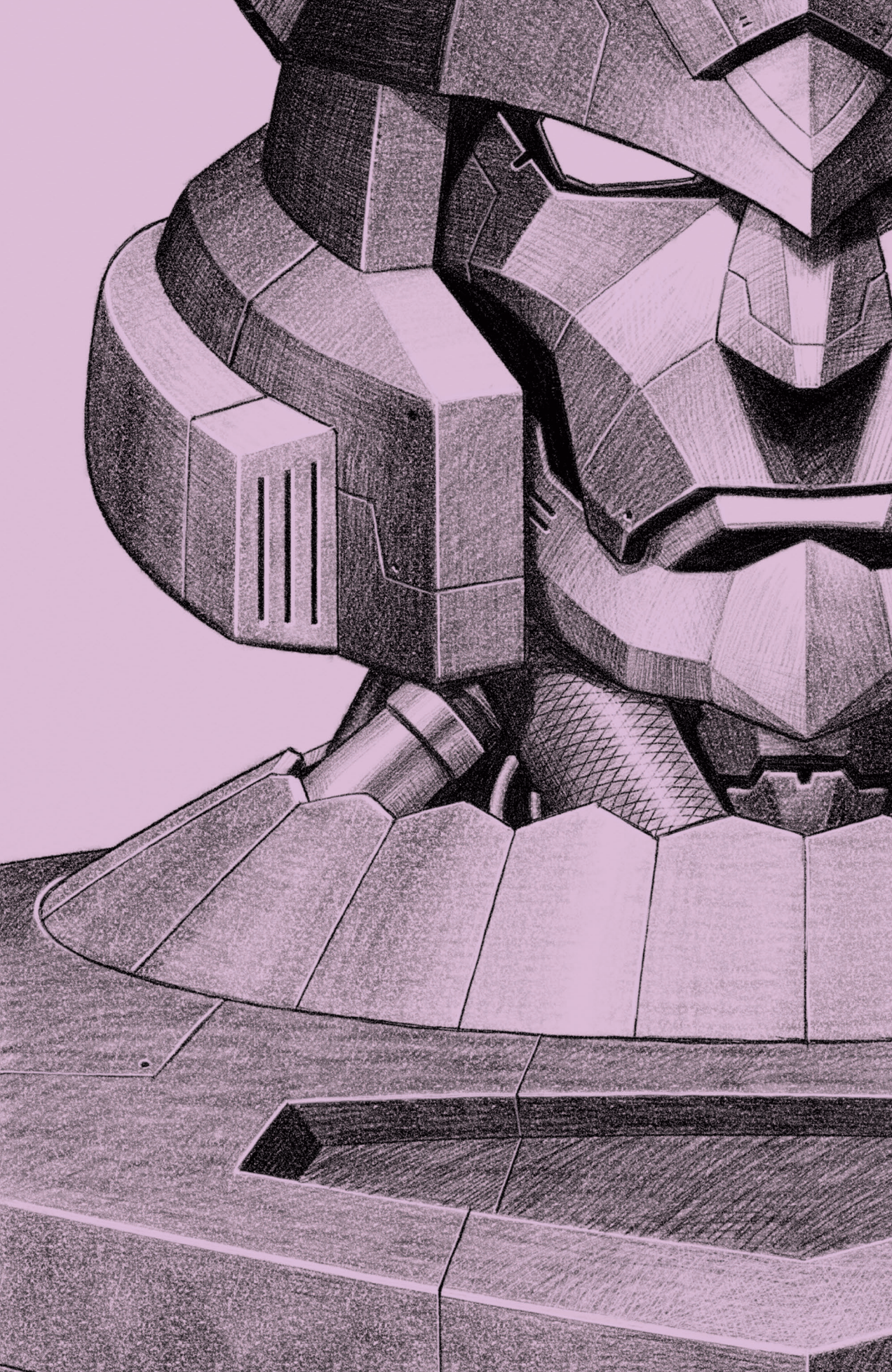
THE TRANSFORMERS

THE IDW COLLECTION

VOLUME THREE



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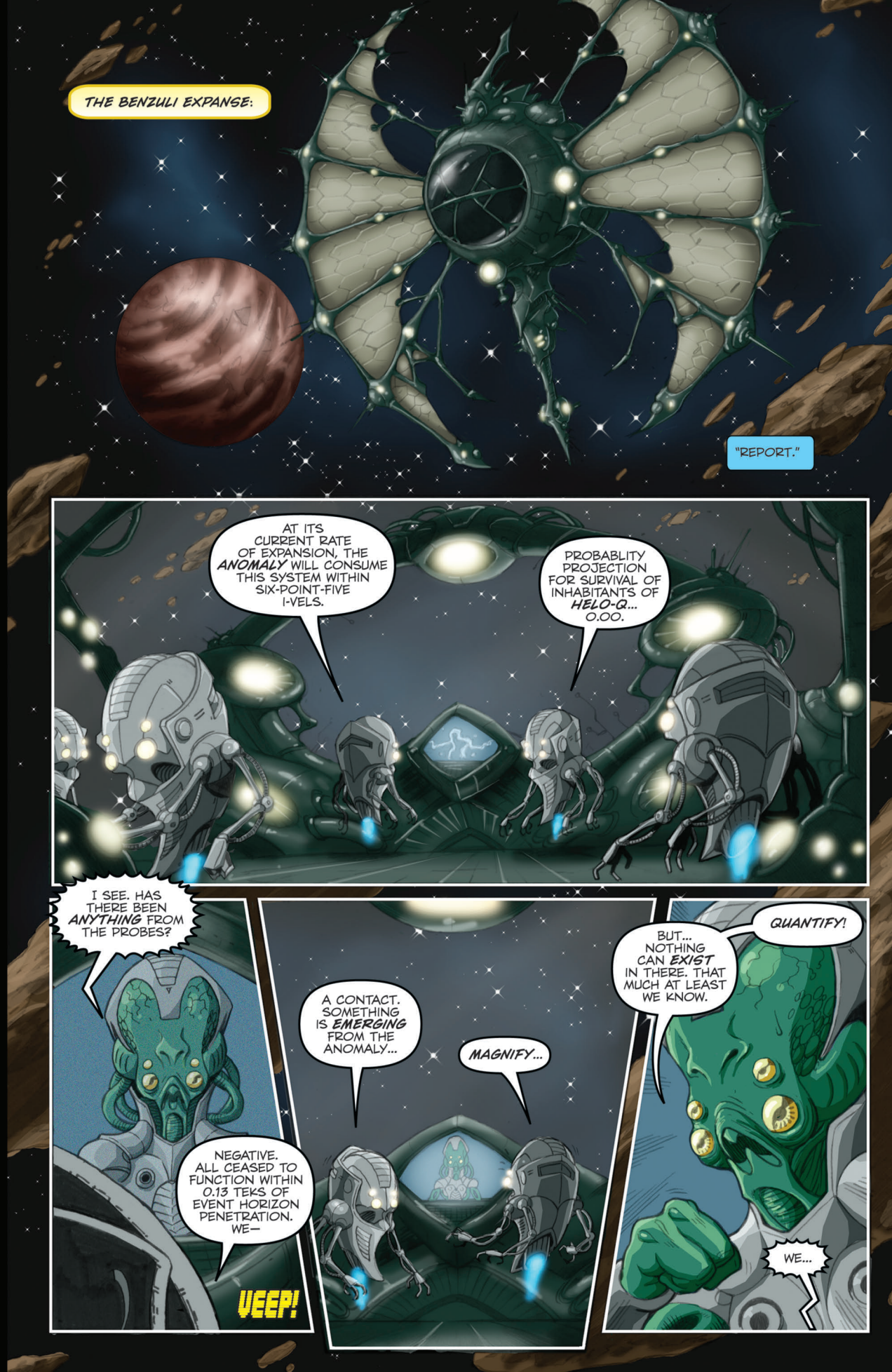
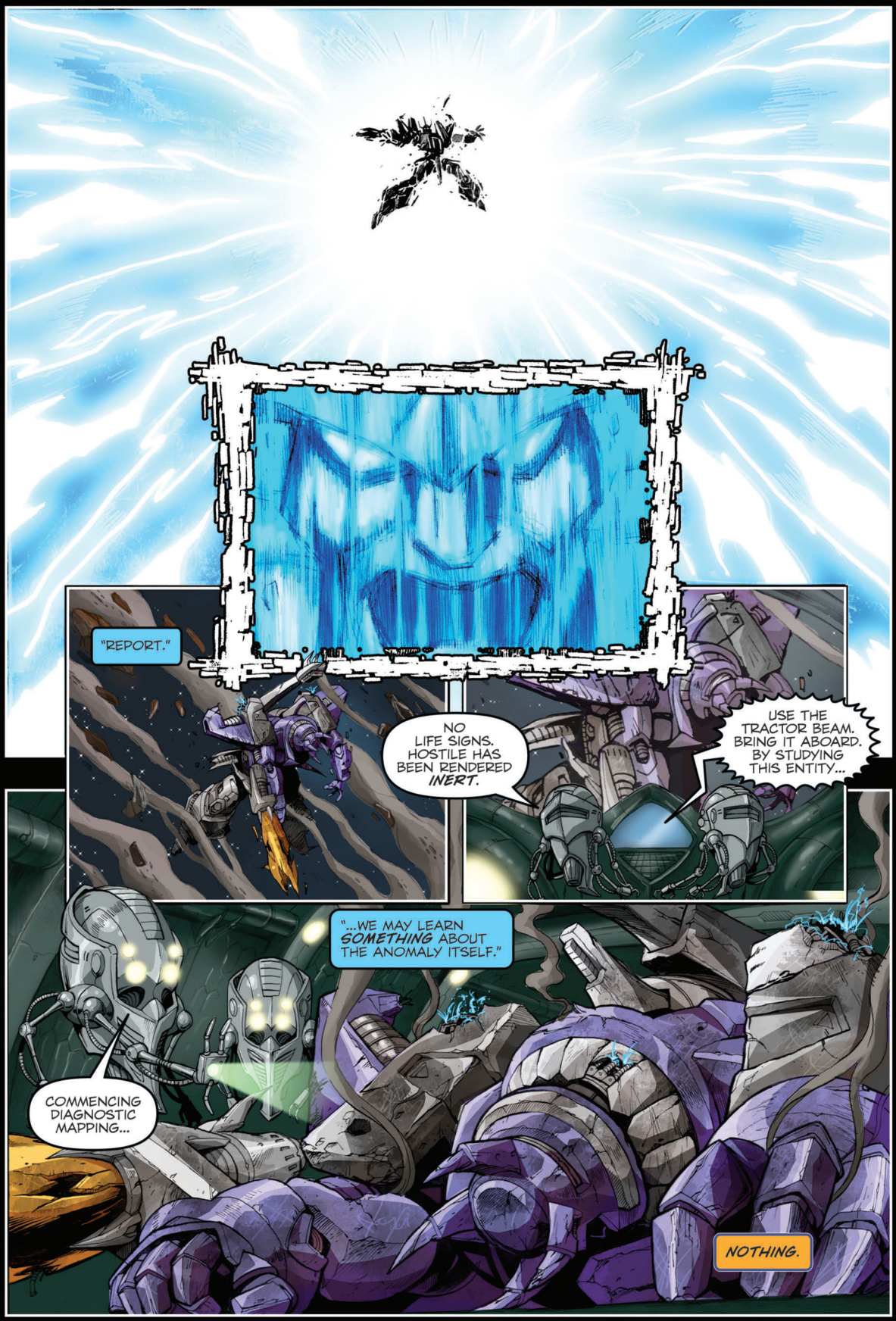

THE BENZULI EXPANSE:
"REPORT."
AT ITS CURRENT RATE OF EXPANSION, THE ANOMALY WILL CONSUME THIS SYSTEM WITHIN SIX-POINT-FIVE I-VELS.
PROBABLITY PROJECTION FOR SURVIVAL OF INHABITANTS OF HELO-Q... 0.00.
I SEE. HAS THERE BEEN ANYTHING FROM THE PROBES?
NEGATIVE. ALL CEASED TO FUNCTION WITHIN 0.13 TEKS OF EVENT HORIZON PENETRATION. WE—
VEEP!
A CONTACT. SOMETHING IS EMERGING FROM THE ANOMALY...
MAGNIFY...
BUT... NOTHING CAN EXIST IN THERE. THAT MUCH AT LEAST WE KNOW.
QUANTIFY!
WE...

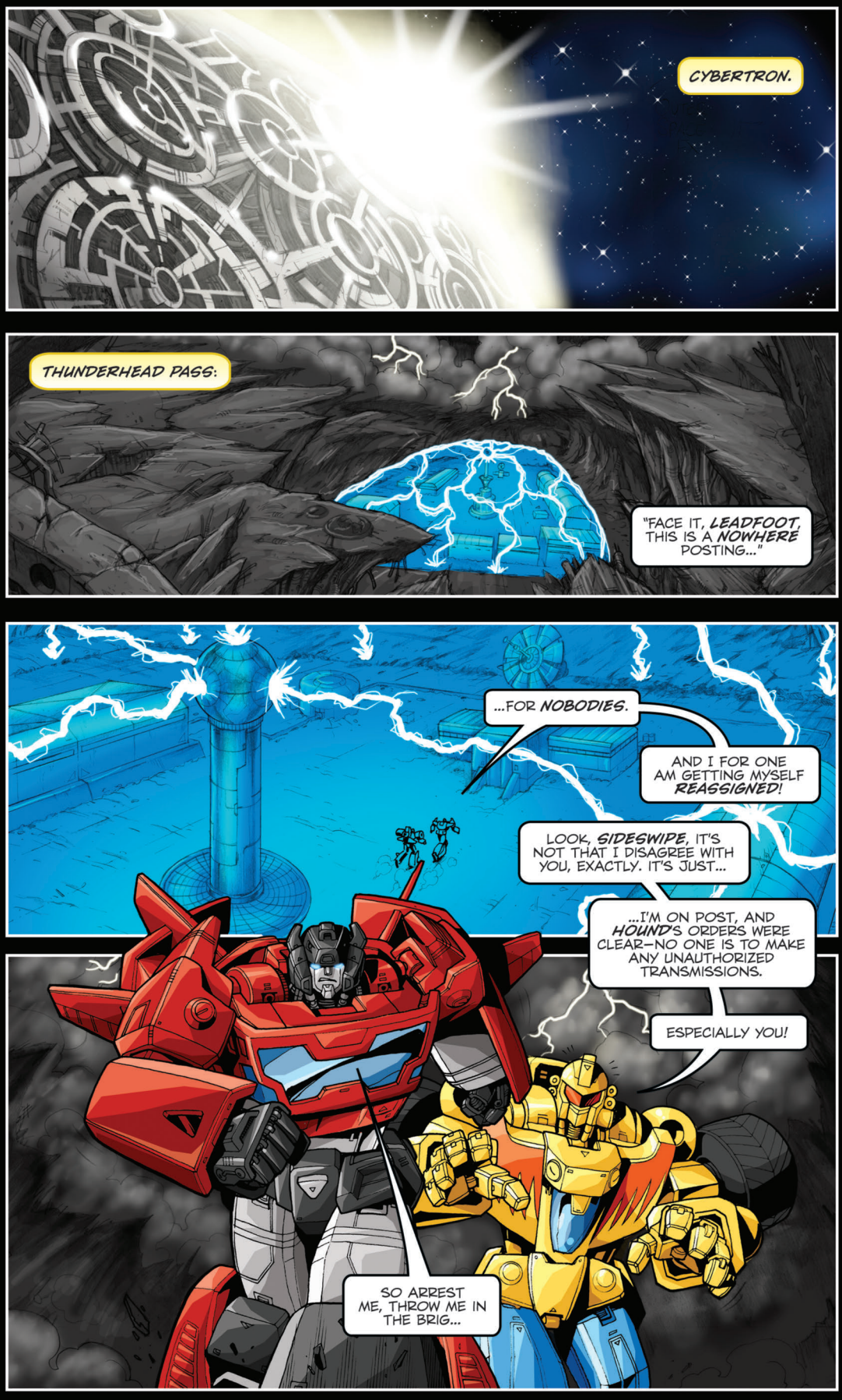

"...CANNOT."
I AM THE *EMISSARY.*
THE *HARBINGER* OF THE UNLIFE, THE *WORD* OF THOSE ONCE AND NOW FOREVER.

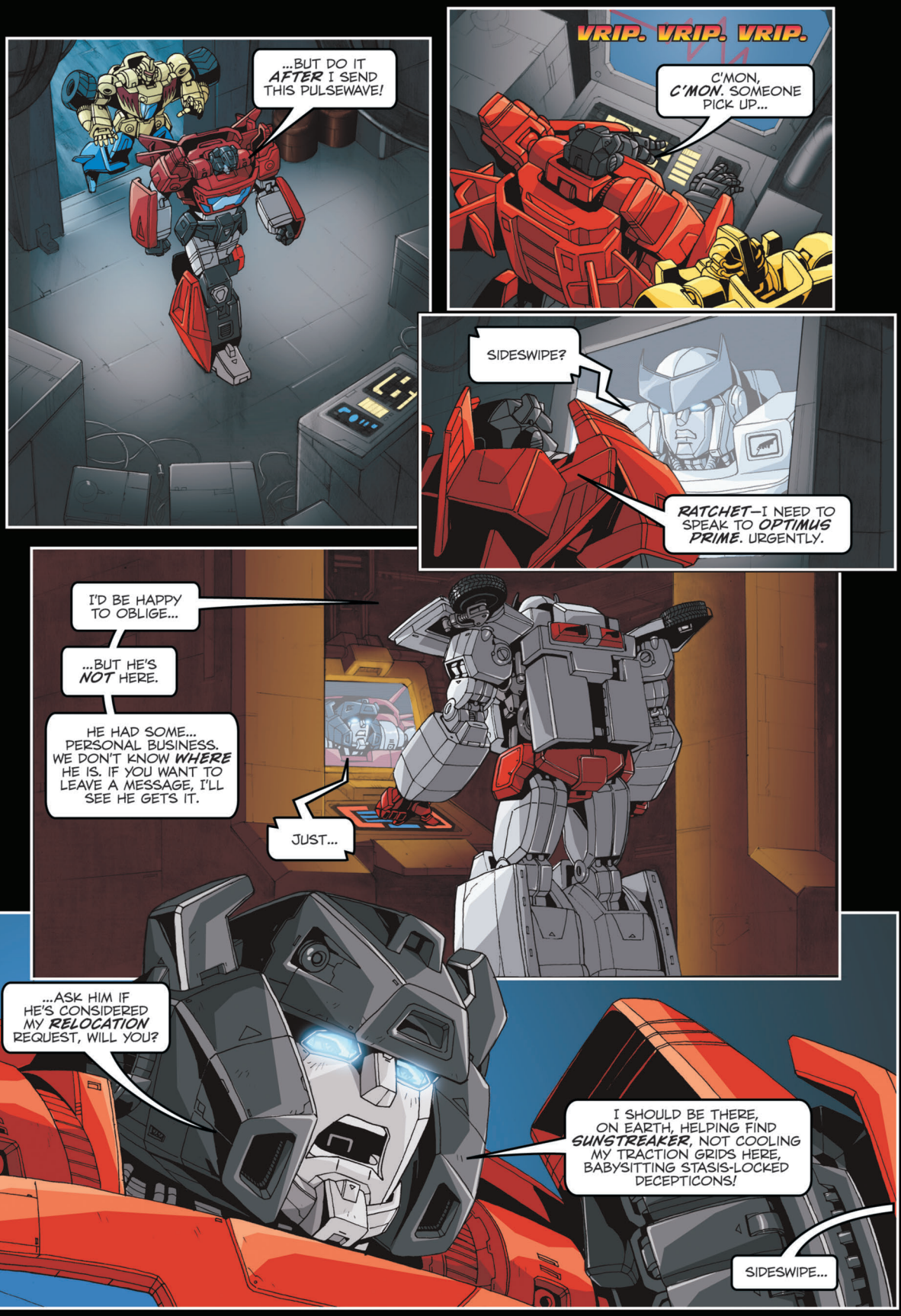

NOTHING CAN STOP ME IN MY APPOINTED TASK.
VAAARK!
CHMMMM!
WE ARE ATTACKED. SPECIES UNKNOWN. INTENT... UNKNOWN.
STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY AT SEVENTY-TWO PERCENT.
ACTIVATE THE BARRAGE ARMAMENTS. AS THEY'RE DESIGNED TO PULVERISE WHOLE COMETS...
"...THEY SHOULD MAKE SHORT WORK OF A SINGLE HOSTILE."

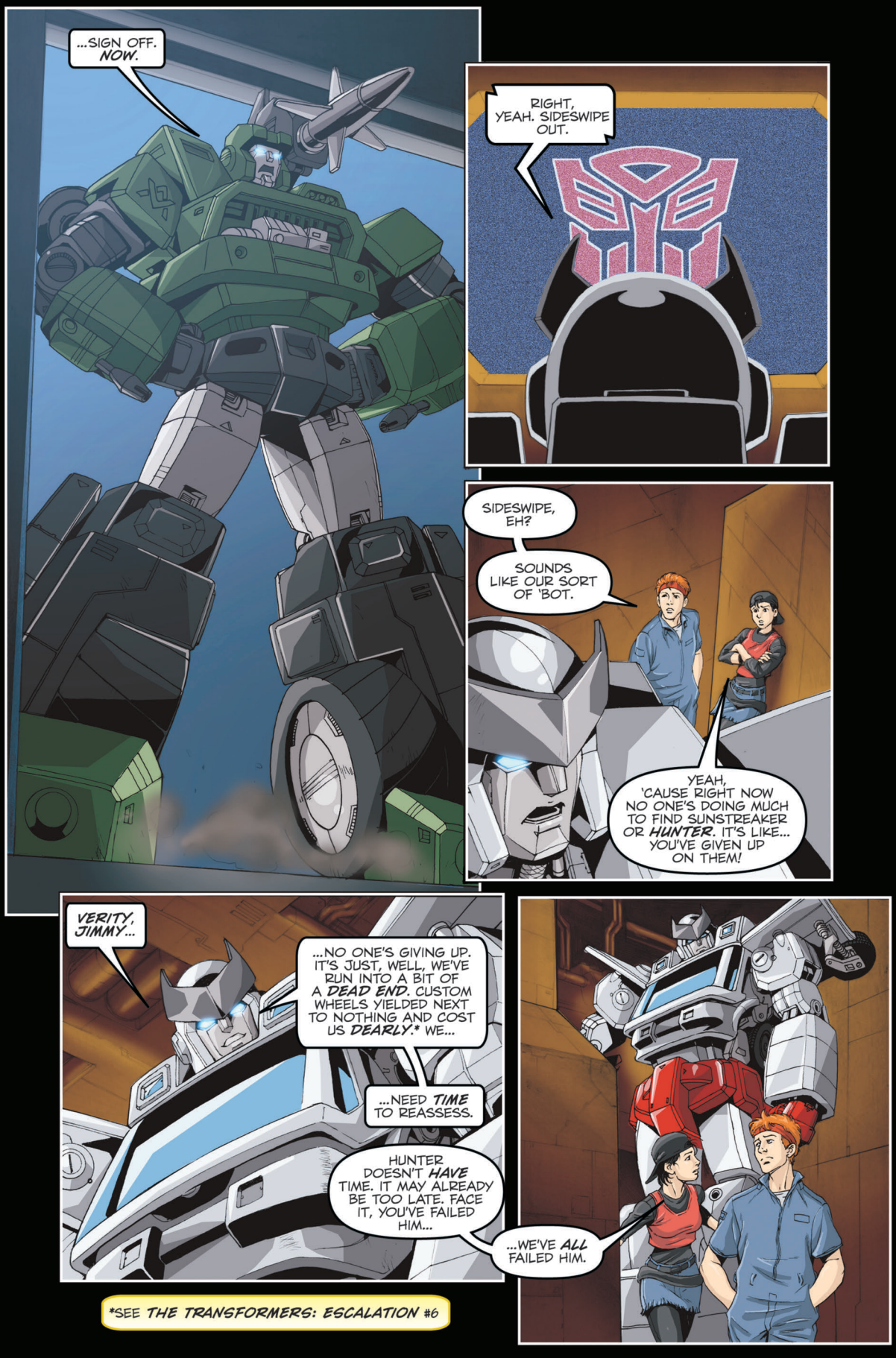

"REPORT."
NO LIFE SIGNS. HOSTILE HAS BEEN RENDERED *INERT*.
USE THE TRACTOR BEAM. BRING IT ABOARD. BY STUDYING THIS ENTITY...
"...WE MAY LEARN *SOMETHING* ABOUT THE ANOMALY ITSELF."
COMMENCING DIAGNOSTIC MAPPING...
NOTHING.


SKITCH!
KRIKTT!
THE EXPANSION IS UPON US. NO ONE CAN STOP IT. NOT YOU, NOT I.
HOWEVER, YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS CAUSING... UNREST.
AND THEREFORE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
THRATCH!

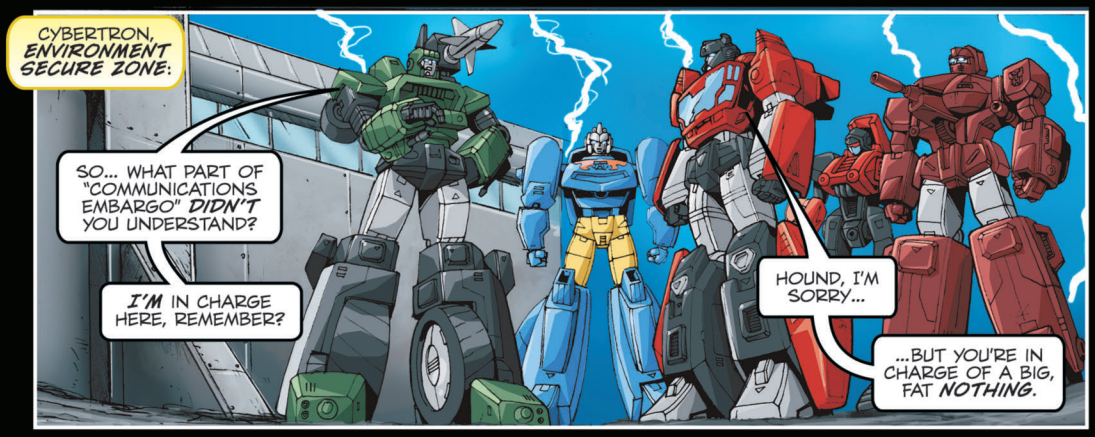

I DO HIS BIDDING.
ALERT! RESTRICTED ACCESS AREA HAS BEEN—
FOR NOW!
VZAAAAK!
WHILE HE COMMANDS THE DARKNESS, I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DO SO.
SHAAK!
BUT IF HE THINKS I AM CONTENT TO REMAIN HIS HERALD FOREVER...
...HE DOES NOT KNOW ME AT ALL!
SECONDARY OBJECTIVE ACHIEVED.
PROCEEDING TO PRIMARY OBJECTIVE...

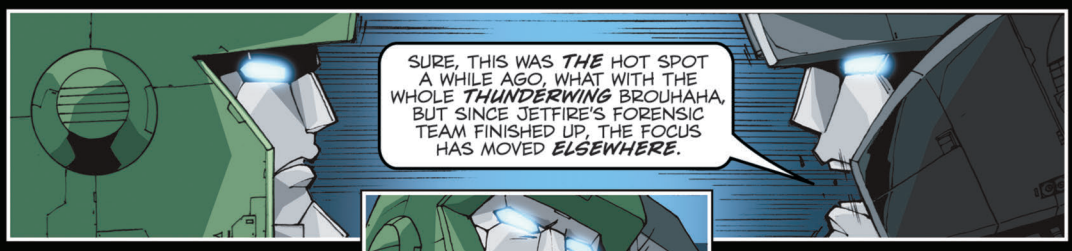

CYBERTRON.
THUNDERHEAD PASS:
"FACE IT, LEADFOOT, THIS IS A NOWHERE POSTING..."
...FOR NOBODIES.
AND I FOR ONE AM GETTING MYSELF REASSIGNED!
LOOK, SIDESWIPE, IT'S NOT THAT I DISAGREE WITH YOU, EXACTLY. IT'S JUST...
...I'M ON POST, AND HOUND'S ORDERS WERE CLEAR—NO ONE IS TO MAKE ANY UNAUTHORIZED TRANSMISSIONS.
ESPECIALLY YOU!
SO ARREST ME, THROW ME IN THE BRIG...


...BUT DO IT AFTER I SEND THIS PULSEWAVE!
VRIP. VRIP. VRIP.
C'MON, C'MON. SOMEONE PICK UP...
SIDESWIPE?
RATCHET—I NEED TO SPEAK TO OPTIMUS PRIME. URGENTLY.
I'D BE HAPPY TO OBLIGE...
...BUT HE'S NOT HERE.
HE HAD SOME... PERSONAL BUSINESS. WE DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS. IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE A MESSAGE, I'LL SEE HE GETS IT.
JUST...
...ASK HIM IF HE'S CONSIDERED MY RELOCATION REQUEST, WILL YOU?
I SHOULD BE THERE, ON EARTH, HELPING FIND SUNSTREAKER, NOT COOLING MY TRACTION GRIDS HERE, BABYSITTING STASIS-LOCKED DECEPTICONS!
SIDESWIPE...

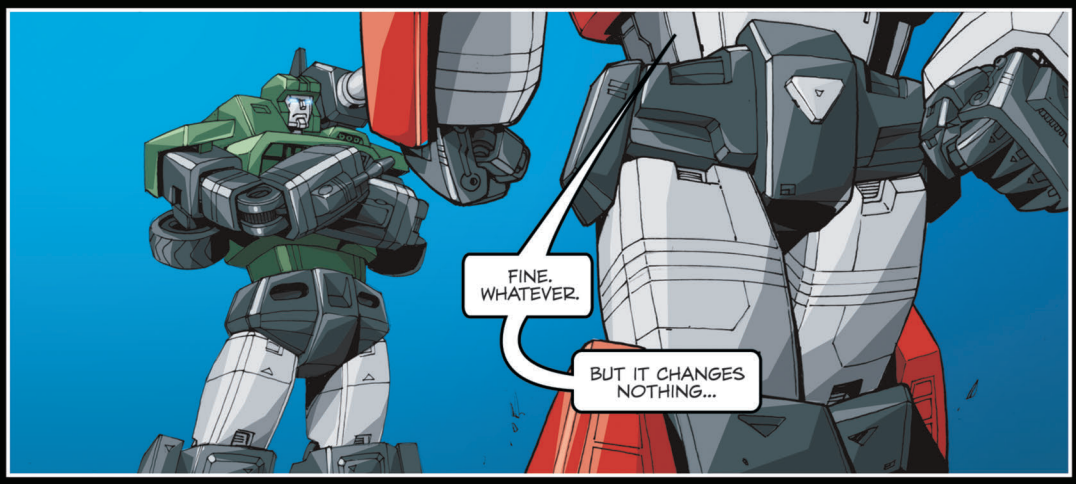


*SEE THE TRANSFORMERS: ESCALATION #6


CYBERTRON, ENVIRONMENT SECURE ZONE:
SO... WHAT PART OF "COMMUNICATIONS EMBARGO" DIDN'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
I'M IN CHARGE HERE, REMEMBER?
HOUND, I'M SORRY...
...BUT YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF A BIG, FAT NOTHING.

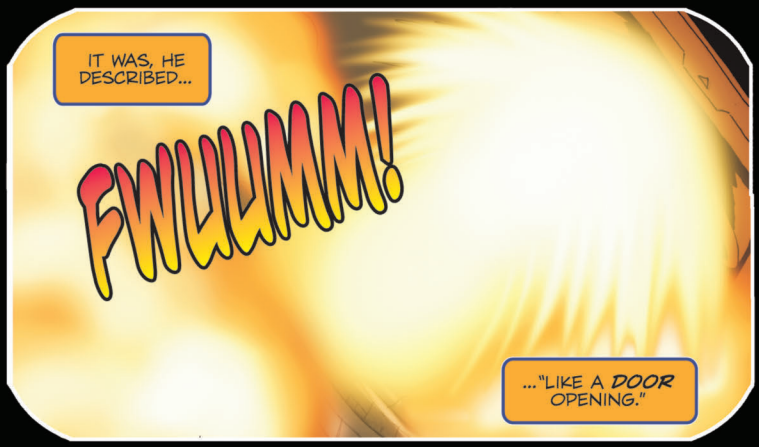

SURE, THIS WAS THE HOT SPOT A WHILE AGO, WHAT WITH THE WHOLE THUNDERWING BROUHAHA, BUT SINCE JETFIRE'S FORENSIC TEAM FINISHED UP, THE FOCUS HAS MOVED ELSEWHERE.


MUCH AS I DON'T WISH TO UNDERMINE YOUR AUTHORITY, I WILL CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO GET MYSELF BACK IN THE THICK OF IT.
I'M IN THE MOOD TO BUST HEADS AND RIGHT NOW I CAN'T THINK OF ANYWHERE BETTER TO DO IT THAN EARTH!
CONSIDER THIS A FORMAL REPRIMAND. YOU'LL RELIEVE LEADFOOT AND REMAIN ON SENTRY DUTY UNTIL I SEE FIT TO ROTATE THE ROSTER. UNDERSTOOD?


FINE. WHATEVER.
BUT IT CHANGES NOTHING...


CYBERTRON...
...HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?
BEFORE WAR...
BEFORE FACTIONS...
BEFORE CHAOS...
CYBERTRON...

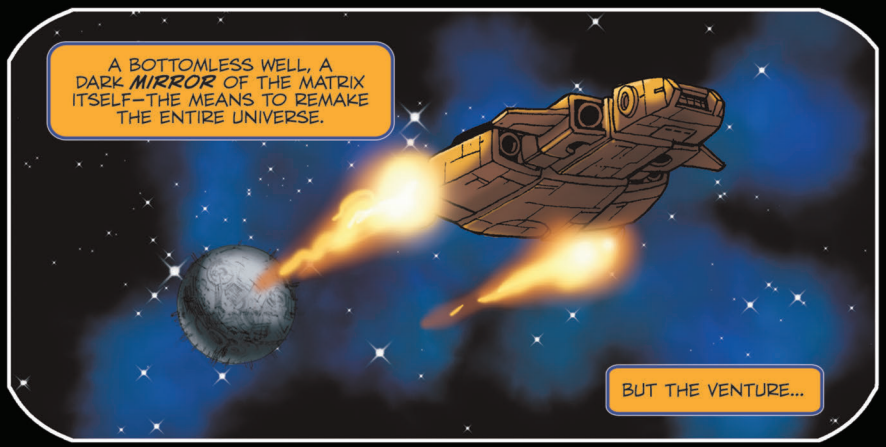

...THE GOLDEN AGE!
THE GREAT AND GOOD GATHERED TO CHEER US ON OUR WAY TO THE STARS, LITTLE KNOWING SUCH NOBLE GOALS AS EXPLORATION OR THE OPENING OF NEW TRADE ROUTES HAD BEEN SHELVED LONG BEFORE.


IT WAS, HE DESCRIBED...
FWUUMM!
..."LIKE A DOOR OPENING."

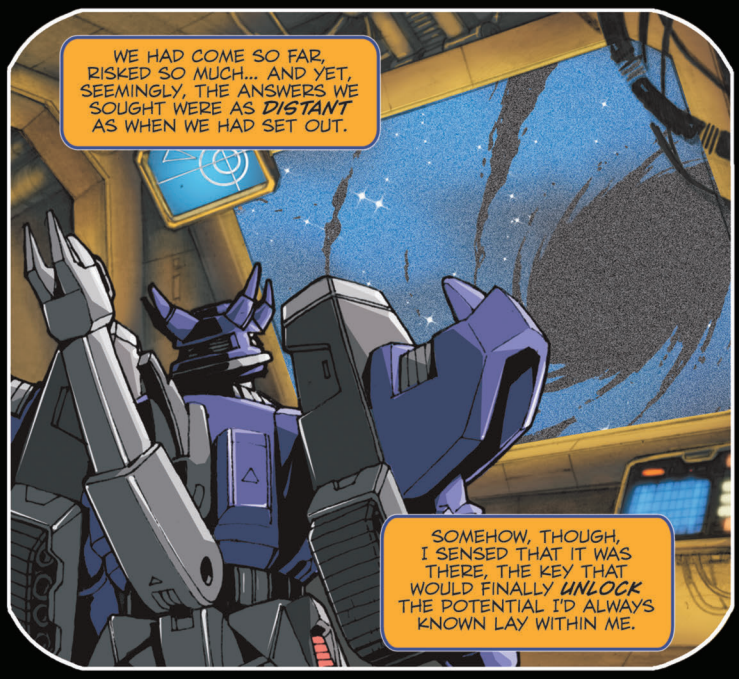

A DOOR TO SOMEWHERE ELSE. AND WITHIN...
...ABSOLUTE POWER!


THE ARK WAS ABOUT DESTINY!
PRIME FELT IT FIRST, A RESONANT TUG FROM SOMEWHERE DEEP WITHIN THE MATRIX HE CARRIED.




A BOTTOMLESS WELL, A DARK MIRROR OF THE MATRIX ITSELF—THE MEANS TO REMAKE THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE.
BUT THE VENTURE...


...WAS TO END IN FAILURE.
ALL EFFORTS TO PROBE THE YAWNING NOTHINGNESS THAT DOMINATED THE BENZULI EXPANSE PROVED FUTILE.


WE HAD COME SO FAR, RISKED SO MUCH... AND YET, SEEMINGLY, THE ANSWERS WE SOUGHT WERE AS DISTANT AS WHEN WE HAD SET OUT.
SOMEHOW, THOUGH, I SENSED THAT IT WAS THERE, THE KEY THAT WOULD FINALLY UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL I'D ALWAYS KNOWN LAY WITHIN ME.


MY DESTINY.


I HAD BEEN SELECTED FOR THE MISSION BASED ON A CERTAIN RECKLESS WILLINGNESS TO THROW MYSELF INTO THE UNKNOWN.
BUT NONE OF THEM EVER TRULY SUSPECTED...
...JUST HOW FAR I WAS WILLING TO GO!


WHO–?
HUUUK-
CURIOUSLY...
...I FEEL SOMETHING LIKE REMORSE.
BOTH FOR THE LIFE TAKEN...
...AND ALL THAT I MYSELF HAVE LOST.
LEADFOOT?
THE TIME, THOUGH, FOR SUCH INTROSPECTION...

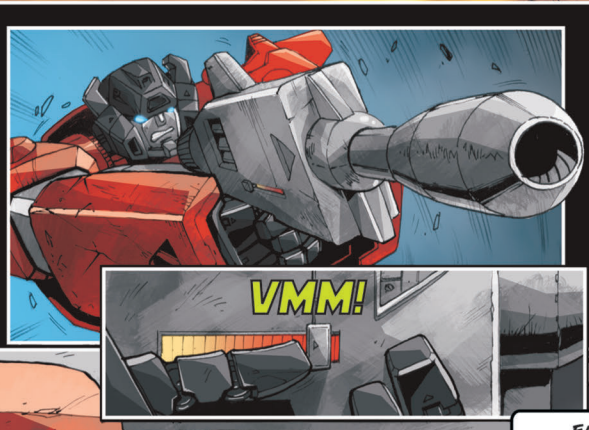

...IS CLEARLY LATER.
LEADFOOT!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM!
KLUNNNG!
THRATCH!
YOU...
...ARE GOING TO PAY!

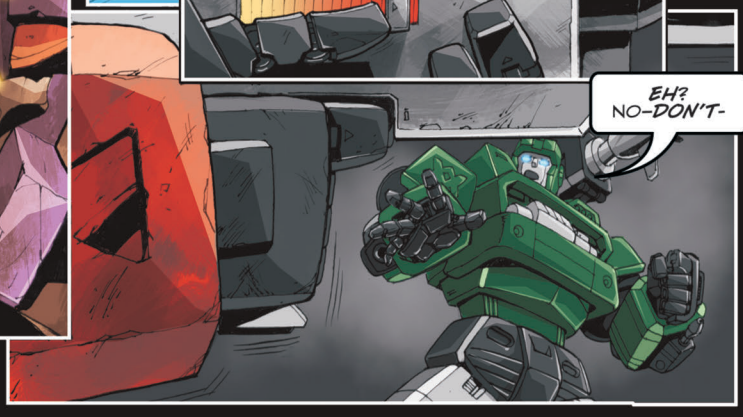

WITH YOUR MISERABLE, MISBEGOTTEN LIFE!
VRAP!
VRAP!
VRAP!
VRAP!
I SHOULD JUST KILL IT. "LEAVE NOTHING ALIVE," HE SAID. INSTEAD, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST...
...I INCAPACITATE.
GHOW!
DA-DOOOM!
OTHERS COME...
WHO THE FRAG IS THAT?
NO IDEA, SKRAM, BUT WE GOT TWO DOWN. I SAY, SHOOT FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER.
DO IT.
BUT I WANT HIM ALIVE!


I LET THEM DO THEIR WORST...
WARPATH, YOU'RE UP!
DUCK AND COVER!
VAAMM!
ROAD ROCKET... CONTAINMENT!
TIME TO TURN UP THE HEAT, DECEPTICON... IF THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE!
YEAH, RIGHT... NO INSIGNIA. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
THAT IS WHAT I INTEND TO FIND OUT!

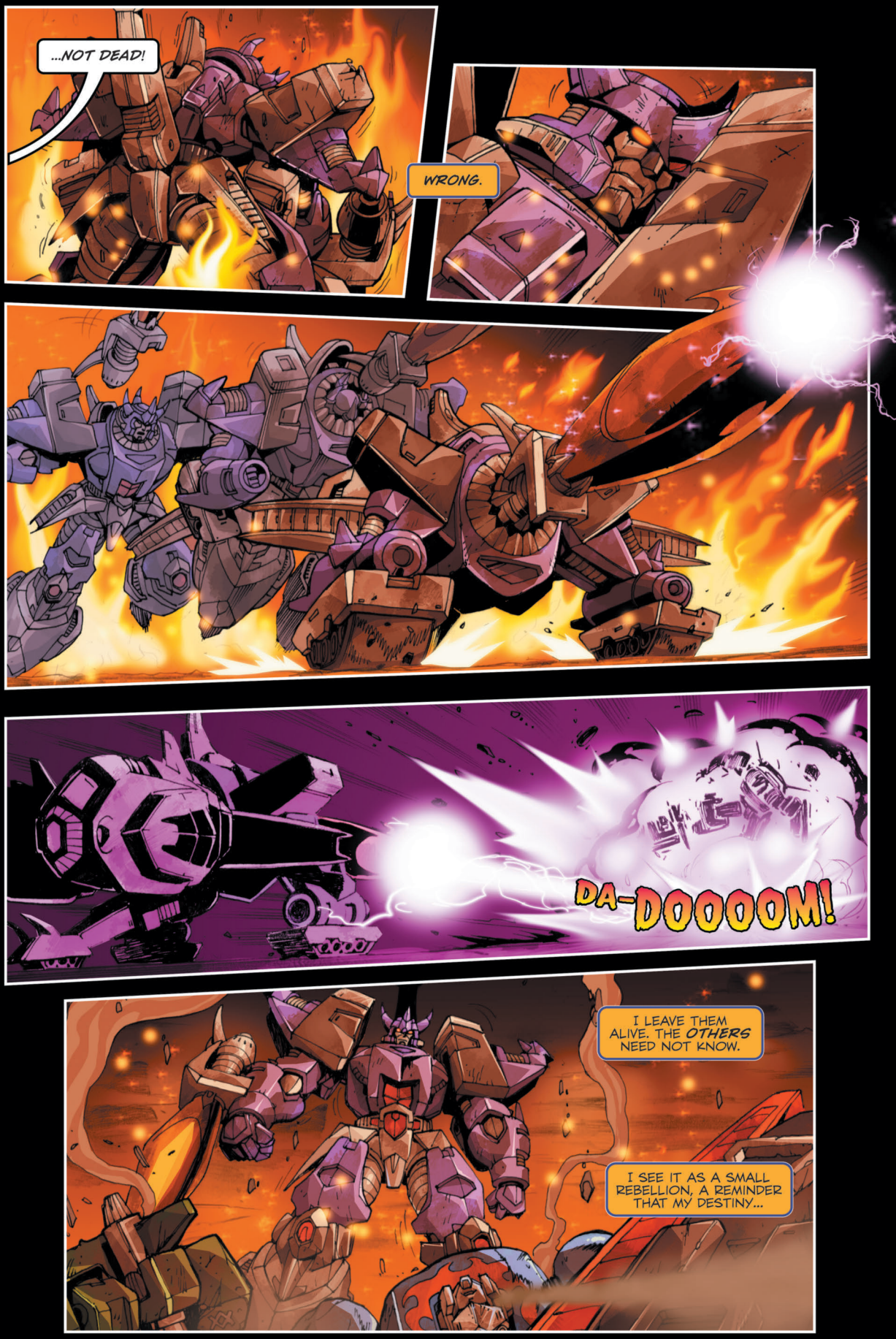

OH... OHH. WHAT–?
OH. YEAH.

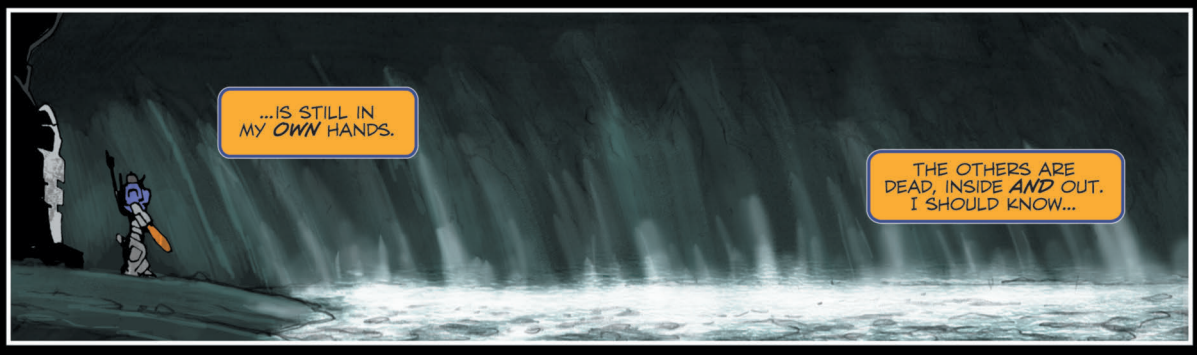



VMM!

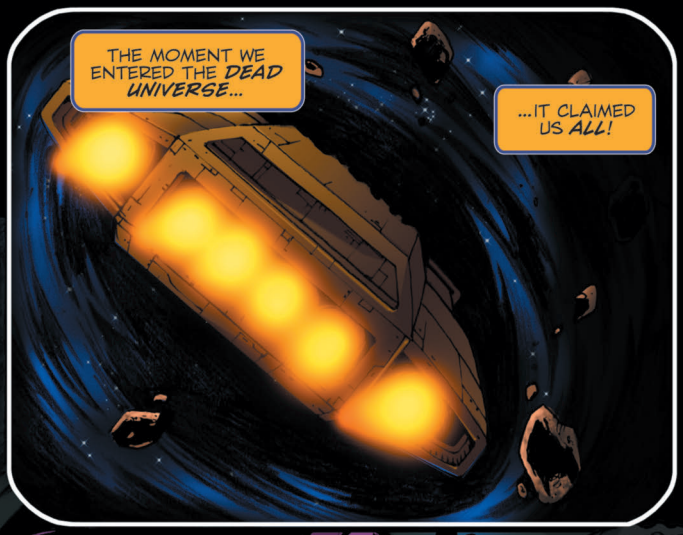

EH? NO–DON'T-


CHAZ-
-ZAKT!
DAMMIT, SIDESWIPE—WHAT'S A CORPSE GOING TO TELL US?
GET OUT OF MY FACE, HOUND. IF ANYONE HAD IT COMING, HE DID!
HUH-
HOUND! HE'S...


...NOT DEAD!
WRONG.
DA-DOOOOM!
I LEAVE THEM ALIVE. THE OTHERS NEED NOT KNOW.
I SEE IT AS A SMALL REBELLION, A REMINDER THAT MY DESTINY...


...IS STILL IN MY OWN HANDS.
THE OTHERS ARE DEAD, INSIDE AND OUT. I SHOULD KNOW...


I KILLED THEM.


THE MOMENT WE ENTERED THE DEAD UNIVERSE...
...IT CLAIMED US ALL!


...I REPEAT, THIS IS AN EMERGENCY, WE—
HOUND! IT'S GONE!
WH-? WHAT'S GONE? WHAT?


"THUNDERWING!"
PRIMARY OBJECTIVE... ACHIEVED.
THE END?

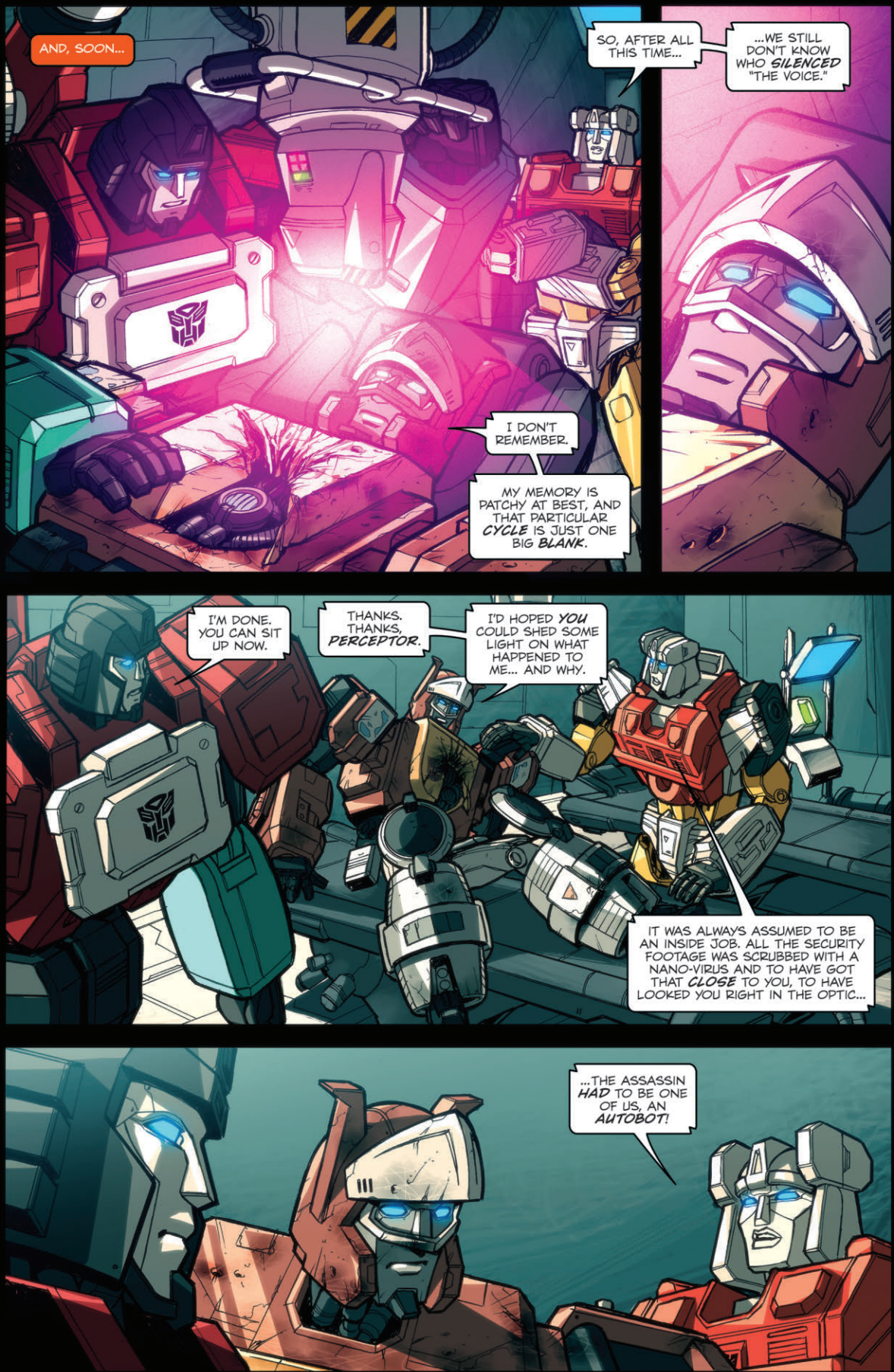

ART BY ALEX MILNE
COLORS BY JOSH PEREZ


THE TRANSFORMERS
SPOTLIGHT: BLASTER
ART BY EMILIANO SANTALUCIA
COLORS BY JEREMY ROBERTS

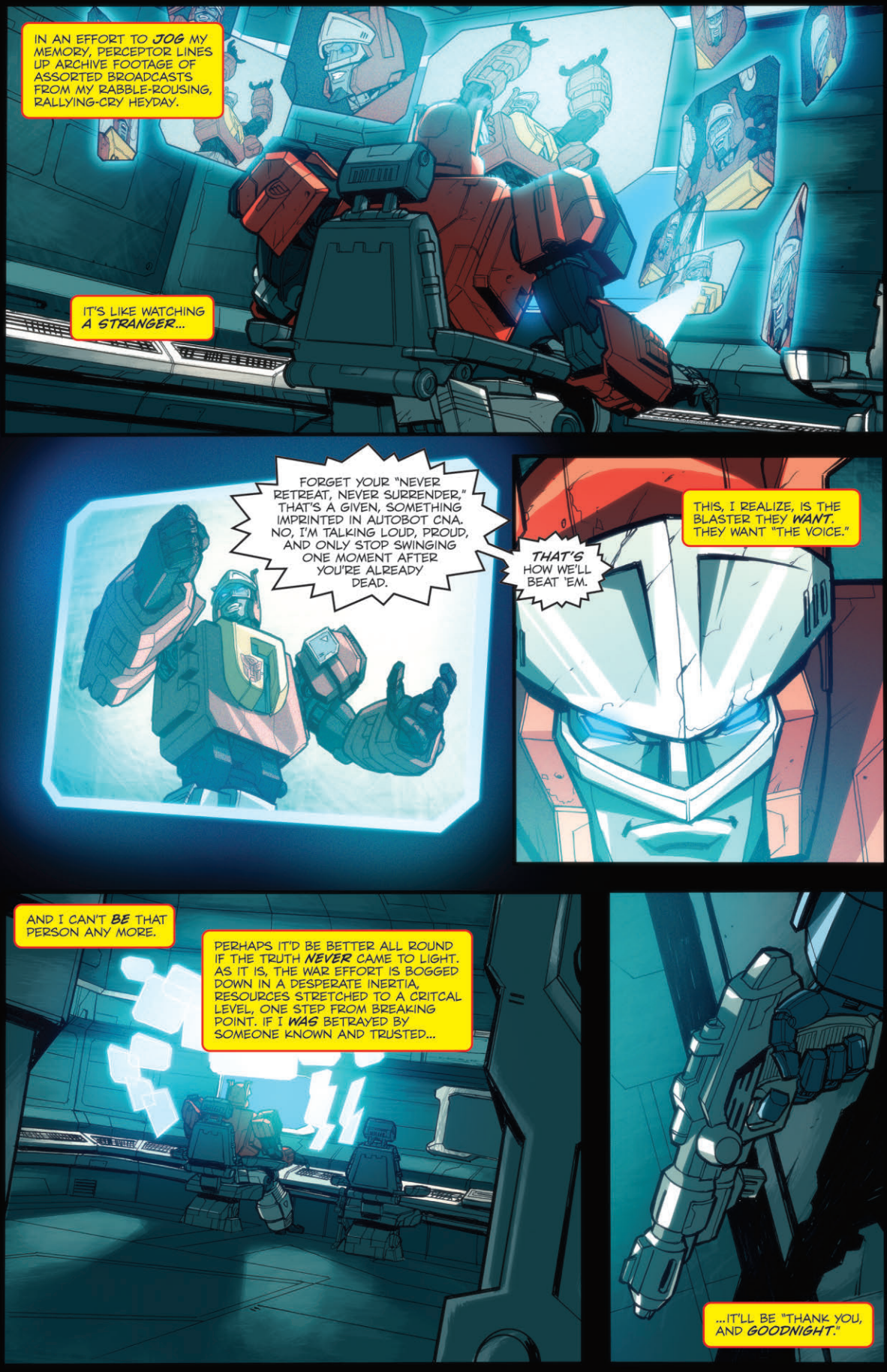

"THE VOICE" (ONCE):
YOU HEAR ME, AUTOBOTS, YOU GO OUT THERE TODAY AND GIVE 'EM HELL!
JUST REMEMBER, BIG THOSE 'CONS MAY BE, BUT THEY'RE NOT CLEVER. WE GOT THE MOVES! THE SMARTS! THE SPIRIT! NOTHING AND NO ONE...
...IS EVER GONNA STOP US!

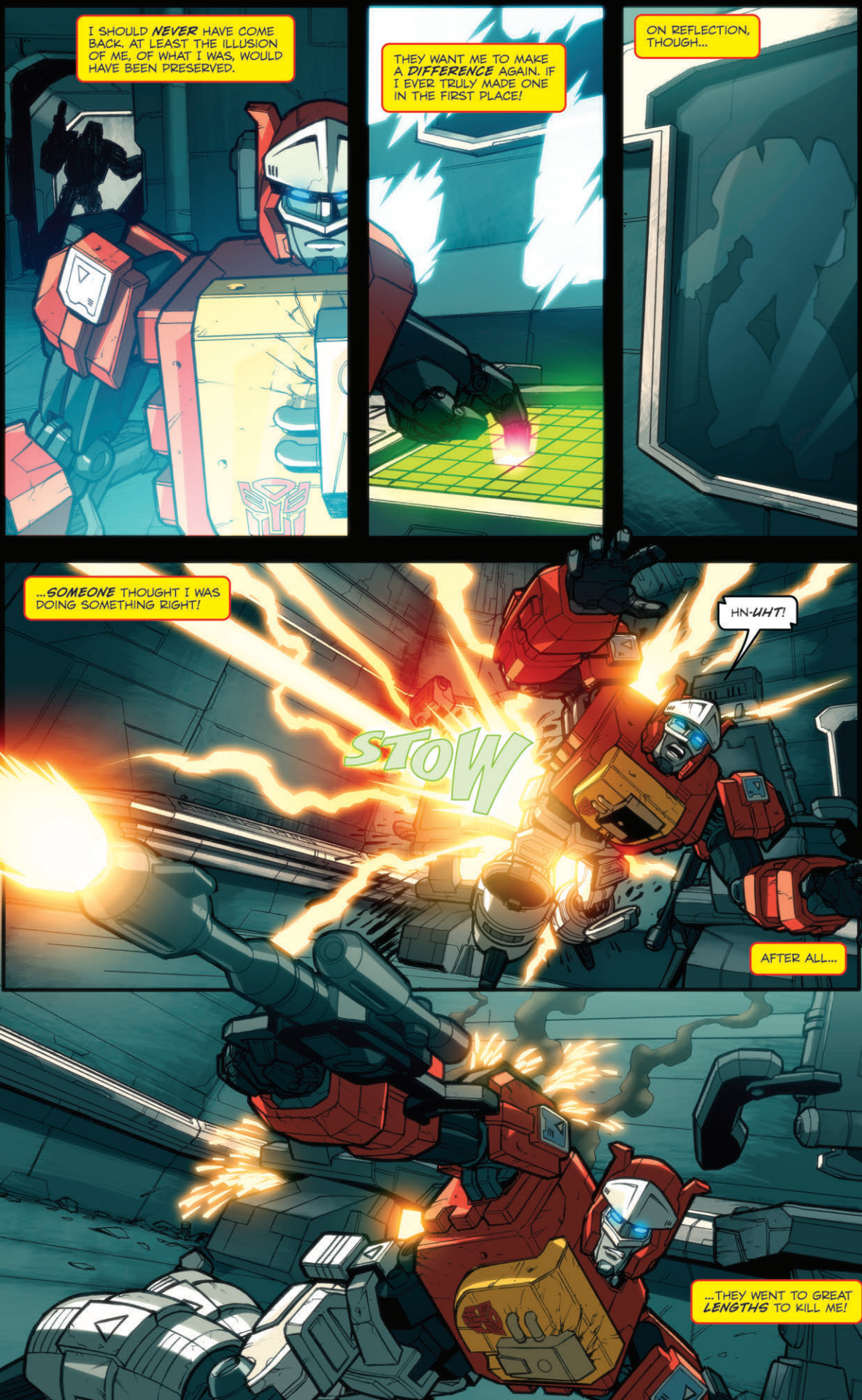

"THE VOICE" (SINCE):

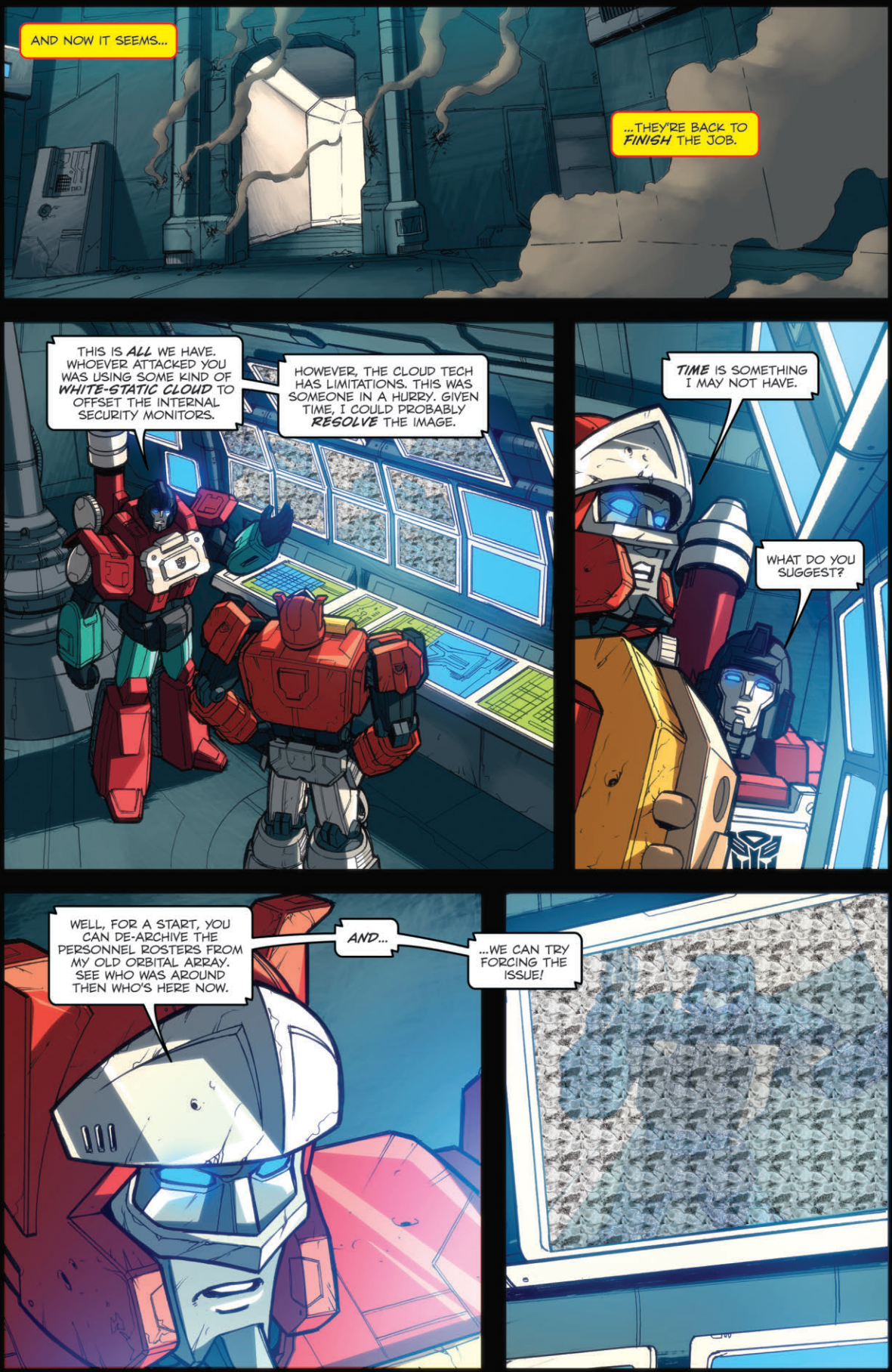

AUTOBOT COMMAND HUB (NOW):
SIR, WE HAVE AN INCOMING TRANSMISSION FROM AN ILXIAN LONG HAUL FREIGHTER.
PROJECT ME...
THIS IS SILVERBOLT, OPERATIONAL COMMANDER IN RESIDENCE. PLEASE STATE YOUR BUSINESS.
I AM KU'ARN, CAPTAIN OF THE YAR STAR TRAWLER. AND I BELIEVE...
PER-PERMISSION TO COME ABOARD...
...WE HAVE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO YOU.
BLASTER?!

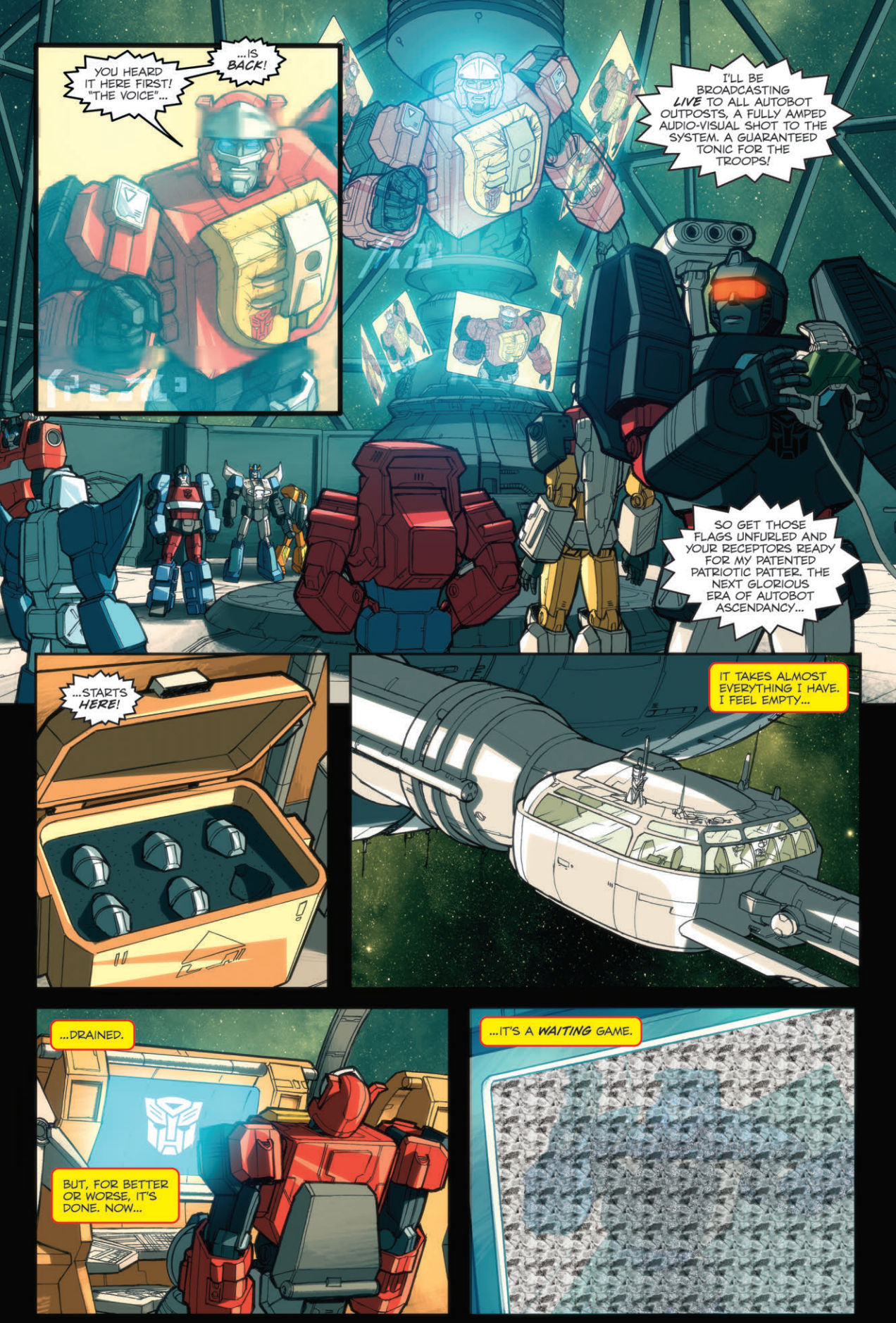

AND, SOON...
SO, AFTER ALL THIS TIME...
...WE STILL DON'T KNOW WHO SILENCED "THE VOICE."
I DON'T REMEMBER.
MY MEMORY IS PATCHY AT BEST, AND THAT PARTICULAR CYCLE IS JUST ONE BIG BLANK.
I'M DONE. YOU CAN SIT UP NOW.
THANKS. THANKS, PERCEPTOR.
I'D HOPED YOU COULD SHED SOME LIGHT ON WHAT HAPPENED TO ME... AND WHY.
IT WAS ALWAYS ASSUMED TO BE AN INSIDE JOB. ALL THE SECURITY FOOTAGE WAS SCRUBBED WITH A NANO-VIRUS AND TO HAVE GOT THAT CLOSE TO YOU, TO HAVE LOOKED YOU RIGHT IN THE OPTIC...
...THE ASSASSIN HAD TO BE ONE OF US, AN AUTOBOT!

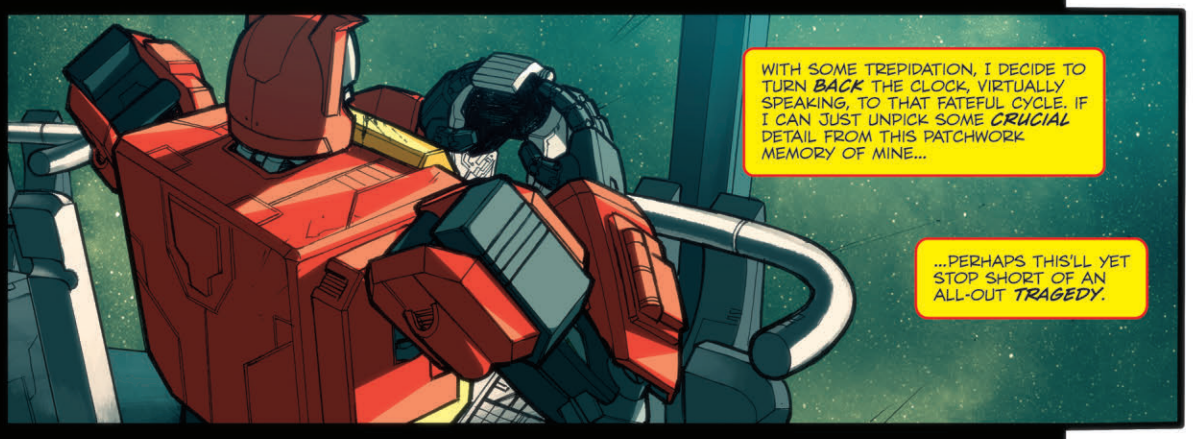

NEWS OF MY MIRACULOUS RESURRECTION/RETURN...
...SPREADS FAST!
FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES BEG PRECIOUS LEAVE FROM THEIR CURRENT ASSIGNMENTS, ON FRONT LINES FAR AND WIDE...
...TO SEE ME IN THE ALLOY.
OH. IT'S– IT'S JUST WONDERFUL.
I THOUGHT, WELL, YOU WERE GONE FOR GOOD.
BUT AS I SHAKE EACH HAND, SMILE DUTIFULLY AT EACH SALUTATION, I WONDER...
...WAS IT YOU?


IN AN EFFORT TO JOG MY MEMORY, PERCEPTOR LINES UP ARCHIVE FOOTAGE OF ASSORTED BROADCASTS FROM MY RABBLE-ROUSING, RALLYING-CRY HEYDAY.
IT'S LIKE WATCHING A STRANGER...
FORGET YOUR "NEVER RETREAT, NEVER SURRENDER," THAT'S A GIVEN, SOMETHING IMPRINTED IN AUTOBOT CNA. NO, I'M TALKING LOUD, PROUD, AND ONLY STOP SWINGING ONE MOMENT AFTER YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD.
THAT'S HOW WE'LL BEAT 'EM.
THIS, I REALIZE, IS THE BLASTER THEY WANT. THEY WANT "THE VOICE."
AND I CAN'T BE THAT PERSON ANY MORE.
PERHAPS IT'D BE BETTER ALL ROUND IF THE TRUTH NEVER CAME TO LIGHT. AS IT IS, THE WAR EFFORT IS BOGGED DOWN IN A DESPERATE INERTIA, RESOURCES STRETCHED TO A CRITCAL LEVEL, ONE STEP FROM BREAKING POINT. IF I WAS BETRAYED BY SOMEONE KNOWN AND TRUSTED...
...IT'LL BE "THANK YOU, AND GOODNIGHT."


I SHOULD NEVER HAVE COME BACK. AT LEAST THE ILLUSION OF ME, OF WHAT I WAS, WOULD HAVE BEEN PRESERVED.
THEY WANT ME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE AGAIN. IF I EVER TRULY MADE ONE IN THE FIRST PLACE!
ON REFLECTION, THOUGH...
...SOMEONE THOUGHT I WAS DOING SOMETHING RIGHT!
HN-UHT!
STOW
AFTER ALL...
...THEY WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO KILL ME!


AND NOW IT SEEMS...
...THEY'RE BACK TO *FINISH* THE JOB.
THIS IS *ALL* WE HAVE. WHOEVER ATTACKED YOU WAS USING SOME KIND OF *WHITE-STATIC CLOUD* TO OFFSET THE INTERNAL SECURITY MONITORS.
HOWEVER, THE CLOUD TECH HAS LIMITATIONS. THIS WAS SOMEONE IN A HURRY. GIVEN TIME, I COULD PROBABLY *RESOLVE* THE IMAGE.
TIME IS SOMETHING I MAY NOT HAVE.
WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?
WELL, FOR A START, YOU CAN DE-ARCHIVE THE PERSONNEL ROSTERS FROM MY OLD ORBITAL ARRAY. SEE WHO WAS AROUND THEN WHO'S HERE NOW.
AND...
...WE CAN TRY FORCING THE ISSUE!


YOU HEARD IT HERE FIRST! "THE VOICE"...
...IS BACK!
I'LL BE BROADCASTING LIVE TO ALL AUTOBOT OUTPOSTS, A FULLY AMPED AUDIO-VISUAL SHOT TO THE SYSTEM. A GUARANTEED TONIC FOR THE TROOPS!
SO GET THOSE FLAGS UNFURLED AND YOUR RECEPTORS READY FOR MY PATENTED PATRIOTIC PATTER. THE NEXT GLORIOUS ERA OF AUTOBOT ASCENDANCY...
...STARTS HERE!
IT TAKES ALMOST EVERYTHING I HAVE. I FEEL EMPTY...
...DRAINED.
BUT, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, IT'S DONE. NOW...
...IT'S A WAITING GAME.


WITH SOME TREPIDATION, I DECIDE TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK, VIRTUALLY SPEAKING, TO THAT FATEFUL CYCLE. IF I CAN JUST UNPICK SOME CRUCIAL DETAIL FROM THIS PATCHWORK MEMORY OF MINE...
...PERHAPS THIS'LL YET STOP SHORT OF AN ALL-OUT TRAGEDY.


THE NEURO-SIMULATION...

...TAKES ME RIGHT BACK THERE.
THIS IS BLASTER, ON APPROACH VECTOR NINE-OH-FIVE.
ROGER, BLASTER. PLEASE CUT POWER. WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
THE ORBITAL ARRAY WAS MY HOME FROM HOME. SOMETIMES IT FELT LIKE I SPENT MORE TIME ABOVE CYBERTRON THAN I DID ON IT.

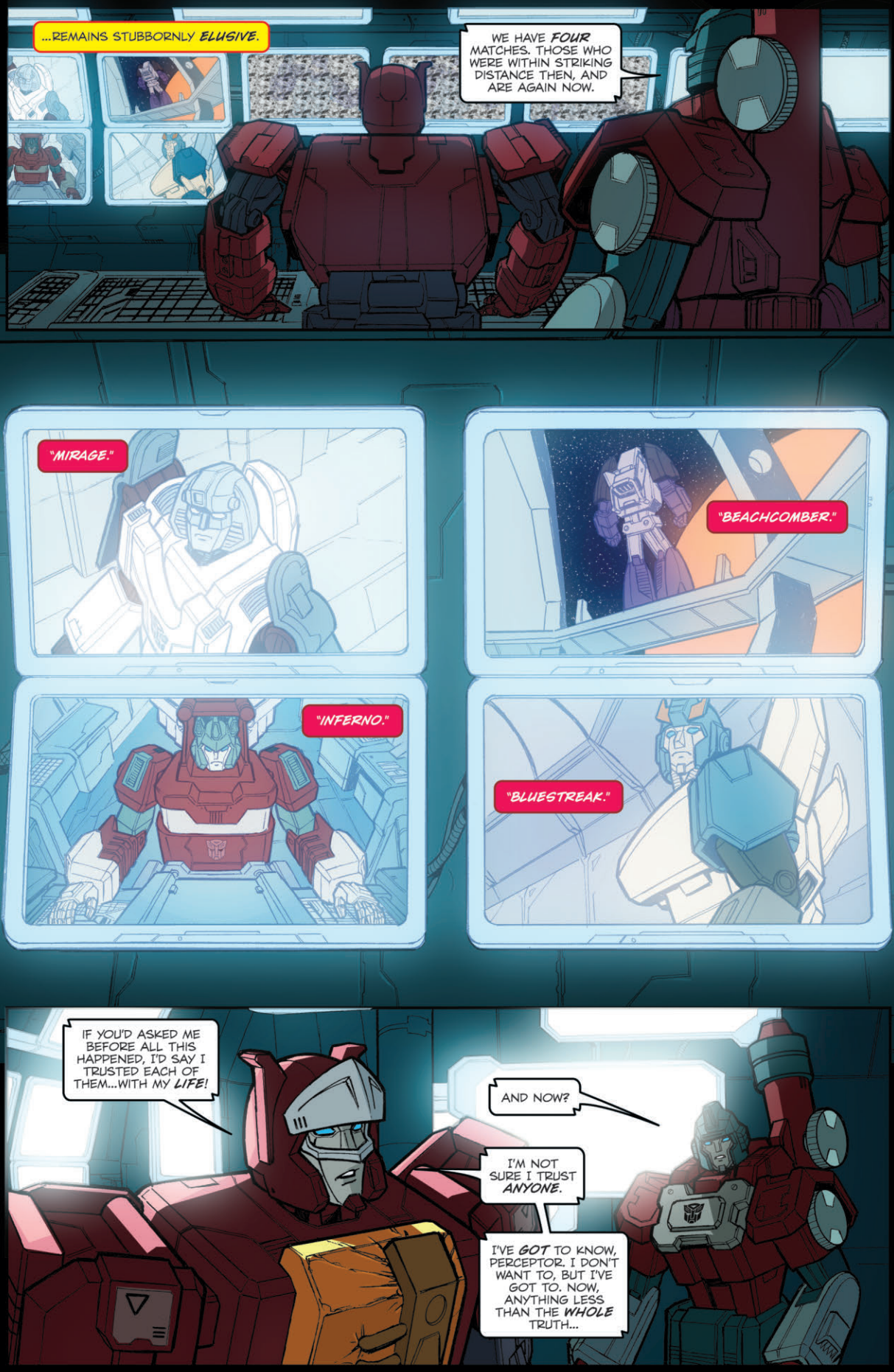

AS WAS MY HABIT...

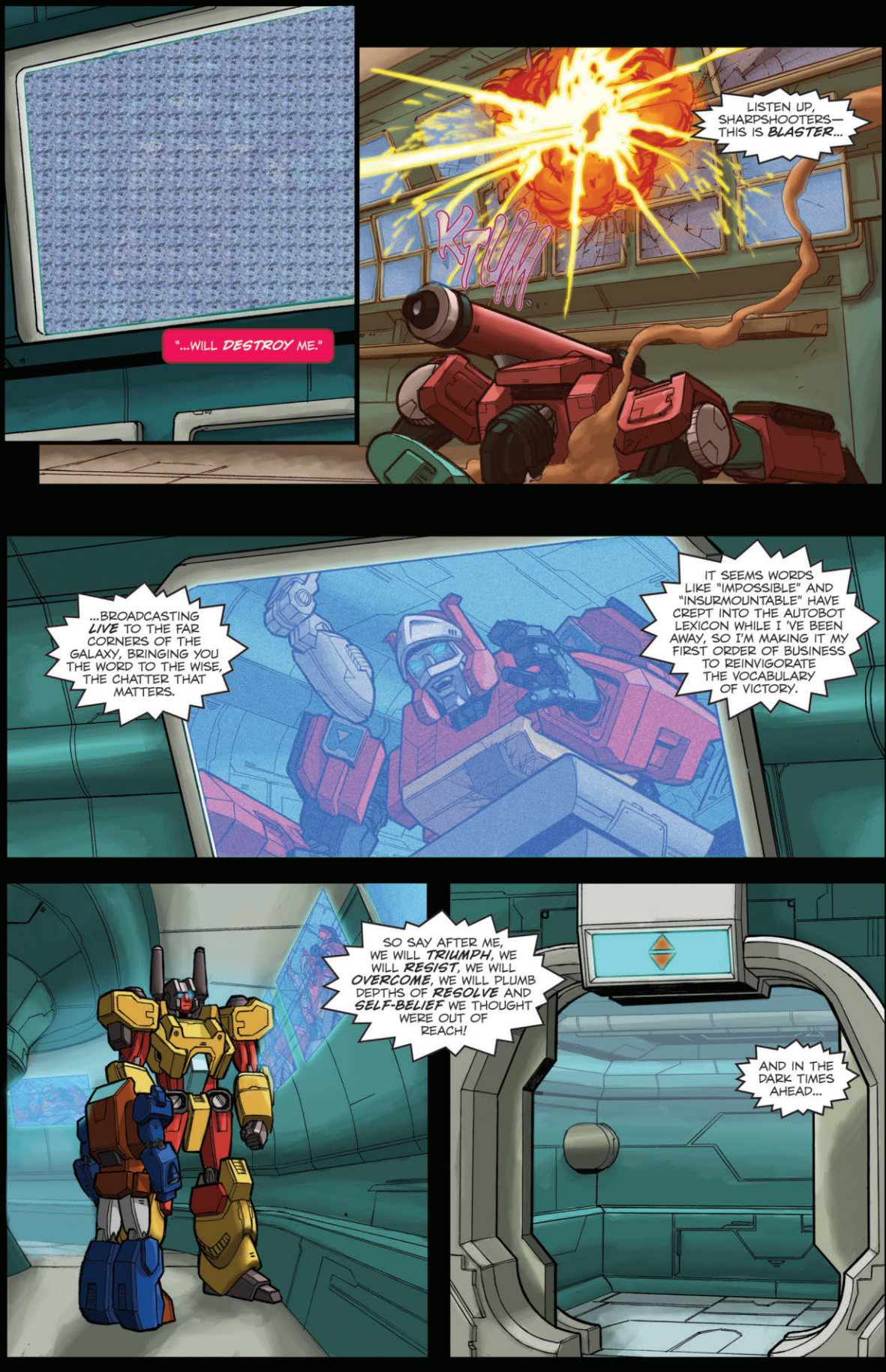

...I HAD THE BROADCAST SUITE CLEARED AHEAD OF MY ARRIVAL.

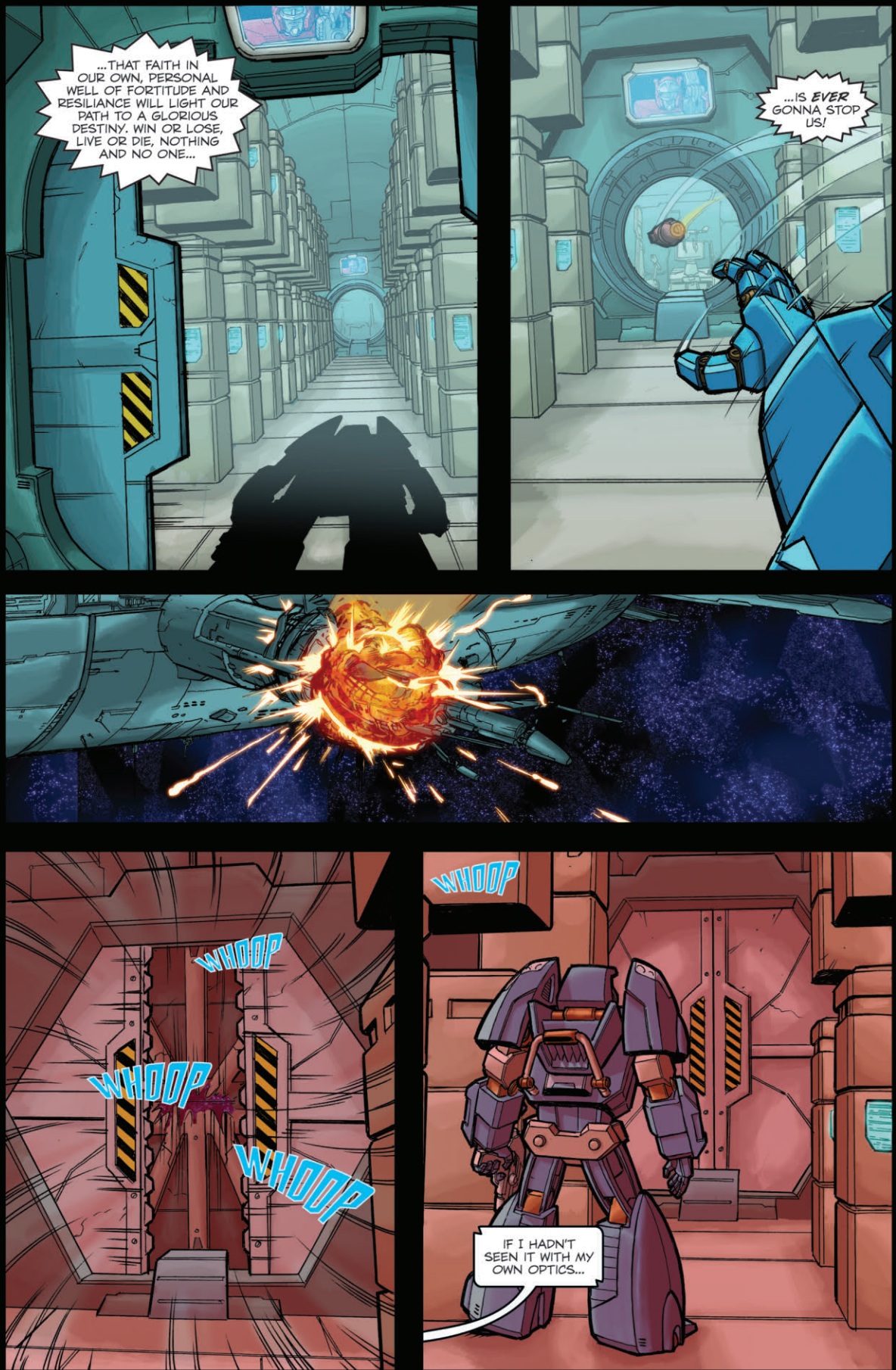

TRUTH WAS, I NEEDED SPACE TO PREPARE, TO GET INTO CHARACTER. THOUGH I COULD NEVER BE CLASSED AS THE SHY, RETIRING TYPE...
...A LOT WAS RIDING ON MY BEING LARGER THAN LIFE AND THEN SOME!
OUR GROUND FORCES WERE STILL REELING FROM THUNDERWING'S APOCALYPTIC ASSAULT. THE 'CONS, QUICKER TO REACT, HAD USED THE FALLOUT PERIOD TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ADVANCEMENTS.
THINGS WERE NOT LOOKING GOOD.
A BIG PUSH WAS COMING, AND EVERYONE KNEW IT!
TIRED, OUTNUMBERED, BESIEGED ALMOST AROUND THE CLOCK...
...THEY NEEDED "THE VOICE."

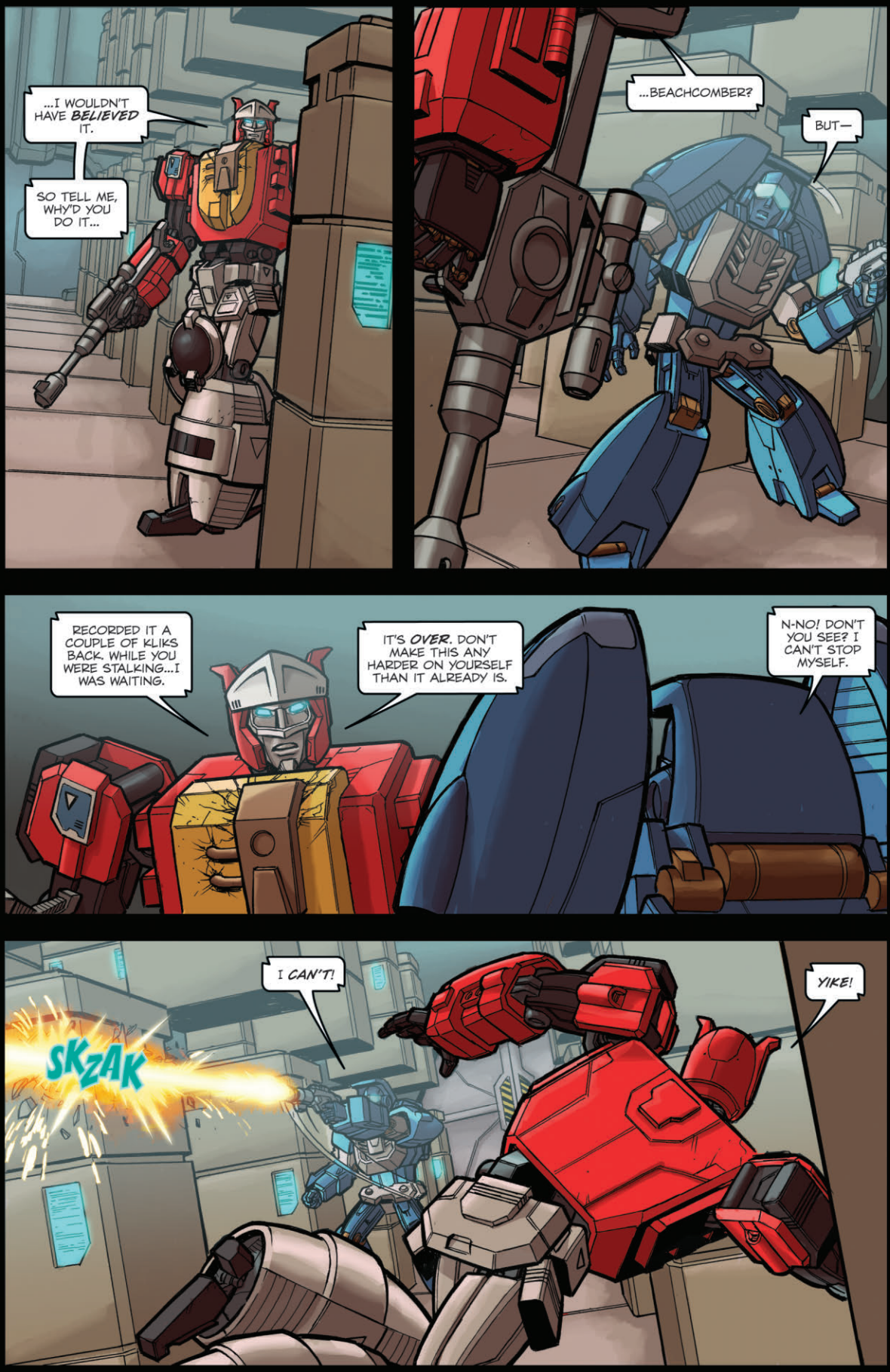

EH—?
OH.
IT'S YOU. WHAT DO YOU—?
FORGIVE ME...
VASHP
WHOEVER IT WAS...
...THEY PICKED THEIR MOMENT.
I'VE SINCE LEARNED THAT NANO-KILKS AFTER THE BROADCAST FAILED TO MATERIALIZE...

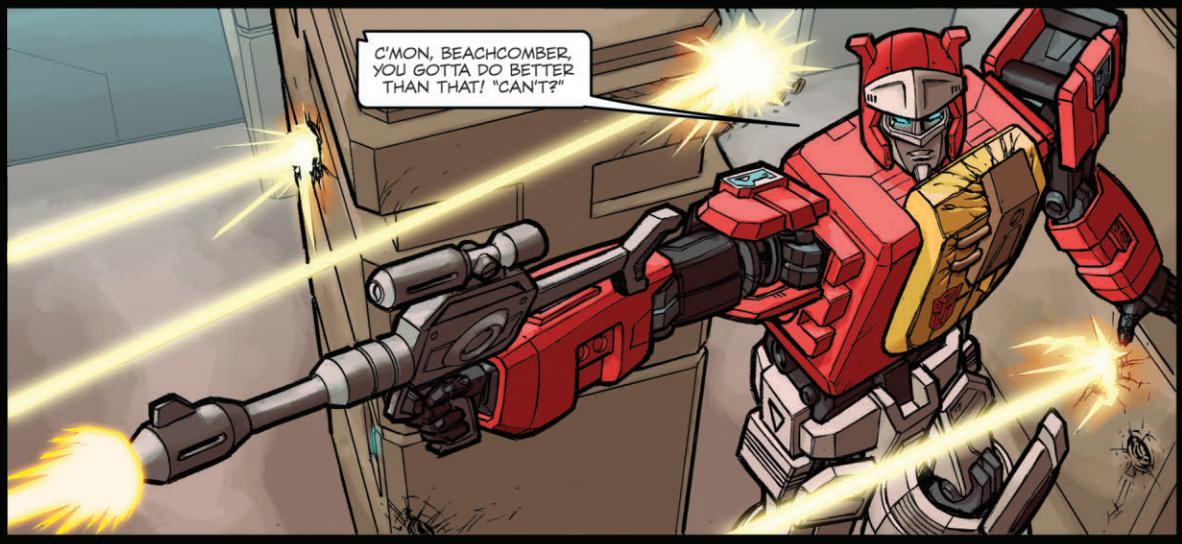

...THE DECEPTICONS MOVED IN FOR THE KILL!
BUT STILL, AS THE DETAILS AND MINUTIAE CRYSTALIZE, THE FACE OF MY ASSAILANT...

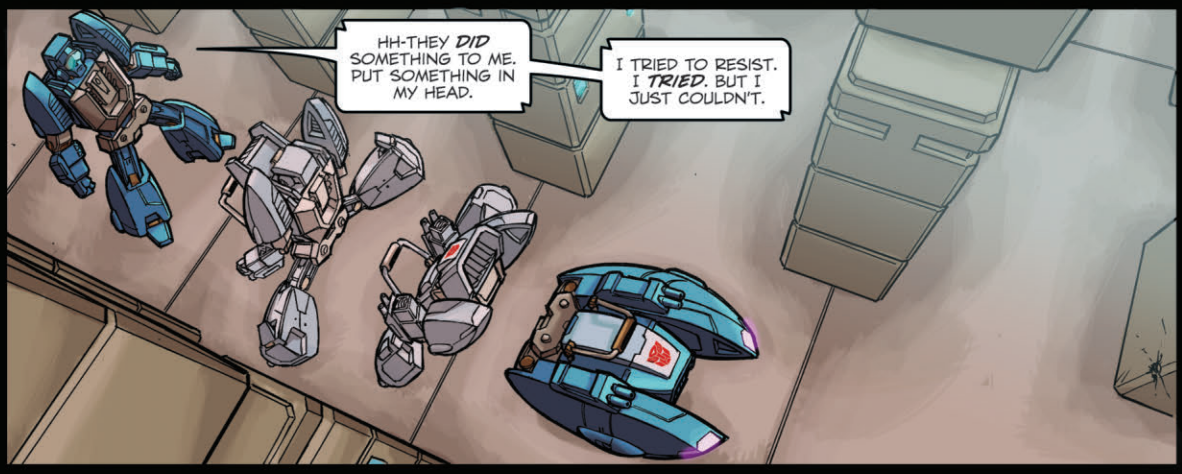

...REMAINS STUBBORNLY ELUSIVE.
WE HAVE FOUR MATCHES. THOSE WHO WERE WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE THEN, AND ARE AGAIN NOW.
"MIRAGE."
"BEACHCOMBER."
"INFERNO."
"BLUESTREAK."
IF YOU'D ASKED ME BEFORE ALL THIS HAPPENED, I'D SAY I TRUSTED EACH OF THEM...WITH MY LIFE!
AND NOW?
I'M NOT SURE I TRUST ANYONE.
I'VE GOT TO KNOW, PERCEPTOR. I DON'T WANT TO, BUT I'VE GOT TO. NOW, ANYTHING LESS THAN THE WHOLE TRUTH...

