The Last Five Hundred Years

by Darksidekelz

Summary

They met, they loved, and then they fell apart.

Notes

So this is a (very) loose adaptation of Jason Robert Brown's 'The Last Five Years.' Very good show, I much recommend. Anywho, as with the show in question, Shockwave's story is going to start at the end and work its way back to the beginning, while Blurr's will start at the beginning and work its way to the end, with them meeting somewhere in the middle. Should be fun!

Anywho, please enjoy!
Still Hurting

Rain poured down from the blackened sky in icy sheets, dousing the lingering fires of a great battle, and washing away streams of spilled energon into the ground below. Shockwave didn't feel any of it, nor did he see a thing beyond the tiny body he held in hand.

A deathly grey pallor had taken over what had once been a finish so lively and blue, now broken, battered – an ugly hole had been ripped through the bot's chest – Shockwave could see his own hand beyond frayed circuits and rent metal. That had been the blow to kill the little mech, dealt by a deadly arrow from Rodimus Prime. The Prime had not lasted long afterwards. His energon still glowed a faint pink on Shockwave's claws.

But petty vengeance had given Shockwave nothing in return. Blurr was never coming back. He was dead, and Shockwave – cold, logical Shockwave, could not process it.

It was foolish, weak. Every moment he spent cemented to the ground, single optic fixed on that dead frame, was a moment where he remained vulnerable to attack. The center of the bloodshed had moved far beyond his current position, but there were still those who lingered, and Shockwave, as a Decepticon, should be focused on winning the war for his people – not mourning the loss of a lone Autobot he shouldn't have given a damn about anyway.

But give a damn he did.

He loved Blurr, more than anything – had for a long time, despite his initial resistance to the idea. Blurr had known his secret, had given up everything for him, and Shockwave had repaid his love by allowing him to die in a battle he had no business being in. Shockwave didn't deserve to live on – almost wished that one of the stragglers would kill him as well, so that he may join his lover in death.

How pathetic.

He'd been with the Autobots for too long; he'd grown weak like them. A proper Decepticon, let alone one as old and renowned as Shockwave shouldn't have cared. He would have taken the death in stride, continued fighting tooth and claw until his goal was achieved, until all that stood in his way was scrap metal. And five hundred stellar cycles ago, Shockwave would have done just that. But now . . .

Now memories flooded through him, assaulting his processor like an army in their own right, bringing to light the love and joy that had melted his frozen spark – the way Blurr would babble at lightning speed when he was nervous, the way he moved such grace while running, but turned into a clumsy new-spark with two left pedes when he tried to dance, his nasally laugh and his sharp wit, his confident smile, his warmth.

He recalled that morning – the feel of Blurr's body around him, stretched wide to accommodate their incompatible size. It should have hurt, unimaginably so, but despite this, the smile never left Blurr's lips, nor the fondness his optics. Shockwave would have given anything to go back to that moment, to freeze time and live forever trapped in the memory of his dead lover, but even he knew that was too pitiful. Blurr was over, gone, and he was alive. No amount of misery would change that.

He didn't know how long he remained on the field, surrounded by corpses, knee-deep in mud, feeling like death itself had overtaken him – long enough for the rain to stop, for the sky to clear, for the sun to rise on a morning without Blurr. The distant sounds of battle had long-since ceased.
Shockwave didn't know who had won, nearly didn't care. Primus, what had become of him? How had he fallen so far to be rendered useless by one worthless Autobot, and in such a short time?

He'd known Blurr for a mere five hundred stellar cycles – a remote fraction of the time that he'd served Megatron, would continue to serve Megatron. Blurr wasn't coming back, and as much as it hurt, it was time to move on.

Shockwave rose to his feet.

He had mourned long enough. There was still a war to fight, and he'd wasted enough time. With a religious deference, he placed Blurr's body on the ground, watched as it sank into the mud, to join his fallen brethren as a casualty of war. It was where he belonged now. And Shockwave, bearing a new scar on his spark, would continue onward, to wherever his path took him.

He turned his back on the battlefield, and walked away, into the morning sun.
God of the Racetrack

Chapter Summary

Blurr would have done anything for a moment of true connection with another bot.

Chapter Notes

Just as a Warning: Though they are technically both adults by Cybertronian/Velocitronian standards, there are some shady age difference issues in this chapter to take heed of.

Also, new tags.

Blurr had always been fast.

A glitch in his spark had resulted in him developing well before the rest of his batch, and on Velocitron, faster was always better. He was harvested early, no effort expended to correct the timing error before it became a problem. There was no such thing as 'too fast.' Or so they had thought. Blurr's lot in life, however, was to prove everyone wrong about that particular philosophy.

The problem began once he started speaking. Words left his vocaliser at lightning speed; even the fastest processor perceived only white noise when he spoke. In fact, it took quite some time for anyone to realize he was speaking at all. It proved to be a great tonal set-up for the course the rest of his life would take – his greatest blessing was also his greatest curse.

A dozen stellar cycles of speech therapy brought him down to a comprehensible level, but even so, he was still a fully-functioning young bot, while his peers remained un-protoformed sparks. He was in a lonely limbo for a period of time, but through sheer speed alone, he managed to catch up with, and then exceed, the previous generation. He was on the fast track, blazing his way through his early years. At a mere two-decades old, he was scouted into the most prestigious Velocitronian academy, the birthing ground of the planet's top racers. He was thrown in with the planet's best, their brightest, their fastest –bots who had invested vorns of their existence into becoming so. And here he was, younger than the lot of them, and matching, if not besting them with speed and skill.

He remembered his first day, orientation, meeting the small handful of bots that were to be his peers for the next several vorns.

There was Override II, a confident and fair two-wheeler, and favorite future winner of the Speedia. She was determined to follow in the footsteps of the Prime that was her namesake, and in Blurr's opinion, she was well on her way.

Moonracer was next, a cocky sharp-shooter who'd gained some notoriety by racing the Rising Sun in the Barren Land, a dangerous feat that lured then claimed many Velocitronian lives. Blurr himself had never been tempted to do so, but nearly wanted to try, if only to get her to stop bragging about it.
Knock Out was flashy, prissy, and shallow, but every once in awhile, he'd prove he was more than just a pretty face. He was studying medicine, after all.

And then there was Fasttrack.

Blurr found himself inexplicably drawn to the charismatic red racer, though he couldn't say why. All of the bots in his class were forces of personality, himself excepted. They were the cream of the crop – fast, beautiful. But Fasttrack stood out among them. He offered something dark and dangerous that the others could not provide, something that Blurr, with his awkward manner and crushing anxieties found strangely alluring.

In retrospect, he always had bad taste.

"You're Blurr, right? You've been pretty quiet so far. Why don't you introduce yourself?" the mech said, approaching Blurr with a winning smile. Blurr immediately flinched away.

He didn't want to talk. If he talked, then the others would know the truth; he'd embarrass himself in front of the bots who were to become his closest companions for the duration of his formative years. Not to mention the fact that Fasttrack was being rather handsy – was he interested in him? Blurr was vaguely aware of relationships and how they worked, but he knew from Cybertronian-imported movies that it was a bad thing to embarrass yourself in front of a crush. Right?

"What's wrong?" Knock Out said, folding his arms. "You're not mute, are you? Bet I could fix that." His smile was probably genuine, but the idea of invasive surgery by a novice made it appear like the wicked grin of an axe murderer – the buzzsaw he'd transformed his hand into didn't help with his image.

"No!" Blurr shrieked. "No no, I'm not mute! I can talk just fine – I've got lots of words, thousands of words, too many words, probably, but I can't stop saying the words, so many words they just come to me and they don't stop 'til I get 'em all out, but if I get them all out then no one understands me, so I have to repeat myself, over and over and over and over again until it all sinks in, and then everyone gets annoyed because it really is annoying, they have a right to be annoyed, but then it's always –"

"Okay, okay, we get it," said Moonracer, waving him off. He wasn't offended. He'd learned to stop being so long ago. The repetition was something he'd been trained to do, once it became clear he would never reach normal speeds. Even he was annoyed by it, though it was better than the blank stares of bots who heard without comprehending.

Override, however, always the peacemaker, urged him to continue. "So, tell us about yourself. What were you doing before this?"

Again, the panic welled within him, pushing his speech ever faster. "Before this?! I didn't do anything before this – not really a thing! There wasn't time – no time to get rich or famous or smart! Only time to learn the basics! That's all it was! Basic training, nothing more!"

The other bots stared at him, dumbfounded, and for a moment, Blurr feared he was speaking too fast again. But then Knock Out spoke up.

"You mean to say you came straight here from basic training?! Impossible! You'd have to be – what? A vorn old?"

"Two decades," Blurr corrected. He cringed inwardly as the grin on Fasttrack's face turned to a look
of horror.

"How do you even have a designation?! You can’t be in the right place! I outran the Rising Sun in the Barren Lands to earn my place here! No way am I classmates with a – a protoform!"

"They gave me my designation when I was inducted," Blurr said, choosing to ignore the jab at his age. He'd figured it would be like this. He'd done nothing to achieve greatness, save for be born. "They couldn't just have someone come into the academy with no designation! 0-T3A1 is a bit of a mouthful to scream on the racetrack, so they called me –"

"Zero?!" shrieked Moonracer, temper flaring. "Now I know you're lying! There's no such thing a as bot with zero as their batch number!"

"Not true," Fasttrack stated. "Sparks harvested prematurely are all given zero as their batch number. But this is all a bit much to believe." Fasttrack cocked his head, a bit too far, as though intentionally trying to show off his long neck. "What, so you're some kind of prodigy then?"

Blurr didn't answer. He felt as though he'd been backed into a corner by the probing questions and disapproving glares of his peers. this was his first time interacting with mechs (relatively) close to him in age, and already he'd made a mess of things, just as he'd known he would.

"Enough!" snapped Override, though her body language suggested she was every bit as suspicious as the others. "We'll find out just what's so special about our little newspark here after the placement exam, or if he is, in fact, here by mistake. In the meantime, we treat him as one of us."

And that was his shining welcome into the Grand Academy of Velocitron.

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As with everything else in Velocitronian culture, the students of the academy were to be ranked by their speed. The Placement Test was the last barrier to every young bot's full integration into academy life. It was one timed lap around that rather elaborate race track, historically used for the Speedia, before the capital moved to Accelcion. The course was full of sharp twists and bends, as well as a number of physical and mobile obstacles, designed to push a bot's body to the limits, both in root mode, and alt. The record was held by the original Override Prime herself, at forty six point six nano kliks.

Blurr's one mercy was that he didn't have to race with the others. Surely, he would have lost his nerves, or tried to appease them by coming in last. Even now, he feared the possibility. Maybe the others were right. Maybe he wasn't supposed to be here. Maybe a glitch in the system had been responsible for his scouting. It would have made as much sense as anything else.

But then the sound of the alarm signaled his start, and he was running, and all his fears flickered away. This was where he was meant to be – on the racetrack, with the wind brushing over him, the pavement beneath him, the road before him, registering in the shuttering of an optic, the blur of information passing through his processor in full clarity. Sharp turns were made with complete control, even at breakneck speeds. His transformation went off without a hitch, the energy behind it hurling him forward even faster. He was in it for scarcely a second before he was reverting, lifting his toe pieces to slide straight through the finish line.

The Professor timing him shuttered his optics, dumbfounded – always dumbfounded.

"Well? What was it?" asked a second professor, holding a data pad. She spoke in eager tones, as though Blurr had accomplished something particularly impressive.
"It – uh. Oh scrap," the first snarled. "I forgot to stop my timer. Think you could do that again?"

Blurr's response was a resounding 'yes.'

It took three attempts for the counter to properly log Blurr's time – twenty-one nano kliks even. Blurr, the youngest bot in the academy's history, had more than halved the record track time.

Needless to say, his peers were less than thrilled to see him receive the coveted title of Number One. Still, the question of whether or not he should be there at all, was put to rest, at least. And who cared what the others thought anyway? To the eyes of Velocitron, he was better than all of them.

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Half a vorn passed with little incident. Blurr was still very much an outsider amongst his classmates, a fact which made daily life difficult for him, but he excelled everywhere else. Academics, athletics – no one could beat him.

But he hadn't expected the academy to be so lonely. He was Velocitronian, and he was faster than all the rest. His life was set – he should've been happy. And yet . . .

And yet it was lonely at the top. His peers barely acknowledged his existence, and even the professors, who had initially been so enthusiastic, were quick to grow distant. There was nothing they could teach him, at least in regards to speed, and Blurr suspected because of this, they were, to some degree, intimidated, or even envious. And thus, most of his time was spent alone, pushing the limits of his speed on the luxury track (sixteen point six three nanos and counting!), or exploring the endless depths of the library raceway, scouring his way through each of the thousands of data tablets, until he'd read all there was to read.

It was never enough, never what he needed, for what he longed for, more than anything else, was to forge a connection with someone – with anyone.

That was why, when Fasttrack dared approach him once again, he leapt on the opportunity for contact.

"I know I've been distant these past stellar cycles, and I really am sorry about that. It can't be easy to go through life alone. So I was thinkin' maybe you would like to come watch the qualifying match of the Speedia next decacycle? I got two tickets, and the others are all a bit too full of themselves for me to want to spend the day with them. What do ya say?."

Blurr didn't pause to question it. He was starved for attention, and would have done anything to get it.

"Yes! Yes yes yes yes yes yes! Of course! Absolutely! I'd love to!!"

"Okay, glad we had this talk," laughed Fasttrack with a wink. As with their first meeting, Blurr was left with the impression that Fasttrack was trying to flirt with him, but surely he was mistaken! Blurr may have been fast, but he wasn't exactly desirable. Honestly, he didn't know if his interfacing protocols had even fully developed yet. As with everything else, Blurr's timing was a jumbled mess, making him a biological headache, in some ways more developed than his age would indicate, while in others, less so. But who cared? If Fasttrack wanted him, he wasn't going to argue. He needed this too much.

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The race itself had been boring. Blurr could have easily outrun any of the competitors; he had no
doubts this time. But Fasttrack seemed to be on the same page. He wasn't here to watch a race, so much as be with Blurr. Over the cycle, he sat progressively closer, and at some point his hands moved from playing with Blurr's own, to hanging over Blurr's shoulder, to making their way first down and then under his back plate, eliciting a number of foreign, yet pleasurable sensations.

Blurr wasn't sure how to feel – flattered, he supposed. He'd caught the optic of an older, and objectively attractive mech. Why wouldn't he be? The pit of anxiety brewing in his tanks was just from having so much attention paid to him. He'd get used to it eventually.

But he didn't.

Fasttrack's ministrations only grew as the decacycles passed, and the discomfort didn't let up. What was wrong with him? He was supposed to want this!

But one thing continued to lead to another, and the next thing Blurr knew, his back was pressed against a wall, as Fasttrack crawled over him, planting a trail of sloppy kisses on any surface he could reach.

Blurr tried to meet him, match him, catch Fasttrack's lips in his own. But for once in his life, he couldn't keep up. His frame was growing uncomfortably hot, his fans didn't seem to want to activate, and though he did feel some pleasure from the rough hands grasping at his protoform, he didn't feel particularly aroused, and there was certainly no sign that his body was making the necessary adjustments to let Fasttrack in. His mind was a mess of incoming sensory data that he couldn't make sense of, and he was at last beginning to wonder if he was making some kind of mistake.

"Fasttrack, Fasttrack," he whined on repeat, until the mech at last pulled away with a twitch of annoyance.

"What is it? In fifty words or less, please."

The dig, which Blurr should have been able to brush off with ease, only served to make him all the more uncomfortable. "This feels weird. I don't know if I like it, I think I might not, I'm too hot and I can't get my fans to activate and I don't know why, and –"

Fasttrack pulled back, optics narrowed. "Weird? No need to be rude, Blurr. I'm doing my best here to make you feel good."

"But it doesn't –" he cut himself off as Fasttrack disentangled the two of them with a hiss of angry steam from his vents. Great, he'd offended the mech. He hadn't meant to – what had he said?

"Figures. You're just a protoform pretending to be all grown up. I sure know how to pick 'em."

"I'm sorry!" Blurr squawked. "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to upset you! We can keep going if you want – I won't complain anymore, just please don't leave me alone!"

Fasttrack's defiance did not let up. "No way am I wasting time on a mech that can't interface. Come back one your protocols activate." He stormed from Blurr's suite in a huff. Blurr should have been happy to see him go. Even he could acknowledge that Fasttrack's behavior was sketchy at best. But he wanted to be alone even less. Solitude was getting to him, and Fasttrack was the first positive attention he'd received in stellar cycles. He would've done anything to keep the mech close.

And so, if Fasttrack wanted interface protocols, interface protocols he'd get, even if Blurr had to hack his frame to do so.
"You want my help doing what?" Knock Out was staring at him with an equal mix of degust and surprise.

"I want you to go into my processor and activate my –"

"I heard you the first time!" Knock Out waved him off. "I'm just flabbergasted. What on Velocitron has gotten into you? You're not even a full vorn yet! What do you need those for - I mean, don't get me wrong, I like interfacing as much as the next hedonist, but the thought of you doing it," he shuddered. "I don't think I want to know what's going through Fasttrack's neural net."

"Are you going to help me or aren't you? I'm going to do it either way, but you're the closest thing to a medic I know, so I thought you'd be my best shot."

Knock Out took his sweet time answering, an insult on the planet of Velocitron, and no doubt intentional. He clearly was relishing in the impatient way that Blurr squirmed. "Hmm, no. I'm not risking a smear on my promising career to help you frag yourself over. Have your fun, but leave me out of it."

The conversation had been a dead end, but Blurr was determined not to leave empty-handed. A medical tablet, one Blurr had never seen before, lay on the table, forgotten, and Knock Out's back was turned. There was no better chance than this.

"Right, thank you. Sorry to ask – I don't know what I was thinking. I'll just see myself out."

"Whatever," Knock Out said without looking back. As fast as he dared, Blurr grabbed the tablet, and fled, sprinting down the hall until he was at last back in his own room.

What he was doing was stupid, and he knew it, but he also knew he wasn't ready to go back to isolation just yet. If Fasttrack was the only mech that tolerated his companionship, then Blurr was prepared to follow him to the Pit and back. A little bodily harm was nothing.

To his chagrin, the data tablet gave no details for the premature activation of unnecessary protocols, but he was able to get a fair idea of how all his pieces fit together, and how he might be able to rearrange them.

He made his move the next night – snuck into one of the science labs with a handful of pilfered medical equipment, and got to work.

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{Insert recharge cable into medical port;}

{Medical access systems override;}

{Breach neural network firewalls;}

{Send power boost to brain module sub-section C;}

— DISABLE PAIN SENSORS!—

-Repeat step four-

{Systems scan;}

{Disable warning messages;}

{Reroute neural pathways;}
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He came to several cycles later, still alone in the dark lab, lying in a mess of fluids and wires, the smell of burnt circuitry in the air. His face was wet, small trails of energon trickled from his optics and mouth, and his body felt as though he’d crashed full-speed into an iron wall. But those were secondary issues. All of his processing power was focused solely on the heat that flowed through him, shooting from his spark, and consuming him whole. Even with his fans on full-blast, he couldn’t quite shake it, the discomfort centered in his lower belly, the wetness that seemed to be gathering between his legs, trapped behind a panel in his protoform that begged to be open, the all-encompassing desire to be filled to capacity, and then some. It should have been terrifying, but he currently didn’t have the capability of feeling such a thing. He needed contact – he needed Fasttrack.

He was standing in front of the mech’s door, pounding away, nearly the moment the idea occurred to him.

"Blurr?" Fasttrack groaned, still half-asleep. "What do you want? It's the middle of the night."

Blurr didn't waste time on words, instead pouncing Fasttrack, wrapping spindly legs around his narrow hips, devouring that smart mouth like a bot starved of energon. Though surprised at first, Fasttrack quickly warmed up to the idea, wrapping one arm around Blurr's back plate to drag him in closer, while his other trailed down his back, his aft, and between his legs. Blurr shuddered at the contact with such an over-sensitized area, and ceased in his assault on Fasttrack's mouth.

"Well, look at you," Fasttrack sneered, pressing insistently into Blurr's overheated panel. It shot open, allowing the molten lubricants dammed within to stream into Fasttrack's open palm, and beyond – down the mech's arm, and down his own thighs.

"Primus! Needy much?" the mech hissed, but shoved his fingers into the newly released valve anyway. Blurr let out a high-pitched electric whine in response, wrapping his legs more tightly around his partner.

It felt strange, to have something so solid, a part of another bot inside him. Every cluster of sensors Fasttrack jabbed in his effort set Blurr's neural net on fire, made his vision short out. But it wasn't what he needed – too thin, too shallow.

"More!" he demanded. "More, I need more – harder, deeper, faster, faster, faster!"

Fasttrack shut him up with another kiss. Withdrawing his fingers, and shifting their positions, until Blurr was supported by the wall as much as by Fasttrack.

"Not much of a spike mech then?"

Fasttrack's words barely registered, and even then, Blurr couldn't make sense of them. "What?"

But Fasttrack didn't answer. The mechanical whirr of shifting plating reached Blurr's audials, and the next thing he knew, he was being penetrated by something far more substantial. He whined again, and threw his arms around Fasttrack's neck, pulling him tight.

"Hey! Watch it!" Fasttrack growled, shoving Blurr back into the wall with a loud clang. It hurt, but the pain only added to Blurr's growing need.

As intense as this was, something within him still demanded more. But he was beyond the point of vocalizing. Instead, he held on tighter, allowing Fasttrack complete control, as he drove Blurr into the wall again and again. Steam had started to waft from the condensation that dotted his overheated plating, and sparks were sent flying into the air with each successive thrust. Eventually, it all got to
be too much for Blurr's body to handle. There was far too much sensory data to process, and his body had devolved beyond the point of being able to do so.

At last, all higher neural functions shut down completely, and Blurr was thrown into a wave of mindless ecstasy. His body stiffened, grew lax, stiffened again in jerky, uncontrolled movements, and somewhere in the distance, he could hear Fasttrack saying something, though he couldn't quite parse what.

The moment passed, and Blurr collapsed into Fasttrack's shivering frame, no longer able to carry his own weight against the wall.

"Ugh, don't you quit now, you speedy little slagheap," he hissed through gritted teeth. "I'm nowhere near finished!" Indeed, Blurr could still feel Fasttrack within his valve, moving in and out in steady rhythm, building charge within him anew. He shifted, once more making an effort to take some of the load off Fasttrack.

His second overload came just before Fasttrack's; he was still a strutless noodle of post-overload bliss, when his partner gave a sudden lurch; the hot gush of transfluid came next.

With no more energy left within him, Fasttrack collapsed, sending the both of them crashing to the floor.

"Sluggish broken-down slagheap!" he spat in a stream of expletives, pulling away with a wince.

"Is that it?" Blurr asked, short on words for once in his life.

"Is that – that wasn't enough for you?!" Fasttrack groaned. He sounded almost offended. Though Blurr couldn't imagine why that might be.

"I don't know, I've never done anything like this before and – I think I want to keep going! Do you think we could go again? I'd like to go again, it felt really good, but I think I need more!"

"Ugh," Fasttrack crawled to his unsteady feet, not bothering to help Blurr. "I can't put up with this right now. You want more, you help yourself. I'm going to bed."

"Help myself? But what does that mean?! I've never done this before and I can't think right now! Everything is too hot, too hot!"

"Experiment," Fasttrack moaned. "Preferably in your own room."

Arguing was too difficult right now. Blurr offered a few timid, 'thank yous' and zipped off back to his suite, a mess of fluids still clinging to his frame, panels wide open. The trek back was hellish – too long to go without stimulation.

He couldn't wait the eternity it took for his door to open, bursting through the moment he thought he could squeeze by. He heard something clang, felt the paint scrape from his pauldron, but he didn't care. He needed to be full again.

He slid to the floor, bracing himself on (who cared as long as it was sturdy?) and shoved his own fingers inside of himself, as Fasttrack had before. It was not nearly enough, but it had to suffice. He overloaded again, though it was much less spectacular than the last two had been.

He used his fingers for a few more rounds before he came across a (who had time to think? It was long and thick, and would fit nicely in his valve!), and began fucking himself on that instead. Much better. He got a few more good overloads out of it before the poor thing began to melt, and he was
forced to abandon it.

Eventually his spike deployed, thin and wispy, a sad sight compared with what Fasttrack's had been. But it felt good in his hands all the same, as he stroked another overload out of himself. What did anything matter other than pure pleasure?

His world turned into a string of overloads, none of them leaving him quite fulfilled. He lost track after awhile, had possibly even lost consciousness, for he had several distinct memories of waking up in his own mess, scarcely aware of his own existence before the need overtook him once more.

He didn't know how long he kept it up. And he didn't care. This was his world now, and nothing else mattered, not depleted fuel tanks, nor fried circuits, nor . . .

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The next time he woke up, he was in the medical ward, all alone, and for the first time in ages, feeling somewhat normal.

A nurse was along in record time, and he was quickly joined by a handful of administrators. Blurr was far too loopy to make sense of any of the words that came from their mouths. They may as well have been speaking in slow motion. Eventually, he was able to gather a few things, namely, that he'd been out for several lunar cycles, locked in an overload-driven stasis. Was that a thing that happened to normal bots?

No, of course not. Fooling around inside his processor had backfired spectacularly; he activated his interfacing protocols, and simultaneously set them to primary functionary objective, supplanting all but the most-vital of bodily operations. He was embarrassed, ashamed, and more than a little terrified. How would the others respond to this?

He found out over the course of the next several days. Moonracer met him with scorn, Override, with disdain. Knock Out couldn't stand to be in the same room as him, and Fasttrack – well, Fasttrack seemed strangely smug.

"Did you miss me, at least, while I was in the med ward?" Blurr asked, already knowing the answer. Fasttrack's haughty grin confirmed it. "Sure, sure."

He caught up in his classes easily enough, but the professors seemed more inclined to ignore him than ever, and before his first week back on his feet was up, he was brought into the Headmaster's office.

"Do you know why you're here?"

"Not at all, sir," Blurr squeaked. "No one's said much of anything to me all decacycle, and even though everyone was talking and talking and talking at me when I first woke up, it all is just kind of one major blur, if you'll forgive me for saying. I think I was supposed to be on probation though, so my guess is I'm here for you to tell me about that."

The Headmaster waited patiently for him to finish. "This is correct, and I'm afraid I do not have good news for you."

Blurr had nothing to say to that, but he did shift nervously beneath the mech's severe stare.

"You're here at the Grand Academy of Velocitron because you may very well be the fastest mech to grace the roads of this planet, but it's clear that your age has proven more of an obstacle than we'd
initially anticipated. You've long-struggled to connect with your peers, and now you go and pull a stunt like this. I don't believe that our academy is the place for you."

Blurr felt the ground give way beneath him - the Grand Academy had been his home for most of his life! He couldn't contemplate a future without it. The words flew from his mouth almost as fast as he could experience the feelings behind them.

"But where am I gonna go?! You can't expel me! I don't know what I'm supposed to do from here – how will people even react to a bot expelled from the Grand Academy?! I don't know! I'm already hated enough as it is – what's going to happen to me?"

To his credit, the Headmaster seemed to catch most of the rapid-fire rant. "It would seem that the military academy back on Cybertron is looking to expand its reach to the colonies. You would more than qualify for a scholarship, and you'll be with mech's your own age for a change. You're a fast mech Blurr – the fastest. It would be a shame to see that go to waste."

"Cybertron?" Blurr asked, optics wide. "Am I being expelled from the planet now too?! What is so wrong with me that the lot of you can't stand to be around me? Why am I being punished for being born – for what the harvesters did to me, for them thinking that I could be something special! This is ridiculous!"

"Now none of that," the Headmaster snapped, words stern but temper even. "I won't deny that we've all made some mistakes here, but the only one who can fix them now is you. We're giving you an opportunity to start fresh, make something of yourself without the memory of Velocitron weighing you down. Take my advice, Blurr. Go to Cybertron."

Blurr was dismissed, fuming, but it didn't take long for him to calm down. There wasn't exactly anything for him on Velocitron, but the Headmaster was right. Cybertron could be the perfect place for a new start, and his desire to leave grew all the more when he met up with Fasttrack again.

"So, what did he want? You in trouble? I mean, you probably should be. That was a gross misuse of school equipment."

Blurr narrowed his optics, brushing past the mech in a huff. "I'm expelled. Say goodbye to the Grand Academy of Velocitron, Blurr, you're out in the big, bad galaxy on your own."

"That's too bad," Fasttrack said, not sounding remotely regretful. Blurr was too upset to put up with the mech's mixed signals anymore.

"Is that all you're gonna say? 'That's too bad?' That's too bad, that's too bad! Sorry Blurr, I know that I led you on for awhile and made you feel special and wanted, only to throw you to the turbo foxes the moment I found out you couldn't interface, but what's that between friends? Not that we're friends anyway. I'm too busy not giving a flying frag when you've worked yourself into stasis lock for three lunar cycles all to please me, and then you're expelled right after that but, 'who cares? I'm Fasttrack! I'm too laid back and aloof and – and slow to care about things like-""

"Slow?" Fasttrack narrowed his optics. "Quit being a drama queen Blurr. I never told you to go digging around in your neural net. That was all on you."

"I know that was on me! It's always on me! I'm the one that was too stupid to stop and think about what I was doing. Yes, I said it! I'm an idiot, stupid, dumb, trash! What do you want from me? What have you ever wanted from me! From the beginning you've been building me up, treating me like no one else would, and now, nothing! No remorse, no worry, not a damn thing! So tell me, what are you doing? Did you get close to me just to toy with me?! Did you ever care at all?!"
Fasttrack stepped away with a disgusted sneer. "You want the truth Blurr? I want you to shut up and get the slagging fuck away from me."

Blurr faltered, not surprised by the sentiment, so much as the bluntness of its delivery. "W-what?"

"You're a spoiled brat, prancing around like you're better than the rest of us. I don't care if you are the fastest. I don't care if you break every record on the planet, or win the Speedia. You did nothing to get there. You're not hard-working, or brave — you've never had to risk everything or forgo anything to get to where you are. You were just born lucky.

"Do you know what it's like — to spend your whole life striving to be better than everyone expected you to be, after a lifetime of suffering, to finally reach the top, only to find someone better — someone you could never possibly beat, thrust into the same position by virtue of existing?! Of course you don't, and you never will!" He was getting riled up, pauldrons bared forward, frame stiff, advancing on Blurr, who meekly backed away, until he hit a wall.

"Then why did you come back to me? You spent half a vorn shunning me like all the others! If you hate me so much, then why did you go out of your way to get close to me?" He tried to insert some bite into his words, but he had none to muster. The truth was, he'd never been in a fight before, and he was scared out of his mind.

Fasttrack pressed in close, until their faces were inches away, a twisted smile on his lips. "It's a good question," he claimed Blurr's mouth with his own, pressing in closer as Blurr struggled against him. Thankfully, he didn't hold the connection long.

"I think part of me wanted to share the lime light, no matter how demeaning it was. If I couldn't be the Great, Lightning-Fast Blurr, then at least I could be his mate. But the more I got to know you, the more I saw your vulnerabilities. I found a way I could win — a way I could be better than you. And I guess that's where petty vindication took over. I wanted to break you, destroy you, until you felt just as hopeless and weak as I did! Did it work?"

Blurr squirmed, as though he could bury himself within the wall by will alone. "Get away from me, you're scaring me, what are you doing! I don't like it here, I don't like you here, I want you to go away! Go away! Please go away!"

Fasttrack jerked out a hand, grabbing Blurr by the jaw to hold his face steady, to force him into eye contact. His was the face of madness itself, and Blurr let out a shriek, thoughts of his remains found dumped in a landfill some stellar cycles down the line, all that filled his head.

"Did. It. Work?" he repeated.

Blurr was acting on fearful impulse now. He began to kick, hard and fast, anything to get that creep away from him, and to his surprise and gratitude, it worked. One solid kick to the torso plating sent Fasttrack flying into the opposite wall, shattering it beneath the force. Blurr sped to stand over the rubble, glaring down at the groaning mech with a fury he'd never known he could have.

"Yes, I guess it worked just as your twisted mind intended it to. Congratulations, you've ruined my life! I hope you feel good about yourself! I hope you find the success you were looking for! I hope that you win that Speedia and that the crows cheer your name and that you make it to the very top, find yourself the fastest mech on all of Velocitron! And I hope once you're there, you're still plagued with the knowledge that no matter how fast you run, you'll never beat me!"

"Blurr!" he found himself quite suddenly pulled into the firm arms of Override, accompanied by Moonracer, while Knock Out looked on in the background with terror on his face. When had they
gotten here? Were they going to report him for this? Would he lose his chance to succeed on Cybertron as well as on Velocitron?

But there was no anger in Override's voice. She spoke softly, gentle and concerned.

"Are you all right? We saw what happened. Security's on its way. No way is Fasttrack going to get away with what he just tried to pull."

"Wha~" He allowed himself to be led away from Fasttrack's prone form and back towards Knock Out. Moonracer moved to stand guard, gun at ready. As they passed her, she offered a smile and a thumbs up.

"That was a nice kick."

Even Knock Out was being inordinately friendly, checking him for injuries, though he had no reason to.

It was surreal, to see his classmates doting on him. They'd never bothered showing him such kindness before, but here they were, doting on him, standing up for him, protecting him. Part of him wondered if they had not recognized some of their own prejudices in Fasttrack's words, and sought to distance themselves from such sentiments, but what did it matter? In that moment, he was glad for one moment of true connection.

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He left Velocitron the next lunar cycle. As the Headmaster had suggested, he'd passed the military academy's entrance exam with flying colors, and was granted with all manner of scholarships to cover his travel expenses, administrative fees, and cost of living. Of the hundreds of applicants, he was the only Velocitronian selected.

Override, Moonracer, and Knock Out were all at the space port to see him off, and though he felt fondness for them, gratitude for their actions, he knew he would not miss them. Though it was his birth place, Velocitron had never been his home, and despite his initial protestations, he was glad to see its backside. His future was on Cybertron – the home world, a place where his speed would not put him on a pedestal, far above all those he longed to befriend, or at least that was his hope. He had no idea what to expect from the future, but he remained cautiously optimistic.

Nothing could have prepared him for what lay in store.

Chapter End Notes

Kinda turned into a long one-shot, but there you go :\
Shockwave had known better than to get involved with the enemy, but his spark didn't care.

As much as Shockwave loved Blurr, being in a relationship with him was not easy. First and foremost, Blurr was the enemy, and a damn clever one at that. By this point, Shockwave was convinced that blind loyalty alone kept his secret safe, and who knew how long that would last?

But though he may have been loyal to Longarm Prime, Blurr had no qualms about putting away other Decepticons, which was a damn shame, because it fell on Shockwave to stop him. Usually, he did this by sending him on bogus missions to decoy planets far, far from Cybertron. This time it was Earth, the planet where a small Autobot crew had disappeared some fifty stellar cycles ago, amidst rumors of Decepticons and the Allspark. Of course, nothing had been heard from that sector of the galaxy since, and thus, it provided a perfect goose chase to send Blurr on.

'See if you can't track down those missing Autobots,' which turned to, 'Keep an optic on those Autobots,' once they resurfaced upon the planet. They had knowledge of the Allspark's location, which made the mission viable, though Blurr had been incredulous one he'd received it. He'd no doubt realized that his beloved 'Longarm' was trying to get rid of him, and to appease the sharp little nuisance, Shockwave had needed to go all out. He did this by smothering Blurr with plenty of affection.

"Thinking of you," he messaged one day to Blurr comm – not the first time he'd done such a thing, nor would it be the last. It was sappy and pitiful, and worse yet, it wasn't even a lie! His more dignified self shook his head in disgust. What was happening to him? What in the galaxy had possessed him to whisper, with genuine intent, sweet nothings over his work commline to an Autobot?!

"I'm very glad to hear that, Sir. I miss you a lot way out here, and I can't wait to come back to Cybertron and see you again – not that I'd consider rushing my work here in order to do so – no! Not at all. You can always expect me to give one hundred and ten percent of myself on any mission, even though that number is a bit of a hyperbole – how are you supposed to give more than what you have? That doesn't make any sense!!"

"But anyway, as much as I do love hearing for you, shouldn't we be reserving this line for work-related comms? It takes a lot of energy to send messages across the transwarp network, and I'd hate for you to get in trouble on my account."

Ah, yes. That was why. Blurr was adorable – and not in some fluffy, useless Autobot way – no! He was competent and dangerous, and turned into a babbling mess when someone was legitimately nice to him – as though kindness was such a rarity for him, that he'd never learned to respond to it properly. And somehow, against all odds, he had won over Shockwave.

"Alas, I'm afraid you're right," Shockwave commed back. That wasn't quite the case. Both knew that, if they were caught Blurr would be in more hot water than Longarm – his rank was lower, and that was the way the Autobots functioned. And Shockwave knew, though Blurr did not, that
nobody would discover them. This line was the very same he had once used to speak to Megatron – before he had disappeared anyway. No doubt Megatron would be displeased to see the encrypted connection put to such mundane use, but until the warlord came back (and he would), he saw no harm in utilizing the unused resource.

"All right then," he continued. "I promise – only orders related to the mission from now on!"

"Thank you, Sir!"

Oh, and Agent? One more thing."

"What is it, Sir?"

"I love you."

He cut the connection before Blurr had a chance to respond. No doubt, he'd go on another meandering rant, and though there was no harm in it, Blurr didn't know that. The last thing Shockwave wanted, was to cause the little dear any inconvenience.

. . .

Shockwave shuddered. He'd been Longarm for too long. Would he stay like this forever – transformed into a sentimental fool ruled by the emotions of others? It was a filthy thought that brought forth feelings of revulsion, but the longer Megatron was away, the more nervous he became. The Decepticons were a mess without their leader. They'd made no progress at all in the last fifty stellar cycles; if someone didn't take charge soon, there may not be a Decepticon movement anymore. It was a terrifying thought.

But if there was a new leader waiting in the wings, it would not be Shockwave. He'd risked everything to get into his strategically vital position within the Autobot Intelligence Agency. He wasn't about to throw that away any time soon.

The Decepticons would bounce back; they always did. In the meantime, he would continue with his work, and try to maintain some semblance of dignity. No easy task when images of sleek blue lines encroached on his every waking thought. This was getting out of hand.

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Despite his promise, Shockwave continued to shower Blurr in his messages of affection – not regularly, but enough to ensure the neurotic little mech knew he was loved. Lunar cycles passed like this, and then a stellar cycle. Blurr never responded.

But then, one night, as he poured over mission reports for any sign of his missing leader, the small chirp of an incoming message reached his audials – not from his personal comm, but the one hidden within his desk.

Megatron.

Were he a more excitable mech, Shockwave would have dropped everything he was doing to answer the call, to once more bask in the commanding voice of his lord. But Shockwave was more than capable of controlling himself. He set his data pads on the desk, shed his disguise, and answered the call.

"Longarm?"
Shockwave was lucky Blurr had no visual input set up for this line. Shockwave shifted back immediately, kicking himself over such a novice blunder.

"B-Blurr!  How did you get this frequency?"

"You've been calling me on it since I got here."

"Yes, but it's –"

"Heavily encrypted, I know.  You probably didn't want me to have it, but I needed to talk with you, and I had no intergalactic communications otherwise available to me.  I'm sorry if I upset you."

Blurr's words were both concerning and completely terrifying. He spoke of hacking into Shockwave's secure line in such a casual way. Shockwave hadn't considered such a thing possible, but if Blurr could do it, then the actual code crackers surely could. He needed to be more careful.

But despite its vital nature, it wasn't the first thing Shockwave noticed.

Blurr was upset; Shockwave could hear it in his voice – the strain, the increase of speed, of pitch, the fact that he was calling at all. Blurr didn't do upset – not on his missions. He was far too competent for such things. Which meant he was in big trouble.

"You had no intergalactic communications?  What about your ship?  Has it been destroyed?"

"No, it should be fine, or at least, I think it's fine.  I haven't seen much of it at all since I got here – not that I've lost it or anything, but I can't really reach it right now, for one reason or another."

He was being cryptic, another abnormal behavior that set Shockwave on edge.  "Blurr, are you all right?"

"I don't know.  Maybe?"

"'Maybe?'"  Shockwave had no idea how to respond to that.  Did Blurr not know?

"I should probably just hang up.  You're clearly busy, and you can't help me right now anyway – haha!  Help me?  Isn't that funny?  You, millions and billions of light years away, help me?  I'm Elite Guard!  I should be perfectly capable of helping myself – you like that about me, right?  I wouldn't want to disappoint you.  I'll just hang up.  I'm not in any immediate danger.  Don't worry about it.  Sorry to bother you."

"Blurr, wait!  What's going on?"  Like the Pit was he going to leave it at that.

Blurr hesitated, long enough that Shockwave wondered if he had cut the connection, but at last his voice crackled in from the other side.

"I don't really know, to be honest.  As best I can tell, one of the indigenous life forms got his hands on a – and this might be hard to believe, but an Allspark-powered remote control.  It interferes with my circuitry.  I'm trapped in alt mode, I can't move either – I have zero control over my body – and he doesn't seem to know what I am, which I suppose is to my benefit, but I guess I'm just freaking out over nothing.  If the control is Allspark-powered, then it won't be long until the Autobots or Decepticons liberate me.  I guess I'm not really afraid, I just really wanted to hear your voice, I guess.  I miss you, Longarm."

"Allspark-powered?  Decepticons?  What is going on over there?  Why have I not been made aware of such things?"  What Shockwave knew was, for once in his life, distressingly limited.  He was
aware of the increased Decepticon activity throughout the galaxy, of fifty stellar cycles worth of rumors that Megatron had returned, but from his position safely nestled within the Metroplex, there was no one he could get confirmation from. Few had his comm frequency, and anyone he could contact securely from his position had disappeared with the Nemesis.

The news of the Allspark didn't surprise him. The Elite Guard had left to investigate its reemergence, after all, though they had yet to return. But to hear of such an overwhelming force being utilized to operate something so mundane as a remote control was baffling. What was happening?

"Sorry Sir. A lot has happened here, and I meant to tell you sooner, but then I got into this mess and it's been a little distracting for me, I admit. But I've been following the Autobots here for the past several months on your order, and there would seem to be a definite Decepticon presence on this planet, that the Elite Guard has been in firm denial of ever since rumors around the Orion's disappearance first surfaced.

"Nonetheless, the activity peaked a little less than a month ago, and it would seem that A: Megatron might very well be back, and B: in an effort to keep the Allspark out of his hands, Optimus Prime smashed it, which judging by my current condition . . ."

Blurr continued on, but for once in his life, Shockwave had stopped listening. So then his suspicions were correct. Megatron was back. And if Megatron was back, then he no longer had time to play around with his favorite new pet.

"Agent Blurr," he said, cutting Blurr off mid-rant.

"Yes Sir?" Blurr said, effortlessly switching gears.

"What I am about to ask you to do may sound a bit subversive, but I think we can both see its necessity. You're right. The Elite Guard will no doubt try to hide Decepticon presence to avoid a panic, but these are things we need to know. That's why, if you find anything about Megatron, or the Decepticon presence on Earth, I want you to inform me first and foremost. Do you understand?"

"Yes Sir," Blurr replied, somewhat hesitantly. "Expect my next report within the lunar cycle. And Sir?"

"Yes Blurr?" Shockwave said, mind already miles away.

"I love you."

It was the first time Blurr had said such a thing. Shockwave was caught completely off-guard, pulled back to the moment by those three insignificant little words. A world of opportunities raced through his processor. Perhaps he wouldn't have to forsake his favorite Autobot after all. How much did Blurr love him? How far would Blurr follow him?

"I'm glad to know that," was all he could think to say. Perhaps a bit less romantic than he'd intended, but it was the truth. He cut communication, before he had time to say something truly incriminating.

But the line didn't stay dead. An imposing static crept in, filling his audials, and Shockwave grew nervous. This was supposed to be a secure line! Why was it so easy to listen in on?

"I am aware of your presence," he said, menace in his voice. "You'd do well to show yourself."

"You dare to order me, Shockwave?" A figure flickered into existence on Shockwave's monitor, but Shockwave didn't need to see that most wonderful face to know who had been listening. Only one
bot in the universe had a voice capable of bringing *Shockwave* to his knees.

"**Lord Megatron!**" Words could not describe the elation that overtook him, audible in his usually-monotone manner, bursting outwards from his spark, unwittingly transforming him from the guise of Longarm Prime. Though Megatron could see only his face, Shockwave fell to the ground, in a show of worship. "**Praise the Allspark, what they're saying is true.**" Shockwave had never sounded so emotional as he did in this moment, though a stranger would mistake him for underwhelmed.

Megatron, however, was no stranger. The barest hint of a smile reached the warlord's lips – a sign that Shockwave's subservient manner pleased him. "**You did not think me dead, Shockwave?**" His words were as close as Megatron got to 'playful.'

"My continued presence on Cybertron is proof of my faith in you. I do love our home world, but it pains me to subjugate myself to our enemies, day in and day out."

"Is that what you call that?"

With those six words, Shockwave's rapture turned to icy terror within his fuel lines. Megatron had heard everything – of course he had! It was *his* communication line Shockwave had so arrogantly used to flirt with Blurr!

"**My Lord, I do apologize for subjecting you to such trite matters. Agent Blurr is my best intelligence agent, as well as a member of the Elite Guard. His loyalty to me is beneficial to my purposes here, and as you have surely seen, he is quite loyal.**"

"**Is that so?**" Megatron mused. Then, his smile faded, his humor evaporated, transformed to the same grave manner in which he gave orders. "**Kill him.**"

Shockwave's lack of a face was quite the blessing, though he feared the slight flicker in his optic gave away his turmoil. "**My Lord?**"

"**You heard me, Shockwave. You cannot afford Autobot attachments, and if he is so skilled as you say, then he is a threat to both you, and everything we're trying to accomplish. I will not repeat myself.**"

Shockwave wanted to protest, but Megatron's words rang with truth, and it was not in his nature to disobey his lord and master. "**I understand, my Lord. Though Blurr currently resides on Earth, where you are, if his report is accurate.**" Megatron narrowed his optics, but said nothing. "**Should he return, then I would not hesitate to do the deed with the utmost enthusiasm, but as it stands, I am in no position to eliminate him.**"

"**Furthermore, I fear that should I call him back, or grow distant too soon, then, knowing what he knows, he may be able to piece together my identity. It would seem that, for the time being, my servos are tied.**"

Megatron's frown deepened, and Shockwave's spark clenched in grief. He had been foolish to allow himself to get so close to Blurr, to wind up in this mess of his own creation. He had failed to live up to his high standards of excellence, and in doing so, had disappointed Lord Megatron. The notion caused him physical pain.

"**Very well,**" Megatron said. "**Allow the situation to play out. But eliminate that threat at your earliest opportunity.**"

"**Yes my Lord.**" He perhaps should not have felt so grateful, but despite his better reasoning, Shockwave was glad that he could keep the façade up just a bit longer. He was in no hurry to kill
"And now," said Megatron, changing gears. "For the reason I called you . . ."

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Blurr did not report to him again.

Too much had happened too fast. As he'd predicted, Blurr had been freed from the prison the Allspark had kept him trapped in, and he'd continued to pursue his mission, keeping a close optic on the Autobot Earth team.

But though Blurr was dutiful to a fault, even he had a conscience. Megatron had inevitably forced his hand, and Blurr had ditched his cover, personally fought against Megatron's forces, before being dragged from the battlefield by a malfunctioning space bridge. The bot always did have impeccable luck.

And that was where things got strange.

Somehow, through sheer force of will, Blurr had run, from an asteroid floating in space, all the way back to Cybertron. The feat was beyond the realm of possibility, even if the little bot had managed to tap into the transwarp network.

For the first time in millennia, Shockwave found himself possessed by the spark of scientific passion, the lust for knowledge, long-quaelled by ages of war and suffering – the desire to run more tests, to find out just how the little miracle-worker functioned. Which was a shame, as now that he was here, Shockwave was obligated to kill him.

And if ever he thought that he could get away with shirking his orders, Blurr's report put an end to it. He knew too much, had gotten too close, was two kliks away from discovering Shockwave's true identity – and on the verge of Megatron's big push, no less. The only thing working in Shockwave's favor was Blurr's loyalty to him. It had kept Longarm Prime free from suspicion, had brought the little mech to do the impossible, all so he could follow Shockwave's orders, all so he could report to his beloved Longarm before anyone else. But loyalty had its limits, and Shockwave had no doubt what would happen when Blurr learned the truth. He had to go.

Even with his guard down, Blurr dodged Shockwave's first swipe with ease, playing the attempted assault off as a joke, but his humor turned to confusion at the next attack, and when diminutive little Longarm morphed into a hulking brute, a flicker of fear glimmered in Blurr's optics.

"Did I do something to offend you, Sir? You seem to be attacking me for some unknown reason, but I cannot imagine what that would be!"

Shockwave transformed, from a warped version of Longarm Prime, to his true alt mode, unseen for five hundred years at least, a massive, powerful tank. And still, despite the evidence unfolding before his optics, Blurr continued to play dumb.

"Did you upgrade your alt mode while I was gone, Sir?" he said, voice on the verge of breaking. "Because the last time I checked, you turned into a crane, didn't you? That's very practical of you – preparing for battle against the Decepticons!"

Shockwave fired, only once, and predictably, Blurr dodged. This was pointless. Even exhausted from his recent trek across the galaxy, body on the verge of a breakdown, Blurr was still impossible to hit. The real surprise was that he hadn't fled yet – a shame, as if he had, Shockwave could have trapped him in the compacting walls of Fortress Maximus.
Shockwave reverted to root mode – his true form – forty feet of lithe monstrous frame, claws nearly as big as Blurr himself – long, treaded legs, menacing antler-like antennae, an eerie red optic. Blurr couldn't kid himself now. Without a doubt, this was Shockwave.

With a cry of surprise, Blurr scurried backwards, nearly dipping into the lethal corridors of the fortress, but Primus below, *something* possessed him to stay.

"I knew it!" he cried out – wide optics deadlocked on Shockwave's own. "I knew it! I did. It was too good to be true – you were too good to be true. I should've known better. You always knew more than you should have! You were always so calm and warm and patient and gentle and kind – and despite all of your greatness, we never seemed to accomplish much of anything after you took over Intel, and you kept on sending me on pointless missions whenever I got too near a breakthrough and it was so obvious! You're horrible at infiltration, I could have turned you in in a nanosecond! I should have! I should have known – it was so obvious!"

While he spoke, his expression hardened – grief turning to resentment. It was not the outcome Shockwave had hoped for, in part because he truthfully didn't want to kill Blurr, and in part because he wasn't sure he could.

Blurr advanced, zipping forward in a flash to stand well within Shockwave's reach. "But somehow you made me trust you! I knew you weren't who you claimed to be, but I – I – I – I – you were just so –" he cut himself off, tiny body trembling in Shockwave's shadow, and Shockwave resisted the urge to grab him once more. He couldn't catch the alluring little bot, but Shockwave had more than mere strength to rely on. And so, he waited.

"It was too good to be true," Blurr said at last, deflating. "It's always too good to be true." \

Blurr was stalling. He was angry, yes, but had he wanted to subdue Shockwave, he would have done so already. He wasn't exactly a stranger to fighting Decepticons, and Shockwave knew for a fact that he had stasis cuffs buried in his subspace. In the corner of Shockwave's mind, a plan began to take root.

"My apologies."

Blurr bolted away, plating flared and optics wide, like a cornered turbofox. Shockwave wouldn't deny that the image was rather appealing.

"What do you mean by that?! 'Apologies?!' After everything that's happened, you're sorry! Don't apologize to me! I've had enough of being lied to – used! Always lies! Like I'm some gullible newspark for everyone to manipulate! Well I have news for you! I'm not!"

Shockwave remained calm through Blurr's tirade, waiting for him to finish, before moving closer with a thunderous step, and then another. Blurr flinched, but did not retreat.

"Stop stop stop! Leave me alone!" he shrieked. "Don't come any closer, you monster!"

Shockwave stopped, unmoving once more, which had the odd effect of changing Blurr's demeanor once again, from panicked to furious. Curious.

"What are you doing? Why did you stop?! Quit playing games with me! You can't manipulate me – I'm not your puppet! I'm a warrior, don't you get that?! I could kill you – before you could raise a hand against me – so stop it! Stop it! Stop it! Why aren't you attacking me right now?! What are you trying to do?!"

There were too many questions in the rant to answer them all, so Shockwave didn't bother trying.
"Apologies. Would you like me to continue my advance?"

"No!" Blurr snapped, more upset than Shockwave had ever seen him. "But you have no reason to obey my wishes, or respect my will. You've lied to me, led me on, made me feel like I mattered – five and a half vorns! I trusted you for the last five hundred years, and it was for nothing!

