

TRANSFORMERS
THE IDW COLLECTION



FORMERS

VOLUME

3

PHASE TWO





TRANS FORMERS

THE IDW COLLECTION • PHASE TWO, VOLUME 3

THUNDERCRACKER

WRITTEN BY **JOHN BARBER** ART BY **CHEE**

COLORS BY **RONDA PATTISON** LETTERS BY **SHAWN LEE**

EDITS BY **CARLOS GUZMAN**

BUMBLEBEE

WRITTEN BY **JOHN BARBER** ART BY **DAVID DAZA**

COLORS BY **ZAC ATKINSON** LETTERS BY **SHAWN LEE**

EDITS BY **CARLOS GUZMAN**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL 2012

WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS**

ART BY **JIMBO SALGADO** & **EMIL CABALTIERRA**

FLASHBACK ART BY **GUIDO GUIDI**

COLORS BY **JUAN FERNANDEZ** WITH **JOANA LAFUENTE**

LETTERS BY **CHRIS MOWRY** EDITS BY **JOHN BARBER**

ROBOTS IN DISGUISE ANNUAL 2012

WRITTEN BY **JOHN BARBER** ART BY **BRENDAN CAHILL**

FLASHBACK ART BY **GUIDO GUIDI** COLORS BY **JOANA LAFUENTE**

LETTERS BY **CHRIS MOWRY** EDITS BY **CARLOS GUZMAN**

Collection Cover Art by Marcelo Matere
Collection Cover Colors by Tom B. Long
Collection Edits by Justin Eisinger and Alonzo Simon
Collection Design by Chris Mowry

Special thanks to Hasbro's Clint Chapman, Heather Hopkins, Jerry Jivojn, Joshua Lamb, Ed Lane, Mark Weber, and Michael Kelly for their invaluable assistance.

For international rights, contact licensing@idwpublishing.com

eISBN: 9781684060245

DIGITAL

IDW © Licensed By:

www.IDWPUBLISHING.com

Ted Adams, CEO & Publisher
Greg Goldstein, President & COO
Robbie Robbins, EVP/Sr. Graphic Artist
Chris Ryall, Chief Creative Officer/Editor-in-Chief
Matthew Ruzicka, CPA, Chief Financial Officer
Dirk Wood, VP of Marketing
Lorelei Bunjes, VP of Digital Services
Jeff Webber, VP of Licensing, Digital and Subsidiary Rights
Jerry Bennington, VP of New Product Development

Facebook: facebook.com/idwpublishing
Twitter: [@idwpublishing](https://twitter.com/idwpublishing)
YouTube: youtube.com/idwpublishing
Tumblr: tumblr.idwpublishing.com
Instagram: instagram.com/idwpublishing



TRANSFORMERS: IDW COLLECTION PHASE TWO, VOLUME 3. FEBRUARY 2016. FIRST PRINTING. HASBRO and its logo, TRANSFORMERS, and all related characters are trademarks of Hasbro and are used with permission. © 2016 Hasbro. All Rights Reserved. The IDW logo is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. IDW Publishing, a division of Idea and Design Works, LLC. Editorial offices: 2765 Truxtun Road, San Diego, CA 92106. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Idea and Design Works, LLC. Printed in Korea.

IDW Publishing does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories, or artwork.

Originally published as THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: THUNDERCRACKER, THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: BUMBLEBEE, THE TRANSFORMERS: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL 2012, THE TRANSFORMERS: ROBOTS IN DISGUISE ANNUAL 2012, THE TRANSFORMERS: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE issues #9-13, THE TRANSFORMERS: ROBOTS IN DISGUISE issues #10-11, and THE TRANSFORMERS SPOTLIGHT: MEGATRON.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #9-11

WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS** ART BY **ALEX MILNE**

ADDITIONAL INKS BY **JUAN CASTRO** AND **JOHN WYCOUGH**

COLORS BY **JOSH BURCHAM** LETTERS BY **CHRIS MOWRY** AND **SHAWN LEE**

EDITS BY **JOHN BARBER**

ROBOTS IN DISGUISE #10

WRITTEN BY **JOHN BARBER** ART BY **LIVIO RAMONDELLI**

LETTERS BY **SHAWN LEE** EDITS BY **CARLOS GUZMAN**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #12

WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS** PENCILS (BEFORE) BY **ALEX MILNE**

INKS (BEFORE) BY **ATILIO ROJO** WITH **ALEX MILNE**

PENCILS (AFTER) BY **BRENDAN CAHILL**

INKS (AFTER) BY **BRIAN SHEARER** COLORS BY **JOSH BURCHAM**

LETTERS BY **TOM B. LONG** EDITS BY **JOHN BARBER**

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #13

WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS** PENCILS BY **GUIDO GUIDI**

INKS BY **JOHN WYCOUGH, JUAN CASTRO,**
GUIDO GUIDI, AND MARC DEERING

COLORS BY **JOSH BURCHAM** AND **JOANA LAFUENTE**

LETTERS BY **TOM B. LONG** EDITS BY **JOHN BARBER**

ROBOTS IN DISGUISE #11

WRITTEN BY **JOHN BARBER** ART BY **GUIDO GUIDI**

ADDITIONAL INKS BY **JOHN WYCOUGH** COLORS BY **PRISCILLA TRAMONTANO**

LETTERS BY **SHAWN LEE** EDITS BY **CARLOS GUZMAN**

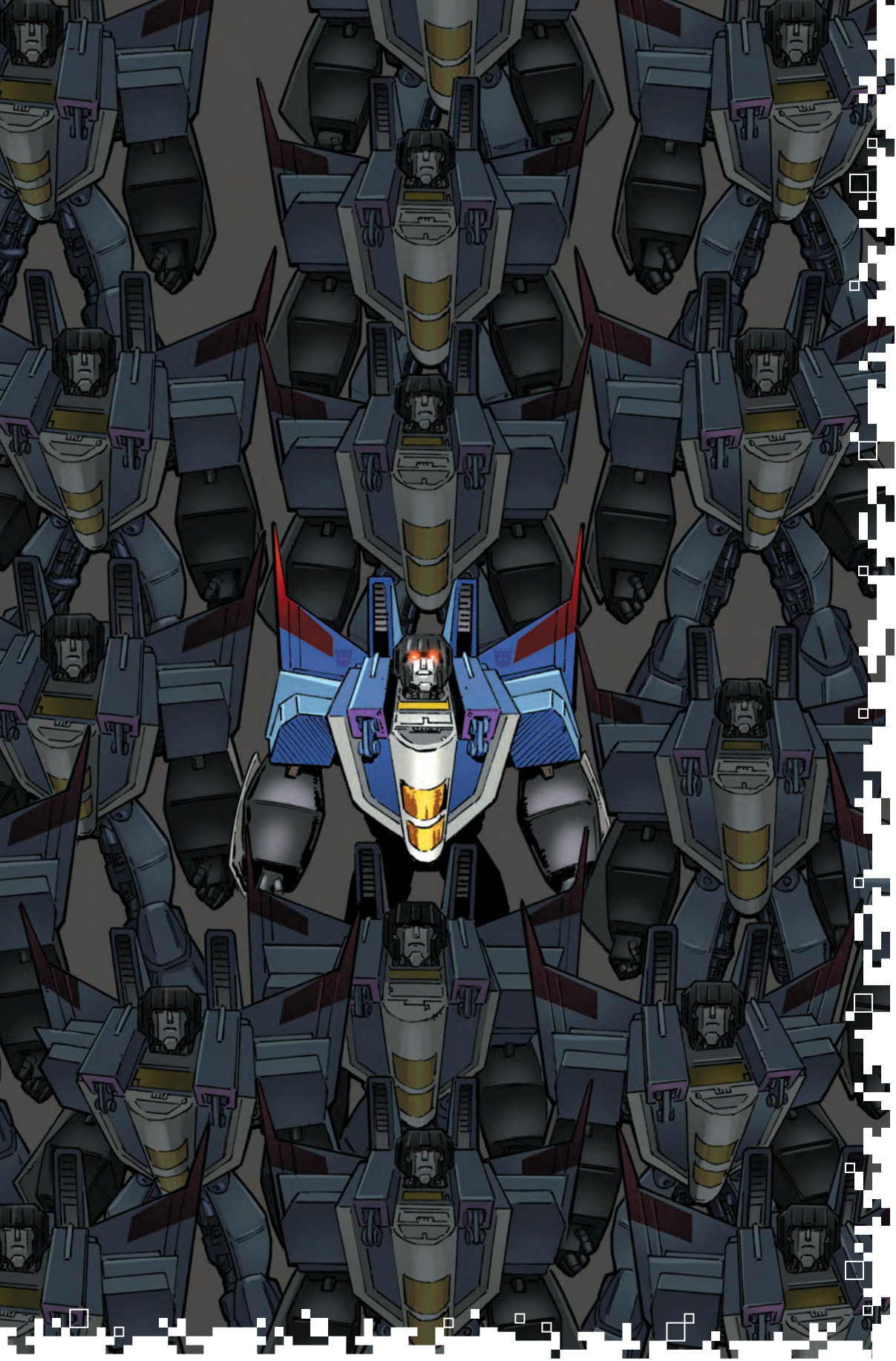
MEGATRON

STORY AND ART BY **NICK ROCHE** COLORS BY **LEN O'GRADY**

EDITS BY **JOHN BARBER**

SIGNAL TO NOISE

WRITTEN BY **JAMES ROBERTS**



SPOTLIGHT: THUNDERCRACKER COVER A

by **CHEE** Colors by **J. BROWN**

SPACE. LONG AGO.

ATMOSPHERE
IS AT, AH... ABOUT
POINT-SIX
CYBERTRONIAN
DENSITY...

...UNUSUALLY
HEAVY FOR AN
ASTEROID
THIS SIZE.

THAT'S
FASCINATING.
REALLY, THIS IS
EXACTLY WHY I
JOINED THE
DECEPTICONS...

...NO, WAIT,
I SIGNED ON
TO KILL
AUTOBOTS—

—NOT
CLIMB
AROUND
ROCKS IN
SPACE.

I KNOW,
BLITZWING.
THIS ISN'T
MY THING,
EITHER...

...BUT
I'M GETTING
SOME WEIRD
READINGS ON
THE SCANNER.

TOO MUCH
AIR, TOO
MANY ALPHA
PARTICLES...

TOO MUCH
SCIENCE.

AT LEAST
ACT LIKE YOU'RE
A SEEKER
THUNDERCRACKER.

THERE'S
NOTHING
TO FIND.

IF
METROPLEX
WAS EVER
HERE, HE'S
LONG GONE.

IT WAS THE
TWO-HUNDRED-AND-
THIRTY-EIGHTH DAY...

...AND WE HAD *NOTHING*
TO SHOW FOR OUR *HUNT*.

NOTHING BUT A *BROKEN*
DATAPAD, A WEIRD CHUNK OF
METAL, A LACK OF *RESPECT*
FROM MY *COLLEAGUES*...

...AND A *DESTROYED*
OUTPOST OF SOME
MISERABLE CIVILIZATION
WE NEVER BOTHERED TO
LEARN THE *NAME* OF.

WE *ANNIHILATED* IT ON THE
WAY IN BECAUSE IT STOOD
BETWEEN *US* AND *OUR GOAL*.

JUST A COSMIC WASTE OF
RESOURCES, DOOMED BY
UNFORTUNATE GEOGRAPHY.

IT DOESN'T *MATTER*—
THE *MISSION* MATTERS.

ONLY THE *HUNT*
MATTERS.

THE HUNTING PARTY

WE HUNT
A TITAN...

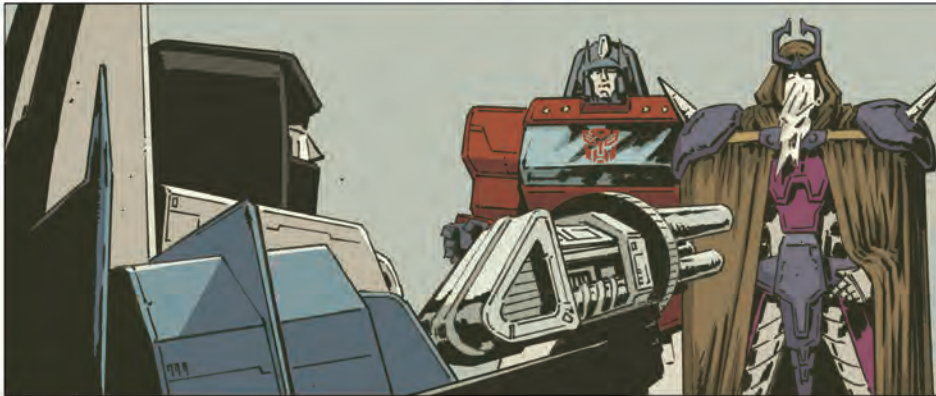
...WE HUNT THE *FIRST* AND
GREATEST OF THEM ALL.






THEY WERE AN ANCIENT SPECIES
OF CYBERTRONIAN—NO MORE
THAN A LEGEND, REALLY...

...BUT I WAS *THERE*,
YEARS AGO, AT THE
DAWN OF THE WAR
BETWEEN *AUTOBOTS*
AND *DECEPTICONS*...



...WHEN WE TRIED
TO CAPTURE THE
AUTOBOT SOLDIER
ORION PAX AND
THE PHILOSOPHER
ALPHA TRION.

MY LEADER,
MEGATRON, HAD
LONG HELD THAT
THE *TITANS* WERE
REAL—AND
TRION OFFERED
CONFIRMATION.



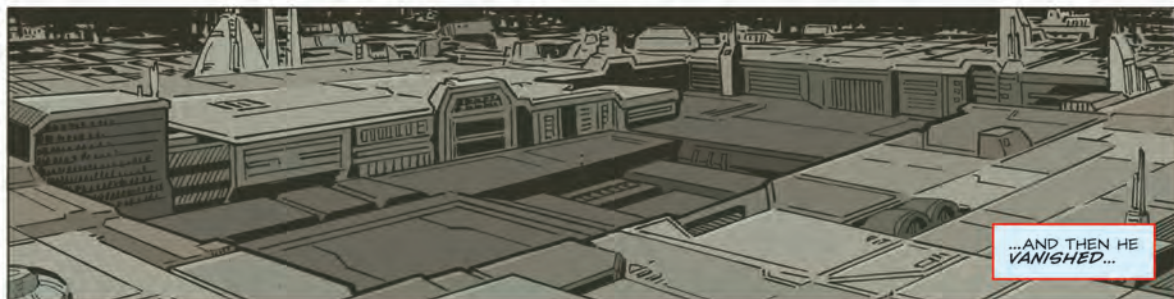
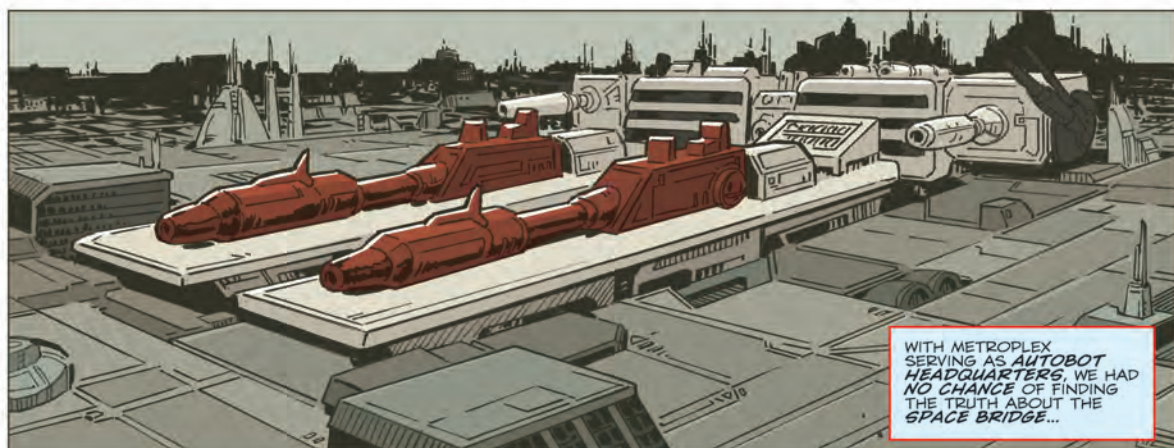
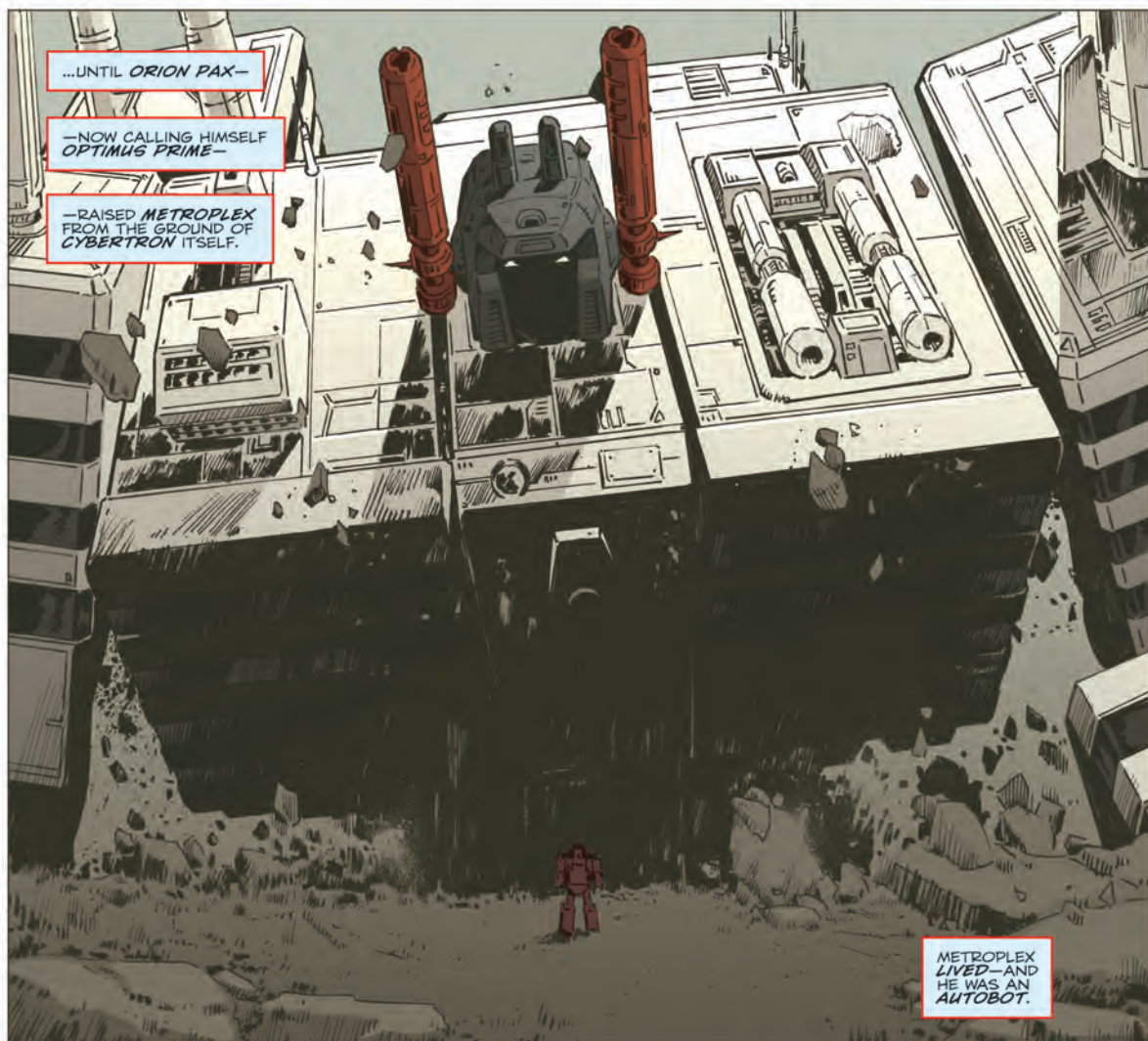
IT WAS *HARD* TO BELIEVE. THEY
WERE SAID TO SERVE *PRIMUS*
AND HIS *DISCIPLES*...