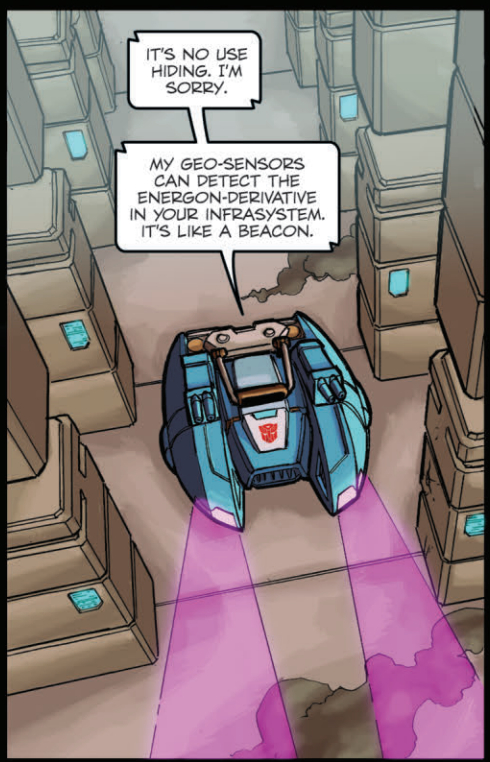

"...WILL DESTROY ME."
KTUM
LISTEN UP, SHARPSHOOTERS— THIS IS BLASTER...
...BROADCASTING LIVE TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE GALAXY, BRINGING YOU THE WORD TO THE WISE, THE CHATTER THAT MATTERS.
IT SEEMS WORDS LIKE "IMPOSSIBLE" AND "INSURMOUNTABLE" HAVE CREPT INTO THE AUTOBOT LEXICON WHILE I 'VE BEEN AWAY, SO I'M MAKING IT MY FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS TO REINVIGORATE THE VOCABULARY OF VICTORY.
SO SAY AFTER ME, WE WILL TRIUMPH, WE WILL RESIST, WE WILL OVERCOME, WE WILL PLUMB DEPTHS OF RESOLVE AND SELF-BELIEF WE THOUGHT WERE OUT OF REACH!
AND IN THE DARK TIMES AHEAD...


...THAT FAITH IN OUR OWN, PERSONAL WELL OF FORTITUDE AND RESILIANCE WILL LIGHT OUR PATH TO A GLORIOUS DESTINY. WIN OR LOSE, LIVE OR DIE, NOTHING AND NO ONE...
...IS *EVER* GONNA STOP US!
WHOOP
WHOOP
WHOOP
WHOOP
IF I HADN'T SEEN IT WITH MY OWN OPTICS...


...I WOULDN'T HAVE *BELIEVED* IT.
SO TELL ME, WHY'D YOU DO IT...
...BEACHCOMBER?
BUT—
RECORDED IT A COUPLE OF KLIKS BACK. WHILE YOU WERE STALKING...I WAS WAITING.
IT'S *OVER*. DON'T MAKE THIS ANY HARDER ON YOURSELF THAN IT ALREADY IS.
N-NO! DON'T YOU SEE? I CAN'T STOP MYSELF.
I *CAN'T!*
SKZAK
YIKE!


C'MON, BEACHCOMBER, YOU GOTTA DO BETTER THAN THAT! "CAN'T?"


HH-THEY DID SOMETHING TO ME. PUT SOMETHING IN MY HEAD.
I TRIED TO RESIST. I TRIED. BUT I JUST COULDN'T.


IT'S NO USE HIDING. I'M SORRY.
MY GEO-SENSORS CAN DETECT THE ENERGON-DERIVATIVE IN YOUR INFRASYSTEM. IT'S LIKE A BEACON.

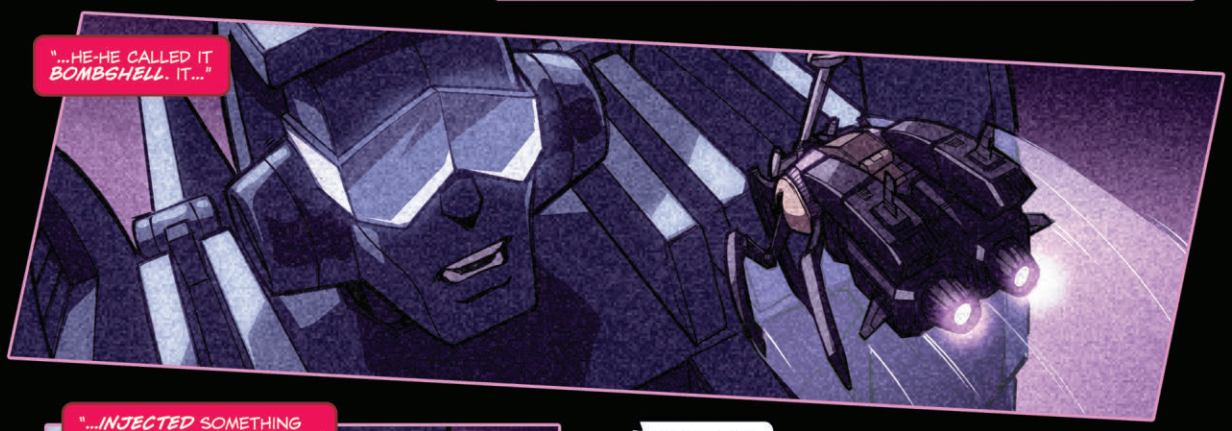

HIDE? PERISH THE THOUGHT. I WAS JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO GET INTO POSITION...

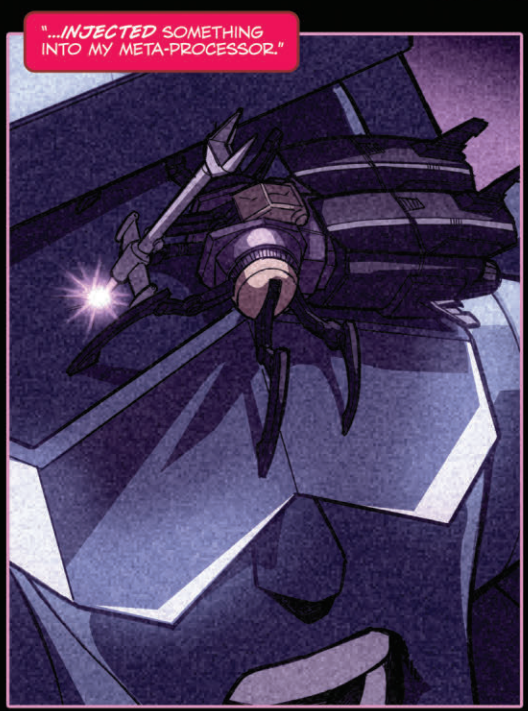

KTANG
KTANG
KTANG
KTANG
"...FOR THIS!"
KTANG
STOP! PLEASE.
I WANTED THIS QUICK AND CLEAN. YOU WERE NEVER MEANT TO SUFFER.
WELL, GEE, THANKS. BUT,SEE...
BA-BOOM!
...I'VE NEVER BEEN THE TYPE TO GO QUIETLY!


HN-UHT!
SORRY, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH. THERE'S ONLY TWO WAYS THIS ENDS.
EITHER I KILL YOU...
...OR YOU KILL ME!
TELL ME MORE, BEACHCOMBER.
UH?
WHO DID THIS TO YOU? HOW?
IF I'M ABOUT TO BITE THE BIG ONE, I'D AT LEAST LIKE TO KNOW WHO'S PULLING THE STRINGS.
WHERE—?
OH, HEREABOUTS. JUST MAKING SOUND JUMP THROUGH SOME HOOPS, Y'KNOW.

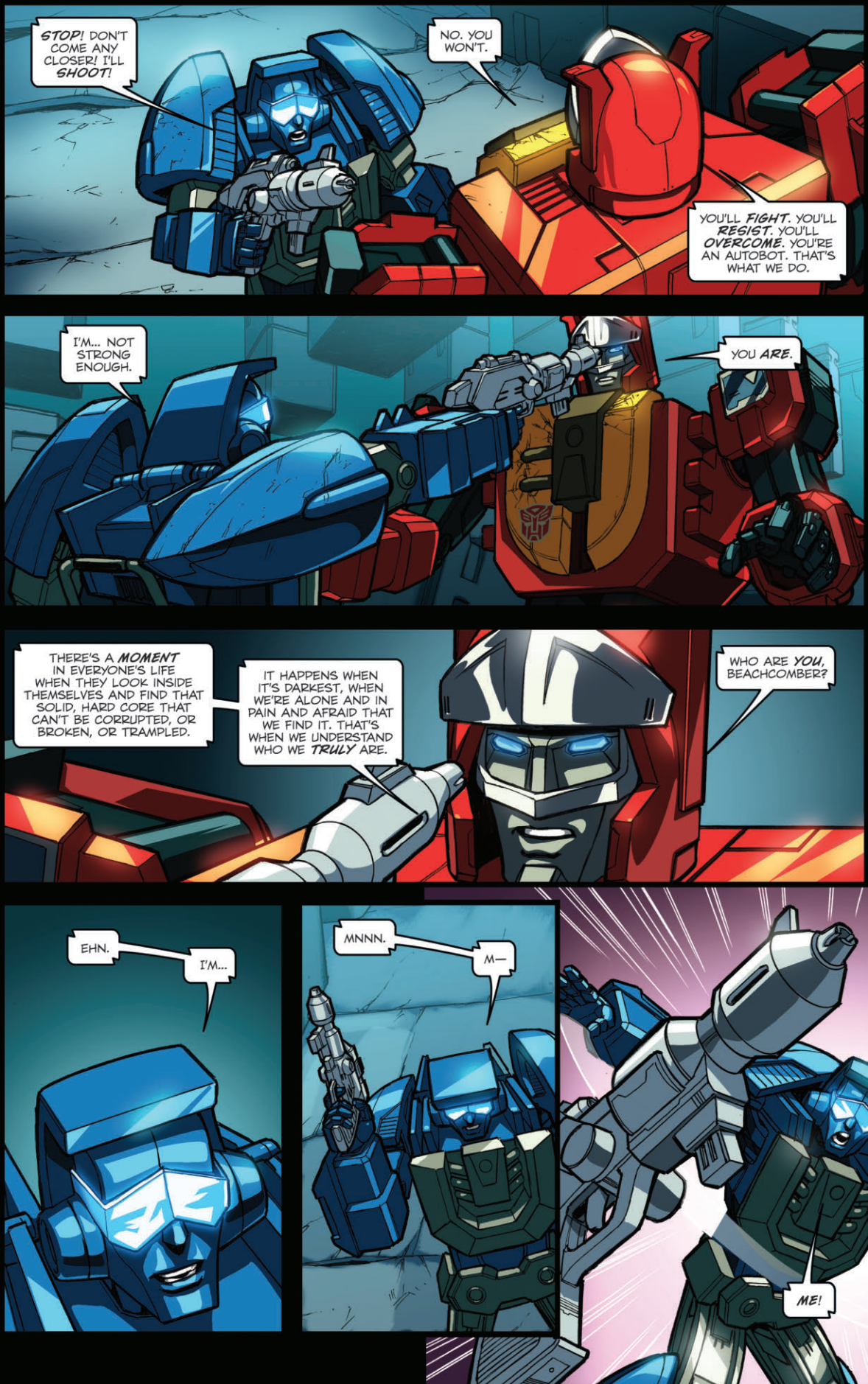

THE NAME!
SUH-SUH...
...SOUNDWAVE!


"I WAS AMBUSHED, RESTRAINED. AND THEN..."


"...HE-HE CALLED IT BOMBSHELL. IT..."


"...INJECTED SOMETHING INTO MY META-PROCESSOR."


IT MADE ME DO TERRIBLE, TERRIBLE THINGS!
EASY, EASY.
WE CAN HELP YOU, BEACHCOMBER, BUT FIRST YOU'VE GOT TO HELP YOURSELF!


STOP! DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! I'LL SHOOT!
NO. YOU WON'T.
YOU'LL FIGHT. YOU'LL RESIST. YOU'LL OVERCOME. YOU'RE AN AUTOBOT. THAT'S WHAT WE DO.
I'M... NOT STRONG ENOUGH.
YOU ARE.
THERE'S A MOMENT IN EVERYONE'S LIFE WHEN THEY LOOK INSIDE THEMSELVES AND FIND THAT SOLID, HARD CORE THAT CAN'T BE CORRUPTED, OR BROKEN, OR TRAMPLED.
IT HAPPENS WHEN IT'S DARKEST, WHEN WE'RE ALONE AND IN PAIN AND AFRAID THAT WE FIND IT. THAT'S WHEN WE UNDERSTAND WHO WE TRULY ARE.
WHO ARE YOU, BEACHCOMBER?
EHN.
I'M...
MNNN.
M—
ME!


UHHH...
BLASTER?
I'M OKAY. THANKS FOR HOLDING BACK.


I ALMOST DIDN'T. WHEN I SAW YOU WERE UNARMED, I WAS READY TO COME STORMING IN.
FUNNY THING IS, I WASN'T UNARMED. I USED THE BIGGEST AND BEST WEAPON IN MY ARSENAL.


MY VOICE.


EPILOGUE:
PERCEPTOR. HOW YOU DOIN'?
I'M ALIVE. I'LL SETTLE FOR THAT.
AND BEACHCOMBER? WHAT'S THE PROGNOSIS?

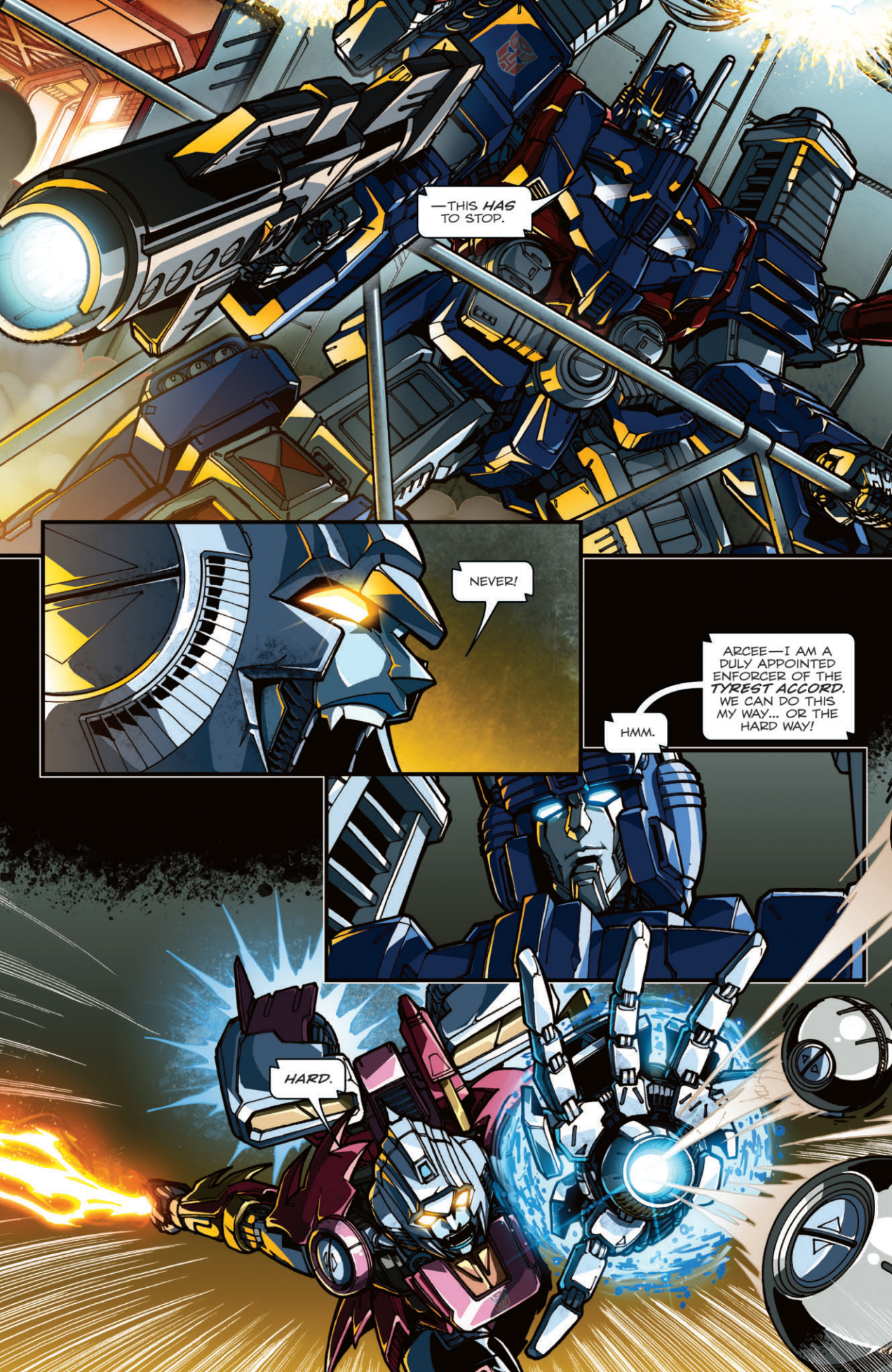

NOT GOOD. THE CEREBRO-SHELL BURNED ITSELF OUT, BUT IT TOOK A GOODLY PORTION OF HIS NEO-CORTEX WITH IT.
YOU?
ANGRY.
I'VE GOT WORK TO DO HERE. BUT WHEN THAT'S DONE, I INTEND TO FIND SOUNDWAVE.
AND?


THE LAST VOICE HE HEARS... WILL BE MINE!
THE END?


ART BY ALEX MILNE
COLORS BY JOSH PEREZ


THE TRANSFORMERS
SPOTLIGHT: ARCEE
ART BY ALEX MILNE
COLORS BY JOSH PEREZ

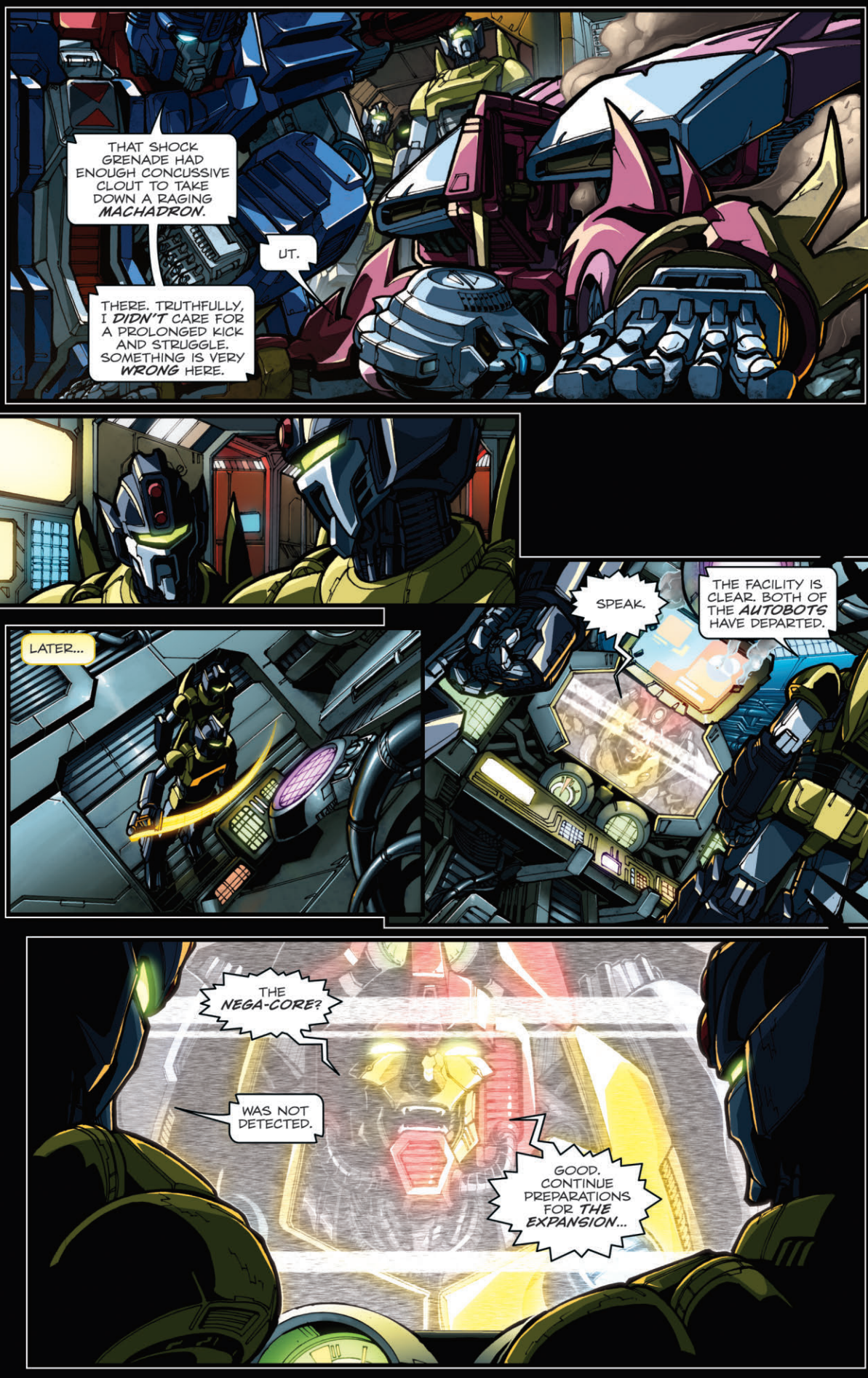

STELLAR CARTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE, VAN-DEMA SECTOR:
HE WAS HERE!
JHI-AX-US!
HIS VILE PRESENCE LINGERS, TAINTING THIS STERILE, RAREFIED SPACE, A DARK, TANGIBLE STIGMA NO PURIFICATION SYSTEM CAN EVER PURGE.
AND WHERE HE GOES THERE IS DARKNESS AND DIRE CONSEQUENCE AND I WILL FIND HIS DEVIANT WORK AND I WILL BURN IT DOWN. ALL OF IT!
ARCEE—


—THIS HAS TO STOP.
NEVER!
ARCEE—I AM A DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD. WE CAN DO THIS MY WAY... OR THE HARD WAY!
HMM.
HARD.

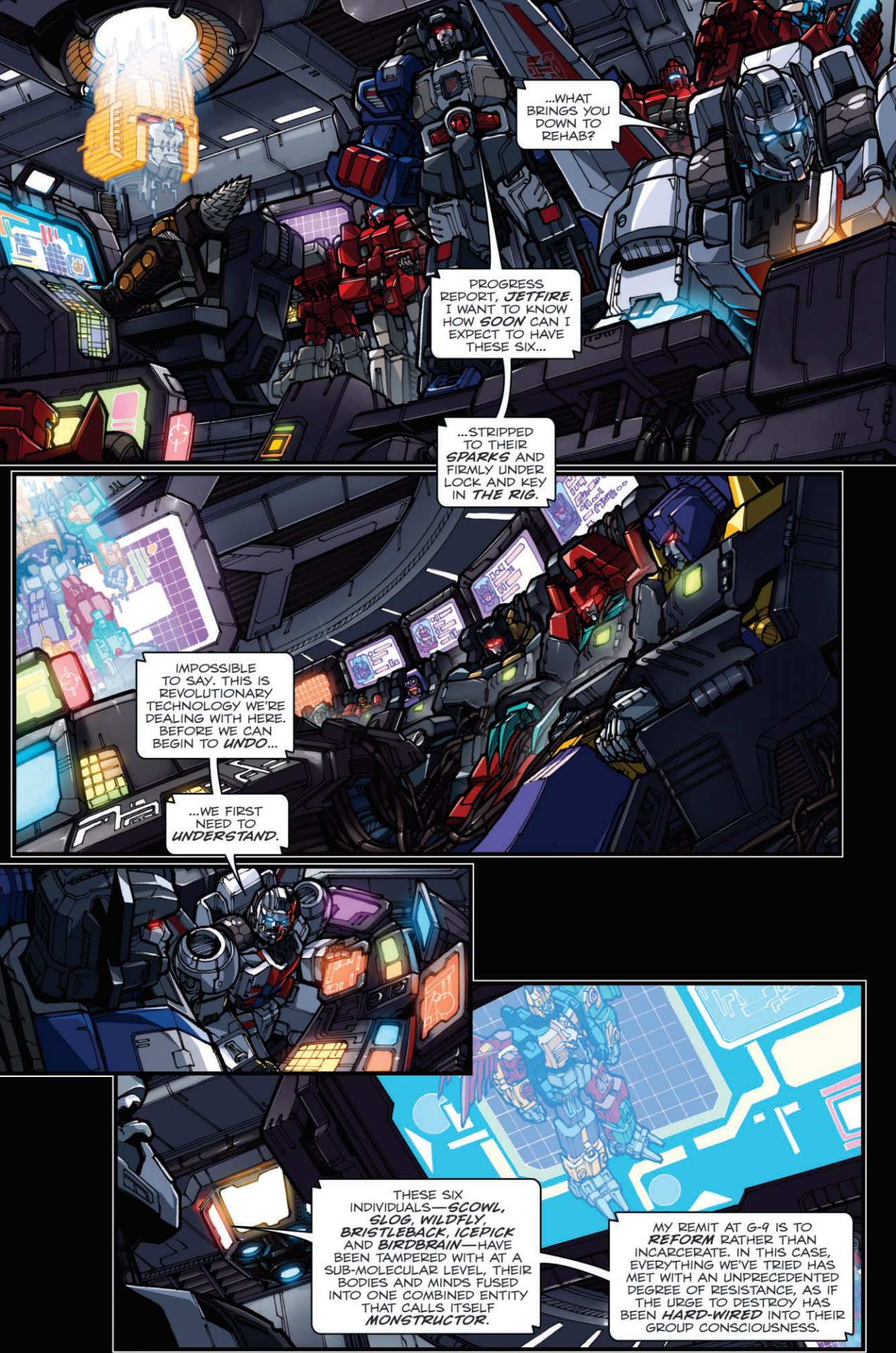

SHAMF
HT!
DAMN.
ARCEE, I AM NOT YOUR ENEMY, BUT YOU'VE LEFT A TRAIL OF CARNAGE HALFWAY ACROSS THE GALAXY AND NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW WHY. PLEASE...
...ENLIGHTEN ME!
IT WOULDN'T HELP. YOU DON'T HAVE THE OPTICS TO SEE, OR, EVEN HAVING SEEN, THE PERCEPTION TO DIVINE THE MEANING OF HIS DARK DESIGNS.
SOMETHING IS COMING! SOMETHING THAT WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING... AT A FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL! AND I...
...AM THE SERVO-WRENCH IN THE WORKS!


NO!
SKIZT
YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE...
...BUT TO TAKE YOU DOWN!
BETTER THAN YOU HAVE TRIED, ULTRA MAGNUS...
...AND THEIR MORTAL REMAINS PROVIDE AN ENDURING TESTAMENT TO THEIR PITIFUL INADEQUACY.
ZZOM


NOTHING PERSONAL, YOU UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE JUST BETWEEN ME...
...AND HIM!
SO BE IT.
SHIMMM
ENH. OHHH...
ARR—
ARCEE?
H-K—
NO, SURELY NOT!


THAT SHOCK GRENADE HAD ENOUGH CONCUSSIVE CLOUT TO TAKE DOWN A RAGING MACHADRON.
UT.
THERE. TRUTHFULLY, I DIDN'T CARE FOR A PROLONGED KICK AND STRUGGLE. SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG HERE.
LATER...
SPEAK.
THE FACILITY IS CLEAR. BOTH OF THE AUTOBOTS HAVE DEPARTED.
THE NEGA-CORE?
WAS NOT DETECTED.
GOOD. CONTINUE PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPANSION...


GARRUS-9 (PENITENTIARY):
MUCH LATER...
REPUGNUS
LONGTOOTH
SKYJACK
REPUGNUS
LONGTOOTH
SKYJACK
RANSACK
BLUDGEON
ARCEE
"FORTRESS MAXIMUS..."


...WHAT BRINGS YOU DOWN TO REHAB?
PROGRESS REPORT, JETFIRE. I WANT TO KNOW HOW SOON CAN I EXPECT TO HAVE THESE SIX...
...STRIPPED TO THEIR SPARKS AND FIRMLY UNDER LOCK AND KEY IN THE RIG.
IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY. THIS IS REVOLUTIONARY TECHNOLOGY WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE. BEFORE WE CAN BEGIN TO UNDO...
...WE FIRST NEED TO UNDERSTAND.
THESE SIX INDIVIDUALS—SCOWL, SLOG, WILDFLY, BRISTLEBACK, ICEPICK AND BIRDBRAIN—HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH AT A SUB-MOLECULAR LEVEL, THEIR BODIES AND MINDS FUSED INTO ONE COMBINED ENTITY THAT CALLS ITSELF MONSTRUCTOR.
MY REMIT AT G-9 IS TO REFORM RATHER THAN INCARCERATE. IN THIS CASE, EVERYTHING WE'VE TRIED HAS MET WITH AN UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE OF RESISTANCE, AS IF THE URGE TO DESTROY HAS BEEN HARD-WIRED INTO THEIR GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS.

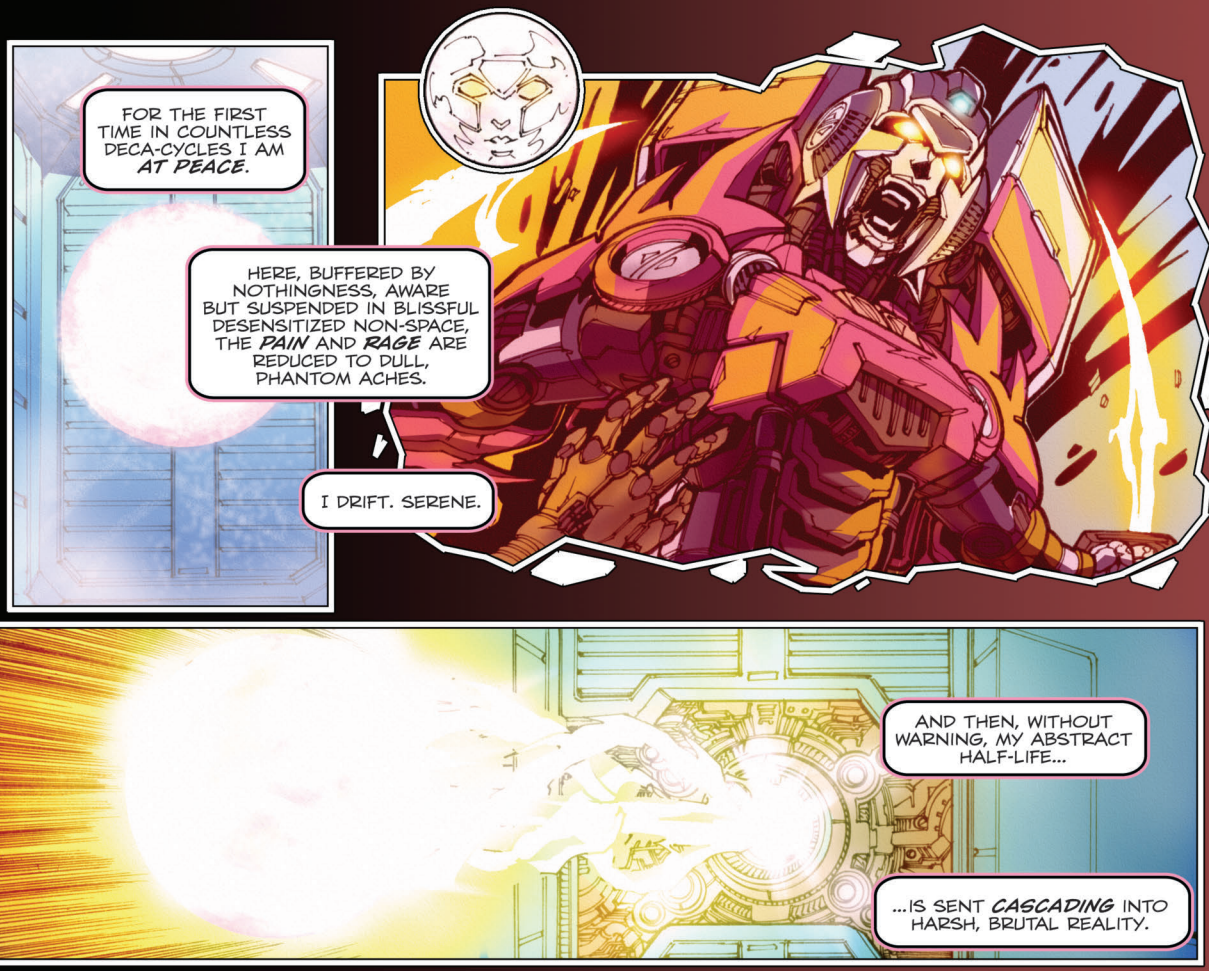

WHICH MEANS WHAT, EXACTLY?
THAT WE'VE STILL GOT A *LONG* WAY TO GO.
YOU GET THEM ONLY WHEN WE'VE EXHAUSTED *EVERY* OTHER COURSE OF ACTION. I'M SORRY.
HN. IF THE *DECEPTICONS* GET WIND OF THIS "REVOLUTIONARY TECHNOLOGY" BEFORE WE CAN RENDER IT NULL AND VOID...
"...WE'LL *ALL* BE SORRY."
GHOST SHIELD STATUS?
OUTPUT RANGE IS WITHIN HARMONIC TOLERANCE, *BANZAITRON*. WE REMAIN UNDETECTED.
RIGHT.
SHIFT ROTATION AT THE FACILITY IS IN TWO KLIKS. WE'LL HIT THEM ON THE SHUFFLE.


IF DOUBLEDEALER'S RIGHT AND THESE SO-CALLED GESTALTS DO EXIST... I WANT THEM FOR MY SECRET SERVICE!
IT'S TIME.
THEN...
"...LET THE MAYHEM BEGIN!"
FSTOOM
THEY WERE JUST THERE! LIKE, OUT OF NOWHERE! AND THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHERE TO HIT US!
QUICK, KICK-OFF, ACTIVATE AUTOGUNS AND MOBILIZE CRISIS RESPONSE UNITS, OR THIS'LL BE OVER...

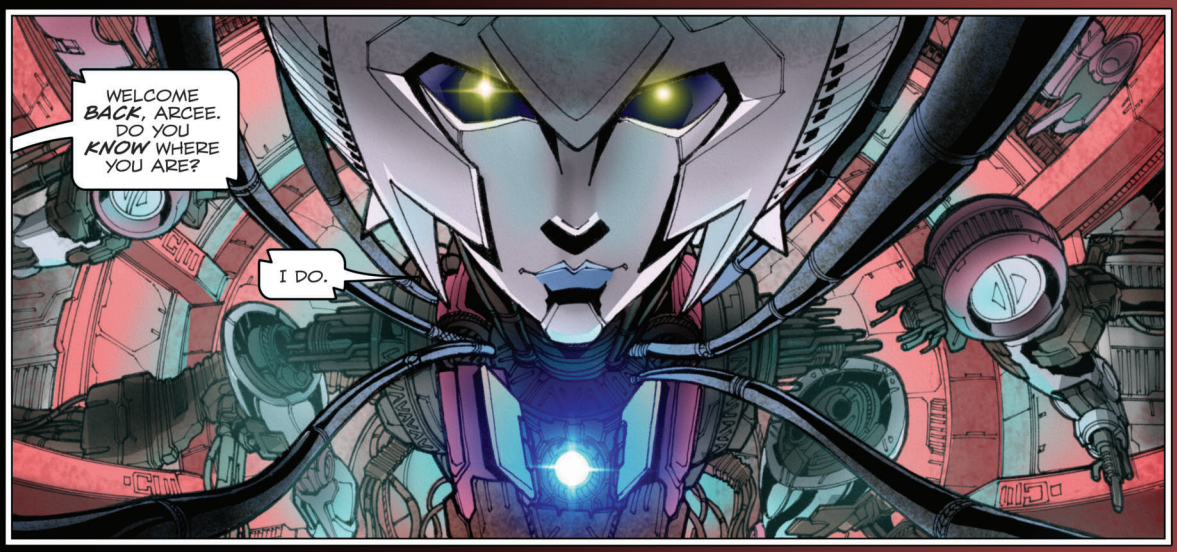

"...BEFORE IT'S STARTED!"
BUDDA-BUDDA
JAWHUM
VOZW
SHADDAAM
WHOMPH
D-DAM

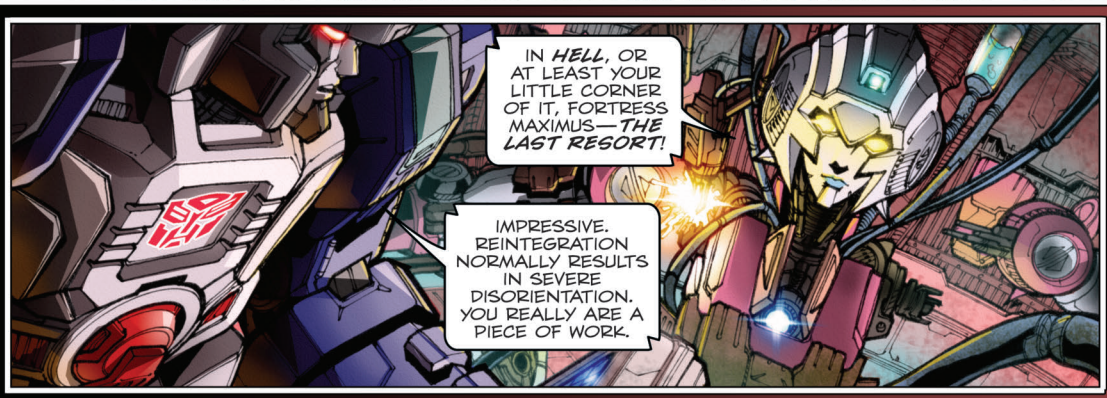

SHANG
FHT-
-SHZZSh
COMBATICONS—MOVE IN! MUTILATE, MAUL OR MASSACRE ANYTHING BETWEEN YOU AND THE TARGET.
ONSLAUGHT... YOU'RE PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED. WE AIM TO MAIM!

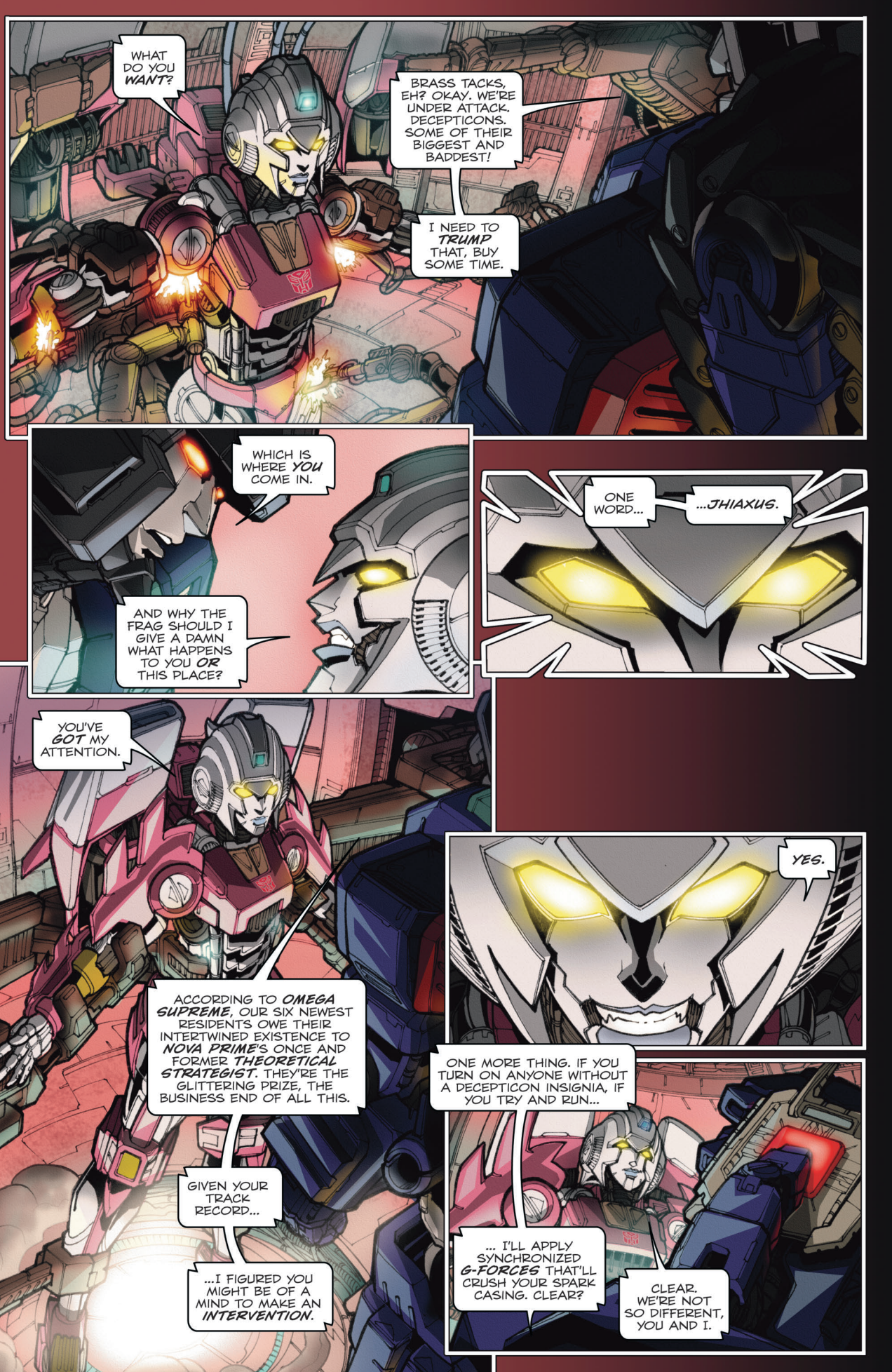

WE'RE BEING OVERRUN OUT HERE...
...IT'S TURNING INTO A SLAGGING SLAUGHTER...
...STRONGHOLD HAS BEEN BREACHED, WE HAVE ISOLATION UNIT PENETRATION...
...MAIN GRID IS DOWN. AUXILIARY DEFENSE SYSTEMS ARE NON-RESPONSIVE...
THIS IS FORTRESS MAXIMUS, SENDING TO ALL TACTICAL RESPONSE UNITS IN SUB-LIGHT TRANSIT DISTANCE OF GARRUS-9. WE ARE UNDER ATTACK! MAIN CARGO IN JEOPARDY!
AARGH!
HAARK!
COMPUTER—GIVE ME AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT INMATES. MAIN CATEGORY: AUTOBOT. SUB-CATEGORY: THREAT LEVEL-9.
ONE RESULT FOUND.
HMM.
ARCEE


FOR THE FIRST TIME IN COUNTLESS DECA-CYCLES I AM AT PEACE.
HERE, BUFFERED BY NOTHINGNESS, AWARE BUT SUSPENDED IN BLISSFUL DESENSITIZED NON-SPACE, THE PAIN AND RAGE ARE REDUCED TO DULL, PHANTOM ACHES.
I DRIFT. SERENE.

AND THEN, WITHOUT WARNING, MY ABSTRACT HALF-LIFE...
...IS SENT CASCADING INTO HARSH, BRUTAL REALITY.


WELCOME BACK, ARCEE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE?
I DO.


IN HELL, OR AT LEAST YOUR LITTLE CORNER OF IT, FORTRESS MAXIMUS—THE LAST RESORT!
IMPRESSIVE. REINTEGRATION NORMALLY RESULTS IN SEVERE DISORIENTATION. YOU REALLY ARE A PIECE OF WORK.


WHAT DO YOU WANT?
BRASS TACKS, EH? OKAY. WE'RE UNDER ATTACK. DECEPTICONS. SOME OF THEIR BIGGEST AND BADDEST!
I NEED TO TRUMP THAT, BUY SOME TIME.
WHICH IS WHERE YOU COME IN.
AND WHY THE FRAG SHOULD I GIVE A DAMN WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU OR THIS PLACE?
ONE WORD...
...JHIAXUS.
YOU'VE GOT MY ATTENTION.
YES.
ACCORDING TO OMEGA SUPREME, OUR SIX NEWEST RESIDENTS OWE THEIR INTERTWINED EXISTENCE TO NOVA PRIME'S ONCE AND FORMER THEORETICAL STRATEGIST. THEY'RE THE GLITTERING PRIZE, THE BUSINESS END OF ALL THIS.
ONE MORE THING. IF YOU TURN ON ANYONE WITHOUT A DECEPTICON INSIGNIA, IF YOU TRY AND RUN...
GIVEN YOUR TRACK RECORD...
...I FIGURED YOU MIGHT BE OF A MIND TO MAKE AN INTERVENTION.
... I'LL APPLY SYNCHRONIZED G-FORCES THAT'LL CRUSH YOUR SPARK CASING. CLEAR?
CLEAR. WE'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT, YOU AND I.


"NEITHER OF US LIKE TO LOSE."
I CAN'T HOLD THEM. AFTERBURNER, SCATTERSHOT—DO IT!
ZZAW
THOW
VIP VIP


YES. OPTIMUS PRIME WAS CLEAR—THE SUBJECTS CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS, EVEN IF IT MEANS TERMINATION!
PREPARING TO CROSS-CONNECT NOW. THE FEEDBACK WILL FRY THEIR NEURAL PATHWAYS. I JUST WISH...
...THERE WAS ANOTHER—


—WHT!
KA SHAKT


NUHT!
COMBATICONS—
VZAPT


—MOVE IN FOR THE KILL.
FTUM FTUM
HEH. IT'S MUCH MORE SATISFYING WHEN THEY SQUIRM. THAT LITTLE BIT OF DEFIANCE, FUTILE THOUGH IT MAY BE, MAKES ALL THE—
—DIFFERENCE.
OH.
OH NO...
...NOT HER!
STRUTLESS FOOL. SHE'S NOTHING.


JUST MORE FODDER...
...FOR THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE!
DOM
DOM
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I TOLD ALL THE OTHERS. IF YOU'RE BETWEEN ME AND HIS HANDIWORK, YOU'RE GONE...
...JUST GONE!
FNGH!
VVAMK


I'M GOING TO BURN IT *ALL* DOWN.
AND YOU RIGHT ALONG WITH IT.
SLAG THIS! IT'S HIGH TIME WE GOT WHAT WE CAME FOR...
...AND GOT THE FRAG *OUT* OF HERE!
N-NO... STOP HIM. SOMEONE...
...BEFORE...


NO ONE MOVE!
TELL ME...
...DOES THAT EVER WORK?

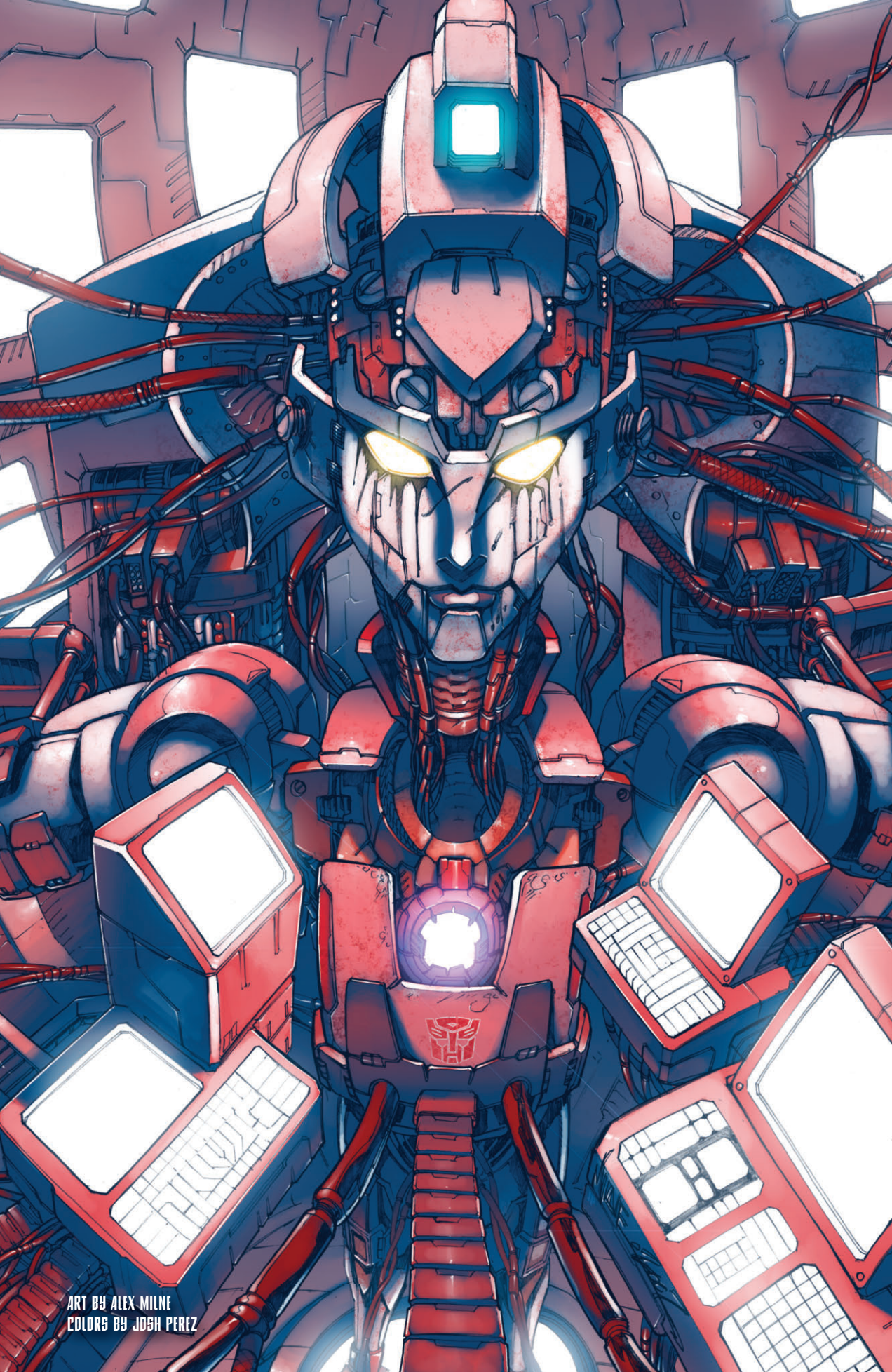

DAMN.


PERHAPS SOMEONE CAN STILL INTERCEPT THEM.
WHO?
ME.


YOU? THE ONLY PLACE YOU'RE GOING IS BACK TO YOUR ALCOVE IN F-WING.
I'M GOING AFTER THEM. IT'S THAT...


...OR KILL ME NOW.
I CAN FIND THEM. I CAN STOP THIS. IT'S WHAT I DO. DON'T ASK ME HOW OR WHY, BUT IT'S ALMOST A HOMING INSTINCT. ME, JHIAXUS, HIS "EXPERIMENTS"...
...WE'RE LINKED.
ARCEE, WHAT IS IT BETWEEN YOU AND HIM? HELP US UNDERSTAND.
JETFIRE...
IT'S OKAY. I DON'T THINK SHE'LL HARM ME.
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW YOU'RE DOING IT, DO YOU?
DOING WHAT?
"SHE."
WE USE "HE" AMONG OURSELVES AND DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT. IT'S JUST THE PRONOUN OF CHOICE, RIGHT?
HAVEN'T YOU EVER WONDERED WHY IT'S "SHE" AND "HER" WITH ME? IT'S BECAUSE YOU UNCONSCIOUSLY SENSE A DIFFERENCE.
JHIAXUS ARBITRARILY DECIDED TO INTRODUCE GENDER INTO OUR SPECIES AND I WAS HIS FIRST TEST-SUBJECT. HE TAMPERED WITH MY FUNDAMENTAL CNA, AND YOU KNOW WHY?
BECAUSE HE WAS CURIOUS. BECAUSE HE COULD!


CLEARLY I DIDN'T MEASURE UP TO WHATEVER IDEAL HE'D HOPED TO ACHIEVE AND SO HE DISCARDED ME WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT, LEFT ME TO THIS MADDENING MAELSTROM OF CONTRADICTORY SENSORY INPUT.
NOW I SIMPLY CAN'T REST UNTIL EVERYTHING HE'S TOUCHED IS WIPED CLEAN.
ARCEE...
...STOP.
THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN, NOT ON MY WATCH.
FORTRESS MAXIMUS...
...LET HER GO. I'LL BACK UP ANY STORY YOU WANT TO CONCOCT. AFTER ALL, WHAT HAVE WE REALLY GOT TO LOSE?
HMM.
YOU KNOW SOMETHING, JETFIRE. IF THIS JHIAXUS IS STILL ALIVE SOMEWHERE...
...I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR HIM.
IT'S CLOSE NOW. I CAN FEEL IT. IN MY ABSENCE, SOMETHING HAS CHANGED, ADVANCED. THE DAY OF RECKONING...
...IS AT HAND!
THE END?



ART BY ALEX MILNE
COLORS BY JOSH PEREZ

NEW AVENGERS/THE TRANSFORMERS
MAN AND MACHINE



ART BY JIM CHEUNG
COLORS BY MARK MORALES


LATVERIA: the Eastern European nation ruled by Dr. Doom...
THE ENGINES OF WAR.
A NECESSARY EVIL, SOMETIMES, BUT A DARK REFLECTION OF OUR BETTER SELVES.
ONCE THOSE ENGINES ARE SET IN MOTION...
...THEY CAN BE VERY HARD TO STOP.
CAP?
YOU WITH US, MAN?
I'M WITH YOU.
FWOOM
S.H.I.E.L.D. RISKED A LOT OF AGENTS' LIVES SO WE COULD SLIP IN HERE BY QUINJET. WHATEVER DR. DOOM IS UP TO, THE RADIATION SIGNATURE IS COMING FROM JUST UP AHEAD.
WE'VE GOT TO SHUT IT DOWN-- FAST--
UH... GUYS?


CAPTAIN AMERICA
A.K.A. Steve Rogers. Enhanced strength & stamina via super-soldier serum.
WOLVERINE
A.K.A. Logan. Mutant healing factor, enhanced senses & Adamantium-laced skeleton & claws.
SNIKT


I THINK DOOM'S GOT PROBLEMS, TOO.
SPIDER-MAN
A.K.A. Peter Parker. Proportionate strength & agility of an arachnid.
LUKE CAGE
Steel-hard skin and superhuman strength.


DOOM'S ROBOT ARMY. SOMEBODY DID A FULL DRIVE-BY ON 'EM...
...IN THEIR OWN 'HOOD.
WHAT? I CAN TALK "STREET"!
EVERYBODY ZIP IT FOR A MINUTE.
DIRECTOR HILL...
HQ of S.H.I.E.L.D., the world's pre-eminent peace-keeping organization.
...ARE YOU MONITORING THIS?
ROGER THAT, CAPTAIN AMERICA.
THAT STRUCTURE-- WHATEVER IT IS--IS DEFINITELY THE SOURCE OF THE ANOMALOUS READINGS. BUT THE ARCHITECTURE DOESN'T MATCH ANY OF DOOM'S KNOWN TECHNOLOGY.
OUR SPY-SATS SHOW LATVERIA CONTINUING THEIR SHELLING OF SYMKARIA--THEIR NEIGHBOR COUNTRY.
WITH STRANGE AIRCRAFT. I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH THAT DESIGN...
FWOOM


THE MAKE OF DOOM'S PLANES IS ABOUT TO BECOME THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS, CAPTAIN.
UNLESS LATVERIA CALLS OFF THE AIR STRIKES, SYMKARIA HAS VOWED FULL RETALIATION IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. THAT'LL MEAN ALL-OUT WAR...
AND A LOT OF NEEDLESS DEATHS.
STILL NO WORD FROM DOOM?
NEGATIVE. HE'S GONE COMPLETELY DARK. BUT ALL OUR INTEL CONNECTS HIM WITH THE STRUCTURE.
CAP, YOU'VE GOT TO INFILTRATE IT AND FIND OUT WHAT IT IS AND IF IT HAS ANY CONNECTION TO THE RISING HOSTILITIES. BOTTOM LINE: STOP THE WAR.
HILL OUT.
NO SIGN OF AN AIR STRIKE HERE...AND NO HUMAN SCENTS LINGERIN' AT ALL.
WHICH MEANS WHATEVER TURNED THESE DOOMBOTS INTO CURBSIDE RECYCLING CAME FROM IN THERE.
UH, CAP.. EXACTLY WHAT KIND OF WEAPONS DOES SYMKARIA HAVE?
THEY JUST JOINED US IN THE NUCLEAR CLUB.
YOU FIND SOMETHIN'?
YEAH...A SEAM...
...RIGHT HERE.


BA-DAAAM
HEY!
WHAT'S WRONG, CAP? WE'RE GOIN' IN, RIGHT?
YES. BUT ON MY ORDER!
FROM NOW ON--YOU TWO HANG BACK, SHUT UP--AND FOLLOW THE CHAIN OF COMMAND.
IS THAT CLEAR?
SPIDER-MAN. TAKE POINT.
THAT'S THE SECOND TIME HE'S TOLD ME TO SHUT UP.
IF IT HAPPENS A THIRD TIME... WE GOT A PROBLEM.
I HEAR THAT.


SO ARE WE THE AVENGERS STEALTH TEAM, NOW? LIKE NINJAS?
COOL.
ANY REAL NINJAS HEARD THIS GROUP TROMPIN' AROUND, THEY'D WET THEMSELVES LAUGHING.
ONE MORE TIME--CAN THE CHATTER!
PERIMETER VIOLATION--SECTOR EIGHT. EXTRAHUMAN PLANETARY DEFENSES DETECTED.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO EASE OFF THE GENERAL PATTON ROUTINE... STEVE.
I'M JUST SAYIN!
SNIKT
INITIATE MIRROR RESPONSE MODE.


WHAT'S WITH THE FUNHOUSE EFFECT?
AM I REALLY THAT FAT?
A DARK REFLECTION.
THE ENGINES OF WAR...
LOOK OUT!
SZAAAK


SZAAAK
SZAAAK
FORM UP!
CAGE-- TRY TO REACH THE--
BLOOD ANOMALIES: HUMAN CELL REGENERATION SERUM.
INTERESTING...BUT INSUFFICIENT...
SZAAAK
AAAHH!
BLOOD ANOMALIES: EXPERIMENTAL BIO-ENHANCEMENT SERUM [TRACE]
NO...
BLOOD ANOMALIES: MUTANT X-FACTOR, RAPID HEALING.
HMM... ALMOST...


SZAAAK
THWIP
COME ON, DOOM--IF THAT IS YOU--
--YOU DON'T GOTTA START A WAR JUST TO GET YOUR OLD BUDS TO COME VISIT!
THWIP
THWIP
THWIP
THWIP
THWIP
BLOOD ANOMALIES: IRRADIATION, EXTREME CELLULAR ALTERATION.
MATCH MATCH MATCH
AHHH... PERFECT.
NEXT TIME YOU FEEL LONELY, JUST TEXT ME.
OR BETTER YET--DROP BY MY PLACE. WE'LL PLAY XBOX FOR A WHILE...
RRRAH!


...AND YOU CAN WATCH YOUR IDOL--HITLER-- ON THE HISTORY CHANN--
--HUH?
spk
AAAAAA-AAHHHH!
VZZZZZ
THUNK
A CAR? WHAT THE--?
RRRRRR


ARRRHHHH!
LOGAN! SLOW DOWN!
DO YOU KNOW WHICH WAY YOU'RE--
GOT TO GET US OUT OF THIS...
...BLASTED... PLACE!
CAP'S OKAY--JUST STUNNED.
LET'S GET BACK IN THERE AND FIND--

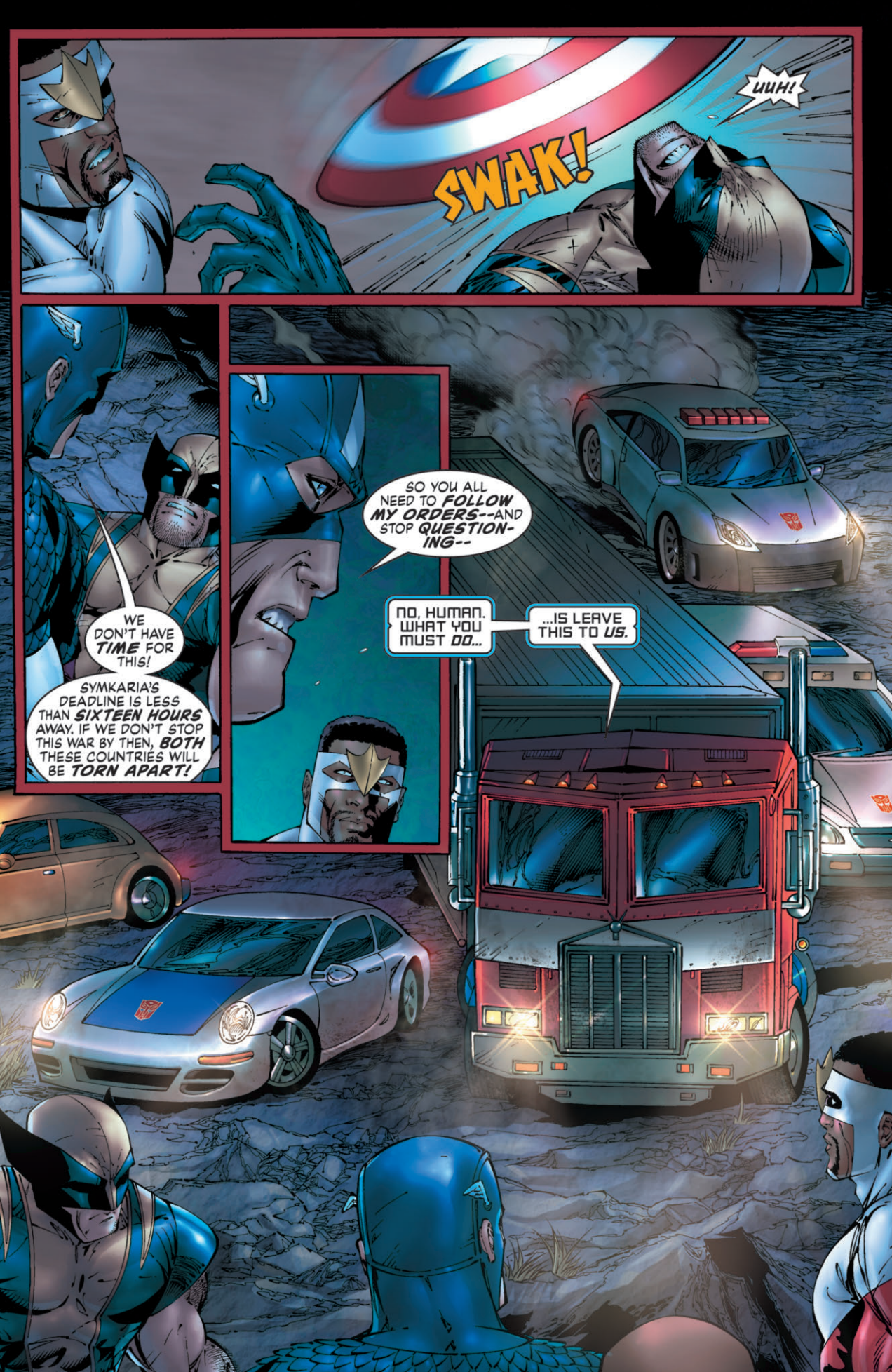

MMMMM
AW, NO!
GUESS THIS MEANS--
IT MEANS I HAVE TO CALL IN REINFORCE-MENTS.
TO FIX THE MESS...
...MADE BY YOU TWO AMATEURS.


IT'S WORSE THAN I THOUGHT. THE HUMANS ARE ALREADY AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS.
SEE?
MMM...AND THIS IS BECAUSE OF THAT STRUCTURE? THAT *ARRAY?*
YES, SIR.
IT'S EMITTING A KIND OF... *AGGRESSION WAVE,* I GUESS YOU COULD CALL IT. IT WORKS DIRECTLY ON THE HUMANS' MINDS...RAISES THEIR *SEROTONIN LEVELS* AND SCRAMBLES THEIR NEUROTRANSMITTERS.
IT'S MAKING THE COSTUMED ONES ACT MORE VIOLENTLY THAN USUAL...
...AND IT'S WHIPPING THOSE TWO NATION-STATES UP TO A XENOPHOBIC *WAR FEVER.*
WHICH MEANS WE'VE GOT A *NEW* GAMBIT BEING PLAYED BY AN *OLD* ENEMY...
...*MEGATRON.*

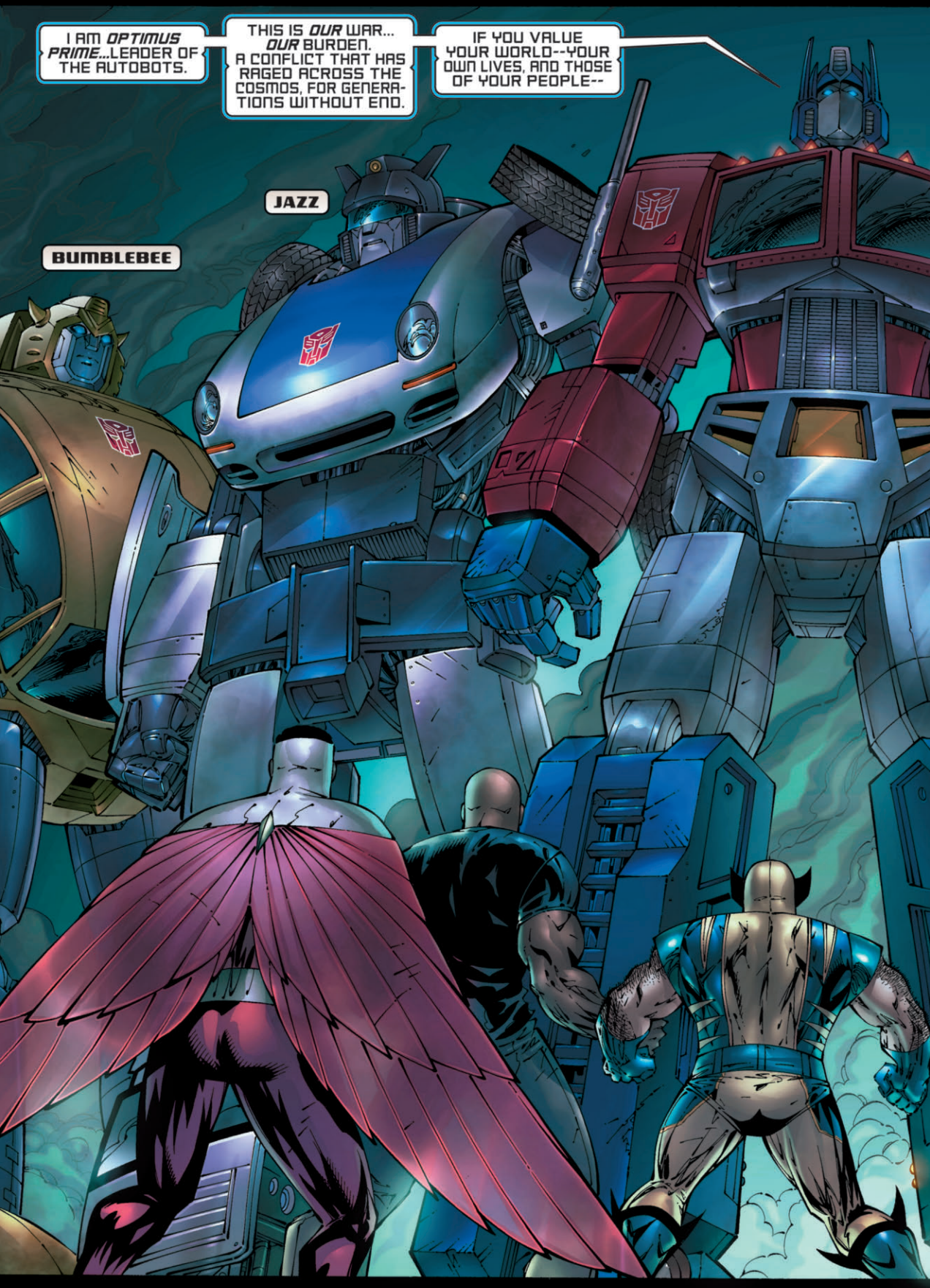

THE DECEPTICONS?
HE'S RIGHT--IT'S THEIR USUAL STRATEGY.
INCITE HAVOC ON A PLANET, THEN STRIP THAT WORLD OF LIFE-GIVING ENERGON AFTER ITS INHABITANTS WIPE EACH OTHER OUT.
AND WE ALREADY KNOW EARTH IS RICH IN ENERGON...AND SUBSTITUTES.
IT ALL ADDS UP.
BUT THE DECEPTICONS HAVE NEVER USED TECHNOLOGY LIKE THAT BEFORE...
THEY MUST HAVE ACQUIRED IT HERE ON EARTH.
WE'VE GOT TO HELP THOSE HUMANS. THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THEM.
AND ONE OF THOSE NATIONS HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS!
WE ARE SUPPOSED TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE--
I KNOW THAT. I GAVE THE ORDER, REMEMBER?
BUT THIS IS WAR--AND THE ENEMY JUST FIRED A SHOT ACROSS OUR BOW.
'JACK--HOLD THE FORT HERE. THE REST OF YOU...
...LET'S ROLL OUT.

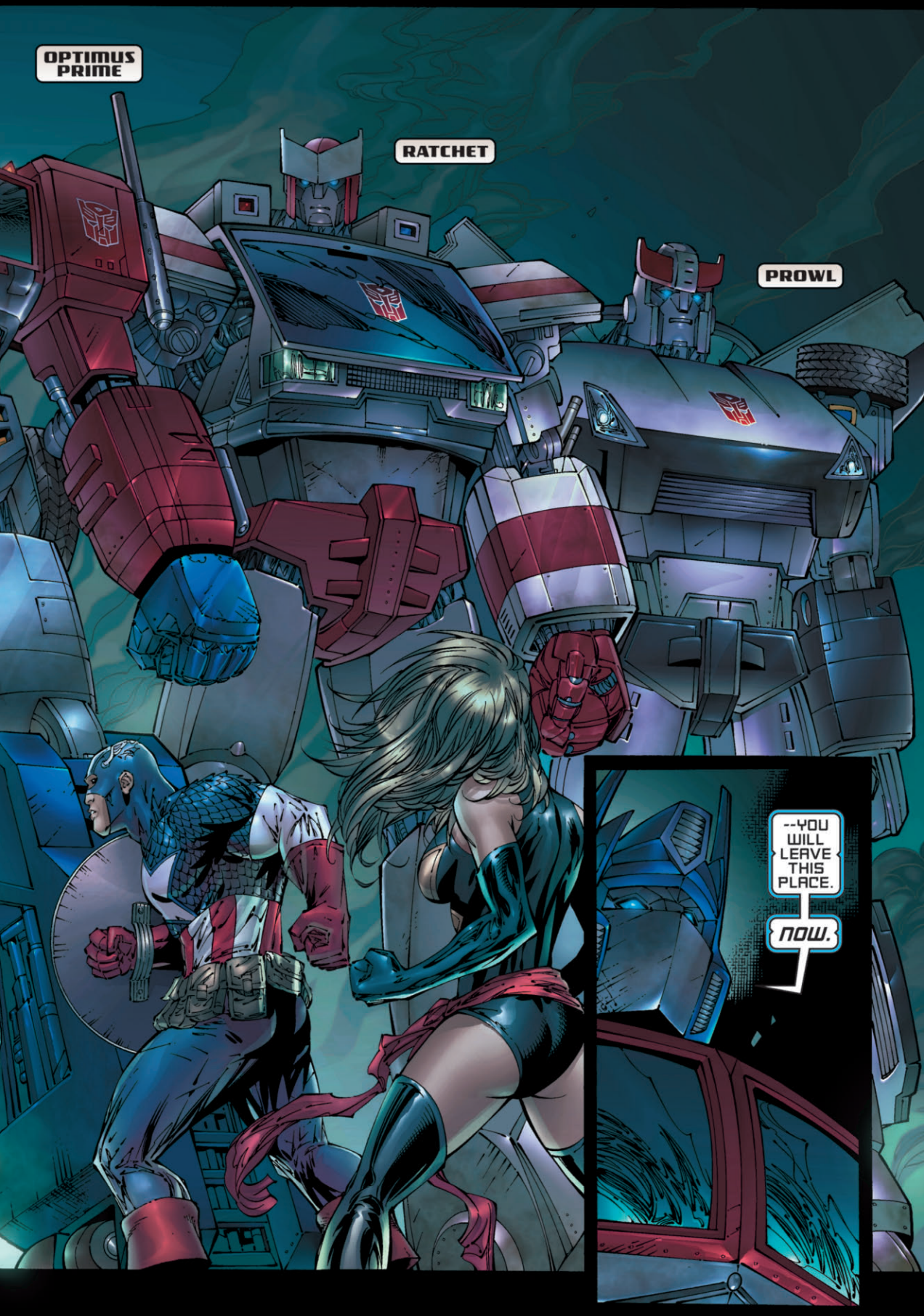

uuuuuhhh...
AHHH... WELCOME BACK, HUMAN...
...I WANTED YOU TO BE *CONSCIOUS* FOR THIS.
YOU NEEDN'T STRUGGLE. WE'VE ENTERED FULL *MIRROR RESPONSE MODE*...ALL SUPER-HUMAN ASSAULTS ARE BEING EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALIZED BY CORRESPONDING FIREPOWER.
I AM *MEGATRON*... FUTURE OWNER OF THIS WORLD.
YOUR FRIENDS HAVE GONE. AND I'M AFRAID THEY'RE IN NO CONDITION TO HELP YOU...THANKS TO A RECENTLY ACQUIRED DEVICE, HIDDEN ELSE-WHERE IN THIS COMPLEX.
MERELY A CRUDE PROTOTYPE...BUT SUFFICIENT TO RE-DUCE ALL HUMANS IN THE VICINITY TO THE MINDLESS, CLAWING ANIMALS YOU TRULY ARE.
THANKFULLY, THIS LABORATORY IS SHIELDED FROM ITS EFFECTS.
AFTER ALL...WE WOULDN'T WANT YOU RAGING WITH ANGER WHILE YOU HELP US ACHIEVE OUR *GREAT-EST TRIUMPH.*
...RUH-ROH...


FALCON, MS. MARVEL--THANKS FOR ANSWERING THE CALL.
DID S.H.I.E.L.D. BRIEF YOU ON THE SITUATION WHILE BRINGING YOU IN?
WE GOT IT, CAP.
FALCON
A.K.A. Sam Wilson. High-tech wings. Aerial expert.
MS. MARVEL
A.K.A. Carol Danvers. Alien-enhanced strength, invulnerability and flight.
WAIT A MINUTE. WHERE'S IRON MAN?
HE'S HANDLING A PROBLEM BACK IN THE U.S., SAID HE'D MONITOR OUR PROGRESS AND JOIN US AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
GREAT. MEANWHILE, WE GOT A MAN DOWN IN THERE!
ARE WE GOIN' IN, OR NOT?
STEP BACK NOW, BROTHER--
WE AIN'T YOUR BROTHERS.
YOU WANNA TRY THOSE PIGEON WINGS AGAINST ME?


SWAK!
UUH!
WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
SYMKARIA'S DEADLINE IS LESS THAN SIXTEEN HOURS AWAY. IF WE DON'T STOP THIS WAR BY THEN, BOTH THESE COUNTRIES WILL BE TORN APART!
SO YOU ALL NEED TO FOLLOW MY ORDERS--AND STOP QUESTIONING--
NO, HUMAN. WHAT YOU MUST DO...
...IS LEAVE THIS TO US.

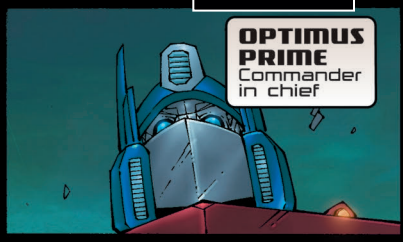

A TALKIN' TRUCK?
ARE YOU KIDDIN' ME?
AUTOBOTS...
...TRANSFORM!

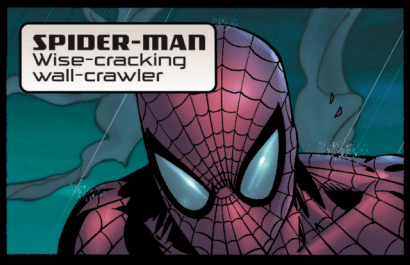

I AM *OPTIMUS PRIME*...LEADER OF THE AUTOBOTS.
THIS IS *OUR* WAR... *OUR* BURDEN. A CONFLICT THAT HAS RAGED ACROSS THE COSMOS, FOR GENERATIONS WITHOUT END.
IF YOU VALUE YOUR WORLD--YOUR OWN LIVES, AND THOSE OF YOUR PEOPLE--
JAZZ
BUMBLEBEE

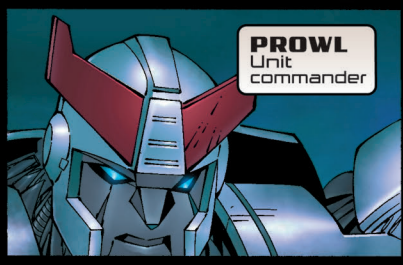

OPTIMUS PRIME
RATCHET
PROWL
--YOU WILL LEAVE THIS PLACE.
NOW.


THE ENGINES OF WAR.
SOMETIMES THEY GRIND SO LOUD IN YOUR BRAIN--THEY DROWN OUT EVERYTHING ELSE. AND ALL YOU CAN DO...
AVENGERS...
...IS HEED THEIR CALL.
...ATTACK!







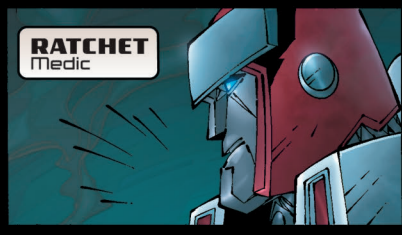


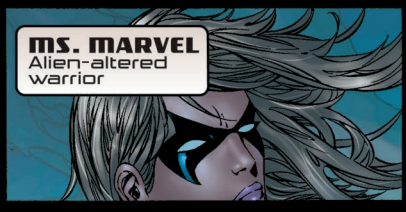


COUNTDOWN TO LATVERIAN/SYMKARIAN WAR: T MINUS 15 HOURS, 22 MINUTES



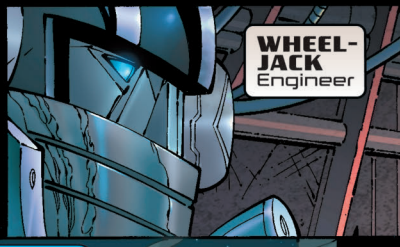


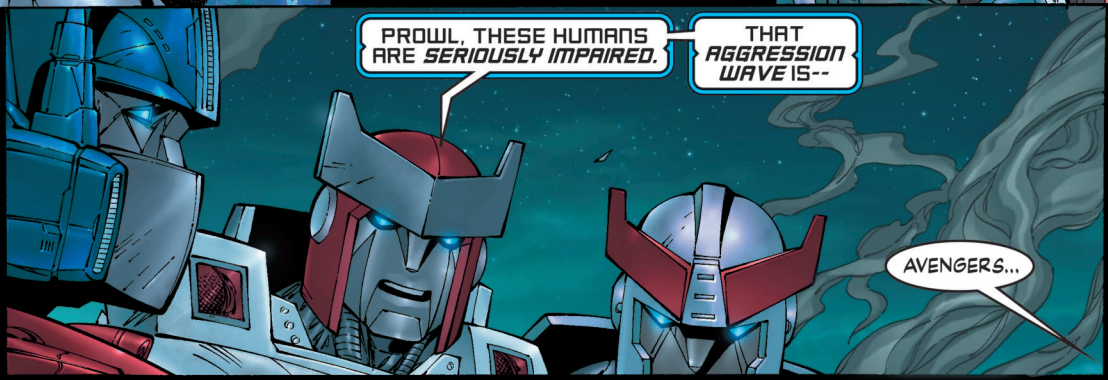




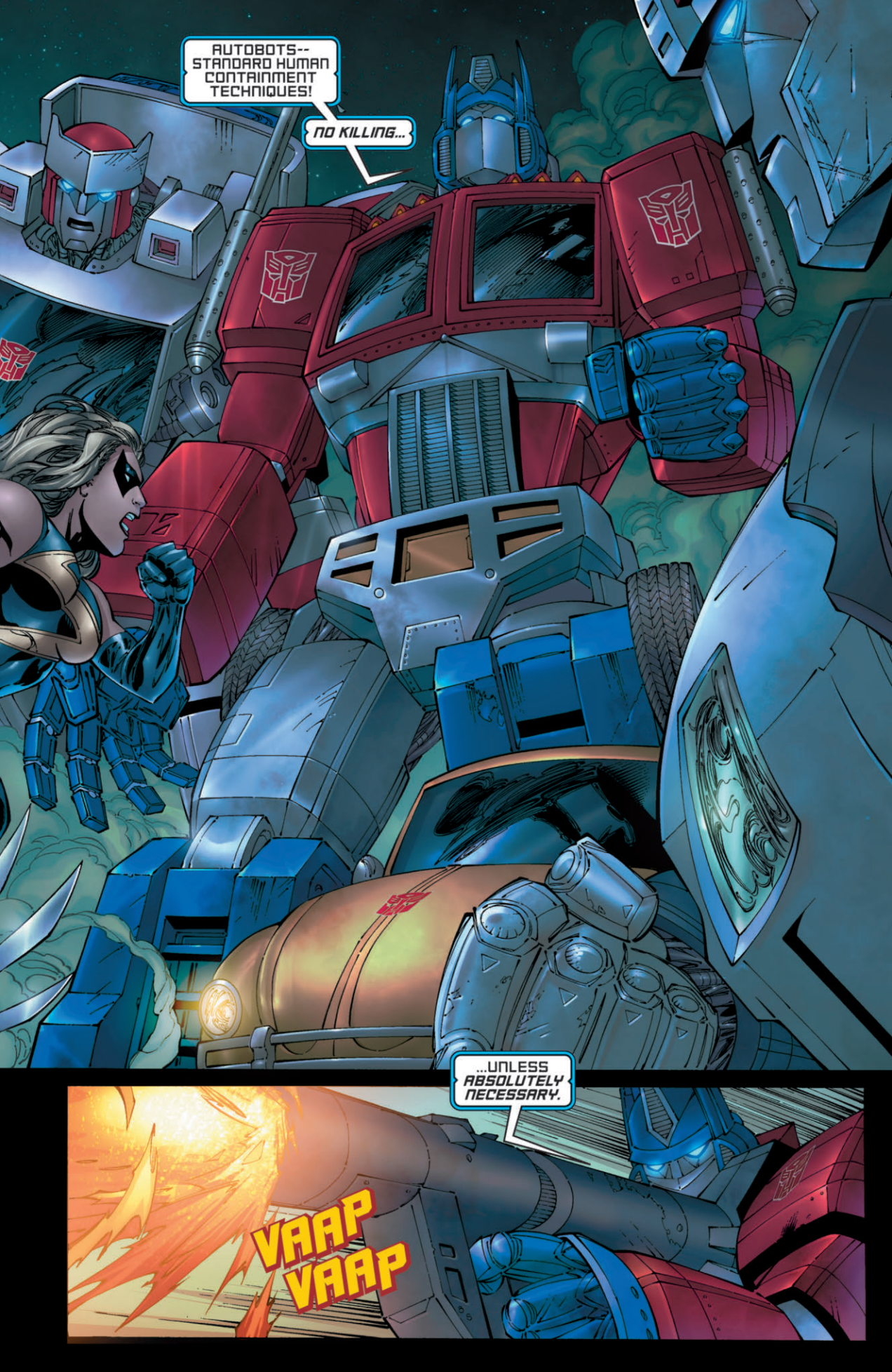









...TAKE THEM DOWN!!


AUTOBOTS-- STANDARD HUMAN CONTAINMENT TECHNIQUES!
NO KILLING...
...UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.
VAAP
VAAP


VAAP
TCHOOM TCHOOM
HUMAN, LISTEN TO ME...
...YOU ARE NOT YOURSELF--
MYSELF?
KRASSSH
I'VE NEVER BEEN MORE MYSELF.
FINALLY, I CAN CUT LOOSE LIKE THE KREE WARRIOR I AM!
WHA-- ARRHHH!
FLFFFF
MY APOLOGIES... KREE WARRIOR.
"STANDARD HUMAN CONTAINMENT TECHNIQUES" DO NOT ALWAYS PRESERVE THE SUBJECT'S DIGNITY.


WHAT IS THIS...AVENGERS VS. NASCAR?
HELP!
HELP ME!
WHAT THE...HOW'D YOU--
CAGE! NO!
SHE'S GOT NO SCENT. IT'S SOME KIND OF PROJECTION--
UNH!
AAHHHH!
TCHOOM
B-WHUD


CAP..YOUR ORDERS?
ORDERS? ORDERS?
GET THEM!
KILL THEM!
VRZOW
KILL THE GIANT ROBOTS. OKAY...
AAHHHH!
ZZZZTTTT
ARRRR-RHHHH!
KILL-- YOU--
CALM DOWN, FRIEND.
WE'RE NOT YOUR ENEMIES.


BUT WE CAN'T LET YOU--
AAHHHH!
SHUNK
RRRRRR...
HUMANS-- YOU MUST LEAVE THIS PLACE.
LET GO OF ME!
WHAM
IF ANYONE'S LEAVIN'--IT'S YOU RUST-BUCKETS--


ZZZTTTT
AHHHHH!
NO!
WHO...?
YOU MAY NOW GIVE THANKS... TO DOOM.

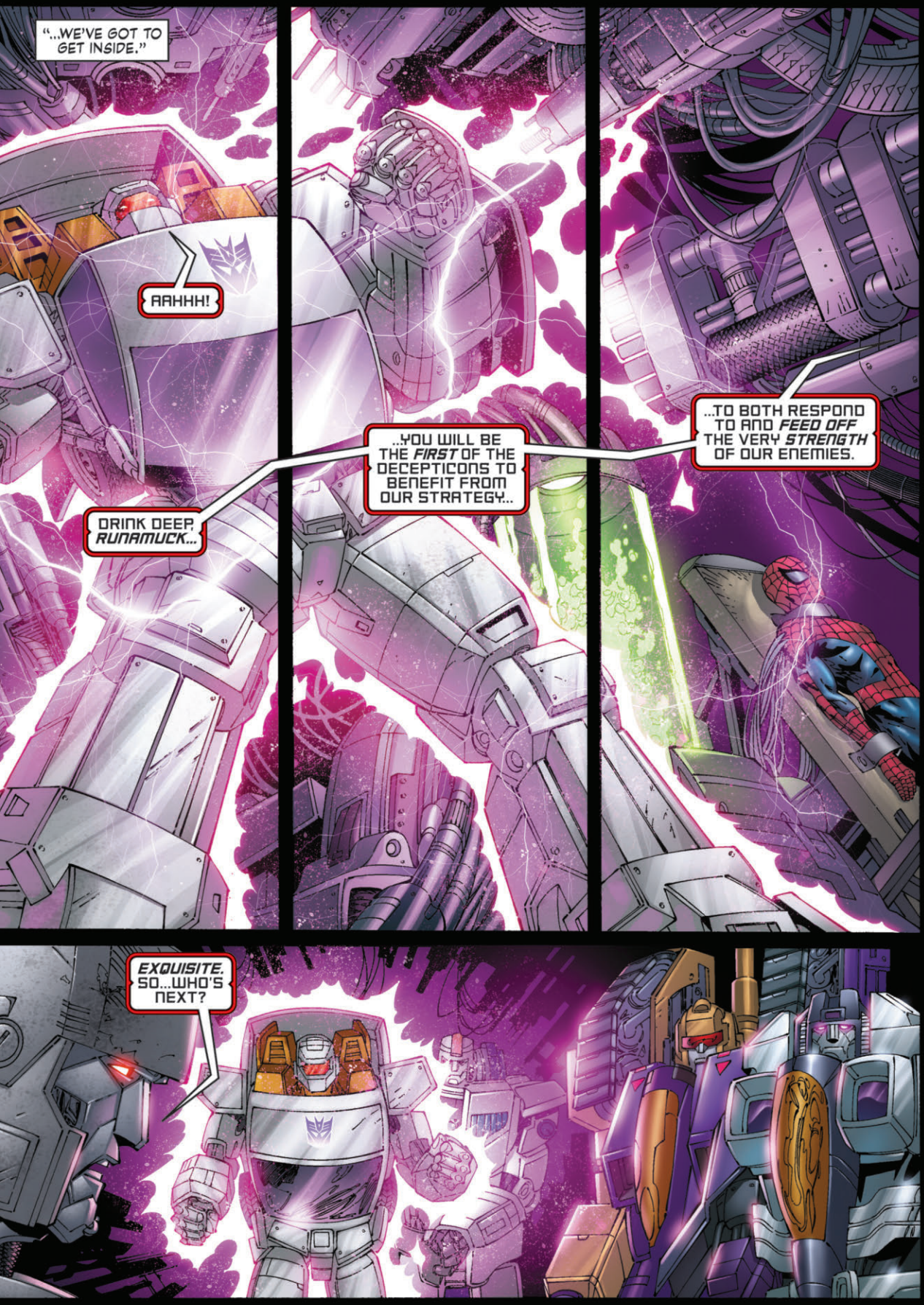

UUHH!
GIVE THANKS...?
FOR ATTACKING US WITH GIANT ROBOTS?
CAP... WAIT...
LISTEN TO YOUR FALLEN COMRADE. MY NAME IS RATCHET.
THE TECHNOLOGY I'M PLACING ON YOU IS GENTLER THAN YOUR FELLOW HUMAN'S METHODS...BUT IT SHOULD HAVE A SIMILAR EFFECT.
SPK
THE ENGINES OF WAR.
SOMETIMES THEY STOP, AND JUST LIKE THAT...
...THE FOG CLEARS.
YOU HAVE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF A MIND-ALTERING DEVICE, AVENGERS. A DEVICE STOLEN...
...FROM ME.

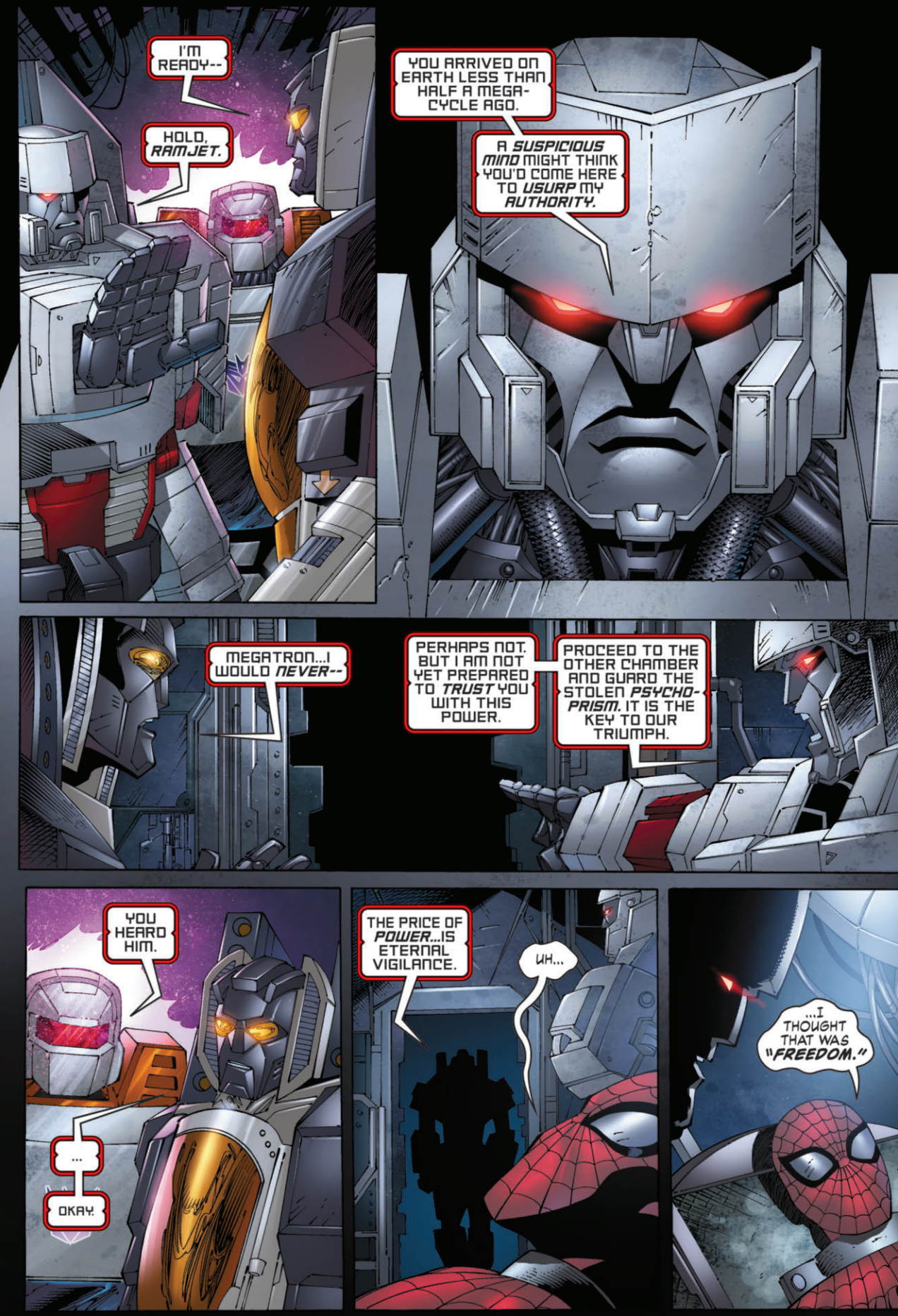

EXAMINE THESE INHIBITORS, HUMAN.
I DESIGNED THEM MYSELF--TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE AGGRESSION WAVE.
NO! I'LL NEVER WEAR ONE OF THOSE THINGS.
I'VE BEEN MIND-CONTROLLED BEFORE...
ZZZT
...NEVER AGA!--
AHHHH!
DOOM, IF YOU HURT ONE MORE AVENGER--I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS.
NOW...SOMEONE BETTER EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON.
IT IS A SIMPLE, SAD STORY, HUMAN.
WE AUTOBOTS HAVE STOOD AGAINST THE DECEPTICONS FOR EONS.
THEY USE DEVICES LIKE THIS TO EXPLOIT WORLDS--DRIVE THE POPULACE TO WAR...
...THEN STRIP THOSE DEVASTATED WORLDS OF ENERGON FUEL.