"So go on! Yes! Keep advancing! Strike me again! Shoot me! Tear me apart with those claws of yours – rip my spark out! Go on! I won't even run away this time." With his words, he faced Shockwave head-on, presenting his chest as a target, planted his feet firmly on the ground. Shockwave should have obeyed, Megatron had ordered as much. But he couldn't bring himself to snuff out that fascinating spark just yet. Not without being certain that he couldn't bring him around.

"Is that why you haven't tried to fight back?" Shockwave pressed. "Do you wish to die so much?"

Blurr stood firm. "No," he admitted. "I don't want to die at all, but –" he paused again. It was quite unusual to see Blurr, of all bots, struggling for words. Shockwave had to wonder what was going on in that overworked little processor of his.

"But I spent so long building my life around you and I don't know if I can go back to the way I was before – I mean, of course I can! I'm not so useless as to be one hundred percent dependent on another bot, but at the same time, I remember the way things were before – how I was before, and I don't want to go back – I don't want to go back, and I don't want to fight you at all!

"It's treason! I know it's treason! But I wasn't lying when I said I loved you, and –" he deflated all at once, and Shockwave moved in, towering over him, enveloping that tiny, insignificant presence away in his shadow. But he did not strike.

He should have. Every instinct in his body urged him to kill his enemy, to obey Megatron's orders. He was glitched, for sure; he couldn't go through with it.

He had only meant for Blurr to be a means to an end, a distraction of the body, his optics and audials within the Elite Guard. He hadn't expected to grow attached. But perhaps he had been lonely as well. Perhaps he had not been immune to stress of living a lie, keeping secrets, of being surrounded by bots who would, could never truly know him. Perhaps these two enemies of war had more in common with each other than with their own allies.

Orders be damned, Shockwave could not go through with the execution. He reached out, slowly this time, and wrapped Blurr in his monstrous claws, pulling him close. Blurr didn't stop him, but he did grow confused when Shockwave failed to do any further.

"What are you doing?"

"Disobeying orders," Shockwave said, slowly shifting back to Longarm, his arms wrapped around Blurr's waist, as if the two could combine if he just held on tight enough.

"I do not know why, but you fascinate me."

"What?"

"You are a threat, Blurr. Your continued existence jeopardizes my mission. You know too much, you are too good at your job." He snaked his arm around Blurr again, grip tightening. Blurr stiffened in his arms. "If I let you go free, not only my life, but everything I have ever fought for, goes down in flames." He squeezed tighter, with force enough to dent an internal mechanism or two. Blurr began to struggle.
"Longarm, that hurts!" he choked, trapped at last in Shockwave's clutches. He could have squeezed the life out of that delicate little bag of thin plating and soft protoform right there, but he didn't. Instead, he released Blurr, a smile coming to his facsimile of a mouth at the way the little dear coughed and sputtered, but didn't outright bolt once his freedom was regained.

"But that would be a waste, wouldn't it?"

"W-what?" Blurr stuttered, trying his hardest to hide the gleam of hope in his optics.

"I do not want to kill you, Blurr. And you do not want to kill me. On that, at least, we agree. The question then becomes, 'what now?' I cannot let you go free, knowing you carry my secret, so that leaves . . ."

"I won't tell," Blurr interrupted – not the cry of the desperate, but the assurance of a mech broken. "You're my enemy – and likewise, a threat to my existence, my way of life. By all rights, I should be doing all in my power to eliminate you, but I meant what I said earlier. I don't want to go back to life without you, so congratulations, I guess. You win. I won't join you, but I can't fight you, so do what you want."

Shockwave thought it over. What was he supposed to make of this? Blurr had given up on fighting him, but it wasn't enough. He was still an Autobot by birth, by nature; it was dangerous to let him run free. His best option then, short of killing Blurr, was to lock him away until Megatron had reclaimed Cybertron. As far as the Autobots knew, Blurr was MIA; there was no better opportunity to sequester him away than the present.

But the fact of the matter was, Blurr was far too independent to allow such a thing, Shockwave did not have the means to keep Blurr prisoner against his will, not if he wanted the little mech to keep right on loving him, at least. Detaching limbs and forced stasis were right out, and any facility capable of withstanding the powerful kicks of the universe's fastest mech would be impossible to secure in his current situation. If he wanted to satisfy his foolish spark, he was just going to have to trust Blurr.

"Very well. I believe you," Shockwave said. "I think it is safe to assume that I know you better than any mech on Cybertron or off. You will not betray me, I know this to be true." He reached out again, wrapping an arm over Blurr's shoulders, hand resting at the base of his helm, and pulled him in close for a deep kiss. Blurr melted into the sensation, body collapsing limply against his own. It went straight to his spark, filled him with an intoxicating sense of power. Was it any wonder he was addicted? But it wouldn't do to lose himself within Blurr – not in such a precarious situation. He broke the kiss, optics serious, but smile gentle as ever.

"We shall continue on as normal, with I as your superior. But know that I will not allow you to cause me trouble."

Blurr said nothing, leaning down to rest his chin on Longarm's shoulder, skinny arms wrapping themselves around his broad chest.

"I can't believe you're really okay with that. You're just going to act like nothing happened? Like I saw nothing? You're going to let us go back to the way things were? You're going to love me, the way you did before? This is impossible! I can't believe it. Even after all the lies you've told me – even thought I don't know the real you, or if you're even telling the truth, you're still somehow the best bot that's ever happened to me, how sad is that?" His shoulders jerked against Shockwave in a bitter laugh, which shattered Shockwave's spark, filled him with the need to personally destroy whoever had so hurt his precious racer. Instead, he stroked the base of Blurr's antenna, eliciting a soft moan.
"Is this a suitable solution for you?"

Blurr pulled back, meeting the expressive blue eyes of Longarm Prime. His own flickered brightly with uncertainty, before his trembling lips curled upwards, and planted a soft kiss on Longarm's.

"I'm smiling, aren't I?"
Chapter Summary

Blurr's Academy days pass him by, leaving him with fond memories, and mountains of regret.

Chapter Notes

And now back to Blurr, some thousand-ish years earlier.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Cybertron was more than he ever could have dreamed. He'd seen imported movies, of course, but nothing could have prepared him for the world that greeted him beyond the doors of the space port.

On Velocitron, most bots shared the same frame, best designed for speed, with only minor variations between them. But here, bots came in every shape and size imaginable! There were little ones scurrying about underfoot, bulky giants who could easily crush Blurr, should they misstep on their stumpy legs. There were sleek bots, and fat bots, petit bots, and top-heavy bots, and bottom-heavy bots, and all in a rainbow of colors. It was difficult to avoid staring, but he didn't feel too bad for it. After all they did the same. Everywhere he went, he seemed to turn heads, though he wasn't quite sure as to why. Was it so obvious that he was a foreigner? It made him shudder; being the center of attention was not something he cared for.

For his first day on-planet, he'd been scheduled to take a train ride to the Grand Trionian Hotel, where he was to stay the night. Boot camp would begin the next day. Blurr didn't mind. He was glad for the opportunity to learn more about the planet that was to be his new home.

For instance, trains were a thing that existed. Public transportation did not exist on Velocitron, at least not in such a regard. Velocitonians loved to run, to drive down the open road, to feel the wind on their chassis. No self-respecting Velocitronian would have ever set foot on one of these cramped, crowded contraptions, travelling across the land at a maddeningly sluggish pace. But at least it gave Blurr an opportunity to take in the sights, and what sights they were.

Never in his life had he seen a city like Iacon. Again, due to Velocitronian need for speed and space, even when indoors, the buildings back home had a tendency to expand outwards, rather than upwards – wide buildings with open pathways and walls only when required. And even within the largest of cities, there were few permanent structures to get in the way. Any building that could afford to be mobile was, and most residential dwellings were constructed underground, to open up space and protect sleeping bots from the ruthless Velocitronian sun. In comparison, Iacon was both a land of wonder, and a claustrophobic nightmare.

The buildings rose high into the sky, many disappearing beyond the clouds. And where Velocitronian structures were a smooth mix of aerodynamic curves and sharp angles, these rigid, crystalline structures stood steadfast, square and blocky. The train track weaved between these phenomenal skyscrapers, high in the air. It was almost like flying!
Pressing his face against the glass of the window, Blurr could see the busy streets far below, where alt modes sat jam-packed together in the roadways, scarcely moving at all. Blurr could only hope that he would never be forced to drive through the city. He would surely go mad.

The world outside may have been awe-inspiring, but within the tiny aisles of the train, he couldn't help but notice that the other passengers were staring at him. Was he making a scene? Cringing in embarrassment, he turned around and planted himself firmly in his seat, tapping his toe in an effort to redirect some of his boundless energy.

"First time in Iacon?" Blurr's attention was grabbed by a pleasant voice from next to him. The words were slow, far slower than even the other Velocitronians. Did all Cybertronians talk like that? But Blurr found that he couldn't have cared less about how fast the stranger spoke once he saw his frame.

The mech was tall, green, with a barrel chest, strong arms, and a powerful chin. Blurr had never seen another Cybertronian this close before, and it was quite exhilarating. He'd never felt so drawn to another bot based on appearance alone – surely it was just novelty. Mechs back home simply didn't come that broad. His spark pulsed faster, despite himself.

And then reality hit him.

The stranger was talking to him. That meant he wanted a reply, and there was no way Blurr could give that without embarrassing himself beyond repair. Velocitronians barely understood him. What would a Cybertronian think? He sunk down into his seat even further, wishing for all the world that he had the space to run away.

Avoiding eye-contact with the handsome stranger, he shuttered his optics and nodded slow as he could manage.

"Welcome then! My name's Springer. It's nice to meet you," the mech beamed, extending his hand towards Blurr, who inched back, staring at the thing with suspicion. What was he supposed to do with that?

After an awkward moment, Springer retracted the hand with a nervous laugh. "You must be from pretty far out. Sorry about that. It's a standard Cybertronian greeting. I guess bah-weep- Graaaaaagnah wheep ni ni bong would be more appropriate."

Blurr perked up at the familiar words of the universal greeting, though he didn't dare repeat them. Still, he couldn't do nothing. Springer was watching him with expectant optics, waiting for a reply. Risking the lesser of two evils, he thrust out his hand, and the bot grasped it, held on tight for a second, then let it go, smiling.

"So, what about you? What's your story?"

This was it. Blurr couldn't put off the words anymore. All he could do was try to get a hold on his nerves, before the dam gave way.

"I'm called Blurr, that's Blurr like what you see when something moves very fast, but I don't know how long it'll stay that way, since I heard they rename you in boot camp. That's what they do, right? I've read about it! See, I've enlisted in the military academy – well first I gotta get through boot camp – well I mean, I didn't enlist so much as was enlisted, but there's not much of a difference I guess, but yeah, I guess that's my story . . ." He trailed off with a nervous laugh, spark sinking at the baffled look on Springer's face. Much to his own horror, more words were already spilling from his mouth.
"Anyway, like I said, my names Blurr, I'm trying to say it a lot so you might catch it, 'cause it doesn't look like much of what I'm saying its getting through – I'm sorry about that, I can't really control how fast I talk – even on Velocitron they didn't really understand me – I'm from Velocitron, by the way. I came out here to join the military, and I really hope I'm not making a terrible first impression, but I bet that I am, so I'll just shut up now, I'm sorry to bother you, even though you're the one who approached me, so if anyone was bothering anyone – not that I'm bothered, but if anyone was bothering . . ."

The entire car was staring at him now, wide-eyed, as though he were some kind of freak. It was happening again. He'd fled halfway across the galaxy to get away from this, and yet nothing had changed. The baffled reactions he instilled in others were just as much a part of him as his speed. He needed this conversation to end.

"I'm sorry, I'll shut up now!" He interrupted himself with a squeak, before clamping his mouth shut and sinking even further into his seat, heated energon casting a pink hue on his otherwise white faceplates.

And still, after all that, Springer wasn't done with him.

"You said . . . you're from . . . Velocitron . . .?"

Blurr offered a sheepish nod.

"Guess that makes sense. I've never seen a speedster with a frame as sleek as yours before."

Was that a compliment? There were so many kinds of frames on Cybertron. Was being sleek a good thing? Or maybe it was better to be broad? Certainly Springer was the more attractive mech. Besides, if it had been a compliment, then surely Springer wouldn't be so flustered after uttering it.

"Oh sorry! That came out wrong! I'm not one of 'those types –' though I suppose that's exactly what one of 'those types' would say." He buried his own face in one, massive hand, while Blurr looked on in confusion. Just what was meant by 'those types?' Blurr was almost curious enough to ask, but the heat that remained in his face reminded him the consequences of speaking up.

"I'm sorry," Springer mumbled, after another awkward moment. "I didn't mean to upset you. I'll leave you alone." And then, with stiff movements, he rose to his feet, and shuffled off to another car.

Great. Someone had legitimately tried to reach out to him, and Blurr had scared him off. So much for making friends. Cybertron wouldn't be so different from Velocitron after all.

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His first night on Cybertron had been worse than his first day

He wasn't homesick, or at least he had been convinced he wasn't right up until he saw the recharge slab. On Velocitron, every recharge slab was built the same – the perfect fit for the Velocitronian frame type, but this Blurr didn't understand. It was a flat slab, tilted at a forty-five degree angle, barely larger than he was. Surely there was more to it; it was a slab built for public consumption, and between size, girth, back plates, and kibble, Blurr had seen few bots that could comfortably fit the thing.

It had transformations seams; it was surely adjustable, but Blurr didn't want to try, stubborn though it was. This one stupid, insignificant detail was all it took to hammer home the surrealism of the past lunar cycle.
He was not home. He was on Cybertron, claustrophobic, chaotic, slow-moving Cybertron, and as optimistic as he'd been before, he couldn't brush aside his fears, his longing for something, that was old and familiar, anything he knew. He didn't want to relearn how to perform basic functions – sleeping, eating, cleaning. He'd never felt so helpless in his life.

He slept that night, curled up in a tight ball on the floor, trembling and twitching, as nightmare after nightmare plagued him, and awoke the next morning, face buried in the opposed wall, which bore a slight dent he was going to have to pay for. Had he launched himself mid-recharge? His head hurt, and his body felt sluggish, and more than anything he wanted to call the whole thing off and go home, but what home would he even have to go to? He'd been booted from Velocitron. And he didn't want to be on Cybertron. He didn't belong anywhere at all.

Then what choice did he have, but to keep on his current path?

A taxi (whatever that was) would arrive in a few cycles to take him to Fortress Maximus. The last thing he wanted was to show up in front of his future peers, a sobbing, vulnerable mess. As much as he missed Velocitron, he could never go back.

And so he got up, gathered his composure, and set off to figure out how the wash racks worked.

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The taxi had been worse than the train. The train hadn't been alive, but the taxi was not only alive, but sassy from the get-go, mocking Blurr's hesitation at the prospect of climbing into another living being. "I'm flattered that you're staring at my plush seats, but I ain't got all day, Kid. Get in!"

Blurr's only consolation was that he wasn't alone. He fumbled into the roomy back seat, planting himself next to another mech, more sleek than the average Cybertronian, and with a flashier paintjob. He had actually painted flames onto his chest plate! Who even did something like that?

The stranger flashed him a winning grin, but the act of friendliness only made Blurr clam up, visions of yesterday's blunder still racing through his head. He didn't seem to mind.

"Hey Taxi," the flashy bot said, spreading arms and legs alike to take up more than half of the back seat. Blurr shifted closer to the door to avoid contact. "Does it feel awesome, or what?"

"Does what?" the taxi begrudgingly answered.

"Having the two hottest mechs in Cybertronian history sharing your backseat?" Well, that answered that lingering question from yesterday at least.

The cab snorted. "Don't kid yourself, Kid. You're not even in the top five."

The flashy stranger responded with appropriate indignation, and the taxi bantered right back, until the two were trading increasingly heated barbs. Blurr wished he could disappear for the duration of the trip, that the taxi would kick one or both of them out, preferably the stranger. His one mercy was that no one was talking to him.

"So, what's your story?" the stranger asked, right on cue. Blurr cringed, wishing that his spark gave him the power to turn invisible, rather than the super speed. Fortunately, Mr. Hot Shot was just self-absorbed enough to not bother waiting for an answer.

"I'm gonna be the next Magnus, just you wait! I was top of my class back in Nyon, you know? My profs always said, 'you're gonna go far, Kid. You've got everything – speed, and strength, and skill, and charisma, and damn good looks.'"
"Do you know what it's like, to finally reach the top only to find someone better – someone you could never possibly beat?"

Blurr shivered, already terrified. This kid had big dreams, and an even bigger ego. This would be Fast Track all over again, Blurr just knew it.

"Yeah, I have that effect on people," the bot said, mistaking fear for awe. The aft. Blurr already hated him. "That's why they're gonna call me Magnificus, when I get to boot camp. Or Hot Shot! I'm pretty good with a bot and arrow! Or wait, I know! I can be Blur, but with two r's, for extra speed!"

It was strange to hear, but even stranger to contemplate. He'd already undergone the rite of naming back home, a ceremony that all bots underwent, rather than just military enlistees. He'd been Blurr for a long time, and he liked his name. He didn't want it to change, and he definitely didn't want this bot to get it!

"Actually, no. 'Blurr Magnus' sounds stupid. Let's stick with 'Magnificus Magnus!' Man, feel that one roll off the glossa. That's a keeper!"

"Anyway, are you single?"

The sudden shift in tone left Blurr legitimately speechless this time. His tracheal vents hitched, and he coughed hard, as though choking on energon.

"Hahah, yeah. I have that effect on people. But seriously, you're hot, and I'm on fire! We should hook up. We'd be the talk of the camp! Er, you are going to boot camp, right?"

Blurr gave a shaky nod.

"Good, me too! But yeah! We should totally do it! Magnificus and uh – Blue Guy."

Blurr narrowed his optics in time with the cab's derisive snort. "Why not let the kid get a word in edgewise, or maybe he doesn't wanna talk to you!"

"Ah stay outta this!"

Much to Blurr's pleasure, the two bickered for the rest of the trip; he didn't have to utter a single word. And once they reached Fortress Maximus, they were met by an escort, who did the impossible and got 'Magnificus Magnus' to shut up, whispering soft threats into his audial. In fact, Blurr didn't have to hear the sound of the mech's voice again until all seven enlistees for this lunar cycle were standing shoulder-to-shoulder in a straight line, as Kup Minor stared them down with scrutinizing optics.

"Well, if this isn't the sorriest bunch of waifish, thick-helmed, soft-plated cannon fodder I've ever laid eyes on. Small! Weak! The Decepticons will eat you alive, as soon as look at you sorry afts."

Blurr noticed the flashy stranger shift uncomfortably two bots over. Kup honed in on the movement right away.

"You got a problem there, Hot Rod?"

"Uh, no Sir!" the mech said, leaping to attention.

"Don't sound very sure of yourself, do you?"
"Err, I'm very sure of myself, Sir!" a heavy clang sounded; Kup had brought his fist down on top of the mech's head, hard enough to leave a dent in the gleaming metal.

"Yeah, I bet you are. I know your type. There's one of you every lunar cycle. Some wide-eyed kid with a flashy paint job and delusions of grandeur. I got news for ya, kid. You ain't worth scrap. I don't care how good you think you are, there is always, always someone better." His words resonated deep within Blurr, granting him a sense of ease. If Kup Minor could cure bots of this mindset, then perhaps Blurr had nothing to fear from his peers – haughty as that sounded. But still, it was hard to imagine that there was someone better than him. He could only hope.

"Hot Rod."

"What?" Another smack. "What Sir?"

"Your designation."

Hot Rod's optics grew wide as saucers. "But Sir! You haven't even seen what I can –" one more smack.

"I don't need to. Personality matters as much as skill when it comes to designations, and my word is law. You're Hot Rod. Now, who's next?" He stepped to the right, approaching a stocky olive mech with a distinct frown.

"All right small fry. You got the build, but do you got the brawn? Go on, show me what you can do."

"Er," the kid hesitated. "Can I break things?"

"Anything in this field."

A wicked grin broke out on that grumpy face, and he jogged for a nearby watchtower, thin, but tall. One great punch sent it toppling to the ground. The feat was impressive enough, but he wasn't done yet. Massive arms strained and creaked under the weight, but somehow the kid managed to lift the fallen structure from the ground. Not for very far or very long, but what did it matter? Watching such an impossible action made Blurr's spark race all the same. He could never manage such a thing.

"Well, I guess you do got the brawn. Brawn's your name now!"

"Yes Sir!"

Next up was a femme, red and white, with a serious face and sweeping skirt plating that Blurr imagined was quite impractical.

"That's the countenance I'm looking for. Tell me, Red, what are you doing here?"

"I want to become a medic," she responded, serious and determined.

"Thought as much. You look the part at least. Guess I won't ask what you can do then. I wouldn't know the difference between an alternator and a brain modlue. Medics are a hard bunch to name. First Aid, perhaps? Fix-it?" He shook his head, displeased with the choices. "What am I going to do with you, Red?"

In the end, he settled on Red Alert, which she accepted with an indifferent salute. Now it was Blurr's turn.
Kup stared at him long and hard, and Blurr struggled not to break eye-contact, panicking inwardly all the while.

"Never seen a frame like yours before. I take it you're one of those colonists."

Blurr nodded, more terrified than ever to speak, with all attention on him. Kup, of course, was not impressed.

"What, don't they teach you how to talk way out there?"

There was no hiding it – everyone would find out sooner or later anyway. It was better to risk the shame than the wrath of authority. "Yes, I can talk – my name is Blurr, or it was, I guess you're supposed to give me a new one, and I'm from Velocitron, which is why I look like this, and you probably aren't understanding a thing I say, no one ever does, so I'm sorry – I'm sorry for ruining everything, you can hit me if you want – oh Primus, I'm supposed to be saying 'Sir!' Sir, Sir – I'm so sorry Sir! It's hard for me to control –"

The mech held up a hand, and Blurr, miraculously, was able to cut himself off.

"Is that a Velocitron thing, or is it unique to you?"

"It's just me, Sir. I've got a timing glitch that makes me –"

Kup cut him off again, and again Blurr managed to shut himself up, for a moment anyway. The mech appeared to be taking his time with whatever it was he wanted to say? Was he trying to insult Blurr?

"Sir?" he whined, with a surprising amount of composure.

"Ah, Blurr seems more apt than anything I could come up with. I've been doing this too long. Still, I've heard Velocitronians are the fastest bots in the galaxy. I'd like to see for myself. So go on then, show me what you can do."

That, Blurr could do. There were no social conventions to worry about, no need to dumb himself down for the benefit of the group. This was Blurr's time to shine.

With a confident salute and a cry of "Yes Sir!" he took off, the bots that lingered behind far from his mind.

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Boot camp was better than anything Blurr could have hoped for. Kup Minor was strict, yes, but fair. It was his job to bark orders, to demean and belittle, but he was an equal opportunity insulter. For the first time in his life, Blurr never felt singled out for being different. In fact, after the first few decacycles, he was rarely singled out at all. He was good at following orders, good at exercises, good at coming up with creative solutions to problems. His berth was always pristinely kept, his chores finished so quickly, so thoroughly, that Kup didn't seem to know what to do with him, other than make him run laps. It was more reward than punishment, and incentivized Blurr to do even better.

In combat simulations, Blurr excelled. He'd never thought he could be so brave in the heat of battle, but the crossfire moved in slow motion to his optics – he would take no hits. And with that knowledge secured, he could focus on helping his teammates, not in the capacity of leader – he had far too little charisma for that, but as an advisor, usually to Hot Rod, who had appointed himself squad captain, and nobody had bothered to challenge him. Furthermore, Blurr's ability to slip behind
enemy lines unnoticed was unparalleled. Scouting was his preferred role, in fact, as it left him alone – no bot there to slow him down. It was freedom.

His squad mates weren't objectionable for the most part. Their specialties were varied enough to keep them from directly competing with Blurr, and he was not the sort of troublemaker that caused Kup Minor to dole out the punishments to the group. Still, there was no affection there. He tolerated them, and they tolerated him.

The only exception to this rule was Hot Rod. Much to his credit, the mech had gracefully acknowledged that he would never be as fast as Blurr, and had instead devoted his energies into becoming a more rounded mech. He wasn't even that bad of a leader when he tried. Listening was a bit difficult for him, but he had a surprising knack for strategy, and when he issued commands, the others followed with little hesitation. Unfortunately, to Blurr's unending chagrin, he hadn't dropped the notion that he and Blurr should hook up, by virtue of appearance alone.

"Now that's not fair," he said with a wide grin. On any other mech, the expression would've given Blurr reason to put up his guard, but on Hot Rod, it came off as genuine. The mech did everything in excess, up to and including emoting. "I don't think we should hook up just 'cause we're both the hottest mechs this side of the Rust Sea. You're the fastest mech in camp, and I'm like, the second. We're both speedsters. We understand each other in a way no one else can, don't you think?"

Blurr narrowed his optics. "I don't think so, no. I think you don't really know me at all, that's what I think, 'cause the second I open my mouth you zone out and go far away and stop listening, but pretend that you're listening just like you are right now, because you can't be bothered to put your processor into it, that's what I think, and that's why I'm not going to date you – never, no way, nuh-uh! I don't care how hot you think it would be! It's not gonna happen!"

Hot Rod continued to stare with that dopey grin of his for a few moments after Blurr had finished his say. "Sorry, I wasn't listening. Could you repeat that, but maybe with fewer words?"

Blurr grumbled before throwing his arms up in exasperation. "No! My answer is no! No no no no no no no no no –"

"That's too bad," Hot rod said, still smiling. '"Cause we'd be great together."

"Ugh," Blurr groaned, melting into his seat and burying his head in the table. There was no reasoning with this guy.

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As much as Blurr enjoyed boot camp, his time spent there was fleeting. The stellar cycle passed in a moment, and the next thing Blurr knew, he and his squad were shaking the smiling Minor's hand, as he dubbed them graduates of boot camp. They knew the basics. Now it was time to specialize.

The Autobot Military Academy was the next stop on their journey, where they would spend the next five vorns. And so time went by.

Blurr continued to excel, continued to devote himself fully to his training day after day after day. He still saw his former squad mates from time to time. They still met for strength and conditioning, they cleaned together and slept together, but that was it. Red Alert and Brawn and the others had their own areas of expertise to train in, and Blurr had his, specifically, the art of infiltration and intelligence gathering. He worked with bots he'd never met before, those who'd enlisted before him, and eventually, those who came after as well, the ones who had never been granted the opportunity to train with Kup Minor, who had since been replaced by an up-and-comer named Sentinel.
He'd never bothered getting to know any of them. It suited him just fine. He was training for a job that would keep him in isolation more often than not. He may as well start practicing now. And there was some part of him that preferred to be seen as a silent snob than a babbling idiot.

Of course, the illusion was doomed to dissipate when it came time to take 'The Art of Seduction,’ a class that Blurr had neither expected nor wanted to take, and yet, it was apparently a requirement for all bots with a certain look to them. His stay on Cybertron had vanquished all trace of naivety when it came to the way others perceived him, but while he may have looked the part, there was no way he could act it.

"Don't sweat it, Blurr. You're adorable when you get all nervous and start babbling. Folks'll eat that right up.” And of course, Hot Rod was in the same class. It was just his luck.

"You wouldn't know anything about it! You don't live with the blank stares, and you don't live with being interrupted and insulted and told to shut up constantly. It's not cute! It's actually pretty debilitating, which you'd understand if you ever listened to a word I say, which you don't! You don't listen and that, incidentally, proves the very point I'm trying to make."

To his great surprise, Hot Rod's smile vanished. "They won't know that. Just play it up, act intimidated by them – make 'em feel powerful – that slag goes straight to their heads, trust me."

Blurr narrowed his optics, refusing to reply. As distasteful as he found Hot Rod, it wasn't a horrible strategy. He would never be the social butterfly Hot Rod was, but perhaps he wasn't completely doomed to fail the course. Failure was not an option. If he didn't succeed – if he couldn't be as good as everyone expected him to be, then he'd surely be given the boot again. Who knew where he'd end up after that?

"Besides," Hot Rod added, after Blurr's lack of reply. "Folks may think you're annoying, but they don't hate you, at least not anyone who's actually met you."

"You don't know that," Blurr snapped, mind immediately flashing back to Fast Track. Even after all this time, the mech still haunted him.

"Okay, maybe not," Hot Rod said, frown deepening. "But they're major afts if they do. You're a good bot, Blurr . . ." He paused, lips pursing and optics hesitant. "And damn good-looking!” he finished. The winning grin returned in a flash, as though its presence could erase any weight the conversation had carried. Surely he'd meant to say something else, then backed out at the last second.

But Blurr didn't press him on it. Surely it had taken the flippant mech a lot of effort to put up even so piteous a display of decency as that. He may as well acknowledge it. Maybe it would encourage more of the same. If only the notion of thanking Hot Rod didn't seem so unbelievably wrong!

"Well, maybe you're not as shallow of a mech as I thought you were.” It was as close as he could get.

Hot Rod didn't seem to mind. The motion was subtle, but a change came over Hot Rod's smile – it grew smaller, sweeter, sincere. Hot Rod may have worn many smiles, but this, right here, was the first time he'd ever seemed truly happy, if only for a moment. Then Blurr's words caught up to him.

"Wait, 'shallow?"'

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Despite the skeezy professor and his unease with all things social, Blurr survived 'The Art of
Seduction.” Following Hot Rod’s occasional advice, he even performed pretty well, receiving the same high scores he usually did, much to his chagrin. While he’d turned out to be surprisingly good at manipulating people, he feared that excelling so well in this area would require him to employ the skills learned down the line. He rather hoped it wouldn’t come to that.

In the meantime, vorns continued to pass, and graduation was looming just on the horizon. Blurr had been through a million simulations, had encountered imitations of terrifying Decepticons and unscrupulous Autobots alike, made his way through any set of circumstances the higher ups could think to throw at him. But there was one more test, one final exam, notorious by now for just how impossible it was, though the exact details had somehow remained under wraps for millennia.

He watched his peers cram with all their might, fill their heads with battle tactics, train their bodies to peak condition, prepare as best as they could for the unknown. But while everyone around him fell apart, Blurr remained confident. As long as he didn't have to make any public speeches, he knew this test would be easy as anything else.

He entered the VR booth, calm and smiling, still unswayed as he found himself dropped alone in the middle of a rusty wasteland. His knowledge that this was a simulation was suppressed, replaced instead with mission parameters.

He'd been dropped several days away from civilization as part of a routine training exercise. His job was to find his way back unaided. He could've done such a thing in his sleep by this point. It was a supreme waste of time.

With little effort, he gathered his bearings and took off running, only vaguely aware of the brilliant light shining down from the sky until it was on top of him, flying directly into his path and putting on a burst of speed. Blurr dodged easily enough, but the ship gave chase, and while Blurr could have outrun the thing in an open field with little effort, the fact remained that he had obstacles and uneven terrain to work around, while the ship did not.

The ship, which was most certainly a Decepticon, caught up, and dove past Blurr, knocking him off his feet with the force of its speed. With its prey downed, it took the opportunity to transform to root mode, and upon catching sight of the thing's face, Blurr's fuel froze in his lines.

He had fought simulated Decepticons before – he knew they were big, that their features were unsettling and alien, but this wasn't some faceless mook, abilities stolen from the coding of inmates captured during the war. He'd read the files, he'd seen the movies. This was Megatron, their supreme leader, and right now he was staring Blurr down with a wicked smirk, dwarfing the little speedster with some fifty feet of steel grey mass, a frame specialized for overpowering other mechs with raw might, and a cannon as big as he was. But while all of that was terrifying, Blurr found the mech's face to be scariest of all.

He'd been taught that Autobots and Decepticons were fundamentally different, and that was easy to believe when he read files on mechs like Shockwave, Megatron's faceless, loyal, lieutenant and chief science officer, or the five-eyed Lugnut, or head-in-a-jar Oil Slick. But Megatron didn't look like them.

Not only was his face one that could be found on any Autobot, it was handsome, with elegantly slanted optics, sharp cheek plates, and a surprisingly delicate chin. It was the kind of face that could command followers by flashing a smile, the kind of face that he'd seen every day, growing up on Velocitron, the kind of face that Blurr could sympathize with, relate to, and that scared him more than anything else. His spark pulsed faster, his legs began to shake, and his every instinct told him to flee.
And so he did. Blurr may never have tested his own limits, but he had no doubt in his mind that he would not survive an encounter with this mech. His mind shut off, and his feet began to move, allowing him to narrowly dodge the pink heat of cannon fire. The first shot tore through one of the rusted structures of the wasteland, knocking it directly into Blurr's path, and forcing him to veer around. The second and third flew by, closer to the ground. Again Blurr dodged, but by the fourth, he began to realize that something was wrong. Megatron wasn't aiming for him. He was aiming for the scenery. Why?

His answer came with the fifth blast, as he mis-stepped, toppling over just in time to avoid the fatal shot. He'd never fallen before – his reflexes were far too quick for that, which meant that something had changed without his notice. And indeed, as he leaned into the earth in front of him, in an effort to force himself back to his feet, he found it soft and pliable, where before it had been brittle.

The ground had melted under the extreme temperature of Megatron's cannon fire, and try as he might, Blurr couldn't regain his footing. He slipped and stumbled, the molten metal pulling him in with every step, until he was near completely immobilized. The panic set in for real this time. Blurr was nothing without his speed! He wasn't strong, his body was fragile, and his intellect was trying its hardest to escape him, making way for a fear unlike any he'd ever known.

He felt the sword slice through him, every inch severed lasting an eternity. He wasn't even aware of the sound of his own piercing screams, until the blade penetrated his spark. Then it was silence.

... The world came back in a flash of white, a room of Autobot Elites, the people Blurr wanted to be, watching him, judging him. He'd failed. They'd seen him fail. They'd seen him fail, and now they would determine his worth based on this failure. This couldn't be happening! Not to him! He never lost! It was all he could do to keep his body from shaking. No.

"Three point two seven kliks," a cool mechanical voice called out – Perceptor, head of the science guild.

"Understood," came another voice, regal and disinterested. This one was the voice of Ultra Magnus himself. He was here? He had seen that shameful display? Blurr thought he would stumble and fall all over again, even on the stable floor of the VR room.

Along the back wall, Hot Rod and Red Alert, who had already taken the test, watched him, with wide-eyed worry. How had they performed? Had they lasted longer than him? They couldn't have! Surely!

"You are dismissed, Blurr of Velocitron."

Blurr barely managed to squeak out a "Yes sir," before zipping out of that terrifying place.

What had he done?! He should have studied, should have prepared more. The test was said to be impossible, but he hadn't expected to lose so quickly. Three point two seven kliks! Normally, the low number would be music to his audials, but here, now, the speed of his failure made him sick.

And how was it fair to throw a speedster into a situation where he couldn't run anyway?! He wanted to curse the bot who had come up with such a biased exam, even while his mind told him there was no such thing as fairness on the battlefield. But who cared? What if he didn't get to graduate for his failure here? What if they sent him back to Velocitron? What if –

"Thought I'd find you here," Hot Rod's irritating voice dragged him from his thoughts.
Blurr slid to a stop. Evidently he'd decided to take a jog around the track, not that he remembered doing such a thing.

"Don't try to make me feel better, I know you're going to make me feel better and I don't want to feel better right now! I just want to bury my head in shame and hide in a cave somewhere, and never come out again! Can you believe it?! The one time my speed fails me, and it's in front of the Magnus! Of course was!"

"Aw, come on Blurr. Everyone was expected to fail that test."

"How long did you last?!" Blurr snapped.

Rodimus's optics grew wide, his faceplates, hot. It was not an expression Blurr had ever seen him wear before. Curiosity began to tug at the seams of his anger.

"Well, I mean, I'm not the best bot to compare with. I had a freakish string of luck in there, so . . ."

"How long?!" Blurr repeated, feeling dizzy.

"Seven point six eight kliks."

"What?" Blurr may have done the bare minimal of research, but even he knew that the longest anyone had taken to fail the exam was seven point seven four kliks, a record set by one Optimus Prime, whoever he was. Hot Rod may not have surpassed it, but he'd come pretty close. The shock was enough to quell some of his anger. By now, he just felt dizzy.

"It was just a fluke though. No need to worry about it." He waved the notion off, smile growing more confident. And at that moment a thought struck Blurr.

"You finally beat me."

"Huh?" Hot Rod drew back, quirking an optic ridge. "What do you mean?"

This was not a conversation Blurr wanted to have, least of all with Hot Rod. Their relationship had never done more than skirt the border of superficial. They were not close; he had no business confiding in a mere acquaintance. But as always, the words came whether he wanted them to or not.

"Back on that first day of boot camp, Kup Minor said to you that there was always going to be someone better, and as arrogant as it sounds, I'd figured that I'd wind up being that someone. I didn't want to be, mind you. But I've been that someone better all my life, and I've always hated it. I got kicked off of Velocitron, did I ever tell you that?" He laughed, not knowing why.

"And I guess I'd always been worried that someone was going to come after me, to destroy the competition. It wouldn't be the first time. I always had my guard up, so I never got close to anyone, which was the one thing I wanted more than anything. And I guess, maybe eventually I started to let it get to me. Maybe I'd never find someone who was better than me – and thinking like that made me feel invincible, and more so, like I had to be invincible, or something bad would happen again. So I stopped trying to improve or succeed, because why bother trying when you don't have to, while simultaneously, and rather counterintuitively, dreading the possibility of failure – and now I sound like a pompous wind shaft, and I'm sorry about that, but I feel like I'm having all of these realizations, and I'm actually really excited about this, and so I'd like to keep talking, is it okay if I keep talking?"

Hot Rod was frowning, a look of intense concentration on his face. He was actually trying to parse Blurr's fountain of words, an action which struck him with a twinge of fondness.
A moment passed as Hot Rod's processor caught up. "Uh, huh? Yeah, you can keep going. Don't let me stop you."

"Thanks," Blurr beamed. "So you see, I guess hearing about your overwhelming success, after my spectacular failure, in a strange way, was just what I needed. Maybe I was getting arrogant, and maybe I did need to be taken down a peg. I've never known what it's like to lose before, not at something that can't be written off as a glitch. I don't like it – I definitely don't like it, but at the same time, it was an eye-opening experience. I always feared what would happen when I failed to be perfect, but now I'm here, and I think it's not as bad as I'd made it out to be. I'm still alive, no one's expelled me yet. I think I'll make it out of this all right.

"And it's not like it's an undeserved failure. I lost my composure and I panicked – in the midst of battle! And I guess in doing so, I learned that I'm not invincible, and I'm not better, I'm just a bot, like everybody else. Pit, if anyone's better, it's better. I don't even know why you bother talking to me. I've never treated you well – I mean, to be fair, you've always been pretty obnoxious, but still – you won and I lost. You beat me – you finally completely trounced me, after years of eating my dust. I think, knowing how it feels to lose now, were I in your place, I'd feel vindicated, but here you are, trying to comfort me after all this time!

"I don't understand you, Hot Rod, but I guess I wanted to say thanks."

Hot Rod took another moment to process, to make certain he'd heard every word, before giving his reply. "You sure do have a lot of words, Blurr. Yeesh! But I guess it's enlightening. I'm honestly surprised to hear you think that way, 'cause I really don't. I mean yeah, it sucked in the beginning – seeing everything I thought I was, overturned by a complete stranger, but it was nice having someone else around who was like me, only better. I liked having someone to complete with – I liked having someone who made me wanted to improve!

"And not just you. Brawn too, and Red Alert, and the rest. You were all so smart, charismatic, kind, talented. I wanted to be like you. And I think I'm better today because I knew you guys.

"We're friends, Blurr. I'm glad that you put up with me all those years, even if I am pretty obnoxious."

'Friends.' It was strange to think about. Blurr had never considered anyone his friend before, and here Hot Rod was, telling him this had not been the case for – for who knew how long! But it was nice to hear anyway.

"What's wrong? You look perturbed." Did he? That was no good. He hurried to force a smile, suddenly fearful of frightening off his new, old friend with his moods.

"Ah! I just – I'd never considered us friends before." At the betrayed expression on Hot Rod's face, he rushed to clarify. "What I mean is, I've never really had friends before, so I guess I never really realized that that was what we were – I'm obviously not an authority on the subject, but if you say we're friends, then I guess that friends is what we are, though I have to wonder why you've been hitting on me all this time if that is the case, but like I said, I don't really know what I'm talking about, so maybe that's just what friends do and I never knew."

Hot Rod laughed, and for a moment, Blurr feared he had done something to further shame himself. But Hot Rod's words brought dispelled the notion. "Err, well that's just kind of how I interact with folks, don't fret about it. When you're as hot as I am, you can't not flirt. Though I still think that we'd be damn hot together – you can't deny that."

"Eh," Blurr shrugged. "I've never really seen the appeal of speedsters myself."
"What, you don't think I'm hot?!

"Not really, no."

They were having a conversation – poking fun at each other, laughing, smiling – Blurr had never enjoyed himself so much in his life; how had he gone so long without this?! Half a cycle passed like that, and then a cycle more. Eventually they moved to Maccadam's, joining Brawn and Red Alert on the way. Blurr even allowed himself to drink with his new friends, though he found the effects of engex both severe and short-lived. It wasn't likely to become a hobby in the future.

Still, here he was, at a bar with his friends, celebrating the end of exams, and their upcoming graduation. It was everything Blurr had dreamed he'd find on Cybertron, and for the first time in his life, he was perfectly happy.

In a few weeks, he'd be a full-fledged military mech, receive his assignment, and be off towards his future, with his new friends by his side.

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As it so happened, this was not to be the case. Like most new graduates, Hot Rod and the others were assigned to the same small unit, with an inexperienced Prime, out to space to guard energon mines and get their first taste of real field work. It was more an extension of training than anything, but that was how these things worked. Best to ease into it.

Blurr, however, would not be going with them.

Despite his spectacular failure in his final exam, the rest of his performance throughout the stellar cycles had impressed one Highbrow Prime, and Blurr had found himself as the first bot ever inducted into the Intelligence Agency straight from the Academy.

And just like that, his world fell apart. Prestige had once again driven a wedge between Blurr and finding a happiness.

When it came time for his friends to head off to their future without him, he didn't even bother to see them off at the space port. What was the point? It had taken him far too many vorns of his life to finally truly connect with other bots, and all of it was gone in an instant.

He was better off alone.

Chapter End Notes

Good lord this chapter was frustrating to write. It is just shy of 8000 words. WHY is it just shy of 8000 words?! What possessed me to do that??

... I kinda wanna write some one shots based on Blurr's academy days now u.u;
A Part of That

Chapter Summary

Shockwave wants Blurr to stay. Shockwave needs Blurr to leave.

Interfacing with Blurr was far from the most clever thing Shockwave had ever done. Maintaining his disguise required strict control – control that was hard to be found lost in the throes of pleasure, and losing Longarm's shape while inside of Blurr would be disastrous for any number of reasons, least of all being their size compatibility. Shockwave could not allow himself to get off like this, and honestly, he wasn't entirely certain he could. His body was so compressed to fit in with Autobot proportions that he could barely feel anything in his spike. But what did it matter? Making Blurr lose control was more than worth it.

The mech was so sparsely armored, that most of him was quite responsive to touch, vents flaring and voice hitching as the ghost of Longarm's fingers drifted over his back, his thighs, his little speedster feet! Even through the metal, he could feel the internal mechanisms rushing to balance themselves to his touch. It was surprisingly fun to roll his knuckles against them, if only for the contented look on Blurr's face – optics half shuttered, lips twisting in a tiny smile. Unsurprisingly, the mech was quite expressive. Shockwave would finish himself off on his own, once Blurr was long gone, memories of the little mech lost in his own pleasure playing through his head.

Not that he didn't get any pleasure from interfacing at all. Power and control were intoxicating to Shockwave, and Blurr was surprisingly open to submitting for an Autobot, and unprecedentedly comfortable with being restrained for a speedster – that one had taken him some getting used to, admittedly. The first time Longarm had stretched his arms around Blurr like bonds, confining arms to frame and disallowing easy escape, Blurr had panicked, kicked out on instinct. Longarm would not soon forget that moment. His fuel tanks were still full of dents from the affair. Now, however, Blurr almost seemed to expect it of him.

Here they were, with Blurr wrapped up in Longarm's right arm, sprawled across his lap. Longarms's left arm, meanwhile stroked a path down that narrow throat, resisting the urge to squeeze – that would come later.

His thick fingers moved upward, drifting across Blurr's sharp jaw, and up to those thin lips. Blurr latched on immediately, sucking away.

The action was much too subdued for Shockwave's liking. Shove his whole hand into that warm, wet entrance, or better yet, his claws – watch his tiny lover writhe and struggle as he tried to accommodate the sudden, too-large intrusion – that would be wonderful. But Shockwave knew better than to try. Autobots were fragile, pathetic creatures, who built their relationships on trust and mutual vulnerability. The Decepticon way was to claim what was yours, with as much force as was necessary. There was still trust, of course, but it was invisible to Autobot optics. Decepticon relationships burned bright like a flame, passionate, and yes, violent too, in a way that Autobots simply didn't understand. He found himself wondering if he could teach Blurr to unleash his inner beast, as he had taught him to appreciate restraints. Taking that kick had nearly driven Shockwave over the edge then and there.

Perhaps another time, once the little bot was better trained. In the meantime, he would bare with
delicate, almost shy touches. Besides, having his fingers suckled at wasn't all bad. The muffled moans that escaped from Blurr's occupied mouth were even the smallest bit arousing, and Blurr's eager face more than made up for a subtlety of sensation. Those were the optics of a mech with an insatiable hunger for debauchery. How far could he be pushed?

\textit{Let's find out.}

Shockwave withdrew his fingers from Blurr's mouth, and shifted the speedster upright, until his legs straddled Shockwave's lap, and he moved in for a deep kiss. Blurr responded with expected enthusiasm, grinding his bare valve against the treads of Longarm's leg.

"Eager, aren't we?" Longarm smiled as he broke away.

"Yes!" Blurr gasped out, struggling against his bonds, trying to move closer. "This is driving me mad, Sir! I need more! More! So much more! Why are you torturing me like this? Please stop stalling, Sir! I think I might lose my mind if I have to wait any longer."

Longarm chuckled and wrapped his arm around Blurr tighter, until he could feel internal mechanisms shift to give him clearance. The little mech gave out a strangled yelp.

"Sir!"

So \textit{that} was where Blurr drew the line. Pity. With reluctance, Shockwave loosened his grasp, giving the skinny little bot some wiggle room. It was no surprise that he used his new leverage to shift closer to Longarm's spike, blunt, unfeeling thing that it was. He so longed to take Blurr in his true form, stretch that tiny frame to the breaking point, drive him mad with the pleasure, and the pain. His face at being so filled would be a beautiful sight – not that it wasn't right now. But even at such a reduced size, the fit was tight for them both. Taking Shockwave's spike all the way would be something to work up to . . . Not that it would ever happen, regardless. Blurr had no reason to find out about Shockwave.

"Hmm, I suppose you've been well-behaved today. Do me one, tiny favor, and it's all yours."

"Anything!" Blurr begged, and oh how Shockwave wished he meant it. There were certainly a few things he wouldn't mind getting Blurr to agree to that were no doubt not on his mind right now. But Shockwave would settle for something relevant to the moment.

"Show me your spark."

Blurr paused, optics widening in delicious surprise. Hadn't been expecting \textit{that} either. "Sir?"

It was a bit too much to ask, but Shockwave had a feeling that Blurr would be up for it. If nothing else, he'd never been too adverse to pushing his boundaries. Time to show Longarm's boring, 'true colors' once more. "Apologies. I suppose that was a bit forward. Don't let me pressure you into anything you don't want to do." Incidentally, that was \textit{exactly} what he intended to do.

"No! I want to do this for you, I really do! I just – I'm not sure if I'm ready for something like that! What if we accidently get bonded? That kind of thing lasts forever! I don't know if I'm ready for such a commitment!"

"Hmm? Who said anything about bonding?" Shockwave said with a mischievous smile, which caused Blurr's head to tilt, gears in his mind turning at rapid speed and bearing no fruit.

"What else could you mean? What else would you even \textit{do} with a spark?"
"I can think of one or two things."

Blurr furrowed his optic ridges. Surely he'd formed ideas by now – ideas, which he dare not voice. Longarm was an upstanding bot! He wouldn't do anything too off the walls, right? And to suggest as much could be taken as an insult. It was better to play dumb. Primus, Shockwave loved picturing Blurr's mind at work!

In the end, curiosity got the better of Blurr, because there, before Longarm's optics, the glass of his windshield slid down into his chest plate, side paneling parted, and the whole mechanism slid up, revealing his spark chamber. One final, internal barrier slid apart, and everything that Blurr was lay on display for Shockwave's pleasure – intoxicating. The brilliant little spark pulsed in double-time, brighter than any Shockwave had ever seen. That was a spark working far too hard, no doubt due to its glitched nature. How long would it be before it burnt out?

He shoved that melancholy thought to the side for another time. There was work to be done.

"You're beautiful."

Blurr immediately tensed up, spark pulsing faster and faster. Loaded phrase. Interesting.

"Apologies. I did not mean to upset you. Your spark is very brilliant. I've never seen one like it before."

"Have you seen many sparks, Sir?"

Shockwave could hit himself. He couldn't very well tell Blurr just how many sparks he'd ripped out in his lifetime. But the antsy little bot would surely grow suspicious if Shockwave gave no answer. "A few. None like yours though."

"That would probably be a side effect of my glitch, Sir, rather than any reflection on my character-" urhk!" Longarm slid Blurr down his thigh, slamming their mouths together in a forceful kiss. There was no need to listen to words they both already knew. Not right now, when they were so close, so warm and wet, burning with need.

Blurr melted into it quickly enough, pressing his open chest flush against Shockwave's closed one. Behind his plating, instinct told Shockwave's spark to reach out, to join with what had been so tantalizingly offered, but he refrained. Blurr was right; that was not something they needed to deal with right now. Besides, he had Blurr back where he wanted him – quiet, and panting, and wanting. He broke the kiss.

"Do you trust me, Blurr?"

Blurr took far too long to answer, but a short moment later, he offered a nod. "Yes, I do." The hesitation proved otherwise, which was healthy for him, and not so much for Shockwave. No matter. He'd cure him of that pesky inconvenience soon enough.

"Good. Because I warn you right now, this is going to be a little bit unconventional. You can tell me to stop if it gets too weird for you."

"I can take it, Sir!" There was that blind loyalty Shockwave so admired.

"We'll see."

He pulled Blurr back into their previous position, until he was once more eye level with Blurr's spark. With his free hand, he stroked the outer rim of Blurr's spark chamber, eliciting a hard shudder
from that tiny frame, which went straight to Shockwave's sadly-trapped spike. He ignored the
unbearable pressure below in favor of focusing on anticipation. This was something he'd always
wanted to try, and now that he had a mouth (fake though it was) nothing would stop him.

With slow movements, he buried his head in Blurr's chest, reached out with his glossa, and
experimentally tasted the energy that pulsed off of Blurr's spark. Around him, he could feel Blurr
stiffen, and within, that little spark contracted, an instinctive reaction to having a foreign mass so near
to it. Blurr was in an incredibly vulnerable position right now, bared as he was. It was only natural
to feel fear.

Shockwave offered a reassuring squeeze, waited for Blurr to say the word, to tell him to stop. But to
the little dear's credit, his frame grew lax, relaxed, determined to see this experiment to the end, even
if he had to force himself to do so.

Shockwave took that as his cue to continue, and pressed in even closer, until his glossa made contact
with the dense core of energy given physical form. He tasted the buzzing surface in one long stripe,
enjoying the sharp sting against his facsimile of a tongue, he twirled circles, marveling at the fluid
way Blurr's spark moved around him, caved to his will. He even managed to get his teeth around the
core, pressing in gently, filling his own mouth with fire and charge, that raced through his frame,
shorted out his HUD, and replaced every sensation with sickly heat and pleasure – he nearly
overloaded right there, but managed to hold it together. Overhead, he heard Blurr whimper softly,
full body trembling, fighting the urge to struggle away, fighting the urge to panic. He was doing so
well, Shockwave was proud of him.

Shockwave withdrew, pulling far enough away to look Blurr in the optics. They were somehow
both too dim and too bright – from fear, from concentration, light seemed to bleed from the corners
as though he were leaking optical lubricant, and perhaps he was. A twinge of pity tugged at
Shockwave's spark, and he hated himself for the next words to come out of his mouth, for how very
Autobot they were.

"Are you all right?"

Another hesitation, another moment of doubt passed before Blurr responded. "I – I think so. You're
right, that does feel pretty weird, and it hurts just a bit too, but I think maybe I kind of like it. You
can keep going if you want – I promise I'll tell you to stop if it gets to be too much."

"If you're certain," he replied.

"Yes! Yes, just do it," was Blurr's impatient response. How adorable.

