay.”

The bright yellow scout skidded to a halt near them and gently patted the hood of Prime with a sad little beeping noise. Bumblebee turned and gently scooped up the human before he walked back into the vortex. Vehicons stood in a circle around them with their weapons out. The situation in hand, he followed the scout.

As his battle systems began to shut down, his steps grew slower and slower. His spark pulsed erratically and he paused at an intersection, just for a moment, while his fans whined as they tried to dissipate the heat that had built up from his wild flight. The twins spun unhappily and he watched as his energy levels plummeted even more. Bumblebee turned and spotted him and only a second later, the medic trotted into view.

“You over did it, didn’t you?”

“I had no choice.”

“No, I suppose you didn’t. Come on, lean on me and let’s get you to a berth. Get Fowler to the med-bay,” the medic said with a wave of a hand towards the yellow scout. “I’ve contacted Nurse Darby, Soundwave is sending a vehicon to retrieve her.”

As soon as the human disappeared around the corner he let some of his weight fall on the sturdy frame at his side.

“Optimus will be alright?”
The medic grunted. “Yes, Breakdown’s scan indicated he was hit with the same thing Dreadwing was. It’s taking a lot more of them to push him here is all. Although at the rate you are moving, they might catch up.”

He did manage to beat Prime to medical, but just barely. He fell onto the first berth and waited for the tap on his armor.

“I need for you to open up,” the medic said in a low voice.

He opened up his chassis and shuttered his optics while the mech worked. Light touches to his sparkchamber and he knew the medic was hooking him up to a spark machine once more.

“Well, Agent Fowler, now you can see the newsparks for yourself,” he said.

“What? He asked!”

His laugh was soft and without any real humor. “Yes, he did. I wasn’t sure who was more appalled, me or Optimus.”

“Yeah, I’m okay without seeing your private parts.”

He heard a huff from the medic. “Primus save me from idiots! Agent Fowler, we do not consider them as you are implying. Sparks are private because they are the very essence of who we are and are exceedingly delicate. They are only shared among those you care about or in this case for medical reasons.”

“Yeah, Prime kinda said something along that already. So what is the matter with him? He didn’t get hit, did he?”

He onlined his optics to find that the children were eying his open chest from where they stood on the berth that held Fowler. He heard the door slid open and swiveled his helm to find out who had entered. The spymaster strode over to Agent Fowler while a woman trailed behind him. After a moment a single tentacle approached the man.

“Hey! What in the name of Lady Liberty do you think you are going to do with that thing?”

“Soundwave: foreign signal detected from location. Signal blocked. Object required for disposal.”

“Were you given anything today or recently?” he asked from his spot.

The human used his good arm to pull out everything he had with him and dumped it onto the berth he sat on. Soundwave delicately removed a single object while the woman moved over to the berth and began to exam Fowler.

“Hey that’s my new cell phone! Do you know how long it took me to get supply to cough one up that got a good signal in that base!”

“And now you know why. Move the ship just in case they were able to get a fix on us.”

The medic’s face hovered into view. “Alright enough of that out of you. I’m putting you in medical stasis to conserve your energy for now.”

He nodded his understanding and let the medic power down his systems. One by one they blinked off. He’d managed to save Optimus and himself, but at what cost - he wouldn’t know until he was able to power up once more. Any thoughts of vengeance were lost as darkness finally claimed him.
Chapter End Notes

Sorry to end on a bit of a cliff-hanger, but the chapter was getting too unwieldy otherwise.

I will say as I have been writing this idea up, the story has taken several turns I hadn't considered at first - so yeah, work in progress!

As always feedback is appreciated and feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed. Thanks for reading!
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Yeah, so this turned out a lot bigger than I had expected and now you know why I broke it off from the last chapter. And to think this was all inspired by my watching the show and having a WTF moment when Prime lost his memory when the Matrix was drained. And then I came across a prompt which gave me an excuse to write it. hehe

Anyway, please feel free to point out any mistakes that I may have missed - with chapters this long I swear my eyes cross and my brain just says 'hey I understand it what else matters'!

Feedback is appreciated as always! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sun blazed down on the pair as they traveled along the empty highway. The noise of the motorcycle was lost to the throbbing purr of the sports car’s engine. The blue motorcycle was in the lead, but the red Aston Martin nipped at her wheels.

:Come on, we can go faster than this. There is no one around for miles. I’ve been stuck on that ship for ages!:

:We’re supposed to be keeping a low profile so that means obeying the local rules so back off - Knock Out.: A soft sigh came over the comm system but the red vehicle dropped back, at least a little.

:The sooner we get the artifact, the sooner we can return to our respective bases.: A harsh laugh echoed over the channel.

:Why Arcee, you sound as if you find my presence distasteful. Needless to say then, I’m a little surprised you signed the treaty. Or are you still miffed that you lost your super secret hideout? Wait, it’s not so secret anymore, why I think I saw Megatron in it!: I don’t like you and I don’t trust you, but no way was I not going to be there to watch out for the others. So stuff that in your intake and choke on it.: The laughter that came from the red car had the motorcycle spinning in a tight circle and screeching to a halt forcing the mech to skid to a stop in front of her.

:Exactly why are you so on board with this peace? What do you know, ‘Con?:

:Tsk tsk no name calling. It’s not very nice.: Answer me! What does Megatron have planned!: The red mech transformed into his root mode and fell over laughing.
“Really, you don’t get it? Tell me, exactly who could stand against the united force of both Megatron and Prime?” At the blank look from the femme, Knock Out grinned. “Yeah, I don’t know of anyone with the bearings for that little undertaking either. I, for one, would not want to throw my spark away trying to stop those two from getting what they want and right now they both want peace. I haven’t survived this long in this war by being stupid, you know.”

The two-wheeler twisted and contorted until the femme stood before the mech with a glare in her optics and a hand on her hip.

“And you just meekly follow along doing whatever your master wants?”

Knock Out shook his helm before he levered himself upright.

“I followed Megatron because I was at the bottom of the heap and I saw in him the fire and will to do what no one else would. He’s now turned all that determination towards rebuilding our world which isn’t a bad thing, is it?”

“Like we can believe that the ol’ Slagmaker has had a change of spark!”

Knock Out’s shoulders lifted and fell in a very human expression.

“Are you still sucking on that slag? The newsparks have changed him or he’s changed for them, I guess that’s a minor difference at best. Of course, those of us on the ship saw the start of this change when he returned with Orion Pax in tow.”

“He always has some sinister plot in play! I just haven’t discovered it yet!”

“Oh, okay, I’ll give you that he’s had some less than stellar ideas,” the red mech said before he coughed into his fist, “Dark Energon Zombies.”

“Yes! That! So what is he planning?”

The red medic threw his servos up in the air. “I just told you! He has turned his vast resolve to fixing our world and the reason is those two little sparks hovering around his own. To be honest, if they hadn’t been there after you broke our truce and took Orion away from him, well, I think you would have seen the return of the slightly deranged, raging, mad Megatron. So compile that piece of code in your processor. Come on, let’s get this over with so you can go back to searching the shadows for the next sinister Decepticon plot.”

The mech shifted back to vehicle form and sat idling on his wheels while he waited for the motorcycle to follow suit. She watched him for a moment more before she gracefully shifted back to her alt form. With a screech of her tires, she roared down the road, and the mech followed suit. The whoop of laughter from the mech had her slowing down to the posted speed limit, which brought another groan from him.

:Really? We were just getting warmed up!: 

:We’ll be turning off up ahead and it’s one of those dirt covered roads.: 

:No one mentioned anything about dirt roads.; he grumbled. :Frag it all, I should have made Breakdown take this mission.: 

He dutifully slowed down as they came to the turn off. The car dropped back even further and did its best to avoid the gravel and dirt being tossed at it.
What’s the matter? Afraid of getting a few dings?:

You might not care about your finish, but some of us keep ourselves to a certain standard. How much further to the coordinates?:

Not far. They are near a body of water up ahead.: A soft snort of disdain came across the channel.

Why not send a few flyers to swoop in and nab the thing since there is nothing out here?:

Because it is near a campground and jets would be a little obvious zooming around out here.: The femme slowed as they came into a dirt parking lot next to a small pond. No other vehicles were in the area and after a brief scan, the motorcycle shifted back to her root mode. Knock Out followed her lead and the pair crept towards the coordinates given to them. A small scanner in the red mech’s servos was their guide and they watched it while they walked, looking for the elusive signal so they could pinpoint exactly where the object was. A chime from the device had them moving closer to the pond and it signaled they were directly over it when they stood in the slimy earth along the shallow part of the water.

“Ugh. This stuff is going to take forever to get out of my wheel wells and joints!”

Arcee rolled her optics at the mech and shove her hands down into the mud and dug around.

“Come on, help me find it.”

His mouth turned down and his grimace of disgust nearly made her laugh, but the medic followed her lead after he stuffed the scanner into his subspace. Together they sifted through the organic material with various degrees of success.

“Yes, that’s it! Now we can get out of here!”

She rinsed it off along with her servos before carefully placing it in her subspace. The red mech was still trying to get the mud off as well when she opened a channel back to the ship.

Retrieval team to Nemesis:

The static that answered her had her shooting her optics over to her companion. He cocked his helm at her look even though he never stopped his washing of his plating.

“What?”

“Try and reach the ship. They aren’t answering my hail.”

She heard him try the same channel she just had with the same results. The forest grew quieter before the thrum of engines fast approaching them echoed through the trees.

“Come on. We need to move,” she said as she trudged out of the muck.
He stopped his frantic cleaning and the widening of his optics showed he understood the situation. As soon as they were clear of the wet earth along the edges, the pair transformed. Dirt spewed out behind them as they attempted to clear the area as fast as they could. Ahead of them, they could see a fleet of vehicles, both in the air and on the ground coming at them. Quick scans to either side indicated there were more closing in from the other directions as well.

“Go back into the woods. You at least have a chance of evading them in there that I don’t. I’ll head out onto the road and maybe pull a few away from chasing you.”

“Maybe Decepticons practice every bot for themselves, but Autobots don’t.”

His ex-vent was suitably dramatic.

“This has nothing to do with me trying to leave you behind, this is about you have the key and are faster over rough terrain than I am. I’m flashy and fast on a road, neither of which is of a use now.”

“Oh. Well, I still say we stick together. At least this way we can watch each other’s back.”

“If that’s how you want to roll, lead on then.”

They transformed once more before Arcee scanned around them and finally picked a direction into the heaviest section of trees. It wouldn’t slow the humans down much, but hopefully it would be enough and they could get out of range of those jamming their signals. Neither of them talked as they ran through the woods as fast as they could in their root mode. The humans didn’t bother to try to cover the sound of their movements and the pair knew that they were still being surrounded. Helicopters above were apparently directing the efforts and making sure their quarry didn’t escape. The red mech paused for a second behind a large tree.

“We can’t outrun them. I say we make a stand and take as many of them as we can out before we go down. I know what Breakdown went through and I want to make them pay for what is coming.”

“The others will come looking for us when we don’t report in. We need to keep moving.”

He shook his helm. “By that time they may have already carted us away and be taking us apart.”

Her optics widened as she saw several humans approaching with a large weapon, most likely that stasis beam of theirs.

“Scrap! Move your aft now!”

She yanked hard on the larger mech and he tumbled out of the way just as the beam went off. They scrambled to their pedes and took off running once more. She leaped over a fallen log and turned at the dull whomp of something heavy hitting the ground behind her. Knock Out was a crumbled heap on the forest floor. She fired at the humans that tried to close on the fallen mech. One thought kept crossing her processor - how had they found them? Another blast from that ray of theirs had her rolling away and she turned her processor to keeping her out of their reach. Her sensors picked up more closing in from her side and she was torn between trying to defend the fallen mech and fighting her way out. Out of the corner of one optic, she caught sight of another of those pulse weapons of theirs being brought in.

Seeing no other recourse, she sprinted in a direction away from where the two guns were converging on her, leaving Knock Out behind. Using every ounce of her skill and maneuverability, she dashed through the trees hoping to get free long enough to send a distress message. She leapt over a fallen tree and skidded to a halt as her way was blocked by yet another one of those guns. Primus! How many of the blasted things had they managed to produce?
“Scrap! Why are you doing this?” she yelled at them.

Their answer was a blast that had her falling backwards trying to avoid it. The beam grazed her, which was enough to darken her vision and send her reeling to the ground. The second shot had darkness enveloping her.

“Team Bravo has acquired the targets and are ready for pickup,” one of the humans said into a walkie-talkie as he crouched near the fallen femme.

“Good work. Helo en route for pickup. Any sign of what they were searching for?”

“Nothing but their weapons on them - one gun and some sort of energy based quarter staff. It’s not like they have pockets for me to go through, sir.”

“We’ll do a more thorough search when we get them back to base.”

“Roger that. Team Bravo out.”

“You heard the Boss. Secure the cargo - we need to wrap up and return to the base!” the leader said.

The humans broke into two groups and began the process of wrapping heavy chains around the two Cybertronians. The heavy wop wop sound heralded the arrival of the helicopter capable of lifting the two prisoners. It hovered over the first one and lowered cables down in to the woods where the red one had been captured.

The radio buzzed with an incoming message.

“Team Bravo here.”

“Team Alpha has failed in their mission. Have you secured your cargo yet?”

“The Stallion is in position over the first payload now.”

“Good. Keep me updated.”

“Roger that,” the man said as he pulled off his helmet and ran his hand over his face, wiping away the sweat from the run through the woods in heavy gear had caused. He looked up and watched as his team worked to secure the red one to the underside of the copter.

“Sir! Look up!” someone yelled.

His head whipped around and found what had his subordinate gaping at, a green vortex had opened up not far from the woods and out of it shot more than a dozen jets. It didn’t take long for them to see who their target was and he knew they were in trouble. He opened the channel on his radio.

“Sir. We’ve got unfriendlies incoming.”

“Get out of there with what you can.”

“Understood.”

“Get that one secured and go! Leave the other one! The rest of you get ready to defend our perimeter.”

His people scrambled to form a line against the incoming flyers. Missiles and energy beams streaked out of the lead planes and their scout helicopters exploded in rapid succession. They were no match
for the aerial mastery of the alien robots. The largest helicopter attempted to lift off with its cargo even as its guns were turned on their enemies. The flyers weaved in and around each other and their deadly dance was breathtaking to see. It was obvious that the jets were attempting to break their comrade free with as little damage as possible, but finally one just fired at nearly point blank range at their helo and it too exploded. The red robot crashed back to earth with parts of burning fuselage on top of it. Seeing there was nothing more he could do, the human turned away from the scene.

“Retreat!”

His men scattered away from where they had been victorious only a short time ago. Thankfully, the robots were more concerned with their own at the moment and most of their people had escaped.

~++~

Starscream landed and began shoving burning metal fragments off of the red frame. He turned at the sound of pedes coming his way. Dreadwing stalked towards him with the blue femme slung over a shoulder.

“Knock Out isn’t going to like you exploded a human aircraft on top of him.”

“Yes, well, I think he would like less to be carted away as their experiment. I see you found Arcee. Any sign of the artifact?”

“Not on her and I didn’t see anything like it with the humans that fled.”

“Ah well, Ratchet can rummage through their subspace for it when we bring them back. You take the medic and I’ll take the femme.”

Dreadwing shook his helm. “I don’t think that would be wise. She spits like a cybercat whenever you get near her.”

“She won’t know, now will she? Besides, she weighs far less than he does and I don’t think I can carry him.”

The larger seeker relented and handed over his burden and hefted the red mech up. Starscream’s smile grew as he patted the back of the femme.

:Soundwave, we need a groundbridge. We have the retrieval team. Tell Ratchet he has a few more patients coming his way.: 

:Acknowledged.: 

Eradicons flew about as the two seekers carried their fallen brethren through the portal first. As soon as they had passed through, they flew in behind them and the vortex disappeared with a soft whump. The smoldering wreckage was the only evidence that anything of any interest had happened there.

~++~

The med-bay had far more bodies in it than it usually did. Prime in his truck form wasn’t using a berth, but still took a lot of floor space. The red medic looked up from where he had been working on Megatron, the grey mech’s chassis wide open with wires attached to various points around his spark. The newsparks were hidden by the mech’s spark, even though Starscream tried to spot them.

“Primus!”
Ratchet’s optics shifted to take in the two frames being carried in before he turned back to where Agent Fowler sat on one of the berth’s he needed.

“Bumblebee, take Agent Fowler and Nurse Darby to a hospital. Bulkhead, take the children home. Both of you take an escort and keep an optic on things. Whoever orchestrated this attack might have found out about them as well.”

“Really, Ratchet, with both of our esteemed leaders out of commission all decisions are supposed to be decided by the three advisors,” Starscream said even as he dropped his burden on the only empty berth.

“True, but right now, I’m the only medic and what I say goes in here. I need the humans and everyone else out of here so I can work -”

“Of course, but how can you be sure they had nothing to do with this?”

The medic glared at the seeker for a moment before turning back to finish connecting the last few wires. Once he was done, he straightened up and gestured over to the one assistant he had.

“Breakdown, keep an eye on Megatron’s readings. If they start fluctuating, even a little, comm me immediately. The rest of you just hold tight. Alright, Starscream, let’s go have this out with Soundwave now.”

Starscream inclined his head and followed the irate medic, well, he was pretty sure he was mad anyway based on the sheer amount of noise he made stomping down the hall.

:Soundwave, meet us in my quarters - we need to have a little chat, the three of us.: 

:Acknowledged.: 

Ratchet’s palm slammed down on the button and the door slid open to the space he had claimed for himself. He waved a servo to Starscream and the seeker followed him inside. He took the only chair and sank down onto it. When an admittance request pinged him, he unlocked the door remotely and the spymaster stepped inside.

“Ratchet, thinks it is okay to send the humans off and using our people to guard them,” the seeker said as he bounced on the medic’s berth.

“Do you mind? I am hoping to recharge there at some point, Starscream. And yes, I did. Optimus would -”

“Is offline still -”

“Not for long. If Knock Out’s damage is superficial, I’ll be rebooting Optimus first.”

“Of course, you would take care of your own first,” the seeker said with a flippant wave of a servo.

Soundwave’s helm swiveled between the two but he remained silent.

“Actually, it’s for Megatron and the newsparks sake I am rebooting Optimus first. He overtaxed his spark and hopefully a merge will settle his spark. I don’t like the fluctuations he was having.”

“I see. Back to the humans then, how do we know that Fowler wasn’t involved in what happened today? I think Megatron would want to keep him here for questioning.”

“Soundwave discovered how they coordinated their attacks already. Fowler was given a device by
his people and MECH somehow used it. That’s how they knew where and when to hit us. Agent Fowler was injured in the attack while defending Prime and Megatron himself called for someone to retrieve him, if he had thought he was guilty I can’t imagine he would have done that. And right now, we can’t afford to alienate Fowler and his government.”

“So you say.”

“Ratchet: Correct. Bulkhead, Breakdown: Megatron ordered retrieval of Agent Fowler.”

“Don’t you think he would want us to interrogate him?”


“Thank you, Soundwave. Now, I need to get back to my room full of patients so let’s call this first official meeting done.”

“Affirmative.”

The medic stood with only a slight creak of his joints. He opened the door and waited for the other two to leave before shutting it and locking it once more. Starscream went in the opposite direction, which was fine with him. The slender spy however, strode next to him.

“I mean it, Soundwave, my med-bay is overflowing as it is. I don’t need anyone else in there that isn’t trained.”

“Acknowledged. Soundwave: Resolve situation with humans. Several alternatives available.”

“Fine, deal with them while I work on getting our leaders up and functioning again.”

Soundwave inclined his helm and continued to follow the medic. The med-bay was much as he had left it and Ratchet hurried over to Breakdown’s side.

“Any change?”

“No, everything appears stable still.”

“Good. Triage Knock Out and Arcee. I’ll get to work on getting Optimus up. Have you ever hard-lined rebooted someone before?”

Breakdown stopped and turned. “I’ve only assisted Knock Out. Never done it myself.”

“Right. I’ll get a console set up so you can watch what I do after you look at the other two.”

“Uh, Ratchet? What about us?” Fowler asked with a wave of his good arm.

The medic looked up and nodded towards the slender mech standing silently near the door. “Soundwave will make your arrangements.”

“What does that mean?”

Soundwave took a step closer to where Fowler rested on a berth with the other humans clustered around him.

“Mom, we were talking about school while Agent Fowler was there. Could they know who we are as well?”

“A sleepover on a real alien space ship, how awesome would that be! I’m staying here!” Miko said as she jumped up to stand on the berth. “Wait, what about dinner? It’s not like you guys can take this thing through a drive-through.”

“Soundwave, can you take them elsewhere to decide what they want to do? I need quiet to work.”

“Come on, Miko. Let’s go find a conference room before doctbot gets his struts all twisted up,” Bulkhead said as he offered the girl his palm. He held out his other hand to Agent Fowler and Mrs. Darby. “Can you help him onto my hand and I’ll carry him to a room nearby so you guys can decide what you want to do?”

Ratchet turned his focus back to his patient and ex-vented in relief when the humans had all departed.

“Knock Out just has some minor damage from what looks like blunt force and heat. He’s going to be more fragged off about the damage to his finish than anything else. Arcee appears to just be off-line due to the stasis beam and only has a few minor dents.”

“Good. Come over here then. This is a little more difficult to do while he’s in his alt mode so I need a hand getting the console hooked up.”

The red and white medic lifted the hood of the truck up. “Hold this. Now I just need to find the connector. There! All right, carefully lower that, we don’t want to pinch the wires. Now, let’s get you back online old friend.”

Breakdown watched as Ratchet weaved his way through the Prime’s systems and began to bring them back to full power, one at a time. In a matter of moments, a loud groan came from the truck.

“Back up. He’ll probably shift back now.”

The transformation sequence engaged and Prime knelt on the floor of the med-bay. His helm lifted and he ex-vented in relief at the sight that he was on the ship and he let his battle protocols shut down.

“Ugh. My processor aches, but am I glad to see you, old friend.”

“Trust me, I’m sorry to have to force your system online, but I had to. And I can’t tell you how happy I am that everyone is alive, including the retrieval team, and aboard the ship right now. Let me unhook you from this stuff. I was showing Breakdown how to reboot someone.”

“Ah, hopefully such skills will not be needed again for a long time. I am glad to hear that everyone is safe now. Megatron?”

Ratchet pointed over to the berth where the mech lay. “Same as before, but I’m hoping your spark will be enough to stabilize his again.”

The big red and blue mech pushed himself upright and gazed down at his co-leader. The newsparks pulsed in worry and he sent his own love to the pair.

“Why is he off-line then? I will not merge -”

“I know, Optimus. He’s in medical stasis - I was trying to keep his spark stable until we could get
you up and functioning again. I’ll bring him out now so you two can merge.”

“Of course. My apologies, Ratchet. It has been a trying day.” The Prime’s head whipped up to stare at the medic. “What of Agent Fowler? Is he alright?”

“Yes, he was injured, but Nurse Darby is tending to him in another room. Soundwave is handling them for me along with Bulkhead and Bumblebee. Everyone under your protection is safe for the moment, well as safe as any of us can be.”

In a matter of minutes, the wires hooked up to Megatron were removed. He watched and waited as life stirred once more in the frame. Both of them being in stasis had had the twins terribly upset he could tell and his attempts to calm them did little good until they could feel Megatron come online as well. The glowing embers of his optics caught his and he gave his former enemy a smile.

“It is good to see you.”

Megatron barked out a harsh laugh. “Yes, well, I wasn’t sure any of us were going to be seeing again at all.” A soft ex-vent left the former warlord. “I meant what I said before. And it is good to see you as well.”

“I know. However, Ratchet has concerns about your spark, he feels that another merge would be of benefit to you and the little ones.”

“Far be it from me to argue with him.”

“Fraggin’ right. About time someone listened to their medic,” Ratchet said with a snort. “Don’t mind us. We’ll be busy over here trying to get the others back up and running. Breakdown, pull that screen over there to give them some privacy.”

The dark blue mech pulled a rolling privacy panel around the pair of leaders. Megatron attempted to push up to see around Prime before it encompassed them, but Optimus gently pushed him back down.

“Arcee and Knock Out are safe.”

“Good. I sent the seekers after them, once we had recovered you.”

“It eases my spark to know that when it is critical, our people can act as one. Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

Megatron expected the usual flooding of love and joy at the merge of their two sparks, and there was some of that, but then something unexpected occurred. Instead of falling into the feelings from the little ones, he found himself standing in bright nothing. As far as he could see there was only light and it was peaceful, but this wasn’t what should have happened. His spark stuttered, had the merge been too little too late? Had his spark guttered and returned to the Well? Panic took him at that thought and he looked around for some sign of the twins.

“No, you haven’t passed into the Well just yet. I thought it time you and I had a little chat before you awoke.”

His helm whipped around to find a mech unlike any he had ever seen standing before him where just a moment before there had been none.

“What is this place? If this isn’t the Well, then who are you?”
“You know who I am. And the best explanation is that we are in the Matrix.”

“Primus,” he said with a soft ex-vent.

“Yes,” the mech said with a gentle smile, one that warmed his spark.

“How? Merges don’t last that long -”

“We have as much time as we need.”

With a roar, Megatron charged the mech. Primus stopped his fist before it could connect and held him immobile without even appearing to strain. He snarled in frustration.

“Why! Why did you lock Orion away! He deserved better than imprisonment!”

“I was sorry, but I needed to make sure that the next Matrix holder would listen to me. Sentinel turned from me and did grievous harm to me and my children. So I created Optimus and it was based off of Orion’s personality matrix, even though Optimus has free will, he will always listen and not turn from me like his predecessor did.”

“Free him! The newsparks deserve to know him!”

“It grieves me that I cannot. Tell me, who would you rather have had with you down there on Earth today, Orion or Optimus?”

The grey mech crumpled a little as he considered the words and his arms dropped to his side.

“Optimus.”

“ Exactly. We both know, you would have never left Orion’s side and you both would have been taken and the newsparks would have perished along with you both.”

“Orion is gone for good then?”

“Your spark will know his again someday. But that isn’t what I wished to tell you. Do you remember how you felt after that first merge with Optimus?”

“Yes. Why?”

“How did you feel?”

“Good, better than I had in a long time.”

“Yes, because I healed you. You still had the taint of dark energon flowing in your system. Enough existed in you that my brother was attempting to twist the newsparks into something that he could control and that I would not allow. So I burned the last of it from you, freeing you from him for good. It also had the added benefit of accelerating the growth of the newsparks and after today’s events, I can see that the twins must be framed sooner rather than later if my people are to survive. You and Optimus have to retrieve the keys needed to repair Cybertron and return my people to their home.”

He gazed down at his pedes while a servo clutched at his chest. He had thought that it had been gone from his system. He looked up to find a kind smile on the other mech’s face.

“Now, I think it is time for you to return. Remember what I said, sooner rather than later.”
“How soon!” he yelled, but there were no more answers, and already he was drifting back into his own processor.

His optics flew open and he found Prime sprawled across his chassis, although both of their chests were now closed. Optimus pushed up and off of him.

“That seemed more intense somehow. How do you feel now?”

He laughed. “It’s been one Pit of a day, Optimus. I got to yell at our god. Oh, and he told me that the twins will be ready for framing, sooner rather than later, his words not mine. So I can honestly say that I have no idea what I’m feeling at the moment.”

“What!” Ratchet yelled from on the other side of the screen. “Don’t you dare engage the separation protocols yet! I will reformat you into...something big and useless!”

At the sight of Optimus smiling and shaking his helm, he laughed. “Can you hear my armor plating rattling in fear?”

At the further sputtering from the medic and the stomp of pedes heading his way he ex-vented. “Calm yourself. I see no such command on my HUD, but according to our god we need to prepare for it to happen soon.”

The panel was pushed aside and the medic’s angry glare didn’t abate as he took in their positions. “Don’t joke about something like that. I would normally have a whole team for a single newspark separation, but I’ll have to handle twins with one other medic and one assistant and right now that other medic isn’t even online. It would be a nightmare to do at the moment.”

He prepared to lever himself upright, but Ratchet was right there, pushing him back down.

“Stay right there until I can get Knock Out up and running. Then I’ll check you over and possibly release you. Optimus, you can go.”

“I will go see how Agent Fowler is doing. Comm me if something should come up.”

He watched as the mech strode out of the med-bay before turning to watch the two bots work to reboot Knock Out. The red mech’s optics brightened and his mouth turned upward as soon as he realized just where he was.

“Oh thank, Primus. Arcee was able to get a message out.”

“No. Megatron sent the seekers after you both after they had rescued him and Optimus,” Breakdown said as he gently brushed some dried up mud off the other mech.

“Were you two successful before you got attacked?” Megatron asked.

Knock Out lifted his helm and his optics widened. “They hit you too? The newsparks!”

Ratchet and Breakdown gently pushed him back down.

“Relax. He just strained his spark a little. He wasn’t hit by one of their beams,” Ratchet said. “I’ll go check him over now. When you feel up to it, can you supervise Breakdown while he reboots Arcee? I want more than just the two of us to be able to do this.”

“Of course. Just give me a moment and once we are finished, then I’m spending the next hour in the washrack. I feel like I have more mud than paint at the moment.”
Knock Out glanced down to brush at something on his leg. His mouth opened and a soft cry left him.

“No! What in the Pit did they do to me?”

“It’s alright, we’ll have you fixed up in no time. I think most of that happened during your rescue.”

The door slid open and Optimus strode back in. He smiled at the sight of the other medic awake.

“Knock Out, it is good to see you functioning. Tell me, were you able to retrieve the key?”

Megatron snorted. “I asked him that already, but he’s too busy mourning his shiny finish to answer.”

“Oh. Sorry, my processor is still a little scrambled. Yes, we got it. Arcee should have it unless the humans managed to figure out how to get at our subspace.”

“Good work. Can Megatron return to his quarters?”

The grey mech rolled his optics at that.

“I was just about to check him, Optimus.”

“I am right here, you know.”

“Uh huh, and you were very nearly not here anymore. Now open up,” Ratchet said with a tap to his chassis.

“I swear the mechanisms are going to be worn out from all this open and shut business.”

The medic snorted a soft laugh even as he scanned all of the sparks. His optics widened and his jaw dropped open as he read the results.

“Oh. My. You weren’t just trying to twist my struts were you?”

“No. I talked to Primus and he said the newsparks needed to be framed so that Optimus and I can retrieve the keys.”

“Right. Well both of you are confined to the ship until further notice. You’ll get a warning about separation before it happens. Do not initiate the command until your aft is here in this med-bay and the three of us are here and ready. Timing is critical. The newsparks have to be guided to the frames quickly or they can be lost. Optimus, you will have to be here as well. The newsparks will need to feel both of your sparks still while they adjust to having frames of their own. If there is anything at all that seems off, you contact us immediately.”

“Of course, Ratchet.”

“Right, he can go then, but nothing strenuous is allowed.”

“I’m still right here,” Megatron grumbled in a low voice.

Ratchet had the audacity to pat him on the helm. “Don’t torque off your medic, it will not end well for you. You’re lucky I don’t schedule you for a systems flush as soon as the twins are framed.”

He nodded and slid off the berth. He wasn’t sure when it had happened, but somehow that medic had managed to make maintenance sound downright scary. He had barely made it out the door when Optimus leaned in close to him.
“Now you know why he was my second, well, beyond the fact that I trusted him with my spark. I’ll go check in on the bridge.”

Before the big red and blue mech could leave, Megatron placed a hand on his arm.

“Primus made me realize a few things and I have come to terms with the fact that Orion and I will meet again when we return to the Well. But right now, the newsparks will be safer with you than they would be with him. I know you will be a good creator to the twins and that is all I can hope for them. I know trust has been hard to come between us and I am not one to give it lightly, but I give you mine.”

Optimus’ smile was warm and reminded him of the one he had received from Primus. The twins spun crazily at the affection they felt from both of their creators.

“Thank you, Megatron. Together we will make sure they have a better functioning than we did.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh, and I thought it only fair that Primus gets to be a little more hands on like Unicron.