...CARRYING THEM ACROSS THE
GALAXY ON *SPACE BRIDGES*—
TRAVELING *INSTANTLY* ACROSS
ANY *DISTANCE* THANKS TO A
TECHNOLOGY LOST TO THE *AGES*...

...IF IT WAS
EVER REAL.



THE *TITANS* ALL
VANISHED, *LONG*
AGO. WE ASSUMED
THEY'D GONE TO
THE *STARS*...





...AND I WOUND UP **HERE**—

—SEARCHING THE **GALAXY**, BECAUSE I **HAPPENED** TO BE THERE WHEN ALPHA TRION HAPPENED TO SAY SOMETHING.



NOT TO SOUND **BITTER**, BUT WHEN NOBODY BUT ME SAW THAT PIECE OF **METAL** ON THE GROUND NEXT TO MY DATAPAD...

...WELL, I MADE **SURE** NOBODY SAW ME **PICK** IT UP. IT WAS CYBERTRONIAN—I COULD TELL **THAT**.

THE **REST** WAS JUST A **HUNCH** AND A **HOPE**. WHAT IF THIS WAS SOMETHING **METROPLEX** LEFT BEHIND...



...AND WHAT IF IT GAVE US SOME KIND OF A **TRAIL** TO FOLLOW...?

COMPUTER—RUN A FULL-SPECTRUM **RESONANCE** SCAN.

DETECTED.

UM. ANYTHING **UNUSUAL**?



OBJECT IS EXTREMELY OLD.

NO HELP.

QUANTUM-TUNNELING RADIATION IS EMANATING AT A RARE WAVELENGTH.

THERE—**THAT**. SEARCH THIS SECTOR FOR **SIMILAR RADIATION**.



DETECTED.

A **SMALL PLANETOID**, LIKE THE ONE WE'RE ORBITING:

LITTLE TO NO LIFE AND AN **UNUSUALLY DENSE** ATMOSPHERE, GIVEN ITS **GRAVITATIONAL SIGNATURE**.



ONLY A FEW **QUANTUM** JUMPS AWAY...

THUNDERCRACKER. WHERE ARE YOU?

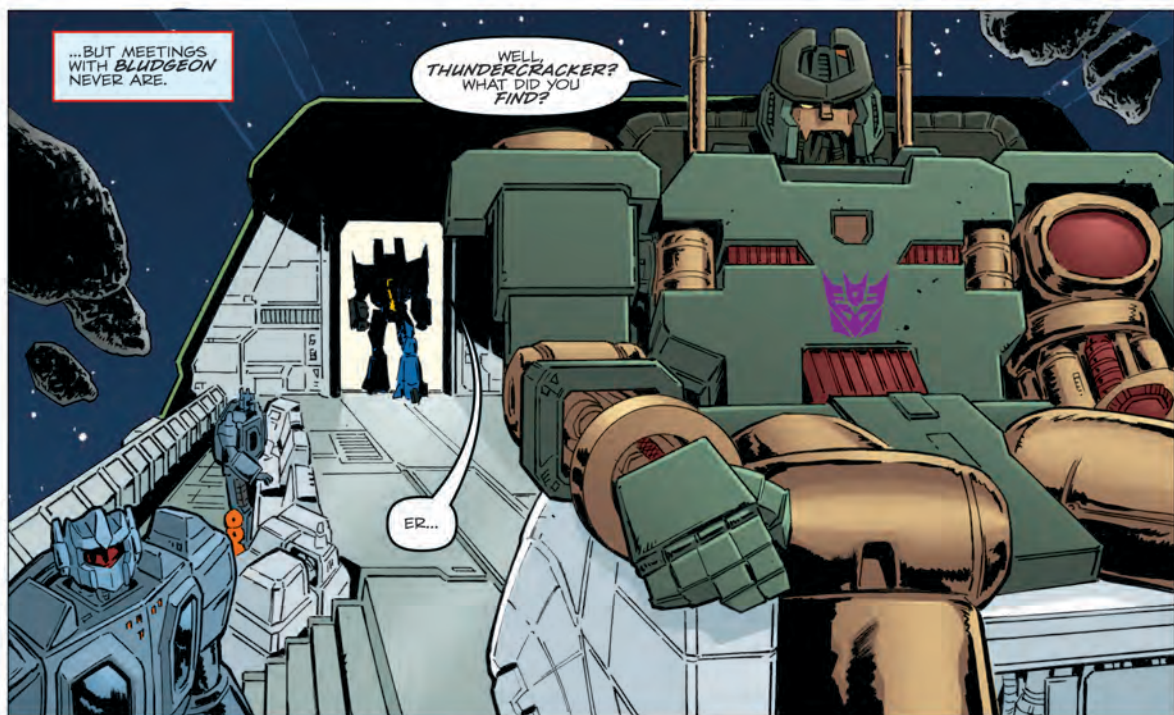


AH—JUST CONFIRMING SOME **DATA**, SIR.

REPORT TO THE **BRIDGE** IMMEDIATELY. I DO NOT ENJOY **WAITING**.

ON MY WAY.

THIS WON'T BE **PLEASANT**...



...BUT MEETINGS
WITH **BLUDGEON**
NEVER ARE.

WELL,
THUNDERCRACKER?
WHAT DID YOU
FIND?

ER...



...WELL,
SIR, EVIDENCE
SUGGESTS
METROPLEX HAD
BEEN THERE, AN
INDETERMINATE
TIME AGO.



ANYTHING
THAT MIGHT
LEAD US
TO HIM?



N-NO, SIR.
NOTHING.

BUT I DO
HAVE A **HUNCH**—
A STAR SYSTEM
WITH **SIMILAR**
CHARACTERISTICS.

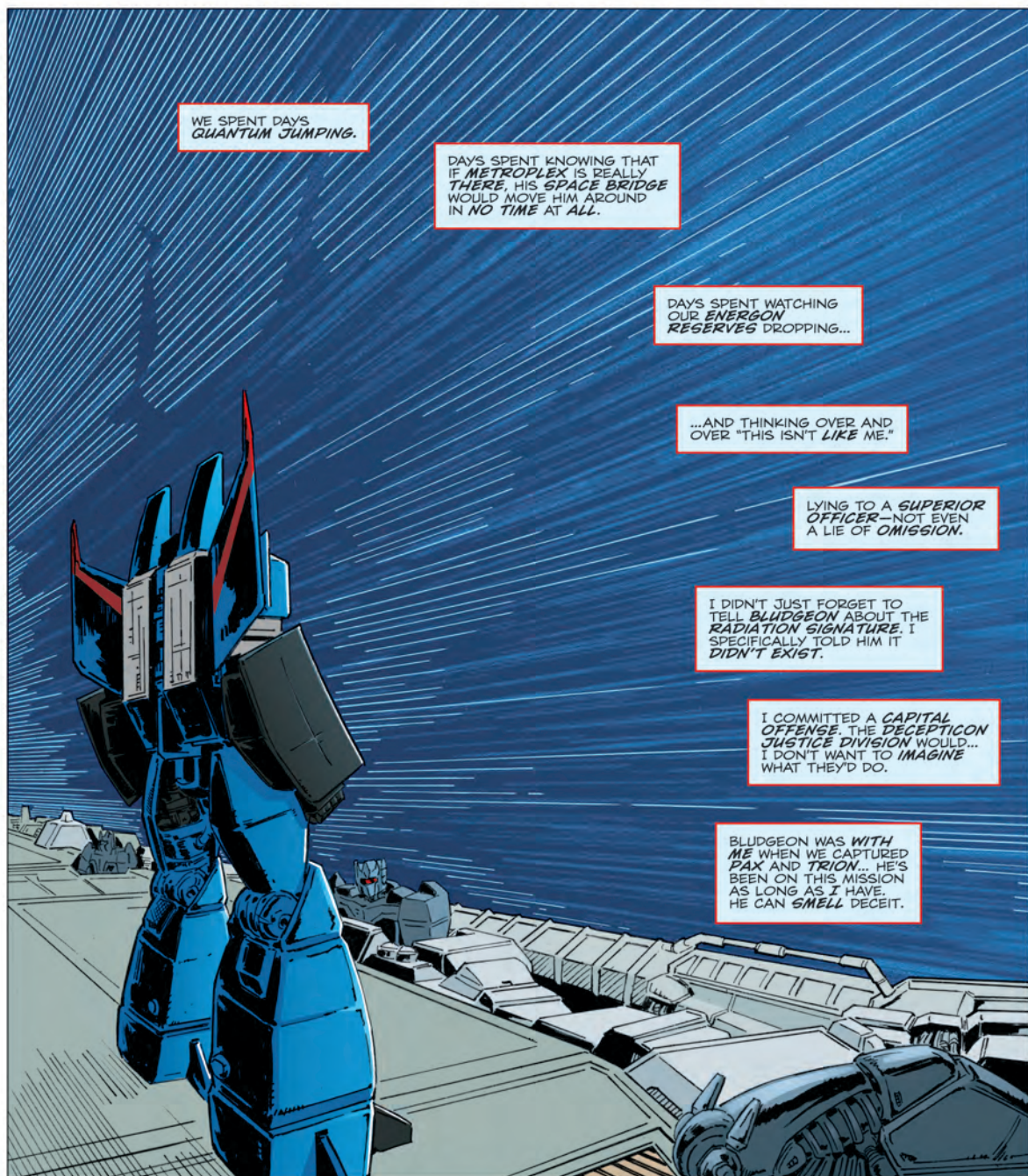


A
HUNCH.

I LIKE THAT.
NAVIGATOR—GET
COURSE TO
THUNDERCRACKER'S
HUNCH.

WHY DID I
LIE? WHY DID I
HOLD BACK
INFORMATION...?





WE SPENT DAYS
QUANTUM JUMPING.

DAYS SPENT KNOWING THAT
IF **METROPLEX** IS REALLY
THERE, HIS **SPACE BRIDGE**
WOULD MOVE HIM AROUND
IN **NO TIME AT ALL**.

DAYS SPENT WATCHING
OUR **ENERGON**
RESERVES DROPPING...

...AND THINKING OVER AND
OVER "THIS ISN'T **LIKE** ME."

LYING TO A **SUPERIOR**
OFFICER—NOT EVEN
A LIE OF **OMISSION**.

I DIDN'T JUST FORGET TO
TELL **BLUDGEON** ABOUT THE
RADIATION SIGNATURE. I
SPECIFICALLY TOLD HIM IT
DIDN'T EXIST.

I COMMITTED A **CAPITAL**
OFFENSE. THE **DECEPTICON**
JUSTICE DIVISION WOULD...
I DON'T WANT TO **IMAGINE**
WHAT THEY'D DO.

BLUDGEON WAS **WITH**
ME WHEN WE CAPTURED
PAX AND **TRION**... HE'S
BEEN ON THIS MISSION
AS LONG AS I HAVE.
HE CAN **SMELL** DECEIT.



ANYWAY... I'M A
DECEPTICON
SEEKER. THAT
IS MY **IDENTITY**.

WHAT DO I **HOPE**
TO ACCOMPLISH
BY ACTING LIKE
SOMETHING ELSE?

FINAL JUMP
SUCCESSFUL—



—WE'RE OUT OF FOLD-SPACE AND IN ORBIT.

I'M READING A RADIOACTIVE DECAY THAT CORRESPONDS WITH A MID-LEVEL PSEUDO-ENERGON...



..THIS PLANETOID CONTAINS AN UNDERGROUND RESERVOIR OF SOMETHING WE COULD CONSUME.

PROBABLY 20-25% AS EFFECTIVE AS ACTUAL ENERGON.



IF METROPLEX NEEDED TO POWER UP FOR HIS JOURNEY...

YEAH. AND THAT WOULD PROBABLY ATTRACT EXOTIC GASSES.

IF HE USED UP ANOTHER RESERVOIR OF PSEUDO-ENERGON ON THE LAST ASTEROID, THIS WOULD EXPLAIN ITS ATMOSPHERE.



I'M READING SOME BIOLOGICAL LIFE FORMS—

—IT LOOKS LIKE A PRIMITIVE CITY CONSTRUCTED DIRECTLY ON TOP OF THE PSEUDO-ENERGON RESERVOIR. PROBABLY SOME FREIGHTER GOT STRANDED ON THIS ROCK A COUPLE GENERATIONS AGO.



THEY MUST BE USING THE PSEUDO-ENERGON FOR GEOTHERMIC HEATING. WHAT'S THEIR TECHNOLOGY LEVEL?

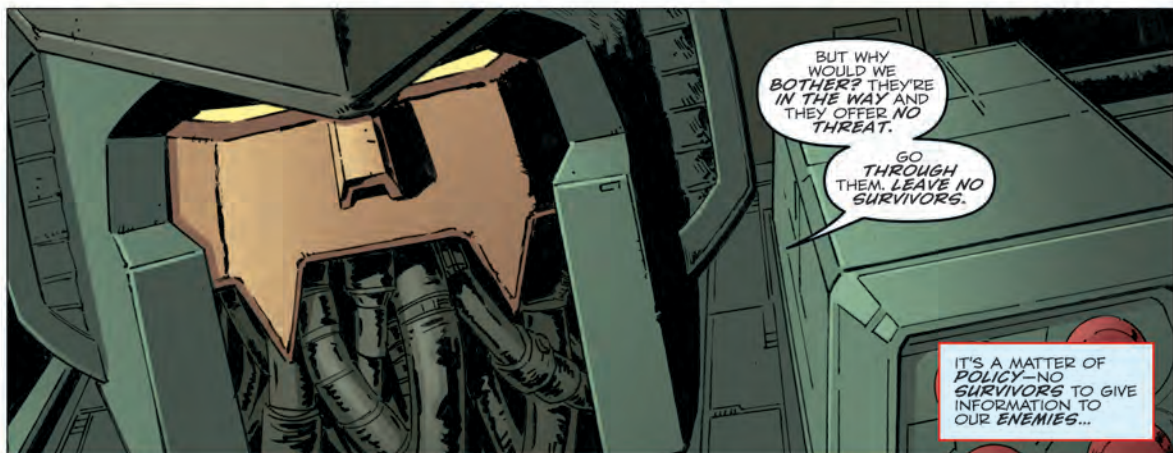
INSIGNIFICANT.

PERFECT. THUNDERCRACKER—BLAST YOUR WAY THROUGH THEM AND TAKE METROPLEX BY SURPRISE IF, INDEED, IT RESIDES THERE.



BLUDGEON—SIR—

—WE COULD EASILY FIND AN ALTERNATE ROUTE!



BUT WHY WOULD WE BOTHER? THEY'RE IN THE WAY AND THEY OFFER NO THREAT.

GO THROUGH THEM. LEAVE NO SURVIVORS.

IT'S A MATTER OF POLICY—NO SURVIVORS TO GIVE INFORMATION TO OUR ENEMIES...



...NO SURVIVORS IN CASE THE AUTOBOTS COME FOLLOWING.

THEY'RE IN ORBIT ON THE FAR SIDE OF THIS PLANETOID—



—THEY WON'T KNOW WE'RE HERE. GHOST SHIELDS ARE ENGAGED; STEALTH PROBES LAUNCHED.