Without further ado, Shockwave dove back in, tasting Blurr's spark, not on his tongue so much as in
his nearby antennae, buried away beneath his chin. He did not use his teeth again; even he could
acknowledge that the sensations derived had been a bit much. Instead, it was his glossa that did all
of the work, tracing patterns in the dense energy currents, reveling in the buzz that flowed through
his own circuits, causing his spark to twist and swirl within his broad chest.

But better than the foreign feelings in his chest, were Blurr's reactions to his ministrations. It was as
though his vocaliser had glitched, activated and active, but had failed to receive the command from
his processor needed to form words. He moaned and squealed with each stroke of Longarm's
tongue, whole body trembling, legs twitching with increasing frequency, as he fought the urge to
flee. It wouldn't take much more to push him over the edge, and all without touching neither spike
nor valve. Perhaps he should reward the little dear for his patience.

He pulled back, just long enough to murmur, "Brace yourself," against Blurr's spark, with no doubt
his message got across. Blurr relaxed his body as best he could before Shockwave moved back in, but it wasn't just Blurr's spark to get attention this time.

Shockwave used his tight hold on Blurr to lift him, and slide him down around his own stiff spike. The effect was instantaneous; Blurr burst into full-on overload, shrieking in that shrill voice of his, legs kicking out wildly behind him, in no position to actually hurt Shockwave. The best he managed was to seat himself further, which added to his overwhelming plethora of sensations. His spark flared, burning and blinding against Longarm's face in a delightful mix of pleasure and pain.

Shockwave removed himself from Blurr's chest, released his hold on the thin frame, and pressed him down onto the berth, into a more relaxed position, body caged by Longarm's. Under the illusion of chasing his own overload, he thrust a few more times and allowed himself to go lax, collapsing softly into a contented puddle on Blurr's chest, while ignoring the intense charge that still buzzed within him. That had been far more pleasurable than expected. Intense. He'd love to try it in his true form, if only he could work out the logistics of it.

Beneath him, Blurr twitched softly, as excess charge dissipated across his frame. A soft whir of gears sounded, and his chest plate slid back into place, though his vents still flared, and his optics remained unfocused. Shockwave nuzzled his cheek, softly.

"How are you feeling?"

Blurr took a moment to respond – an actual moment by a normal mech's standards, not the brief paused that constituted Blurr giving extra thought to a situation. He was completely drained.

"I apologize. Perhaps I got a bit carried away."

This time, Blurr did respond, voice stuttering, as though there was interference in his vocaliser. "It was very intense. I'd never contemplated doing such a thing before, let alone being on the receiving end of it. I think I need a minute for it to process, which feels like a weird thing to say, but here we are."

"Take your time."

Blurr did just that, though 'his time' amounted to quite a bit less than a minute.

"Where did you come up with that, anyway?"

He couldn't tell the truth. Unconventional spark play was very Decepticon in nature, not common, per say, but Shockwave himself, had been on the receiving end of such an act once or twice. Of course, the chances that Blurr knew the connotations behind such actions were slim to none. At least, Shockwave believed that to be the case. The little mech was just full of surprises. It was better to play it safe.

"It just struck me as something worth trying." No, that sounded irresponsible. "I admit, I've played around with my own spark in the past – not quite like that, obviously." Did that sound weird? "But I was confident you'd be safe, and curiosity got the better of me, I admit." There, that was better.

Blurr chuckled, reaching up to push Longarm onto his side, and Shockwave allowed himself to be maneuvered. "Well, feel free to let your curiosity get the better of you in the future then. I'd love to see what other things you've got in store for me."

If only he knew.

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This had to stop. Shockwave's mission hinged on secrecy – on fitting in and staying under the radar. And he'd gone and ruined it by hooking up with the sharpest mind in his unit. Worse, it wasn’t just a hook-up. He could have taken pleasure from ruining Blurr's stupidly fragile Autobot body, by twisting his mind, leaving him a wreck, or even dead – and admittedly, that had been the initial, ill- advised intent. Even Decepticons as old as Shockwave got lonely. And a pretty, and moreover, damaged little bot seemed like the perfect distraction. The fact that he was perfectly placed to spy on high command, should Shockwave require it was just a bonus.

But that was just it. As a foreigner with a crippling speech impediment and a processor that could run circles around those of his peers, Blurr had spent his entire life in isolation, sitting on the outside looking in. He'd never belonged anywhere, let alone on Cybertron, and he'd been desperate for even the smallest scrap of love. And somehow, that disconnect made him far easier for Shockwave to relate to than he had any right being.

He held different perspectives than most Autobots, was perfectly capable of thinking for himself and questioning authority (and smart enough not to do so aloud), and was capable of far more intelligent conversation than Shockwave had initially given him credit for. He was perhaps the closest thing that Shockwave had to an equal on Cybertron – not so much in processor-capacity, as in passion, drive, pragmatism, devotion. They fit together surprisingly well, and that was what made Blurr so dangerous. He was disarming, and honest in a way that felt so genuine, Shockwave had to wonder if it was calculated. He knew what sorts of things attractive Autobots were taught at the academy, and paranoia insisted that he was under suspicion; that Blurr was spying on him, and that he would quite accidentally spill all of his plans (which was not entirely unlikely).

Already, he'd nearly let his identity slip a number of times in Blurr's presence, and he'd had to pull quite a few rounds of mental acrobatics to make up for each truth uttered. By now, Blurr either suspected Longarm's true nature, or he was willfully ignorant. Either way, it was best to take precautions.

He passed suggestions along to Sentinel Prime in the guise of security measures, and the paranoid coot ate them right up. Several key facilities, most notably, Fortress Maximus, had been fitted with a series of compacting walls to be utilized in the event of a Decepticon invasion, or more specifically, in the event he needed to dispose of a little mech who he could never hope to catch unassisted.

He made plans to back out of the relationship as well. His first thought had been to get some distance, so he sent Blurr to Luna I to spy on (falsely) suspected Decepticon double agent, Mirage. Following that, Blurr was deployed as a messenger to Trypticon, and after that, he'd spent a whole decade tracking an illegal weapons ring of Swindle's all the way to Goo, the stickiest planet in the galaxy.

But in his absence, Shockwave found his spark and drive wilting. Being alone again was a challenge after tasting true connection for the first time in eons. And every time Blurr came back, he would fall all over again. He was addicted, and he hated it.

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He learned more about Blurr each time they interfaced. For whatever reason, Blurr seemed to have reservations in regards to doing any of the work, which Shockwave didn't particularly mind. Shockwave liked to touch, Blurr liked to be touched – it worked out well for them both. Or it should have.

Unfortunately, the next thing he learned was that Blurr, despite whatever training he'd received at the academy, didn't seem to have much confidence in his ability to pleasure Shockwave, and worse yet, no amount of reassurances could sway him. He was suspicious that Shockwave never seemed to
produce any transfluid or let off any charge. And Shockwave's insistence that an unfortunate medical condition was the cause, and not any lack of enjoyment of Blurr's company, was met with insincere acknowledgement. He supposed he was lucky that Blurr's mind had chosen to draw that conclusion, rather than come anywhere near the truth, but the knowledge did little to please him. There was something more going on with Blurr than just shyness, he was certain.

Learning that Blurr liked to be hurt only confirmed his suspicions. Not severely, at least at first. Grabbing on too tight, leaving little dents across that thin plating, led to crushing that light frame beneath Longarm's superior weight, led to slamming him into walls, biting and squeezing and tearing, nearly inflicting the kind of damage that his sadistic spark desired. And through it all, Blurr moaned and squealed and overloaded spectacularly, fully sated, and covered in physical evidence of their tryst, which filled Shockwave with pride to see, while simultaneously making him cringe at the extra clean-up required to maintain their secrecy. Still, the more time he spent with Blurr, the more he learned, the more he loved.

All the Autobot needed now was that spark of fight, and he would be perfect.

Tonight, they lay together on Shockwave's recharge slab, Blurr atop his chest, venting heavily, thighs drenched in his own lubricants, thin trickles of energon painting his vivid blue painting with pink. A smile of absolute contentment spread across his lips. Beautiful.

It was short-lived, of course. Doubt was never far-behind Blurr.

"You don't have to keep humoring me, you know," he said, allowing his optics to shutter back on. "Blurr dear, I can't say I know what you're talking about. I'm not doing anything I don't enjoy, I promise you." His voice was strained with the weight of an unpleasant conversation repeated many times.

Blurr rolled off of Longarm, sitting himself on the edge of the oversized slab. "Sorry, there I was leaping to conclusions again. I know, I know, you keep saying that you love being with me, but I guess I just find it difficult to believe when your face never changes at all. No smiles or glimmering optics or any indication that you're anything other than bored. All I see is that bulb on your head light up. What is that anyway, if I may ask? A third optic?"

Well that had gone downhill fast. Shockwave resisted the urge to unleash his claws, and instead raced for a feasible explanation. "Ah yes. It's a little weird, I know. It's a prosthetic – my visual inputs were damaged in an accident vorns ago."

"Wow, it's pretty crazy how they can construct a new optic from scratch, but not repair broken ones." Shockwave tensed once more, but Blurr continued, oblivious to the thin line he was treading. "What's happened to medical advancement on this planet? It's a disgrace."

This was a dangerous line of conversation. He needed to steer it away from anything to do with himself.

"Yes indeed. Admittedly, it's a bit of a personal issue. It's not great impairment, but I fear others won't see it that way, so if you wouldn't mind . . ."

"My lips are sealed!" Blurr assuaged.

It wasn't incredibly reassuring. Blurr had a part of his secret, however small, and despite his wishes, he couldn't trust that Blurr wouldn't spill the beans. Blurr's voice pulled him from his thoughts.

"I found out your secret it looks like. To make it fair, I'll spill one of my own."
Shockwave cocked his head. "Is that so? What kind of secrets could you be hiding, I wonder?"

Everyone had secrets. It wasn't so surprising, and yet, with the entirety of his existence was
Longarm being a lie, it was difficult to reconcile his secrets with those of others. Unless Blurr was
also a double agent, it would have been difficult to surprise him.

"I could tell you about how I got kicked off of Velocitron."

Or he could say that. *That* had been surprising. "What? *You?* Why would anyone not want you?
Least of all Velocitron? It was my understanding that they worshipped speed."

"They do," Blurr admitted. "And therein lay the problem."

Shockwave listened intently as Blurr sped off, talking about his youth on the speed planet, and his
first experience with interface, and the disastrous aftermath. By the end of it, the little mech had
found himself tangled up in Shockwave's arms, pressed uncomfortably close. Against all reason, he
found himself wanting to tear that world apart – dig his claws into the spark chamber of the ones
who had dared seen fit to toy with – hurt, his precious. A possessive growl formed in the bottom of
his vocaliser.

"It's all right," Blurr assured. "No reason to be upset about it. This all happened a few thousand
years ago. It still bothers me, of course, but I don't care as much as I used to. I'm happy with the
way my life has turned out. If I had stayed on Velocitron, I never would have met you, and
that would be unbearable. I really am very glad that you're a part of my life, Longarm Prime. I'd relive
it all over and over again, and would be happy knowing that you were waiting for me at the end."

Shockwave chuckled. It was either a beautiful lie, or an intoxicating show of devotion. Shockwave
didn't care which, at the moment. Blurr's lithe body was pressed close against his, overflowing with
rebuilding charge, and a desire for Longarm – his presence, his body, his love, and Shockwave was
finding it increasingly difficult to ignore the needs of his own body any longer. He wanted Blurr to
stay. He *needed* Blurr to leave.

"I'm sorry," Blurr added, hurriedly. "I must sound like a love-struck fool. Feel free to disregard all
of that, Sir. I'm just babbling, like I do. It's hard to stop myself from saying what's on my mind
sometimes, I admit."

"Don't be sorry," Shockwave said, running a  hand up Blurr's spinal strut, beneath his back plate –
allowing a dangerous hint of claws to poke through. Blurr leaned into the touch, and Shockwave
fought the urge to devour that frail Autobot body whole. Instead, he continued.

"You have no idea how happy you make me Blurr." *And how terrified,* he did not say. "And the
feeling is mutual, I promise. I am just as glad to be a part of your life."

Blurr's field raced against his, his engine erupted in a  contented whine, and rather unexpectedly, he
got his own arms around Longarm's portly little body, digging his blunt fingers into thin
transformation seams, hard enough to hurt in a most pleasing way. "Sir?"

"Yes?"

"Let me spike you?"

It was an unexpected request to say the least – Blurr had never given any indication that he got any
enjoyment from using his spike, not for Shockwave's lack of trying, and Shockwave, for his part,
was in the opposite boat. The only mech to touch his valve since the start of the last Great War had
been Megatron alone. And yet, in that moment, between the possessive growl in Blurr's voice, and
his own overwhelming need for release, Shockwave couldn't deny the request. The consequences could be damned! He'd overload with Blurr inside of him, and maintain this wretched shape all the while. Nothing was going to keep him from this.

"Of course."

It had gone quick, as predicted. Blurr was already beat from their previous session, and naturally, had some difficulty controlling the pace, but Shockwave hadn't cared. The compacted nature of his body had made his valve tight – a perfect fit for Blurr's thin spike, which filled every inch of space within him, hit every node in just the right way, and Blurr was surprisingly vicious when on top – biting and clawing and thrusting with enough force to knock them to the floor, not that either of them cared.

Wound up as he was, Shockwave didn't last much longer than Blurr himself had. His body stiffened, writhed beneath the currents, and as predicted, threatened to burst outwards and upwards, revealing his true face for Blurr's horror. But he'd held on, just barely.

Fingertips had sharpened, arms and legs had stretched themselves out, and his optic had glowed with a blinding red light, enough so to briefly obscure Shockwave's momentary lack of a face. Exhausted as he was, Blurr hadn't even noticed, instead collapsing atop Shockwave's chest, which hummed violently under the weight of his too-big engine, and passing right out.

It had been his first chance for release in centuries that hadn't been by his own hand. He'd forgotten how good it felt, and longed for more, longed to take Blurr as he so desperately wanted, with all of himself. But maybe he could settle. Maybe Blurr was worth it. Maybe they could make this work?

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This wouldn't work, it was becoming increasingly clear, and Shockwave could do nothing to change it. Each day that passed brought Shockwave and Blurr closer, but the closer Blurr got, the more he wanted to know about his lover, and as far as Shockwave was concerned, the less Blurr knew, the better.

But despite his growing concerns, he'd held on stubbornly, irrationally, despite the slip-ups and the near misses. In the end, it was work that dragged him back to reality's cold hands. It was Blurr, submitting a report on his most recent assignment – weeding out Decepticon sleeper agents on Cybertron. He'd caught a small handful so far, and though Shockwave had gritted the teeth he didn't have through losing a few mechs too stupid to pick good covers, this time was different. This time, it was Flip Sides.

She wasn't of any more strategic significance than the rest, disguised as the Autobot singster, Rosanna. But she had been in contact with Shockwave before going under – she knew about Project Doppelganger, and Longarm's secret, and if caught, she would turn him in in a second, if it meant saving her own aft.

Blurr's report indicated that he had nearly figured it out. All he needed now was a warrant to make the arrest under reasonable suspicion. Rosanna was a public figure – every spark on Cybertron, and off, would hear about it, and likewise, of Shockwave's subsequent failure. Shockwave thus, had two choices: kill Rosanna and betray his people, not to mention draw more attention to himself, or get rid of Blurr. It wasn't a difficult decision, or shouldn't have been, at least. It had take far more will-power than was healthy to tell Blurr that he'd been reassigned indefinitely.

The speedster hadn't been happy, of course. This wasn't Luna I, or the other side of the planet or a scavenger hunt with a definite end. This was some far-off world in the middle of nowhere, minimal
contact with Cybertron, or other mechs at all. And Shockwave couldn't help but notice the similarities between this situation and Blurr's previous expulsion from his home world. It was as though he was being told all over again that he was unwanted, only this time, the blow came not from an indifferent headmaster, but someone he loved, trusted. Cold as he was supposed to be, Shockwave couldn't stave off the guilt.

The kind thing would have been to rig Blurr's ship to explode out in the middle of space, but Shockwave found he was too selfish to let go. He couldn't even bring himself to break it off with the dangerous little nuisance.

Instead, he piled on pitiful excuse after pitiful excuse that a less smitten mech would have seen right through, and brought Blurr to his berth one more time, whispering promises that it wouldn't be the last, even though his spark knew it had to be.

Gorlam Prime would be first. Marklar once he finished there, and so on, chasing rumors of Decepticon presence beyond the borders of their empire – keeping Blurr as far away from Cybertron, and providing any real threat as possible, at least until the inevitable victory of Megatron. Shockwave wondered what would happen then. Perhaps he could convert Blurr? And if not, surely his lord would allow him to take on a pet. Either way, their time would come. He just needed patience.

And it was this, he swore to a miserable Blurr at the spaceport, as he saw him off on his mission. He just needed to be patient.

Primus, what was happening to him?
Take Your Time

Chapter Summary

Cybertron Intelligence is everything Blurr feared it would be, and more.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The smell was the worst part. The air was thick, cloying with sickness, with Syk, the stains of all manner of mech fluids absorbed into every surface of the bar, leaving Blurr afraid to touch anything. This was a center of depravity. In one corner, a trio of mechs were uploading circuit boosters directly to their neural networks. Elsewhere, three bots had hijacked a booth, and the smaller two were taking the larger's spike in turns. All three were beyond wasted on engex and oils. On a rusty, makeshift stage behind the bar, a handful of sleek frame types with matching paintjobs were dancing in unison, their spark chambers on display to be ogled. And in the back room, a ring of powerful mechs, with a gorgeous speedster on each arm, sat around, gambling away other bots' money.

Blurr was with this last bunch, pressed close to a bot named Skyfall, whose arm was hooked around Blurr's waist, hand drifting downwards towards Blurr's interface cover, while his other held onto the cards. Opposite Blurr, another speedster, Roulette was whispering giddy tips into their benefactor's audial, giggling and trying his hardest to worm his way into Blurr's position. Not likely. Blurr had put far too much work into getting this far. He was going to uncover this drug ring and get the Pit out of this cesspool of sin as soon as he could.

Intelligence had been everything he'd feared it would be.

From their very first meeting, Blurr had disliked his boss, Highbrow Prime. Initially, the old veteran had held the brunt of the blame for Blurr's brand new isolation, but after a few minutes of first impressions, Blurr found that the impression held.

Highbrow was a smart bot, that was undeniable. He'd worked for Cybertron Intelligence since the days of the war – a lesser mech would not have lasted this long. And he was an all around optimist, certain that there was a bright future for Cybertron somewhere down the line, and he was unafraid to make sacrifices to reach it. But that philosophy had left Blurr at the mercy of an opportunistic tyrant. Highbrow had been quite up front regarding what he'd expected of Blurr from day one.

"Your skills are impressive, unmatched in some areas," he said, devoid of expression, as though he were one more academy professor, providing a lecture he'd heard many times before.

"Thank you, Sir," Blurr said, paying close attention to his speed. He did not want to look like a fool in front of his new boss. A bad first impression could break his career.

"But that is not why I brought you here."

Blurr took a moment to shutter his optics, allowing his every doubt about accepting this position to take hold. If Highbrow didn't want him for his skills, then there could only be one thing. Blurr felt he knew exactly where this conversation was going, but optimism kept him plowing forward. "It's not, Sir?"
Highbrow frowned, bridging his fingers in front of his mouth. "If you wish to play dumb, I shall indulge you." That wasn't a good sign. Blurr felt his tanks clench in response to the perceived insult.

"You're a very beautiful mech, Blurr," Highbrow stated, with as much neutrality as anything else. He may as well have said, "You're a very blue mech, Blurr," for all he cared.

"You're too kind, Sir," Blurr had a feeling he was going to grow to hate that word. Beautiful.

"It is rare to find a mech with so striking an appearance, that also boasts the qualifications for this position." Blurr wasn't sure what to make of that particular statement. Red Alert was smart, Rodimus strong and observant, both beautiful in their own right, as best he could tell, and yet they had been sent off to the energon mines, while Blurr had been brought here. What made him so special?

Highbrow seemed to read his mind, for he answered, "It was your marks in infiltration and interrogation that impressed me most, though your performance in 'The Art of Seduction' sealed your fate.

"I need a mech with your qualifications on my team, someone to take advantage of a common failing in so many mechs with power. And you, in particular, are quite adept at coming off as harmless. I have no doubt you will make an excellent addition to the team."

And so, here Blurr was, in a seedy bar, allowing himself to be felt up by one of the most disgusting mechs he'd ever met, while pulling scraps of information, mostly in code, from the others that sat around the table.

On the bright side, he felt he was verging on a breakthrough. He had names, he had places, he had times. All he had to do was survive the night, and he could get out of this Hell hole.

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He didn't make it back that night, or even that decacycle. He had the intel, but Highbrow was unable to make any arrests until much later. In the meantime Roulette had been mysteriously spirited away, only to turn up dead and disassembled, dumped in the Dead End, and Blurr, as Skyfall's other favorite toy, was terrified that he would be next. As fast as he was, it wasn't impossible to catch him off guard. He'd never been so terrified in his life.

Fortunately it didn't come to that.

After nearly a whole lunar cycle of waiting around in that hell hole, the Elite Guard came in to perform the raid. It was over; he was free. And in that moment, Blurr swore that he would never get caught up in such villainy again.

Highbrow had other ideas.

"You're the only bot I have that can do this," he said, unfeeling as ever. Blurr was too angry to fall in line this time.

"What about Mirage? Mirage is Intel too, and he's a great deal more attractive and less conspicuous than me! Why can't you use him?"

"Mirage held your position in the past, but crime lords have since caught on. An agent in your position has maybe a two, three vorn span they can work in on Cybertron proper, more if there's work to be done in the greater commonwealth. You're still fresh, Blurr. Therefore, the necessity
"Agent Blurr," Highbrow growled, fast enough to catch Blurr before he got started. "Did you not take an oath to protect Cybertron, at the cost of your own life, if need be?"

Blurr hung his head, partially in submission, mostly in shame, hiding his burning face plates and over bright optics. Highbrow had hit him where it hurt most – his pride. "Yes Sir."

"And do you intend to recant on your oath?"

"No Sir."

"Then you will go where I damn well put you."

"Yes Sir."

And so, Blurr continued on in that vein, playing the role of harmless eye candy, lover, or if he was lucky, a businessmech, who traded pleasure for information. He felt it was all very degrading, but Highbrow was right – he'd taken an oath. Sure, he'd expected to be facing down death and danger through battle, as he had in Academy simulations, but the risk was still there, even more so, given his intimate proximity with his enemies. It was just a bit less dignified than he'd imagined.

Already he'd been drugged twice, kidnapped a small handful of times, and had his mark turn on him more times than he could recall. Too often was the occasion where he'd found himself on the wrong end of a blaster – his punishment for finding out too much. In the beginning, his instinct had been to run away in such situations, and it had served him well for awhile. He was impossible to catch, after all.

And then one of his marks had come searching for him, had arrived at the front door of Blurr's hotel, had cornered Blurr in the cramped room, had grabbed him, slammed him into the wall, whispered in his audial, promised that there was nowhere he could run away to that would be safe. All because he'd witnessed the bot in question sample the merchandise. In that moment, Blurr was completely and utterly trapped – panic clouded his judgment, and something inside of him snapped.

That had been Blurr's first kill.

Centuries of training couldn't have prepared him for the reality of taking another bot's life, of feeling plating and protoform give way to the force of an energy saw moving at lightning-fast speeds. He'd spent hours after the fact, wrapped in a tight, shivering ball in the corner, vents on full-blast, staring horrified at the rusting corpse on his floor, as the energon slowly dried on his plating.

It had taken him until the next day to find the composure to report the incident, and much to his surprise, he was met with understanding by Highbrow Prime. Later that day, Mirage and Metalhawk had come to take care of it.

His first kill had not been his last. After awhile, he simply grew numb to the death that constantly surrounded him. Bots he met on the job were likely to die – such was the danger of their lives, and though he tried to avoid it, sometimes he had to be the cause of that death, more often than not, once he'd been backed into a corner. A trapped Blurr was not conducive to a long life. He could only pray that he'd soon reach that day where he could no longer stalk the underground without recognition dawning in the optics of those around him. Someday.

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As it turned out, Cybertron was a big place, and the Autobot Commonwealth, bigger still. There was always somewhere for him to go – somewhere where they knew not his name nor face. In speaking with Mirage, he'd found that Highbrow had greatly understated the amount of time he could expect to be in this position. His predecessor had held the job for half a million stellar cycles. Blurr thought he would be sick once he'd found out.

Mirage, for his part, proved a moderate blessing. Nobody understood what Blurr went through quite like Mirage, and they'd managed to develop a sort of mentor-student rapport, with Blurr approaching Mirage for advice on how best to go about handling a task, how to deal with the horrors he regularly encountered, how to sleep at night. With all they had in common, the two should have been fast friends.

But it never came to that. By nature, Blurr was a very defensive bot, building walls to keep himself safe, and Mirage, despite their shared experiences, had come out of his ordeal always on the offensive – outspoken, judgmental, and hyper-vigilant. As much as Blurr looked up to Mirage, interacting with the mech always left him deeply uneasy, as though he would be eaten alive if he ever let his guard down. Would he be so bitter, so broken one day?

That wasn't to say Blurr was completely alone, however. There was an intern at the Metroplex that Blurr had grown quite fond of recently. Wheelie was a small bot, weak and nervous – would never have been accepted into the military, forever relegated to supportive roles. But what drew Blurr to him was his speech impediment. The little bot spoke entirely in rhyme, unintentionally and quite unfortunately, for him, at least. His words never failed to annoy the mechs around him – most would turn the other way when they saw him coming, as if he carried a plague about him. He must have had some friends in high places, for it was a miracle that he had been hired in the first place, and a greater miracle that he'd yet to be fired.

It wasn't a stretch to say Blurr saw a bit of himself in that awkward little outcast.

For his part, Wheelie had been quite excited when a prestigious agent began blessing him with positive attention. Even though his own processor was much too sluggish to understand Blurr well, they pair had become fast friends. They'd even taken to eating lunch together, along with Wheelie's best friend, a bot named Dug Base, who likewise suffered from an off-putting vocal tic, if his brief, robotic sentences were any indication.

Friendly as they were, however, they were civilians. Blurr couldn't talk about his job with them, and he didn't want to. It was better to let them think that the world was a place worth fighting for.

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It had been a long mission, leaving Blurr stuck travelling the greater Gorlam Prime system for nineteen stellar cycles, mostly unwillingly, as he'd worked his way into a slave trading operation, as a slave, of course, though that part had been unintentional (if not expected). In the end, he'd found one hundred sixteen outposts throughout the galaxy, including structural flaws within as well transportation networks to and from. It had been huge, and the information he'd found had allowed the Elite Guard and Galactic Council to team up and shut the whole operation down.

He'd been integral to saving countless lives, both Autobot and alien, but he was glad to be back home. There was plenty of time over those past stellar cycles that he wished to forget.

Instead, he'd sat himself at his usual table with Dug Base, and a freshly promoted Wheelie, sipped down his energon, made small talk, and tried to pretend that he had anything remotely resembling a normal life, whatever that meant.
"So how does it feel to be secretary to the head of Intel, huh? I'm glad you are by the way – you've worked really hard, and now we'll get to see each other more often! Which is great! Maybe Dug Base can get transferred to our floor as well!" His words were enthusiastic, but his feelings were false. He didn't want to be here right now. He wanted to be in his recharge slab, hibernating for the next stellar cycle, or running the track even. He could forget, while he was running.

"I'm glad to finally have the chance to not be dismissed with a glance. Highbrow Prime is stern but fair, I'm just so glad to be up there. And with you Blurr, I do agree. I wish so much to unite us three."

"Outcome: ideal," Dug Base added.

"And we can speak of our lives sure, but we'd rather know what's up with Blurr," Wheelie said, his smile fading away, replaced with a concerned frown. And Dug Base wore one to match, obscured behind his face plate.

Blurr froze, smile instinctively growing wider, as if he could chase away his fears with a sunny countenance. He wasn't happy, sure, and apparently he'd done a rather poor job of hiding it. His friends were worried about him, of course they would be – but the last thing he wanted to do was talk about what was on his mind. "What's up with me?" he laughed. "That wording implies that there is something wrong, and though I am glad for your concern, I assure you I am perfectly well, perhaps a little tired from my mission, but that's nothing to fret over, unless of course, I am reading into things – I could be reading into things, it wouldn't be the first time I've read too much into things. Maybe you were just trying to be friendly, and I took it as an expression of concern, in which case, I am incredibly embarrassed right now, but let it suffice to say that I am fine."

Wheelie and Dug Base stared at him for a long moment, trying their hardest to make sense of his flurry of words. Their concern deepened as understanding at last began to take hold.

"Insincerity: detected."

"What?"

"Blurr is tired, that is clear, but there's more to it than that, I fear."

Blurr waved off their concerns and laughed brightly. "Honest truth. I didn't mean to come across as aloof!" Great, now he was rhyming. "I know it's been awhile, but I'm very happy to be here right now, if I wasn't I wouldn't be here," that part was true, at least. He didn't much care for social obligation, but it was better than being alone.

Still, despite his efforts, Wheelie and Dug Base remained unconvinced, their suspicious glares fixed on him, scrutinizing. Wheelie in particular seemed antsy, shifting in his seat, and swishing his energon around in its cube, as though there was something he wanted to get off his chest. Blurr was not at all surprised when his comm pinged moments later.

"I know it will not make you smile, but I confess, I read your file."

And as Wheelie suggested, Blurr's manic smile flattened out. Aloud he said, "Don't worry about me, I'll be fine. In the meantime, let's just drink our energon and chat like we used to."

"Proposition: accepted; Intervention: postponed."

"Thank you," he said aloud, while he messaged back to Wheelie, "That is a flagrant breech of privacy, perhaps not officially, but from my perspective at least. If I haven't told you something, it's because I didn't want you to know. But I guess you do now, so congratulations." Despite his
impassioned words, he managed to maintain a friendly smile as he asked after Dug Base's guild job.

"Job: adequate; Inquiry: appreciated."

"I know, I know. I'm a bad friend. I hope that this is not the end. But please excuse blunt proclamation, I think that you could use a vacation. Your mind and spark must suffer a lot, but command just wants you to be hot. You sneak and spy and scurry around, then bring the Elite Guard into town. You risk your life and sell your frame, and no one even knows your name. Your intel put plans in ignition, but it's them who get the recognition. So Blurr, might I suggest a plan: so you're not just the middle man?"

"It's fine Wheelie, really it is," Blurr protested, chugging down half of his cube in one go. "I don't need recognition, and I don't mind risking my life or using my body if it means I can help people." It was a lie, but Wheelie was being far too presumptuous, and Blurr did not like that. Moreover, his job had taught him to be wary of everyone. Wheelie had more contact with Highbrow Prime than he did with Blurr, or than Blurr had with Highbrow. He may have had rapport with the awkward little bot, but he couldn't shake the feeling that this was a test of some kind, though the nature of it, he did not know.

"I don't know, I think Elite Guard is the way to go."

Blurr actually choked on his remaining energon at the thought, then had to issue an apology to Dug Base for catching him in the backwash. Dug Base took the affair in stride. He was a laid back guy. Blurr liked that about him.

"Wheelie, that's a bit much. The Elite Guard is where the most elite and long-serving of bots go. There's no way that I could get in – not yet. I'm just a spy, after all, and not an incredibly good one – I'm not sure how I'd react if I ever actually came face-to-face with a Decepticon, and really, there are so many bots more deserving than I am, it wouldn't make sense for me to even contemplate such a thing right now.

"Besides, that's not something you just apply for. You gotta be chosen, and I don't have even a single commendation. It's not gonna happen – not any time this millennium anyway."

Wheelie wore a mischievous smile on his face as he added a packet of flavored crystals to his second cube – the little bot sure could eat. Blurr shoved himself away from the table. It was getting increasingly difficult to keep up both conversations at once.

"Actually, I hate to do this, but I really am very tired. I think I'm going to go back to my apartment and recharge. I'll meet up with you later."

"Understood. Sleep well," Dug Base waved.

"See ya later operator." Blurr raised an optic at Wheelie's strange figure of speech, but decided it was best to not dwell on it.

"I've seen bots with less qualification get picked up by administration. Don't write yourself off just yet, the Magnus will meet with you, I bet. Your record is flawless, no one can compare, with your unequaled skill set, you belong there I swear! And once in the guard you'll get what you deserve: a chance to save lives, a chance to serve, and not just in the way that Highbrow sees fit. Come on Blurr, think about it!"

And Blurr did. He thought about it all the way home, before dismissing the notion in its entirety. Even if Wheelie wasn't doing Highbrow's bidding – testing Blurr for loyalty to Intel, that didn't
change the fact that Blurr was still young, inexperienced, and far too self-conscious for his own
good. The last thing he wanted was for a repeat of the Grand Academy of Velocitron. He would
not take the place of a more deserving bot, he would not stand to be judged, to be treated as though
he didn't belong. He hated his current job, but it was better than being subjected to such humiliation
for a second time.

He promptly forgot about the advice, and Wheelie didn't bring it up at either of their next two
meetings. It seemed that the pair had come to a mutual understanding: Blurr wasn't going anywhere
anytime soon.

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All of Cybertron was in an uproar. For the first time in a million stellar cycles, a Decepticon had
been discovered on Cybertron, disguised as a recruit at boot camp. Fortunately, he'd been caught by
his peers, a drop out named Bumblebee, and an Intelligence hopeful named Longarm.

For his contribution to the Autobot cause, the latter of the two was receiving a lot of media attention,
making a name for himself before he'd even left the Academy. The former had quite literally
disappeared off the face of the planet. The whole situation struck Blurr as fishy.

There was something very opportunistic about the way this Longarm was handling himself, though
he'd need to investigate further in order to make any definitive conclusions. For the first time in ages,
Blurr felt excited about the prospect of work. This was big news – every agent was sure to be
redirected towards rooting out Decepticons. After all, if one had gotten through, surely there were
more. Too bad it didn't pan out in the way he'd hoped.

Agents were being sent to the far reaches of the Autobot Commonwealth to investigate, and Blurr
was no different. That in itself was disappointing, but he'd expected as much. Investigating the
'Autoboot Camp' affair would naturally go to a bot of high rank. But when Blurr opened the data
file that held his assignment, his fuel froze in his lines.

*Velocitron.*

"Sir, I can't go to Velocitron," he begged, practically on his knees, once he'd finally secured an
audience with Highbrow. "I understand why you've assigned me to such a location, but this is far
too personal of a mission for me to undertake with any degree of professionalism. I read the report
and several of the names on it were those of my old school companions – most notably the victim. I
can't do this Sir, and I shouldn't. Please reconsider."

According to the file, a bot had been found broken down and barely alive by the side of the road,
with a crude Decepticon sigil carved into her face. That bot had had been Override II. She'd later
died on Knock Out's operating table and the case had been submitted to Intel by Moonracer.

Poor Moonracer had been convinced that the capture of the spy on Cybertron had served as a
catalyst to increased Decepticon activity across the galaxy (and she probably wasn't wrong), and that
Override had been a victim of such a thing. Blurr himself, was entirely unnerved by the affair. Add
in Fast Track, and they'd have a full class reunion lined up.

Even though he'd left on amiable terms with Override, Moonracer, and Knock Out, Blurr couldn't
quell the nausea that gripped his tanks at the memory of their faces, judging him, hating him. The
mere thought of being back on his home world, let alone the possibility of being trapped for decades
left him with his back against the wall, cornered, trapped, and standing on the wrong end of gun
barrel.
"And what would you have me do, Agent? Velocitron is not kind to outsiders. There is no 'undercover' for any of us out there. Even our fastest speedster would be found the moment he set foot on that wasteland."

"You can make a cover story for them – a reason for them to be there. Don't tell me you can't figure something out. You've solved harder problems than that in the past. And besides, did you not stop to think that I would be just as visible out there?"

"Me leaving Velocitron was a big deal – everyone knows I left, and why. Everyone knows my name, that's one of my classmates dead out there, and I could just as easily become a target – I've spent more of my life off Velocitron than on – they won't trust me. There could be a number of reasons for an alien to visit, but if I come back, everyone will be suspicious, no matter what I say, and I have very strong reservations about my ability to maintain any degree of professionalism in the face of my past." His words came rapid fire, with no regard for logical flow or intelligibility. There was too much that needed to be said all at once.

"I've been patient," he all but sobbed. "It's been vorns since I last protested a mission. Please Sir, just give me this."

Highbrow Prime was usually capable of understanding Blurr with minimal effort, but the voracity of Blurr's words left even his genius struggling to keep up. Once it had, however, all Hell broke loose. For the first time since Blurr had met the Prime, Highbrow lost his temper, rose from his seat, slamming his hand onto his desk with enough force to make Blurr flinch. When he spoke, it was with an angry hiss.

"Do you not realize what is happening, agent? The significance of these events? You're too young to remember the war, but I do – believe me I do. You think your missions are bad? Wait until you're staring down real Decepticons, wait until all of the innocent bots out there," he gestured towards the window, "are staring down real. Fragging. Decepticons – giant machines of murder and hatred. Is that what you want, Agent?"

Blurr was rendered speechless, but that didn't stop Highbrow from continuing.

"We're here to prevent another war from breaking out, and with the discovery of Wasp hiding comfortably right under our olfactory sensors, we are farther from that goal than ever. I don't have time to care about your 'feelings,' agent. You have a job to do, and you will do it. Am I understood?"

Blurr wanted to argue – that none of his own points had been addressed, that he would be a liability should he go, but shame held his tongue. He couldn't protest – if the Decepticons had managed to invade Cybertron, it would be his fault, for his refusal to investigate some stranger on Velocitron. It wasn't something he could deal with right now.

"I apologize Sir," he said, hanging his head. His visible remorse seemed to be enough to quell Highbrow's temper. When the mech spoke next, it was with his usual flat, even tone.

"You leave next lunar cycle. Dismissed."

This was it. He was going home, dragged kicking and screaming back to everything he'd run away from in the first place. And there was nothing he could do about it – it was the sacrifice he paid in return for the occasional moment of happiness.

I don't know, I think Elite Guard is the way to go.
Wheelie's words ran through his head a lot these days, and every time, they grew more compelling. Would it be treason to apply now, in order to get out of a mission he refused to do?

Perhaps it would be, but Blurr was finding it increasingly difficult to care. He was fighting for Cybertron, for the Autobots, but why? Because he'd sworn to. Why? So he could become a soldier. Why? He'd had no choice, that was where his life had taken him. And his processor continued the cascade of thoughts all in this vein, until his head throbbed and his optics refused to focus.

Blurr cared about Cybertron and his fellow Autobots sure, Wheelie and Dug Base were nice, and Hot Rod and Red Alert and Brawn were still somewhere out there, probably being excellent examples of the species. But did he care about them – his friends, and the million strangers he'd never wanted to know, more than his own well-being? He couldn't provide a definitive answer, guilty as he felt.

So maybe it was treason. If they locked him up, at least he'd no longer be trapped with Highbrow Prime.

His hands trembled as he composed his message to the Magnus, requesting consideration. It would probably change nothing. Blurr was still young, and comparatively inexperienced. His convictions weren't strong, there were other bots more suited to the Guard. But he had to try – he was done with being miserable.

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Much to his surprise, he received a reply from Ultra Magnus himself, not even a decacycle later, offering him an interview.

Blurr was shocked to say the least. Most applications were dismissed right off. To have an opportunity to meet with the Magnus again, especially after their disastrous last encounter at the Academy, was unheard of. Then again, his life was full of impossible accomplishments. This shouldn't have been so surprising.

His departure date for Velocitron was nearing, and time was running out. This interview was his last hope to break free. And so, it was with a violently pulsing spark and strutless legs that he entered the interview room. To his credit, he was able to obscure these things, presenting himself with a confident, professional demeanor.

Sitting at his desk, framed by the massive window at his back, was Ultra Magnus, giant and regal and every bit the imposing figure he should have been. A few vorns ago, Blurr would have been intimidated, but over the course of his career, he'd spent so much time playing powerful mechs for fools – mechs that could break him with a glance would fall before him, as he seduced their secrets and left them none the wiser. Blurr had power of his own – more than enough to feel confident in the face of such a presence.

On either side of the Magnus, an Elite Guardsmech stood at attention. To the right was a red tank, imposing but not incredibly threatening as far as Blurr was concerned. It was the serene, white speedster on the left that had Blurr worried.

"Agent Blurr?" the Magnus said, breaking the tense atmosphere in the room and drawing Blurr's attention back to himself.

"Yes Sir! That is me."
"You are here today because you are looking to be inducted into the Elite Guard." As he spoke, the Magnus pulled out a data pad and began going over it. The inattentive nature of the action did nothing to ease Blurr's frantic nerve.

"That's correct, Sir." Blurr had to force his mouth shut, to hold back the deluge of words just waiting to break free. This was one time where he could not afford to babble.

"I admit, Agent, that today's meeting is a bit unusual. Ordinarily, an extraordinary mech is recommended to us by his Prime, rather than by himself. However, your reputation does proceed you, Agent Blurr, so I have decided to make an exception, just this once.

"You've been a long-serving member of Cybertron Intelligence, with two hundred forty-eight missions to your name, each of them culminating in an ultimate success. Your assistance has helped us to put away four thousand eight hundred forty-six criminals within our commonwealth's borders, and stop numerous drug and bot trafficking rings. Your record is quite exemplary and should be commended."

"Thank you, Sir," Blurr's face plates were beginning to grow hot. He disabled his vocaliser, just for a moment – he could feel the words trying to escape.

"However, you are young yet, and there are a few issues that worry me."

All at once, it felt as though the floor had been ripped from beneath Blurr's pedes. Calm down, he thought. He hasn't said anything yet. But his own advice did nothing to dissuade that sinking feeling in his tanks. He said nothing, waiting, hoping that this wasn't the end of the road.

"It is extremely uncommon for intelligence mechs to be inducted into our ranks," Ultra Magnus continued. "Not impossible, but uncommon. The nature of your job leaves little room for combat experience, which is the majority of our business. And I'm afraid in that regard, your track record has been appropriately spotty." He gave a subtle nod, indicating Blurr's slight frame. Did he not think Blurr was a capable fighter? Sure, he didn't look like he could throw, let alone take a blow; that was a fair assessment, and his Academy final hadn't done him any favors. But Blurr wasn't about to accept failure so easily, least of all for something so trivial. He switched his vocaliser back on, and let the words at last break free.

"With all due respect, Sir, I believe this to be an unfair assessment. My primary area of expertise may be in infiltration, but I am fully capable in a fight. I know I look fragile, and I know I performed poorly the last time you saw me, but I am long past the point of being frightened by larger mechs, and my speed more than makes up for any fault in my defensive capability. I can have a mech bound up in stasis cuffs within a nanoklik, and I kick with the force of a concussion blaster, and that's ignoring the fact that it is extremely difficult to hit me. Forgive me for saying, Sir, but in a proper battle, I feel I am practically unstoppable."

"Perhaps," the Magnus conceded, without pause. He was the first mech Blurr had ever met to not struggle with his speech impediment, a trait that was worthy of respect in itself. "But it is yet to be proven."

Blurr deflated. There was no arguing with that tone, and he would only come across as arrogant and ungrateful should he try. The last thing he wanted was to throw away his chance of serving under the Magnus due to stubborn pride. He had no choice but to obey. "Understood Sir."

"Moreover," he continued, "I've noticed that you are scheduled for deployment on Velocitron within the next decacycle. I do not wish to cast doubt onto your integrity, but to an outside observer, it appears as though you are trying to shirk your duties."
Within his fuel lines, Blurr's energon froze; the world began to spin around him, dizzying, overwhelming, punishing. He was unable to keep up the confident façade, faltering, falling back, allowing fear to show in his too-bright optics, if only for an astrosecond. Ultra Magnus had hit the nail on the head. How could he have been so foolish? Of course the Elite Guard would see through to his true intentions. They thought him uncommitted, surely – petty, conceited, and lazy. He'd blown his chance. It was all over.

What he said now wouldn't change Ultra Magnus's mind, but perhaps, if he said the right things, he could at least save his reputation. It was a miracle he was able to keep his voice steady (though not slow), as he leapt to explain. "I apologize, Sir. I admit I was frustrated with this assignment, but it was never my intention to dissent, Sir. I put all of myself into every mission I receive, even if I may find it to be disagreeable."

There was a nod of that heavy head, followed by a long moment of silence that threatened to drive Blurr out of his mind. Why did Cybertronians have to think so slowly? Why did they have to dwell on every tiny detail? Didn't they realize how insulting that was to a Velocitronian? Blurr knew it was foolish to be upset over such a small thing, but rationality had gone on vacation. It was all he could do to continue standing at attention.

When the Magnus finally spoke again, it was with a gentle voice and worried optics, as though he pitied Blurr. It was not a comforting thought.

"I am glad to hear such a thing, and I shall bear no resentment to you for a small mistake. However, there is another issue that I would like to bring up. I admit, with the return of the Decepticons to Cybertron, I am likewise hesitant to pull one of our top spies from his job to join a less crucial team. We need intelligence right now more than we need active fighters – at least until the Decepticons give us a reason to declare war anew. However, I am also aware that it would be unfair to deny you the opportunity for advancement by virtue of being too skilled and hard-working."

Where was he going with this? Blurr wished that the Magnus would just hurry up and reject his application already – let him be free to run away and beat himself up for such an embarrassing failure. All of this waiting around through unnecessary explanation was doing no favors for Blurr's frantic spark and dizzy frame.

After an eternity of waiting in Hell, Ultra Magnus at last provided his definitive answer.

"For now, in deference to Highbrow Prime, I am forced to deny you," Blurr fought to keep his face neutral. Like the Pit was he going break down in front of the Magnus.

"However, I don't wish to reject you outright. We shall speak again once you've returned from Velocitron, and make our decision from there."

That . . . had been unexpected. Blurr honestly wasn't sure how to respond. It was neither a 'yes,' or a 'no,' but an inconclusive 'we'll see.' In a way, that was almost worse. He was still trapped into returning to Velocitron, but now he had an extra weight to carry on his shoulders. He was now obligated to provide a superior performance; the optics of the Elite Guard were on him, judging, ready to determine his fate. Now, more than ever, it was imperative that he succeed, face down the demons of his past, and destroy them in one fell swoop.

And then, if he managed to pull it off, he might just be able to escape the demons of his present – to at last be proud of the bot he was, proud of the things he did, able to love himself. It was an opportunity he was willing to die for.

"I understand. Thank you, Sir."
My goal in life is apparently to make Blurr a sad panda : ( 
Sunset in the Acid Wastes

Chapter Summary

Shockwave finds himself fascinated by Highbrow Prime's best agent.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It wasn't a stretch to say that Agent Blurr had left an impression on him. Of course Shockwave had met other agents in his time as Highbrow’s assistant – some professional and competent, others intuitive, or neurotic, awkward, charming, and anything in between. Blurr, however, had blown through each and every one of those traits in a manner of seconds, and then kept right on going.

Shockwave had known next to nothing about the mech prior to their first encounter. His efforts in research had been directed at those who were actually present to worry about. It was thus, that when the rather striking Velocitronian whirlwind strode into Highbrow’s waiting room, and let loose an intimidating deluge of words from his vocaliser, Longarm had been caught completely off guard.

The initial shock wore off soon enough, however, and he found himself able to keep up easily enough, even if Blurr's speed pushed the limits of his processing power. But intriguing though it was, it wasn't the speed that caught his optic, so much as the words, the emotion, the personality behind them. Shockwave had been fascinated from their first meeting. Fascinated, and terrified. Within kliks of their first 'hello,' Shockwave had fully recognized Blurr as the threat he was.

Blurr was smart, and Blurr was fast, and Blurr was very good at getting events to go the way he desired. Shockwave needed to learn everything he could find about the bot, and fast, particularly any weaknesses or insecurities to take advantage of.

"Reading up on Agent Blurr?"

Shockwave jumped, nearly dropping his data pad. He'd been so enthralled by a report regarding the nineteen stellar cycles Blurr had spent infiltrating a bot trafficking ring, that he hadn't even noticed Highbrow come in. Not good.

"How did you know, Sir?"

"The look on your face earlier, when he was in here giving his report. Don't fall in love."

What a rubbish thing to so. Expression did not come naturally to Shockwave. He had to put effort into every quirk of his lips, every squint of his optics, every wrinkle of his brow. He'd been too focused on processing Blurr's words to think about his face at the time, but surely it hadn't done anything out of the ordinary. It was still his after all.

Highbrow walked around the desk to peer over Longarm's shoulder. "So, have you learned anything interesting?"

"Not much," Shockwave admitted. "He was forged on Velocitron, left after a not quite a vorn to join the military Academy on Cybertron, maintained incredibly good grades, was drafted into Intel upon graduation, and has maintained a rather impressive track record with his missions, all in spite
"Those reports are pretty dry, but that's the gist of it. One of my best agents, Blurr is – if not the best."

"That seems a fair assessment based on what I've read, but if you'll forgive my saying, he seems to be a bit pigeon-holed here." He hadn't finished the file yet, but he had noticed a certain theme that his missions all shared. "With the way he looks, I can understand wanting to use him for missions of a certain nature, but every mission seems a bit degrading. I'm surprised he's held up so well."

Highbrow's good mood evaporated in an instant, and he pulled away, his field filled with icy resentment. "Yes, perhaps. But it is a job that needs doing, and as obnoxious as Agent Blurr is, he is very good at it."

"I see," said Shockwave, despite the fact that Highbrow had done nothing to answer his question. Something told him it would be a bad idea to pursue this line of questioning any further.

Besides, Highbrow had told him nothing that he hadn't already surmised from the file, though his cold attitude did provide some context for some of Blurr's behaviors. The sheer volume of missions he undertook, for instance, or his willingness to put up with the most dangerous, frequently undignified tasks, or his applying for the Elite Guard after a mere two and a half vorns of active duty. Highbrow Prime clearly hated his 'best agent.' As best Shockwave could tell, the feeling was mutual.

Little things like this seemed trivial in the grand scheme of things, but if he played his cards right, Shockwave could use them to his advantage. He had known from their first meeting that Blurr was going to be a problem, and one that would require a certain degree of finesse at that.

He couldn't just kill any bot that got in his way – he may as well walk through downtown Iacon in his true form; the effect would be the same. 'Hello, I'm a Decepticon.' Highbrow was the bot whose death was required, if Shockwave wanted to find himself head of Intel. Blurr would have to be dealt with in another way. Pinning the blame for Highbrow's inevitable death on the put-upon speedster was one option, though one that made Shockwave wary. The other was to get the nuisance out of Intel altogether, and where better to send him than the Elite Guard?

Shockwave had his solution. Now he just needed a plan.

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Blurr was back the next decacycle, reporting to Highbrow for his next assignment, like the dutiful little Autobot he was. But Highbrow was running late, which gave Shockwave a chance to work his magic –not that he'd arranged it that way, of course.

"I really do apologize for this, Agent Blurr. This kind of thing is unacceptable."

"Oh no, it's all right. The Prime is a very busy mech. He can't be expected to respond in a timely manner to every visit from one of his agents." He was smiling in a way that did not reach his optics.

"I feel personally responsible," Shockwave confessed, as sincerely as he could manage. "As his assistant, I should have paid more attention to scheduling this visit. I didn't realize he'd get held up by the Magnus."

Blurr cocked his head. "The Magnus? That's a very important call to be receiving. I can wait as long as necessary. I don't really have any plans or anything. I mean, I'm not trying to sound pathetic or anything, even if it's maybe a little pathetic, and wow, I probably shouldn't have said that, but with
any luck you missed it, and I mean, I really do like being available for work, because I really do like my job, and I don't mean to give the impression that I don't..." Blurr continued on like that for awhile, as if banking on the fact that assaulting Highbrow's assistant with a barrage of high speed words would make him miss just how very awkward said words were. No such luck.

Shockwave caught it all, and after politely waiting for Blurr to finish, said, "I don't think it's pathetic at all. In fact, your devotion is really admirable. I admit, I don't have much of a life outside of work myself."

The look Blurr gave him was priceless, as though Longarm had sprouted a third eye, or grown some thirty feet. He ran a quick system's check to make sure this wasn't the case.

"Forgive my surprise, but you caught all of that?!!" He was gaping now, optics flickering rapidly, as though they couldn't decide whether to be on or off.

"Ah... yes," Shockwave said, forcing a sheepish smile onto Longarm's face. Perhaps that had been a mistake. As cute as Blurr's disbelieving face was, it was rapidly occurring to Shockwave that easily picking up rants of such speed and density was probably a bit out of the ordinary, and what was abnormal warranted suspicion. He'd been a fool. It was too late to fix now, however. He had no choice but to go with it. "I suppose that seems strange to you."