Helo - military abbreviation for helicopter (just in case anyone was confused)

Stallion- a type of very large military grade helicopter capable of lifting heavy assault vehicles so I figured it could handle these two - the things I google for this fic.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took a bit longer to get out, but I really struggled with it. Apparently, doing my taxes broke my brain, but I finally finished it. Hopefully, it's not too bad.

As always feedback is appreciated and please feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed.

Thanks for reading!

The incoming hail wasn’t completely unexpected, after all both sides had sent out transmissions about the peace treaty, what was unexpected was how fast someone had answered and just who had. Soundwave contacted the former Autobot who would be best to answer this particular message. The green mech barreled onto the bridge with a huge grin across his face.

“Put him through.”

A subtle incline of the blue mech’s helm and then a very familiar face appeared on the overhead screen. The blue optics widened for a moment as it took in the scene around their friend.

“Jack! It’s about fraggin time you contacted us!”

“Hey, Bulk. Well, I was torn between thinking Prime was a far better prankster than I realized or that the Universe was about to implode. So I decided I had better come see for myself which one it was. In fact, I was expecting him to answer.”

“Yeah, he’s a bit busy right now down in the med-bay. You need to get here, we’re going to have a huge party across the ship - the newsparks are about to be framed!”

The mech on the other end leaned forward and his optics grew even wider.

“You’ve got to be kidding me! Who sparked up Prime?”

Bulkhead grinned and shook his helm. “Nah, not Prime, it’s Megatron, two of them in fact! Prime’s the co-creator, sort of. It’s kind of complicated.”

“What the frag have you guys been doing down there? Sucking down nightmare fuel or some such slag?”

Bulkhead grinned. “Nah, though what I wouldn’t give for some right now. That would make for a serious party!”

“Why don’t we meet up at your base and we can chat, just the two of us and maybe you can explain this whole thing to me.”

The green mech’s optics dimmed and the helm dipped a little. “Yeah, about that, our base is gone. We think it was a group of humans that call themselves, MECH. They nearly got Megatron, Prime, Arcee, and Knock Out. Soundwave has been working to try and find out exactly who it was and
where they are based, but yeah it’s not safe down there right now.”

“Frag it all. Transmitting my coordinates. Can I get a bridge and clearance so I can bring the
Jackhammer in?”


“I’ll meet you on the flight deck, Jack. It will be good to have you back on the team.”

Wheeljack nodded before the call was disconnected. Bulkhead ex-vented before turning to the silent
mech at his side.

“I’ll go meet him and give him a copy of the treaty. Let Prime know that he is here. It would be good
for him to talk to him if at all possible.”

“Affirmative.”

The green mech’s strides quickened as he headed towards the top of the ship. He had just stepped
onto the deck when the former Wrecker’s ship landed softly onto it. He shifted from pede to pede as
he waited for his friend to exit the vehicle. The silver and white mech strode off the ship and
Bulkhead whooped in delight before barreling over to him and lifting him up in a hug.

“Really? Must you do that, Bulk?”

“Yep! I’ve been worried about you after the attacks on us.”

“How exactly did a bunch of humans take out four of you, including the two biggest badafts of both
factions? Have the lot of you gone soft from all of this peace stuff?”

Bulkhead shook his helm and gestured for the other bot to follow him.

“Nah. Did we tell you about Agent Fowler when you came through last time?”

“No, I remember meeting the children, but not him. Why did he spike their energon or something?”

Bulkhead shoved his friend on the shoulder. “No! That’s right; he wasn’t around when you came
through last time. He’s our contact with the human government here. It turns out he was given a new
phone for his job and MECH rigged it so that not only was it transmitting what was being said near
it, but it also acted as a homing beacon according to Soundwave. So when Prime asked him about
human settlements around the area for one of our relics they went after Arcee and Knock Out and
then waited for the rest of us to take the children up to the ship before they hit Prime and Megatron.”

“Still doesn’t explain how they nearly got those last two. I can see the humans going after the first
two, but that takes some serious bearings to go after the two leaders together.”

“Yeah, well, they got more of those stasis beam weapons than when we first ran into them. They
shelled the base into scrap and hit Prime with one when he came out. They tried to get Megatron, but
he managed to get out of range of their jammers long enough to send the ship a message and well
then we all went in and got Prime before they managed to cart him off,” he said with a clash of his
servos together.

“Why would they even attempt to take on those two? What are you leaving out?”

Bulkhead ex-vented with a small nod. “We aren’t sure how long they had been tapping into Fowler’s
phone, but we think that they knew that Megatron wasn’t at full capacity cuz of the newsparks. If
they could knock him out of the sky, well then Prime is far easier to take down because he can’t fly
and they had those beams of theirs mounted in their aircraft.”

“Scrap. So that’s why you guys signed a peace treaty because of the humans?”

“Nah, it all started after our fight with Unicron.”

“What the frag! You guys took on a god without me?”

The green mech snorted a soft laugh. “Would have loved to have you along, we could’ve used all
the help we could find, and that included Megatron. Although, he actually approached us in order to
stop him and then Prime drained the Matrix to seal him back up in the Earth’s core. It was fragging
crazy, I tell you.”

Wheeljack stopped dead in the hall. “Bulk, are you sure you haven’t been hitting the high grade,
because I have to say this is some seriously crazy slag you are trying to feed me.”

“Trust me; I couldn’t make this up if I tried. And it turns out that Prime used to be a mech named
Orion Pax who was uh, involved with Megatron before the war.”

“Wait? What do you mean by that? I thought becoming Prime just meant you got a frame upgrade
and access to all that other primely stuff.”

“Come on, let’s snag some fuel and you can come back to my quarters and we can finish this story.”

“There’s a punch line in it somewhere, right? Or is the joke on me?”

He clapped his friend on the back and laughed, “Nah, Jackie, there is no joke on you.”

The big green mech steered his friend down the hall towards the mess hall. Bulkhead nodded at a
pair of vehicons as they passed by.

“Hey Steve and Dave, this is my friend Wheeljack. He just got here. They still got some high grade
in the dispensary?”

“Hey Bulkhead, first batch is gone already, but they are bringing in some more. But you better hurry;
those flyers can put that stuff away!”

“Thanks for the warning. Come on, Jack. We don’t want to miss out on our share.”

The white and silver mech glanced between the pair of vehicons as they continued down the hall and
the other former Wrecker.

“I have to say this is a much nicer visit than the last time I was here. Although I have to ask, how do
you tell them all apart? And what is up with those names of theirs?”

“Yeah, I bet. I’ll explain everything back in my quarters and when you sign the treaty, you’ll also get
the list of transponder codes so you can tell them apart too.”

The rec room quieted down when Bulkhead breezed into it. Wheeljack nearly spun around to keep
an optic on all the Decepticons that his system insisted were around the pair. A sleek silver flyer
wove his way through the gathered mecha and sauntered towards the pair.

“Ah, someone else that has decided to return to the fold.”

Wheeljack’s optics narrowed at Starscream. “Please tell me that he’s not in charge, Bulk.”
The grin on the seeker’s face grew. “Actually, I share that honor with Soundwave and Ratchet while our leaders are in the med-bay, however, with Ratchet busy I guess that means it’s just myself and Soundwave at the moment. Have you signed the treaty yet?”

“I haven’t given it to him yet. I wanted to get some high grade first and then we could go over it in my quarters before the party gets into full swing.”

“You know the rule. He has twenty-four hours to decide before he will be escorted off.”

“That was included in the message that Prime sent out, so yes, I know. Afraid I’ll run out on you like the last time I was your guest?” Wheeljack asked with a grin.

Starscream’s optics narrowed. “I should get so lucky, but we still have your old accommodations available if necessary.”

“It warms my spark that you’re thinking of me.”

The seeker waved a servo. “Grab your fuel and make sure to go over the treaty with him.”

Bulkhead nodded and grabbed Wheeljack by the arm and dragged him to the front of the line.

“That sounded like an order,” the green mech said to the vehicon he had just passed by, “and I really didn’t want to end up in the brig again.”

Wheeljack laughed. “Bulk, if you’re not ending up in the brig then you’re not doing it right!”

“Not when you have to have Prime come down and give you the ‘I’m disappointed in you’ speech. Once was enough for me. He nearly had me begging him for the privilege of scrubbing the hull down with a brush.”

The green mech scooped up several cubes of the more potent fuel and swept out of the room with Wheeljack trailing him. They passed by several more small groups of vehicons and eradicons that Bulkhead always greeted with a nod and a wave. Some of the tension left Wheeljack’s stance when they finally entered a room with a pair of berths.

“It’s not much,” Bulkhead said with a wave of his hand, “but we got privacy. Bee is on duty at the moment so we have the place to ourselves.”

Wheeljack tipped back the cube in his hand and took a big swallow. “Now, start at the beginning and don’t leave anything out.”

Bulkhead nodded and took a swig from his portion before he flopped down on his berth. This was probably going to be a long story.

“You got it, Jack.”

~++~

Three mechs worked as fast as they dared, drying off the two sparkling frames now that they had been removed from their special pods. The drenched clothes fell to the side as they grabbed a new one and worked on removing all the excess liquid from the little bodies.

“It’s not too early, is it; I mean the frames will have enough nanites, right?” Megatron asked.

“We don’t have any choice, but they’ll be fine. There haven’t been any cases of rust on board, so they should be safe so long as we are careful. Hopefully, the worst thing will only be that their full
colors will just take a little longer to come in,” Ratchet said as he gazed over to his fellow medic, “but we’ll keep an optic on them regardless.”

The red medic looked up and nodded. “Just about done. Primus, I wish we could have had some more time to practice.”

“Trust me, it never gets easier. All right, finished with this one.”

The red and white medic stepped back from the little frame. Its chest lay open as it waited for a spark to give it life.

“Where should I be, Ratchet?”

Optimus stood stiffly near Megatron’s helm, his optics shifting down to the grey mech’s chest and over to the sparkling frames.

“Cycle your vents and relax. All you have to do is be yourself. We’ll be handing the sparklings to you once they are framed while Megatron reboots. It will be reassuring to them to be near your spark while they adjust to having a frame of their own.”

“Done,” Knock Out said.

“Right then. Megatron, open up and you can activate the separation protocols. I’ll take the first one so you can watch, Knock Out; and then you take the second one. Breakdown, keep an eye on Megatron’s spark readings, this shouldn’t be too stressful for his spark, but be alert just in case.”

The former Decepticon’s chassis split down the center and the plates folded away. Megatron’s spark pulsed a little faster as he waited for the first of the newsparks to leave. The first little light peeped up above its parent spark and Ratchet leaned in with a smile.

“That’s it little one. Come on out, we have a nice frame waiting for you.”

A grimace crossed Megatron’s face as the newspark pulled on the feeder lines that connected it to his own spark. The sharp pain faded after a moment, but left an emptiness behind as the newspark completely split away. The medic’s hands shielded the fragile star and with gentle touches, guided it towards the waiting body. It hovered over the chest for just a moment before it plunged down into it and the chest snapped shut. Soft whirring could be heard and then the visor lit up going from a pale blue to a rich midnight blue. The helm swiveled about taking in the scene around it before Ratchet scooped him up.

“Welcome to the world, Topspin. And here is your creator, Optimus.”

The sparkling chirped and cocked his helm and gazed up at the big mech. The familiar feel of a spark that had nurtured him had the sparkling snuggling in closer to that chest. Ratchet turned from the sight of adoration that practically glowed from the big mech. The pain in his spark could be shunted away while he worked at least.

“Greetings, Topspin. We have been anticipating your arrival for some time now.”

Knock Out sat hunched over, eyeing the second newspark as it began to strain on its tendrils. It broke free and Megatron’s optics dimmed as his system was forced to reboot. The medic cooed at the little bit of life.

“Come on there. Not far to go and you’ll have a frame of your own and then you and your brother can get up to all sorts of mischief.”
“I am not sure that you should be encouraging them that way, Knock Out.”

The red medic didn’t even look up as he guided the little spark to the waiting frame, but one side of his mouth did quirk upward.

“Well, Prime, I have to coax him into the frame somehow.”

The little spark descended into the spark chamber with less hesitation than his twin had. The chest shut and the hum of a tiny engine sounded just before the optics lit up. They were a deeper color than his brother’s with hints of red, making them more of an indigo color. An inquisitive sounding whistle came from the little ground based sparkling before his brother answered with a series of trills and beeps from the arms that held him. Knock Out gathered up the small frame with a smile.

“Welcome, Twin Twist.”

The second sparkling was offered to Optimus and he cradled him next to the first twin. The beeps and whistles from the pair increased as they held what sounded like some sort of discussion.

“Good work team. Our job is done here. Now, I don’t know about you two, but I hear there is high grade in the mess hall and I’m personally going to see if I can soak my processor in enough of it to get tanked.”

“Frag yes! Wait. Let me make the announcement and then Breakdown and I will meet you there.”

“Knock Out! Please, I do not wish their first words to be bad ones! And Ratchet, what about the sparklings? Megatron?” Optimus asked as he held the two little frames that seemed to be engaged in exploring his windshield with glossa and mouth and then critiquing said item.

“Right, Breakdown, any issues with Megatron?”

“Not a single anomaly.”

“Great! See nothing to worry about, as soon as he boots back up you two will have your servos full bonding with the twins and you don’t need us around for that. You did read the datapad I gave you, right?”

The comm system beeped as Knock Out turned it on. “Attention crew: Framing was successful so give a big welcome to our two newest members, Topspin and Twin Twist. On a side note, all high grade must be tested by a medical professional first. We’ll be there shortly to engage in a little QA, Knock Out out!”

“Ha, now we’ll get to the front of the line! Good luck, Prime!” the red medic said with a wave as he exited the room with Breakdown.

Ratchet rested one hand on the doorframe as he gazed back at his friend.

“You and Megatron need to begin forging the four of you into a family. In the old days, we would have had a suite set up for you to use. Soundwave said he’d make sure the path to your habsuite will be clear so as soon as Megatron is online you can head there. You don’t need me here for the few minutes it will take him to reboot, and I need to put some personal things behind me for myself.”

The cheers from outside the room poured in for the moment that the door had been open. The noise didn’t faze the little ones, Optimus noted as he gazed down at the pair in his arms, apparently still intent on taste testing his frame. The noise ceased as Ratchet slipped out.
“Why do I feel like I have just been left to the tender mercies of a nest of scraplets?”

He shuffled the twins about, trying to get them to cease in their activities, but there was very little he could do to stop them with his hands literally full. He glanced over at the sound of a soft ex-vent and sighed in relief when he saw Megatron’s optics light up.

“Thank Primus!”

Megatron looked over at Prime and grinned at the sight of the twins. A quick sweep of the room, however, revealed that they were alone.

“Where is everyone?”

“The medics felt it was better for us to be alone, although I feel that was merely an excuse so they could leave to engage in sampling the high grade rather than waiting for you to finish rebooting.”

“Well, the datapad did suggest a quiet period for the sparklings to get used to their frames away from others was recommended.”

“I know. I just had not expected them to be so active already. I feared I would do some harm to them while you were still returning to yourself. Especially since they seem intent on nibbling on my frame, which is not exactly comfortable. How do you feel now?”

“All systems are reading normal. The humans are in for a rude surprise when they attack us again.”

“Megatron.”

“No, Prime, what they did was an act of war.”

“It was one small group, not all of them.”

“Oh, I’ll wait until Soundwave can determine exactly who and where they are, but not a moment more. I will not sit idly by and allow them to gather strength in order to make another attempt on any of our people again.”

“We cannot just attack them -”

“And what if they come after our ship? After the twins? The most helpless of all of us? How far will they have to go before they drive you past the point of breaking?”

The grey mech pushed himself off the berth and strode over to Optimus. He held out his hands and the small seekerling was offered to him. He smiled down at the tiny fragile life entrusted to him. The dull grey of their plating indicated that the nanites had yet to reveal exactly what colors would adorn their frames. They would have to be kept separate from the rest of the crew until that first layer of protection had formed.

“Primus, made you his representative and you are supposed to ensure the survival of our people, so tell me what does he say about my words?”

“The Matrix is silent at the moment, but we cannot declare war on the humans.”

Megatron’s laugh was sinister sounding enough that the sparkling in his hand glanced up with a rather concerned look.

“Oh, I’ll treat those that attacked us exactly as they have treated us. This is no war, this is survival. Now, let’s get these two back to our quarters so they can begin to explore their new world.”
“We will discuss this further after the twins are recharging.”

“Yes, we will,” the grey mech said with a low rumbling purr as they stepped outside the med-bay.

Noise filtered through the empty hallway and it was obvious that there was a celebration going on elsewhere in the ship. The sparklings held their own discussion as they traveled and at the first intersection, a lone mech stood silently waiting.

“Soundwave, is there a problem?” Megatron asked.


“Thank you, Soundwave. That is good news. Can you see if Ratchet will be able to go over any questions he might have? I am afraid I will be busy before his grace period will be up. Although, you might want to find him soon, he said something about soaking his processor in high grade.”

“Acknowledged,” Soundwave said with another dip of his helm before stalking off towards where the sounds of celebration were coming from.

A chirrup from the little body in his arms had him gazing down at Topspin. The sparkling turned his helm up at the mech holding him and then to the one walking away.

“Yes, you’ll be seeing him again. And he’ll be bringing someone along that might be a playmate for you two.”

“Laserbeak?”

Megatron nodded. “Who better to play with them and keep an optic on them at the same time then him? He is the closest in size to them after all.”

The rest of the walk held only the noise of the sparklings and the sound of their pedes as they echoed in the empty halls. The door to their suite had a pair of vehicons in front of it. They saluted the pair.

“Everything is prepared, sir. Nothing down low that might harm them and enough energon for all of you. Let us know if there is anything else you need.”

“Thank you, Raoul. We appreciate that you two are missing the celebration, but hopefully someone is saving some high grade for you both.”

Raoul dipped his helm. “It’s an honor, sir. And the rest of the guard said they would save some for us.”

Optimus placed his palm over the key plate and the door slid open revealing the sitting area. Two sofas capable of handling even their large frames sat across from each other leaving the middle of the room empty. A long counter stood along one wall and on it was numerous cubes of energon along with a few datapads. As soon as Megatron stepped inside, the door closed behind him. He engaged the privacy lock and strode over to the nearest chair. He placed Topspin down on the floor at his pedes and Prime settled his twin next to him. Megatron stepped carefully over them and grabbed a cube from the stack before turning back towards Optimus. His optics fell down to watch as the twins explored each other’s frame with a curiosity that was delightful to watch. Little servos touched and poked and smiles lit the faces as the pair began to learn about themselves and each other. Hints of their emotions still trickled through the creator bond he had with them, but it was muted now and easily blocked if necessary. His spark felt more like his own than it had in a long time and he could now turn his processor to the new conflict that hovered over the horizon. The many years of war with the other mech meant that he knew that this latest fight would not be an easy one, but he would
win it, whatever it took. The new lives at their pedes meant there was no other acceptable outcome as far as he was concerned. He would make Optimus realize the danger the humans posed to them all.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, but the flu caught me and it's taken me a bit to get writing on a more regular basis. Hopefully, the next chapter won't take as long.

As always, please feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed and feedback is always appreciated.

Have a bit of fluff with a side of plot. : )

Optimus stared down at the twin in front of him that he was trying desperately to get some fuel into. Twin Twist had a vastly different idea on the whole situation should go. He would lift the specially made smaller sized cube close to that intake and tiny servos would quickly dip into the cube and splash about as soon as it got close enough even as the mechling chirped in delight. The glee he felt over the bond had him trying to counter it with encouragement to drink the liquid, but to no avail. The sparkling’s servos remained entrenched inside the cube.

“I think that datapad failed to mention more than a few things about the proper care of sparklings,” he muttered to no one in particular.

Megatron’s laugh had him gazing over to find that the other mech wasn’t having any more luck than he was. The sparkling in front of him wanted no part of what the former warlord was offering either.

“Perhaps then we should just wait until they are hungrier than they are now, because this is obviously not working.”

“The pad said that they should be fed at regular intervals because of their small tanks and by the timeline given, this is when they should be fueled. I must say, I am rather surprised you can laugh about this.”

Megatron’s grin was sharp and full of pointed denta. “Well, I’ve had more experience with propaganda than you so really, it’s not that surprising to me that they left a few things out of it. I frequently found that those in charge left important details out of documents. And you have to admit, it is a bit funny. After all, we have commanded armies that were willing to die on our orders, but we can’t convince these two that this fuel is something good for them. Add to that their sheer joy of them discovering something that amuses them and well, there isn’t much else to do but concede defeat and laugh along.”

Optimus chuckled and shook his helm. “Fair enough. Although I cannot see how you can compare a datapad on caring for sparklings to political propaganda. However, I suppose there is nothing to do but try and clean them up now.”

The grey mech swept up Topspin and held him in the palm of his servo. The little seekerling lay belly down on the palm while the little winglets quivered above him. More delighted squeals came from the sparkling as he was swooped about in the palm that had crushed many a spark.
“Really, Megatron, I do not think that is safe. You should have a firmer grasp on him.”

“Nonsense. He needs to learn about all of his sensors. Look at him, he is enjoying the feel of air flowing over his wings, and that is something he needs to experience. Personally, I’m looking forward to when he masters the use of his magnets and I can take him flying.”

“Primus,” Optimus breathed out, “I do not know if I will be able to watch that. I am not sure why fliers ever decided that carrying their sparklings on their alt form was a good idea.”

“Not to worry, Optimus, I won’t be taking him out alone. I’ll make sure there are several others along just in case something goes wrong.”

“You know, I have always wondered why a miner was forged a flyer. Was that difficult to adjust to, being underground so much?”

Another laugh left the grey mech along with the happy trills of the sparkling. Twin Twist added in his own squeals from his perch as he obviously appreciated the sensations that his twin shared with him.

“That would be because I wasn’t. My first alt form was more of an all terrain vehicle, very sturdy, but so very slow. The first time I saw seekers flying overhead of me shortly after I arrived in Kaon, I knew that was something I wanted. As soon as I had saved up enough from my arena winnings, I upgraded myself. In fact, it wasn’t too long before the war started. My first flight up was rather inelegant I was told, but still I found that flying had a freedom that I relished greatly.”

Megatron paused mid-swoop and gazed over at the red and blue mech where the other sparkling was carefully contained against his chassis.

“You know, I think it might be something you would enjoy as well.”

“I like my alt form, thank you very much. I prefer to keep my pedes on the ground, so Twin Twist and I will be happy to stay there while you two take to the air.”

Megatron nodded before he opened the door to the newly created wash rack. Special drains had been created that would allow liquid out but wouldn’t trap the smaller limbs of the sparklings. Numerous spray nozzles at different levels were placed towards the middle of the area. The original design had been for one large mech and two sparklings, but adding another large mech made the fit a bit tighter. At the end nearest to their living quarters stood two large drying vents, while against the far wall a large tub sat on a supply cabinet near the lone sink along with a container of diluted solvent. He put Topspin down and stepped over him to grab the container. The edge of the tub nearly collided with Prime’s helm as the other mech reached down to pick up the other sparkling.

“He was fine, but now you are going to have to move back so I can fill this up.”

“I just worry that they will be stepped on.”

“Contrary to popular belief, I do look where I put my pedes, you know,” the grey mech said as he half filled the tub with a mixture of water and solvent.

Optimus took several steps backwards while Megatron placed the tub in the center of the space. Prime carefully lowered the pair into the soapy solution. There were squawks of outrage from the twins as soon as they entered it.

“Is it too hot?”
“No, I made sure it was a moderate temperature just like that pad said to. I just think they don’t care for the feeling of the whole thing.”

The feeling over the bond only confirmed that as distaste for the sensation the twins were experiencing came through to the two adults.

“Oh, my. I think Topspin has found the program for his magnets,” Optimus said as he lifted his hand back out with a sparkling dangling off of it by his servos and pedes.

The laughter from Megatron had the little one grinning from where he hung upside down from Optimus’ servo. Twin Twist, however, figured that if his brother could escape so could he. His little feet scabbled at the side of the tub as his servos clung to the rim of the tub and he desperately tried to pull himself out of the liquid. Megatron reached over, pressed just under Topspin’s arms, and caught the sparkling as he dropped off the other mech’s servo. The grey mech grinned down at the sparkling that was gazing at his own servos with a rather surprised look.

“Clever little mech aren’t you? I can see you take after me. I will say that the pad was right about that at least; just a firm touch under the arms and you can deactivate the magnets yourself. Now back in the tub with your brother. Little mechs that play with their energon have to have it cleaned off, we wouldn’t want anything to slow down the growth of your nanites, do we?”

Topspin gave a plaintive beep as he was placed back next to his brother in the soapy solution. Megatron carefully began rinsing him and Twin Twist settled back down as escape seemed impossible for the moment. Indigo optics narrowed as they watched his brother get washed and then his little servos began pushing liquid onto Topspin as well. His brother’s visor turned towards his traitorous twin and brightened at his ‘help’ before his servos began to shove bath water back at his brother. The noise level skyrocketed as the pair beeped and laughed as an all out splash war erupted between the two.

“Well, that is one way to get them clean,” Optimus said.

The first sparkling scooped out of the bath was handed to him and he gingerly rubbed a drying cloth all over the little frame being mindful of the wing nubs. The soft hum of a contented engine brought a smile to his face.

“Ah, you like this part of the process at least.”

Topspin sprawled across the palm that held him and his visor dimmed as he watched his brother undergo the same thing he had just gone through. Optimus smiled as he gazed at the trusting little spark in his hand, the visor falling dark as the little one fell into recharge where he lay.

“Looks like recharge for the pair of them. Twin Twist is shutting down as well,” Megatron said as he wiped down the little frame in his servo.

“But they have not fueled yet.”

“Optimus, we just got them cleaned up from the first failed attempt. It’s obvious they are going to do things on their own timeline; we just need to figure out what works for them. Come; let’s place them in their berths.”

The two mechs carried their charges back into the main sitting area before heading to the room adjacent to what would have been Megatron’s berth room alone, but now was shared by the two of them. Inside the smaller berth room sat two pallets across from each other, but lower to the ground than what an adult would use, while the middle area had been left open as a play area for the pair.
They had barely placed them down when wails of distress and then a surge of panic across the bond came from the pair and the two mechs quickly gathered them back up.

“They must be used to feeling another spark, both mine and their brother’s. I don’t want to have to hold them for their recharge periods -”

“Push the two berths together so that there is enough room for them to sprawl but still be close to each other.”

“Yes, that should work,” Megatron said as he scooted one berth across the room with his pede.

This time when they placed the sparklings down, the pair curled into each other with a soft purr. Optimus grabbed a thermal cover and draped it over the twins. As quietly as they could, the two left the sparklings to recharge in peace. As soon as the door slid closed, Optimus spun on his heel to face the other mech as he placed a hand on Megatron’s shoulder.

“Did you mean it when you said you trusted me?”

Red optics blazed brighter at first, but Megatron finally grunted something that sounded like a yes.

“Then how can you doubt that I would not do everything in my power to keep those two safe? So trust me when I say that there is a better way than just barreling in cannon blasting against the humans responsible without having any dialogue with the local government first.”

“Waiting will only give them time to build up strength,” Megatron hissed in a low voice, afraid to disturb the pair that rested not far from them.

“And we let Agent Fowler and his government work on the problem as well. Remember they injured him and damaged one of their structures; his government should be as outraged as we are about the attack. This way they will feel involved versus threatened. We do not want them to see us as a threat as well.”

“And what if they are unable to discover anything? Waiting is a dangerous gamble.”

“We offer Soundwave’s services. Or really anything else they might need, but if we try to keep them involved than they will not feel quite so threatened by our mere existence. Let me talk with them and we can see what they have learned and what they might be planning.”

“Fine. We will try it your way, for now.”

“Thank you, Megatron. And know this, should they attack this ship, I would be right there at the front making sure they could not go any further into it. So while we have a few moments of quiet, let us see if Agent Fowler has any news for us.”

“I’ll get the console out of the berth room, that way we can hear the twins easier when they begin to stir.”

“Good idea, I will clean up the remnants of the fuel out here.”

The two of them worked quietly and in no time at all, the fueling disaster was erased and the console placed in front of one of the sofas. Optimus activated the device and waited for the screen to reveal the bridge. As soon as the spymaster appeared, Prime nodded.

“Soundwave, we need you to get us a secure line to the human communication system. I have what Agent Fowler calls his phone number and we need to contact him.”
“Acknowledged.”

Nothing appeared to be happening except the visor of the mech dimmed and then brightened.

“Connection established.”

“Thank you,” Optimus said.

Several beeps could be heard and then a gruff voice said, “Hello, this is Agent Fowler.”

“Agent Fowler, this is Optimus Prime.”

“Prime! What’s happened now?”

“I was calling to verify your status.”

“Status? Oh, how am I doing - healing up nicely, thanks for asking. I was released from the hospital yesterday, why?”

“Have your people made any advances in discovering exactly who and where those who attacked us that day are? We do not wish to be caught unprepared again, not with the newsparks finally framed.”

“What? I thought that wasn’t supposed to happen for a few more months!”

“Yes, well, the medics deemed them mature enough to survive so we framed them since we nearly lost Megatron and the newsparks in that last attack.”

“I haven’t heard anything, but I’ll check with my superiors.”

“We are willing to assist however we can. It is to both of our benefits if these individuals are neutralized before they can do any more harm.”

“No kidding. I’ll get back to you as soon as I find out what has been going on. I’ve been out of the loop for a bit while I was recovering.”

“Thank you, Agent Fowler.”

The click of the call ending had Megatron pacing back and forth with an agitated growl.

“So we know nothing because he knows nothing!”

“For the moment, but their government will also be reassured that we are not about to attack any of their population either. And what we do now is we shore up our own defenses here on this ship and any team we send out.”

Megatron slid onto the sofa next to Prime and activated the console, but this time Starscream’s face appeared.

“Megatron, Prime, is there a problem?”

“No. But I have a mission for you. I want you to go over every entrance, every part of this ship and come up with defensive protocols to counter anything the humans might throw at us. And then do the same for any retrieval team we might send out, whether for energon or an artifact. Two days should give you sufficient time to come up with the plans and give the twins enough time to have their colors come in so we can have a formal meeting with all of us.”
“Me? This sounds more like Soundwave’s area of expertise!”

“Normally it would be, but I want new optics to look over everything and this way it won’t pull him away from the database until necessary. Is it too much for you? Should I give this assignment to Dreadwing instead?”

“No, I can do it. Anything else?”

“Any problems?”

“Nothing of concern. The newest arrival is with Ratchet last I heard.”

“Thank you, Starscream,” Megatron said with a nod.

“Yes, thank you, Starscream. We look forward to seeing what insights you come up with,” Optimus said before he closed the channel.

“Nothing more for us to do than relax before the twins awaken then,” Megatron said.

“I should contact Ratchet and see if there were any problems.”

Megatron placed a servo over Prime’s arm. “If you contact him now he will think it is an emergency and the mech has been stressed enough lately. If there was a problem, I’m sure he would have contacted you.”

Megatron pulled a datapad out of his subspace and settled back against the cushion. Optimus sat on the sofa, back struts rigid.

“Perhaps you are right. I will leave a message at his workstation instead.”

It only took a few minutes for him to send the message out. A few more taps on the keys and he delved back into the Iacon database, perhaps he could help Soundwave find the next key.

“You’re supposed to be enjoying the quiet while we can.”

A small smile crept across the Prime’s face. “Oddly enough, I have found that working in the database is enjoyable.”

The soft laugh had him turning to his, well, he was unsure exactly what Megatron was to him besides a fellow leader and creator.

“What?”

“Primus did say he based you off of Orion and that is something I would expect to hear him say. He loved nothing more than untangling mysteries and finding rare bits of information that had been lost to time.”

“I am sure you are reading reports or studying something of use, are you not?”

“Actually no, I’m not. I’m indulging in reading something I haven’t looked at in a very long time.”

“Military history then?”

“Wrong again, Prime,” Megatron said with a definite smirk.

“What is it?”
He was not sure what to make of this lighter version of Megatron next to him, but he leaned over trying to get a glimpse of the glyphs on the screen that the former warlord held. His processor stuttered over the words that appeared before him.

“Is that - poetry?”

The laughter this time sounded derisive. “Hard to believe someone like me could enjoy something like that?”