THEY TELLING US ANYTHING, JETFIRE?



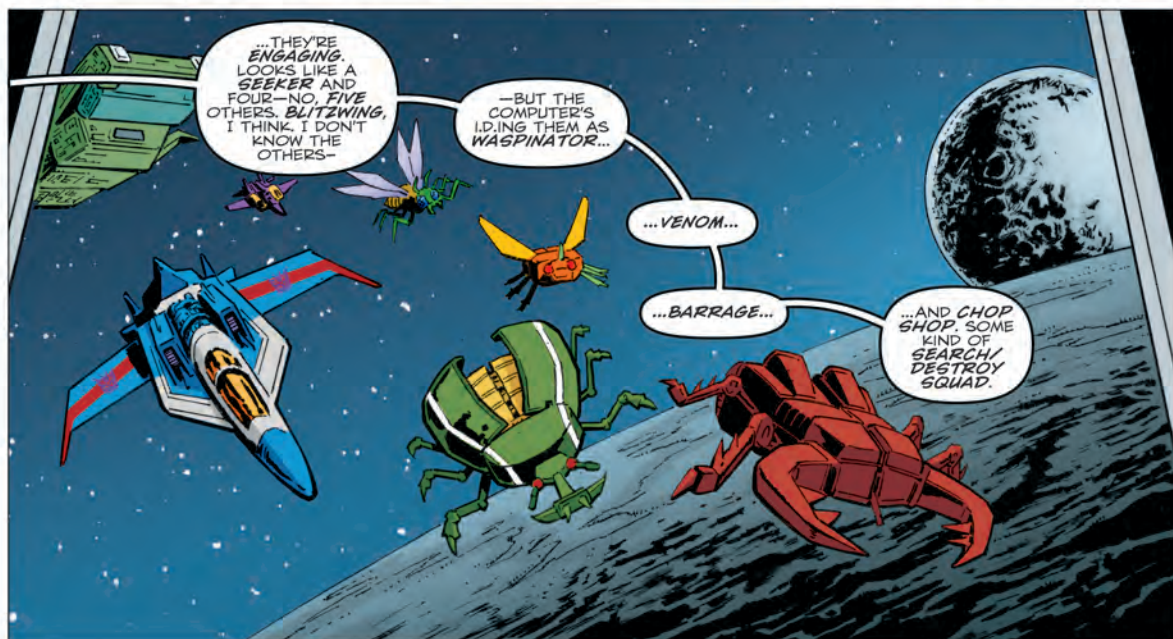
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S A CITY DOWN THERE—ROUGHLY TEN THOUSAND INHABITANTS...

...AND THE DECEPTICON SHIP IS IN GEOSTATIONARY ORBIT ABOVE IT.



WELL, THAT SOUNDS BAD.

IT'S ABOUT TO SOUND WORSE...



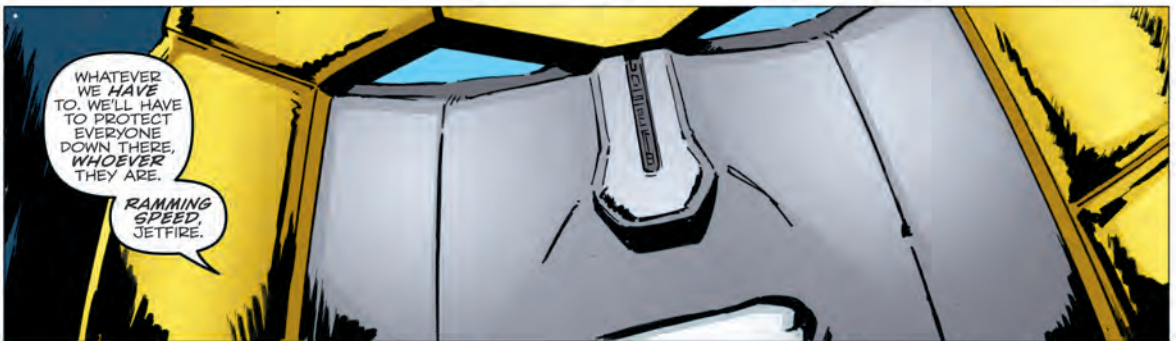
...THEY'RE ENGAGING. LOOKS LIKE A SEEKER AND FOUR—NO, FIVE OTHERS. BLITZWING, I THINK, I DON'T KNOW THE OTHERS—

—BUT THE COMPUTER'S I.D.ING THEM AS WASPINATOR...

...VENOM...

...BARRAGE...

...AND CHOP SHOP. SOME KIND OF SEARCH/DESTROY SQUAD.



I DO THE ONLY THING I *CAN*—I MOVE IN *FIRST*, AND I MOVE IN *LOUD*.

I GIVE THEM A *WARNING*—GIVE THESE WORTHLESS CREATURES A *CHANCE* TO FIND *SHELTER*—TO AVOID MY COMPANIONS' *GUNS*.

I DO THE ONLY THING I *CAN*—I MOVE IN *FIRST*, AND I MOVE IN *LOUD*.

I GIVE THEM A *WARNING*—GIVE THESE WORTHLESS CREATURES A *CHANCE* TO FIND *SHELTER*—TO AVOID MY COMPANIONS' *GUNS*.

[illegible]

NICE MOVE, THUNDERCRACKER—
LURING THESE *THINGS* OUT INTO
THE OPEN!

YOU'RE MORE
SADISTIC THAN
I GAVE YOU
CREDIT FOR!



NICE MOVE, THUNDERCRACKER—
LURING THESE *THINGS* OUT INTO
THE OPEN!

YOU'RE MORE
SADISTIC THAN
I GAVE YOU
CREDIT FOR!



YOU'RE A REAL DECEPTICON AFTER ALL!

LET BLITZWING AND THE OTHERS DO WHAT THEY WILL.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

ONLY THE MISSION...

YOU'RE A REAL DECEPTICON AFTER ALL!

LET BLITZWING AND THE OTHERS DO WHAT THEY WILL.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

ONLY THE MISSION...

YOU'RE A REAL DECEPTICON AFTER ALL!

LET BLITZWING AND THE OTHERS DO WHAT THEY WILL.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

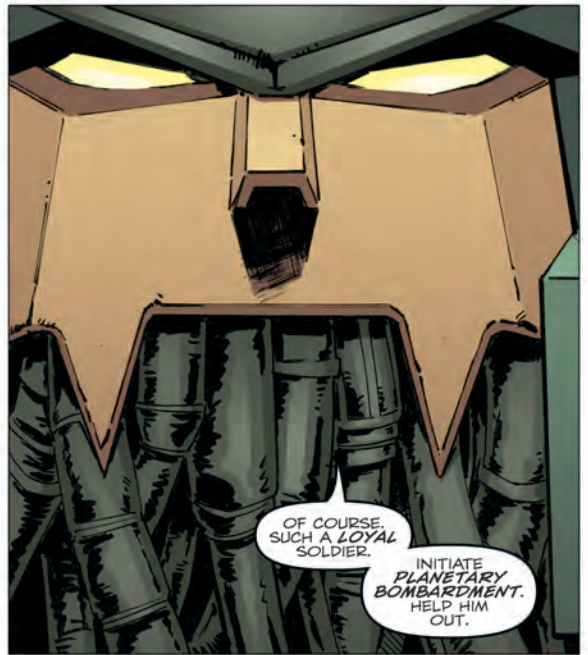
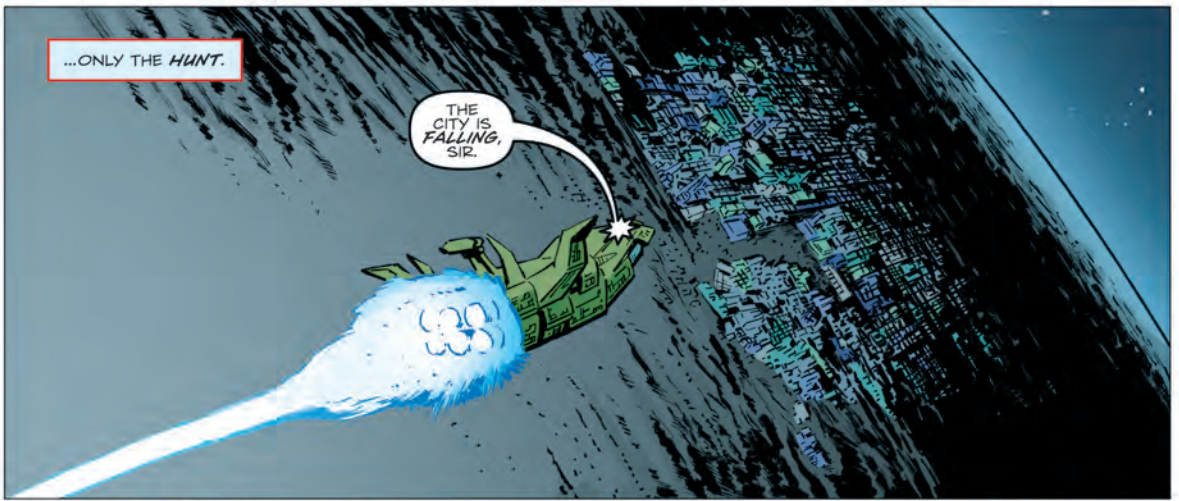
ONLY THE MISSION...

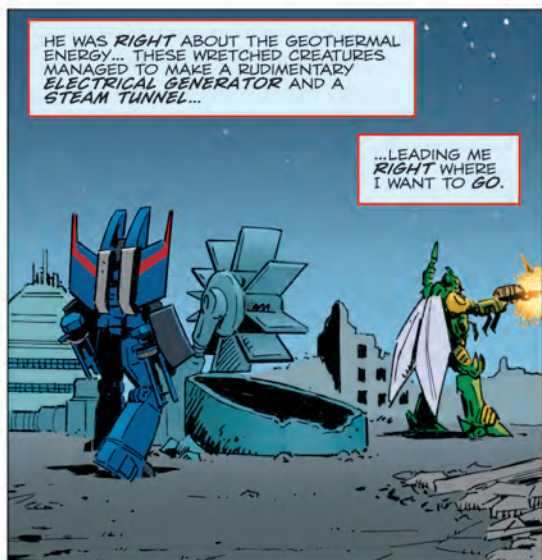
YOU'RE A REAL DECEPTICON AFTER ALL!

LET BLITZWING AND THE OTHERS DO WHAT THEY WILL.

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

ONLY THE MISSION...





HE WAS *RIGHT* ABOUT THE GEOTHERMAL ENERGY... THESE WRETCHED CREATURES MANAGED TO MAKE A RUDIMENTARY ELECTRICAL GENERATOR AND A STEAM TUNNEL...

...LEADING ME *RIGHT* WHERE I WANT TO GO.



YOU—
WASPINATOR!

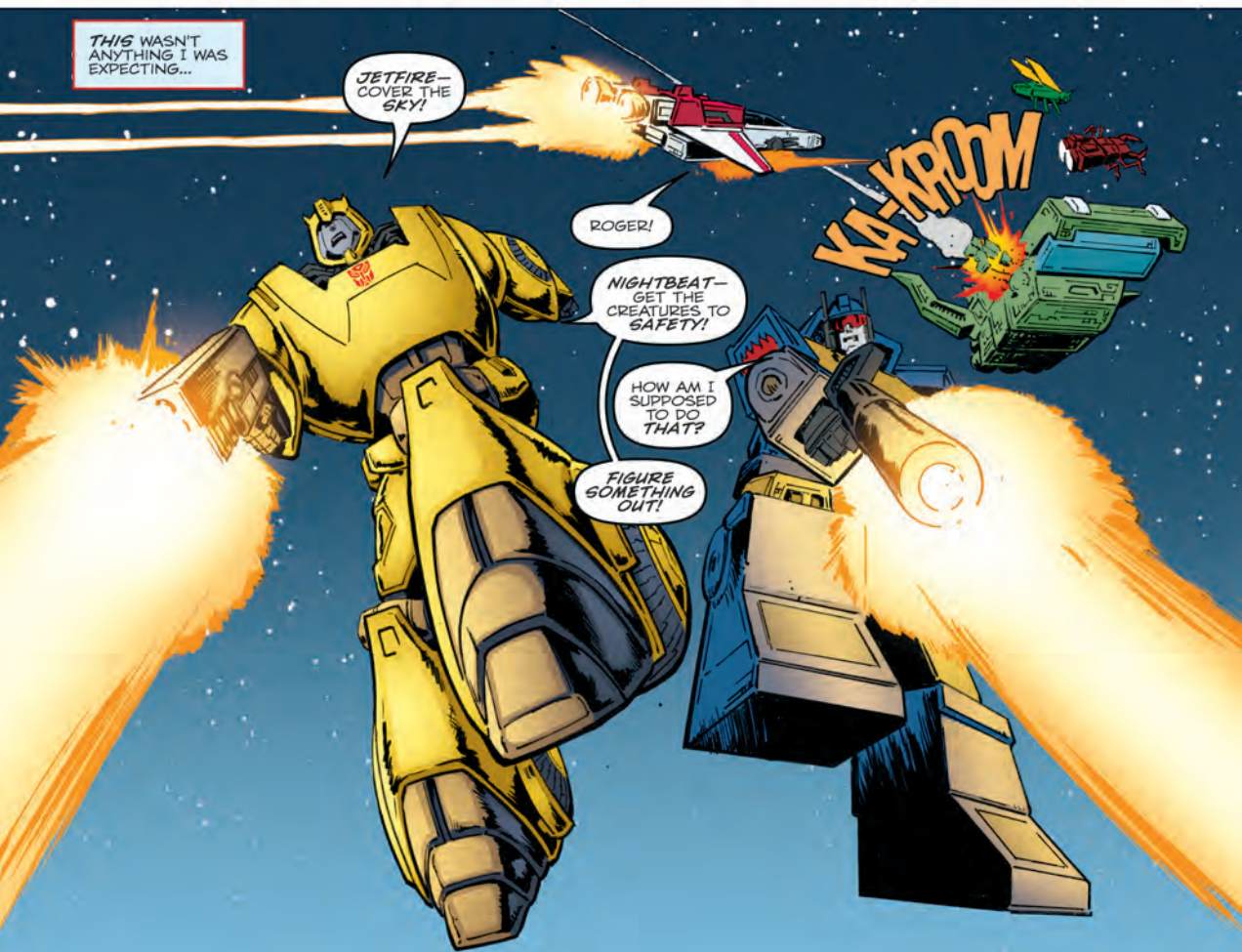
FOLLOW
ME IN—
I'LL NEED
BACKUP.

PRIMUS KNOWS
WHAT I'M SUPPOSED
TO DO IF I ACTUALLY
FIND METROPLEX.
HOPEFULLY HE
WON'T NOTICE ME...



...I'LL BE ABLE
TO GET THE
DATA BEFORE—

WASPINATOR!



THIS WASN'T
ANYTHING I WAS
EXPECTING...

JETFIRE—
COVER THE
SKY!

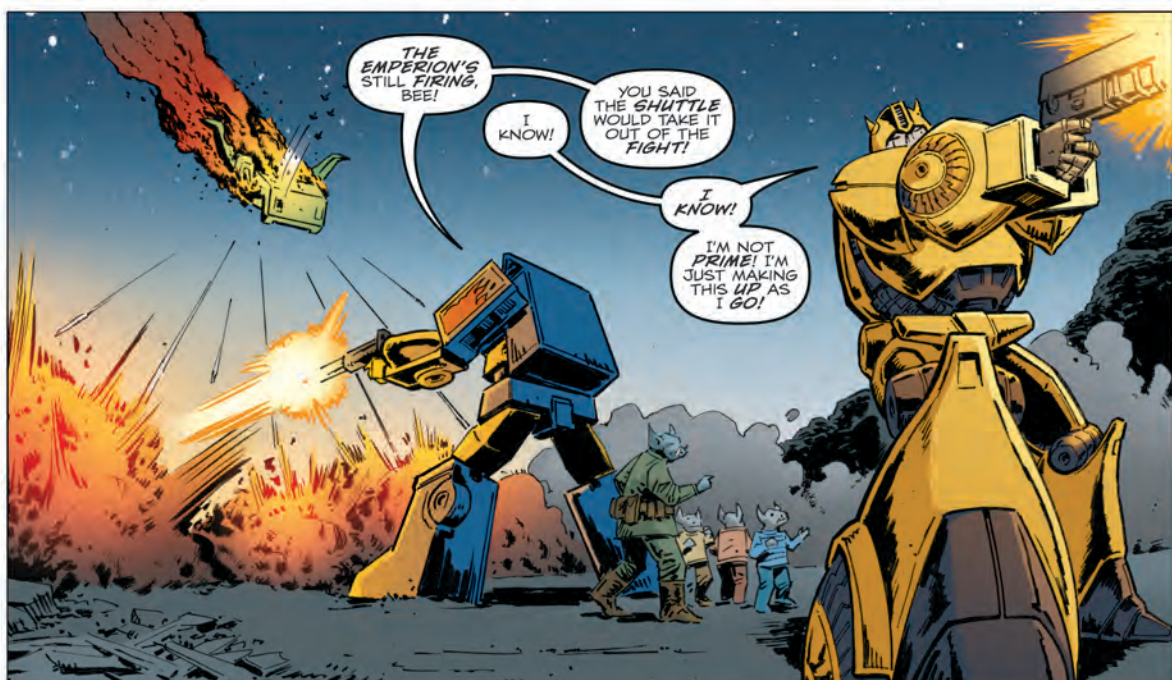
ROGER!