"Oh no!" Blurr said, first retreating with shame, and then stepping back with more confidence, all in less than an astrosecond. "Well, I mean, yes, it is a little strange actually. Even Highbrow and the Magnus have to concentrate really hard to pick up the things I say, let alone something of that duration, but you – forgive my saying, but you look completely normal. I've never seen a mech who could do that before – not even on Velocitron! How are you doing that? You must have an extremely fast processor!"

"Ah yes," he replied, forcing a shy smile to best appear nonthreatening. "I admit, it does push the limits of what I can easily parse, but my processor is abnormally strong. I suppose that sounds arrogant."

"Not at all!" Blurr hastened to say, before once again rethinking it in a flash. "Okay, well maybe a little, but color me impressed anyway. I suppose it's not really all that arrogant if it's true, and to be honest, I think you're perfectly justified. I mean, usually when I talk, people get this blank look on their face like they don't understand, or else they have to concentrate really, really, really hard in order to make out anything, but you; and sorry if this sounds weird, but you look just like you're talking to any other bot, and I --I--I'm at a loss for words, which believe me, is not a thing that happens often. I don't really know how to react to this, I'm sorry."

And Shockwave didn't either. He'd been intending to direct the conversation to the Elite Guard, but Blurr, whether intentionally or not, had pushed it somewhere else entirely. And Shockwave, somehow, was content to follow.

From the way he spoke, Blurr was clearly starved for affection, and that, Shockwave could work with. He'd unwittingly put himself into a very powerful (dangerous, but powerful) position. Blurr had never held a normal conversation with another bot in his entire life; even Shockwave had difficulty imagining how damaging that could be, how debilitating. He'd found the weakness of Intel's best agent, and though his mind told him to rid himself of the potential threat, his spark told him to exploit it.

"Take your time to process it. I can't imagine it's easy for you, which I understand is unusual in itself."

Blurr tilted his head. "What do you mean? Are you saying that most things come easily to me? 'Cause I suppose it might be objectively true, but it really doesn't feel that way. I honestly think I'd trade all of it for a chance to be normal, and actually that sounds kind of pathetic now that the I say it, not to mention ungrateful. I know there are a lot of mechs who envy my abilities, but I don't think they realize how much I envy theirs in turn, but this conversation just got kind of personal, wow. Maybe you could forget I just said that, and we can talk about something else?"

"That's fair," said Shockwave. "What would you like to talk about instead?" It would have been a decent opportunity to direct the conversation to the Elite Guard as initially intended, but the longer Shockwave listened to Blurr talk, the more he found himself wanting to keep him talking, the less he wanted to stick to the original plan. He'd made his initial decision with the barest of knowledge, but Blurr as his file described him, and Blurr as Highbrow described him was a very different creature than Blurr as he was. Shockwave needed Blurr to stay, needed to learn more. Only then could he properly determine what to do with the mech.

Unfortunately, Highbrow chose that moment to pop out of his office and call Blurr in for his next assignment, and he disappeared with little more than a lingering glance. But there were other opportunities.

Blurr was back in half a lunar cycle, mission completed in record time, and a beaming smile on his face as he greeted Longarm. A decacycle after that, they met again, and another decacycle after that, and though each time Blurr arrived ostensibly to report to Highbrow, he'd taken to arriving earlier and earlier, staying longer, smiling more. Shockwave couldn't help feeling that Blurr was more interested in speaking with *him* than his superior.

It took until their seventh meeting before they got around to talking about the Elite Guard.

Blurr had arrived in the office with the same enthusiastic smile on his face, but his movements were shaky, and his field pressed in tight, obscuring his emotions.

"Agent Blurr, forgive my presumption, but are you all right?"

His face faltered for just an instant, imperceptible to the untrained optic. Oh yes, he was *definitely* upset. But he seemed disinclined to talk about it.

"Oh yes, yes! I'm fine, I'm great. I'm perfectly swell! In fact, I couldn't possibly be better, and if it sounds like I'm putting a lot of emphasis on the fact in order to obscure some kind of inner turmoil, I can absolutely, one hundred percent assure you that that is not the case! How are you?"

Was this really the same mech that could make slavers and mob bosses bow to his will? Shockwave forced a stern frown to Longarm's face. "Agent." It was enough to break the mech's resolve. Interesting.

"I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine, I promise," he said. However . . .

"Okay, I'll tell you. It's work-related, however, so I don't feel completely comfortable speaking of it in Highbrow's office."

Shockwave didn't ask how Blurr had found his comm frequency. He was a spy. Of course he knew it. What worried Shockwave was just how much *else* Blurr had learned in the process of obtaining it.

"All right, if you insist," he said aloud. "Though I'd like to cheer you up anyway. A little happiness never hurts."
"I won't utter a peep."

"I guess you're right about that, but what is it you had in mind today?"

"I'm sure you're aware that I have a pending application with the Elite Guard."

"I am."

"I was wondering, how familiar are you with the Rust Sea?"

"The Rust Sea? I've passed over it once or twice on my way south, but I can't say I've ever been there personally. From what I understand though, it's pretty treacherous."

"They were supposed to get back to me when I returned from Velocitron, but they never did. I thought that they were just busy, and that I should wait it out, so I did, for a few decacycles. Then I started to worry that I'd been declined and they'd just forgotten to let me know, and I know it's paranoid, but the thought really was very upsetting, so I thought I'd follow up with them between missions. I finally heard back today, and . . . ."

"And?"

"Treacherous yes, but beautiful. The sunsets on the Rust Sea are the most glorious sight on all of Cybertron. And I figured, skilled as you are, it could make for a nice place to visit."

"Visit? I suppose, yes. It sounds nice, though with work, it's hard to find a reason to go sightseeing."

"And I found out that Highbrow had pulled my application."

"Well, I have some time off coming up. I was thinking we could go together."

There was a brief pause as the other's words sank in.

"What?" they said, simultaneously.

"Do you mean like a date? Because I'm pretty sure that's against the rules, but at the same time – I mean, that does sound kind of nice, I'll admit."

What had he been thinking? With his attention focused on Blurr's comms, on maintaining a pleasant face, holding onto his disguise, not slipping up, he hadn't been paying too much attention to the words coming out of Longarm's mouth. He never would have said something to rouse suspicion, but he hadn't considered the possibility that he might inadvertently ask Blurr out while trying to maintain innocent small talk.

And then there had been Blurr's comm, the reason for his morose attitude and the wrench in Shockwave's plan.

"He can do that? That can't be legal."

_He wants me to stay here, I guess," Blurr conceded. "But I don't want to stay here – not with him! I know it's unprofessional, but I hate him, and he hates me, and I'm pretty sure everyone up to and including the Magnus knows it, and I don't know whether it's legal or not, I haven't had time to check. I was actually intending to confront him about it today, but I'm just so shocked and upset that I've been trying so hard to get away from him, and he's taken that chance away, and I don't know what I'm going to do if I'm stuck with him forever!"_ Blurr's plating gave a sharp rattle that belied his
frustration, even as his nervous smile tried to obscure it.

"It doesn’t have to be a date. Just two friends enjoying the bounty of this world we call home."
Truth be told, he really did love the Rust Sea, and if he was going to spend time there with any of the vermin that currently inhabited his world, Blurr didn't seem like the worst choice. He refused to admit that there might be anything more to it than that.

For just a second, a genuine smile did shine through on Blurr's face. "That's pretty cheesy," he laughed. "but I like it! Let's go!"

Before Longarm had a chance to respond to Blurr's words, Highbrow poked his head out of his office, his surly glare beckoning Blurr in. However, before Blurr disappeared behind those closed doors, Shockwave shot off one final message, risky in its content but genuine in meaning.

"Everything will be all right. I promise."

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Finding dirt on Highbrow Prime was surprisingly difficult. For such an unpleasant mech, he led an incredibly boring life. No workplace violations, no lewd happenings in his free time. He was practically a saint.

More than once, Shockwave had to ask himself why he was doing this – why he was devoting an astronomical amount of his free time to finding ways to ruin Highbrow, why he cared so much. Sure, the sight of Blurr trying so hard to hide his pain had woken something strongly possessive within Shockwave, but that wasn’t enough to take such severe interest in punishing Highbrow, was it?

In the end, he told himself that the arrangement was mutually beneficial. A discredited Highbrow was a Highbrow one step closer to losing his title, his power, and position. And if Shockwave kept playing his cards right, he’d find himself next in line. It really was the only logical option.

True, his chosen solution of planting incriminating memories in Highbrow’s processor had been risky, but the head of Cybertronian Intelligence was long past his prime. His only real skill these days was his ability to be a hardass. Shockwave could afford a little bit of risk. Besides, Highbrow looked favorably on Longarm Prime, and affection made such a very good blindfold.

The fool had reluctantly agreed to go out for drinks after work one night, as a favor to Longarm – had put himself at Shockwave's mercy, at a club Shockwave had chosen. Highbrow wasn't much one for drinking, nor dance clubs – he was out of his element, confused, his wide optics locked on the beautiful bots that danced around him as though fearing they were out for his energon. Distracted as he was, it was easy enough to slip some nucleon into his engex. He was out like a light.

From there, Shockwave had carried him back home, cracked open his processor, and spent the next several cycles digging around, rearranging memories, implanting a few of his own, and transforming a relatively uneventful evening into the night that never was.

It was nothing too serious. In this new sequence of events, Highbrow, overcharged from two too many cubes of heavy engex, had gotten a little too handsy with one of the dancers, one that happened to bear a passing resemblance to Blurr (which had been quite a lucky find. That shade of blue was hard to come by).

The dancer had been anonymously paid off to file a complaint, and poor, honest Highbrow was helpless to deny the accusation, even as he swore to himself that he would never do such a thing.
Longarm had two jobs from there. The first was to earn Highbrow’s trust – suggesting that someone had drugged him, that someone was out to ruin him, and swearing he would help.

The second, was anonymously leaving a tip with the Elite Guard, comparing the dancer in question with a certain mech in Highbrow’s employ, highlighting the sort of missions said mech was consistently sent on, as well as a certain degree of possessiveness displayed in withholding an Elite Guard application, and inferring that Highbrow’s intentions towards Blurr were less than pure. Blurr’s own testimony, confused and horrified, was icing on the cake.

The next thing anyone knew, Highbrow was on probation, and Blurr was forbidden from going anywhere near the disgraced Prime so long as the investigation was underway. In the meantime, Blurr was to receive his (noticeably more mundane) missions from Longarm, right where Shockwave wanted him. And an increasingly-paranoid Highbrow had cozied up to Longarm as the one mech he could trust, exactly where Shockwave wanted him.

All in all, he felt rather godly right now.

And as sweet as his successful gambit was, his budding relationship, as it was, with Blurr was even sweeter. Their day trip to the Acid Wastes had been a charming bit of one-on-one time, and with the heavy weight that was Highbrow Prime momentarily removed from his life, Blurr couldn’t have been happier. It was difficult to tell whether or not he suspected Longarm's involvement in the affair, but if he did, he made no mention of it. It seemed the mech was at least self-serving enough to accept the gift offered him without question. Shockwave respected that.

And that was all it was. Respect. Nothing more.

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In light of the Highbrow controversy, Blurr’s Elite Guard application was back on the table. It was what Shockwave had wanted from the beginning, but now that he had Blurr in his grasp, he was reluctant to let go. As terrible as it was, Shockwave had found himself growing attached to Blurr in their increasing time spent together, nearly as much as Blurr was attached to him, and strangely, he found that he didn’t want to acknowledge the necessary inevitability – that Blurr had to go. The mech was too good at his job; the closer they became, the greater the threat or his true identity being discovered grew. Pleasant company or not, Shockwave could not sacrifice all he'd worked for, for some childish pleasure.

So when Blurr arrived in his office a few decacycles later with a timid disappointment lingering in his field, Shockwave knew exactly what had happened, and much to his own chagrin, was relieved.

“I suppose congratulations are in order.” It should not have been so difficult to sound happy. Shockwave had never been one for emoting, and yet even he could acknowledge the bitterness in his voice.

“I honestly don’t know how to feel about this,” Blurr said with a shrug. "I was so certain for so long that I wanted to be in the Elite Guard, but now that I’ve gotten there, I don’t feel happy or relieved or anything of that nature at all. Really, if anything, I feel kind of disappointed, which is weird, don’t you think? This is a major opportunity for me, and yet here I am not wanting to go, but I also know that if I turn this down, I'll never have another chance. You don’t say ‘no’ to Ultra Magnus, after all - it doesn’t matter if you’ve had a change of spark or not, but this is all very tangential I believe, and I guess all I’m really trying to say is you don’t have to congratulate me if you don’t want to. I’m honestly not sure that I even want you to.”

Shockwave allowed Blurr's words to wash over him, a slight frown worrying at his lip.
"Blurr," he said at last, when it seemed like the bot was finished speaking. "Come out with me tonight." He knew he shouldn't have said such a thing, but seeing sadness in the little speedster's face was unacceptable. He felt much as he had before, when it was Highbrow giving Blurr trouble. He wanted to protect the stupid Autobot, from harm and suffering, and he didn't even know why. Who knew? Maybe he was lonely too.

At the invitation, Blurr's face suffered a minor breakdown - shuttering his optics, opening his mouth to speak, closing it, opening it again, shaking his head as though to clear his thoughts, and then at last finding his voice. "Out? Do you mean like to the Acid Wastes again, because while I definitely enjoyed spending time with you, that seems to be more of an all-day venture, and it's already kind of late, I'm pretty sure we'll miss the sunset, even if we leave right now, which means all we really get is the acid and the waste, though perhaps their sunrises are just as nice? I would love to watch the sunrise with you, but I don't think we'd be back in time to –"

"No, Agent Blurr. Nothing so elaborate," Shockwave interrupted. "Though I am glad to hear you enjoyed our time together. I was thinking we could go out for a few drinks. It sounds like you could use one."

"I don't know, that sounds an awful lot like a date, if you ask me," Blurr said to the floor. Shockwave allowed a chuckle to escape.

"It doesn't have to be. Highbrow and I have gone out before, though I think, if you'll forgive my saying, it is quite telling that you'd leap to such a conclusion."

Blurr's head shot up, optics wide and fearful, like a cornered Turbofox. "What?! Oh no, no it's nothing like that. I promise I'm not trying to break the rules! I'm an avid follower of the rules!"

"Yes, well, it can just be drinks," Shockwave laughed, once more. "But if you want it to be more, well, forgive my forwardness, but I am open to the idea."

Blurr gaped again, at a loss for words for the second time in minutes. It had to be some kind of record.

But then, after what must have been an eternity for the little bot, Blurr turned his optics back to the floor and said, "I think I'd like that very much."

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The evening went about as well as expected. Engex hit Blurr's tiny racer frame hard and fast, leaving him chatty as ever, but infinitely more uninhibited, not to mention clingy. Blurr had always striven to maintain a respectful distance in the past, but tonight, such reservations were wiped from his hard drives.

It had started with Blurr moving their chairs together, under the pretense of being able to hear better in the crowded room. From there, he had shifted to soft touches – a pat on the arm, an accidental brush of a pauldron. And then, somehow, Blurr had wound up in Longarm's lap – doubly troubling in that if someone recognized them, they would both be in a load of trouble, and that was to say nothing of the fact that Shockwave was finding himself unexpectedly aroused.

Entertaining the Autobot's crush was one thing – creating a loyal follower, forging his own confidant, sharing an emotional connection – it had been uncomfortable, dangerous, but doable. Getting physical, however, was out of the question!

Shockwave doubted very much that his disguise would hold up through an overload, and once that
happened, Blurr would know his secret, provided he survived their size incompatibility.

And yet, the subtle way Blurr ground their hips together, nuzzled against his folded up antennae with a soft sigh, dug his long fingers into thick treads, drove Shockwave nuts. And Blurr surely knew it, which brought to mind one more issue with the scenario.

Blurr was a spy, and one with plenty of experience in using his body to get what he wanted. There was always the unignorable possibility that Longarm was under suspicion and Blurr was merely waiting for him to slip up. For his own safety, he needed to get away.

"Ah, Blurr," he said, peeling the agent's contented, drowsy face away from his shoulder. The beauty of those half-shuttered optics distracted Shockwave from what he'd intended on saying. Instead, he went with, "Are you all right?"

"Mmmm yes," Blurr said, at a nearly normal speed. "It's getting really late, I admit, and my head is all kinds of clouded, and you're just so very comfortable, I think I started drifting off there. Perhaps it's time to head out."

"I couldn't agree more," said Shockwave, though his reasoning was more to do with the increasing pressure building behind his interface panels. "Come, I'll walk you home." That was not getting away! Why had he said that? Was the engex getting to his brain module too? Had Blurr drugged him? Pit, he didn't even have to. Blurr's presence was a drug, one that Shockwave had somehow become addicted to.

But even as his processor screamed at him to remove himself from the threatening, diminutive Autobot, his legs were moving, his hands reaching out to steady a surprisingly stable frame, and Blurr's engine purred at every moment of affectionate contact, a pleased little smile on his face. It was short-lived however. They could get away with flirting in the dark club, but once out in the cold night air, they were infinitely more exposed. They walked side by side, a down the empty streets of the late cycles, a respectful distance apart, their steps far too graceful to belong to a bot inebriated. Their journey took them past high rises and shopping centers, and into a more densely-packed area, dirtier, poorer. Did Blurr really live here?

"Thank you for doing this for me, I really do appreciate it," Blurr said as they walked. "There was a time I never would have imagined staying out all night just talking and having a good time, one-on-one, no less! And yet here we are on the second date already, and I feel like I'm walking on clouds," he danced on ahead several paces to demonstrate, finishing off with a giddy spin before falling back in line. Shockwave was most disgusted by the smile that graced Longarm's lips at the absurd little action, let alone the fact that Blurr had called this their second date.

"And now you're walking me home, which is a very sweet gesture, if not a bit unnecessary. I'm the last bot anyone would want to mug, and if they tried – well, it's not a stretch to say they'd regret it. Actually, to be honest, I'm more worried about you. I know that you graduated from the Academy too, with honors even, so I really shouldn't be, but I admit I don't live in the best area, so you don't have to feel pressured to walk with me. I'd hate for anything to happen to you."

"Don't worry," Longarm laughed. "I'm a lot stronger than I look." Understatement.

The two continued on like that all the way back to Blurr's apartment, with Blurr chatting animatedly all the while. The few bots that were out and about didn't bother them, even if a few did give the impression that they wanted to. Shockwave was willing to bet that they knew Blurr well enough not to try.

"If I might ask," Shockwave said, as they climbed the rusting stairs to Blurr's apartment. "Why do
you live all the way out here? Surely you can afford better?"

Blurr shrugged. "It never really occurred to me to move, I guess. Out here most people keep to
themselves, which suits me just fine, I think, and I'm not really home enough to warrant spending the
money on a nice one, not to mention the fact that as much as I love Cybertron, I've always kind of
preferred Velocitronian homes – your house is where you sleep, and that's it, so their places tend to
be cramped and claustrophobic, which is probably the last thing you'd associate with Velocitron, but
I grew up with it, and this is about as close as you can get to that feeling in Iacon, and it's far enough
out that I manage a decent run to work in the morning, and I'm sure there are other reasons, but I
don't know, I just kind of am used to it?"

They were at the door now.

"Ah, I see," said Shockwave. "I apologize if I came off as judgmental." It was for the better.
Shockwave himself could not stand spaces too small to accommodate his true form, and from the
outside, Blurr's apartment certainly looked the part. This could be the motivation he needed to leave.

"So," said Blurr, pulling him from his thoughts. "I know you said you'd be fine getting home by
yourself, but it's late and – and I mean if you want to, you're more than welcome to stay the night."

And despite his reservations, the offer was tempting. He could imagine it easily, their bodies
entwined on Blurr's too-small berth, throwing caution to the wind, splitting the tiny Autobot in two
around his spike. If he stayed the night, the ending was certain.

And somehow, it was that certainty that caused Shockwave to finally come to his senses. He
couldn't do this. Not yet. Not until he absolutely knew that he could control his disguise in such
circumstances. Not until he was sure that Blurr wasn't playing him like the long lists of mechs he'd
thrown into Trypticon Prison over the stellar cycles.

He pulled away, as Blurr slipped through the door. Upon sensing he was no longer being followed,
the little bot paused, turned back around. "Longarm?"

"Actually, I'd better go."

Blurr's face fell the instant those words reached him. "Go. Oh yes, I suppose you oughta. Got work
in the morning, after all, and I'm meeting with the Magnus and the new Prime anyway, so I should
probably get some rest too. Sorry if that was presumptuous of me."

It actually hurt to see the pretty little Autobot so crestfallen. Shockwave couldn't leave him that
way. He had to do something.

"Blurr?"

"Yes?"

He had to stretch his legs in order to match heights, had to step forward, wrap one hand around the
base of Blurr's neck, pull him closer, all so he could press his lips against Blurr's in an impressively
chaste, and surprisingly smooth kiss.

"Goodnight Blurr."

And it was the memory of that kiss, of the pliant protoform of Blurr's lips as he melted into the
gesture, that ran through his head later that night, as his thick claws filled his own valve, and stroked
his spike to overload.
I think half of this chapter's length is just Blurr talking.
The Next Full Cycle

Chapter Summary

After traveling in different directions for so long, Shockwave and Blurr finally meet in the middle.

Chapter Notes

This is the most experimental chapter in what has already amounted to a very experimental fanfic. Hopefully it came out okay.

Moonracer hadn’t changed much since their academy days. She was still the feisty little sharpshooter she'd been when they first met. Only now, she was the head of Velocitronian security, a position she’d achieved by virtue of being quick on the draw. The prestige was expected of an Academy graduate, but still strange to contemplate, when the image of Moonracer as his second-most unpleasant classmate remained strong in his mind.

“Wow Blurr, I never thought I’d see you again, let alone in this capacity. Cybertronian Intelligence? It's pretty impressive.” She took a sip from her energon cube.

His arrival on the planet had been met with an unprecedented degree of excitement. Moonracer, too busy to make it to the spaceport herself, had sent assistants to greet him, and take him to all manner of cultural sites on his first days back, as though to remind him just how great Velocitronian life was. There were drive-throughs and open air markets, empty, spacious roads, migrating libraries – constant movement, a constant drive to be fast.

Admittedly, he had missed all of this. Velocitron was so peaceful, so open and free, in a way that Cybertron could never be. But seeing all it had to offer, after spending so much time on Cybertron, and out in the galaxy, visiting different worlds, meeting all sorts of people, he couldn't help but feel it was a little shallow. Velocitronian culture boiled down to speed and speed alone – all bots were defined by it, it permeated every aspect of their lives, the worth of all Velocitronian culture and art amounted to how fast it could be made, how fast it could make others. But what should happen if their speed was stripped from them? If they woke up one day and realized there was more to life than racing – that their education was abysmal, their technology sub-par, their limited resources had been blown on race-tracks and frame upgrades, and their defense was such a joke, that they needed to rely on outside help to solve a single murder.

It was uncomfortable to comprehend.

They'd come to a rest in Moonracer’s warehouse, an unnecessarily-large building, with wide, open floors, sweeping ceilings, and pleasant breezeways. Any location of note, from the front desk, to the weapons' storage, and all the way up to Moonracer's sixth floor, open-air office, could be reached through running, though the higher levels were only accessible to the fastest of bots, by virtue of physics. Slower bots were too unimportant to have business so far up anyway.
After three days of wasting time, Blurr was finally face-to-face with Moonracer, enjoying a rare moment of stillness, to refuel and discuss business.

“I thank you for the compliment,” he said, perhaps a little perturbed, "even if it does seem to be a little patronizing – as though the idea of me finding success is just so very out there as to be unbelievable – even if I can understand why you would say it, actually, and so I suppose the thing I should have said was more along the lines of 'I know. Isn’t it funny how time flies? And you, head of Velocitron Security! We sure have come far.’ Let's just pretend I said that instead, okay?” He hadn’t meant to come off as so defensive, but some wounds just ran too deep. And the intense concentration on Moonracer’s face proved that she’d probably missed most of his words anyway. What a nuisance.

“Ah, still fast as ever,” she chuckled, giving up so as not to keep him waiting.

“With all due respect, I’ve spent more than enough time reminiscing. I came here to investigate a murder, and I would rather we got down to business sooner than later. It shouldn't come as much surprise to you that I would rather not be here right now.” This time, he managed to drag his speed down to an ordinary Velocitronian speaking level.

“You mean you could do that the whole – err, I mean yes, let’s.” The surprise on her face was priceless. Precise control over his speed had come with time and practice. He couldn't have done it before he'd left Velocitron, but it was quite delightful to do it now. Petty vindication was the best kind.

She tossed her empty glass aside, and pulled out a data pad, flicking it on in one swift motion. “I'm sure you know the basics. Override, a prominent member of Ransack's cabinet, was attacked and left for dead, presumably by Decepticons on the 25th Dixosol of the 487th Megacycle, OT, 6.87 kliks past the 18th. She passed on later that evening on the operating table of state physician, Knock Out.

“We’ve launched our own investigation, of course, but our resources are limited, and our forces aren’t exactly trained to face down Decepticons. So I called you – well, Cybertron Intel, anyway. I can't say I expected to see you again, let alone investigating a case that hits so close to home.” That made two of them.

She slid the pad towards Blurr, who read over the report within in a flash. Velocitron security had done a criminally poor job in investigating, as far as Blurr was concerned. In the lunar cycle or so since the crime occurred, they had amassed no leads, and no suspects. Override’s body, the only evidence gathered, had long since been smelted. He had next to nothing to go on. Solving this mystery would prove nearly impossible.

There was one piece of information that caught his optic, however.

“It says, ‘Rule out Fasttrack.’ He’s involved in this too?”

“It’s not so strange,” explained Moonracer. “Velocitron is much smaller than Cybertron, and as graduates of the Grand Academy, we were all on the fast track to prestigious jobs. “

“But Fasttrack?” Blurr still couldn't believe it. Fasttrack had been disgraced! How had he managed to land a 'prestigious job,' as Moonracer described it.

“A member of Ransack's cabinet, like Override. He may have been a bad person, but he was still fast. There wasn’t a whole lot to keep him from greatness.”
Blurr felt he'd taken a blow to the fuel tanks. After how long he had suffered, after losing his entire future to the heinous mech, it was insulting to hear he’d gotten off scot free. Never before had Blurr resented Velocitron's blind worship of speed more than he did at that moment.

“And did you rule him out?”

Moonracer nodded. “Ah yes. Sorry, apparently I can’t trust Crumplezone to file a proper report. He was actually in prison at the time for corruption. Still is.”

Good. And not the least bit surprising. But the knowledge didn't answer all of Blurr's questions. “Why was he a suspect in the first place?”

Moonracer’s face grew grim. “He’d been accused of having Decepticon ties in the past. This was never proven, but it was the best lead we had at the time.”

A pang of hot rage struck Blurr, but he suppressed it. Of course Velocitron would allow a potential Decepticon sympathizer into their ruling house. As long as he was fast, who cared if he dragged the planet into shackles once more?

Even as he thought it, he knew he was being ridiculous. Accusations were not the same as proof. There was no reason to be barred from politics if no evidence had been found. And he knew that if it had been any other mech, he would not have been nearly so upset. This mission had truly been a bad idea.

“I see.” He was surprised by how very calm he sounded. “Well then, I thank you for the information. I'll begin my investigation first thing in the morning.”

Moonracer hesitated, for just a second – any longer would have been rude. “Really. I thank you for doing this, and I am glad to see you again, even if you're not glad to see me.”

The words were surprisingly sweet coming from Moonracer – heartfelt, even. Blurr took a second hard look at her, noticed the dullness of her once-vivid aquamarine plating, the weak glow of her optics, the heaviness behind her steps. She was overworked for certain, stressed in the extreme, and Blurr got the sense that there was more to this situation than she was telling, but for whatever reason, her lips were sealed. And Blurr had a hunch he knew why.

The weakness of the investigation implied gross incompetence or criminal negligence. Blurr had initially assumed the former, but the latter was seeming more and more likely as he thought on it. Moonracer was proud, as was Velocitron. If she was asking for outside help, then it was because she didn't trust Velocitron to achieve justice for Override on its own merits, and if the Head of Security didn't trust Velocitronian criminal law, then something was very, very wrong.

If his hunch was right, then he and Moonracer alike were in a precarious position. He’d have to approach this assignment with the utmost care.

“I'll do my best,” was all he could say in response. He was not looking forward to tomorrow.

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The doors had closed behind Blurr nearly a full klik ago, and Shockwave had yet to look away. What the Pit had that been? He’d heard the rumors of a certain agent in Intel who spoke at five hundred words per minute, but he’d thought folks were just exaggerating. Why would anyone speak so quickly? Surely it would take more energy and concentration than to speak at a normal speed? He’d been wrong.
“So,” said Highbrow, setting down the data pad on which the physical copy of Blurr's report was stored. “That was Agent Blurr. What did you think?”

And for once, Shockwave could only think to speak the truth. “I don’t know Sir. That was a sudden and unexpected turn of events. I admit, I'm still trying to process what just happened.”

“Yes,” Highbrow nodded. “Agent Blurr can be nearly incomprehensible and he seems to hold little regard for the understanding of us common mechs. I suppose it's a good thing his written reports are so meticulous.”

“Still, don’t feel too bad for not understanding. It takes an incredibly powerful processor to pick up his speech in its entirety. Even I have difficulty.”

Highbrow sounded somehow smug and disappointed at the same time. He thought the problem was Longarm's inability to parse Blurr's speech, but that, of course, had not been the case. Admittedly, it had taken a little more concentration to understand than Shockwave was used to sparing, particularly when the agent's enthusiasm got the better of him, but he still picked up every single meandering word. Understanding wasn't the problem at all.

"I did manage to pick up most of the debriefing," he said, downplaying his own skills. Working in Intel was all about finding the right balance between being brilliant and unthreatening. Too little, and he would be cast off, too much, and he would fall under suspicion. "I'm certain that with more exposure, I will reach your superior level." Highbrow did love a suck-up. "But I don't think his speed was the entirety of the problem.”

"No, I fancy not," Highbrow said with a coy grin. Whatever he was thinking, Shockwave didn't care to hear it. Not that that would protect him. "It wasn't that the contents of the report, was it? There's some scary stuff in there, I know, but it's only going to get worse from here, with the emerging Decepticon presence."

Longarm shook his head. “No Sir. It is a bit terrifying to dwell on, but I am not so easily upset.” Blurr’s report had been mundane at best, and disappointing at worst, it only for how the Decepticon presence on Velocitron had been all but wiped out, and by a single bot no less. Perhaps that was it. If Blurr was not exaggerating about his feats (and judging by Highbrow's reaction, he probably wasn't), then he had just become the most terrifying Autobot that Shockwave had ever met. And all in a fragile racer frame. What a travesty.

“Maybe I was just – well, Agent Blurr is – very vivacious, isn't he? So much energy and enthusiasm. Perhaps I'm a little intimidated.” There, that was it. Shockwave, legendary Decepticon warrior, was intimidated by barely twenty feet of rail-thin protoform and flimsy armor. It was a secret he intended to take to his grave.

Highbrow's merry chuckle clashed terribly with Longarm's misgivings. It was almost offensive. “Dear Longarm, I assure you, Agent Blurr is nothing to be afraid of.

“Anyway, as charming as your reaction is, we still have work to do. Here,” he pushed Blurr’s report towards Longarm. “Go ahead and process this for me. I've got another meeting with Ultra Magnus to set up.”

“Yes sir,” Longarm said, taking the offered tablet.

As far as he was concerned, Highbrow took far too long in getting out the door afterwards, fussing and lollygagging about like he had all the time in the world. Shockwave wished he could have sent the irritating Prime away by force. After all, there was research to be done on this Agent Blurr, and
he didn't want any distractions. This would be the last time a pathetic little Autobot made him feel weak.

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The most logical place to start was with the bot who had witnessed Override’s death. And so, here he was, in Knock Out’s luxurious office, with its elegant wall-spanning windows (currently shuttered), and ornately-carved shelves, lined with glittering trophies and certificates of merit, for fastest reattachment of a limb, quickest neurosurgery, most efficient cosmetic alterations, among other things. The attention to detail in the décor was unusual enough for a Velocitronian, but the most peculiar thing of all was the fact that the office was on the first floor. No self-respecting Velocitronian of Knock Out's prestige would ever work where the commoners could come waltzing in, doctor or no. It was worth noting.

Blurr had been ushered into the empty office by an enthusiastic receptionist, and was shyly told to wait, that the doctor was busy, but would be with him shortly. Blurr took no insult. He’d come on short-notice, and his time away from Velocitron had given him much patience. Besides, the last thing Blurr wanted was for the state medic to rush his operation.

Still, true to his station, Knock Out didn't keep Blurr waiting long. He’d been in the office for three kliks at most before his host came dancing in, humming a merry ditty. Immediately, Blurr was scooped from his seat and pulled into a tight, and somewhat uncomfortable hug. "Blurr!"

“K-Knock Out,” he choked, vocaliser straining beneath the excess pressure. “It's good to see you again, but it would be even better if you would put me down – I mean, I can understand why you’d be enthusiastic - it's been a long, long, long, long time since we last saw one another, but at the same time, I don't really think we were ever close enough to warrant such affection, and I admit, I'm a little uncomfortable right now – both physically and emotionally, so if you could let go of me, I would really appreciate it.”

To his relief, Knock Out released him upon request. “Primus, Blurr. You haven't changed a bit!” Blurr didn't bother correcting the assumption. The old Blurr had been weak and pathetic, and at the moment, it was an image he was perfectly content in cultivating.

“What about you?” Blurr asked with a timid smile and a weak sputter of his vents. Had Knock Out broken something in there? “I see you're the chief medic now. Pretty fancy position. Do you get to operate on Speedia winners?”

Knock Out scoffed. “Blurr, I make Speedia winners. I've got an eye for aerodynamics and alteration, and I'm very good at boosting a frame to its maximum potential . . . Not that you're in need of any assistance. I bet you're a pretty big hot shot over on Cybertron.”

Blurr shrugged. “Only with lonely singles, I'm afraid. You have no idea how much those guys fetishize speedsters over there – so much unwarranted touching and commenting and otherwise unwanted forms of attention every time I go out in public. It drives me nuts! So I admit, in that regard at least, it's nice to be back.”

“Speaking of . . .” In one smooth motion, Knock Out whirled around his desk, and slid gracefully into his desk chair, with back plate lounging against one arm, and crossed ankles dangling over the other. “What brings you all the way out here to Velocitron? You get expelled again?”

“Don't even joke about that,” Blurr groaned. “I was actually on my way to Animatron for a mission, but my ship started acting up, and I figured that, since I was already in the neighborhood, I may as well stop by and visit everyone.”
“That’s a shame.” Knock Out leaned over his desk, scrutinizing Blurr with his vivid red optics, as though judging the validity of Blurr’s story. “I’m afraid you have very poor timing.”

“Ah yes, it looks that way. I heard about Override from Moonracer. I still can’t believe it. Who would kill Override? I mean, we were never all that close, but she was always so strong and smart and kind – it’s hard to imagine anyone wanting to hurt her.”

Knock Out’s smile was gone, and his optics grew vacant, staring at the back of his hand, like looking at a ghost. “She was better than any of us,” he muttered. “I saw her when she came in. She died on my table – I’m not a bad doctor; I’ve never botched an operation, I’ve never lost a patient... I think that was the worst night of my life.”

“I’m sorry,” Blurr squeaked, as Knock Out withdrew back into his chair, folding his arms over his chest.

“Hey, Blurr,” said Knock Out, after a bitter pause. “Have you seen Fasttrack yet, out of curiosity?”

Blurr shook his head. “Moonracer said he’s in prison right now. And after the way we parted, I honestly don’t see it being a good idea to pay him a visit. I don’t think I’m ready to see him yet, and do they even allow visitors anyway?”

“You’re Cybertron military, right?” Knock Out said, rising to his feet. “You’ve pretty much got free reign to do whatever you want while you’re here, within reason, of course.” He stepped around the table and leaned in close to Blurr, placing a hand on his back plate. “I think you should talk to Fasttrack.”

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"I know you don't want to hear it, but this is really important to me, so I'm going to say it anyway, but I'll be brief for your sake. Do you have any idea how long I was stuck on Velocitron for? Of course you do, I've only been gone for something like two vorns! That's what happens when you completely overhaul the leadership of an entire planet! I'm an intelligence agent, not a politician, and yet because I was Velocitronian, I got stuck with the Cybertronian Task Force cleaning up the mess Ransack and Breakdown had left behind once the Elite Guard left, and negotiating, and putting down uprisings before they began, and Velocitron is a very different planet now and I think that's really all there is to say on the matter. The details are in my report.” He handed a data tablet to Highbrow Prime.

Shockwave couldn't help but stare in shock. The last cycle of his life had been spent listening to five-cycles worth of storytelling from a single intelligence agent who had infiltrated and eliminated a low-scale Decepticon invasion of Velocitron in its infancy. He could scarcely believe what he'd heard. He needed a moment to process everything.

"So let me see if I've got this right," Highbrow said, slowly, deliberately. "A single Decepticon by the name of Breakdown infiltrated Velocitron as a Cybertronian immigrant —"

"Yes," Blurr interrupted. "He'd undergone some kind of frame overhaul. I told you already, he looked like your typical Cybertronian speedster. The kind with a spoiler." He shut himself up at Highbrow's lengthy glare.

"Yes, well. This Breakdown infiltrated Velocitron, and over the course of five vorns managed to convert not only the High Councilor, Ransack, but also many of his cabinet members, as well as a number of other influential figures within Velocitron politics, and an untold number of peasants."
"Roughly one sixth of the planet, Sir."

"And you were able to kick them out?"

Blurr shook his head. "All I did was provide the names. The Elite Guard did the rest. Well, I also
stuck around as per your order to keep an eye on any threats to the peace," he looked very much like
he wanted to elaborate on that, but refrained, for Highbrow's sake, "but as it stands, Velocitron is
about as peaceful as can be expected at the moment, and is in not in any current danger of falling to
the Decepticons."

Shockwave did not like this. He had not been a part of Project: Velocitron, but he knew enough
about the scheme – enough to know that well more than five vorns of planning had gone into it.
And it had been undone by Agent Blurr in a fraction of the time.

And worse than the supreme failure of that idiot Stunticon, Breakdown, the waste of time and energy
and resources they did not have to begin with, was the manner in which the too-sharp agent had
found him out. The mech had taken the tiniest of details, a trait that most mechs wouldn’t even
notice, and torn apart the whole carefully-constructed system.

Shockwave had met his fair share of Intel mechs, but not one of them had pulled such a significant
stunt.

And it made him nervous. Breakdown's brilliant scheme had been given away by a pair of optics. If
Agent Blurr could spot a Decepticon by the color of his eyes, then in what other ways could he
uncover one's secrets? And more importantly, what did he see when he looked at Longarm? One
wrong move, and Project: Doppelganger could fall just as easily as Project: Velocitron.

Shockwave was suddenly feeling very small.

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Blurr figured he was walking into a trap. Knock Out was almost certainly a Decepticon, barring the
bizarre possibility that red optics had become a fad on Velocitron, but Knock Out's shifty behavior
only lent weight to Blurr's suspicions. Still, trap or not, Fasttrack was a lead, and truth be told, he
did want to see him again.

And so, with nothing more than a handful of Moonracer's finest prison guards to protect him (and
who knew if they were trustworthy?), Blurr descended the steps into the dark and gloomy caverns of
Velocitron's most notorious dungeon.

If he’d thought Fasttrack’s imprisonment had been a mere formality for his not-so subtle political
leanings before, his mind was changed at the state of Fasttrack’s cell. It was a grimy pit, reeking of
sharp tang of spilt energon and, if Fasttrack’s unhealthy grey pallor, and the unsettling thinness of his
exposed protoform were any indication, the burnt-oil odor of overworked nanites. The cell was too
low to stand up straight in, and iron shackles restricted Fasttrack's movement – one pair looped
through his tires, and a third chain clutched at his throat, for maximum discomfort.

This treatment was far too severe for a political prisoner, at least on the Velocitron that Blurr thought
he’d known. Sworn enemy or not, it pained Blurr to see the once-proud mech so debased, so
broken. He lingered in the doorway, knowing that this was his last chance to run.

But then Fasttrack's optics fell upon him, resigned misery transforming into a wicked grin,
illuminated by the bars of his cell, the only light within the otherwise black cavern. The opportunity
for retreat had passed. He had no choice but to press on.
“Blurr,” Fasttrack croaked, his voice broken with static. "It's been a while."

And Blurr, tip toeing into the room, responded in the only way he could think to. "What the slag am I looking at here? What happened to you? Why are you starring in 'The Torture 4'? Since when does Velocitron do this to political prisoners? That's what you are, right? A political prisoner? Because from the looks of things, I'd guess you were some kind of serial killer, or protoform filcher, or some other kind of deeply heinous criminal mastermind, which – well I kind of hate you and think you're a total sleaze, but I never would have picked you for a cartoon villain! What is all of this?"

"Whoa, slow down there. My processor is not that fast, and I don't got the energy to keep up. Good to see you too, Blurr." Fasttrack laughed – choked more like, throwing back his head and erupting in a fit of darkly merry coughs. Blurr found himself reaching out to his subspace; he'd feel safer with his saw in hand.

"Look Blurr," Fasttrack said, waving a placating hand. "I'm probably going to be dead soon – as you can see from my cushy furnishings, they really like me up there. And I know I haven't been particularly good to you, so I guess there are a few things I want to say."

"Save it," Blurr snapped. "I'd rather hear about why you're in here, and why here is so incredibly disturbing." Truth be told, he didn't want to think about the past right now. Looking at Fasttrack filled him with the urge to run far away, bury his head under his arms, and cry. And that was before he factored in the horrific nature of the setting. The last thing he needed was something else to get emotional over.

Of course, Fasttrack ignored his wishes. He always did. "Look, I just wanted to say, I'm sorry – for all the hot slag I put you through for all those years."

Blurr's spark began pulsing faster, as he'd known it would. He shouldn't have come here, not to this dungeon, and not to this planet. With that handful of weakly-muttered words, Blurr's processor was sent crashing. He wanted to scream. He wanted to hide. He wanted to shoot off one of his famous light-speed rants, explaining in precise detail exactly how he felt about Fasttrack and his 'sorries.' This mech had been responsible for turning Blurr's life on its head, for stealing everything he'd ever known. Blurr still had nightmares of a sly face and crimson plating, using him, twisting him, until he was a puppet on a string, a Pretender in his own body. And he was supposed to be mollified by a word - a word that was only being said due to extreme circumstances?

But he held back. He was no longer Blurr of Velocitron, an anxious child, broken down by years of misery and solitude. He was an Intelligence agent. He'd suffered far worse, seen far more brutal monsters than the pathetic nobody that now sat before him. He wanted to be afraid, but he couldn't afford to let himself. The mission was more important. "Noted. Now about why you're here. Moonracer said -"

"'Noted?' That's it? That's all you have to spare for a dying mech? Do you know how hard it is for me to say such things?"

Blurr struggled to keep hold of his icy demeanor. Stay calm, stay calm. "To be honest, I don’t care. So you’re dying? And what? What are you looking for here? Forgiveness? Why? What does it matter? This is the first time we've met in vorns – I'm not a part of your life and you're not a part of mine. Why should you care if you die with me hating you?"

"Because," Fasttrack said, scooting in towards the bars on his wrecked knees. "I've made a nice mess of my life, as you can clearly see, and it all began with you. I got expelled for what I did to you – did you know that? They called it assault – what a joke! You're the one who assaulted me, if anything. But the Academy had to protect their precious, shining star. It was always about you!
“You were given recommendations, the opportunity to move to Cybertron. I got kicked to the curb, made a pariah on a planet I didn't have the means to escape.”

Blurr was fast losing hold on his emotions. His legs began shaking, plating rattling as he tried to retain his fading grasp on serenity. Getting kicked off of Velocitron had been the worst day of his life. He'd never imagined how much harder things could have been if he'd stayed.

Fasttrack had haunted him for vorns, always lingering at the back of his mind with every failure he’d faced, every time weakness overcame him. Every Speedster he met bore Fasttrack’s face, and every spike he took filled him with memories of Fasttrack’s hands grabbing him, mocking him, hurting him. And now, here Fasttrack was, a pathetic and beaten shell of his former self. There was no room for a creature like this in his nightmares – Blurr had won. Here he was – a successful military mech, half on his way to the Elite Guard, and Fasttrack was a prisoner, rotting in a cell.

“I didn’t realize,” Blurr said, voice neutral, his fear and pain finally leaving him to do his job. He almost felt bad for how good this felt. “You’ve been through a lot, and I do pity you, but I do not forgive you. So why don’t you answer my questions, and I’ll be on my way.”

“Primus Blurr!” Fasttrack groaned. “How do you think I got joined up with the Decepticons in the first place?!”

The easy confession hadn’t surprised him. Fasttrack's status as a Decepticon was confirmed, but Blurr had been open to that possibility since Moonracer first mentioned it. Still, the question he posed was a valid one. Blurr thought it over.

“Well,” he began, tapping his chin, and then his toe-piece as his mind got to work. "Presumably they had a recruiter on Velocitron to seek out potential converts, most likely among the weak and disenchanted, the bots who would most benefit from an upheaval of the system, much like yourself. He would have gotten you back on your feet, enticed you with promises of a better future, earned your loyalty, and in turn, you would swear your allegiance to him, to the Decepticons, and do whatever it took to put them in power." Blurr was pacing now, excitement overflowing from within him as the pieces fell into place. "And judging by what Moonracer said, you did pretty well for yourself – got yourself a seat in President Ransack’s cabinet, the highest power in the land, where you no doubt began to spread the gospel. How am I doing so far?"

Fasttrack shuttered his optics, his mouth agape. It was a good look on the mech. “Color me impressed.”

“Right,” said Blurr, resuming his steady shuffle. He was on a roll here; no point in stopping it now. "And if the ruling party belongs to the Decepticons, it would explain a thing or two, for instance, the gross negligence regarding the investigation of Override’s death. She was in the cabinet too, but knowing what I know about her, not to mention what I surmised from Moonracer's behavior, I'm disinclined to believe that she was one of you. Which means she was probably standing in the way and needed to be taken out – or perhaps she learned the truth, either way, her death was a matter of silencing her. Leadership or not, the Decepticons are still operating on an Autobot colony. They'd need to keep their presence a secret from the general populace for as long as possible.

“And that’s why you’re in here too, isn’t it?” he said, suddenly changing gears. "Someone found out about your allegiance and threatened to squawk, and your allies decided to make a scapegoat of you, to distance themselves from the movement, since you were already suspected of having Decepticon leanings. I guess the only thing I can't explain is the severe nature of your imprisonment.”

Fasttrack stared at Blurr in mute horror for a moment, as he struggled to process what he'd just been told, but then, once it all settled in, his lips twisted upwards, and he burst into another fit of static-
laced laughter.

“Close. You're really close. I'm surprised. When did you get so smart?”

“I'd say it was about the moment when I stopped letting you hold me back, but do go on.”

The dig earned a grimace from Fasttrack, but for once in his life, he proved amenable. “Override was the one who found out about me. Nothing definitive, but it was enough to launch an investigation, should she go public, and the council didn't want that, less for my sake, and more to save their own afts. Like you said, despite everything I'd done for them, the Decepticons were perfectly willing to sacrifice me to protect themselves, and an investigation would definitely uncover their own secrets. So I made a deal with her. I told her everything I knew, in exchange for my freedom. From there, we were going to go public, all the way to Cybertron if we had to, to get those traitors outta there.

“Too bad, they somehow found out what I did. Now I'm here as a traitor, and I guess they managed to silence Override too in the end. It's a damn shame, that. But hey, if Override's dead, then I guess I may as well tell you. Name the names. Squeal like a Minicon. Wanna hear?”

“Okay, I'll bite,” said Blurr, skeptical. Fasttrack's account made enough sense to be worth hearing more, but he couldn't discount the possibility of the mech encouraging misdirection. Still, there was no reason not to listen either.

But the opportunity never came.

“Oh no no no, Primus no!”

Fast Track begin screaming, torturous, sickening cries for help, writhing in his chains all the while. But Blurr couldn't afford to pay him the attention he sought. The world somersaulting around him, leaving him dizzy on his feet, struggling to see straight. Primus, it had been a trap! Blurr activated his comm and made a cursory effort to call the guards, but only silence answered him.

“Now now, no more of that. We did warn you, Fasttrack.” A rev of the stranger's engine brought Blurr to his knees. Beside him, Fasttrack's screams ceased. He slumped forward in his chains, EM field vanishing altogether, the weak crimson of his plating fading to grey. Dead.

“What – what did you do to him?” Blurr snarled, struggling to produce any sound at all, though his words came out as fast as ever. “What are you doing to me? Who are you? And don't say you're a Decepticon. I think that much is obvious by this point. I want you to tell me something useful. You killed him, didn't you? How? How did you kill him? And why do you have a Cybertronian frame? You don't wear it well, I think you've been transplanted into it! You're a Decepticon, you should have a war frame! Where did you get that?”

The mech was watching him with wide, confused optics. His vicious engine ceased, allowing Blurr some clarity of thought. The stranger was confused by him, distracted from his assault in his effort to understand him. Blurr could use this.

He stopped trying to control his speed – if anything, he made an effort to speak even faster, with no
regard for clarity or reason. Whatever came to mind would do just fine.

“I should have known better than to trust Knock Out! He was in on this, he was absolutely in on this, and I don’t understand – what’s going on – why do you want Velocitron of all places? Whatever resources it had were used up long ago – it’s one hundred percent dependent on Cybertron, and they only take care of it out of obligation, and moreover, Velocitronians are completely divorced from reality – since when is speed a good measure of competence . . .” And so on.

The mech before him looked to be on the verge of a breakdown, his face plates heating pink in his effort to keep up. “What are you do –” The moment the mech opened his mouth, Blurr made his move, barreling over the stranger on his way out. He didn't dare stick around to finish the job. Professional or not, the stranger had him spooked. Until he learned more about that terrible ability, he wanted nothing to do with the guy.

Instead, he zipped up the stairs, and out of the cave, into the vast, empty desert that awaited him. How had everything gone so wrong so fast?

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If Shockwave had not been so well-trained, had been more prone to emotional outbursts, had been a mech less suited to undercover life, enemies constantly on all sides, he would have been in trouble. Shockwave was angry.

Breakdown was the target of his rage – Breakdown, and his incompetent handling of an easy-win situation.

Knock Out was an obvious symptom. The mech had been far too pathetic to call himself a Decepticon – he had besmirched the once-great name of their people. No wonder Breakdown had found such success on Velocitron. When one was willing to accept any common riff raff into the cause, to obscure their true beliefs and purpose behind pretty lies in an attempt to appeal to a downtrodden population – of course the people would come. But there was a downside to such strategy, and Agent Blurr had found it and exploited it, undoing vorns of hard work.

Shockwave would have felt vindicated, were the consequences not so severe. Megatron would flay Breakdown alive, disassemble him piece by piece, in front of an audience of fuel-hungry allies, looking for justice to be served. He would be destroyed, everything he ever did or cared for abolished with extreme prejudice, kept alive just long enough to let the horror of it all sink in before he was allowed to taste the sweet release of death. That was, if he was stupid enough to go back. If he ever crossed paths with Megatron again. The fool.

But Highbrow and Blurr did not see Shockwave's inner turmoil. All he allowed them to see was Longarm's face, serene as ever, as he listened to the further details of Blurr's story.

“My plan was finally starting to kick into motion once I had Knock Out in my hands. I stashed him in my ship where no one would find him, then got in touch with Moonracer again, who was eager for my report.

“She was, of course, horrified that the Decepticons had infiltrated so much farther than even she had anticipated. She'd suspected they were in security, but in Ransack's cabinet? Still, she took to the idea without too much fuss. She was even the one who suggested that President Ransack was in on the conspiracy, which ultimately proved to be true. We talked well into the night, but eventually we parted ways. She had a presence to maintain, and I still had to locate Breakdown.
“Fortunately for me, it seemed he had the same idea.”

Shockwave would not bury his face in his hands, even if he very much wanted to. What had that idiot been thinking? Well, whatever it had been, as Agent Blurr was here now, it hadn't worked. He didn't think he could stomach any more of the tale, but leaving at this point would have been pointless. He steeled his tanks, and prepared for the worst.

“On my way out, I ran into Breakdown, who, as it turned out was a little less than thrilled that Knock Out had gone missing. He attacked me outside of Moonracer's warehouse, which in retrospect, probably was a sign of desperation – attacking an agent right outside of the headquarters of Velocitron security! But ultimately, the move worked out for both of us.

"He seemed to be under the impression that he could beat Knock Out’s location out of me, and I admit, that engine of his did give me some trouble. It had been modified, you see, so that revving it sent out vibrations violent enough to upset the internal mechanisms within other bots. It's what had thrown me off earlier, and killed Fasttrack, with the state his body was in, it was no wonder.” He stopped mid-rant as Highbrow held up a hand, calling for silence.