“No,” Optimus said with a shake of his helm, “one thing I have learned over our war was never to underestimate you; your processor works in ways that few do. It is more of, that personally, I do not enjoy it. I find it difficult to grasp at times.”

“Ah, well, Orion didn’t enjoy it either until I introduced him to a certain subset of it. Of course, those he preferred me just to read to him. He said my voice had the nuance necessary to pull it off.”

“Really? What type is that?”

“Erotic.”

“What! Mecha write about such personal things?”

“Of course, poetry is about feelings and impressions so what better topic than passion itself?”

“Is that what you are reading now?”

“No, I found my taste for that sort of writing disappeared with him. These are just about ordinary things.”

“Ah, well, that is good. I would not want the twins to learn to read on such material.”

“Not to worry, that particular pad has a lock on it and I haven’t pulled it out since before the war.”

Optimus ex-vented in relief and turned back towards the screen, but now found that his processor ran in a different direction.

“Megatron, what other things do you enjoy in your spare time?”

“Me? What about you? I already revealed my dark secret.”

The red and blue mech stopped even attempting to work through the database.

“I rarely had much in the way of leisure time. What I had, I usually spent visiting with my soldiers, so does that count as a pastime?”

Megatron rolled his optics at that. “No, that doesn’t. That’s just being a good leader or a voyeur.”

He reached into his subspace and pulled out an old scuffed up datapad and held it out to Optimus.

“Here try this.”

The red and blue mech stared at the object as if it was about to combust.

“It’s not that, it’s a collection of old stories that Orion gave to me long ago.”

Optimus ex-vented in relief. “Oh, thank you then.”
He settled back, turned on the device, and across the screen emblazoned the title **Legends of Cybertron**. Perhaps this might be the diversion he needed, he thought as his optics scanned the list of stories in it.

~+~+~

A soft beep had Ratchet lifting his helm up, but his console merely signaled that there was a non-urgent message waiting on his workstation.

“Work calling?”

His optics narrowed as he gazed down at his companion. “I’m a medic, I’m always on call, but no, that is just a message. Probably a revised schedule, Starscream does love to put those out. So, no, you’re not escaping that easy. I told you, you weren’t leaving until after I had you screaming my proper designation.”

Wheeljack grinned up at him. “Do your worst, err best, doc.”

Ratchet’s smile was rather predatory. “I fully intend to.”

His servos begin the gentle assault on the smaller bot’s frame much to the delight of the white and silver mech. His digits traced the Autobot symbol that still graced the chassis of the other mech. In fact, it rode nearly over the other’s spark.

“Perhaps I’ll start with this,” he said softly.

He dipped his helm down and let his glossa just brush along the edges wringing a gasp from the mech.

“Oh, going right for the spark. I like it. You think like a Wrecker.”

“Not a Wrecker anymore, just a Cybertronian like the rest of us. I filed your signed treaty already. Now, I believe there should be less talking and more screaming from you.”

Wheeljack’s laughter was warm and it brought another smile to Ratchet’s face. Maybe this moment had been created by the highgrade, but it felt good to have someone who saw him as more than a medic or officer and he was going to fully enjoy it while he could.

Chapter End Notes

And yes, after rewatching a few of Wheeljack's interactions with Ratchet, I thought he would be the perfect bot to provide him with a distraction.
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

As always feedback is appreciated and feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed.

Enjoy!

The mechs ranged around the table quieted, in reality though, it was mainly Starscream as he had been the one who had been ranting when Optimus and Megatron strode into the room.

“Ah, we were wondering if you two were ever going to come out of your little love nest,” Starscream said as he flipped on the holographic display of the Nemesis.

Before Megatron could retort, Optimus had already glided into the seat next to the seeker with a deferential nod.

“Our apologies, we had a small delay as the twins were not convinced that us leaving their side would be tolerable. Thankfully, the arrival of their caretakers with some interesting things distracted them enough that we were able to slip away.”

The medic’s engine made a rude noise and all optics swiveled towards him.

“We might as well wait because I venture that within a few minutes their guardians will be contacting you.”

Optimus’ helm swung in a negative motion. “No, the twins are not happy we are not there, but that displeasure is being offset by their interest in whatever activity they are currently doing.”

“Brad said something about teaching them how to write. He had all sorts of supplies with him, so yes; I think they are well entertained at the moment. And should they panic, he has orders to bring them to us, wherever we are,” Megatron said.

A slender servo waved towards the display. “Now that that crisis is averted, can we return to the purpose of this meeting?”

“Once more, our apologies, Starscream. Please begin,” Optimus said.

The seeker inclined his helm with a small smile. For whatever reason, the flyer responded better to Prime than Megatron and the two leaders used that fact to their advantage whenever possible.

“After extensive searching through the blueprints and a visual inspection of the ship, I have found that the most likely point for any human would be through the ventilation systems. To that end, I would recommend routing electricity to those that have openings to the outside, electrifying them will keep pesky intruders from getting very far and it would be easy to add an alert as well while we are doing that. Next on the list, we normally keep the corridors leading from the flight deck down with their doors open, but I think we should at least put a basic lock system on them. They would have issues even reaching our panels, much less breaking into them. And we definitely need to stop making them motion activated.”
“Excellent suggestions, Starscream. My main concern is the possibility of the electrified vents harming Topspin. He has discovered his magnets and already we have had to pull him off the walls and the ceiling. Thankfully, we have managed to keep him out of the vents in our quarters so far. Also we need to make sure that it will not kill any humans, perhaps make sure it only stuns them? And perhaps screen all the vents on the interior to keep Topspin out and slow down any humans that might find a way past the initial protection?” Optimus asked.

Megatron nodded. “Yes, those are all good suggestions, how feasible is it to implement them?”

“Most are simple and I can have crews working on them immediately. Routing the electricity will be harder, but in a few weeks, I think we can have that done as well. Screens are easy to install. I’ll have the fabrication crew begin work on those so we can install them first since we have to worry about the sparkling. So are you going to take him flying soon, now that he has use of his magnets?”

“No,” Optimus said with a firm voice, “I am not sure that the little one is ready for such an undertaking.”

Megatron grinned as he glanced over at the red and blue mech. “More like you’re not ready for him to have such an adventure.”

“Ah. Now as for the retrieval teams -”

Soundwave tilted his helm as if studying the display and at the other mech’s quiet study, Starscream’s plating flared up as he waited for the other mech to find a flaw in his observations.


“Put him through the channel in here,” Megatron said as pushed a few keys on the main console.

“Prime!” Fowler’s voice boomed out over the speaker.

“Agent Fowler, do you have any news for us?”

“Yes, about that. My superiors want to discuss the situation in person after the whole problem with my phone during the last attack. We can set up one of our bases to accommodate the two of you so you can meet with them.”

Megatron’s optics narrowed and he shook his helm with a hiss. Optimus held up a servo when it looked like those bared fangs were about to snarl something aloud.

“Although we should be wary of electronic surveillance, a meeting in person would be difficult to do at this time, Agent Fowler.”

“Look, I get that you guys are a little leery after what happened last time -”

“It is not just that, Agent Fowler. We cannot be that far away from the sparklings at this time. If your superiors are willing, we should be able to set up a secure line between us and yourself, if you so wish.”

“Just distract them with a few -”

“It’s not that simple,” Ratchet cut in, “the little ones literally have formed a bond with their two creators which allows them to sense their sparks, and if those sparks get too far away from them they will panic. And on top of that, if they are separated for too long there is a chance that bond could be broken and unless they bond with someone else quickly, we could lose them both. So no, as their medic they are confined to ship until the sparklings can handle that sort of stress.”
“Right then. I’ll let my boss know and get back to you.”

There was a buzz and then silence.

“Truly, we are both confined to ship?” Optimus asked.

The medic ex-vented. “Ideally, yes, although if it was an emergency then one of you could probably
leave so long as the other one was here for the twins. And I do mean here, as in physically with them
the whole time the other is gone. But I would recommend against it if at all possible. Stressing them
like that when they are this young can be detrimental to their development.”

“Understood. Hopefully, the humans will be willing to work with us on this,” Optimus said. “Now
about the teams, Starscream, what suggestions do you have?”

“If we are going to prevent a repeat of the last time, we need to send out larger teams with mixed
frames. We have to be less concerned with stealth and go for speed. Is there anything you can do,
Soundwave, to prevent our signals from being blocked?”

“Why not just send flyers then?” Megatron asked. “Ground based mecha will just slow the others
down.”

“Because having both types on site ensures that the team has the necessary flexibility to deal with
any situation and it will be that much harder for the humans to try and neutralize all of them.”

“We have always worked with trying to blend in so as not to gain notice,” Optimus said with a wave
of his hand, “this seems to be too aggressive.”

“I disagree, Optimus. He didn’t say anything about going after the humans and I personally do not
want my med-bay full of mecha ever again. The humans have proven themselves willing to go to
extremes to track us down; so I think Starscream’s suggestions should be implemented at once.”

“Agreed,” Megatron said with a nod.

“Soundwave: Will analyze current frequencies and attempt to find sufficient protection for
communication channels.”

Prime ex-vented and at the looks from the rest of the table finally nodded his helm.

“I will concede to that if that is what everyone thinks is best, but make sure that anyone on a team
knows that they are not allowed to go on the offensive. They may protect themselves, but no
retribution. Now as for the other thing, even just a signal that could not be blocked would be of great
benefit, Soundwave. Perhaps a channel or frequency that we normally do not use so there is no
mistaking that it is anything but a distress signal.”

The visor on the mech brightened as he gave a slight nod. “Soundwave: Study problem.”

“Thank you, that is all we can ask of you. Both Megatron and I are grateful for all the support you
three have given us while we have been busy with the twins.”

“Yes, and those two are getting a little anxious so I think it is time to take a break so we can go see to
them. We now have more flexibility since their colors have fully come in so comm us if there is a
problem.”

Megatron pushed away from the table and Optimus was only a step behind him as the pair walked
through the corridors. The feeling over the bond was that of slowly creeping anxiousness as the
twins wondered where their creators were. The two big mechs pulsed back their assurance that the twins were not alone.

“It was nice to see other mecha for a little while at least.”

“Agreed. Although, we can bring them with us while we walk the ship. It would give them a chance to socialize more as well.” Optimus said.

Megatron turned with a grin. “I’m surprised to hear you say that. I thought I was overprotective, but you seem to be so even more than me.”

The Prime ducked his helm with a small smile. “Well, yes, I have never had such small beings entrusted directly to me before so my normal coding to protect might be a little more active than usual. But being there to oversee their interactions will help mitigate that issue, I hope.”

The big grey mech slapped Optimus on the back with a laugh. “I have to pity anyone who dares to break their spark. If you don’t get them, I will.”

Optimus shook his helm at the good-natured jibe as he pressed the access button to their quarters. The door slid open and the servos holding the twins back was the only reason the two didn’t just fall out of the door when it opened. Squeals and chirps came from the pair as they held up their arms to their creators. Prime picked up Topspin and brought the little one close to his chest. The distinctive click of magnets against his chassis sounded before he felt the more adventurous of the two climbing up his frame until he was perched on his shoulder with servos holding tightly to his neck cables. A slightly muted shade of the blue of his helm adorned the extremities of the seekerling, but the red accents on the little ones shoulders and wings was the exact shade that graced the shoulders the little one sat on right now. Topspin’s chassis, however, carried a softer grey than what Megatron’s frame bore, giving the impression of a muted blending of the colors of his two creators. Twin Twist was a reverse of his brother, with his chassis being the same blue as what Topspin wore, but his limbs were the dove grey found on the chest of the other. Even though their frames were not identical, there was no doubt when looking at the pair that they were twins.

Megatron placed Twin Twist in between a shoulder spike and his helm and waited until he felt a firm grip on the spike before turning towards Optimus.

“Would you two like to go see more of the ship and those who live here?”

Excited chirps and little servos pointed outward answered his question.

“Looks like they’ll be joining us while we survey the ship,” Megatron said as he turned towards the two vehicons who had been in charge of the pair. “You can either follow along, or wait for us to comm you.”

“We’ll follow along, sir. Just in case,” Brad said with a nod. “I’m afraid we didn’t get very far with the writing lesson.”

“More like drawing lesson,” Dave said with a soft laugh.

“Which turned into a cleaning session.”

“Yes, we have noticed that is a natural progression with them as well,” Optimus said with a chuckle. “At least, they take the cleanings better than that first time.”

“The rec room should be mostly empty since it’s between shifts, that would be a good place to introduce them to a few individuals.”
“A sound idea. Even more than being able to get out and socialize, I am looking forward to when the
danger has abated enough that we may drive on the roads once more.”

The grey mech glanced over at his companion. “The halls are large enough that you could drive
through them, you know.”

“I do not think that would be fair since it is not allowed unless there is an emergency, and this is most
assuredly not one.”

“And the longer we are all stuck on this ship, the more relaxed that rule will become and since we
are confined to the ship already, I’m sure we can get your medic to give you permission to transform
and drive around, for your health of course.”

“It has been quite a while.”

Megatron couldn’t keep the grin off his face as he finally managed to get Optimus well, maybe not
break but at least to bend the rules a little.

“Yes, and you can take the twins for their first ride at the same time.”

At that statement, excited beeps came from both sparklings. Being out and about with their creators
had the bond already thrumming with pleasure from the pair, but this new activity sounded even
more fun to them.

Optimus paused in the middle of the hall. One heavy ex-vent and then he carefully removed Topspin
from his perch and handed the sparkling over to Megatron. The whirs and clanks of gears echoed
around them until the large truck rolled forward on its wheels just a little. The door closest to the little
group swung open and Megatron placed the twins on the seats inside the cab. The excited squeals
had the big red and blue truck opening the windows a little to allow some of the noise to escape.

Megatron slapped his helm with his open servo as the truck rolled forward at what seemed like an
impossibly slow pace. It looked like a mini-bot pulling a trailer would go faster uphill than what
Optimus was currently doing.

“Pit! I can walk faster than that!”

The grey mech strode forward and in a few strides was past the other mech. He spun on his heel and
pointed a finger at the semi as he continued to move in the direction towards the rec room.

“See this is me, walking backwards faster than you. I’ll get behind you and push you if you don’t
actually engage your engine!”

“Megatron, language, please. I am merely going slow to ascertain how the twins handle the
movement. I do not wish to distress them.”

The grey mech threw his servos over his head. “Optimus, you are more likely to send them directly
into recharge from boredom!”

He stomped back towards the truck and then past it until he stood just behind the trailer hitch. He
wasn’t terribly surprised when he felt the wheels lock up as he attempted to push the former Autobot
faster down the hall. However, he was surprised at exactly how well the truck resisted his pushing.
He leaned forward more, put more of his weight against the Prime, and revved his own engine as he
gave the semi another shove. A soft chuckle was the only response he got from Prime as the vehicle
stayed exactly where it was.
“Help me shove this aft to the rec room. Apparently he’s broken down,” the former warlord said as he glanced over at the pair of vehicons.

The two held aloft their hands and took a few steps away from what was sure to be an odd contest between the two.

“Sorry sir, you’re on your own with this.”

“Cowards,” Megatron said with a grin even as he tried to contain his own laughter.

Without a trailer, it was hard to find a good place to push against and he wondered if Prime had all wheel drive in this Earth based vehicle he had scanned. He placed his servos under the back end and started to lift but the front wheels spun and the truck pulled out of his grasp.

“That is cheating, Megatron. You are supposed to be pushing not picking up.”

The amusement over the bond was not just Optimus’s as he could clearly hear the delight coming from the twins as well. Primus only knew what the other mech was whispering to the pair now that he noticed that the windows were closed once more. He braced himself against the back of Prime and had started to push when an alert came in.

:Incoming transmission on a Decepticon channel, requesting Megatron to the bridge.: 

“Well, you’re saved from humiliation by that timely intervention, Prime. Although, I bet I’ll still beat you to the rec room.”

“We will see,” Optimus said.

The smug tone had Megatron shaking his helm and laughing as he stalked towards the bridge.

“Well, are you two ready to keep up with me?”

Brad glanced over at Dave who gave a shrug of his shoulders.

“Of course, sir.”

“Good.”

The seatbelts tightened over the two little frames in his cab.

“Hold on,” he said to the twins.

His wheels spun for a moment as they worked to gain traction on the floor, but once they caught, the big blue and red truck tore down the hall. The vehicons shifted and raced after the big semi with a squeal of their tires. The truck did slow down, at least a little and it wasn’t long before the little group came to a stop in the hall before their destination. The truck’s door swung open once more and the vehicons transformed back to their root mode. Dave reached in and plucked out the nearest sparkling to hand over to Brad and then took Twin Twist into his arms. They took several steps back to allow room for Optimus to shift back as well. As soon as Prime had regained his pedes, he turned to the pair.

“Of course, we traveled at a very slow rate here, did we not?” he asked with narrowed optics at the pair.

The vehicons nodded. “Yes, sir. Very sedate, sir.”
Optimus smiled as he took the twins back from their caretakers. “Excellent. I was not about to let Megatron see me break anymore rules than I had already done so.”

Brad and Dave shared another look. Pit knew what was going on with those two, but since it seemed more amusing than dangerous they would pretend that there was nothing to see. After all, genuine laughter was something that only a few had ever heard coming from their leader recently and that was a mood they did not need to fear.
Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

I appreciate all the support between kudos, follows and comments that let me know that people are still enjoying this story, so a great big thank you to all the readers!

As always feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed and feedback is appreciated!

Enjoy!

Megatron strode onto the command deck with a smirk still on his faceplates. Pushing Optimus out of his comfort zone had just become his favorite new hobby. The other mech really sucked slag at having fun and the twins deserved as much fun as he could give them. The previous evening he had even left that datapad out and unlocked on a shelf in their berth room. He’d seen the other mech stare at it when he casually mentioned that was the one that Orion had had him read from.

He shook his helm to clear his thoughts when Soundwave turned at his approach with a tilt of his head. Starscream, however, lifted his wings and they rustled against his plating even as the seeker’s optics shifted about and Megatron knew something was up.

“Who is it?”

“Shockwave,” Starscream said. “We thought he had perished in that explosion!”

“Put him through.”

“Lord Megatron.”

“Shockwave, I was under the impression you had gone offline.”

“I nearly had, but I managed to repair myself. I’ve been stranded on Cybertron all this time. I detected space bridge activity, but when I arrived at the coordinates, whoever was there had left already. At least they had left some supplies behind which helped me to build myself a communicator.”

“That would have been me and my team. I’m glad you managed to contact us. Have you heard the message I sent out across all our channels?”

“Yes, if not for my analysis that confirmed it was indeed your voice and speech pattern, I would have thought it was an Autobot ploy.”

“No, no ploy. Do you wish to join us? Doing so will mean you will have to abide by the terms of the treaty.”

“I will follow you, my liege.”

“It’s just Megatron now. Optimus and I are currently sharing leadership until we can get a civilian government up and running. Send us your coordinates and we will bridge you back. You’ll have twenty-four hours to exam the treaty and sign it. If you choose not to sign, you will be escorted off
“the ship and you will be on your own.”

“Understood. I would like to ask Starscream why I was left behind like so much scrap though.”

The wings drooped on the seeker and he twisted his servos together. “We didn’t think anyone could survive that explosion and there was no spark signature in the area. We had no idea you were functioning and on Cybertron!”

There was a pause and the seeker’s wings fluttered nervously.

“That is...logical. Transmitting coordinates now.”

“Excellent. Once out of the space bridge, we will ground bridge you up to our ship and I will meet you there.”

“Understood.”

The channel went dead and Megatron turned towards Soundwave.

“Bridge him to the large conference room. I’ll go over the treaty with him and explain to him the situation.”

“Acknowledged.”

“Megatron,” Starscream said as the grey mech pivoted to leave, “how does his arrival affect the chain of command?”

“Never fear, Starscream, you will not be taken off the council of advisors, so there will be no change. I do think he would be an asset working on the defensive projects concerning the humans, though, but that I will discuss with everyone once he has actually signed the treaty.”

He lengthened his strides in order to reach the conference room before Shockwave. Turning the mech’s impressive intellect towards either the database or defending themselves against the humans would be a powerful win for them. Distantly he felt the twin’s delight ramp up along the bond, he wondered what the slag they were getting up to now with Optimus. No matter, he would find out soon enough, he thought with a grin and a shake of his helm.

The door opened at his approach and he stopped where he was when the green vortex appeared at the opposite end. The single red optic preceded the hulking purple and silver frame as it stalked through the portal.

“Megatron.”

“Shockwave, it’s good that you survived.”

He pulled a datapad of the treaty out of his subspace and held it out to the other mech.

“This is the treaty and I will answer any questions you might have concerning it.”

That single optic focused on him and he waited for the other mech to reply.

“My main question is how did this all come about? Logically, I can find no reason for you to agree to this.”

“It came about because of a series of events. It all started when we found out that I was right and Prime was not Orion, not really. Next came Orion returning with me to this ship after we defeated
Unicron when Prime unleashed the full power of the Matrix to seal him back up in the core of this world. The Autobots then restored their Prime through the use of Vector Sigma and Orion was lost to me once more.”

“Is there physical proof that the deities exist?”

Megatron ex-vented. “I personally saw Unicron’s spark in the heart of this planet. However, I have spoken with both Unicron and more recently Primus. I always doubted either existed as well, but not anymore, both seem to meddle in the affairs of Cybertronians when it suits them.”

“Interesting. I would like to see copies of your memory files in order to better exam this event.”

“Perhaps eventually, but we have other more important things that you need to be aware of first. Shortly after Orion was made Optimus again, I discovered that our time together had left me with newsparks. They are the main reason for this truce. Optimus is their co-creator as he had to spark merge with me in order to keep me functioning and the twins alive.”

“Newsparks! So little is known about them. If I could study them perhaps I could ascertain exactly how they are formed. Imagine if we could replicate -”

He narrowed his optics and didn’t bother to stifle the warning growl from his engine. “No, Shockwave. They are my sparklings and if you so much as run a scanner over one, I’ll dismantle you into pieces so small that you couldn’t even be used for spare parts. Do I make myself clear?”

“But the scientific -”

“No, you will not go near either of them! Do not make me ban you from this ship after you just got here!”

His anger and fear at what the scientist would do to the twins unfortunately trickled down the bond and he could feel the twin’s distress. He tried to tamp down his own feelings while pushing his love to them, hopefully that would hold them until he finished here. When a ping came over the private channel he shared with Optimus, he knew that the other mech realized that something was up. He held up a servo as he answered. Shockwave waited with a nod.

:It’s Shockwave - I’ll try and keep my emotions in check. I’ll explain later,: Megatron sent over the frequency.

:Understood,: Optimus said.

“Go on.”

“May I at least access any information that the medics may have? Being able to replicate what you did would be a huge advancement in our understanding of this process and free us from dependency on the AllSpark.”

He waved a servo. “Fine. Keep your distance from them and I’ll tell Ratchet that you may have any information on me and Topspin and Twin Twist that he has.”

“Thank you, Lord Megatron.”

“No need to be so formal. Now if we have that settled, there are two different projects that I think would benefit from your skills, but I’ll need to discuss it with Optimus and our advisors first. Truly you have arrived at a fortuitous time for us.”
“More important than the creation of newspark?”

“Yes.”

“I look forward to assisting however I may.”

“Thank you, Shockwave. Now read over the treaty and I will wait to see if you have any more questions. If you decide to stay, Soundwave will set you up with quarters and a workspace. I know you prefer to work alone and we should be able to accommodate that.”

“Thank you,” Shockwave said with an incline of his lone optic.

Megatron pulled out a chair to wait in as the scientist methodically scanned through the datapad. He took the time to send another reassuring pulse along the bond while he sat there, there was no telling just how long it would take Shockwave to finish going through the treaty.

It took several hours before the other mech had analyzed the whole thing to his satisfaction. The one functional hand traced his glyph signature onto the device and handed it back to Megatron.

“You didn’t have to sign it just yet.”

“No need to wait. I am satisfied with the terms.”

“Excellent. Welcome back, Shockwave.”

:Soundwave, we need quarters for Shockwave and a lab set-up. I have a copy of the transponder list that I can give him and I have his signed copy of the treaty to file.: 

:Acknowledged. Transmitting data.: 

Megatron pulled up his copy of the transponder list for the ship’s inhabitants and pushed a copy of it to Shockwave.

“Information received. Question, what are these unusual names next to the serial codes for the vehicons and eradicons?”

“Those are the designations they have chosen for themselves.”

“How strange. No matter, their serial codes will suffice.”

“No, you will use the names they have chosen. Just as I had to choose my own because I only had a serial number, they too have the right to be called by a proper designation of their own.”

“But -”

“I even have a staff of them that watch over and protect the twins when Optimus and I are otherwise occupied. They are a part of our society and if you truly wish to be a part of this then you need to treat them as the individuals they are.”

“Understood. Where are we going to settle, Cybertron is not fit to live on still.”

“Ah, right now that is true, but we know how to repair her and that is one of the things we are currently working on.”

“How! The scope of such a project would be huge.”
“How good are you at breaking through heavily encrypted databases?”

“It is not my strongest ability. Why?”

“We have a copy of the Iacon database onboard, it was in there that Orion and Soundwave discovered the Omega Lock, a device created by the ancients that will bring Cybertron back to life. We’ve located two of the four keys necessary to activate it. Once we have them all we will be returning to our world.”

“That is one of the projects you mentioned, isn’t it?”

Megatron nodded. “Yes. I’ll need to talk with Optimus and our advisors first, but I will recommend that you work on the protection for our ship and people from the indigenous life-forms of this world instead. Settle in and I will get back to you with your assignment.”

“I will await your orders.”

He pushed away from the table and strode down the hall. It had taken far longer than he had expected and he found that he was anxious to see the twins. Although based on what his chrono said, they were most likely in one of their short recharge sessions. At least he could peek in on them and reassure himself that they were fine. Logically, he knew there was no reason to be anxious, but logic had very little to do with sparklings he had found. In front of their door, stood Brad and Dave, their shift not yet over.

“Sir.”

“Shockwave has returned, please make sure everyone knows he is not allowed near the twins unless I or Optimus say otherwise. If he gives you any problems you contact one of us directly.”

“Yes, sir! Do you expect him to try something?”

“I hope I sufficiently emphasized the gravity of the situation to him, but I will not take the chance that his scientific curiosity gets the better of him.”

“Understood. We’ll let the rest of the team know.”

“Thank you. Hopefully the rest of your shift will be boring and you can enjoy your shift off.”

“Thank you, sir. Good night cycle to you as well.”

He nodded and opened their quarters. The door slid aside and revealed Optimus reading on one of the sofas. Bright blue optics watched him with - was that concern he saw in them?

“What happened? If dealing with him was going to be that stressful perhaps I should have done it.”

Megatron stalked through the small space until he reached the other wall and then pivoted to face the other mech.

“Trust me, you would have reacted the same way. Shockwave is an excellent scientist, however, his social skills are somewhat lacking. I had to threaten to rip him to pieces to get him to back off from his desire to study the twins.”

“Study? What do you mean?”

“With him, that frequently means something unpleasant for the recipient. He wants to figure out how newsparks are formed and he’s obviously never had a chance to study one, much less two of them. I
already warned Brad and told him to pass along the new rule that he is not allowed to touch the twins without our express permission.”

“Is he dangerous to them?”

“I hope not, but I prefer to err on the side of caution. I do need to send Ratchet a note saying that he is allowed access to any data he might have, that was the concession I made to appease his curiosity. In spite of everything, we could really use his help against the humans.”

His fingers drummed against the wall. “Frag it all. I was hoping to maybe peek in on the twins, but I’m too worked up still and I’m afraid I would wake them.”

“Go and see that they are fine, perhaps then you can relax.”

With a shake of his helm, he strode over to the sofa and sat next to Optimus.

“I know they are perfectly safe, after all you were standing watch over them. So tell me, how long did it take you to get to the rec room?”

The soft laugh had him turning his head to watch the other mech.

“I am sure you would have found the pace far too slow for your taste, but the twins enjoyed their first ride and then visiting with those in the rec room.”

“Tell me about it.”

“Some of my old team was there, Arcee and Bumblebee to be exact. Topspin was his usual self, climbing all over everything and everyone, but Twin Twist apparently paid more attention to the writing lesson then he let on as he drew at least one recognizable glyph on the table while we were talking.”

Megatron laughed. “Really? What did he use?”

“Energon from a cube, of course. At least our visit gave everyone a chance to see that they were truly innocent sparklings that we all must protect. I was well pleased with how it went.”

“I am sorry I missed it, but I am glad that you and them enjoyed yourselves. However, you know you could have gone out to visit them again while the twins were recharging.”

“Perhaps, but I enjoy reading stories to them from that datapad that you gave me as they fall into recharge too much to give that up. And once I start reading those stories, I do like to finish them.”

“Yes, but if you wished to go see your medic, now is the time to do it, now that I can take over. I saw how he watched you before you had to move in here with me.”

A heavy ex-vent and the creak of cables and plates as Optimus squirmed a little from where he sat.

“Did you not once say that I was the guardian of the spark and frame that I am in?”

Megatron shifted a little to better face Prime. A soft ex-vent escaped him as words said in anger came back to haunt him.

“I was wrong to say that. I was angry and hurt and I took it out on you, and for that I am sorry. Of us all, you bear the least amount of guilt for everything that has happened. As Primus explained to me, you are your own mech, created by him to be the bearer of the Matrix that our people needed. So go see your medic if that is what you wish.”
Optimus rubbed one hand over his optics.

“Thank you. I realize now that I should have asked more questions about the situation before trusting the Council as I did. It is part of why I am cautious now, I learned too many harsh lessons those first few stellar cycles. As for Ratchet, he deserves someone who can put him first and I am afraid that the twins will always come first with me and that would not be fair to him. What about you? Surely, you could have gone to visit someone to burn off that extra energy with?”

A soft laugh escaped him. “Like you, I find that the twins are my top priority and there is no one I desire like that. However, we could leave the twins to their caretakers outside and I could go throw you around the training room if you’re willing.”

“If not for the fact that I would be afraid of the twins waking without us here, I find the idea of sparring a good one. It would be an interesting challenge to spar for fun instead of forced to fight for real.”

The sound of the twin’s door opening had them both turning to watch as the pair scampered out. Megatron could only laugh as Topspin pulled his brother along as fast as he could towards their creators.

“Every time you two come out of defrag you seem to master a new skill. Are you ready to refuel now?”

A pair of helms bobbed eagerly even as Optimus chuckled.

“Do not believe them. They have already fueled. When they saw that the rec room is where everyone else takes their rations, they insisted they be allowed to do so as well. Brad was kind enough to return here for their cubes and we left them in there to use for the next time. So they are not hungry regardless of what they might indicate.”

A taloned servo reached down and scooped up the pair and placed them between Optimus and himself on the sofa.

“Well, then perhaps we could go see more of the ship?”

“Beeeeeeeeeeep!”

“I take that as a yes then,” Megatron said with a laugh.

“Perhaps up to the flight deck so that they can see the sky for a few minutes.”

“That will probably give Topspin ideas, but yes it would be nice to feel the wind against my plates.”

The sparklings were scooped up into their creator’s arms with smiles and bright optics on their shining faceplates. They had just made it to the door when a ping came through the officer’s channel.

:Incoming transmission: Agent Fowler’s communication device.: 

:Put him through to our console, Soundwave.: Optimus said as he handed Topspin over to Megatron who squawked at the sudden change.

“Hush for a few minutes, little one, your creators need to talk with someone first before we go out.”

The twins made a few more sad little beeps before settling against Megatron’s chassis.

Optimus gently patted them both on the helm with a smile. “Thank you, I will be as quick as I can.”
The console lit up as the device warmed up.

“Agent Fowler -”

“Actually, this is General Bryce. I couldn’t get the connection to go through on my phone even though I input the same numbers.”

“Ah, that would be because we have blocked all incoming human transmissions unless we recognize the number. We can add your number to the list if you wish it.”

“That would be appreciated. We’ve discussed the situation and although it is less than ideal, if having your, uh, sparklings with you is necessary, you may bring them with you to our meeting.”

Megatron’s optics narrowed and deepened in color as he shook his helm from side to side.

“Over my greyed out frame will I allow them to go down to a human base,” he said in a Cybertronian.