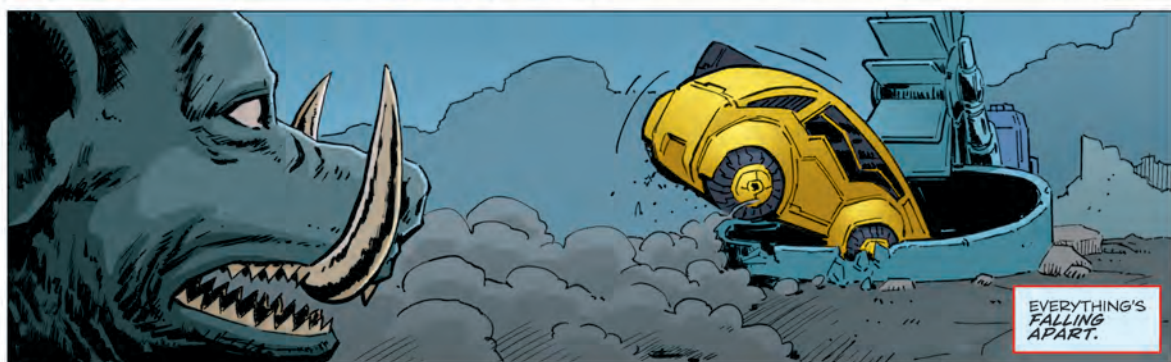
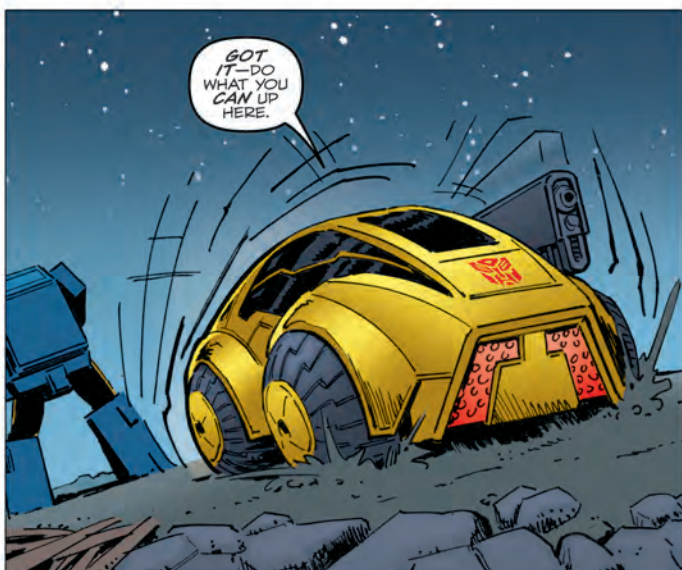
NIGHTBEAT—
GET THE
CREATURES TO
SAFETY!

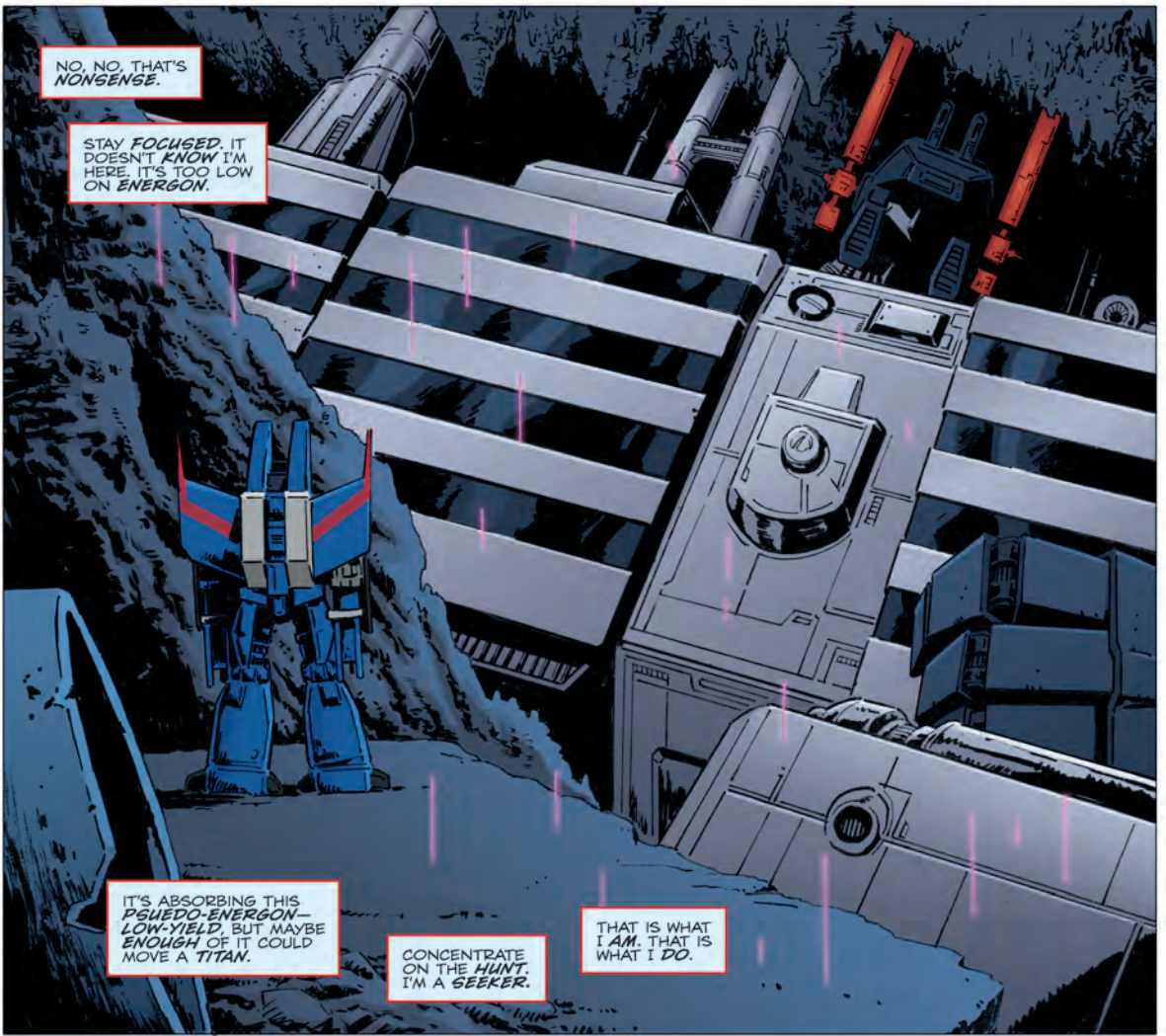
HOW AM I
SUPPOSED
TO DO
THAT?

FIGURE
SOMETHING
OUT!

KA-KROOM







NO, NO, THAT'S
NONSENSE.

STAY *FOCUSED*. IT
DOESN'T *KNOW* I'M
HERE. IT'S TOO LOW
ON *ENERGON*.

IT'S ABSORBING THIS
PSUEDO-ENERGON—
LOW-YIELD, BUT MAYBE
ENOUGH OF IT COULD
MOVE A *TITAN*.

CONCENTRATE
ON THE *HUNT*.
I'M A *SEEKER*.

THAT IS WHAT
I *AM*. THAT IS
WHAT I *DO*.



FREEZE
THUNDERCRACKER!
WHAT DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE—
—OH, BOY—
METROPLEX—?

NO...



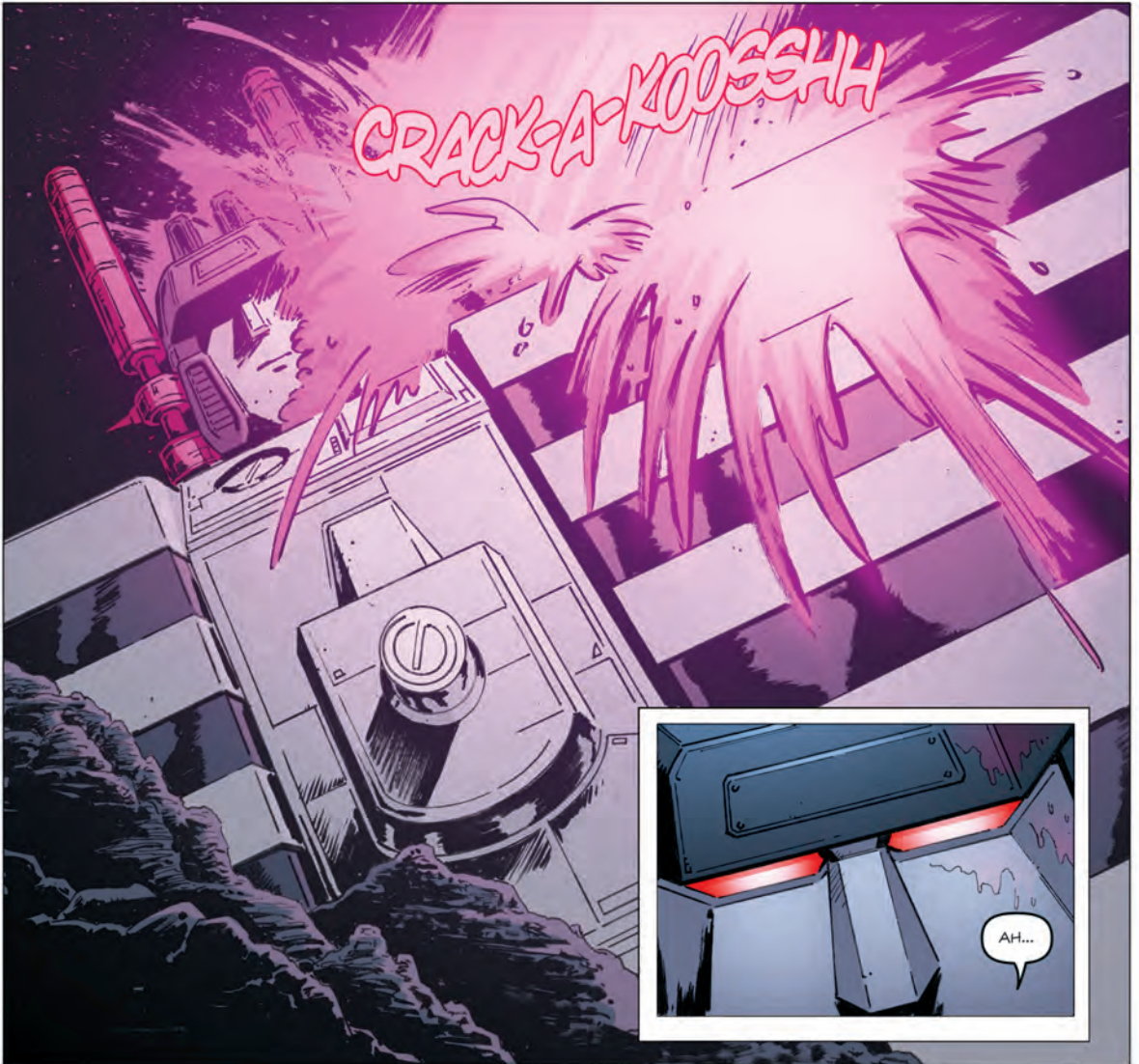
...THE
TITAN IS
MINE!

CRACKA
CRACKA
CRACKA

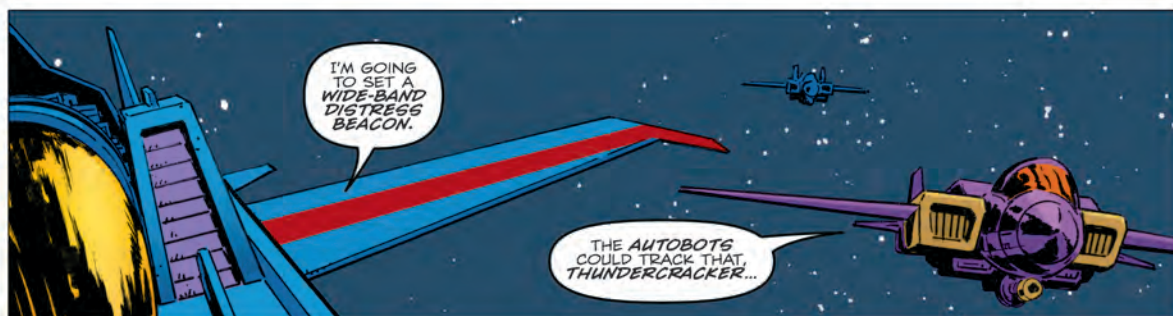


ERG.
WHY CAN'T
ANYTHING
BE EASY?











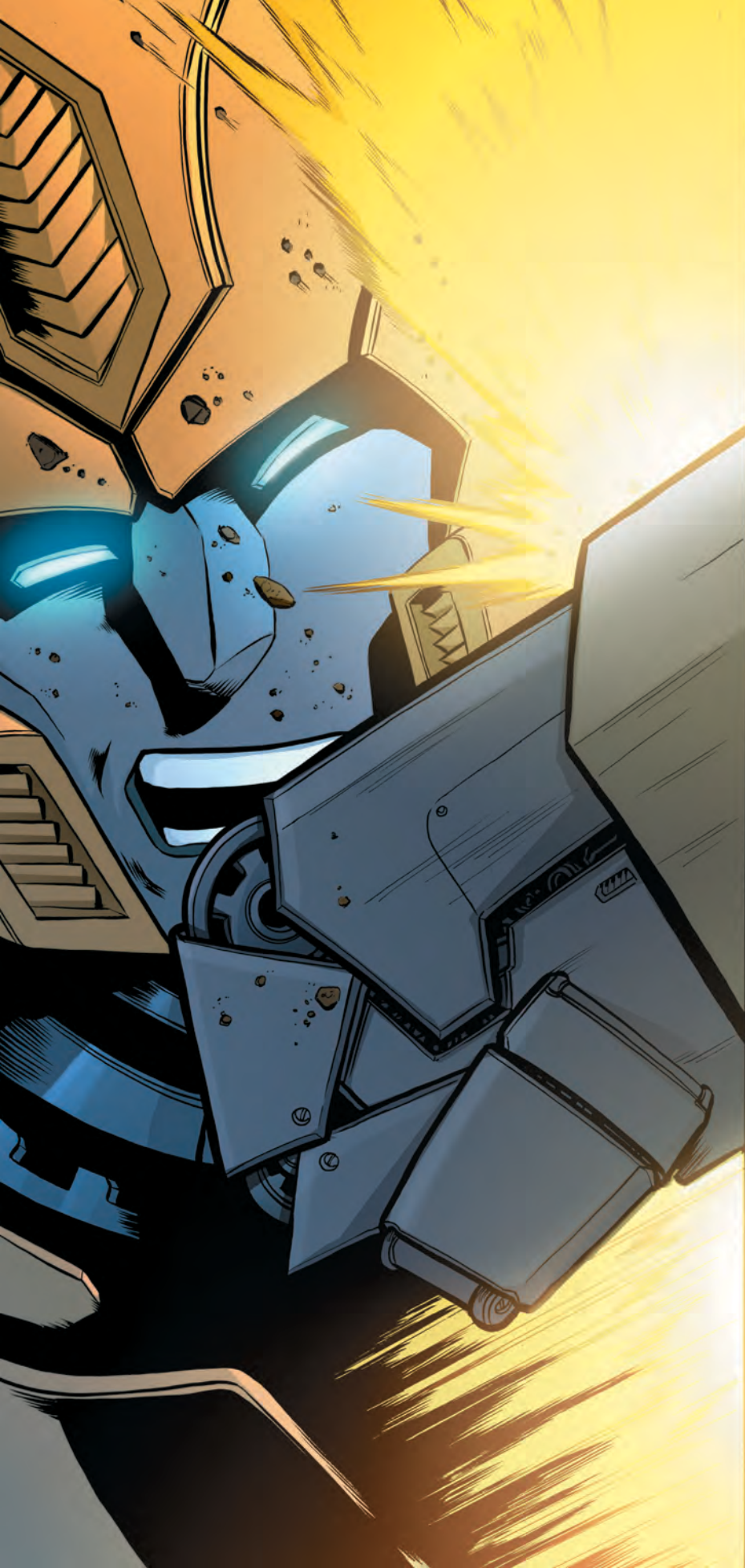
SPOTLIGHT: THUNDERCRACKER COVER B

by **LIVIO RAMONELLI**



SPOTLIGHT: BUMBLEBEE COVER A

by **DAVID DAZA** Colors by **ESTHER SANZ**



MAYBE THIS ISN'T THE BEST WAY TO *START* MY STORY.

(IT DEFINITELY DOESN'T PAINT *ME* IN THE MOST *FLATTERING* LIGHT).

BUT THIS IS WHERE THINGS GET *EXCITING*. SEE, RIGHT NOW I'M *OUTMATCHED*, *OUTGUNNED*, AND I'M PRETTY MUCH *OUT OF OPTIONS*.

HOW DID I *GET* HERE?

I GUESS THE STORY *REALLY* STARTS A FEW *MILLION* YEARS AGO—*AUTOBOTS* VERSUS *DECEPTICONS*, ALL THAT STUFF.

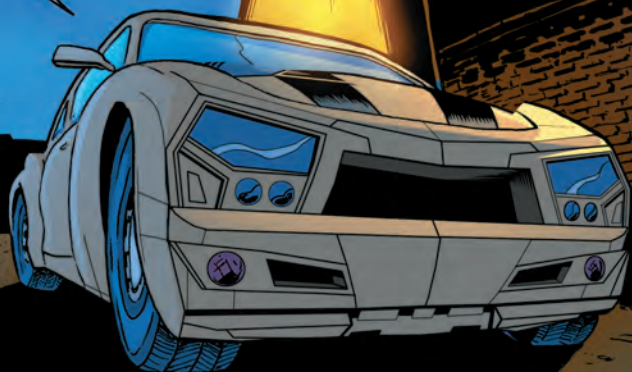
OUR *WAR* PRETTY MUCH *ENDED* A COUPLE YEARS AGO, AND SINCE THEN, WE'VE MADE OUR HOME ON *EARTH*, UNTIL—A COUPLE DAYS AGO—WE GOT WORD THAT THERE WAS A *CRISIS* ON OUR HOMEWORLD, *CYBERTRON*.