“This Knock Out was really so important to the cause?” He said scoffing. “So important, that Breakdown felt the need to attack you in such an absurd location, when he had killed Fasttrack, a mech actually positioned within Ransack's cabinet for jeopardizing his mission? I can understand the latter, but the former baffles me. How in the world was Knock Out so important?”

Shockwave had a guess, and he really didn't want confirmation. The last thing he needed right now was one more reason to loathe the disgraced mech.

“Well, he was state medic, of course, which is actually kind of a big deal, but I’m pretty certain that, as far as Breakdown was concerned, this was an entirely personal matter.”

“Personal . . .” Highbrow let the notion sink in, before his face upturned in a hideous sneer at the realization. “Disgusting! Autobots with Decepticons!? That traitor deserves the most brutal of executions. Joining the enemy is bad enough, but sleeping with them?!”

Shockwave wanted to reflect the sentiment, was fully prepared to mere seconds prior, but somehow, hearing Highbrow's violent protestations quelled his fire, if only a little. The last thing he wanted was to agree with such a deplorable mech on an ideological level. Besides, disgusting as the idea of engaging with an Autobot in such a way was, he’d been stuck on Cybertron long enough to understand that, despite being softer and weaker, the Autobots were still made from the same mold – still given life by the Allspark, still forged from protoform. They were all bots, cultural differences aside. And though he would never stoop so low, he could understand how a lesser bot might fall into such a trap.

They were enemies, not monsters.

“Yes, well it worked to my advantage in the end. I was ultimately able to trade Knock Out for the names of Decepticon agents in the cabinet, including, as suspected, President Ransack himself. Moonracer and I spent a few days confirming the names and gathering evidence, but everything seemed to check out, and soon we had enough information to warrant arresting a good third of the Velocitronian leaders.”

“And Knock Out?” Highbrow asked, a stern look on his face.

“I gave him back to Breakdown, of course.”
Blurr had laid low for long enough. The Elite Guard was due to arrive any day now, and he needed to be ready for them, with answers, and moreover, warrants. He couldn’t very well put a handful of Velocitronians in prison under suspicion alone, least of all when said Velocitronians were the ones in charge of the planet. It was time to get to work.

And so he found himself back in Knock Out’s office, this time without an appointment, following what continued to be his only lead. Knock Out had insisted he talk to Fasttrack, Knock Out had set him up, Knock Out had the answers.

Blurr zipped past reception, fast enough that nobody noticed him. And he didn’t stop running until he was in Knock Out’s elegant first-floor office, with the poor mech slammed up against the wall.

“Blurr?!”

“Weren’t expecting to see me so soon?” Blurr nearly wished he could see the medic’s surprise at being so caught off guard.

“I-” He trailed off, his voice strangely remorseful. It was great to know he cared. Too bad he didn’t care enough.

“You what?” Blurr prompted, pressing in tighter, feeling a rush at being able to throw his own weight around for a change.

“I told him not to hurt you.”

“What?” Blurr backed off, just slightly, surprised when Knock Out didn't try to get away. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t know. He promised he wouldn't hurt you. I just – I don't . . .”

Blurr placed a pede in the small of Knock Out’s back, pressing him back into the wall, and allowed his wheels to shift slightly, in warning. “Knock Out,” he growled.

“I don’t!” came the shrieked reply. “I’m sorry! I knew you were investigating us and I panicked. Same with Override. She told me she was gonna go public with what Fasttrack had told her. And I got scared, but I didn’t want her to die – I tried my hardest to save her, and . . .”

Blurr released his hold on Knock Out, and carefully laid his hand on a shoulder pauldron, at last whirling the mech to face him. Knock Out’s optics were wide and bright – upset.

“But you had to have known! Your friend? He's a Decepticon. We’re Autobots. What did you think was gonna happen?”

“Breakdown wouldn’t have hurt you.” Bingo. He had a name. It wasn't much, but it was a start.

“Breakdown?”

“He’s the main Decepticon recruiter on this planet. He wouldn’t hurt you. Not if I asked him not to! He’s my – we’re partners.”

Blurr didn't like the way Knock Out had said that. ‘Lovers.’ He'd meant to say 'lovers,' then thought better of it. The news was surprising, but made a strange amount of sense as well, as the pieces began to fall into place. “You sold out the Autobots for love? Is that what you’re telling me?”
“Of course not!” Knock Out snapped. “You’d sell them out too if you knew the things I do. Breakdown opened my optics.”

“And I’m sure he had no ulterior motive at all. He’s a Decepticon Knock Out. He’ll say whatever it takes to get you on his side.

“You would say that – you’ve been off-planet for too long. But look at us – look how Cybertron rules us. They take what few resources we have, distract us from our dying planet by keeping our optics on racing – racing! You think it’s natural that our leadership is won in such ridiculous manner? You think we chose to confine ourselves to tiny little underground hovels? You think we willingly refuse to innovate and educate and try to make things better for ourselves? Primus Blurr, we’re them! We all descended from colonists! We’re not fundamentally different, so how have we become such a joke? Why is our world is one of the worst-off in the commonwealth? How do you think that happened?

“It was better when the Decepticons were in charge.”

When the Decepticons were in charge? The words had been said with such longing, as though Knock Out were pining for a lost golden age, but the Decepticons had last held the planet during the Great War, well before Knock Out's time. The mech had no idea what he was talking about. “It wasn’t –”

“It was!” Knock Out insisted. “Talk to any of the older mechs and they’ll tell you. We were better off during the war. And we were better off again when Ransack took over, when Ransack allowed Breakdown in, allowed the Decepticons to help us fix our broken planet! Trust me, Blurr. Someday you’ll see just how messed up everything is, and you’ll want to join the Decepticons too.”

There was no getting through to him. The fact of the matter was, as strange as this conversation was, and as little as he trusted Knock Out, he couldn't exactly find the conviction within himself to refute the arguments. The Autobots were corrupt; he had first-hand evidence of that. But how could anyone think the Decepticons were better?

But it didn't matter. He had a mission to fulfill, and nothing would keep him from it.

“All right then, Knock Out. I believe that you really believe in what you’re saying, but you do realize that Override and Fasttrack are dead because of your decisions, and I’m starting to worry about Moonracer now too actually, and so I’m sorry for what I’m about to do.”

Knock Out was still trying to comprehend Blurr’s words when Blurr struck, whipping a pair of stasis cuffs from his subspace and slipping them on Knock Out’s wrists. Knock Out dropped immediately, the energy drained from his frame.

“Blurr,” he growled, voice strained under the effort of speaking.

“Like I said, I’m sorry about this, really I am, but I’ve got a mission to complete, and you’re in the way.”

“You’re just as bad as they are,” Knock Out laughed, bitterly. “I should have known.”

“If it makes you feel any better,” said Blurr, “I’ve looked into your claims already, and I even acknowledge some of what you’re saying as factual. But the Decepticons are not our bright saviors. They're just the Autobots with a different name, if not a bit more utilitarian and brutal. But that is all beside the point. I've got a job to do. I’ve got two murders right here, and somebody has to be brought to justice. In the meantime, we need to make you disappear.”
Blurr spoke fast. That much had been made obvious from the first time he opened his mouth. But it was hearing him speak at length that really drove this point home. It was clear that he was trying to make amenities for the sakes of Highbrow and Longarm – controlling his speed, pausing every so often to let the words sink in, for all the good it did. Ten very intense kliks had passed, with Blurr telling of his arrival on Velocitron, reuniting with his old friends, and unraveling half the investigation in the span of two days. By this point, Shockwave's processor was awake and fully up to speed for the first time in vorns, millennia even. He hadn't worked it this efficiently since the days of the Great War. It was a feeling he hadn't even realized that he missed.

And Blurr was still speaking.

"At that point, I had a pretty good idea as to what was going on. Fasttrack was dead. Knock Out was a Decepticon convert. And the bot from the cave, Breakdown, was his name – I found that out later, was now in the game, and probably looking for me. It was time to bring in the Elite Guard.

"Unfortunately, even with a transwarp drive, they needed twenty-four solar cycles to arrive. In the meantime, I had to lay low, research what I could without drawing attention to myself, lest I wind up trapped in Decepticon servos with no respite in sight.

"So I called up Moonracer and told her that I needed to avoid her for a bit, for her own safety. I warned her to stay sharp and watch her back, and to not trust anyone, because the Decepticons had already infiltrated the Velocitronian elite. Of course, I was pretty certain that she already knew that, but you could never be too careful. I'd already lost Override and Fasttrack, and Knock Out may as well have been dead to me. I had no intention of losing Moonracer too."

"So you spent most of that first lunar cycle doing nothing?" Highbrow surmised, his face a twisted combination of understated shock and indignant rage, that Shockwave couldn't quite understand. Blurr had pursued the only logical option open to him in that situation. A single Intelligence Agent couldn't very well arrest half of a planet's ruling class. Even if he'd had the means, he certainly lacked the authority.

On the other hand, this meant that, technically speaking, Blurr had really destroyed Breakdown's operation in a handful of days, which was, quite frankly, absurd! This mech, awkward, glitched-up little Velocitronian immigrant with a quick tongue, sharp wit, and impossible speed, was shaping up to be the most unusual creature Shockwave had ever held the misfortune of interacting with – and the Decepticons weren't known for their conformity. He feared – oh, did he fear, but also, somewhere deep within his spark, a sense of admiration began to take root. How refreshing to find even a single worthy foe amongst hundreds of thousands of weak, foolish Autobots.

"Not nothing," Blurr corrected with a sour look of his own. "I researched, I talked to commoners, got a sense of the climate on Velocitron – what they thought of President Ransack, for instance. On the whole, they were more satisfied with modern Velocitron than they had been in a long time – I was actually surprised by how much animosity most mechs held towards Cybertron. I certainly never noticed any of that growing up there, but maybe a regime change was what it took to bring to light all of the flaws?

"People were angry, and they were tired – I don't know how much you know about Velocitron, but it's a bit of a disaster. It's resources were plundered ages ago, between Autobot colonizers and Decepticon occupiers, and then the Autobots again, after the war. The only resource left to it is space – lots of open space. But even so, the sun is intense – lethal in some parts of the planet, and when all's said and done, it really is a hellish place to live.
“Nobody knows quite where the obsession with racing culture came from – perhaps it was
necessitated by the inhospitable desert planet – among the early colonists, the fastest bots were the
ones who survived to shape the planet in their image. Whatever the case, by this point, Velocitron
had devolved into a joke. Every aspect of society, right down to the election of leadership, was
determined by speed – racing, and I think people were starting to realize how absurd that was.

"A series of incompetent, extravagant rulers had pushed the planet to the brink of despair – to the
point where they broke centuries of isolation and began sending mechs, like myself, to Cybertron in
an effort to rekindle a relationship and seek help. Too little too late, I think.

"President Ransack was the first leader in ages to possess not only speed, but some measure of
strategic intelligence as well. He came in not long after I'd left, and had worked hard for the handful
of vorns he'd been in office to improve infrastructure and generally reshape the Velocitronian way of
life – to make them proud to be Velocitronian, to shift views and make Velocitronians realize that
they were more than just their speed. And somehow, and by 'somehow,' I mean, through deals with
the Decepticons, he'd managed to come up with the funding and resources to pull off a lot of
impressive feats. He was a much-beloved leader, which made my job all the more difficult, not that I
was aware of that at the time . . ."

"With all due respect, Agent Blurr," Highbrow interrupted, "I would prefer you keep this concise. If
I wanted a lecture on Velocitronian history, I would enroll in a class at the Historians' Guild. This is
about how you weeded out the Decepticons and sent them packing. Please stay on topic."

Again, Blurr's optics narrowed, insulted by Highbrow's words, and Shockwave didn't blame him. It
was clear that Highbrow did not much respect Agent Blurr, which seemed a travesty, given all
Shockwave had learned thus far. Besides, every good story needed context, and Shockwave quite
liked hearing about the mess that the Autobots had made of their most useless colony. The
Decepticons, careless overlords that they'd been, at least hadn't reduced the planet to a world of
vapid, senseless morons. He wanted to hear more.

"Yes, Sir. I apologize. I'll get back on track. Now, where was I? Oh yes. After two decacycles of
casual investigation and chatting up the locals, I figured I had laid low long enough. The Elite Guard
were due to arrive any day, and I needed to be ready for them, with answers, and moreover, warrants
. . ."

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The meeting had gone about as smoothly as could be expected. Breakdown had come alone, as was
the deal. And Blurr, for once, had no tricks up his sleeve – no plans to double-cross. Perhaps he felt
sorry for the unlikely pair, perhaps he was satisfied with his own accomplishments already. Perhaps
Knock Out's words had left a bigger impact on him than anticipated.

The Autobots were supposed to be the good guys, and heroes did not play dirty.

Whatever the case, Blurr released Knock Out to Breakdown, who apparently had no qualms about
underhanded deals. He revved his engine hard and loud, and Blurr fell to his knees, world moving
too fast to keep his balance.

But then, it had stopped.

With his head addled as it was, Blurr had some difficulty in perceiving what happened next. All he
saw were the backs of the unlikely pair as they retreated into the sunrise.

Blurr did not pursue, a fact that would need to be omitted from his report to Highbrow. He would
tell them he had been knocked out by the assault. And though he knew his actions foolish, and felt guilty for lying, he did not admonish himself for it. Why was showing mercy a deed worthy of shame?

The Elite Guard arrived the next morning, utterly destroying Velocitron leadership with it, as in all, eighteen mechs in various positions of authority were taken in. Naturally, they couldn't leave the planet to recover from such a blow on its own. A small Cybertronian police force would be dispatched to work with Moonracer's crew to weed out infiltrators, and work with Moonracer's crew to get Velocitron back on its pedes. And though Blurr received a commendation from Elite Guard Agent Jazz, he was subsequently given the order to remain where he was, until Velocitron was stable once again.

It was the last news he'd wanted to hear. He was sick of Velocitron; he wanted off of it. It had been a place of misery in his past, and now it was a place of death and corruption. Only bad things happened there, and Blurr, cursed as he was, was always at the center of them. He prayed he would never go back.

In the end, it took another two vorns for him to return to Cybertron, between red tape and supplemental investigation, as well as the transitional period, and the moment he arrived in the space port, he was already racing for Highbrow’s office, ready to report his findings and wash his servos of the whole affair. He put through a brief call, as a courtesy, and had his approval by the time he reached the front steps of the Metroplex.

Wheelie would be so happy to see him!

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Shockwave had been on Cybertron for a little more than two vorns, and Project: Doppelganger was already ahead of schedule. And all it had taken was nearly blowing his cover to do so. An innocent bot was in prison in his place, Cybertron as a whole had been alerted to the possibility of Decepticon activity on their home soil, and Longarm had been lauded as a hero. These three factors had serendipitously combined forces to rush him through the Academy, ultimately getting him sniped by the Head of Intelligence, Highbrow Prime, before his degree was even issued.

That was when Shockwave benefited from his second stroke of good luck. Highbrow had seen his grades, Highbrow had seen him put a Decepticon behind bars before leaving boot camp, and Highbrow had taken note of his desire to join Intelligence. But as it turned out, Highbrow had no intention of making him 'just' another agent.

"You're still a little fresh to be out in the field, but you've got a good head on your shoulders. I'd like to have you stick around the office, assist me where you can – filing, reports, research. It's grunt work, but I'd like a competent young upstart like yourself at my side; my current assistant is useless. He's the Magnus's ward; only reason he got the job. But he's more than proven he can't handle it. 'Out with the old, in with the new,' I say." Ironic, coming from the longest-serving Prime in the military.

What Highbrow had not told him, was that, as assistant to the Prime, he would be taking on the duties of the Prime, whenever Highbrow was too busy to perform them. And should Highbrow happen to die, protocol was to have his assistant fill in until a proper Prime could be acquired. If Shockwave played his cards right, this could be his big break. He was close enough to victory to taste it.

In the meantime, he did research. He wanted to know the name, face, skills and weaknesses of every agent in Intel, and then of every military officer and public figure, up to and including Ultra Magnus.
He was going to learn everything he possibly could while he was here; Megatron would be so very pleased once he arrived.

He was at his desk, pouring through a personnel data tablet when the proximity sensors went off. Strange. There were no upcoming appointments on the schedule. Highbrow had been in a strategy meeting with Ultra Magnus for the greater part of the morning, discussing known Decepticon sightings and invasions, and trying to piece together their movements. It was due to end soon, which made the timing of this a little eerie.

But before Shockwave had time to comm Highbrow or check the schedule, the door was sliding open (that was a bit quick, wasn't it?) and a blue flurry of Velocitronian racer angles zipped into the room. Ah, this must have been Agent Blurr. That explained a few things.

Shockwave had intended on introducing himself with a smile, and offering the newcomer some friendly chatter while they waited for Highbrow's meeting to end. And if he happened to get a feel for the character of an agent he'd spent, in retrospect, woefully little time researching, all the better. But it hadn't worked out that way.

"You're not Wheelie!" he cried out at such a speed that Shockwave's unprepared processor gave a stutter. It had been far too long since it had found the chance to work at such speed. "What happened to Wheelie? He was Highbrow's assistant when I left, but now he is gone and you are here, in his chair, which leads me to believe that he's been replaced, which is a shame, unless that is not the case, and you do not, in fact, work here, in which case, I have to ask, who are you?"

Shockwave's vision spiraled as he forced his lazy processor back up to its ordinary standard of functioning. He'd been among these inferior Autobots with their far too easy lives for too long. He'd never expected to find one capable of challenging him, and yet, here he was. While he was at it, he brought up Highbrow's schedule. Oh.

There in fact was an appointment scheduled for Agent Blurr, as of five kliks ago. What in the world? What kind of mech scheduled an appointment a mere five kliks in advance?

The agent was staring at him with an expectant frown. Oh yes, he was in a conversation.

"I'm afraid my predecessor was deemed inadequate for this position, and transferred to a factory in downtown Iacon." Blurr's glare softened at this, suspicion turning to grief. Interesting. "I surmise he was a friend of yours, and I apologize if my presence upsets you. My name is Longarm. Longarm of Luna I."

Recognition dawned on Blurr's face. "Oh, you're that bot who found the Decepticon spy infiltrating boot camp. I remember you. Good job with that, I suppose. I mean, it's hard to believe that the Decepticons would send an agent all the way to Cybertron, only for him to be apprehended in boot camp, don't you think? By two cadets, no less! How incompetent do you even have to be in order to fail that spectacularly – no offence to you. You seem to have done all right for yourself, though if I recall correctly, you would have just been entering the Academy when I left. Surely I haven't been gone long enough for you to have netted a position in Intel already, even if it is only as Highbrow's assistant. But what do I know? It's been awhile. Maybe things have changed, and I honestly don't know you anyway, so I shouldn't make such judgments. You'll have to forgive me if I'm terse. I only arrived back on Cybertron ten kliks ago. I'm probably still a little jet-lagged."

Ten kliks?! Shockwave admired a dedicated subordinated, but this was something else entirely! It was customary for an agent to wait at least a day to regain their bearings. Who in the Pit was this bot?! And why did his description of Longarm of Luna I's shining moment sound so very accusatory?
Alas, Highbrow Prime poked his head out of his office before Shockwave had a chance to learn more.

"Ah, Agent Blurr," he said. Shockwave had always seen Highbrow as an affectionate leader, if not one fond of using tough love on his subordinates from time-to-time. But the look on his face as he met optics with his agent held no fondness whatsoever. Blurr may as well have been a dent in his plating, for all the detestation Highbrow fixed upon him. "Quick as ever. I see you've met Longarm."

"I have," said Blurr, concise and to the point. His optics, however, seemed to be continuing the conversation on my own. You got rid of my friend for this guy! Why did you do it? Where is he? Is he all right?" Wisely, he said none of these. "But more to the point, I've just gotten back from Velocitron, and I'd like to get my report to you before I settle in. It's been a long time, and I just want to get back to my life without that looming over my head, if that's fine by you."

"Of course Agent," said Highbrow, flat and expressionless. "I've heard tell of your accomplishments second hand, from the Elite Guard, though nothing has been concrete. I am eager to hear about this mission first-hand, particularly the part where you upset an entire Decepticon operation in barely a single lunar cycle."

What was that now? This scrawny agent had done what?!! Breakdown had been operating on Velocitron, and last Shockwave heard, had managed to work his way into the colony's highest order, gathering converts left and right. But arriving on Cybertron had done much to leave Shockwave cut off from the cause he was fighting. His only point of contact was Lord Megatron, and when he deigned to grace Shockwave with his glorious presence, it was only to talk of his own mission. He'd had no idea.

This Blurr was dangerous. Shockwave had to hear his tale.

"That?" said Blurr. "That was ages ago! Wouldn't you rather hear about the political turmoil and social outreach and the otherwise excruciating process of cleaning up what amounted to our own mess, and taking Velocitron from a colony teetering on burnout to – well, I wouldn't say it's flourishing, but it's certainly stable at least! I've been gone for two vorns, and you only want to hear about the first lunar cycle?"

"The rest is covered in your report, is it not? But this is the part I would most like to hear." He moved towards his office, beckoning Blurr along with him. Shockwave would be left alone, forced to read over the physical copy of the report later on. And though this particular agent had a reputation for his meticulous writing, from the way he spoke, it seemed unlikely that the most important piece would be the one written in the least detail. Shockwave couldn't stand the thought.

"Would you like to join us, Longarm?" Shockwave perked up, forcing a look of wide-eyed wonder onto his face.

"Sir?"

"This is good experience for you, and we may as well start getting you accustomed to Agent Blurr and his long-winded reports right now. Come on in."

"Yes Sir!" Longarm chirped. "Thank you Sir!" And he teetered into the office after them. Eager to learn as much about his new enemy as possible. And then, when the time was right, he would kill him.
Chapter Summary

Blurr loves Longarm very much, it's true, but does he trust him?

Longarm was not who he said he was – Blurr was almost certain. The circumstances of his rise to prominence were too convenient, he had graduated (with *honors*) in a fraction of the time Blurr had, though admittedly, he could understand why the Academy was rushing out graduates. Still, he'd also been immediately sniped out as Highbrow's right hand, was currently being groomed to succeed the Prime. Moreover, his processor was strong enough that he could effortlessly understand *Blurr*. He was perfect.

And that was the issue. Blurr had been accused of the same, shared many of the same traits, but everyone *hated* Blurr. Not so with Longarm, and it wasn't hard to see why. In addition to being smart, and lucky, not to mention his shining record of putting away a Decepticon before he'd left boot camp, he was sweet and kind, reliable, witty, wise, and never once, had anyone seen him lose his temper. He couldn't possibly have been real. Rather, he left Blurr with the impression of an elite bot forced to pretend to be young and inexperienced, and failing spectacularly at it.

Longarm couldn't be trusted.

But Blurr had no hard evidence to back up his intuition, and to be honest, he preferred it that way. Longarm may have had everyone wrapped around his servo, but Blurr would be a fool to discount himself as affected.

Never before in his life had he been treated with such reverence, such patience, such respect. Longarm understood him, Longarm understood how to treat him, Longarm was everything he never knew he wanted, never thought he'd have.

He nearly didn't care that it may be an act to get him complacent. It worked. Blurr turned a blind optic to any word or deed that was incompatible with the Longarm he needed.

Highbrow's disgrace, so soon after Blurr had confided in Longarm about the guy? A happy coincidence. Things were finally going right for Blurr. He had a good job, a sweet lover (?), was free from the grasping hands of mechs in seedy dives and crowded clubs, free from Velocitron and Fasttrack, free from Highbrow. For the first time in his life, he was happy. Was it any wonder he wanted to play dumb?

But Blurr didn't have to worry about it – he had plenty of distractions to keep his mind away from the possible treason he was maybe committing. He was in the Elite Guard now; he rarely had a moment to himself, even when he *wasn't* working. He had no time to keep up with his old friends Wheelie and Dug Base, even though he tried to visit. He barely had time to spend with Longarm, no matter how much he wanted to. He was too busy travelling across Cybertron and the wider commonwealth, doing raids, making arrests once in a great while, fighting Decepticons. Their momentum seemed to have petered out a bit as of late, and they'd gone back into complacency, and into hiding. Still, the slavers, the drug barons, and the rest of the rabble were still out in full force. Blurr had plenty to do.
Busy as he was, it was a miracle Longarm was still with him. Pit, that night at the club should have been the last – it would have followed the pattern of Blurr's life to a tee. Kindness was fleeting, a one-and-done sort of affair. Longarm had stayed longer than most, but an explicit date that nearly ended in a quick tumble in Blurr's apartment should have been enough to kill it. But Longarm had been persistent.

"I had a lot of fun last night," he'd said the next day, over Blurr's comm. "I wish you the best of luck with your endeavors in the Elite Guard, but if I can be selfish for a moment, I hope that your transfer will not be the end for us. You've scarcely left, and already I miss you."

 Needless to say, it was not. Suspicious or not, Blurr was done with letting his loved ones walk out of his life. If only he could actually get around to paying Longarm a visit. Daily comms were nice, but it could not compare to a face-to-face meeting.

But while he struggled to fit his old relationships into his new life, he wasn't without contact. He'd gotten to know a handful of pleasant mechs in the Elite Guard, most notably Jazz, the Elite Guardsmech who had shown up in his life time and again.

He was calm, surprisingly cheerful, and honestly, a little scary. Of all the mechs Blurr had met in his new job, Jazz was the only one who ever felt like a threat. He was savvy and observant, much like Blurr was, but unlike Blurr, he had a tendency to sneak up on other bots, hiding in the shadows, unnoticed until it was on his terms. It was difficult not to imagine him, lurking around every corner, spying on every conversation. But that was fine. Blurr had nothing to hide.

Nothing important anyway.

His confidence was put to the test, however. He sat in the mess hall of Fortress Maximus, re-reading his most recent comm from Longarm. "I know I should be working this case right now, but I couldn't stop thinking about you. I look forward to our next outing, whether it been in a solar cycle, or a hundred stellar cycles. All I want is to be at your side once again." The message was short and sweet, and Blurr was surely grinning like a love-struck fool, when Jazz showed up out of nowhere.

"So, you and Longarm, eh?" he said, dragging a most-startled Blurr from his blissful reverie. The snarky aft leaned his hip against the table, a playful smile on his face. He knew. How did he know? And how had that comment been so very apropos?

"There's nothing wrong with it," Blurr said, a bit hastily. "We're in different departments, so it's fine."

"Uh-huh," Jazz laughed. "Well, I promise not to tell – cross my spark."

"Er, thank you for that."

"So, what's he like?" he continued. "Little fella seems to have hit the jackpot – nice job, favor from his Prime, a fine lover, but I can't say I know him at all, yeah? He up and came outta nowhere and took over in a stupidly short time yeah? Kinda like a meeker version of you actually. Bot must be something special."

Jazz may well have been the only other bot to notice. It should have been a sign that his misgivings had merit, but hearing his own anxieties spoken aloud by a trusted voice drove him to protest even more. Blurr didn't know how much Jazz respected Blurr's opinion, least of all due to his position of bias, but Blurr felt the need to defend his lover anyway.
"I understand what you're saying, Jazz. Believe me, I've seen it too. But if you spoke to him in person, you'd see that he really is something special!

"He's so smart and talented and the sweetest mech I have ever met – humble! And he listens! Like, he really and truly honest-to-Primus, one hundred percent, listens to me, and understands and I've never met anyone who can just do that before! And he's so patient with me! He never interrupts! He never gets upset when I go off – kind of like I'm doing now! He just listens! It's a really underrated skill."

Jazz took a moment to catch up, before offering another chuckle. "Seems you really dig 'im."

"He's practically perfect, Jazz! I know everybody else thinks he's boring and dull, and maybe even a little timid, but what he lacks in charisma, he makes up for by being introspective and kind. I refuse to believe it's just an act."

"You know him best," Jazz shrugged. "I'm happy for ya." He clapped Blurr on the shoulder, then turned for the door. However, he didn't pass through, rather, he paused in its frame, as though he'd forgotten something.

"I don't think he's spyin' on us," he assured, swinging back around to face Blurr with a lazy, yet confident grin. "But I'd be a fool not to double-check in a case like that. Someone rises to power so quick and quiet, you can see my concern, ya dig? But if you're sayin' he's on the level, then I'll trust your judgment. You ain't let us down yet."

"Thank you," Blurr nodded, more assured than he felt. Was Jazz telling the truth? Or would he dive in and try to take the one thing that made Blurr happy?

The thoughts stuck with Blurr long after Jazz was gone.

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Life was going well for Blurr. He'd been with the Elite Guard for half a vorn now, and found himself both challenged and fulfilled. His social life was as busy as he could tolerate, and best yet, Longarm still loved him!

Their relationship at this point was mostly long distance – Blurr was off-planet too often to have it any other way, and when he did manage to find his way back to Iacon, he was usually confined to an office. But one of the advantages of being so quick, meant he was able to blaze through paperwork in a flash. Every so often, he would find the time to get away from it all, to pay his lover a visit, and every time Longarm greeted him with a warm smile and a tight embrace.

They loved to travel. Together, they'd already been to the Acid Wastes seven times, had explored the Sonic Canyons top to bottom, had spent one very lovely day walking the shores of the Rust Sea, and had toured every major City State. Romantic as it was, however, Blurr found himself baffled by Longarm's aversion to interface.

"Ah, I apologize," he'd say. "I just don't think I'm ready."

It was a frustrating excuse. He could understand if Longarm just didn't like the idea of interfacing – he was more than happy to spend time with Longarm, intimate or otherwise, and it was a refreshing change of pace from most of the mech's he'd shared a berth with, who had been unable to keep their hands off of him. But both of them knew this wasn't the case. Even if he had explicitly implied otherwise with his words, Blurr had an optic trained to spot arousal, and every brush of their hands, every kiss they shared, nearly sent Longarm over the edge. He clearly wanted Blurr, but for every
hint Blurr gave, every suggestion, or in one case, outright begging, Longarm would pull away and repeat the party line.

It should have been fine right there. Not being ready was a perfectly justifiable reason for not wanting to interface, but it had been half a vorn! If he wasn't ready by now, he likely never would be.

Still, Blurr wasn't about to throw away the purest relationship he'd ever had the pleasure of knowing for something so petty. If Longarm wanted to wait, then they'd wait.

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Blurr was allowed a few more years of tranquility before the bad luck inevitably caught up to him.

He was in his office, compiling his report for his most recent mission when his comm pinged, with a frequency that he knew well, and had hoped to never deal with again.

"Highbrow Prime? Why are you comming me? Is that even something you are legally allowed to do anymore? 'Cause even if it isn't, it is my personal preference that you go right back to not comming me, if you please."

"I need to meet you," he croaked from the other end. He sounded tired, he sounded ancient, he sounded done. What in the world had happened in Blurr's absence?

"Sir? Are you all right? You don't sound very well."

"They're after me, Agent Blurr. They're out to ruin me."

"'They'? Who is 'they' Sir? And why are you telling me about it? Shouldn't you report this to the Magnus? I don't know what I can do."

"No! I need you!" he snapped. "Meet me under Sherma Bridge in the second district at the twenty-first cycle. Come alone. Trust no one."

And with that, Highbrow cut him off, leaving Blurr with only the memory of that surreal encounter.

Highbrow Prime had lost his mind. Blurr didn't know if there was any truth in his allegations. It was probably just the ramblings of a madmech. But despite trying to will himself otherwise, he could not keep his mind from finding ways to blame Longarm for this.

Longarm and Highbrow had been inordinately close before Blurr had left – it was clear that Highbrow was very fond of Longarm. But Blurr was convinced that the affections only ran one way. Longarm had almost certainly staged the event that soured Highbrow's reputation, and though Blurr had suspected, he'd never said anything. Why would he? The scandal was a dream come true for him; he wasn't going to fight it.

But now – now it was all too clear that he had left Highbrow all alone with a mech who, for one reason or another, was trying to get Highbrow out of the picture.

... That was absurd! Longarm would never do such a thing – not without good reason. And Highbrow was hardly an upstanding mech, at least in Blurr's optics. If 'someone' was after him, then surely it was well-deserved.
Still, Blurr couldn’t just leave it at that. It would nag and grate on him the rest of his life if he left Highbrow’s call unanswered. And so, when his shift ended, he raced down to Sherma Bridge, quiet and secluded, to meet with the crazed Prime.

Highbrow was waiting for him.

"Agent Blurr."

"Sir, what is it you wanted form me? Why are we all the way out here? You said 'they' were after you? Who are 'they'? And wow, you don't look very well at all! Are you quite all right?"

"Stop babbling!" Highbrow snapped, his blue optics rimmed in the white of exhaustion. His frame was haggard, rough from every day wear-and-tear – he was in dire need of a wash and a buffer. Moreover, his colors were looking a bit flat, his stance unsteady, and his field flickering wildly. When was the last time he'd recharged?

"Yes Sir! No more babbling, Sir!" Blurr said, perhaps a bit facetiously. It was hard to have sympathy for Highbrow. Fortunately, Highbrow was too tired to notice the snide tone.

"How’s the Elite Guard treating you?

Blurr hesitated. What kind of question was this? "It's very nice, Sir. I'm quite happy there"

"Well," Highbrow sneered. "Isn't that just jolly?"

"Sir?"

"I've put in a request to get you back."

What?! The statement had been sudden, too fast for even Blurr to process. He couldn't go back! It wasn't possible! Highbrow was just rambling again.

"What are you talking about?! You were already given a strike for untoward behavior towards one of your subordinates – you're not allowed power over me anymore, by the Magnus's ruling! Pit, I shouldn't even be here now!"

"Not the case," Highbrow cackled. "Someone is out to get me – someone framed me! Perceptor found evidence that my memories had been tampered with! And Longarm supports the allegation. I appealed to Ultra Magnus, and he removed the charges. I can do whatever I like with you now. And I would like you back at my side – my best agent."

"What are you talking about? Surely the Magnus would have told me if I was being transferred, but I've heard nothing – zip, nada, zilch, zero, squat! Why are you telling me this? What are you trying to prove?"

Highbrow staggered forward, and Blurr backed away, in spite of himself. He'd faced down many an angry mech in the past, but that had been work. This was personal. Fortunately, Highbrow seemed to recognize Blurr's defensive action for what it was, as he stopped advancing.

"He's a busy mech. The appeal was solidified today. I'm sure you'll be receiving your notification in a day or two."

The more Blurr heard, the more he wanted to run away. But some cruel force held him in place, forced him to keep on listening as his life shattered to pieces all around him. "Why are you doing this?! I'm in the Elite Guard now! Are you really still hung up on that? Move on already!"
“You'll still be in the Elite Guard,” Highbrow laughed, unhinged. "Once you're in, you gotta go outta your way to dishonor yourself in order to be kicked out. But instead of running around on the order of the Magnus, your mission will be to work for me. We're gonna sniff out this spy, and you're the only one I trust to do it."

"What? Why?"

"Because it started after you left. I'm thinking it's someone in the Elite Guard that set me up – disgraced my name. Sentinel Prime, maybe? You can't trust those young up-and-comers." Blurr didn't bother mentioning that he was a young up-and-comer. "Warpath, perhaps? Never did trust a tank. Well, guess what! They can't have you! You're mine Agent!

"What?" Blurr stuttered. This couldn't be true. "I don't – I don't understand! If you've thought this since I left Intel, why would you wait until now to come forward with this?!"

"Got more evidence now, Agent. Someone hacked my bank account, I've had my identity stolen three times, someone's been siphoning from my subspace, I've been mugged, I've been assaulted on the street, and I suspect someone's been moving the furniture in my office, just slightly. Tryin' to make me think I've lost my mind."

"I don't – what does any of that have to do with me?"

"Well," Highbrow spat, his optics widening with a manic glee. "They way they got you out, I've been thinking that there's someone in the Guard's got a little crush on you. They see me as the enemy, and are trying to make me pay. They think I've done you wrong. Me! Who scouted you straight from the Academy."

"I think you're proving their point, Sir."

"No!" Highbrow slammed a fist into the side of the bridge, causing Blurr to flinch. "I may have never really liked you, Agent, but I acknowledge your skills. You're a smart mech. Are you really all right with some possible stalker hunting down any perceived threats to you? He goes after me first. Anyone that's hurt you. Once he runs out of those, he goes for smaller targets, perhaps those harmless syphonists that shout rude comments to you on the way home, maybe an estranged friend? And then after his rivals. Primus forbid you ever get a lover."

Blurr's energon ran cold. His mind flashed to Longarm again. Was he really to blame for this situation? Or could he become an unwitting victim? Or maybe this was still the ramblings of a mech demented. They were under a bridge in a seedy neighborhood. It didn't lend much credence to his proclamations.

"Anyway, there is no debating this. I wanted to let you know away from prying optics. It's impossible to know who you can trust. But trust me when I say that you will be reporting to my office on the twelfth solar cycle of the next lunar cycle, at the sixth cycle sharp, ready for work. Good night, Agent."

And with that said, Highbrow slipped away, leaving Blurr under the bridge all by himself to sort through what he'd just learned.

Highbrow was paranoid, to be sure, but Blurr couldn't deny that he'd been through a lot for just under a vorn, at least, if he was speaking the truth. The sheer number of slights couldn't have been coincidence, but Blurr had difficulty imagining a single Elite Guardsmech who would do such a thing, least of all for his sake. And furthermore . . . and furthermore . . .
He was going back.

Back to highbrow, his leering stares and his violent outbursts and his disdain for Blurr's very existence, only now accompanied by an extra does of extreme paranoia. He'd be back in the underground, allowing all manner of strangers to put their hands on him, to be inside of him, risking his life and welfare more intimately than he had in ages.

The joyful cloud he'd been floating on all vorn grew brittle and black, crumbling away until Blurr was left plummeting into despair.

Longarm.

He needed Longarm. Longarm had gotten him out before. Longarm could get him out again!

He didn't even think to comm first – he was beyond that point. But it was late – Longarm would be off work by now. He was dashing across the city and arriving on Longarm's front step nearly as soon as the realization struck, pounding frantically at the oversized door of the luxury suite.

"Blurr?" Longarm answered, optics wide. "What are you –"

And that was all the time Blurr allowed him before he pounced, wrapping long legs and spindly arms around Longarm's portly frame, as though it was the only thing that could keep him afloat.
Longarm, sensing Blurr's anguish, wrapped his own arms around that desperate body, holding him close.

"Blurr, what's wrong?"

This time, Blurr avoided answering by latching his mouth onto Longarm's, forcefully and passionately, savoring his touch, his taste. Longarm melted into the kiss, moaning into Blurr's frantic action, before he found enough willpower to pry him off.

"Blurr, what is going on? I appreciate the gesture, but this is so unlike you."

"I'm going back to Intel – Highbrow's dragging me back to Intel – apparently Ultra Magnus is all right with it, but nobody asked me or warned me – I can't go back to him – I can't! I'm finally happy – please don't let them take me back!"

Longarm pushed at his shoulders, lowering him down to sit on the edge of the recharge slab – when had they moved to the recharge slab? Weren't they just at the door?

"Blurr, slow down – vent. You're not making any sense. Highbrow is dragging you back to Intel?"

"Yes. He just told me, like, a few kliks ago. Someone in the Elite Guard is out to get him he thinks, so he wants me back to investigate or something – I don't know – it doesn't make any sense! None of this makes any sense!" There was a cube of energon in his hands now. He didn't know where it had come from, but he raised it to his lips, drinking it down greedily.

"You're right there," Longarm folded his arms across his chest, frowning. "That doesn't make any sense. Why in the world would he make a connection between you and his stalker?"

"His what?"

"With everything that's happened over the last vorn, he's come to the conclusion that he's being stalked. Poor guy. I think the pressure is really getting to him. I try to help where I can, but . . ." He shook his head, taking a seat beside Blurr. "Anyway, I'm sorry you were dragged into this. I
didn't think he'd come after you. Maybe he saw your departure as where his troubles began. But still, I can't believe the Magnus signed off on it. It might be worth double-checking."

"Right. Yes. I'll double-check," Blurr mumbled without much conviction, leaning into Longarm to take comfort from his warmth instead. "I'm sure it's nothing. I'm not going anywhere. I can't go anywhere." A hand reached around to Blurr's far shoulder, and squeezed tight, pulling him even closer. How was Longarm so warm, so secure, so good? Blurr allowed his optics to flicker off.

"I don't want to go back to that, and I don't want to go back to him. I'm finally happy, Longarm – I've got the Elite Guard, and I've got you – I don't want to go back to where I was before. I don't want to be pressured into – " he cut himself off. Truth be told, he didn't want to talk about his undercover work, least of all with Longarm. But there was something he did want to do.

In one quick motion, he whirled, throwing a leg across Longarm to straddle his lap, and he leaned in, resting his head against Longarm's shoulder.

"Blurr?"

"I want to stay yours – I want to be yours, please let me be yours."

"Blurr, I –" It was Longarm's turn to cut himself off. He left Blurr hanging for a long moment, as he pondered over the situation, and Blurr remained perfectly still, trying his hardest to not push Longarm's opinion either way.

Finally, his treaded pauldrons dropped a sigh. "Very well. I suppose I have kept us waiting long enough."

Blurr lifted his head, peering into Longarm's face. Gently smiling optics met his, and Blurr found himself lowered onto the recharge slab, found Longarm huddled possessively over him, found him leaning in close to plant a shy kiss on his lips. Any other mech would have found the progression of events sudden, but Blurr had felt every movement in the process, had taken comfort in Longarm's rough hands on his waist, directing his movements, taking control, until he had landed on his back, staring up at the most beautiful mech in the universe.

Blurr moved to wrap his arms around Longarm, to pull him in closer, but he soon found himself impeded, as Longarm's hands fastened themselves around his wrists, keeping him secured to the panel below. Moreover, the way in which Longarm straddled his legs prevented him from bringing them closer in that region as well.

Blurr craved more motion, more friction. He struggled for just a moment, but Longarm held tight.

"I want to take this slow, Blurr. I hope you understand."

"Of course! Take as much time as you need," he said as sincerely as he could manage. It was difficult to be rendered so immobile as Longarm explored Blurr's body with his tongue – kissing deeply, lavishing his jaw and throat, dipping it between the cracks in his armor. It felt amazing, even if the movements were a little clumsy . . .

Primus!

Was this Longarm's first time? No wonder he'd put it off so long! Blurr would be intimidated too, to be the virgin testing his skills on a professional. He felt suddenly guilty for his impatience. Apologizing or drawing attention to Longarm's inexperience would only be awkward, but he could still offer encouragement.
"That feels so good," he moaned.

"I'm glad," Longarm chuckled, giving Blurr a peck on the forehelm, before resuming his previous ministrations. It was a bit slow for Blurr's liking, but Longarm's firm grip on his wrists kept him securely in place. Being restrained was bad enough when it was just him, but both of their arms were pinned, and Blurr so badly wanted those hands on him, exploring his body more skillfully than Longarm's awkward tongue might have.

And then, his prayers were answered. He felt a hand slide up under his back plate, gripping at the sensitive protoform hidden beneath – another hand mimicked the action on his front, dipping just beneath his breastplate, toy ing with the seams of the dark blue plating that protected his stomach. But his hands were still trapped. He lolled his head to the side to catch a glimpse.

Longarm had wrapped the stretchy treads of his arm around Blurr's, and had then further extended them at the wrist for maximum reach. It was not the weirdest thing Blurr had seen in bed, but it certainly was strange to look at.

"Ah, sorry to surprise you like that," Longarm said, apparently noticing Blurr's realization. "You're really committed to not letting me move," Blurr laughed, pushing away his discomfort. Restriction of movement was torture for a speedster; being pinned wasn't so bad – he was used to that, but he couldn't deny that the idea of going further, to find his limbs rendered fully immobile, made him nervous, and Longarm was treading that line.

"Perhaps," Longarm chuckled, his laughter dispelling Blurr's fears – he was safe with Longarm. "Please do forgive me. I want to focus on you wholly."

"Me?" Blurr laughed. "I appreciate the gesture, but you don't have to. I can make you feel good too!"

Longarm hesitated at that – as though the idea truly did appeal to him, but he ultimately brushed it off. "I want to Blurr." His face grew dim, taking on an intensity that was a little frightening to behold. Blurr squirmed a little, despite himself. "If Highbrow is right, if he really managed to get you back in Intel, then you're going to be required to share your body with strangers, and that thought angers me. They do not deserve you. Only I deserve you. And so, I want you to remember only me – my touch, my taste. You understand?" He punctuated the remark by licking a long stripe down Blurr's windshield. He was beginning to doubt Longarm's inexperience.

"O-of course! Yes, absolutely! Primus, you can do anything you want if you keep talking like that."

"I'm glad you like it," Longarm laughed, but now that Blurr had seen the hint of a dangerous, possessive streak in Longarm, it was difficult to unsee it, even behind the serenity of his smile. But he didn't mind. Somehow, it added an extra degree of intensity to every one of Longarm's actions.

Blurr leaned in to each touch, savoring the feel of Longarm's hands on himself, committing each minute detail to memory, as Longarm slowly shifted his ministrations further and further south, cupping Blurr's aft, teasing at the seams of his valve cover. Blurr couldn't get it opened fast enough.

Despite Blurr's enthusiasm, Longarm still seemed to want to scope out every inch of Blurr's body. One hand continued its slow descent, grasping at Blurr's thighs, his calves, stroking a gentle line down his leg plating, his soft tires, his toe pieces – Blurr's entire frame jerked at the attention paid to the sensitive mechanisms. Longarm, a dark smile on his face, moved his attentions to Blurr's other leg. His free hand, however, was less patient, opting to occupy itself with Blurr's array, playing with his spike cover, fingering the mesh lips of his valve, even dipping inside, just barely, giving Blurr a
taste of things to come.

Frag, that felt good. But he wanted more. He squirmed, trying to sink those fingers deeper into himself.

Much to his chagrin, this caused Longarm to withdraw altogether, planting another kiss on Blurr's helm.

"Impatient, are we?" he smiled, fondness overflowing.

"I can be patient, I can. It's just —" Longarm had shifted, let his guard down for a moment. It was all Blurr needed.

In one swift motion, Blurr had freed his legs from the cage of Longarm's body, wrapping them around his waist, and using his new leverage to grind his thirsty valve against Longarm's still-closed array. Why was it still closed?

"This feels so good! You feel so good — maybe it's because I actually want to be with you — so, so bad, but I've never felt like this before! And I've been waiting and wanting you for so long — I think I might burst if I have to hold on a second more!"

"Well then," Longarm replied. "We'd best not let that happen." He wore a smile, but it wasn't fond or amused. It gave no hint of emotion at all, though the bulb on his head did seem to flicker briefly, whatever that meant.

Was he nervous? Or had Blurr's initial speculation been correct? Had he allowed himself into the bed of one more criminal?

Longarm's expression did not change, but his array did fly open, allowing his spike to pop out with a hiss. As far as spikes went, it was interesting only in how boring it was. Black and grey seams met on either side of the sheathe-like shape, but that was it. It was neither big nor small, fat nor thin, it had no ridges, no biolights, no fancy paint apps or absurd modifications — even Blurr's rarely-used spike had a more striking appearance.

"I'm sorry if you're disappointed."

"No!" Blear squawked. He'd been staring! He knew better than to stare. Idiot. "Not at all! I was just curious! I can show you mine if you want!"

"Ah, maybe later," said Longarm, his genuine smile coming back. "Right now, I'd much rather do this."

Blurr had not expected a mech like Longarm to be capable of moving so quickly, but in one swift motion, Longarm rolled Blurr onto his belly, aft on display in the air. One more motion, and he buried himself in the presented valve.

The stretch wasn't as wide as he usually liked, but what did it matter? This was Longarm inside of him, thrusting with a surprising amount of strength. One heavy hand found its way to Blurr's antenna, holding on like a handle, and wrenching his head backwards, until his back was arched and his optics were fixed on the ceiling. Longarm took the opportunity to run his free hand up and down the length of Blurr's exposed torso, fingers digging in to protoform, and leaving dents in his soft plating, until eventually they came to a rest, just outside his spike's cover, toying with the seams.

"Actually, I think I'll take you up on that offer now," he said, nibbling at the back of Blurr's neck, his face just out of sight.
"What -?"

"Your spike, if you will."

"Ah yes – that!" Why was it so hard to think right now? The sensations weren't new – should have been underwhelming, and yet, within half a klik, Longarm had brought Blurr to the brink of overload.

Blurr's spike shot into Longarm's waiting hand like a bullet, quivering with need, and Longarm wasted no time wrapping skilled digits around it, stroking Blurr in time with the thrusts from his own spike.

*Primus* this was too much!

Blurr could feel only heat, electricity prickling at his plating from deep within him, racing from Longarm, through his own frame, outwards to his fingertips, and toe pieces, which had curled up around his tires. All thought had fled him, leaving only room for pleasure – intense, heated pleasure, with every thrust of Longarm's spike, every sensitive node brushed. His spark began to pulse in time with the motions. One two three. One to three.

It was too soon! He had to hold on! It was too soon!

He came with a cry, hot transfluid spilling into Longarm's hands, providing extra lubrication has he stroked him through it. His valve, meanwhile, had taken to pulsing rapidly around Longarm's spike, trying to milk nonexistent transfluid from him.

Longarm hadn't overloaded, Blurr realized, as he collapsed forward, sliding off of Longarm's spike, and onto the berth, exhausted and thoroughly fucked.

Of course he hadn't, it had been too soon. Memories of Fasttrack came to him, the first time since the mech's death.

"Ugh, don't you quite now, you speedy little slagheap. I'm nowhere near finished!"

Blurr scurried to his knees, whipping around to latch his lips around Longarm's spike, easily taking the whole thing into his mouth, though it stabbed at the back of his throat as his head bobbed around it. A gentle hand rested itself against the side of his helm, and somewhere above him, Longarm gave a contented sigh.

"You don't know what you do to me, Blurr," he said. But pleasured though he sounded, he didn't allow the moment to last for long. Once again, he grabbed a handful of Blurr's antenna, and gently, he pried Blurr away from his spike, pushing him back onto his back. "You're good, it's okay."

"But you didn't –" Blurr tried to protest, only to find the rest of his sentence shushed away.

"Shh, you're great. And I'm just fine. Believe me. I couldn't be happier." He planted himself at Blurr's side, wrapping an arm across his chest, to draw him close. "Shh, let's rest now."

"But –" Blurr squeaked. This wasn't right. Longarm was supposed to get angry. They always got angry if he didn't satisfy them.

"Shhhh, rest," Longarm said again. Blurr didn't fight it this time. He may not have been able to stave off the feelings of worthlessness that plagued him, but this was Longarm's choice. If Blurr couldn't please his lover, at least he could obey him.
He drifted off in Longarm's protective embrace, but his sleep was restless, sprinkled with nightmares, a disappointed Longarm taking the spotlight in each. Soon, however, Longarm's face faded away, growing older, thinner, crueler, until it had transformed into the face of Highbrow Prime. Thick grey hands grabbed at him, dragging him kicking and screaming back into the trap that was Cybertron Intelligence.

Save for that brief moment of magic, it had been a pretty terrible night.

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Three decacycles later, a few days before Blurr was slated to return to Intel, Highbrow Prime went missing. The circumstances were a mystery; the only clue he had left behind was a rather unhinged letter claiming that there were 'spies everywhere',' and that he was not going to allow himself to be 'gotten.'

The general consensus was that Highbrow had gone mad and fled, but Blurr couldn't help but note the convenient timing of it all.

The last time he'd confided in Longarm regarding Highbrow, the latter had found himself pinned with charges of assault and untoward behavior towards a subordinate. Now, such a brief time after his second confession, Highbrow had been mysteriously spirited away. Either Highbrow was unlucky as Blurr was, or Longarm had directly interfered both times.

And the answer was made more clear to him when Longarm was promoted to acting Prime in Highbrow's absence. This couldn't have been a coincidence.

Still, it seemed that the Elite Guard, at least, wasn't so blind to ignore the possibility of Longarm's involvement.

"I admit, this situation causes me discomfort," Ultra Magnus said. He had gathered all available agents in his office to discuss the matter – Jazz and Warpath, Rad, Erector, the newly appointed Sentinel Prime, and of course, Blurr. "Highbrow Prime had re-established the position of his assistant to take over in his absence, and it was clear that he very much respected Longarm, but the fact remains that Longarm is still quite young and woefully inexperienced. I cannot say I am comfortable with him in this position. And the fact that he's profited from Highbrow's disappearance is cause for concern."

"Highbrow Prime had no past issues prior to taking on Longarm as his assistant," Erector sniffed. "That's pretty suspicious right there."

"Everything's suspicious to you, buddy," Warpath groaned. "Highbrow was an old coot, to be sure, and the problems, you'll notice, also coincide with the reemergence of the Decepticons."

"And can you really imagine Longarm, a mech with all the personality of sheet metal, plotting conspiracy?" said Sentinel. "It's laughable."

"Actually," Rad interjected. "Cybertronian Intelligence has improved efficiency by thirty-six percent since Longarm took his role as Highbrow Prime's assistant."