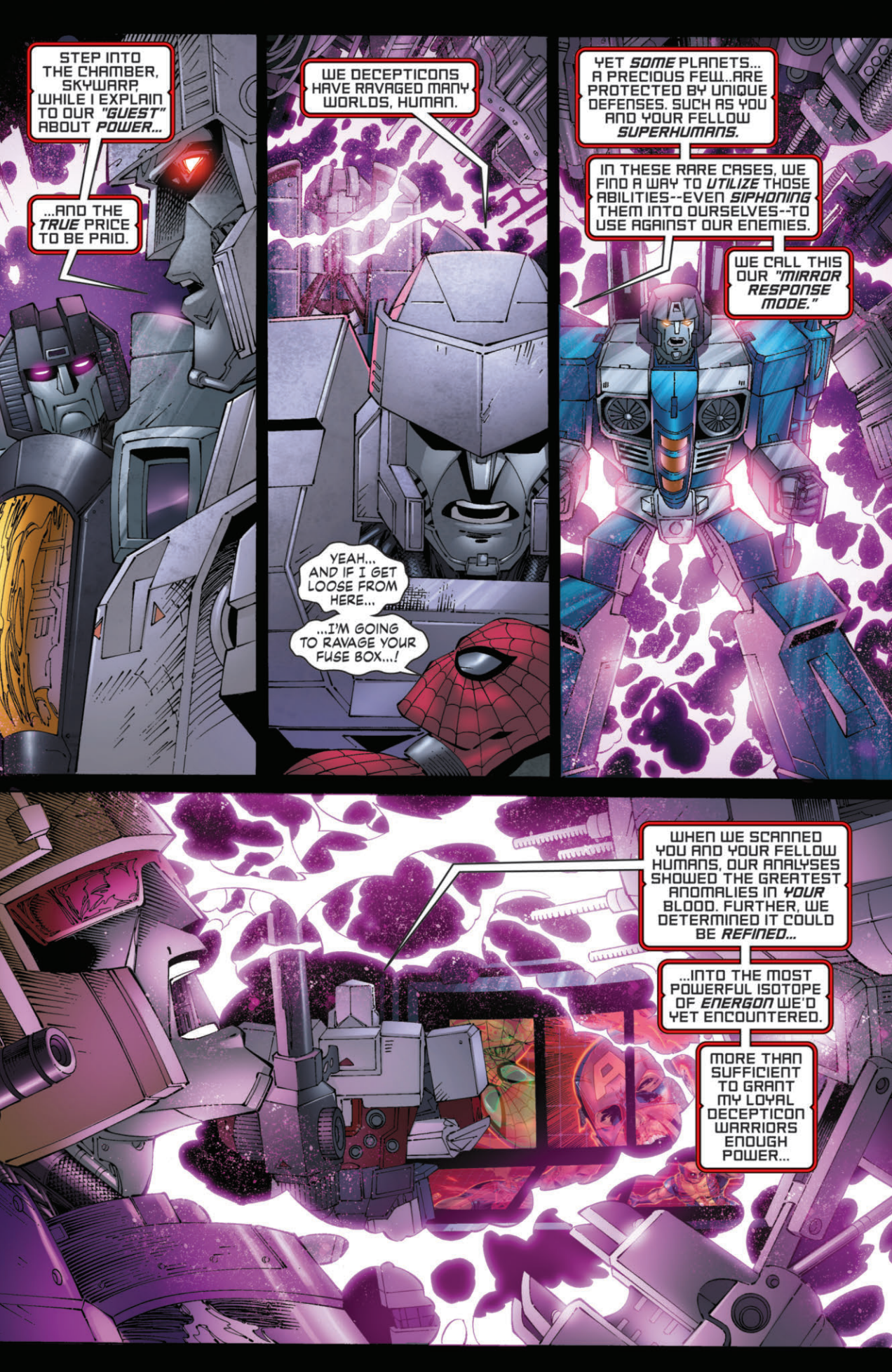

I...I'VE SEEN THOSE WORLDS. DURING MY TIME OUT IN SPACE, WITH THE STAR-JAMMERS.
PLANET-SIZED, EMPTY HUSKS. DRAINED OF ALL RESOURCES... ALL LIFE...
BIG, OUTER-SPACE ROBOT WAR. GOT IT.
SO WHAT'S DOOM GOT TO DO WITH IT?
I AM A MAN, LIKE YOU--A CITIZEN OF THIS PLANET. AND MY FIRST PRIORITY IS MY PEOPLE.
I WILL NOT SEE THEM DESTROYED BY MERE MACHINES.
HUH...!
THIS... ARRAY...WAS PLANTED ON MY LAND WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. NATURALLY I ATTEMPTED ITS REMOVAL.
YOU SEE THE RESULTS.
YOU SAID SOMETHING BEFORE...ABOUT THE AGGRESSION-WAVE TECHNOLOGY?
YES. THREE MONTHS AGO, A VERSION OF MY MIND-CONTROLLING PSYCHO-PRISM WAS STOLEN FROM A NEARBY LABORATORY.
THE ITEM IN QUESTION WAS MERELY A PROTOTYPE--NOT DESIGNED FOR PRECISE MENTAL CONTROL. YET SUFFICIENT TO TWIST HUMAN MINDS INTO A MURDEROUS RAGE.
UH...RATCHET? THESE DEVICES...THEY SHOULD PROTECT US?
I DESIGNED THEM BASED ON MY RECENT ANALYSES OF HUMAN PHYS--
NO!

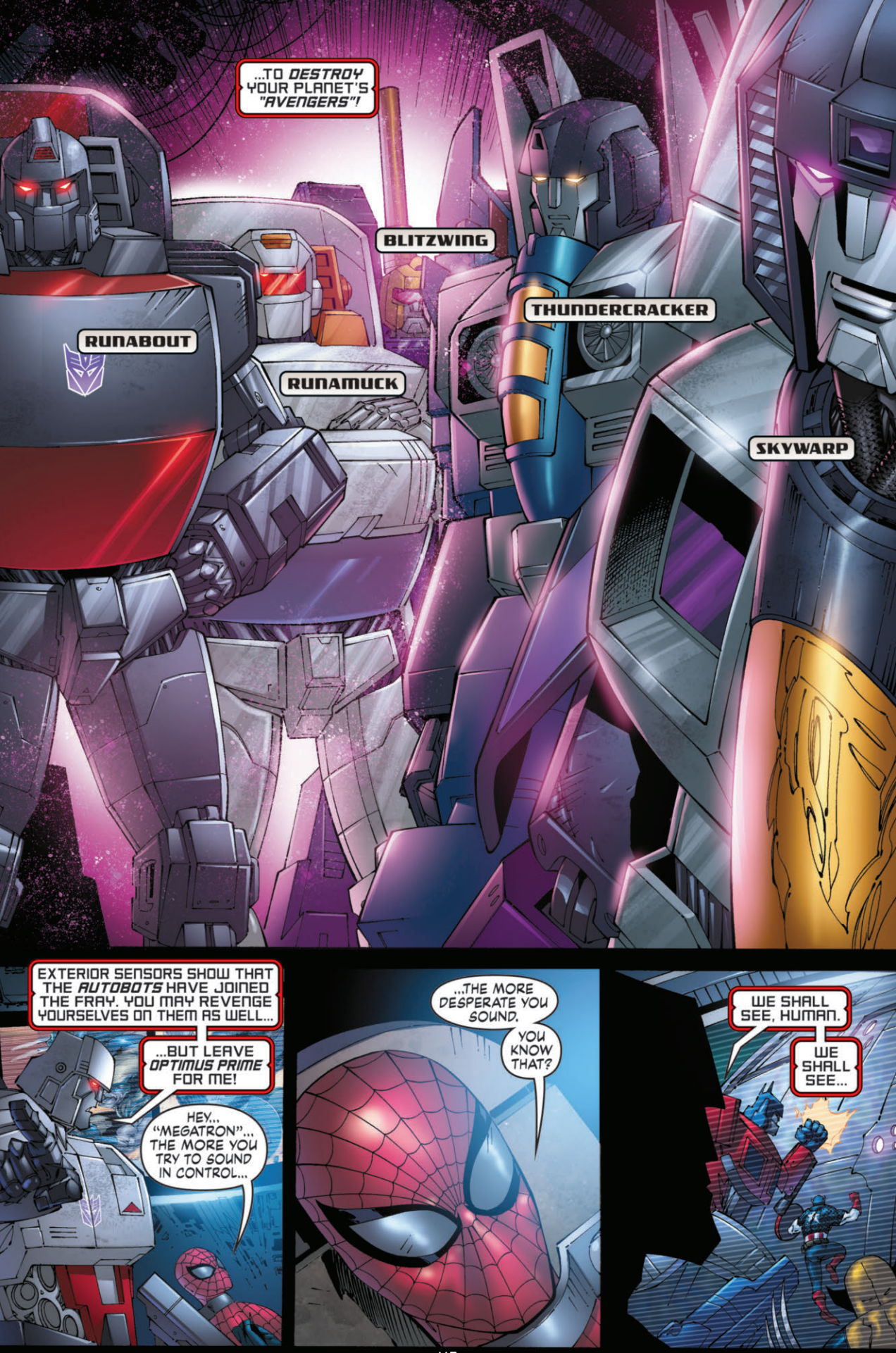

I WON'T WEAR THAT THING!
EASY, GIRL.
HOLD HER A MOMENT, LUKE.
IRON MAN, ARE YOU MONITORING THIS?
COPY, CAP.
WITH MY INTEREST IN TECH, I'VE BEEN MONITORING RUMORS FOR SOME TIME OF *EXTRATERRESTRIAL ROBOTS* LIVING *COVERTLY* AMONG US.
THIS *CONFIRMS* IT.
...CAN YOU VET IT FOR US?
HMM...LOOKS LIKE A SIMPLE ***SYNAPSE REGULATOR,*** WITH A LOW-LEVEL ***SEROTONIN INHIBITOR.***
SHOULD BE HARMLESS ENOUGH, CAP.
YOU HEARD HIM, CAROL. IT'S SAFE TO WEAR...
...PLEASE?


Ten minutes later...
THAT'S IT. DEEP BREATHS.
THAT WAVE HIT YOU AN' ME THE HARDEST. YOU, BECAUSE OF YOUR HALF-KREE DNA...AN' ME...
...'CAUSE I'M JUST A NASTY PIECE OF WORK.
IF THESE ARE THE PLANES THAT HAVE BEEN SHELLING SYMKARIA, THEY ARE NOT MINE.
THEY'RE DECEPTICONS. ROBOTS IN DISGUISE.
THESE ARE SKYWARP... AND THUNDER-CRACKER.
SO THIS WHOLE WAR IS JUST A SETUP!
THAT WON'T STOP IT FROM ERUPTING INTO UTTER CHAOS--IN JUST UNDER FOURTEEN HOURS.
AREN'T WE FORGETTIN' SOMETHING ELSE?
SPIDER-MAN'S STILL TRAPPED IN THERE!
I'M NOT FORGET-TING A THING, LOGAN.
EVERYTHING HERE ADDS UP TO A SINGLE OBJECTIVE...


"...WE'VE GOT TO GET INSIDE."
AAHHH!
DRINK DEEP, RUNAMUCK...
...YOU WILL BE THE FIRST OF THE DECEPTICONS TO BENEFIT FROM OUR STRATEGY...
...TO BOTH RESPOND TO AND FEED OFF THE VERY STRENGTH OF OUR ENEMIES.
EXQUISITE. SO...WHO'S NEXT?


I'M READY--
HOLD, RAMJET.
YOU ARRIVED ON EARTH LESS THAN HALF A MEGA-CYCLE AGO.
A SUSPICIOUS MIND MIGHT THINK YOU'D COME HERE TO USURP MY AUTHORITY.
MEGATRON...I WOULD NEVER--
PERHAPS NOT. BUT I AM NOT YET PREPARED TO TRUST YOU WITH THIS POWER.
PROCEED TO THE OTHER CHAMBER AND GUARD THE STOLEN PSYCHO-PRISM. IT IS THE KEY TO OUR TRIUMPH.
YOU HEARD HIM.
...
OKAY.
THE PRICE OF POWER...IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE.
UH...
...I THOUGHT THAT WAS "FREEDOM."


STEP INTO THE CHAMBER, SKYWARP, WHILE I EXPLAIN TO OUR "GUEST" ABOUT POWER...
...AND THE TRUE PRICE TO BE PAID.
WE DECEPTICONS HAVE RAVAGED MANY WORLDS, HUMAN.
YEAH... AND IF I GET LOOSE FROM HERE...
...I'M GOING TO RAVAGE YOUR FUSE BOX...!
YET SOME PLANETS... A PRECIOUS FEW...ARE PROTECTED BY UNIQUE DEFENSES. SUCH AS YOU AND YOUR FELLOW SUPERHUMANS.
IN THESE RARE CASES, WE FIND A WAY TO UTILIZE THOSE ABILITIES--EVEN SIPHONING THEM INTO OURSELVES--TO USE AGAINST OUR ENEMIES.
WE CALL THIS OUR "MIRROR RESPONSE MODE."
WHEN WE SCANNED YOU AND YOUR FELLOW HUMANS, OUR ANALYSES SHOWED THE GREATEST ANOMALIES IN YOUR BLOOD. FURTHER, WE DETERMINED IT COULD BE REFINED...
...INTO THE MOST POWERFUL ISOTOPE OF ENERGON WE'D YET ENCOUNTERED.
MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TO GRANT MY LOYAL DECEPTICON WARRIORS ENOUGH POWER...


...TO DESTROY YOUR PLANET'S "AVENGERS"!
BLITZWING
THUNDERCRACKER
RUNABOUT
RUNAMUCK
SKYWARP
EXTERIOR SENSORS SHOW THAT THE AUTOBOTS HAVE JOINED THE FRAY. YOU MAY REVENGE YOURSELVES ON THEM AS WELL...
...BUT LEAVE OPTIMUS PRIME FOR ME!
HEY... "MEGATRON"... THE MORE YOU TRY TO SOUND IN CONTROL...
...THE MORE DESPERATE YOU SOUND.
YOU KNOW THAT?
WE SHALL SEE, HUMAN.
WE SHALL SEE...


SVARK
SVARK
SO YOU'RE A COMBAT MEDIC? I GOT A BUDDY USED TO DO THAT.
BRUTAL WORK...
YES. IT CAN... GET TO YOU...
THE FOOLS.
TO THINK THE FUTURE OF MY NATION MAY RELY ON SUCH AS THESE...
YEAH? I DON'T SEE YOU HELPIN' OUT HERE!
SEEMS LIKE ALL YOU WANT IS FOR US TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK!
VERY PERCEPTIVE, MUTANT. WHAT ELSE ARE ONE'S LESSERS FOR?
YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE TWO PINTS OF BLOOD LESS.


CAPTAIN AMERICA...THE ARRAY'S FORCE FIELD IS HOLDING. WE CANNOT BREAK THROUGH IT.
HOWEVER...WITH YOUR AID, WE AUTOBOTS MAY KNOW ANOTHER WAY TO--
HOW CHARMING.
AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN TWO DISGUSTINGLY INFERIOR SPECIES.
DOOM WILL HAVE NONE OF IT.
BY ALL MEANS, CONTINUE TO ATTACK THAT OBJECT WITH YOUR STICKS AND STONES.
I WILL TRAVEL TO SYMKARIA... AND BROKER A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION.
DO WE TRUST THAT GUY?
NO. BUT WE'VE GOT OUR HANDS FULL HERE.
SVARK
SVARK
PERHAPS HE WILL SUCCEED IN HIS MISSION.
RATCHET CANNOT PRODUCE ENOUGH INHIBITOR DEVICES TO CALM AN ENTIRE NATION.
MEANWHILE, WE'RE DOWN TO TWELVE HOURS TILL THE SYMKARIANS ATTACK--AND WE'RE CLEARLY NOT GOING TO GET INSIDE THAT THING BY BRUTE FORCE...


COMING FROM THE ARRAY...
DECEPTICONS!
AVENGERS
ASSEMBLE!
AUTOBOTS,
ROLL OU--
AAHHH!
CHKOOM

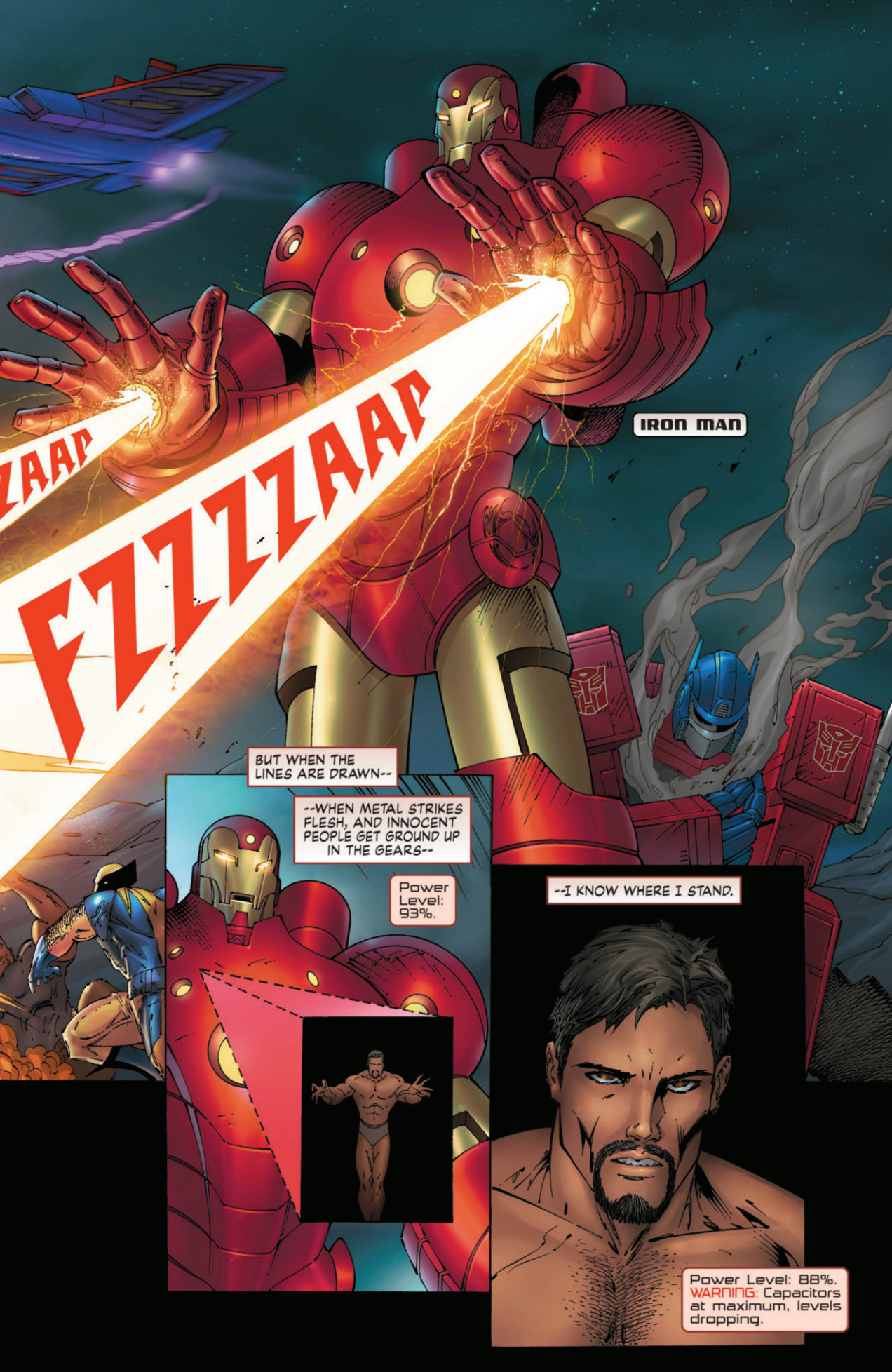

PRIME!
THAT'S--IMPOSSIBLE. THUNDERCRACKER'S NEVER HAD THAT KIND OF FIREPOWER BEFORE--
BADOOM
UUHHHH!
MAN AND MACHINE. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY MEET?
YOU CALL IN AN EXPERT...


...KNOW ANYBODY LIKE THAT?

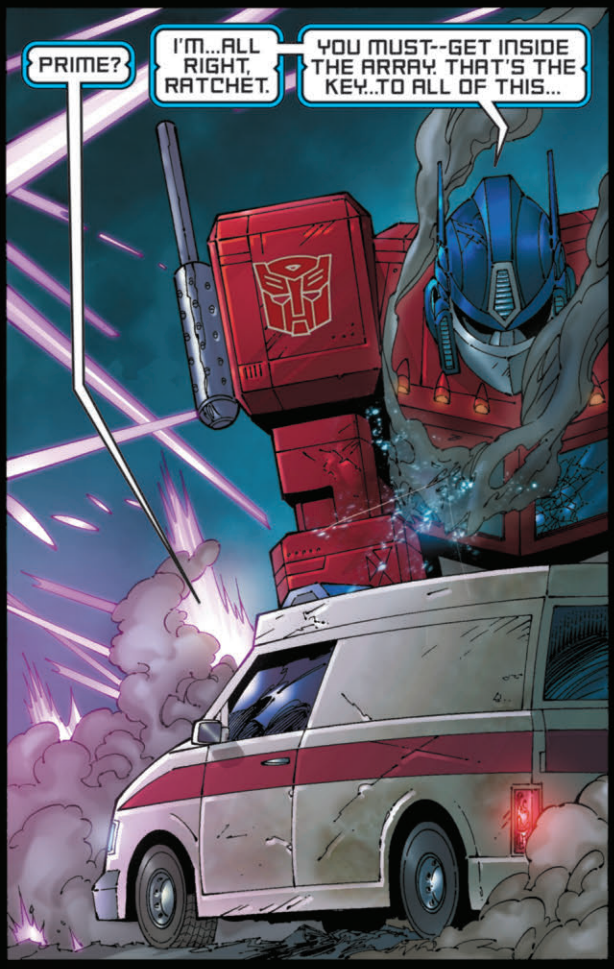
COUNTDOWN TO LATVERIAN/
SYMKARIAN WAR: T MINUS
5 HOURS, 38 MINUTES.




MAN VS. MACHINE.
I'VE LIVED IN BOTH WORLDS. IF NOT FOR MACHINES--
--I WOULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED MY FIRST HEART ATTACK.
FZZZT


ZAAP
FZZZZAAP
IRON MAN
BUT WHEN THE LINES ARE DRAWN--
--WHEN METAL STRIKES FLESH, AND INNOCENT PEOPLE GET GROUND UP IN THE GEARS--
Power Level: 93%.
--I KNOW WHERE I STAND.
Power Level: 88%. WARNING: Capacitors at maximum, levels dropping.


NICE SUIT, BOSS.
LIKE I TOLD CAP I'VE BEEN EXPECTING SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
MY INTEL INCLUDED REPORTS OF GIANT ALIEN ROBOTS, HIDDEN AMONG US. SO I FIGURED--FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE, RIGHT?
FZZZAAAP
FZZZAAAP
UNFORTUNATELY, AT THIS SIZE--THE POWER DRAIN IS MURDER.
UH-OH--
Power level: 81%. Levels dropping.
--LOOK ALIVE!
VOOP


PRIME?
I'M...ALL RIGHT, RATCHET.
YOU MUST--GET INSIDE THE ARRAY. THAT'S THE KEY...TO ALL OF THIS...

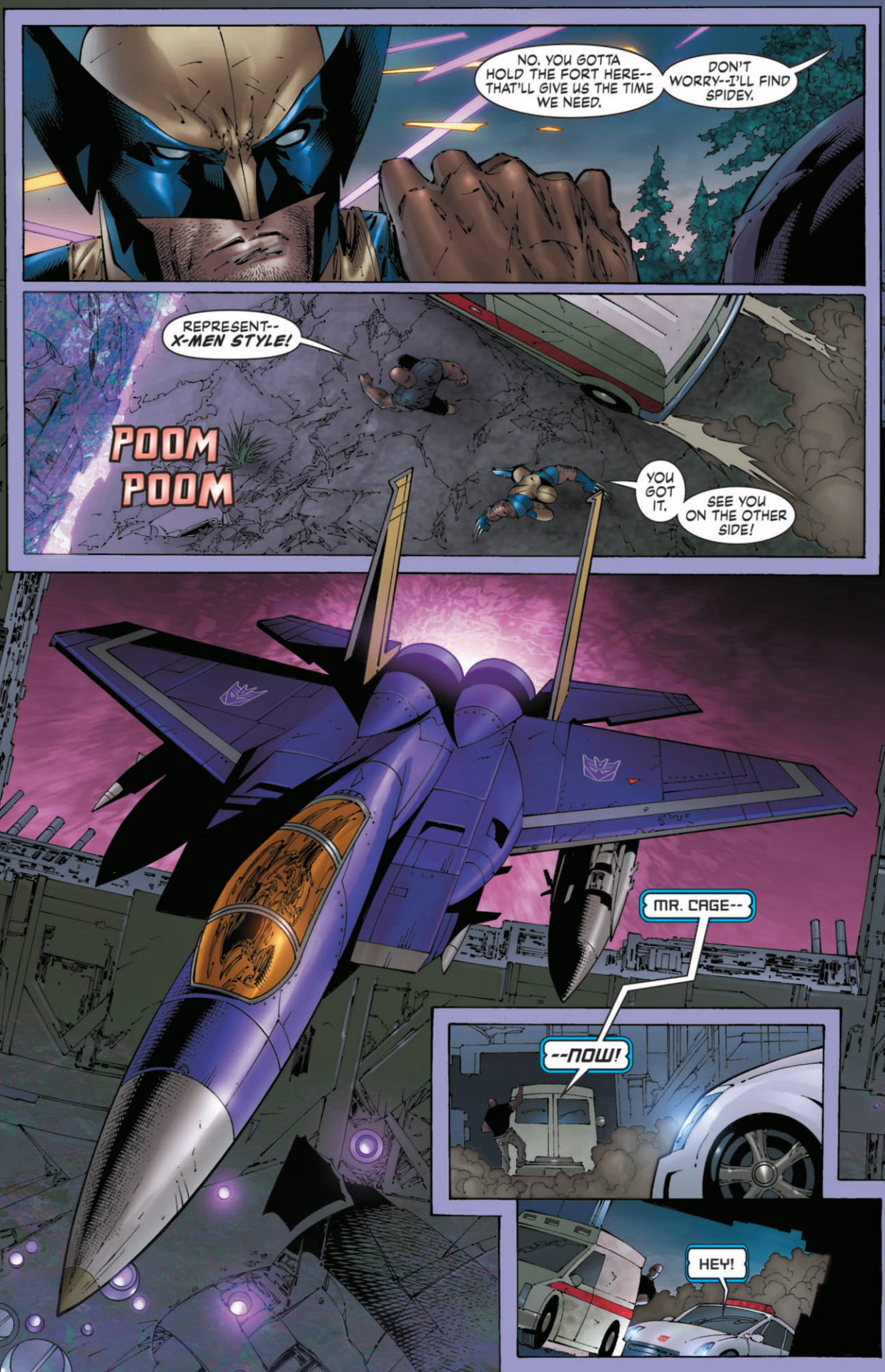

WE'RE NOT... COORDINATING OUR STRATEGY WELL.
WHERE IS THE HUMANS' LEADER...?
HEY!


WE'RE GETTING KILLED HERE!
I KNOW...

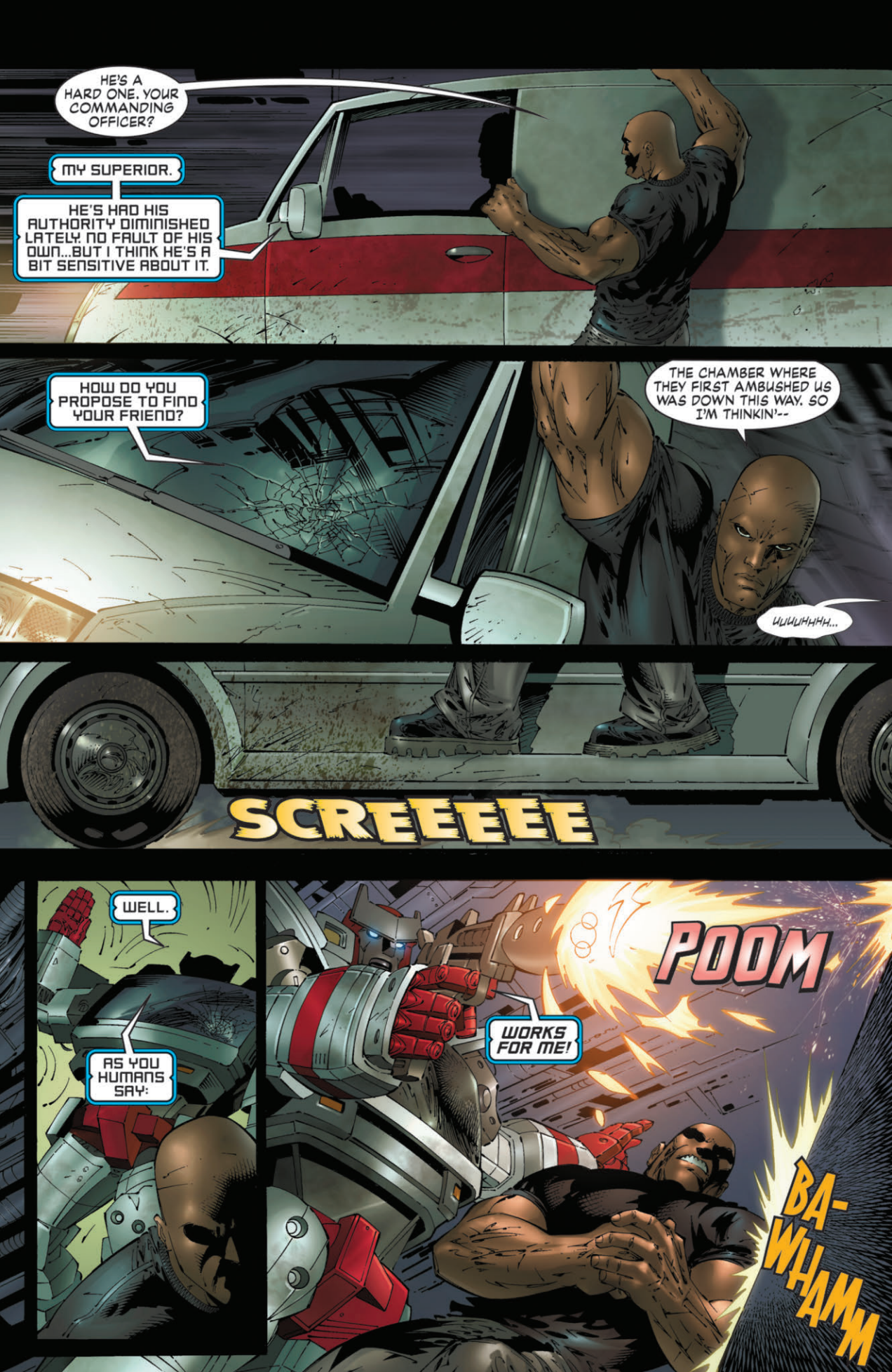

"O SAY, CAN YOU SEE--
"--BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT?"

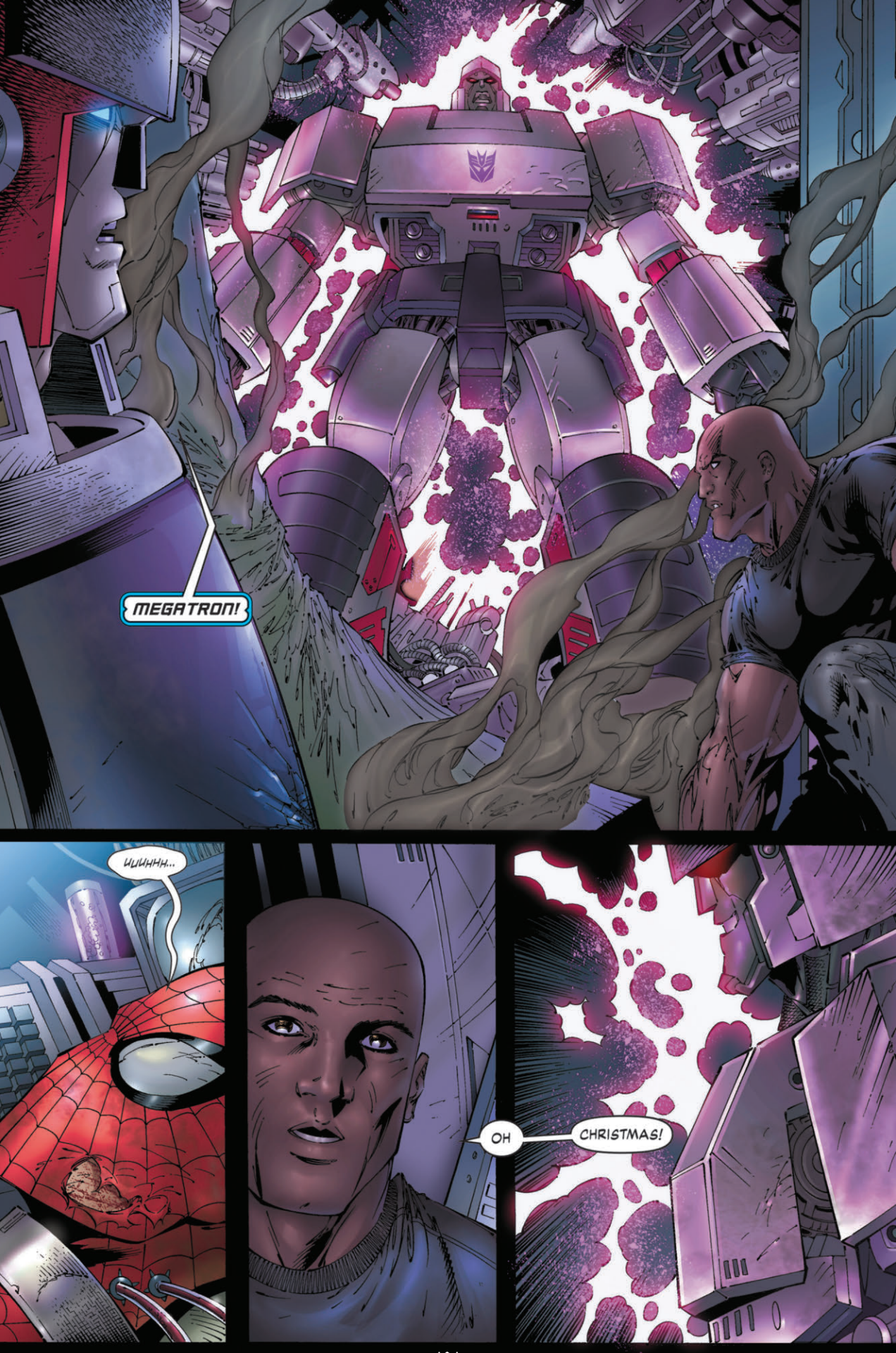

I CAN.
PKOW
PKOW
PKOW
PKOW
Power level: 76%. Recharging.
I'M GOING IN.
BACK ME UP!
"BACK ME UP"?
WITH WHAT?
AARRRHHH!

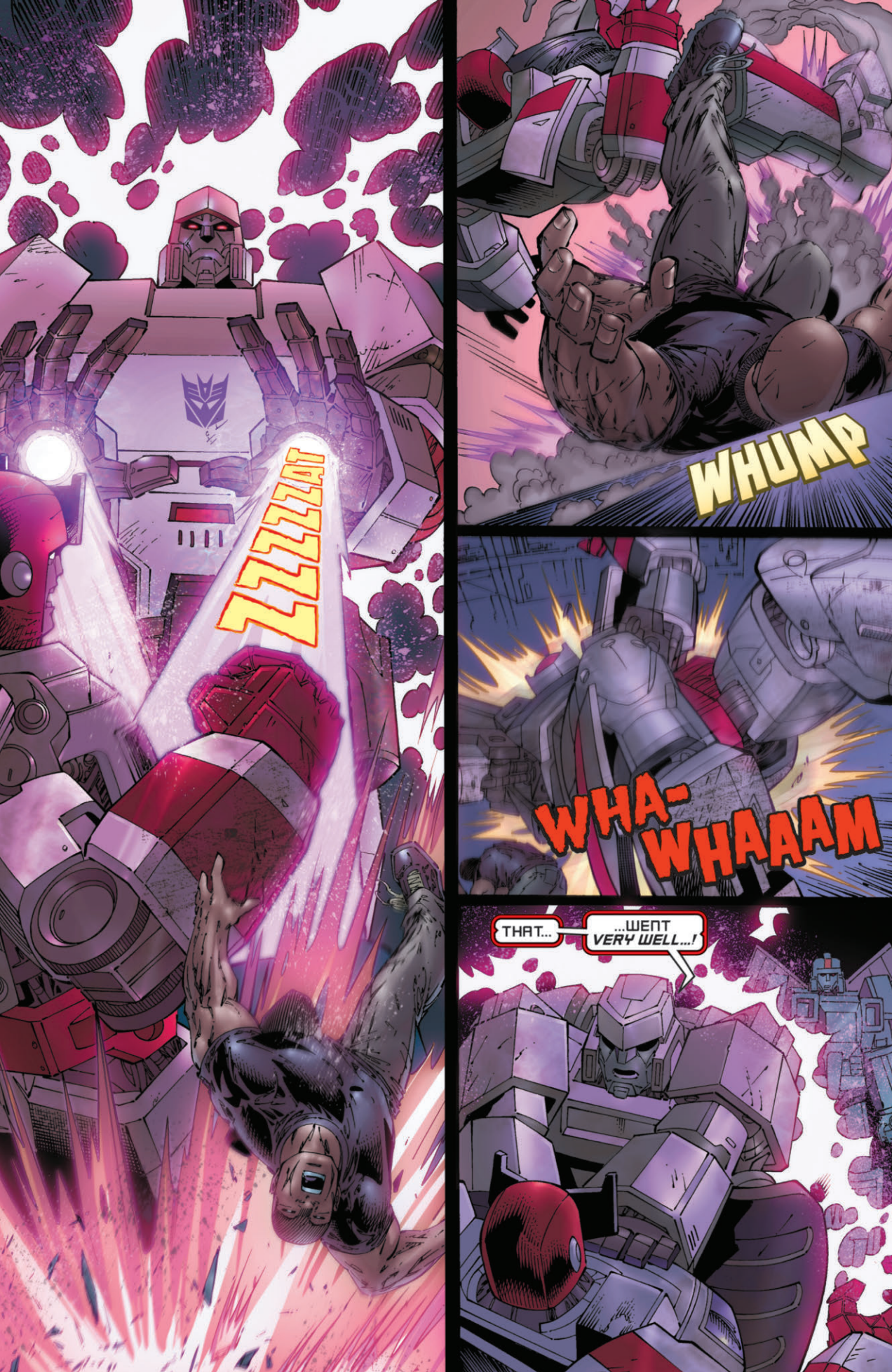

THIS IS NOT A CAGE-SIZED FIGHT.
POOM POOM POOM
YO, RATCH!
BATTLE'S OVER HERE, MAN!
I'M AWARE OF THAT, MR. CAGE.
BUT I BELIEVE I'VE DETECTED A WEAKNESS IN THE ARRAY'S FORCE FIELD.
WHEN THE FIRST DECEPTICONS CAME OUT, THEY HAD TO LOWER THE FIELD FIRST. RIGHT HERE.
IF I CAN WEAKEN IT ENOUGH--
WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET INSIDE. LIKE HOW WE GOT INTO THE ARRAY THE FIRST TIME.
THAT ONE DIDN'T WORRY ABOUT THE FORCE FIELD...
NO. SKYWARP CAN CREATE HIS OWN PORTALS IN SPACE.
BUT NONE OF THE OTHERS POSSESS THAT ABILITY.
I HEARD THAT. IF YOU GUYS ARE GOIN' IN--
--I'M COMIN' WITH YOU.


NO. YOU GOTTA HOLD THE FORT HERE-- THAT'LL GIVE US THE TIME WE NEED.
DON'T WORRY--I'LL FIND SPIDEY.
REPRESENT-- X-MEN STYLE!
POOM POOM
YOU GOT IT.
SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE!
MR. CAGE--
--NOW!
HEY!


PROWL!
WHAT ARE YOU--
YOU'VE BEEN KNOWN TO PUT *HUMAN* PRIORITIES AHEAD OF OUR OWN, RATCHET.
I'M HERE TO SEE THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN.
OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO DESTROY THE PSYCHO-PRISM.
THAT'S ALL.
YEAH? WELL, A FRIEND OF MINE'S BEING HELD CAPTIVE IN HERE-- MAYBE *DYING*--
--AND I DON'T THINK YOU'RE GONNA STOP ME FROM FINDIN' HIM.
PROWL...CAN YOU GET A LOCK ON THE PRISM?
MULTIPLE RADIATION READINGS ARE CONFUSING MY SCANNERS...BUT IT'S SOMEWHERE DOWN *THIS* WAY.
I AIN'T CONFUSED.
I'M GOING AFTER SPIDER-MAN.
PROWL...I...
SAVE IT, RATCHET. GO WITH THE HUMAN-- KEEP HIM FROM GETTING HIS FLESHY LITTLE BODY CRUSHED.
I'LL JUST SAVE THIS PLANET *MYSELF.*


HE'S A HARD ONE, YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER?
MY SUPERIOR.
HE'S HAD HIS AUTHORITY DIMINISHED LATELY. NO FAULT OF HIS OWN...BUT I THINK HE'S A BIT SENSITIVE ABOUT IT.
HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO FIND YOUR FRIEND?
THE CHAMBER WHERE THEY FIRST AMBUSHED US WAS DOWN THIS WAY. SO I'M THINKIN'--
UUUUHHHH...
SCREEEEE
WELL.
AS YOU HUMANS SAY:
WORKS FOR ME!
POOM
BA-WHAMMM


MEGATRON!
UUUHHH...
OH
CHRISTMAS!

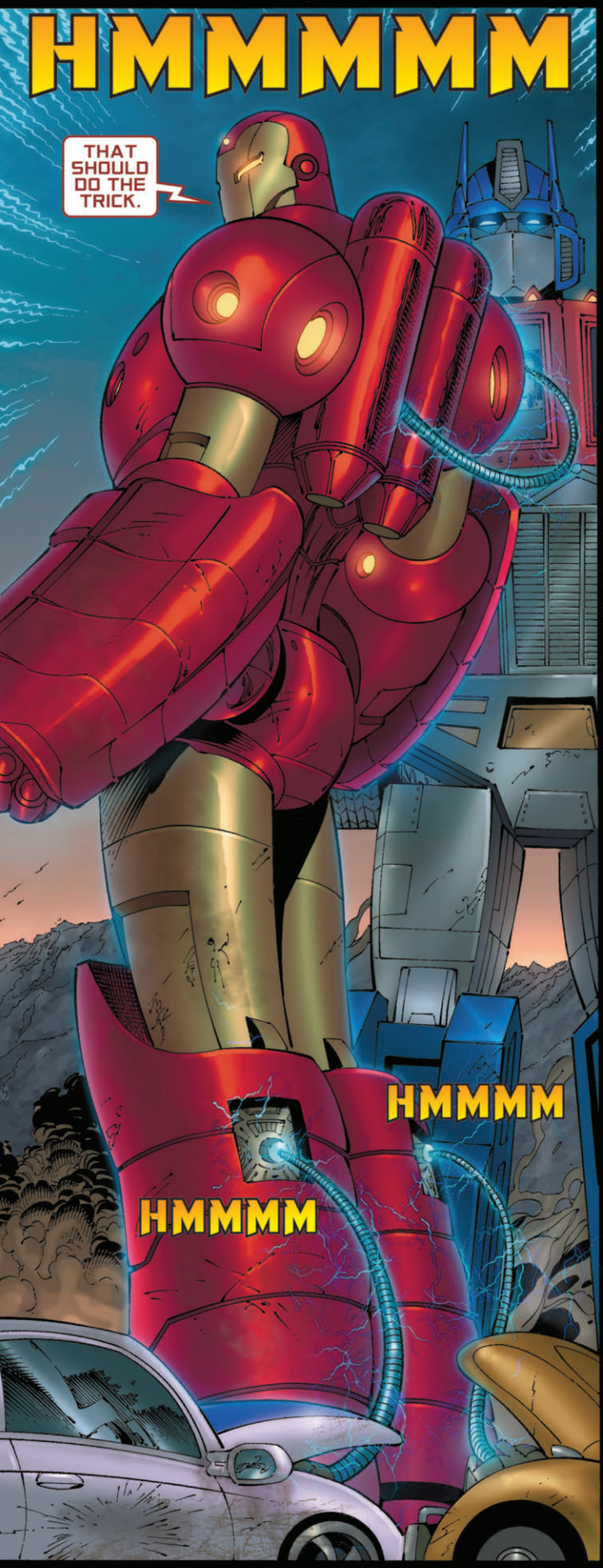

ZZZZZZAT
WHUMP
WHA-WHAAAM
THAT...
...WENT VERY WELL...!


FIFTH DOOR I'VE KICKED DOWN.
THIS ONE BETTER BE--
KWAQAM
RAMJET!
PROWL--
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON EARTH?
YOU KNOW...I'VE BEEN ASKING MYSELF THE SAME QUESTION...
...EVER SINCE MEGATRON GAVE ME THIS LOWLY GUARD DUTY.
IT'S DIFFICULT WHEN OUR LEADERS DON'T RESPECT US.
ISN'T IT?
THE PSYCHO-PRISM. STAND AWAY FROM IT, RAMJET.
I WON'T ASK YOU TWICE.


...
ALL RIGHT...
ZZZZTTTTTTT
AAAHHHHH!
HA!
SUCKER.
MEET OUR NEW PARTNER.

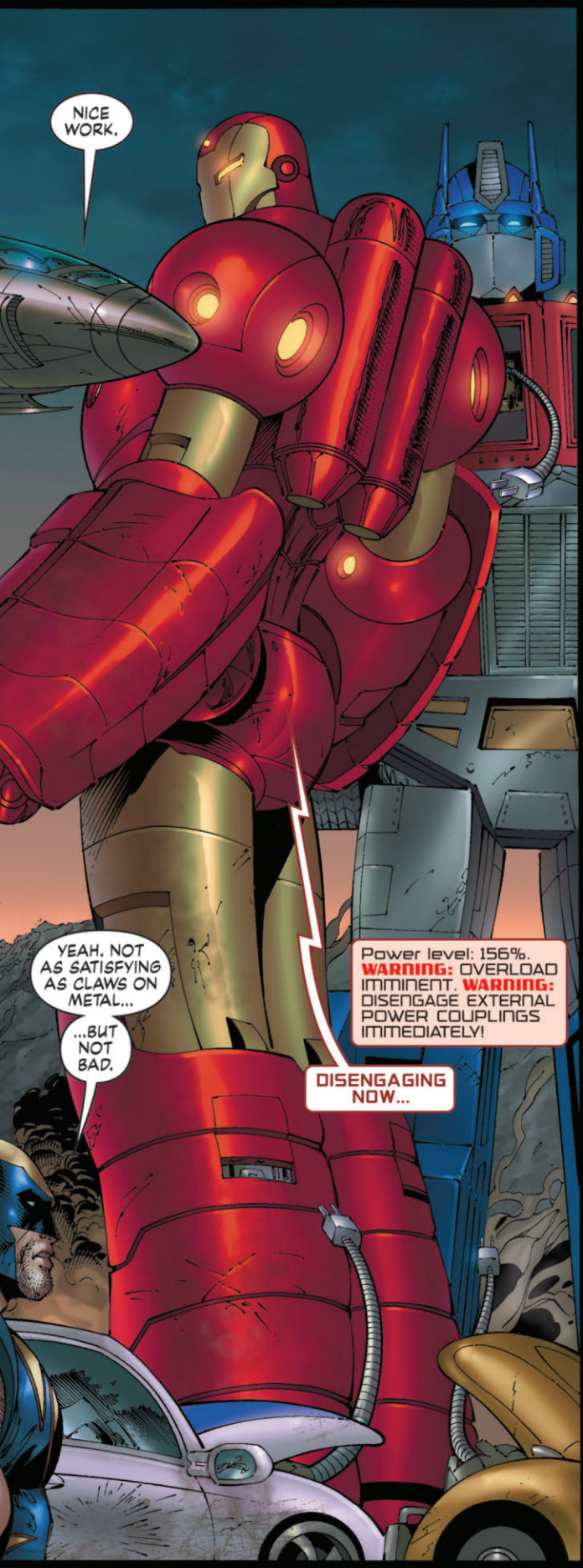

CAP-- COME IN.
WHAT'S YOUR SITUATION?
PKOW
FZZZAAP
Power level: 64%. Warning: Capacitors at redline, levels dropping.
WE'RE A LITTLE OUTGUNNED HERE, IRON MAN.
ANY CHANCE OF AN ASSIST?
SURE.
WHAK


SOMEHOW, THE DECEPTICONS HAVE ACCESS TO MORE RAW POWER THAN USUAL. WE NEED THE SAME.
IRON MAN...WHAT IS YOUR ARMOR'S CIRCUITRY COMPOSED OF?
KRRSHHUKK
CARBON NANOTUBE TRANSISTORS, PRINTED ON SILICON WAFERS...
CAPACITY'S ABOUT FIFTEEN AMPERES...
THAT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT.
JAZZ-- BUMBLEBEE--
--FALL BACK AND FORM ON ME!
I GET YOU.
PREPARING FOR EXTERNAL POWER INPUT.
VVVVT
VVVVT
VVVVT


HMMMMM
THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK.
HMMMM
HMMMM


FZZZAAP
FZZZAAP


KA-RASH


NICE WORK.
YEAH. NOT AS SATISFYING AS CLAWS ON METAL...
...BUT NOT BAD.
Power level: 156%. WARNING: OVERLOAD IMMINENT. WARNING: DISENGAGE EXTERNAL POWER COUPLINGS IMMEDIATELY!
DISENGAGING NOW...

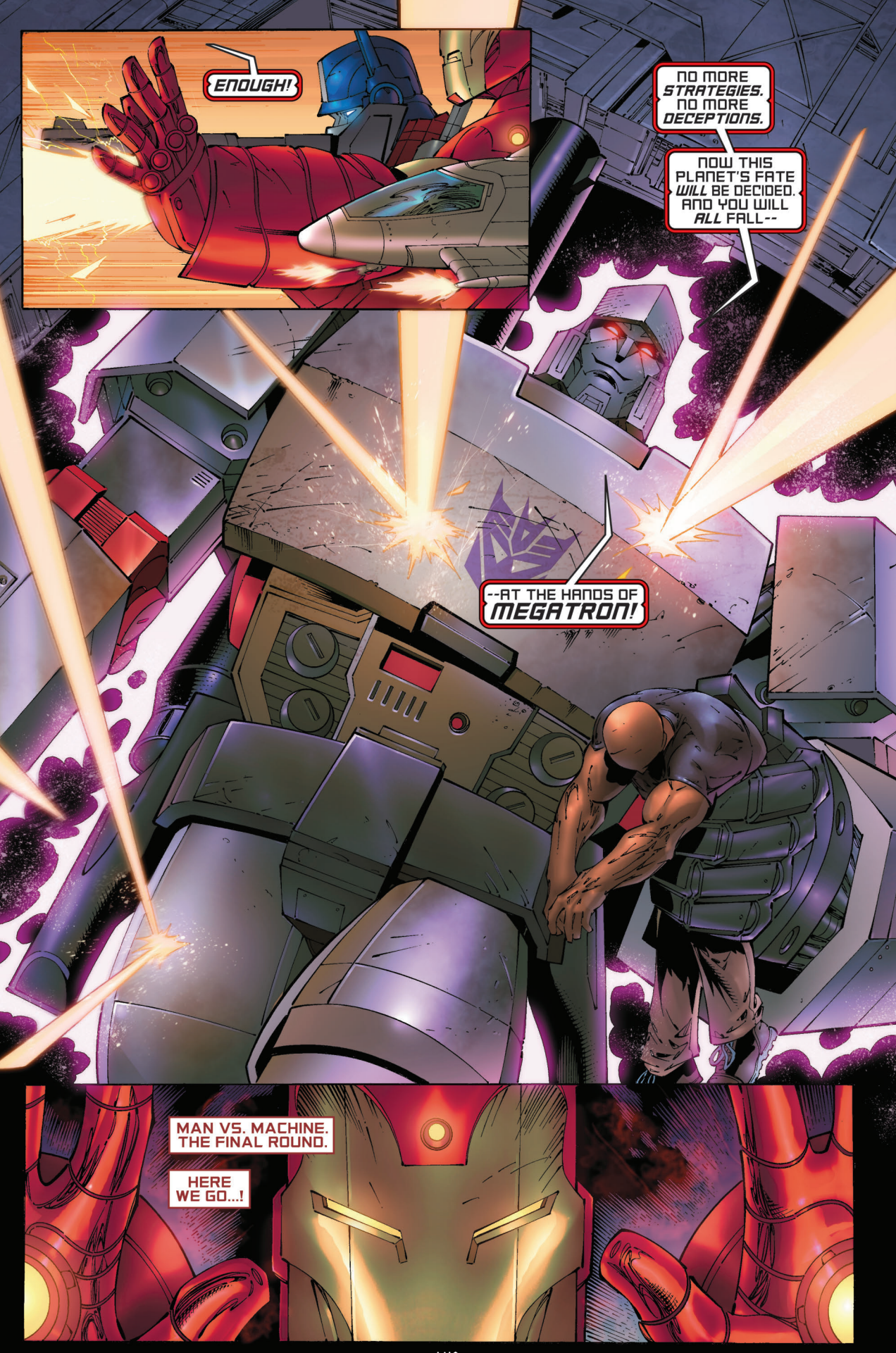

I THINK WE ALL NEED A BREATHER.
AND MAYBE A TUNE-UP--


AUTOBOTS--HUMANS--YOU MAY HAVE DEFEATED THESE SOLDIERS, BUT YOU HAVE NOT WON.
YOU WILL SURRENDER--IMMEDIATELY--TO MEGATRON--


--AND TO DOOM.
DOOM.
I KNEW HE WAS IN ON THIS!
DOCTOR DOOM HAS AGREED TO AID US IN TAKING CONTROL OF THIS WORLD--IN EXCHANGE FOR DOMINION OVER ITS REMAINS.
I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME, OPTIMUS PRIME. OUR WAR HAS RAGED BITTERLY FOR EONS--BUT NOW IT IS OVER.
YOUR TIME IS PAST--
--OLD SOLDIER.


SURRENDER IMMEDIATELY--OR YOUR PEOPLE DIE.
WE AWAIT YOUR ANSWER.
SPK
AVENGERS--YOU MUST DESTROY THE ARRAY. QUICKLY.
I WILL AID YOU AS MUCH AS I CAN IN MY WEAKENED--
WHAT?!
OUR TEAMMATES ARE STILL IN THERE!
AND SO ARE YOURS!
A FEW HUMANS ARE EXPENDABLE--
SHE'S RIGHT. IF WE DON'T STOP THEM, YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'LL DO TO EARTH.
I'VE SEEN IT!
HOW HIGH UP IN SPACE YOU GOT TO FLY, LADY--
--BEFORE YOU CAN'T SEE THE PEOPLE ANYMORE?
OUR PRIORITY IS STOPPING THE SYMKARIAN WAR--
ALL I KNOW IS-- I AIN'T LEAVIN' SPIDEY AND CAGE TO DIE.
HUMANS-- PLEASE.
LISTEN TO ME...


THEY ARE ATTACKING AGAIN.
USELESS HUMAN--
ZZZZZAT
--YOU SAID THEY WOULD SURRENDER!
AH, WELL, AS EVER, HUMANS PROVE WEAK PLAY-THINGS.
THERE IS AN OLD CYBERTRONIAN PROVERB: IF YOU TRULY WISH ORGANIC BEINGS TO BE BATTERED INTO A THIN PASTE--
--YOU MUST DO IT YOURSELF.

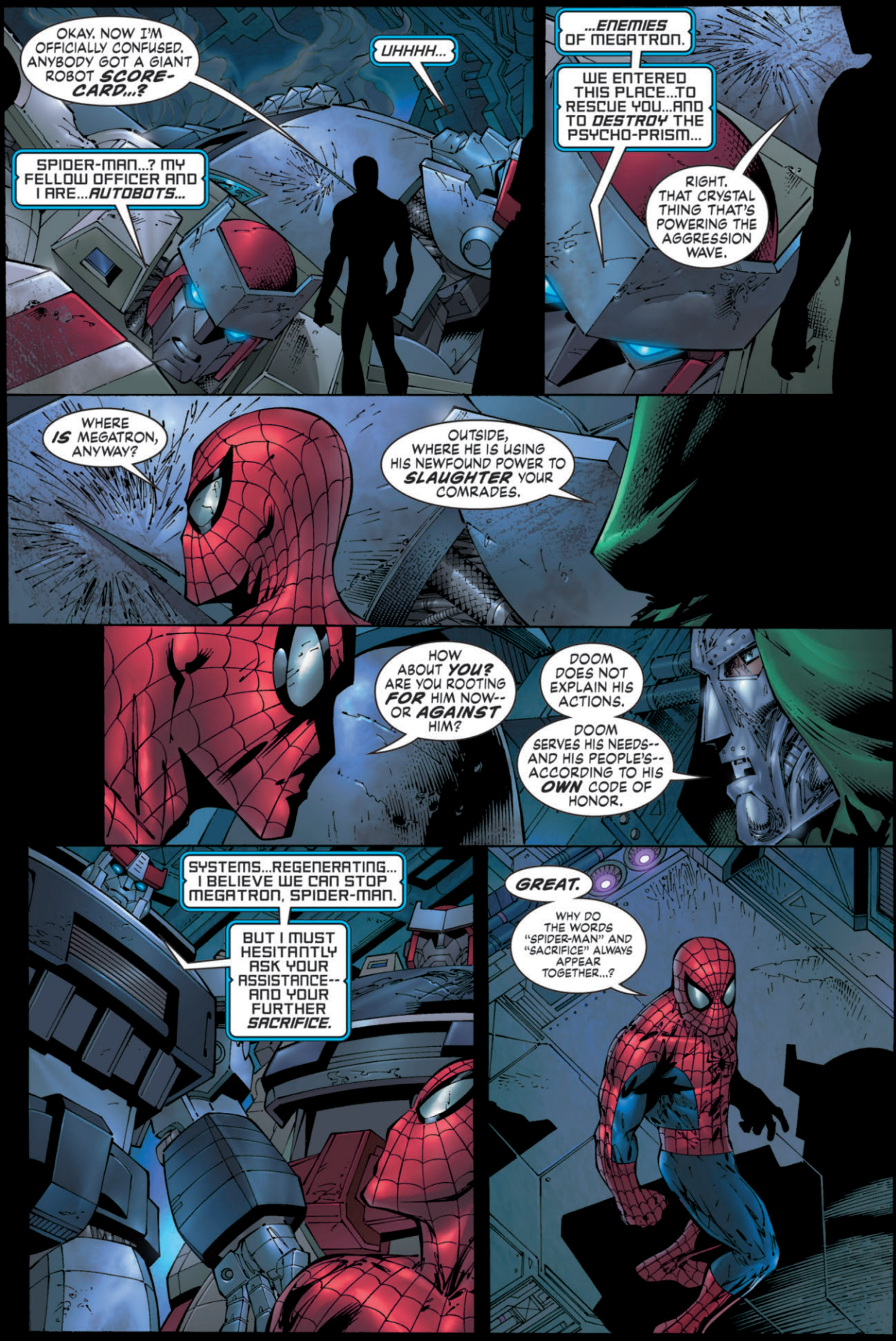

ENOUGH!
NO MORE STRATEGIES. NO MORE DECEPTIONS.
NOW THIS PLANET'S FATE WILL BE DECIDED. AND YOU WILL ALL FALL--
--AT THE HANDS OF MEGATRON!
MAN VS. MACHINE. THE FINAL ROUND.
HERE WE GO...!

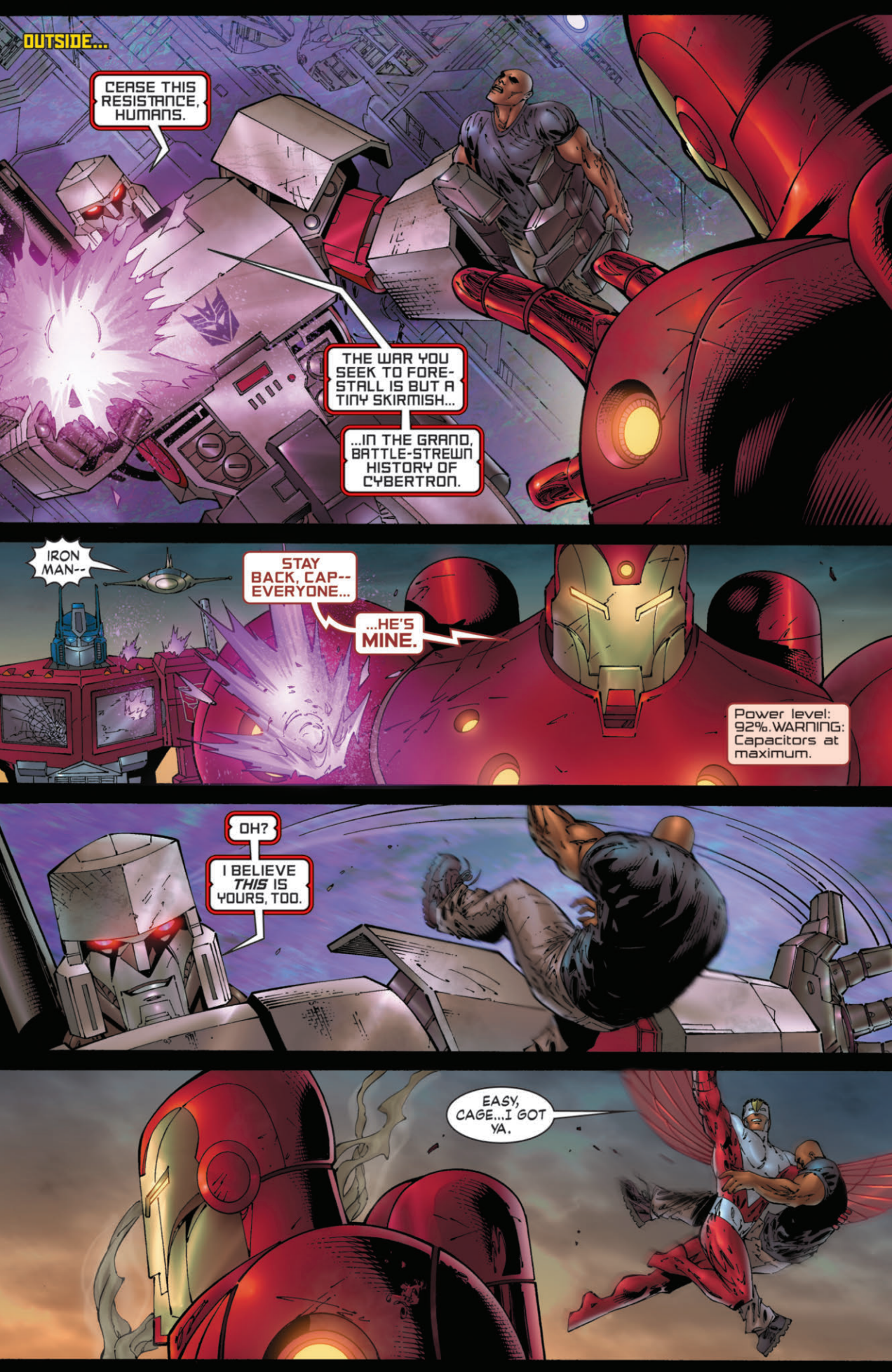


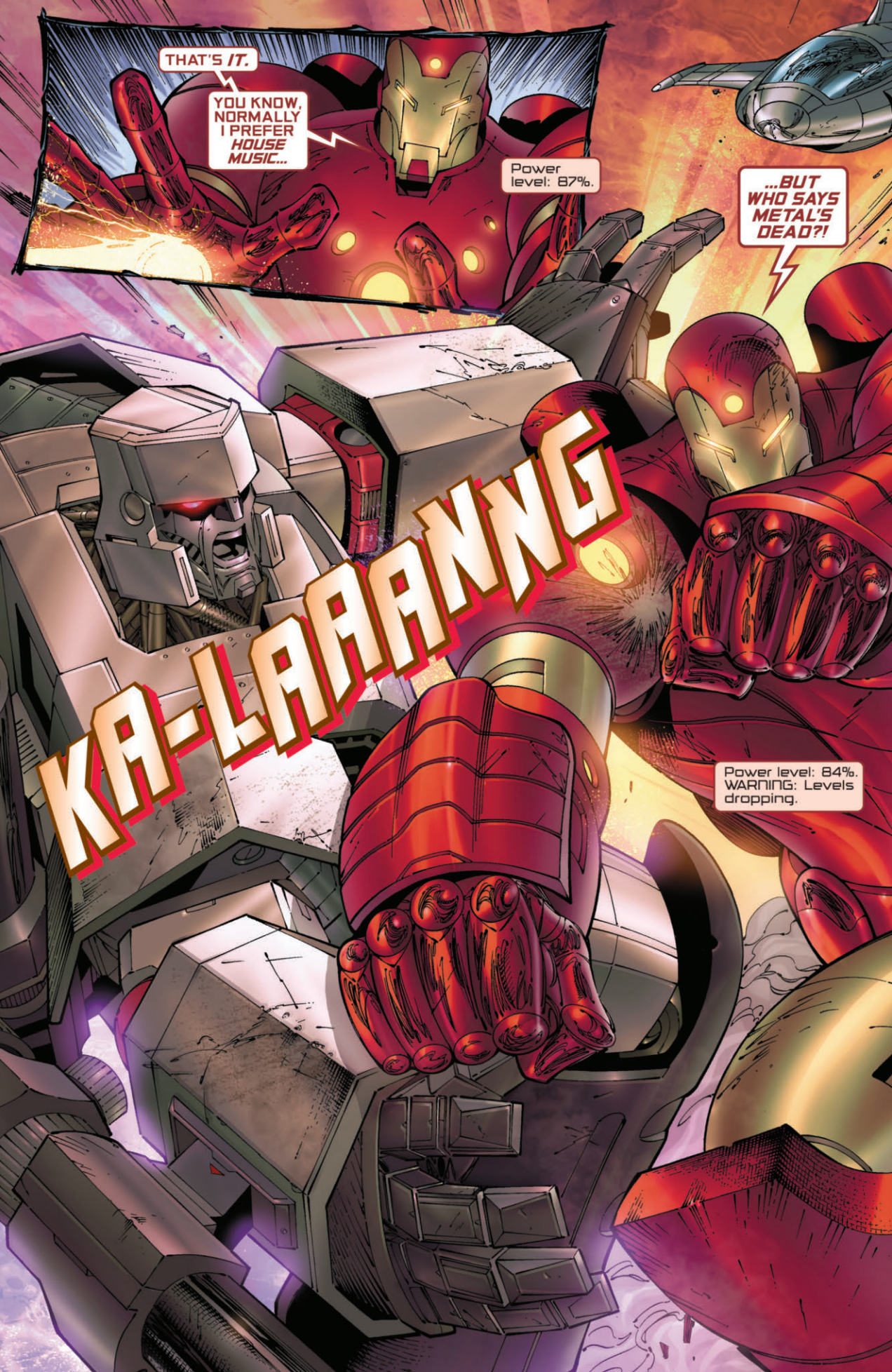
COUNTDOWN TO LATVERIAN/SYMKARIAN WAR: T MINUS 2 HOURS, 23 MINUTES.

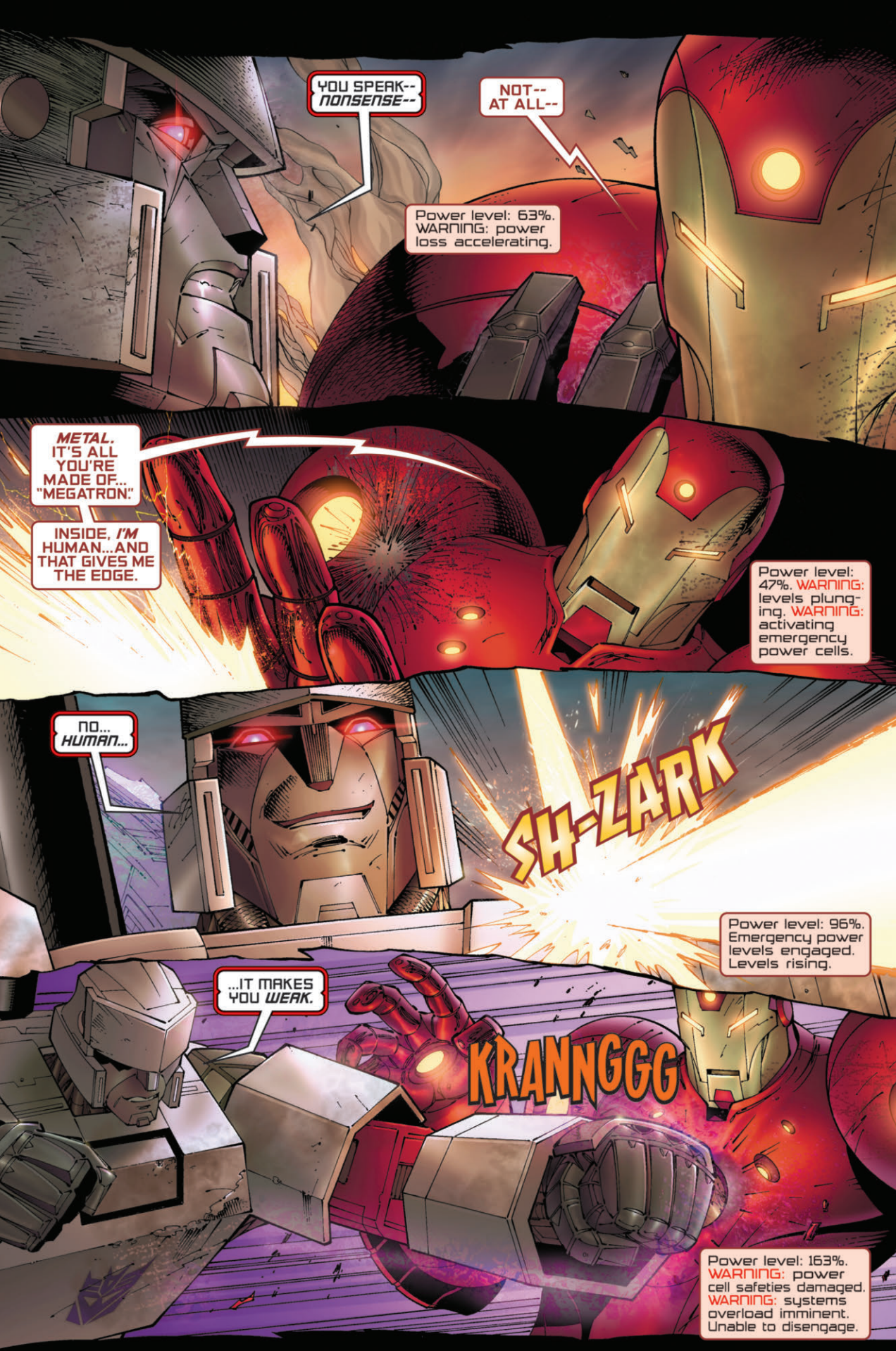


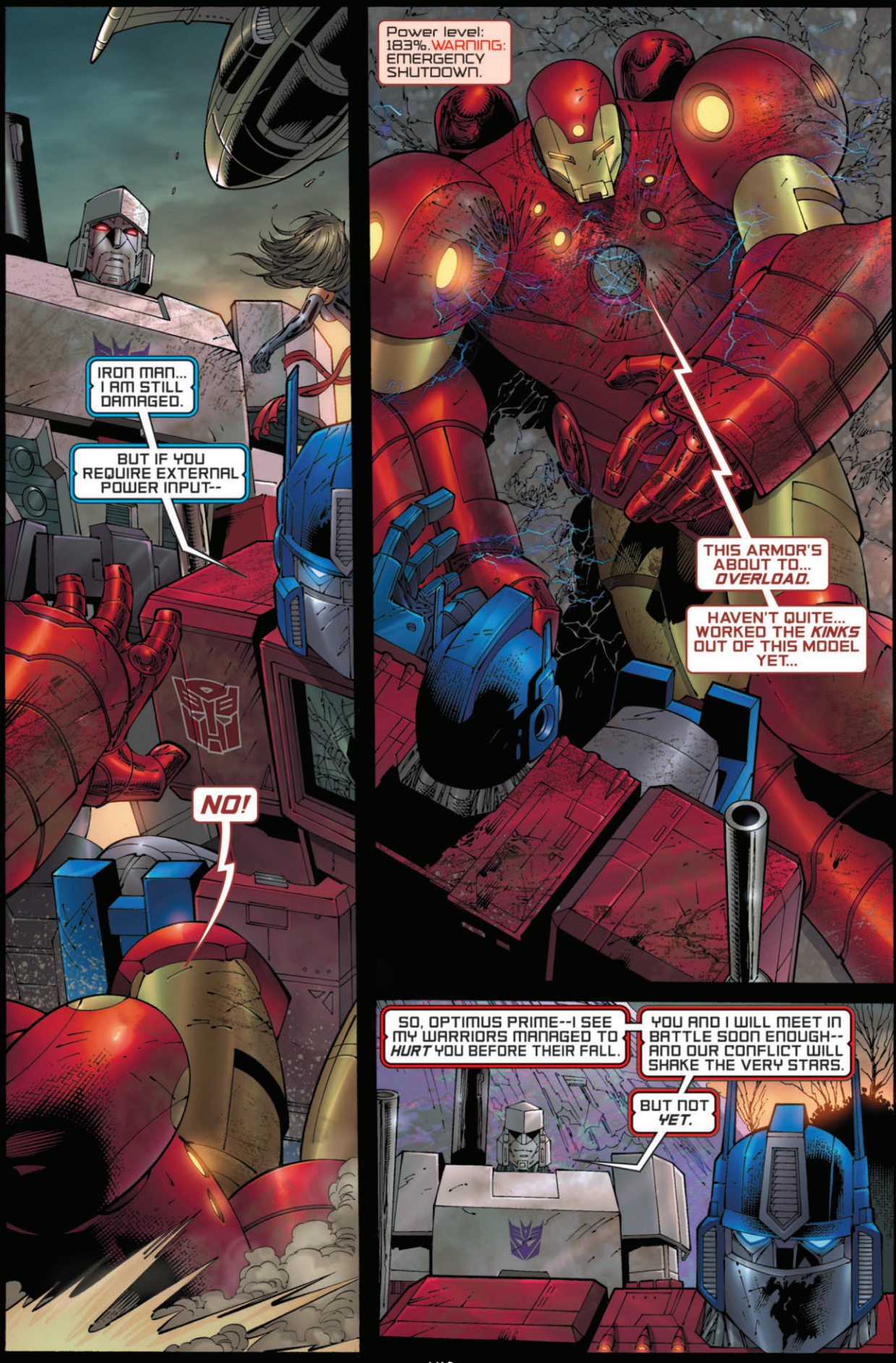

HUH?
HEADS UP, CRANKSHAFT!
NAP TIME'S OVER--AND I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS ROBO-DAY CARE CENTER!
ZZZZZTTTT
HEY!
WHAAAM
JEEZ, DOOM!
I APPRECIATE YOU TAKING OUT THE GIANT ROBOT LACKEY AND ALL...
...BUT COULD YOU WATCH YOUR AIM?
DOOM WATCHES ALL, INSECT. HE LEAVES NOTHING TO CHANCE.

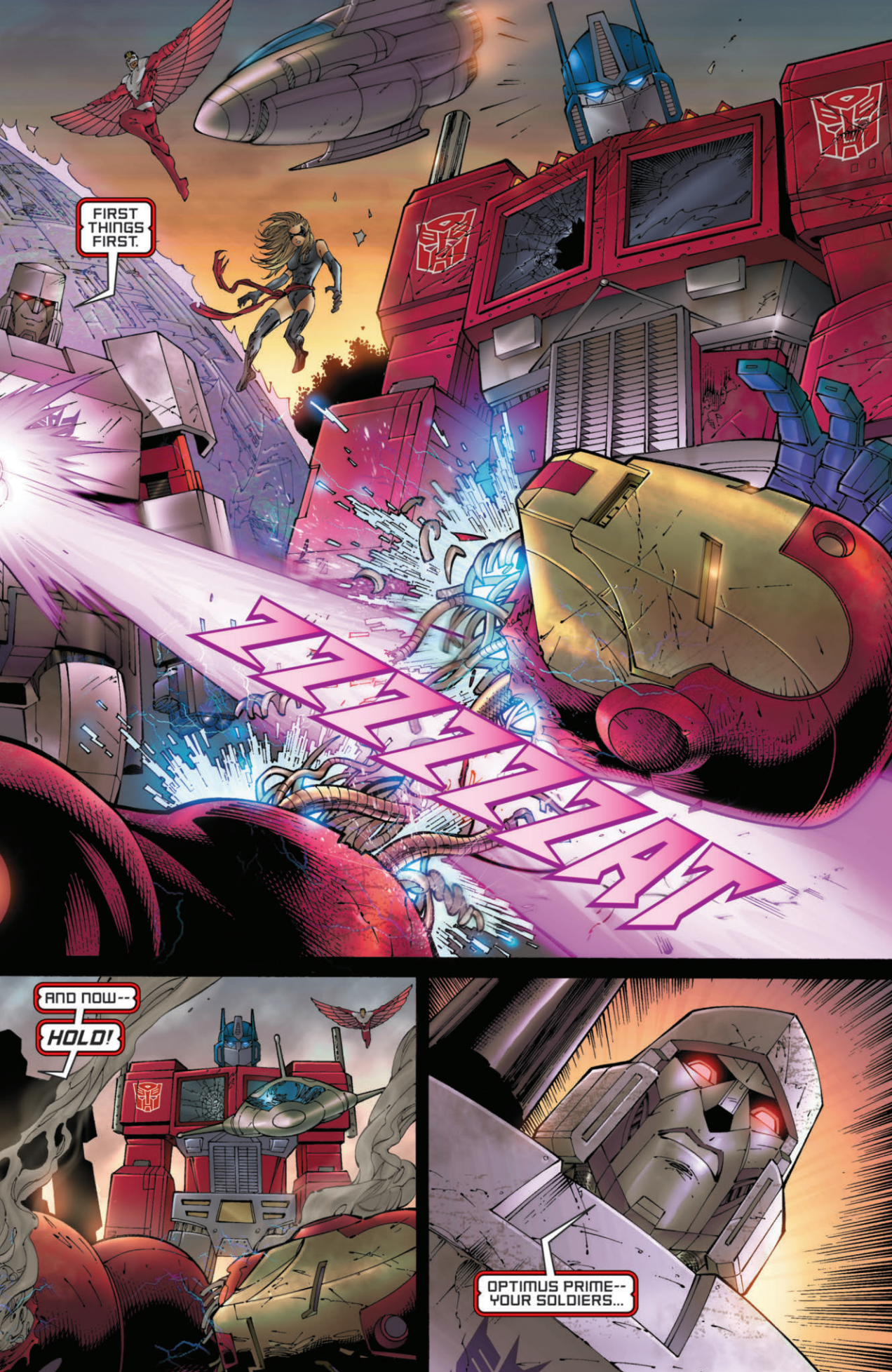

OKAY. NOW I'M OFFICIALLY CONFUSED. ANYBODY GOT A GIANT ROBOT SCORE-CARD...?
UHHHH...
SPIDER-MAN...? MY FELLOW OFFICER AND I ARE...AUTOBOTS...
...ENEMIES OF MEGATRON.
WE ENTERED THIS PLACE...TO RESCUE YOU...AND TO DESTROY THE PSYCHO-PRISM...
RIGHT. THAT CRYSTAL THING THAT'S POWERING THE AGGRESSION WAVE.
WHERE IS MEGATRON, ANYWAY?
OUTSIDE, WHERE HE IS USING HIS NEWFOUND POWER TO SLAUGHTER YOUR COMRADES.
HOW ABOUT YOU? ARE YOU ROOTING FOR HIM NOW--OR AGAINST HIM?
DOOM DOES NOT EXPLAIN HIS ACTIONS.
DOOM SERVES HIS NEEDS--AND HIS PEOPLE'S--ACCORDING TO HIS OWN CODE OF HONOR.
SYSTEMS...REGENERATING... I BELIEVE WE CAN STOP MEGATRON, SPIDER-MAN.
BUT I MUST HESITANTLY ASK YOUR ASSISTANCE--AND YOUR FURTHER SACRIFICE.
GREAT.
WHY DO THE WORDS "SPIDER-MAN" AND "SACRIFICE" ALWAYS APPEAR TOGETHER...?


OUTSIDE...
CEASE THIS RESISTANCE, HUMANS.
THE WAR YOU SEEK TO FORE-STALL IS BUT A TINY SKIRMISH...
...IN THE GRAND, BATTLE-STREWN HISTORY OF CYBERTRON.
IRON MAN--
STAY BACK, CAP--EVERYONE...
...HE'S MINE.
Power level: 92%. WARNING: Capacitors at maximum.
OH?
I BELIEVE *THIS* IS YOURS, TOO.
EASY, CAGE...I GOT YA.

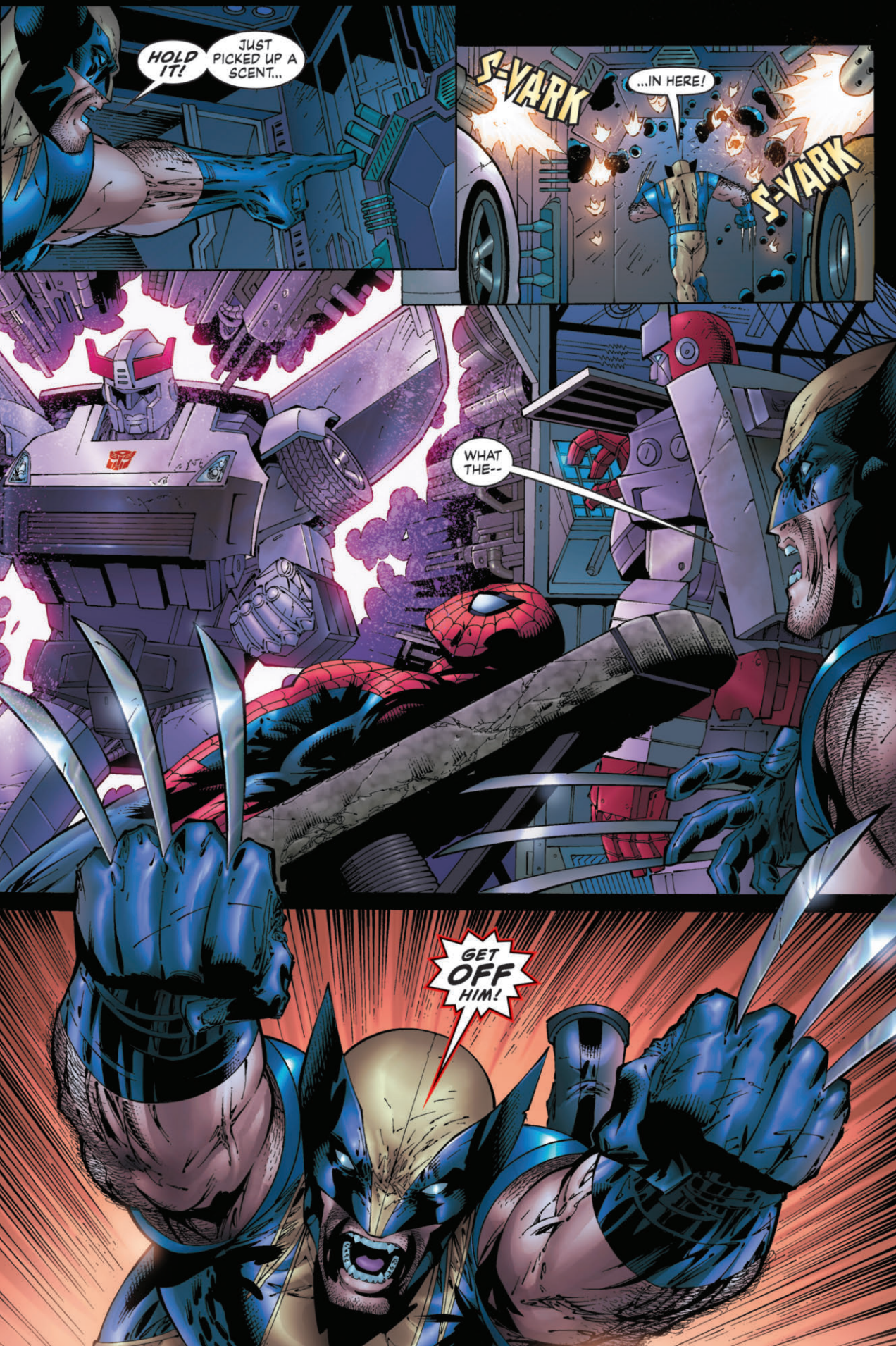

THAT'S IT.
YOU KNOW, NORMALLY I PREFER HOUSE MUSIC...
Power level: 87%.
...BUT WHO SAYS METAL'S DEAD?!
KA-LAAANNG
Power level: 84%. WARNING: Levels dropping.


YOU SPEAK-- NONSENSE--
NOT-- AT ALL--
Power level: 63%. WARNING: power loss accelerating.
METAL. IT'S ALL YOU'RE MADE OF... "MEGATRON."
INSIDE, I'M HUMAN...AND THAT GIVES ME THE EDGE.
Power level: 47%. WARNING: levels plunging. WARNING: activating emergency power cells.
NO... HUMAN...
SH-ZARK
Power level: 96%. Emergency power levels engaged. Levels rising.
...IT MAKES YOU WEAK.
KRANNGGG
Power level: 163%. WARNING: power cell safeties damaged. WARNING: systems overload imminent. Unable to disengage.


IRON MAN... I AM STILL DAMAGED.
BUT IF YOU REQUIRE EXTERNAL POWER INPUT--
NO!
Power level: 183%. WARNING: EMERGENCY SHUTDOWN.
THIS ARMOR'S ABOUT TO... OVERLOAD.
HAVEN'T QUITE... WORKED THE KINKS OUT OF THIS MODEL YET...
SO, OPTIMUS PRIME--I SEE MY WARRIORS MANAGED TO HURT YOU BEFORE THEIR FALL.
YOU AND I WILL MEET IN BATTLE SOON ENOUGH-- AND OUR CONFLICT WILL SHAKE THE VERY STARS.
BUT NOT YET.

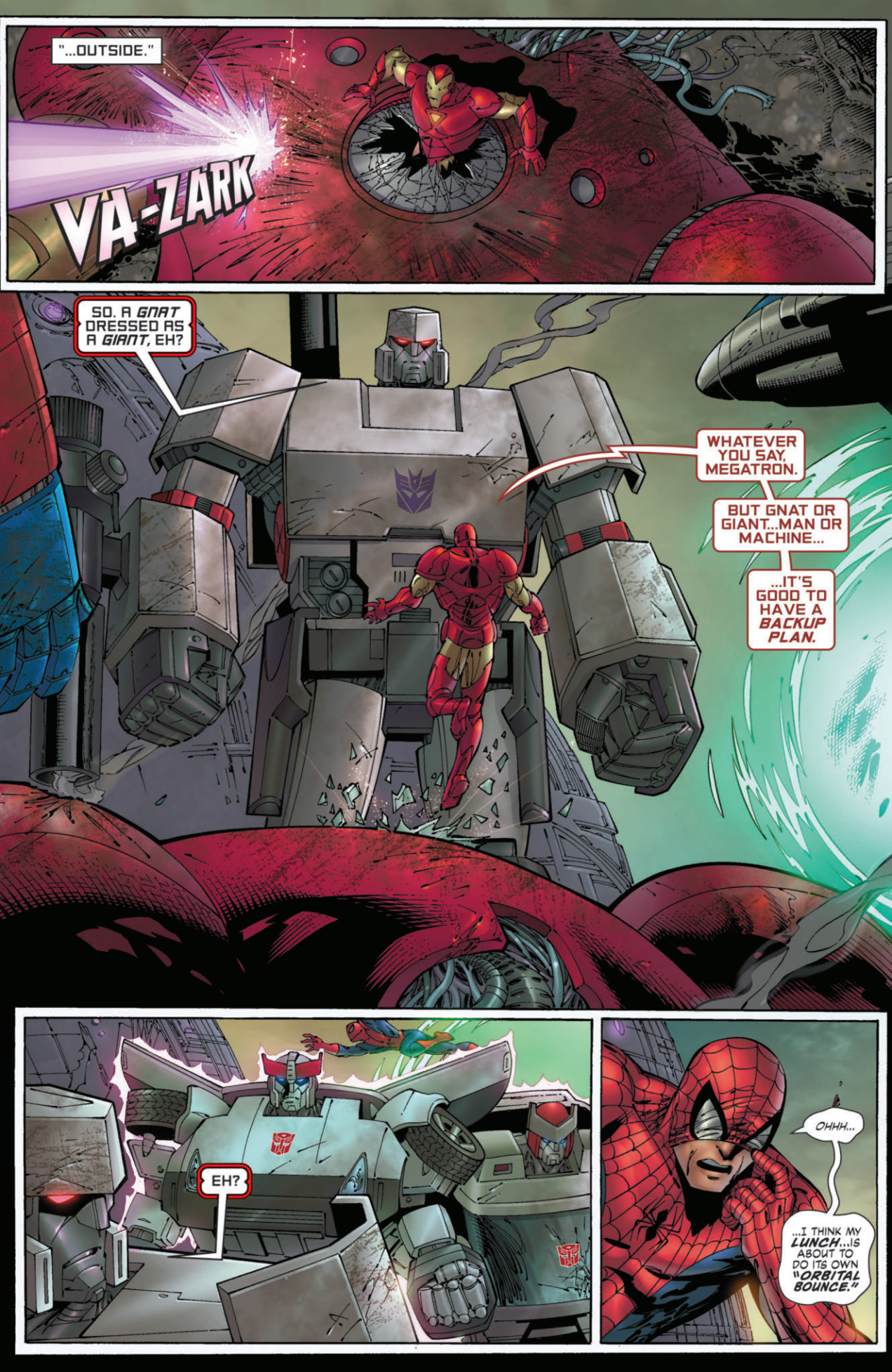

FIRST THINGS FIRST.
ZZZZZZAT
AND NOW--
HOLD!
OPTIMUS PRIME-- YOUR SOLDIERS...

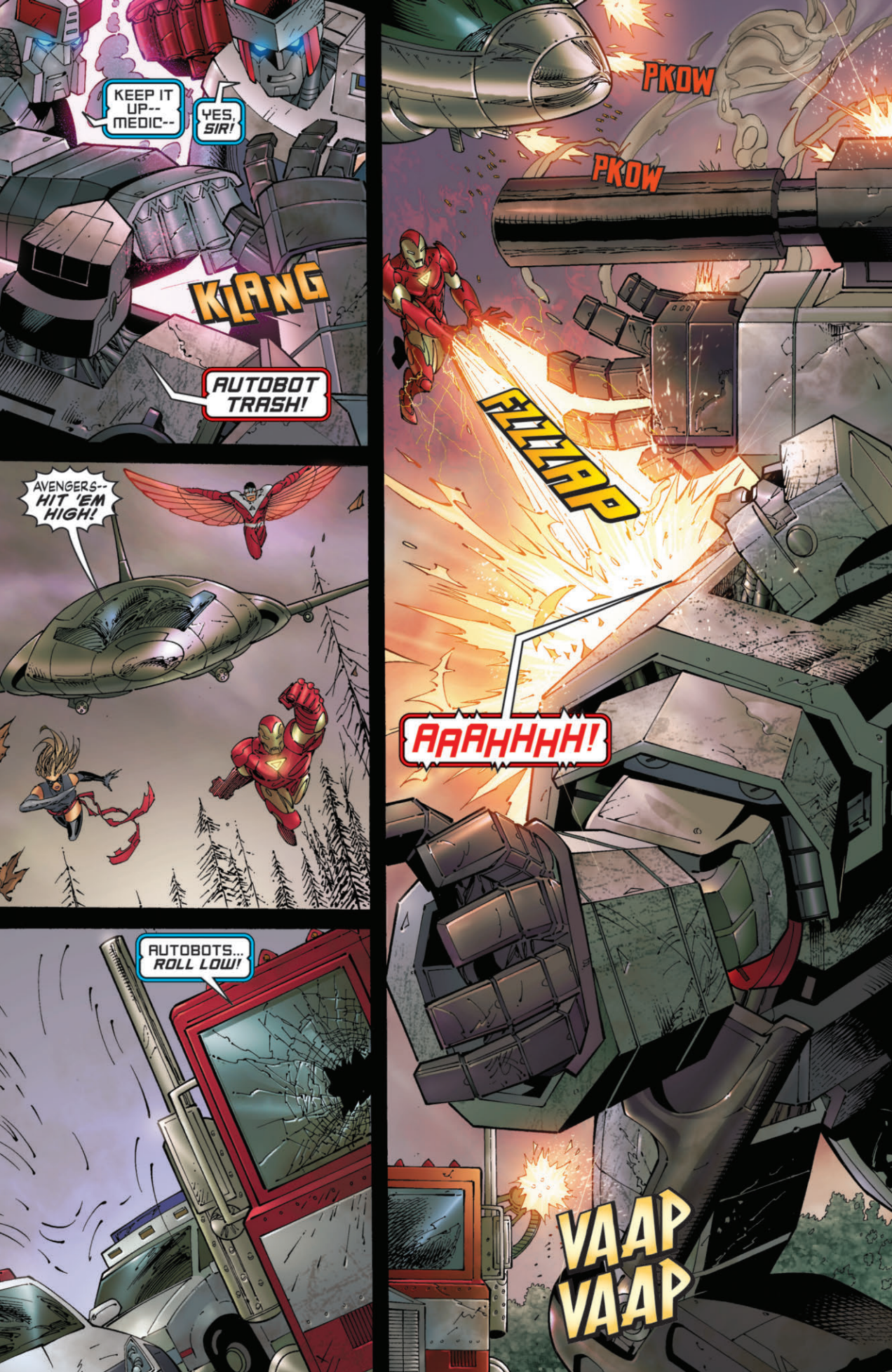

"...WHERE ARE THE AUTOBOTS?"
UNNHH! MY GUTS ARE ON FIRE. NICE WAY TO TRAVEL.
SORRY. IT'S CALLED AN "ORBITAL BOUNCE." IT'S NOT DESIGNED FOR HUMANS.
IT'S ALSO NOT VERY PRECISE AT SHORT DISTANCES.
BUT ACCORDING TO WHEELJACK'S TELEMETRY, RATCHET AND PROWL ARE DOWN THIS WAY.
THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?
SNIKT
AN' IF ANY MORE OF THESE "DECEPTICONS" SHOW UP..
...I GOT MY CAN OPENERS READY.
SNIKT


HOLD IT!
JUST PICKED UP A SCENT...
S-VARK
...IN HERE!
S-VARK
WHAT THE--
GET OFF HIM!


WOLVERINE! HOLD IT!
THWIP
I APPRECIATE THE ASSIST, BUDDY--AND I ADMIT I'M STILL PRETTY WEAK. BUT I VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS.
THE ONLY WAY TO STOP MEGATRON IS TO USE HIS OWN POWER-CHARGING PROCESS AGAINST HIM.
THAT MEANS USING MY BLOOD TO BOOST THESE GUYS' STRENGTH!
YOUR ALLY--WHO IS NOT AS INTELLIGENT AS HE THINKS HE IS--IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT.
DOOM... WE GOT UNFINISHED BUSINESS, YOU AN' ME.
HUMANS--PLEASE!
WE MUST BEGIN THE PROCEDURE... ENHANCE THE ENERGON-LIKE SUBSTANCE IN SPIDER-MAN'S BLOOD...
BLOOD ANOMALIES: MUTANT X-FACTOR RAPID HEALING.
HIS BLOOD...OR MINE.
RIGHT?


TEN MINUTES LATER...
THANK YOU, HUMAN. YOU MAY HAVE JUST SAVED US ALL.
PEACHY.
BY CYBERTRON... THE POWER!
SHOULD WE CHARGE UP AS WELL?
NO, JAZZ. THERE'S NO TIME.
YOU TWO MUST DESTROY THE PSYCHO-PRISM. I CAN TELL YOU WHERE IT IS--
YOU WON'T FIND IT.
MEGATRON HAD IT MOVED.
BUT DOOM CAN LEAD YOU TO IT.
COME.
AH, WHAT THE HELL...
BUMBLEBEE AND JAZZ, GO WITH OUR NEW ALLY!
RATCHET AND I WILL RENDEZVOUS WITH YOU LATER...


"...OUTSIDE."
VA-ZARK
SO, A GNAT DRESSED AS A GIANT, EH?
WHATEVER YOU SAY, MEGATRON.
BUT GNAT OR GIANT...MAN OR MACHINE...
...IT'S GOOD TO HAVE A BACKUP PLAN.
EH?
OHHH...
...I THINK MY LUNCH...IS ABOUT TO DO ITS OWN "ORBITAL BOUNCE."