OPTIMUS PRIME LED MOST OF THE *AUTOBOTS* BACK. HE LEFT *ME* HERE, IN CHARGE OF A FEW *BOTS*. WE HAD SOME LOOSE ENDS TO TAKE CARE OF—

—ONE OF WHICH BRINGS US TO THIS *DECEPTICON* FIST SMASHING INTO MY FACE...

...BUT I'M GETTING AHEAD
OF MYSELF. *THAT* STORY
REALLY GOT STARTED
YESTERDAY.

BUMBLEBEE
TO ALL POINTS.
STATUS.



HOT SPOT
HERE. I DON'T
KNOW *WHY* I'M
HERE, BUT I'M
HERE, BEE.

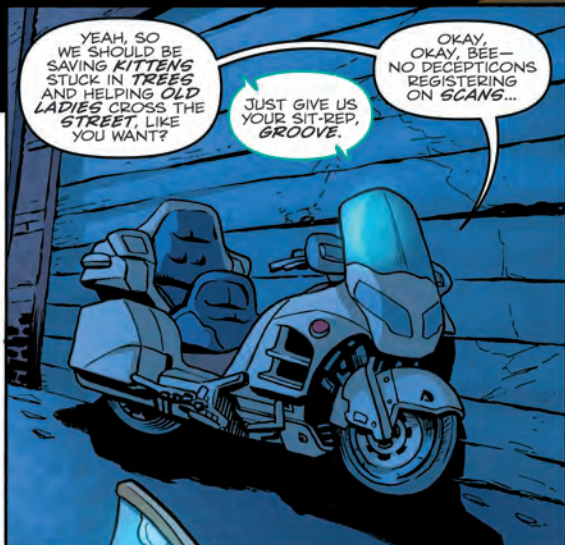
I MEAN, THE
WAR'S OVER—WE
SHOULDN'T BE
LOOKING FOR
MORE FIGHTS.



YEAH, SO
WE SHOULD BE
SAVING KITTENS
STUCK IN TREES
AND HELPING OLD
LADIES CROSS THE
STREET, LIKE
YOU WANT?

JUST GIVE US
YOUR SIT-REP,
BROOVE.

OKAY,
BEE—
NO DECEPTICONS
REGISTERING
ON SCANS...



...BUT THAT
DOESN'T
MEAN THE
BUILDING ISN'T
SHIELDED.

NO HUMANS
ARE AROUND, SO I
GUESS THERE'S *ONE*
WAY TO FIND OUT IF
ANY OF THE MISSING
DECEPTICONS ARE
IN THERE...



WHEN *PRIME* WENT BACK TO *CYBERTRON*, HE TOOK THE DECEPTICONS' LEADER—*MEGATRON*—BACK AS HIS PRISONER.

BUT EVEN WITH THEIR LEADER IN CUSTODY, THERE'S STILL A *SMALL ARMY* OF DECEPTICONS SOMEWHERE ON EARTH.

SOMEWHERE...

...BUT NOT ANYWHERE I WAS LOOKING.

BUMMER.

SORRY, BEE, LOOKS LIKE WE STRUCK OUT.

AGAIN.

AND *ME*... I WAS CONSTANTLY ASKING MYSELF THE SAME THING, OVER AND OVER:

WHAT WOULD *PRIME* DO?

The
Question



NOW—

—I MEAN, *RIGHT NOW*, WHILE I'M GETTING MY *PRIDE* HANDED TO ME ONE *FIST* AT A TIME...

...I'M ACTUALLY ASKING MYSELF, "HOW DO I GET OUT OF THIS?"

MAYBE THAT ISN'T RIGHT FOR A *LEADER* TO ASK. BUT, YOU KNOW—I DON'T *FEEL* LIKE MUCH OF A LEADER. IT'S SO EASY FOR PRIME—EVERYBODY LISTENS TO HIM, AND HE ALWAYS KNOWS WHAT TO *DO*.

ME? I HAVE A *LOT* TO *LEARN*. I KNOW THAT. UNFORTUNATELY, EVERYBODY *ELSE* KNOWS IT, TOO.

I MEAN, LOOK AT THESE DECEPTCONS... THEY WERE VERY *CAREFULLY*, VERY *DELIBERATELY* STAYING *ONE STEP* AHEAD OF ME.

THEY WERE DOING THAT THING THAT MAKES A GROUP OF... OF *GUYS*—

—INTO AN *ARMY*.

THEY WERE *ACTING* AS *ONE*. UNFORTUNATELY...

...I WASN'T ABLE TO GET *MY* ARMY WORKING LIKE THAT.

WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT CONCERNS, BEE...

...THIS PLANET IS AT A **BOILING POINT**. THE PEOPLE OF EARTH **FEAR** US, AND THEY **HATE** US, AND IF ANYTHING **GOES WRONG**—

AND IT ALWAYS DOES!

STAY OUT OF THIS, STREETWISE.

IF ANYTHING GOES **WRONG** WITH OUR FEW **HUMAN FRIENDS**...

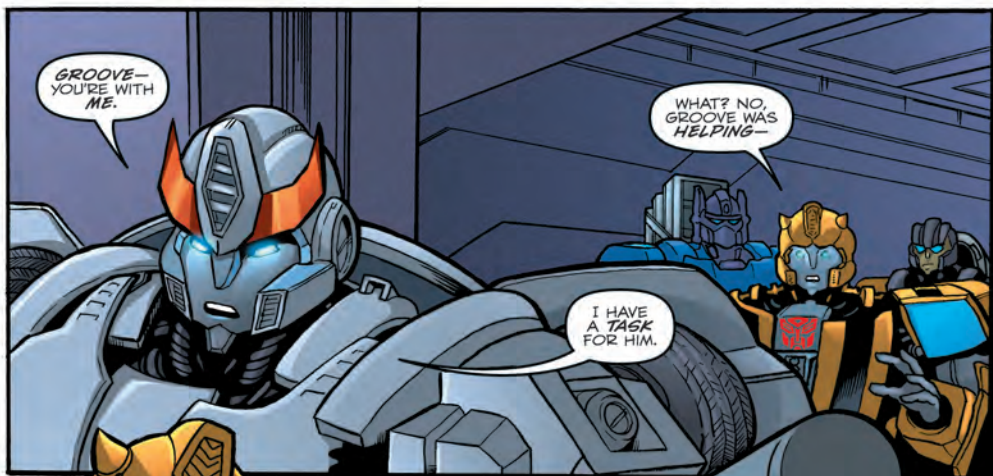
YEAH, I KNOW, **PROWL**—YOU'RE LOOKING INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR **ALLIES**...

...WELL, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO **THINK** ABOUT WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF ANYTHING **BAD** WAS GOING ON.

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE, BEE. I CAN **HANDLE** THOSE THOUGHTS.

OKAY—BUT WE'VE GOT A SITUATION WITH THE **DECEPTICONS**, TOO. YOU'RE RIGHT, THE PEOPLE OF EARTH **FEAR** US—

—BECAUSE EVER SINCE THEY **LEARNED** WE **EXIST**, ALL WE'VE DONE IS GIVE THEM **REASONS** TO.





WHAT?
COME ON.

THIS ISN'T
ABOUT BEING IN
CHARGE. IT'S
ABOUT BEING
RIGHT.



"I'M IN
CHARGE."

**OPTIMUS
PRIME** WOULD
NEVER PUT UP
WITH THAT KIND
OF PROCEDURAL
NONSENSE.



THAT 'BOT
IS **INTENSE**.

YEAH.



I WONDER WHY
HE DIDN'T WANT
ME WITH HIM,
THOUGH.

I MEAN, **YOU**.
I GET IT—YOU'RE
STILL PRETTY BADLY
DAMAGED FROM
THAT HIT YOU TOOK
A FEW WEEKS BACK.
RIGHT? GOTTA USE
THAT **CANE** OF
YOURS.

UH... I
THINK I NEED
SOME TIME
ALONE.



OH, YEAH.
SURE. I MEAN,
I KNOW YOU'LL
GET ALL REPAIRED
UP SOON! BUT IT'S,
UH, **GOOD** TO
GET SOME
ALONE-TIME,
BEE.



THAT'S WHEN IT DAWNED
ON ME. "**ALONE**."

WE KNEW WHERE EXACTLY
ONE DECEPTICON WAS...



...AND HE WASN'T
HERE WITH THIS GUY,
BEATING ME UP.

SEE, DECEPTICONS
ARE PRETTY **TOUGH**
CUSTOMERS. AND WE'D
BUILT UP SOME PRETTY
STRONG **ANIMOSITY**
BETWEEN OUR TWO SIDES,
OVER THE PAST FEW
MILLION YEARS OF
NON-STOP WAR...

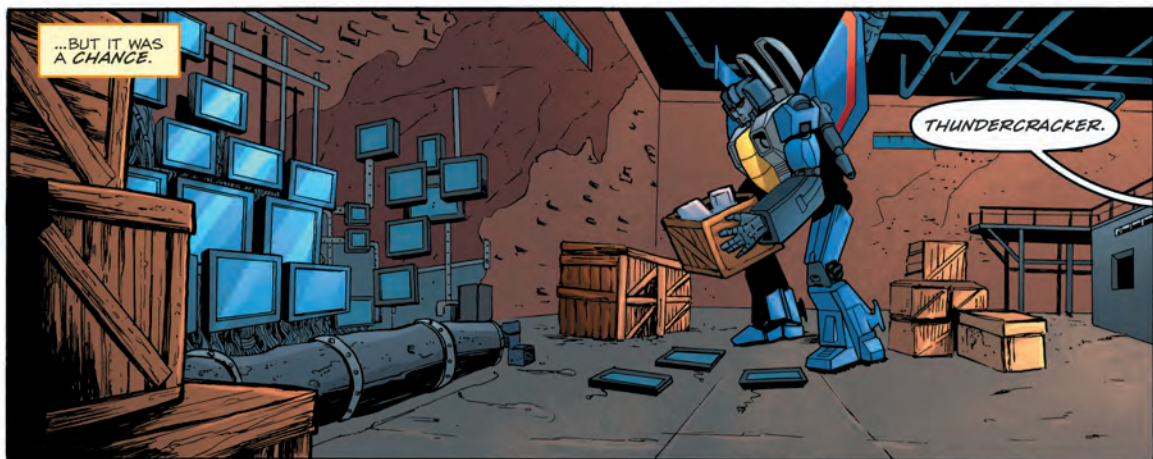
...WHICH IS WHY **THIS**
GUY ISN'T GIVING ME
MUCH OF A CHANCE TO
TALK THINGS OUT.

BUT THERE WAS **ONE**
DECEPTICON THAT I **HAVE**
TALKED TO... HE'D EVEN
HELPED US BEFORE.

HE'S BEEN **QUESTIONING**
THE DECEPTICONS'
METHODS—THEIR
CAUSE—FOR A VERY
LONG TIME.

NOT THAT HE REALLY
LIKED **US** MUCH, EITHER,
TO BE HONEST. BUT HE
AND I, WE HAVE A **PAST**.

SO IT WAS A
SLIM CHANCE...



...BUT IT WAS
A CHANCE.

THUNDERCRACKER.



THE WAY YOU
AUTOBOTS
KEEP SHOWING UP,
I SHOULD INSTALL
A REVOLVING
DOOR.

OR MAYBE
I'LL JUST
LEAVE AND NOT
TELL YOU WHERE
I'M GOING.



LIKE YOUR
FRIENDS.

THE OTHER
DECEPTICONS.

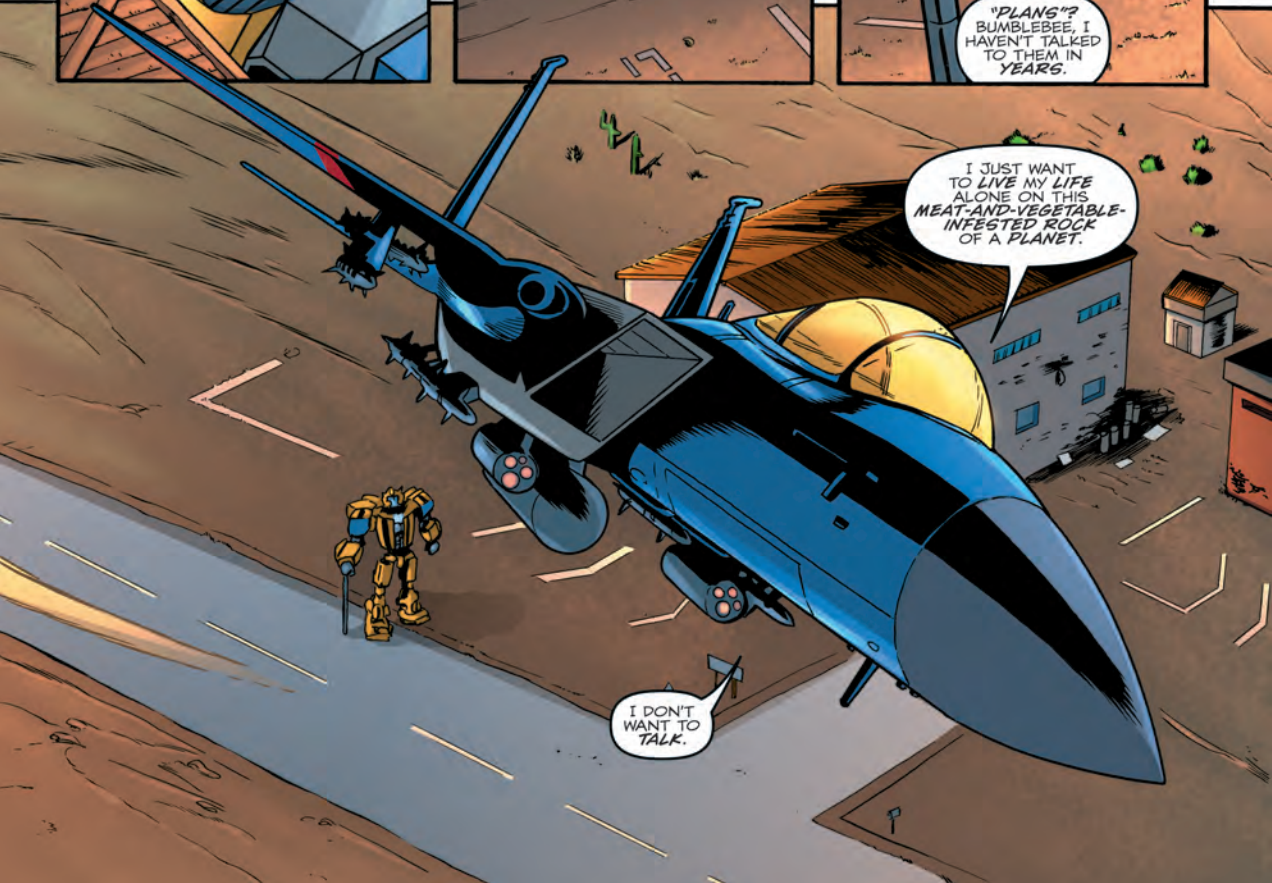
MY
FRIENDS?

THEY'RE
NOT MY
FRIENDS
ANYMORE.



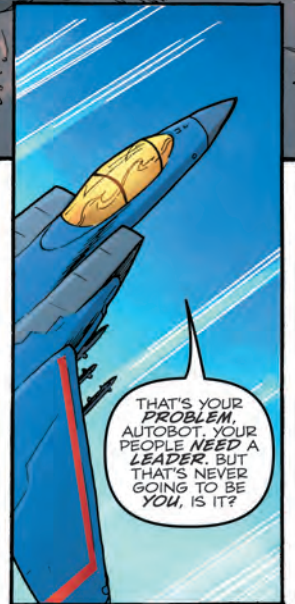
SURE, BUT
DO YOU KNOW
WHERE THEY
MIGHT BE? DID
THEY HAVE ANY
PLANS...?

"PLANS"?
BUMBLEBEE,
I HAVEN'T TALKED
TO THEM IN
YEARS.



I JUST WANT
TO LIVE MY LIFE
ALONE ON THIS
MEAT-AND-VEGETABLE-
INFESTED ROCK
OF A PLANET.

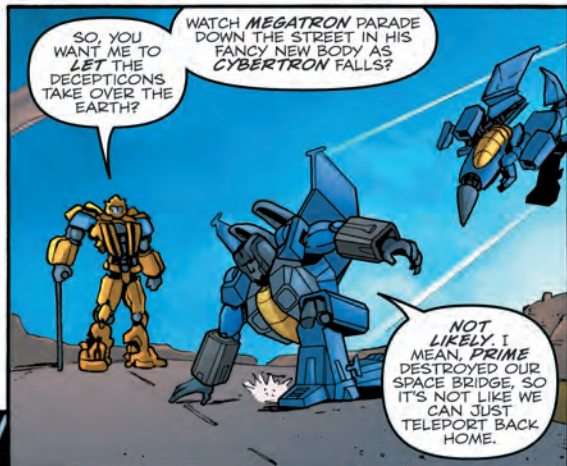
I DON'T
WANT TO
TALK.





LOOK AT ME, I'M CONTENT WITH MY NEW LIFE.

I'M NOT SUITED TO LEADING **BATTLE-CHARGES** OR BLASTING AUTOBOTS. IT'S **OKAY** NOT TO BE THE LEADER.