"All true," Ultra Magnus said. "Still, I wonder if a full investigation is warranted."

"You've been awfully quiet, Blurr."

It was true. Blurr had very pointedly been avoiding contribution to this conversation. He was certain he knew the truth already, but the idea of condemning his lover left a bad taste in his mouth.
It was better to say nothing at all. But here Jazz was, dragging him into the spotlight, right where he didn't want to be. And though his mind about Longarm had been made up, hearing the others debate his valor had Blurr seeing red.

"You know Longarm better than anyone, and Highbrow better than most. Might be nice to hear your insight."

"My insight," Blurr uttered. What should he do? Speak the truth? What would they do to Longarm if they suspected the same that Blurr did? And how would Longarm react if he knew that Blurr had betrayed him? Shifty or not, Longarm was the best thing that had ever happened to him.

"I honestly don't think there's much to say. As Sentinel Prime so bluntly put it, Longarm is not really the type of bot to engage in conspiracy. He's not ambitious so much as he is intelligent and highly capable – a perfect fit for his new position.

"Moreover, Highbrow trusted him implicitly. He scouted him straight from the Academy for the express purpose of naming him his successor. Prior to Highbrow's disappearance, Longarm had helping him through either an extended bout of paranoia, or the trauma brought on by a stalker – it was difficult to say. Regardless of whether or not it was true, however, he was convinced that someone was out to get him in his later days, to the point where he requested my return to Intel to investigate the matter." Highbrow surely would have shot him had he heard Blurr admit that to the Elite Guard, but Highbrow was gone now, and frankly, Blurr didn't care. "If you had seen him the night he made contact with me to inform me of my return, the idea of him disappearing himself into oblivion would not seem so farfetched . . ."

The more he spoke, the more he became convinced of the truth in his own words. Longarm wouldn't have killed Highbrow – couldn't have. He could only hope that the others saw as well.

"Highbrow was clearly an ill mech. I think, while it is of course, wise to keep our optics alert for any sign of conspiracy here, I think our time would be better spent trying to hunt down our missing Prime."

Ultra Magnus folded his arms, lost in thought. "Hmmm. That sounds reasonable. All the same, I admit, that I remain unconvinced that Longarm is the best bot for the position of Head of Cybertron Intelligence."

"Sir, if I may?" Jazz interjected, raising a lazy hand.

"Yes, Agent Jazz?"

"Agent Blurr is set to return to Intel anyway. We already know he's got skill and experience, not to mention a sharp optic. I'm thinkin' we get him to keep tabs on Longarm Prime for us."

"What?" Blurr wasn't sure to make of this scheme. All things considered, it wasn't a terrible idea. His personality would prevent him from ever becoming leader himself, but working directly under Longarm didn't seem so bad of a prospect. Their relationship would suddenly be rendered quite against the rules, but he could deal with that. Still, he wanted to hear more. Jazz didn't do anything without a reason.

"Oh yeah," Sentinel chimed in. "Send an Elite Guard spy to spy on the spies in search of spies. Why not?" It was difficult to tell if he was being sincere.

"I am not accusing Longarm of subterfuge," Ultra Magnus cut in. "But it would grant me peace of mind to have first-hand intel from one of our own. Therefore, Agent Blurr, I think I will have to
follow Agent Jazz's advice this time. You will return to Cybertron Intelligence as initially planned. However, instead of following Highbrow's command as requested, you will now be assigned to work under the future Longarm Prime, and assist him to the best of your ability. In addition to that, however, I would like you to stay alert for the presence of suspicious behavior from any member of the Autobot Military, Intel, or otherwise. Highbrow Prime was afraid of something in the decacycles preceding his death. I do not believe that Longarm was the cause, but the problem may well be from within our house. Be careful, Agent Blurr."

"Yes Sir! I understand Sir!"

"Agent Jazz, and Agent Warpath. I would like you to investigate Highbrow's disappearance . . ."

The meeting dispersed soon after. It had gone better than anticipated; Blurr's life was looking up again. He was going to be spending a lot more time with Longarm from now on, and Highbrow Prime was out of the picture! Longarm had been a good luck charm on his life from the moment he'd walked in. Truly, a miracle had happened.

But still, an air of foreboding hung heavily around him.

There were no fools in the Elite Guard. Blurr couldn't imagine his kind words towards Longarm had changed any minds. No matter what Ultra Magnus said, Longarm was still under suspicion, and paranoid though it seemed, Blurr couldn't help but wonder if he was as well.

He could only hope this wasn't the case. He was a good Autobot! He was just and loyal.

But to whom? If his suspicions were correct, and Longarm (Primus forbid) was, in fact a spy, if Blurr was forced to choose between the one thing that made him happy, and the Autobot commonwealth, which would he choose?

He prayed that he'd never need to find out.
Climbing Uphill

Chapter Summary

Shockwave faces his greatest enemy yet: youthful exuberance.

“I am ashamed of you, Shockwave, disappointed, disgusted. Your idiotic blundering was one stroke of a fool's luck shy of ruining decades of our hard labor.”

Even played at the lowest volume, the words stung like knives, burying themselves beneath his protoform, shooting straight into his spark. But Shockwave did not contest them, as he cowered in the cramped dark of his dorm-room closet like some pathetic Autobot. Megatron was absolutely right. Shockwave had been a fool, had grossly underestimated the Autobots’ propensity for meddling, and had nearly blown his cover in the process.

“You were fortunate that the small one was so gullible.”

“It will not happen again, Master,” he assured, hanging his head, wishing for all the world that he could implode right now. He had failed Megatron, failed his purpose for being. He was no better than Starscream! No better than Lugnut. He was the worst. And his idiocy had rightly lost him his lord’s favor. Had he not been in such a strategically vital position, surrounded by Autobots on all sides, he would have submitted himself for direct punishment.

Alas, he would have to settle for scathing words.

He had been fortunate, unprecedentedly so. His error had played out fairly well for him; he'd gone off-plan, but prestige was far from the worst consequence his failure could have brought. Longarm of Luna I had become a minor celebrity for his role in putting away a Decepticon spy, and at such a tender age nonetheless! The stream of newsbots was ceaseless from that point on. Everybody wanted to know all about Longarm and his triumph over Wasp. Bumblebee who?

But though the attention was positive, it was still attention. The initial plan had been to slip in unnoticed, to receive as little acknowledgment as possible in order to be inducted into Cybertron Intelligence and begin plotting his takeover – a slow but necessary process. That plan, however, had been rendered impossible. He was in the public optic, his every action scrutinized, his position more dangerous than ever. His opportunities to communicate with his distant leader were fewer and fewer with each day, and even now, after having locked his door, having swept his room for bugs, having ensured that Ironhide next door was fast asleep, Shockwave wasn't completely certain he was safe.

Still, Longarm was already a bigshot; he may as well take advantage of it. He could no longer quietly disrupt the system. That was fine. He would do it loudly, visibly. He would convince the world that Longarm of Luna I was the most wholesome bot the Allspark had ever seen fit to produce, and then, while they were busy fawning over his magnificence, he would destroy them.

That was, if they didn't annoy him to death first.

At the best of times they were soft, petty, and ignorant. Most of the young bots that surrounded him had never known true hardship – there were some that couldn’t even make it through boot camp. It all served to enrage Shockwave. This was his planet, and it had been stolen from him
by this lot! Sometimes he wondered if the subterfuge was necessary at all. The Autobots may have had superior weapons, but they’d been at peace for so long, and most of the war veterans were well past their prime – pathetic Autobot lifespans! If the Autobot military had to face a Decepticon invasion as it was, they would be slaughtered, he was certain.

But he had thought much the same last time, and here he was now, an alien in his own homeland. Disgusting.

"I shall rectify my errors, I shall redeem this situation. Operation: Doppelganger is not unsalvageable."

"You have a plan?" for the first time in the conversation, the corners of Megatron's lips twitched up, his tone softened, grew conspiratorial. "Share, Shockwave."

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Shockwave was determined that Megatron should not be disappointed again. After what had become known only as “The Wasp Affair,” Shockwave did his best to keep his head down, his hands clean, and his optic focused solely on his work. He finished boot camp with ease, along with Ironhide – a graduating class of two. While Shockwave was no big fan of Ironhide, the same could be said in reverse. Shockwave was an outsider, ancient, isolated, familiar with operating on his own, but Ironhide was young, brash, and took the alleged betrayal of his best friend poorly.

He did not oppose the conviction, but it had quite turned his world upside down, and with the departure of Bumblebee and Bulkhead, he soon found himself trapped alone with the one cadet he could never bond with. The last few lunar cycles of boot camp had been filled with a hellish, icy resentment cast at him, and few words exchanged.

But what did it matter? Once they advanced to the Academy, Longarm and Ironhide went their separate ways, Ironhide to learn the way of the warrior, and Longarm, the way of the spy. Ironhide thrived in this new environment, once again surrounded by mechs his own age. Shockwave, however . . .

“Hey, aren’t you that Longarm guy?” said one bubbly young femme on the way from their first lesson in infiltration.

“Ah, yes. Yes, I am,” was his nervous answer. Head down. Hands clean. Play it safe.

“Hey, Lightbright! Get over here! It’s The Longarm! The one who found that traitor!”

“Get out! No way!”

“Way! Hey, Hot Shot, you gotta meet this guy!”

Soon enough, a small crowd of chatty young Autobots had Longarm surrounded, asking him all manner of inane questions. “Where are you from?” “What was it like to meet a Decepticon face-to-face?” “Are you afraid they’ll send someone after you for revenge?” “What kind of music do you like?” “What kind of frame-types do you like?” “Are you single?” “What is your area of study?” “Would you have lunch with us?” and so on. Shockwave tried to answer as best he could, forcing the urge to grow to his full size and remove the heads of these stupid brazen Autobot children in one fell swoop, into some dark corner of his spark.

“Ah, I am from Luna I. It was quite scary to meet a real Decepticon. I am always aware of the potential enemies I may have made. I enjoy classical music. I –” he cut himself off. These questions were getting too ridiculous. ‘What kind of frame-types did he like?’ Honestly? He could hardly
say, broad, heavy warframes without raising a few optic ridges. “Um, Speedsters?” It was a safe
enough answer. “Really, I have to get to my next class. I’m sorry. I have to go.” He awkwardly
tried to shoulder his way through the crowd, who couldn’t seem to take a hint. It was getting all the
harder not to murder the little chatterboxes. *Head down. Hands clean.*

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“Ingratiate yourself to them,” Megatron said, when Shockwave mentioned the affair later. He didn't
know why. The threat they posed was small. He was in little danger of them learning his secret. It
should not have been worth mentioning to his leader, let alone dwelling on. And yet . . .

“They will be less likely to turn on you if they see you as one of their own.”

It was a true sentiment, but Megatron hadn’t been on the receiving end of their inane questioning and
chirring voices, all fighting to be heard. He'd thought the suspicion, the corruption, the fact that he
was a Decepticon strut-deep in enemy territory would be his greatest adversary on this mission. He'd
never have imagined it would be the vapidity of Autobot youth. Still, he could hardly ignore a direct
order.

And so he made the effort to be more friendly, more outgoing. But through some strange twist of
happenstance, the more he opened up to his classmates, the less interested in him they became.

Today, he was at a room party with a small gathering of other young bots, sipping politely at his
cube of engex and trying his hardest to force enjoyment onto his face. He had his work cut out for
him. Were these *really* supposed to be the finest of their generation? The bots that would protect
Cybertron from tomorrow’s threats?

“Check it out, I got Roseanna’s newest album!” said Lightbright already moving to play it from her
speakers.

“Ahh, her music is so real! I love it!” squealed Lickety Split, another young femme
speedster. “What do you think Longarm?”

Longarm smiled, effortlessly this time. Roseanna, unbeknownst to even herself, was a Decepticon
sleeper agent, who had already worked her way into the hearts of Cyberton’s youth. It was hard not
to enjoy in her triumph. “I think she is magnificent.”

His praise seemed to please the gang of young bots for the moment, but then the dancing started –
thrashing, desperate movements that Shockwave found, on the whole, unrefined and honestly, a little
ridiculous coming from stupid, innocent little Autobots. But he couldn’t refrain – that would have
made an outcast of him. He gave in, allowed his body to sway to the beat in jerky, forced
movements that surely made a mockery of him, and hating himself for it. Megatron could never
know of this.

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For one full vorn, Longarm was invited to every dorm party, every outing that the Infiltration bots
arranged, but with each venture, the novelty of his celebrity status wore off, and it soon became
common knowledge that Longarm of Luna I was boring, stuffy, and hated fun. It shouldn’t have
bothered him. He was millions upon *millions* of years old! Why should he care that a bunch of kids
in their first five vorns thought him unworthy of their time?

Because his mission demanded he be accepted.

He tried harder. He told jokes to the blank stares of his peers (stupid Autobot humor!). He partook
in gossip, though it was apparently never juicy enough (what did it matter if Hot Shot had finger dents in his hip plates? If he couldn't clean up properly after interfacing, that was *his* problem.). He even tried to get in on the pranks, only to chicken out at the last moment. He couldn’t afford any infractions – not with the lofty goals he had in mind. There was simply no helping the fact that he was an old bot, had the tastes and mannerisms of an old bot, and was stuck in an alien facsimile of his homeworld, surrounded by a bunch of petty protoforms.

“You’re behind enemy lines,” Megatron told him, "Surrounded by the very bots who stole our homeland away from us, and you are complaining about your inability to fit in? What have they done to my greatest warrior?” His displeasure was apparent on his face. Megatron had bigger things to worry about, important things. He had an empire to run, a people to unite, to care for, to rule. He had a planet to retake, vengeance to seek, and unruly subordinates to make an example of. He had not time for Academy angst.

What *had* become of Shockwave? He was used to being alone – sought it out. He was fearless, lethal, cold and calculating. He’d expected this part of the mission to be a breeze. He’d never expected to find himself upset by Lightbright's snide laughter when his back was turned, Hot Shot’s scathing words, the dirty rumors spread by Ironhide. He’d never expected that, of all things, it would be Longarm’s inability to make *friends* to wreck him.

It was stupid and it was weak and it was so very *Autobot*. He contemplated inventing a device that could alter temporal perception, to get him through this nightmare before he snapped, and threw the mission out the window in favor of a killing spree. He'd put up with much suffering in his long-lived life. But five vorns of *this* was beyond the limits of even *his* patience.

In the end, he didn’t have to.

Just under two vorns into his academy days, he received a message from a most unexpected source.

*Longarm of Luna I,*

*I have been watching your progress since you entered the Academy. You are at the top of your classes, and very advanced for your age. We have entered a new era of war and strife, and require an influx of skilled graduates into our military service in the immediate. Longarm of Luna I, I would like to schedule a meeting with you in person, to discuss a potential future in my Intelligence Agency. Please respond as soon as this finds you.*

*Highbrow Prime*

Shockwave had to reread the message three times before the meaning finally sunk in. He was being considered for premature advancement; it was a dream come true. Finally away from these whining children and back with bots slightly closer to his caliber, or at least he hoped that would be the case.

He replied in the affirmative with a confirmation of the meeting, and two decacycles later, he sat in a most spacious office in the Metroplex, staring across the desk at an old war veteran, tall for an Autobot, wearing a moustache, a statement of fashion two million years too late. The mech’s arms were folded, and his optics bore a scrutinizing look.

“Longarm of Luna I,” he said, his tone stern.

“Yes, Sir.”

“I have been watching you for the past two vorns, and I must say, I am impressed. You put away a Decepticon before you were even out of boot camp. Can’t say there’s a single other Autobot out
there who has such bragging rights.”

“You are very kind, Sir.”

“I know many young mechs would’ve tried to face the ‘Con head on, and died. Others would’ve
told their Minor, which may well have resulted in nothing, and they again, would have died. You acted wisely, with great wit about you. And from there, you’ve gone on to prove yourself an exemplary student. Am I correct in assuming that Academic work is too easy for you?”

“I’ve always excelled in academia. It was why I left the crystal farms to join the military.”

“And you were hoping to wind up in Intelligence. Why not the Science Guild? They could use bright minds like yours.”

“With all due respect, Sir. I was hoping for more of a challenge. Science comes naturally to me, but Intelligence? There is a natural risk inherent to being a spy. Forgive my selfishness, but I want fulfillment in my life, and I will not find that with facts and figures.”

“Hmm,” Highbrow folded his arms, humming to himself in contemplation. “Well, I am glad to hear it. It would seem that you are interested in my offer?”

Longarm nodded, cautiously. This whole operation seemed a bit too good to be true. “I am very much interested in joining Cybertronian Intelligence,” he began, his optics locked on Highbrow's in search of any twitch, sign, or tic that would betray his intentions. The Prime's face, however, remained unmoving. “But I would like to hear the full details before I make my decision. When would I be enlisted? Would I have to jump through any hoops, as it were, before my application is accepted? I should remind you that I have a full three vorns remaining in my Academic career.”

“Of course. We would have you finish the Academy with this year’s graduates, and enlist you straight into Intel from there.”

His assumption had been correct, then. No more gossip, no more parties – it was a dream come true. But what was good for Shockwave couldn't have been good for the Autobots. Why would they do such a thing? It was time to make his reservations known. It was only logical.

“Forgive my saying, Sir, but this seems a little too good to be true.”

Highbrow offered a solemn nod in return, and, just the barest hint of a fond smile on his lips.
Interesting. “As I said, the return of the Decepticons has created an increase in demand for military personnel. I have found myself overworked, and desperately need an assistant that can keep up with the load – one who can read a report and understand its contents without assistance.”

“I see,” said Longarm. He would be serving as an assistant. It wasn’t glamorous, most bots wouldn’t think twice before denying the offer, but as far as Longarm was concerned, the prospect was worth considering. Remaining at headquarters would do him well in the long run. He'd be handling the reports, he'd be at the center of the action, would have optics everywhere – there were few other locations so well-suited to his mission.

But would it affect his chances of supplanting the Prime?

Highbrow continued, dissatisfied with Longarm's non-answer. “It is more prestigious than it sounds. There has only ever been one other young bot in the Academy’s history to be directly enlisted in Intelligence after graduating, and while he is my most skilled agent, he is, unfortunately, a bit too glitched to rely on for leadership. You, however, are a very skilled young mech. I would not see you wasted on mere reception. Think of it as an elaborate job shadow. As you assist me, you
will be learning the skills necessary to put you on the fast track to Primacy, if that is your aim. As I’ve said, your record has greatly impressed me.”

Done! That was exactly what Longarm needed to hear. But he didn’t dare say as much. He grew more convinced by the astrosecond that this was a trap. He was not about to walk in without preparation – besides, if nothing else, Highbrow might appreciate the show of restraint.

“Might I have a few days to think it over, Sir?”

Highbrow nodded once again, this time, his smile wide. He was already convinced he’d won. “As you wish.”

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“It is surely a trap,” Megatron said, slowly, cautiously, giving the idea full consideration.

“I believed the same, Sir. And yet, it is a very tempting one. I have followed up on the Prime’s story. It is true that his department has been woefully overworked and understaffed for the past two vorns. And according to my research, there is word that he is indeed most displeased with his current assistant, who suffers from some sort of vocal glitch. The reasoning for his gesture is not without merit.

“Moreover, I have looked up on him. The local gossip says that he lives very much in the past. The Great War was the glory days as far as he’s concerned, and sometimes, it would seem that he still believes he’s living it – he has suffered from disassociation from time to time, it’s gotten worse over the years. He likely won’t last another two vorns – he’s on his way out, and he wants to leave a competent replacement in his place. He mentioned that the best agent he currently has in his employ is glitched. With a bar so low, I can understand why he may seek a new face.

“With your permission, I would like to accept his offer. I would like to seize the opportunity to study under him, learn from him, *ingratiate* myself to him,” he noticed the hint of a smile at Megatron’s words from an earlier conversation turned back on him. “He will name me his heir, and then I will remove him from the picture.”

“And if it is a trap?”

Longarm smiled. “They will have nothing on me, Sir. I will ensure it.”

Megatron deliberated for a long moment, his face a blank mask, refusing to give away his leanings until a decision could be reached. It was the deepening of his frown, the harsh glow setting into his optic that gave away his decision.

“Very well. You may take this Highbrow Prime up on his offer of advancement. You may join the Intelligence Agency. I trust you, Shockwave, my most loyal subject. You will not fail me again.”
If I Didn't Believe in You

Chapter Summary

Blurr struggles to ignore what his mind tells him is true.

Blurr was nervous. He trusted Longarm Prime, loved him even, but this was playing with primal fears and deep-coded instinct. Longarm wanted to restrain him, wrap him tightly in those stretchy arms of his, until he couldn't move – until his face and valve were all that was bared. Blurr didn't know why Longarm had wanted to do this, but despite his misgivings, he'd agreed, smiling and doing his best to hold still as each arm wrapped itself through his wheels, and kept extending on and on, around his body – trapping his arms tightly to his frame, locking him in place.

It's Longarm. You can trust Longarm. Longarm is safe. Longarm is safe. Longarm is –

The blunt tip of Longarm's spike pressed against Blurr's valve, and it was enough to wrest the last ounce of control he held from his grip. He struggled against his bonds, writhing and kicking – hard and fast. Even restrained as he was, his legs were powerful enough to break the hold, dragging those flexible arms out farther and farther, giving him more and more room to move. And then one of his kicks connected with something solid. Longarm flew backwards, dragging Blurr with him, sending them both crashing to the floor.

At first all Longarm could do was give a pained grunt, too tangled up in Blurr to relinquish his hold. Eventually, words followed. "Primus, that hurt."

Blurr's tanks sank with dread. He'd hurt Longarm! "I'm sorry Sir! I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to kick you – I didn't know I'd react so strongly! I'm so so so so so so so so so sorry!"

But then, to Blurr's surprise, Longarm chuckled. He should have been angry. He had every right to scream, to hurt Blurr, and yet he hadn't. If anything, he seemed almost jovial.

"Don't you worry about a thing. This was my fault. I shouldn't have pushed you into something you didn't want to do." How on Cybertron was this mech so perfect?

The rubbery treads of Longarm's arms began to shift and withdraw, and in that moment, whether from the ice breaking accident or some other change of heart, Blurr found the idea of his imminent freedom supremely disagreeable.

"Wait!" Longarm froze in his motions. Blurr couldn't see his face, trapped in his lap as he was, and facing the wrong way to boot, but he could imagine Longarm's confused pout all the same.

"Blurr?"

Blurr didn't know exactly what it was he wanted, but there was no time to think it over. It would be rude to keep his partner waiting. "Keep going!"

Those arms twitched against him. Definitely confused. "Are you sure?"

"Yes!" Blurr snapped, perhaps a bit harshly. His body was trapped, screaming to be released; his valve, kissed by the empty air, begged to be filled. He'd never felt quite so needy in his life. "Only,
could you squeeze me tighter? I'm getting quite the head rush – I think – I think I might like this! Yes! This is nice – I'm getting so much extra charge this way! Please! I want tighter!"

Who was Longarm to disobey? The arms tightened, until Blurr's plating creaked in protest, until even his strong legs were rendered immobile. He couldn't escape if he tried. It was terrifying, and also so, so arousing.

"Is that good?" Longarm whispered in his audial.

Blurr replied with a shaky mewl, but that seemed not to be enough for Longarm. When his restraints threatened to loosen once again, however, poor, shivering Blurr found his voice. "Yes!" he squeaked. "Yes yes yes! So good!"

"I'm glad." Longarm pressed a kiss to the side of his helm, then pulled him backwards, until his valve sat just over Longarm's spike. Terror seized him again – his legs threatened to kick out – the thought of being penetrated – taken, claimed, with no chance of escape, struck a violent, instinctual fear deep within him, and Blurr let out a high whine in response.

"Blurr?"

"Keep going!" he choked.

The next thing he knew, his valve was spreading wide, pulsing fiercely as it tried in vain to expel Longarm's intruding spike. But it was not to be. Longarm, done with taking things slow, allowed gravity to help lower Blurr down, until he was fully-seated, the blunt tip of his spike pressing hard into Blurr's ceiling node.

His mind spun wildly, and his legs still struggled to kick out, even as his valve enjoyed the penetration, at last relaxing back and forth around its movements in a comfortable rhythm. Upon realizing what he was doing, however, Blurr's body lurch ed against the restraints, his vocaliser producing a series of sobs. He wasn't supposed to be enjoying this. He couldn't move! He was trapped! He was in danger! His valve clenched hard, giving Longarm pause once more.

"Keep going," he insisted, even as his body tried its hardest to protest. This was intense, it was beautiful, and he wanted more.

Longarm followed the order, rolling his hips gently, each shallow thrust causing his spike to hit Blurr's back wall again and again and again. Blurr was in Heaven.

His vents were trapped shut, but his body was collecting extreme heat; he began to pant, moans escaping his slack jaw with each steady movement. He felt a hand reach up from . . . who even knew where, find his throat, and squeeze. His head popped back instantly, further exposing himself, helping Longarm along in his quest for total power over Blurr; it felt so good. He was going to overheat, maybe even pass out, but it felt so good!

Longarm's other hand found its way between a pair of treads, up and under Blurr's chest plate to toy with the sensitive transformation seams near his spark. Blurr's optics shot sparks, and his vocaliser shot static. He tried vainly to kick again, but the only movements down below were Longarm's steady thrusts, assisted by a new action – raising and lowering Blurr swiftly along his spike, allowing his spike to brush past every rippling caliper as it tried to milk an overload from him.

At last, Blurr could hold out no more. He felt the overload claim him, burning every strut, every fuel line, until his entire body was overwhelmed by a white hot bliss.
"Primus!" he muttered, once he finally regained the capacity for speech. Longarm had released him at some point, allowing Blurr to puddle on the berth beside him. As usual, there was no sign that Longarm had overloaded. Blurr tried to push the realization from his mind, lest it sour his moment of satiation.

"Are you all right?" The furrow to Longarm's brow was quite charming – he always thought of Blurr first, worried after his welfare. How had Blurr gotten so lucky?

"Yeah. Yeah I'm good. I'm great! I admit that I had some reservations going in. Giving up control like that is scary, especially for a speedster, so –" he cut himself off, grim realization dawning on him. In an instant, he was at Longarm's dented side, fussing and fawning and worrying after the wound.

"Oh no! This looks pretty bad! I'm so so so so sorry! Are you all right?! I can't believe you kept going with your chassis caved in like this! We gotta get you to the med ward – and Primus, that's going to be one awkward conversation, isn't it? 'How did you injure yourself, Sir?' 'Ah, I took a full-on kick to the side in the middle of some rather kinky sexcapades.' 'I didn't know you had it in you, Sir!' 'More lik –'"

Longarm pressed a finger to Blurr's lips. He wasn't usually one for interrupting, a fact which Blurr was thankful for, but he didn't mind in this case. The hypothetical 'Longarm reveals to the medical staff that he is secretly a nymphomaniac scenario was getting a bit out of hand. "I apologize Sir."

"No need," Longarm smiled. "I won't deny the kick hurt, and that I will indeed have to visit the med ward, but it's nothing to worry about. Truth be told, in the heat of the moment . . ." He turned away, his face plates heating red. "It felt kind of nice."

Nymphomaniac indeed. Still, it was exactly what Blurr needed to hear right now. He snuggled up close to his portly Prime, nuzzling the straps of his chin-guard. Longarm melted into the touch.

"Why are you so good to me?"

Longarm took a moment to answer, peeling Blurr away just long enough to meet his optics. He was smiling just as always.