KEEP IT UP-- MEDIC--
YES, SIR!
KLANG
AUTOBOT TRASH!
AVENGERS-- HIT 'EM HIGH!
AUTOBOTS... ROLL LOW!
PKOW
PKOW
FZZZAP
AAAHHHH!
VAAP
VAAP

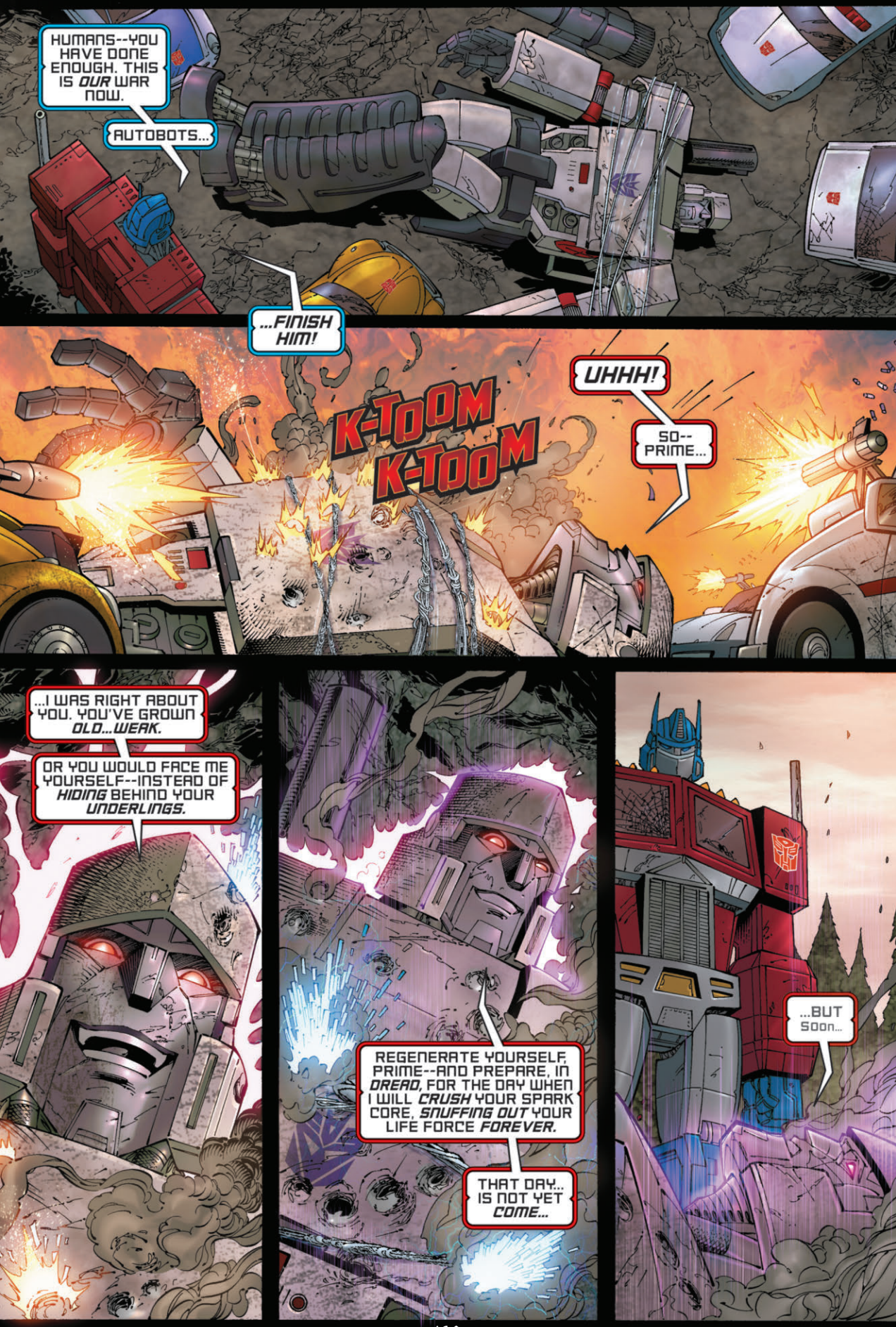

KWAAAM
WHAT? WHO'S--?
RAMJET!
I SUPPOSE *YOU* WANT THE PSYCHO-PRISM, TOO?
TRUST ME, BUB...
...HE AIN'T GETTIN' IT.
SNIKT
AH, THE LITTLE MONARCH. I SEE YOUR LOYALTIES HAVE CHANGED AGAIN.
I THINK I'LL FOLLOW YOUR LEAD, THIS TIME. AFTER ALL...
...IF MEGATRON'S PLAN SHOULD FAIL *TODAY*--THEN SOMEDAY *SOON*...
...PERHAPS IT WILL BE *MY* TURN TO LEAD THE DECEPTICONS.


SHOULD WE GO AFTER HIM?
NO TIME. WE'VE GOT EIGHTEEN MINUTES LEFT TO STOP THE HUMAN WAR.
YOU GUYS CAN DEBATE THIS TILL THE NEXT TRACTOR-PULL IF YOU WANT...
...I'M TAKIN' THIS BAD BOY OUT!
KA-RESH
THAT STOPPED THE AGGRESSION WAVE--BUT I THINK THIS WHOLE PLACE IS ABOUT TO COME DOWN.
LET'S MOVE!
RRUMMBLE
NONE OF THEM UNDERSTAND.
DOOM'S GLORY...DOOM'S BURDEN...DOOM'S GENIUS.
NO MAN...NO MACHINE...
...SHALL TAKE THAT AWAY!


THE POWER-- STILL BURNS.
I--
VAAP VAAP
B-KOOM
THE ARRAY!
THE PSYCHO-PRISM HAS BEEN DESTROYED. WITHOUT IT--THIS BATTLE SERVES NO PURPOSE.
IT WILL DRAIN THE LAST OF MY ADDED STRENGTH, BUT--
UUHHH!
DECEPTICONS! HOME IN ON MY RESONANT SIGNATURE...


"...AND EXECUTE EMERGENCY WARP-OUT PROTOCOL!
"THE LATVERIAN PROJECT IS HEREBY...
"...TERMINATED!"
YOU'VE COST ME A VICTORY, HUMANS--AND MUCH MORE. AN EMERGENCY WARP-OUT WILL DRAIN THE DECEPTICONS' ENERGY RESERVES FOR MANY STELLAR-CYCLES.
BUT BEFORE I, TOO, DEPART THIS PLACE OF ROTTING MEAT--I WILL SEE YOU PAY FOR--
HEY, MEGS!
THWIP


YOU MAY HAVE STOLEN MY RADIOACTIVE BLOOD...
...BUT CAN YOU SWING FROM A THREAD?
TAKE A LOOK OVER-HEAD!
UHHHH!
AND JUST TO BACK UP MY BOY IN THE SKY...
...HERE'S THE WORD FROM DOWN HERE ON THE STREET!
KLANG
WHAAAM

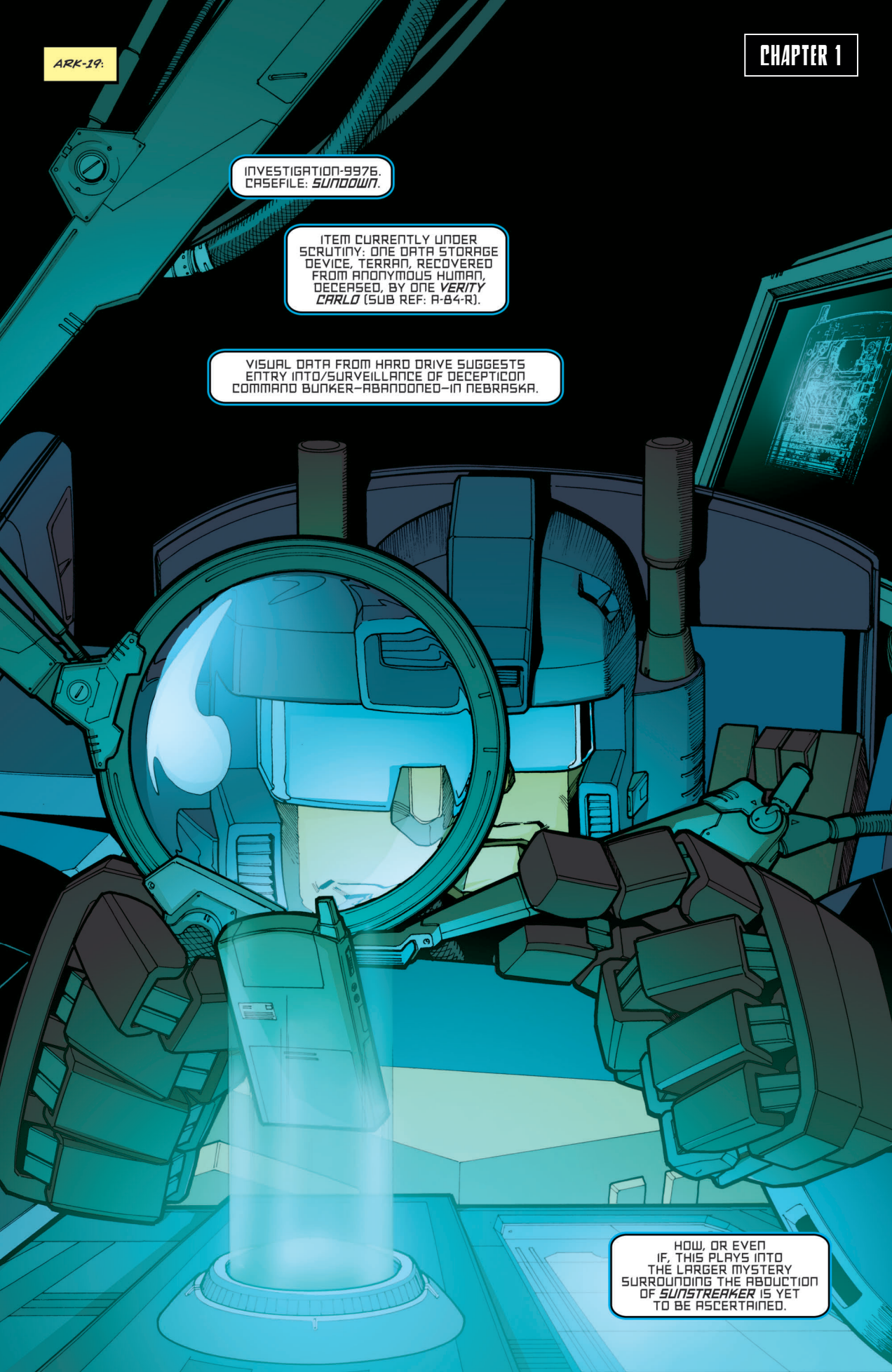

HUMANS--YOU HAVE DONE ENOUGH. THIS IS *OUR* WAR NOW.
AUTOBOTS...
...FINISH HIM!
K-TOOM K-TOOM
UHHH!
SO-- PRIME...
...I WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU. YOU'VE GROWN *OLD...WEAK.*
OR YOU WOULD FACE ME YOURSELF--INSTEAD OF *HIDING* BEHIND YOUR *UNDERLINGS.*
REGENERATE YOURSELF, PRIME--AND PREPARE, IN *DREAD*, FOR THE DAY WHEN I WILL *CRUSH* YOUR SPARK CORE, *SNUFFING OUT* YOUR LIFE FORCE *FOREVER.*
THAT DAY... IS NOT YET *COME...*
...BUT SOON...

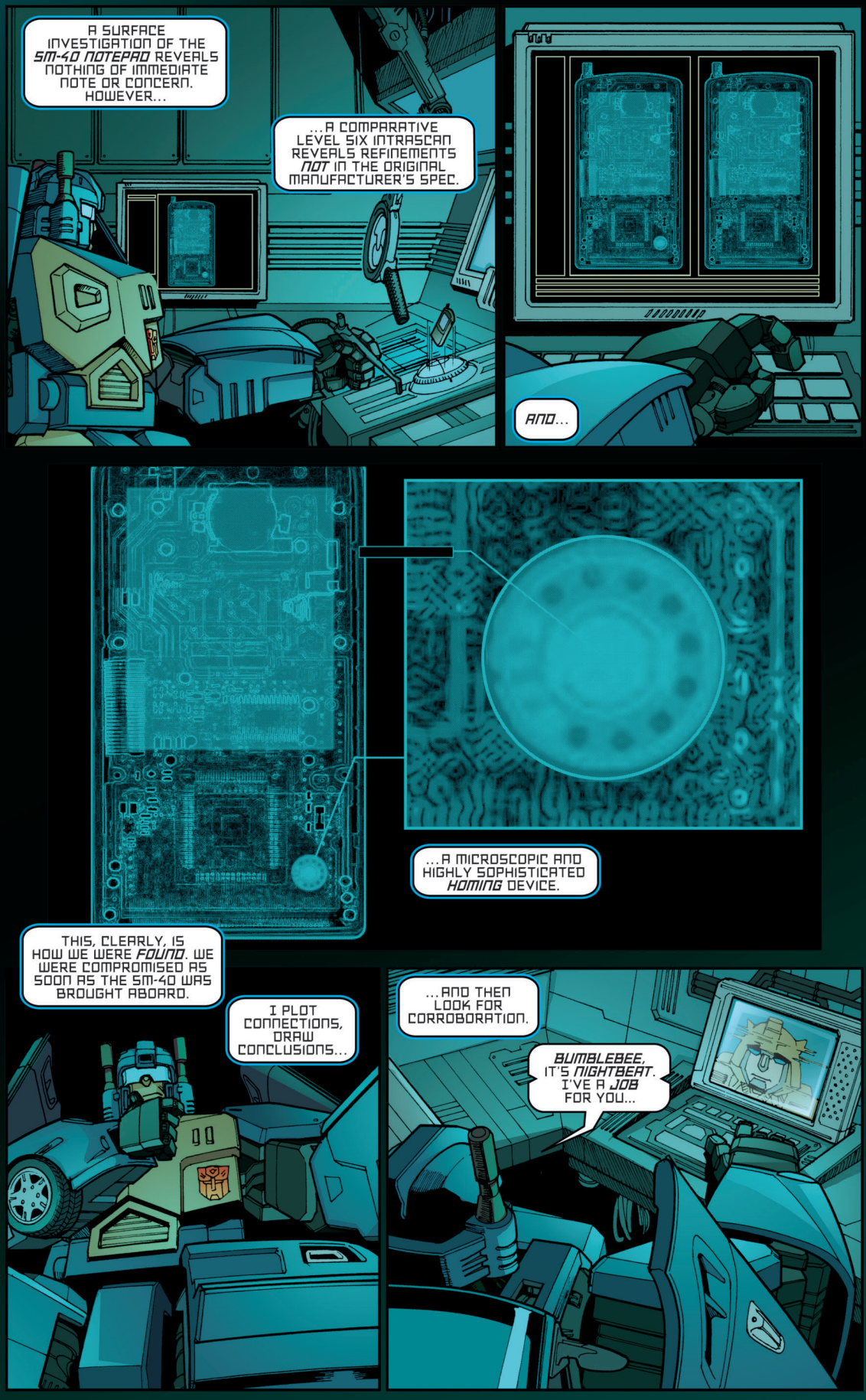

SO WHAT ABOUT DOOM?
HE WAS INSIDE WITH US. I DIDN'T SEE HIM GET OUT.
I SEVERELY DOUBT A HUMAN COULD HAVE SURVIVED THAT...
WITH DOOM, YOU NEVER KNOW.
JUST RECEIVED A S.H.I.E.L.D. UPDATE. WITH THE AGGRESSION WAVE DESTROYED, SYMKARIA CALLED OFF THEIR ATTACK.
THE ENGINES OF WAR ARE QUIET AGAIN...FOR NOW.
SO THE EMERGENCY IS OVER?
YES, BUT S.H.I.E.L.D. WANTS A COMPLETE DEBRIEFING--BOTH US, AND THE...
...ROBOTS?

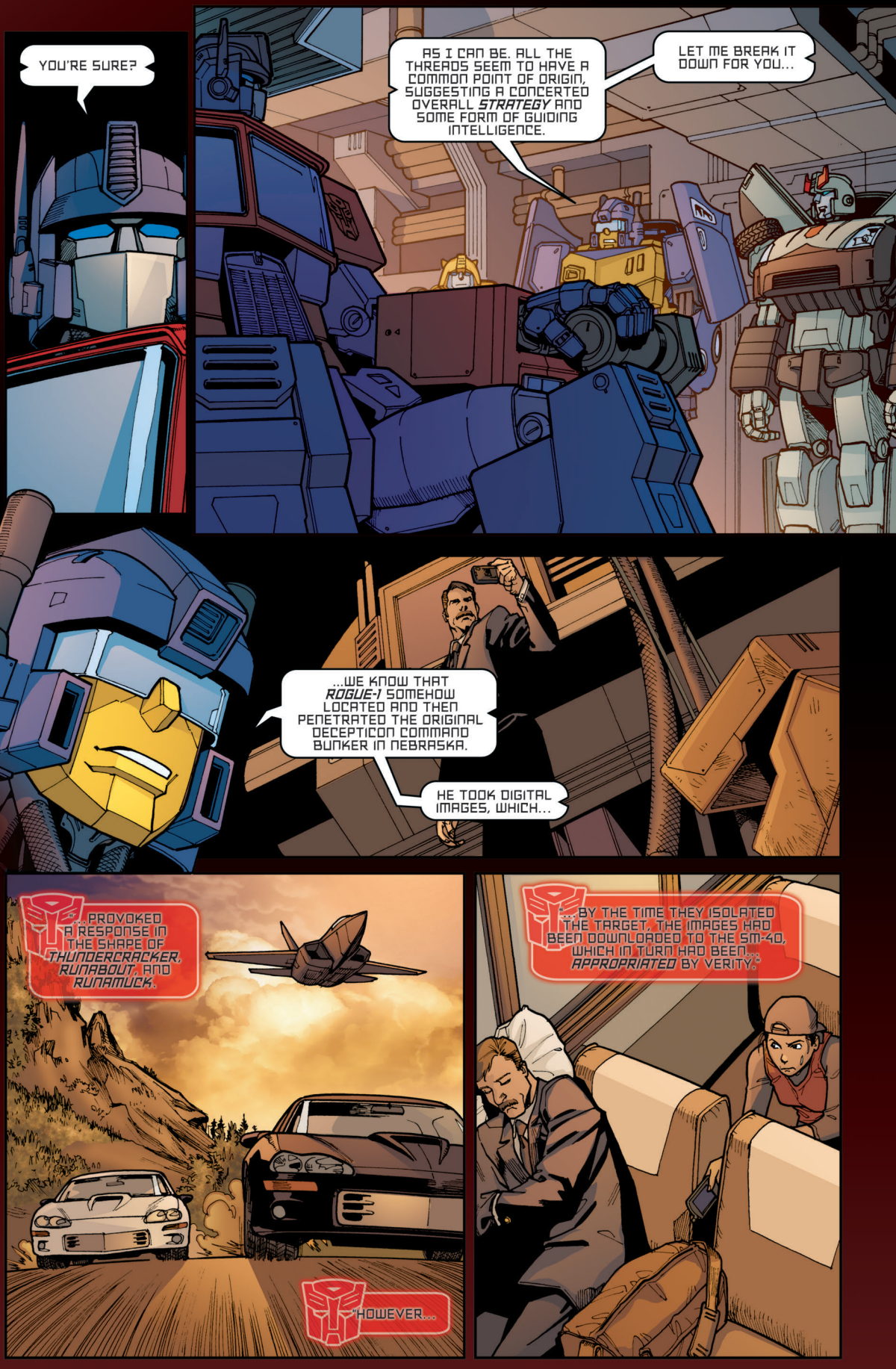

LATER. ARK-19, THE AUTOBOTS' COMMAND SHIP.
SO--ANY NEW DECEPTICONS?
RAMJET HAS ARRIVED ON EARTH.
LOOKS LIKE THE "AUTOBOTS" ARE BACK IN HIDING.
WHERE DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY LAY LOW? BUS TERMINALS?
...SQUARE-CUBE LAW... DIMINISHING POWER RE-SERVES...
...HOW MUCH BIGGER COULD I BUILD IT?
HE'S THE ONLY ONE WE SAW...
SWEET DESIGN ON THE HUMANS' SHIP. LOOKS ALMOST...
HUH. QUINJET'S A LITTLE... SLUGGISH...
SMELLS FUNNY, TOO.
...CYBERTRONIAN?
NAH.
NO WAY...
THE END?


ART BY TOM RANEY

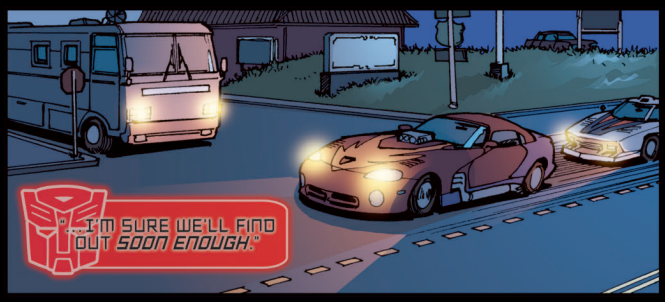

THE TRANSFORMERS
DEVASTATION
ART BY E.J. SU

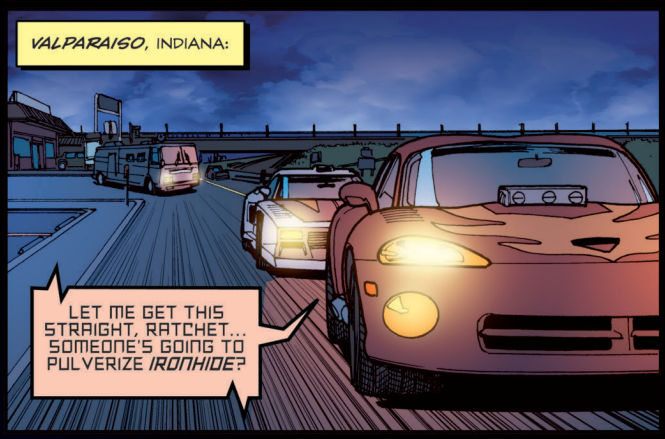

ARK-19:
CHAPTER 1
INVESTIGATION-9976. CASEFILE: SUNDOWN.
ITEM CURRENTLY UNDER SCRUTINY: ONE DATA STORAGE DEVICE, TERRAN, RECOVERED FROM ANONYMOUS HUMAN, DECEASED, BY ONE VERITY CARLO (SUB REF: A-84-R).
VISUAL DATA FROM HARD DRIVE SUGGESTS ENTRY INTO/SURVEILLANCE OF DECEPTICON COMMAND BUNKER–ABANDONED–IN NEBRASKA.
HOW, OR EVEN IF, THIS PLAYS INTO THE LARGER MYSTERY SURROUNDING THE ABDUCTION OF SUNSTREAKER IS YET TO BE ASCERTAINED.


A SURFACE INVESTIGATION OF THE SM-40 NOTEPAD REVEALS NOTHING OF IMMEDIATE NOTE OR CONCERN. HOWEVER...
...A COMPARATIVE LEVEL SIX INTRASCAN REVEALS REFINEMENTS NOT IN THE ORIGINAL MANUFACTURER'S SPEC.
AND...
...A MICROSCOPIC AND HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED HOMING DEVICE.
THIS, CLEARLY, IS HOW WE WERE FOUND. WE WERE COMPROMISED AS SOON AS THE SM-40 WAS BROUGHT ABOARD.
I PLOT CONNECTIONS, DRAW CONCLUSIONS...
...AND THEN LOOK FOR CORROBORATION.
BUMBLEBEE, IT'S NIGHTBEAT. I'VE A JOB FOR YOU...

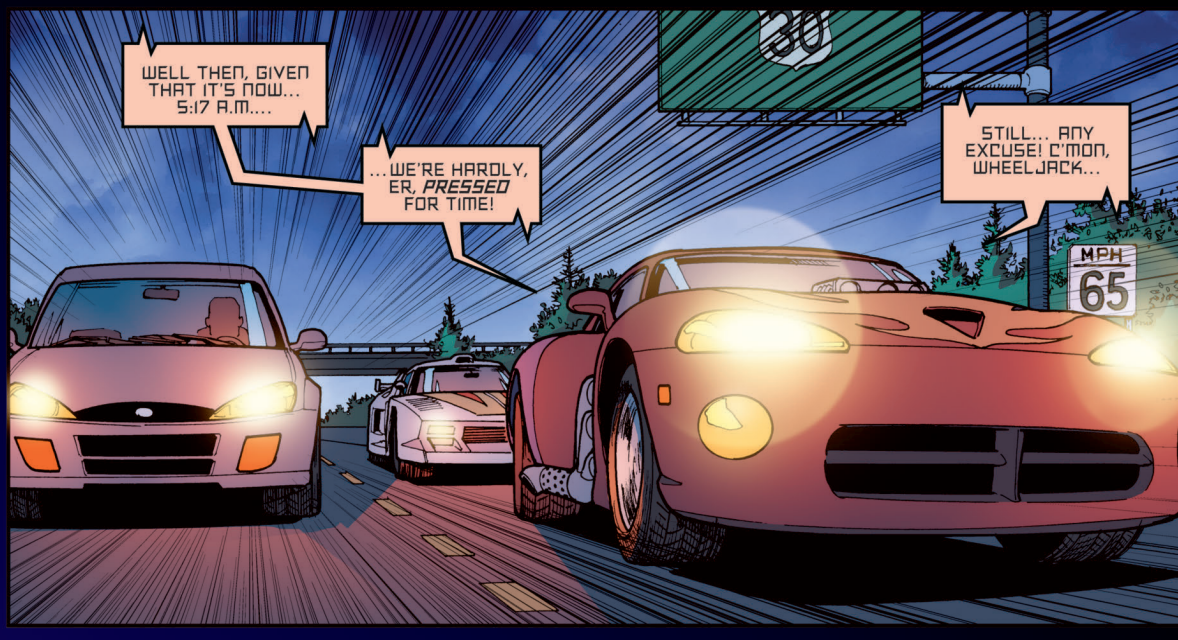

YOU'RE SURE?
AS I CAN BE. ALL THE THREADS SEEM TO HAVE A COMMON POINT OF ORIGIN, SUGGESTING A CONCERTED OVERALL *STRATEGY* AND SOME FORM OF GUIDING INTELLIGENCE.
LET ME BREAK IT DOWN FOR YOU...
...WE KNOW THAT *ROGUE-1* SOMEHOW LOCATED AND THEN PENETRATED THE ORIGINAL DECEPTICON COMMAND BUNKER IN NEBRASKA.
HE TOOK DIGITAL IMAGES, WHICH...
...PROVOKED A RESPONSE IN THE SHAPE OF *THUNDERCRACKER*, *RUNABOUT*, AND *RUNAMUCK*.
...HOWEVER...
...BY THE TIME THEY ISOLATED THE TARGET, THE IMAGES HAD BEEN DOWNLOADED TO THE SM-40, WHICH IN TURN HAD BEEN... *APPROPRIATED* BY VERITY.


VIA THE INTERVENTION OF *RATCHET*, BOTH FOUND THEIR WAY HERE, TO ARK-19, WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN END OF STORY, EXCEPT FOR...
THE HOMING DEVICE.
EXACTLY. CLEARLY, WHOEVER ROGUE-1 SERVES DREW NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN DECEPTICON AND AUTOBOT. THEY SIMPLY REQUIRED *A* CYBERTRONIAN AND SET ABOUT GETTING ONE WITH TRENCHANT PURPOSE.
I ASKED BUMBLEBEE TO SCOUT AROUND THE IMMEDIATE *LAKE MICHIGAN* SHORELINE. HE FOUND...
"...A LARGE AMOUNT OF STATE-OF-THE-ART, IN LOCAL TERMS AT LEAST, *SURVEILLANCE* AND *SCANNING* EQUIPMENT."
THEY'D BEEN WATCHING YOU FOR DAYS, PERHAPS WEEKS. RIGHT UP UNTIL SUNSTREAKER WAS AMBUSHED.
BUT WHO ARE *THEY*? WHAT DO *THEY* WANT?
THE *WHO*, I DON'T KNOW. THIS WAS FOUND CLUTCHED IN VERITY'S HAND AFTER HER CLOSE CALL IN FORT WAYNE.
I COULD FIND NO MATCH IN OVER 600,000 INSTITUTIONAL DATA ENTRIES WORLDWIDE.
"*M*"?
AS FOR THE *WHAT*...

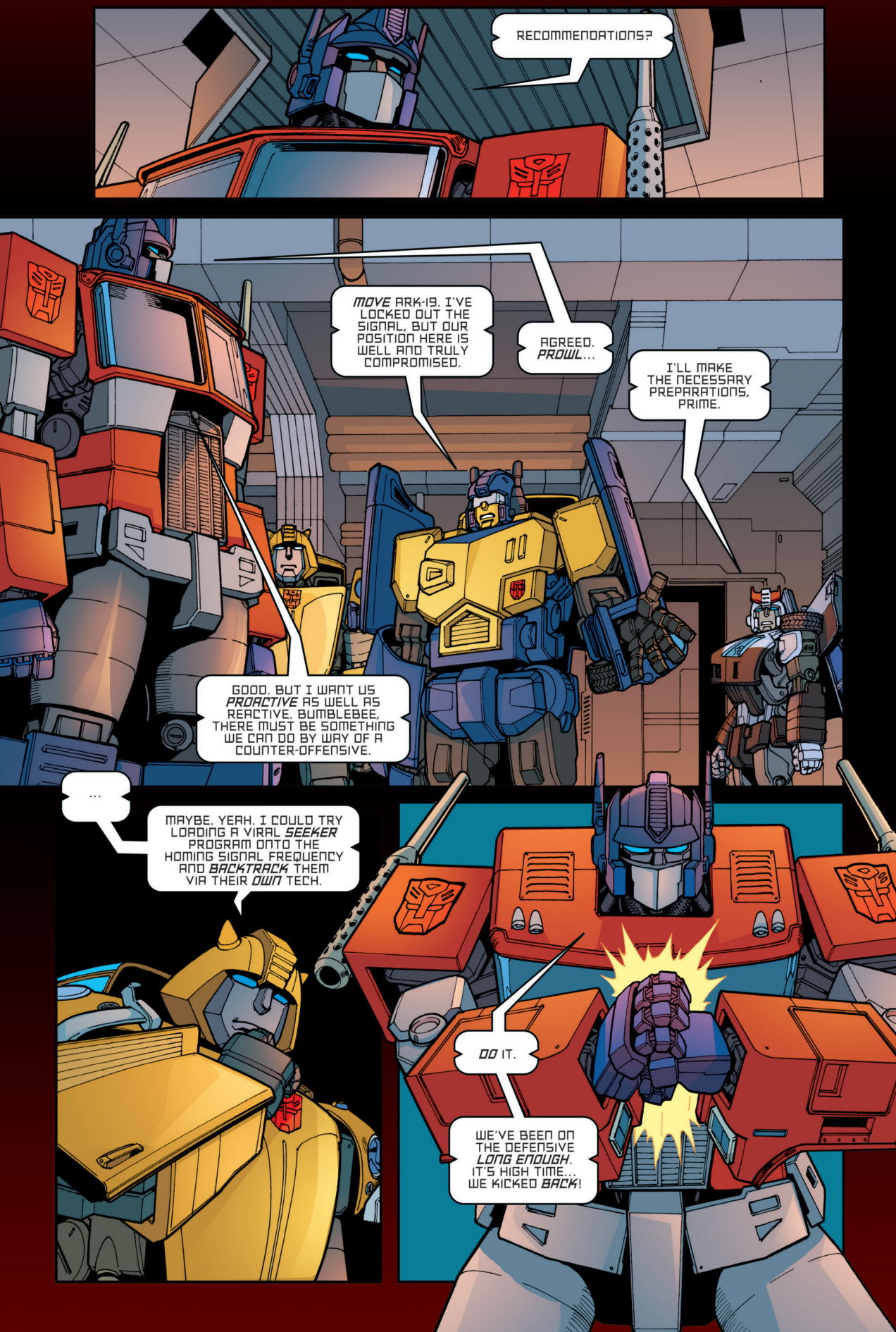

"...I'M SURE WE'LL FIND OUT *SOON ENOUGH*."

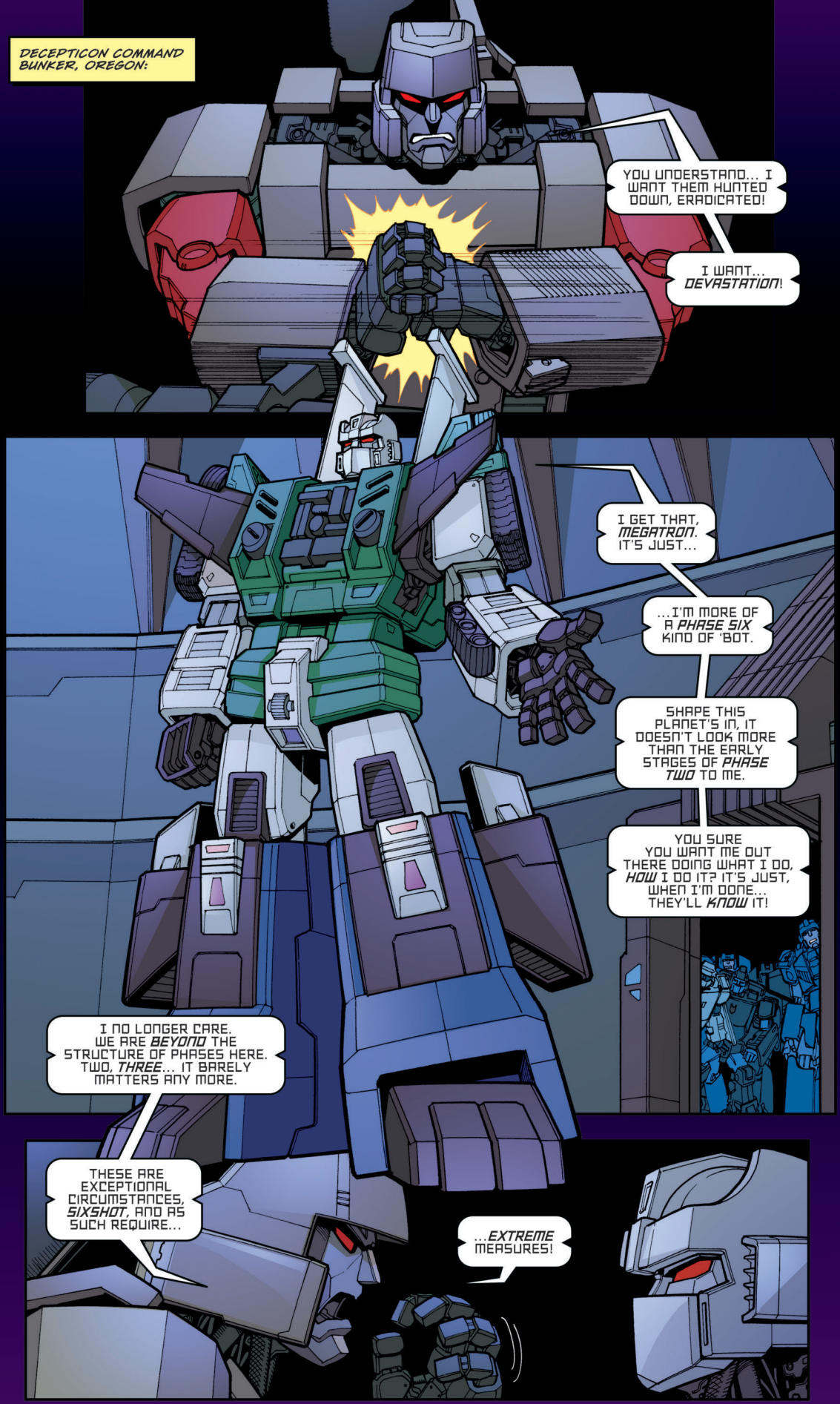

VALPARAISO, INDIANA:
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT, RATCHET... SOMEONE'S GOING TO PULVERIZE *IRONHIDE*?

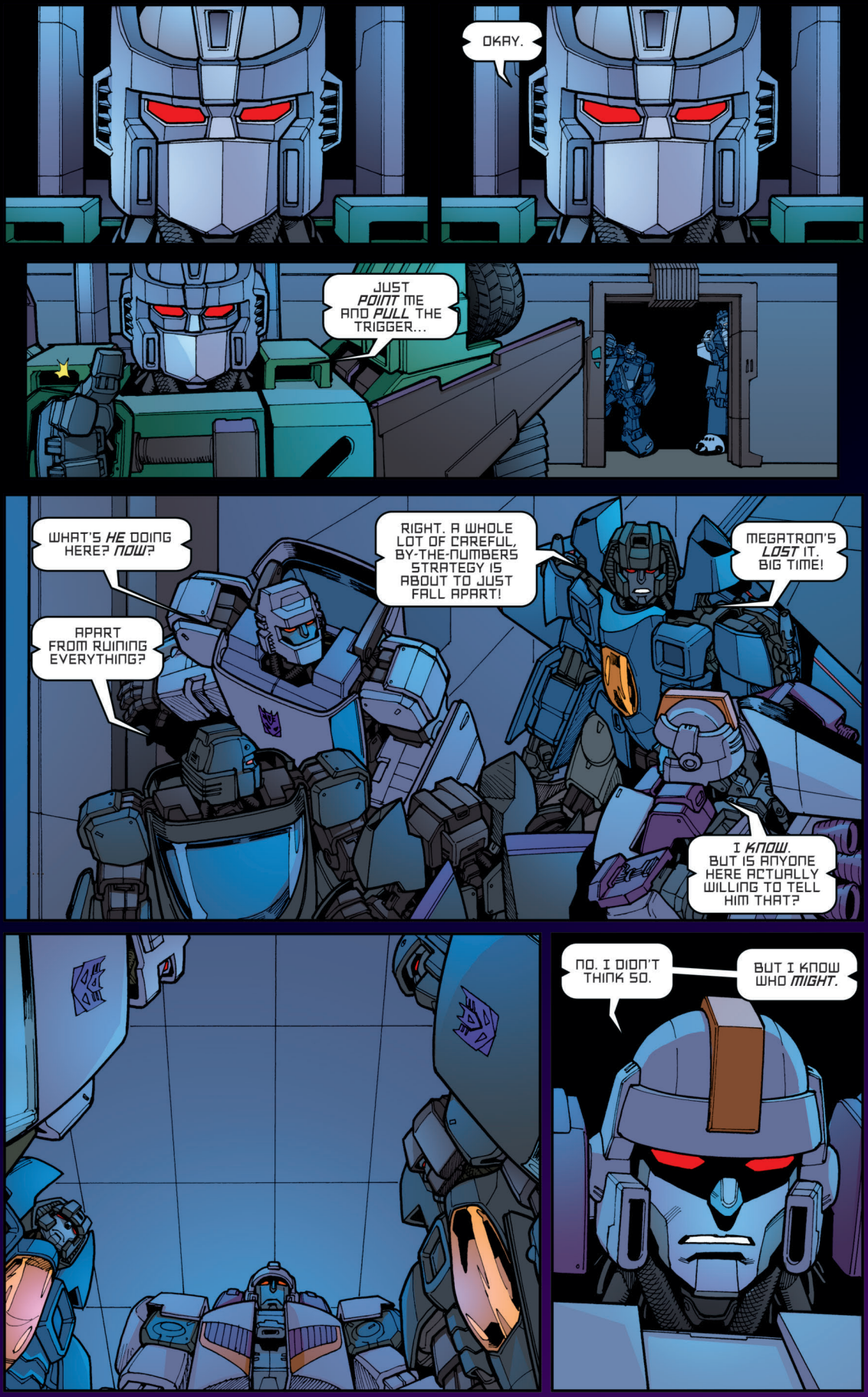

APPARENTLY SO, *HOT ROD*. IT'S TAKEN THREE WEEKS, BUT I FINALLY GOT A SOLID G.P. *LOCK* IN AN AUTOMOTIVE SCRAPYARD IN *WARSAW*.
ACCORDING TO THEIR ON-SITE LOG, HE'S IN A CLUTCH OF WRECKS SCHEDULED FOR THE *PNEUMATIC PRESSES* WHEN THEY OPEN AT 8:00 A.M.

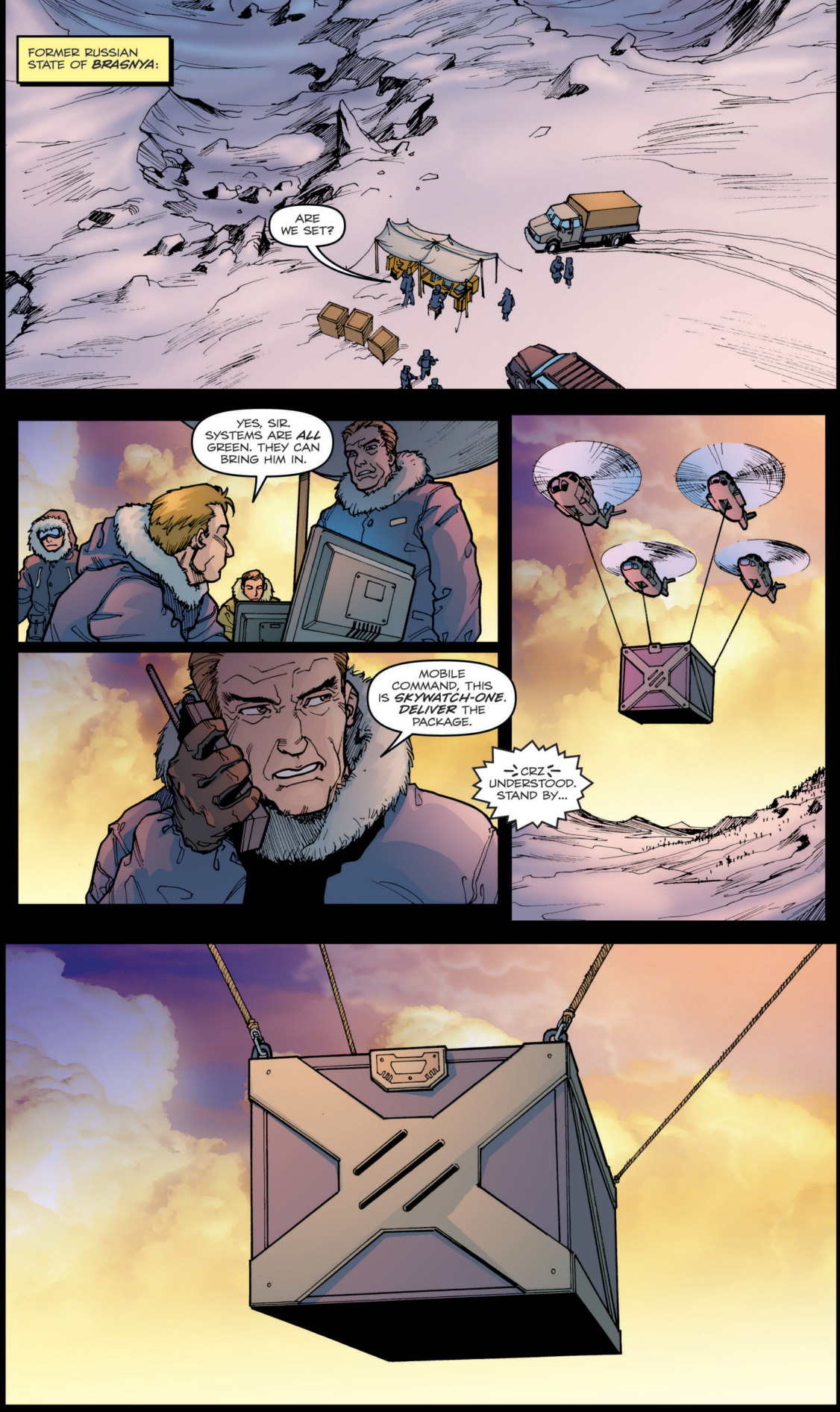

WELL THEN, GIVEN THAT IT'S NOW... 5:17 A.M....
...WE'RE HARDLY, ER, *PRESSED* FOR TIME!
STILL... ANY EXCUSE! C'MON, WHEELJACK...
MPH
65


30
"...LET'S *BURN*!"


RECOMMENDATIONS?
MOVE ARK-19. I'VE LOCKED OUT THE SIGNAL, BUT OUR POSITION HERE IS WELL AND TRULY COMPROMISED.
AGREED. PROWL...
I'LL MAKE THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS, PRIME.
GOOD. BUT I WANT US PROACTIVE AS WELL AS REACTIVE. BUMBLEBEE, THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WE CAN DO BY WAY OF A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE.
...
MAYBE. YEAH. I COULD TRY LOADING A VIRAL SEEKER PROGRAM ONTO THE HOMING SIGNAL FREQUENCY AND BACKTRACK THEM VIA THEIR OWN TECH.
DO IT.
WE'VE BEEN ON THE DEFENSIVE LONG ENOUGH. IT'S HIGH TIME... WE KICKED BACK!

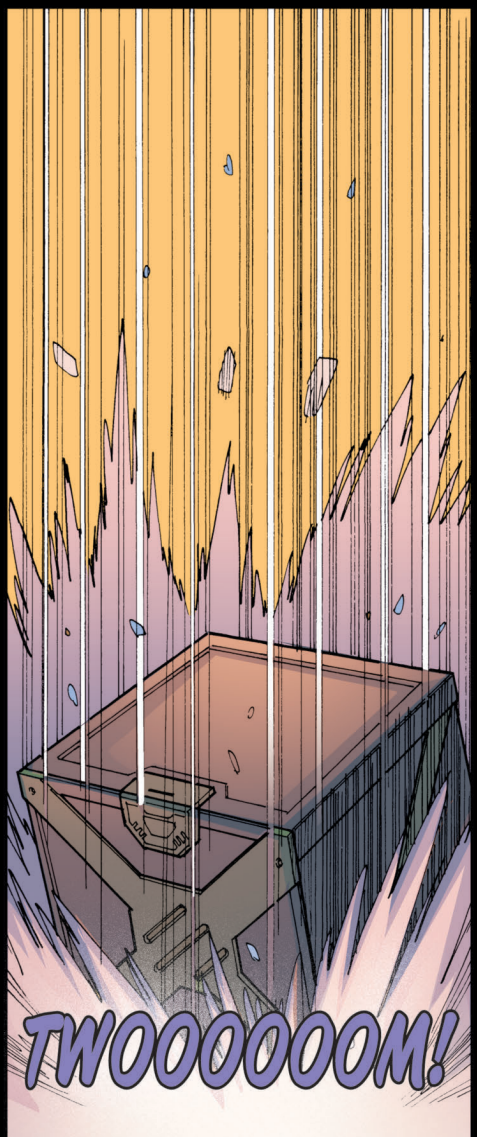

DECEPTICON COMMAND BUNKER, OREGON:
YOU UNDERSTAND... I WANT THEM HUNTED DOWN, ERADICATED!
I WANT... DEVASTATION!
I GET THAT, MEGATRON. IT'S JUST...
...I'M MORE OF A PHASE SIX KIND OF 'BOT.
SHAPE THIS PLANET'S IN, IT DOESN'T LOOK MORE THAN THE EARLY STAGES OF PHASE TWO TO ME.
YOU SURE YOU WANT ME OUT THERE DOING WHAT I DO, HOW I DO IT? IT'S JUST, WHEN I'M DONE... THEY'LL KNOW IT!
I NO LONGER CARE. WE ARE BEYOND THE STRUCTURE OF PHASES HERE. TWO, THREE... IT BARELY MATTERS ANY MORE.
THESE ARE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, SIXSHOT, AND AS SUCH REQUIRE...
...EXTREME MEASURES!


OKAY.
JUST *POINT* ME AND *PULL* THE TRIGGER...
WHAT'S *HE* DOING HERE? *NOW*?
RIGHT. A WHOLE LOT OF CAREFUL, BY-THE-NUMBERS STRATEGY IS ABOUT TO JUST FALL APART!
MEGATRON'S *LOST* IT. BIG TIME!
APART FROM RUINING EVERYTHING?
I *KNOW*. BUT IS ANYONE HERE ACTUALLY WILLING TO TELL HIM THAT?
NO. I DIDN'T THINK SO.
BUT I KNOW WHO *MIGHT*.

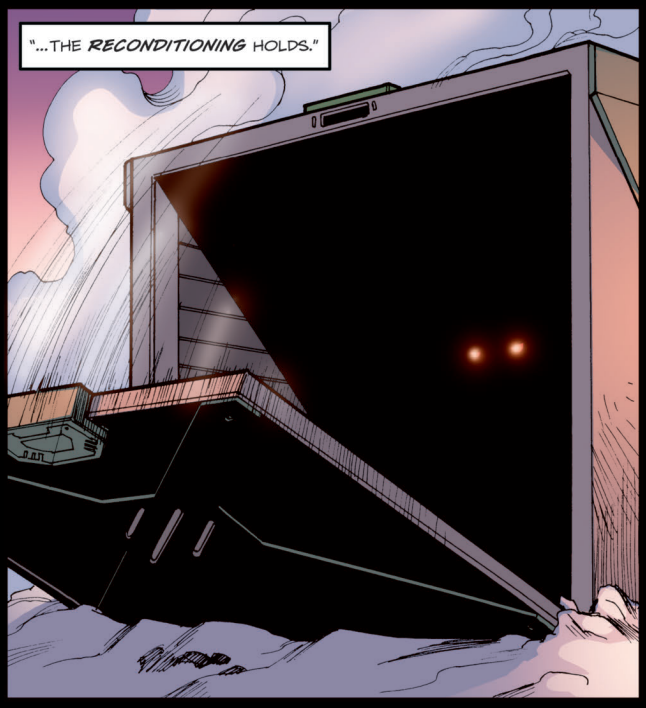

FORMER RUSSIAN STATE OF BRASNYA:
ARE WE SET?
YES, SIR. SYSTEMS ARE ALL GREEN. THEY CAN BRING HIM IN.
MOBILE COMMAND, THIS IS SKYWATCH-ONE. DELIVER THE PACKAGE.
-=CRZ=- UNDERSTOOD. STAND BY...

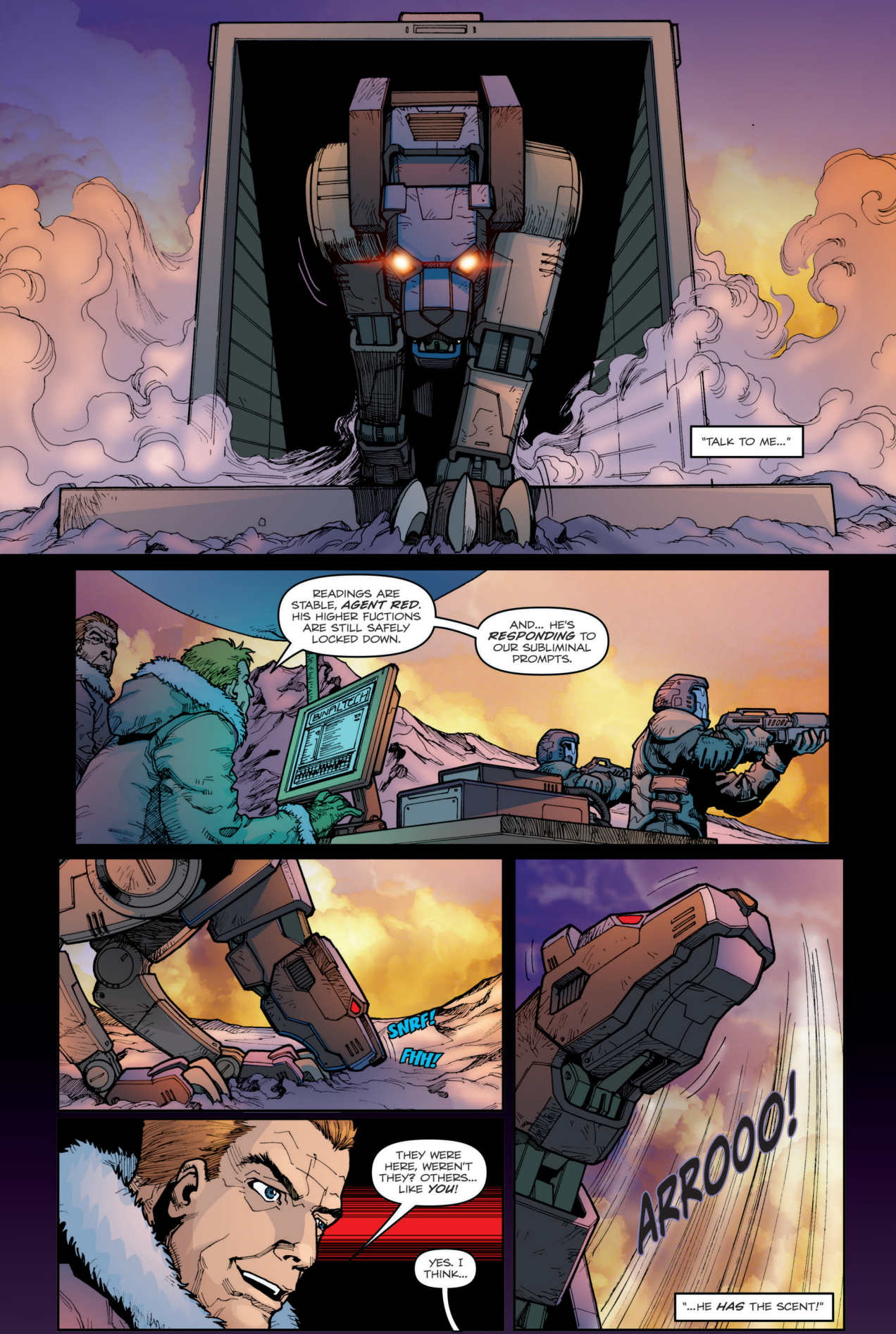

TWENTY-TWO YEARS IN THE MAKING...
SIR?
NEVER MIND.



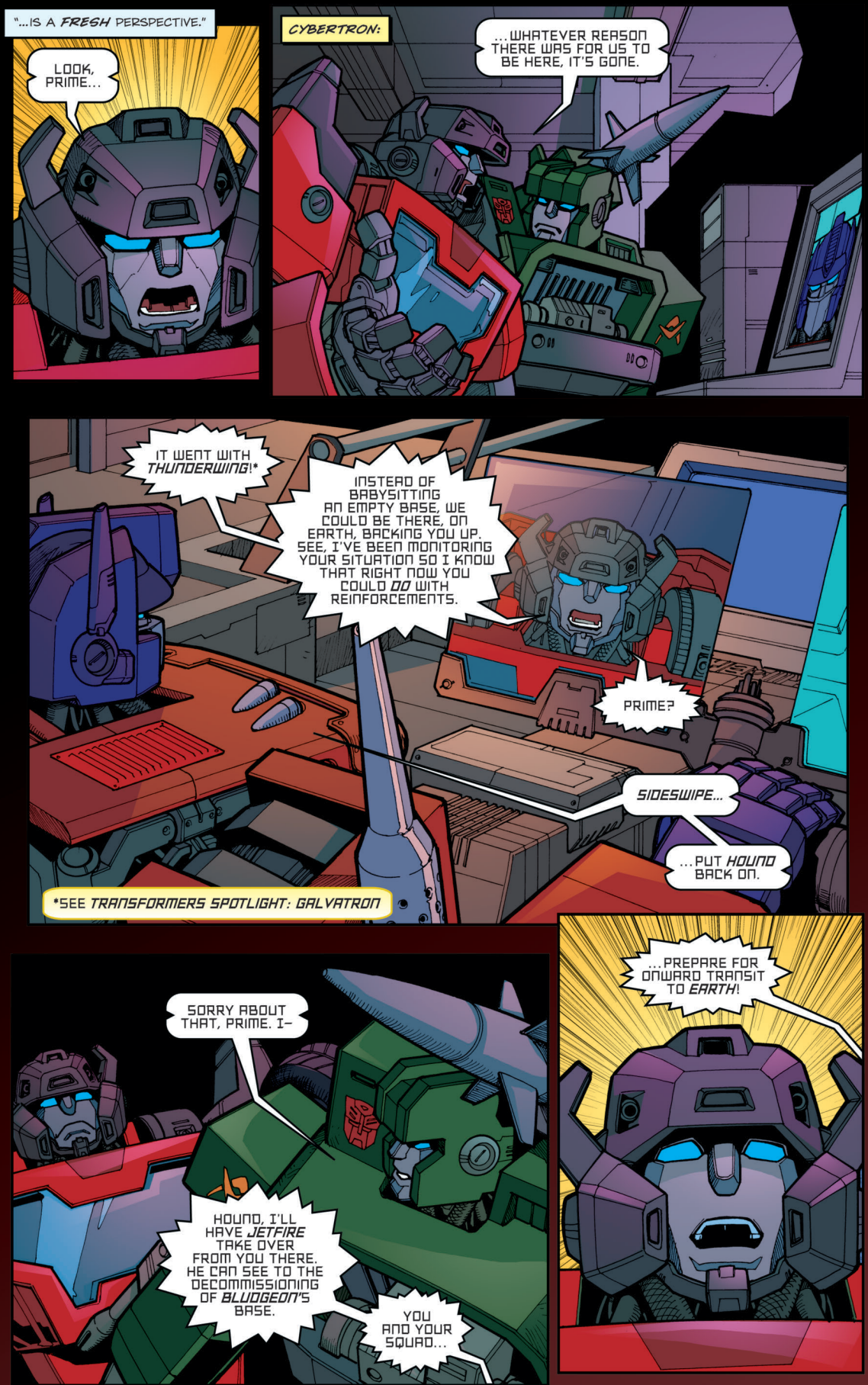

TWOOOOOOM!


RELEASE THE MAGNO-SEALS AND PRAY TO GOD...

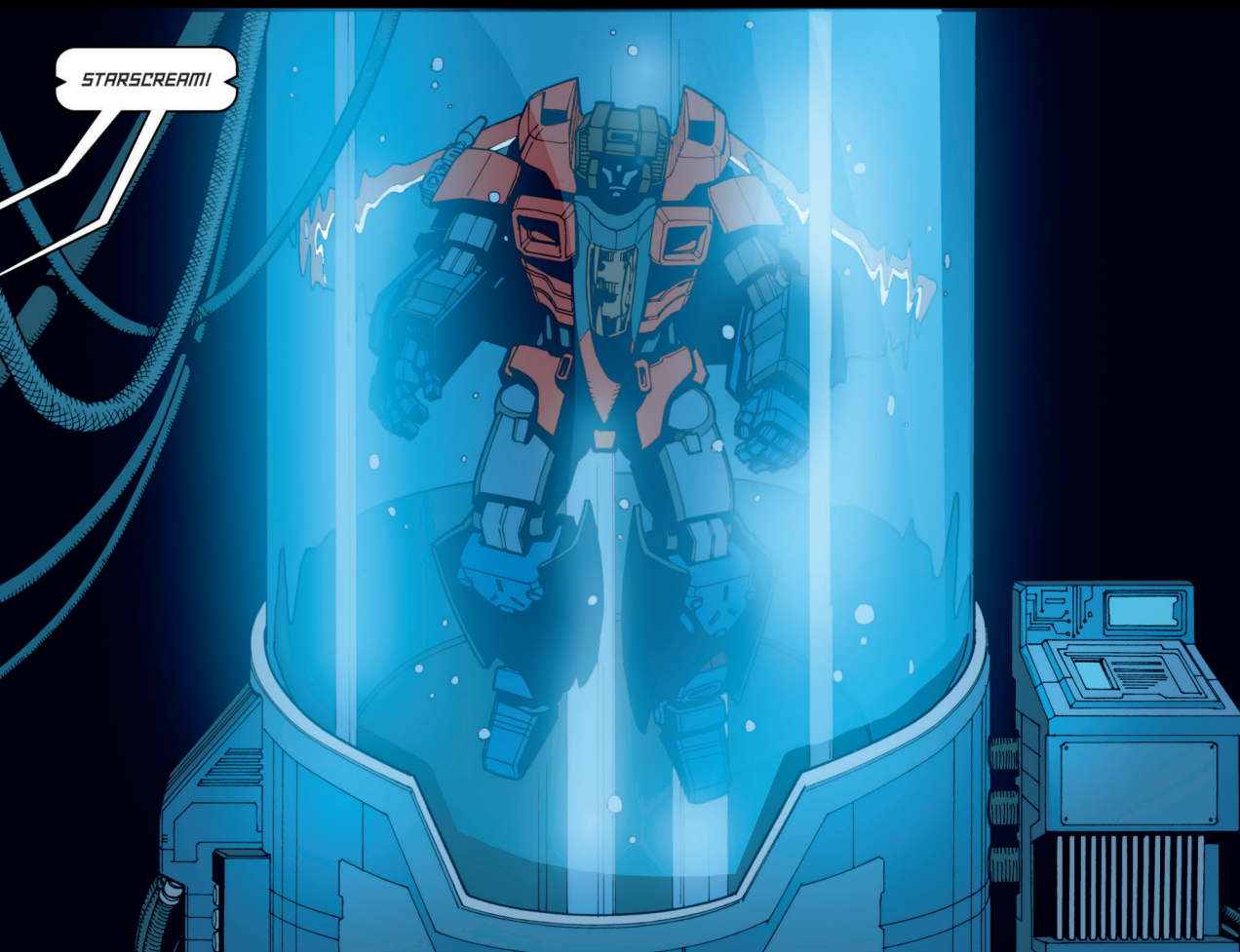

"...THE RECONDITIONING HOLDS."


"TALK TO ME..."
READINGS ARE STABLE, AGENT RED. HIS HIGHER FUCTIONS ARE STILL SAFELY LOCKED DOWN.
AND... HE'S RESPONDING TO OUR SUBLIMINAL PROMPTS.
SNRF!
FHH!
THEY WERE HERE, WEREN'T THEY? OTHERS... LIKE YOU!
YES. I THINK...
ARROOO!
"...HE HAS THE SCENT!"

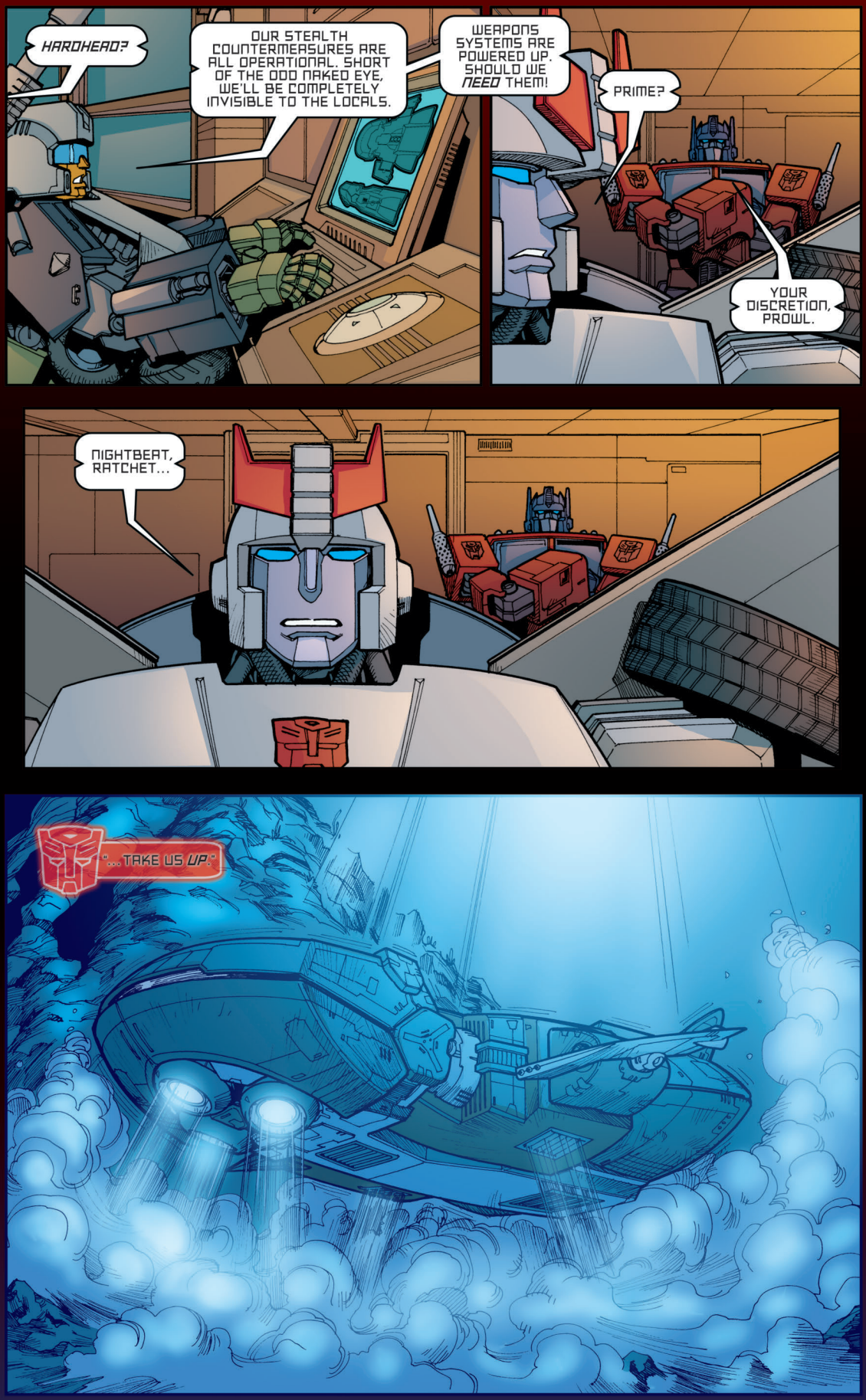

ARK-19:
LOOK, JAZZ...
...ALL WE WANT TO KNOW IS WHAT'S BEING DONE TO FIND HUNTER AND SUNSTREAKER. BECAUSE, FROM WHERE WE'RE STANDING...
...IT LOOKS DISTINCTLY LIKE NOTHING.
CAN'T STOP. SORRY. THINGS TO DO...
BUT–
JIMMY, VERITY–I PROMISE YOU, I'LL FIND OUT. JUST... NOT RIGHT NOW. AND, FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY, THIS...
"...IS AS FAR YOU GO!"
GREAT. FIRST RATCHET, NOW JAZZ. WE'RE BEING STONEWALLED.
I THINK WHAT WE NEED HERE...


"...IS A FRESH PERSPECTIVE."
LOOK, PRIME...
CYBERTRON:
...WHATEVER REASON THERE WAS FOR US TO BE HERE, IT'S GONE.
IT WENT WITH THUNDERWING!*
INSTEAD OF BABYSITTING AN EMPTY BASE, WE COULD BE THERE, ON EARTH, BACKING YOU UP. SEE, I'VE BEEN MONITORING YOUR SITUATION SO I KNOW THAT RIGHT NOW YOU COULD DO WITH REINFORCEMENTS.
PRIME?
SIDESWIPE...
...PUT HOUND BACK ON.
*SEE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: GALVATRON
SORRY ABOUT THAT, PRIME. I–
HOUND, I'LL HAVE JETFIRE TAKE OVER FROM YOU THERE. HE CAN SEE TO THE DECOMMISSIONING OF BLUDGEON'S BASE.
YOU AND YOUR SQUAD...
...PREPARE FOR ONWARD TRANSIT TO EARTH!

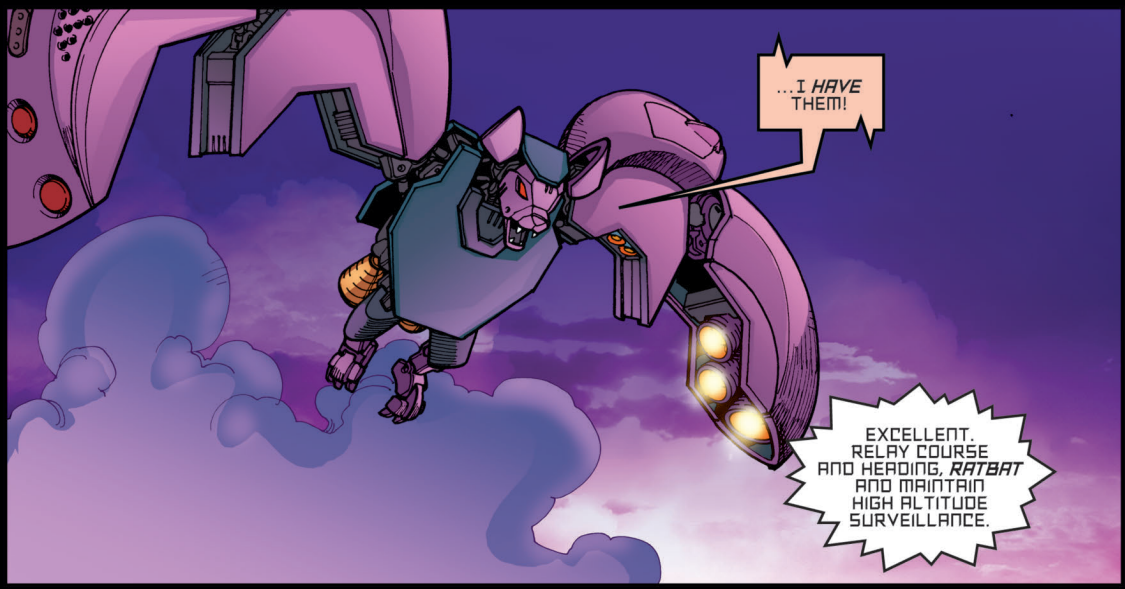

OREGON (DECEPTICON COMMAND BUNKER):
YOU *SURE* ABOUT THIS?
NO. BUT I DON'T SEE ANOTHER OPTION.
IF HE SO MUCH AS SUSPECTS WE'VE BEEN IN THERE, WE'RE DEAD. WE'RE NOT EVEN SUPPOSED TO MENTION HIS *NAME*.
THEN I GUESS *THIS*...
...IS THE POINT OF NO RETURN!
SAY IT. SAY THE NAME...


STARSCREAM!

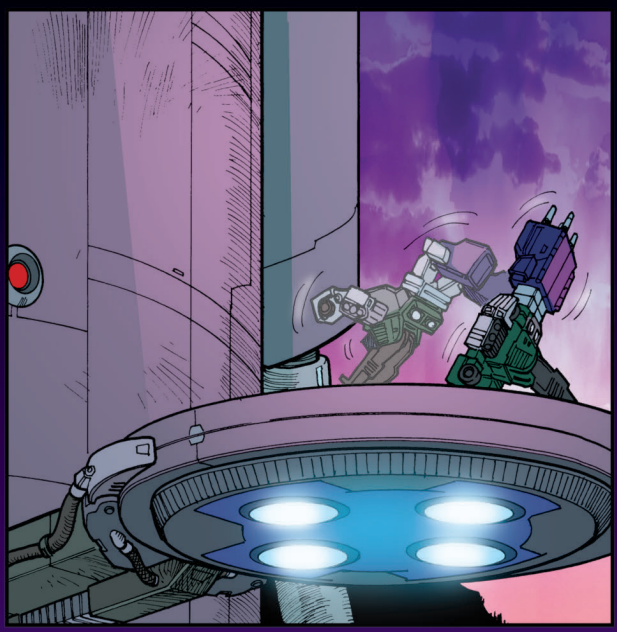

LAKE MICHIGAN:
"JAZZ?"
MANEUVERING THRUSTERS ARE SHOWING MAXIMUM LIFT POTENTIAL. MAIN ENGINES ARE ON STANDBY.
WE'RE POWERED UP AND READY TO GO.
GOOD. NIGHTBEAT?
OPTIMUM COURSE PLOTTED AND LOCKED, PROWL. TRANSIT TIME TO THE GULF OF MEXICO IS TEN MINUTES AND SIXTEEN-POINT-TWO SECONDS.
ALL LOCAL FLIGHTPATHS SHOW CLEAR FOR THE DURATION.

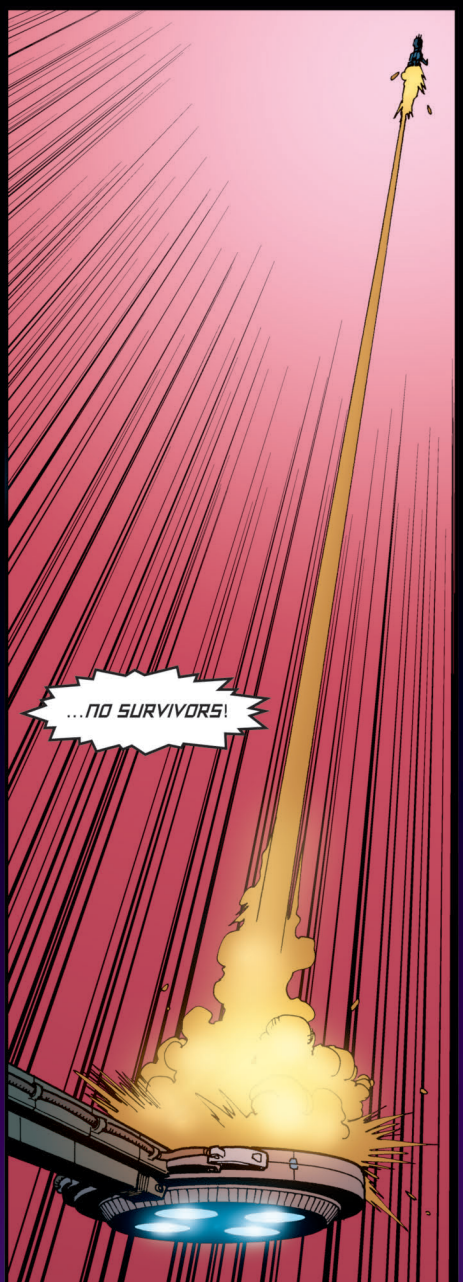

HARDHEAD?
OUR STEALTH COUNTERMEASURES ARE ALL OPERATIONAL. SHORT OF THE ODD NAKED EYE, WE'LL BE COMPLETELY INVISIBLE TO THE LOCALS.
WEAPONS SYSTEMS ARE POWERED UP. SHOULD WE *NEED* THEM!
PRIME?
YOUR DISCRETION, PROWL.
NIGHTBEAT, RATCHET...
"...TAKE US *UP*."


WHUUUM!
BACK
MEGATRON...


...I HAVE THEM!
EXCELLENT. RELAY COURSE AND HEADING, RATBAT AND MAINTAIN HIGH ALTITUDE SURVEILLANCE.

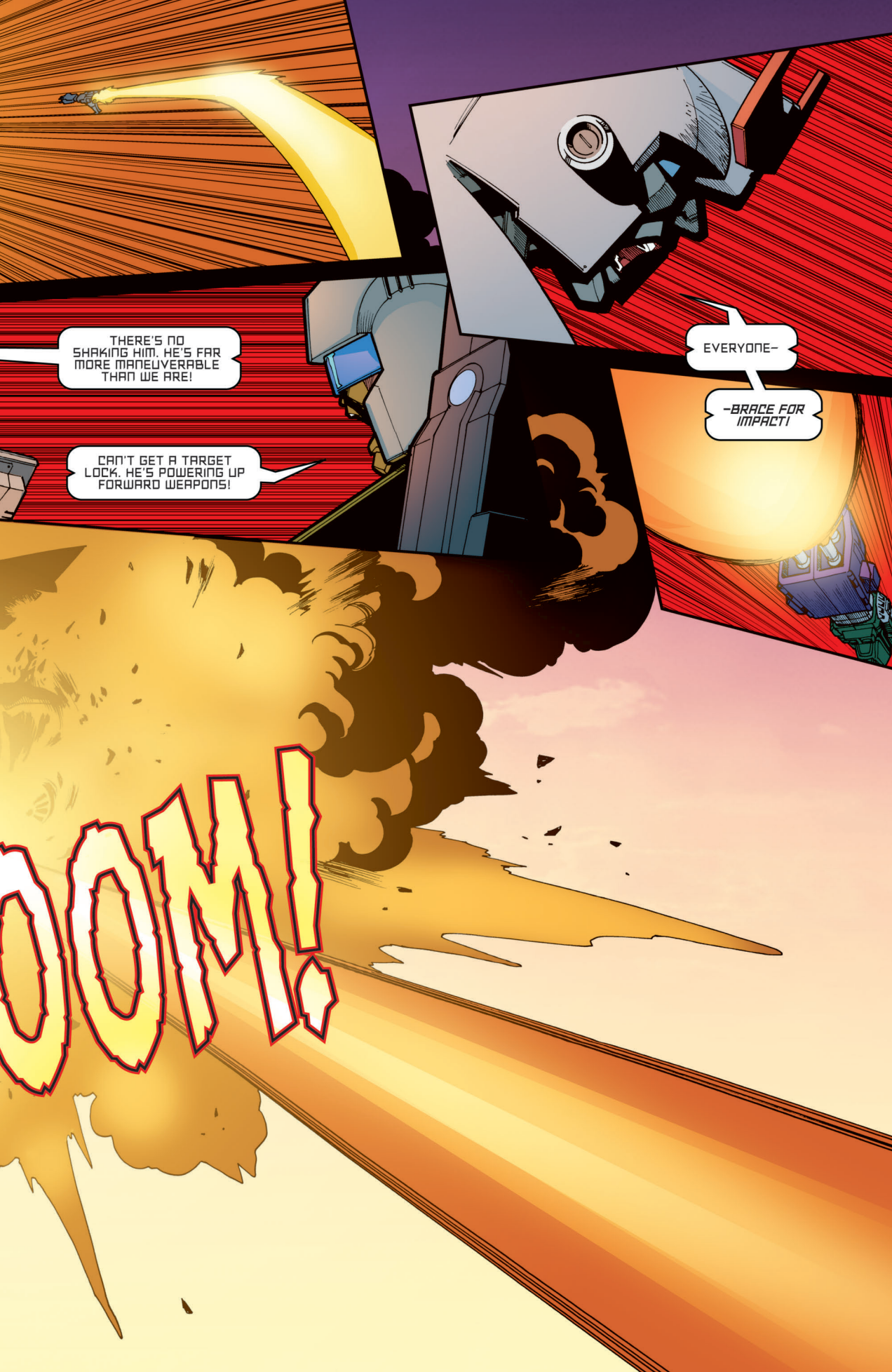

SIXSHOT...



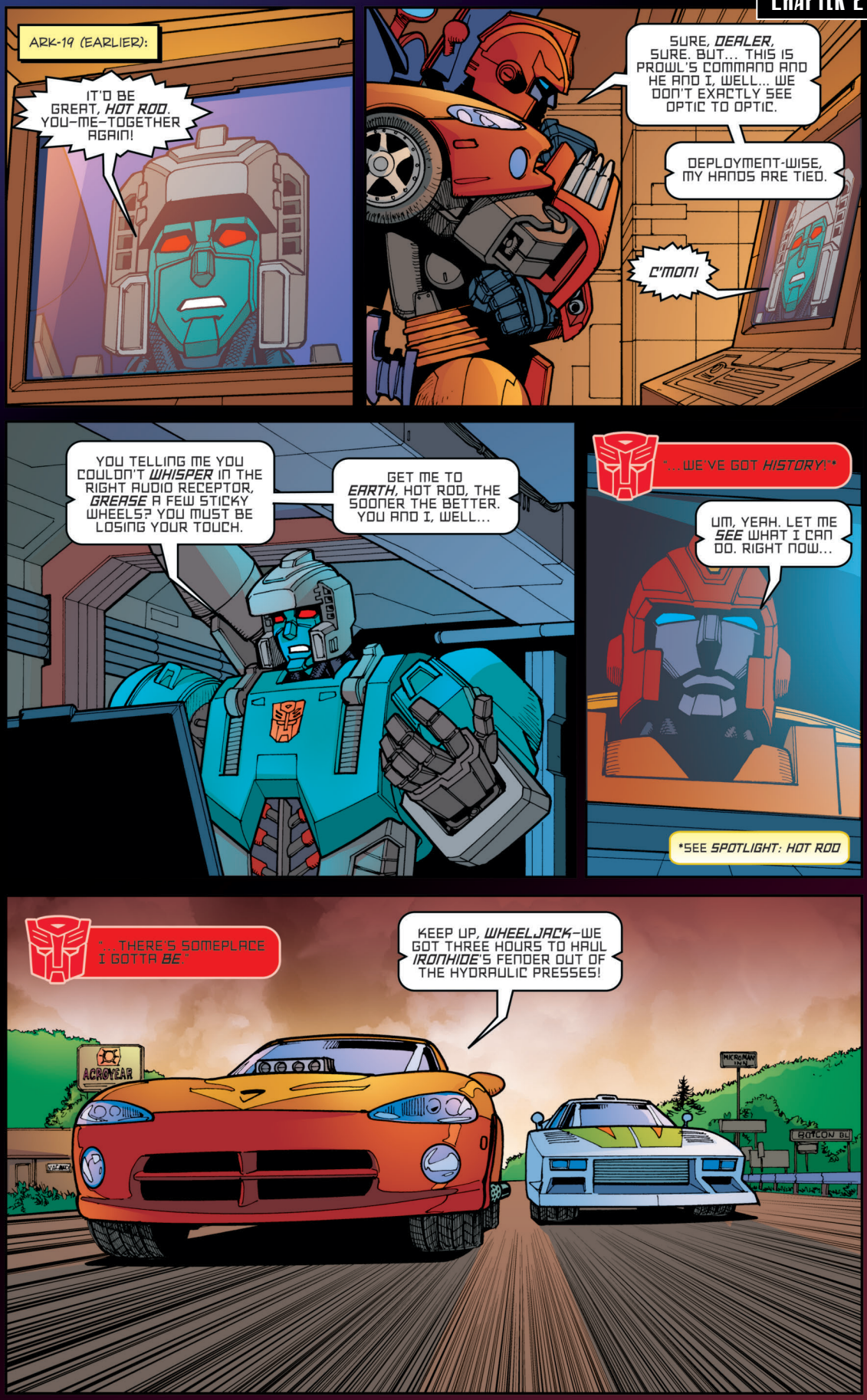

...NO SURVIVORS!


(VICINITY OF) KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE:
SO FAR, SO GOOD. CALL IT, PEOPLE. ALL STATIONS...
CIVILIAN AND MILITARY WAVEBANDS ARE CLEAR. NO RED FLAGS.
FOUR MINUTES AND THIRTY-TWO SECONDS TO DESTINATION.
PLASMA-REACTOR LEVELS WITHIN OPERATIONAL GREEN ZONE. SILENT RUNNING STATUS MAINTAINED.
LOCAL AIRSPACE IS CLEAR. PROXIMITY SENSORS ARE—
—NO, WAIT! INCOMING... FAST... ON A DIRECT INTERCEPT COURSE!
GIVE ME A VISUAL!


OH... FRAG! WHERE'D HE COME FROM?
EVASIVE–NOW!
BARRAKOO

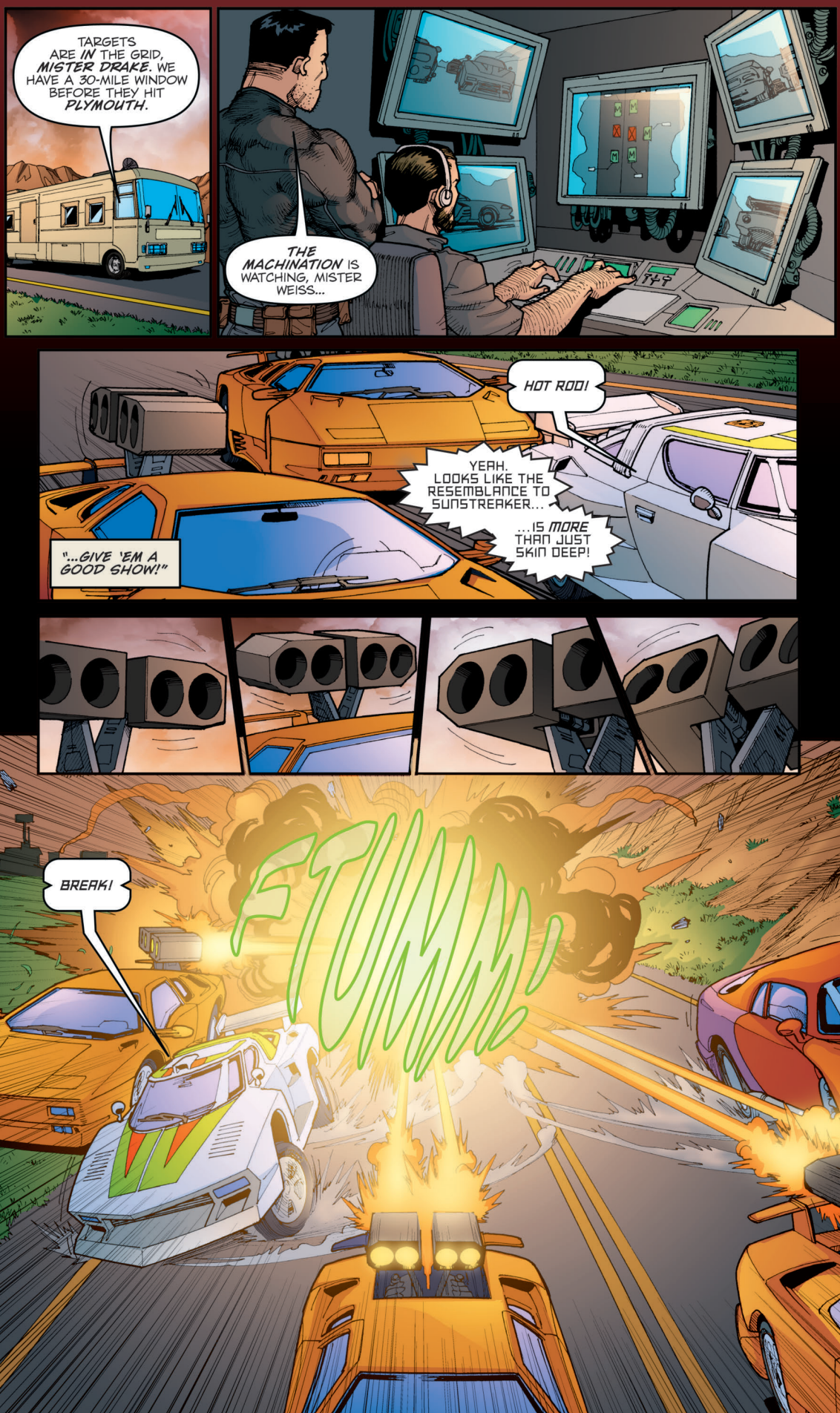

THERE'S NO SHAKING HIM. HE'S FAR MORE MANEUVERABLE THAN WE ARE!
CAN'T GET A TARGET LOCK. HE'S POWERING UP FORWARD WEAPONS!
EVERYONE–
–BRACE FOR IMPACT!
OOM!


DOOOM!


ARK-19 (EARLIER):
IT'D BE GREAT, HOT ROD. YOU-ME-TOGETHER AGAIN!
SURE, DEALER, SURE. BUT... THIS IS PROWL'S COMMAND AND HE AND I, WELL... WE DON'T EXACTLY SEE OPTIC TO OPTIC.
DEPLOYMENT-WISE, MY HANDS ARE TIED.
C'MON!
YOU TELLING ME YOU COULDN'T WHISPER IN THE RIGHT AUDIO RECEPTOR, GREASE A FEW STICKY WHEELS? YOU MUST BE LOSING YOUR TOUCH.
GET ME TO EARTH, HOT ROD, THE SOONER THE BETTER. YOU AND I, WELL...
"...WE'VE GOT HISTORY!"*
UM, YEAH. LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN DO. RIGHT NOW...
*SEE SPOTLIGHT: HOT ROD
"...THERE'S SOMEPLACE I GOTTA BE."
KEEP UP, WHEELJACK—WE GOT THREE HOURS TO HAUL IRONHIDE'S FENDER OUT OF THE HYDRAULIC PRESSES!
ACROYEAR
MICRONAN INN
BOYCON BL


WHICH IS *PLENTY* OF TIME. SO LET'S KEEP IT A MITE CLOSER TO THE SPEED LIMIT, EH? AND, HOT ROD...
...INITIALIZE YOUR HOLO-DRIVER.
SURE, I CAN DO THAT...
AS FOR THE SPEED LIMIT, IT'S NOT LIKE THERE'S ANYONE MUCH ELSE ON THE ROAD AT THIS HOU-
WHAT THE-?
RRRAW!
RRRAW!
DID YOU-?
YEAH...


...AND I WISH I HADN'T!
SUNSTREAKER? NO.
SUNSTREAKERS!

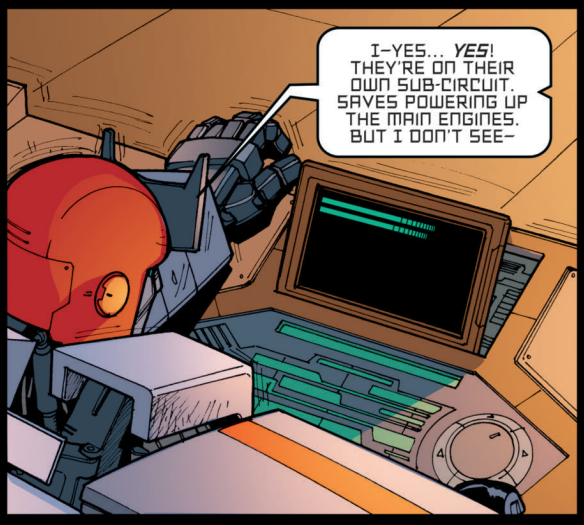

TARGETS ARE *IN* THE GRID, *MISTER DRAKE*. WE HAVE A 30-MILE WINDOW BEFORE THEY HIT *PLYMOUTH*.
THE MACHINATION IS WATCHING, MISTER WEISS...
HOT ROD!
YEAH. LOOKS LIKE THE RESEMBLANCE TO SUNSTREAKER...
...IS *MORE* THAN JUST SKIN DEEP!
"...GIVE 'EM A GOOD SHOW!"
BREAK!
FUMM!


WE NEED TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN THEM AND US.
SKRANG!
WHY?
I VOTE WE STICK AROUND AND SHOW THESE PALE IMITATIONS HOW TO FIGHT FIRE...
SCREEE!
...WITH FIRE!
FUUH!
BECAUSE...
CHNK!
...WHAT'S TO SAY ONE OF THEM ISN'T THE REAL SUNSTREAKER?
ARK-19 (NOW)...
SIT-REP!


HELM IS NON-FUNCTIONAL. ATTITUDE, GUIDANCE, NAVIGATIONAL INTERFACE... THEY'RE ALL *SHOT*!
MAIN ENGINES ARE JUST *GONE*. IT'S A MIRACLE WE'RE STILL IN ONE PIECE!
FIND ME *SOMETHING*, SOMEWHERE, SOME SPARK OF RESERVE POWER.
MAIN GRID IS DOWN, LOCKED OUT. NO JUICE WHATSOEVER.
WE'RE DEAD IN THE AIR.
AND WE'RE *VISIBLE*! ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE HAS JUST GONE TO FULL ALERT!
TIME TO IMPACT?


"FIFTY-TWO SECONDS."


RATCHET–DO WE STILL HAVE MANEUVERING THRUSTERS?


I–YES... YES! THEY'RE ON THEIR OWN SUB-CIRCUIT. SAVES POWERING UP THE MAIN ENGINES. BUT I DON'T SEE–


CHARGE THE FORWARD ARRAY ONLY AND GET OUR NOSE UP!
NIGHTBEAT–DISTANCE TO THIS LANDMASS' NEAREST COASTLINE?

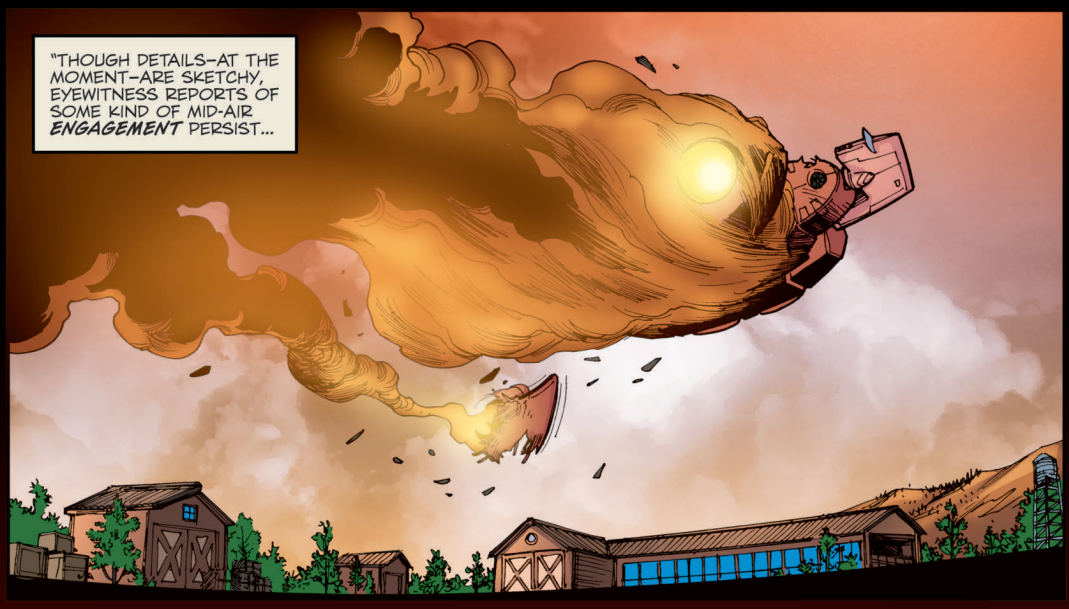

UM. WELL, INSTRUMENTATION IS DOWN. BUT BASED ON LAST POSITION AND COURSE, I...
NIGHTBEAT. BEST ESTIMATE!
YES. OF COURSE... APPROXIMATELY 200 MILES!

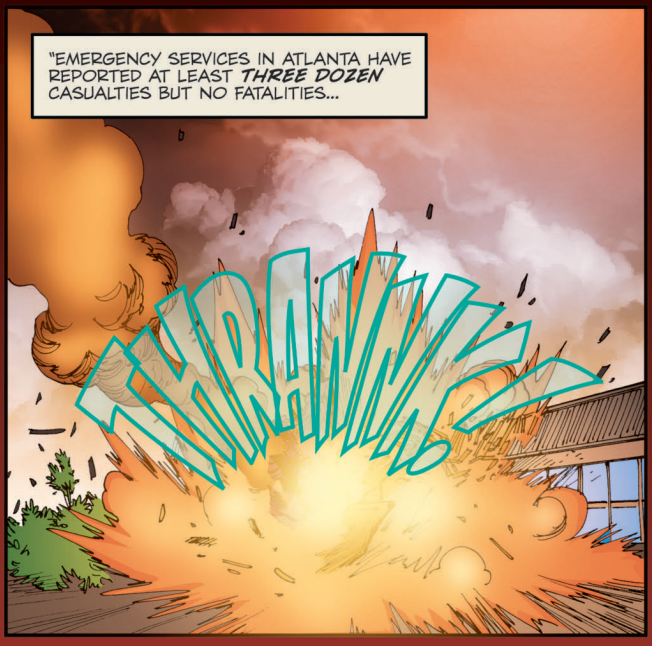

"WELL, THEN..."
"...THAT'S GOING TO BE CUTTING IT *VERY* FINE."
WAROOO


OOOM!

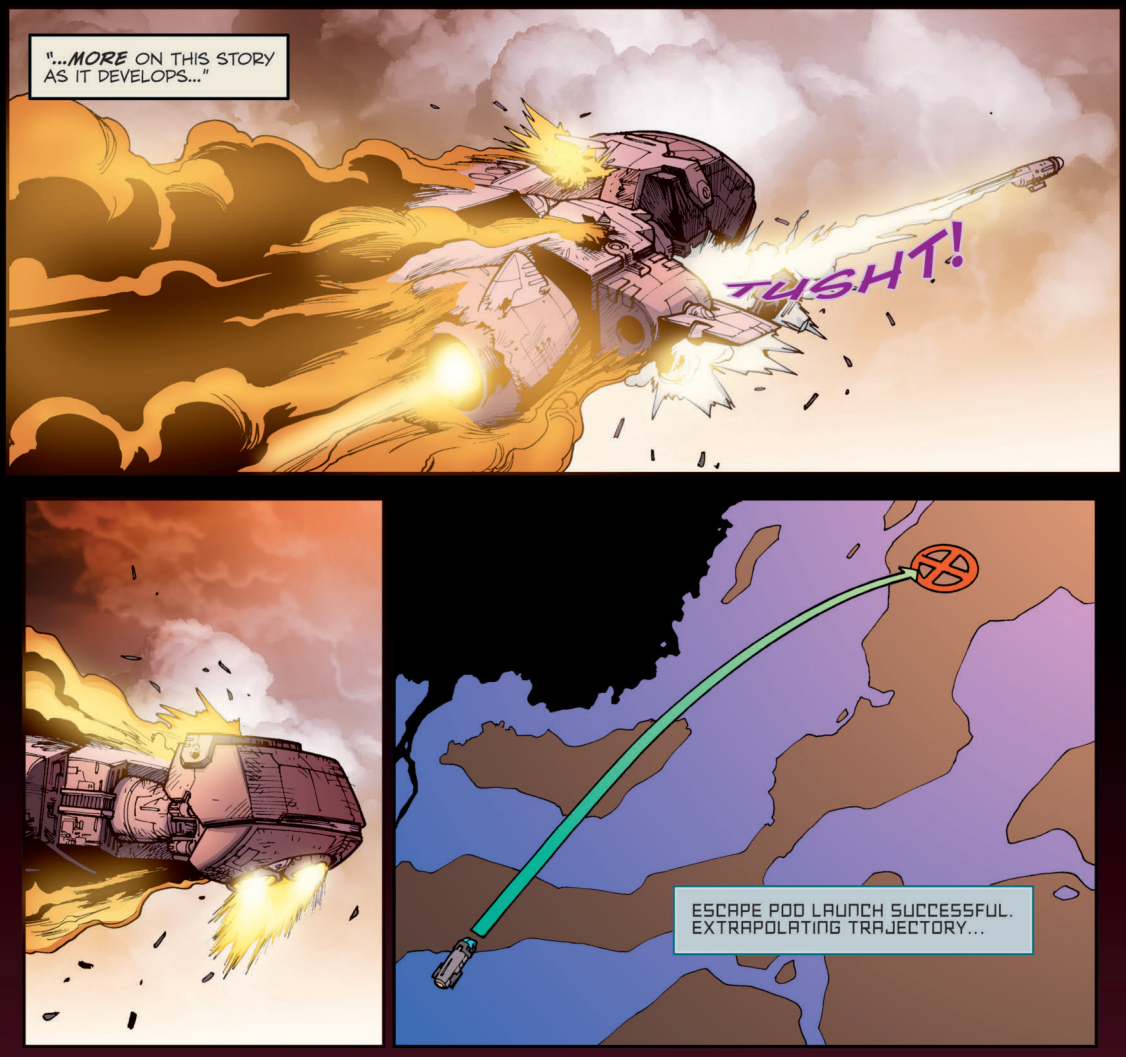

RATCHET–GET THE HUMANS TO AN ESCAPE POD. GO *WITH* THEM.
NIGHTBEAT–*ZIP* ALL THE DATA IN THE MAINFRAME AND TRANSFER TO *ARK-32*.
PROWL–


–*NOTHING* MUST SURVIVE THE CRASH!