SO, YOU WANT ME TO LET THE DECEPTICONS TAKE OVER THE EARTH?

WATCH **MEGATRON** PARADE DOWN THE STREET IN HIS FANCY NEW BODY AS **CYBERTRON** FALLS?

NOT LIKELY. I MEAN, **PRIME** DESTROYED OUR SPACE BRIDGE, SO IT'S NOT LIKE WE CAN JUST TELEPORT BACK HOME.



EVEN IF YOU DID, ALL YOU'D FIND IS **PRIME** LEADING A TON OF **AUTOBOTS** WITH **MEGATRON** LOCKED UP IN A CELL.

HUH, I HADN'T REALLY CONSIDERED THAT.

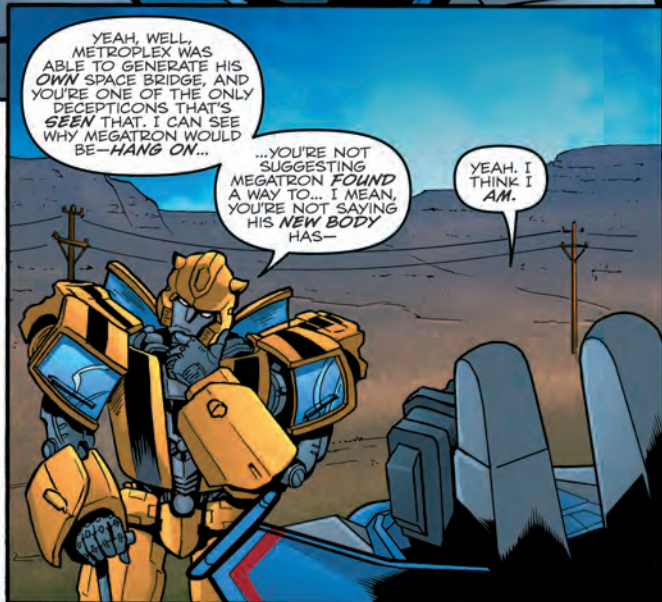
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



WELL, BUILDING THE **SPACE BRIDGE** TOOK SOME DOING, RIGHT?

WE WERE RESTORING A TECHNOLOGY THAT, FOR A VERY **LONG TIME**, WE ALL THOUGHT WAS LOST.

BUT **MEGATRON** KEPT PRESSING ME ABOUT **METROPLEX**, ABOUT THE TIME YOU AND I ENCOUNTERED HIM...



YEAH, WELL, **METROPLEX** WAS ABLE TO GENERATE HIS OWN SPACE BRIDGE, AND YOU'RE ONE OF THE ONLY DECEPTICONS THAT'S **SEEN** THAT. I CAN SEE WHY **MEGATRON** WOULD BE—**HANG ON**...

...YOU'RE NOT SUGGESTING **MEGATRON** FOUND A WAY TO... I MEAN, YOU'RE NOT SAYING HIS **NEW BODY** HAS—

YEAH, I THINK I AM.



LOOK... I KNOW I STILL HAVE RECORDS OF THE **RADIATION SIGNATURE** OF **METROPLEX**'S **SPACE BRIDGE** SOMEWHERE IN MY OLD FILES.

BUT THAT'S ALL I HAVE FOR YOU, THIS ISN'T MY FIGHT.

MAYBE NOT—



—BUT IT SURE
IS *MINE*.

STILL—I PROBABLY
SHOULDN'T BE HERE
ALONE, TRYING TO AVOID
GETTING *BLASTED* TO
SMITHEREENS.

I DIDN'T *WANT* TO
GO OUT BY MYSELF—
BUT WHEN I CALLED
HEADQUARTERS,
STREETWISE AND
PROWL WERE *OUT*
AGAIN, *GROOVE* WAS
OFF ON A MISSION
FOR *PROWL*—HECK,
EVERYBODY WAS
WORKING HIS
OPERATION.

THAT LEFT *ME*. A
LEADER WITH NO ONE
TO *COMMAND* AND,
FRANKLY, NOT MUCH
IDEA HOW TO *COMMAND*
ANYBODY, ANYWAY.

GETTING SHOT AT—*THAT*
I'M AN EXPERT ON.

ANYWAY, I SHOULD
PROBABLY GET USED
TO BEING *ALONE*...

...LIKE I SAID, WE'D
DONE A GOOD JOB AT
WEARING OUT OUR
WELCOME ON EARTH.

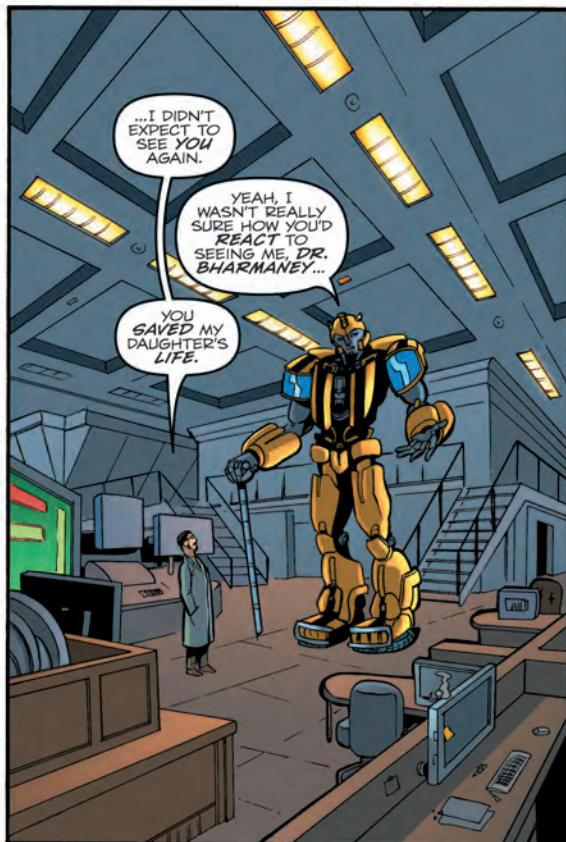
WE'D *HID*, *DECEIVED*,
AND JUST BASICALLY
DONE EVERYTHING IN
OUR POWER TO MAKE
HUMANS *SUSPICIOUS*
OF US, AND I WAS AS
GUILTY AS *ANYBODY*...



...BUT ALONG THE WAY, I'D MADE A FRIEND OR TWO.

I HAVE TO ADMIT...

DARKMATTER
LOGIC



...I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

YEAH, I WASN'T REALLY SURE HOW YOU'D REACT TO SEEING ME, DR. BHARMANEY...

YOU SAVED MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE.



ONLY AFTER I PUT HER IN DANGER.



I KNOW THAT WASN'T YOUR INTENTION, BUT YOU—YOU DOUBT YOURSELF, AND YOU SHOW THAT DOUBT TO ALL. THAT'S NOT DOING YOU ANY FAVORS WITH YOUR TROOPS, IS IT?

BUT WHAT DO I KNOW? I'M JUST A SCIENTIST.



ANYWAY, HERE'S SOMETHING. I CAN ACCESS SPECTROGRAPHS AT ALL OUR FACILITIES, AND THE RADIATION SIGNATURE YOU GAVE ME—

—IT'S VERY UNIQUE, NOT LIKE ANYTHING ON EARTH.

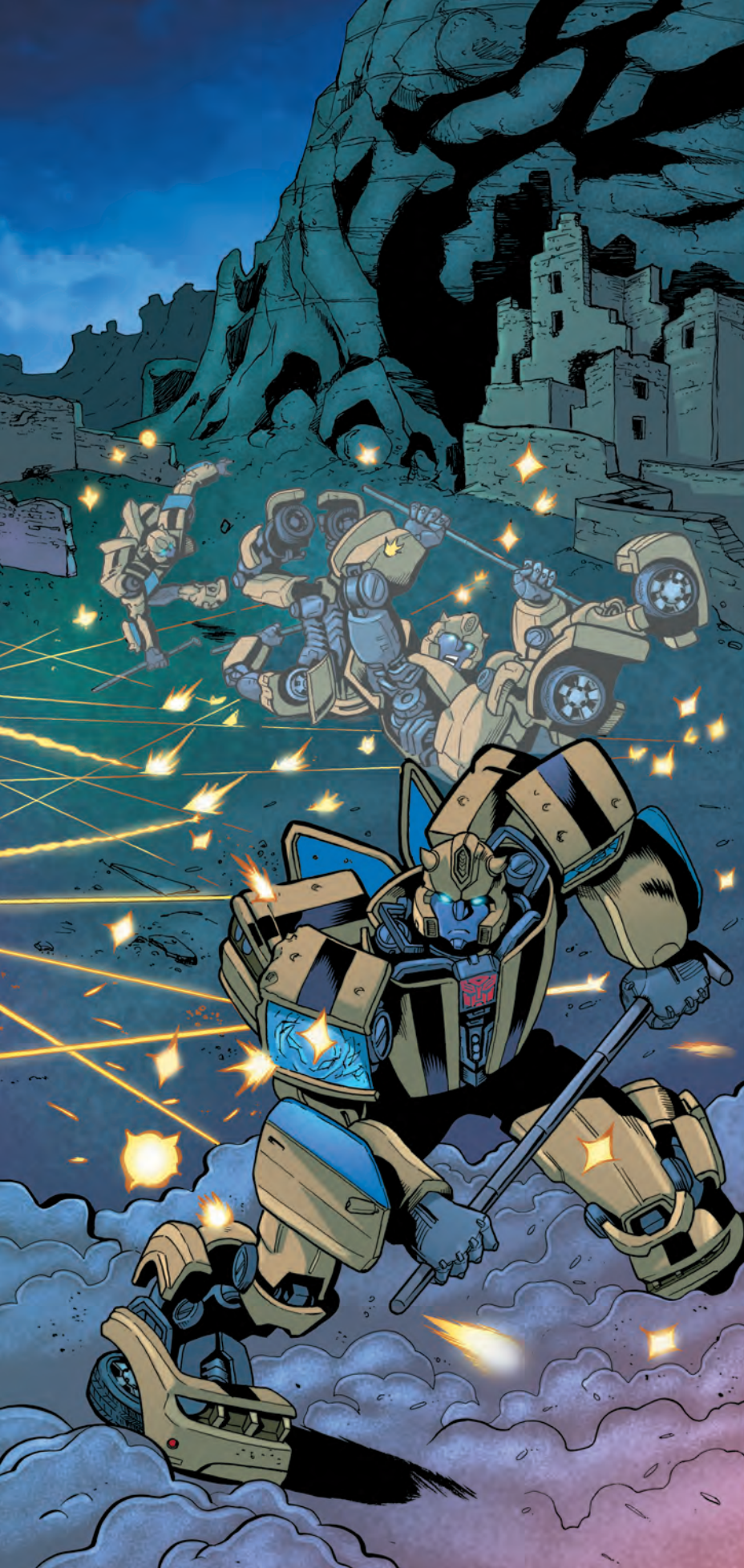
IT'S UNIQUE ON CYBERTRON, AS WELL, DR. BHARMANEY.



SANJAY, CALL ME SANJAY. AND I DON'T PRESUME TO IMAGINE THAT YOU COULD TELL ME WHAT IT DOES.

ANYWAY, I THINK I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.

DR. BHARMANEY—I MEAN, SANJAY—HAD EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR...



...A LOCATION.

AN ANCIENT NATIVE AMERICAN STRUCTURE, THAT MUST'VE PROVIDED THE RIGHT **SUB-ETHERIAL ACOUSTICS** FOR THE **SPACE BRIDGE**—THE FASTEST, MOST EFFICIENT METHOD OF **TRANSPORTATION** POSSIBLE.

OTHER KINDS OF SPACE TRAVEL REQUIRE DAYS—SOMETIMES **MONTHS**—TO TRAVEL BETWEEN **STARS**.

WITH A **SPACE BRIDGE**, THE JOURNEY IS **INSTANTANEOUS**.

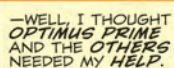
AND THE **TITANS**—LIKE **METROPLEX**, THE FIRST AND **GREATEST** OF THEM ALL—HAVE THEIR OWN SPACE BRIDGES.

LEGEND TELLS US THE TITANS USED THEIR **BRIDGES** TO CARRY **PRIMUS** AND THE **GUIDING HAND** ACROSS THE UNIVERSE.

PERSONALLY, I DON'T BELIEVE IN **OLD SUPERSTITIONS**, BUT...

...I KNOW FOR A FACT **THAT** TECHNOLOGY IS **REAL**, AND I CAN'T RISK THE POSSIBILITY THAT **MEGATRON** HAS GOTTEN A **HOLD** OF IT.

IF HE LET HIMSELF BE TAKEN **PRISONER**—KNOWING HE'S GOT AN **ARMY** READY TO RIDE HIS SPACE BRIDGE BACK TO OUR **HOMEWORLD**—



—WELL, I THOUGHT
OPTIMUS PRIME
AND THE OTHERS
NEEDED MY HELP.



BUMBLEBEE TO
HEADQUARTERS—
CAN YOU READ
ME?



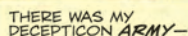
PROWL?



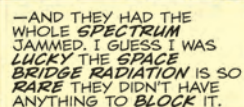
ANYBODY?



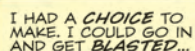
BUT THAT WOULD
BE WAY TOO EASY.



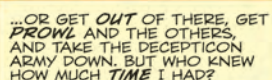
THERE WAS MY
DECEPTICON ARMY—



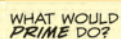
—AND THEY HAD THE
WHOLE *SPECTRUM*
JAMMED. I GUESS I WAS
LUCKY THE SPACE
BRIDGE RADIATION IS SO
RARE THEY DIDN'T HAVE
ANYTHING TO BLOCK IT.




I HAD A CHOICE TO
MAKE. I COULD GO IN
AND GET *BLASTED*...



...OR GET *OUT* OF THERE, GET
PROWL AND THE OTHERS,
AND TAKE THE DECEPTICON
ARMY DOWN. BUT WHO KNEW
HOW MUCH *TIME* I HAD?




WHAT WOULD
PRIME DO?




BUT THAT DOESN'T
MATTER, DOES IT?

I'M *NOT* OPTIMUS
PRIME, AND I
NEVER *WILL* BE.


WHAT MAKES
ME SPECIAL?




FOR ONE THING...
I USED TO BE A
SABOTEUR, BACK
IN THE WAR.



SO I FIGURED I
COULD *SNEAK* IN...



...AND *DISABLE*
THE *BRIDGE*
BEFORE IT
ACTIVATED.



OF COURSE, *LIFE*
HAS A FUNNY WAY OF
MESSING WITH YOUR
BEST DECISIONS.

MAYBE I
SHOULD'VE
KEPT ASKING
WHAT *PRIME*
WOULD DO...



AN AUTOBOT!

IT'S BUMBLEBEE!

GET HIM!

NO—
EVERYONE
INTO THE
BRIDGE!



I'LL
LEAD THE
CHARGE!

SOUNDWAVE,
SHOCKWAVE,
BLITZWING—
FLANK ME.



STUNTIGONS—
KILL THE LITTLE
YELLOW RUNT
AND FOLLOW
US IN.

YOU
GOT IT.

I OWE THE
AUTOBOTS A
LITTLE SOMETHIN',
ANYWAY.
STARSCREAM!



THIS IS PRETTY
MUCH WHERE I
STARTED MY
STORY...

...NOW, HOW WOULD
A REAL LEADER
HANDLE THIS
SITUATION?

WHAT WOULD
PRIME DO?



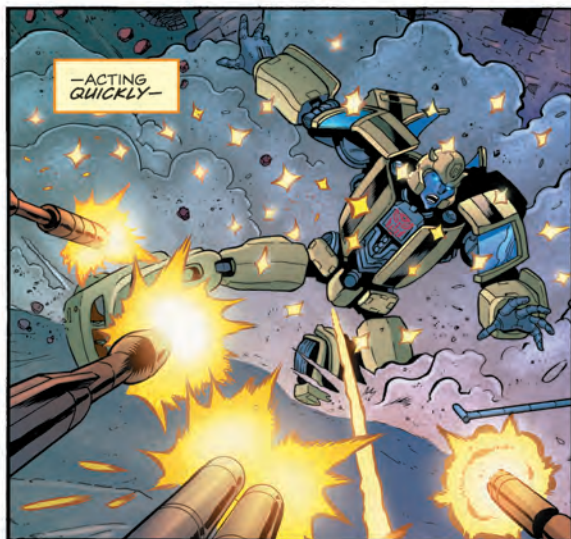
HE PROBABLY WOULDN'T
GET *PUNCHED* IN THE
FACE RIGHT OFF THE BAT.



BUT *THAT'S* NOT
WHAT'S IMPORTANT.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT
IS ACTING LIKE A
LEADER—



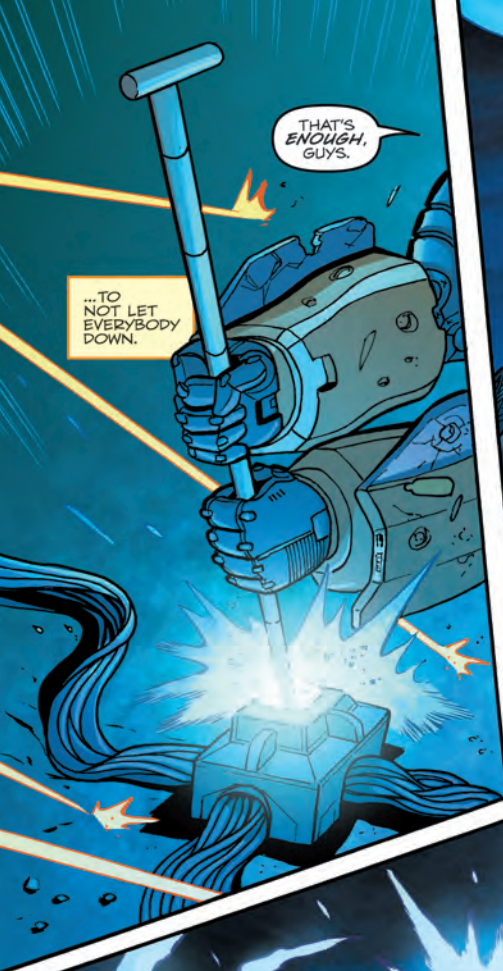
—ACTING
DECISIVELY—



—ACTING
QUICKLY—



—USING EVERYTHING
AT YOUR DISPOSAL
TO DO WHAT YOU
NEED TO DO...