Prime gave him a nod before turning his attention back to the human.

“I am afraid that is not acceptable. The sparklings are far too inquisitive and the potential for them to harm themselves too great. We would be worrying about them instead of focusing on our discussion if they were with us on your base. I am sure we could set up a secure video conference so that we may discuss the situation.”

“With MECH’s ability to infiltrate among our people, we need to have this discussion in person. If your people truly are interested in working with us than you need to show a little more flexibility.”

“It is that ability of MECH’s that is another reason why bringing our sparklings off of our ship is not acceptable. If this discussion needs to be done face to face than the only other alternative is for you to come up to us.”

Megatron’s optic ridges rose up and he shook his helm at the other mech.

“Bringing them here isn’t much better than going down there! What if they bring a transmitter or some other -”

“Then we need to make sure Soundwave scans them before they come through the groundbridge.”

“Is there a problem, Prime? Who is that you are talking with?”

“I am with Megatron and the sparklings at the moment and I was discussing the situation with him. We could groundbridge you -”

“We could fly ourselves to your ship if you give us your coordinates.”

Prime was sure that the grey mech’s head was going to come off at the rate he was shaking it.

“As you said, MECH has infiltrated your organization before so giving out our coordinates is not acceptable. We can groundbridge you and your team up to us, however, our only stipulation is that there be none of your communication devices with you since MECH seems to be able to use them for their own purposes.”

“And just as you are wary of coming to our base, we are doubly so of being brought to your ship without any means of leaving on our own if we need to. It seems we are at an impasse.”
Optimus ex-vented and glanced over at Megatron who still wore a scowl on his faceplates.

“Perhaps than we meet somewhere out in the open in a neutral spot, so to speak. That is the best we can offer.”

“I can work with that. Where do you propose?”

“Let me discuss this with Megatron and our advisors since where ever we go we will have to take several caretakers and guards for the sparklings. I will contact Agent Fowler with the coordinates when we come to a decision.”

“Fine, but we will choose the time then.”

“That is acceptable,” the red and blue mech said as he ended the call.

He rubbed one servo over his face plate and was amazed that Megatron had managed to not explode, of course the sparklings in his arms probably helped the situation.

“Optimus, this doesn’t seem like the best course of action to me. I thought the humans regarded you as an ally? There didn’t seem to be a lot of trust on his part.”

Optimus could only nod. “I know. From what Agent Fowler has told me before, Bryce has always been less than thrilled with having giant alien robots in his country, his words not mine. With the destruction of our base, they must feel like their position with us is even more precarious than before. I can only assume that is the cause of the tension between our people, something we must rectify if we can. We cannot afford to have any more humans hunting us than already are.”

A low rumble of Megatron’s engine was the only sound of displeasure he allowed.

“Let’s go walk on the flight deck for a few minutes before we have to call everyone together for a meeting that is likely to be loud.”

Optimus took Topspin back from Megatron as they exited their quarters. Little helms turned to gaze up at the serious expression on their creator’s faces and the excitement from before dissipated from even the sparklings as they walked. The procession was a somber affair as they trekked along the hall, the vehicons falling quietly in behind their leaders. The wind gusted about the small group when they finally reached the top deck and some of the joy crept back into the two sparklings.

Topspin leaned forward with his servos braced against the arm that cradled him as he gazed up with a smile at his creator and was rewarded with a gentle smile as bright blue optics watched him take delight in the feel of the wind against his frame. Twin Twist squealed happily from his perch on Megatron’s hand as he gazed up at the darkening sky with a servo pointed upward at the twinkling lights that were just beginning to appear above them.

“Those are stars and someday we will be returning to them and to our world that is out there,” Megatron said as he stared up into the heavens.

“Someday,” Optimus said softly as he turned his optics up to gaze at the stars.

The wind died down until only a gentle breeze blew about them and for a moment the two leaders stood shoulder to shoulder enjoying the temporary peace they had found.
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

As always, feedback is appreciated and feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed.

Enjoy!

Talons gripped the edge of the table as the grey mech leaned forward to address his companions.

“I know it is rather late to call you all together, but we needed to wait until the twins were in recharge before we summoned you. Optimus has finally managed to negotiate a meeting with the humans and we need to prepare for it.”

Red optics scanned those gathered around the table. A soft snort drew his attention and he glared at the seeker responsible.

“A little melodramatic isn’t that? I mean, you two have been talking with them for a while now.”

“No, it is not,” Optimus said with an ex-vent. “What little trust we had with them seems to have eroded. We will be meeting them at a location of our choice down on the planet at a time of their choosing.”

The red and white medic pushed away from the table with an angry rev of his engine.

“What! I told you, you two can’t be that far from the sparklings!”

“That is part of the emergency - we have to plan to bring them along.”

Ratchet dropped back into his seat with a thud. One servo scrubbed at his chevron.

“Primus. That is a recipe for disaster. I should go along to keep an optic on them.”

“Actually, no, we want you to remain on the ship. If there is an attack, you and Knock Out will be needed here. Also, we’ve been discussing this at great length and should the unthinkable happen - we want you and Soundwave to step up next as their mentors.”

“What! Why would you two even think that is necessary unless you think it is a trap and if that is the case then we should tell them no!”

Ratchet punctuated the last word with a slam of his fist onto the table and a glare at his two leaders.

“We do not, but should MECH attack us, we will be doing everything in our power to make sure that the twins make it safely back to the ship even if it breaks their bonds with us.”

“You!” Ratchet pointed at Megatron. “Get a fraggin altmode with a cockpit in it! That would at least allow you to escape with them if they pin down Optimus!”

“The human’s fighter planes lack the mass I need in order to not have to displace so much of my own, which as you know requires a lot of energy and I refuse to scan for a transport vehicle - we
need my firepower. The best plan we could come up with is this: we leave our channel open throughout the meeting, should the connection be lost, Starscream, you will lead the squadrons in a rescue mission. Besides the sparklings, we will bring whichever of their caretakers is on duty along with Dreadwing and another flyer that Starscream recommends.”

Optimus nodded at Megatron’s words. “Their orders will be to get the twins into myself and I will transform and attempt to get away from the fighting. Megatron and the others will help hold them off to try to ensure that they are unharmed. Hopefully, none of this will be needed, but we want plans in place in case we are attacked.”

Starscream’s servos flung up over his head. “Why do we even care about meeting with them, if we have to go to such great lengths?”

“Because we do not want this government to view us as an enemy.” Optimus held up a hand before the seeker could speak again. “Yes, we have superior technology, but I am tired of fighting and if we can end MECH’s threat then the retrieval teams will be in that much less danger. And what if this government goes to some of their allies and they band together against us? No, we will achieve far more with peace than fighting.”

“And now what we need is a good, defensible location.”

“As far away from other human cities as possible,” Optimus added in with a nod.

“But with a good sightline so that we will see if MECH begins an assault. Soundwave and Starscream, both of you have done extensive searches of this continent, do either of you have a recommendation?”

“Well, if you have it on a mountain top, you’ll definitely have the visual range you want,” Starscream said.

Prime shook his helm. “It needs to be somewhere not too extreme for the humans. And I admit I would worry that one of the twins might tumble off as well.”

Soundwave cocked his helm and then brought up a display.


“Yes, that is a good idea,” Optimus said as he glanced over at Megatron. When the other mech nodded, he turned back towards the spymaster. “Can you connect us to General Bryce, please?”

Soundwave nodded and typed in a few commands on the console in front of him.

“Who is this? How did you get this number?”

“General Bryce, this is Optimus Prime. And you gave us your number. We have found a suitable location for our meeting.”

“Ah, sorry, caller ID was blank. Excellent news, give me the coordinates.”

Optimus read off the numbers on the display in front of him.

“I know that area and that will work for us. We will meet you tomorrow at zero seven hundred local time.”
“We will be there.”

The call disconnected with a soft buzz and Megatron waved their advisors back into their seats.

“Soundwave, keep an optic on that location. I expect the humans will arrive early, but I want to know exactly how many and what they are bringing.”

“Watch only,” Optimus said as his optics narrowed at his fellow leader. “I am more concerned about MECH learning of this meeting and hiding nearby than the General.”

“Agreed, anything within striking distance of our location should be watched. Next, as I’m sure you all know, Shockwave has returned and has agreed to the treaty. Now, he says his decrypting skills are not strong so I suggest we put him in charge of finding some way to protect us from those stasis beams of the humans.”

“He’s not going to be allowed to experiment on us, is he?” Ratchet asked as he glared at Megatron.

“No, and I will make sure he knows that, but you will need to give him whatever data you have on how they affect us.”

“That’s private information!”

“Yes, but without one of those weapons for him to study, he needs something to work with.”

“I know it goes against your beliefs, Ratchet, but Megatron is right. He may have access to my information as I was disabled by it.”

The medic crossed his arms in front of his chassis. “Fine. But I will contact each individual to make sure they are okay with him having that data.”

“Yes, and I meant to send you authorization to allow him access to my medical information along with the twins, so please give him that as well.”

Arms flew up in the air. “What in the name of Primus for?”

“To appease his curiosity about the newsparks since I’ve forbidden him from contact with the twins.”

Ratchet turned his optics towards Prime. “Are you okay with this, Optimus?”

Blue optics glanced over at the grey mech. “If he thinks it will help, then yes, granting him access is a small concession to make.”

“Fine.” A single servo waved about in surrender. “I’ll give him that and contact the others that were hit and see who else is willing to allow that maniac to have that information. Is there anything else I should know about?”

“No, that’s it. Starscream, assign Dreadwing and another flyer to the twin’s detail tomorrow; have them report to Raoul, he’s handling the assignment of who is going tomorrow with his team.”

“Are there any questions?” Optimus asked with a glance about the table. At the continued silence, he nodded. “Then we will see you all on the flight deck early tomorrow. Good night cycle to you all.”

Megatron stood up and strode out of the room, Optimus only a step behind him. Tomorrow would come too soon as far as the grey mech was concerned.

~++~
A soft crimson glow provided only a little illumination as his optics came online. Sensors helpfully noted that there were two additional sparks in the room. He turned his head and found Optimus still on his back, but perched atop him lay two smaller frames with their little thermal covering loosely draped over just the bottom half of them. He couldn’t really fault them at using the other mech as their berth, after all, he did have a much flatter chassis than his own, one he had even used for himself. He pushed himself up and gently touched Optimus’ shoulder. The hum of machinery intensified as the other mech came out of recharge and those blue orbs turned towards him with a question in them. He pointed to the lump on the bright red chest.

“You have a scraplet infestation again.”

“Primus. How do they do that? I can see Topspin managing to traverse us, but Twin Twist?”

“Obviously they work together to get where they want to go.”

“We must reinforce that they cannot wander during recharge cycles. I fear they will come to harm by accident from us when we shift about during recharge.”

“Unless we lock them in their room or us in our room, both of which I am against; I don’t see how you are going to stop them. I say we fetch them when we decide to call it a day and settle them where we want in here. And as for us accidentally harming them, well, I may have altered my coding a bit already. Just as I wrote in an exception for Orion long ago, I may have added in a new bit that stills me when my sensors pick up their unique spark signatures. I don’t know about you, but I feel much better knowing that they are in here with us.”

A long ex-vent left the other mech. “Explain to me how you did that so I may do the same thing.”

“Don’t you have any exceptions written for sharing a berth?”

“No, I have never needed any such thing. Any Autobot that recharged near me I never considered a potential threat and I find it disturbing that you needed such a thing for your people.”

He managed to keep his laughter soft even though there was no humor in it.

“I was forced to create it when I was a gladiator and I found it served me well during the war so I kept it. Here jack in, it will be easier to show you how to do it than explain it,” he said as he shifted to expose the port on the back of his neck.

Blue optics spiraled wide, but Optimus found that he couldn’t move enough to free his cable.

“You will need to remove the twins; I dare not shift enough to reach your port.”

Megatron turned back around and scooped up the little frames from their makeshift berth. Sleepy little beeps came from the pair as they were shifted into their creator’s arms, but the feel of that spark near their own had them snuggling against it and their optics dimmed once more. Optimus pushed up as Megatron twisted once more to expose his port again.

“Are you sure, Megatron? I can just as easily write it from your description.”

“You’ve touched my spark already, so I don’t think there are any real secrets between us anymore.”

“Thank you,” the red and blue mech said as he gently plugged in.

Optimus turned inward and waited patiently as an impressive firewall slowly dismantled itself in front of him. Coding flashed in front of him and he copied the relevant bits until he was able to build
a similar program for himself. He carefully unplugged his data cable and waited as the other mech
shifted off the berth, still cradling the two sparklings.

“We should get our rations since we will need to leave soon, but this is far earlier than the twins
normally fuel so I fear that they will not cooperate.”

“Agreed. Let’s let them recharge until they awaken on their own, we’ll just make sure that some
energon is brought along for them. How long do you think the humans will keep us down there?”

“I do not know. We should plan on an hour or two at the very least.”

“Pit, this is going to suck slag.”

“Megatron.”

“What? It will and you know it.”

“The sparklings-”

“In recharge and they are going to be around soldiers for the foreseeable future. I’m pretty sure their
language skills will be quite, umm, interesting.”

“Not if everyone works to be a good example, and as their creators we should be setting the tone.”

The stare Prime leveled at him would have shriveled lesser sparks, but he just quirked an optic ridge
and waited for the other mech to open the door. One heavy ex-vent of disappointment later and the
red and blue mech released the lock on the door.

Raoul and two of the former Autobots stood outside, the big green one, Bulkhead and one he hadn’t
seen before which meant it had to be Wheeljack.

“Is there a problem, Raoul?” Megatron asked.

“No, sir. Bulkhead and Wheeljack approached me last night about today’s mission.”

“Really? It got around the ship that fast?”

The smaller of the two actually grinned at him. The mech had a stiff back strut to be sure.

“Yes, and we convinced Raoul here that we are the better ‘bots to accompany you down and watch
out for the bitlets.”

“Is that so? And why is that?”

“Wreckers are the best at getting through impossible situations, better than anyone else,” Wheeljack
said with a nod.

Raoul shifted to stand in front of the other two.

“Sir, I know this is short notice, but truly I was thinking of the twins. Both of them have superior
armor and weapons to anyone else on my team and they seemed like the best chance to ensure that
the twins survive if you are attacked.”

“You know what your part in the plan is?” Optimus asked.

The green mech squirmed a bit under the Prime’s direct gaze.
“Yes, Bossbot. If there is trouble, we get the twins into your altmode and make sure you get away with them. Once you’re away we give you as much ground support as we can as long as we can. Although, why don’t we stick them in a flyer and let them get away that way?”

“We do not want to break their bonds, if we can avoid it. And while I am unable to fight in that form, my frame will protect them. If a flyer were to be shot down with them inside, they would most likely perish. I am hopeful that this is not necessary, but we wanted to plan for every contingency possible.”

“And that is the easy part of the mission,” Megatron said with a smirk. “The hard part is keeping the pair out of trouble while we are talking with the humans.”

Wheeljack’s helm cocked as he took in the pair still quiet where they were curled together against the warlord’s chassis.

“Right, I think we can manage.”

“I put you in charge, Raoul, so if you think this is the best solution than I have no problem with it. Do you, Optimus?”

“No, and I appreciate you two volunteering for this. If we hurry, we can still grab our rations before we have to bridge down.”

Raoul reached into his subspace, pulled out two oversized energon cubes, and held them out to the two leaders.

“Here, I anticipated that you would need these and I know the twins are not normally online at this time so if you want to hand them to me, I’ll carry them while you drink your rations on the way up to the flight deck. Bulkhead has the twin’s rations for when they need it.”

Optimus took the cubes while Megatron carefully shifted the pair over to the vehicon.

“Thank you, Raoul.” Optimus smiled at the vehicon as he handed Megatron his portion. “You always anticipate our needs.”

“My job, sir,” Raoul said even as he ducked his helm.

Their pace decreased as they consumed their rations but remained aware of how fast time was passing. They had just finished their cubes when they arrived on the flight deck. Their advisors stood waiting and just behind them were two squadrons of jets lined up and ready for deployment. Dreadwing and another flyer stood next to the three officers. The medic stepped away as he noticed the two behind his leaders.

“Wheeljack? Bulkhead? What are you two doing here?”

Wheeljack stepped around the small group and approached the red and white mech.

“Well, after you vented to me last night about our ‘idiots’,” he said with a vague gesture towards Megatron and Optimus, “going off to do idiotic things, I got to thinking.”

The noise the medic made had the white mech grinning.

“You and thinking, Primus, do I even want to know?”

“I went and talked to Bulk here and then we went to see Raoul. We figured all the idiots should stick
together, and who better to make sure our leaders return than us two?"

“Wreck and rule!” Bulkhead started to shout but lowered his volume at the disapproving look from Optimus.

“So we are doing sparkling duty today, and we’ll make sure everyone returns.”

Ratchet’s optics narrowed as he glared at the smaller mech. Wheeljack’s grin only got bigger.

“You had better.”

“Right then, so shall we carry the twins down?” Bulkhead asked although he didn’t wait for a reply as he held out his arms toward the smaller mech.

Raoul shifted the twins, but before he could hand them over, Optimus put a servo between them.

“Actually, it will be better for Megatron to carry them. Let the humans see him coming not as a warrior, but as a creator.”

A soft snort of amusement came from the circle of officers. The grey mech scowled at the smirk on the seeker, but took the pair.

“I think it better to have my combat abilities ready, but I will carry them. Hopefully, you understand these humans well enough for this to work.”

The twins made a soft beep at the shift, but settled back down after a moment.

“Soundwave, what is the status at the site?” Optimus asked.

“Humans: Arrived one hour ago. Scouted area. Set up temporary dwellings.”

“Any sign of MECH anywhere nearby?” Megatron asked.

“Negative. No visual sightings or transmissions in area.”

“Well, that is one thing at least,” Optimus said. “I suppose we should head down.”

“Don’t forget to leave your lines open,” Ratchet said.

“Yes, maybe even using a key phrase or something to alert us to the fact that the situation on the ground is becoming dangerous?” Starscream asked.

“Good idea, suggestions?” Megatron asked.

“Something not likely to be spoken normally,” Ratchet said.

The Air Commander tapped one talon against his chin. “But it can’t be too obvious.”

“ ‘Till all are one,” Optimus said softly. At the glances his way, he shrugged his shoulders. “I can explain it as a common phrase for our people, which it is.”

“Yes,” Ratchet said with a snort, “when the slag is about to be sucked into the turbines.”

“And you are standing behind them,” Starscream said with a laugh.

A heavy ex-vent left Prime.
“What? That is when it is most commonly used,” Ratchet said.

“I had hoped you would set a better example for the sparklings.”

Megatron grinned. “Optimus seems to forget this is a warship.”

“I do not. I merely hoped that everyone would refrain from such language around the sparklings.”

“Sorry, Optimus, sometimes it’s hard to think that there is not just one, but two sparklings among us. It’s been too long.”

“Of course, we all need to work on being the role models they need.”

“Well, now that that is settled, Soundwave, bridge us down,” Megatron said.

“Acknowledged. Portal opening. Phrase will initiate a bridge opening at a location close to you.”

The swirling field of energy hummed as it opened up and Optimus strode forward with Megatron close behind him. The rest of the party fell in behind the pair. The crackling energy caused the pair in Megatron’s arms to stir, optics on-lined and the soft beeps began to rise in distress. The grey mech glanced down as he felt the unease creep along their bond and at the wide-opticed glances around he held them a little more tightly.

“We will be out in just a moment and you will see get to see many new things.”

The sun had just started its climb into the sky when he exited the portal. Ahead of him, Optimus stopped and turned to offer the twins a smile. The vortex shut down just as the last of their party exited, the last four through took up flanking spots on either side of him.

“Prime.”

Optimus swiveled back around and found Agent Fowler standing not far away, with who had to be the General.

“Agent Fowler, it is good to see you again.”

“Likewise, Prime. This is General Bryce,” Fowler said as he gestured towards the man at his side.

“General Bryce, it is an honor to meet you,” Prime said as he dropped to one knee. “Behind me is Megatron with our sparklings, Topspin and Twin Twist. Bulkhead and Wheeljack are on his right and on his left are Dreadwing and Spike; they are to watch over the pair while we talk.”

“Four guards for those two little robots?”

The pinging of metal on metal rang around them as Topspin clambered up his creator’s frame until he stood on his helm. Excited chirps rang out as the sparkling gazed about him. Twin Twist gazed up and answered with eager beeps and trills at what his brother saw. Megatron ex-vented and reached up to remove the little one from his perch.

“Sweet Lady Liberty! Is he part gecko or what?” Fowler exclaimed as he pointed up to the sparkling.

“Gecko, what is a gecko?” Megatron asked as he placed the twin on his shoulder. “No higher, you know the rules, not on the helm.”

A sad little beep came from the little one, but he remained where he was placed. A moment later Megatron plopped his brother next to him.
“A gecko is an organic creature that can climb just about any surface,” Bulkhead offered. At the looks from the rest of them, he shrugged his shoulders. “What? I looked it up once after something I heard.”

“We prefer the term mechanical being, and on our ship they typically have two caretakers when we are not with them, so we felt it prudent to have a few extra available,” Optimus said. “They are naturally very curious and Topspin’s magnets allow him to get places his brother cannot.”

Several other humans moved a little closer, all of them eyeing the sparklings with interest. An interest that made Megatron want to snarl at them and shield the pair from them. Perhaps it was time to direct the discussion to what they came here to do.

“Do you have information to share on MECH?” he asked.

Prime shot him a disapproving look, but as far as he was concerned, the humans had too much interest in their sparklings and he merely quirked an optical ridge up at Optimus.

General Bryce nodded and waved his people back. “Of course, we too are a curious people and your sparklings are quite fascinating.”

“Perhaps you should give the twins over to their caretakers so that we may talk,” Optimus said.

“Fine. Behave and listen to your watchers,” Megatron said as he scooped the pair up and deposited them in Bulkhead’s waiting hands.

The anxious little meeps from the pair had him stopping before he took a single step. “We will both be right over there talking to the humans. You’ll be able to see us just fine.”

Hardening his spark, he strode over to where the Prime and General waited. Bryce nodded as he joined them.

“I found it hard to believe when Fowler said that you claimed they were similar to our own children, but seeing them now, well, I think I understand. How long will they be so dependent on you?”

“Yes, that analogy is appropriate and you have to understand they have not been in their frames very long, as they learn they will become not be quite so distressed if we are not with them. Within a hundred of your years they should be able to be upgraded to their adult frame,” Optimus said.

“That long! I thought they were put in those frames simply because you didn’t have a big frame available.”

Megatron shook his helm. “No, from the information that Ratchet gave us, their sparks are not capable of powering an adult frame, they have to - I guess you could say mature, before they can. Putting them into an adult frame before they are ready would kill them, so we teach them manually since we can’t download modules directly into their processor as they are.”

“Ah. Fowler said that your medic has only handled five other cases of sparklings, I’m not sure I would want my doctor to be so inexperienced.”

Megatron snorted and shook his helm. “I was happy he had any, none of my people had any experience with them at all. In fact, until I saw them myself circling my spark, I had always thought that newsparks were just a story created by those in power and that they were not real.”

“Yes, without Ratchet’s expertise we may not have been able to save them. They are a gift from Primus and have managed to do what nothing else has - brought an end to our war.”
Bryce squared his shoulders and stared directly at the big grey mech standing at Prime’s side.

“That brings me to something that has been troubling me since I learned of your truce. According to Fowler, you two were at war for what millions of years? Yet, now here you are, standing together with so little animosity I have to wonder if your war was just a ploy to gain a foothold on my world, among my people.”

He narrowed his optics, feeling like a fool. Apparently, the humans weren’t interested in talking about MECH after all. A hand on his shoulder was the only thing that kept him from spinning about and plucking his sparklings up.

“Megatron.”

“What? Surely you can see he isn’t interested in sharing information -”

“They are legitimate concerns and all he is doing is trying to protect his people.”

He shrugged off the servo and took a few steps away before he spun and stalked back up to the human.

“Fine, you wish to know, I will tell you, but I expect you to share when I am done.”

He had to give it to the human; he didn’t flinch at his stare even when he lowered himself so he could hiss out his words low enough that hopefully the twins would not hear.

“I kept the war going for far longer than any sane mecha would have because I blamed Optimus for something that I only recently discovered was not his fault. Oh, I started the war for good reasons - to end the caste system, to rid us of the power hungry politicians who kept one pede on our spark at all times, but I continued it due to my anger and rage. The newsparks forced me to look at my army and what we were fighting for and I found that if they were to have a chance at surviving then the war had to end.”

“I made mistakes as well, you have to realize, General. When I accepted the Matrix and became Prime, I foolishly trusted the advisors who were in place from the previous Prime and I was unaware that I had lost the memories of the mech I used to be before the Matrix. Although I wished to make some of the changes that Megatron wanted, I hoped to do it peacefully within the system.”

“And I refused to wait. I had spent enough of my function little better than a slave to ever think that there would ever be a change. No, I had had enough of it all. As to why we have reached an accord - look over there,” he said as he pointed towards the twins, “they are the reason for that as well. Even though we had been enemies for so very long, when my spark began to fail from trying to sustain all three of us; Optimus used his own spark to keep us alive. He could have let my spark gutter and it would have ended his greatest enemy and most likely broken my army.”

The General’s eyebrows shot up towards his hairline. “I’m not sure if you have more compassion than anyone else I’ve ever met or just that big of an idiot.”

Megatron barked out a short laugh. “Our medic is pretty sure we both suffer from the second thing.”

“From the description that Fowler gave me, I had a hard time believing that a warlord such as yourself could ever care about anything else, but it is apparent from watching you that the twins are very important to you.”

“As I told Optimus once, there is very little I won’t do to ensure that they survive.”
The human’s mouth quirked up at one corner. “I’ll make sure to keep that in mind. As for MECH, well, they’ve gotten smarter. The things we used to find them last time, well, they aren’t working this time. They are being far more careful this time around. We know they have to have someone on the inside, but so far we’ve been unable to discover who it is. It’s part of why I wanted to meet face to face, this was the best way to try and make sure that any information from our meeting doesn’t get out to them.”

Megatron stood up and rubbed at his optics. “Surely you have a trusted spy you can task to find them?”

“Yeah, well our laws make that sort of order a little problematic for me. If I want to catch them and be able to prosecute them fully, I need to do this above the board,” Bryce said as he ran his hand over his face.

The thunk of metal pedes coming towards them had all three of them turning to find Dreadwing approaching their location. The jet ducked his helm and gave them an apologetic look before pointing off into the distance.

“Prime, Megatron - there are at least six planes coming in low and fast less than ten minutes out.”

“What?” Megatron said as he turned towards where the other mech pointed.

“Jenkins! Are there any maneuvers scheduled for this area?” Bryce shouted out.

A woman looked up and then turned towards her computer. “No, sir. This area has been designated off-limits for any low flying maneuvers due to the nesting season of the resident bird species. There is nothing scheduled from any of our forces that could even be accidentally in this area. They are not ours, sir.”

“Get those helos going,” Bryce barked out. “Grab the important stuff, but leave the rest. We are leaving, people! Prime, Megatron - I suggest you get your little ones out of here.”

Megatron nodded and waved at Bulkhead. “Bring them here. Optimus -”

Prime held up his servo. “General, what are your chances against them if they are unfriendly?”

Bryce snorted. “My helos only have a few mounted guns. If I took some of the heavy hitting helos out, people might have questioned. But these, these I chalked up to a training mission. To answer your question, not good.”

“Megatron, do you not find it odd that MECH would attempt a run at us when we could spot them so far away?”

“Maybe they figured we wouldn’t notice them until too late.”

“Or maybe they counted on us wanting to protect the sparklings and we are meant to leave and the General and his people are the true target.”

The grey mech paused and his processor spat out the same answer.

“What would happen, General, if you were killed after meeting with us?”

“You’re thinking they are trying to set you up? Dammit! We need to find that mole ASAP! If I was killed at this meeting and it was linked to you,” Bryce paused and scrubbed hard at this face. “The government would begin by going to our DOD contractors and trying to find out how MECH took
you guys out and then we would go to our trusted allies about forming a coalition. It wouldn’t be pretty, that’s for sure.”

“That is what I was afraid of. General, if I might suggest, we have flyers that can be here in seconds to turn the odds in your favor, if you so wish it,” Optimus said.

Bryce’s mouth flattened. “Do it. But tell them to try and not kill the pilots - someone is going to give me some answers!”

:Starscream,: Optimus said.

:We heard. Knock them down but no blowing them up if at all possible.: “They are on their way.”

Optimus pointed at the green vortex that opened up in the sky between their spot and the enemy planes. Seekers streaked out of the vortex and aimed directly for the formation aimed at the meeting area. The human jets attempted to evade the Cybertronians even as they fired their weapons at them. A seeker rolled and managed to get above one of the human planes, at first it looked like he was keeping pace with it, but then the mech transformed and in his root mode, he fell onto the other plane and forced the nose of the plane down. The human inside jettisoned out of the cockpit, a white parachute carrying him safely down. Just as the plane was about to plow into the ground, the mech leapt up and away and transformed back to a jet, while the human’s plane smashed into the earth.

“Did he - just ride that plane down?” Bryce asked.

Megatron laughed at the gutsy ploy that was being adapted by the rest of their people. Optimus covered his face with one palm.

“Yes, well, we did ask them to knock them out of the sky, but not to blow them up,” Megatron said with a shake of his head.

“General, might we take a look at the wreckage? Our scientists need one of those weapons to understand how it works on us.”

“Officially, no, but if someone were to get to the wreckage before us, well, what we don’t know is missing -”

“Thank you, General,” Megatron said with a grin.

:Soundwave, bridge Shockwave down. He can get what he needs if he is quick.: :Acknowledged.: Another portal opened up and Megatron could only pick out the blocky purple form of Shockwave as he began to exam the debris. Starscream and his squadron strode towards their little group with the pilots that had ejected from their planes clutched in their servos. Hopefully, the General would get some much needed answers and Shockwave would find a way to neutralize MECH’s weapon once and for all. This meeting had gone far differently than he had expected.

He glanced over to where the twins continued to play. Pit. It looked like they were attempting to dig a hole down to Unicron himself, but they were laughing and throwing dirt about, completely oblivious to the drama that had nearly pulled the nearby adults into combat.

“Well, we have our work cut out for us, Optimus,” Megatron said as he pointed to the now dark
brown sparklings.

“Primus. They are filthy.”

“Yes, but they are having fun even though I’m not sure how that is fun.”

Bryce broke into a laugh as he caught sight of the pair. “Hell, they look like my kids now. Anytime I take mine to the beach, I swear they bring back more on them than what they leave behind.”

“General, I believe we have some cleanup to do as well. Please keep us informed of what you find out.”

“Of course, Prime.”

“Wheeljack, Bulkhead, I thought you were supposed to be supervising them?”

“We are,” Wheeljack said with a grin. Bulkhead, however, looked guilty.

“They are discovering all sorts of interesting things in this planet’s ground. We’ve kept them from eating rocks and other bits -”

“Ugh. I do not want to know. I believe it is time to leave so we can go soak them for the next hour or so.”

“I think standing with them under the wash rack will be a better idea. Dunking them in a tub is likely to just create mud,” Megatron said with a soft laugh.

The grey mech scooped up the pair. The twins giggled and little servos happily smeared dirt all over him, but he didn’t care about the brown streaks they left all over his chassis. All in all, he was well pleased with how the meeting had turned out, even if it looked like he would have to spend the next few hours picking organic bits off of his sparklings. There were far worse things that could have happened, after all.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Feedback is appreciated and as always feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed.

Enjoy!

A bright blue helm cocked to one side as the mech paid more attention to the surges of delight that flowed across his bond with his sparklings than the display in front of him. Whatever Megatron was up to, it was obvious that the sparklings were enjoying it immensely. Sadly, he had the deck for a few more hours before he would get his chance to spend time with the little ones. Of course, by then, they should be in recharge for the night. Which is where they should have been already, but the pair had a longer than normal nap, as the humans called it, earlier in the shift, so now they were still wide awake. At least tomorrow, the other mech would be on deck and not him. If someone had told him that there would come a day when he would rather spend time in Megatron’s company than anywhere else, he would have kindly herded that individual to Ratchet and asked the medic to exam their processor for damage. Now all he could think about was how long until he could return to their shared quarters. Perhaps he was not the Prime his people needed after all if he could not keep his processor on his duties for a few hours.