"Because, my love, a bot like you deserves the world."

~~~

Vorns passed with little incident. Longarm and Blurr were close as ever, that fact in Blurr's mind, proof of the sanctity of their relationship. If work, time, and Longarm’s eternal shifty nature hadn’t torn them apart by this point, nothing ever would.

In the meantime, life continued as normal. Longarm had proven himself more than capable of commanding the Intelligence Agency, and had thus been made official Prime after a mere decade – the youngest Prime since the last Great War.

With his position secured, he appointed a surly little mech named Cliffjumper as his assistant, freeing Blurr up to go on more extensive missions, for Intel and the Elite Guard alike. He bemoaned his separation from Longarm, but busy as he was, Longarm never failed to find time enough to contact Blurr, and they were afforded some time together every few lunar cycles.

Blurr rarely saw his own home anymore; when he and Longarm met, they’d either tour some far-off location, or laze their decacycles of downtime away at Longarm’s more spacious abode. Had their relationship not been forbidden by law and custom, he would have given up the place altogether.
To be honest, he was fairly certain that half of the Elite Guard suspected, if not knew with certainty, but he had no desire to push his luck. Plausible deniability needed to remain strong.

On the third vorn of working under Longarm Prime, Blurr received a most peculiar comm – its sender, a bot he’d never expected to see again.

“Hey Blurr. How’s it goin’? It’s been awhile, hasn’t it? I hear you’ve done all right for yourself. Elite Guard and Intelligence. I expected nothing less from the best, a.k.a. you.

“I’ve been doing all right too. They made me a Minor, can you believe it? ‘Rodimus Minor,’ they call me. Sounds a bit weird, doesn’t it? Still better than ‘Hot Rod’ though.

“Anyway, I’m back on-planet to apply for Primacy. Yikes! But I’ll nail the exam; I’m pretty cool too. Let’s get dinner sometime – Maccadams’! Be just like old times! Hit me up, yeah?

-Rodimus Minor (a.k.a. Hot Rod)

“P.S. We still would be totally hot together!”

Blurr had honestly never expected to see Hot Rod again, yet here he was, walking right back into his life. It was a bit surreal, to be sure, but that didn’t stop him from meeting his old friend at Maccadam’s Old Oil House two days later.

Hot Rod, or Rodimus, he supposed, was easy enough to find, the flames on his chest standing out against the blander bots of the bar. Still, his paintjob wasn’t quite so vivid as Blurr remembered – bright reds and pinks, oranges and yellows replaced by a duller, more practical maroon, with orange trim. It made him slightly less of a target than he had been before.

Upon seeing Blurr, Rodimus’s face lit up, and he charged forward, throwing his arms around him in an uncomfortable hug. The action was a bit enthusiastic for Blurr’s liking, not to mention restrictive, and he squirmed in the tight hold until Rodimus at last released him, none the wiser.

“Oh man, it’s been way too long, Blurr! Look at you! You look like a certified badass now!”

“That’s strange. I haven’t changed anything about my appearance, though you’ve changed yours, if I’m not mistaken? I like it. It’s more subdued, mature. It’s very nice.”

Rodimus shuttered his optics a few times, grin growing wider as he tried to process the information. At last, he let out a nervous laugh. “Man, I forgot how fast you ar.”

Blurr thought to be annoyed, until Rodimus added, “They made me mute my colors out on the rock. They were too distracting, I guess. But here,” he put a hand around Blurr’s back, leading him further into the bar. “Let’s take a seat, grab a bite. We’ve got a lot of catching up to do.”

Admittedly, there was much that neither bot was allowed to speak of in public, due to the sensitive nature of their work, but Rodimus gushed about life on the asteroid, about how much he’d learned, about Red Alert, and Brawn, and his newest recruit, Hot Shot. He spoke with a soft reverence about his upcoming exam, though skirted around his reasons for wanting to participate.

His optics grew hard, wistful. “There are things out there, things I wish I could forget. I swore I would get stronger, smarter, wiser – I can’t let my crew down.”

He was quick to back away from that cryptic subject. “What about you, Blurr, my big shot Elite Guard buddy? I gotta wonder what’s been goin’ on in your life.”
“Not much I can talk about,” Blurr shrugged. “Fought some Decepticons, drug lords, slavers –”

“Decepticons?!” Rodimus interrupted. “Face-to-face?” Blurr nodded, causing Rodimus’s grin to take on an impressed glimmer. “Primus, you’re hardcore! I’ve never even seen a Decepticon! I hope it’s not a requirement.”

“I don’t think it is,” Blurr said, taking a sip of his Engex. “And they’re really not so bad as they’re made out to be. Big yes, and strong, of course – I’m not saying to underestimate them, but I’ve had scarier allies than any of the Decepticons I’ve faced. They’re just bots. Half their power comes from fear. Take that away, use your head, and you can beat them just fine.”

“Easy for you to say,” Rodimus chuckled.

“Who was it that broke the record in the ‘Battle Megatron’ simulation?”

“Yeah, yeah,” Rodimus waved away the comment with a laugh, then threw back the rest of his drink. “Swerve, one more Bloody Z! And a Latta Collins for Blurr!”

“On it!” chirped that all too eager to please bartender. Blurr suspected he quite enjoyed having a pair of flashy speedsters dining together at his establishment – he’d scarcely looked away, a dopey smile on his face the whole time. Blurr tried to ignore it.


Blurr sputtered. “I –”

Rodimus’s optics widened, japery vanishing. “Wait, you are?!”

Twice, Blurr was at a loss for words. “I-I –”

Blurr’s shock, of course, went right over Rodimus’s head. “My little Blurr’s all grown up! Tell me, who’s the lucky bot?! What are they like? Did you meet them through work or out on the town? Oh man, I’m so proud of you! A bit disappointed it’s not me – heck, if it’s not me, then they gotta be a real babe, right? Oh! It’s Agent Jazz, isn’t it? He’s quite the charmer!”

“No, it’s not Agent Jazz!” Blurr finally bit out.

He very much doubted that Rodimus would stop until he knew, but Blurr couldn’t tell him. His relationship with Longarm had ceased being legal the moment Longarm became his boss, and the last thing he wanted was to get Longarm in trouble, or get in trouble himself, for ‘seducing a superior officer.’ But was that everything?

Jazz already knew about his relationship. Others surely knew as well. What was the harm in telling Rodimus? Why didn’t he want his old friend to learn about his new boyfriend?

“Nah, of course not. You’re not into speedsters; I remember. Who then? Sentinel Prime?”

“Oh Pit no!” Blurr snapped, and then, before Rodimus could reply, added. “I’d really appreciate it if you stopped trying to guess. It’s enough to know that I’ve got a significant other now, and we’re very happy. But we’re very private about our relationship – I really would prefer not to talk about it actually. Hey, here’s a better question – have you found anyone yet? Red Alert, maybe? Brawn? Maybe that new kid? Do tell.”

A frown crept across Rodimus’s lips the more he processed. “Ah, I see. Sorry, that was kind of
rude of me. We can talk about something else."

“Thank you!”

From there, the conversation moved right back to Rodimus and anything he could think to talk about that wasn’t relating to top secret information or his love life – the places he still wanted to visit while he was on Cybertron, his favorite drinks, hit songstress Rosanna. The conversation was very Rodimus-centric, but Blurr didn’t mind. The mech was a good speaker, and despite the earlier mishap, Blurr did enjoy the evening. There wasn’t much from his past to feel nostalgic over, but Rodimus definitely qualified as something to get excited over. When they parted this time, Rodimus promised he’d call, and Blurr, so unaccustomed to kindness from the servos of mechs other than Longarm, felt his spark beat a triumphant rhythm. How strange.

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After that first time with the restraints, Blurr found himself wrapped up in Longarm's arms more often than not. And that was how he preferred it. The position put his whole frame on edge, straining to feel each sensation, waiting for the first sign of danger. Interfacing was a lot more intense like this.

But Longarm didn’t stop there.

The deceptively docile little mech was always testing his limits, and he couldn’t have found a better partner to do so with. Blurr didn’t mind a little crushed plating, scratched paint, misaligned struts. He actually rather liked the toys that Longarm had introduced him to – increasingly larger false spikes, which stretched him a little further each time – *Primus*, it felt so good.

But there was always some small part of his mind left wondering – how far was too far? And would he even know once he reached it?

And then Longarm had tasted his spark, and damn it all, Blurr didn't care anymore. He'd never felt like that before, so intimately connected, not just to another mech, but to his own body.

Longarm was the best thing that had ever happened to him. He'd been such a good mech all his life, this was his reward. A miracle had happened. He wasn't going to fight it anymore.

It was time to shut up, believe in Longarm, and enjoy the ride, and oh what a ride it was! Ever since Blurr had transferred back to Intelligence, Longarm had done everything in his power to keep him near, long after he had any reason to.

Gone were the stellar cycles spent off-world, stopping crime and corruption throughout the Commonwealth. Gone too were the missions of seduction. Blurr hadn’t once slept with another mech since Longarm took over, a fact for which he was eternally grateful.

Instead, he stuck to Cybertron, using his wits, rather than his looks, to uncover spies and sleeper agents. The mission was right up his alley, but also served to bolster his confidence in Longarm. If Longarm *was* the enemy, he would never have put Blurr in such a position.

And at the end of each mission – the highlight of his lunar cycle – he would report back to Longarm Prime. Every once in a while they’d even risk a tryst in Longarm’s office, provided Cliffjumper was sufficiently occupied. So far, they’d done an admirable job of hiding things, but if Cliffjumper found out, that would be the end of it, Blurr was sure. He may have been able to keep military secrets, but juicy office gossip like this? Never!

The surly little secretary greeted Blurr with his usual level of enthusiasm, and Blurr responded with
as much energy as ever.

“Good afternoon Cliffjumper! You’re looking friendly as ever! I’m here to see Longarm! I’ve got a status update to give him, you know, on the Flipsides thing. Nothing definitive yet, but he insisted that I keep him in the loop, so in the loop is right where I’ll keep him! Anyway, I’ve rambled quite enough, I suppose you’d like to be buzzing me in so that you can get back to re-alphabetizing your data pads, and I wouldn’t want to get in the way of that – I suppose that sounded a bit condescending of me – my apologies. I understand that sometimes there’s not much to do around here and . . .” Cliffjumper was shaking his head. How odd. Usually Cliffjumper let him finish, not that he ever understood Blurr’s rapid-fire anecdotes.

“Longarm can’t see you right now. He’s got company.”

“What? Company?” Since when did Longarm get company to his office in the middle of the afternoon? “Is it the Magnus?” Strange as it would be for Ultra Magnus to venture all the way to the Metroplex, Blurr couldn’t think of anyone else Longarm would be willing to meet with. Not when he knew Blurr was coming to visit.

Cliffjumper shrugged. “Not Ultra Magnus, no. Some kid I’ve never seen before. Flashy paint job. Was like, a Minor, or something? He just showed up and really wanted to speak to Longarm. And Longarm eventually caved and let him in.”

“Rodimus?!” Blurr felt his tanks drop. He didn’t even really know why. There was nothing inherently wrong with Rodimus paying a visit to Autobot Intelligence. Especially if he was doing research for his Right of Primacy test. And yet the idea of any other part of his life meeting Longarm Prime filled Blurr with a mysterious sense of dread.

“Oh yeah, that was it. Rodimus Minor.”

It was business. He was surely just here on business. He didn’t know. He had no clue that Longarm and Blurr were together.

And yet, paranoia got the better of Blurr. He opened a private comm to Longarm. If Longarm really was busy, then he would be cross with Blurr’s indiscretion, but that was something Blurr was willing to risk.

“Longarm? Blurr to Longarm Prime.”

“Agent Blurr? Are you all right? You sound flustered.”

“I’m fine,” Blurr replied. “I came to give you a status update on the Flipsides case, but Cliffjumper said that you were visiting with Rodimus Minor, and I’ll admit I was curious.”

There was a brief silence on the other end, followed by, “You are right to be curious. He came inquiring about you, after all.” He paused for another long moment, presumably to speak with the bot in question. “I’ll have Cliffjumper let you in.

He cut the call, but judging by the sudden angry flush of Cliffjumper’s face, he had made good on his word. With a glare Cliffjumper addressed him. “I told you ‘no,’ so you went behind my back. Stupid pampered little speedster. Just ‘cause your Longarm’s favorite.”

Blurr folded his arms over his chest, fixing his own glare on the little mech. It was, of course, Cliffjumper who caved.

“Fine, fine. Guess I can’t second-guess the boss.” He flicked a switch on his desk, and Longarm’s
door buzzed open, allowing Blurr passage.

Once inside, he found Longarm at his desk, hands folded, his demeanor patient as ever, though Blurr thought he detected a slight hint of annoyance. Rodimus, meanwhile, leaned against a desk across the room, tapping his foot on the floor. He appeared flippant as he ever did, but like Longarm, he was hiding something – in his case, a slight edge of suspicion in his optic. Blurr didn’t like this at all.

“Hey Blurr, welcome!” Rodimus chimed. “We were just talking about you!”

“Good things, I hope,” Blurr joked, though his spark was pulsing faster and faster in his chest, urging him to flee danger.

“Only the best,” Longarm smiled.

Rodimus made to explain. “I came here to interview Longarm Prime about the Right of Primacy, one young Prime to one young Prime-hopeful. Turns out he didn’t even have to take it! Lucky bastard!” He laughed, though somehow, Blurr felt he wasn’t feeling so jovial as he tried to appear.

“Anyway, I remembered that you work in Intel, and that, by extension, Longarm was your boss, and I just wanted to make sure he was treating my best friend right!” ‘Best friend?’ Blurr wouldn’t have gone that far, but that part of the story, at least, struck him as plausible, if not more ominous than Rodimus implied.

Blurr frowned. “Is my word not good enough for you?”

That wiped the smile from Rodimus’s face. He stepped forward, releasing his hold on the desk, wearing a look of terrified dejection. “That wasn’t what I meant by it! I just wanted to – to . . .” He took a step back, slapping a palm to his forehelm. “Primus, I’m a stalker. I’m sorry Blurr. It’s just been so long, and I really do miss you, and you didn’t answer my last couple comms. I just wanted to make sure you were all right.”

Blurr quite wanted to lecture Rodimus right then and there. He was a busy mech; between his two jobs, he was out more often than not – he didn’t always have time to answer his comms! But Longarm was still here, watching with that same patient smile, and the last thing Blurr wanted to do was to lose his temper in front of such a miraculous mech.

“If you would like to step out and catch up, I can wait right here.” How was Longarm so perfect? He’d read the situation so well and had provided the best solution. Blurr was falling in love all over again.

“Yes Sir!” he chirped. “That would be much appreciated.” Without another word, he grabbed onto Rodimus’s wrist and in a blur, dragged him out the door, past a startled Cliffjumper, and into the hall. Once past earshot of potential eavesdroppers, he flung Rodimus’s hand away from him, as though it were toxic, and began with the ranting.

“What are you doing here?!” he snapped, aware that he was being a bit dramatic, yet fear drove him onward. “Why are you here? Who told you to come here? I didn’t ask you to come here, and yet here you are, and it’s overbearing and kind of creepy, and I don’t care if I’m overreacting; I want to know why you felt the need to come all the way out to my place of employment to chat up my boss – what reason could you possibly have?!”

“Whoa,” Rodimus laughed, holding up his hands. “Chill out Blurr; you’re kinda scaring me.”

And okay, the glare was kind of uncalled for, as was the flared plating and the rapid-fire demands. But Rodimus had crossed a line, and invaded a part of Blurr’s life he had no business
being in.

But Blurr would accomplish nothing if he frightened Rodimus away. Gathering himself as best as he could, Blurr let out a heavy vent, forcing his plating back into place, folded his arms over his chest, and stared intently at the floor, though he couldn’t keep the anxious tap away from his toe. He had to stay calm.

“I can see I’ve done something that upset you.” This time, Rodimus didn’t laugh. “I’m sorry. It had been awhile since I’d heard from you, and I was worried that something had happened. I know your job is dangerous – you could die out there, and I would never know.” He folded his own arms, mimicking Blurr’s gesture. “I guess I just didn’t realize that talking to your boss would be crossing a line. I don’t suppose you’d be willing to tell me what you’re so upset about?”

“I am not,” Blurr said, anxious haste masked by his own speech impediment. But there was Rodimus, with his wibbly lips and his big blue eyes, and Primus, Blurr really was a terrible friend. He hadn’t bothered trying to contact Rodimus once in four vorns, a trait that he still held to, even when Rodimus initiated contact, and now he was pushing him away, and for what? Showing concern? What was wrong with him?

“Oh, okay,” said Rodimus. “That’s fine, I didn’t mean to pry. I’ll just –”

“Wait!” Blurr interrupted, knowing he was going to regret what he was about to do. “What I’m about to tell you – you can’t tell anyone else about it, okay? Can you promise me that?”

Rodimus’s jaw fell slack, and he stared at Blurr with suspicion. “Err, yeah. Yeah, I won’t tell.”

“Longarm and I –” he cut himself off, afraid to proceed. If he gave words to their relationship, if he admitted to it, then he was committed to it – there was no backing out, no more plausible deniability. Was he ready for this? For a mech that had shown him kindness once or twice a long time ago? He was going to regret this…

“Longarm and I are seeing each other – have been for three vorns now! I know that he’s my superior and that we really oughtn’t to be; to be fair, he wasn’t when we first began our relationship, but I know that if anyone found out, we would get in trouble, I mean, my last boss was infracted because he was suspected of having an untoward interest in me, which was later dismissed, but the Elite Guard takes this kind of thing seriously, though given our age, experience, and ability, I’m honestly not sure which of us would be the one in hot water if we were found out. Probably me, actually, since I got Highbrow in trouble once already. Folks will start to think I’m intentionally seducing my superiors, which I’m not, but you know, word just gets around, and anyway, that’s why you can’t let anyone know about this, and why I’ve been so antsy about it, and I’m sorry for snapping at you and being cross at you, and not returning your comms for so long – I really do care about you, I just get distracted sometimes, which isn’t much of an excuse, I know, and I’ll try to be better in the future, I will! That’s why I’m telling you all of this right now, even against my better judgment, because I want to make things right with us, and I really do hope things are right with us now, are they right with us?”

He’d really done it now. In his haste to say everything, as fast as he could, he’d gone and made it impossible for poor Rodimus to understand a word. The poor mech stood, blank-faced, trying his hardest to concentrate, before inevitably giving up.

“I’m sorry,” he sighed. “I know you hate it when folks can’t understand you. I tried though, you gotta believe me.”

“I do,” Blurr hastened to say. “That was my fault! I can repeat it if you want.”
“That would be nice,” Rodimus smiled, though the smile was not quite so genuine as Blurr was accustomed to. Nonetheless, he began his tale a second time, forcing his words to come out at Rodimus’s speed.

“Longarm and I are seeing each other – have been for three vorns now.”

“Yeah, I kinda figured that was the case,” he said with a laugh.

“I know that he’s my – wait, what?! How?” Was it really so obvious?

“You got really dodgy about the whole s/o thing last time we spoke, and with the way Longarm spoke about you – all gushing and starry-optic’d? And if you were dating your superior, that would be reason to be hesitant about telling, right?”

“He wasn’t when we started seeing each other though!” Blurr was determined to save at least a little credibility.

Rodimus laughed again. Why did he keep on laughing? What was so funny? “Then what’s the issue?”

“It’s unlawful!” Blurr protested.

And then Rodimus’s face turned stern, the change in demeanor sudden enough to make Blurr flinch. “Blurr, if the Elite Guard cared so much about your relationship with Longarm, then they would have brought it up by now. You can’t tell me they don’t know, if even I know. What’s the real reason for your defensiveness? Why don’t you want me to meet him? Are you ashamed of me? . . . Or of him?”

And that was it, wasn’t it? As wonderful as Longarm was, as kind, and sweet, and loving as he behaved towards Blurr, he knew deep down that it was just a front. Somewhere, beneath the smiles and the serenity, Longarm was rotten – he’d caught glimpses of it – with Highbrow, at work, in bed. He wasn’t the mech he said he was, and Blurr knew, that if anyone else saw it – if anyone else pointed out what he was already certain was the truth, he would no longer be able to deny that anything was wrong. He couldn’t let anyone get close. He couldn’t let them see that Longarm wasn’t perfect. He couldn’t let them destroy everything good in his life. Not again.

“I’m not,” he said, meeting Rodimus’s optics, his own full of barely-suppressed rage, “and I’d appreciate it if we could stop talking about this.”

Rodimus nodded. “That’s fine. I don’t want to push you,” and then, with a sigh, added, “You’ll tell me if he hurts you though, right? I’m worried about you, Blurr.”

Blurr’s optics narrowed. “He’s not going to hurt me, because there’s nothing wrong with him. He’s a great, fantastic, wonderful, upstanding Prime! The best I could have ever hoped for. Now, if you’ve got nothing else to say . . .”

“I wanted to invite you to my Right of Primacy ceremony – if you’re willing to come.”

That had not been what Blurr had expected him to say. “Right of Primacy . . . ceremony?”

“Yeah,” Rodimus smiled, completely fake this time. “That’s what my last comm was about. I’m on my last two tests – a show of cunning and a show of valor. But that should be no sweat. I’m set to graduate at the end of the next lunar cycle. I’d like you to come if you’re not busy. I don’t have a whole lot of friends on-world. It would really mean a lot to me.”
And if that wasn’t telling right there? Rodimus was lonely; Pit, he’d always given hints before: “They don’t hate you,” echoed in Blurr’s audials. Blurr had always been so wrapped up in his own issues – his inability to communicate with people, his off-putting personality – from where he’d stood, Rodimus, with his flashy smiles and incessant chatter, had always seemed like a social butterfly. Of course that hadn’t been the case. Why else would he have been interested in Blurr?

Rodimus was lonely then, and without the small squad he’d been bonding with for the past seven vorns, trapped back on Cybertron, a planet that had never been kind to him. He must have been in Hell. And here Blurr was, making things worse. It was time to stop being so wrapped up in his own mess of a life and make an effort to care about someone else for a change.

He put on the most apologetic smile he could muster, and said, “I’ll be there.”

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Life continued on as normal for a few months’ time. Rodimus's Right of Primacy ceremony came and went, one more night of drinks and chatter, before the new Prime was at last returned to his crew. And without Rodimus, Blurr found himself, once again, with only Longarm Prime for company.

But with his drastically diminished social life dragging him down, it was more than a little worrisome for Blurr when he found himself on assignment off-planet for the first time in three vorns. It was only to Luna I, but the distance was unaccustomed enough to be surprising. Supposedly some Decepticons had been sighted out there, and Blurr was the only available agent that could handle it.

The reasoning was sound, and Longarm gave no indication that he was cross or otherwise disappointed in Blurr, so Blurr tried his hardest not to stress over it. Everyone had to go off-planet from time to time. It was hardly fair that he got preferential treatment just because he happened to be sharing a berth with the boss.

The second time it happened that decade, however, shook his confidence, and the third demolished it. Three of his last seven missions had been in space, after spending so long on Cybertron, close to Longarm. Something was wrong.

But far be it from Blurr to fret over it. It was best to confront Longarm directly and see what had happened.

“Have I done something to offend you, Sir?” he asked, slipping the line casually in at the end of his report the next time he was back on-world.

“Whatever do you mean Blurr?” Longarm laughed, lighthearted as ever, and then, growing more severe, added, “Have I upset you in some way?”

Blurr vented a relieved sigh. Longarm was clueless . . . or playing dumb. More likely the latter, actually. He was far too clever a mech to have not known exactly what he was doing. Blurr took the bait anyway.

“I admit it’s probably nothing – I’m probably just whining or being paranoid, but I couldn’t help but notice that, after so long working at your side, I’m suddenly being sent off-world – quite a lot actually, with no warning or explanation from you. I know that I’m jumping to conclusions here, but it kinda looks to me like you’re trying to get rid of me – please tell me you’re not trying to get rid of me! Or actually, do, if that’s what you’re doing. I want you to be honest with me, Longarm. I know it’s been nearly four vorns now, and that’s a long time to be with one partner, and I know I’m kind of grating and uninteresting, so you’ve probably gotten bored, I mean, if I were you, I would
probably be sick of me too, but if you are, in fact, trying to get rid of me, please tell me the truth. I don’t want to pretend everything’s all right while worrying every day that it’s not.”

He knew he’d messed up when Longarm gave him the same blank stare everyone else did. How fast had he spat that one out? He’d gotten so used to hyper-speed babbling in Longarm’s company, that he’d forgotten that even this perfect mech had his limits.

At last, though, Longarm seemed to parse it. His lips turned downward in a deep frown. “I’m not sick of you. Quite the opposite, in fact.” He stepped closer, reaching out to lay a hand on Blurr’s shoulder. “I miss you, Blurr.”

Blurr leaned into the touch. Primus, how desperate was he? “But you keep sending me away. No warning at all! What am I supposed to think about that?”

The arm wrapped itself around Blurr’s neck like a scarf, or a noose, before stopping, allowing a heavy hand to cup the side of Blurr’s helm. “I apologize. I hadn’t stopped to consider your feelings in the affair. That was very thoughtless of me.” It inched its way up to tangle stubby fingers in Blurr’s antenna. “Truth be told, Mirage and Metalhawk started to complain about the schedule. I didn’t want you to get in trouble, so I sent you away. You do understand?”

How could he have been such an aft?! Longarm was only thinking about him and his safety! Blurr was ungrateful. He didn’t deserve a mech so wonderful and gracious as Longarm Prime!

How easy he was to forgive . . .

Blurr shook his head, to dispel the unwanted thought. “I’m sorry, Sir. I am just being selfish. I don’t know why you put up with me.” The hand at his antenna tightened, forcing Blurr’s head down, to stare at Longarm head-on.

“Don’t say such things, Agent Blurr. As it so happens, I am quite fond of you, ‘grating personality’ and all. It drives me mad to be kept apart from you as I am, though you are inclined to doubt me. You are a smart mech; I do not take offense. How can I make things right with you, Agent?”

Somewhere in the back of him mind, Blurr was screaming at himself. He had no right to demand anything of Longarm – not after Longarm had given him the world! But it would be worse to continue down the route of self-deprecation.

“Please stay with me tonight?”

At long last, that serene smile was back on Longarm’s face. He pulled Blurr down further yet, planting a deep kiss on his lips. It did not last so long as Blurr would have liked, but it made him weak in the knees all the same. And then Longarm pulled away, his grin tinged with a hint of mischief, and said, “Your wish is my command.”

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It was all Blurr could not to scream.

Longarm's hands were inside his spark this time, while his arms were wrapped tightly around Blurr's own, keeping them fastened to his side. With Blurr properly restrained, he was able to poke and prod, tickle and pull at Blurr's very life force, all to his spark's content. Blurr felt like he was being torn apart.

At the same time, Longarm's spike ground a punishing rhythm into Blurr's valve, driving him into the wall at his back.
Blurr squirmed as best he could over the overwhelming need to get rid of some of the charge building up inside of him. There was not a sensor node in his frame that Longarm hadn't activated, Blurr's neural net was on fire, begging him to stop. It hurt. In the best way, it hurt – fuel lines burning and pelvis stretching and his very soul terrified. His optics had shorted out awhile ago, and strange as it was, Longarm seemed to somehow be getting bigger. Despite their difference in height, Longarm's lips had found Blurr's, claiming them, forcing his glossa in, and Blurr's valve was beginning to feel stretched wider than even the toys had managed. It was going to tear – he just knew it.

He moaned weakly against Longarm's lips, shaking his head, pulling away. "L-Longarm," he managed.

Mercifully, Longarm paused, released Blurr's spark, and the cold loss of sensation caused Blurr to release the most pitiful whine.

"Are you all right Blurr? It's too much, isn't it? I'm sorry; I should have known."

"N-n-n-no," Blurr stuttered. "I'm fine. Keep going! Keep going!"

He wasn't fine, but like the Pit was he going to tell Longarm that. He had to keep going; even he didn't know why.

Alas, Longarm's mind had already been made up. "Blurr, close your spark chamber."

"No! I'm fine. I can do this!" Blurr protested, though the words were a bit more ragged than he'd intended.

But Longarm wasn't listening. In one swift motion, he released Blurr from his grasp, pulling out just enough to swing Blurr around, and shove him face-first into the wall. Blurr gave out a surprised yelp in response.

"Longarm!" he choked, but Longarm continued to push, crushing Blurr into that solid surface, and Primus, it felt good.

"Close your spark chamber," he growled into Blurr's audial, voice deeper and darker than Blurr had ever heard; Blurr couldn't stave off the full body shiver at the sound. He was ready to be complacent, a fact which Longarm seemed to sense, as he paused in his motions, just long enough for Blurr to snap his chest plate shut. Then the game was back on. Longarm began driving into him once more, even faster than before. Blurr could feel his chest plate caving with every thrust, his body swaying harshly enough to make him dizzy, while Longarm pounded him into the wall.

At some point, Longarm grabbed onto his hips, hard enough to put dents in his internal mechanisms, and hoisted him from the floor, driving in deeper and deeper, stretching him wider and wider, until the rim of his valve burned and tore. And still Longarm kept going. Blurr was terrified that he would be split in two. How was Longarm able to get in so deep? When had he gotten so big? Blurr didn't even bother holding back his screams anymore; couldn't if he'd wanted to.

He was being torn apart. Primus, his body couldn't take it anymore! He jerked hard, movements trapped by the wall, by Longarm, forcing his struts to snap and his joints to creak. His vision was long gone, but his hearing was quick to join it, and his mind tagged along. In that moment, he was just his frame, a hunk of metal and energon, lost in pure sensation.

And then, he felt Longarm's spike pulse within him, felt hot, thick transfluid gush through him, adding more pressure within his overstuffed valve. He couldn't keep from crying, from the pain, and
the pleasure. It felt so right; this was where he was meant to be – here, taking Longarm's spike, milking him of that sweet transfluid. He wanted more. It wasn't enough!

But then, Longarm was sliding out of him, lowering his battered, twitching body to the floor, saying some faraway words that Blurr could never hope to parse. Not when he was too overwhelmed by the coldness of the air, the emptiness of his gaping valve clenching on nothing – he was so upset, so out of his mind with the need for more contact, more Longarm, that he sobbed.

"Blurr! Blurr!"

That was his name, wasn't it? Kind of a silly name when you got down to it. Very on the nose.

"Are you all right?"

Hmm? No. No, he probably wasn't all right. He conveyed this with a soft gurgle.

"You poor dear," Longarm said, somewhere far away. "I wore you out, didn't I?"

"Mmrf," Blurr replied.

His grunt was met with a chuckle. "Rest Blurr. Rest and recharge. You're going to need it."

Blurr didn't want to recharge. He wanted to be full again. He wanted Longarm to be inside him – body and spark. He tried to vocalize this, but of course, his traitorous vocaliser betrayed him. It shorted out, and suddenly, sleep was seeming more and more like a good idea. Maybe he could power down for just a minute. Then they could move on to round two. Yeah.

Just for a minute . . .

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From that day on, Longarm was clingy when Blurr was around – they spent more time together interfacing than not, and so long as no one was watching, they were never found with their hands to themselves – it was like falling in love all over again, albeit with something even darker lurking just beneath the surface. Despite this, however, Longarm had taken to being more gentle in the berth. They'd yet to try restraints or spark play since the night that Longarm had fucked Blurr into unconsciousness, and whatever had happened to Longarm's spike to make it longer, thicker, capable of releasing transfluid, seemed to have been undone.

It was probably for the best, all things considered.

When Blurr was off-world, Longarm sent him love notes every decacycle, and if Cliffjumper could be believed, spent his days morose and pining. Despite their distance, physically, intimately, Longarm's mind was still consumed by thoughts of Blurr. Longarm still believed in him. Blurr should have been satisfied. And yet . . .

And yet their relationship was in a worse state than ever.

Longarm had given Blurr the key to their doom, the one thing he never should have relinquished: time to think. Absence caused Longarm's magic to fade – without the constant contact, he became less the light of Blurr's life, and more Blurr's incredibly shady boss.

Wasn't it odd that the only Decepticons Blurr seemed to run into were ineffectual grunts with no useful knowledge nor command? Wasn't it strange how the missions kept getting longer and longer? How peculiar that Longarm, an avid lover of Cybertron's wonders, no longer wished to
leave Iacon when Blurr was around – Pit, he barely let Blurr leave the house, drowning him in affection until he stayed.

But that always had been his Achilles heel. The moment he read a message, the moment he laid eyes on that precious little Prime, Blurr’s mind took a hike, and his spark took over, pulsing madly with its blind love. Blurr was trapped, and he had a hunch he was exactly where Longarm wanted him.

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It had been nearly a decade since his last space mission. He was safe. Longarm wouldn’t send him away again – he wouldn’t! Even though he should have. Even though he was doubtlessly some kind of spy, even though Blurr had to get away. He was here, his every minute devoured by Longarm Prime.

When he wasn’t physically with Longarm, he thought of Longarm, he dreamed of Longarm. Good things, bad things – Longarm was his life, his addiction. Never before had he felt so trapped.

“Blurr, are you okay? You’re looking kind of pale.”

Even Rodimus could tell that something was wrong. Fulfilling his promise to make their friendship work this time, the young Prime had chosen to spend his own downtime between missions on Cybertron. Rodimus Prime and Agent Blurr. They both had found success after the Academy. Not that Blurr felt particularly successful now.

“I’m fine!” Blurr snapped. “I’m fine, I’m fine! There is nothing that could even conceivably be wrong with me, because that’s how incredibly great I am at the moment, thank you for asking!” He knew his response was harsh. He knew Rodimus was only trying to help. He knew that he was stressed and on-edge, but it was so hard to stop himself, when Longarm’s hands on him were all that he could think of. Primus, he needed a miracle. Some way to quit Longarm.

Rodimus was surprisingly patient with him, however. “Not sure I believe you, but I won’t press. Just know, if you need to, you can talk to me about anything.” Rodimus laid a gentle hand on his shoulder, only for it to turn into Longarm’s in Blurr’s mind. He flinched, and the hand went away fast as it had come.

“You know what we need Blurr?” said Rodimus, smiling broadly as ever. He was, perhaps, right to change the subject.

“What?” He didn’t snap this time; he was too exhausted.

“We need a bit of fun – just you and me.”

“Fun?” Blurr wasn’t sure he wanted to know what Rodimus’s version of fun was.

“I got a couple tickets to Rosanna’s Iacon concert. You wanna come?”

Blurr didn’t have any particular interest in the princess of pop, but if she could get his mind off of Longarm and back to rationality for a few minutes, it would was worth trying. “Yes! Sure! Let’s do it.”

Two decacycles passed like a lifetime; by the time the day of the concert rolled around, Blurr wasn’t sure he wanted to go anymore. Longarm was a great mech! Blurr was just paranoid; that was it. After all, there was no one willing to smother Blurr with their pure affections, untainted by lust or lies. Longarm loved him, and he loved Longarm too. There was no reason to try to escape because
Longarm was not someone he wanted to run away from.

But Rodimus came to pick him up for the concert all the same, and soon enough he found himself trapped in a crowd of a few thousand rowdy bots jumping and dancing in time to the music produced by one tiny singer on a faraway stage. Blurr couldn’t see the point in it; the songs were all right, but how anyone was able to enjoy them in this atmosphere, he couldn’t quite fathom.

At least Rodimus seemed to be enjoying himself. “Isn’t this great?” he called out over the noise.

The idea of holding a conversation while competing with the sound of every other bot in the stadium was unappealing to Blurr, but he’d come here to spend time with Rodimus. If Rodimus wanted to talk, then they’d talk.

“Yes, she’s pretty good,” Blurr responded, forcing himself to remain concise. Rodimus would never be able to understand him otherwise.

“Slag yeah she is! She wouldn’t still be going strong after – what, six vorns if she wasn’t!” Wow, who’d have thought her career was so long-lived? She’d been singing since just before Longarm got big for arresting that Decepticon, come to think of it.

. . .

No. The point of this night was to not think about Longarm. Blurr didn’t know why he shouldn’t be thinking about Longarm, but it had seemed like a good idea at some point.

“Man, she was one of the few musicians we got out on the asteroid. Everybody was listening to her.”

Rosanna was pretty prolific, wasn’t she. Blurr had never realized just how popular she was before. A mech whose career had been going strong since before the reemergence of the Decepticons on Cybertron – a highly-placed civilian within the Entertainment Guild. Now wasn’t that a funny coincidence?

Intercepted transmissions had alluded to a sleeper agent of a similar status and duration of activity. Could this Rosanna have been the elusive Flip Sides?

. . . .

That was preposterous! Rosanna may well be Flip Sides, but such an inconsequential hunch was hardly evidence enough to build a case on. There were plenty of bots in the Entertainment Guild. The only thing that made Rosanna different was the timing of her rise to the public optic.

Still, it was a lead worth investigating. Longarm would be very pleased with him for making such strides, even while he was off-duty!

But Longarm wasn’t pleased. Sure, he had worn the smile, offered words of praise, took Blurr home that night and utterly ravaged him in congratulations for a job well done. But two days later, Blurr received his new assignment – to Gorlam Prime, farther from Cybertron than he’d ever been before.

His first instinct was to cry, to mourn his separation from the bot that was his sun and sky. It was certain to be a long mission, and the thought of being away from Longarm for such a duration hurt enough to make him purge.

And yet, the voice of doubt that so-often visited during these absences, had already reared its head. 
You got too close to the truth. He’s sending you away because you found out too much. He
And Blurr, bitter and heartbroken, found the voice easier to listen to than ever. He had to report Longarm Prime. He had to get the Elite Guard to open up an investigation against him. It was his duty as a member of the Elite Guard, as an Intelligence Agent, as an Autobot. And if Longarm was, in fact, innocent, then there was nothing to worry about . . .

Even still, Blurr could not convince himself to do it. He found himself standing in Fortress Maximus, wandering the corridors, trying his hardest to avoid approaching Ultra Magnus’s office.

It was a small mercy that the Rodimus happened to be on the premises at that exact moment. Blurr wasn't sure how long he would have paced the same hallway for otherwise.

“Blurr? What are you doing here?” Blurr might have asked the same question of Rodimus, but he was too relieved to see his friend to even consider it. In an instant, he was pressed tight to Rodimus’s side, arms wrapped around his chest, clinging as though all the world was trying to drag him away, into some endless pit of despair.

Rodimus adjusted to the sudden presence with an admirable quickness, wrapping his own awkward arms around the skinny frame, stroking soft, soothing lines into Blurr’s antenna with his thumb. “Hey,” he said, voice gentle. “You okay Blurr? Do you want to talk about it?”

Blurr shook his head fiercely, an action which Rodimus was blind to. Despite the negation, however, he couldn’t keep the words from spilling from his mouth. “It’s Longarm. He’s in trouble this time, I know he’s in trouble, I’ve been telling myself that he’s not trouble – that he’s perfect and good and fine and on the level, but I can’t lie to myself anymore. I can’t I can’t! I have to tell the Magnus – I’ve got to; I can’t live like this anymore! But I can’t seem to convince myself to get over there – I can’t seem to control myself – not when Longarm’s involved! But why would I want to report Longarm? Longarm is everything! I can’t report him!”

Rodimus held on tighter as Blurr spoke, and somehow, he was the same comforting presence that Longarm always had been. Blurr felt safe here; why couldn’t he feel like this all the time? Why had he gone and made a mess of his life like this? Why couldn’t he make up his own damn mind about Longarm?!

“I’m sorry I’m sorry I’m sorry!” he squeaked, shoving himself away. “You shouldn’t be seeing me like this! I’m Elite Guard – I have to act like Elite Guard – especially here! I’m sorry, I’ll do better.” He stood up straighter, forced his face into a neutral position, got his EM field on lockdown, but Rodimus wouldn’t stop staring at him with those worried optics.

“You’re here to report Longarm?” Scrap. He had said that hadn’t he? Why had he said that?

“It’s fine! It’s nothing, I promise. I’m just being stupid. Don’t worry about me. I’ll leave now.”

“Wait!” Somehow, Rodimus managed to get the word out before Blurr took off running. “Has he hurt you, Blurr?”

“No!” Blurr snapped, though it wasn’t quite sincere. Longarm had hurt him, truth be told. Physically, mentally, emotionally – he’d even managed to convince Blurr that he liked it. No! No, that was just him being paranoid. He was smart enough to know his own mind. Of course he liked it! He liked it because it was Longarm doing these things to him. . .

Primus.

Rodimus seemed to pick up on Blurr’s insincerity, for his optics glowed with a blue fury, his fists
clenched, hard enough to dent. “That fragger! I swear, I’ll kill him! Abusing his power like that!” It was Rodimus to initiate the hug this time, though Blurr couldn’t find enough presence of mind to reciprocate. Rodimus thought that Blurr was in an abusive relationship? He certainly had conveyed the wrong idea, hadn’t he? Of course he had . . .

“I’ll report him for you,” Rodimus continued. “I can’t allow anyone else to pull this kind of raw slag. Not with you, or anyone else!” The vindictive intensity with which Rodimus spoke was perhaps more telling than the mech had intended. He clearly had some kind of baggage of his own, more things that Blurr had been too wrapped up in his own mess of a life to pay any attention to. He wasn’t alone. Rodimus had problems too – things that Blurr could only imagine. Maybe Rodimus had a secret lover too. Maybe Rodimus's secret lover was probably a spy.

Unlikely as it was, it did help ease Blurr's racing thoughts. He gently eased himself out of the hug, feeling more calm this time.

“I appreciate the offer,” he said, as slowly as he could force himself. “But don’t worry about it. I’m fine now. Thank you. Really. I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t shown up just then.”

Of course, Rodimus wasn’t so easily swayed. “Blurr, you can’t! I know how hard it can be to get out of a situation like this. Let me help you. I’m worried about you, Blurr. You’ve been looking really bad the last several times I’ve seen you. Longarm must really be getting to you. This isn’t good for you.”

Blurr shook his head. “I’ve got it under control now. I promise. Please don’t tell anyone about this.”

Rodimus looked very much like he wanted to, but Blurr was more convincing than his own conscience. He frowned, narrowed his optics, and folded his arms over his chest, but in the end, all he could say was, “Okay.”

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Blurr had wanted so badly for his rational mind to win over whatever Longarm had done to make him into such a witless wreck. But in the end, he hadn’t been able to. Longarm was life. Longarm was love. Even from across the galaxy, that wouldn’t change.

And so, Blurr had gone to Longarm’s berth one last time, had been held so lovingly, so gently, that he knew that something was wrong. And he hadn’t cared. Pit, he nearly believed when Longarm swore to him that this would not be the end for him.

And when he finally reached the space port, bid farewell to the love of his life indefinitely, when the doubt that had always wrapped itself around him in his solitude reared its ugly head, he had no difficulty in banishing it. Longarm was good and loyal. He just needed patience. They’d be together. One way or another.

He believed in that.
You Can Do Better than This

Chapter Summary

The war is over and the Decepticons are lost. When will Lord Megatron return to save them?

New Kaon was a pathetic excuse for a barren hunk of rock presenting itself as a planet, and an even worse capital world for the once-proud empire of the Decepticons. Shockwave had been around for a long time – he’d seen the rise and fall of regimes, great leaders come and go, one tiny, insignificant planet of constantly warring autonomous mechanical beings reach out, spread its wings, and become an unprecedented powerhouse, holding a good two thirds of the galaxy.

Shockwave knew well the transient nature of life and the universe, and yet, Megatron had made him believe otherwise. The mech had come from nowhere to overthrow Megazarak, fourteen million years ago. And with his invincible demeanor and beautiful words, Megatron had convinced even an old mech like Shockwave that this time would be different – that this time, it would be the Decepticons to come out on top, and end the age of warring factions once and for all.

And now the remnants of his naïve followers were trapped on this rock, with few resources and little hope. Megatron had left not long after the end of the war, heading out into the wider galaxy in a vain attempt at finding help. They were down, the signing of the Tyrest Accord had ensured that, but Megatron refused to be out. He intended to bolster their forces more than ever, and return to reunite the Decepticons and retake Cybertron from those Autobot thieves.

That had been half a million stellar cycles ago.

In the meantime, former war general Onslaught had taken over command. He had a mind for strategy, but had not much in the way of charisma. All that skinny blue general did day in and day out was sit on Megatron’s throne, reread the treaty that had doomed their lot, and mope. It didn’t do much to instill faith in the system.

Beyond Onslaught’s reach, mechs were angry, hungry, tearing each other apart. New Kaon held a dwindling number of resources – not enough to support the several thousand Cybertronians stranded on its surface, not enough for more ships, cities, anything. They couldn’t even create new life as they were. If Shockwave had believed in the Pit, then surely he had found it here.

During the war, Shockwave had been the head of Scientific Achievements. He was no Perceptor, but he had been responsible for a number of useful inventions – holomatter avatars, the cortical psychic patch, synthetic energon, improved transmitter technology, warp drive technology, and of course, weapons of mass destruction. Sixshot was a personal favorite.

But out here, deprived of his laboratory and supplies, he’d been reduced to comm duty. Every day, all day, his job was to send pings out into the endless void of space, in hopes that Megatron would respond. He never did. Half a million stellar cycles and not a peep. And every day that the call for help remained unanswered, Shockwave died a little more on the inside.

Perhaps Megatron had been killed? Perhaps he’d crashed on some nowhere asteroid and had no means of returning home? Perhaps he’d abandoned them? And even if he hadn’t, at the rate he was
working now, Megatron was going to come home to find the capital of his joke of an empire empty, save for the sparkless husks of his once-loyal followers.

They were all going to die.

But somehow, the universe had decided that spending his days waiting, searching, pleading for the return of his one true lord and master, was not enough suffering for him. It seemed that one hundred fifty thousand stellar cycles of being in charge of this nowhere land was finally getting to Onslaught’s head.

“Where is he?” Onslaught snapped one day, looming in the doorway of Shockwave’s station, an impatient sneer on his face. “How long have you been searching, Shockwave? And yet still no sign of him? Are you even trying?”

Shockwave didn’t bother turning to look. It wasn’t his wisest move, true, but he didn’t think he could deal with looking upon that gaunt, wicked face. Not without purging his tanks. Onslaught was fed up with his own inept leadership, and today, he had chosen to lay the blame on Shockwave. It was always someone, usually his own mechs. Swindle had already been put in the med bay three dozen times, Blast Off and Vortex stuck to the shadows, always hiding out of sight, and Brawl had taken to firing his cannon on anyone who approached him from behind.

Now, in the absence of his old unit, Onslaught had moved on to bigger targets. He spread foul rumors of fellow generals Straxus and Strika, until the two were incapable of showing their faces in the crumbling city, for fear of becoming the victims of an angry mob. Oil Slick had mysteriously vanished altogether, and the Stunticons remained in a group no matter where they went. Now, it seemed, it was Shockwave’s turn for some abuse.

“Do you realize how big space is?” Shockwave volleyed, claws tightening on the controls. Though his voice had been strong, he couldn’t deny that the same accusations had been plaguing him for centuries now, albeit levied by his own mind. “Megatron could be anywhere at all. It is not so simple as pointing the telecommunicator in a direction and asking it to find him. Normal communication frequencies cannot be reached after a certain distance. And presumably, our lord had exceeded that distance.”

He heard the creak of the floor behind him; Onslaught was approaching. This time, he did turn around. Who knew what sort of wicked deeds Onslaught would try to inflict upon his exposed back?

But it wasn’t fast enough. Powerful hands wrapped themselves around an antenna, and wrenched, twisting Shockwave’s body, and dragging him down. Shockwave couldn’t stave off a grunt of pain – had it been any other part of his frame to suffer the abuse, he would have made no sound at all.

“You wouldn’t be trying to undermine me, now would you? You don’t like my leadership, so you’re making me out to appear inept. Is that it?”

“What would be the point in that?” Shockwave growled, voice shorting and crackling from his neck’s odd angle. “Once Megatron returns, he’ll do a better job of that than I could possibly manage.”

Onslaught wrenched again, though this time, Shockwave stifled his hiss.

“I could murder you for your insolence right here! Don’t think that I won’t.”

And it wasn’t a lie. Onslaught may have been a terrible leader given the circumstances, but he was strong, and Shockwave was a mere scientist. A Decepticon scientist, true, but not much of a fight for a decorated combat general. If he wasn’t careful, he could very well wind up with his head blown to
pieces by one of those twin cannons on Onslaught’s back.

“If you kill me, then you’ll have no one else who can look for Megatron. I am irreplaceable.”

Onslaught released his hold, faltering back a few steps, as though bitten. Shockwave decided he may as well capitalize on the moment. “Moreover, I hold a special significance to Lord Megatron, as one of his first followers. He would be most displeased should he return to find me dead. I would very much hate to be the one who killed me in such a situation.”

“This was a warning,” Onslaught insisted, trying his hardest to keep his voice from cracking. Even gone for a million years, Megatron’s wrath was a very real fear. “Stop trying to undermine me, or you may wind up with an axe buried in your back one of these days.”

Onslaught was afraid; Onslaught had lost. It was thus, that Shockwave didn’t bother holding back his final comment. “Keep on your current path, and it will be you to wind up in such a situation. Not by my hand, of course. I have no interest in you one way or another. But the Decepticons are a mess, and as leader, you are the one responsible for it. The wrath of every bot on this planet is directed at you right now. I can’t say I envy your position.”

And that was the killer. Plating flared and fangs bared, Onslaught stumbled from the room, as though the murderers were already after him. It wasn’t much of an exaggeration.

Two weeks later, he indeed turned up dead, though it wasn’t an axe that was buried in his back. His spark had been shot out by a null-ray, a fact that Shockwave didn’t have to deduce. The culprit was obsessed with sharing his good deed with all of Kaon.

“Onslaught has fallen by my hand. Now I, Starscream, am taking over as the new leader of the Decepticons!”

Nobody really liked Starscream. He was boisterous, self-centered, cowardly, and even a little unhinged, but he was better than they’d had. And no one could deny that he had ambition.

Starscream’s rule was objectively better than Onslaught’s, but unlike his predecessor, this new leader could not have cared less about the guidelines established in the Tyrest Accord. With the disgrace of their unit leader, the Combaticons were tasked with flying out into the depths of space to secure further supplies. A week’s worth of rations had to be forfeited to get Blast Off into a fit enough state to make the journey, but most Decepticons were willing to make the sacrifice. At least they were doing something now. Besides, those who objected were too weak to fight back anyway.

Unlike Megatron’s mission for help from far-off worlds, the Combaticons found success. They returned within the stellar cycle, bearing all sorts of riches – energon, alloys, weapons and transport. As it turned out, Swindle was quite the salesmech.

From there, Starscream ordered the Decepticons to spread themselves out amongst the few, barren worlds they still maintained control of. Char, Thrull, Krull. The planets were scoured for any and all resources that could be found – and those that had none to spare were transformed into outposts, resting points for recharge on longer voyages. But it was when he began reclaiming old planets that the Autobots finally took notice.

They sent in four Elite Guardsmechs – four bots against the entire might of the mighty Decepticon military. That was all they needed. The Decepticons bowed before those inferior mechs like the cowards they were, like fresh protoforms caught playing with the transdimensional flux generator. And Shockwave was there with them, hating himself for it.
“So,” said their leader—a red tank that had obviously been converted from something else; Autobots simply were not warframes. Besides, Shockwave could safely attest that no self-respecting, naturally-born tank would allow itself to stuff a turret in the middle of his chest. Worse yet, the mech had an obnoxious habit of providing his own sound effects, like some kind of tick. “Word is that your lot has been—*whip!* **Bang!*—occupying liberated planets and pillaging their resources.”

“I’m sorry, are we not allowed to leave Kaon?” Starscream asked, folding his arms. “That sounds to me like it violates the rights granted to all sentient beings by the Galactic Council, don’t you think?”

“You can leave Kaon,” the next mech, a flashy red speedster added. “But your presence beyond the boundaries of your territory is upsetting the locals. That’s why they called us in. Have to make sure you’re not violating the Tyrest Accord. Erector?” The bot nodded to a rotund yellow constructi-bot.

“Article 3.7 declares that any travel beyond the borders of your realm must be explicitly approved by the leadership of any planet, moon, asteroid, et cetera, that you wish to visit. Goods acquired may be limited to energon, building materials, other foods and fuel, and alien technology, except when procured with the express purpose of use as or manufacturing of weaponry and armaments. Furthermore, all off-world goods must be purchased legally through the appropriate channels.”

“Somehow,” the second mech cut in, “I’m not so sure that you’ve been following those rules. Do you want to tell them what the punishment for breaking the treaty is?”

Erector continued. “Article 21.1 states that any violation of the here-to outlined rules and regulations shall subject the undersigned to the arrest of their leadership, and a four million shanix fine to their nation, as well as the confiscation of any illegal contraband.”

“That’s nice,” Starscream sneered, folding his arms over his chest, “But our leader is who-knows-where and we’re slowly starving to death on this wasteland. I have not violated any of your stupid little laws, but you make it very difficult not to. Can’t see why we signed this stupid treaty with a bunch of power hungry lugheads in the first place.”

“We’ll be the judge of whether or not a crime was committed,” said the tank.

Thank Primus for technology.

Shockwave had managed to develop a handful of attention deflectors and planted them on the most illegal of their weaponry. And the Elite Guard fell for it. In the end, they did confiscate a handful of power converters and energy cores, but they found nothing that would have damned their lot, though the little white speedster gave Shockwave quite a scare, staring at weapons stockpiles and fusion generators as though he knew they were there. He said nothing, however—too young and inexperienced to be certain of what he saw, Shockwave suspected.

In the end, the Elite Guard left with only a warning, but the warning was enough to break the fragile spirits of the Decepticon destitute. Starscream had given them a sliver of hope, something to cling to, to fight for— the chance of a better life. But the arrival of the Elite Guard had proven that war criminals by way of defeat deserved not even that much. Big Brother was always watching, always ready to step in the moment the Decepticons managed to squeeze a drop of happiness for themselves.

What was the point in trying?

And so, despite Starscream’s best efforts, advancement stopped. The only bot that could save their lot was Megatron—Megatron, who had been deified by eons of absence. Of course he had the miraculous means of taking out the Autobots and bringing the Decepticons home; he hadn’t been
present to prove otherwise. And until he failed, he was guaranteed to succeed.

But despite the faith he proclaimed, Shockwave was beginning to wonder – was Megatron really out looking for a miracle to save them? Or had he just run away?

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In the end, Megatron was gone for just under two million stellar cycles. What he came back to was a society that was fully-functioning, if not stagnant. Starscream had done well with the opportunities available to him, but there was no redeeming their spirit. Not without Megatron.

Fortunately, Megatron didn’t come alone.

He’d brought with him several hundred mechs – some, Decepticons lost during the war, others, bots that Shockwave had never seen before. They came in all shapes and sizes and frame types – at least one was even partially organic.

“My fellow Decepticons,” he addressed the masses from the podium that, until yesterday, had been Starscream’s. “I have been gone for far too long, scouring the wide universe for the key to winning an impossible situation. And I have hurt you. I have left you destitute, abandoned to your fates. I have become but a name, a legend, an image of flawless leadership that I know I will never live up to. And there is no one to blame for such things but myself.

“I cannot offer you a miracle. I cannot offer a flawless victory to you, nor the head of Ultra Magnus served up on a silver platter.” Though many in the crowd deflated at the admission of defeat, not a one dared to utter even a whisper – such was the power of Megatron’s sway. Even while admitting defeat, he was the type that could convince others to follow him anywhere. He continued.

“But I do not return empty-handed. Victory will be a hard win for us; it always had been. We underestimated our opponents last time, and we paid dearly for it. And that accursed Tyrest Accord that we were strong-armed into signing has made our chances of recovery more difficult to achieve than ever, as the Autobots systematically strip us of our rights. They will not be happy unless we are living like mechanimals, rather than the Cybertronians we are.

“I bring with me help from the outside. Our forces, who had been scattered throughout the galaxy. Loyal mechs, and powerful. General Lugnut, Commander Blitzwing, and others. But I also bring with me newcomers. Autobot colonists swayed by sympathy to our cause, neutral forces from far-off worlds, bringing with them new perspectives and ideas, as well as some former Autobot cadets, looking for vengeance on a vicious people that have turned their back on them.” He gave a quick smile to the techno-organic femme that stood by his side. So she was a former Autobot? Interesting.

“They bring with them insight, they bring with them technology and knowledge, they bring with them news from the other side. On their own, not one of these things will regain what we’ve lost, but time and perseverance will turn the tide.

“Decepticons, after two million stellar cycles, your leader has returned. The period of mourning is over; it is time to rise up and reclaim our stolen home, our right to freedom, our place in this galaxy!”

The crowd cheered. Megatron had not given them any substantial information – no plan of attack, no leads, just more empty promises. But nobody cared. After their eons of despair, Megatron’s magical words were just what everyone needed to hear, his presence, the spark of light that would inspire sparks and drive the hopeless to pull themselves from this endless slump.
Of course, not everyone was pleased.

Starscream stood near Shockwave, arms folded and wings twitching with a barely-suppressed rage. He had led the Decepticons for millennia; he had held them together in Megatron’s absence, had fought just as Megatron was intending to, and he now had nothing to show for it. It had taken Megatron less than a day to sweep in and reclaim leadership without so much as raising a fist.

But even from atop his stage, Megatron seemed to notice the anger emanating from that single mech.

“My fellow Decepticons, far be it from me to not give credit where credit is due. Remaining united in my absence was no easy feat, and yet here you remain. I understand that for this miracle, I can thank one Starscream of Vos, for stepping up and continuing the fight.” Starscream perked up, wings giving the slightest twitch of anticipation. What was this now?

“And never let it be said that Megatron is ungrateful. For his unwavering commitment to the cause, I wish to name Starscream as my second-in-command.” There was an instant, a flash, of calculated hatred in Starscream’s optics, but it was quick to pass, replaced with a broad grin and a puffed chest. He fluttered up on stage, bowing before the wild cheers of the captive audience.

Before Starscream had a chance to make any kind of victory speech, however, he found Megatron stepping back in, moving on to a new subject. “And at this time, I would like to appoint others to positions of power.

“I wish for the position of chief medical officer to be fulfilled by Scalpel; Secretary of foreign affairs: Strika, Secretary of commerce: Swindle . . .” The nominations continued for a while, with a round of applause following each name. Shockwave patiently awaited the calling of his own name, recognizing him as chief science officer. However, when the time came . . .

“Chief science officer: Blackarachnia.”

Shockwave’s tanks clenched. The nomination had been a slap in the face. Judging by her reaction, ‘Blackarachnia’ was the techno-organic, former-Autobot that Megatron had acquired on his travels. Shockwave didn’t care who she was! No one was as skilled as he, and no one half-so loyal! What could she do that he could not?

But Shockwave was, indeed, a loyal mech. He needed to have faith; Megatron knew what he was doing. It had been eons since they’d last met, but Megatron could never forget Shockwave, one of his oldest and most capable of followers.

And indeed, his faith paid off.

Later that night, once the festivities had died down, and Megatron was able to step out of the public optic, Shockwave received a comm, urging him to come to his Lord’s quarters. This was his moment; this was his reward. He dropped everything he was doing, and made the journey.

Megatron stood with his back to the door, staring out the third-story window of the decrepit building – still the best that their settlement had to offer. Infrastructure had fallen by the wayside once the Autobots stepped in.

“My Lord? You wished to see me?” said Shockwave, entering the room and collapsing to his knees in deference.

“You may rise, Shockwave.” When Megatron deigned to face him, his frown was grim, his optics hard. Shockwave wondered just what he had seen in his long absence.
“You did not object to my choice in science officer,” he noted, no emotion betrayed in his voice.

“I trust your judgment, Lord Megatron.” It was the only obvious answer. And Shockwave’s devotion was enough to create the barest hint of a smile.

“I am glad. It is loyalty like this that I need more than ever.” He turned back to the window, gazing on the wasteland before him. “Disgusting, isn’t it?”

“It was not always so bad,” Shockwave admitted, hesitant. “We were making an impressive recovery right up until the moment that the Autobots came in, to subjugate us once more.”

“I have heard.” Again, his tone was unreadable, though it was usually a good bet to assume that Megatron was angry.

“The Autobots are a disgrace. Do you know what they’ve done with our homeworld?” Megatron asked after a long pause, his optics still locked on the barren grays of the city below.

“I do not.”

“They’ve allowed it to become weak. They have raised a generation of Cybertronians that have never known combat nor war nor strife. They are vapid, dedicating their time to art and expression. They are weak, soft and sensitive – would not survive two minutes out in the greater galaxy. Their Military Academy tries to beat sense into them, but there is only so much they can do. They will not survive another war, against us nor anyone else. All they have to their name right now is technology.

“Blackarachnia has been on the inside. She knows the Autobots and their weapons more intimately than any of us ever could – studied under Perceptor himself.” Shockwave bristled at the name. Perceptor was a pitiful wretch with far more brains than was logical. But most offensive, he was weak; should they have ever met face-to-face, Shockwave could have killed the mech with ease. Someday, he swore he still would. But Megatron was not finished, and Shockwave could not afford to let his thoughts wander until he’d taken in every sweet word his Lord uttered. “I do not intend to underestimate them a second time. She will help us stay on top of anything they can come up with.”

Oh. The blow was unintended, but hurt nonetheless. Shockwave had always been Megatron’s science officer. Shockwave had fought at Megatron’s side for fourteen million stellar cycles, since before the Great War, since the days of Megazarak. The fact that he’d been replaced by a young femme who couldn’t have been more than one million, based on her frame type, was more than a little offensive. But he was not soft. He could take a hit, physical or otherwise. He kept his expression neutral, lack of face making it easy, and waited for Megatron to continue.

“As for you, Shockwave, you can do better than that. I have plans for you.”

“Plans, my Lord?” Shockwave cocked his head. If he was not to be chief science officer, then what could Megatron possibly have in store for him?

“Blackarachnia is skilled, but it will take time for us to reach a point where we can effectively defeat the Autobots, and in the meantime, technology marches on. I will require a bot on the inside – someone who can keep tabs on the new advances in Autobot tech, relay their weaknesses, strengths, military patterns, observations.

“There is no one so loyal nor dedicated as you, who I trust to perform this task. Your observational skills are unmatched, and you can shift your body beyond the capabilities of most mechs. It should
not be so difficult for you to maintain a disguise."

Shockwave’s first instinct was to protest. Megatron had finally returned to him; he did not want to leave his side now – let alone to go live amongst the Autobots. Moreover, intentionally surrounding himself with enemies would be putting him in a state of constant peril, and not only himself, but the entire movement. This action would be a clear violation of the Tyrest Accord. The last thing they needed was the Elite Guard coming back and upsetting Megatron’s rule. If events transpired that made him appear anything less than a god, there would be no recovering their shattered morale.

“I cannot force you to do such a task. Putting yourself in a state of such high stakes danger and agony would require nothing short of the utmost dedication. If you falter at all, you will fail. I trust you, Shockwave, but if you are unwilling to consent to this most important of missions, then I will not force you.”

But though Megatron presented Shockwave with a choice, they both knew it was only a formality. Shockwave could never refuse anything asked of him by Megatron. He had sworn fealty to this mech ages ago, and he had meant every word of his oath. He would follow Megatron anywhere. Which was why, when it came down to it, there was only one thing he could say.

“Lord Megatron, I graciously accept this task that you have deemed me capable of.”

This time, Megatron did smile. “I knew I could rely on you.”

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“I’m thinking in your case, a small frame would be best. No one would expect a Decepticon spy to be a shrimp.”

“I agree. We will have to install a specialized cooling system and power converter to compensate for the mass shifting. A spark siphon as well, and perhaps some specialized attention deflectors, in the event that I am forced to undergo any kind of physical examination.”

“Yes, good idea.”

Blackarachnia may have been young, but Shockwave could see why Megatron had chosen her. She had a brilliant mind; nothing was impossible with enough time and thought. And her youth benefitted the cause in another way.

She had been away from the Autobots for a mere two hundred stellar cycles. She was up to date on relatively current trends, at least of the sort that Shockwave’s alter ego would find useful. The intention was to drop him on the farming colony of Luna I. No one would care if he was a few hundred years behind on music, fashion, and culture. The disguise, however, was another issue.

“Now, what are we looking at for frame?”

Shockwave folded his arms, pondering over the question. It had been quite some time since he’d seen another Autobot – what did they even turn into? Flimsy ground vehicles? Nothing with wings; he remembered that much. “I don’t want to turn heads. Make me as uninteresting as can be.”

“You’ll have to lose the purple then,” she smirked. “Purple’s not a very Autobot color.”

“What about grey?”

“You wanna look like a corpse?” she laughed.
“Are there no grey Autobots?”

Blackarachnia curled her upper legs, and hid her ponderous face behind the data pad. “I can’t say I’ve ever thought about it. I guess there must be, but I’ve never really noticed. It doesn’t stand out.”

“Exactly.”

Across the operating room, a small femme code-named Flip Sides grumbled on her medical slab. She was set to go to Cybertron too, but as a sleeper agent rather than a spy. “Just don’t do pink and white. I’m doing pink and white.”

“As much as I’d love to see a blood-colored Shockwave,” Blackarachnia laughed, hitting one last button on her data pad and spinning it around for Shockwave’s benefit, “I think this would be much more fitting.”

The bot on the screen bore a lot in common with Shockwave’s own frame, from his treaded limbs to the shape of his chest plate, the placement of his vents, the way his legs functioned. And yet, no one would suspect that these two bots were one and the same.

He was short and portly where Shockwave was tall and slender. His armored hands were small, with five plump fingers where Shockwave had three claws. He transformed, not into a powerful tank, but a lowly crane – perfect for work on the crystal farm, as his falsified back-story would imply. But the coup de grace was the face. It existed, for one. His antennae had been folded down beneath his chin to form some kind of guard. The single optic of his true form had been reduced to a mere decoration, while two Autobot-blue optics, and a pair of white lips made up the rest of his features. What an interesting foray this would be.

“Do you like it? I call him L1-AX2. You won’t get a proper designation until you enter the Academy, but ‘Axer’ might work as a sufficient nickname in the meantime. I based his design on a popular labor frame from a few vorns back. The face is pretty unusual, but not to an absurd degree, and I am working with limitations. The rest, however,” she chuckled, “is so boring that nobody will pay you a second-glance.”