THAT'S
ENOUGH,
GUYS.

...TO
NOT LET
EVERYBODY
DOWN.



DON'T
INTERRUPT
THE
POWER
FLOW!

YOU DON'T
KNOW WHAT
YOU'RE
DOING!

WAIT!



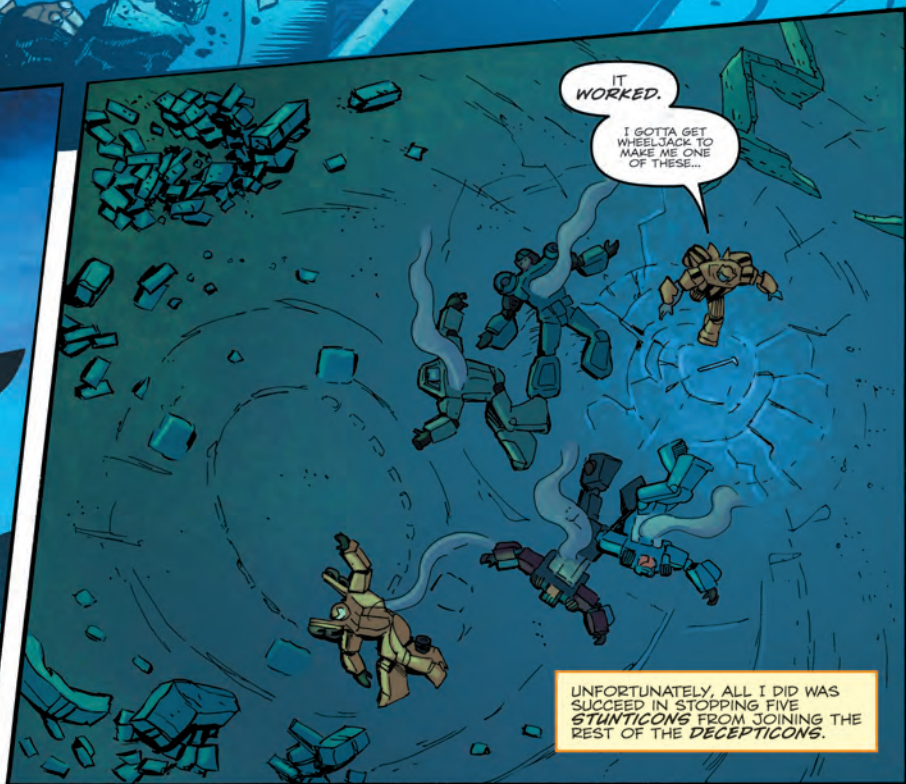
SURE,
I DO—



—I JUST
KNOW I
CAN TAKE
IT.



HUH.



IT
WORKED.

I GOTTA GET
WHEELJACK TO
MAKE ME ONE
OF THESE...

UNFORTUNATELY, ALL I DID WAS
SUCCEED IN STOPPING FIVE
STUNTIONS FROM JOINING THE
REST OF THE **DECEPTICONS**.

FIVE OUT OF
HUNDREDS.

YOU TOOK
DOWN ALL FIVE OF
THE STUNTICONS
ON YOUR OWN?

MAYBE YOU
DIDN'T HEAR ME,
PROWL. THAT MEANS
THE REST OF THE
DECEPTICONS
ESCAPED.

BUT FIVE
STUNTICONS,
SOLO?

BUMBLEBEE,
WHAT PROWL IS
SAYING IS, UH,
"WOW."

I DIDN'T
KNOW YOU
HAD IT IN
YOU.

NO
OFFENSE.

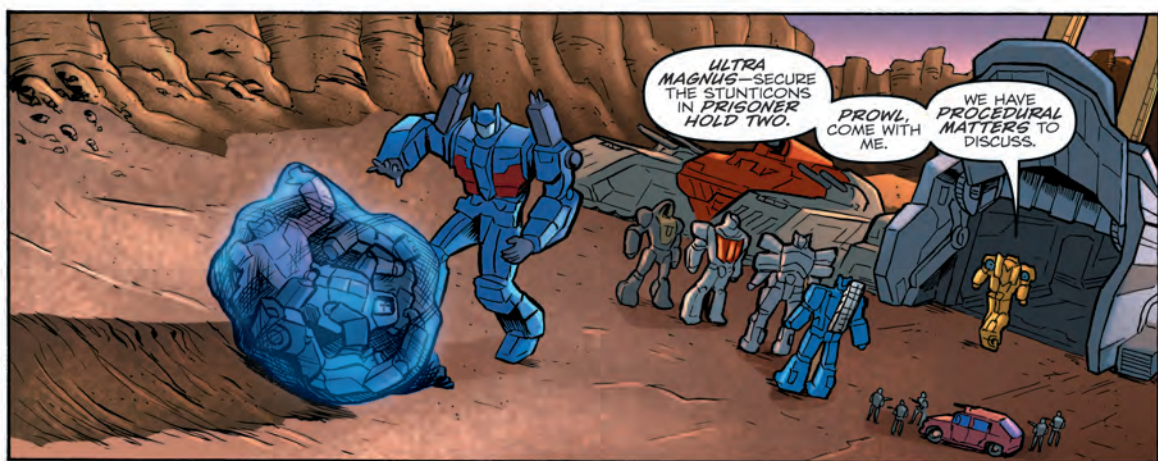
RIGHT.

RIGHT...

...LOOK, HERE'S
WHERE WE ARE.
PRIME'S GOT THE
ENTIRE DECEPTICON
ARMY BEARING
DOWN ON HIM, AND
UNFORTUNATELY,
WE'VE GOT NO WAY
TO REACH HIM
IN TIME.

SO WE PLACE
OUR FAITH IN
HIS LEADERSHIP
AND WE CLEAR
OUT THIS
MISSION ON EARTH.

STREETWISE,
GROOVE—YOU'RE
ON THIS. YOU TWO
ANSWER DIRECTLY
TO ME NOW.





SPOTLIGHT: BUMBLEBEE COVER B

by **LIVIO RAMONELLI**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL COVER A

by **TIM SEELEY** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

PRIMUS

YOU, ME, AND OTHER REVELATIONS

HOW AM I DOING?

THAT'S THE **FOURTH** TIME YOU'VE ASKED ME THAT, RODIMUS.

WHAT CAN I SAY? BENEATH MY COCKSURE EXTERIOR, I HAVE TERRIBLY LOW SELF-ESTEEM.

YES, BUT BENEATH THAT LOW SELF-ESTEEM YOU'RE **BETTER** THAN EVERYONE ELSE.

FAIR POINT.

1: SIGNS & PORTENTS

"THE GREATEST GIFT THAT PRIMUS BESTOWED UPON HIS CHILDREN WAS THE CAPACITY FOR THEM TO QUESTION HIS EXISTENCE. FOR ONLY WHEN DISBELIEF IS AN OPTION DOES FAITH COME INTO ITS OWN." ALPHA TRION SPEAKING AT THE NOVA PRIME MEMORIAL LECTURES, 5TH CYCLE 522

KII-YAH!

B-KOOM

GET OUT THE WAY, SKIDS! I CAN'T GET A CLEAR SHOT!

RODIMUS SAID "NO GUNS!" WHAT PART OF "NO GUNS" DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

THE GUN PART...?

TYPICAL WRECKER! IT'S ALL BANG-BANG-RELOAD-BANG!

CLOSE QUARTERS COMBAT IS A FINE ART. OBSERVE...

AH YES, THE ANCIENT AND MYSTICAL ART OF DRIVING INTO THINGS.

I CAN'T SEE WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE, BUT ALL I CAN HEAR IS **MACHO BANTER**. YOU'VE GOT TO SHUT UP AND KEEP MOVING!

ABOVE THE INTERSECTION ON YOUR LEFT YOU'LL FIND A SHAFT. CLIMB UP IT...



"...AND YOU'LL COME FACE TO FACE WITH THE MAIN INFESTATION."

GOOD DIRECTIONS!

HEY, IF I CAN'T FIND MY WAY AROUND THIS MAP I'M IN THE WRONG JOB...

WE'RE NEARLY OUTSIDE, AREN'T WE?

HOW'D YOU FIGURE THAT?



WELL, I CAN SEE YOUR UGLY MUG, FOR ONE THING...

(JUST ANOTHER NORMAL DAY ON) THE LOST LIGHT.



FORGET ABOUT ME AND CONCENTRATE ON STOPPING THE NANOCONS. IF THEY PENETRATE ULTRA MAGNUS' BRAIN MODULE AND COMBINE, HE'LL DIE.

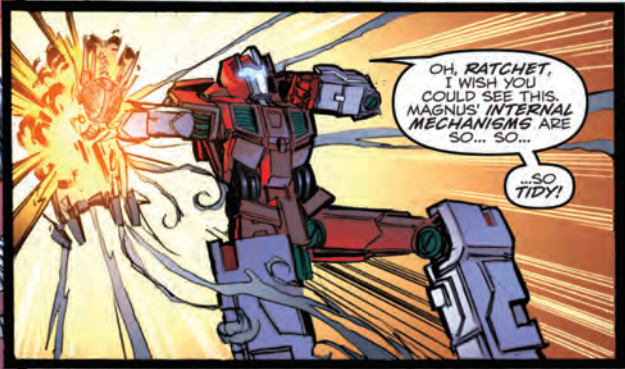
QUICK! HE'S STIRRING...



WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT IT? ME, A ONE-EYED WATCHMAKER FROM POLYHEX, SHOOTING TINY BAD GUYS INSIDE THE BIG M'S ORAL CAVITY!

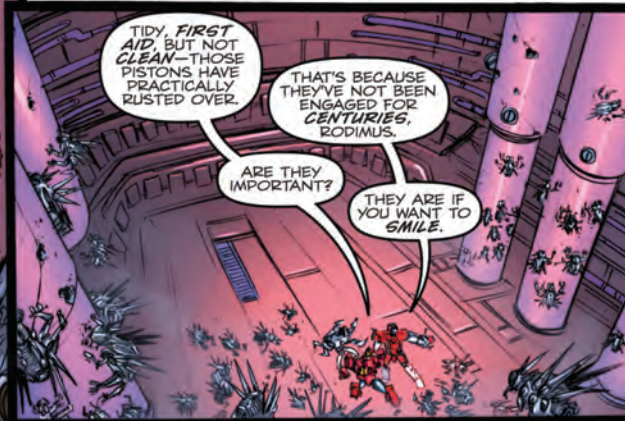
WHIRL—DO YOU INTERNALIZE ANY OF YOUR THOUGHTS?

YOU CAN DO THAT?



OH, RATCHET, I WISH YOU COULD SEE THIS. MAGNUS' INTERNAL MECHANISMS ARE SO... SO...

SO TIDY!



TIDY FIRST AID, BUT NOT CLEAN—THOSE PISTONS HAVE PRACTICALLY RUSTED OVER.

THAT'S BECAUSE THEY'VE NOT BEEN ENGAGED FOR CENTURIES, RODIMUS.

ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

THEY ARE IF YOU WANT TO SMILE.



GNNN—I

STEADY, MAGNUS. IF YOU WANT TO SPEAK, DO IT VIA INTER-AUTOBOT RADIO. YOUR MOUTH IS OTHERWISE ENGAGED.



I HAD THIS RIDICULOUS OFFLINE HALLUCINATION...

...THERE WAS A SWARM OF NANOCONS INSIDE ME, SO BRAINSTORM SUGGESTED TEMPORARILY DOWNSIZING RODIMUS BY ZAPPING HIM WITH THIS HIGHLY EXPERIMENTAL AND HIGHLY IMPLAUSIBLE MASS-DISPLACEMENT GUN.



AH. BRAINSTORM.

NANOCONS, EH? NO ONE EVER TEACH YOU TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS?

I WAS INFECTED YEARS AGO, WHEN I ARRESTED THIS DECEPTION—I FORGET HIS NAME. HE'D BEEN PEDDLING MINIATURIZATION TECHNOLOGY.

I THOUGHT ALL THE NANOS WERE KILLED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS.

WELL, THERE CERTAINLY WON'T BE ANY SURVIVORS THIS TIME. NOT WITH WHIRL DOWN THERE.







IT *BURNS!*
IT *BURNS!*
MAKE IT
STOP!



SHH. EASY,
CHROMEDOME.
EASY. YOU WERE
HAVING ANOTHER
FLASHBACK.

OH. *REWIND.*
PLEASE TELL ME
I DIDN'T TRY TO
KILL MYSELF BY
DRINKING
GIDEON'S
GLUE...

NO, I'M
PRETTY
SURE THAT
WAS—WAIT...

HABITATION SUITE 208



HABITATION SUITE 14

CYCLONUS?

I WAS, ER,
WONDERING IF
YOU HAD ANY
PLANS FOR
LATER.

IT'S JUST
THAT TODAY'S KIND
OF A *BIG DAY* FOR ME.
REMEMBER I TOLD YOU I
WAS TAKING MY *AUTOBOT*
CODE EXAM? THE ONE I
DID ALL THE REVISION
FOR? THE ONE YOU
SAID WAS A WASTE
OF TIME?



ANYWAY,
TURNS OUT I
KINDA *PASSED.*
NOT MY BEST
GRADE EVER,
BUT—

—WOO-HOO!



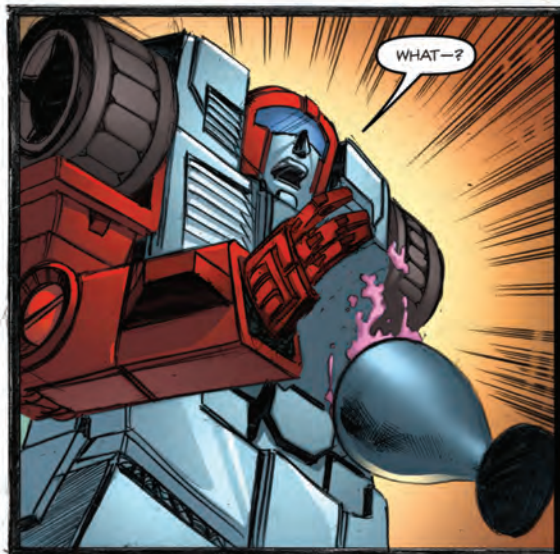
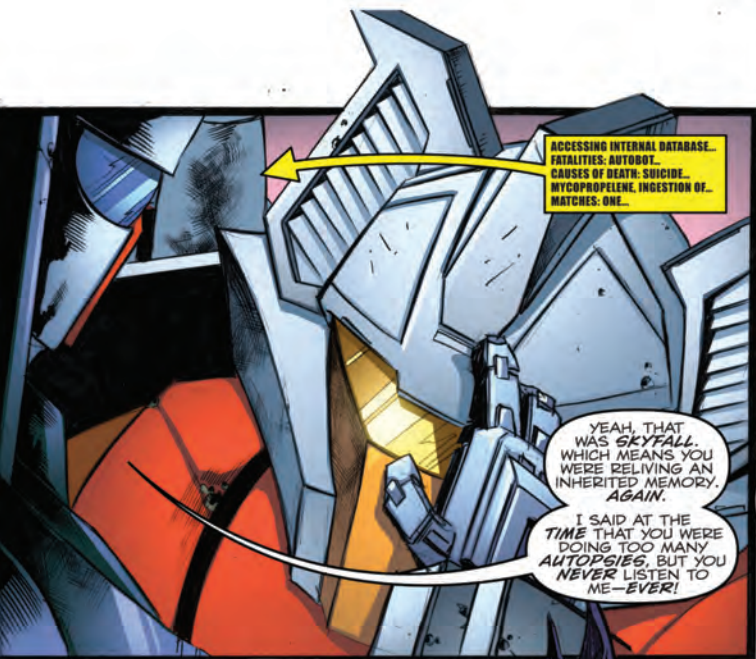
RED
ALERT? YOU
DOWN HERE?
IT'S
SWERVE.



OH, HI
ORE. DON'T
MIND ME. UH,
SORRY YOU'RE
DEAD.

JUST
LOOKING
FOR MY
ROOMMATE.





RODIOUS' QUARTERS.

CEREMONY'S
IN FIVE MINUTES.
I HOPE YOU'VE
PREPARED YOUR
SPEECH.

PREPARATION'S
OVERPRATED.
DRIFT—ALL IT
DOES IS LIMIT
POTENTIAL
OUTCOMES.

TRANSLATION:
YOU'RE GONNA
WING IT AND
HOPE FOR THE
BEST.

SINCE
WE'RE TALKING
SPEECHES... THIS
'TIL ALL ARE ONE'
THING. A FEW OF
US HAVE BEEN
TALKING,
AND—

—I MEAN
WE LOVE IT AND
ALL, BUT IT'S ONE
OF THOSE SAYINGS
THAT'S BEST USED
IN MODERATION.
OTHERWISE, IT SORT
OF... LOSES ITS
IMPACT.