“Sir.”

His optics darted over to the vehicon at his side. Had he missed something? “Yes?”

“We have an emergency beacon from a Decepticon escape pod.”

“Hail them.”

“We tried, sir. No answer, but most of our pods were designed to put anyone inside in stasis so that is not too surprising.
However, there should have been a message attached to the signal, but there wasn’t.”

“Where is it now?”

“On the far side of the planet from us. It will land in about ten minutes in a remote area at least.”

“Why didn’t we know about it sooner?”

“The beacon didn’t activate until a moment ago. It might be faulty and was activated by accident and that is why there is no message.”

“We cannot take that chance. There are too few of us to risk losing even one of us.”

He paused for a moment and pulled up the list of teams and ex-vented in relief that there should not be too much of a clash of personalities between the next two groups on the roster.

“Notify the next two retrieval teams on the roster that they are up. Assign Breakdown to the first team, he can at least perform field repairs for anyone if that becomes necessary. Also, alert all the
other officers of the situation and make sure they are ready for anything. I’ll meet the teams on the
deck to give them their briefing personally.”

“Oh, course, sir! All personnel have been contacted, sir.”

Long limbs carried him off the deck and he nodded to the groups of mecha that he passed by as he
made his way to the top of the ship. The flight deck glittered from the light of the moon and it shone
down on the two groups of his people gathered there. They must have been speeded through the
halls in order to beat him up here. Ah, well, he could not fault them for wanting off the ship.
Dreadwing and Arcee stood side by side in front of their respective teams. They both ducked their
helm in greeting at his arrival and he returned it with a nod of his own. All optics were on him as he
addressed the gathering.

“We have an escape pod that is reading as of Decepticon origin set to crash shortly on the other side
of the planet. Fortunately, it is on the light side so you will not be hindered by the dark at least.
Dreadwing, your team is tasked with locating the individual inside and seeing if they are still
functioning. Arcee, you will be leading your people to make sure that every part of that pod is
recovered. We leave nothing behind for MECH or any other human to find that might possibly be
used against us. Any questions?”

Dreadwing took a step towards him.

“What if they don’t want to come with us? Do we leave them behind?”

“Make sure they are aware of the situation and since Breakdown is part of your group,” he said and
pointed one servo at the big blue mech behind the flyer, “feel free to explain to them, in whatever
detail necessary, the risk they are taking by not at least coming with you. Put them into contact with
Megatron or myself if that is what is needed. I will not force anyone to join us, but I would not like
for anyone of us to be captured either.”

“Oh, course, sir. We’ll make sure they know the risks.”

“Thank you. Good luck and remember to keep your comms open at all time.”

‘Yes, sir,’ and ‘Yes, Prime!’ rang out across the deck.

:Bridge the teams down,: Prime ordered across the main channel.

The familiar green vortex opened up and the gathered mecha streamed through it. As soon as the last
mech passed through it, it shut down once more and he stood alone on the now silent deck. Turning
on his heel, he returned to the command deck to wait for the outcome of the mission.

~+++~

The blue and gold flyer jogged out of the portal and waited for the rest of his squad to join him. His
optics scanned the sky looking for their target, but the trees hindered his search.

“Okay, Quake Squad - you know the mission -”

“Quake Squad? Really?” Arcee asked as she strode over to the much larger mech, her own team
flanking her.

“Have you a better idea than unique names to keep our two teams straight while we are out on a
mission together?”
She shrugged her shoulders. “I suppose not. I guess that makes us Team Scrap. We should be near where it is supposed to crash, so stay together until we can get optics on it. Of course, that is what Ratchet will turn us into if one of us is taken out by that thing.”

A few snorts of laughter answered her words, but the other three mechs stayed near her. The four mechs with Dreadwing took a few steps closer to their leader as well.

“Got it!” one of the vehicons shouted, one servo pointed northward.

Just above the treetops, a fireball blazed across the sky. As one, the two groups jogged towards where it looked like it would end up. Ahead of them, they could see it drop rapidly towards the ground. Earth and trees spewed skyward as the pod plowed into the ground. They all swayed when the ground trembled under their pedes at its impact.

“That had to have hurt,” someone muttered.

“Alright Scrappers, don’t let any piece of it remain behind. Spread out and stay in the main channel. If you so much as hear anything that isn’t one of us, shout out. We do not want the humans sneaking up on us!”

“Come on let’s go see if there is anyone still online in that thing,” Dreadwing said as he stalked towards the smoldering hulk of wreckage.

The big blue flyer picked his way across the field of debris avoiding the clumps of vegetation that still burned. His team followed a few paces behind him. The capsule radiated heat, not enough to harm his heavier shielding at least, but the eradicons and vehicons could possibly be damaged.

“Still hot so be careful. Anyone see the control panel on this thing?”

The five mechs stalked around the vehicle until one of the vehicons pointed at a sparking piece of the pod.

“There. But it doesn’t look like it’s still functional.”

“Of course not,” Dreadwing said with an ex-vent. “Well, that’s why I insisted we bring some equipment along.”

He banged on the hull and it resounded with a dull thunk. “If you are functional in there, comm us on the general Decepticon channel or at least bang on the wall.”

No new voice chimed across the seldom-used channel and no other noise came from the pod besides the pinging as the metal slowly cooled.

“Right then. If you can at least hear me, we’ll have you out of there shortly so don’t shoot - we are not your enemy.”

“Why would they shoot us?” the other flyer in his group asked.

“Well, Spike, most Decepticons shoot first and ask questions later,” Breakdown said with a laugh.

“He is correct. Hopefully, this is one of the more even-tempered individuals of our old army; otherwise, this could get ugly.”

“Blitzwing for example,” Breakdown said with a shake of his helm.

“Agreed, that one would be very bad. All right, who grabbed the torch? You, there, Kai - give it to
me. Breakdown be ready for anything.”

He fired up the instrument and began cutting through the seam of the hatch. He had only made it part way around it when it blew outward nearly clipping him in the faceplates. He dove down as more blaster fire came from inside the little capsule. His team scattered away from the hole, seeking cover.

“Fraggin’ glitch! Knock it off! We are not your enemies!” Dreadwing snarled.

“Well, you sure as Pit aren’t my friends! Fraggin’ ‘cons, I’ll never surrender!” a voice yelled out from inside it.

“Wait! You’re not a Decepticon?”

“Of course not! And I’m not falling for whatever your ploy is either! You’re just waiting for me to come out to take me prisoner again!”

“Actually, none of us here are either Decepticons or Autobots, so I promise we won’t harm you.”

“If he keeps shooting at us, that might change,” Breakdown growled in a low voice.

“What? I landed in a neutral colony?”

“Not exactly, but we are at peace and Optimus Prime can explain it to you.”

A silver and red crest appeared just before the rest of the silver helm did. Blue optics narrowed as they scanned the various mecha hunkered down around the area.

“Where is Prime? I want to talk to him!”

Dreadwing climbed to his pedes. “He’s not here, physically, but he is on our ship. I can give you the channel to contact him on.”

:Prime, we have what I think is an Autobot in the pod. He’s a little paranoid, but he wants to talk to you. Give him this channel?: Dreadwing asked.

:Yes, put him through. I will try and explain the situation.: 

“Alright, I’ve got Prime on the line.”

He rattled off the frequency and waited as the other mech connected. The helm retreated back inside the pod.

:Hello? Prime?:

:Yes, this is Optimus Prime. May I learn your designation?:

:How do I know this is really you? I mean, last I heard you were leading the Autobots and now these ‘bots here are saying that this is like a neutral zone or something.: 

:There is nothing I can say to convince you of the truth of those words while you are there. Perhaps you should look at those who are down there. Do you see any faction symbols anywhere?: 

The silver mech poked his helm out and watched as the various mechs around him stood up from their hiding spots. Most had red optics but one had gold, unusual but at least not normally Decepticon. A slender blue femme strolled out of the woods with another team. Although her optics were blue, the rest of her team was red.
“Hey, you need to get your aft out of there. We need to get it back to the ship before the humans get here.”

The mech retreated back inside his little sanctuary.

:No, I don’t. What’s going on?:

:The Autobots I had led and the Decepticons that Megatron had here have signed a treaty and we are at peace and co-existing on what was their warship. Sadly, this world is not safe at the moment as there is a group of the indigenous population that is hunting us. Please, whoever you are, if you return to the ship with those that are down there I promise you will meet me in person and I will do my best to explain the situation to you.: 

A small shriek escaped him as the femme stuck her head inside and glared at him.

“Get your aft out of there, now! Listen I am, err was, part of Prime’s team here on this planet. If Prime says he will meet you personally, than you can trust he will. But we need to go! Bay says he picked up helicopters coming in our direction and I am not getting caught by the humans again!”

“You were an Autobot?”

Her mouth quirked upward in a grin. “I’m Arcee, and I still consider myself one for the most part, just don’t need the emblem anymore.”

She pulled her helm back out and the silver mech crept out of the capsule. As soon as he was clear, she waved at a bunch of the mechs standing around and they surrounded the pod. One tossed several loose pieces inside before turning his shoulder to the hull.

:Nemesis, This is Arcee, my team has the pod and we need a bridge at our current location.: 

The air crackled with energy as the green vortex opened just a short distance away. The small group began shifting the pod out of the ground.

“Hey, since he’s able to walk on his own, how about giving us a hand with this thing. It rammed itself pretty good into the ground and doesn’t want to come out,” Arcee said as she pushed against the wreckage.

“Do as she asked. I can hear the humans. We need to leave,” Dreadwing said as he moved up to help the others.

Seeing all the others shoving the pod, the Autobot turned his shoulder to the task as well. Together they managed to work the capsule free and began rolling it along the ground and into the bridge. The new mech found himself standing on top of a large Decepticon warship, however, day had become night and now unfamiliar stars shone down on him. He stopped and gazed about and his optics widened as he caught sight of a large red and blue frame, one he had only seen in vids before, striding towards him.

“Prime! Optimus Prime! I can’t believe it! I’m finally meeting you! It’s an honor! How did you do it? Did you single-handedly beat Megatron in a fight and he surrendered?”

Optimus shook his head and gave a smile to the young mech. He must have been one of the last forged before the AllSpark was jettisoned.

“Welcome aboard the Nemesis. I am afraid you have me at a disadvantage since you know who I am.”
“Oh! Right, I’m Smokescreen. Wait, isn’t that the Decepticon flagship? We are on that ship?”

“It is nice to meet you, Smokescreen. Yes, but now it is merely a Cybertronian warship, one co-captained by myself and Megatron along with our council of officers.”

“What! Shouldn’t he be in a brig or spark prison or something?”

“No, as part of our truce, all who were part of both our armies here were granted clemency as we all had taken lives. I have always believed that all sparks have the ability to change, I was just glad his did so before we went extinct.”

“So what now?”

“You will have twenty-four hours to go over the treaty and decide for yourself if you wish to remain with us. Any of us officers will answer your questions to the best of our ability during that time. Have you need to see a medic?”

“No,” the silver and blue mech said with a grin, “it will take more than a rough landing to do more than rattle my plating. You said I could ask questions? Can I ask you? I mean if you aren’t too busy and all.”

“Of course. Do you need energon?”

Smokescreen’s smile widened. “That would be great. The warship I was on was a little stingy with the rations for prisoners.”

“It is my hope that soon no one will be held prisoner anymore, but we are unsure of the locations of all of our troops.”

“Well, this is the first I’ve heard of a truce, of course, I was locked up and then in stasis for a long time in that pod. I still can’t believe I’m finally at your side, but the fighting is over! I never even got a chance to prove myself in combat! I still find it hard to wrap my processor around that somehow you convinced Megatron into a truce. How did you do it?” Smokescreen asked as he vibrated gleefully next to Prime.

“I, for one, am glad that you will get to be more than just a soldier,” Optimus said and his optics caught sight of an emblem he had not seen in a very long time. “You were part of the Elite Guard?”

“Yeah, although it wasn’t much more than a boot camp when I finally joined up. They didn’t even have graduation ceremonies by that time,” Smokescreen said with an ex-vent.

“We were at war; sadly many things fell to the side.”

“I know. It’s just - all I ever wanted was to be a soldier and fight for the Autobot cause, to fight for you, and instead I got security detail in Iacon. Not exactly thrilling, you know. At least Big A turned out to be a good teacher and friend.”

“Big A?”

“Alpha Trion.”

“You protected the Master Archivist? Do you know if he is still functioning?”

“No, I was knocked out by an explosion during that last great push by the Decepticons when they took Iacon. When I came online again, I was on a Decepticon ship. I managed to escape into that
Optimus’s helm sunk a little. “Ah, I had hoped he was still online. I have questions I would have liked to ask him, but Megatron never mentioned that they had taken him alive when they obtained a copy of the database so I was hoping that he had escaped.”

Smokescreen’s mouth dropped open and his optics widened impossibly large.

“You actually trust anything that he says? What exactly happened that you think you can you trust him now? Not that I’m questioning your skills, sir - it’s just - that’s Megatron we are talking about,” Smokescreen said softly as his optics darted about.

Prime nodded and continued towards the rec room. “I understand your disbelief and if I was in your position I would probably think the exact same thing.”

A long ex-vent hissed from the leader. “You could say his spark has been touched by Primus, in more ways than one, but truly the thing that has changed him the most has been the newsparks, well, sparklings now. They did what nothing else had been able to do - make him see reason.”

Vents stalled and the silver and blue mech stopped dead in the hall.

“Newsparks? Sparklings? Pit! I never even thought he had a spark to share! Who’s his bonded?”

Optimus shook his head. “It is a rather complicated story. Come let us get some energon and I will try to explain it.”

The pair reached the mess hall and Optimus was grateful that it was relatively empty. He guided the younger mech to a table in the back of the room after Smokescreen had grabbed himself a cube of energon. They settled into their chairs and Optimus watched as the other mech tentatively tasted the cube before him.

“It is not tainted, I assure you. We found energon crystals on this world and harvest them when we can.”

“Right. Sorry, sir.”

He waved a servo to stop the mech from rambling on. “It is quite alright. Now, since you worked for Alpha Trion, did he ever share who I was before I took the Matrix?”

“Oh course! Everyone knows you used to be an archivist named Orion Pax. Why?”

“Because recently I discovered that is and is not true. When Orion Pax accepted the Matrix, I came into being as Optimus Prime. Orion is - locked away inside of the Matrix from what I understand.”

It had not gotten any easier, saying those words aloud, but he would not hide the truth. The Matrix pulsed a feeling of warmth and love at him and he knew that was the right decision. Bolstered, he opened his mouth to continue the story when an alert came over the officer channel.

:Sir, Agent Fowler just contacted us. Sir, I think he’s in trouble.:”

“Smokescreen, I am sorry, but I must return to the command deck. One of our allies might be in trouble and I need to see what the situation is. We will have to continue this later.”

“Oh course, sir. I understand.”

He pushed away from the table and strode towards the door.
:Put him through.: 

:Hey, OP, is that you?: 

OP? That was Agent Fowler’s voice but he sounded off.

:Yes, I am here.: 

:Good. I’ve been trying to reach you. I was wondering if I could come to your house tonight? My place is being fumigated for bugs and well, it’s not really habitable at the moment.: 

That did not sound good and Agent Fowler had never asked to come to the ship before. What in the name of Primus was going on? There was only one way to find out.

:Should I send someone to come get you?: 

:That would be great! It’s a pain in the ass trying to get a cab this time of night in this neighborhood.: 

:Someone will be there soon.: 

Static filled the line for a moment before his voice came across the officer’s channel.

:All officers to the bridge. We have a situation developing. Soundwave, we need to locate and drop a retrieval team near Agent Fowler. Preferably with as little notice as possible.: 

So much for spending a little time with the sparklings before they recharged, he thought as he listened to the rest of the command staff acknowledge his statement. They needed to find the human before who or whatever was after him, caught him.
Soundwave stalked onto the bridge, the first to reach the command deck after his summons. Prime nodded to the silent mech.

“I am unsure of Agent Fowler’s current location. Your expertise will be needed.”

Soundwave inclined his helm, walked over to his station, and plugged one of his main data cables into the unit. The metallic ring of pedes had him shifting to see who had arrived next. The red and white medic appeared, but he wasn’t alone - Bumblebee, Arcee, and Bulkhead flanked the mech.

“Ratchet? Why did you bring them along?”

“I summoned them here because we are going to need them. Agent Fowler will be able to recognize them in vehicle mode and we know he trusts them. Do we have his location yet?”

Soundwave shook his helm and turned back to the display in front of him.

“Can you play his message for all of us?” Arcee asked. “It might give us a clue of where to start looking.”

A snort had all helms swiveling to see the newest arrival - Starscream.

“Really? Since when are you three part of the command staff?”

The blue femme’s plating flared a little at the seeker, but Optimus stepped between the two before she could do anything else.

“Arcee, stand down. Starscream, Ratchet was well within his rights to call them here. And he is right, if we send someone to find Agent Fowler, it will have to be one of us, someone he can pick out by sight and that he trusts.”

A delicate silver servo waved about. “So this human calls because something scared him and we come running - why?”

Heavy thuds preceded a familiar grey frame arriving on the deck.

“I heard what Starscream asked and I have to agree. Why are we running to his aid?”

Arcee’s optics narrowed and she glared at both of them. “Because we stand with our friends and Agent Fowler has never called us because of anything trivial.”

“Arcee is correct,” Optimus said. “If he called for aid, than something major is going on. We haven’t
heard from the humans since our meeting, perhaps he knows what is going on with the General’s investigation. But first, we need to find him before we can ask him.”

Optimus waited for Megatron or Starscream to voice their dissent, but the big grey mech simply exhaled at the expression he saw in his co-leader’s optics and turned towards the spymaster.

“Soundwave, turn all our resources towards finding the human.”

“Affirmative. Replaying message.”

The brief conversation replayed once more and Optimus listened for any nuance that might be a clue. The slender blue femme stepped up to the console and pulled up a map of the city that the human resided in and highlighted a single building.

“Right. This is where he lives. It sounded like he went there and left again. If what he said was a clue then we need to start in the neighborhoods that are the most crime-ridden closest to there.”

“And why do you think he would put himself in more danger by doing that?” Starscream asked.

“That doesn’t make any sense!”

“Because he’s trying to avoid security cameras, high crime areas tend to have less of them because they are also poorer.”

“Whoever is after him is most likely using technology to find him, just like we would. Soundwave, can you track his cell phone?” Optimus asked.

Soundwave’s visor darkened for a moment.

“Negative. Device currently off-line.”

“He shut it off, so no one could track him with it. Is there any way you can find out where it has been?”

“Negative. No none location history stored for device available.”

“We will have to send out teams to scour the most likely areas where he could be hiding then. It will be dangerous if it is MECH after him,” Optimus said.

“True, but will they have their weapons for use against us along with them if they are after one of their own?” Megatron asked.

“Cell phone activated,” Soundwave said, bringing all helms towards him.

“Soundwave -”

The vehicon that sat in front of the monitor looked over at the gathered mecha. “Sirs, we have another communication coming in on the same device as before.”

“Put it through.”

“And track it,” Megatron added with a glance over to Soundwave.

“Agent Fowler, give us a location -” Optimus said.

“Agent Fowler isn’t here - not anymore.”
“Who is this?”

“MECH. I’ll be leaving this phone here for you to find with a message for you.”

They could hear the sounds of feet running away from the phone and then the squeal of tires as a car sped away.

“Location established.”

“Cut the connection then, we can’t risk them trying to find our location through it,” Megatron said.

Static filled the room as the call was cut. Optimus turned to face his former team.

“Arcee, take Bumblebee and Bulkhead down there and find out what they left for us. Keep the channel open.”

“Starscream, have a squad of flyers ready - just in case,” Megatron said.

“Already done.”

The portal opened at the far end of the bridge, but before the three of them could go through it, the slender two-wheeler stopped and glanced back at Optimus.

“What do we do about the cell phone?”

“Destroy it. We can’t bring it back here and we can’t let it fall into anyone else’s hands,” Megatron said.

The blue helm inclined and the team returned the nod while the sound of the transformation sequence rang through the area just before the three of them drove through the vortex.

~+~+~

Engines throbbed in the stillness as three vehicles crept along a dark and empty street. Buildings that reminded them of their war-torn world stood on either side of the team. Small organic creatures raced away from the headlights and bounded back into the deepest shadows. However, there was no sign of their friend and ally.

:Scans are negative for any heat signatures large enough to be a human. Who knows where they could have dumped that phone.: 

:Proceed with caution, team.: 

The three Cybertronians shifted back to root mode and began sweeping the area. Headlights bounced about the area and arms were transformed into weapons as they moved as quietly as they could.

:Bulk, stay on the street. Let Bee and me handle the tighter areas.: 

:Fine., the green mech said with a disgruntled huff. 

:Last known location ahead and on the right., Soundwave said.

:Cover me., Arcee said as she slipped past what had been a dumpster, but was now missing one side.

The yellow and green mechs swiveled about slowly where they stood with their weapons armed as they watched for anything out of place.
A few steps behind the remains of the container rested a roughly human shaped lump under a tarp. She pulled it off and her thermal scans showed only quickly fading warmth to the body.

“Frag it all sideways,” Arcee muttered softly as she gazed down at what she had uncovered.

Bee’s optics widened at the femme’s language. He took a few steps towards her to see what it was she found.

:We found Agent Fowler. He’s dead. Shot numerous times. There is a note on him and it says - This is how you deal with traitors. What do you want us to do?:

A sad soft series of beeps left the yellow mech as he saw the human. He had been laid out with his arms crossed over his chest to hold the note on top of him. His phone lay next to him.

:Destroy the phone and return to the ship -: Optimus said.

:But -:

:There is nothing more we can do for him. We will contact General Bryce so he knows what has happened to his agent. His body needs to be returned to his family.: 

:Yes, sir:, she ground out as she used the tip of one pede to crush the small device. :We need a portal:.

The green vortex felt cold as the three stomped through it and back to the ship without their friend. They found themselves back on a now silent command deck. The sound of their pedes rang in the area as they strode towards Prime.

“Arcee, will you share with us what you saw.”

The femme nodded and marched over to the nearest console. In seconds, up on the main console there appeared the lifeless body of the human and the note.

“Well, he definitely wasn’t killed there,” Ratchet said.

Megatron glanced over at the medic. “How can you be so sure?”

The red and white mech pointed at the body. “Not enough blood on the ground for what looks like five shots he has in him. They put him there along with that note.”

“For what possible purpose?” Starscream asked.

“A warning, obviously. To us or humans, or both,” Megatron said.

“Optimus, can we check on the children? I know we are supposed to keep our distance, but if they killed him -” Bulkhead said as his optics shifted from the macabre scene above and Prime.

“We can - remotely. Soundwave, see if you can verify the whereabouts of the children and that they are safe. Keeping our distance from them is more important than ever if this group targets anyone who considers us a friend or ally,” Prime said.

“But -”

“Optimus is right. These xenophobic afts have just upped the stakes. We can’t risk approaching the children,” Ratchet said.
The main screen split into three separate sections. The first to appear was the youngest. Rafael appeared to be typing furiously on his laptop as Soundwave had seized control of the camera on his machine to show the young human.

“Wait. Something isn’t right,” the young boy muttered aloud.

The human’s eyes widened and he began typing even faster.

“He probably knows he’s being hacked, put an image of a dancing monkey on his screen, he’ll know what that means,” Ratchet said with a soft laugh.

Soundwave did as instructed and the human’s mouth grew wide in a smile.

“Hi, Bee! I’m fine, although I’ve been worried about you guys. How did you do that? I didn’t think you were that good with hacking.”

“Cut the connection. Find the others, please,” Megatron said.

A rude noise came from the yellow mech and he began ranting in electronic noises.

:Hey! I didn’t get to tell him I was okay as well!:  

“We cannot risk keeping connections open for very long, Bumblebee,” Optimus said as he laid a hand on the others shoulder.  

“Please continue, Soundwave.”

The next to appear was the eldest boy, Jack. The picture was grainy and gave a top down view of the scene. The human appeared leaning on one hand as he spoke into a microphone. A light colored hat rested on his head.

“Welcome to KO, where ever burger is a knock out. Can I take your order?”

“He looks bored, but good. Thank you,” Arcee said.

That screen closed down and finally the female human appeared. Her mouth was scrunched up and the tip of her tongue just barely poked out of her mouth as she worked on something on her laptop. The big green mech gazed up at the familiar face with a grin.

“Throw her the same picture you gave Raf, she’ll understand it.”

“Are we done with this -”

“Starscream,” Optimus began, “these children have been true friends and helped us far beyond what they should have been capable of. Their safety is important to me and my former team so kindly refrain from finishing that sentence. Soundwave, keep track of them, discretely, of course, and alert us if anything suspicious happens around them. I will not take a chance on MECH coming for them as well.”

The flyer’s mouth shut with an audible click. Gone was the normally gentle voice of the Prime and instead the steel-laced baritone of a hardened soldier addressed him.

“Uh, ah, yes, of course, Prime. What now?”

“Contact General Bryce, he needs to know what happened to Agent Fowler,” Optimus said.

The picture disappeared and instead the voice of the General echoed around them.
“This is General Bryce, leave a message at the beep.”

“Disconnect us. This is not something we can leave as a message,” Optimus said.

The connection ended and Soundwave turned from the console.

“Device not active.”

“We need to find him. He could be in grave danger as well. Task anyone you need, Soundwave. This is our priority for now. Agreed?”

Megatron stepped closer to the Prime and nudged his shoulder with his own.

“Yes, now go get some recharge. I’ll take over command now.”

“Excellent advice and I’m sure you need to refuel as well,” Ratchet said as he clasped the other mech on the arm. “Come on.”

Optimus found himself being propelled down the hall by his former team. His legs locked and his optics widened as a sudden thought crossed his processor.

“Primus! I forgot about the new arrival. I need to find Smokescreen.”

“We’ll take care of him, come on you two. Don’t worry, we’ll find him and go over everything and let him know why you are busy,” Arcee said.

The three younger bots wandered off and left the other two continuing on their course towards Prime’s quarters. A single guard stood outside the door, but he knew the vehicon wasn’t alone; the other was inside overseeing what should be recharging sparklings. The guard, Dave, nodded at him.

“I was just about to go in, sir. Ping just notified me that the pair just dashed out of their room, again. Shall I -”

“I will handle them, thank you. Ratchet can provide assistance if necessary.”

The door slid open and two squealing sparklings barreled towards their creator with their caretaker right behind them. Optimus scooped the pair up and they chattered up at him.

“And why are you both wide awake?” he asked.

The twins responded with excited beeps and trills.

“They had a long recharge session with Megatron, sir. And they have been agitated most of the evening. Problems, sir?”

“Yes, a formal announcement will be made when all the facts are in.”

“Anything we should be aware of?”

“Not at this time. We will try and do a better job of keeping outside events from disturbing the little ones,” Optimus said as he ushered the vehicon out.

Ratchet found a cube of energon that had been left waiting for Optimus and pushed it into the other’s servos while taking one of the sparklings.
“Here drink up. I know part of the reason why these two recharged so long, it turns out that they had a grand adventure. I came across a curious sight while walking the hall earlier today. Megatron and Dreadwing were flying down the main corridor. Twin Twist rode in the cockpit of the second while the other was riding on ol’ Sl - err Megatron’s nose cone.”

Optimus shook his head with a soft laugh. “Well, he kept his promise not to take them flying off the ship at least, but that explains the joy coming across the bond earlier. I nearly contacted him to ask what exactly he was doing with them that had them so excited.”

Ratchet’s optics watched his leader carefully. “How are you doing? Dealing with them and Megatron?”

Optimus sank down onto the closest sofa. “It has been - unusual. The sparklings are a delight and I find myself growing more attached to them every day. As for Megatron, he is not like the opponent I have battled against for so long. His love for the sparklings is apparent and in many ways, I find he is more like a big sparkling himself. He is bound and determined to make sure their life is full of laughter and light. I find it sometimes hard to believe he is the same mech.”

“That’s not so unusual. And to be honest, I’m glad to hear it. I was afraid that he might carry over his old harshness to them. However, it is common for creators to want to provide for their sparkling all of the things they missed out on. He hasn’t been - difficult to you, has he?”

Optimus turned his gaze from the sparkling in his arms to the medic. “What? No. If anything, he has been oddly considerate. Every now and then, I see flashes of how he used to be, but that is usually when his protective side has been stirred up. Make no mistake about it, although I try to shield the twins, Megatron is worse, I think. Although we don’t always agree on what is dangerous.”

Ratchet grunted and turned his attention to the sparkling watching him.

“Hello again, Topspin. Do you remember me? My name is Ratchet.”

A smile crossed the sparkling’s face and a happy little meep left him.

“I saw how well you have mastered your magnets earlier today. Did you enjoy your ride?”

An emphatic nod and a grin was the reply he got.

“I wonder how long it will be before Megatron takes them off the ship to fly among the clouds,” Optimus said with a gentle smile as he watched the little seekerling.

Another snort left the medic. “Probably as soon as he can convince you that they will be safe. Come on, all three of you need to recharge.”

The red and blue mech downed the last of his cube and still carrying his sparkling he headed for the twin’s berth room.

“Optimus, take them into your room with you. All three of you will settle easier together than apart.”

“I - uh, yes, that does sound better. Thank you, Ratchet. You always look out for me.”

“And don’t you forget it.”

The twins were placed onto the large berth and they scooted away from the edge. The grins on their faces showed that this was just what they wanted and where they wanted to be. Optimus pulled a datapad off the top shelf and checked it before settling down next to the twins.
“Shall we continue our story about Solus Prime?”

The twins chirped happily and snuggled closer to their creator’s helm.

“Good night cycle,” Ratchet said.

“Good night cycle, Ratchet.”

Optimus watched as his friend left before finding where they had last left off. The loss of Fowler still sat heavily on his spark, but the little ones beside him helped to remind him that life went on, regardless of what losses might happen. All he could do was try to shield the innocent as he had always done.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

I'll be heading out of town for my daughter's graduation so unsure when the next update will be ready.

Anyway, feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed and as always feedback is appreciated.

Enjoy!

Megatron rubbed his optics as he stared at the screen. The human information system was so slow and tedious to work through and he had been at it for several hours already. Hopefully, someone would find something soon. The shifting of gears near him had him turning from his station to face whoever had approached him. Soundwave stood silently just a few steps from him.

“Request authorization to access information node.”

“I thought that was what we were doing already? Although, their idea of information is sometimes disturbing.”

“Require: Direct access.”

“Ah. Optimus might disagree with this later, but do it. Just be careful, I can’t afford to lose you - we can’t afford to lose you. Route anything of interest you find to us. I don’t think I can take finding another piece someone wrote about their pet goldfish named Bryce.”

The slender spymaster inclined his helm before swiveling and striding towards a portal he opened for himself. The grey mech watched the other depart before turning back to wading through the drivel that the humans posted about the stupidest things. How humans got anything done was beyond him, he thought with a shake of his helm.

A few hours later and only the hourly pings from Soundwave that let him know that all was well with the spy kept him from ordering him to return. Shortly after the last one, however, a different data packet was transmitted and when he opened it, he found a connection to a live feed from a security camera. He sent it to the main screen and the video showed someone who he was positive was still in recharge with the twins. He turned inward, focused on the bond with the twins, and through it could feel the peace and calm from the three sparks on the other end of it. Yep, Optimus was definitely on the ship, not that he thought otherwise, but he knew someone would ask eventually. That still left the question of who was that currently battering his way through the defenses of what looked like a military base? The rest of the skeleton crew stared at the video as it played.

:Soundwave, lock that video up. I don’t know who that slagger is, but it isn’t Optimus:

:Affirmative. Soundwave: investigate:

:From a distance. Scan him, see if it is anyone we know. Whoever he is, we can’t let him bring down Optimus’ reputation with the humans, and that is obviously what they are trying to do. I’ll start to
bring the ship closer to that area, just in case. :

“Sir?”

“No, that is not Optimus and I’m surprised you would even think that. I can feel that he is still in recharge with the twins.”