Shockwave pondered over the image of the unrecognizable grey mech whose body he would be wearing in the near future. It was awful to think about – having to pose as some flimsy, inexperienced Autobot newspark, especially after the life of hardship that he had led. But duty was more important than his own prejudices and misgivings. Megatron’s word was life and law. He would bear with looking like a mechanimal even, if that was the frame that Blackarachnia saw fit to stick him in.

“You’re certain that this will not get me captured.”

“Shockwave,” she grinned, four optics alight with mischief. “This form is so mundane, that you’ll be lucky if you’re noticed enough to even get into Intelligence in the first place.”

And that, was exactly what he wanted to hear. If Shockwave had had a mouth, he would be smiling. And then, he tried not to cringe, as he realized that soon enough, he would.

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“I am requesting updates every lunar cycle. Remember Shockwave, yours is the most vital position to our victory. Do not let us down.”

Megatron’s parting words ran through his head as he flew his miniscule shuttle away from Kaon and the misery of the life he’d led upon it. He hadn’t been off-world in two million stellar cycles – it was
difficult to leave now. But leave he must.

With this sorry excuse for a ship, it would take him just over a vorn to arrive on Cybertron. It was the price he paid for the security of being able to fly under the Autobots’ radar. No one would notice a craft so tiny flying free of Decepticon territory, and so long as he avoided activating his flimsy transwarp drive until the last possible moment, he would remain that way.

The ship had enough juice for a single jump, and was set to fall apart immediately after leaving the pocket dimension. If all went according to plan, he would crash land on Luna I, as just some poor nobody bot locked in stasis. Luna I was accustomed to vagrants and outlaws, working the crystal farms to escape a shady past – at least if Blackarachnia’s intel was to be believed. Shockwave would slip in easily enough, upload his new profile to their systems at the first possibility, stick around for a few stellar cycles, growing accustomed to Autobot culture and building a history with the locals, should someone wish to investigate him. From there, it would be straight to the Autobot Military Academy and the heart of his mission.

It would be a long wait, but he’d already been sitting on the sidelines for two million years. What was one more vorn?
Nobody Needs to Know

Chapter Summary

Blurr knows the truth about Shockwave, has willingly betrayed the Autobots by keeping the presence of the Decepticon warrior a secret. How much farther can he fall from here?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Knowing Shockwave's secret was somehow very liberating. There was no more internal dilemma, no more wondering whether Longarm's love was sincere, what his ulterior motives were, whether or not Blurr should report him to the Elite Guard, or even what he'd be reporting him for. Blurr had seen Shockwave's face with his own optics, had stood in that monster's claws, and he'd been spared. And it was with full awareness as to what he was doing, that Blurr had made the decision to not report what he knew. So long as it was in Blurr's power, Shockwave's secret would stay safe.

Which made him a traitor. He was knowingly abetting a Decepticon spy, knowingly allowing him access to all of Cybertron's deepest secrets, knowingly handing the planet over to the enemies he'd dedicated his life to fighting. And he didn't care.

Cybertron had been his home for twelve vorns, longer than Velocitron had ever been, but even after all that time, he'd only ever felt he belonged when he was with Longarm. Why fight it? He'd known it would end this way from the moment he laid eyes on that portly little beacon of light and wisdom. It was only the last few dregs of instilled loyalty that kept him from diving full-on into the deep end, but even that couldn't last forever.

In the meantime, he still played at work. With Megatron's failed rush to access the space bridge network, the Decepticons were more active than ever, and the Elite Guard more busy. Sleeper agents had begun awakening, and the wider military presence in the Commonwealth was failing, as inexperienced Autobot foot soldiers came face-to-face with Decepticon veterans with predictable results. The Elite Guard was spread thin, optics facing every-which-way but inward. Distracted as they were, it was ridiculously easy to lie to them.

"Agent Blurr," said Ultra Magnus at a recent meeting of the Elite Guard. "Longarm Prime has requested your presence at his side, due to your extensive work in tracking down Decepticon spies and sleepers. You will remain on-world, serving as our main line of defense against Decepticons who have already breached our borders."

"Yes Sir!"

"The rest of the guard will be spread out amongst the galaxy at large as follows. Erector, Rad, Warpath: to Theophany. Sentinel Prime, Jazz, Jetfire, and Jetstorm: to Earth, Metalhawk, Springer, Crosseut to . . ."

It was nearly impossible for one Elite Guardsmech to be responsible for all of Cybertron, but Blurr had a little help. Shockwave gave him the occasional name to keep Blurr happy, gave him a heads up when Con radio chatter was dead, when there was no point in keeping watch. In return,
Shockwave got more time with Blurr, something both of them could appreciate.

They didn't interface right away. To be honest, the thought of taking Shockwave whole was a little terrifying. Knowing what he knew now, many of Shockwave's previous actions were beginning to make sense – the toys, the inability to overload, even that one occasion when he had begun to grow inside of him, tearing Blurr apart. He'd lost control, that much was clear, but Blurr somehow doubted he'd seen the worst of it yet.

They started small. Shockwave filling Blurr with his claws – still more substantial than any Autobot spike Blurr had ever taken. His own pleasure was reciprocated in a variety of ways – on some occasions, he would transform back to Longarm and allow Blurr to spike him. On others, Blurr would put his skilled mouth to use, working at Shockwave's monstrous spike with his tongue, with his hands. If he tried very hard, he could even swallow the tip! More often than not, however, they'd turn to external methods. Shockwave would pull Blurr close, grind against his belly, or between his thighs. It was never quite so intense as interfacing with Longarm had been, but it didn't have to be. Allowing a forty-foot Decepticon monster so close to him was already pinging every one of his danger sensors. He honestly didn't think he would survive were his frame restrained, his spark bared. Still, sooner or later, the day would come.

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Blurr's life was going well, so it was only so long until the bubble burst – in this case, weeks. He'd received a call on his comm from a medic named First Aid; immediately, his mind leapt at all of the horrifying possibilities. There was no reason for medicine to be calling him – unless Longarm was hurt, and if Longarm was hurt, it wouldn't take long for them to discover his secret, and just the thought of that made his spark pulse faster and faster, until he felt ill, stumbling heavily into the wall for support, and clutching at his constricting chest.

He needn't have worried.

Actually listening to First Aid's words revealed that Rodimus Prime had named him an emergency contact, which struck Blurr as strange. Shouldn't he have chosen someone from his own squad?

But the reasoning became more clear once First Aid explained why he'd called. Team Rodimus had been set upon by a Decepticon unit while defending the outer reaches of the Commonwealth. Brawn had been killed, Hot Shot and Red Alert were M.I.A., and Ironhide had only just managed to make it back to Cybertron with Rodimus's inert body. "Cosmic Rust," First Aid called it, a disease unseen since the last Great War. It was curable thankfully, but Rodimus would never be the same again. This time, Blurr was sick, stumbling to the floor, head spinning and spark racing. How could this have happened?

And what had he been thinking?!

If the Decepticons won – if he allowed them to win, then this would happen again and again. And though there were few bots he cared about, he couldn't stomach the thought of willingly allowing anyone to suffer like this. He's been a fool to think betraying the Autobots would be easy.

But it didn't have to be that way! Shockwave was one of Megatron's oldest and most powerful of warriors. He could fix this! Shockwave had chosen to keep Blurr alive! He could keep Rodimus safe too – maybe the surviving members of his squad as well.

"Absolutely not."

"Shockwave, please! I'm not asking you to not kill any Autobots! It's just a handful, that's all! You
talk to Megatron directly! Surely you have some influence over –"

Shockwave was moving, massive arm stretching and straining, until Blurr found himself caged between the wall and those claws. "Shockwave?"

"Don't presume to know anything about my relationship with Lord Megatron. If you'll recall, I disobeyed orders just to keep you alive, a fact which I will no doubt pay for in due time. I could not protect your Autobot 'friends' even if I wanted to."

"Then forget the others! Just Rodimus! Please, he's just one bot, and it's not like he's even actively out on the battlefield by this point! Please! Just Rodimus. I can't kill Rodimus."

"Why do you so vehemently protest this bot's demise? You barely know him. You don't have friends Blurr – you don't have attachments. That is how I was able to tear you away so easily."

"You don't know anything!" Blurr snapped. Shockwave's words may have been true, but some part of Blurr was determined to protest just how easily he'd fallen, or that he'd fallen at all. "Just because you're at the center of my life, doesn't mean that you're the only presence in my life! Rodimus has been there for me when you couldn't be! Please, just keep him safe!"

"Enough!" Shockwave demanded, allowing his claws to slip until Blurr was pressed flat into the wall. "You are not going to change my mind, Blurr, no matter what you say."

"I –" Blurr struggled for the words, but the world had started moving too fast, even for him. He had to put on speed, he had to keep up. Incomprehensible babble fled from his mouth, and he jerked violently against Shockwave's hand, prying himself free. But still his stupid spark wouldn't slow down. It hurt. It hurt! He stumbled to the ground, the sound of his own racing pulse drowning out all others. Shockwave called out to him, but it may as well have been in slow motion for all Blurr could make it out.

He was burning, his fans roaring, his mind reeling. And then, all at once, it stopped. Everything went black.

"Blurr! Blurr, are you all right?"

He came to on the floor, Shockwave leaning over him, the tip of a giant claw resting on his chest.

"Hmm? Yeah, I'm fine. Not sure what came over me just then, but I'm better now. Really I am."

A second claw worked its way under him, scooped him up, until he was held close to Shockwave's chest.

"Poor dear, you've been under so much stress lately, and I know that being the bearer of my secret is, in part, to blame. Come, let's get you to bed. You need to rest; we'll continue our discussion later, when you are well again."

Blurr found it all to be a little condescending, but he didn't have the energy to protest right now, not when he had so many other things to worry about – Rodimus, the Autobots, he didn't have time to worry about his health too.

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Cybertron was in a downright frantic state. Ultra Magnus had been killed – his hammer stolen. Sentinel Prime and his crew had been called back from Earth to take over as acting Magnus in the meantime, and Blurr had to do his level best to pretend that he hadn't been in on it.
He had been the one to help Shockwave get past security unnoticed, he had engaged the auto-locks to keep the Magnus from escaping, had heard the Magnus's last moments over Shockwave's comm. There was Autobot blood on his hands now; it couldn't ever be washed away. Blurr's spark roared in agony.

But while he had been a willing participant, he couldn't keep the resentment from stirring within. It had been folly all around. Shockwave should have left well-enough alone, laid low. Now every Cybertronian was under suspicion. Just one more thing to add to Blurr's ever-increasing stress load.

"So you think it was an inside job?" asked Rodimus, voice weak and face pale. It was good to see him talking again, even if his hands did shake against the medical slab. Blurr came to visit him in the infirmary as often as work would allow.

"It had to have been," Blurr admitted carefully. Damn Shockwave to the Pit for this – orders or no! "What kind of civilian could have gotten past the security of Fortress Maximus?"

"Any suspects?"

Blurr shrugged. "Most of the Elite Guard was off-world at the time, but it could have been a Prime, a Minor, or even some Decepticon spy that broke into boot camp like that Wasp kid tried to do."

"Huh," said Rodimus with a thoughtful frown. "Maybe." He gave a sharp, pained cough and slumped back onto the slab.

"Primus, this sucks," he groaned. "I've been bedridden for weeks. It is enough to drive a Speedster nuts." He reached out with a trembling hand, until he found Blurr's own. "You're the only one who understands."

It was such a pathetic display, Blurr couldn't hold back his laughter. "Quit being dramatic," Rodimus." And then, in a more sober voice, "You're lucky to be alive right now – Pit, I'm lucky you're alive too. I don't know what I'd do with myself if you died. So please, don't push yourself and hurry up and get better." He laughed again, then added, "You gotta look your best for our date, right?"

He didn't know why he'd said it, or if he'd meant it, but it had the intended effect. Rodimus smiled and gave Blurr's hand a surprisingly strong squeeze.

"Don't worry. Rodimus never disappoints." And at that, his optics dimmed, off-lining. His hand grew lax. He was out like a light.

Blurr allowed himself to entertain the idea. What would his life be like now, if he'd taken Rodimus up on his offer all those vorns ago? It certainly wouldn't be the treasonous mess he lived now – none of the stress or secrets, at least not to this degree. How nice a simple life would be.

He remained in the room for a few minutes more, keeping his optics on Rodimus's condition, but once it became clear that he wouldn't be waking up nor taking a turn for the worse any time soon, Blurr found the motivation to leave.

He didn't make it far.

"Blurr?!"

The voice was familiar – deep, clipped, unheard for a few hundred years. Still, Blurr had no trouble recognizing it.
"Dug Base! I wasn't expecting to find you all the way up here – not that I think you're unqualified to work in the infirmary and more because I haven't heard from you in so long, which is more my fault than yours, I guess – I've just been so busy, but I guess there's no helping that, and it occurs to me that I've already lost you. I'm sorry, let me start again. " He paused, and very slowly said, "Hello. Dug Base."

"Last meeting: long time," Dug Base replied.

"Yes, I was just thinking that," said Blurr. There was a moment of silence as Dug Base stumbled over his words for something new to say. "Designation: Wheelie – misses Blurr. Dug Base: reflects sentiment."

"I miss you guys too." He didn't, not really. The three of them had never had much in common beyond ostracism and speech impediments. Selfish though it was, Blurr had no problem abandoning the friends he'd made in his desperation for connection once better prospects came along. All they did was remind him of the parts of himself that he hated. Still, he fully acknowledged that such thinking was unfair to them. "I'm sorry to up and disappear like that."

"Apology: accepted." Another pause, and then. "Blurr's busy-ness: acknowledged. Accepted. However, presence is missed. Dixosol: Wheelie and Dug Base: drinking at Maccadam's. Blurr's presence: requested."

He could have said 'no.' He should have said 'no.' His life was topsy turvy enough as it was, without adding in social obligations. Besides, the last thing he needed right now was one more tie to the Autobots. But whether from guilt or even the need to prove that he wasn't the monster he was shaping up to be, the words were leaving his mouth before he could stop them.

"Yes! Of course! I'll see you there!"

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Blurr spent the rest of the week neither looking forward to, nor dreading the occasion. In fact, it was the farthest thing from his mind.

The Decepticons were plotting something big – full-scale invasion levels of big, which meant that Shockwave and Megatron were in contact with increasing frequency. Blurr remained Shockwave's well-kept secret, but they both knew that couldn't last. Sooner or later, Megatron would have to find out, and before that time, Blurr would have to resolve his allegiance.

Naturally, the increase in Decepticon chatter in Shockwave's home came at the worst possible time. The Elite Guard was investigating Ultra Magnus's death full-force, and Sentinel was much less subtle in his approach to interrogation than his predecessor had been.

For one reason or another, Longarm had become a favorite suspect, along with Drift and Sky Garry. He was under observation more often than not. In a last-ditch effort, the two had allowed themselves to be caught going at it in Longarm's office, hoping that, in Sentinel's mind, such action would account for any suspicious behavior on Longarm's part. They'd both walked away with an infraction – a slap on the wrist. At a time like this, the members of Cybertron Intelligence were too valuable to lose.

The gambit had helped, at least a little, and some discreetly-planted evidence made Drift seem the prime suspect. But neither Blurr nor Shockwave were foolish enough to lower their guard in public.

In private, however . . .
"You're doing so well, Blurr," Shockwave cooed, two claws buried deep in Blurr's valve, stretching him wide, wide, wider than ever before. Blurr's vocaliser was emitting a continuous, involuntary whine, and his optics were certain to spring a leak at the slightest increase in pressure, but he was determined to stay strong. He dug his fingers into the recharge slab, and shuttered his optics, allowing the pain to overwhelm him. His spark gave a weak stutter in response.

"What do you think? Would you like to try taking me today?"

With the intense sensation he was feeling, a subdued reaction was impossible. "Oh yes, Sir! Please, I've wanted this for so long! Yes yes yes yes yes!"

Shockwave chuckled and withdrew his claws, leaving Blurr's gaping valve gasping around the empty air. Blurr tried to sit up, to follow those wonderful claws, but a heavy hand on his back kept him in place.

"Stay."

"Yes sir!"

"Aft up."

Blurr hastened to obey. His enthusiasm was met with a gentle clawtip running the length of his antenna. He tilted his head into it, like a well-trained cybercat. But the sweet pleasure was fleeting, as the claws moved downward, wrapping themselves around his waist, and holding on tight. Blurr forced himself to relax – tensing up would only make this worse. Behind him, he could hear the sharp hiss of Shockwave's spike deploying.

"Are you ready?"

"Y-yes Sir! Couldn't be more ready than this!"

"Good."

Within seconds, the massive blunt tip of Shockwave's spike was pressed against the entrance to Blurr's slick valve. It was too big; it wouldn't enter. Instead, as it insistently pressed, Blurr found himself forced forward, Shockwave's claws the only thing keeping him in place. His legs trembled beneath the effort of maintaining his position – aft in the air, valve on display for Shockwave's benefit.

Shockwave's free claws found their way downwards, gently prying Blurr farther and farther apart, until his valve burned, but it did the trick. Shockwave began to inch in, not too deep, not yet, but the pain was enough to turn Blurr's legs to jelly. They gave out, and Blurr would have collapsed to the slab beneath him were Shockwave's claws not keeping him in position, as he forced his way deeper and deeper.

Blurr couldn't control himself; he began to struggle, legs kicking wildly out behind him. Shockwave managed to catch one in his free claws, while the other beat uselessly against his treads, which buckled, but remained in place. His vocaliser was emitting a high-frequency whine broken only by the occasional burst of static. Ordinarily, with this kind of reaction, Shockwave would have stopped, to check and see if Blurr was all right. But not today. He continued pressing inward, ignoring the writhing, sobbing mech around him, until at last, he could go no further. His spike was nowhere near fully sheathed – Blurr could feel it, but Blurr's stupid, tiny body failed to afford him the room he needed.

"I'm sorry!" he babbled, unable to contain his shame. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!"
squeeze against his trapped leg cut him off.

"None of that, Love. You're perfect right where you are."

Blurr didn’t believe the consolations, but he did manage to get a hold on his vocaliser, at least for the two seconds before Shockwave pulled out, and oh if there was a Hell, it would feel like this.

Blurr screamed this time, optical ducts at last bursting, leaving lens fluids flying wild, while his free leg resumed its kicking. This time, Shockwave was unable to stand up to the blows. His treads gave way, sending him collapsing forward with a heavy thud. He managed to catch himself before he crushed Blurr, but was forced to relinquish his hold on Blurr's other leg. But he redeemed the situation quickly, using his new leverage to pin Blurr flat to the slab, and sinking in once more, forcing himself against Blurr's already raw nodes.

Somehow, despite the mind-blowing pain, Blurr found himself experiencing a twisted pleasure as well. He was here, safe beneath Shockwave’s steadfast presence, closer to his lover than ever before. This was what he had craved for so long – the pain wrought upon his worthless self with the precision, attention, and love that only a mech who cared as much as Shockwave could provide. Forget Rodimus. He was right where he needed to be.

His cries of pain turned to moans of pleasure as each thrust tore through him, his glossa lolled out, lips twisting in a depraved smile, while his optics glowed so brightly, they shot sparks.

Overload claimed him far too soon, his body lost in a series of short tremors, while Shockwave continued to chase his own pleasure. Blurr was far too over-sensitized to overload a second time, but he never stopped enjoying the sensation of Shockwave above him, within him.

A heavy grunt accompanied Shockwave’s own overload, hot transfluid gushed from his spike, filling up Blurr’s already overstuffed valve. But Blurr was beyond pain. He moaned helplessly, longingly, an unspoken demand for more. Shockwave, wise but cruel, responded by pulling out, a trail of fluids following him – energon, lubricants, and transfluid most like. Blurr whined at the emptiness that overtook him.

"Shockwave."

His body was scooped up in those massive claws, as though he were a doll, and he found his limp frame turned around, until he could look upon Shockwave’s empty face. The mech was not much for expression, but his optic glowed brightly, with fondness, with love.

"You did so well, love." He brought Blurr close, nuzzling his helm gently against Blurr’s heaving chest. His spark beat so fast, he was certain it would burst from his chest.

"That was –" Blurr tried to say, but there were no words. That was what? Amazing? Wonderful? The best damn interface he’d ever experienced?

Whatever he settled on, Blurr didn’t have the chance to say it. Without warning, his spark lurched, and his body followed, again and again, until he was a shaking mess in Shockwave’s claws. No no no!

"Shockwave – it – it- It hurts! Shockwave!" He squirmed and writhed, trying to break free, trying to find a position where his chest didn’t feel likely to explode. Why was this happening?

"Blurr, open your spark chamber," came Shockwave's demand, a million miles away. Blurr struggled to obey. His chest slid open, spark whirling on display, casting a blue glow upon the hollowness of Shockwave’s face.
"What's happening to me?" Blurr squeaked.

Shockwave didn't answer, contemplating the spark before him, reaching in with a free claw to brush against the surface. A rush of fire spread out through Blurr's fuel lines.

"S-Shockwave?"

"Your spark is burning out," Shockwave said at last, retracting his claw, and fixing Blurr with a weary stare. "It's likely a result of your glitch – your spark works much faster than that of a normal mechs; by extension, one can assume it will not last as long as a normal mech's. If it is already beginning to affect you so, then it will only get worse from here. I can't imagine you have more than a few years left at most."

What?! No! How could this be happening to him?! He was still young! Barely one thousand stellar cycles! How could his body be giving out already?! Now, when he was on the cusp of permanent happiness?! Why was he so cursed with this stupid glitch – back to ruin his life once again?!

He said none of this. What was there to say?

"O-oh."

"You're taking this news well."

"I – I –" Blurr couldn't find words. His spark still hurt, and now, with the absence of pleasure, his abused valve was burning, his back, his legs, his head – there wasn't a part of him that wasn't in pain. How was he expected to react to this life-altering news?!

"If you are willing," Shockwave said, carefully standing Blurr on his noodle legs. "I may have a solution."

"What?" It was a miracle he could stand at all, and yet he managed, dizzy and sore, as Shockwave bared his own spark chamber before him.

"If I bond to you, my spark will spare yours some of the burden. It should buy you enough time to find a more permanent method. However . . ."

"However?" Blurr repeated, unconsciously drawing nearer to that comforting light.

"I cannot bond with you without the permission of Lord Megatron." His chest plates slid shut, barricading that sacred view from Blurr's sight. Despite himself, Blurr gave a small whimper.

"It is much to ask, I know," Shockwave said, instead taking the opportunity to pull Blurr to his chest, and hold him close. "I shall allow you time to think on it."

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The next week was spent in a dull haze as he forced his way through his daily life, fighting the throbbing pain that bit at his spark all the while.

Here he stood on the brink of spark burnout, ten million years too soon. The universe had cursed him with the most double-edged gift ever. There was still so much he wanted to see and do – people he didn’t want to lose. He was angry, tired, despairing, and most of all, done. What was the point of denying what his spark wanted while on death’s door?
But he couldn’t deny that Megatron terrified him. What if he said ‘no?’ What if he punished Shockwave for disobeying orders and sparing Blurr? What did he have to lose?

He was strangely subdued during his visit with Rodimus, a fact that poor, fallen Roddy was quick to pick up on.

“Are you all right?” he asked. When Blurr failed to respond, he pressed on. “Is this about Longarm? Has he hurt you again?”

“What?! No! I’m fine! Longarm’s fine! We’re fine,” Blurr snapped, more harshly than he should have been with Rodimus. He knew the mech only asked because he cared about Blurr. And truth be told, Rodimus was right to ask. But Blurr was too on-edge to care. “And he never hurt me in the first place! I was just stressed; Longarm’s a great guy, I promise! And we're very happy together!”

Rodimus looked as though he wanted to protest, but a knock on the door put an end to the conversation. But who in the world could be calling on Rodimus now of all times?

“Dug Base?! What are you doing here?”

“Blurr,” the great mech acknowledged, slumping his shoulders as he dutifully crossed the room, towards Rodimus’s side. “Arrangement: missed,”

“Er, yes. Sorry about that. Life’s been pretty hectic lately.” He made a surprising show of faked sincerity for his current lack of energy.

“You two know each other?” Rodimus asked, looking between the pair.

“Old friends,” Dug Base answered.

“Oh.”

“Attendant,” Dug Base added, gesturing between himself and Rodimus.

“Small world we live in, huh?” laughed Rodimus, though his mirth was as fake as Blurr’s apology.

“Yes,” said Blurr, eager to escape the prying questions. At least Dug Base made for a convenient excuse to leave. “Yes, well, I’ll let you get to work then. Take good care of him for me!”


“I’ll be there!” Blurr beamed, again regretting his decision instantly. He was on the verge of committing to high treason. The last thing he wanted to do was waste time at a dinner party.

On the other hand, dinner with Wheelie and Dug Base was the exact kind of low-stress activity that he needed right now – at the very least, it would be better than dealing with Rodimus prodding him about Longarm.

It was settled. He wouldn’t forget this time. Tonight, he was going to dinner.

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Dinner was the last thing on Blurr’s mind. He had been home for an hour maybe, when Shockwave called, requesting his presence, and Blurr always came when Shockwave called.

As it turned out, this visit was about more than pleasure. Blurr hadn’t noticed the sneering face of
Megatron on the wall until he was already in the room. And though it was a mere hologram, and though the real Megatron was light-years away, Blurr couldn’t stave off the memory of a sword piercing his chest in slow motion, in the most embarrassing defeat he had ever faced, real or no. His spark clenched painfully in response.

“So this is the parasite you disobeyed me for.”

“It is, My Lord,” Shockwave said, head hanging in shame. Why was this happening? Why had Shockwave told Megatron about their secret? Blurr still hadn’t committed to becoming a Decepticon! He wasn’t ready to make this decision yet!

His spark clenched again, and it took all of his willpower not to stumble.

“I do not appreciate you disobeying orders, Shockwave.”

“With all due respect, My Lord, Agent Blurr has done an admirable job of keeping my secret in the time since he learned it, and he was instrumental in the assassination of Ultra Magnus. I believe that he will make an excellent Decepticon. We have never barred converts in the past, and on the eve of full-scale war, we need all the help we can get.”

Shockwave was the one who spoke, but Megatron’s optics remained fixed on Blurr throughout the explanation, and did not stray, even as the warlord addressed Shockwave.

“This is about more than utility, isn’t it, Shockwave?”

“It is, Sir.” Shockwave admitted. “It is my desire to merge my spark with his, if you will allow it.”

Severe red optics flashed to Shockwave for just an instant, before falling back on Blurr. Mock-kindness overtook his expression. “Well, Little One? What do you think about all of this? Would you forsake the life you know to fight for the enemy? Would you allow your soul to be shared with a bot you have only just begun to know? Will you throw everything away to serve him? To serve me?”

This was it. Blurr had to make his choice; there was no time for second-guessing, and no time for weakness. His spark was threatening to explode in his chest, and Blurr had no illusions as to how this would end, were he to show weakness before Megatron. *Say something. Anything!*

“I am, Sir! I’ve never been fully accepted by the Autobots, but Shockwave has always treated me with respect and acceptance. I would follow him into the Pit itself, if that is where he led me. By extension, I would follow you as well.”

His declaration actually got a laugh out of Megatron. “I can see why you have difficulty amongst the Autobots. Very well. I shall allow it.”

The tension eased from the room just like that. Shockwave brightened up for the first time, and Blurr, unable to help himself, rushed over to offer a congratulatory hug to Shockwave’s leg.

“Provided you bring me the head of a Prime.”

And there went Blurr’s sense of elation. It was one thing to swear fealty to Megatron. And it was one thing to help Shockwave on his mission to kill Ultra Magnus. It was quite another to kill one of his allies by his own hand. But it was too late to back out now.

“Any Prime, Sir?”
“Any Prime,” Megatron confirmed.

A flurry of faces flashed through Blurr’s head. Sentinel would be the best bet. He was acting Magnus, he was an idiot, and he had never been kind to Blurr. It would be easy to kill a mech of his sort.

But he knew there could only be one choice.

“Very well, Sir. I will get you the head of Rodimus Prime.”

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He’d known this would be hard – that was why he had chosen Rodimus. The mech was half-dead, confined to a medical slab in the state infirmary, but that wasn’t the hard part. Rodimus was his friend, the only bot Blurr truly considered a friend. He had proven himself to Blurr time and again, trusted Blurr, cared about Blurr. If there was anything that would keep Blurr tied to the Autobots, it would be Rodimus.

And that was why Rodimus had to die.

But when Blurr found himself at the Prime’s bedside, energy saw poised to slice through the mech’s spark and end his life, he found himself incapable of following through.

It should have been easy! He was asleep! He couldn’t fight back!

But one look at that peaceful face was all it took to steal his nerve, to bring back the memories – the concert with Rosanna, crying about Longarm on his shoulder, drinking together at Maccadam’s, sharing a sassy taxi on the way to boot camp. Blurr could not kill Rodimus. He lowered his weapon and backed away, just in time to hear the voices from down the hall.

“Stood us up not once, but twice – I’m starting to think he’s not so nice.”

“Speculation: busy.”

“Busy schmusy. He stood us up, he’s just too good to be seen with folks that he once would. So here’s to Blurr and one more night of failing to make old wrong’s right.”

"High grade?"

"High grade.” The first voice – Wheelie, for sure, gave a laugh, then paused, gasping. “Hey, Dug Base? Don’t mean to be rude, or at least I’m hopin’, but did you leave Rodimus’s door open?”

“Negative.”

Slag! Those idiots had the worst timing! There was nowhere to hide in Rodimus’s room, and he’d be hard-pressed to find a reason to have broken into the room of a Prime in the middle of the night, Elite Guard or no.

But hey, if he couldn’t kill Rodimus, he could at least rid himself of those other loose ends – bots who could hold him back from his rightful place with the Decepticons, if given the chance.

This was it then. Dug Base and Wheelie had to die.

Wheelie was down the moment Blurr entered the hall, but Dug Base was a bit harder. Five seconds of dashing and darting around the gargantuan bot at top speed, slashing and slicing and at last kicking brought the brute down with a thud that shook the hallway.
There was no way that hadn’t been heard. Someone would be coming any moment now. There was no time to hide the bodies – Blurr never would have been able to move a mech of Dug Base’s size anyway. He had to get out!

His spark pulsed faster and faster, leaving his vision white, his gears burning, twisting, churning. He didn’t know how he’d wound up on Shockwave’s front step, hadn’t been aware of his surroundings at all, until those claws were wrapping themselves around his shivering body, drawing him close, as that calm, dark voice pulled him back to reality.

“Blurr,” it called.

“It’s over! It’s over! We’re done!”

“What is wrong?” Shockwave continued, stroking a soothing claw down Blurr’s spinal strut. “Were you able to kill Rodimus Prime?”

“N-n-n-no!” Blurr stammered, voice shorting out beneath the weight of his panic, the screaming of his spark. “No, Dug Base and Wheelie got in the way; I killed them instead, but I couldn’t hide the bodies, and they’ll realize it was me soon enough, and they’ll link me to you, and they’ll come for you, and I’m sorry – Primus, I’m so sorry!”

“Shh,” Shockwave soothed, leaning close to nuzzle at Blurr’s helm. “It’s okay. I have been planning for such a thing since the death of the Magnus. I have contingency plans. There’s a deep sewer network running beneath Iacon, unused since the Great War. We’ll go underground. It will be fine.”

The words should have calmed him, but the panic had set his spark pulsing so rapidly, it was sure to burst – the knowledge of the possibility made him panic all the more.

“Shockwave! Shockwave, it hurts! I-I’m sorry – I’m scared! I think it’s going to explode, I – it hurts so much!”

Shockwave’s head lowered further, pressing against Blurr’s chest, listening closely. In the eternity of a few seconds, he seemed to come to some kind of decision. He straightened up, pulled Blurr just far enough away to afford himself room to move, then allowed his chest plates to slide open, revealing his spark.

“Shockwave?”

“Lord Megatron cannot know about this.”

Somewhere, the dim realization of what was going on took root in Blurr’s mind. If Shockwave was disobeying Megatron, then Blurr’s condition was surely severe. Shockwave wanted to bond, to use his stronger spark to support Blurr’s failing one.

There were still so many reservations Blurr had – about bonding, about the Decepticons, but he’d made up his mind, hadn’t he? When he’d killed Dug Base and Wheelie. There was no going back, and like Hell was he going to abandon Shockwave to face the Autobots alone. He was going to live. He was going to fight. At Shockwave’s side. For as long as he had left.

His own chest plates slid open in that brief moment of clarity, and Shockwave seized his opportunity, pulling Blurr in close, until their spark chambers met, until their coronae opened wide, reached for one another, joined, until Blurr and Shockwave were one.
Chapter End Notes

Next chapter is the last one! We're almost there guys!!
Goodbye Until Tomorrow

Chapter Summary

Shockwave explores new beginnings while Blurr meets his end.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shockwave knew that the war was over from the moment he saw Megatron, his glorious leader, the light of his world, shot down in a blaze of smoke and flames, one of those accursed Omega Guardians to blame. He would live of course, Megatron was not so weak to be taken out by mere blaster fire, one hundred times regular power or no. But the symbolism of the blow did more than enough damage.

The Decepticons had seen their once-invincible leader fall, had come to the collective realization that the brute force that had kept them driving onward for the past eight million stellar cycles, had been overcome by Autobot trickery. There was no coming back from this.

Megatron was too far away to help, and the Decepticons, in too-short supply. Already, Shockwave could see Autobot destroyers sweeping in to the crash site – no doubt they would take Megatron prisoner, coerce him into signing a treaty. He would not give up to save his own life of course; he was no coward. But after eight million years of fighting, with his forces decimated, unable to replenish their numbers while the Autobots held the Allspark, with their movements limited as the Autobots used their network of space bridges to beat Decepticons to their targets, to lay traps, his personal failure was the final straw needed to collapse the whole damn movement.

And Shockwave was – truth be told, he didn’t know what he was feeling right now. Anger, perhaps, at this senseless waste of lives, of time, the destruction of half the galaxy, all for a war that they’d lost. Or maybe it was grief, weariness, betrayal? Whatever the case, it hurt more than any blow.

Shockwave had put all his faith in Megatron, had been his closest confidant and most loyal follower, for eons! Megatron had granted him hope and freedom – Shockwave would have followed him forever.

But Megatron had failed, and now Shockwave stood alone on a desolate planet as missiles from overhead battleships rained down to the earth all around him, watching the scattered remains of his comrades fall, even after they’d stopped fighting. It was no surprise that the Autobots were cruel enough to keep on battering at an already defeated enemy, but Shockwave had long grown numb to death and destruction. He too, may still fall – but what did it matter? Where was the worth in a life where Megatron had failed?

He’d been abandoned by the one mech he cared for more than all others, left alone to pick up the pieces of his ruined life. And for the first time in twelve million stellar cycles, Shockwave did not know what to do, how to go on, when the one thing he’d lived for had been taken away.

But Shockwave was an old mech. He knew that these feelings would pass – all things in life were transient, after all. He may die here, or he may keep on living for another two million years – it
didn’t matter. This devastating wound, this irreparable betrayal would someday fade away to an old scar; he knew that much from experience. Megatron had been his world, but now Megatron was gone.

It was time to move on.

And yet, lost in the horror of the moment, Shockwave couldn’t banish the sense that he would never be happy again.

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Blurr sprawled out across Shockwave’s massive chest, helm pressed against the cool metal, listening to the slowing pulse of that beautiful spark. He didn’t quite have the energy to do any more than that, not after the way they’d just interfaced.

It had gotten easier since that first time – Shockwave went in easier, the pain had by and large been replaced with feelings of warmth and love, exploding from Blurr’s own tiny spark, but that didn’t change the face that their size disparity made a healthy relationship impossible. And with the fading of his post-coital bliss, he was really beginning to feel it.

But an aching frame and taxed spark couldn’t have soured Blurr’s mood. Pain or not, he was just happy to bask in his lover’s presence. They were finally at peace, in the sanctuary of the sewers. As Shockwave had predicted, nobody thought to look for them in these forgotten tunnels – even Blurr hadn’t known about them, after all. And down here, there was no guilt, there was barely a sense of war or conflict. It was just the two of them, sparks drawn together, filling even the dull, damp underground with a sense of warmth and rightness. Blurr didn’t know how long this honeymoon phase would last, but he was in no hurry to lose it.

For the first time in vorns, he had a chance to properly enjoy Shockwave’s company, no secrecy, no lies, just two mechs sharing their every thought, their hopes, their dreams. Megatron had accused Blurr of barely knowing Shockwave at all, when they had requested permission for their bond. Now that they had time, Shockwave had set about trying to fix this. He was all ears, allowing Blurr to ask any question that tickled his fancy, and answering each with full honesty.

Blurr had learned a lot about his lover in these past weeks. He was twenty five million stellar cycles old, an age Blurr never would have seen, spark burnout or no. Decepticons had absurd lifespans – Shockwave was older than Kup Minor or Ultra Magnus had been, and yet, as far as Blurr could tell, he was still in the prime of his life. He wondered if it was lonely, or perhaps boring to live so long, to which Shockwave had replied,

“It seems to me more pitiable that your own lifespans are so short. How are you able to lead a full life in a mere ten million stellar cycles?”

Blurr didn’t know how many years he’d gained by bonding to Shockwave, or how many, if any, that Shockwave had sacrificed, but he hoped that the number was a good one, especially if their remaining years could be spent in peaceful bliss like this.

Blurr should have known better.

The sharp hiss of static drew Shockwave’s attention from caressing Blurr’s worn out frame, to the communication hub in the corner of the room, one of the few things he’d been able to bring with them in their escape. Only one mech knew the frequency, and it was the one mech that held nearly as much significance to Shockwave as Blurr himself did.
“Megatron to Shockwave,” said that deep, cruel voice. Blurr didn’t much care for Megatron, but he knew he would have to learn, for Shockwave’s sake.

“Go to him,” he murmured, reluctantly crawling from Shockwave’s chest to lean against the wall, optics half-closed. How nice it would be to fall asleep right here.

Shockwave, as instructed, approached the hub, flicking it on to answer his lord. “This is Shockwave. Do forgive the scarcity of my updates, My Lord. As anticipated, the Autobots were able to discover my secret. Agent Blurr and I have been hiding in a safe location in the meantime.”

“You are still with that Speedster?”

“I am Sir. Is that a problem?”

“I suppose that depends on whether or not he has successfully obtained the head of a Prime, now doesn’t it?”

Tired though he was, Blurr had no desire to see Shockwave harassed for his own failings. His legs wobbled beneath him, but he forced himself to stand nonetheless, and rush to the monitor, in order to speak for himself. “I have not yet succeeded in my mission, Sir. It is a shameful failure on my part, Sir, but I promise that the head of Rodimus Prime will still come to you, Sir.”

Perhaps Megatron was moved by Blurr’s earnestness? Or perhaps his smile was caused merely by fantasies of ripping Blurr’s own head from its shoulders. Blurr felt it best to ignore it altogether.

“Well, Little One, you’ll have the chance to prove yourself sooner than you may think.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“This evening, fifteen breems past the 26th cycle. We have hijacked the space bridge network from Earth; we’ll be invading Cybertron through the space bridge terminal at Fortress Maximus, eliminating the Autobots from the inside. I expect you will be there.”

“Of course, My Lord,” Shockwave barked, spark ready to fight and die for the mech on the other side of the screen.

“And you, Little One?”

All doubts Blurr had once held over betraying his own people were gone. He’d heard Shockwave’s tales of Autobot wickedness, of ancient oppressions and modern immorality. Nearly every mech he had ever called a friend was already dead, or resented. He had nothing left to tie him to the Autobots. And so, it was with complete confidence that he met Megatron’s question with a “Yes Sir!”

So long as he allowed himself plenty of rest, his body would be recovered by the twenty-sixth cycle for sure. He would go in with Shockwave, with an army of the Decepticons’ finest – strong, experienced, angry. Blurr was intimately familiar with the Autobots and how they fought – knew their weaknesses, knew their fears, their arrogance, their incompetence. The Decepticons would crush them.

And Blurr would be there when they did.

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There was nothing like the battlefield to make one reassess his values. At the beginning of the war,
Shocked had thought himself fearless, invincible, irreplaceable. He was Megatron’s right hand, he was a capable fighter in his own right, he had all of the cunning and wit that a lifetime spent in the laboratory had cultivated.

Shockwave wasn’t naïve; he’d witnessed death, he’d witnessed hardship and despair and suffering. But a life of bondage and misery never could have prepared him for the reality of eight photon missiles flying towards his unit, sparing them only by virtue of the deaths of the unit five miles southward. He hadn’t been ready to witness his teammates, his friends frozen in their tracks, optics flickering and mouths gaping in silent screams, as the Autobots paralyzed them with their wicked guns, then struck them down. He had never imagined the horrors that existed in a prison camp, intimate torture, dismemberment, laser-guided assaults on the mind.

Every death Shockwave witnessed numbed him a little more. But it also increased his own will to live, and with it, the longing for things to live for.

Megatron.

Two million stellar cycles of war had only served to strengthen their relationship. Each could anticipate the other’s needs, words, even thoughts and feelings. They were two sides of the same spark, two mechs who operated on the same wavelength. They may as well have been bonded, they loved one another so much.

And one day, after crawling his way from a swamp of spilled energon and the dismembered parts of his own teammates, after spending three hours sitting in his cold, wet shelter, staring blankly at the wall ahead of him, trying to drown out the voices of the screams that had plagued him all afternoon, that still sounded in the distance, Shockwave decided that it was time to make that a reality. His life was so very miserable, he needed a glimmer of joy, however, small. And with Megatron’s spark bonded to his own, perhaps he would find the strength to persevere through the horrors of war.

“A spark bond?” Megatron asked, optics widening in surprise.

“Yes, My Lord. We have been together for six million stellar cycles now, two million of those in this war alone. The power of our bond is known throughout the empire - no one is closer to you than I. But I admit, even such a privileged state is not enough for me anymore.

“Megatron,” he said, dropping the formality. “I want to be yours. Forever.”

Megatron’s reaction, however, was not incredibly encouraging. Surprise turned to worry in his face – a look so unsuited to this great leader of mechs. Shockwave regretted saying anything.

“Shockwave, that is very flattering to hear, if not unexpected.”

“Forgive me, My Lord,” Shockwave said, bowing his head. “I presumed too much. With your permission, I will take my leave.” He backed up, making to retreat, but a gentle hand grasped at his own, begging him to stay.

“My Lord?”

“Do not take my reaction in the wrong way,” Megatron said, the corners of his lips quirked in a coy smile. The expression was a rare one; Shockwave savored it. “Your presumptiveness is appreciated; you are not wrong Shockwave. I do love you, very much.”

Hearing such words spoken aloud would surely give him the strength to keep fighting another million years, they felt so good. He hadn’t been wrong. Megatron shared his feelings of love – they could yet become two halves of one whole.
But why then?

“I am glad, My Lord. But if you share in my emotions, inappropriate as they may be, I cannot help but wonder why you refuse a spark bond?”

The smile vanished from Megatron’s face. He regarded Shockwave now, not with his prior fondness, but with the stern face he always wore when giving orders. Shockwave stood up a little straighter beneath the cold, confident stare.

“Do not mistake my hesitation as denial. There is nothing that would please me more than sharing my spark with yours for all eternity. However, this is not the time. We are at war, Shockwave. I cannot afford to allow myself to fall into such a vulnerable position. If you should fall, then I would be devastated, broken. And in such a state, the empire we’ve struggled so hard to build would not linger far behind. It is not a risk I am willing to take.”

Shockwave nodded his understanding. He had been a fool to ignore such an obvious danger. Megatron’s words were logical and wise. Shockwave would do well to learn from him.

“I would expect no less worthy an answer from you, My Lord. I will not press the issue.” He turned to leave, to return to the icy solitude of his own tent. But he could not allow such a thing to bother him. He would recharge, regain his energy, and then report for duty first thing in the morning. He would not disappoint Megatron.

Megatron, however, had other ideas. “Shockwave,” he said, giving Shockwave pause in his retreat. “Stay with me tonight.” It was not a request, but an order. Shockwave was helpless to obey.

But when they were together, tangled up in one another on the cold, hard floor, Megatron atop him, inside him, easing his haggard body and restless mind, he was able to open up, just a little more. He never would have done so for another mech; Shockwave beamed with pride that Megatron had chosen him to confide in.

“Shockwave, I promise you,” he said, between love bites and heavy thrusts. “You and I shall both survive the war, and when that time comes – when we have destroyed the Autobots, when we have won, then we shall be bound together for all time. I will rule Cybertron, and you will rule at my side, as my mate. This, is the future that I am fighting for. And that is how I know that we shall triumph.”

Shockwave said nothing in return; there were no words to say to such a heartfelt confession. However, on that night – that night so otherwise full of misery and despair, now peppered with the tiniest hint of hope, Shockwave was gifted with the most magnificent overload he had ever had in his life.

There was nothing that would keep them from winning this war, that much he knew for certain.

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It really ought to have been a lot more difficult for two fugitives to break into the center of the Autobot military might. Had it been anyone else, it would have been. But Blurr knew these halls like the back of his hand – he led the way, taking out surveillance drones and guards before they’d had a chance to know what hit them, and Shockwave followed behind. His disguise was flimsy, somewhere between Longarm Prime and his true form, but it was close enough in size and color to an Autotrooper to avoid suspicion from the casual observer, and nobody had the chance to view him any closer.
Once inside the space bridge hub, the security module disabled, there was little left to do but wait and hope that Megatron arrived at the rendezvous point with a sufficient amount of back up. Or at all. Getting out would be a lot harder than getting in had been.

Blurr needn’t have worried.

The space bridge activated at fifteen breems past the 26th cycle exactly, and rather wisely, Shockwave, back in his original frame, purple plating and all, placed himself between the two. The last thing either of them wanted was for an unprovoked attack on Blurr, or worse, for Megatron to go back on his word. Blurr was taking a great risk by allowing himself to be in the company of so many Decepticons, but though he did not trust them, he trusted Shockwave.

The sound of four space bridges activating all at once was deafening – certain to draw attention from guards, but it didn’t matter. Dozens of Decepticons were stepping through each – Strika, Oil Slick, Lugnut, Cyclonus… he recognized numerous names and faces from his studies back at the Academy. Change of allegiance or no, it was a little terrifying to see so many powerful, alien creatures standing before him, weapons drawn, EM fields pulsing for blood.

But when Megatron stepped through the bridge, everyone noticed; hundreds of Decepticons put their bloodlust on hold, to bow their heads, to provide their leader with respectful acknowledgement, as he gazed out over his small army. Shockwave was quick to approach him, to kneel before his liege, and Blurr had no choice but to follow. Like the Pit would he be caught standing alone in this horde. Eager to not upset his new boss (Master? Was that what the Decepticons referred to him as?), Blurr mimicked Shockwave’s gesture, frame solid, but only under great effort. He could feel Megatron’s sneer upon him without even looking up.

“So this is the parasite in person.”

Shockwave said nothing in Blurr’s defense, and Blurr followed suit, spark pulsing faster and faster as he grew more and more aware of his situation. There was no running away now; he had nowhere left to go.

“I do hope he can hold his own in battle.”

“Yes Sir! Absolutely Sir!” Blurr barked, still bowing his head. He could feel more optics on him, hungry, hateful – why couldn’t they have stayed in the sewer for a few days more – or forever?

“Well,” Megatron smiled, his voice so smug that Blurr couldn’t help but spare a glance at those sharp, white teeth, those gleaming red optics. “Here’s your chance to find out. Decepticons,” Megatron cried, directing the army’s attention upward and outward.

The warning came not a moment too soon. The Autobots had heard the activation of the space bridges, and they, in turn, made their own arrival, armed with the best they had to offer. Autobot warships hovered overhead, guns pointed down at the space bridge network, while snipers and cannoneers positioned themselves on the perimeter, the high walls, looking down into the clearing, ready to strike. In the halls of Fortress Maximus stood the foot soldiers, ready to block any Decepticon ground movement. No doubt Sentinel had more planned, once he was able to access it. The battle would need to end before then. Time was in short supply, and their forces were surrounded, trapped. But they were not defeated.

“Move out!”

Blurr was the first to dodge the volley of sniper fire, realizing belatedly that he’d abandoned Shockwave at the space bridge entrance with Megatron. A quick glance told him that his lover was
safe, but that was all he’d been allowed.

The Decepticons were moving around him, firing weapons into the distance, taking to the sky for better leverage, while even more trickled in through the space bridges. Blurr was forced to dodge charging allies, too focused on the beginning of battle to pay any heed to the tiny blue Autobot underfoot.

Blurr could hear the clashing of metal upon metal – the Autobot infantry was encroaching on the enclosed space, trying to push the Decepticons back towards the bridges, while staying away from the middle of the arena, where blasterfire rained down from the heavens in steady streams, at least until the warships were taken out by an armada of Seekers. The Autobots had no idea what they were doing. They were smaller, weaker, inexperienced, and intimidated by their monstrous-looking opponents; the Decepticons had no such weakness, and were better-trained to boot. Already, the screams of fallen Autobots were piercing the air, joining the deep cries of gleeful Decepticons, of wounded Decepticons, of Decepticons starved of their homeland for far too long.

With the brunt of the warships destroyed, and the artillery likewise dwindling, many were flying beyond the walls of Fortress Maximus, out into the wider world – if they reached Iacon proper, who knew what the death toll would be? Blurr tried not to think about it. He had a mission of his own. He had promised Megatron the head of Rodimus Prime – moreover, he had assured the warlord that he was a capable fighter. Now that the Decepticons had dispersed a bit, he had the chance to prove himself.

Blurr zipped around the battlefield, searching for a way out, knocking over Autobots that got in his way – former allies, total strangers. He recognized Warpath and Erector amongst those who fell as he passed. There was no sign of Rodimus; it made sense. Rodimus had been confined to a medical slab the last time Blurr had seen him. There was no way he’d be out on the battlefield so soon. And Blurr didn’t think that leaving an active combat zone to go look for an invalid Prime would do much to ingratiate himself to Megatron. He’d have to wait on that front, and keep mowing down bots he’d once worked with in the meantime.

A pulse of pain hit his spark – distantly, as though through an ocean. Shockwave.

Suddenly terrified, Blurr raced up to a high point, looking for a familiar flash of purple, forked antennae, a single red optic. It was difficult to hunt down a solitary mech in a sea of hundreds, in the chaos of blaster fire and the smoke of a battlefield. But his spark led him.

Shockwave hadn’t made it too far from the space bridge, and he was currently trapped in battle with the Jet Twins’ combined mode, Safeguard. They had scored a heavy hit, and Shockwave was down, with the combiner bearing down on him.

Not on Blurr’s watch.

He used his tiny size to his advantage, weaving through the legs of fighting Decepticons, over their backs, running as fast as his legs would carry him. In a fraction of a second, he was bowling over Safeguard, sending him flying into the structural support of a crumbling space bridge, splitting their combination in two. In one more, he had severed their sparks, leaving behind twitching, lifeless husks. He returned to Shockwave’s side.

“Are you okay?”

Shockwave’s expression was dazed; he had yet to fully process what had happened. But once realization dawned on him, he reached out, wrapped his claws around Blurr’s waist, and pulled him close, while simultaneously firing his new cannon arm at one of the few remaining warships in the
sky. It took a direct hit, and began plummeting to the ground below.

There was a quick brush of Shockwave’s antennae against his own, accompanied by a, “I do so love you,” before he released Blurr to the ground. But on the way, Blurr’s optic caught the last thing he expected to see. A flash of red, yellow flames. What was Rodimus doing here?!

He was retreating through one of the narrow corridors of Fortress Maximus, stumbling away, injured, weak. Blurr would have no trouble catching up with him. And Shockwave’s attention had already been stolen by Jazz, trusting Blurr to survive the battle on his own. His presence would not be missed.

Unnoticed, Blurr darted through the rapidly thinning crowd, stepping over bodies and dodging blaster fire, as he pursued that doomed Prime into those cramped hallways.

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Shockwave couldn’t believe it.

The symbol of twenty-five million stellar cycles of oppression and failure was dead, killed by Megatron’s hand. And Shockwave had helped.

He’d been a newspark when Megazarak had come into power, overthrowing the previous leader of the Decepticons in the process. Things had been better then, if only by a little. Shockwave had been working as a lab assistant when Megazarak’s unhinged plans to bring Cybertron to life really began to gain traction, and suddenly, he had found himself, a young prodigy, thrust above his station to act as the primary scientist overseeing the conversion. The Autobots had not been pleased.

Perhaps it was for the best that Megazarak had failed in his profane schemes, for Cybertron as a whole, at least. But its impact on the remaining Decepticons was anything but ideal. His people were brought to a new age of oppression and slavery, as he timidly caved to the will of the Autobots. The tyrant was worthless. The tyrant had allowed his people to be used and abused—proud warriors reduced to house pets, servants, laborers. Institutionally forbidden from being anything more.

But Megazarak was strong – invincible, some said.

They had never met Megatron.

And now that miner-turned poet-turned gladiator had succeeded where all others had been too scared to try. Shockwave had given him the keys to the house, so to speak, but once there, face-to-face with the cause of so much suffering, it was his own might that had seen him through. The fight had been epic, tearing a scar right down the center of the Kaonian settlement, raging onwards, into the Manganese mountains, destroying the land, the air, the people. It was a miracle the Autobots hadn’t intervened.

But ultimately, Megatron had emerged victorious, and Megazarak, weakened, broken, and shamed, had been banished from the face of Cybertron itself.

They’d won; Megazarak's Decepticons were no more. It was time to reclaim their rights, their dignity, their identity, under the leadership of Megatron. Megatron had brought victory; it was time to savor it.

And Shockwave, as Megatron’s closest confidant, got his own share of benefits.

Here he stood, in Megatron’s personal chambers, a room he had seen many times before, but never
in such a way, intertwined in Megatron's arms, pressed close to his broad chest, as sharp dentae and an agile glossa attended to his neck. His pulse rushed, fans blared, antennae twitched, his claws reached around Megatron's back to stroke a gentle path down his thick plating.

"You didn't think I could do it, did you?" Megatron chuckled, cocky words tickling Shockwave's protoform. Despite the accusation, Shockwave did not feel threatened.

"I was mistaken, it seems."

"Indeed," Megatron was pushing him down, down to the floor, planting his bulky body over Shockwave's lithe one, leaning closer to nibble at an antenna. Shockwave arched his back at the heavenly touch, an embarrassing whine reaching his vocaliser. And then, the nibble turned harsh.

"Megatron!"

"Is there something you want to say to me?" Megatron smiled, fond as before, though there was a mischievous edge to him that left Shockwave's engine revving hard.

"I think," said Shockwave, digging his sharp claws into Megatron's protoform and using his new leverage to roll them over, until he straddled Megatron's hips, sliding down to align their panels, "that we're beyond words at this point. Don't you?"

And then Megatron's hands were on his treads, pulling him close, Megatron's knees were forcing Shockwave's groin up and away, just long enough for the new leader of a generation to deploy his spike. Shockwave's valve cover shot open in response, much to Megatron's further amusement. "Yes, I suppose we are."

Shockwave had interfaced many times in his life, sometimes willingly, usually not, but never before had he felt so enthusiastic about the prospect. He was still high from their recent victory, and now the greatest mech he had ever had the pleasure of meeting, was paying him intimate attention, claiming him as his own, making Shockwave feel like he was legitimately wanted, needed – like he was home for the first time in his life.

He didn't know what tomorrow would bring. He didn't know if Megatron could follow through a second time, and become the leader that Megazarak could not be, if he could free his people from the oppression they suffered. He didn't know if peace lay in his future, or further bloodshed. And it didn't matter.

All Shockwave knew, was that here, with this extraordinary mech inside of him, he was happier than he had ever believed he could be.

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Blurr should have killed Rodimus. Every strut in his body was urging him to kill Rodimus, to make Megatron proud, to ease the transition into his new life as a Decepticon to the best of his ability. But his legs wouldn't move.

He stood in the corridor, facing down his long-time friend, his saw hanging loosely in his trembling hand. Rodimus had turned to face him, his sad, betrayed optics paralyzed Blurr, as the guilt hit him full-force. What was he doing?! What had he done?!

His spark began to pulse faster and faster, held in check only by Shockwave’s presence on the other end of the bond. No doubt he could feel Blurr’s fear.

No.
He didn’t need Shockwave coming here to save the day. He had to do this on his own.

He couldn’t.

“So it’s true what they said about you,” Rodimus spat, his expression darkening, though it was not anger displayed upon his face. Disappointment, despair, dejection, but not anger. Blurr could say nothing in return, could only shake harder. But his reaction held no bearing on Rodimus’s stature.

“I trusted you, Blurr. How could you do this – please, tell me it’s not true. Tell me you’re not really a – a Decepticon!”

Blurr hung his head, no longer able to meet Rodimus’s optics. He heard something shift behind him, but paid it no mind. Right now, Rodimus was the only thing that mattered.

“Did Longarm put you up to this? That’s what you were trying to tell me all those years ago – that Longarm was a Decepticon! Primus, I never knew. If I’d only listened, I could have saved you.”

The confession held a strange amount of self-deprecation; Blurr couldn’t understand. “Don’t blame yourself for my failings, Rodimus,” he muttered at last, chancing a look upon Rodimus’s distressed face. “You’re a great mech – you tried, and I’m glad for it. Thank you, really. Your kindness meant so much to me. Maybe if I’d known more mechs as good as you, I wouldn’t have wound up here . . . And yet here I am.

“Shockwave’s given me everything – sacrificed his own future so that I could have a shot at one. He loves me, he understands me, he’s disobeyed Megatron all for my sake. And I love him. And I’m not sorry for that. There was nothing holding me to the Autobots – nothing except for you, but I can’t stay in this world, filled with people I hate, all for your sake. I’m sorry I wasn’t good enough for you, Rodimus. I’m sorry you couldn’t rescue me. I’m sorry it had to be this way.”

This was it. Blurr was ready. Just a few steps, a thrust of his blade, and Rodimus would be dead and his own future would be secure. He prepared to move.

Only to find the walls closing in on him – two pressing in from the sides, squeezing his shoulders together, until his armor buckled, until his feet left the ground, until he was incapable of escape. He struggled, legs kicking wildly in an effort to break free. If he could get enough leeway to turn his chest, or dislocate his shoulders, he would be fine. But Rodimus’s words drew his attention away from his attempt, and back to the betrayed Prime.

“My too.”

He’d drawn his bow, the arrow within was pointing directly at Blurr’s chest, at his spark. Blurr ceased in his struggling. It looked like even he could run out of time.

Rodimus pulled the trigger. The arrow flew free, its movements clear to Blurr’s optics, but he could do nothing to dodge, nothing to protect himself as it burst through his chest, piercing his spark and breaking through the other side in an instant.

Blurr’s body fell limp in its restraints.

Through the sparkbond, his consciousness lingered just long enough to feel Shockwave’s agony as he arrived on the scene, as he shoved his claws through Rodimus’s own chest, as he pulled Blurr’s body from its restraints, as he cradled in his arms, close to his chest, as he tenderly carried that lifeless thing from the hallways, out into the cold, black rain.

And then, there was nothing.
“I’m sorry,” Shockwave said, incredulous. “You want to do what to Megazarak now?” He poured his carefully-measured nucleon-rich energon into the beaker he held in-hand, allowing it to interact with the sample of sentio metallico he’d placed inside. They fizzed, letting off a sweet purple steam. Interesting.

“I want to fight him,” said the stranger. “I want to – maybe not kill him, but disgrace him at least. His ineptitude has disgraced the name of the Decepticons. We’re nothing! We’re worth nothing! We’re trampled under the pedes of the Autobots, and he does nothing to stop it.

“Just look at you, Shockwave. I’ve read your journals – the ones you publish under a pseudonym. You’re a genius! Smarter than any Autobot, and yet you’re trapped in this underground laboratory all day every day, mixing new – what? Energons for His Tyranny?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Shockwave said, coolly. Nobody was supposed to know about those journals – as far as the world was concerned, they were written by an Autobot named Dive. He had taken a great risk in publishing them, but he’d thought his findings too beneficial to bot kind to keep secret! Such understanding of the neural net could remove the issue of processor decay from Cybertron altogether, and to think! Damage to the brain module could be undone, with just a little more research.

But should it become known that a Decepticon made such discoveries, he would be executed. Scientific knowledge of such a degree was too dangerous in the hands of a warframe. He’d only been able to publish the journals in the first place by claiming to be delivering them from his alleged master. So long as the knowledge got out, who cared if Shockwave got the credit?

But how had this bot found out?

The mech offered him a charming smile. Shockwave’s spark certainly did not skip a beat when he saw it. “Do not worry, Shockwave. Your secret is safe with me.”

“Oh, of course. A complete stranger claims to have potentially life-threatening information about me. I feel very secure in contemplating this.”

The stranger laughed. “My name is Megatron.”

“‘Megatron,’” Shockwave repeated, glancing up from his now-empty beaker. Nucleon-enriched energon was not to be directly exposed to protoform. Good to know.

“You’ve arrived in my chamber uninvited, you have expressed ill-intent towards my Master, and you’re requesting I break every moral oath I’ve ever held and devise a poison that will suppress his deity-like power to the point that you can defeat him in battle – all without his knowledge.”

“You’re not a cook, Shockwave,” Megatron said, leaning against the table and scooping up a flask of Ore-7. Shockwave was quick to snatch it back. That stuff was far too easy to mishandle. Megatron continued with a chuckle. “You’re a genius – you deserve to up there with the greatest minds of our time, sharing your knowledge with the world, creating a better Cybertron.”

Shockwave sighed. Clearly this stranger wasn’t about to go away any time soon. “Let’s say you’re right. Let’s say I do want more than what was intended for me. Let’s say I help you, and you foolishly decide to take on Megazarak, and you lose, because you will lose. What then? What becomes of me? I am in no hurry to die.”
“Maybe not,” said Megatron thoughtfully. “And I cannot force you to do anything, Shockwave. But I know that I would rather die fighting for what’s right, than live forty million years a slave.” He rose from the table, turning his back on Shockwave. “But you will do what you think is right, and that will have to be good enough.”

Shockwave allowed the words to sink in as Megatron climbed the stairs leading from his shoddy ‘kitchen’. He wasn’t wrong. Decepticons were remarkably long-lived; and Shockwave hated the life he led. The idea of spending the next vorn, let alone the rest of his life trapped in this empty mockery of an existence was unbearable. And though he knew that their world was unlikely to stay static for too long, he also knew that change would not happen without instigators. He was smart, well-equipped, and well-situated. It wasn’t hard to see why Megatron had chosen him. He could make a difference, create the kind of world they deserved to live in. There were not many who could say that.

Perhaps it was time to stop hiding in the shadows.

“Wait!” he said, reaching out with a claw before Megatron could open the door. The stranger turned back to gaze upon him with an anticipatory smile.

“Yes?”

“Tell me more.”

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Shockwave had mourned long enough. There was still a war to fight, and he'd wasted enough time. With a religious deference, he placed Blurr's body on the ground, watched as it sank into the mud, to join his fallen brethren as a casualty of war. It was where he belonged now.

He had put all his faith in Blurr, had been his leader, his lover, his friend, for the last five hundred years. Blurr had granted him life, passion, something to protect – Shockwave would have stayed by his side forever.

But Blurr had failed, and now Shockwave stood alone on a desolate landscape, marching past the lifeless remains of Autobot and Decepticon alike, towards the empty sounds of victory. The Decepticons had won. After two million years of suffering, after fourteen million years of hardship, Shockwave finally had what he wanted. He was finally home. The heart of the Autobot military had been defeated; the rest of the planet would fall easily enough, and there were still plenty of Decepticons out and about, ready to add to their numbers. But even the thought of further conflict shouldn’t have been able to sour his joy.

But there was no joy to be had. Where was the joy in a life without Blurr?

He’d been abandoned by the one mech he cared for more than all others, left alone to pick up the pieces of his ruined life. And for the first time in five hundred stellar cycles, Shockwave did not know what to do, how to go on, when the one thing he’d lived for had been taken away.

But Shockwave was an old mech. He knew that these feelings would pass – all things in life were transient, after all. He may die here, or he may keep on living for another two million years, and another, and another. It didn’t matter. This devastating wound, this irreparable betrayal would someday fade away to an old scar; he knew that much from experience. Blurr had been his world, but now Blurr was gone.

It was time to move on.
And yet, lost in the horror of the moment, Shockwave couldn’t banish the sense that he would never be happy again.

Chapter End Notes

It. Is. DONE!!

Thank you everyone who stuck with me through this whole thing, and a major thanks to all those who left comments. I don't think I woulda made it through this one without 'em. Anachronistic order + publish as you go is not a combination I will ever attempt again, especially on such a large scale. But it was definitely an interesting experiment.

At some point, I'll probably go back through and clean up some of the continuity errors. In the meantime, it's time to get started on the next adventure! Huzzah!!

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