"THOUGH DETAILS–AT THE MOMENT–ARE SKETCHY, EYEWITNESS REPORTS OF SOME KIND OF MID-AIR *ENGAGEMENT* PERSIST...


"EMERGENCY SERVICES IN ATLANTA HAVE REPORTED AT LEAST *THREE DOZEN* CASUALTIES BUT NO FATALITIES...
KRAAK

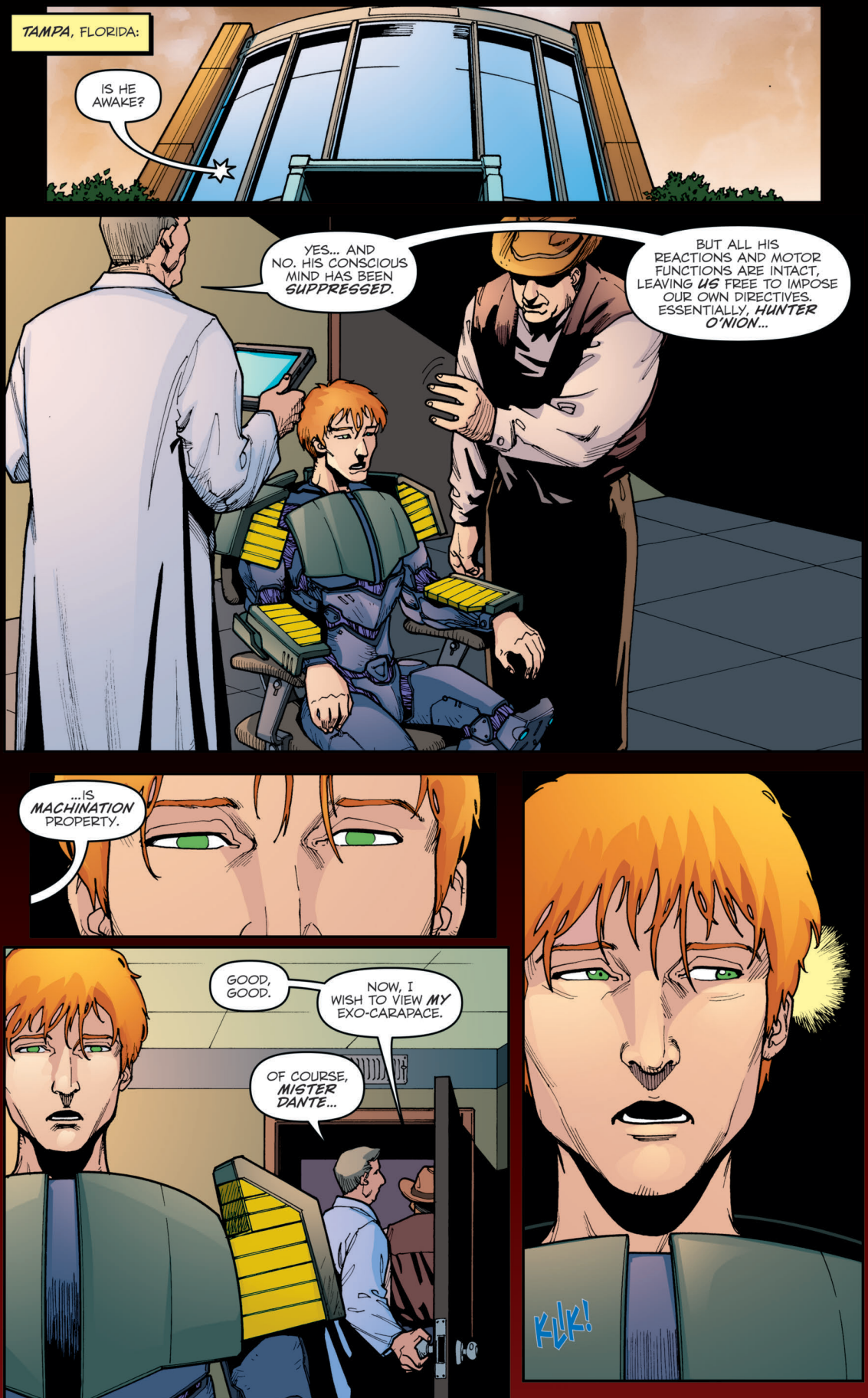

"...A WHITE HOUSE SPOKESPERSON REFUSED TO CONFIRM OR DENY THAT AIR FORCE FIGHTER JETS HAVE BEEN SCRAMBLED..."

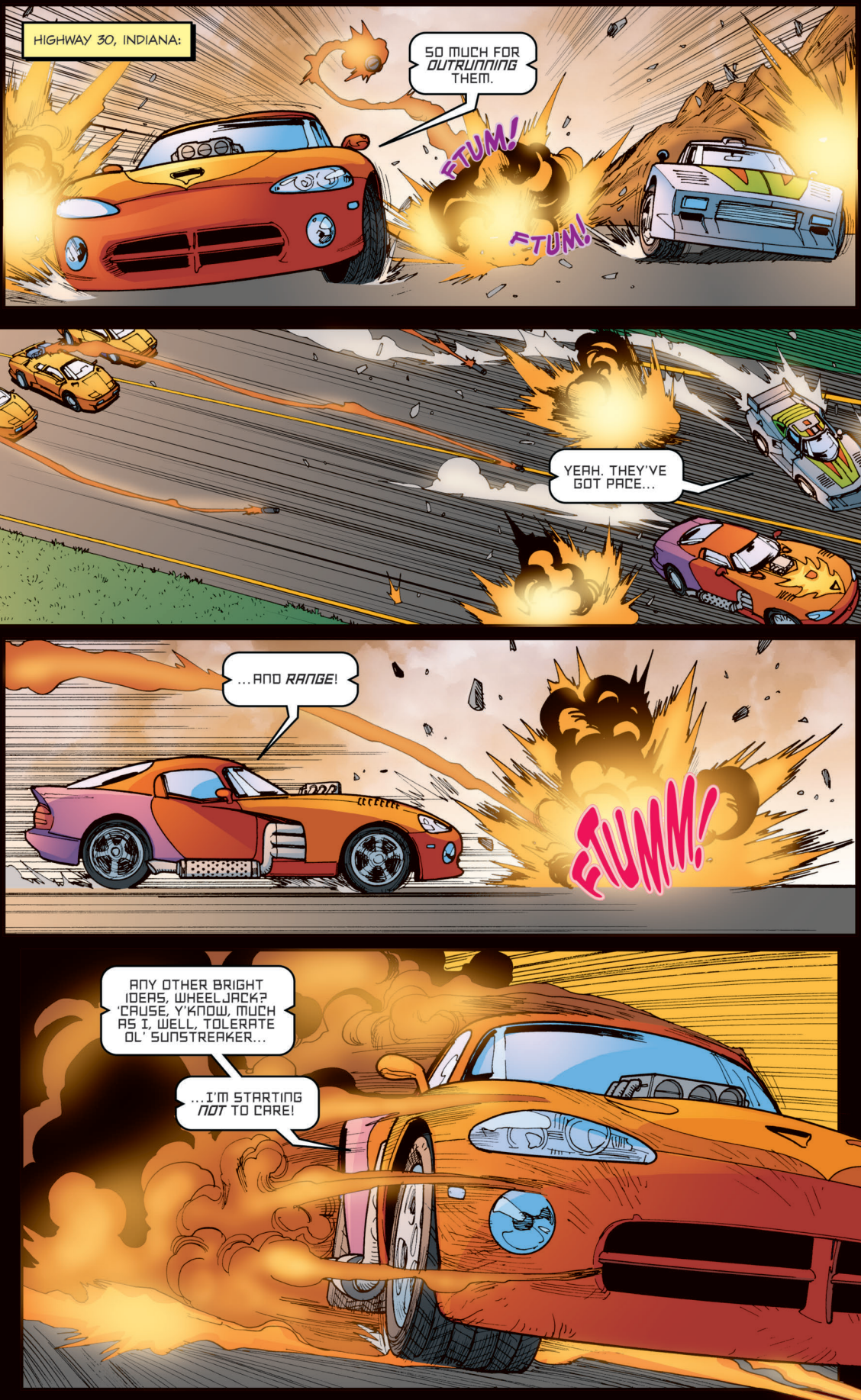

"...MORE ON THIS STORY AS IT DEVELOPS..."
TUSHT!
ESCAPE POD LAUNCH SUCCESSFUL. EXTRAPOLATING TRAJECTORY...
HM.
DISTANCE?

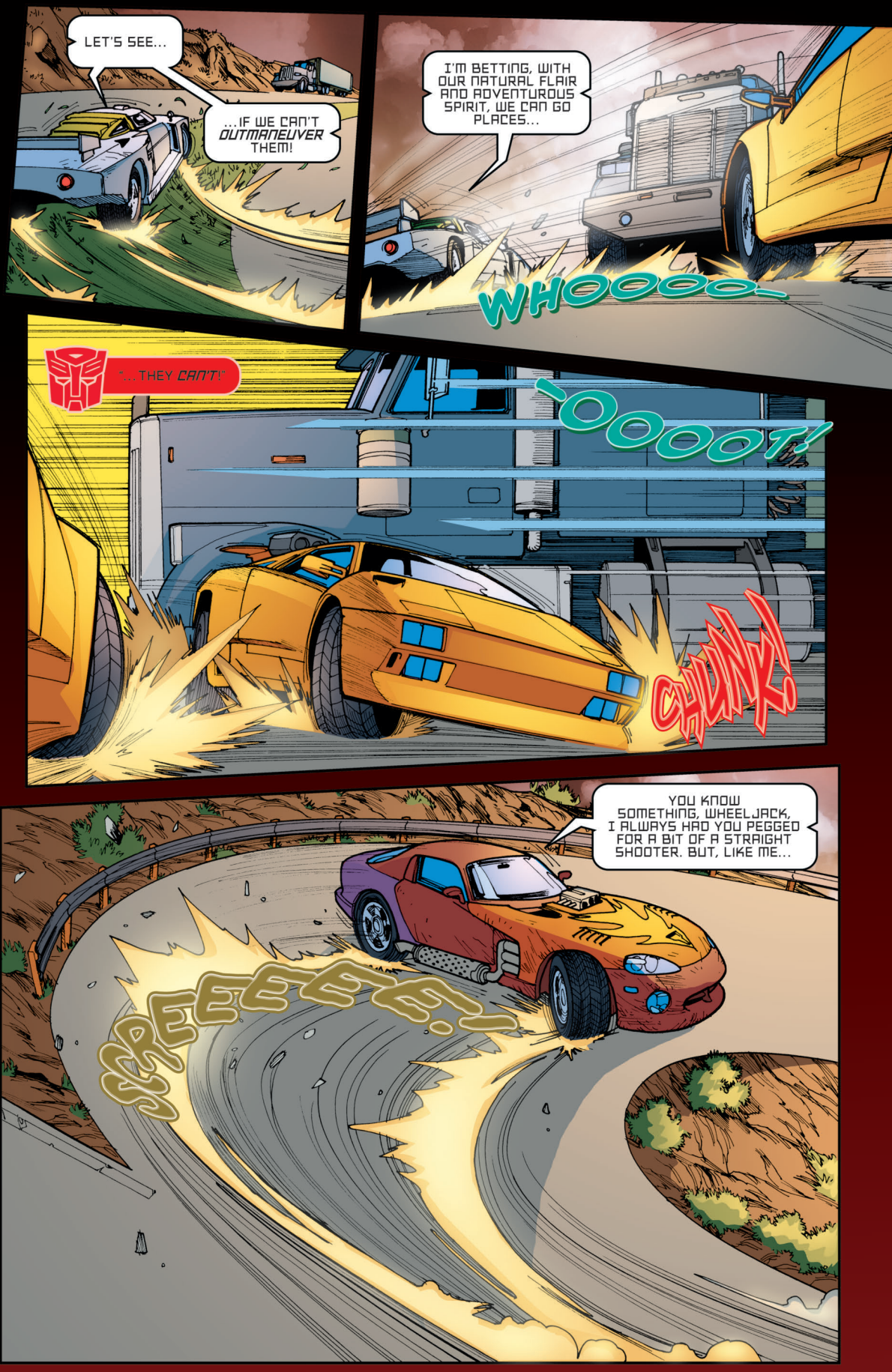

THIRTY-FIVE, FORTY MILES...
RIGHT. GET YOURSELF TO THE CARGO BAY WITH THE OTHERS.
PROWL?
READY. I JUST NEED TO VERIFY THE COMMAND SEQUENCE.
DO IT.
AUTO-DESTRUCT ENGAGED.

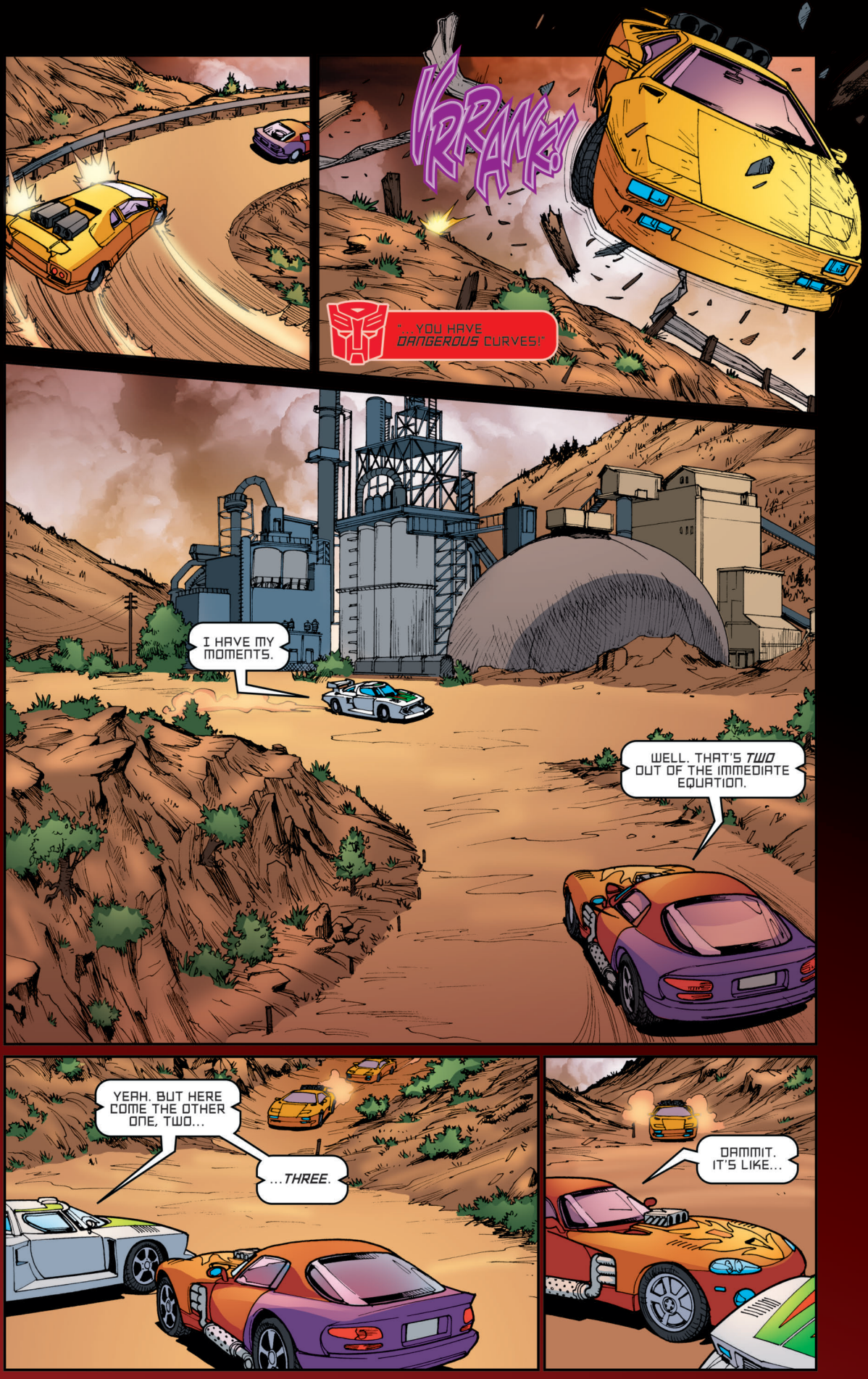

KSPAASHH!!
THA-DOOMM!!
THIS IS SIXSHOT. ARK-19 IS DOWN.
SURVIVORS?


NONE. THOUGH...
...AN ESCAPE POD *WAS* JETTISONED PRIOR TO THE CRASH.
WHOEVER WAS IN IT– *FIND* THEM.
"*KILL* THEM."
LORD *MEGATRON*, I NEED–
DON'T BOTHER ME WITH INCIDENTALS, *ASTROTRAIN*.
WHEN SIXSHOT REPORTS AGAIN... FIND ME.
PSST! ASTROTRAIN.
HE–HE'S *AWAKE*!
BLITZWING? WHAT IS IT?

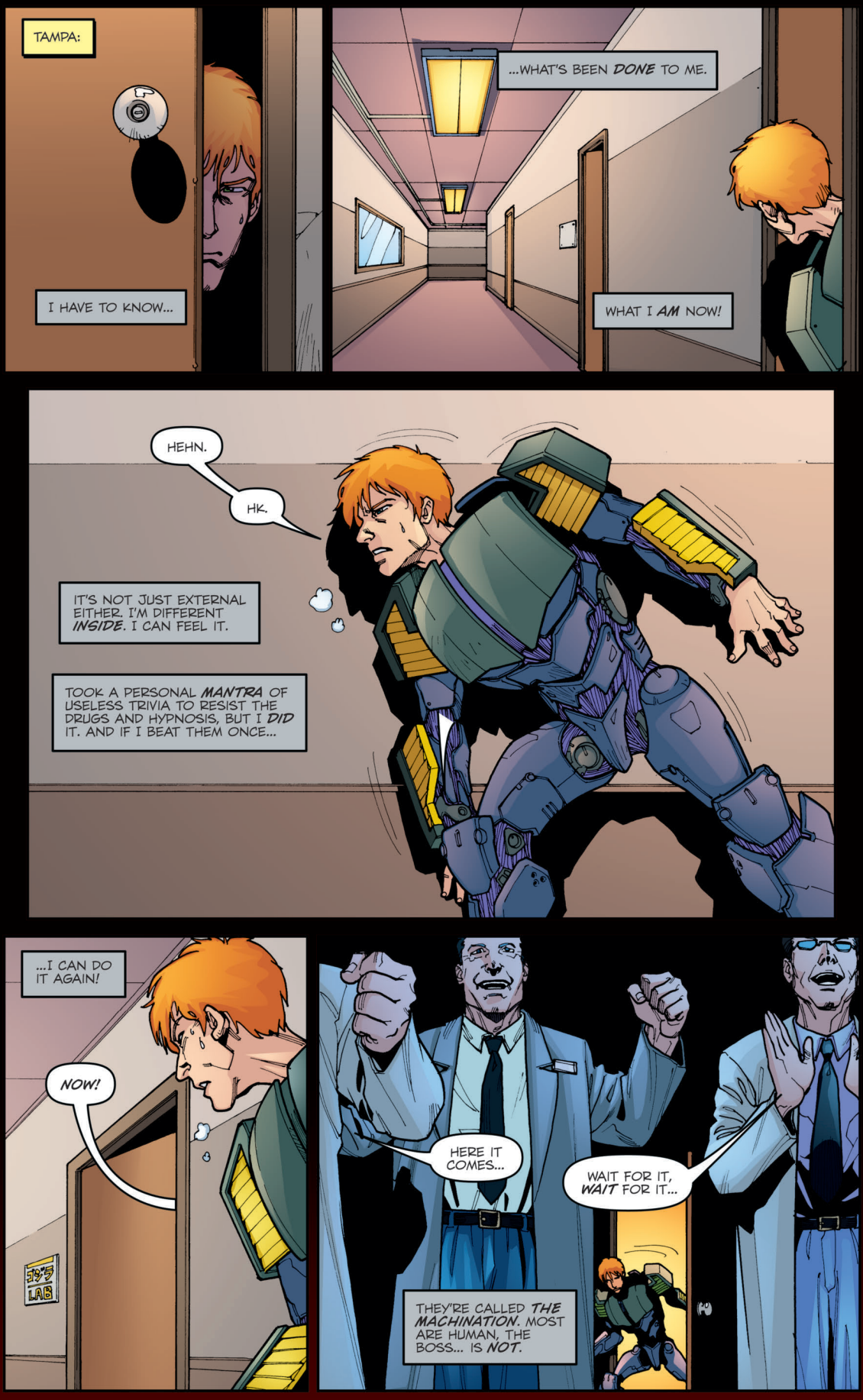

TAMPA, FLORIDA:
IS HE AWAKE?
YES... AND NO. HIS CONSCIOUS MIND HAS BEEN SUPPRESSED.
BUT ALL HIS REACTIONS AND MOTOR FUNCTIONS ARE INTACT, LEAVING US FREE TO IMPOSE OUR OWN DIRECTIVES. ESSENTIALLY, HUNTER O'NION...
...IS MACHINATION PROPERTY.
GOOD, GOOD.
NOW, I WISH TO VIEW MY EXO-CARAPACE.
OF COURSE, MISTER DANTE...
KLIK!


HIGHWAY 30, INDIANA:
SO MUCH FOR *OUTRUNNING* THEM.
FTUM!
FTUM!
YEAH. THEY'VE GOT PACE...
...AND *RANGE*!
FTUMM!
ANY OTHER BRIGHT IDEAS, WHEELJACK? 'CAUSE, Y'KNOW, MUCH AS I, WELL, TOLERATE OL' SUNSTREAKER...
...I'M STARTING *NOT* TO CARE!

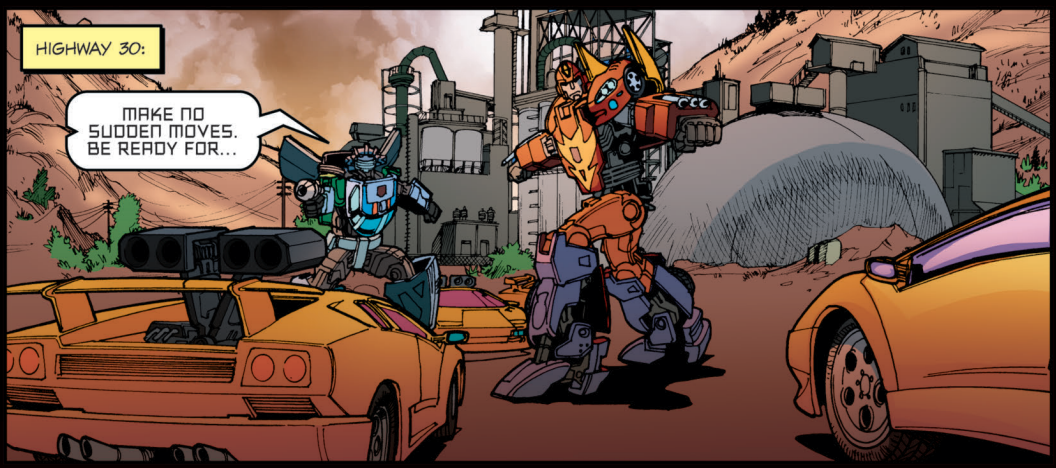

LET'S SEE...
...IF WE CAN'T *OUTMANEUVER* THEM!
I'M BETTING, WITH OUR NATURAL FLAIR AND ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT, WE CAN GO PLACES...
WHOOOOO-
"...THEY *CAN'T*!"
-OOOOT!
CHUNK!
YOU KNOW SOMETHING, WHEELJACK, I ALWAYS HAD YOU PEGGED FOR A BIT OF A STRAIGHT SHOOTER. BUT, LIKE ME...
SCREEEEE!

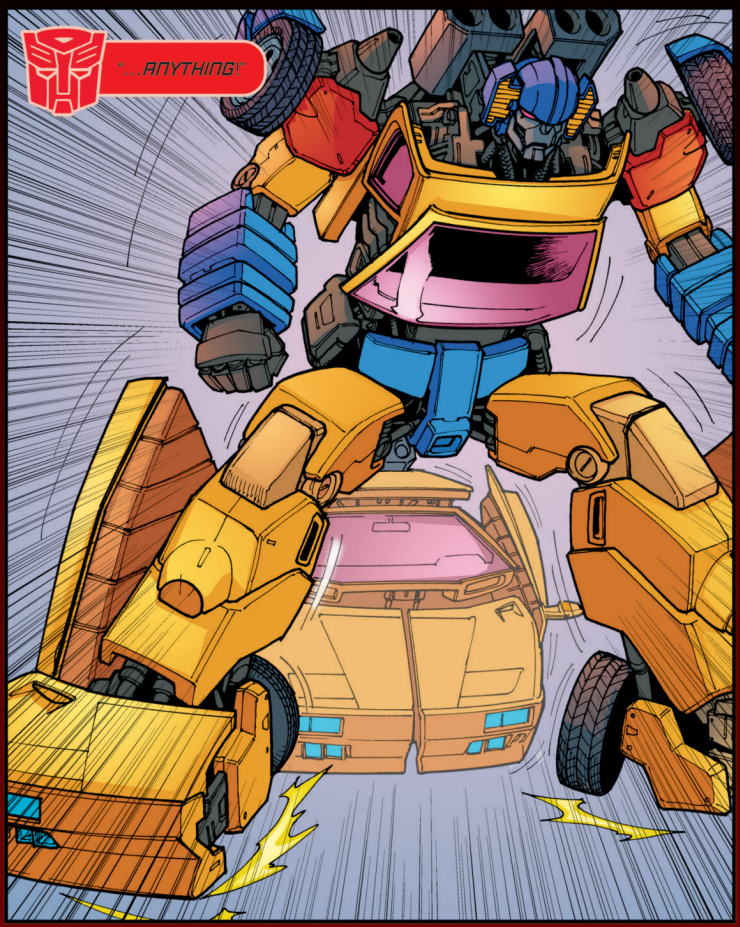

IRRANK!
"...YOU HAVE DANGEROUS CURVES!"
I HAVE MY MOMENTS.
WELL. THAT'S TWO OUT OF THE IMMEDIATE EQUATION.
YEAH. BUT HERE COME THE OTHER ONE, TWO...
...THREE.
DAMMIT. IT'S LIKE...

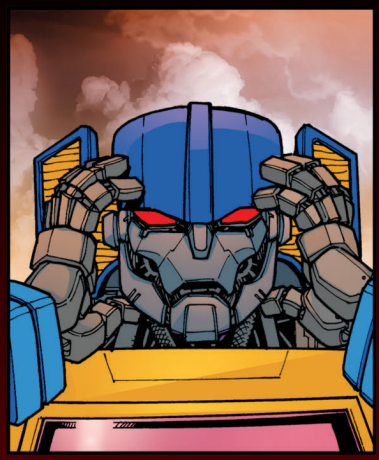

...THEY KNOW HOW WE THINK.
ANTICIPATE EVERY MOVE WE MAKE.
BUT THEY'RE JUST AUTO-PILOTED DRONES, RIGHT?
RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW. THAT'S WHAT I FIGURED, BUT NOW I'M NOT SO SURE! LET'S SEE WHAT THEY DO WHEN WE...
...DO THIS!

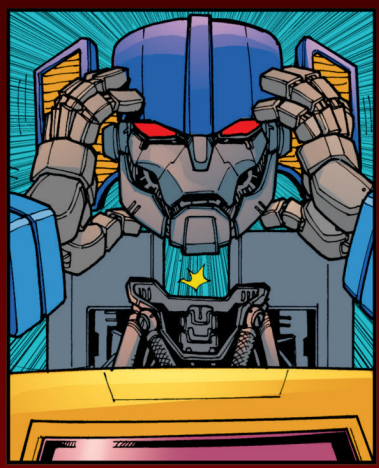

TAMPA:
I HAVE TO KNOW...
...WHAT'S BEEN DONE TO ME.
WHAT I AM NOW!
HEHN.
HK.
IT'S NOT JUST EXTERNAL EITHER. I'M DIFFERENT INSIDE. I CAN FEEL IT.
TOOK A PERSONAL MANTRA OF USELESS TRIVIA TO RESIST THE DRUGS AND HYPNOSIS, BUT I DID IT. AND IF I BEAT THEM ONCE...
...I CAN DO IT AGAIN!
NOW!
LAB
HERE IT COMES...
WAIT FOR IT, WAIT FOR IT...
THEY'RE CALLED THE MACHINATION. MOST ARE HUMAN, THE BOSS... IS NOT.


WHAT IT WANTS IS SOMEHOW CONNECTED TO WHAT'S BEEN DONE TO ME, BUT I DON'T–
HT–
HUNTERRR...


HIGHWAY 30:
MAKE NO SUDDEN MOVES. BE READY FOR...

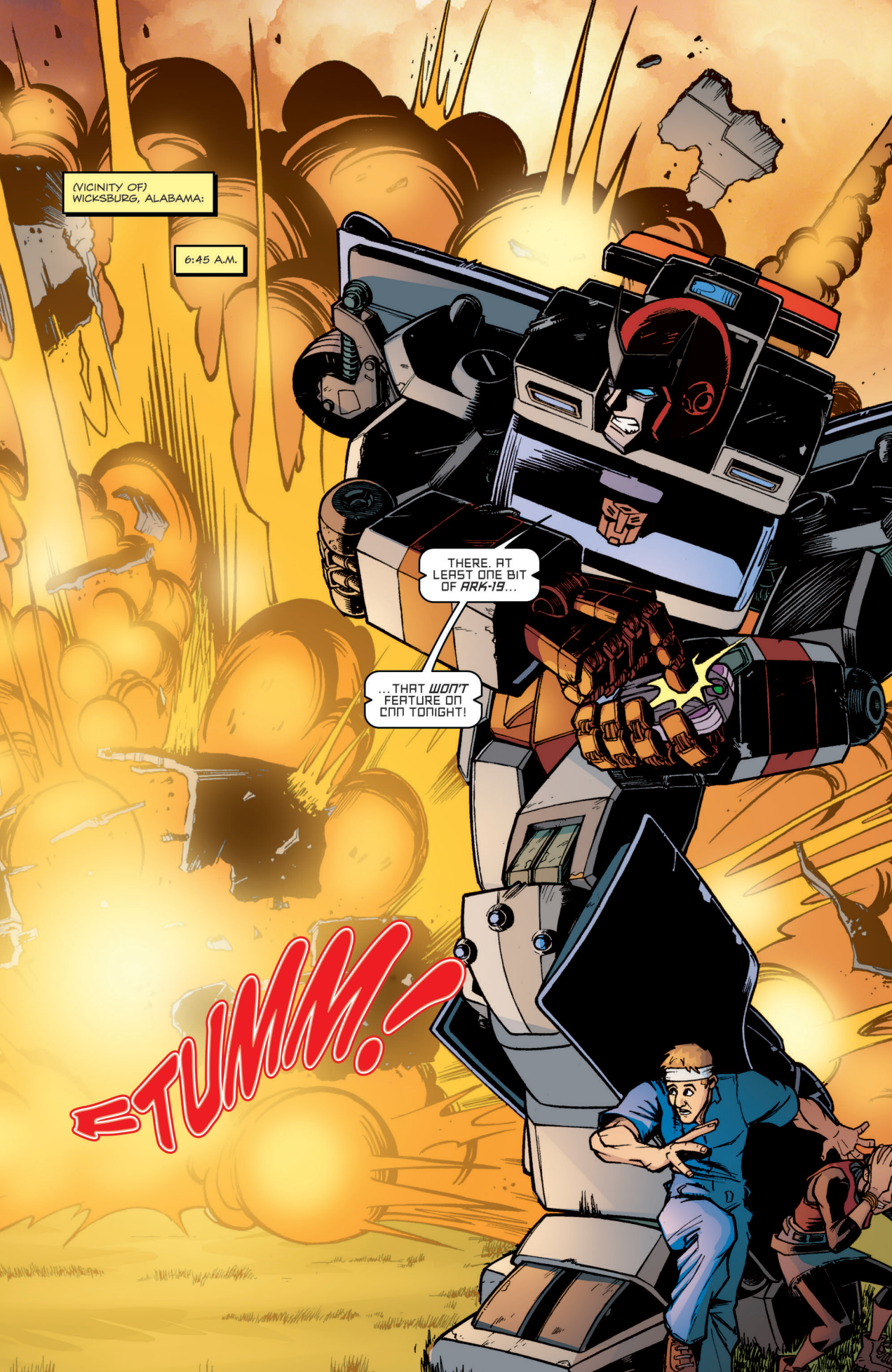

"...ANYTHING!"

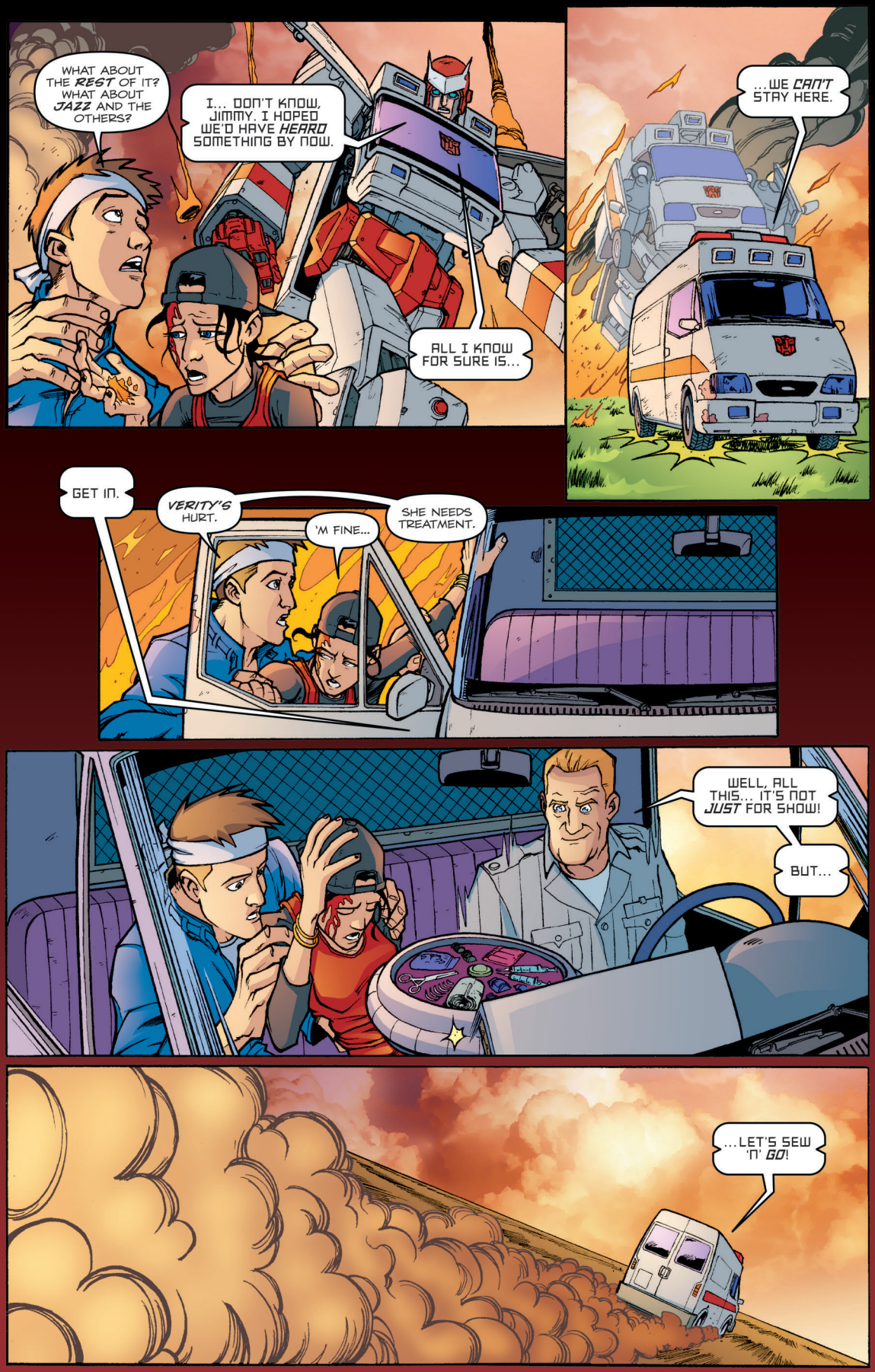


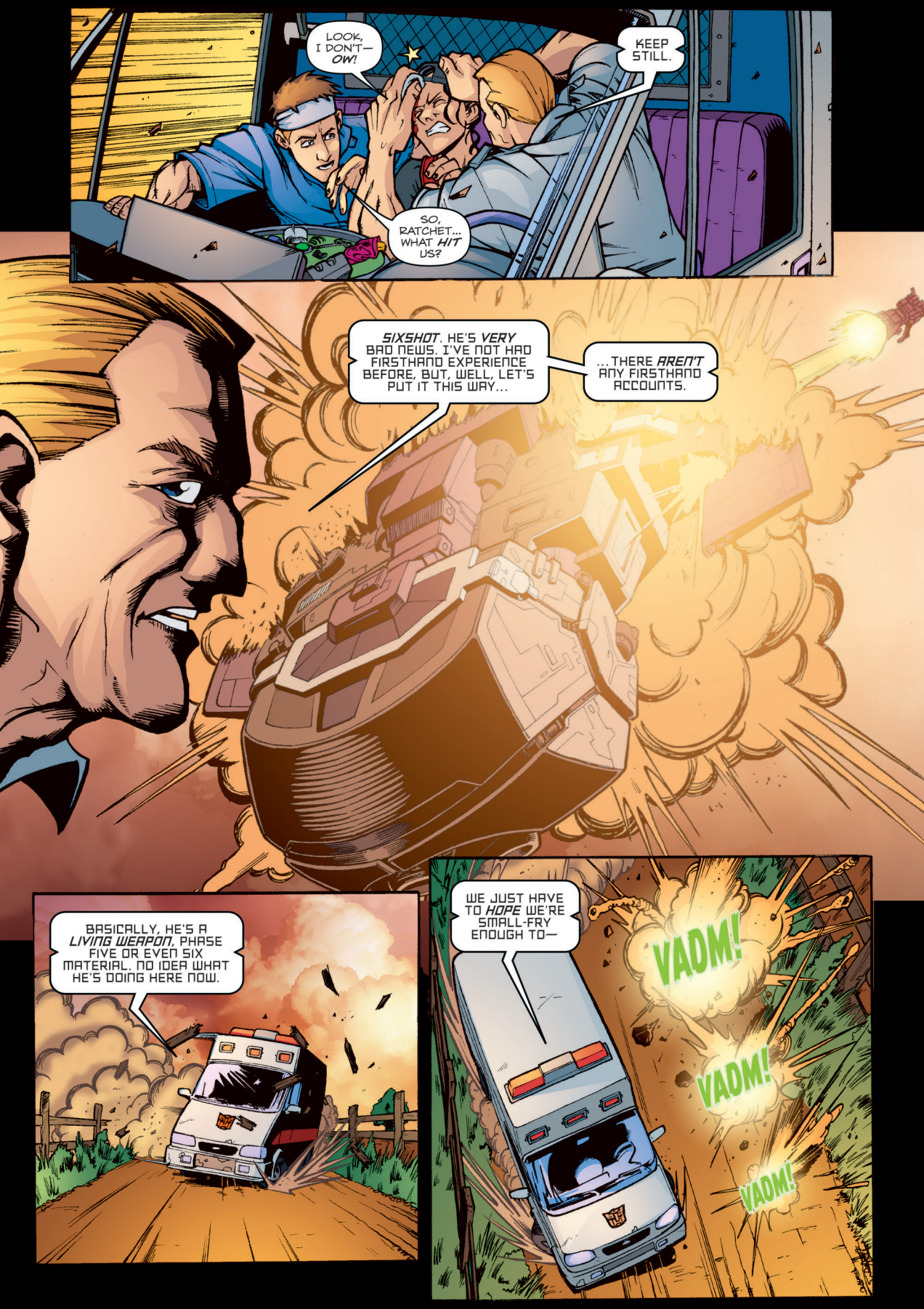


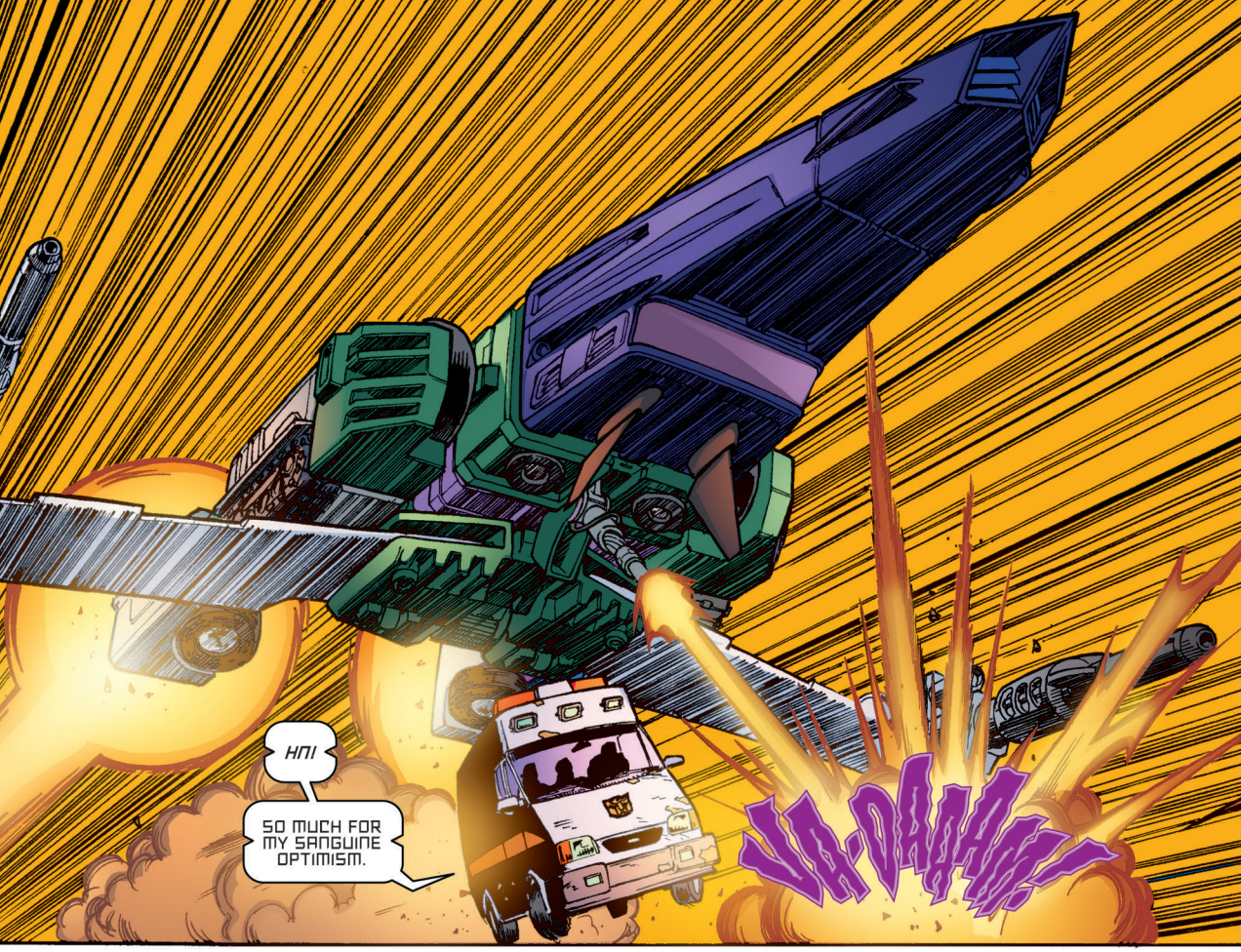

KRIKATAKARI!
"WHAT *ARE* YOU?"
HEADMASTERS.
IN EVOLUTIONARY TERMS, THE NEXT STEP. WHICH RATHER MAKES YOU TWO...
...*SURPLUS* TO REQUIREMENTS!
SUH-
-SUNSTREAKER!
PEHLEASE...
...*KILL* ME!

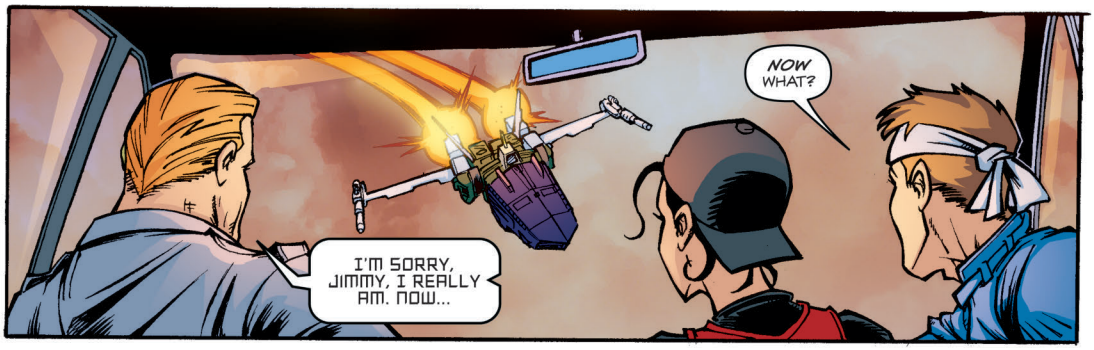

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA:
AS OF 0615 HOURS THIS MORNING...
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (EMERGENCY SESSION):
...A BLANKET NO-FLY ZONE HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED. ALL CIVILIAN FLIGHTS HAVE BEEN GROUNDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.
AIR FORCE BASES REMAIN ON FULL ALERT, BUT SO FAR THERE HAVE BEEN NO HARD CONTACTS OR EVEN CONFIRMED SIGHTINGS OF UNFRIENDLY TARGETS.
ALL WE HAVE IS THE SUDDEN RADAR CONTACT AT 0556 AND THE SUBSEQUENT EXPLOSION IN THE GULF OF MEXICO. EYEWITNESS REPORTS ARE BEING...
DRRT
GENTLEMEN, EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT. I HAVE TO TAKE THIS...
DEACON.
WHAT'S HAPPENING? THERE'S BEEN NO UPDATE OR COUNTERMAND. DO WE PROCEED WITH THE ALPHA-SCENARIO OR DISENGAGE?
WE... PROCEED.
I AGREE. WITH A LITTLE SKILLFUL SPIN, ALL THIS...
...COULD BE MADE TO WORK TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
SENATOR ALEXANDER HOLT

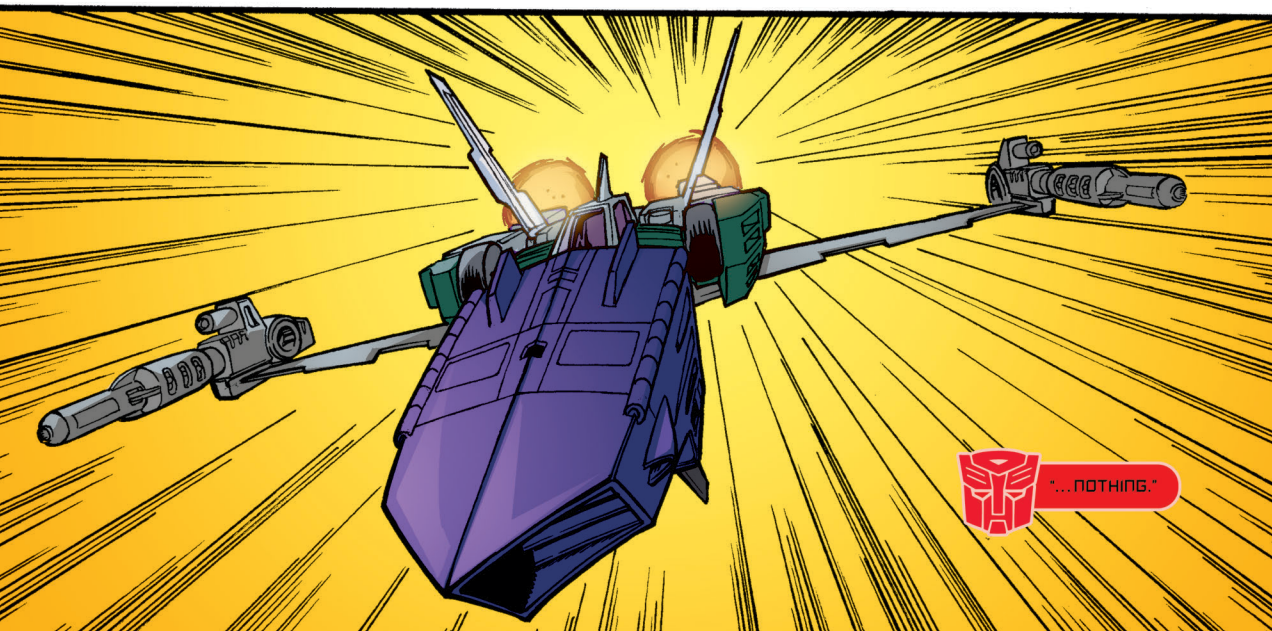

(VICINITY OF)
WICKSBURG, ALABAMA:
6:45 A.M.
THERE. AT LEAST ONE BIT OF *ARK-19*...
...THAT *WON'T* FEATURE ON CNN TONIGHT!
-TUMM!-

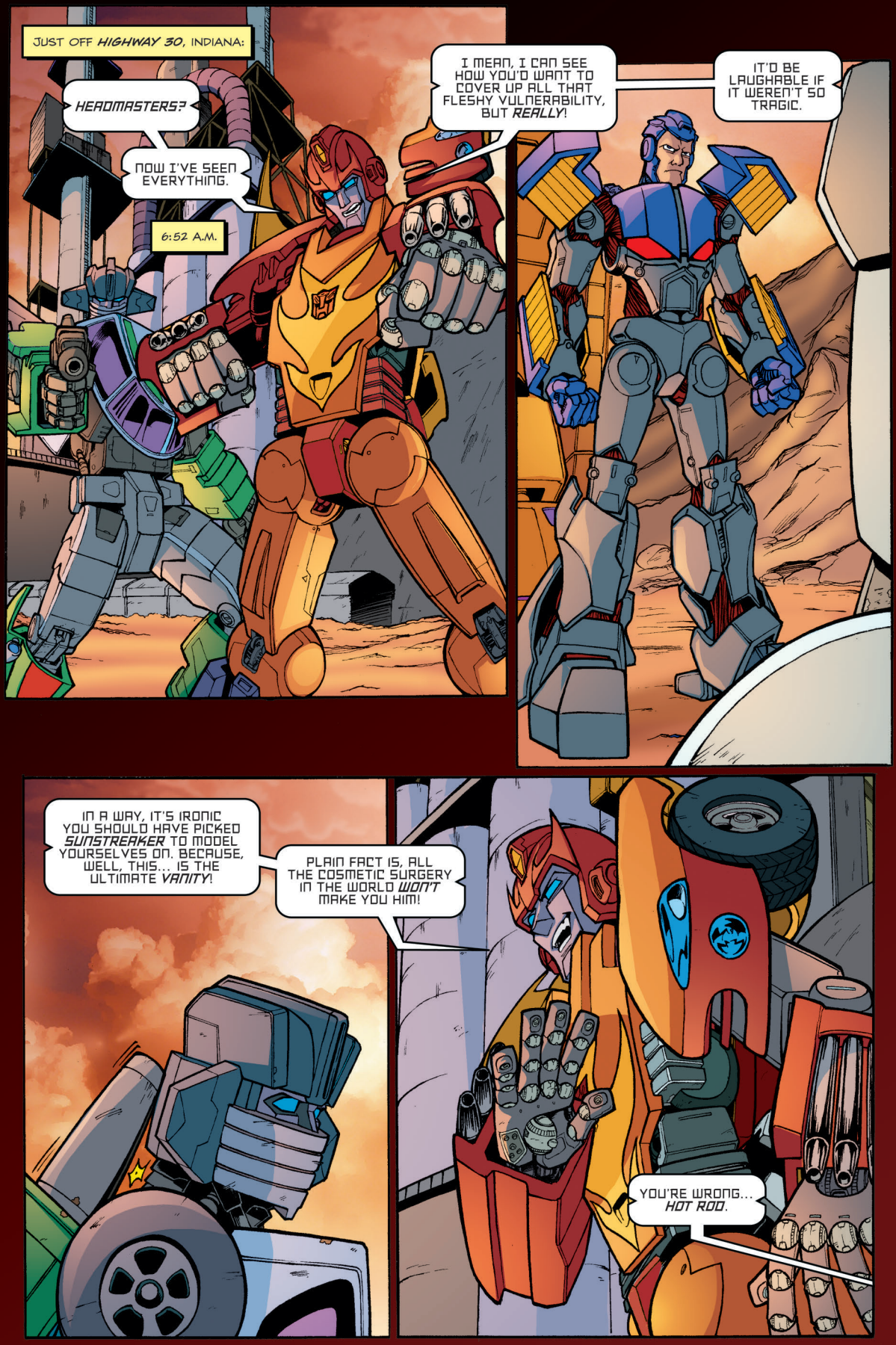

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF IT? WHAT ABOUT JAZZ AND THE OTHERS?
I... DON'T KNOW, JIMMY. I HOPED WE'D HAVE HEARD SOMETHING BY NOW.
ALL I KNOW FOR SURE IS...
...WE CAN'T STAY HERE.
GET IN.
VERITY'S HURT.
'M FINE...
SHE NEEDS TREATMENT.
WELL, ALL THIS... IT'S NOT JUST FOR SHOW!
BUT...
...LET'S SEW 'N' GO!

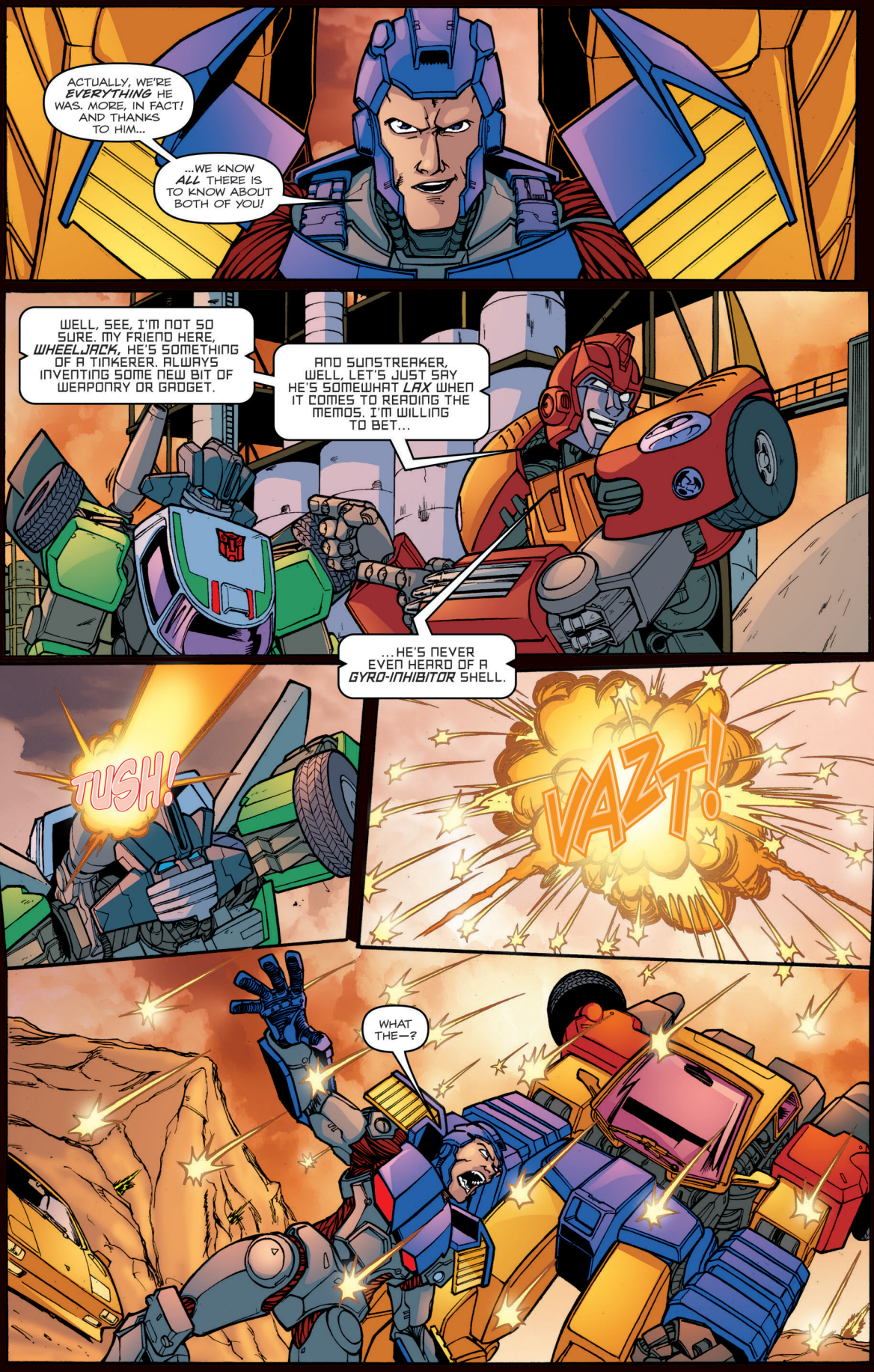

LOOK, I DON'T— OW!
KEEP STILL.
SO, RATCHET... WHAT HIT US?
SIXSHOT. HE'S VERY BAD NEWS. I'VE NOT HAD FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE BEFORE, BUT, WELL, LET'S PUT IT THIS WAY...
...THERE AREN'T ANY FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS.
BASICALLY, HE'S A LIVING WEAPON, PHASE FIVE OR EVEN SIX MATERIAL. NO IDEA WHAT HE'S DOING HERE NOW.
WE JUST HAVE TO HOPE WE'RE SMALL-FRY ENOUGH TO—
VADM!
VADM!
VADM!

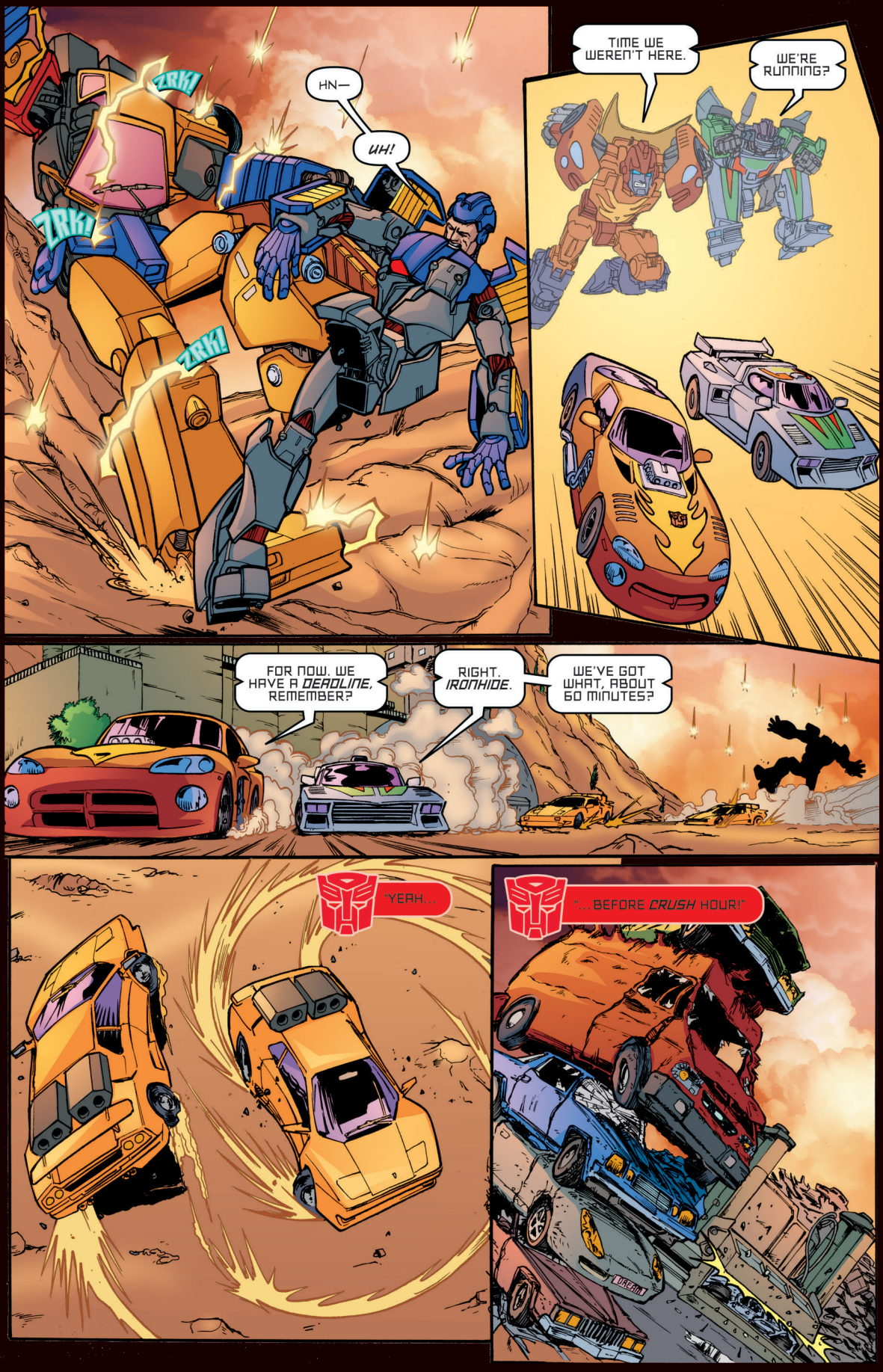

HM!
SO MUCH FOR MY SANGUINE OPTIMISM.
VA-DAAA!

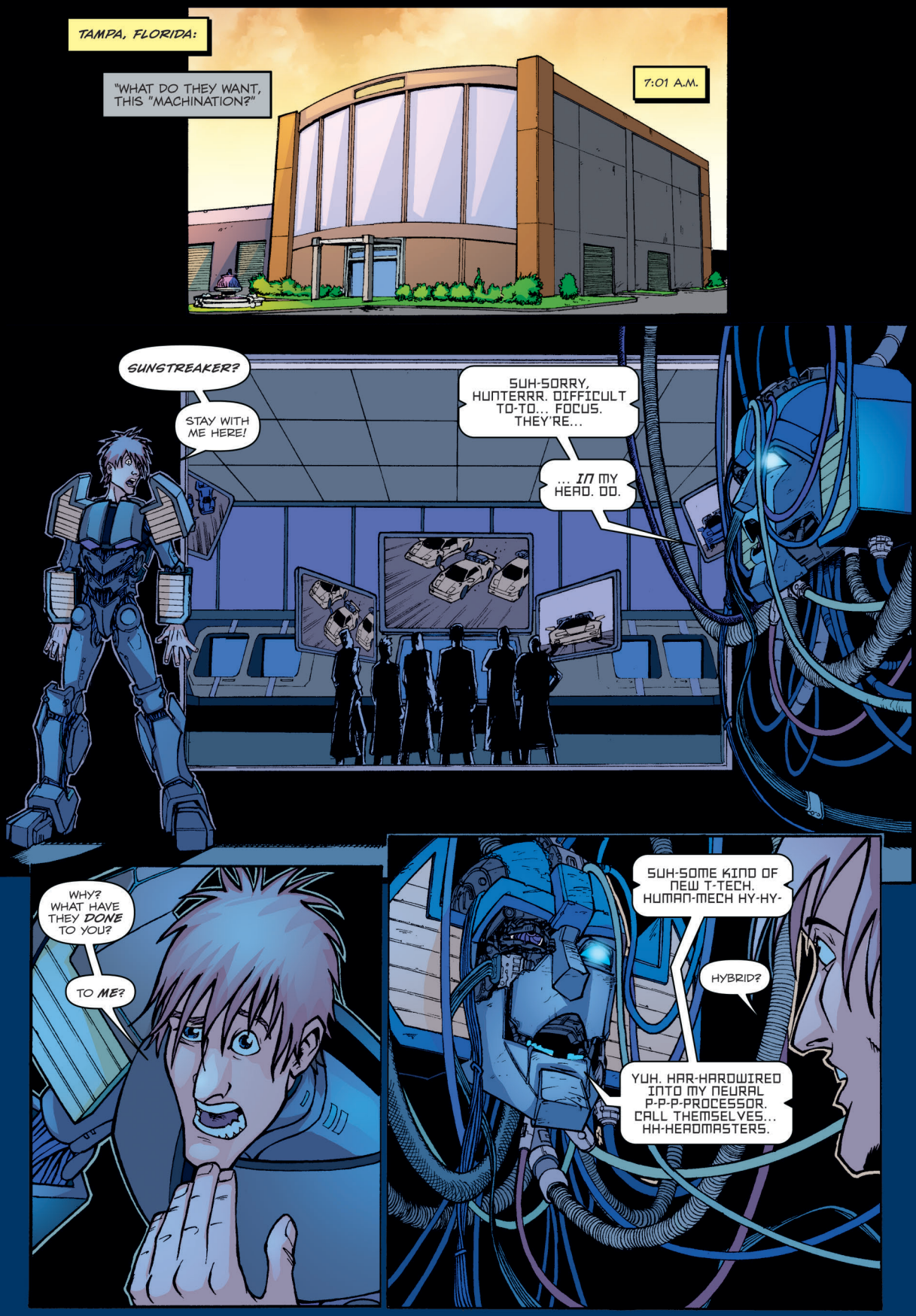

I'M SORRY, JIMMY, I REALLY AM. NOW...
NOW WHAT?

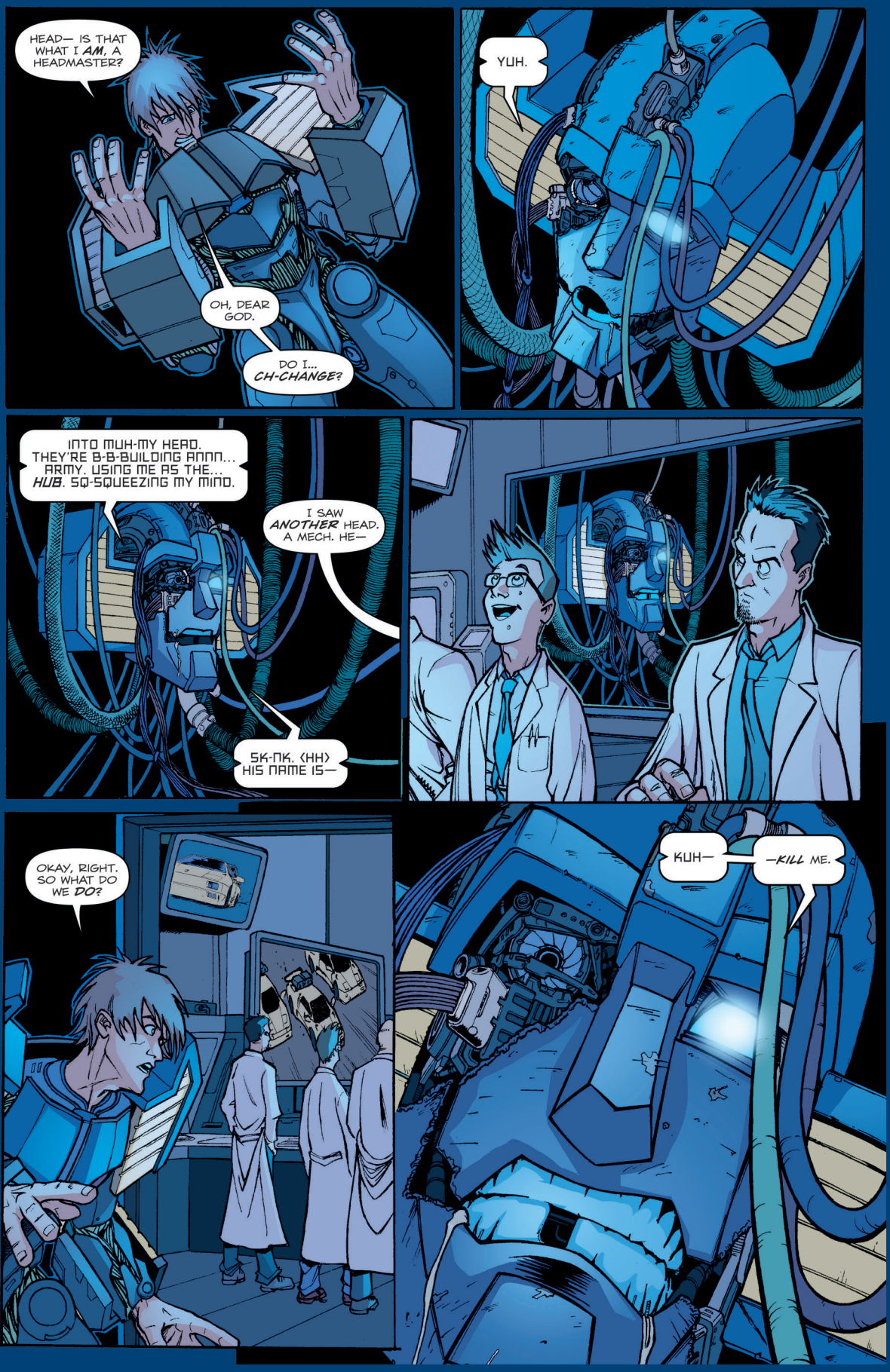

"...NOTHING."

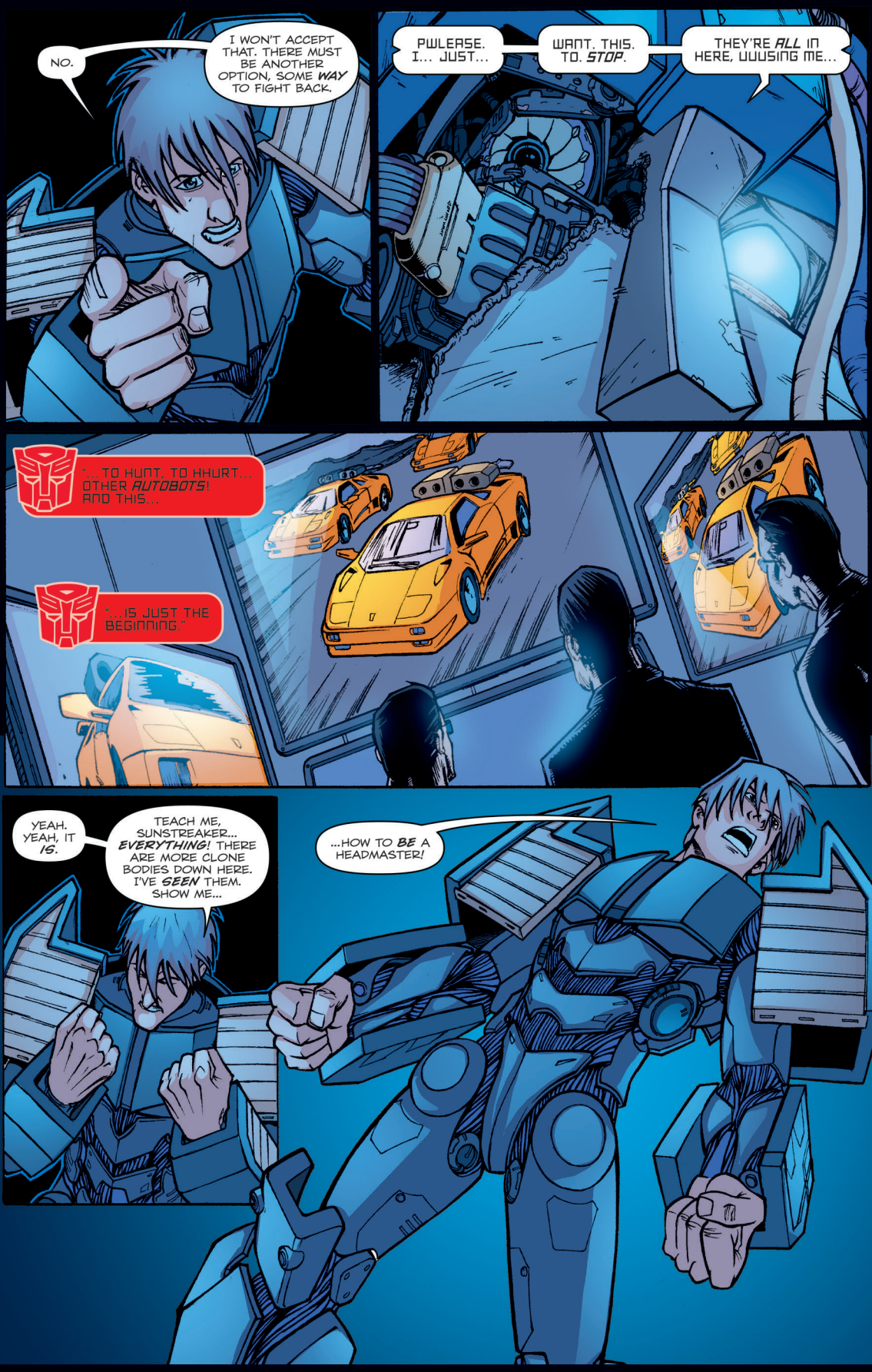

JUST OFF HIGHWAY 30, INDIANA:
HEADMASTERS?
NOW I'VE SEEN EVERYTHING.
6:52 A.M.
I MEAN, I CAN SEE HOW YOU'D WANT TO COVER UP ALL THAT FLESHY VULNERABILITY, BUT REALLY!
IT'D BE LAUGHABLE IF IT WEREN'T SO TRAGIC.
IN A WAY, IT'S IRONIC YOU SHOULD HAVE PICKED SUNSTREAKER TO MODEL YOURSELVES ON. BECAUSE, WELL, THIS... IS THE ULTIMATE VANITY!
PLAIN FACT IS, ALL THE COSMETIC SURGERY IN THE WORLD WON'T MAKE YOU HIM!
YOU'RE WRONG... HOT ROD.

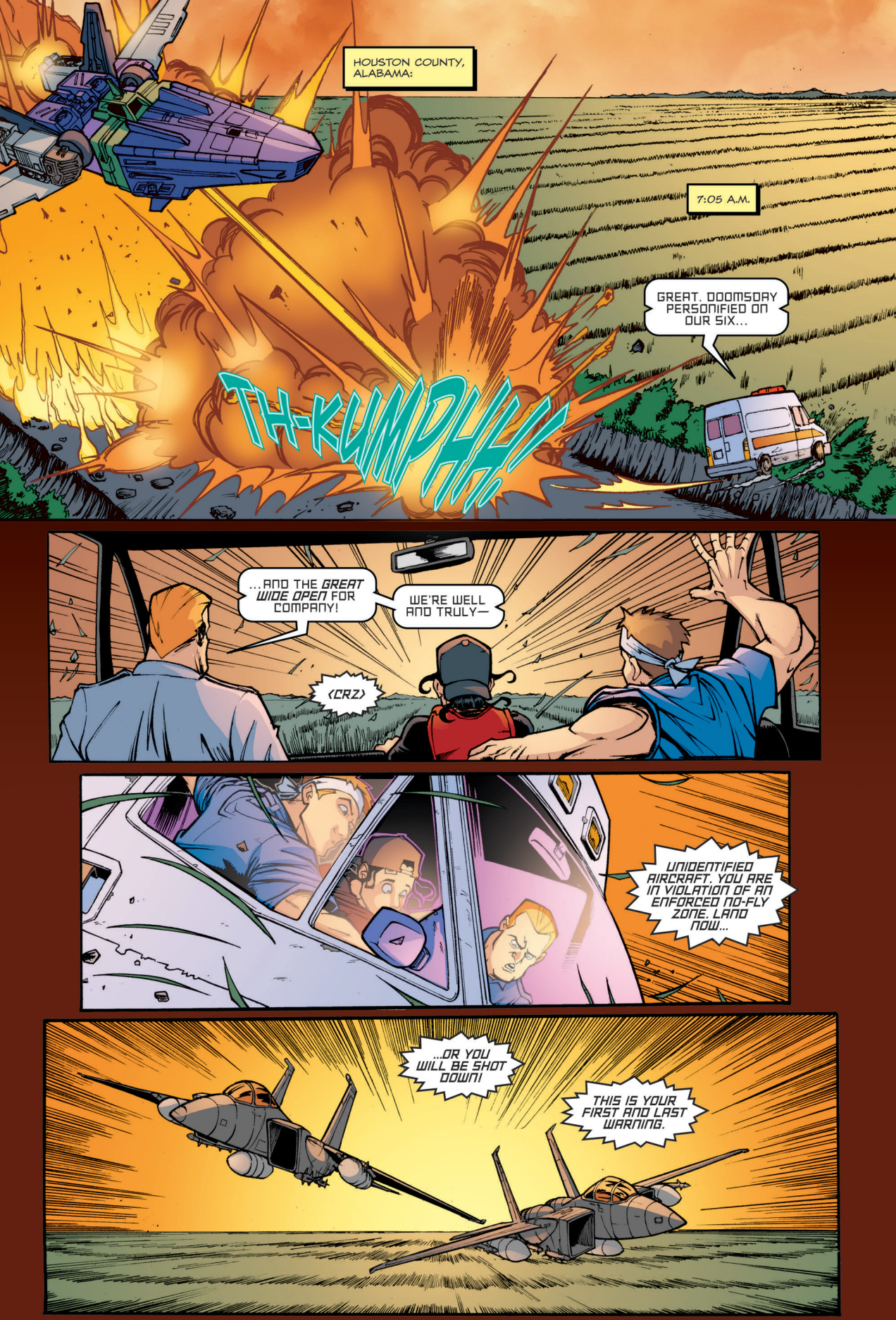

ACTUALLY, WE'RE *EVERYTHING* HE WAS. MORE, IN FACT! AND THANKS TO HIM...
...WE KNOW *ALL* THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT BOTH OF YOU!
WELL, SEE, I'M NOT SO SURE. MY FRIEND HERE, *WHEELJACK*, HE'S SOMETHING OF A TINKERER. ALWAYS INVENTING SOME NEW BIT OF WEAPONRY OR GADGET.
AND SUNSTREAKER, WELL, LET'S JUST SAY HE'S SOMEWHAT *LAX* WHEN IT COMES TO READING THE MEMOS. I'M WILLING TO BET...
...HE'S NEVER EVEN HEARD OF A *GYRO-INHIBITOR* SHELL.
TUSH!
VAZT!
WHAT THE—?

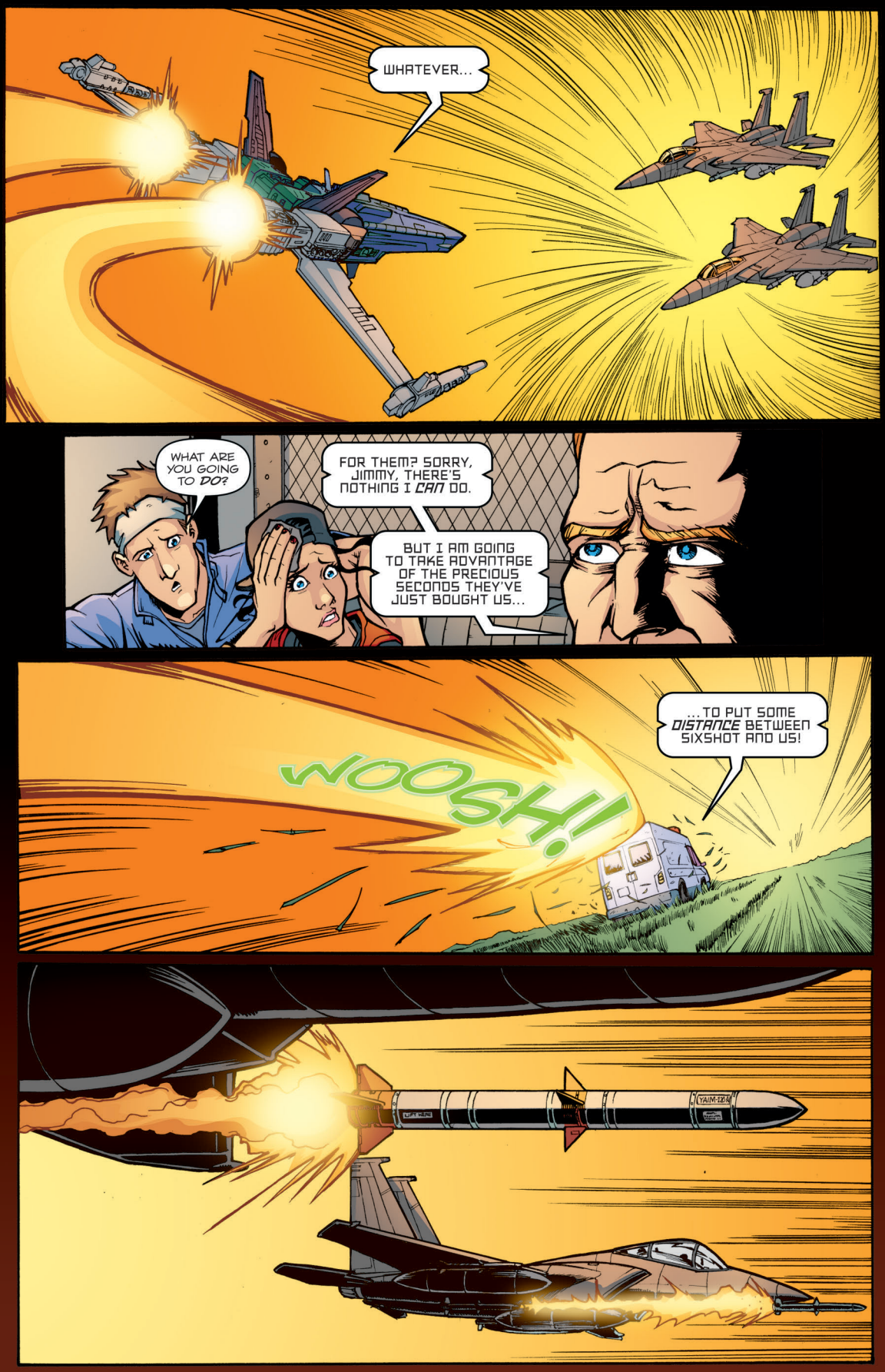

ZRK!
ZRK!
ZRK!
HN—
UH!
TIME WE WEREN'T HERE.
WE'RE RUNNING?
FOR NOW, WE HAVE A DEADLINE, REMEMBER?
RIGHT, IRONHIDE.
WE'VE GOT WHAT, ABOUT 60 MINUTES?
"YEAH...
"...BEFORE CRUSH HOUR!"

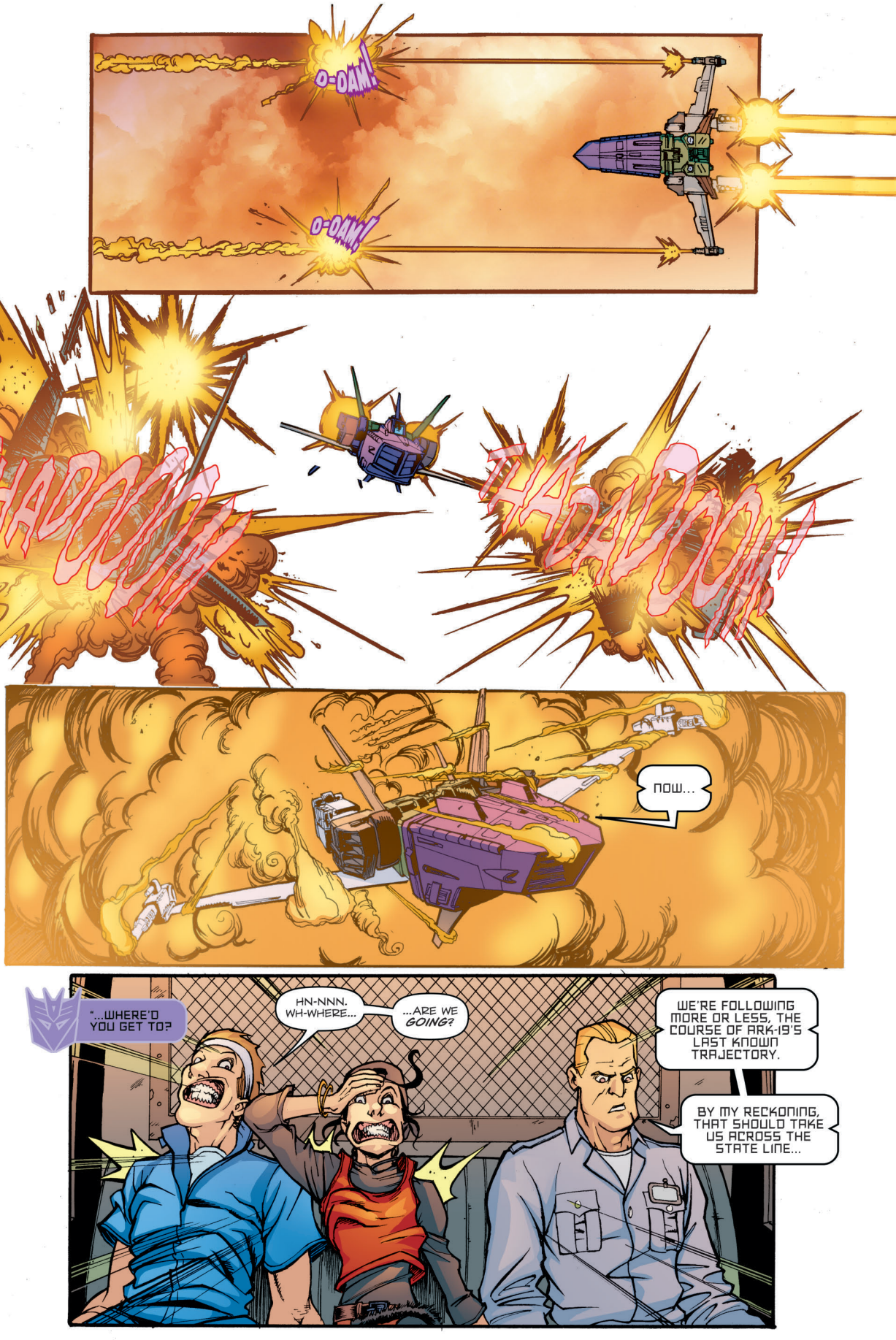

TAMPA, FLORIDA:
"WHAT DO THEY WANT, THIS "MACHINATION?"
7:01 A.M.
SUNSTREAKER?
STAY WITH ME HERE!
SUH-SORRY, HUNTERRR. DIFFICULT TO-TO... FOCUS. THEY'RE...
... IN MY HEAD. DO.
WHY? WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?
TO ME?
SUH-SOME KIND OF NEW T-TECH. HUMAN-MECH HY-HY-
HYBRID?
YUH. HAR-HARDWIRED INTO MY NEURAL P-P-P-PROCESSOR. CALL THEMSELVES... HH-HEADMASTERS.

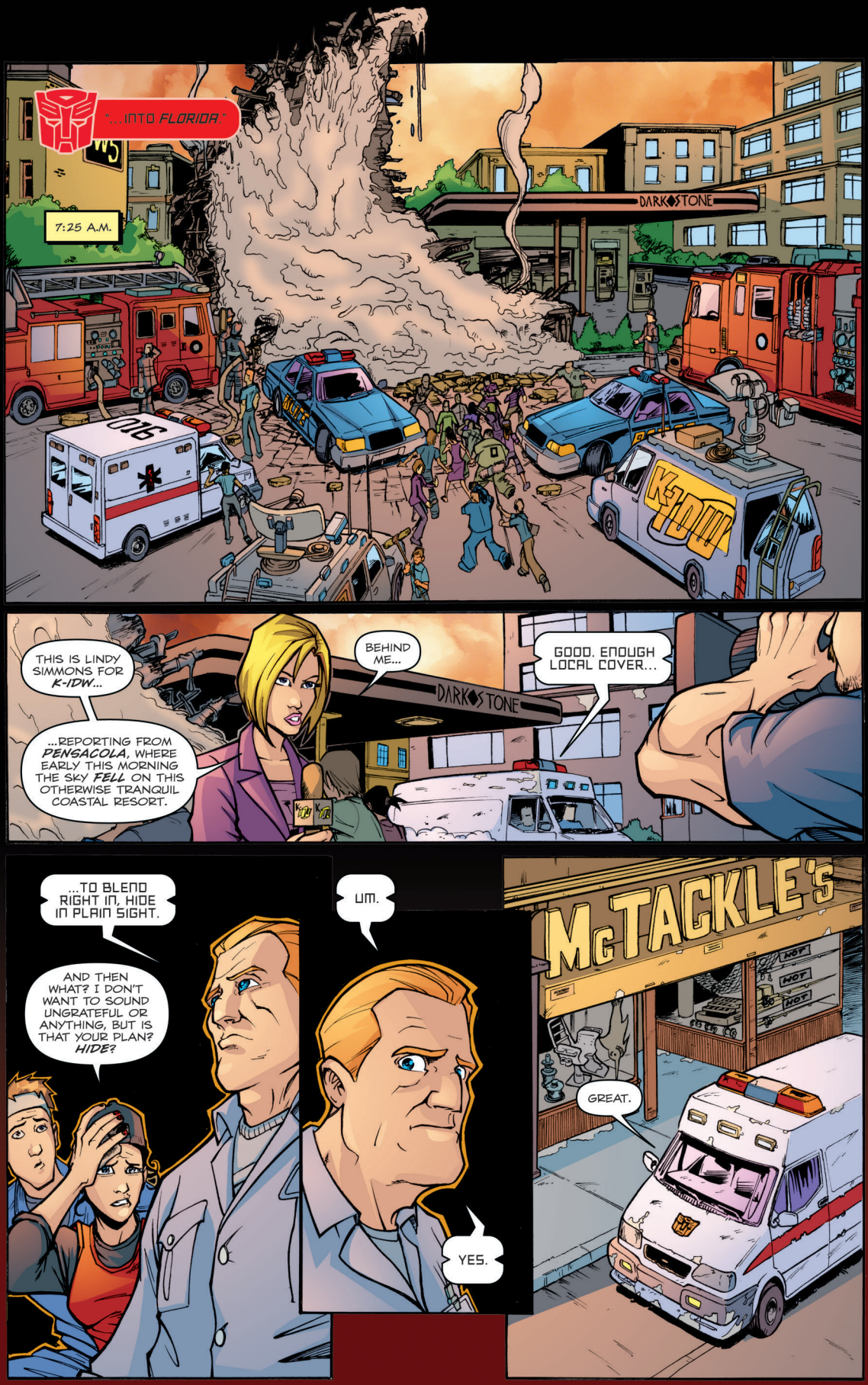

HEAD— IS THAT WHAT I AM, A HEADMASTER?
OH, DEAR GOD.
DO I... CH-CHANGE?
YUH.
INTO MUH-MY HEAD. THEY'RE B-B-BUILDING ANNN... ARMY. USING ME AS THE... HUB. SQ-SQUEEZING MY MIND.
I SAW ANOTHER HEAD. A MECH. HE—
SK-NK. <HH> HIS NAME IS—
OKAY, RIGHT. SO WHAT DO WE DO?
KUH—
—KILL ME.


NO.
I WON'T ACCEPT THAT. THERE MUST BE ANOTHER OPTION, SOME WAY TO FIGHT BACK.
PWLEASE. I... JUST...
WANT. THIS. TO. STOP.
THEY'RE ALL IN HERE, UUUSING ME...
"...TO HUNT. TO HHURT... OTHER AUTOBOTS! AND THIS...
"...IS JUST THE BEGINNING."
YEAH. YEAH, IT IS.
TEACH ME, SUNSTREAKER... EVERYTHING! THERE ARE MORE CLONE BODIES DOWN HERE. I'VE SEEN THEM. SHOW ME...
...HOW TO BE A HEADMASTER!

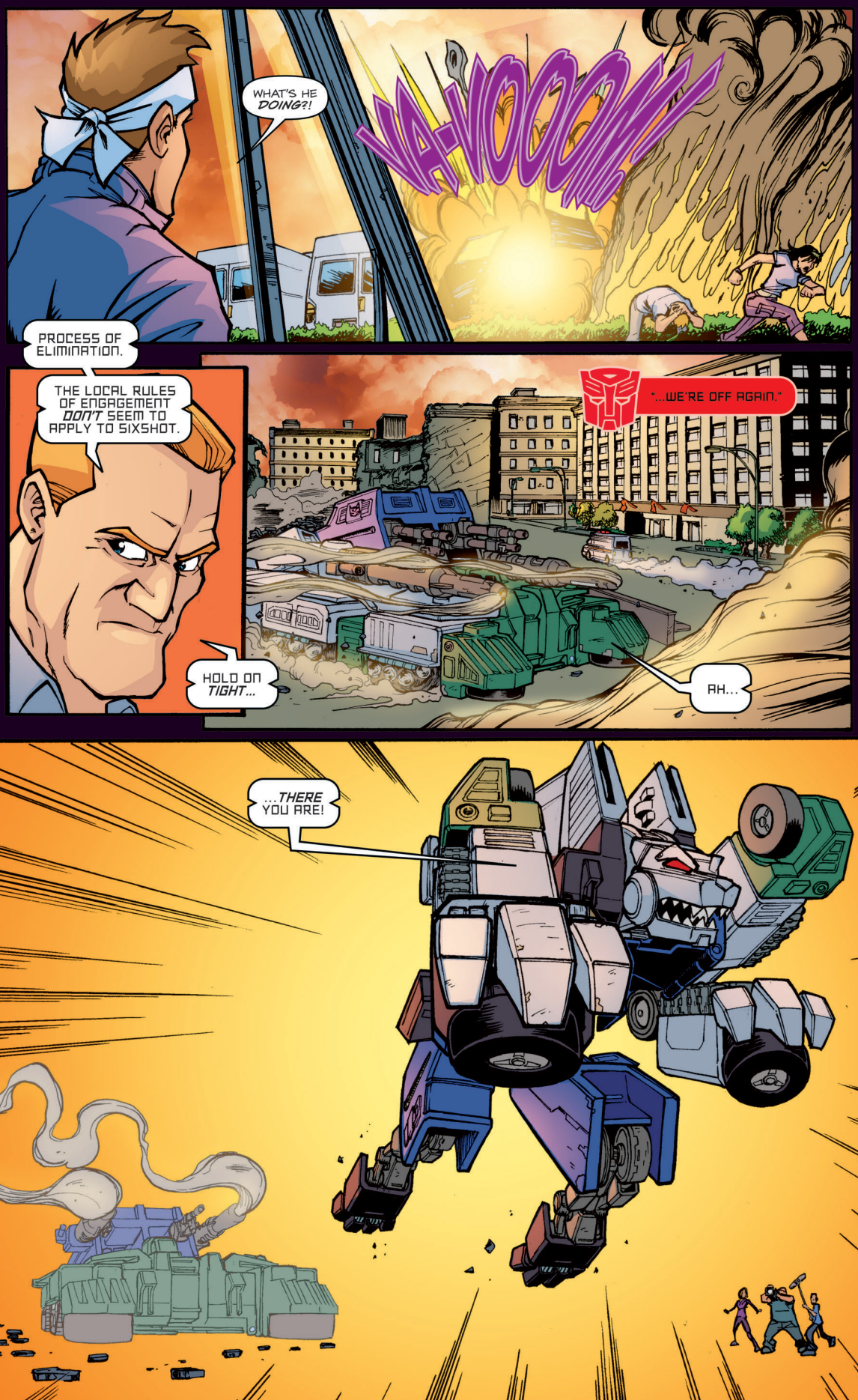

HOUSTON COUNTY, ALABAMA:
7:05 A.M.
GREAT. DOOMSDAY PERSONIFIED ON OUR SIX...
TH-KUMPH!!
...AND THE GREAT WIDE OPEN FOR COMPANY!
WE'RE WELL AND TRULY—
<CRZ>
UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT. YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF AN ENFORCED NO-FLY ZONE. LAND NOW...
...OR YOU WILL BE SHOT DOWN!
THIS IS YOUR FIRST AND LAST WARNING.