“I’m sorry, sir. That just looks so much like him.”

He turned his optics to the feed and watched the fake Prime barrel through the area with lots of strength but very little finesse.

“Watch him. He moves like he is still learning how to control his frame. He has none of the skill of Prime, not even a newly awoken one. If that was who I had faced on the battlefield that first time, I would have destroyed him quickly. He isn’t even using his arm cannon, just his fists.”

Someone snorted. “Not like he has to against their defenses.”

They watched as the humans valiantly tried to fight off the Cybertronian and then the imposter looked straight at the security camera and spoke in the same deep, rolling voice of the real Optimus Prime.

“I am Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots, and I bring you this message.”

The figure’s battlemask slid across the lower face before one arm transformed into a cannon and began blasting away at the humans, sending them scurrying for whatever cover they could find.

Megatron snarled and a fist slammed down on the alarm system, causing the klaxon and the warning light to go off.

“Bring the ship around and head towards that base, now! I want combat teams assembled and ready to go. That slagger picked the wrong ‘bot to pretend to be!”

The crew scrambled to obey his orders and the ship tilted a little as instead of the slow, gentle turn it had begun, it shifted sharply to change direction and thrusters engaged to speed it on its way. The alarm shut off after a few pulses, however, the warning lights continued to flash.

He had felt when the three sparks had jolted out of recharge and then when Optimus attempted to comfort the little ones as they had panicked at the jarring sound and lights of the alarm. He bottled up his anger and tried to soothe the twins as well. The sound of running pedes had him swinging his helm around to see who was coming on deck. Starscream’s optics were narrowed as he took in the scene and then widened as he watched the screen.

“What? Prime started an attack without us! That’s -”

“Not Prime, you idiot. It’s an imposter - one we will be making sure he is aware of exactly who he has crossed,” Megatron said and his engine thrummed with anger.

“Oh, frag,” Ratchet breathed out as he came onto the deck and spotted the scene on the main screen.

“Who is that?”

“Unknown at this point, but Soundwave is attempting to get a scan to see if it is anyone we know. It doesn’t matter though, as he just proclaimed himself Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots to all and then proceeded to shoot up that base.”

The incoming communication from Prime when it came wasn’t unexpected.
Megatron, what is going on?: Optimus asked.

Someone has made themselves into a copy of you and the imposter is destroying a military base. Soundwave is moving in to scan them, but we need to send teams to stop him before he starts that war you’ve been trying to avoid with the humans.

The slight tremble over the bond was the only reaction he got from the other mech, but it was enough for him to send another pulse of calm down the bond.

I will be there as soon as I can settle the twins down.

Bring them with you. There is no telling how long we will be needed up here and I know I will feel better if I can see them with my own optics.

His focus returned to the deck and he brought his optics back up the vid screen. The fake seemed to be working towards a particular building and the humans swarmed in to defend it.

Laserbeak: Scan negative for spark. Orders?:

“MECH,” Megatron said. “It has to be them. But how did they get it to move and transform like one of us?”

Soundwave, can you tell if there is a human inside it - driving it?:

The distaste from that statement made him want to go down there and smash the abomination into pieces.

“Ugh, that’s just wrong,” Starscream said and he let his wings shiver at his words.


The medic’s engine rumbled angrily. “Well, I guess Bee’s explanation for what their name stands for is more accurate than I first thought.”

The seeker rolled his optics and turned towards the medic. “Oh, this I have to hear.”

“Massively Egotistical Clang Heads,” Ratchet answered while his optics continued to watch the scene of destruction. “We need to get in there and stop that thing.”

Starscream bit back a snort of amusement. “Yes, but how do we do that without getting attacked by the humans as well?”

“So long as they don’t possess MECH’s stasis beam, I’m not too worried about those humans,” Megatron said. He raised his fist and pointed at single digit towards the screen. “No, what concerns me is this feels like a deliberate taunt - something to pull us away from our ship and that I don’t like at all.”

The sound of a heavy frame walking quickly had them all turning to see who was arriving now, although Megatron felt the familiar pull of the little sparks bound to his first. The red and blue mech had the sparklings in his arms as he strode onto the command platform. The Prime appeared as unflappable as always although he knew what he had felt over the bond when he had told the other mech what was happening. What truly concerned him was the quietness of the twins as they clung to the chassis of their co-creator. There should have been some sort of excited noise from the two as this was a new area and they loved new, but there was nothing but just wide-optic’ed glances from them.
Starscream pointed at the pair and threw a glare at the former warlord. “Really? This is no place for sparklings!”

“Mute it. The twins need us and we have to be up here, so here they will remain,” Megatron growled out.

The red and white mech moved to stand at the Prime’s shoulder.

“It’s not ideal, but as their medic, that’s exactly what I would have ordered them to do. Look at them. They are stressed enough as is, so yes, they need to be here where their creators are.”

The seeker huffed, but at least kept his opinion about that to himself, however, he waved a servo back towards the screen.

“Are we going to do an aerial assault only on that thing or are you going to lead the ground troops, Megatron?”

The grey mech shook his helm. “I won’t leave the ship unless it becomes absolutely necessary.”

“I’ll assume command of the ground troops as well then,” Starscream said and the lift in the wings showed how much the seeker liked that idea.

“We need someone on site to lead them, so I think Arcee should be in charge of them. She has proven herself skilled and adaptable, both will be needed for this mission. Based on what I see up there, we cannot send in our flyers, not yet anyway. We send them in now and they will come under fire from the humans who will not know that we are allies, not with General Bryce still missing. He is, is he not?” Optimus asked as he turned towards his co-leader.

“Correct. We haven’t been able to locate him. Soundwave went off ship to hack into an information center directly and found that happening. Starscream, I want a team of your best ready to back him up if he should encounter resistance while he is currently trying to track down what he believes is the source of the signal controlling that machine.”

The motorcycle roared into the area and skidded to a stop before transforming back to her root mode.

“What is - oh, scrap,” she said. Her optics remained transfixed on the figure on the screen.

“We need you to lead the ground teams into drawing that thing,” Megatron said with disgust, “off the human’s base so it can be dealt with appropriately.”

“This will not be an easy task. You must remain in your alt modes, while you draw it away from the humans. Starscream as the Air Commander will provide you with air support if needed, but your vehicular modes will have the best chance of not drawing weapons fire from the humans,” Optimus said with a nod.

“Got it. We’ll have that thing heading for the scrap heap as quick as we can.”

The femme transformed and her wheels spun for a moment before tires caught and she shot off the bridge. Her processor spun through various scenarios before she finally decided on a course of action.

:Listen up everyone, I was put in charge of this mission and I won’t lie - it’s going to be dangerous. Bee, pick out a team that is, well, faster than most. I’ll explain when I get on deck. Arcee, out:

The chatter over the comm increased as she sped down the hall and up to the flight deck. The top of
the ship had all of the ground based troops milling about, although the bright yellow scout was easy to pick out among the sea of purple vehicons even with a few of them gathered around him. The former Autobots were easier to pick out as they stood out from the uniform vehicons, but she didn’t expect to find the newest member of the ship in the mix. She pointed a finger at the white and blue mech standing with Bee.

“Smokescreen, you can’t come. You don’t have an Earth-based alt mode.”

“What! But I want to help! Come on, I’m fast! And I’m not afraid of danger!”

Bumblebee put a hand on Smokescreen’s shoulder and answered her in urgent beeps and whistles.

“We could use his help and I had him show me his alt form, it sort of reminds me of one of those fancy prototype cars from those car shows. He’ll just be one among many and he is fast.”

The femme finally nodded her helm at the pair. “Fine. But you are under Bee’s watch, do as he says or you won’t be going on any other missions if I have anything to say about it.”

Smokescreen pumped his fist into the air. “Yes! What’s the plan?”

Arcee waved the gathered mecha closer and waited for them to quiet down.

“We have a human made imposter of Optimus Prime attacking a human military base. Our job is to go in there and draw it out so we can deal with it. And to make it really interesting, we have to do it while remaining in alt form. Bee, you and your team are our first wave. I want you to go in there and drive around him, attempt to pull him away from the humans. Taunt him, whatever you want so long as you do not leave alt form.”

Arcee pointed at Bulkhead and the white mech standing beside the hulking green mech.

“You two will lead our next wave. If Bee’s team fails to draw him out, then I want you to take whichever of the rest of you feel lucky enough to roll with a few former Wrecker’s and I want you guys to knock that thing on its aft if at all possible. If we can knock it down, then we can drag it out of there. Those of you with towlines installed will then latch on to whatever part you can and we move it off the base. When we get it away from the humans, well, then all of us will unload everything we got into it. I’ll be directing as best as I can and the rest of you will be running interference for Bee’s team and Bulk’s should they need it. So keep the line open and chatter minimal so requests for aid can be heard. Any questions?”

Helms shook even while a few of the braver vehicons moved to stand with Bulk.

“Good. Let’s roll!”

:Ground assault is ready, bridge us down,: Arcee said over the main channel.

The portal swirled open near the gathered mecha and the femme waved at the yellow scout, his team shifted and drove through the portal followed closely by the large green off road vehicle and his squad. Wheeljack’s sports car form looked tiny compared his friend as they rolled through the vortex together with several vehicons close on their taillights. The motorcycle roared through it next along with the rest of the vehicons.

The Cybertronians found themselves on the far side of a hangar and they sped around it, all the while gunfire echoed in the pre-dawn dark.

:Keep headlights off until you can shine them directly into that thing’s optics - I assume that is a
camera feed for whoever is driving it. Go Team Bee!:

The roar of engines momentarily drowned out the sound of the battle that waged near them. Two flashy cars led the pack, one a cheery yellow and the other shone bright white against the dark, while behind them were three dark purple and dangerous appearing cars. The imposter turned at the noise and five sets of high beams caught the thing directly in its face. A hand rose to shield the cold blue orbs from the light.

:Yep, it didn’t like us shining our brights into its optics!:

“Where is your precious leader?” the imposter snarled as it swung at the vehicle closest to it.

Smokescreen slid into one of the vehicon’s from the impact of the fake’s fist. Wheels squealed as they broke apart and accelerated away from the thing.

“He asked us to take out the trash. He’s got more important things to do than waste his time with a drone!” Smokescreen called out as he headed around a corner.

:Good one, Smokes!: Bee laughed over the channel.

The humans took shots at the giant robot when they could, but ignored the cars for now. Whoever was driving them seemed to be on their side and they would take the help since the air strike they had called in was still thirty minutes out. The fake Prime swung from the vehicles circling him when they didn’t open fire on him and returned to making his way towards a hangar.

:Team Bulk, go knock that thing off its pedes,: Arcee said even as she roared out into the area with her holographic projection activated.

:Wreck and Rule!: the green and white mechs yelled as they peeled out with a vehicon on either side of them.

The four vehicles drove in a tight formation towards their target with their lights off.

:Jack, you and Fred take the right stabilizer, we’ll take the left.:

Bumblebee and his group kept circling the thing and getting in its way whenever they could. It swatted at the cars when they ventured to close, but remained on its current trajectory. They waited until the last minute before driving out of range of what would hopefully soon be a falling down machine. The robot stopped and shifted to peer at where its enemy had gone when four vehicles slammed into it. It rocked on its legs and one hand landed on the hood of the big green SUV crumpling it.

“Oof!”

:Get it off of me! This thing weighs as much as the real Prime!:

:Grapplers get in there and drag it while it is off balance!: Arcee said and sped towards the pair.

Vehicons rushed in and wires fired from their frames.

“Do you think your weak little tricks will be able to stop me? Stupid machines! MECH has achieved the perfect synthesis of man and machine! My extensive combat and tactics training coupled with this unstoppable combat chassis - you can’t best me!” Fake Prime snarled as it fought off the lines attempting to yank it off its feet.
“Extensive? I thought you said that humans have short life spans, Bee?” Smokescreen asked.

:They do. He’s talking maybe twenty years tops.: Arcee said.

Smokescreen laughed loud and long. “Twenty years! Seriously? Who does this guy think he’s fighting? My boot camp lasted almost as long as that!”

An angry snarl came from the machine and it managed to break a few of the cables holding it still.

:Soundwave: Location of signal found. Request assistance at these coordinates.: 

:On our way.: Starscream answered.

:You cannot carpet bomb the area. We must find out if they know anything about General Bryce’s whereabouts.: Optimus said.

:Yes, try and take whoever is in charge prisoner. They have much to answer for.: Megatron added.

The location given wasn’t that far from their current location and she decided on a new tactic to draw the thing away from the humans.

“We don’t have to. We were just buying time for the main force to find out where the signal controlling your machine was located. They found it. Roll out everyone. Time to bust up this aft’s party once and for all!”

Whoops and hollers answered her words and the force turned towards the new destination. She made sure she was at the back of the pack and angled one mirror to watch the fake.

“No! You will not stop me!”

It shifted much as she had seen the real Prime do many a time and the semi-truck rolled after the much nimbler cars in front of it.

:Once we are out of sight of the base; we surround this thing and take it out. So let him get in the middle of us, it will save us some work later.: 

The humans watched as what had to be the oddest race ever shot out of the remnants of the base’s front gate. The semi surged forward, far faster than anything that large should be, and was able to keep up with the smaller vehicles. The pack was silent as they raced down the road spreading out and around the much larger truck. Once the base was safely out of sight, Arcee turned her focus towards their target.

:On my mark, take out its tires. Bulk, smash through its hood and damage the engine if you can. This thing stops here. Ready?:

A chorus of yes’s answered the femme and she revved her engine to get closer to the imposter.

:Go!: 

Transformation sounds rang out all around them and then a barrage of weapon fire hit the semi. It slowed as the tires were blown out, but didn’t stop. The green SUV was a fraction of its size, but that didn’t stop the mech from leaping in the middle of his transformation onto the semi. His fist slammed down onto the hood of the vehicle.

“That’s for denting my hood! And this is for pretending to be Prime!”
The mech’s fist transformed into his mace and he smashed it down once more onto the already crumpled metal. The truck slammed its brakes and the green mech was ripped from the hood, but he didn’t go empty handed, part of the hood remained firmly held by his servos. The rest of the Cybertronians surrounded the vehicle. Headfins flashed in a merry pattern and Wheeljack grinned beneath his battlemask.

“Hey, Bulk, nice souvenir you got there. I think it’s time we show it why we are called Wreckers.”

Bulkhead chuckled from where he lay still hanging onto the piece of metal. “Get’em, Jack.”

The smaller mech pulled out a string of his special armaments and flipped the arm switch before he shoved it inside the engine block that had been exposed by Bulkhead.

“Scatter!”

The Cybertronians dove away from the machine. It began its transformation sequence once more, but all the damage it had sustained slowed it down. Too late, an explosion ripped through the chassis and shrapnel flew everywhere.

“Ow! Fraggin thing hit me!”

“Should have ducked better.” came the laughing reply.

Smoke spewed from it while the lights dimmed as it creaked and groaned before finally toppling over.

:Ground team reporting in. Fake Prime is down and ready to be smelted. Orders?:

:Opening a vortex near you. Bring the remains onboard. Good job, team.; Optimus answered.

:Yes, sir. I can’t speak for all of us, but I know I would like to join the others in ending MECH’s threat once and for all, once we’ve dropped off this wreck.:

There was a pause and the mechs gathered about the smaller femme as they waited for an answer.

“Frag that. We aren’t that far away, I say we go join them anyway. We have a debt to collect,” Wheeljack muttered.

The taller white and blue mech nodded. “Yeah, I don’t want to go back either. I want to -”

“Stuff it in your tailpipe - both of you! We follow orders and if Optimus says we return, than that is exactly what we do,” Arcee said with a finger shoved into Smokescreen’s chassis. “I’ve not always been the best for doing just that, but this mission is bigger than just some petty revenge!”

:Ground team, you have permission. We will bridge you down to Soundwave after the remains are brought onboard.:

“Yes!”

The green portal swirled to life not far from them and towlines were put in place on the still smoking wreckage while the rest of the team pushed from behind. As soon as they got it onto the flight deck, the group converged on the femme.

:Ground team has delivered the package, ready for the bridge down.:

The vortex had barely begun to open before the gathered mecha streamed back through it. The group
slid to a stop just outside another underground bunker.

“Another retrorat hunt. Yuck.”

Several jets swooped down over their heads. The lead one hovered in place in front of the team.

“Yes, it is. We’ll make sure none of them escape this time, but your job is to dig them out of their bunker.”

Arcee waved a servo at the mech’s groans and faced the Air Commander. “That’s all well and good, but has that one eyed freak come up with anything to combat their stasis beams yet?”

“That’s hardly a nice way to refer to one of our scientists, but to answer your question he’s already inside. Haven’t heard anything from him so I would say that whatever he came up with didn’t work.”

“Great, we’ll have to haul his aft out of there as well. Everyone stick together and remember we need prisoners not roadkill.”

Someone had blasted through the main door. Weapons drawn the team slunk through the crumpled entrance. Lights flickered around them and off in the distance it sounded like a fight was still going on.

:Shockwave?:

:I did not request backup yet.: 

:No, but we are here never the less. You found a way to counteract their beams?: Arcee asked.

:Correct. I’m currently trying to neutralize all of them. The humans are trying to counter my countermeasures. So far, they have failed.: 

:Understood. We’ll sweep in behind where you’ve been and round them all up. The seekers are staying above to make sure none get away this time.: 

Arcee rolled her optics at the silence over the channel, once an aft, always an aft apparently. They stalked through the now empty hallway, scrape marks on the walls showed where Shockwave had damaged the walls, apparently not only was his ego too big. At the first big intersection, she waved Bee’s group down to the right and the Wrecker’s down the left while she continued on with the rest of their force.

:If you come under fire, call for reinforcements. Those beams will take you out in one shot. This is no place to play hero.: 

A chorus of yes’s rang out and the three groups split apart. The femme approached the first door she spotted and gestured for the rest of her squad to fan out around her. The vehicons shifted around her, covering her from all sides. One hard kick and the door flew open, the interior showed signs of a fight, but nothing else remained.

The femme huffed in irritation. :Shockwave, what have you been doing with the humans you have encountered?:

:Keeping them together in front of me of course. They make excellent shields against their own kind.:
Listen you aft! We need them alive so we can find out if they know anything about the General and whatever else they might be up too.

She cycled her vents as she tamped down her disgust at the mech.

Everyone sweep the area for stragglers and head towards where Shockwave is.

Their search of the complex went much faster now that they knew that Shockwave had been taking the humans he had encountered with him and it didn’t take long for them to clear their hallway.

I’ve encountered a prisoner. Can any of you identify him? Shockwave asked even as he transmitted the location of the unknown human.

Bulkhead, you’ve met the General, go see if that is him.

On my way, ’Cee.

Shaking her helm, she turned back to finishing their area.

Nemesis, we found the General. He’s in pretty rough shape. Orders?

Free him, Optimus said, and see if he has any suggestions on how to handle this situation.

It didn’t take them long to verify that there were no humans left in their section and Arcee led her group towards where the General had been found.

All of the human weapons have been rendered inoperable. My upgrades worked just as I predicted, although the beams were unpleasant they did not cause the cascade of system shutdowns previously seen.

Good work, Shockwave. Return to the ship and let Arcee’s team handle the humans now.

Understood.

Arcee and her group had to slip into rooms in order to give the big tank-former enough space to fit through the hall and she ex-vented in relief at seeing him leave. They continued on through the complex and found Wheeljack and the rest of his squad guarding the humans huddled together, behind them stood what looked like the remains of a huge console.

Any problems?

Nah. Shockey scared the slag out of them already so they are behaving.

Keep them contained and safe for now. I’ll go check in with Bulkhead.

A few of the vehicons followed her as she headed for her teammate. The big green mech sat on the ground next to the human while he attempted to straighten out a piece of his armor.

If you make that worse, Ratchet will be fragged off, she said with a soft laugh. General Bryce, I’m Arcee and in charge of the ground troops. Optimus and Megatron are hoping you might have a few suggestions on how to handle this, sir.

I need to get hold of my people so they can come in here and clean up this mess. How did you know where to find me?”
“We didn’t. We were chasing down the imitation Prime they had created and Soundwave tracked the control signal to this spot. I am sorry to say that Agent Fowler is dead.”

“I know. Bishop, their leader, told me they took care of him. It was my orders that put him in danger, I sent him to check out a warehouse I suspected as one of theirs. They must have spotted him. He was a good man.”

“Yes, he was and will be missed. However, I doubt Shockwave left anything useable behind, but perhaps we can connect you through our own system.”

:Nemesis, can you patch us into a channel so that the General can talk to his people?:

:Affirmative. Link established. Number required. Broadcast channel to human.:

:Understood.:

She turned back towards the human. “Looks like Soundwave patched me into your communication network. Give me the number you wish to call and he will finish the connection.”

Bryce’s head slumped for a moment and she feared he had gone unconscious. His head swiveled up to her and he rattled off a series of numbers. She passed the information onto Soundwave and broadcast her internal channel.

“Hello.”

“Alpha code - four, one, three. Bravo code - sierra, oscar, sierra.”

“Understood. Location?”

Bryce looked up at her. “Where are we exactly? I was in a trunk so didn’t really see our location.”

She rattled off the coordinates.

“Got it. Clean up will arrive in ten minutes.”

The line filled with static and she shut down the channel.

“Shall we leave, sir?”

He shook his head. “No, the team coming in is privy to your existence. Now you said something about Prime? What happened?”

She ex-vented and settled down on the other side of him. “They created an exact replica of Optimus and sent it into a nearby military base and used it to attack it. Even had it say who it was, although their information was a little outdated when it said it was the leader of the Autobots. We were sent in to draw it out and neutralize it. What’s left of it is on our ship.”

Bryce scrubbed his face with a hand. “Those idiots. I know he ranted that he was going to incite action against your people, but I had no idea that was what he meant.”

“Why? What could they possibly gain from this?”

Red-rimmed eyes stared at her. “It would have made it open hunting season on your people and I’m sure they had plans to come forward as having the technology to bring you under control and gotten even more money backing them than they already have. As far as I am concerned, it would have been a disaster.”
The groan of metal under stress had her and the General turning towards Bulkhead. The mech patted down the panel he had just adjusted.

“Ah, there we go. Now it isn’t pinching that cable anymore.”

Noticing he had an audience, he grinned. “Hey, ‘Cee, think we can talk Prime into letting the kids visit us now?”

The human’s eyes drifted up to the green mech’s face and whatever he saw there had him smiling.

“I can talk to him myself, if you would like. I think having a little less isolation between our people would be a good thing.”

“Yes!” Bulkhead exclaimed. “Now we are talking! Wait until she meets the twins! She’s gonna love them! Let me go tell Bee!”

They watched the mech stomp out of the room and there was a bounce in his step that had been missing recently.

“Thank you, General.”

Bryce leaned his head back against the wall behind him and closed his eyes. He waved a hand at her.

“No, thank you. Now while we wait, tell me in every little detail how you kicked Bishop’s machine to scrap.”

She shook her helm and smiled. Keeping her sensors attuned to the area around them, she imitated his pose while she recounted every detail from their recent mission. Her team had received only a few dents and scrapes, and except for the loss of Fowler, it had been a resounding win and that felt good.
Ground team reporting in. Area is secure. The humans have arrived and are in the process of transferring the prisoners out. Sending the injured back now, Arcee said over the main channel.

Megatron glanced over at Optimus, the red and blue mech had the twins cradled in his arms still while he shifted from pede to pede and those bright blue optics seemed to stare at the far wall. The swaying motion seemed to help settle the pair down although they hadn’t dropped into recharge yet.

“I know what you are thinking and although I would like to see the site for myself, bringing the twins down there doesn’t sit well with me,” the grey mech said as he stared at the main view screen. “We need to speak with the General now more than ever. I do not suggest it lightly, but we need to show him that we are the type of leaders who value peace and cooperation and since we have to bring them with us that shows the humans that we are not a threat to them.”

Megatron raised an orbital ridge at his co-leader. “You’ll bring them down to a base that had just recently been inhabited by humans who meant to start a war with us, but yet you think that flying with them is too dangerous of a risk!”

Prime ex-vented and turned to face Megatron. “Because I cannot follow you into the air so I cannot protect them should something happen to them or you and what about their bond to me should you venture too far!”

His mouth opened and shut as his processor quickly verified that he hadn’t considered the last part of that statement when he’d first proposed taking the twins up. At least he’d finally gotten the stubborn mech to explain why he had been so adamantly against the whole thing.

“Ah. Well, perhaps we can work something out then. Perhaps if you drove below me with Twin Twist while I take Topspin above. We can use them to gauge how far apart we can be before it distresses them too much. As to the other thing, I agree, we need to talk with the General, but if he was held prisoner I’m sure he is in no shape to talk right now. No, we need to meet with him when he has had a chance to recover and we can do so some place where there recently wasn’t fighting. Right now and down at that base is neither the time nor place that I am willing to bring the twins to.”

Prime’s optics narrowed, but after a moment he ex-vented and nodded with his helm. “Why must you turn everything into a test of wills?”

“Me? I can’t help it you are as stubborn as I am. And I merely wanted to know the real reason you don’t want them to go into the air with me. I can’t address your concerns if you won’t tell me.”

“Perhaps you should just ask, all I can see is that you enjoy being a pain in my - processor.”
Megatron shook his helm and tamped down his irritation while he gestured towards the main hall.

“Come. Instead of dwelling on the humans, why don’t we go see how our injured are doing. That is something good leaders do as well, correct?”

“Do not use that to avoid the humans, I know you tend toward xenophobia.”

The grey mech snorted. “You misunderstand me then, I am not afraid of them; I just do not see the point in socializing with them.”

:Optimus, Megatron, this is Ratchet. You need to come to the med-bay, there is something here you need to see.: 

:We were just about to head there,; Megatron said with a smug grin aimed at Optimus.

The red and blue mech strode off without a second glance back although a wave of annoyance cascaded back to the grey mech. Megatron shook his helm but followed behind Prime. The hall echoed with their footfalls, but nothing else. He idly scratched at his armor as they traveled and the irritability over the bond only increased and it wasn’t just him that was feeling it. The door to the med-bay slid open to the sounds of metal plates being banged back into their proper position. The red and white medic glanced up at their approach and waved them over to where Smokescreen lay on a table.

“We think we found another key. Smokescreen got banged up a bit in the attack and while scanning for other injuries, well, we found this.”

Ratchet shoved the screen at his leaders and together they leaned forward to gaze at it - a foreign object amidst the inner workings of a normal Cybertronian cheerfully blinked on the device.

“How?” Megatron asked. “Did you swallow it?”

“Pit no! I have no idea how that got there!”

“Alpha Trion,” Optimus said, his voice barely audible. “He must have done it during the time you were with him. As for how, that I cannot explain.”

“Can we remove it?”

“Hey! Do you mind! Only medics are allowed to muck with my inner workings, thank you very much!” Smokescreen said as he placed his servos over the front of his chassis.

Megatron grinned down at their newest addition. “Lucky for you, there are several here to get it out for us.”

Ratchet ex-vented and patted the mech on the shoulder. “Yes, we can remove it, safely. As soon as everyone has their dents banged out, we’ll put him under and extract it.”

He shifted to face the two leaders once more and his optics narrowed as he gazed at them.

“We just wanted to give you a little more good news besides saving the General and stopping that abomination. Breakdown is up scanning the thing now to try to figure out how they made it. Now go get a full defrag session, both of you.”

Ratchet punched in a few codes and two pairs of optics stared at the medic as they examined the notification that had just been sent ship-wide.
“There, you’re both on medical leave for a full solar cycle so unless we come under attack, I don’t want to see either of you up on the command deck.”

“What? What in the name of Primus for?” Megatron began.

The medic poked one finger at the hulking grey mech with not a speck of fear.

“I’ve been watching you all since you arrived. You are rubbing your armor like it is itching, and the twins have optics that are too pale. All four of you need some decent defrag before you really start glitching and the little ones won’t relax until you two do, so off you all go.”

When his words only made the two leaders open their mouth, he narrowed his own optics. “Don’t make me put you two into forced defrag!”

Megatron glared at the medic and took a step forward but a hand on his shoulder stopped him.

“He is right. We are both irritable and the twins need it even more than we do.”

A servo rubbed across Megatron’s face. “Fine. Let’s go.”

The pair stalked out of the room with only a slightly angry rumble from the former warlord. Smokescreen gazed up at Ratchet with something approaching awe in his optics.

“That was either the bravest thing I’ve ever seen or the craziest. That was Megatron! The Slagmaker! Destroyer of Cybertron and you just sent him to his quarters! Primus, that was amazing. I think I want to be a medic now.”

A soft laugh left the medic as he leaned against the nearest wall since his legs suddenly felt as if all the energon in his body had evaporated. “I think I’ve been hanging out with Wreckers too much lately.”

~+~+~

The ping of a small metallic object clanging against his chassis brought him out of recharge and red optics lit up. His helm shifted until he spotted the twins, one earnestly banging a servo on him while his brother treated Optimus to the same thing. His HUD helpfully reminded him that fueling would be needed soon, and that had to be the reason the little ones were unhappy. He scooped up Twin Twist, his tiny attacker, and crooned a soft noise at the unhappy meep he was given. Before he could nudge Optimus awake, blue optics lit up and his mouthplates quirked upward when he spotted Topspin nearly on his helm hitting him on the chin.

“I believe defrag was sufficient, however fuel appears to be the next priority for the twins.”

“That it is. I hate it when your medic is right.”

Optimus laughed softly. “Our medic now.”

The sparkling rode in his palm as he maneuvered his frame off the berth, Prime, only a moment behind him. They had barely reached the door that led to the main hall when a ping for admittance was transmitted to them. Megatron palmed the panel and the hatch opened to reveal Ivan with a pair of tiny cubes held in his servos.

“Ratchet warned me that you were online and that the twins would need fuel, sirs.”

“He is through, I’ll give him that,” Megatron said as he watched the sparkling in his palm. “Do you
want to fuel here or in the main rec room?"

The pair let out a series of beeps until finally tiny servos pointed down the hall towards where they knew the rest of the crew took their rations even though the two adults could feel how hungry the pair were.

“Perhaps you could sip on those while we walk, after all, we will need to go there to fuel anyway,” Optimus said as he gazed down at the fragile life in his palm.

The two mechs lowered their palms and the vehicon gave each sparkling one of their special cubes. Little servos grabbed their rations and soon the contented hum of tiny engines could be heard as the fuel disappeared down intakes.

“Slowly, Topspin and Twin Twist, you do not wish to upset your tanks by taking in too much too quickly.”

Their steps were careful as they tried not to jostle the pair while they drank their rations. The vehicons followed a few paces behind their leaders until the sound of heavy footfalls had them moving to intercept whoever was carelessly running through the hall. They braced themselves, but thankfully the big green mech slid to a stop with his hands held up and a sheepish grin. He would have trampled the pair with little problem if he had kept going.

“Whoa. Sorry guys. Didn’t mean to almost run into you like that. I just wanted to catch Prime.”

The guards glanced back and at a nod from Prime, they moved behind the two leaders.

“That is why we do not rush through the halls unless it is an emergency, Bulkhead.”

“I know, but it sort of is. It’s Saturday.”

“I am aware of that.”

“Scrap. You didn’t talk to the General yet?”

“No, we were giving him time to recover and we needed to get a full defrag in, Ratchet’s orders.”

“Well with MECH gone now, can we go see the children or have them come here? General Bryce was real nice and said he thought that was a good idea for us to visit and you know Miko would love to meet the twins.”

Megatron took a step forward. “No.”

Bulkhead’s helm drooped until he saw Optimus place a servo on his co-leader’s shoulder.

“Megatron, I disagree. I think exposing the twins to other species early on will be beneficial for their development and the children -”

“They are organic. They are not our kind.”

“Exactly. We are fairly unique in the galaxy, most species we have encountered have been organic, and as such all of us must be more open to other kinds of life.”

Optimus swung his gaze over to the former Wrecker.

“As for the children, until we can verify with the General that MECH has been completely neutralized, I feel it best that we keep our distance for their sake. I would not want what happened to
Agent Fowler to befall them, so I am sorry but our reunion with them will have to wait a little longer.”

Bulkhead ex-vented with a nod. “I understand. I’ll let the others know.”

“And we’ll be discussing that later,” Megatron ground out as he stepped around the big green mech.

“Yes, we will.”

The rest of the walk was quiet except for the soft, inquisitive meeps that the twins occasionally vocalized. The mess hall was nearly empty since it was between shifts and Megatron and Optimus took their rations to a table far away from the few still lingering over their energon. Topspin and Twin Twist were placed on the table and they glanced up at their caretakers before gazing around them.

“Why don’t you two take the twins over to visit with whoever is in here. You’d like that wouldn’t you?” Megatron asked the pair of sparklings.

The two looked out at the handful of mecha in the room and back to their creators. They shared another glance between themselves along with a few beeps.

“We will remain right here drinking our rations while Ivan and Dave follow you about, and you can return whenever you want,” Optimus said and gave the pair a gentle smile.

Happy grins plastered on their faces, the pair held up their arms to the pair of vehicons. Dave and Ivan gathered up their charges and placed them on the floor so they could go where they pleased. Megatron turned to Optimus and took a long gulp of his energon before placing the cube on the table.

“Why are you so insistent we make friends with the humans? We will be returning to our world soon enough.”

“Perhaps and perhaps not. I know you spent most of the golden age of Cybertron in a mine, but at one time our people had colonies and space bridges to areas all over the galaxy. Perhaps someday we will again and to that end we must learn to co-exist peacefully with our species and other cultures. You must get over your disdain for the humans. They have come far in a very short period of time, and we would be wise to cultivate allies wherever we can.”

Megatron threw up a servo and glanced over at the twins who were busy chattering at the table full of vehicons as all of the inhabitants of the room had gathered around the pair. He gave Twin Twist a smile when the little one shifted to look over at his creators. Reassured, he returned to watching one of their new friends showing off his collection of rocks.

“I hate it when you use that voice of yours and give me logic and reason to win your argument. I think I prefer having you yell at me to make your point.”

A soft laugh left the Prime. “No, you hate it when I am right.”

“That too.”

He downed the rest of his cube and watched as the vehicons vied for the attention of the twins. He pointed a talon over at the little gathering.

“Perhaps we should just unleash those two on the humans, they apparently turn our people into willing slaves.”
“Which is why having the humans see them is not a bad thing. Much as we are protective of our sparklings, they are of their offspring as well. Showing them our similarities allows them to see us as more than just giant alien robots.”

A rude noise came from Megatron. “More like they see us as parts and weapons to be used, after all, why should they treat us any different than they treat each other.”

“Only some of them are like that. Are they so different from us? Have we not harmed each other, used each other?”

Megatron waved a hand in defeat before letting it fall to the table. “Fine, you’ve made your point and won it. I will follow your lead on this as well. Pit, maybe Starscream is right and caring for the twins has made me weaker.”

A warm hand over his pulled his gaze from the now empty cube.

“Never think that, Megatron. If anything, they have brought out a strength in you. The old you would have destroyed them and would have never bothered to care. No, you faced your mistakes, accepted them, and then worked to fix them - that is the true strength of any individual. Caring is not a weakness for we are our mightiest when we can work together as a unit.”

Red optics shuttered and he nodded his helm, however, he brought them back online at the sound of the door opening. He shifted his gaze over and spotted the large, blockish form of Shockwave, before he could say something he watched all of the vehicons in the room surround the twins, forming a wall between the much larger tank-former and the sparklings.

“Sir. I’m sorry, sir, but you’ll have to wait as the twins are here and Megatron gave strict orders not to let you near them,” Ivan said from his place at the front of the group.

Optimus stood up. “I’ve got this.”

Prime moved to the front of the pack. “I am sure that Shockwave just needed some fuel and we can all share the room peacefully, can we not?”

“Sir, are you sure?”

The single optic swung about, taking in the stance of the vehicons and the presence of Megatron at a far table. The twins could be heard but were hard to pick out being in the middle of the vehicons.

“Prime is correct. I came for my ration is all.”

“Let him in, he would be beyond foolish to try something with us here and Shockwave is no one’s fool,” Megatron said.

The mass of smaller purple mechs shuffled to one side, still protecting the sparklings in their midst. It was almost funny, but in a rather disturbing way. Shockwave inclined his helm and strode towards the dispenser. Dave placed his charges on the floor once more and the pair darted over to their creator’s table with Optimus right behind them. Beeps and whistles were directed towards Megatron and Optimus while little digits pointed over at the new mech.

“That is Shockwave. He is a scientist and very busy so you musn’t bother him.”

Sad little meeps was their response.

“I am merely taking a break from decoding the information I downloaded from the humans and
needed fuel,” Shockwave said from his table that he had purposefully picked on the far side of the area.

The twins viewed that as an invitation as they scurried over to the table with their watchers right on their afts. The pair stopped an arm’s reach away and it was all Megatron could do not to snarl and blast the other mech as that single optic gazed down at the innocent sparks watching him.

“Do you know how many newsparks were lost while our ancestors tried to figure out the correct frame size that they could support? I studied the data the medics released to me and I still can’t deduce how to recreate their creation.”

“Too many,” Optimus said softly.

“Our god is a bit of an interfering fragger -”

“Megatron, please.”

“What? He is and I wouldn’t doubt that newsparks are created to amuse him so chalk it up to gift from Primus,” Megatron said with a soft laugh.

“I will keep my promise, Megatron, but may I observe them when they are out and about the ship? How they process data and learn could be of value to us.”

At that look from Optimus, the one that said do this, Megatron nodded. “Fine, you may observe them and interact with them, but nothing else.”

Shockwave drained the last of his cube and stood up from the table. He faced the pair watching him and dropped down to one knee. He had observed how the vehicons interacted with the pair and imitated it.

“Greetings, Topspin and Twin Twist.”

A quick glance back and at the reassuring nods, the twins faced the newcomer with a tentative smile. Ivan and Dave stood directly behind the pair, ready to assist if needed. Megatron glanced over and found the Prime watching the interaction just as closely as him. Good to know he wasn’t completely trusting, perhaps there was some hope for him after all.
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Please feel free to point out any mistakes I may have missed and as always, feedback is appreciated and on that note a big thank you to Optimus' girl, Acidwing, and Chaoswolf12 for all their comments, it's helped me tremendously to know what people found interesting. Thank you!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The room was a lot fuller now with the addition of Arcee and Shockwave to their normal staff meeting. Some how the femme seemed to take up as much space as any of the mechs around her. She had her arms crossed over her chassis as her optics watched those around her.

“You are sure that there was only Airachnid’s frame in that complex?” Optimus asked.

“Without actually trying to piece her together? Yes, we are pretty sure,” Ratchet said.

Arcee leaned forward and caught Prime’s optics. “We weren’t even aware that there had even been a Cybertronian down there, not at least until we stumbled across a part that could only have come from one of us, and that was in a heap of discarded parts.”

“CNA tests confirm that the transformation cog found in the fake prime came from her, my guess is that if we broke down the rest of it we would find more parts from her as well in there.”

The disgust on the medic’s face was reflected by most of the command team.

Megatron shook his helm. “I have to wonder how she was caught by them.”

“Hopefully the humans kept detailed notes. I would hate to have wasted my time un-encrypting their data for incomplete information,” Shockwave said and his single optic peered over to the communication officer. “It would go much faster if Soundwave were to use his considerable skills to aid me. I find the human’s system illogical.”

Megatron shook his helm. “I’m sure you will decode it soon enough. Soundwave has his servos full trying to decipher the location of the last key.”

“When we meet with the General we can ask him if his people had better luck,” Optimus said. He paused for a moment and let his optics sweep across all the attendees. “On that end, I have a few suggestions I would like to make - first, I would like us to offer a diplomatic gesture to the humans - a gift if you will.”

Megatron raised an orbital ridge and leaned on one hand as he watched the other mech. “Exactly what kind of gift are you talking about?”

“Ratchet has always complained about how inefficient their engines are, perhaps he and Knock Out could draw up plans for a better energy conversion system that they could use for their combustion engines instead.”

Prime held up a servo when both Starscream and Megatron opened their mouths to most likely
“We need to begin thinking beyond the here and now and begin to plan ahead for when Cybertron is recovering. Building alliances with other races is the first step needed to protect our world. We all have seen how tenacious and intelligent the humans can be, let us get them on our side. With Unicron at the heart of their world and Primus in ours, our fates are perhaps more tied together than any of us previously believed. Let us work to guide them away from the mistakes we have made.”

The noise from Megatron’s engine was definitely on the rude side and drew a glare from Prime.

“We haven’t even gotten our world righted and you want us to waste time here?”

“Have you thought about the fact that the space bridge that you built will be remaining here and still be operational? Either we leave a contingent of our people behind to oversee it or we enlist the humans as allies to do so.”

“We could put it on a timer to self-destruct after we pass through it,” Starscream said with a smirk.

The slender blue femme jumped to her feet and slammed her fist down in front of the seeker although Ratchet wasn’t far behind her.

“Not on your spark, you insane glitch! That explosion would destroy half of this continent and most likely kill off most of the organic life on this planet!”

The flyer held up his hands in defeat although the grin never left his face. “It was just a thought.”

“Starscream, really? Stop baiting them. Prime is right, we need to consider the fact that the space bridge is here to stay and since we haven’t even begun to look for where Alpha Trion threw the rest of the artifacts from our world, we might just have to come back here,” Megatron said with a sigh. At least Prime wasn’t openly gloating yet.

He turned towards the medic. “Can you come up with something to offer the humans before our meeting with them?”

Ratchet shrugged a shoulder even as one finger tapped his chin. “A set of plans, probably. Although adapting a proto-type to the materials available on this planet might be a little more problematic.”

Optimus’ smile had Megatron shaking his head again.

“You said several things?”

“Just one other thing - I want to invite the humans here for our meeting.”

“What makes you think the humans will be willing to come here now? And why?”

Prime’s optics locked with the former warlord’s.

“Because otherwise the humans will most likely want us to go to one of their military bases and that is somewhere I am sure you do not want to bring the twins. So instead we offer to let them fly to our ship and we make sure to move it to a location that is easy for them to get to, after all we can always move after they leave.”

A low growl built in the war frame’s chassis. It wasn’t ideal, but bringing the twins down to a human military base was an even poorer choice as far as he was concerned. He nodded warily.

“Fine, but only if Bryce says they are sure they have all of MECH gathered up. Only then will we
invite the humans to join us up here.”

“You’re not serious, are you?” Starscream said and each word rose higher in pitch than the previous one.

“Yes, I am. Optimus is right, I would not bring the sparklings down to a human military stronghold willingly. If MECH has been dealt with then having them here is acceptable. However, if the humans don’t wish to come here then we fall back to that open field we used before.”

The seeker’s servos flailed about in the air over his head. “You’re both insane! Inviting the humans onto our warship!”

Optimus placed a servo on the flyer’s shoulder. “We need everyone, including the humans, to think of this vessel as something other than just a warship. We are attempting to find the means to restore our world and while we do so this is where we live at the moment. This is our home.”

Ratchet nodded his helm and stared at his leaders and the side of one lip plate quirked upward. “If we invite Bryce up here, Bulkhead will start asking about bringing the children up here again.”

“If the meeting with Bryce goes well, I do not see any reason not to allow controlled visits from the children as well. And that is one thing I want to ask for all of us - permission to travel on their planet in our alt-modes. However, I think we will have to find an alternative to you traveling on their roads, Shockwave. Humans normally do not have tank like vehicles traveling on them.”

The shutters on the scientist’s single optic flexed a little. “Transformation serves little purpose to me outside of combat or a need to travel great distances. I have no desire to spend time traveling about the human world with no goal.”

Megatron covered his laughter at the obvious relief he felt coming from Prime’s side of the bond with the twins. A single light flashed on the console and Soundwave inclined his helm towards his leaders.

“Incoming transmission: General Bryce.”

“Put him through, Soundwave,” Megatron said.

A click could be heard and then the faint sound of a human taking a breath.

“Prime?”

“General Bryce, we were just going over our findings from our recent encounter with MECH.”

“Excellent. I have our reports as well, and I think we should compare what we found. Are you ready to schedule a meeting?”

Optimus gazed about the room and at the nods from their team he smiled.

“Yes. I think that would be a good idea.”

“Glad to hear that. We have a little used base out in the desert, I think that would be a good place for us to meet. I can send you the coordinates, but will you be ready to meet later today? You are, of course, free to bring whoever you need.”

“The time frame is acceptable, however, I must ask first, has MECH been fully contained now?”

“Yes, we had one of them roll on Bishop and we were able to sweep up even the smaller cells.
“Why?”

“As a gesture of good faith, we were thinking that perhaps your people would like to visit our ship. We can bring her to a location of your choice and you can fly up to it. And the same applies to you, you may bring whoever you think is necessary.”

“I see. Do you realize that I can’t think of a single person who wouldn’t want to see it?” Bryce asked with a soft laugh.

“Understandable, our two races do share a certain amount of natural curiosity towards new things.”

“Let me make sure my superiors are onboard with that, but I think that sounds like an excellent idea. I’ll give you the coordinates for that base I mentioned, we can meet in the airspace above it. Let’s assume that this is a go and we will meet there in five hours. I’ll call back if there needs to be a change.”

“We will be there. Contact us when you are airborne and we will give you an approach vector. Thank you, General.”

As soon as the brief static of a disconnect could be heard, Ratchet surged up and out of his chair.

“Five hours! Primus! I need to get busy drawing up the plans. I’ll need to be there to explain the schematics so I’ll see you up on the flight deck then.”

And with that said the medic was gone out the door.

“Well, I guess he will be present,” Megatron said with a shake of his head. “Is there anyone else who should be there to greet them?”

“No, I think if the twins are left with their caretakers than we do not need a large party,” Optimus said.

Arcee uncrossed her arms and looked directly at Prime.

“I should come along as well, after all, I led the assault on your copy and the base. I can best answer any of their questions.”

“We have your report, and we don’t want to intimidate the humans with too many of us at the start. We can call for you should they have questions,” Optimus said as he slowly shook his helm.

Megatron arched an orbital ridge at Optimus. “What about when the twins start to get agitated if we are apart for very long?”

A long ex-vent left Prime. “We will have to bring them in then.”

“Suggestion: Have sparklings at their arrival. Separate later.”

Prime’s engine hummed softly before he he nodded.

“Yes, excellent idea, Soundwave. The humans will want to see as much of the ship as we allow. We can give them a tour of several select areas, including the rec room and their caretakers can take them from there, after all, that is one of their favorite areas to stay in,” Optimus said.

Starscream canted his head to one side as he watched Optimus. “What areas exactly are you thinking of taking them to?”
Prime returned the look. “Command deck, rec room, and the med-bay seem like good areas to show them.”

“I guess then Soundwave and Starscream will have the deck while we escort our ‘guests’ about with Ratchet. Make sure the crew is aware of the upcoming visit and have them lock up all weapons and any other hazardous material that might be out.”

Prime pushed up from his seat. “That should cover everything. Our comms are open should anything arise.”

“Orders transmitted. Ship on stand-by,” Soundwave said.

Megatron idly rubbed his face plate as he moved to follow Optimus. “Why does this already feel like a repeat of one of our near disasters?”

~+~+~

Megatron vented in relief as they finished their visual inspection of the ship. Everything was locked up and the crew looked, well, shinier than they had a few hours ago. He expected such behavior from the former Autobots, but the former Decepticons had taken the orders to clean up to spark and now they too gleamed as they bustled about the ship.

“I want to try and polish the twins.”

Of course, all that freshly polished metal they had seen had given Prime that idea. A soft snort of laughter escaped Megatron at the thought of how well that was bound to go. “Why? We washed them last night. How dirty can they possibly be already?”

“Yes, but I want the humans to see that we take care in our appearance as much as they do,” Optimus said. At the roll of optics from the former Decepticon he squared his shoulders. “If you are meeting someone for the first time, do you not have a better impression of them if they are polished and clean?”

Megatron made a show of considering those words before shaking his helm. “Fine, but I just want to go on record as saying this is bound to be a pain in the -.”

At the glare from Optimus he just grinned. “I didn’t say it - thought it, but I didn’t vocalize it.”

“You are impossible.”

His laughter echoed around them. “No, this going to be impossible. Have you forgotten how much they don’t like to hold still unless you are reading to them before recharge and even then they tend to twitch and wiggle about?”

One side of the Prime’s mouth quirked upward. “I guess I will have to try and read to them while we work then.”

“Let’s hope that the hour we have left before the humans arrive will be enough.”

Thirty minutes later they finally placed the newly polished pair into the servos of the pair of vehicons on duty. Megatron waved Prime back into the wash rack.

“I’ll get your back while you take care of the front, we should have enough time to get you looking as good as the twins.”
“Thank you. We should have enough time to do your frame as well if we hurry.”

His servos swept down along the back of the other mech and he tried not to dwell on how familiar this seemed.

“No point in trying to fancy up this frame. I was constructed a miner and turned into a gladiator. No amount of polish will ever make me anything but that.”

“But -”

“No, we are not going to waste time trying to pretty me up. I am what I am.”

He buffed away the compound until the Prime glittered in the light.

“There now you look like a proper Prime.”

The soft rumble of Optimus’ engine sounded off.

“What? You disagree?”

“I appreciate the thought, but I have spent very little of my functioning being the spiritual leader of our people.”

“Well, that is about to change isn’t it? Come on, we need to head up to the deck.”

Raoul and Ping passed the twins back to Optimus as they left the wash rack and fell in behind their leaders. The sparklings chattered to everyone around them as they walked the hall. Near the corridor to the flight deck, they came upon the medic, his red and white colors gleamed under the lights. The dull matte grey of his frame looked drab, even lifeless next to the others. Pit, even the vehicons were flashier than him. Ratchet smiled as he took in the appearance of their little group.

“I’m surprised to see you managed to get the little ones to hold still long enough to be polished.”

“Optimus told them stories while we worked. How long until they start speaking proper?”

Ratchet’s gaze narrowed in on the twins. “Hard to say, it tends to be more of a function of how long it takes them to get serious about wanting to communicate with those around them. They get plenty of opportunities to engage in social interactions with others and as quickly as they mastered controlling their frames, I would think they will begin to talk fairly soonish. At least, single words as they work out the grammatical rules and syntax.”

He nodded his helm as they walked. “Good, although their beeps and other noises are endearing, I look forward to being able to have discussions with them.”

The medic came to a complete stop. He roared with laughter and nearly fell backwards but recovered by bending forward. The whole party waited for the medic to recover before they began walking once more.

“Primus, thank you for that. What that datapad failed to mention was something my few patients always asked me - well now that they are talking why do they have to question everything? Megatron, I predict when you get your first series of why’s from them you will be saying the complete opposite.”

The medic was still rubbing his optics as soft chuckles came from his vocalizer when they stepped out and onto the flight deck. The sun glinted off of the four frames beside the former gladiator.
Megatron shielded his optics as he gazed over at Prime, the sparklings, and Ratchet. They looked like they belonged together more so than they looked like they belonged with him. The muted grey blue of the twins looked good against the red of Optimus’ chassis. Even the twins shared more in common with the Prime’s frame than his own. That wasn’t surprising, after all the rich would have made sparkling frames that looked like them and not the low caste mecha. No wonder those who dwelled at the bottom of society were discouraged from sharing sparks, imagine if some of them had become sparked and it became known that anyone could create newsparks. He felt some of his old anger and disgust begin to rise in him but at the questioning look from Prime he tamped it back down. He shook his helm trying to dismiss that line of thought. Instead he let the joy from the sparklings fill his spark, their excitement over being on deck hadn’t diminished even when they had been told that they needed to stay with their creators.

:Nemesis, this is Apache One en route and requesting safe approach vector.: The humans were finally getting close and Megatron turned his optics towards the sky once more.

:Apache One, we have you on our instruments. Continue on your current course at half speed. The ship will appear when you are approximately half a mile out and breach the disrupter field. Do not rely on your navigational instruments alone until you pass through it as they will temporarily give you faulty readings.: Starscream announced over the channel.

:Roger that, Nemesis,: the pilot said.

:Well, this will be fun,: a human could be heard to say in the background.

:We have flyers on standby should you have any difficulties. Nemesis, out.: The officer’s channel came alive with Starscream’s voice full of disdain. :Really, if they can’t handle such simple instructions.: The words were spoken gently but the hint of steel underneath let the seeker know that Prime would not tolerate any disrespect to their guests. Megatron kept his optics on the horizon, glad to let someone else deal with the annoying glitch. It wasn’t long before the deep whump whump sound of rotary blades could be heard and then finally four helicopters crested over the top of the deck. Little chirps came from the twins when they spotted the aircraft.

“Those are our guests. Do you remember when we went down to the planet?”

“Beep beeeep!” Topspin exclaimed at the top of his vocalizer.

Megatron laughed as he felt the joy over the bond. The little troublemakers were probably hoping that there was dirt involved somehow.

“We are going to show them around our home. You’ll both be good, won’t you?” Megatron asked as he glanced down at the pair.

The twins shared a look but nodded with a smile up at him. He brushed the tops of their helms with a talon and a smile of his own.

“Thank you. That’s my good little mechlings.”

He turned back to finish watching the humans as their aircraft approached the flight deck. One by
one the helicopters alighted on the warship and their rotors slowed as their crew powered the vehicles down. Their little party strode forward to greet the arrivals. A familiar face exited the lead helicopter with several other humans right behind him.

“Impressive ship. Thank you for inviting us to visit it,” Bryce said.

Optimus inclined his head. “Thank you for joining us. We thought you would like a tour.”

“That would be appreciated. That last half mile of the flight was a little nerve-wracking. Although, I have brought a few special guests for you as well.”

Bryce waved a hand back towards one of the back ships and three much smaller humans tumbled out of it. Black pigtails tinged with pink flew towards the Cybertronians with two adolescent males right behind her, trying to slow the girl down.

“Miko!” the larger boy yelled after the girl.

“Optimus! Ratchet! Oh, wow those are the little bots?”

Megatron spared a glance over to his co-leader, wondering if the little human was always like this and at the obvious signs of amusement from Optimus he shook his helm.

“Yes, Miko, this is Topspin and Twin Twist,” Optimus said as he lowered the pair down.

An inquisitive trill came from Twin Twist as his optics shot up to look at Optimus and then back at the human children.

“Think of them as human sparklings. They are learning about their world just as you are,” Optimus said with a smile.

Topspin’s servo inched outward towards the children.

“Careful, they are organic and more delicate than you,” Megatron said.

The two boys flanked the girl and all three stared just as hard as the sparklings were doing towards the humans. The wonderment he felt over the bond had him watching the interaction with a little more curiosity. The human girl was the first to give in and her hand brushed against Topspin’s. Not to be outdone by his brother, Twin Twist offered his hand as well and the smaller male mirrored the gesture. Burbling squeals of laughter came from the pair at the touch and the children grinned up at Prime. The sparklings slipped off Prime’s palm to stand next to the children. All three spoke at nearly the same time causing all the adults to laugh.

“They are so small! I always wondered why you didn’t make them bigger?” the small boy asked.

“Their blue is like a softer shade of yours, Optimus,” Jack said.

“Topspin got cool red racing stripes on his little wings! Those are awesome!” Miko said.

“Because Rafael, their sparks can’t sustain an adult frame yet. It was through the loss of several of the first newsparks our people ever created that we discovered that this was the largest size they could maintain. They will stay in these frames until their sparks have matured and then they will get adult frames,” Ratchet said.
Optimus brushed the helm of Topspin with a digit who didn’t even look up to engrossed with watching the children.

“Yes, Jack, they have some of my colors. Megatron honored me by asking me to donate my color nanites, the newsparks made them their own as you can see.”

“Without you, they wouldn’t have survived,” Megatron said his voice a little gruff. “If they only had access to my nanites, they would have been a dull grey just like me.”

The medic took another step forward and smiled down at the children as they gathered around Prime and the twins. “I’ve contacted the others and re-arranged the schedules so they can visit with you while you are here. Shall we go meet up with them?”

The children reluctantly stepped back and nodded up to the medic. Ratchet guided the three children towards the corridor that lead to the interior of the ship. The surge of unhappiness from the twins had both him and Optimus reaching for the pair. Soft sad meeps nearly had Megatron calling after the medic to stop, but Optimus spoke first.

“Would you like to go with Ratchet and the children?”

Tiny helms nodded urgently.

“Go with Ratchet then, but remember to obey your caretakers,” Megatron said.

Not waiting to be picked up by the vehicons, the twins scurried after the little group with Raoul and Ping following behind them. They slowed when they reached them and seemed unsure what to do next. Raf held out a hand to Twin Twist.

“My parents always tell us to hold hands to make sure no one gets lost.”

“Good idea, Raf,” Jack said as he offered a hand to Topspin.

The sparklings took the offered hands and a little chain was formed. Megatron watched them go and wondered how sad it was that all other newsparks had been created singly. The twins had each other, but it was obvious that they craved more.

“How I think three adults to the five of them is an unfair advantage for the younglings,” Megatron said.

The humans laughed.

“Spoken like a true parent. I take it you have found that your two are a handful,” Bryce said.

“Yes, I was delighted when Topspin figured out how to use the magnets, but not when I had to pick him off the ceiling and we had to put covers on all of the vents to keep him out of them. Not wanting to leave his brother behind is the only thing keeping him out of trouble sometimes.”

“Yeah, I’m not sure why anyone thought that was a good idea,” Bryce said with another chuckle. “The thought of my two being able to climb walls is enough to give me nightmares.”

“Ratchet told us that flyers began to request them in sparkling frames to ensure that their newspark had the desire to be airborne before being placed in adult frame,” Optimus said. “With them they can ride on their creators frame while they take them up in the air.”

“Perhaps we should start the tour, we thought we would begin at the top of the ship and work our
way down which means the command deck is first,” Megatron said.

Several humans remained beside the helicopters, a wise precaution, Megatron thought. Optimus gestured towards the corridor where Ratchet and the children had disappeared down. Bryce smiled and the rest of his entourage gathered about the larger Cybertronians. They shortened their steps to allow the much smaller humans to keep up with them.

“That sounds like an excellent idea. We are all looking forward to this.”

Chapter End Notes

I think I'm finally winding this monster up and I refuse to allow the plot bunnies to tempt me anymore - bad bunnies!

I ended up breaking this chapter just because I was afraid it would be another two weeks to finish the whole thing.
Chapter 29

Chapter Notes

Hopefully this doesn't drag too much, but I just felt that there were some things that had to be said and I was tired of fighting with it.

As always feel free to point out any mistakes and feedback is appreciated.

Enjoy!

Prime’s servo gestured towards where Starscream stood in front of the main console.

“This is our command deck and this is our Air Commander, Starscream. Off to his left is our Communications Officer, Soundwave. They along with Ratchet comprise our advisors and take command if we are otherwise engaged.”

At the sound of their names, both mechs gave a slight nod towards Prime. Bryce eyed the gathered mecha as the vehicons had arisen and placed a hand over their chassis as a salute when the group had entered. Megatron nodded from where he stood behind and the deck crew returned to their tasks.

“Soundwave, ah, then you are the one I have to thank for the timely intervention that saved me and stopped MECH from causing a war none of us wanted,” Bryce said.

The General saluted the slender mech who inclined his helm at the gesture before turning back to his console. Bryce’s eyebrows shot up at the dismissive gesture, but since his superiors didn’t call him out on his behavior, he assumed that was normal for him. His eyes swept around the area before turning back to the two largest robots beside him.

“Impressive. For such a large ship, I thought you would have to have more people to run it.”

“Those on deck now are only needed to monitor various internal systems or are watching for possible collisions from human aircraft. If we came under fire than yes, we would have more individuals up here,” Megatron said.

“So how many total are on your ship?”

“Several hundred, although the majority of those are the lesser armored and armed vehicons that normally only staff and run the ship.”

“Two hundred and thirty-eight,” Soundwave said from where he stood facing his console.

Bryce’s head snapped over to the mech who he had been sure had been ignoring the conversation.

“That many? We had no idea there were so many up here.”

“Like Megatron said, most are the staff that runs the ship. Shall we move on?” Optimus asked.

Bryce smiled and gave a quick nod. “Of course. Where to next?”

Optimus led the little group while Megatron trailed behind it.
“We thought you might like to see our med-bay. We currently have two fully trained medics with one assistant aboard.”

“That seems like too few for so many.”

Megatron laughed. “Well, Knock Out thinks it’s an improvement while Ratchet thinks his workload just skyrocketed.”

Bryce turned to look at the hulking grey mech at the rear of the party.

“Knock Out was your only medic for the ship before your two sides reconciled?”

“Yes, he with Breakdown’s assistance maintained my people aboard this vessel.”

“In order to alleviate that situation, our two medics have begun giving aptitude tests to anyone interested in becoming a medic in the hopes of eventually being able to ease their work load,” Optimus said. “We hope they will be able to identify at least a few more capable of assisting them.”

“Actually, we have begun trying to identify personnel for several key occupations that we will need when we return to Cybertron.”

“Bill - Agent Fowler mentioned that was your ultimate goal. Although what he said didn’t make a lot of sense to me - something about you needing keys for a lock.”

A soft smile crossed Prime’s face at the mention of their former friend but continued walking towards their destination.

“Yes, well the Omega Lock is a device believed to have been built by the ancient Primes and from what we have learned about it; it is capable of bringing our world back to life and to do so we need the four keys that activate it.”

“We discovered its existence when Orion returned to the ship with me after we sealed Unicron back into the core of this world. We already have three of the keys necessary and Soundwave is currently engaged in the hunt for the last one.”

Bryce snorted. “Yeah, I heard that from Fowler and somehow having one of your gods trapped in the heart of my world doesn’t seem like a good thing.”

“He was already here. How or why, we do not know. We merely made sure he could not escape, for if he did your world would have been ripped apart.”

Another nod from the General. “Put that way, yes that does sound like the better choice.”

Prime placed his palm on a switch high on the wall and the door slid open. Knock Out looked up at the sound and his optics narrowed as he took in the little group before he put down the datapad he had been reading.

“Ah, did you lose Ratchet along the way?”

“He took the children and the sparklings to meet with up with my former team.”

The medic spread his arms wide. “Well as you can see, we are quiet in here right now. I have another set of potential candidates coming in for testing in a few minutes.”

“Can’t you just download the relevant information directly into anyone?” Bryce asked as his eyes skimmed around the room.
Everything was neatly organized and clean, but thankfully lacked the antiseptic smell of a human hospital; instead, the smell was more reminiscent of the cleaners that they used on their own machinery.

“Well, yes, in theory, but just because they have the information doesn’t mean they can act on it and more importantly are their hands steady in emergency situations.”

“Good point. I take it that isn’t always the case?”

Knock Out grinned and shook his head. “Not even remotely. The first set we train will be the ones we hope can eventually be medics or at least assistants.”

“A worthwhile endeavor, I hope you can find the help you need.”

The red mech nodded. “Thank you.”

“Perhaps you would like to see where we gather off-shift?” Optimus asked. “And I believe that is where we will find Ratchet and the younglings.”

“Lead on. I look forward to seeing where your people relax.”

Prime took a few steps further down the corridor and the rest of the party followed behind him.

“It isn’t much since this was originally a warship, but if the sparklings are there, anyone not on duty is liable to be there as well,” Megatron said with a soft laugh.

The General cast a look back at the former warlord. “I take it you are a little surprised by that.”

“Yes, I thought my war machine had been honed into a sparkless and lethal weapon after millions of years of war, but the sparklings have the ability to turn the majority of them into a hopeless pile of purring cybercats.”

Bryce’s laughter was contagious and the rest of the humans joined in.

“Somehow I find that hard to believe.”

“Megatron is right. Ratchet is the only one of us who had ever interacted with sparklings before the twins and I too, was amazed at just how much the vehicons dote on them. Yet, we have seen how they rally around them when they thought there was even a possibility of danger.”

Bryce’s head nodded at Prime’s words. “We are much the same way.”

At the sound of hurrying steps, Megatron gazed behind to find a pair of vehicons walking fast towards them. One orbital ridge rose as he watched them and the pair ducked their helms at his observance.

“Just heading to the rec room for some fuel, sir, since we just got off shift.”

“Of course, carry on then,” the grey mech said with a grin. “I’m sure the fact that the twins are already there has nothing to do with why you are walking so fast.”