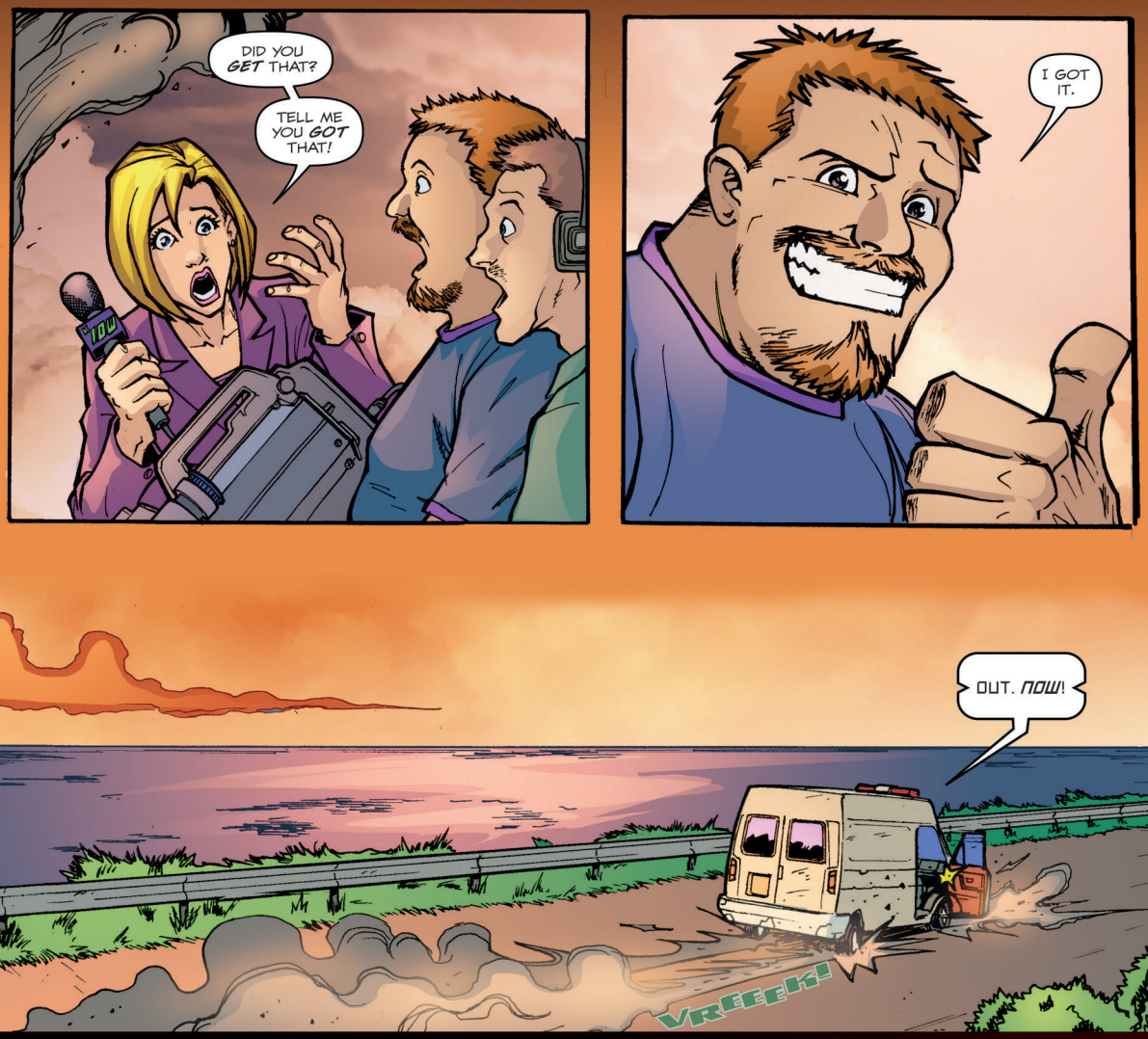

WHATEVER...
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
FOR THEM? SORRY, JIMMY, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.
BUT I AM GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRECIOUS SECONDS THEY'VE JUST BOUGHT US...
WOOSH!
...TO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN SIXSHOT AND US!

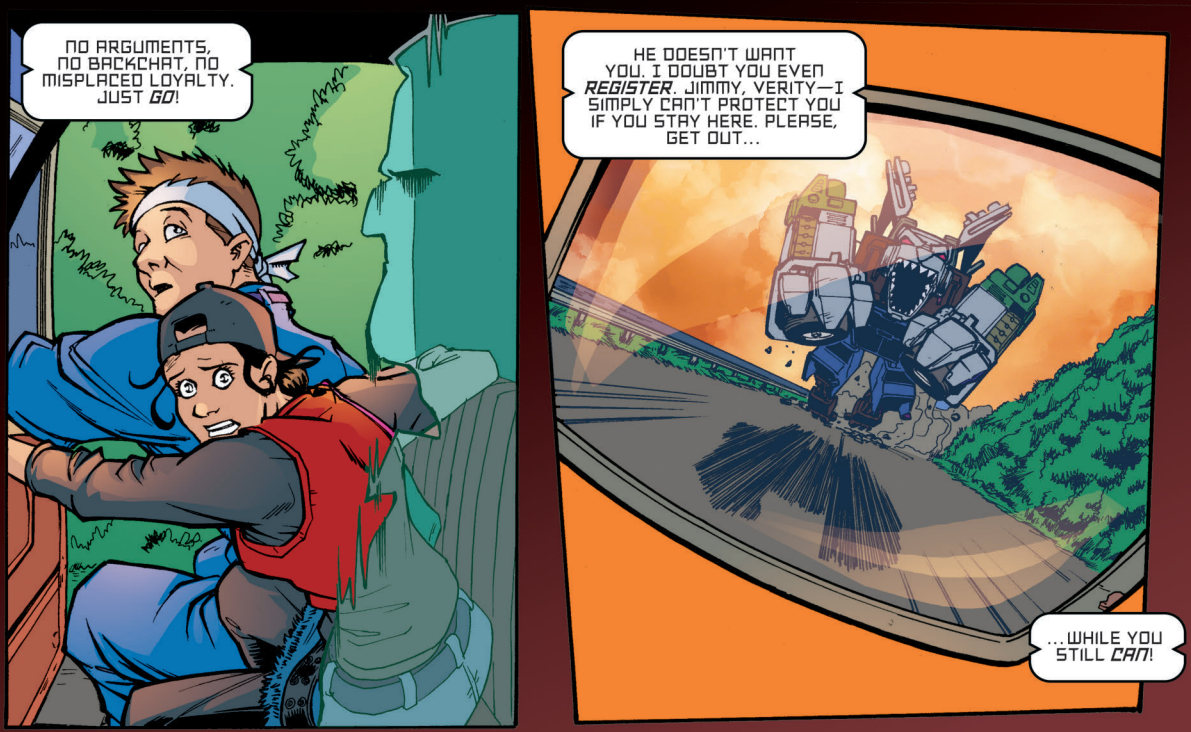

O-OAM!
O-OAM!
THADOOM!
FADADOOM!
NOW...
"...WHERE'D YOU GET TO?
HN-NNN. WH-WHERE...
...ARE WE GOING?
WE'RE FOLLOWING MORE OR LESS, THE COURSE OF ARK-19'S LAST KNOWN TRAJECTORY.
BY MY RECKONING, THAT SHOULD TAKE US ACROSS THE STATE LINE...


"...INTO FLORIDA."
7:25 A.M.
DARKSTONE
THIS IS LINDY SIMMONS FOR K-IDW...
...REPORTING FROM PENSACOLA, WHERE EARLY THIS MORNING THE SKY FELL ON THIS OTHERWISE TRANQUIL COASTAL RESORT.
BEHIND ME...
GOOD. ENOUGH LOCAL COVER...
...TO BLEND RIGHT IN, HIDE IN PLAIN SIGHT.
AND THEN WHAT? I DON'T WANT TO SOUND UNGRATEFUL OR ANYTHING, BUT IS THAT YOUR PLAN? HIDE?
UM.
YES.
McTACKLE'S
HOT
GREAT.


KRUMPH!
HM.
VA-VOOM!
VA-VOOM!


WHAT'S HE DOING?!
KA-VOOM!
PROCESS OF ELIMINATION.
THE LOCAL RULES OF ENGAGEMENT DON'T SEEM TO APPLY TO SIXSHOT.
HOLD ON TIGHT...
"...WE'RE OFF AGAIN."
AH...
...THERE YOU ARE!


DID YOU GET THAT?
TELL ME YOU GOT THAT!
I GOT IT.
OUT. NOW!
VREEEK!

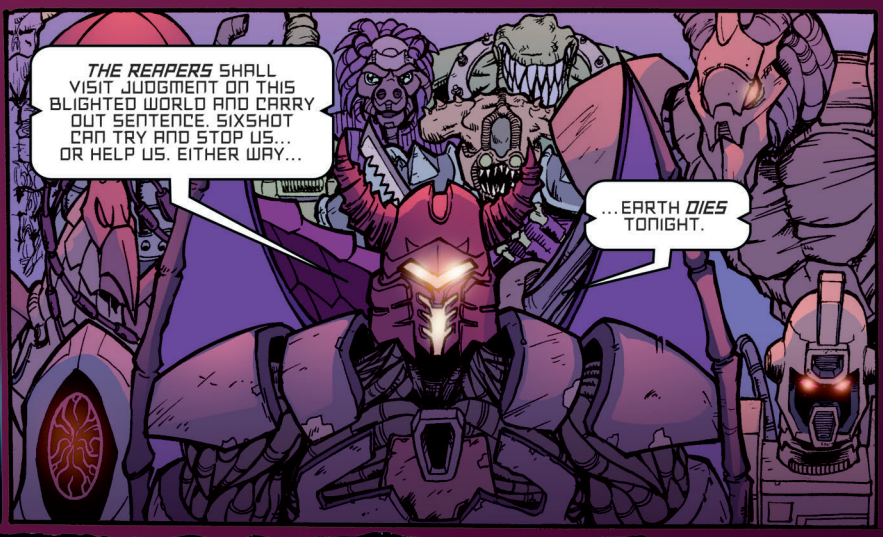

NO ARGUMENTS, NO BACKCHAT, NO MISPLACED LOYALTY. JUST GO!
HE DOESN'T WANT YOU. I DOUBT YOU EVEN REGISTER. JIMMY, VERITY—I SIMPLY CAN'T PROTECT YOU IF YOU STAY HERE. PLEASE, GET OUT...
...WHILE YOU STILL CAN!


KTSHT-
KTSHT!
KT-SPIT!
OH... FRAG.
END OF THE ROAD!


OH, WELL...
...IT WAS *ALWAYS* GOING TO END THIS WAY!
IT'S BEEN FUN. BETTER THAN SOME, ANYWAY. BUT IT'S *OVER*.
I'LL MAKE IT QUICK.
GEE...
...THANKS.
FROWRR!


DDTTTUM!
SO, DOC...
...NEED A HAND?



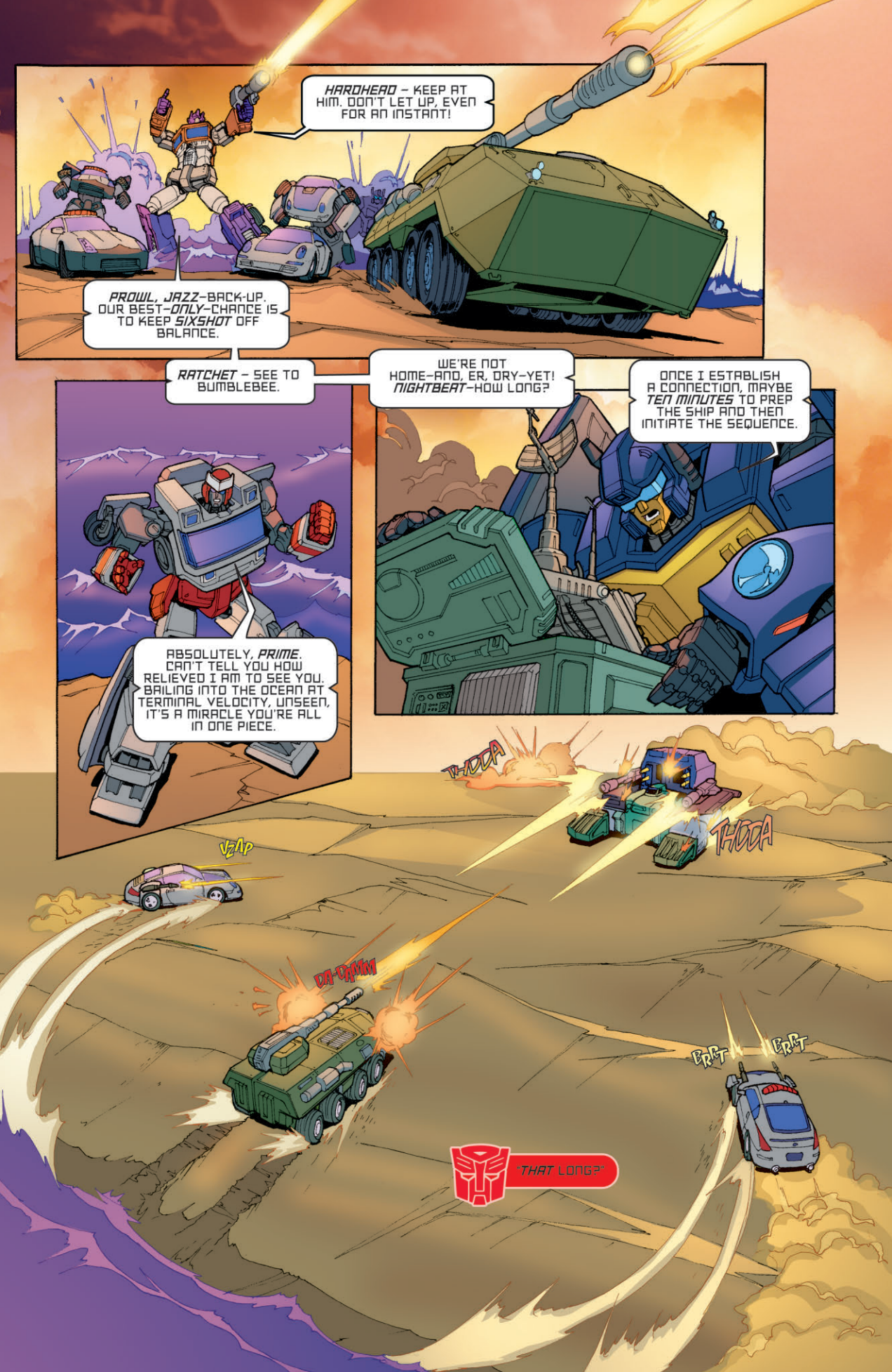

THE REAPERS SHALL VISIT JUDGMENT ON THIS BLIGHTED WORLD AND CARRY OUT SENTENCE. SIXSHOT CAN TRY AND STOP US... OR HELP US. EITHER WAY...
...EARTH DIES TONIGHT.


THE DEAD UNIVERSE:
IT IS TOO SOON.
GALVATRON— YOU MUST GO TO EARTH. NOW.
AT THIS MOST CRITICAL STAGE, ON THE EVE OF REVIVIFICATION, NOTHING AND NO ONE MUST BE ALLOWED TO FORESTALL OUR GLORIOUS SECOND COMING. YOUR GIFT IS DEATH...
...DISPENSE IT AT YOUR DISCRETION.
IT SHALL BE DONE, NEMESIS PRIME...

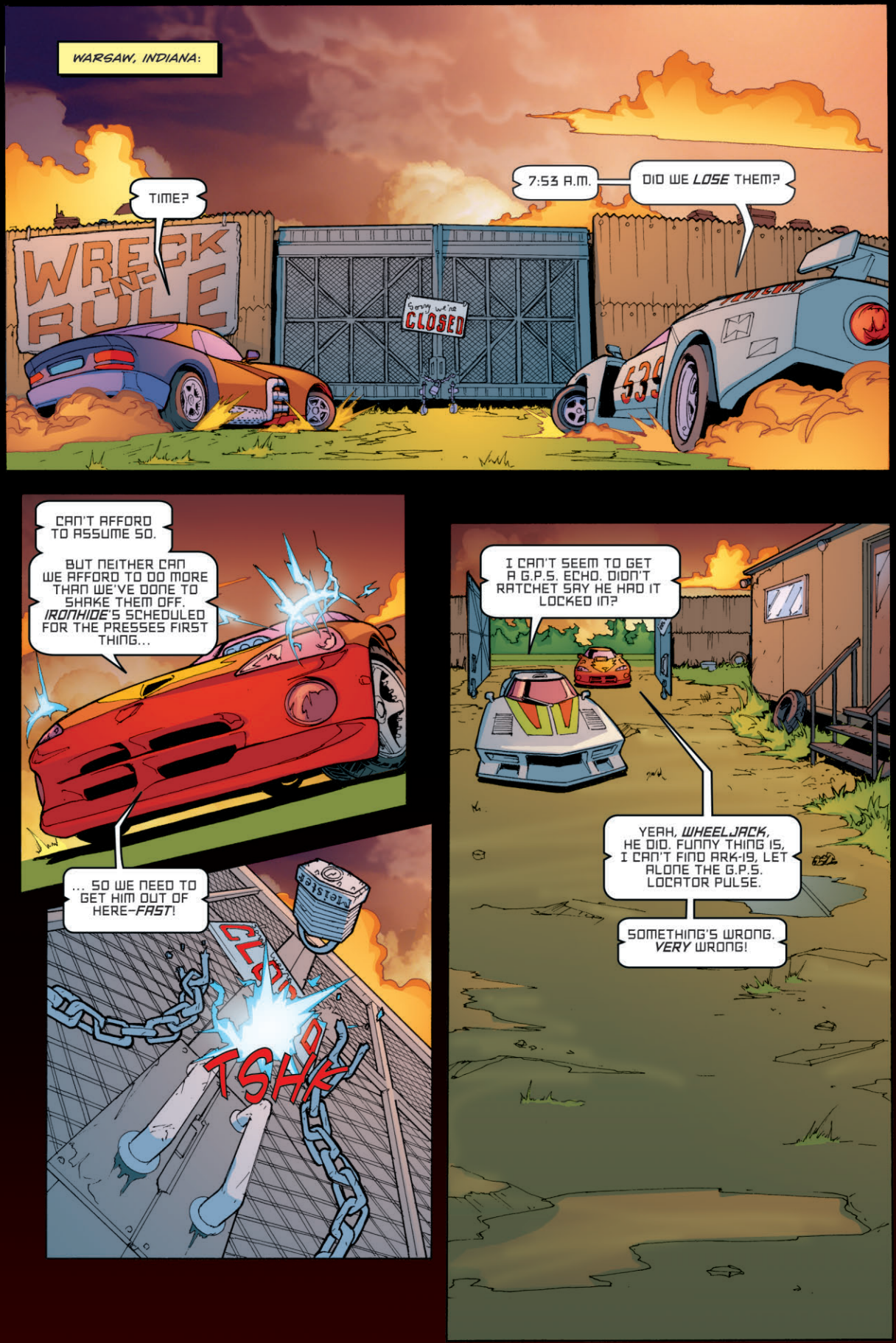

CHAPTER 4
WASHINGTON D.C.:
THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING.
SKYWATCH:
RECALL THE SEEKERS IMMEDIATELY. AND GET ME AN URGENT STATUS UPDATE ON THE EUREKA ACQUISITIONS.
YES SIR, AGENT RED.
WHATEVER IT WAS BEFORE... NOW IT'S WAR!
PROBLEM?
I THINK SO. YES. THE SEEKERS ARE NOT RESPONDING. THERE'S SOME KIND OF COMPETING SIGNAL.
"CAN YOU BLOCK IT?"
"NEGATIVE. WHEREVER IT'S COMING FROM, IT'S STRONG..."
"...AND EXTRATERRESTRIAL!"
ESCAPE
PLAY
REC/BATT
STEREO MICROCASSETTE RECORDER

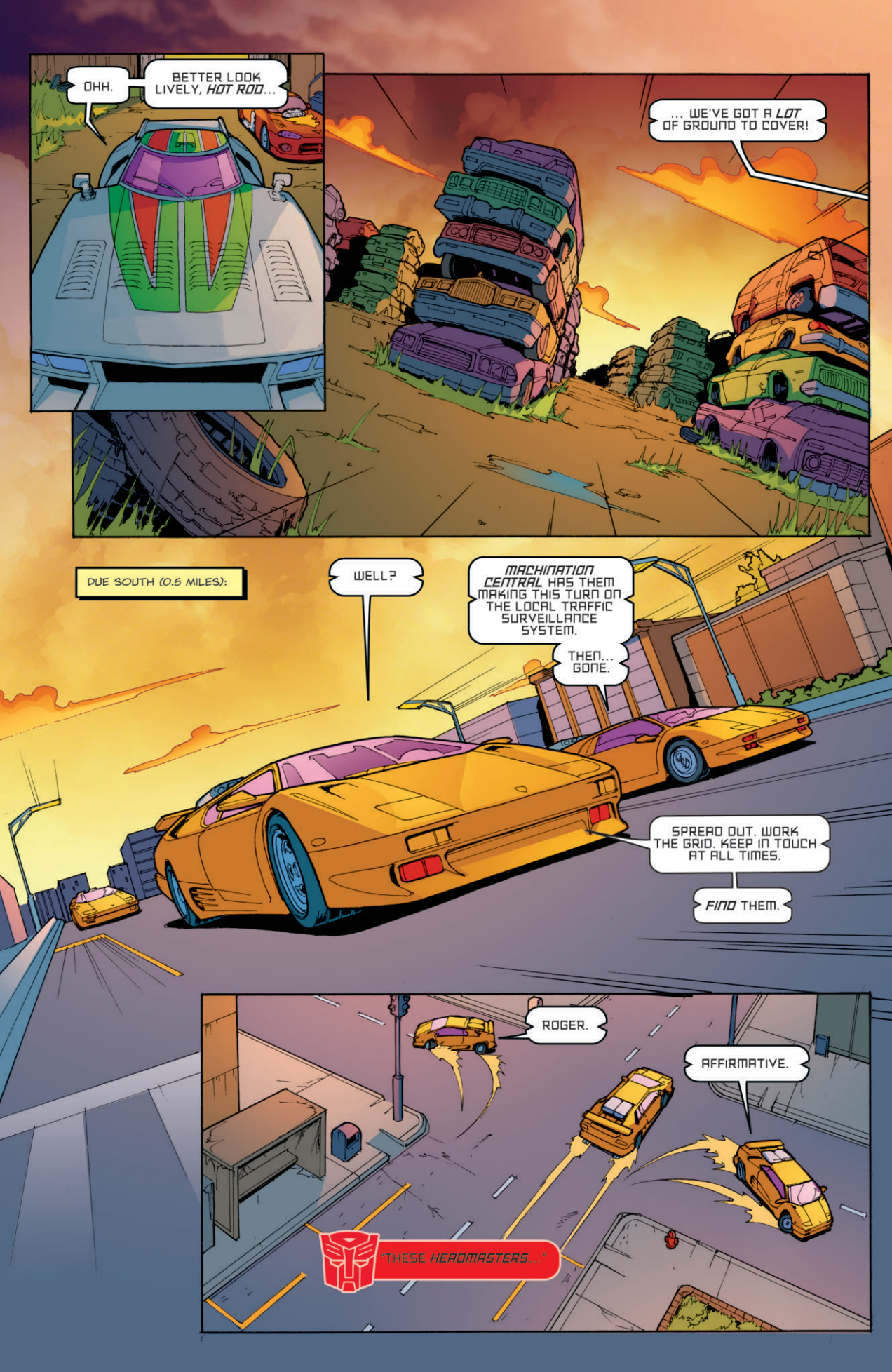

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA:
YOU'RE JUST *FULL* OF SURPRISES, AREN'T YOU? TROUBLE IS, SO AM I.
AND MINE ARE ALL SO DELICIOUSLY, UTTERLY *LETHAL*!
DZUM
DZUM

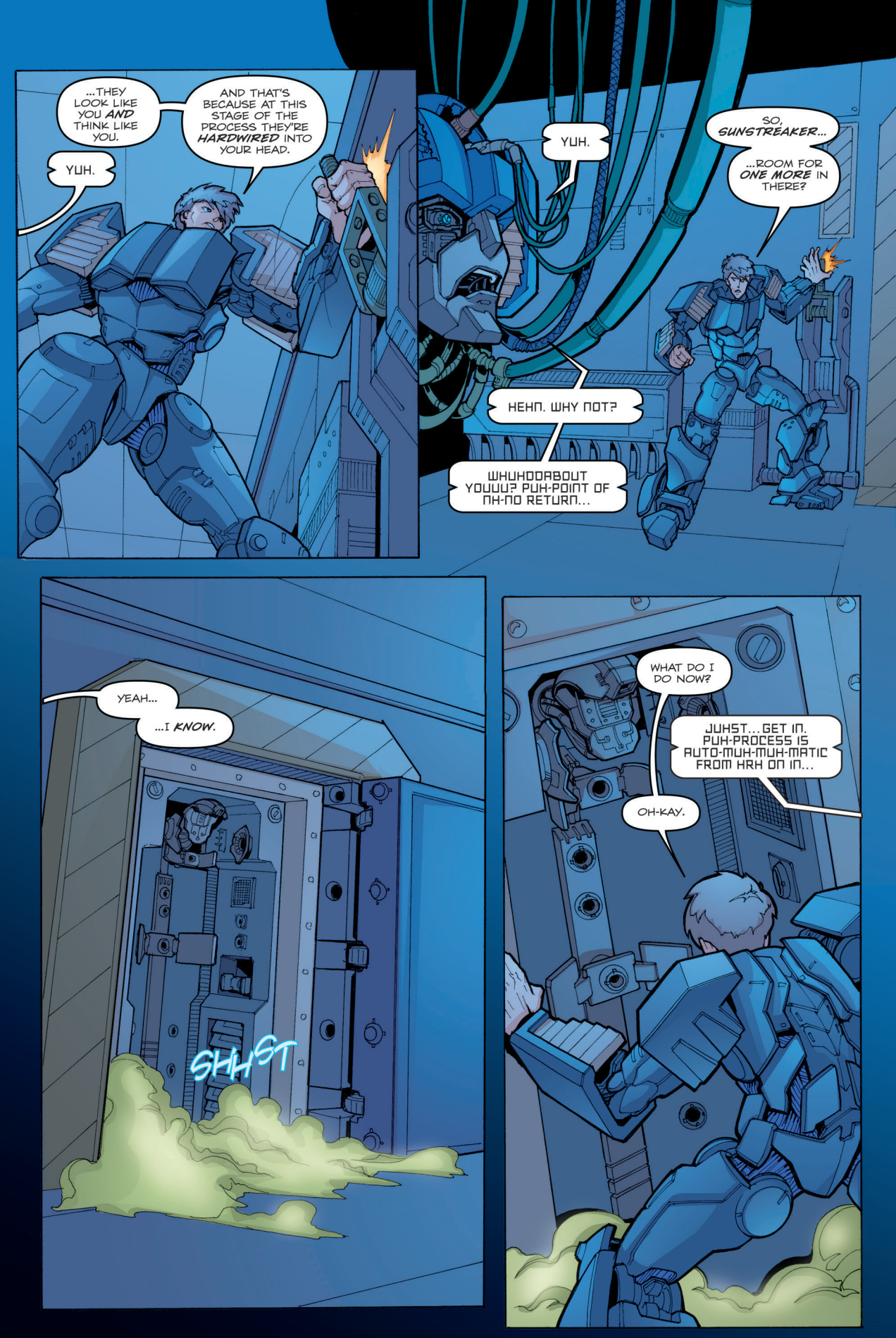

GAHT!
VAMPH
BUMBLEBEE!
FRAG. WHAT DOES IT *TAKE* TO PUT THIS ONE DOWN?
HEAVY ARTILLERY, THAT'S WHAT!
THWBCOM


HARDHEAD – KEEP AT HIM. DON'T LET UP, EVEN FOR AN INSTANT!
PROWL, JAZZ–BACK-UP. OUR BEST–ONLY–CHANCE IS TO KEEP SIXSHOT OFF BALANCE.
RATCHET – SEE TO BUMBLEBEE.
ABSOLUTELY, PRIME. CAN'T TELL YOU HOW RELIEVED I AM TO SEE YOU. BAILING INTO THE OCEAN AT TERMINAL VELOCITY, UNSEEN, IT'S A MIRACLE YOU'RE ALL IN ONE PIECE.
WE'RE NOT HOME–AND, ER, DRY–YET! NIGHTBEAT–HOW LONG?
ONCE I ESTABLISH A CONNECTION, MAYBE TEN MINUTES TO PREP THE SHIP AND THEN INITIATE THE SEQUENCE.
"THAT LONG?"
THDDA
THDDA
VZAP
BRRT
BRRT


YES! GO AUTOBOTS...
FADOOOM
IF ONLY...
...I FELT REASSURED!
YEAH. YEAH. SIXSHOT. HE'S THIS DECEPTICON WEAPON OF LAST RESORT, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
WHICH MEANS...
...THOSE CAREFULLY PLANNED PHASES RATCHET TOLD US ABOUT ARE, LIKE, GONE. FAST-FORWARD TO THE END OF THE WORLD.
AND WHAT'S MORE, THE CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG, THE CAN OF WORMS IS OPEN...
...ALL LIVE AT FIVE!


WARSAW, INDIANA:
TIME?
7:53 A.M.
DID WE LOSE THEM?
WRECK-N-RULE
Sorry we're CLOSED
539
CAN'T AFFORD TO ASSUME SO.
BUT NEITHER CAN WE AFFORD TO DO MORE THAN WE'VE DONE TO SHAKE THEM OFF. IRONHIDE'S SCHEDULED FOR THE PRESSES FIRST THING...
... SO WE NEED TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE-FAST!
CLA-
TSHK
I CAN'T SEEM TO GET A G.P.S. ECHO. DIDN'T RATCHET SAY HE HAD IT LOCKED IN?
YEAH, WHEELJACK, HE DID. FUNNY THING IS, I CAN'T FIND ARK-19, LET ALONE THE G.P.S. LOCATOR PULSE.
SOMETHING'S WRONG. VERY WRONG!


OHH.
BETTER LOOK LIVELY, HOT ROD...
... WE'VE GOT A LOT OF GROUND TO COVER!
DUE SOUTH (0.5 MILES):
WELL?
MACHINATION CENTRAL HAS THEM MAKING THIS TURN ON THE LOCAL TRAFFIC SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM.
THEN... GONE.
SPREAD OUT. WORK THE GRID. KEEP IN TOUCH AT ALL TIMES.
FIND THEM.
ROGER.
AFFIRMATIVE.
"THESE HEADMASTERS..."

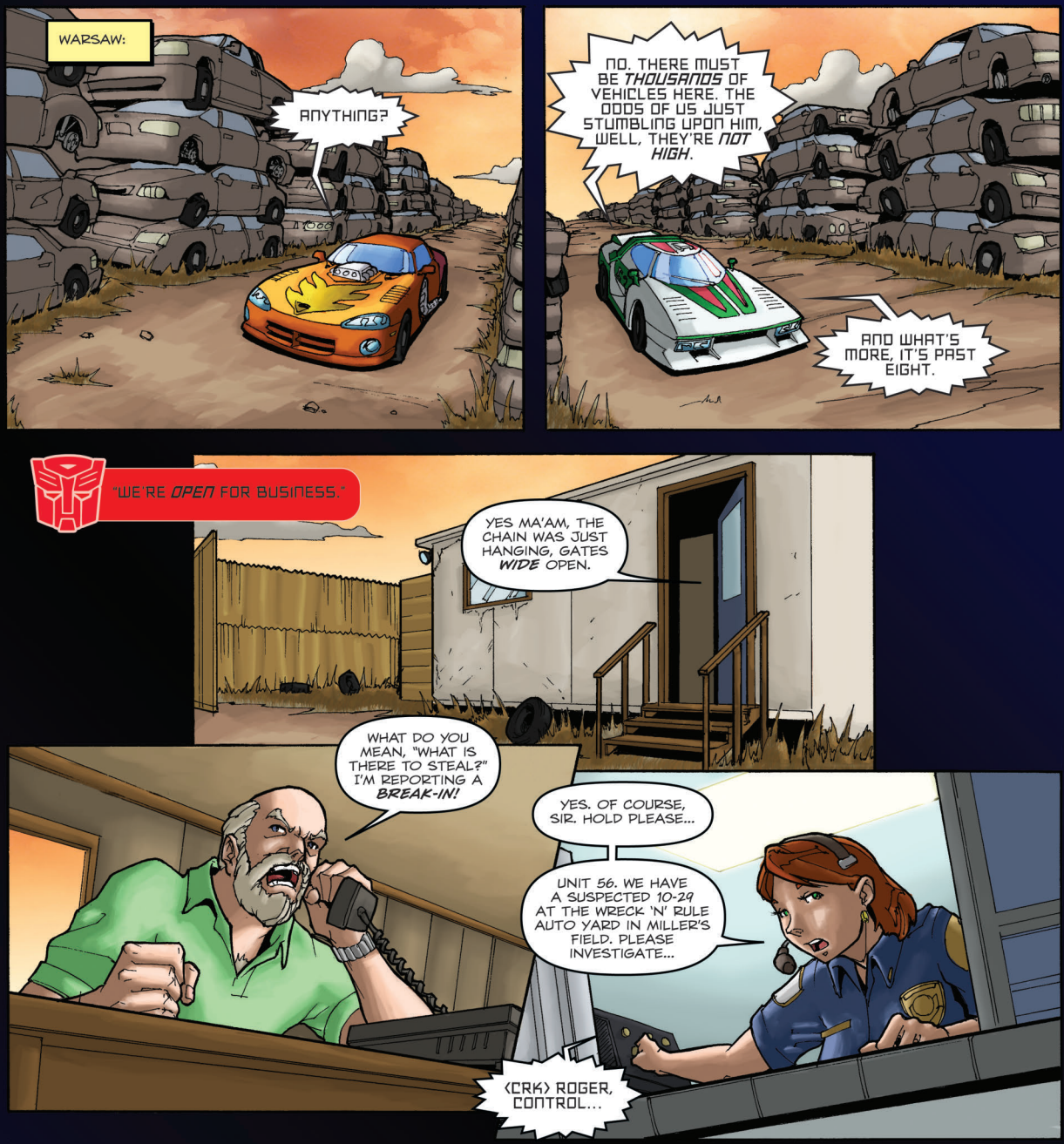

...THEY LOOK LIKE YOU AND THINK LIKE YOU.
AND THAT'S BECAUSE AT THIS STAGE OF THE PROCESS THEY'RE HARDWIRED INTO YOUR HEAD.
YUH.
YUH.
SO, SUNSTREAKER...
...ROOM FOR ONE MORE IN THERE?
HEHN. WHY NOT?
WHUHDOABOUT YOUUU? PUH-POINT OF NH-NO RETURN...
YEAH...
...I KNOW.
SHHST
WHAT DO I DO NOW?
JUHST... GET IN. PUH-PROCESS IS AUTO-MUH-MUH-MATIC FROM HRH ON IN...
OH-KAY.


AH-ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?
YUH.
IHT'S... PAINFUL.
OH. GREAT!
NOW HE TELLS ME–
TSHT
VHMMMMM–
-EEAAAGH!

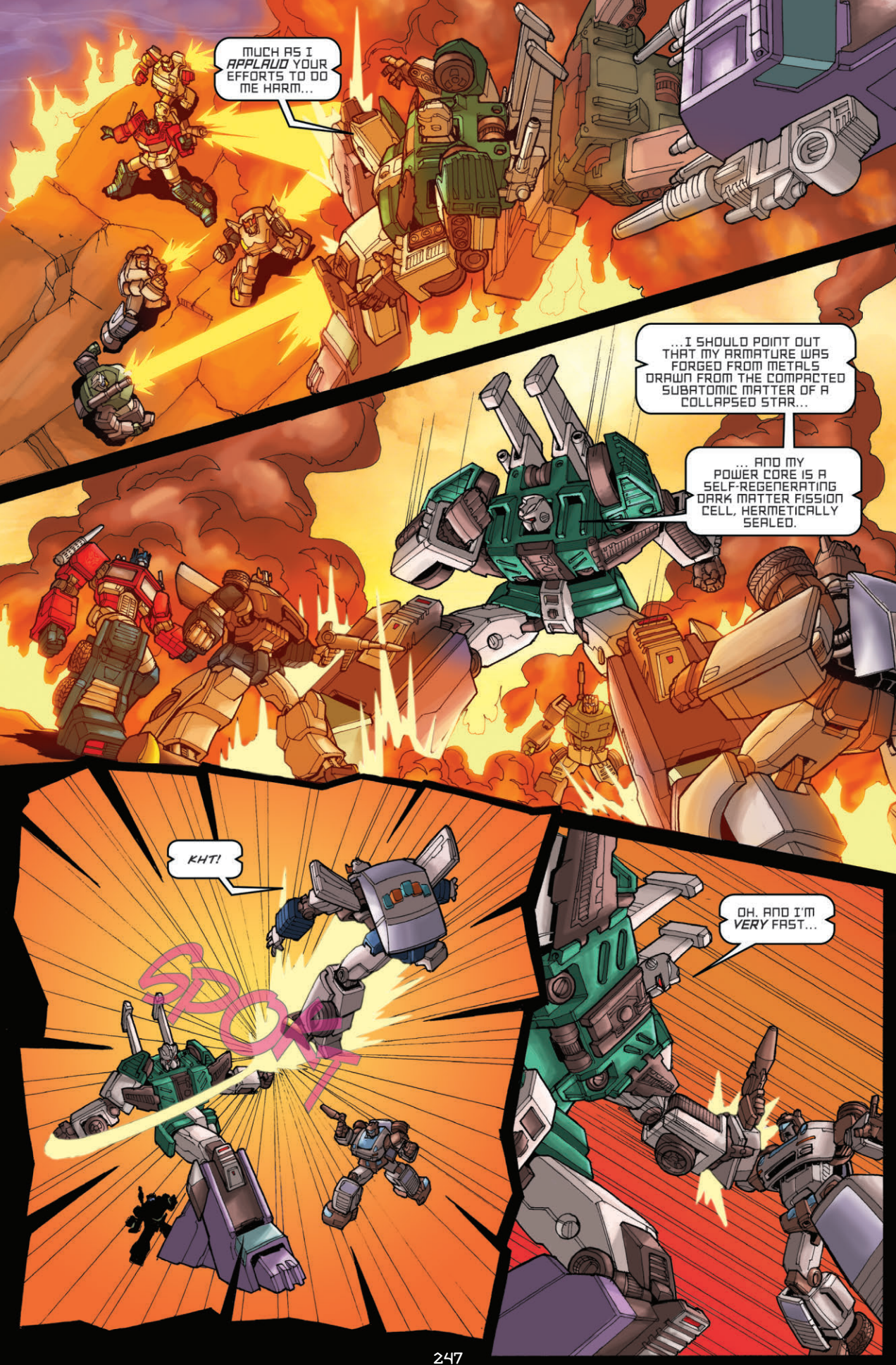

PENSACOLA:
KWAADAM
YOU DON'T *GET* IT, DO YOU? I COULD DO THIS ALL DAY.
IT'S WHAT I WAS *BUILT* FOR.
KRADOOM
IT'S *ALL* I WAS BUILT FOR.
MEGATRON WANTS DEVASTATION...
...HE'S *GOT* IT!
THRRBBOOM

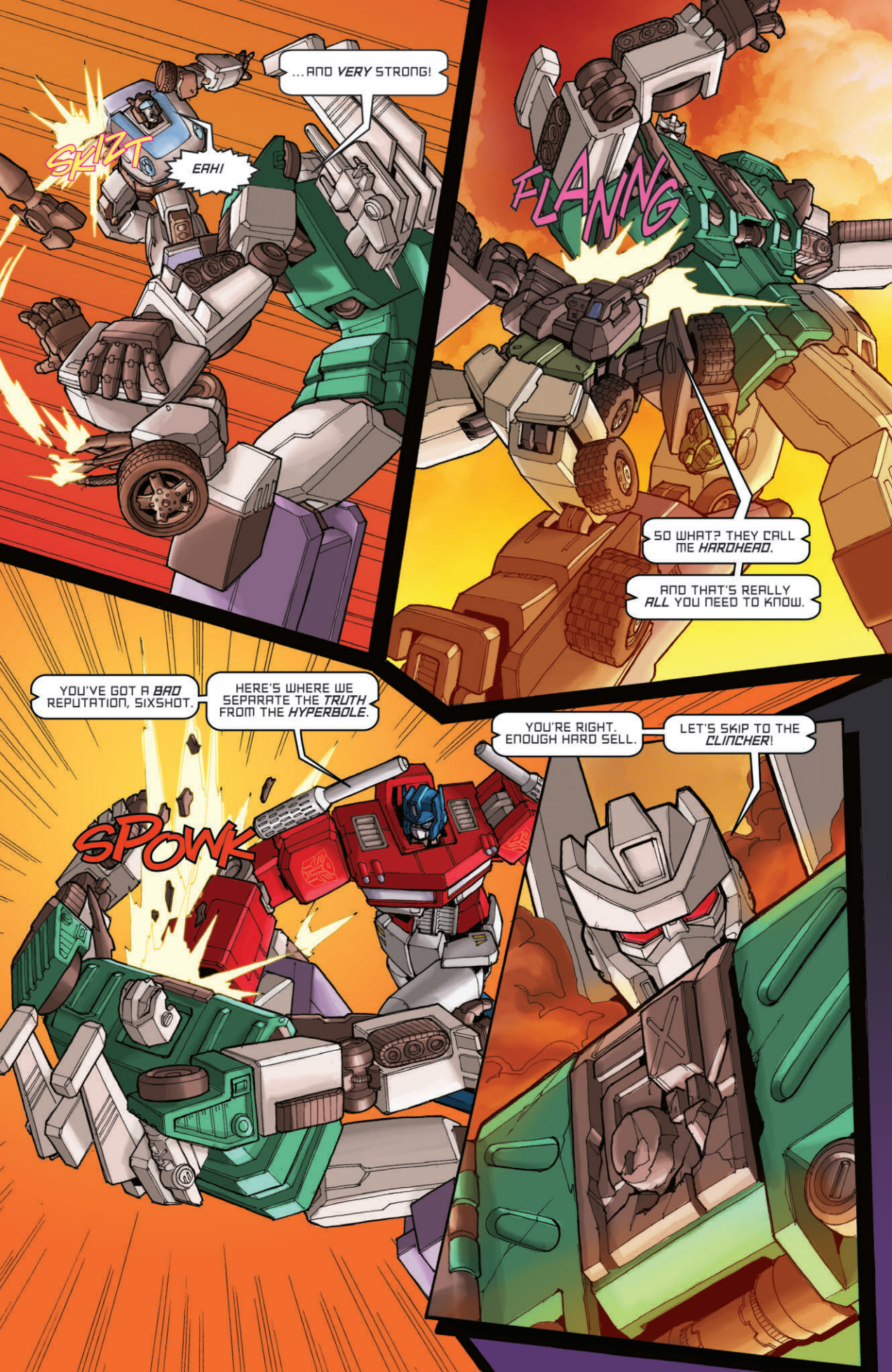

HE MEANS IT. HE'LL BURN THIS *ENTIRE* WORLD...SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS MEGATRON'S WILL!
AUTOBOTS–*DISENGAGE* SAFETY INHIBITORS ON YOUR PRIMARY ARSENAL...
FIRE AT WILL!
<CRZK> IT LOOKS AS THOUGH WE NOW HAVE *MULTIPLE* COMBATANTS. NATURE/ORIGIN: UNKNOWN. INTENTIONS: HOSTILE. HOMELAND THREAT LEVEL...*OFF* THE SCALE!
RECOMMEND *ULTIMATE FORCE*.

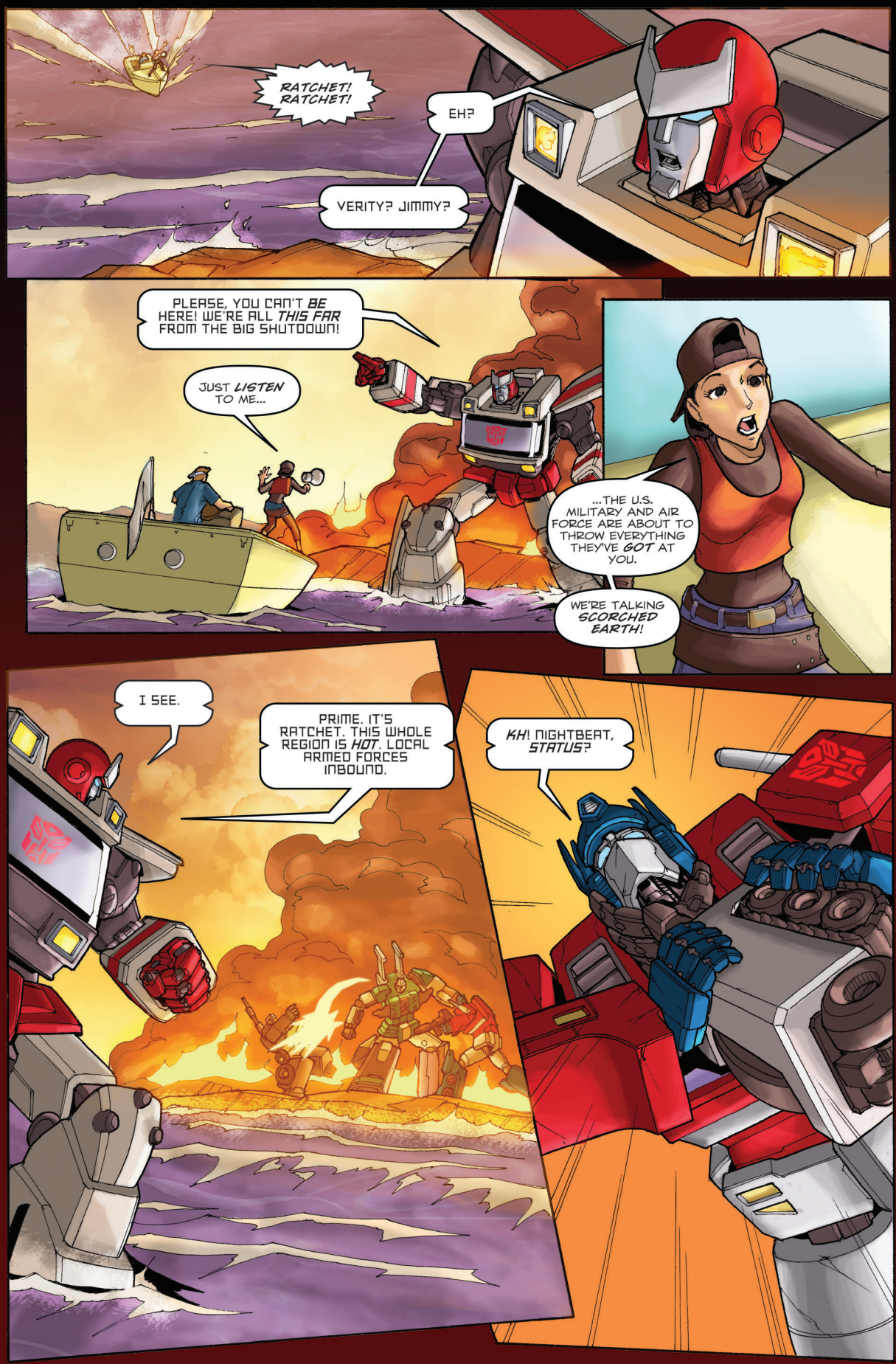

TURN YOUR VEHICLES *AROUND*. USE THE SHOULDER.
SLOW AND ORDERLY. DO IT–*NOW*.
WELL, WE BEFRIENDED THEM... I GUESS. LOOK, SIR, I KNOW HOW THIS *SOUNDS*, BUT...
...THERE ARE, UM, *GOOD* ROBOTS AND *BAD* ROBOTS. YOU *HAVE* TO MAKE THEM UNDERSTAND.
MM-HM. SO... THEY'RE MECHANICAL BEINGS FROM ANOTHER PLANET. AND YOU KNOW THIS, *HOW*?
SON...
...GO WASTE SOMEONE *ELSE'S* TIME.
I KNOW, I *KNOW*.
LOOK, YOU TRIED. NOW...
"...WE DO IT *MY* WAY."


WARSAW:
ANYTHING?
NO. THERE MUST BE THOUSANDS OF VEHICLES HERE. THE ODDS OF US JUST STUMBLING UPON HIM, WELL, THEY'RE NOT HIGH.
AND WHAT'S MORE, IT'S PAST EIGHT.
"WE'RE OPEN FOR BUSINESS."
YES MA'AM, THE CHAIN WAS JUST HANGING, GATES WIDE OPEN.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WHAT IS THERE TO STEAL?" I'M REPORTING A BREAK-IN!
YES. OF COURSE, SIR. HOLD PLEASE...
UNIT 56. WE HAVE A SUSPECTED 10-29 AT THE WRECK 'N' RULE AUTO YARD IN MILLER'S FIELD. PLEASE INVESTIGATE...
(CRK) ROGER, CONTROL...
... RESPONDING.

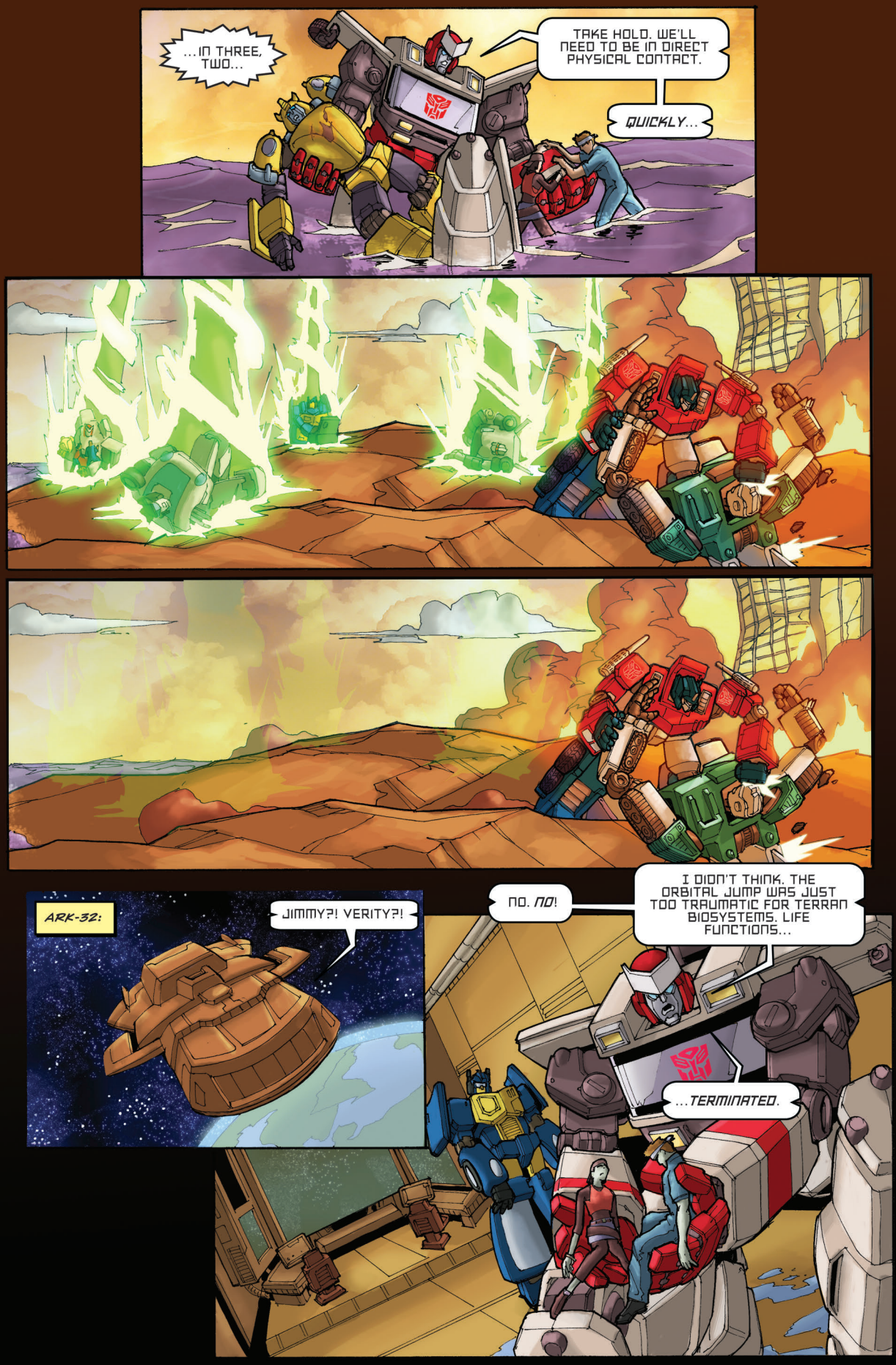

PENSACOLA:
HURRY UP.
I AM HURRYING. IT'S JUST A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM AN AUTOMOBILE IGNITION, I–
AH!
THAR SHE BLOWS.
THRSH
YOU SURE THIS IS SUCH A BRIGHT IDEA?
NO. BUT WE'VE GOT TO WARN THE AUTOBOTS. BASED ON WHAT WE HEARD BACK THERE, THEY'RE CALLING IN AIR STRIKES...
...AND I DOUBT THEY'LL GIVE A SECOND THOUGHT TO WHO'S WHO!


MUCH AS I APPLAUD YOUR EFFORTS TO DO ME HARM...
...I SHOULD POINT OUT THAT MY ARMATURE WAS FORGED FROM METALS DRAWN FROM THE COMPACTED SUBATOMIC MATTER OF A COLLAPSED STAR...
... AND MY POWER CORE IS A SELF-REGENERATING DARK MATTER FISSION CELL, HERMETICALLY SEALED.
KHT!
SPORT
OH. AND I'M VERY FAST...


...AND VERY STRONG!
SKIZT
EAHH
FLANING
SO WHAT? THEY CALL ME HARDHEAD.
AND THAT'S REALLY ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW.
YOU'VE GOT A BAD REPUTATION, SIXSHOT.
HERE'S WHERE WE SEPARATE THE TRUTH FROM THE HYPERBOLE.
SPOWK
YOU'RE RIGHT. ENOUGH HARD SELL.
LET'S SKIP TO THE CLINCHER!

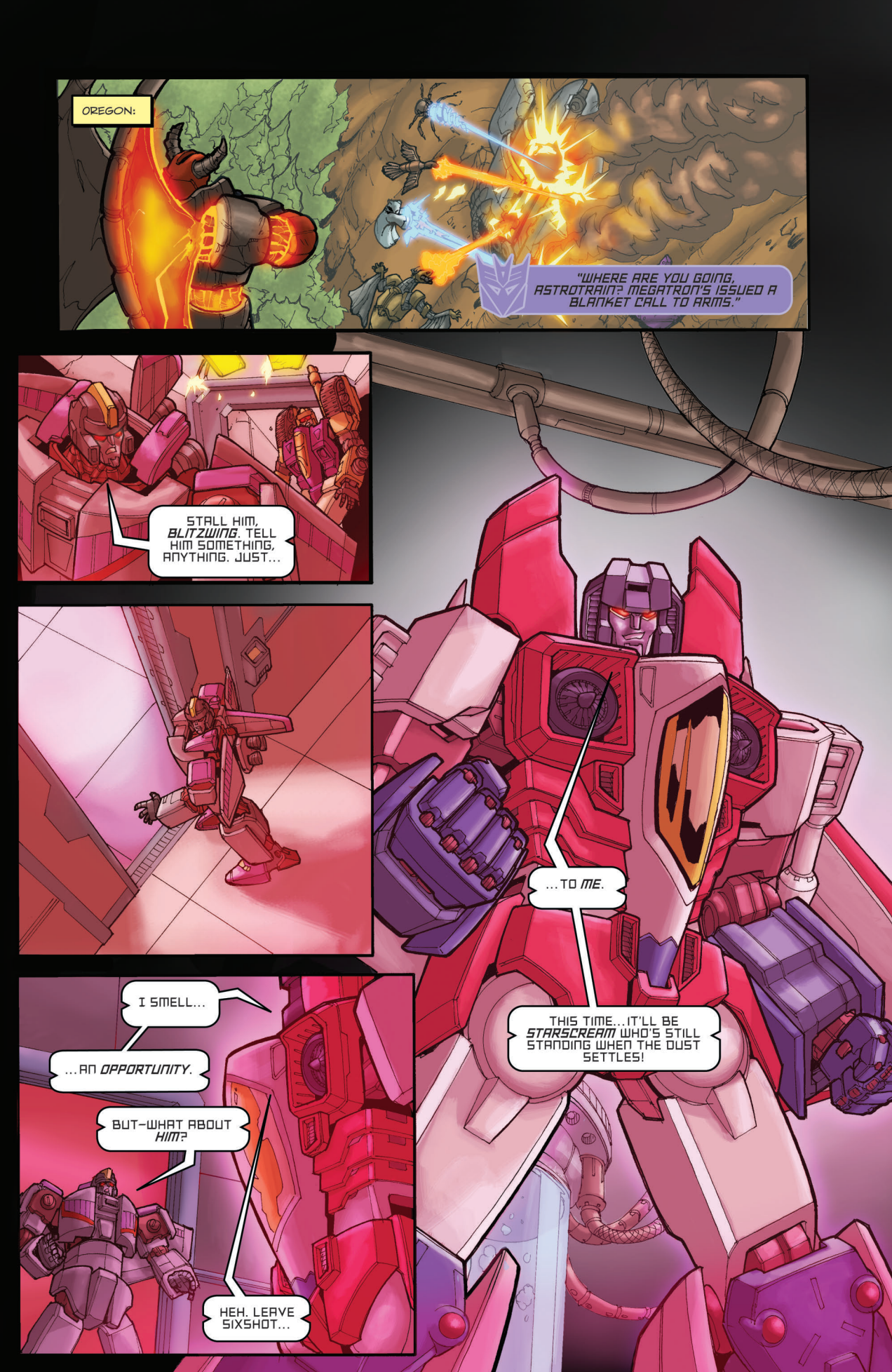

RATCHET! RATCHET!
EH?
VERITY? JIMMY?
PLEASE, YOU CAN'T BE HERE! WE'RE ALL THIS FAR FROM THE BIG SHUTDOWN!
JUST LISTEN TO ME...
...THE U.S. MILITARY AND AIR FORCE ARE ABOUT TO THROW EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT AT YOU.
WE'RE TALKING SCORCHED EARTH!
I SEE.
PRIME. IT'S RATCHET. THIS WHOLE REGION IS HOT. LOCAL ARMED FORCES INBOUND.
KH! NIGHTBEAT, STATUS?


SAY THE WORD, PRIME, AND WE'RE *GONE*.
DO IT. GET EVERYONE *OUT* OF THE AREA, MYSELF EXCLUDED.
I'M *STAYING* TO SEE THIS THROUGH, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER!
BUT–
THAT'S AN ORDER! *EXECUTE*.
UNDERSTOOD.
AUTOBOTS. BRACE FOR *ORBITAL JUMP*...


...IN THREE, TWO...
TAKE HOLD. WE'LL NEED TO BE IN DIRECT PHYSICAL CONTACT.
QUICKLY...
ARK-32:
JIMMY?! VERITY?!
NO. NO!
I DIDN'T THINK. THE ORBITAL JUMP WAS JUST TOO TRAUMATIC FOR TERRAN BIOSYSTEMS. LIFE FUNCTIONS...
...TERMINATED.


DECEPTICON COMMAND BUNKER, OREGON:
LORD MEGATRON...
...WE HAVE A VESSEL IMMEDIATELY OVERHEAD. UNKNOWN CONFIGURATION.
WHERE DID IT COME FROM, SKYWARP? AND WHY DID OUR SENSOR BUFFER NOT PICK IT UP?
UM. IT WAS JUST...THERE. NO WARNING.
HM.
"RECALL SIXSHOT. TELL HIM IT'S A MATTER OF URGENCY. ALL PREVIOUS ORDERS ARE RESCINDED."
"TELL HIM..."
"...WE ARE BESIEGED!"


UNGHR!
IT'S YOUR LUCKY DAY, PRIME. BUT...
...DON'T GO THINKING I WON'T BE BACK TO *FINISH* WHAT I STARTED.
NIGHTBEAT?
"GET ME *OUT* OF HERE."
SHFWOOOM


OREGON:
"WHERE ARE YOU GOING, ASTROTRAIN? MEGATRON'S ISSUED A BLANKET CALL TO ARMS."
STALL HIM, BLITZWING. TELL HIM SOMETHING, ANYTHING. JUST...
...TO ME.
THIS TIME...IT'LL BE STARSCREAM WHO'S STILL STANDING WHEN THE DUST SETTLES!
I SMELL...
...AN OPPORTUNITY.
BUT-WHAT ABOUT HIM?
HEH. LEAVE SIXSHOT...


CHAPTER 5
CYBERTRON (THE PAST):
HE'S TOO POWERFUL.
TOO POWERFUL, STARSCREAM? THERE'S NO SUCH THING.
WITH RESPECT, LORD MEGATRON...
...MY SOLE DUTY IS TO SEE TO YOUR SAFETY. IF SIXSHOT WERE TO TURN HIS CONSIDERABLE ARSENAL AGAINST YOU, I—MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PROTECT YOU.
STARSCREAM, STARSCREAM. YOU ARE SO ACHINGLY NAIVE. FIRSTLY, YOUR PRESENCE AT MY SIDE IS LARGELY FOR SHOW. I CAN PROTECT MYSELF.
AND SECONDLY, DO YOU SERIOUSLY THINK I WOULD SET IN MOTION A LIVING WEAPON...
"...IF I DID NOT HAVE THE OFF SWITCH?"

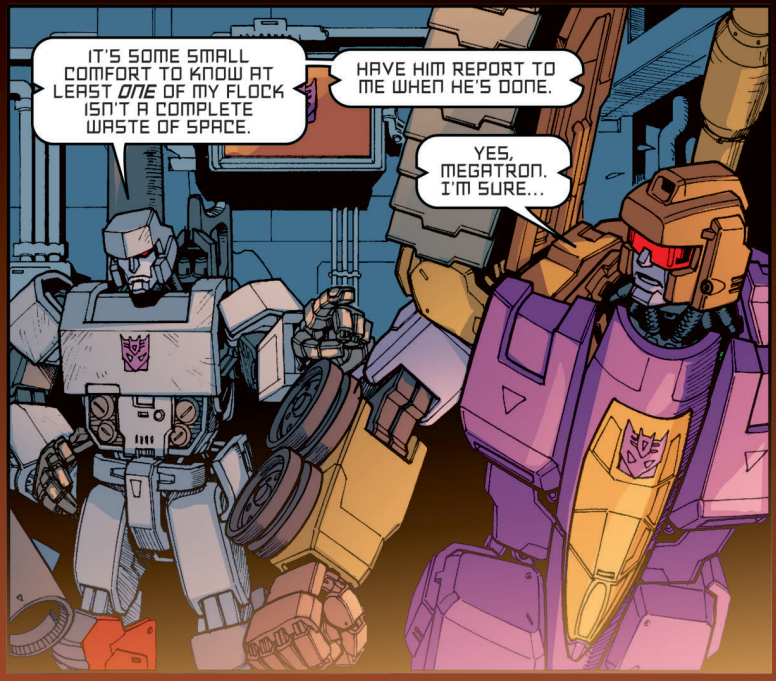

EARTH (PRESENT DAY):
TH-THUMMM!
WHO ARE THEY?
WE DON'T KNOW, MEGATRON.
WHAT DO THEY WANT?
ER, DITTO.
TELL ME SOMETHING, BLITZWING, OR SO HELP ME I'LL EVISCERATE YOU AS THOROUGHLY AS I DID STARSCREAM!


UM. THEY'RE... ALIEN. A MISH-MASH OF SPECIES. AND THEY'RE, ER...
KLOOM!
DUM DUM DUM!
VATAKYS!
"...HOSTILE!"
YOU DON'T SAY.

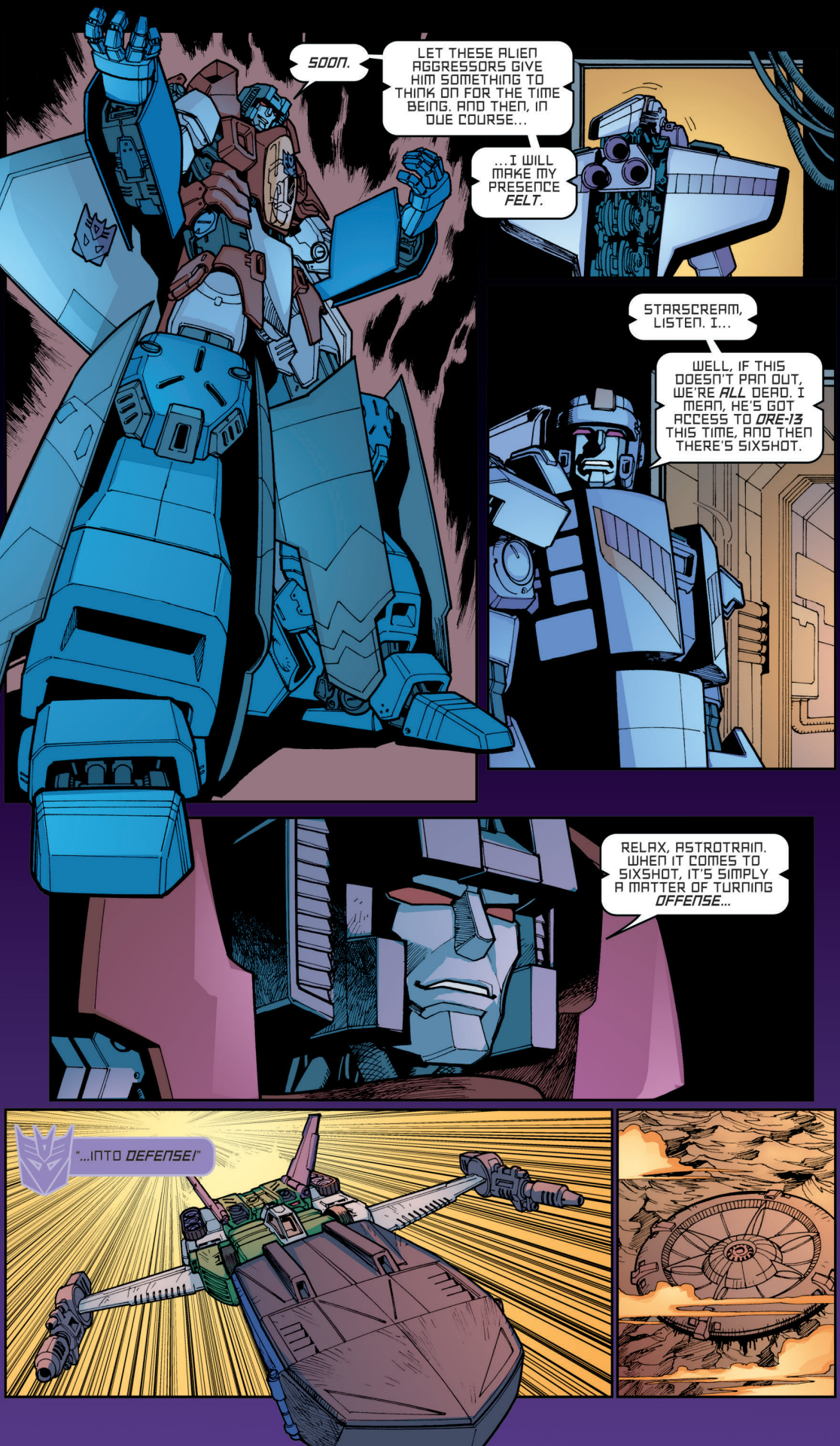

THUNDERCRACKER—HOW LONG UNTIL SIXSHOT GETS HERE?
ANY TIME NOW. HE'S INBOUND.
GOOD. THE REST OF YOU, GET A BOOSTER SHOT OF ULTRA-ENERGON. ONCE SIXSHOT HAS SOFTENED THEM UP...
...WE'LL PLAY.
DONE.

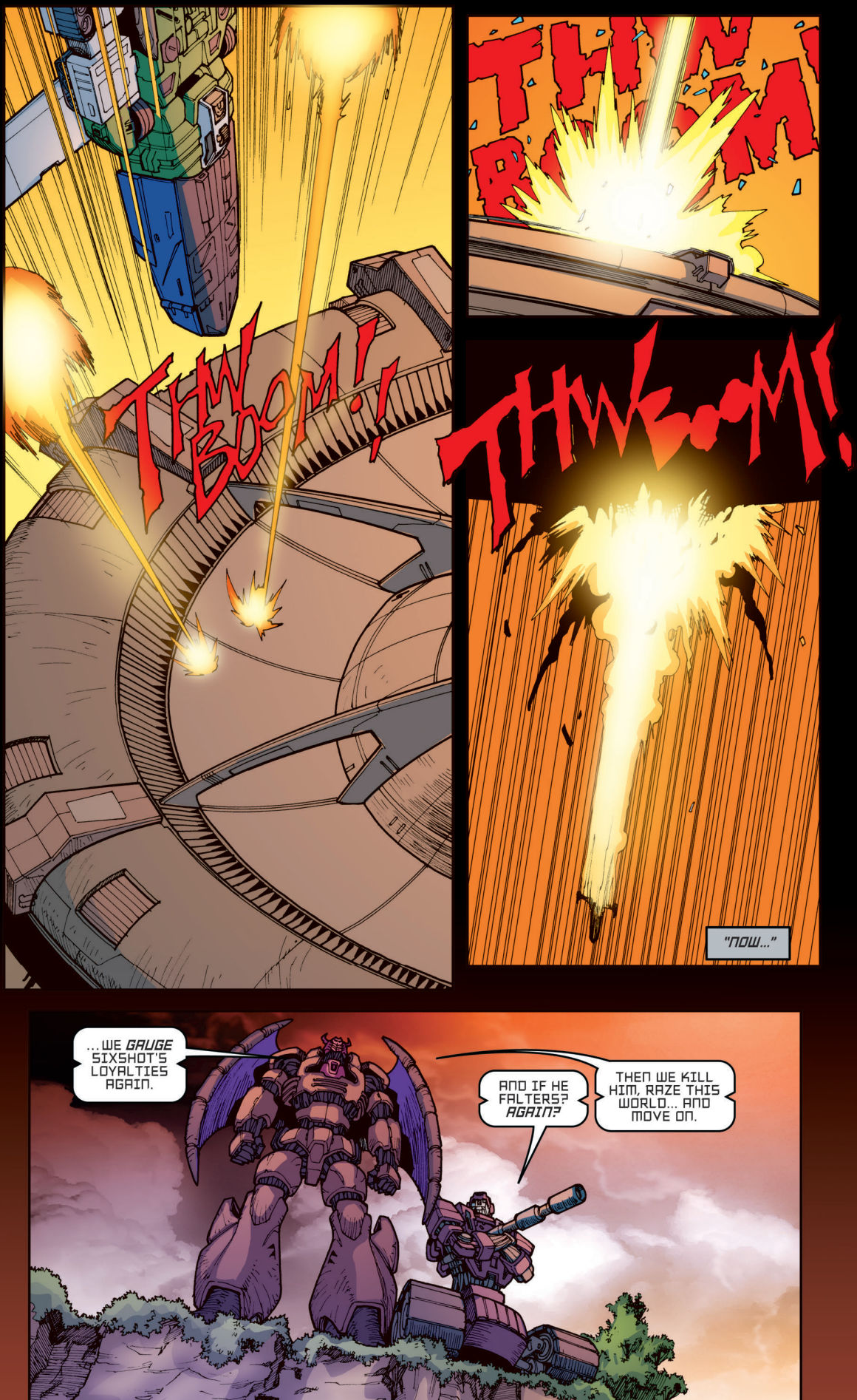

AND DUSTED.
BLITZWING...
...WHERE'S ASTROTRAIN?

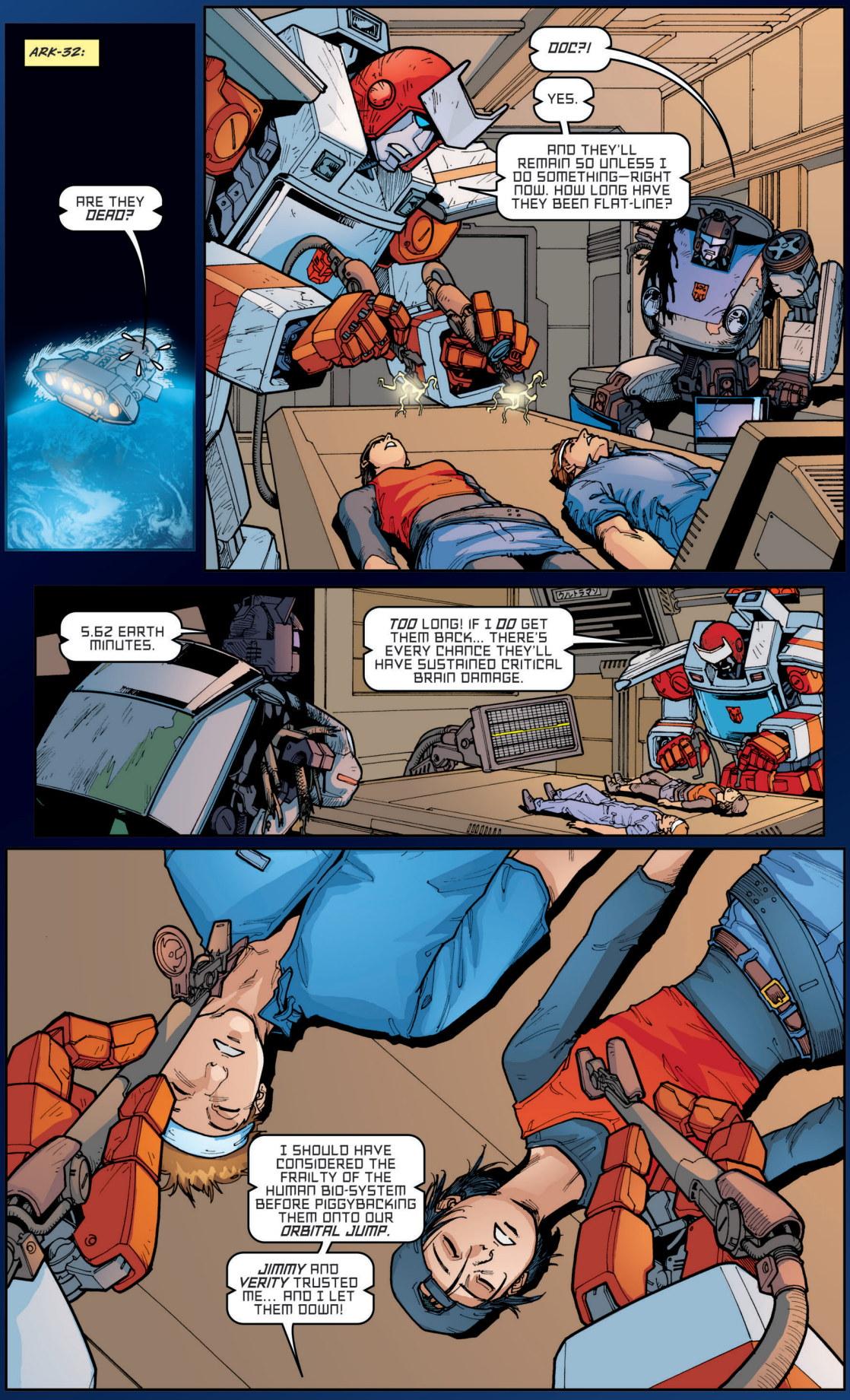

I—ER, HE'S...
...ALIGNING THE ORBITAL DEFENSES. HE THOUGHT WE MIGHT NEED THE EXTRA FIREPOWER.
HM.

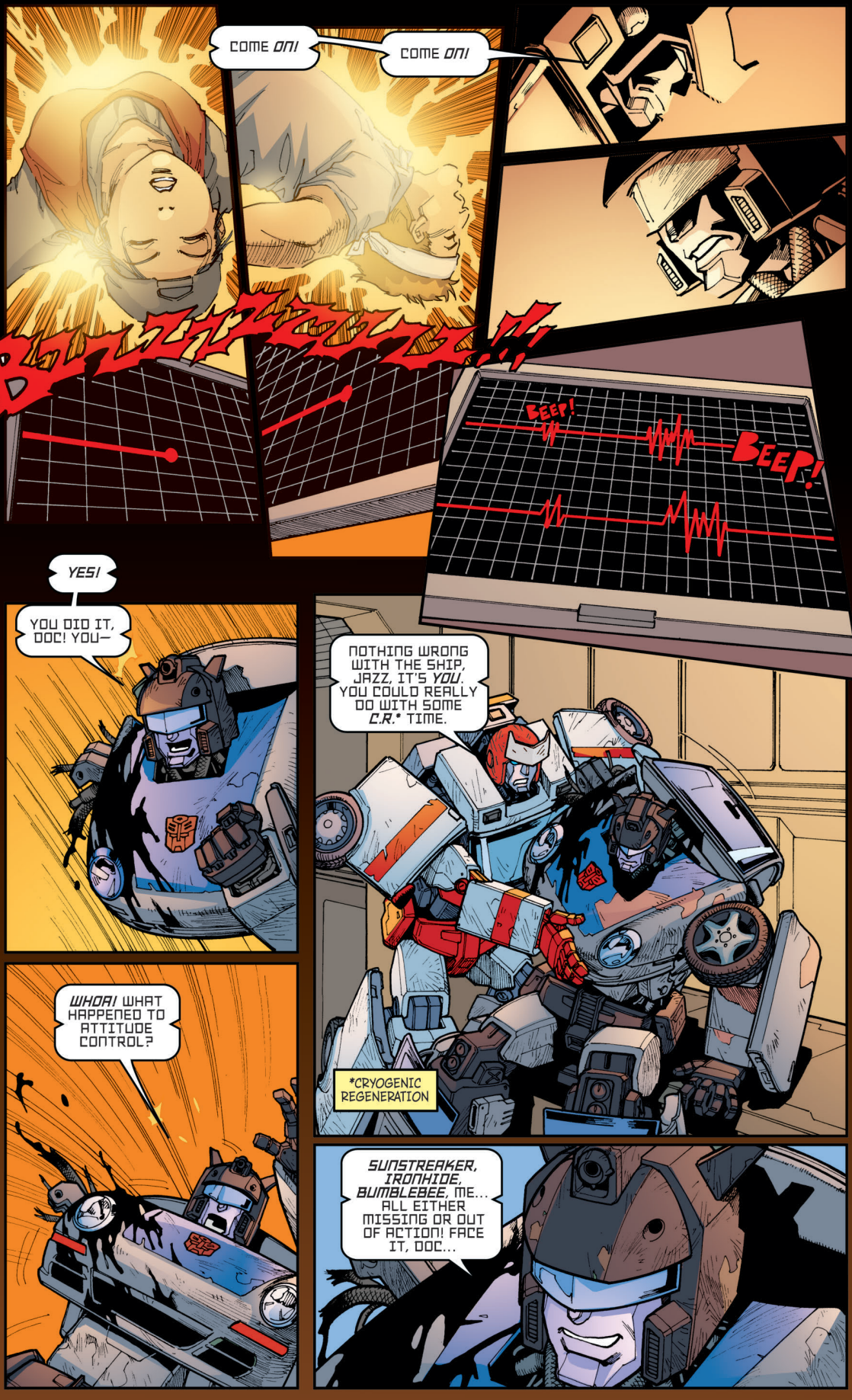

IT'S SOME SMALL COMFORT TO KNOW AT LEAST ONE OF MY FLOCK ISN'T A COMPLETE WASTE OF SPACE.
HAVE HIM REPORT TO ME WHEN HE'S DONE.
YES, MEGATRON. I'M SURE...

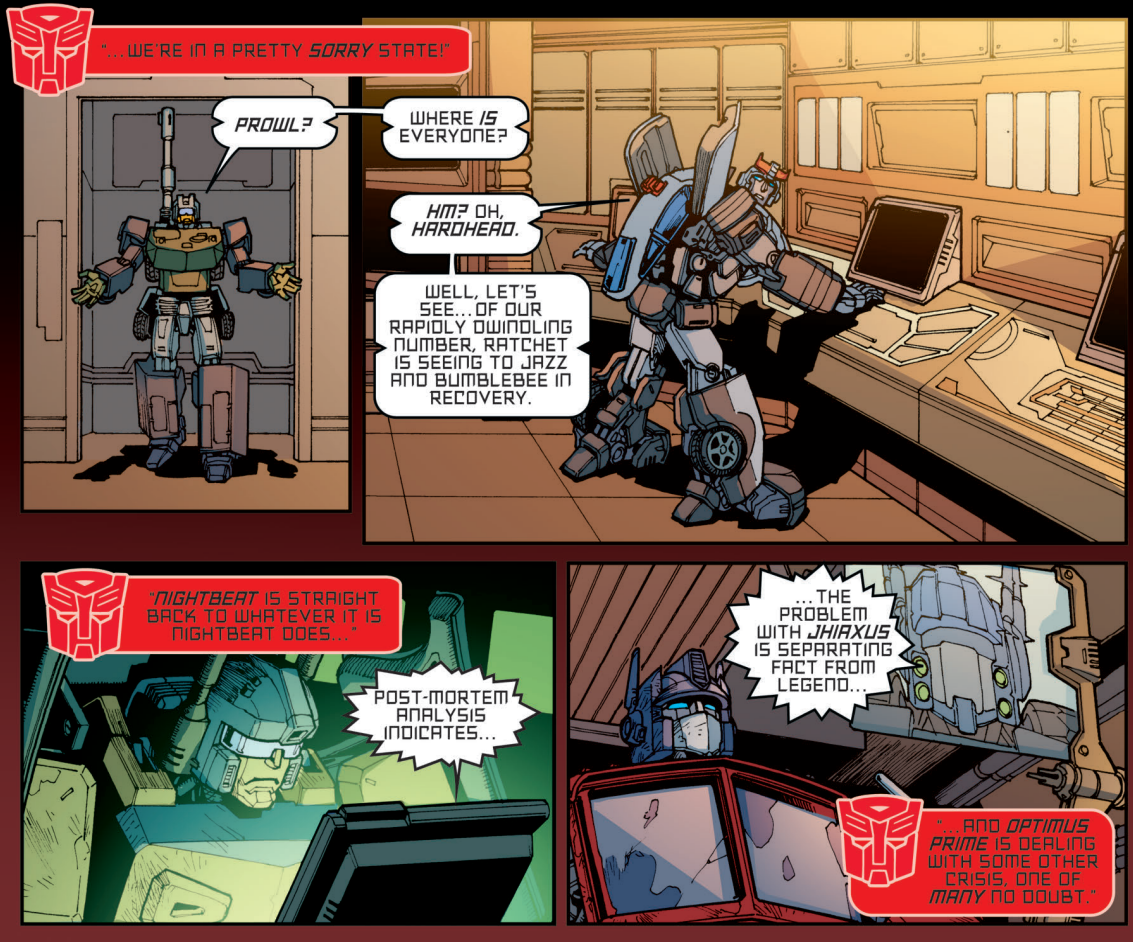

"...HE'S ONLY TOO AWARE."
YOU'D BETTER GO. NO SENSE IN AROUSING HIS SUSPICIONS.
BUT WHEN—?

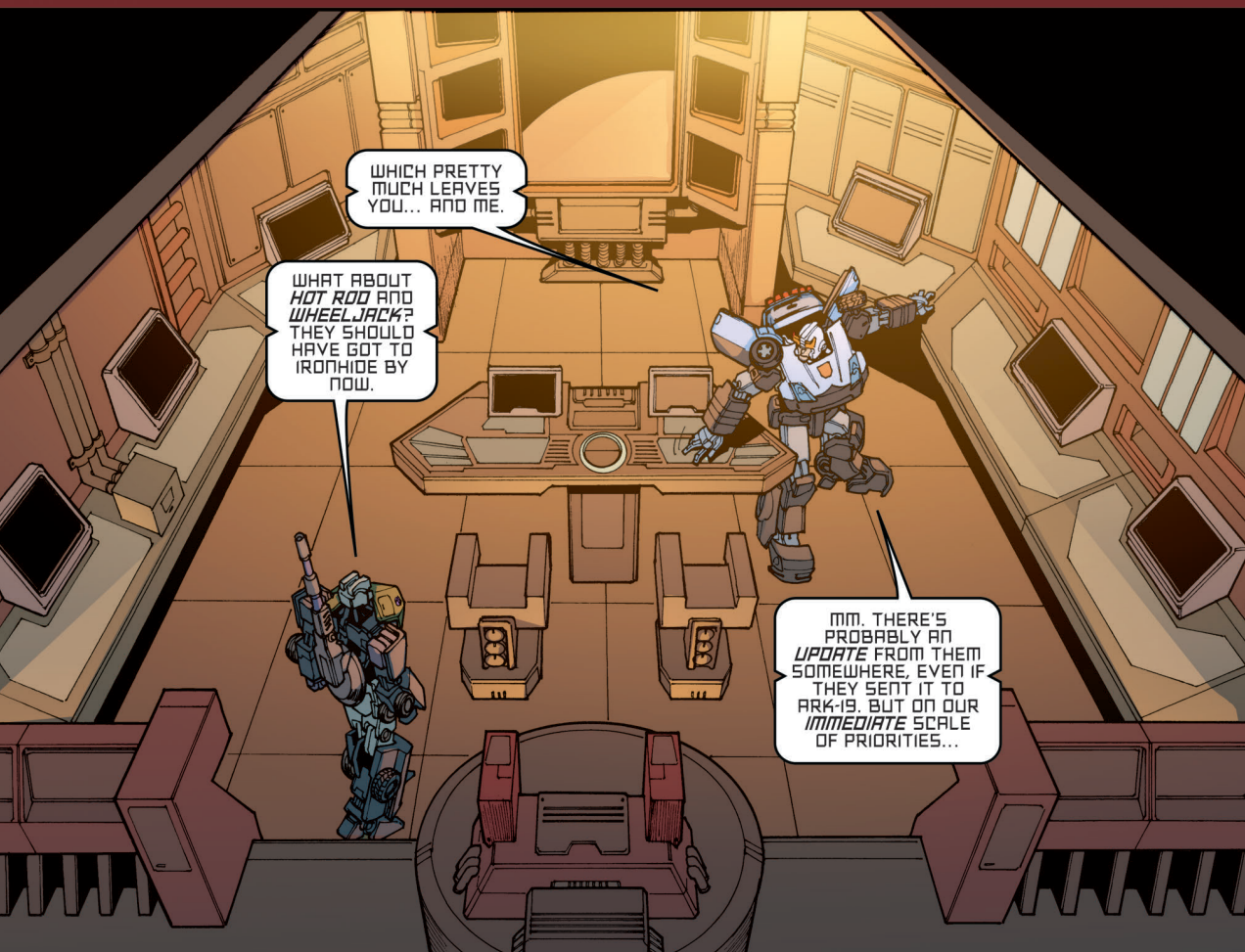

SOON.
LET THESE ALIEN AGGRESSORS GIVE HIM SOMETHING TO THINK ON FOR THE TIME BEING. AND THEN, IN DUE COURSE...
...I WILL MAKE MY PRESENCE FELT.
STARSCREAM, LISTEN. I...
WELL, IF THIS DOESN'T PAN OUT, WE'RE ALL DEAD. I MEAN, HE'S GOT ACCESS TO ORE-13 THIS TIME, AND THEN THERE'S SIXSHOT.
RELAX, ASTROTRAIN. WHEN IT COMES TO SIXSHOT, IT'S SIMPLY A MATTER OF TURNING OFFENSE...
"...INTO DEFENSE!"


TIW BOOM!
THWOOM!
"NOW..."
...WE GAUGE SIXSHOT'S LOYALTIES AGAIN.
AND IF HE FALTERS? AGAIN?
THEN WE KILL HIM, RAZE THIS WORLD... AND MOVE ON.

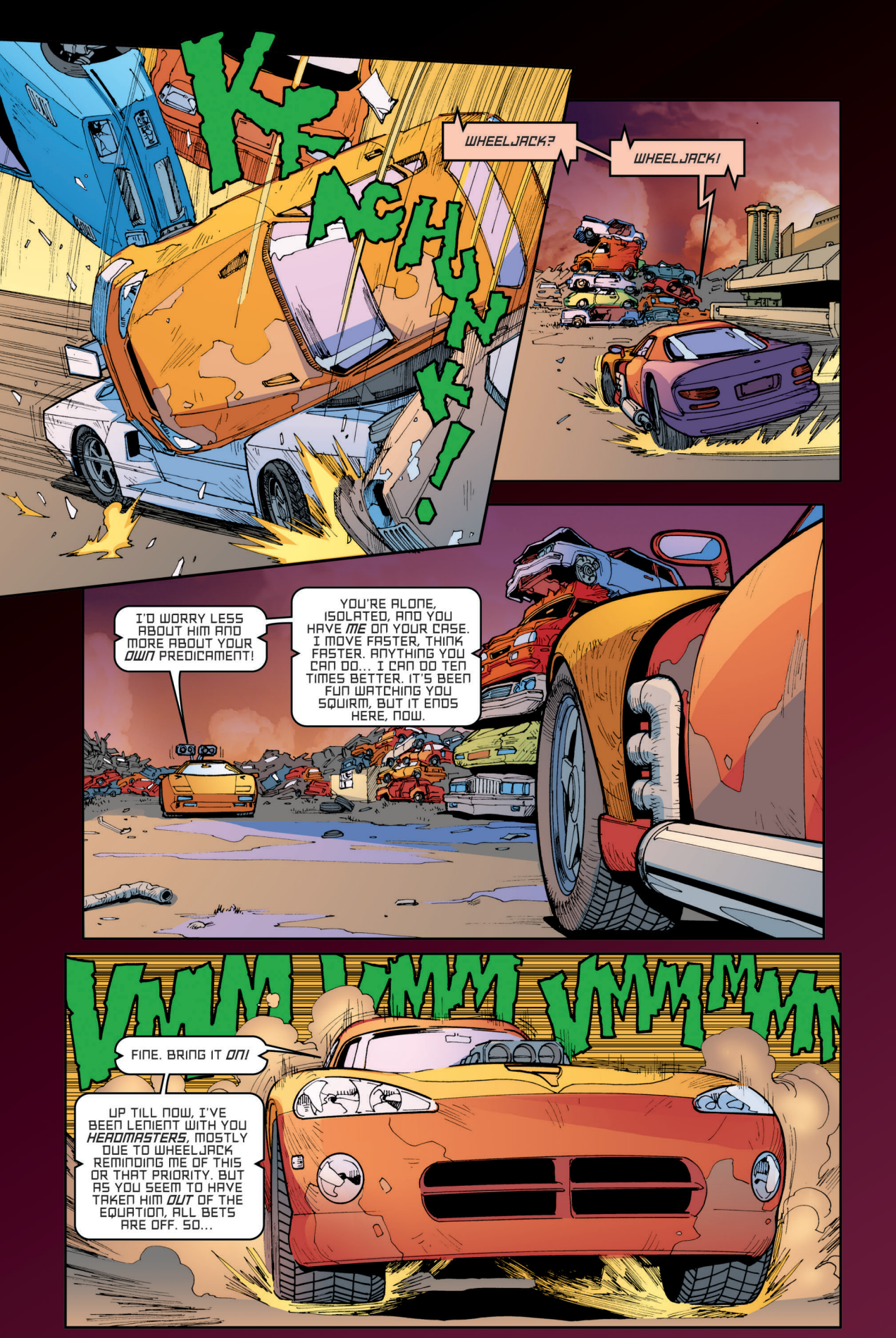

ARK-32:
ARE THEY *DEAD?*
DOC?!
YES.
AND THEY'LL REMAIN SO UNLESS I DO SOMETHING—RIGHT NOW. HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN FLAT-LINE?
5.62 EARTH MINUTES.
TOO LONG! IF I *DO* GET THEM BACK... THERE'S EVERY CHANCE THEY'LL HAVE SUSTAINED CRITICAL BRAIN DAMAGE.
I SHOULD HAVE CONSIDERED THE FRAILTY OF THE HUMAN BIO-SYSTEM BEFORE PIGGYBACKING THEM ONTO OUR *ORBITAL JUMP.*
JIMMY AND *VERITY* TRUSTED ME... AND I LET THEM DOWN!

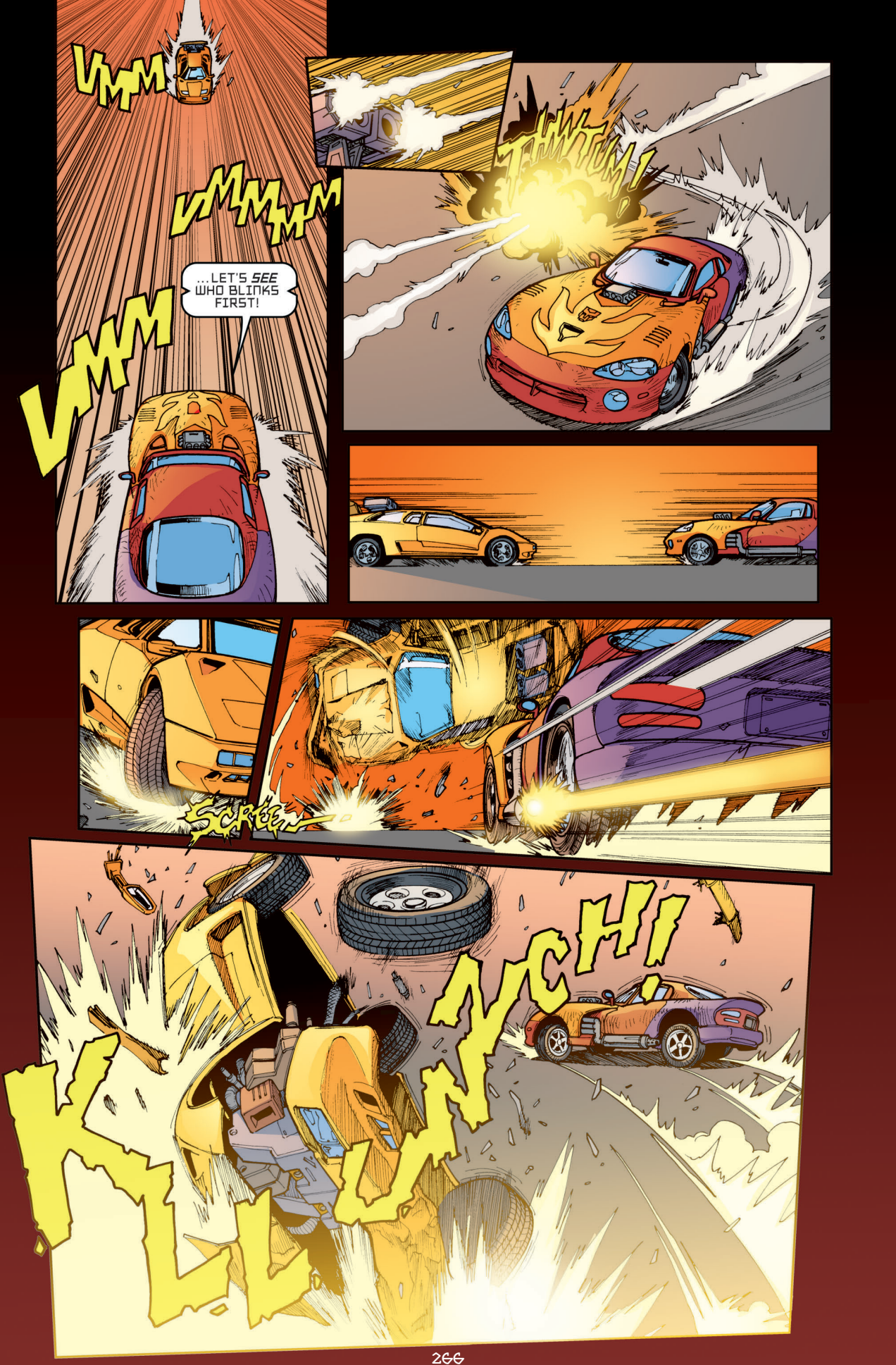

COME ON!
COME ON!
BZZZZZZZZZ!!!
BEEP!
BEEP!
YES!
YOU DID IT, DOC! YOU—
NOTHING WRONG WITH THE SHIP, JAZZ, IT'S YOU. YOU COULD REALLY DO WITH SOME C.R.* TIME.
*CRYOGENIC REGENERATION
WHOA! WHAT HAPPENED TO ATTITUDE CONTROL?
SUNSTREAKER, IRONHIDE, BUMBLEBEE, ME... ALL EITHER MISSING OR OUT OF ACTION! FACE IT, DOC...