The pair merely nodded to their leaders and kept on going past. Bryce shook his head with a soft laugh.

“You know, I would never have believed it if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes, but I do believe those two looked embarrassed.”
“I know your people have envisioned what sentient robots are like, but you will find that besides being made of metal we are not like that.”

Bryce cocked his head at Prime’s words. “I take it you have seen some of our movies then?”

“Yes, Miko thought we should watch some of them on what she called movie night. We are not terminators.”

The General barked out a laugh. “From what little I have learned about her, I can see her picking those movies out.”

Once more Prime approached a wall and placed his palm over a panel on it. The door slid open to the refueling room and from the noise, it sounded more like a bar and it looked like every table had at least one occupant. The former warlord shook his helm as he took in the scene. Honestly, Megatron wasn’t sure more than just off duty mechs weren’t currently in the room.

“Watch your pedes! Sparklings on the floor!” Raoul could be heard shouting above the din.

The occupants as one peered down at the ground. A few shifted carefully to one side and it became evident why when Megatron caught sight of the twins weaving their way through the tangle of legs towards them.

“Meep! Beeep! Beeep!”

He grinned and reached over the top of the humans to scoop the pair up into his palm before they crashed into the little party. Of course, Optimus had the same idea but his hand was just a little too slow.

“Careful there, mechlings. You nearly ran into our guests.”

Topspin and Twin Twist gazed down at the General and his people and both issued soft little chirps towards the humans. Bryce gave a dismissive wave with a hand.

“It’s quite all right; I understand how young ones can forget things in all the excitement. I must say this is quite the gathering.”

“You know, I don’t think I’ve ever seen this many crammed in here at once, have you, Optimus?”

“No, but then we frequently come at off times.”

Raoul and Ping finally managed to wiggle through the crowd until they reached their leader’s side.

“Sorry, sirs. They took off before I could stop them. They had been down on the ground examining a rock collection with the human children one moment and then the next they were running off. I should have realized why sooner.”

Prime smiled. “It is quite all right, Raoul. We should have let you know when we were heading your way so that you could be ready for their charge towards us.”

A red and white frame squeezed by several vehicons with a nod until he could reach the door.

“Primus, I don’t think I’ve ever seen this many in here. They all started arriving after we did.”

Raoul ducked his helm. “Sorry about that, I always keep my team updated on the twin’s location so everyone knows where to head if there is trouble. I think some of the others have figured out the frequency we are using and are using that information so they can show up at that spot.”
Even over the noise from the room, the sounds of heavy pedes coming their way had Megatron twisting to see who was coming towards them now. The sight of the blocky purple frame approaching them nearly had him laughing aloud.

“Shockwave. Taking a break I see.”

The rest of their little group turned as well at his words. Prime shifted to one side and the humans moved out of the doorway to stand beside the mech leaving a path open into the dispensary.

“General Bryce, this is Shockwave, our resident scientist,” Optimus said as he held out a hand towards the new arrival.

The shutters around the single optic twitched a little, but he made no move to enter the room.

“General. Prime, Megatron, Ratchet. Topspin, Twin Twist.”

“Are you going in?” Megatron finally asked.

The tank-former stepped past until he stood just inside and as he turned to face the party once more, he missed the roll of optics from the medic.

“Are you leaving, sirs?” Raoul finally asked.

Megatron glanced down at the pair in his arms. “Do you two wish to stay while we go talk to the General and his people?”

Heads cocked, the pair shared a few beeps before their hands pointed back into the room. He lowered them down.

“Behave and listen to your caretakers. We’ll be back in a little bit.”

The twins grinned and nodded before dashing back into the room.

“Watch your pedes! Sparklings on the move!” Raoul shouted out as he scurried after the pair while Ping cursed in a low voice as he moved to keep up with the others.

The large purple mech wasn’t far behind the two vehicons however, the path for him opened far quicker.

“They have no fear running among you, do they?” Bryce asked.

Ratchet chuckled and shook his helm. “Why should they? Their experiences on this ship have always been positive from what I can tell and I think that is helping their development immensely. The few other newsparks I handled before the war were always kept sequestered away from others until they were almost ready to be placed in an adult frame, something I strongly recommended against.”

The medic paused for a moment and pointed back into the middle of the room. “Before you arrived, I watched the pair find a particular vehicon out of the pack out there and through various gestures managed to convey that they wished to show the human children some collection of his. The reason why that is significant is that everyone on this ship has a unique transponder code so we can identify each other over comm’s and well, we use it to tell all of the vehicons and eradicons apart. The twins have no internal communication programs so they have no way of using those codes to tell anyone apart, yet they have managed to do just that by some other means. Mark my words, those two will be well versed in reading others by the time they reach their adult frame.”
“It is good to know that their environment is helping them and not hindering their development,” Optimus said with a gesture towards the hall. “Perhaps we should move to the nearby conference room so we do not impede any others from entering here.”

The room was just a short walk away, well for the Cybertronians anyway. Upon entering, however, Optimus faltered for the first time.

“Perhaps I did not think this through very well, I am afraid we have no seating appropriate for your species.”

“That’s quite all right, not like we don’t have the same problem when you are among us,” Bryce said with a smile. “A hand up so we could sit on the table would be nice though so we could see more eye to eye, so to speak.”

“Of course.”

Both Optimus and Ratchet lowered their palms so the humans could climb aboard. Seeing that they had things well in servo, that thought alone nearly had Megatron chuckling, the grey mech settled in a chair and waited.

Seeing that they had things well in servo, that thought alone nearly had Megatron chuckling, the grey mech settled in a chair and waited. The humans settled on the top of the table, some sitting cross-legged while a few others just on their afts with their knees pulled towards their chest. Bryce, however, remained standing.

“Prime, Megatron, I regret to inform you that MECH managed to kill one of yours, someone referred to as Airachnid. We learned that she had formed an alliance with them, but when that attack on your base failed to net them the two of you, Bishop apparently decided to end it - permanently.”

“Thank you, General,” Optimus said and his optics dimmed a little. “I had wondered how she came to die down there.”

Megatron shook his helm; Prime truly had to be the only member of them that was sorry the femme was dead.

“To be honest, General, I had a kill on sight order out on her so as far as I am concerned they did us a favor, not that I would ever tell them that.”

“Megatron,” Prime chided.

“She slaughtered her team and left her post, no, she deserved no leniency from us.”

Ratchet nodded. “I hate to say this, but I’m with Megatron on this one. Can you imagine having her aboard the ship now with the twins out and about?”

“No,” Megatron said in a flat tone, giving every indication that this topic was over.

Bryce cleared his throat. “On a different note, I would like to put forth a new initiative, one that would hopefully benefit both of our people.”

Prime’s optics shifted down to the human. “What are you proposing?”

“I would like to find a new liaison for you and establish another ground base for you so that your people can freely come and go from it. The base we are currently over in fact has several large open hangars not in use that even the largest of you could easily move around in. That is why I suggested meeting there.”

Optimus leaned forward a little and a smile lit his face up. “That sounds like an excellent idea. Many
of us have been cooped up on this ship and a chance to get off it would be a welcome thing. Ratchet, do you have the plans ready?"

“Yes, thanks to Raf. He had a tablet on him and he worked with me to transfer the information to it.”

The medic reached into his subspace and pulled something out that could barely be seen with normal optics. With precision that only a medic would have, he balanced the thing on the end of a finger that he carefully held out to the General. Bryce took the device, turned it on and began to thumb through what appeared to be several complex schematics.

“Are these plans for some type of engine?”

“Yes, a more efficient one than what you currently use something that Optimus suggested as a gift for you.”

Bryce handed it to one of his assistants but turned towards Prime. “Thank you, sharing something like that could help my people tremendously.”

Prime inclined his head. “You are welcome. This base will be a good place for sharing of knowledge between our two species. As I pointed out to Megatron, there will be a space bridge left behind when we return to Cybertron. We must either leave some of our own behind to maintain it, or we show your people how to do so.”

“Ah, yes, a space bridge. To be honest I had a hard time believing the explanation from Bill the first time. It can really allow you to cross to other worlds?”

It was Megatron’s turn to lean towards the humans. “Yes. I used it not too long ago to hunt down the frames we needed for the twins back on Cybertron.”

Ratchet nodded at the former warlord before turning his optics back towards the General. “Your people will need to understand how to program it and maintain it if you want to use it to explore your solar system, which is what I would suggest you do before trying to go interstellar with it. I understand the basics of it, but Shockwave is more likely able to give you a more in-depth explanation than I could.”

“We have files on the ship’s mainframe that if translated would probably be helpful as well,” Megatron said.

A low whistle left the human and his team began to talk softly amongst themselves.

“To be honest, that is a far greater gift than these plans,” Bryce said.

“That maybe true, but you see we did not develop that technology, we took it from the Quintessons when we drove them from our world,” Prime said.

The General slowly lowered himself down. “Tell me about them, I have a hard time believing there are beings bigger and badder than your people out there.”

“They are not physically larger than us. They conquered us through lies and deceit and when we discovered the truth of what they intended for us, they had planned to enslave us and ship us back to their own world for them to use. We came together as a people and we rose up and forced them off our world.”

“When I tell my superiors about all of this, I think they will be scrambling to find the best and brightest of our people so they can be taught whatever you will share with us.”
“We look forward to that. I have grown fond of your people and would not see them make the same mistakes we did.”

Prime’s smile widened and Megatron could feel the hint of joy from the other mech, but when it grew, he figured some of it had to be coming from the twins as well. Not that it really mattered, that much joy coming over the bond was inescapable for any of them. He could only hope the good mood remained even when the twins were forced to see their new friends leave. The promise of a trip down to the planet would probably go a long way to soothe that pain, especially if he could convince Optimus that this was the perfect place to let him take Topspin into the air. With that thought, he rested his helm on a fist as he watched the General and Prime finish their talks.
A small group of mecha strode out of a hangar, the warmth of the sun above them had them pausing at the door in order to shift a few panels allowing more of the heat to be absorbed.

“Beautiful day for a flight.”

Several chirps came from two tiniest Cybertronians who rode on the shoulders of the pair who stood several feet above the others. A wide white smile shone against the dark skin of the human who spoke and the pair nodded at his words.

“Yes, it is, General.”

“About time that the weather cleared, I was about to request we find a new area to do this at,” muttered the imposing grey mech.

Optimus ex-vented with a shake of his head. “I know you and the sparklings have been impatient for this, but I feel strongly that they will be safer here on this base.”

Megatron nodded. “I know, but once we mentioned taking them down here, they have both been giving us what you have been calling ‘sad optic look’ and I find that difficult to deal with.”

Bryce covered his laugh with a cough into his hand, but he saw the edge of one of Optimus’ mouth creep upwards and knew that Prime had caught him.

“I was not going to take any chances with the first new Cybertronians to join our people in millions of years. I do wish you would have agreed to take a few more up in the air with you.”

Megatron waved a servo at the seeker by his side. He handed Topspin to Spike before he took a few steps away from the others. Between one breath and another, the humans watched the giant fold himself into the shape of a jet that had never been built on Earth.

“We won’t be going that fast or long so Spike should be enough. Now let’s go before the weather changes again.”

As the purple lights on the jet flickered in annoyance, Optimus handed Twin Twist to Ratchet at his side. The sounds of transformation rang out as Prime shifted into his truck form. Meanwhile, Spike carefully placed his charge on the wide flat nose of Megatron’s alt mode.

“No shifting about when we start to move, Topspin. Spike may not be able to reach you in time if you were to lose your hold.”

The sparkling wiggled about, the magnets in his extremities locking and unlocking as he settled into a comfortable position that gave him the best view. Content, he looked up, grinned at the mechs watching him, and gave several excited meeps.

“Right, I think he’s ready to go now,” Spike said.

The door on the semi-truck swung wide and Ratchet plopped Twin Twist down on the seat. The seatbelt snaked out and around the little frame securing him in place. The sparkling’s servos pushed
at the restricting band as he tried to free himself, but Ratchet gently held the tiny bot in place.

“No, Twin Twist, you have to wear this just in case Optimus has a blow out or has to stop suddenly. You do not have magnets to secure yourself so your creator has to use this to keep you safe.

“He is right. You must wear that, but how about I keep the windows open so you may feel the air blow across you at least?”

A long resigned beep left the little sparkling as he crossed his arms across his chassis. Ratchet shut the door and began his own transformation sequence with the other flyer right behind him. The two jets hovered in mid-air thanks to their ability to aim thrusters straight down while they waited for the two ground vehicles to maneuver out and onto the main road.

“We cleared the perimeter road and the airspace above us so you shouldn’t have to worry about anyone else out there,” Bryce said.

“Thank you, General,” Optimus said and the deepness of his voice was accented by the rumble of his engine.

They started slow but quickly increased speed and the red and white ambulance easily kept pace with the truck as they sped along the road side by side. They headed away from the buildings and towards the flat open areas of the post while the two jets remained above their frames. Megatron lazily soared upward while Spike stayed off his right wing until they were nearly twenty feet above the other pair. The sheer joy coming from the sparkling riding on him had him feeling lighter in spark than he had in a very long time. Laughter burbled out of him to join with the mechling’s.

:You do not have to fly so far above us.: 

:Is Twin Twist getting upset because Topspin is still just laughing. In fact, give me a moment -: 

“I’m glad you are enjoying yourself, little one, but you might want to keep your intake closed so you do not accidentally get something in it that you don’t want in there.”

Another squealing giggle left the sparkling and the little troublemaker lifted his helm and opened his mouth as wide as he could. Megatron was torn between laughing and scolding the little scraplet.

:Ratchet, will Topspin come to any harm if he swallows anything organic?: 

:Most likely not. I would be more worried from damage if something were to hit him. Why?: 

:Spike, move in front of me, I’ll fly in your slipstream. That should minimize the chance of him getting hit with anything or ingesting it. We’ll move lower in case Ratchet needs to make a grab for him.: 

An annoyed huff came across the open channel. :I told you to take more flyers with you. Back in Vos, whenever we were bringing someone just framed up for the first time, we always had at least four or five of us along.: 

:Fine. Send a squadron to us, Starscream.: 

A green vortex swirled to life not far from them and far more than four or five seekers flew out of it. Sure enough, his sensors indicated there were a dozen flyers moving into place around them while Starscream took point. Megatron would have shaken his head, if he could have, at the overabundance of help they now had as seekers surrounded them. Topspin’s helm pivoted about as he beeped at the newcomers who waggled their wings at him and his frame wiggled as he tried to
imitate the others.

: Isn’t that a little bit of overkill, Starscream?:

: Well, it would hardly be fair not to let everyone on the flight deck who volunteered to have a turn in the air with the sparkling.:

: Thank you, all of you. I, for one, am glad to see so many willing to assist,: Optimus said.

The curtain of flyers shifted and moved about Megatron and his tiny rider as they took turns shielding the smallest of them with their frames. Something changed as well over the bond with the arrival of the seekers, as the iron control that Prime must have been using to keep his worry away from the little ones eased and they responded with another influx of joy. A rumbling laugh escaped him and he settled down to enjoy the flight with his people even if his field of vision was now limited to the frames around him. A ping from the ship had him wondering what had happened now as he acknowledged the transmission.

: Soundwave: Last coordinates deciphered.:

: Excellent! Send a team to retrieve it,: Megatron said.

: Negative. Soundwave: Acquire.:

: Take a team with you then. Now is not the time to take chances,: Megatron said.

: Acknowledged. Soundwave, out.:

“Finally! We will be going home soon!”

Cheers erupted around him at his words and he let his own excitement soar down through the bond.

: Really? Twin Twist is bouncing enough already but you had to add to that?: Optimus asked.

Prime couldn’t quite keep the amusement out of his voice and he let another laugh rumble out of his frame much to the delight of Topspin.

: We are out enjoying an excursion with our sparklings and we are finally going to go home, Prime. I can think of no better reasons for us to celebrate than those.:

The rest of the trip around the base’s perimeter seemed both too short and too long. It had been too long since he had taken to the air and it felt good even if they flew rather straight and slow. The excited chattering of the seekers had the sparklings keyed up even more, a feat he didn’t think was possible. He wasn’t sure what they understood, but it was obvious that they knew something important was about to happen. He was anxious to call in all of their people and begin preparations for going through the space bridge.

The hangar that they had bridged down to earlier stood open and as they approached the structure, he could see several humans, including the General heading for it. His escort transformed first and Spike stepped up to where he hovered and gently pried Topspin off of his fuselage.

“Was there a problem?” Bryce asked. His eyes glanced about at all the flyers gathered about the grey mech.

Megatron shifted back to his root mode and shook his helm. “Only that we didn’t want Topspin to get hit by anything flying in the air or eating it. I confess I hadn’t thought the little one would try and
catch something when I warned him about keeping his mouth open while we were flying.”

Bryce chuckled, “You have your hands full with that one.”

The two ground based vehicles joined the pile up of Cybertronians around the building. The medic gained his pedes and plucked Twin Twist from the truck-former’s interior. Freed from the sparkling, Optimus shifted as well and turned to face the humans.

“General, our time here is coming to an end. Soundwave is out retrieving the last key as we speak.”

Bryce’s eyebrows shot up. “How long?”

A few short steps brought Megatron beside Prime. Excited chirps from the twins along with their hands reaching for their brother had Ratchet and Spike bringing the pair together and they finally settled on the wide pauldrons of the medic.

“We’ll head back to the ship in case Soundwave needs us,” Starscream said as he gestured towards the other flyers.

“Sir?” Spike asked.

“Go on with the rest of them, we’ll be heading back to the ship shortly,” Megatron said.

The seekers strode away from the gathering and leapt into the air. Megatron waited until the roar of engines faded before turning back to the General.

“We need to retrieve all of our people and make sure there is no one left in this system, but I would like for us to be on our way through the bridge as soon as Soundwave returns,” Megatron said.

“We are still vetting the appropriate people to be taught how to use the space bridge safely. We need more time.”

Before Megatron could say anything, Prime nodded. “Perhaps some of us can stay behind so that your people may have the training they need.”

Red optics narrowed at that. “I will not order any of our people to stay behind. Too many of us have waited too long to return to our home for me to take that away from them.”

“Of course, I would only ask for volunteers.”

The tension in his frame eased at that. He had been afraid that Prime would delay their departure or Primus forbid suggest that they should stay behind to oversee the transfer of information.

“The bridge can be used to open communications with us on Cybertron as well so we can rotate people through as needed.”

“Topspin! NO!”

Ratchet’s voice bellowed out and the hint of panic had both him and Prime turning as one. His sensors scanned for dangers and he brought his battle systems up, however, it was obvious what that danger was when he spotted the sparkling running after something that danced in the air above his head and his path had taken him out onto one of the roads. However, the sound of his name had him stalling and looking back towards Ratchet. The military vehicle wasn’t going very fast by Cybertronian standards, but he wasn’t taking any chances. The medic clutched at the other twin as he tried to follow his brother. Megatron pushed past the medic and vaguely noticed that Optimus was
right behind him as he rushed towards the impending disaster. Out of the corner of one optic, he saw Prime diving to intercept the vehicle even as he moved to corral the troublemaker. His servo came talon down around the bitlet forming a protective cage with Topspin in the middle while Prime stopped the vehicle with his frame. His spark hammered in his chassis and he let his terror over what had nearly happened wash over the sparkling as he scooped him up. He had to harden his resolve to be firm as Topspin’s sad little beeps were full of fear and unhappiness.

“You have to think before you act, Topspin. We have indulged you both, letting you run wild on our ship because everyone on it is mindful of where you and your brother are. We are not there right now. The humans do not have sensors like we do. You were nearly hit by that vehicle which most likely would have been fatal. When we are somewhere new or among others, you must get permission before you go anywhere. Do I make myself clear?”

The little helm nodded and the visor darkened. Megatron held out his other hand towards Ratchet and the medic deposited the other sparkling in it. He brought the two together and Twin Twist beeps sounded rather scolding even as he checked over his brother before clutching him tightly.

“I believe it is time to return to the ship.”

The human driver skin had paled beyond what seemed normal and his eyes darted between the General and the giant aliens.

“I’m so sorry, sir. I got distracted by the sight of all of them and didn’t even see the little one dart out in front of me.”

Prime’s servos only shook a little as he released the vehicle. “I believe we all bear some fault in this near miss. As Megatron said, we have indulged the twins allowing them to explore to their spark’s content, and now we need to make sure they know what their limits are.”

The blast of heat from the ex-vent from Optimus as he moved to stand beside him had him passing the twins to him. He understood the desire to hold the pair close to one’s spark, safely away from all danger.

:Nemesis, we need a bridge up:, Megatron said.

:Yes, sir:.

They strode into the hangar where the green swirl of energy was beginning to form.

“We will contact you when we have a list of volunteers, General,” Optimus said.

“Of course, Prime. I’ll be going over safety protocols as well with my people. We will try and make sure that something like this doesn’t happen again.”

Megatron nodded grimly before stepping into the vortex. “Agreed.”

“Thank you, General,” Optimus said.

As soon as they stood on the flight deck, Megatron rounded on the medic with optics blazing.

“How could such a thing happen while they were with you?”

Ratchet’s helm dropped a little and he rubbed at his chevron. “Topspin went down my back quick as can be while Twin Twist was trying to get down from the front. Knowing that a fall from that height would most likely result in serious injuries, I concentrated on holding onto him. When I saw where
the other one was going, well, I called out. I am sorry. I didn’t expect him to run off like that.”

Optimus dropped his free hand onto the medic’s shoulder. “It could have happened to any of us. We share blame in this as well, but at least the worst that happened is the human’s vehicle will need repairs. I fear I dented it a bit.”

“You were far gentler than I would have been,” Megatron said and the low rumble of his engine only accented his words. “I’ll go up to Command and keep tabs on Soundwave while you round up the volunteers the humans need.”

He turned on his heel and tried not to think of what nearly had happened as he made his way up to the bridge. The bond with the twins was just beginning to feel less of fear, but he could tell the twins were still more subdued than normal. The next time Raoul suggested he bring at least one of his people along he would take the recommendation to spark. He stepped onto the main deck and found Starscream already standing in front of the main view screen.

“Any news yet?”

“Only that Soundwave said that the ground must have shifted and they are having to dig around a little more than usual.”

“I’m sure he will find it soon.”
He turned his attention towards their upcoming departure and to that end; he halted all requests for excursions down to the planet. He had just finished crafting a ship-wide announcement when Prime joined him on the deck. Optimus held a datapad out to him and he glanced at the list of names on it. He wasn’t surprised to see several of the Prime’s former team heading the list; no, the surprise was that they weren’t the only ones who had agreed to stay behind.

“I’ve got a list of volunteers. We just need to pass it onto the General.”

He nodded and accessed the human’s communication network and punched in the General’s information. Soundwave, as usual, had simplified it so any of them could use it if he wasn’t on duty. The line rang a few times before it was answered.

“Hello?”

“General, it is Optimus Prime. Our volunteers will be coming down shortly along with the supplies they will need for at least a month. If they are needed longer than that then we will have to have them open a bridge to us on Cybertron and retrieve more supplies from there.”

“Excellent. Thank you, Prime. If there is anything we can provide, they just need to ask. I’ll look after them like they are one of my own soldiers.”

“Thank you, General. We will rest easier knowing they are being looked after.”

“Speaking of that, how are the twins? They didn’t come to any harm did they?”

Prime’s helm shook even though the human couldn’t see it. “No, they did not, thankfully. They were a little shook up but no lasting damage to them. Their caretakers were given orders to keep them quiet by Ratchet, but he says they are fine.”

“I’m relieved to hear that,” Bryce said and even Megatron could hear that the human meant what he said. “My people are standing by for the arrival of your people. And I just want to say that it’s been an honor working with you. You know, if I thought the public could handle the sudden arrival of huge robots from outer space; I would push to have an embassy put in place for those of you staying
behind. Sadly, I think the general masses would not handle it well.”

“We appreciate the sentiment, but I feel they would be safer if they are kept out of the spotlight. I fear there will always be extremists in any society.”

“I know. Have a safe trip back and I hope this lock of yours will do what you need it to.”

“Thank you.”

The call disconnected and Prime cycled his vents. “Soundwave hasn’t checked in yet?”

“Only to say that they are still searching.”

Prime nodded and waited patiently beside him, but he could tell something was on his processor. When Starscream moved out of hearing range, Optimus leaned closer to him.

“I was surprised you didn’t stay with the sparklings. I felt -”

His servo came up to interrupt what the Prime was about to say. “I know. They needed some quiet time and I want to have the ship ready to go as soon as we can.”

A portal opening up on the far side of the bridge was a welcome distraction. Soundwave and several eradicons walked out of it and onto the deck. All optics stayed on the returning team. When the spymaster held up the last key, only then did the room explode into cheers.

Megatron strode over to the little group and clapped his old friend on the shoulder. “Well done!”

“Yes, excellent work. Were you able to find where the Omega Lock is located in the database?”

Megatron’s mouth open and shut as he tried to remember if Orion and Soundwave had ever mentioned that bit of information.

“Negative. Suggestion: Examine keys.”

Prime reached into his subspace and pulled out the rest of the relics. “I picked them up from the vault for when we return to Cybertron.”

The three keys rested in his palm and Soundwave laid the fourth one next to its brethren. It had just barely been placed when all four began to glow and they rose in the air until they could nestle together and a holographic picture of their world was projected above them. The image spun for a moment and then a red dot appeared in what was now known as the Sea of Rust. A soft laugh left Megatron as he gazed at the projection.

“Well, I guess that answers that question. We head for the Sea of Rust.”

The keys broke apart and fell back onto Prime’s hand once more.

“Let me see if those staying behind are ready to bridge down yet.”

“Of course. Starscream, begin preparations for activating the space bridge with coordinates for the Sea of Rust as our destination.”

Prime nodded before activating his communication system. :Bumblebee, Bulkhead, are your people ready to go?:

:We are now, Boss. Got everything, even a few emergency medical supplies from doc so just open a
bridge for us and we’ll head out.; Bulkhead said.

:Primus be with you and contact us if you need us for any reason.; Prime said before turning towards Soundwave. “We need a bridge down to the hangar for Bulkhead and his team.”

Crowned helm inclined and after a moment, the slender mech turned to his leaders.

“Space bridge Detail: Planet-side.”

“Excellent. Patch me through to the ship,” Megatron said.

Another incline of the helm and Megatron and Optimus appeared on the main view screen.

“All attention crew of the Nemesis, we have the keys and coordinates and are making preparations to go through the spacebridge. Everyone report to their battle stations and remain on full alert. Also sparklings to the bridge.”

The view screen went back to showing the sky and Optimus arched an orbital ridge at him. Although the siren didn’t go off, the warning lights flashed across the bridge. He took a step towards the door when Optimus placed a hand on his arm, which brought him to a gentle stop. Prime’s voice was low when he finally spoke.

“I’m surprised you’re bringing them up here if you put the ship on alert.”

Massive grey shoulders lifted and dropped. “Nowhere better for them to be than with us, and you know we want to be there when the Lock is activated, so again, might as well bring them up here now.”

“I feared you were still upset with them.”

Megatron shook his head and ex-vented. “No, I feared for them greatly, but I wasn’t mad at them. If anything, I was mad at myself for not being cautious enough with them. I trusted I could stop anything that might happen and I nearly lost them both.”

“I understand. I felt the same way.”

They broke apart when Dave and Raoul arrived with the twins. Before Prime could say anything, he had scooped the pair up in his servos and held them close to his spark. Perhaps such a display went against how he used to rule his army, but right now, he didn’t care. Contentment washed over him as the pair reacted to him and he turned his optics down to them and waited for them to turn their gaze up at him.

“We will be going through a space bridge soon that will bring us to our world. It is a dangerous place and you must stay with either Optimus or myself unless one of us tells you otherwise. Understand?”

They both nodded and tiny servos clasped at his armor so he kept them where they were.

“Space bridge: Activated.”

He turned his optics to the view screen and saw as a massive green vortex swirled to life just beyond the front of the ship.

“Bring us through,” Optimus said.

The engines of the ship roared to life as it accelerated through the whirlpool of energy. All optics remained fixed as the ship glided into and out of the wormhole. Soon the screen was filled with the
empty wasteland that was the Sea of Rust; in the distance, rubble from a nearby settlement was just barely visible. Behind them, the space bridge shrunk until it completely disappeared leaving the warship the brightest thing left in the pre-dawn sky.

“So who gets to go down and see this thing in action? Well, once we find it,” Starscream asked as he waved a digit at the screen.

“Can we secure the ship enough that all who want to go down, can?” Optimus asked.

“Affirmative,” Soundwave answered.

“Open the channel, please.”

The view screen filled once more with the visage of the two leaders. Of course, excited squeaks left the twins and hands pointed to the display where images of the four of them were displayed. More than a few of the bridge crew grinned at the sparkling’s antics.

“Attention crew, we will be opening a bridge down to the surface in a few moments. We will secure the ship so any who wish may go down with us. Assemble on the flight deck,” Optimus said.

The sounds of pedes heading up could be heard and the entire bridge crew added to that as a mass of Cybertronians headed to the topmost deck. Rather than finding the flight deck stuffed with the entire crew, the crowding eased as they moved onto it and it became obvious why when Megatron spotted the green of a ground bridge at the far end where everyone headed to. The milling mecha gazed about the ruins of their world and the apparently empty section of the Sea they had landed on.

“Optimus, hold up the keys. See if they will show us where the Lock is,” Megatron said.

The four keys held in his two hands, Optimus walked through the crowd while the grey mech trailed behind him. He approached what looked like a pile of debris and the keys glowed once more. More illumination came from the hunk of metal and the light flowed away from it forming an intricate pattern on the ground. Gasps and soft murmurs came from the gathered mecha as four massive pillars rose from the ground and formed a giant circle above their heads. Blue energy undulated inside the circle, and its movement was reminiscent of the Earth’s water. The former debris that had started the cascade that had revealed the Lock now shone brightly with energy with four panels jutting out from it.

“Who should get the honors of activating it?” Optimus asked as he gazed about him.

“Our advisors should each get a key and I think the two of us can manage one, with the help of our sparklings,” Megatron said as he strode up to stand beside Prime.

“Excellent idea.”

Optimus handed out three of the keys and Megatron moved up to one panel and the others took up spots at the rest of the projections.

“Do you two think you can help Optimus and I insert a key?”

Smiles and nods came from the pair and he waited for Optimus to return to his side. Soundwave was the first to slide his key home and the sound of energy ramping up far above them could be heard. Starscream grinned and followed suit with Ratchet right behind him. Optimus held the last key out towards him and he shifted Topspin over to him so he could place one hand on the key and still hold Twin Twist near it.
“Ready?” Optimus asked with a smile as he watched his helper.

Several beeps came from the pair and the twins pushed with all their might against the key as their creators guided it into its slot. A projection of the planet came up above the control panel. Optimus touched a section on the holograph and then the only button on the device and a beam of energy shot out of the device and hit a nearby building. As they watched, broken pieces came together and within moments, a pristine building stood where once only ruins had been.

“By the AllSpark,” Optimus whispered. “It is a miracle.”

Shouts of their names surrounded the pair and once mortal enemies embraced each other, perhaps a little awkwardly but Megatron laughed and grabbed Prime around the shoulder in a move that was dangerously close to being a hug. The sparklings squealed in laughter and grabbed hold of their creators’ fingers as they were jostled about.

Megatron placed Twin Twist on Optimus’ shoulder and turned to face the newly created building. “I’ll be back in a moment.”

He took several steps away from the packed group and flung himself into the air. His sensor screamed in warning when another beam of energy fired from the Lock as it headed off in the direction of the Well. He shifted to root mode and dropped down on the roof of the building. His optics took in the celebration and he felt the first stirrings of panic from the twins. He smiled and pulsed his love and devotion back to them easing their dismay.

“I did it, Orion. I kept my promise and our world is in the process of being made anew. Our sparklings will have a better future. I will see you when I return to the Well.”

He dropped off the roof and roared back towards where the twins and Prime waited. They all had a chance now for a better life.

~+The End+~

Chapter End Notes

A great big thank you for everyone who has followed this story leaving comments or kudos, thank you so much for your support! They helped keep me going while writing this monster of a story that grew far beyond what I first thought it would be.

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