"...WE'RE IN A PRETTY *SORRY* STATE!"
PROWL?
WHERE *IS* EVERYONE?
HM? OH, *HARDHEAD.*
WELL, LET'S SEE...OF OUR RAPIDLY DWINDLING NUMBER, RATCHET IS SEEING TO JAZZ AND BUMBLEBEE IN RECOVERY.
"*NIGHTBEAT* IS STRAIGHT BACK TO WHATEVER IT IS NIGHTBEAT DOES..."
POST-MORTEM ANALYSIS INDICATES...
...THE PROBLEM WITH *JHIAXUS* IS SEPARATING FACT FROM LEGEND...
"...AND *OPTIMUS PRIME* IS DEALING WITH SOME OTHER CRISIS, ONE OF *MANY* NO DOUBT."


WHICH PRETTY MUCH LEAVES YOU... AND ME.
WHAT ABOUT *HOT ROD* AND *WHEELJACK*? THEY SHOULD HAVE GOT TO IRONHIDE BY NOW.
MM. THERE'S PROBABLY AN *UPDATE* FROM THEM SOMEWHERE, EVEN IF THEY SENT IT TO ARK-19. BUT ON OUR *IMMEDIATE* SCALE OF PRIORITIES...

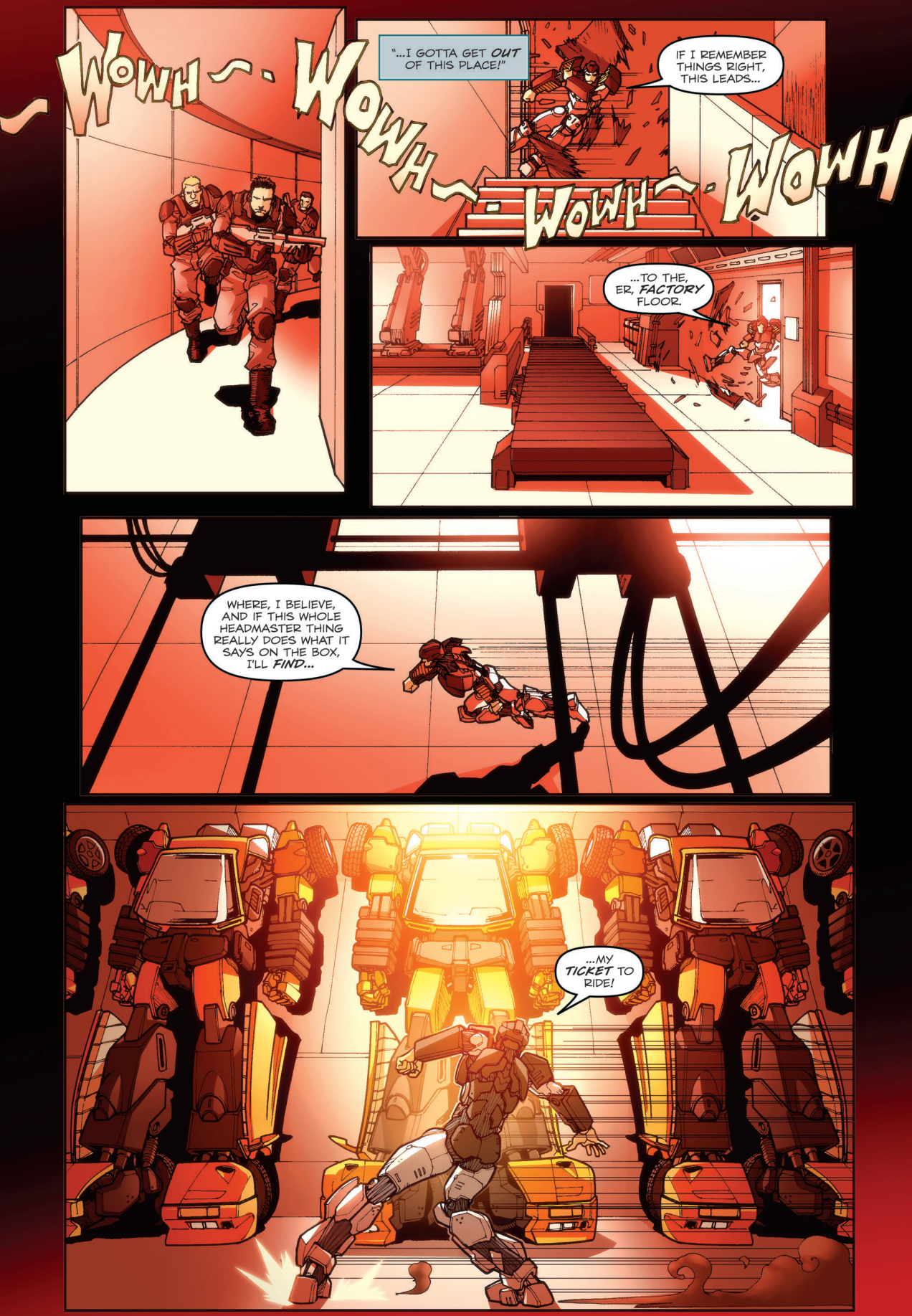

"...IT CAN *WAIT!*"
WARSAW, INDIANA:
IT OCCURS TO ME, WHEELJACK...
...THAT IF IRONHIDE WAS SCHEDULED TO GO TO THE *PRESSES* FIRST THING THIS MORNING, CHANCES ARE THAT'S WHERE HE IS, READY AND WAITING.
I'M ON MY WAY THERE NOW.
ROGER, HOT ROD, I'LL SEE YOU TH—
—UH?
KLUNNG!
KLUNNG
SLAG IT! HOT ROD—THEY'VE FOUND—


KRACHUNK!
WHEELJACK?
WHEELJACK!
I'D WORRY LESS ABOUT HIM AND MORE ABOUT YOUR *OWN* PREDICAMENT!
YOU'RE ALONE, ISOLATED, AND YOU HAVE *ME* ON YOUR CASE. I MOVE FASTER, THINK FASTER. ANYTHING YOU CAN DO... I CAN DO TEN TIMES BETTER. IT'S BEEN FUN WATCHING YOU SQUIRM, BUT IT ENDS HERE, NOW.
VMMM VMMM VMMM
FINE. BRING IT *ON!*
UP TILL NOW, I'VE BEEN LENIENT WITH YOU *HEADMASTERS*, MOSTLY DUE TO WHEELJACK REMINDING ME OF THIS OR THAT PRIORITY. BUT AS YOU SEEM TO HAVE TAKEN HIM *OUT* OF THE EQUATION, ALL BETS ARE OFF. SO...


VMM
VMMMM
VMM
...LET'S SEE WHO BLINKS FIRST!
THWUM!
SCREE
KLUNK
CHI

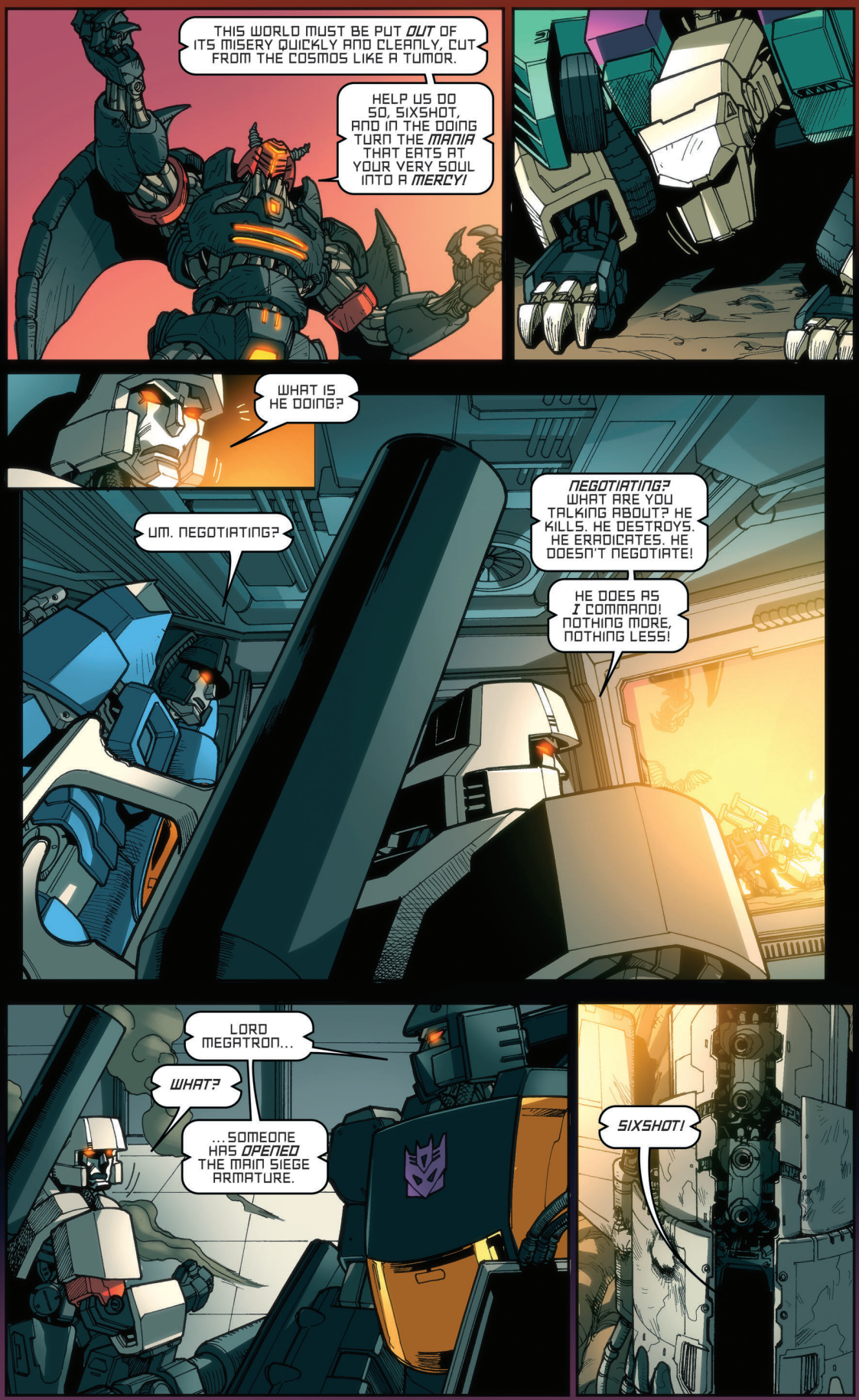

REEENK!
AMATEUR.
HFT!
IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, YOU MIGHT NOT MEASURE UP TO THE REAL SUNSTREAKER...
"...BUT THERE'S A WHOLE LOT MORE OF YOU!"
TAMPA, FLORIDA:
OW. OW. OW!
WHEN YOU SAID IT WOULD HURT, SUNSTREAKER, YOU WEREN'T KIDDING.
BUT... IT'S STRANGE, APART FROM A REAL BAD HEADACHE, I DON'T FEEL ANY...

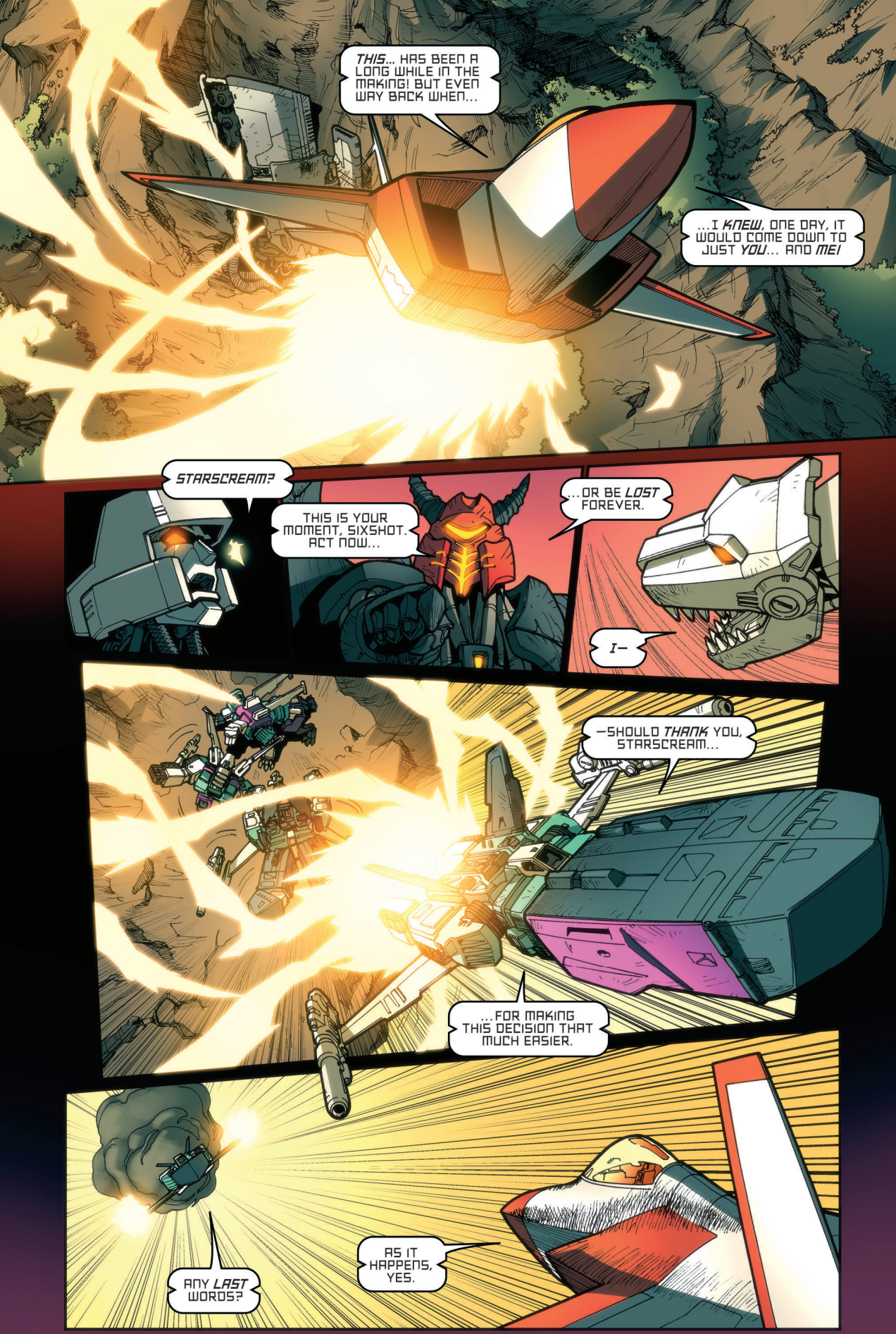

...DIFFERENT?
!
DNT!
WOWH-WOWH!!-WOWH
WHOA. DID I DO THAT?
OR WAS THAT YOU? OR BOTH OF US?!
WOWH-
FLHT—
YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. ONE THING I DO KNOW FOR SURE...


WOWH
WOWH
WOWH
WOWH
"...I GOTTA GET OUT OF THIS PLACE!"
IF I REMEMBER THINGS RIGHT, THIS LEADS...
...TO THE, ER, FACTORY FLOOR.
WHERE, I BELIEVE, AND IF THIS WHOLE HEADMASTER THING REALLY DOES WHAT IT SAYS ON THE BOX, I'LL FIND...
...MY TICKET TO RIDE!


OREGON:
HOW MANY TIMES...
...DO I HAVE TO SAY "NO"?
I'M NOT, AND NEVER WILL BE...
...A REAPER!
VASHAP-VASHAP!!
UH?
THT!
WOOP!!
THEN WHAT, PRAY TELL...

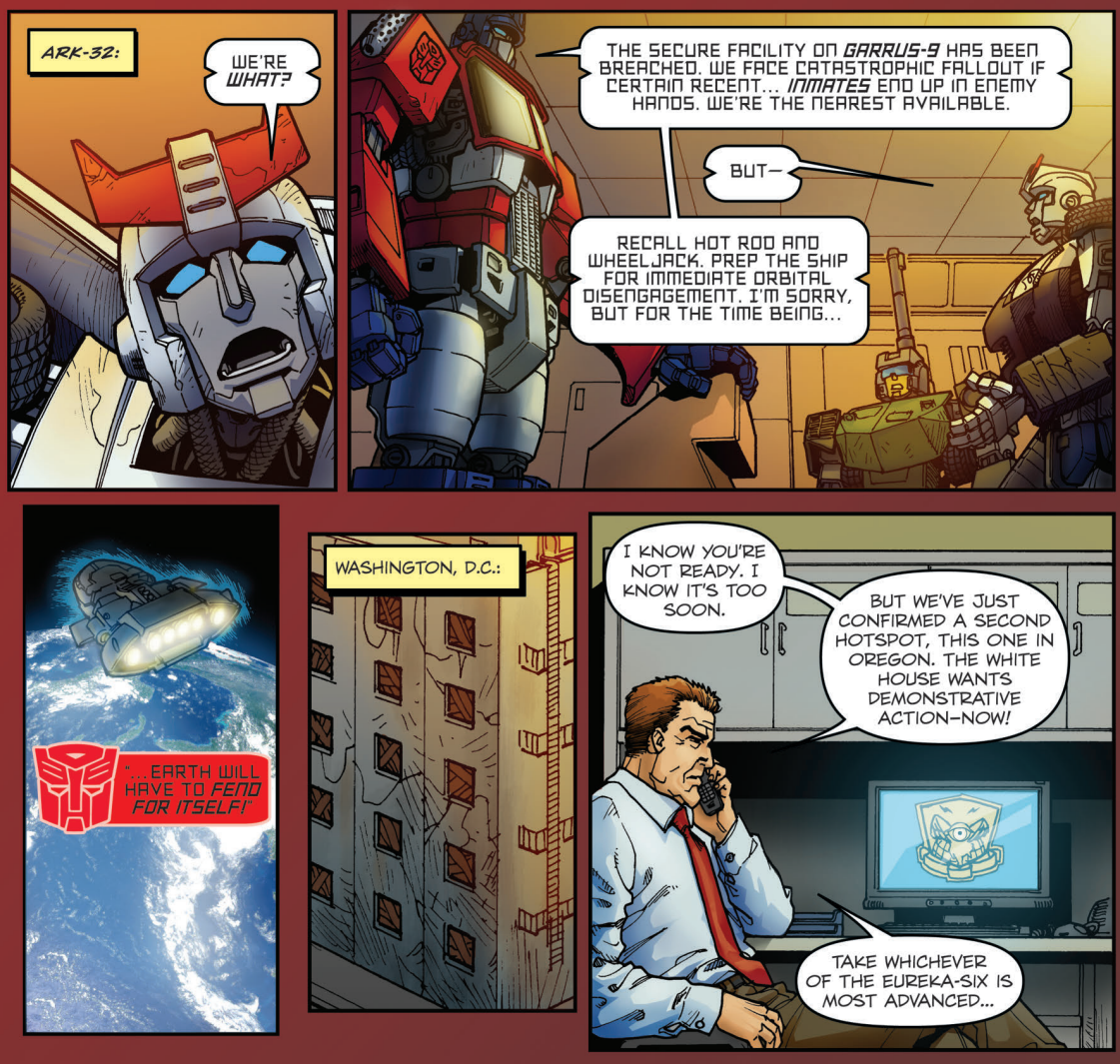

...ARE YOU?
PROPERTY? CHATTEL? A SLAVE TO ARTIFICIAL INSTINCTS THAT ARE DRIVING YOU EVER CLOSER TO A PRECIPICE, ONE FROM WHICH THE FALL...
CHRMMM!
...IS INFINITE AND ABSOLUTE.
WHAT YOU ARE—WHAT THEY HAVE MADE YOU—WILL CONSUME YOU UTTERLY...
...UNLESS YOU MAKE THE CHOICE TO DIRECT AND CHANNEL YOUR OWN DESTRUCTIVE NATURE.
HURF
JOIN US IN OUR CRUSADE TO END WAR OR DIE HERE, NOW.
FOR ALL YOUR DEVASTATING POWER, WE...
...ARE LEGION.


THIS WORLD MUST BE PUT *OUT* OF ITS MISERY QUICKLY AND CLEANLY, CUT FROM THE COSMOS LIKE A TUMOR.
HELP US DO SO, SIXSHOT, AND IN THE DOING TURN THE *MANIA* THAT EATS AT YOUR VERY SOUL INTO A *MERCY!*
WHAT IS HE DOING?
UM. NEGOTIATING?
NEGOTIATING? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE KILLS. HE DESTROYS. HE ERADICATES. HE DOESN'T NEGOTIATE!
HE DOES AS *I* COMMAND! NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS!
LORD MEGATRON...
WHAT?
...SOMEONE HAS *OPENED* THE MAIN SIEGE ARMATURE.
SIXSHOT!


THIS... HAS BEEN A LONG WHILE IN THE MAKING! BUT EVEN WAY BACK WHEN...
...I KNEW, ONE DAY, IT WOULD COME DOWN TO JUST YOU... AND ME!
STARSCREAM?
THIS IS YOUR MOMENT, SIXSHOT. ACT NOW...
...OR BE LOST FOREVER.
I—
—SHOULD THANK YOU, STARSCREAM...
...FOR MAKING THIS DECISION THAT MUCH EASIER.
AS IT HAPPENS, YES.
ANY LAST WORDS?


RESET:
PI-ORION-ACTUAL-ORBIT.
ENABLE.
THRASSHKT!!
WRAKMM!!
"LORD MEGATRON—LOOK..."


...HE'S TAKING THEM ON SINGLE-HANDED!
SO I SEE. IN FACT...
...I SEE IT ALL SO *VERY* CLEARLY NOW.
NEVERTHELESS, THE BATTLE CRY IS HONORABLY RAISED.
DECEPTICONS...
"...ATTACK!"


ARK-32:
WE'RE WHAT?
THE SECURE FACILITY ON GARRUS-9 HAS BEEN BREACHED. WE FACE CATASTROPHIC FALLOUT IF CERTAIN RECENT... INMATES END UP IN ENEMY HANDS. WE'RE THE NEAREST AVAILABLE.
BUT—
RECALL HOT ROD AND WHEELJACK. PREP THE SHIP FOR IMMEDIATE ORBITAL DISENGAGEMENT. I'M SORRY, BUT FOR THE TIME BEING...
"...EARTH WILL HAVE TO FEND FOR ITSELF!"
WASHINGTON, D.C.:
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT READY. I KNOW IT'S TOO SOON.
BUT WE'VE JUST CONFIRMED A SECOND HOTSPOT, THIS ONE IN OREGON. THE WHITE HOUSE WANTS DEMONSTRATIVE ACTION—NOW!
TAKE WHICHEVER OF THE EUREKA-SIX IS MOST ADVANCED...
"...AND GET THEM PREPPED FOR COMBAT!"


TAMPA, FLORIDA:
WHERE ->KK<- IS HE?
IN THE BODYSHOP. AS YOU ORDERED, WE'VE SEALED ALL EXITS AND POSTED EXTRA TACTICAL UNITS AROUND THE PERIMETER.
->KK<- GOOD. TELL YOUR MEN-DO ->KK<- NOT ENGAGE.
IT'S TIME.
YES.
"HUNTER O'NION WILL ->KK<- BE OUR FIRST VICTIM. IN THAT RESPECT, AT LEAST...
C'MON! DO SOMETHING!
"...THE RESOURCES INVESTED IN HIM SHALL NOT HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY ->KK<- WASTED."
DANTE-ARE YOU READY?
MORE THAN. YOU COULD SAY I HAVE A WHOLE NEW LEASE ON LIFE.
AS-SOON-SHALL I. THIS ->KK<- PITIFUL EXISTENCE WILL BE TOLERATED NO LONGER. TWO ->KK<- MUST BECOME ONE...


...THAT SCORPONOK MAY LIVE AGAIN!

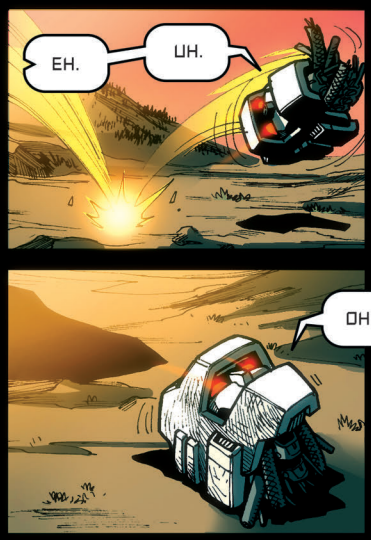

DAMMIT. WHAT DO I DO? WHY DON'T I KNOW WHAT TO DO? I'M A HEADMASTER. ON SOME LEVEL... I'M SUNSTREAKER. BUT, IT SEEMS...
"...THERE'S INTERFERENCE ON THE LINE."
C'MON! FOCUS. SOMEWHERE IN THIS MIXED-UP HEAD OF MINE IS THE ANSWER.
I JUST HAVE TO NOT...
THUM-
THUM-
THUM-
THUM-
...PANIC!
IT'S KILLING TIME!
BOOOM!


DECEPTICON COMMAND BUNKER, OREGON:
I KNOW NOT *WHAT* YOU CREATURES ARE, OR *WHY* YOU HAVE ATTACKED US, BUT IN DOING SO...
...YOU INVITE THE FULL SAVAGE FURY OF *MEGATRON*!
KCHOK!
THIS PLANET IS *OURS*!
DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?
STARSCREAM...
...I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT INTERNAL MACHINATIONS LED TO YOUR *SECOND COMING*, BUT FOR NOW I CONSIDER THE MATTER MOOT. DO YOU SERVE ME... OR YOURSELF?


I SERVE...
...THE DECEPTICON CAUSE!

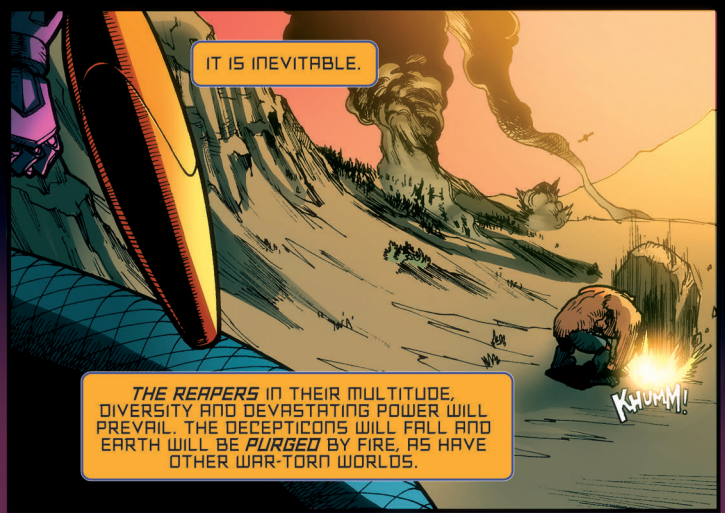

THEN YOU SERVE ME. FOR I AM ITS HEART AND FIERY SOUL!
TAKE ME...
...AND LET LOOSE ARMAGEDDON ON THESE HEATHEN ALIENS!
MEGATRON...
...I AM EVER YOUR HUMBLE AND WILLING SERVANT.
KABOOM!
GH-HHN!
RUNABOUT—
VRZ AAP!
N-NO. NO.


DAAAMN Y—
CHUK!


EH.
UH.

OHH...

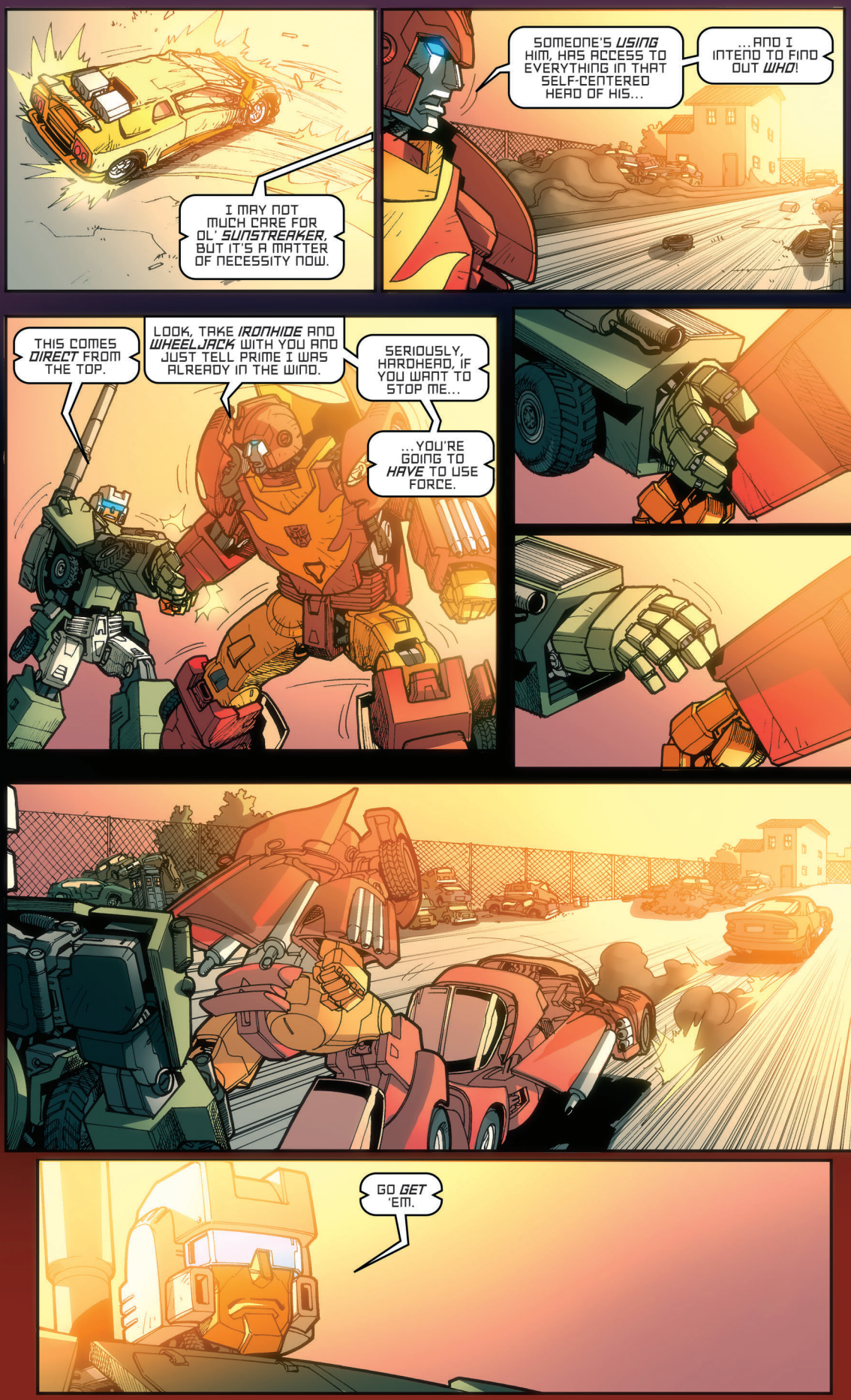

...FRAG.

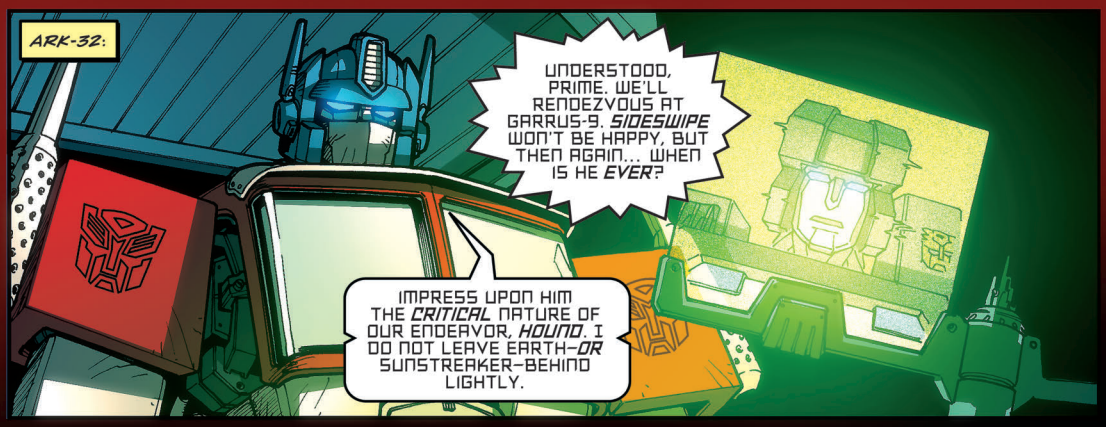

IT IS INEVITABLE.
THE REAPERS IN THEIR MULTITUDE, DIVERSITY AND DEVASTATING POWER WILL PREVAIL. THE DECEPTICONS WILL FALL AND EARTH WILL BE PURGED BY FIRE, AS HAVE OTHER WAR-TORN WORLDS.
KHUMM!


UNLESS I INTERVENE.

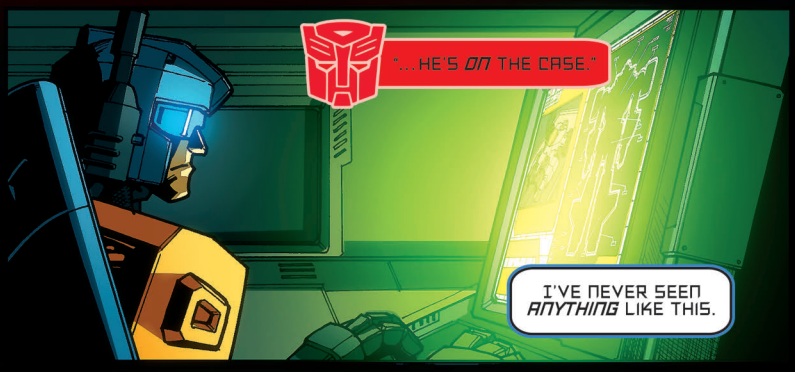

WARSAW, INDIANA:
SORRY TO SAY THIS, BUT...
SHRENK!
...YOU GUYS ARE NIGH-ON TOTALLING YOURSELVES HERE!
THRUNK!
I MEAN... YOU'RE NOT EVEN COMIN' CLOSE!
YOU HEADMASTERS HAVE GONE FROM SERIOUS THREAT TO RANK AMATEUR IN NO TIME AT ALL. WHATEVER EDGE YOU HAD...
...IT'S GONE!
HEADMASTER REESE TO MACHINATION CENTRAL. RESPOND! SITUATION...

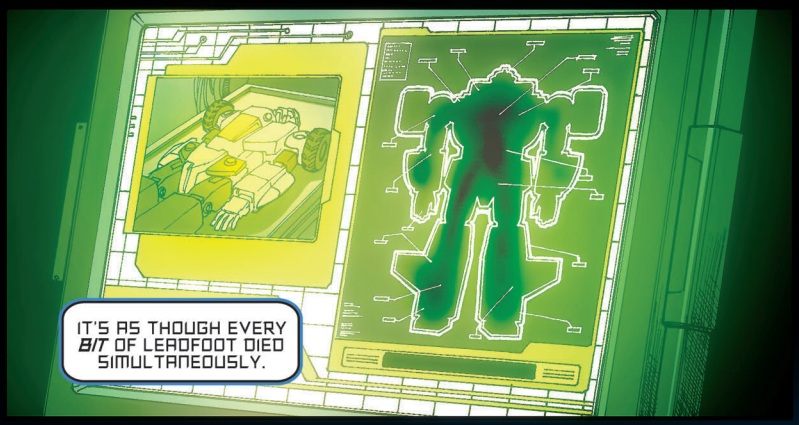

SH
UMPH!
...CRITIC—
AHWL!
WHO—?
HARDHEAD?
DIDN'T MEAN TO STEAL YOUR THUNDER, HOT ROD, BUT WE HAVE TO GO.
AND I MEAN GO!
EXPLAIN.
WE'RE LEAVING EARTH. FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST. THERE'S TROUBLE AT GARRUS-9 AND WE'RE THE NEAREST BIG STICK.
NO.
WHADDAYA MEAN, "NO"?
I'M STAYING TO SEE THIS THROUGH.

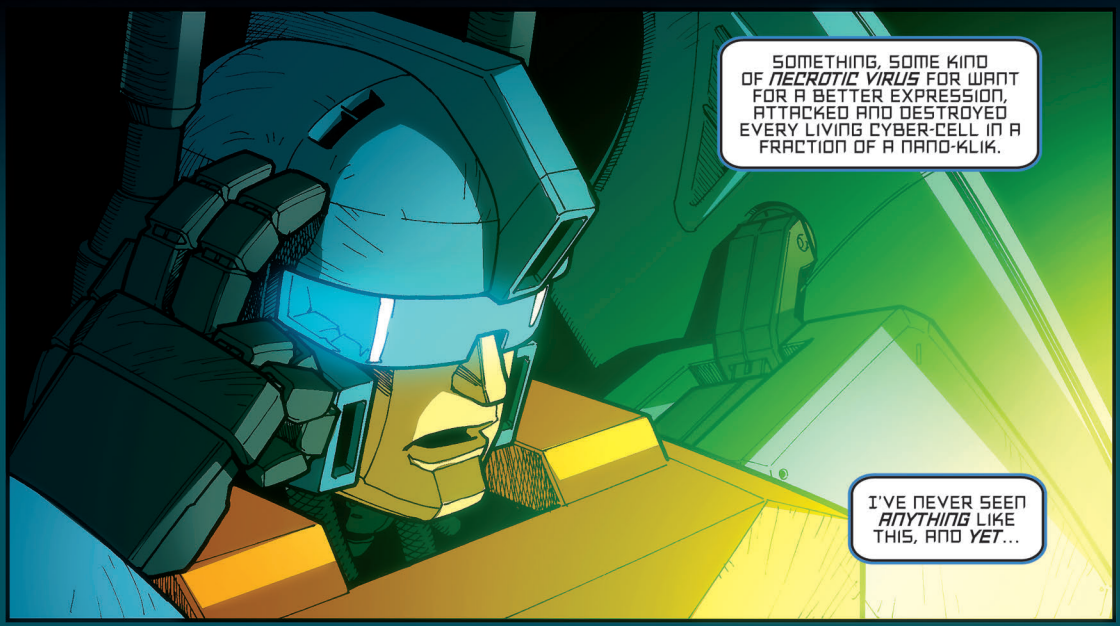

I MAY NOT MUCH CARE FOR OL' SUNSTREAKER, BUT IT'S A MATTER OF NECESSITY NOW.
SOMEONE'S USING HIM, HAS ACCESS TO EVERYTHING IN THAT SELF-CENTERED HEAD OF HIS...
...AND I INTEND TO FIND OUT WHO!
THIS COMES DIRECT FROM THE TOP.
LOOK, TAKE IRONHIDE AND WHEELJACK WITH YOU AND JUST TELL PRIME I WAS ALREADY IN THE WIND.
SERIOUSLY, HARDHEAD, IF YOU WANT TO STOP ME...
...YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO USE FORCE.
GO GET 'EM.

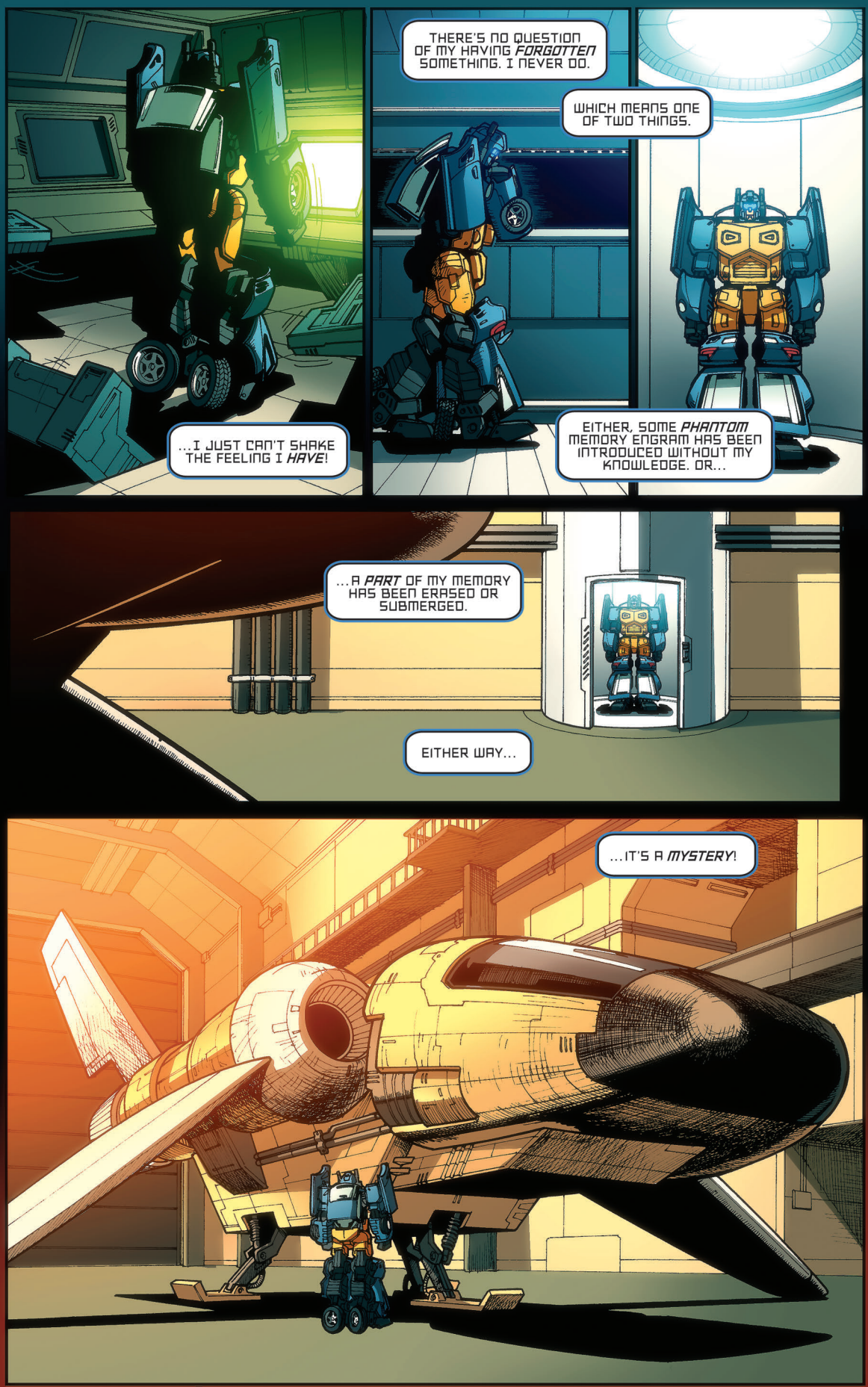

ARK-32:
UNDERSTOOD, PRIME. WE'LL RENDEZVOUS AT GARRUS-9. *SIDESWIPE* WON'T BE HAPPY, BUT THEN AGAIN... WHEN IS HE *EVER*?
IMPRESS UPON HIM THE *CRITICAL* NATURE OF OUR ENDEAVOR, *HOUND*. I DO NOT LEAVE EARTH–*OR* SUNSTREAKER–BEHIND LIGHTLY.


OF COURSE.
OH, BY THE WAY, DID *NIGHTBEAT* GET A CHANCE TO LOOK INTO THE TELEMETRY WE SENT THROUGH ON *LEADFOOT*?*
I BELIEVE, HOUND...
*SEE *TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: GALVATRON*


"...HE'S *ON* THE CASE."
I'VE NEVER SEEN *ANYTHING* LIKE THIS.

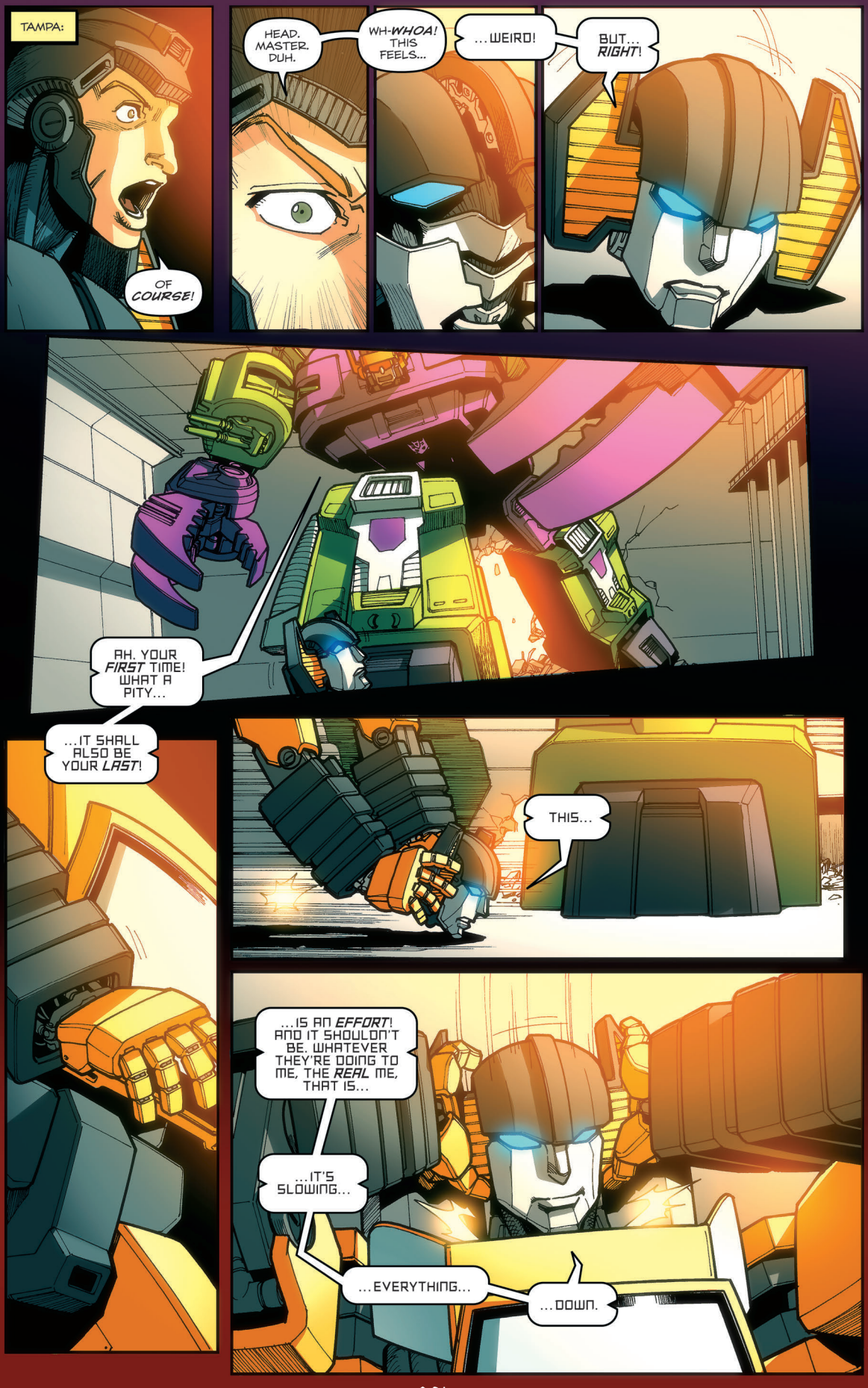

IT'S AS THOUGH EVERY *BIT* OF LEADFOOT DIED SIMULTANEOUSLY.


SOMETHING, SOME KIND OF *NECROTIC VIRUS* FOR WANT FOR A BETTER EXPRESSION, ATTACKED AND DESTROYED EVERY LIVING CYBER-CELL IN A FRACTION OF A NANO-KLIK.
I'VE NEVER SEEN *ANYTHING* LIKE THIS, AND *YET*...


...I JUST CAN'T SHAKE THE FEELING I *HAVE*!
THERE'S NO QUESTION OF MY HAVING *FORGOTTEN* SOMETHING. I NEVER DO.
WHICH MEANS ONE OF TWO THINGS.
EITHER, SOME *PHANTOM* MEMORY ENGRAM HAS BEEN INTRODUCED WITHOUT MY KNOWLEDGE. OR...
...A *PART* OF MY MEMORY HAS BEEN ERASED OR SUBMERGED.
EITHER WAY...
...IT'S A *MYSTERY*!


OREGON:
YOU, WHO CLAIM THE TITLE DEATHBRINGER...
...BE ONE!
YOU ARE NOW, FOR A BRIEF, BURNING INSTANT, A HARBINGER! GIVER OF THE UNLIFE!
GO...


...GIVE OF YOUR CHARNEL KISS.
BROTHER DEATHBRINGER! WHAT AILS YOU?
BRO-THAAAA!


TAMPA:
OF COURSE!
HEAD. MASTER. DUH.
WH-WHOA! THIS FEELS...
...WEIRD!
BUT... RIGHT!
AH. YOUR FIRST TIME! WHAT A PITY...
...IT SHALL ALSO BE YOUR LAST!
THIS...
...IS AN EFFORT! AND IT SHOULDN'T BE. WHATEVER THEY'RE DOING TO ME, THE REAL ME, THAT IS...
...IT'S SLOWING...
...EVERYTHING...
...DOWN.

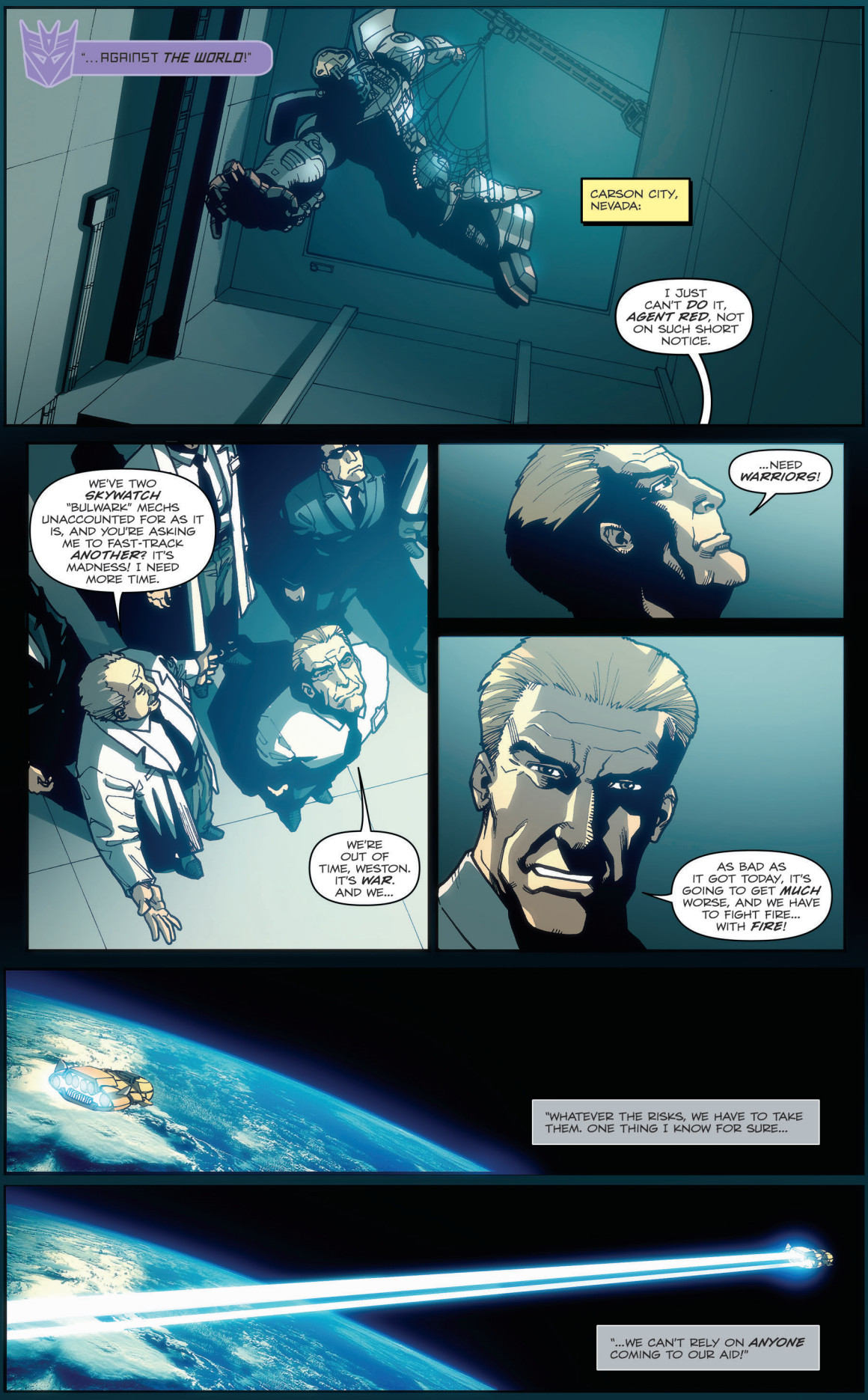

IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG...
...SINCE I EXERCISED MY FULL CATACLYSMIC MIGHT!
UM, EXCUSE US IF WE DON'T FAINT IN AWESTRUCK APPRECIATION, BUT IT'S NOT JUST FLESH-AND-BLOOD HUNTER O'NION YOU'RE DEALING WITH NOW.
K-TA
AANG!
YOW!
WE'RE-I'M...
...SUNSTREAKER!
AND I'M OUT!


OREGON:
STAND AWAY! OUR BROTHER REAPER HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A SHAMBLING FORCE OF CORRUPTION AND RUIN. BROTHER KLAXA...
...BURN HIM!
WUMPH!
HE... CANNOT BE STOPPED.
WHATEVER-WHOMEVER-HE TOUCHES...
...IS DUST.
"WHAT'S HAPPENING?"


OUR ATTACKERS SEEM TO BE FALLING APART. QUITE LITERALLY!
STARSCREAM...
...TAKE SKYWARP AND THUNDERCRACKER. TARGET THEIR VESSEL!
ASTROTRAIN, BLITZWING—WITH ME!
THFT!
SHOW NO MERCY!
SHOOM!
DOOOM!
YOU HEARD HIM.
WHILE THEY'RE IN DISARRAY...


...DECIMATE THEM!
KTUM!
THWW!
I LEAVE THEM TO THEIR SYMPHONIC SLAUGHTER, THIS OPERATIC CRESCENDO OF CARNAGE.
MY WORK HERE IS DONE. EARTH'S STRUCTURE AND SANCTITY PRESERVED...
...FOR NOW.
LITTLE DO THEY KNOW THAT WITH ONE APOCALYPSE AVERTED...
...ANOTHER IS BEGUN.


MINIMUM SAFE DISTANCE–*NOW*!
I THINK...
SKARAKOOM!
"...WE *BROKE* IT!"
HEY, HOW ABOUT THAT–WE *WON*! RUNABOUT, RUNAMUCK... I CALL THAT "ACCEPTABLE LOSSES!"
YEAH, UM, I GUESS IT ALL TURNED OUT OKAY. IN THE END.
AH YES, BLITZWING. PERHAPS YOU CAN GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON...
...WHY I DON'T *DISMEMBER* YOU ON THE SPOT!
BECAUSE...
...THEY *KNOW* WE'RE HERE NOW.
IT'S *US*...

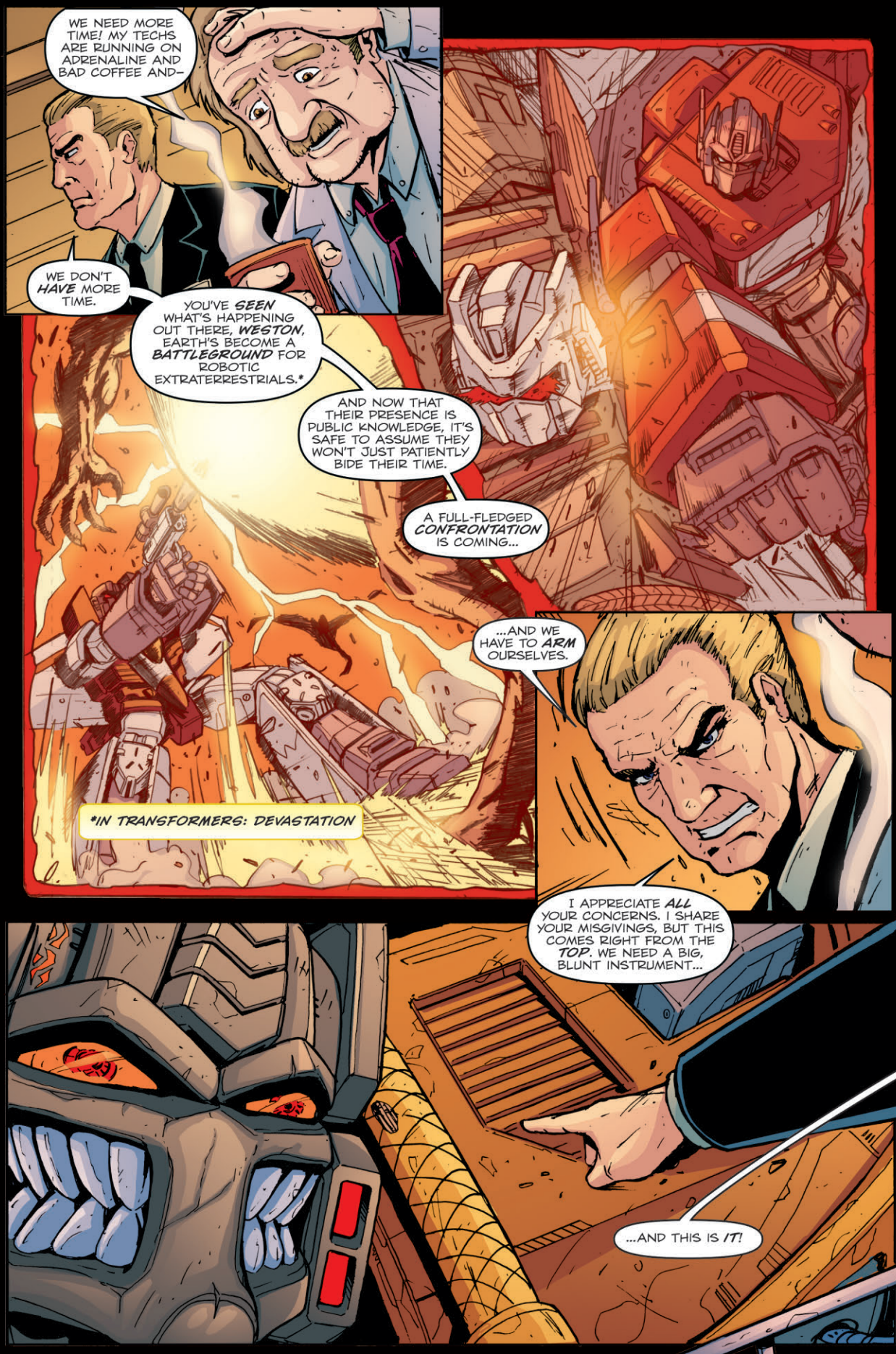

"...AGAINST THE WORLD!"
CARSON CITY, NEVADA:
I JUST CAN'T DO IT, AGENT RED, NOT ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.
WE'VE TWO SKYWATCH "BULWARK" MECHS UNACCOUNTED FOR AS IT IS, AND YOU'RE ASKING ME TO FAST-TRACK ANOTHER? IT'S MADNESS! I NEED MORE TIME.
WE'RE OUT OF TIME, WESTON. IT'S WAR. AND WE...
...NEED WARRIORS!
AS BAD AS IT GOT TODAY, IT'S GOING TO GET MUCH WORSE, AND WE HAVE TO FIGHT FIRE... WITH FIRE!
"WHATEVER THE RISKS, WE HAVE TO TAKE THEM. ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE...
"...WE CAN'T RELY ON ANYONE COMING TO OUR AID!"


THE DEAD UNIVERSE:
"YOU HAVE DONE WELL, GALVATRON."
I DO YOUR BIDDING, NEMESIS PRIME. I SERVE THE EXPANSION.
DO YOU NOW? JHIAXUS...
...WHAT DO YOU THINK?
I THINK GALVATRON, WHILE OPENLY COMPLICIT, HARBORS MANY SECRETS, MULTIPLE AMBITIONS AND AGENDAS. BUT THE ENDGAME IS ABOUT TO BEGIN, AND WHEN IT DOES...
...ALL WILL BE REVEALED!
PHASE THREE... CONCLUDED.


ART BY E.J. SU

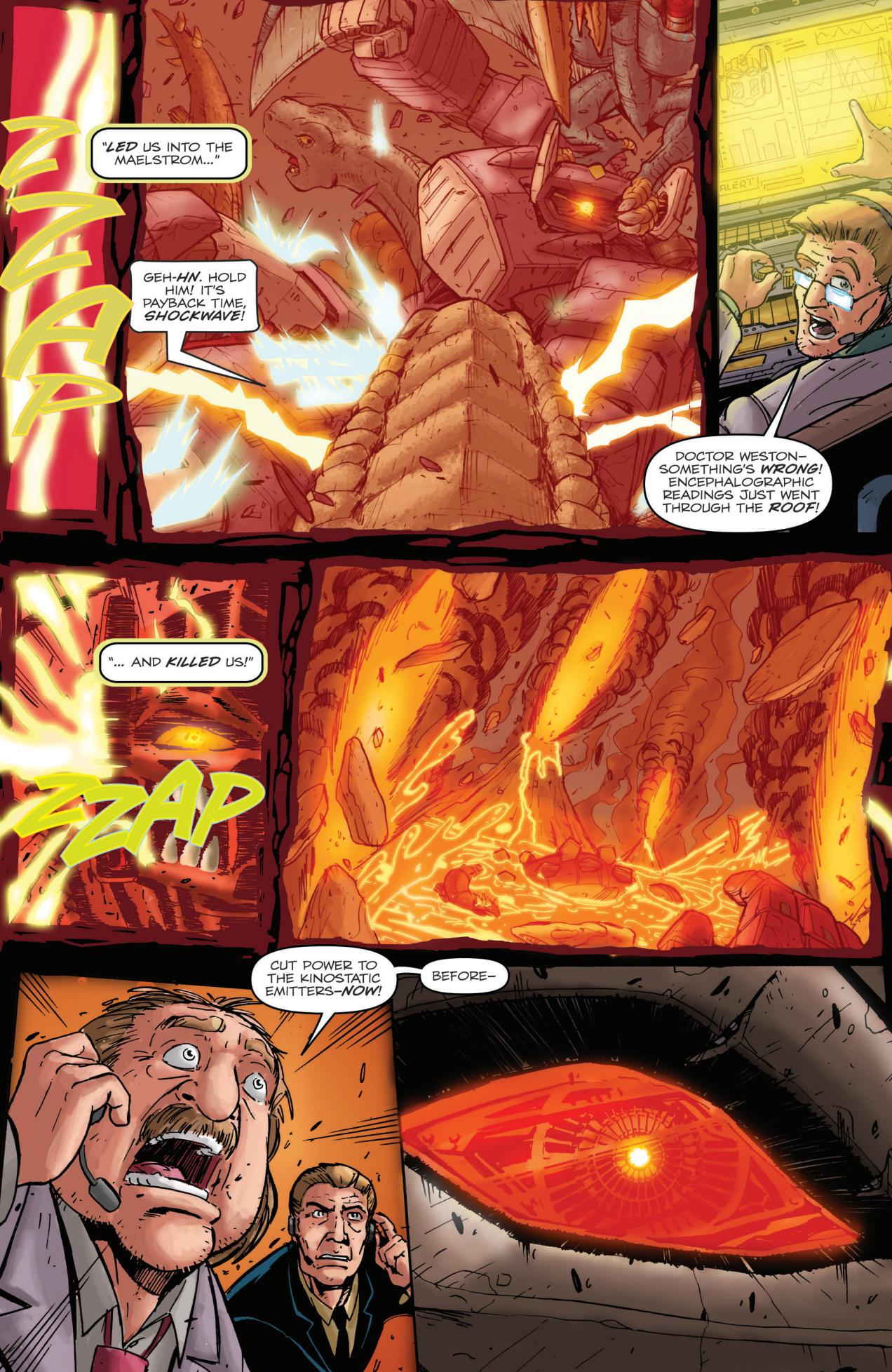

THE TRANSFORMERS
SPOTLIGHT: GRIMLOCK
ART BY MARCELO MATERE
COLORS BY KIERAN DAYS


CARSON CITY, NEVADA
WELL, WE'RE AS READY AS WE'LL EVER BE, BUT ONCE AGAIN I FEEL CONSTRAINED TO WARN YOU...
PROCEDURES THAT TOOK SKYWATCH OVER 20 YEARS TO PERFECT, AND WERE TAILORED SPECIFICALLY TO THE TWO INITIAL ACQUISITIONS, HAVE HAD TO BE OVERHAULED AND REAPPLIED IN DAYS. ONE FALSE MOVE NOW, AGENT RED, AND...
...YOU'RE PLAYING WITH FIRE.
...DISASTER.


WE NEED MORE TIME! MY TECHS ARE RUNNING ON ADRENALINE AND BAD COFFEE AND–
WE DON'T *HAVE* MORE TIME.
YOU'VE *SEEN* WHAT'S HAPPENING OUT THERE, *WESTON*, EARTH'S BECOME A *BATTLEGROUND* FOR ROBOTIC EXTRATERRESTRIALS.*
AND NOW THAT THEIR PRESENCE IS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THEY WON'T JUST PATIENTLY BIDE THEIR TIME.
A FULL-FLEDGED *CONFRONTATION* IS COMING...
*IN TRANSFORMERS: DEVASTATION
...AND WE HAVE TO *ARM* OURSELVES.
I APPRECIATE *ALL* YOUR CONCERNS. I SHARE YOUR MISGIVINGS, BUT THIS COMES RIGHT FROM THE *TOP*. WE NEED A BIG, BLUNT INSTRUMENT...
...AND THIS IS *IT*!


FINE. OKAY. BUT WE'VE ALREADY GOT TWO ROGUES OUT THERE–SOMEWHERE–AND I'M SURE NEITHER OF US WANTS A THIRD.
THUNDER-LIZARD 1 HAS A HIGHER GRADE OF NEURAL NET, SO WE'VE HAD TO INTRODUCE A FAR MORE COMPLEX INHIBITOR WEB. IT SHOULD HOLD. BUT, IN TERMS OF OUR AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY, WE'RE STILL AKIN TO CAVEMEN HANDLING FISSION RODS.
HOW SOON?
LIKE I SAID, WE'RE AS READY AS WE CAN HOPE TO BE RIGHT NOW. BUT, AGENT RED...
"...I'D HAVE YOUR TAC-TEAMS STANDING BY."
STATUS?
WE ARE SHOWING A COMPLETE NEURAL OVERPRINT. SYNAPSE BLOCKERS ARE ALL PRESENT AND CORRECT.
INTERNAL READINGS ARE STABILIZING. T.L.-1'S SYSTEMS ARE STARTING TO METABOLIZE THE PLUTONIUM STIMULANT.
WE ARE GO TO JUMP-START COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS.
AGENT RED?
DO IT.


ZT-TT
ZZZAA
AARD
I'M WARNING YOU, GRIMLOCK!
THIS CONTINUED INSUBORDINATION WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. ANY FURTHER UNAUTHORIZED ACTION WILL BE CONSIDERED THE ACT OF A RENEGADE AND DEALT WITH ACCORDINGLY!
ZZAP
"YOU DECEIVED US!"
"LIED TO US!"
FORGET PRIME. HE MAY NOT LIKE THE WAY WE DO THINGS, BUT HE KNOWS WE GET RESULTS. THE WAY IT WORKS IS, HE SAYS ONE THING–OFFICIALLY–AND WE DO THE OTHER. UNOFFICIALLY. TRUST ME...
...THERE'LL BE NO FALLOUT.


"LED US INTO THE MAELSTROM..."
GEH-HN. HOLD HIM! IT'S PAYBACK TIME, SHOCKWAVE!
ZZAP
DOCTOR WESTON– SOMETHING'S WRONG! ENCEPHALOGRAPHIC READINGS JUST WENT THROUGH THE ROOF!
"... AND KILLED US!"
ZZAP
CUT POWER TO THE KINOSTATIC EMITTERS–NOW!
BEFORE–

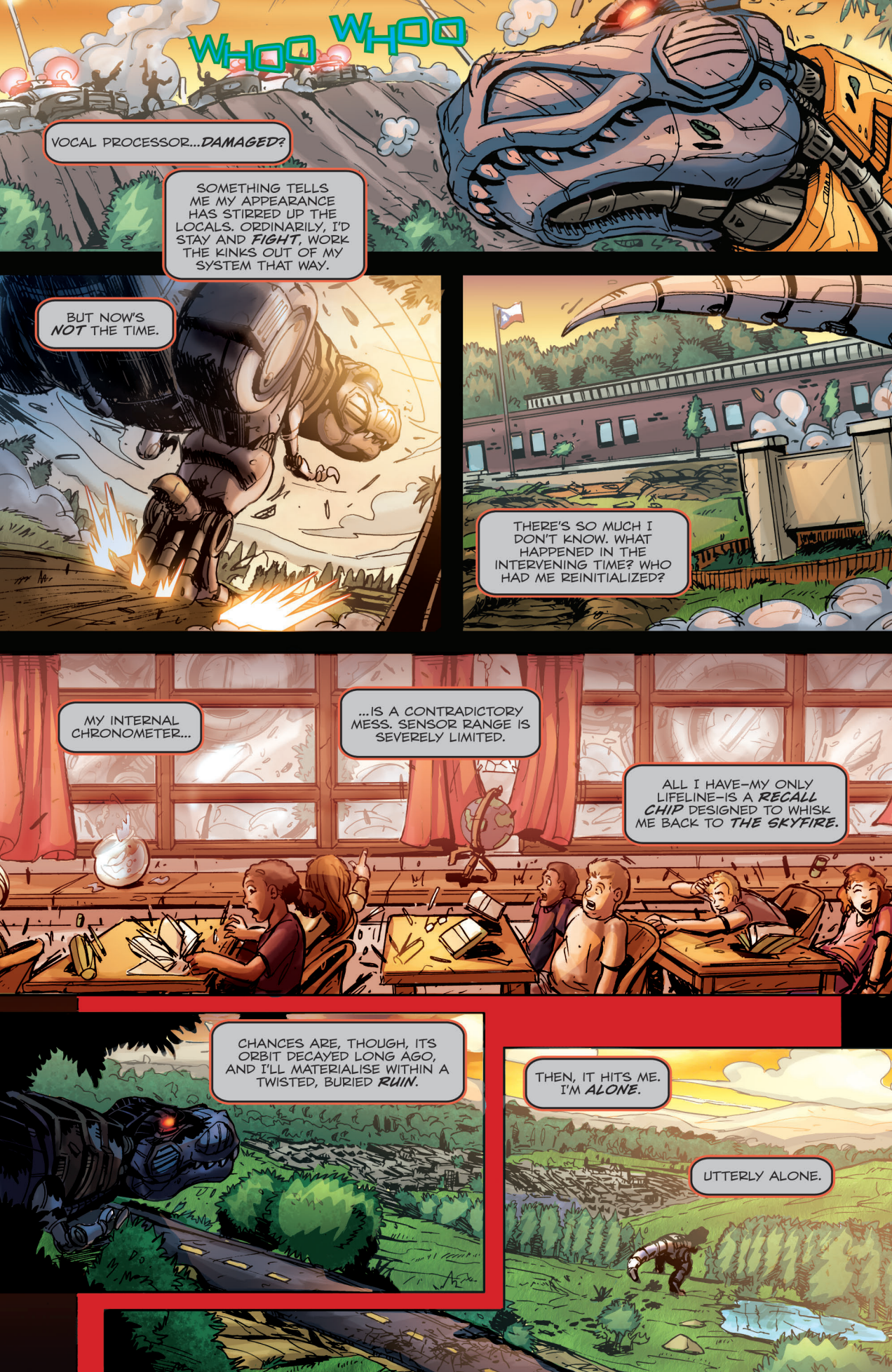

FNRRAAAGH!
KRATANK
CRYO-SQUAD– MOVE IN!
THE REST OF YOU–TARGET THE HOSTILE, BUT AWAIT EXECUTIVE CLEARANCE! DO NOT, I REPEAT, DO NOT OPEN FIRE!
THKLANG


STATUS, DAMMIT!
WESTON-T.L-1 IS MOBILE. HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?
I DON'T KNOW! NOTHING'S WORKING. ALL THE CEREBRO-CHECKS AND AUTO-PROMPT FILTERS JUST... BURNED OUT EN MASSE. I CAN'T ESTABLISH CONTROL.
...
ALL TACTICAL UNITS...
"...FIRE AT WILL!"
GO! TAKE HIM DOWN HARD!
THWUM

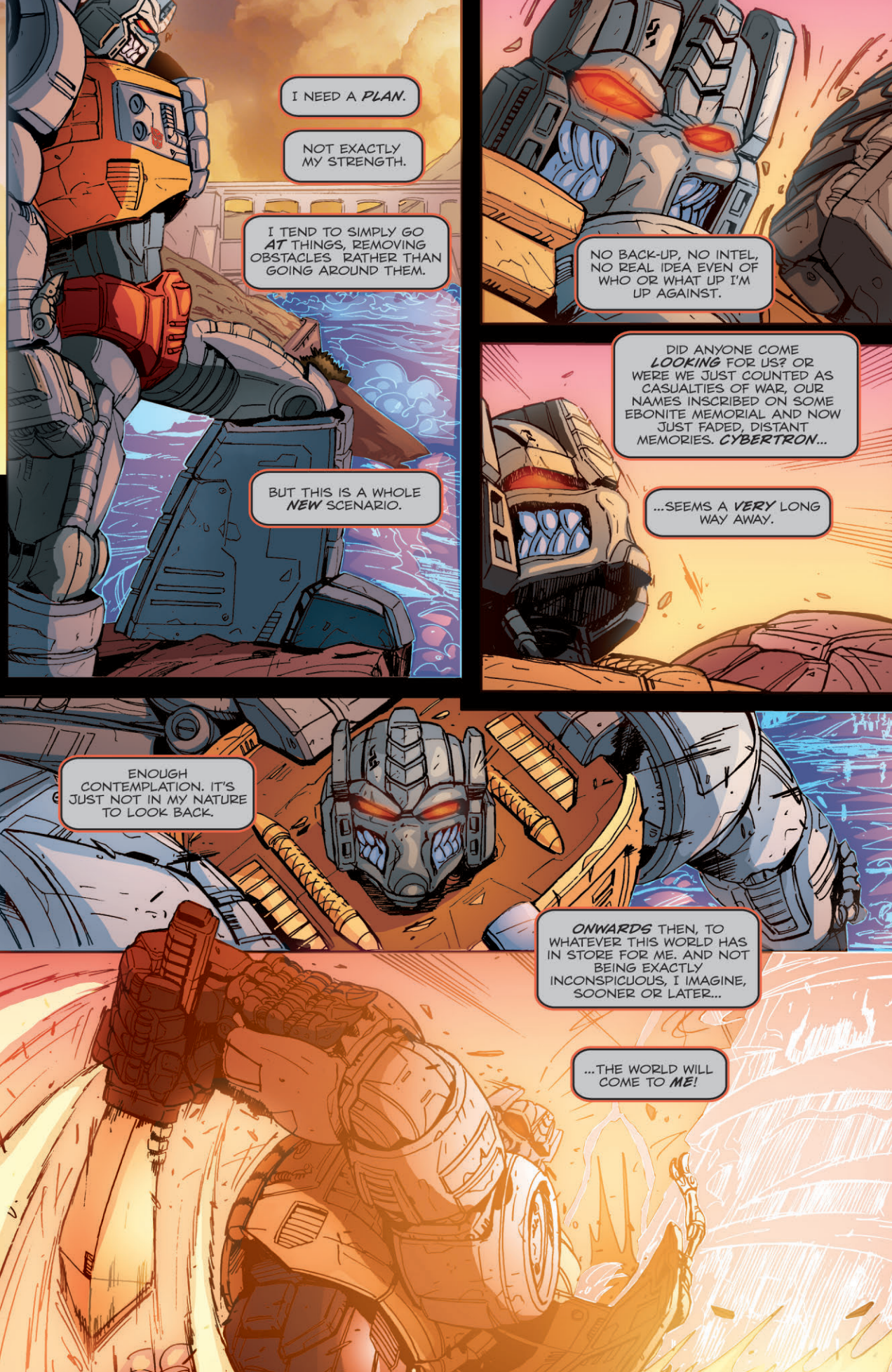

GRRR...
...ROOOONK!
SHLANK-SHLANK
SKRASHK
WE DON'T PANIC. SANITIZE THE FACILITY, STRIP OUT ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING. THEN FIND OUT WHAT WENT WRONG...
...AND HOW TO FIX IT.
OH GOD... HE'S OUT! WHAT DO WE DO?


FIX–? NO. NO! YOU CAN'T BE CONSIDERING–
I AM. THIS THING CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO JUST WANDER OFF. GET ME A PROGRESS REPORT...
"...ON THUNDER-LIZARDS 2, 3, 4 AND 5."
CONTROL ROOM
IT'S KLOSS. WHAT YOU SAID WOULD HAPPEN, JUST HAPPENED.
YES. I'VE ALREADY PURGED THE VIRUS. THERE'LL BE NO TRACE WHEN THEY SCAN-ANALYZE THE SYSTEM. AS FOR T.L.-1...
0T-0T-000T
...HE'S YOURS FOR THE TAKING!


WHERE AM I?
WHEN AM I?
AND WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?
LAST I REMEMBER, WE WERE FIGHTING SHOCKWAVE.
THE BLAST... STRIPPED AWAY OUR PROTECTION AGAINST THE ULTRA-HIGH LEVELS OF ENERGON. WE...
...WENT INTO PROTECTIVE STASIS.
HH-HOW LONG? AND...
...WHERE ARE DD-DYNOBOTS?


WHOO WHOO
VOCAL PROCESSOR...*DAMAGED*?
SOMETHING TELLS ME MY APPEARANCE HAS STIRRED UP THE LOCALS. ORDINARILY, I'D STAY AND *FIGHT*, WORK THE KINKS OUT OF MY SYSTEM THAT WAY.
BUT NOW'S *NOT* THE TIME.
THERE'S SO MUCH I DON'T KNOW. WHAT HAPPENED IN THE INTERVENING TIME? WHO HAD ME REINITIALIZED?
MY INTERNAL CHRONOMETER...
...IS A CONTRADICTORY MESS. SENSOR RANGE IS SEVERELY LIMITED.
ALL I HAVE–MY ONLY LIFELINE–IS A *RECALL CHIP* DESIGNED TO WHISK ME BACK TO *THE SKYFIRE*.
CHANCES ARE, THOUGH, ITS ORBIT DECAYED LONG AGO, AND I'LL MATERIALISE WITHIN A TWISTED, BURIED *RUIN*.
THEN, IT HITS ME. I'M *ALONE*.
UTTERLY ALONE.

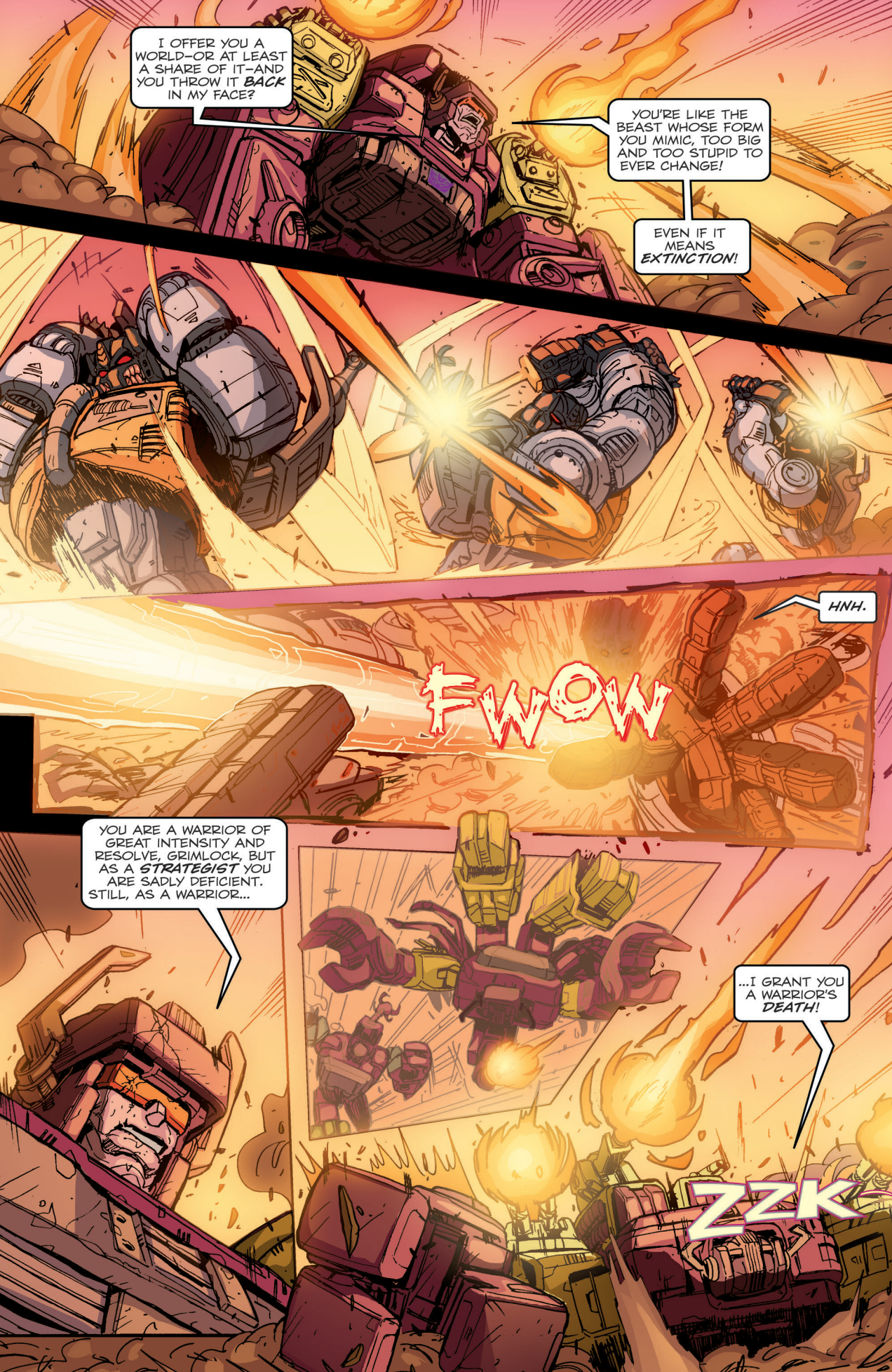

WHERE'S HE GOING?
HONESTLY, SIR, I DOUBT HE KNOWS... OR CARES. HIS CURRENT COURSE, HOWEVER, WILL BRING HIM TO THE *LAHONTAN DAM*.
THEN THAT...
...IS WHERE I SHALL INTRODUCE MYSELF.
OR IS IT *OUR*SELF? I'M STILL NOT SURE.
AND IT'S NOT *EXACTLY* THE FIRST TIME WE'VE MET.
FOR THOUGH THE NAME AND FACE OF *ABRAHAM DANTE* MEANS NOTHING TO HIM...
...HE KNOWS *ME* ONLY TOO WELL.

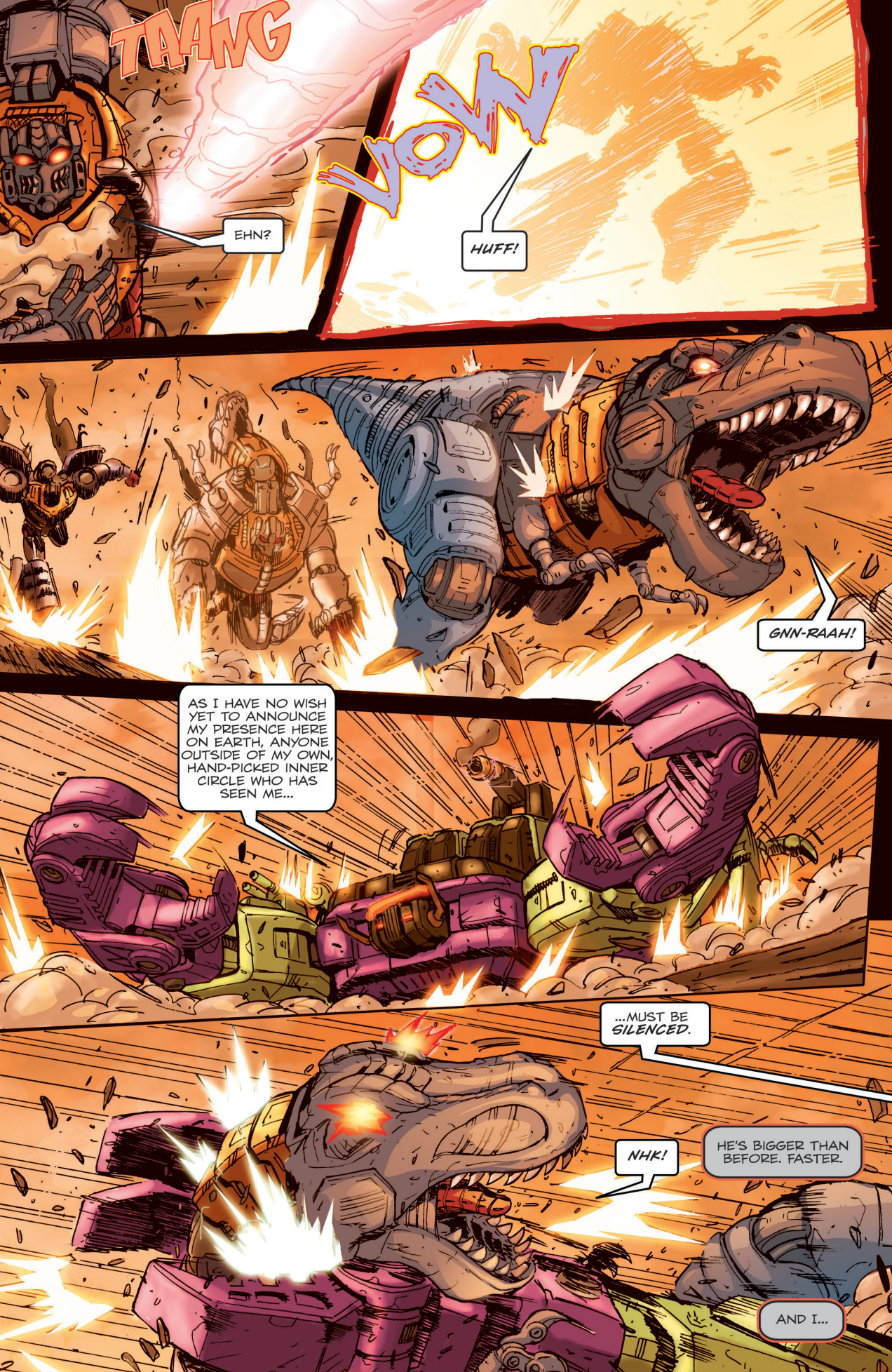

I NEED A PLAN.
NOT EXACTLY MY STRENGTH.
I TEND TO SIMPLY GO AT THINGS, REMOVING OBSTACLES RATHER THAN GOING AROUND THEM.
BUT THIS IS A WHOLE NEW SCENARIO.
NO BACK-UP, NO INTEL, NO REAL IDEA EVEN OF WHO OR WHAT UP I'M UP AGAINST.
DID ANYONE COME LOOKING FOR US? OR WERE WE JUST COUNTED AS CASUALTIES OF WAR, OUR NAMES INSCRIBED ON SOME EBONITE MEMORIAL AND NOW JUST FADED, DISTANT MEMORIES. CYBERTRON...
...SEEMS A VERY LONG WAY AWAY.
ENOUGH CONTEMPLATION. IT'S JUST NOT IN MY NATURE TO LOOK BACK.
ONWARDS THEN, TO WHATEVER THIS WORLD HAS IN STORE FOR ME. AND NOT BEING EXACTLY INCONSPICUOUS, I IMAGINE, SOONER OR LATER...
...THE WORLD WILL COME TO ME!

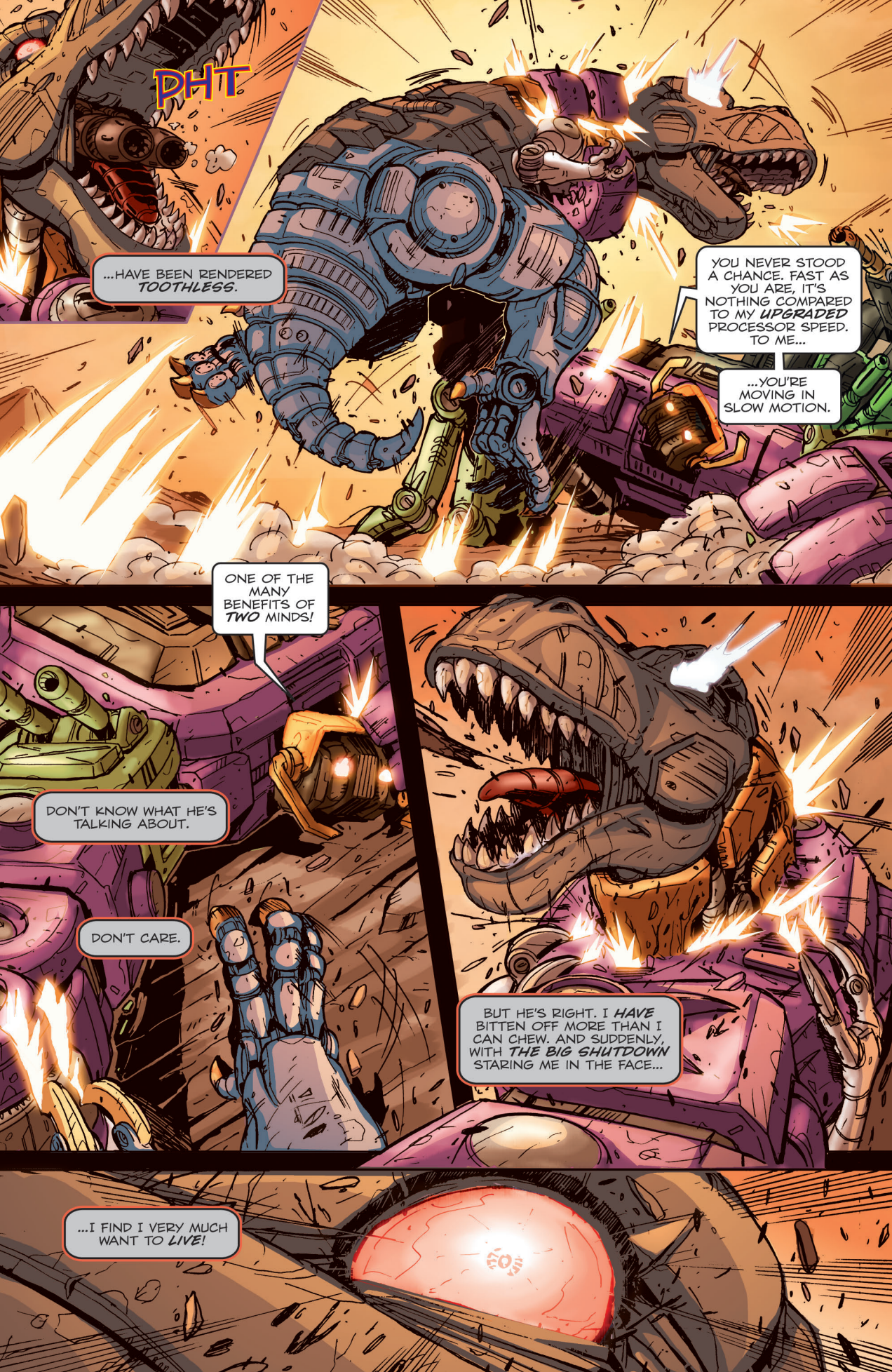

YOU.
SCORPONOK!
INDEED, THOUGH PERHAPS NOT QUITE AS YOU REMEMBER ME. BUT... TIME ENOUGH FOR THAT LATER.
I COME WITH AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE.
TRY ME.
HA. DIRECT AND TO THE POINT— I ADMIRE THAT, GRIMLOCK.
WE'RE QUITE ALIKE, YOU AND I. WE BOTH OPERATE ON THE FRINGES, NEITHER BOWING TO CONVENTION OR PROTOCOL. TO US, ALLEGIANCE IS A CONVENIENCE, NOT AN OBLIGATION. WHICH IS WHY...
...I PROPOSE AN ALLIANCE: YOU AND I—AGAINST THE WORLD!
YOU CAN'T... BE SERIOUS.

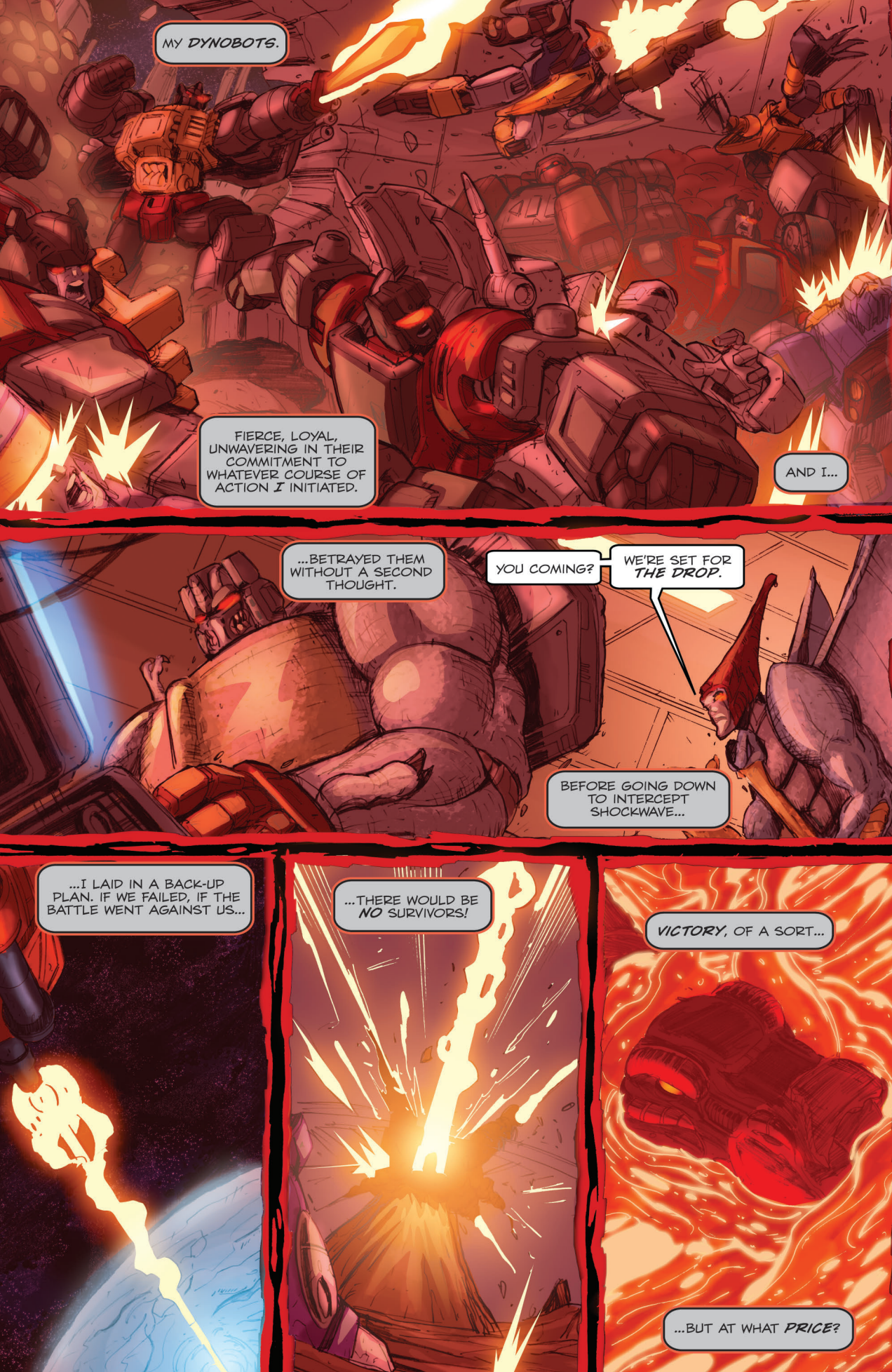

OH BUT I AM. CONSIDER YOUR CURRENT POSITION...
...YOU'RE A ROGUE, DID YOU KNOW THAT? YOU'RE DATAFILE B-345-101 ON ULTRA MAGNUS' HIT LIST OF WANTED CYBERTRONIANS. THERE'S NO WAY BACK.
YOUR DYNOBOTS ARE LONG GONE, DEAD AND BURIED, AND YOU'RE STUCK HERE ON AN ALIEN WORLD WITH THE DECEPTICONS POISED TO IGNITE ARMAGEDDON.
EH. AND YOU? WHAT'S YOUR POSITION?
SUFFICE IT TO SAY, I AM BUILDING MY OWN NEW ORDER HERE ON EARTH, AND THE TIME IS NOT YET RIPE TO UNVEIL ITS SCALE OR INTENT.
I NEED YOU TO RUN INTERFERENCE, DELAY MEGATRON'S PLANS LONG ENOUGH... FOR THE MACHINATION EMPIRE TO RISE!
NO WAY BACK.
IS HE RIGHT?
ARE YOU THAT STUBBORN, THAT MIRED IN OUTMODED NOTIONS OF LOYALTY, THAT YOU'RE WILLING TO ISOLATE YOURSELF SO TOTALLY AND UTTERLY?
WHY DO YOU EVEN HESITATE?
ACTUALLY...
...IT'S THAT TIME BACK ON CYBERTRON YOU STOLE A CONSIGNMENT OF SOLAR AGITATORS FROM A FACILITY WE WERE GUARDING.
WHAT? THAT—THAT WAS NOTHING.
TRUE.

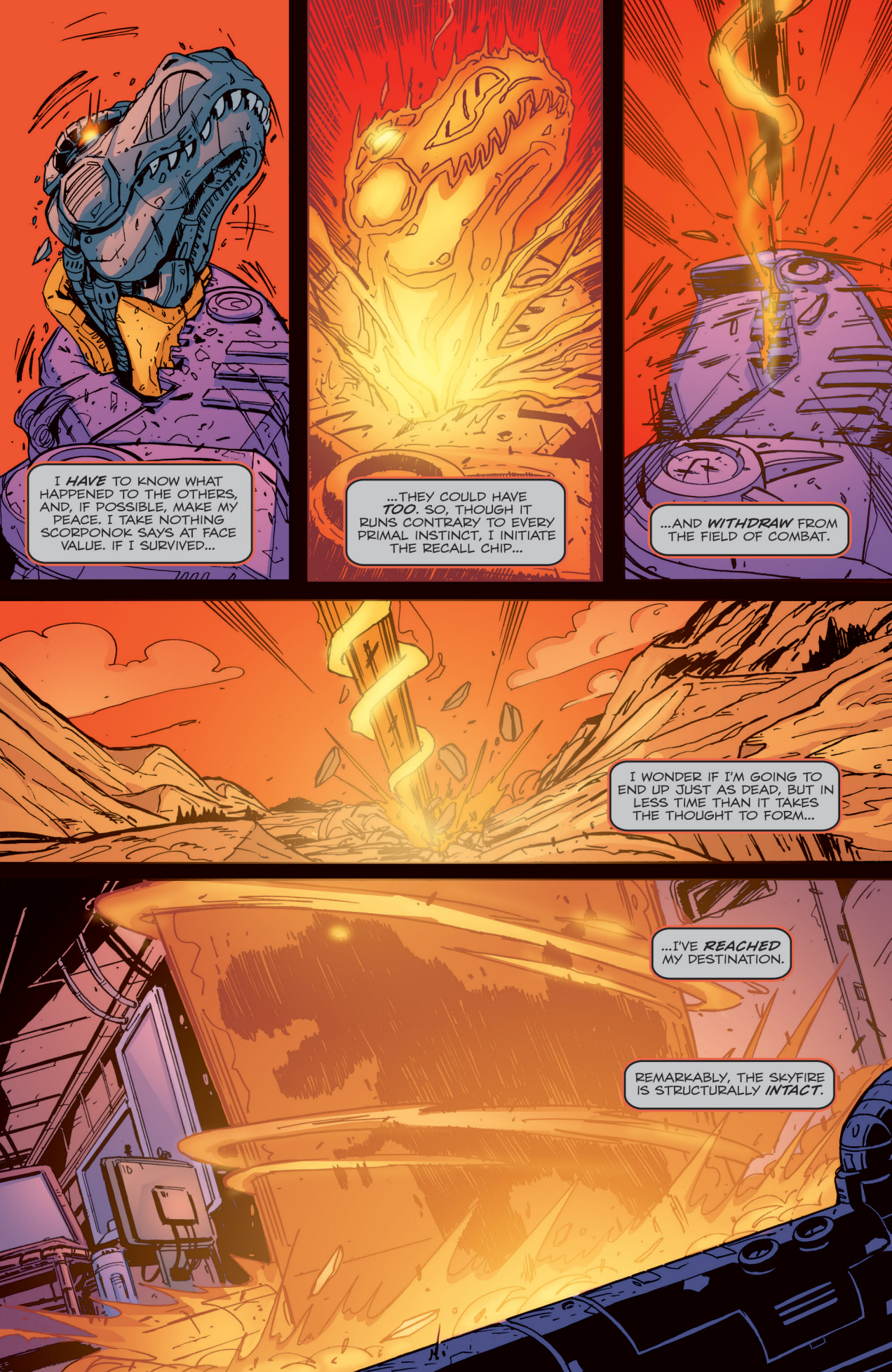

BUT IT'LL DO!
KLUNG
KEH!
I GOT TO THINKING... WHAT IF I RETURNED TO CYBERTRON WITH THAT WELL-KNOWN THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT, SCORPONOK, TAGGED AND BAGGED AND READY FOR SPARK-ISOLATION?
THEY'D MOST LIKELY TEAR UP THEIR WARRANTS AND GIVE ME A HERO'S WELCOME!
VZAPT
THE BUSINESS WITH THE SOLAR AGITATORS, WELL...
...THAT'S JUST A LITTLE EXTRA MOTIVATION!

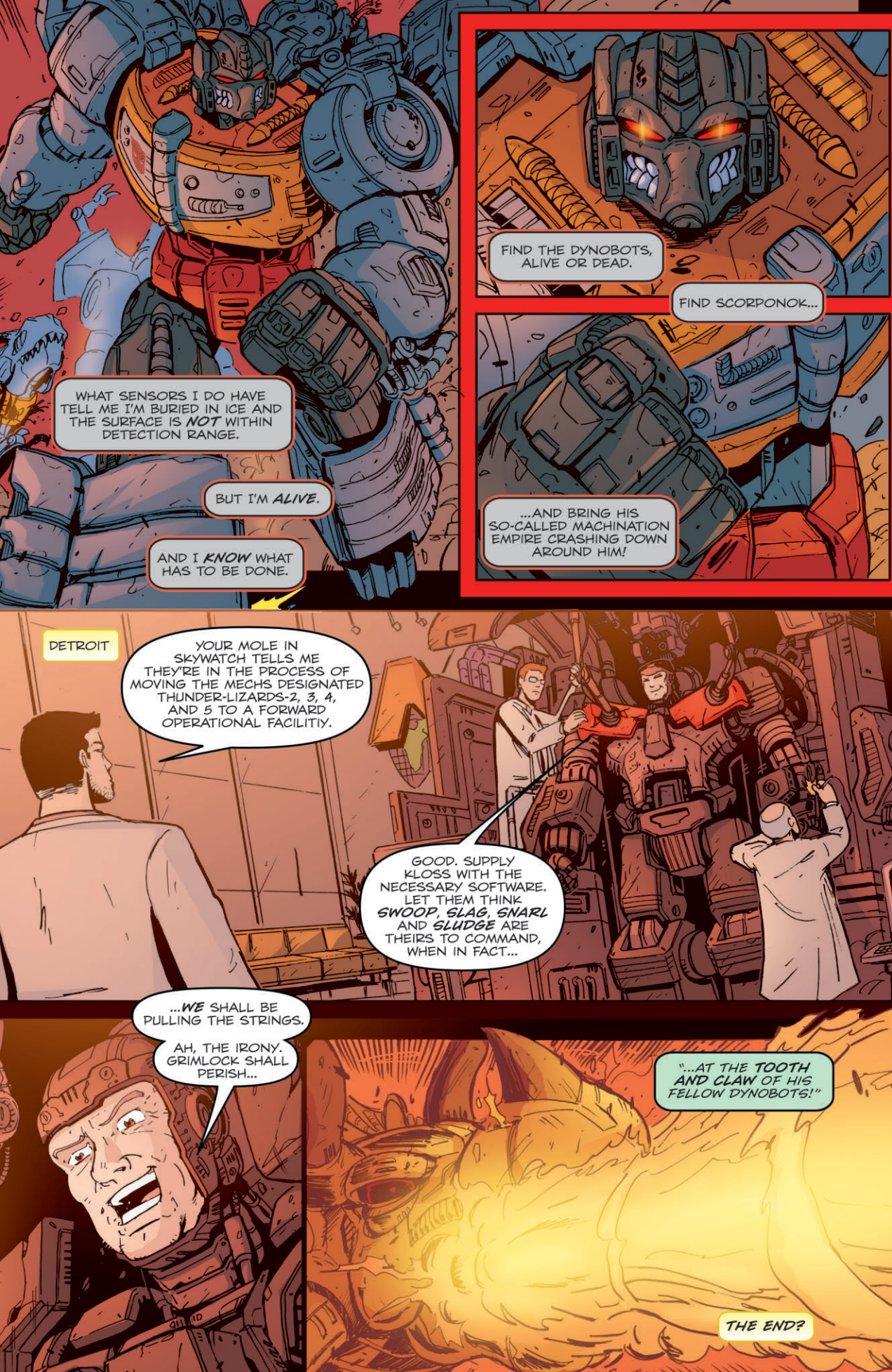

I OFFER YOU A WORLD—OR AT LEAST A SHARE OF IT—AND YOU THROW IT *BACK* IN MY FACE?
YOU'RE LIKE THE BEAST WHOSE FORM YOU MIMIC, TOO BIG AND TOO STUPID TO EVER CHANGE!
EVEN IF IT MEANS *EXTINCTION*!
HNH.
FWOW
YOU ARE A WARRIOR OF GREAT INTENSITY AND RESOLVE, GRIMLOCK, BUT AS A *STRATEGIST* YOU ARE SADLY DEFICIENT. STILL, AS A WARRIOR...
...I GRANT YOU A WARRIOR'S *DEATH*!
ZZK


TAANG
VOOM
EHN?
HUFF!
GNN-RAAH!
AS I HAVE NO WISH YET TO ANNOUNCE MY PRESENCE HERE ON EARTH, ANYONE OUTSIDE OF MY OWN, HAND-PICKED INNER CIRCLE WHO HAS SEEN ME...
...MUST BE SILENCED.
NHK!
HE'S BIGGER THAN BEFORE. FASTER.
AND I...


PHT
...HAVE BEEN RENDERED TOOTHLESS.
YOU NEVER STOOD A CHANCE. FAST AS YOU ARE, IT'S NOTHING COMPARED TO MY UPGRADED PROCESSOR SPEED. TO ME...
...YOU'RE MOVING IN SLOW MOTION.
ONE OF THE MANY BENEFITS OF TWO MINDS!
DON'T KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT.
DON'T CARE.
BUT HE'S RIGHT. I HAVE BITTEN OFF MORE THAN I CAN CHEW. AND SUDDENLY, WITH THE BIG SHUTDOWN STARING ME IN THE FACE...
...I FIND I VERY MUCH WANT TO LIVE!


MY DYNOBOTS.
FIERCE, LOYAL, UNWAVERING IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO WHATEVER COURSE OF ACTION I INITIATED.
AND I...
...BETRAYED THEM WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT.
YOU COMING?
WE'RE SET FOR THE DROP.
BEFORE GOING DOWN TO INTERCEPT SHOCKWAVE...
...I LAID IN A BACK-UP PLAN. IF WE FAILED, IF THE BATTLE WENT AGAINST US...
...THERE WOULD BE NO SURVIVORS!
VICTORY, OF A SORT...
...BUT AT WHAT PRICE?


I *HAVE* TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHERS, AND, IF POSSIBLE, MAKE MY PEACE. I TAKE NOTHING SCORPONOK SAYS AT FACE VALUE. IF I SURVIVED...
...THEY COULD HAVE *TOO*. SO, THOUGH IT RUNS CONTRARY TO EVERY PRIMAL INSTINCT, I INITIATE THE RECALL CHIP...
...AND *WITHDRAW* FROM THE FIELD OF COMBAT.
I WONDER IF I'M GOING TO END UP JUST AS DEAD, BUT IN LESS TIME THAN IT TAKES THE THOUGHT TO FORM...
...I'VE *REACHED* MY DESTINATION.
REMARKABLY, THE SKYFIRE IS STRUCTURALLY *INTACT*.


WHAT SENSORS I DO HAVE TELL ME I'M BURIED IN ICE AND THE SURFACE IS NOT WITHIN DETECTION RANGE.
BUT I'M ALIVE.
AND I KNOW WHAT HAS TO BE DONE.
FIND THE DYNOBOTS, ALIVE OR DEAD.
FIND SCORPONOK...
...AND BRING HIS SO-CALLED MACHINATION EMPIRE CRASHING DOWN AROUND HIM!
DETROIT
YOUR MOLE IN SKYWATCH TELLS ME THEY'RE IN THE PROCESS OF MOVING THE MECHS DESIGNATED THUNDER-LIZARDS-2, 3, 4, AND 5 TO A FORWARD OPERATIONAL FACILITIY.
GOOD. SUPPLY KLOSS WITH THE NECESSARY SOFTWARE. LET THEM THINK SWOOP, SLAG, SNARL AND SLUDGE ARE THEIRS TO COMMAND, WHEN IN FACT...
...WE SHALL BE PULLING THE STRINGS.
AH, THE IRONY. GRIMLOCK SHALL PERISH...
"...AT THE TOOTH AND CLAW OF HIS FELLOW DYNOBOTS!"
THE END?


ART BY MARCELO MATERE

THE TRANSFORMERS

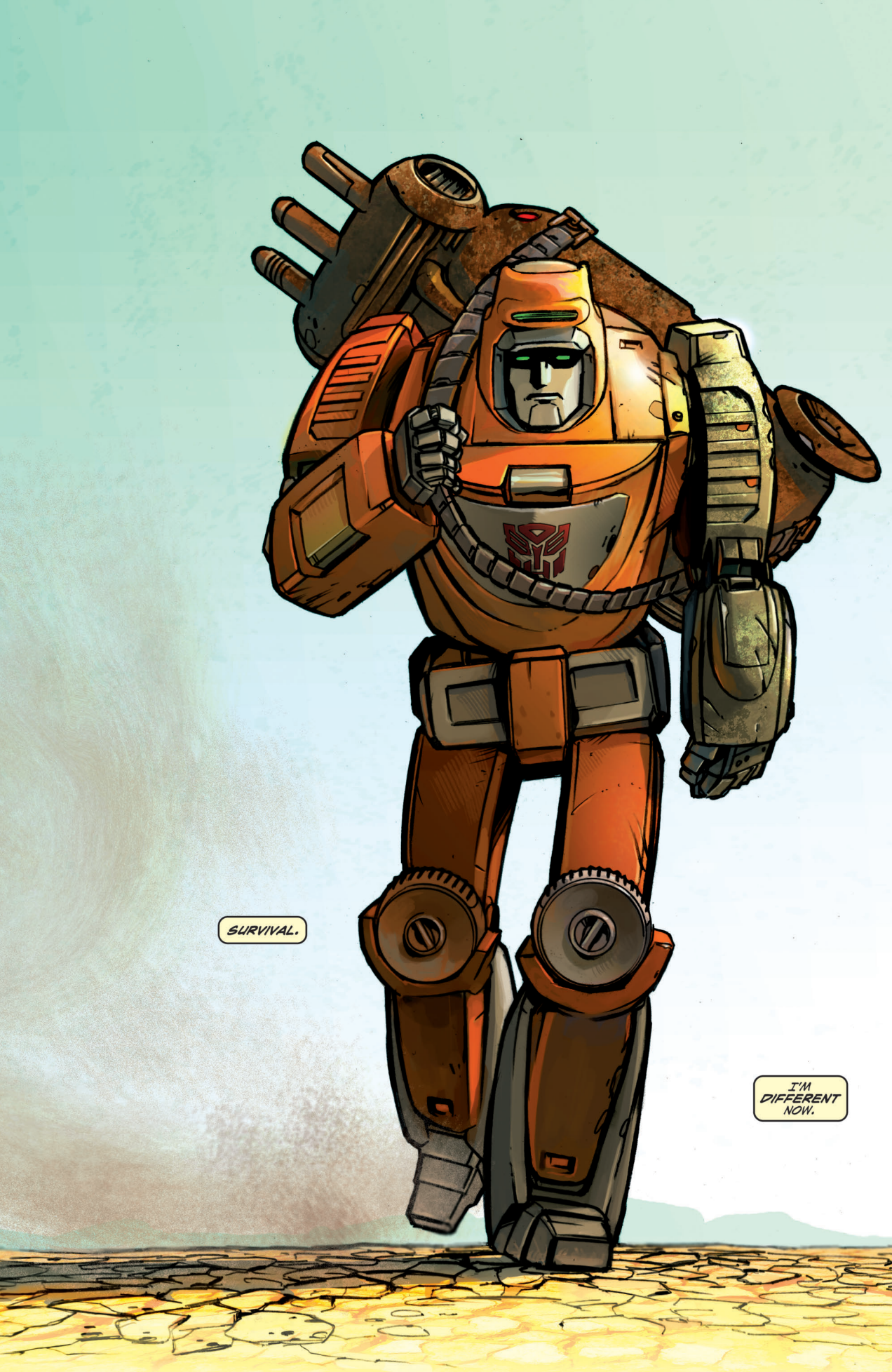
SPOTLIGHT: WHEELIE

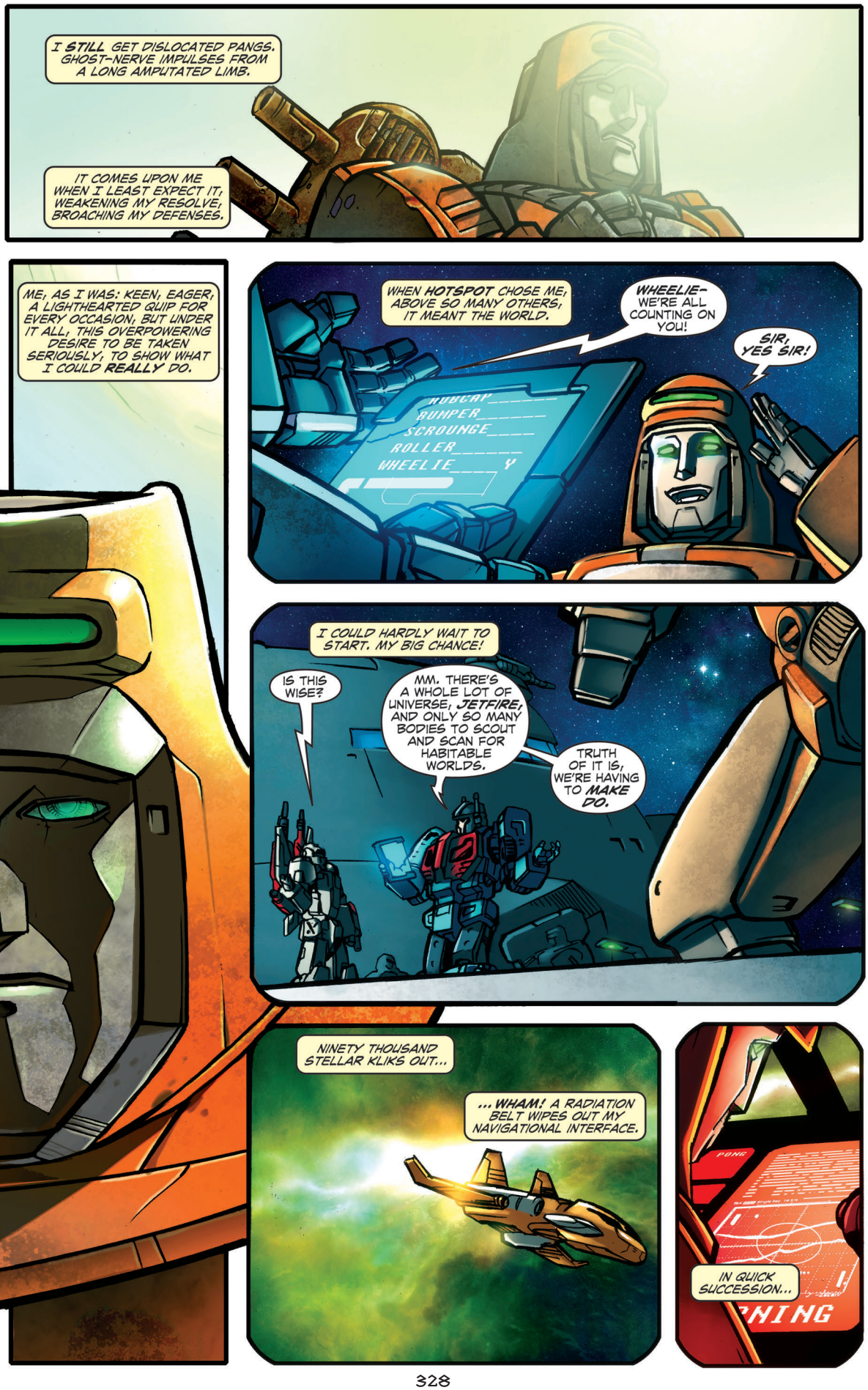


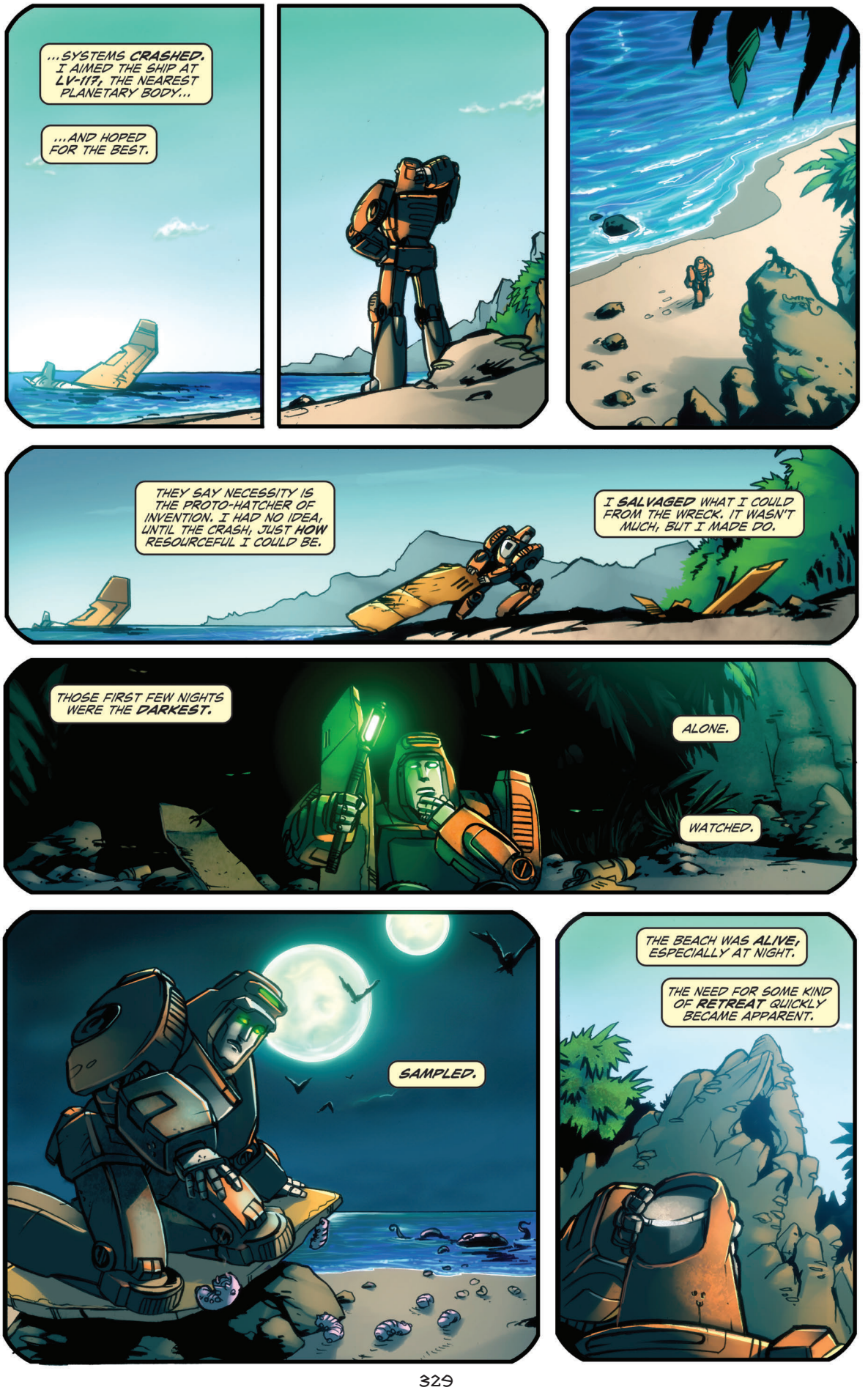
ART BY KLAUS SCHERWINSKI


CYBERTRON, THE GREAT WAR.
ANY FRONTLINE, EVERY BIG PUSH... THAT'S WHERE YOU'D FIND ME. BUT WHEN YOU'RE MY SIZE...
ULTRA MAGNUS—WAIT! YOUR RESERVE ARTILLERY!
...IT'S EASY TO BE OVERLOOKED.
I NEVER LET IT GET ME DOWN, THOUGH, OR HOLD ME BACK. UPBEAT, OPTIMISTIC, I KNEW, SOONER OR LATER...
...I'D GET MY SHOT.
REALLY? NO WAY! I MEAN... I WON'T LET YOU DOWN!
SADLY, MY SCOUT SHIP DID.
...NAVIGATIONAL SYSTEMS ARE INOPERATIVE. MAIN ENGINES AND LANDING GEAR NON-FUNCTIONAL—I'M GOING DOWN!
HELLO? ARE YOU RECEIVING ME?
"ANYONE?"

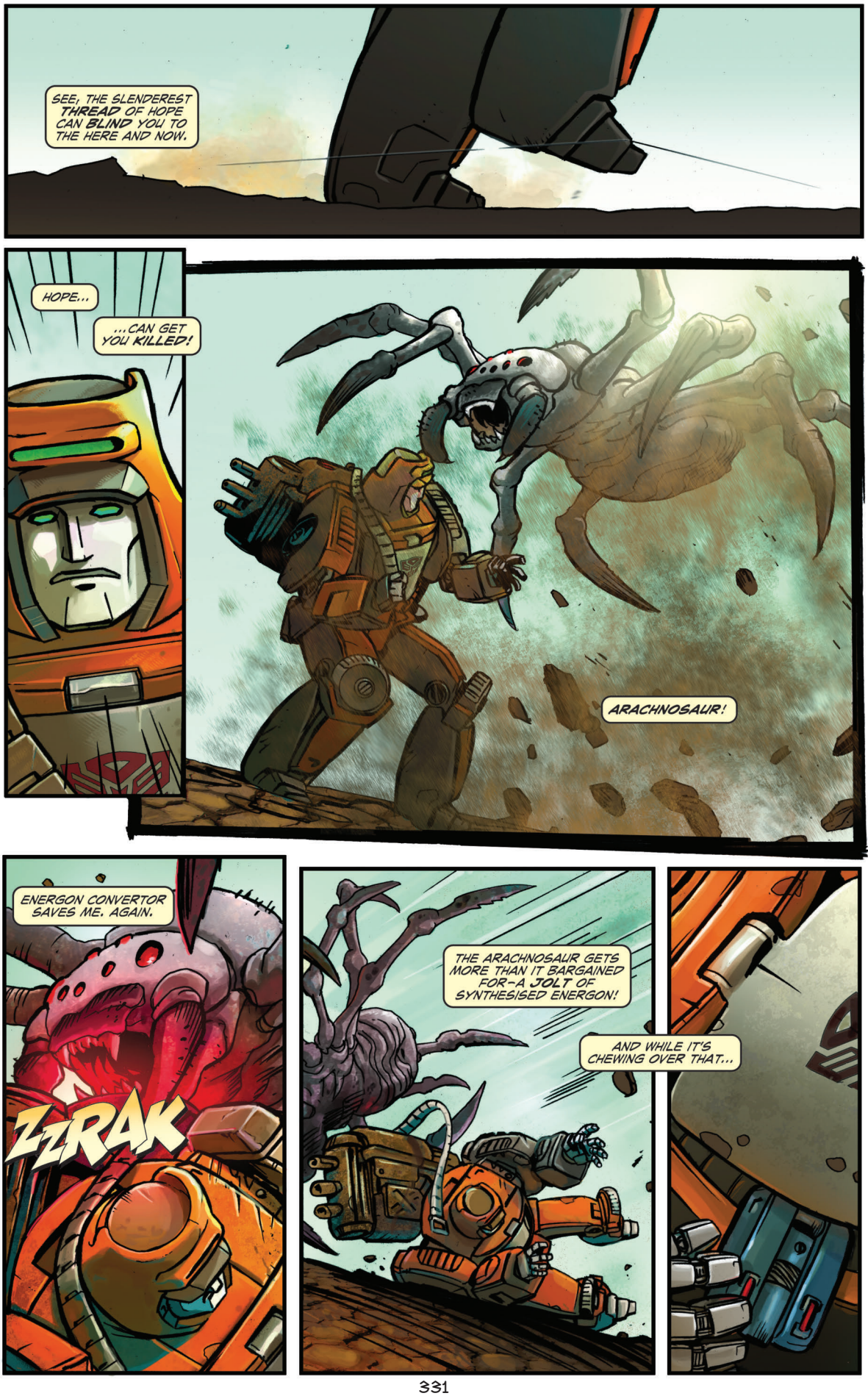

THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO. ANOTHER LIFETIME.
RECENTLY, THERE REALLY HASN'T BEEN A WHOLE LOT TO BE UPBEAT AND OPTIMISTIC ABOUT.
AS A SPECIES, WE ARE DEFINED BY CHANGE. IT'S A CONSTANT STATE OF BEING FOR "TRANSFORMERS." IF WE SIT STILL, BECOME IMMUTABLE, A SMALL BUT IMPORTANT PART OF US DIES.
THE WAY I SEE IT NOW, MY MISSION TO THE STARS WASN'T JUST ABOUT WIDENING MY OWN HORIZONS. WHATEVER I DISCOVERED OUT HERE WAS MEANT TO HAVE REPERCUSSIONS FOR CYBERTRON AS A WHOLE!
BUT... THIS PLANET TURNED OUT TO BE ONE BIG, FAT DEAD END--A FULL STOP. MY LIFE HERE'S BECOME ALL ABOUT ONE SINGLE SOLITARY THING:

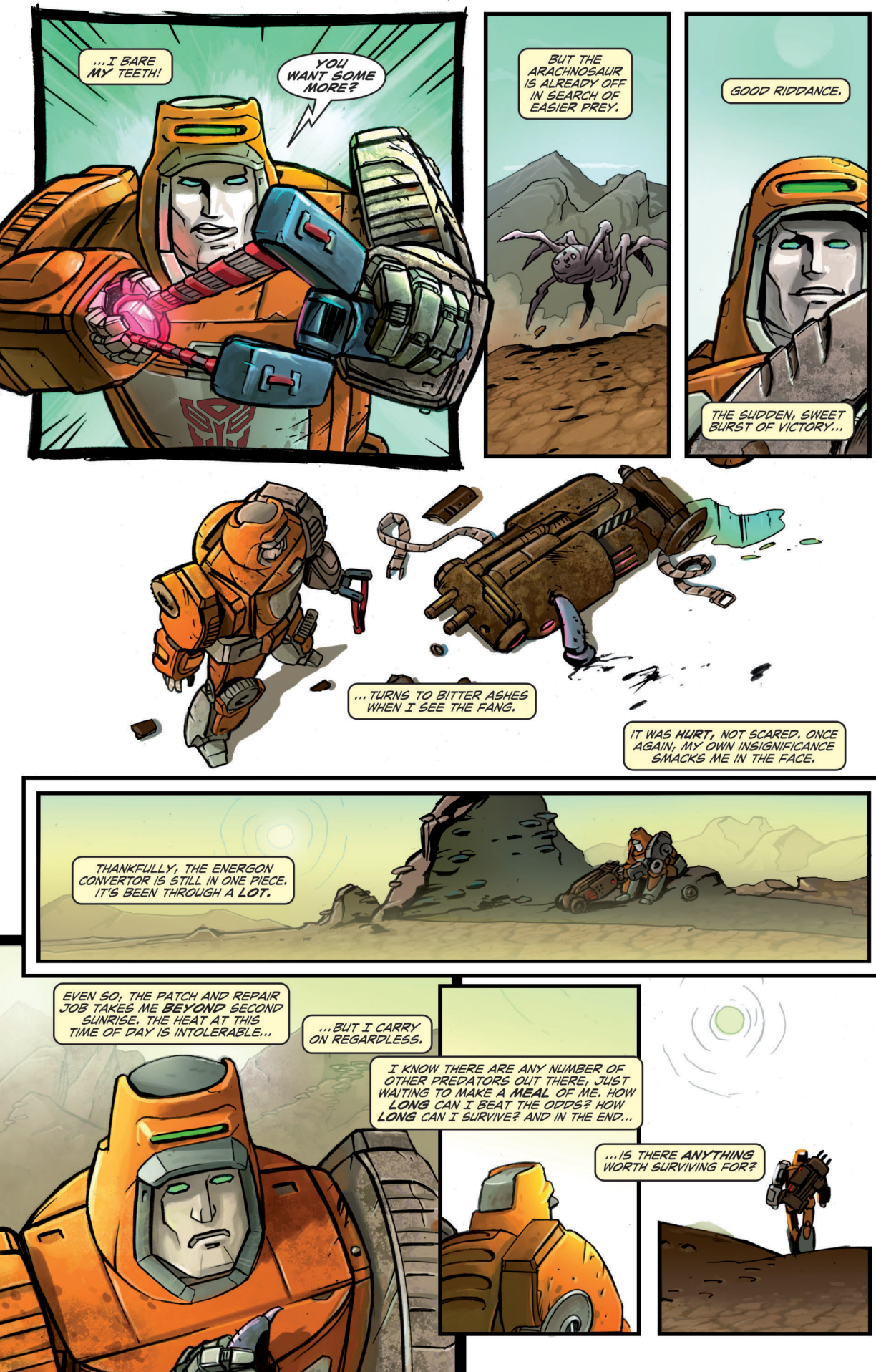

SURVIVAL.
I'M DIFFERENT NOW.

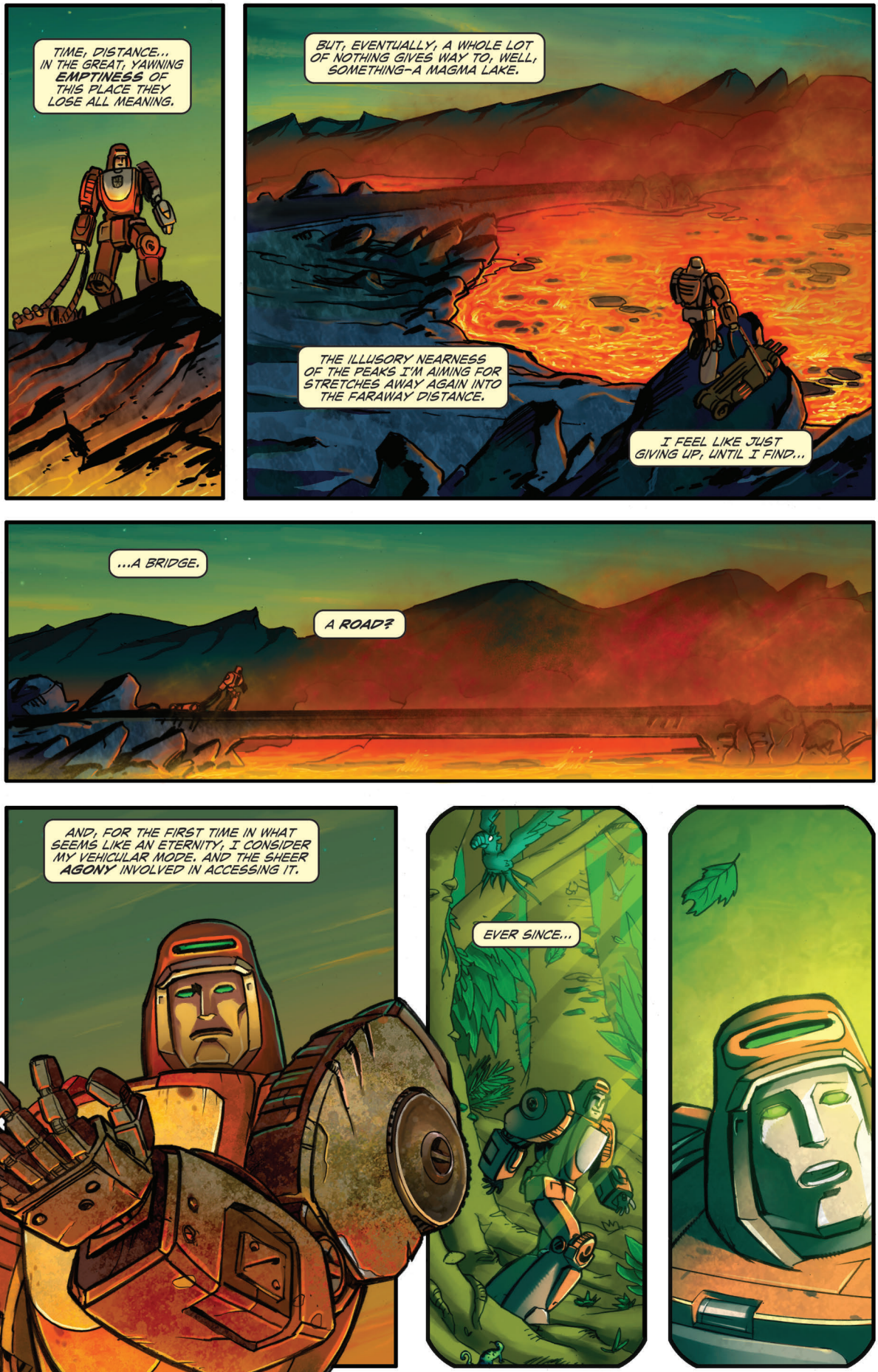

I STILL GET DISLOCATED PANGS. GHOST-NERVE IMPULSES FROM A LONG AMPUTATED LIMB.
IT COMES UPON ME WHEN I LEAST EXPECT IT, WEAKENING MY RESOLVE, BROACHING MY DEFENSES.
ME, AS I WAS: KEEN, EAGER, A LIGHTHEARTED QUIP FOR EVERY OCCASION, BUT UNDER IT ALL, THIS OVERPOWERING DESIRE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, TO SHOW WHAT I COULD REALLY DO.
WHEN HOTSPOT CHOSE ME, ABOVE SO MANY OTHERS, IT MEANT THE WORLD.
WHEELIE— WE'RE ALL COUNTING ON YOU!
SIR, YES SIR!
BUMPER
SCROUNGE
ROLLER
WHEELIE
I COULD HARDLY WAIT TO START. MY BIG CHANCE!
IS THIS WISE?
MM. THERE'S A WHOLE LOT OF UNIVERSE, JETFIRE, AND ONLY SO MANY BODIES TO SCOUT AND SCAN FOR HABITABLE WORLDS.
TRUTH OF IT IS, WE'RE HAVING TO MAKE DO.
NINETY THOUSAND STELLAR KLIKS OUT...
... WHAM! A RADIATION BELT WIPES OUT MY NAVIGATIONAL INTERFACE.
IN QUICK SUCCESSION...
PONG


...SYSTEMS CRASHED. I AIMED THE SHIP AT LV-117, THE NEAREST PLANETARY BODY...
...AND HOPED FOR THE BEST.
THEY SAY NECESSITY IS THE PROTO-HATCHER OF INVENTION. I HAD NO IDEA, UNTIL THE CRASH, JUST HOW RESOURCEFUL I COULD BE.
I SALVAGED WHAT I COULD FROM THE WRECK. IT WASN'T MUCH, BUT I MADE DO.
THOSE FIRST FEW NIGHTS WERE THE DARKEST.
ALONE.
WATCHED.
SAMPLED.
THE BEACH WAS ALIVE, ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT.
THE NEED FOR SOME KIND OF RETREAT QUICKLY BECAME APPARENT.

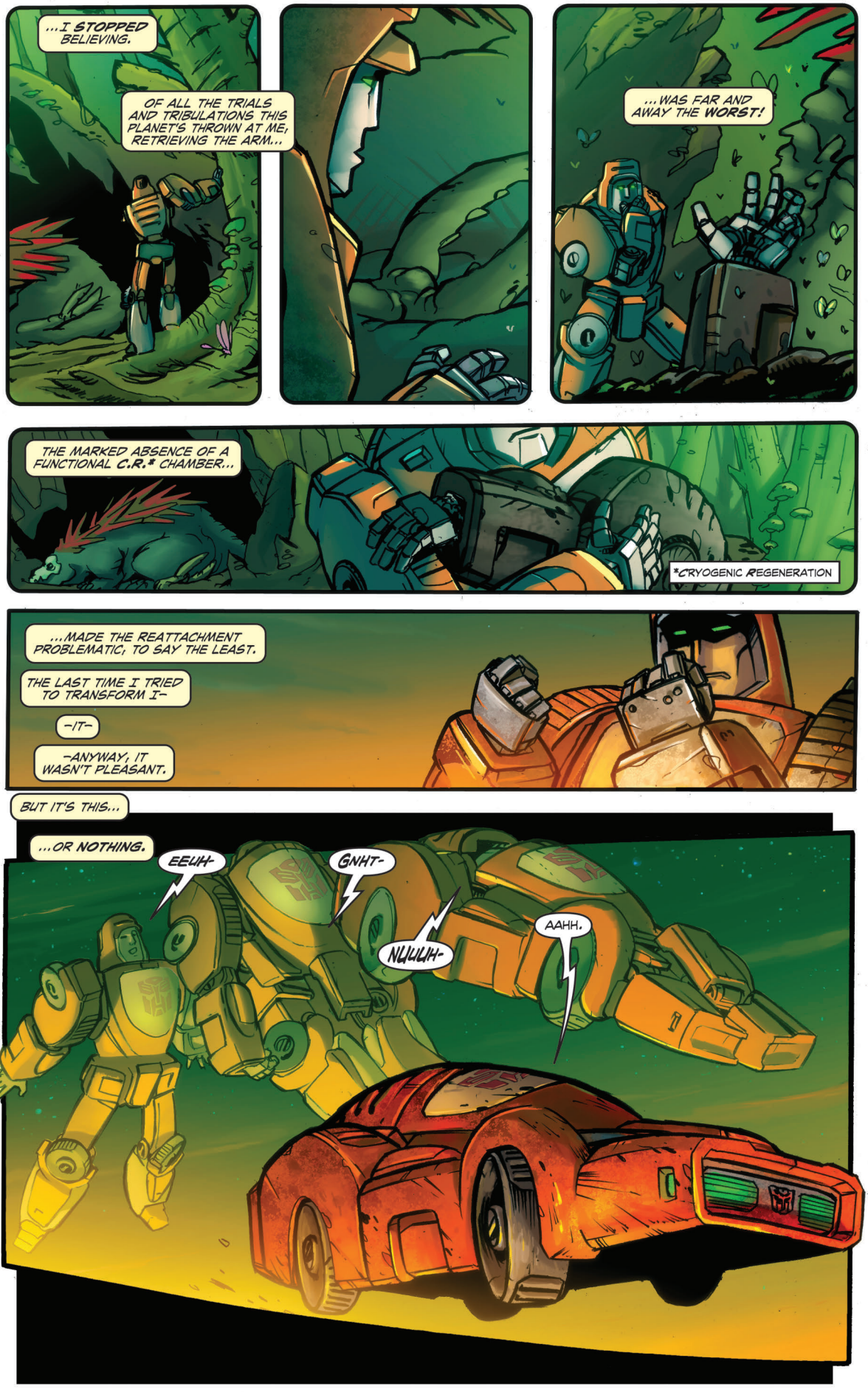

I DID WHAT I COULD TO FORTIFY MY "AERIE." THE PLANET WAS A STUDY IN CONTRADICTIONS- BEAUTIFUL FLORA...
...DEADLY FAUNA!
THEN I SET UP A MAKESHIFT TRANSMITTER, BEAMING A FORLORN DISTRESS SIGNAL TO DISTANT STARS, WITH NO REAL IDEA IF IT EVEN ESCAPED THE STRATOSPHERE.
DECA-CYCLES TURNED INTO MEGA-CYCLES. STELLAR CYCLES TURNED INTO META-CYCLES.
AND NOTHING.
THEN, PERHAPS THE CRUELLEST TWIST OF ALL...
...HOPE.

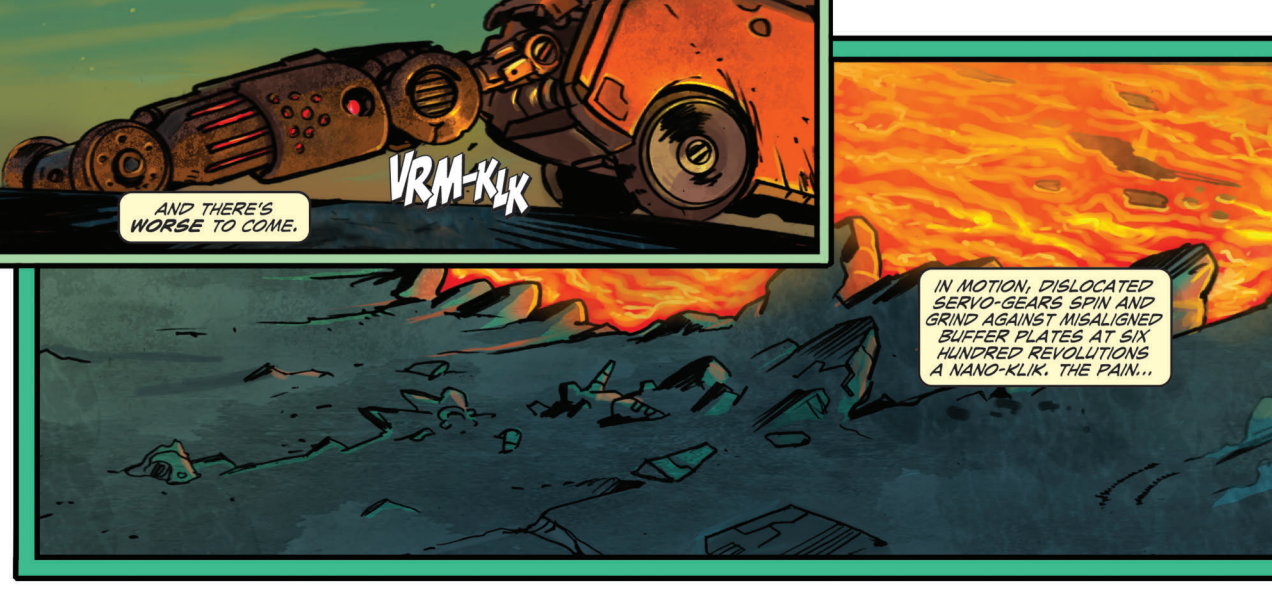

SEE, THE SLENDEREST THREAD OF HOPE CAN BLIND YOU TO THE HERE AND NOW.
HOPE...
...CAN GET YOU KILLED!
ARACHNOSAUR!
ENERGON CONVERTOR SAVES ME. AGAIN.
ZZRAK
THE ARACHNOSAUR GETS MORE THAN IT BARGAINED FOR-A JOLT OF SYNTHESISED ENERGON!
AND WHILE IT'S CHEWING OVER THAT...

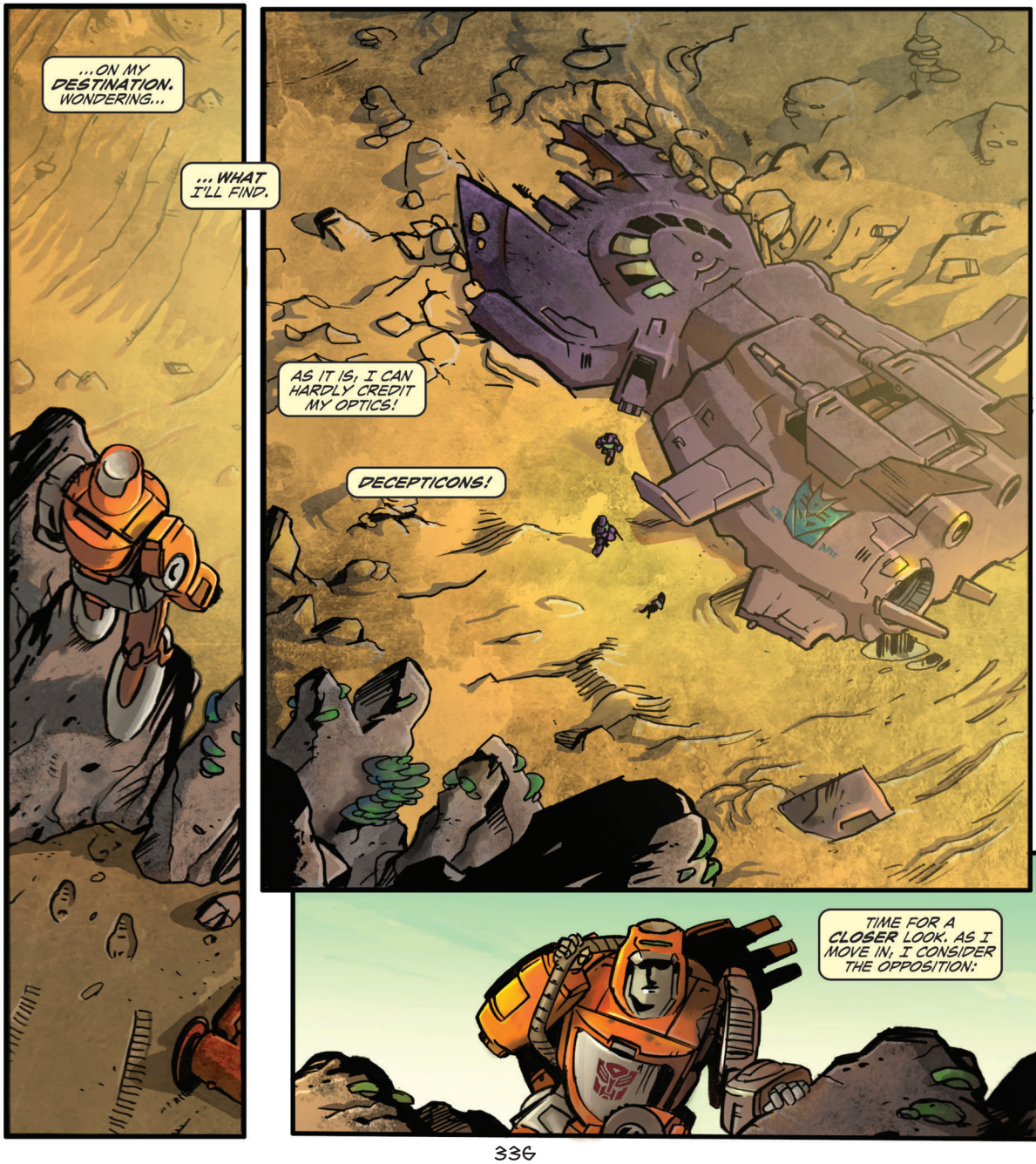

...I BARE MY TEETH!
YOU WANT SOME MORE?
BUT THE ARACHNOSAUR IS ALREADY OFF IN SEARCH OF EASIER PREY.
GOOD RIDDANCE.
THE SUDDEN, SWEET BURST OF VICTORY...
...TURNS TO BITTER ASHES WHEN I SEE THE FANG.
IT WAS HURT, NOT SCARED. ONCE AGAIN, MY OWN INSIGNIFICANCE SMACKS ME IN THE FACE.
THANKFULLY, THE ENERGON CONVERTOR IS STILL IN ONE PIECE. IT'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
EVEN SO, THE PATCH AND REPAIR JOB TAKES ME BEYOND SECOND SUNRISE. THE HEAT AT THIS TIME OF DAY IS INTOLERABLE...
...BUT I CARRY ON REGARDLESS.
I KNOW THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF OTHER PREDATORS OUT THERE, JUST WAITING TO MAKE A MEAL OF ME. HOW LONG CAN I BEAT THE ODDS? HOW LONG CAN I SURVIVE? AND IN THE END...
...IS THERE ANYTHING WORTH SURVIVING FOR?


TIME, DISTANCE... IN THE GREAT, YAWNING EMPTINESS OF THIS PLACE THEY LOSE ALL MEANING.
BUT, EVENTUALLY, A WHOLE LOT OF NOTHING GIVES WAY TO, WELL, SOMETHING-A MAGMA LAKE.
THE ILLUSORY NEARNESS OF THE PEAKS I'M AIMING FOR STRETCHES AWAY AGAIN INTO THE FARAWAY DISTANCE.
I FEEL LIKE JUST GIVING UP, UNTIL I FIND...
...A BRIDGE.
A ROAD?
AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN WHAT SEEMS LIKE AN ETERNITY, I CONSIDER MY VEHICULAR MODE. AND THE SHEER AGONY INVOLVED IN ACCESSING IT.
EVER SINCE...

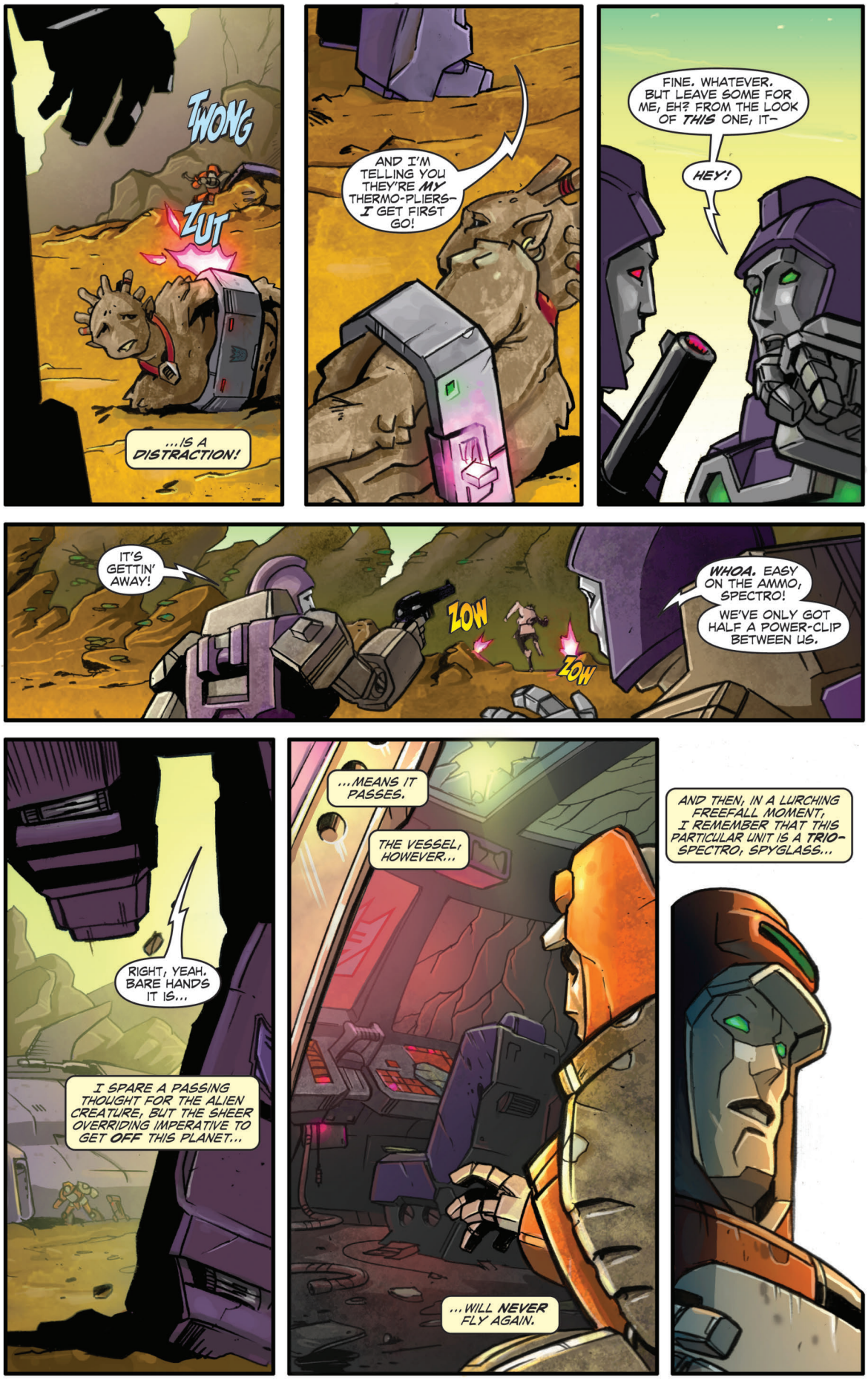

...THE CHAOSTEROS!
I WAS SO NAÏVE. THE HOPE OF FINDING INTELLIGENT LIFE WAS STILL ALIVE BACK THEN.
STUBBORNLY IGNORING MANY PREVIOUS DISAPPOINTMENTS, I TRIED THE UNIVERSAL GREETING:
BAH-WEEP-GRA-
CHUMP
-NIIAAAK!
THEY SAY WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER.
BUT THAT DAY...
...A LITTLE BIT OF ME DIED.
THAT DAY...


...I STOPPED BELIEVING.
OF ALL THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS THIS PLANET'S THROWN AT ME, RETRIEVING THE ARM...
...WAS FAR AND AWAY THE WORST!
THE MARKED ABSENCE OF A FUNCTIONAL C.R.* CHAMBER...
*CRYOGENIC REGENERATION
...MADE THE REATTACHMENT PROBLEMATIC, TO SAY THE LEAST.
THE LAST TIME I TRIED TO TRANSFORM I–
–IT–
–ANYWAY, IT WASN'T PLEASANT.
BUT IT'S THIS...
...OR NOTHING.
EEUH-
GNHT-
NUUUH-
AAHH.

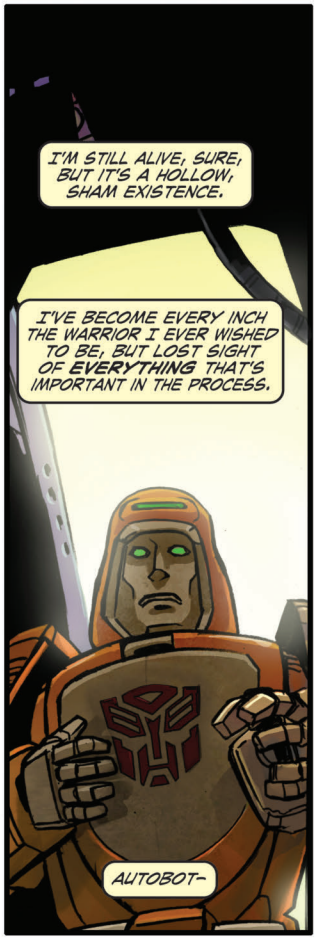

AND THERE'S WORSE TO COME.
VRM-KLIK
IN MOTION, DISLOCATED SERVO-GEARS SPIN AND GRIND AGAINST MISALIGNED BUFFER PLATES AT SIX HUNDRED REVOLUTIONS A NANO-KLIK. THE PAIN...


...ON MY DESTINATION. WONDERING...
...WHAT I'LL FIND.
AS IT IS, I CAN HARDLY CREDIT MY OPTICS!
DECEPTICONS!
TIME FOR A CLOSER LOOK. AS I MOVE IN, I CONSIDER THE OPPOSITION:


...IS RELENTLESS.
I TRY TO FOCUS...
SPECTRO:
I SAY KILL IT. IT'S NO USE TO US.
SPYGLASS:
WE DON'T KNOW THAT. IT COULD BE INTELLIGENT. IT COULD KNOW WHERE WE ARE!
HM.
OKAY.
BUT WE CAN TORTURE IT.
OH YEAH.
LOW-GRADE HOODLUMS, NO USE TO ME, BUT THEIR VESSEL...
...COULD JUST BE ANOTHER MATTER.
WHAT I NEED...


TWONG
ZUT
...IS A DISTRACTION!
AND I'M TELLING YOU THEY'RE MY THERMO-PLIERS– I GET FIRST GO!
FINE. WHATEVER. BUT LEAVE SOME FOR ME, EH? FROM THE LOOK OF THIS ONE, IT–
HEY!
IT'S GETTIN' AWAY!
ZOW
ZOW
WHOA. EASY ON THE AMMO, SPECTRO!
WE'VE ONLY GOT HALF A POWER-CLIP BETWEEN US.
RIGHT, YEAH. BARE HANDS IT IS...
I SPARE A PASSING THOUGHT FOR THE ALIEN CREATURE, BUT THE SHEER OVERRIDING IMPERATIVE TO GET OFF THIS PLANET...
...MEANS IT PASSES.
THE VESSEL, HOWEVER...
...WILL NEVER FLY AGAIN.
AND THEN, IN A LURCHING FREEFALL MOMENT, I REMEMBER THAT THIS PARTICULAR UNIT IS A TRIO-SPECTRO, SPYGLASS...

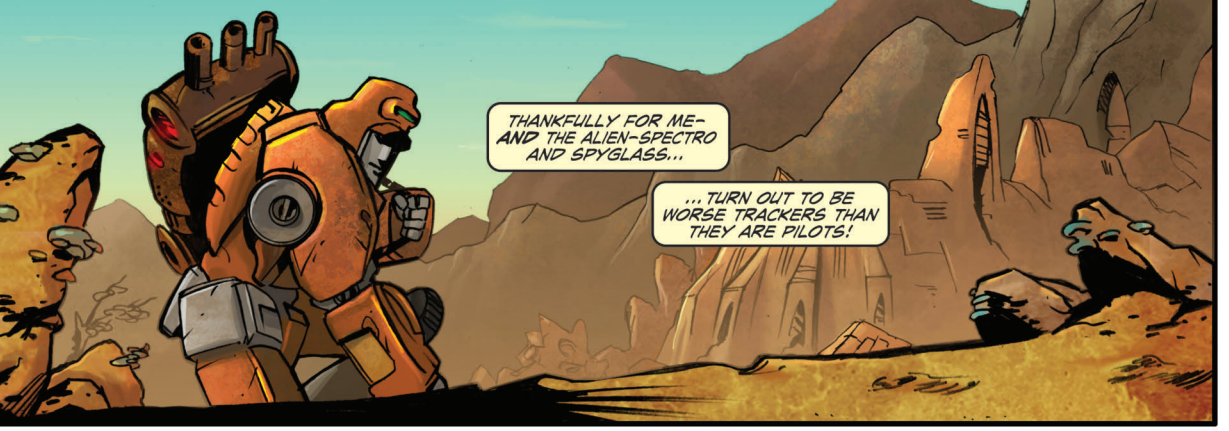

...AND VIEWFINDER!
LUCKILY FOR ME, ANY POTENTIAL THREAT HE MAY HAVE POSED IS LONG PASSED. AND THEN I WONDER, AM I THE LUCKY ONE...
...OR IS HE?


I'M STILL ALIVE, SURE, BUT IT'S A HOLLOW, SHAM EXISTENCE.
I'VE BECOME EVERY INCH THE WARRIOR I EVER WISHED TO BE, BUT LOST SIGHT OF EVERYTHING THAT'S IMPORTANT IN THE PROCESS.
AUTOBOT-


-DECEPTICON-
-NEUTRAL.

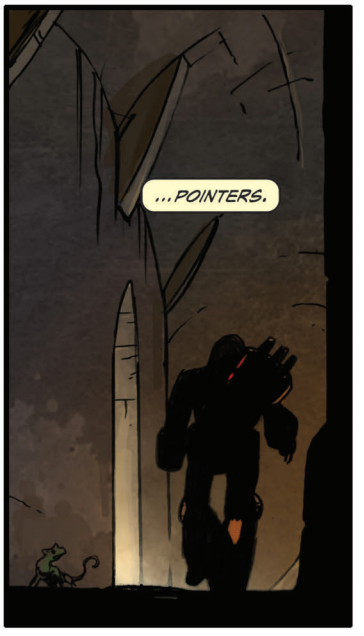

IT USED TO MEAN SOMETHING. IT HAS TO MEAN SOMETHING. OTHERWISE...
...I MAY AS WELL BE DEAD.


THE ALIEN COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR. I JUST HOPE I'M NOT ALREADY TOO LATE.


THANKFULLY FOR ME- AND THE ALIEN-SPECTRO AND SPYGLASS...
...TURN OUT TO BE WORSE TRACKERS THAN THEY ARE PILOTS!

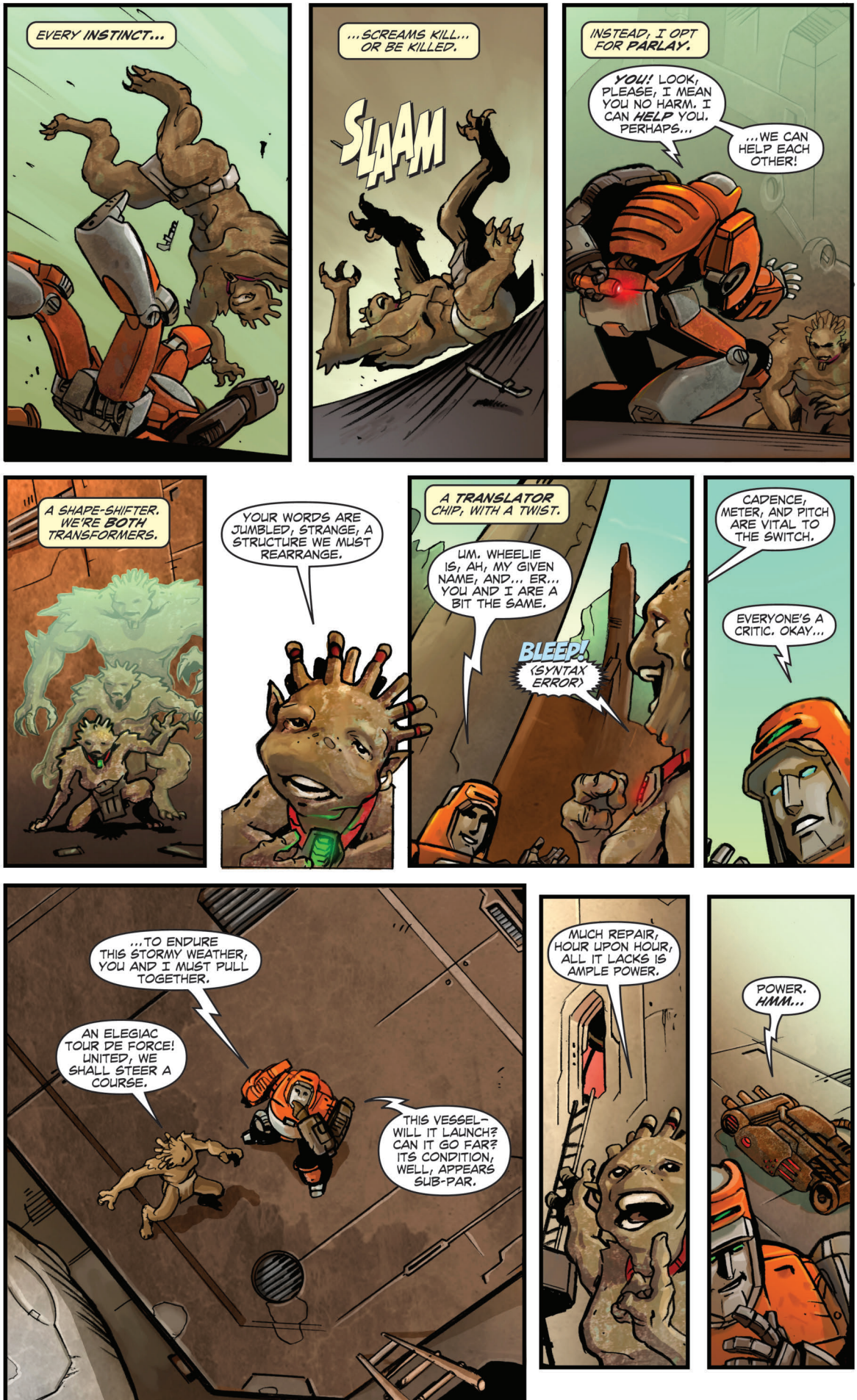

IN THE RUINS OF SOME ANCIENT CIVILIZATION...

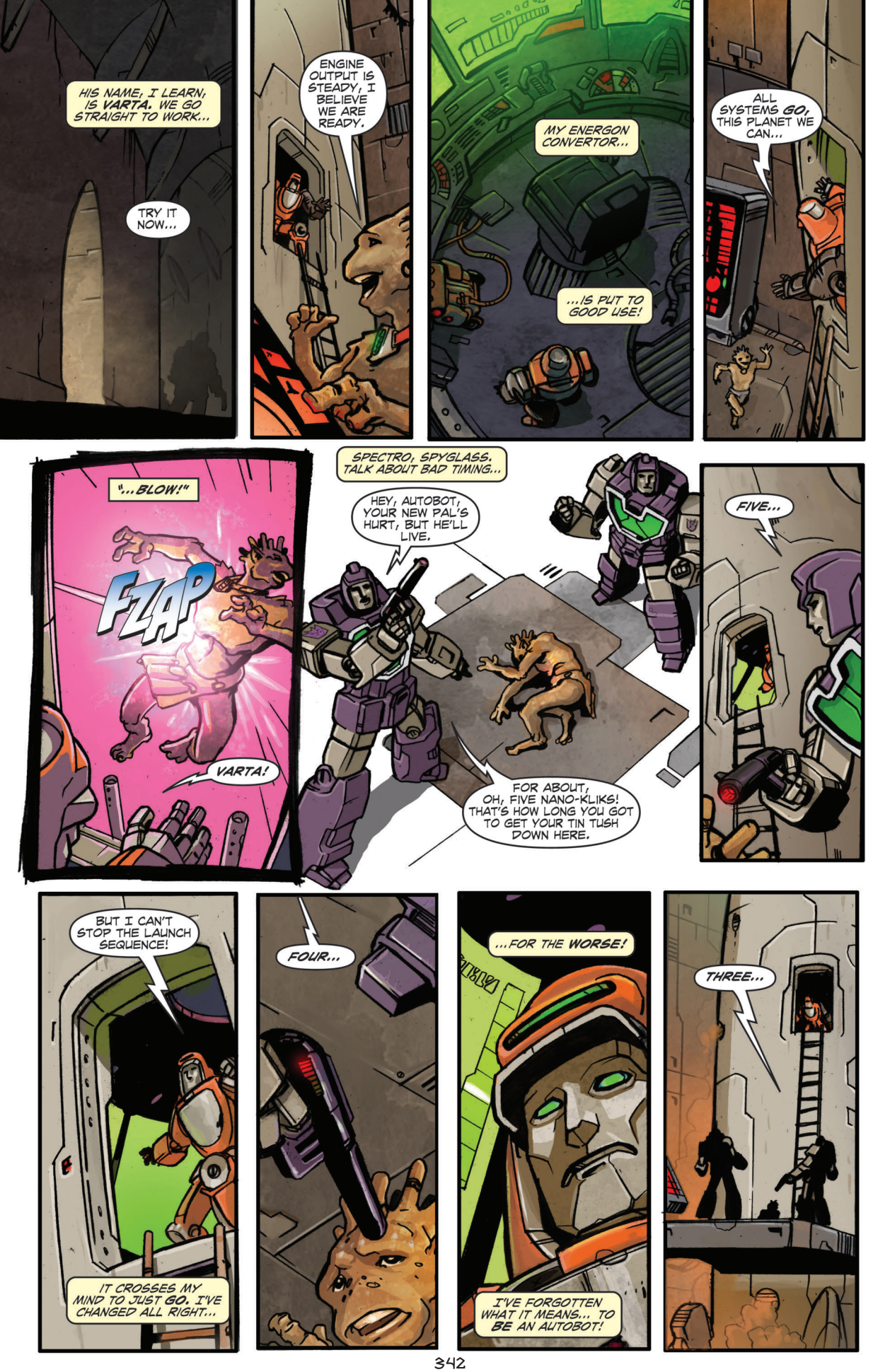

...I FIND TRACES...

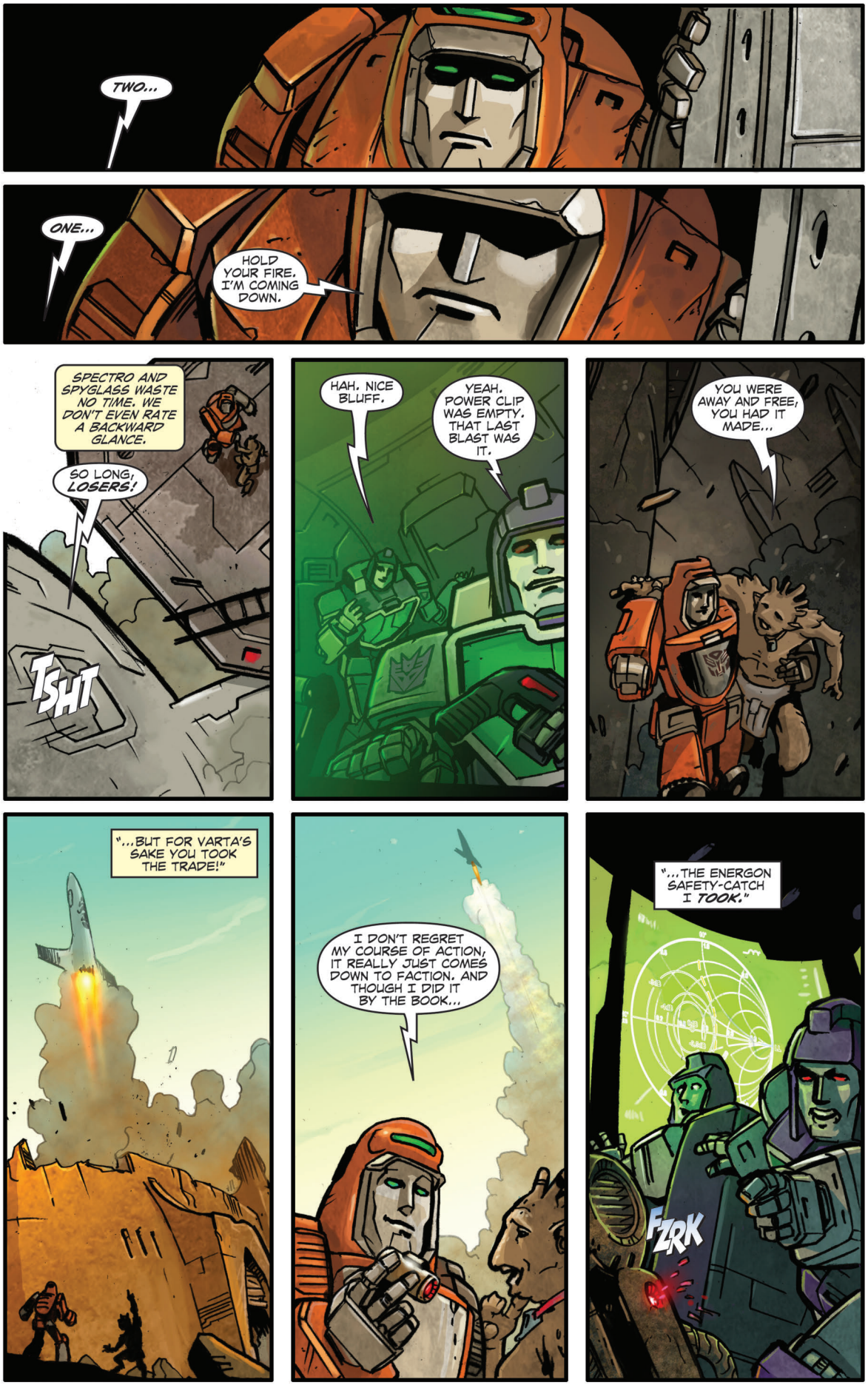

...POINTERS.

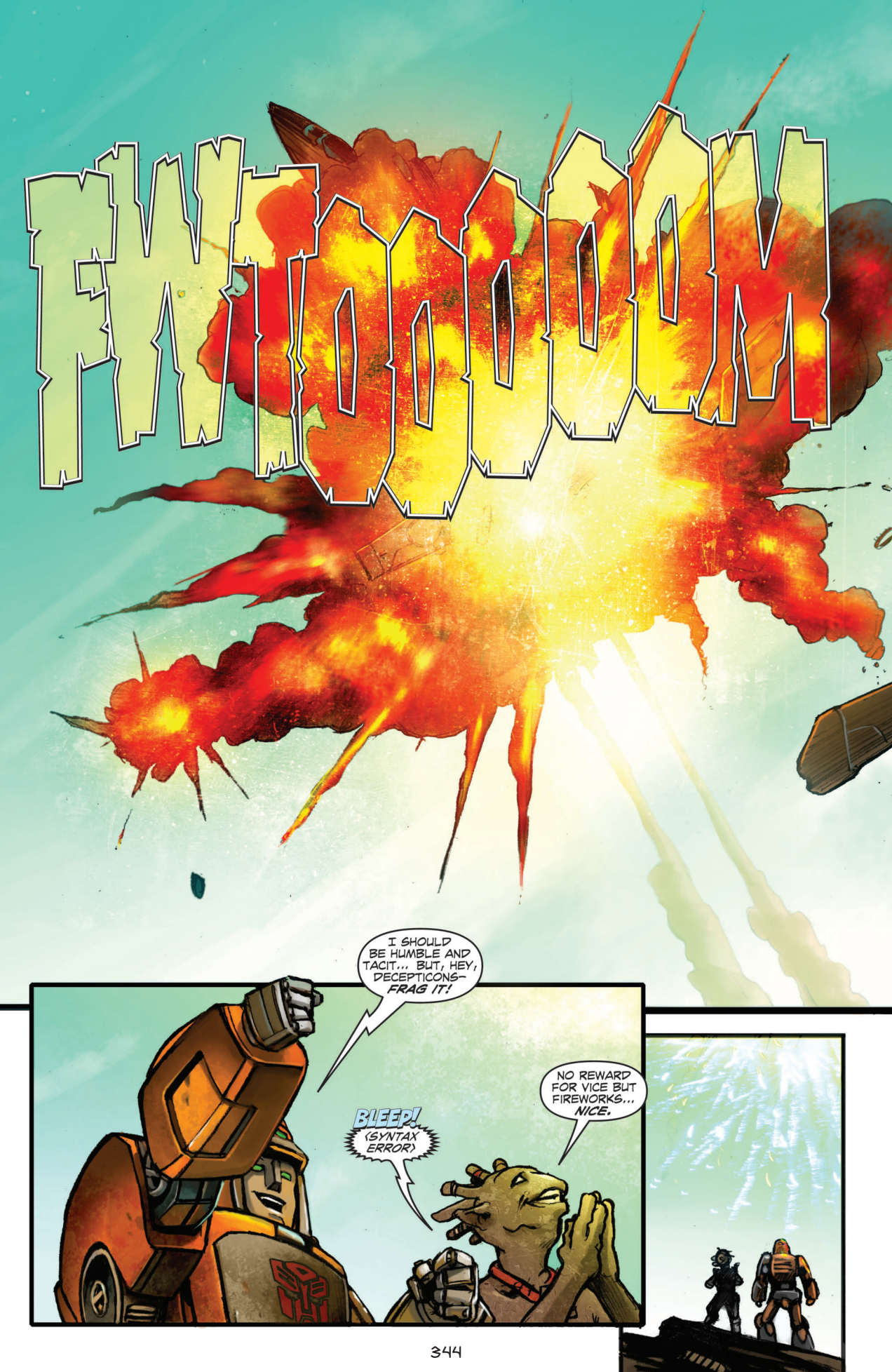

AND MORE. MUCH MORE!
AND AGAIN, HOPE...


...CONSPIRES TO GET ME KILLED!
ROWWR

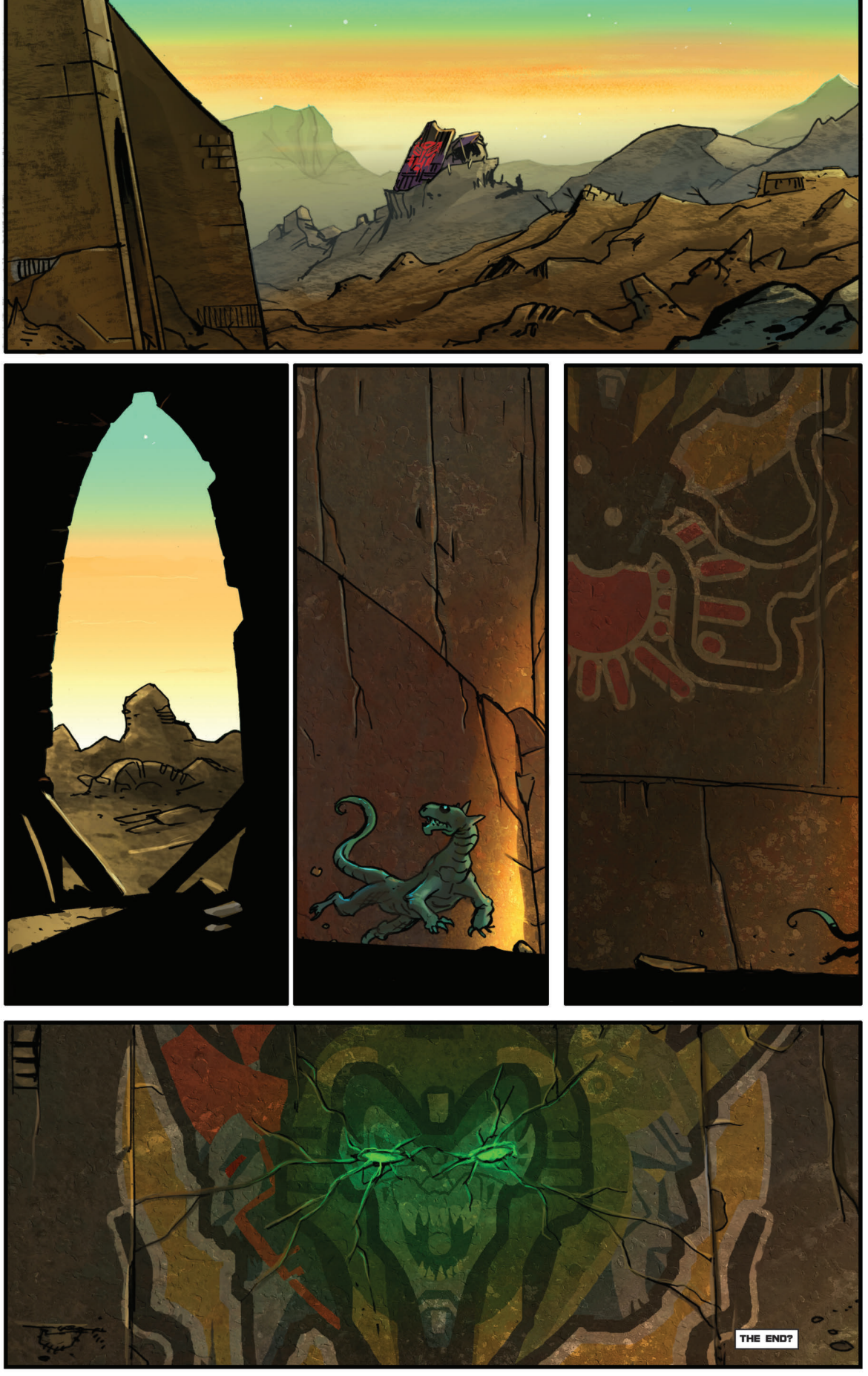

EVERY INSTINCT...
...SCREAMS KILL... OR BE KILLED.
SLAAM
INSTEAD, I OPT FOR PARLAY.
YOU! LOOK, PLEASE, I MEAN YOU NO HARM. I CAN HELP YOU. PERHAPS...
...WE CAN HELP EACH OTHER!
A SHAPE-SHIFTER. WE'RE BOTH TRANSFORMERS.
YOUR WORDS ARE JUMBLED, STRANGE, A STRUCTURE WE MUST REARRANGE.
A TRANSLATOR CHIP, WITH A TWIST.
UM. WHEELIE IS, AH, MY GIVEN NAME, AND... ER... YOU AND I ARE A BIT THE SAME.
BLEEP!
<SYNTAX ERROR>
CADENCE, METER, AND PITCH ARE VITAL TO THE SWITCH.
EVERYONE'S A CRITIC. OKAY...
...TO ENDURE THIS STORMY WEATHER, YOU AND I MUST PULL TOGETHER.
AN ELEGIAC TOUR DE FORCE! UNITED, WE SHALL STEER A COURSE.
THIS VESSEL— WILL IT LAUNCH? CAN IT GO FAR? ITS CONDITION, WELL, APPEARS SUB-PAR.
MUCH REPAIR, HOUR UPON HOUR, ALL IT LACKS IS AMPLE POWER.
POWER. HMM...


HIS NAME, I LEARN, IS VARTA. WE GO STRAIGHT TO WORK...
TRY IT NOW...
ENGINE OUTPUT IS STEADY, I BELIEVE WE ARE READY.
MY ENERGON CONVERTOR...
...IS PUT TO GOOD USE!
ALL SYSTEMS GO, THIS PLANET WE CAN...
"...BLOW!"
FZAP
VARTA!
SPECTRO, SPYGLASS. TALK ABOUT BAD TIMING...
HEY, AUTOBOT, YOUR NEW PAL'S HURT, BUT HE'LL LIVE.
FOR ABOUT, OH, FIVE NANO-KLIKS! THAT'S HOW LONG YOU GOT TO GET YOUR TIN TUSH DOWN HERE.
FIVE...
BUT I CAN'T STOP THE LAUNCH SEQUENCE!
IT CROSSES MY MIND TO JUST GO. I'VE CHANGED ALL RIGHT...
FOUR...
...FOR THE WORSE!
I'VE FORGOTTEN WHAT IT MEANS... TO BE AN AUTOBOT!
THREE...

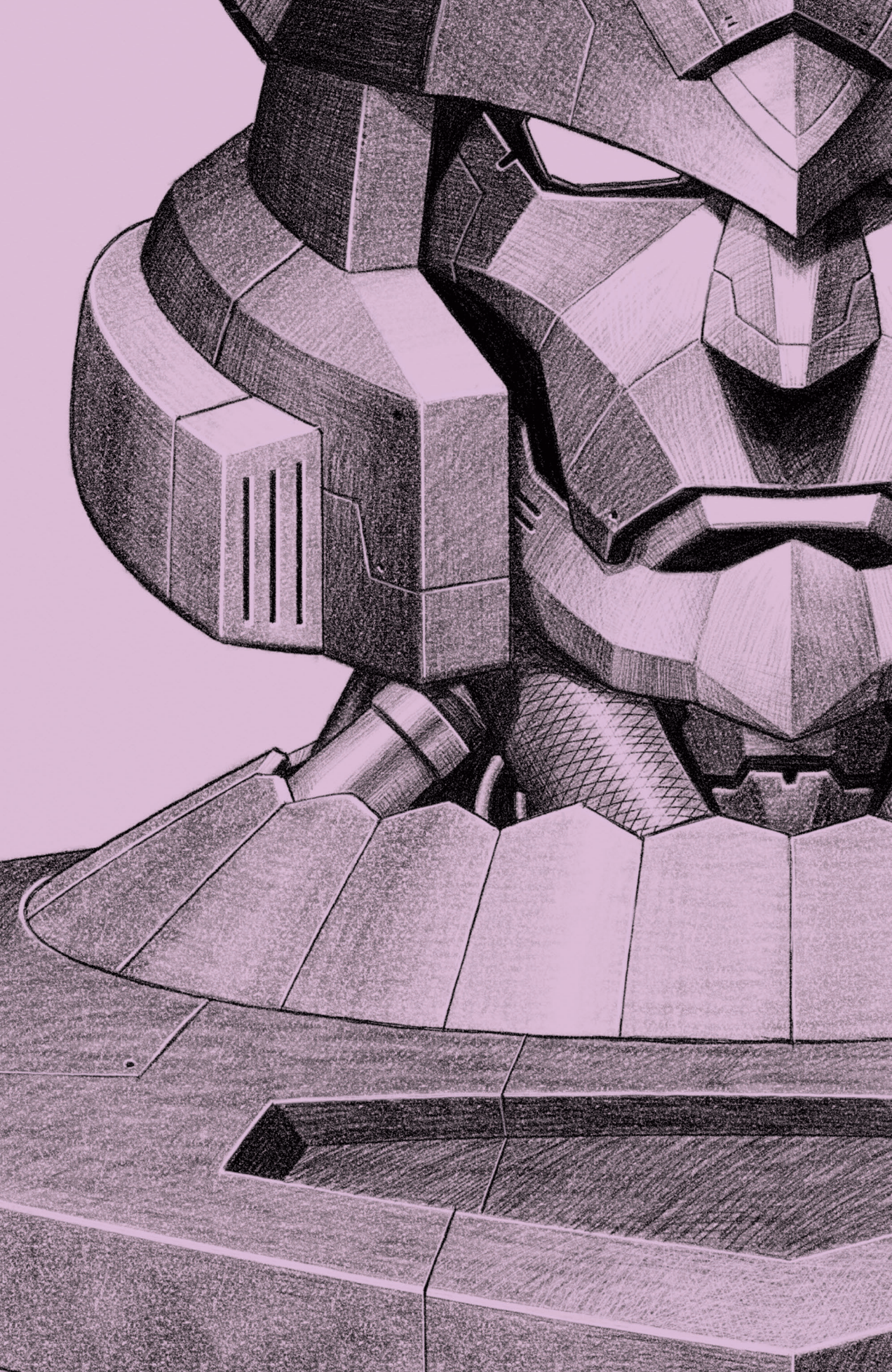

TWO...
ONE...
HOLD YOUR FIRE. I'M COMING DOWN.
SPECTRO AND SPYGLASS WASTE NO TIME. WE DON'T EVEN RATE A BACKWARD GLANCE.
SO LONG, LOSERS!
TSHT
HAH. NICE BLUFF.
YEAH. POWER CLIP WAS EMPTY. THAT LAST BLAST WAS IT.
YOU WERE AWAY AND FREE, YOU HAD IT MADE...
"...BUT FOR VARTA'S SAKE YOU TOOK THE TRADE!"
I DON'T REGRET MY COURSE OF ACTION, IT REALLY JUST COMES DOWN TO FACTION. AND THOUGH I DID IT BY THE BOOK...
"...THE ENERGON SAFETY-CATCH I TOOK."
FZRK

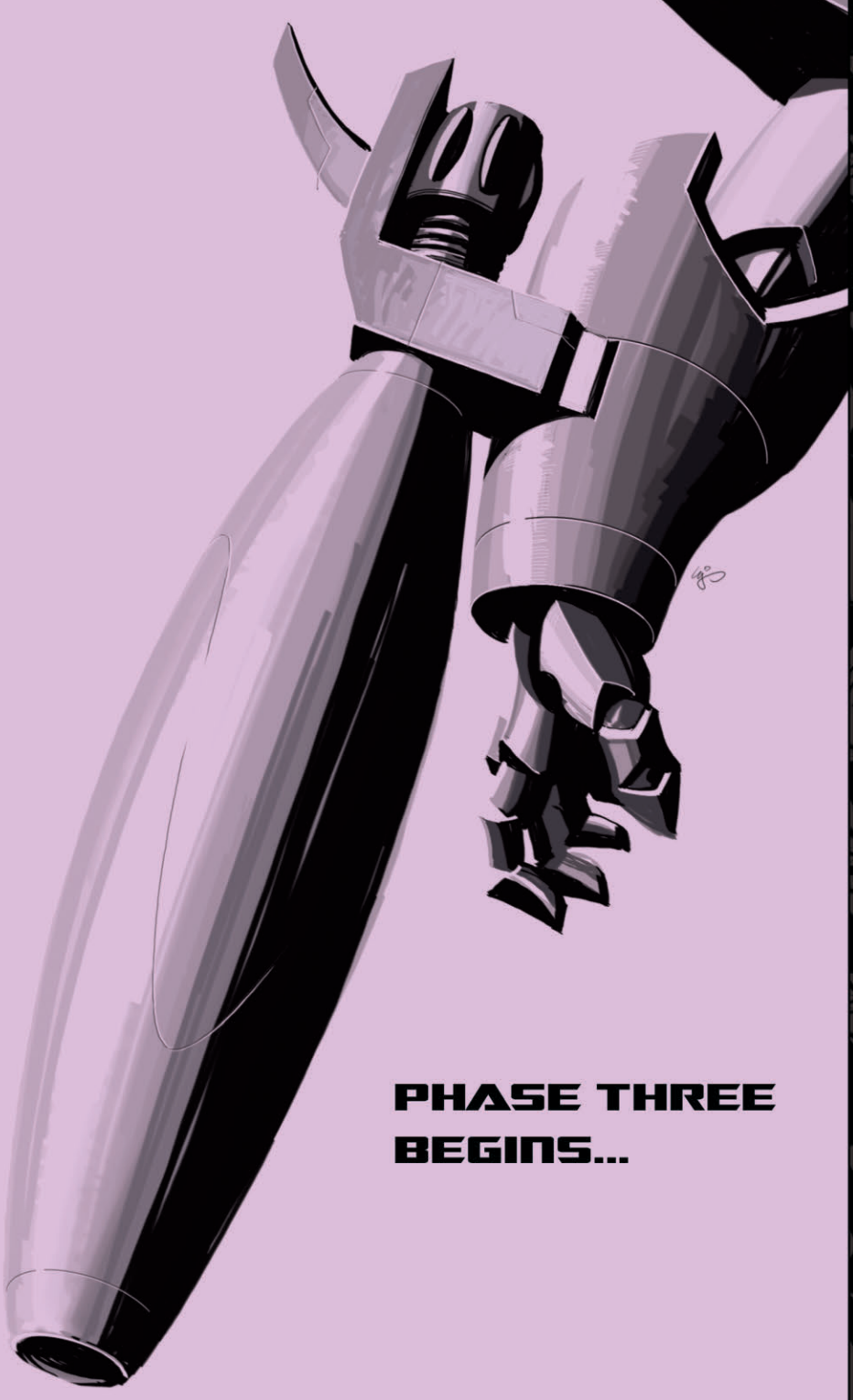

KWOOOOOM
I SHOULD BE HUMBLE AND TACIT... BUT, HEY, DECEPTICONS— FRAG IT!
BLEEP! (SYNTAX ERROR)
NO REWARD FOR VICE BUT FIREWORKS... NICE.


ONE YEAR LATER.
IN THE DECA-CYCLES FOLLOWING SPECTRO AND SPYGLASS'S SPECTACULAR EXIT, VARTA AND I SALVAGE WHAT WE CAN FROM THE WRECK...
...AND BUILD A NEW HOME ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE ANCIENT CITY.
SPEAKING IN VERSE SOON BECOMES SECOND NATURE.
I'LL PREP THE SONIC LIMITER THEN GO CHECK THE PERIMETER.
THE EVENING'S JUST TOO SUBLIME, RELAX AND TAKE SOME LEISURE TIME.
THIS FEELS GOOD. RIGHT. HERE, I'M JUST MYSELF. NO PRETENSE, NO SELF-DELUSION. I FIND I CAN FINALLY ALLOW MYSELF THE LUXURY...
...OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE!


THE END?


ART BY KLAUS SCHERWINSKI
#1 IS COLLECTORS EDITION!
TRAPPPED ON PLANET LU-A17, ONE LITTLE AUTOBOT HAS JUST ONE AIM: SURVIVAL! BUT CAN
WHEELIE
OUTRUN THE UNSPEAKABLE TERROR OF THIS PLANET'S MOST HORRIFIC CRITTER? THE GIANT
CHAOSTEROS!
FEATURING:
SPECTRO!
SPYGLASS!
AND THE FATE OF THE DECEPTICON KNOWN AS VIEWFINDER!
50 c
WHO OR WHAT IS VARTA?!
K-SKI 08 -DAMIR-
ANOTHER SELF-CONTAINED IDW MASTERPIECE FROM THE FAMOUS SPOTLIGHT SERIES, BROUGHT TO YOU BY SIMON FURMAN AND KLAUS SCHERWINSKI.





PHASE THREE BEGINS...

Continuing the re-presentation of IDW's TRANSFORMERS Universe! This third volume includes the TRANSFORMERS series *Transformers/New Avengers* and *Devastation*, as well as *Spotlights: Galvatron, Blaster, Arcee, Grimlock*, and *Wheelie*.

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