WHAT? I
DON'T SAY
IT THAT
OFTEN...

'TIL ALL
ARE ONE.

'TIL!
ALL!
ARE!
ONE!

'TIL
ALL ARE
ONE!

'TIL
ALL ARE
ONE...

'TIL

ALL

ARE

ONE!



OPTIMUS
USED TO
SAY IT.

PARDON?

OPTIMUS
USED TO
SAY IT.

TRUE—ONCE
EVERY DECADE OR SO,
AND IN *VERY EPIC*
CIRCUMSTANCES: LIKE
WHEN HE WAS BATTLING
SHARDS OF LIVING RAGE,
OR EXORCISING THE
DEMONICONS.

NOT WHEN
HE BEAT
Highbrow AT
A GAME OF
FULLSTASIS.

THAT WAS
A HELL OF
A GAME.



ANYWAY, WHAT DO
YOU CARE? GO AWAY
AND *MEDITATE* OR
SOMETHING.

ALL *YOU* CARE
ABOUT IS *AFTER*
THE CEREMONY WHEN
WE REACH *CRYSTAL*
CITY AND YOU GET TO
SEE ALL YOUR OLD
FRIENDS AGAIN.

YEAH,
BUT *COME*
ON—CRYSTAL CITY
IS *PROGRESS*. IT
MEANS WE'RE
FINALLY *GETTING*
SOMEWHERE!

IMAGINE IF
THE *CIRCLE OF*
LIGHT JOINED
US—WHAT A
TEAM!

THEM WITH
THEIR UNRIVALLED
KNOWLEDGE OF THE
KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON.
ACQUIRED OVER MILLIONS
OF YEARS OF INTENSE
CONTEMPLATION,
ROBUST *PHILOSOPHICAL*
INQUIRY, AND RIGOROUS
INTELLECTUAL DEBATE.
AND US WITH OUR...
WITH OUR...

WITH OUR *BIG*
MAP.

AND US
WITH OUR *BIG*
MAP! TOGETHER
WE'D FIND
CYBERUTOPIA
BEFORE YOU
COULD SAY—

WE NEED
A NEW
CREW.



I'M
SERIOUS:
EITHER THE
CREW GOES,
OR I DO.

IS THIS
ABOUT THE
NANOCON
THING?

I'M BEING
MOCKED.
OPENLY AND
IN FRONT OF
OTHERS.



ULTRA
MAGNUS IS NOT
SUPPOSED TO BE
A *FIGURE OF FUN!*

YOU KNOW
WHAT? I ACTUALLY
THINK THIS IS GOOD
FOR YOU. IT SHOWS THAT
THE CREW HAVE TAKEN
YOU TO THEIR HEARTS.
WHAT YOU SEE AS
INSUBORDINATION
IS ACTUALLY
AFFECTION.

AFFECTION.

YOU'RE AN
UNNERVING GUY. YOU
CAN BE A BIT—DETACHED.
REFERRING TO YOURSELF
IN THE *THIRD PERSON*
DOESN'T HELP,
EITHER.



THE NANOCON INCIDENT
REMINDS EVERYONE THAT
UNDERNEATH THE
PROTOCOLS AND THE
ON-THE-SPOT FINES,
YOU'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT
TO THE REST OF US.
FROM EMBARRASSING
THINGS HAPPEN
TO YOU.

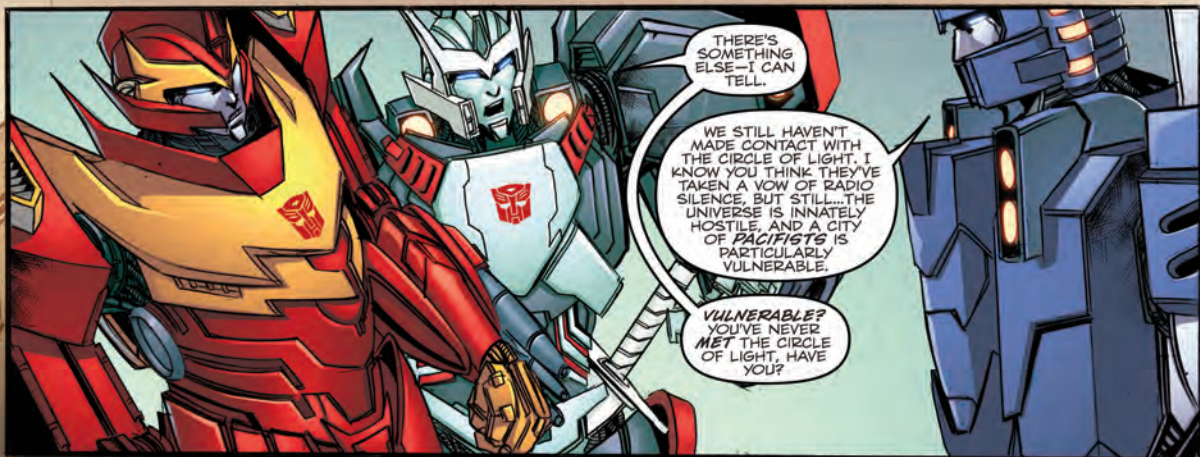


EMBARRASSING
THINGS NEVER
USED TO HAPPEN TO
ME WHEN I WORKED
ALONE. EVERYTHING'S
CHANGED.

INCLUDING
YOU—AND FOR THE
BETTER. YOU'RE
LOOSENING UP, LITTLE
BY LITTLE—AND
PEOPLE ADMIRE YOU
FOR THAT.

THE DULY
APPOINTED
ENFORCER OF THE
TYREST ACCORD MUST
NEVER CHANGE. IN A
LAWLESS UNIVERSE,
HE IS THE ONE
CONSTANT.

NOW YOU'RE
JUST DOING
THAT TO WIND
ME UP.



THERE'S
SOMETHING
ELSE—I CAN
TELL.

WE STILL HAVEN'T
MADE CONTACT WITH
THE *CIRCLE OF LIGHT*. I
KNOW YOU THINK THEY'VE
TAKEN A VOW OF RADIO
SILENCE, BUT STILL...THE
UNIVERSE IS INNATELY
HOSTILE, AND A CITY
OF *PACIFISTS* IS
PARTICULARLY
VULNERABLE.

VULNERABLE?
YOU'VE NEVER
MET THE *CIRCLE*
OF *LIGHT*, HAVE
YOU?

"*DAI ATLAS* AND THE *CIRCLE* TOOK ME IN
WHEN I WAS FURTHEST FROM THE *LIGHT*.
THEY LOOKED BEYOND MY DECEPTION.
BADGE AND SHOWED ME A *BETTER WAY*."

"AND YES, THEIRS *WAS* A
PACIFIST CULTURE—BUT ALL THAT
CHANGED WHEN I UNWITTINGLY
LED THE ENEMY TO THEIR DOOR."

"THE *CIRCLE* MADE A DECISION: THEY
BROKE COVER, THEY LIFTED CRYSTAL
CITY OUT OF THE GROUND..."

"...AND THEY CUT THE
ENEMY TO SHREDS."

"TRANSLATION: THEY CAN
LOOK AFTER THEMSELVES."

2: SACRAMENTS AND CEREMONIES

"PRIMUS IS IN THE GAPS BETWEEN YOUR CIRCUITS AND THE SOUND YOU MAKE WHEN YOU CHANGE SHAPE. HE IS THE GLOW BEHIND YOUR EYES AND THE SHEEN IN THE CURVE OF THE WORLD." BEACHCOMBER OF IBEX, THE PRIMAL PROPHECIES: A NEW INTERPRETATION.

I'M SORRY, TAILGATE, BUT WE'RE ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE. I DON'T THINK SWERVE IS GONNA SHOW.

HE PROMISED...

MAYBE SO—BUT IN TEN MINUTES WE'LL BE IN ORBIT AROUND THEOPHANY, THEN IT'S STRAIGHT DOWN TO CRYSTAL CITY.

JUST A BIT LONGER?

OKAY, PEOPLE—YOUR TIMES, PLEASE.

TEN MINUTES.

FIVE MINUTES.

EIGHT SECONDS.

EIGHT SECONDS...? WOW.

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

JACKPOT'S TAKING BETS ON THE SPEECH: HOW LONG BEFORE RODIMUS SAYS "TIL ALL ARE ONE"?

WINNER GETS FREE DRINKS ALL NIGHT. WE HAVEN'T TOLD SWERVE YET.

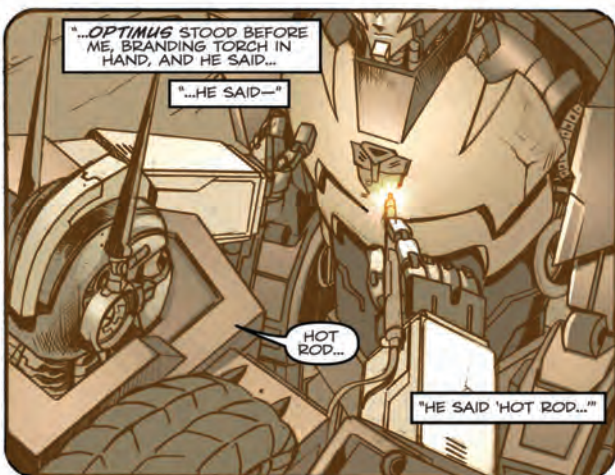
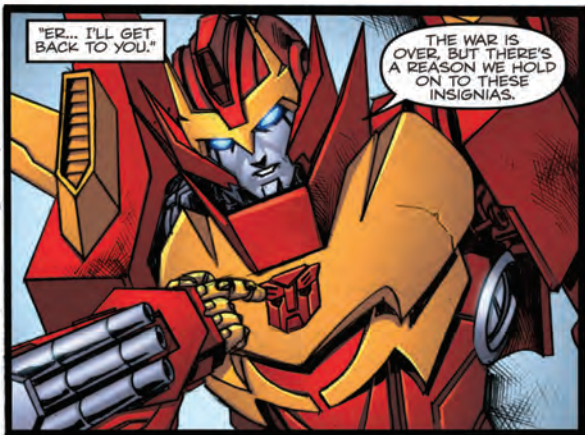
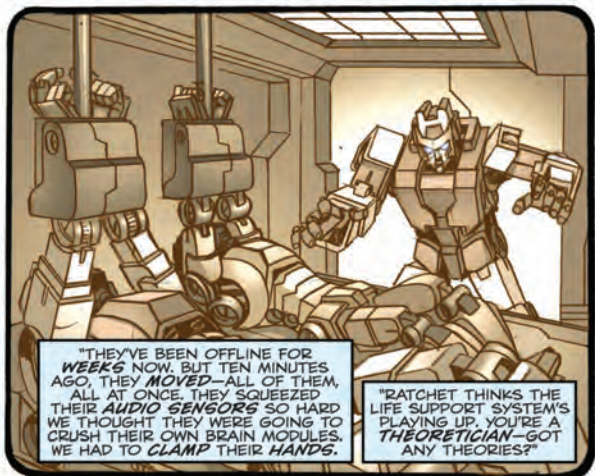
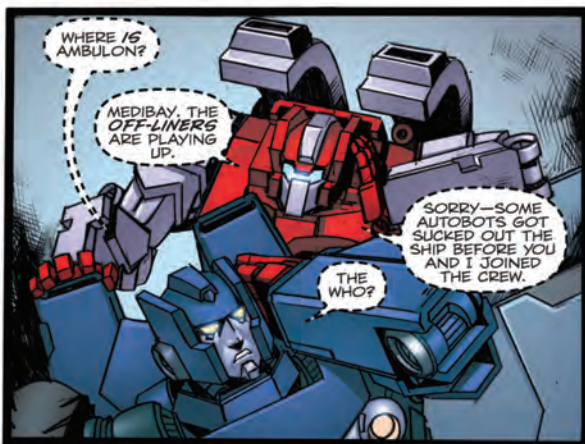
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT: YOU LEFT GRAFFITI INSIDE ULTRA MAGNUS?

YEAH, DON'T PRETEND YOU'RE NOT IMPRESSED.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

IT SAYS, "THE DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD CAN DULY APPOINT MY SHINY METAL—"

ASSUMING THAT'S EVERYONE, WE'LL BEGIN!



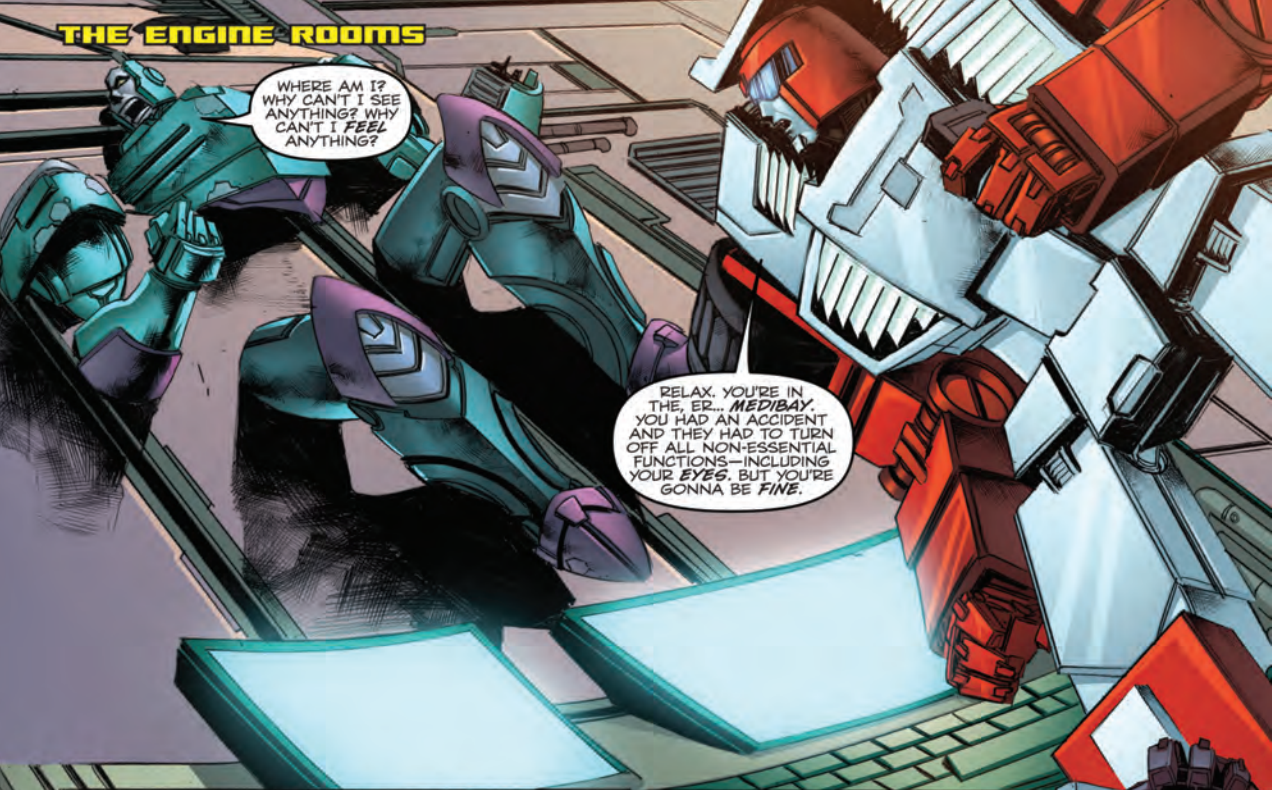




"...IT'S THE *GALACTIC COUNCIL*."







WHERE AM I?
WHY CAN'T I SEE
ANYTHING? WHY
CAN'T I *FEEL*
ANYTHING?

RELAX. YOU'RE IN
THE, ER... *MEDIBAY*.
YOU HAD AN ACCIDENT
AND THEY HAD TO TURN
OFF ALL NON-ESSENTIAL
FUNCTIONS—INCLUDING
YOUR *EYES*. BUT YOU'RE
GONNA BE FINE.



HEY,
IS THAT
PIPES?

ER...
ACTUALLY,
IT'S—

IT *IS*. ISN'T
IT? WE MET ON
THE *LAUNCH PAD*.
REMEMBER? Y'KNOW,
PIPES. YOU SOUND
JUST LIKE THAT
LUG-NUT
SWERVE.

SORRY—HE'S
PROBABLY A
FRIEND OF
YOURS.



NO, NO, NO, CAN'T
STAND THE
GUY.

I USED TO THINK
HE WAS ALRIGHT,
BUT THEN SCREWED
UP BIG TIME. HE
ACCIDENTALLY *SHOT*
SOMEONE—A GUY
NAMED *RUNG*.

WHO?

HE WAS *TRYING*
TO FOLLOW ORDERS,
BUT THAT KINDA MAKES
IT *WORSE*. DON'T YOU
THINK? 'COS HE COULDN'T
JUST SAID *NO*. HE
COULDN'T JUST SAID,
"NO WAY, RODIMUS,
IT'S TOO RISKY."

*SEE MTMTE #6



BUT HE
DIDN'T.

NO...

...ACTUALLY,
HE PRETTY MUCH
CONFERSED TO ME
THAT HE WAS AFRAID OF
DISOBEYING RODIMUS IN CASE
IT DAMAGED HIS CHANCES
OF BEING ALLOWED TO
REOPEN HIS BAR.



IF THAT'S
TRUE—MAN—WHAT
A *SCUMBAG*.

YEAH.
WHAT A
SCUMBAG.

TEN MILES OUTSIDE CRYSTAL-



-CITY?

NOTHING
TINGLES LIKE A
TELEPORT. HOW
COME WE DON'T
TELEPORT
EVERYWHERE,
BRAINSTORM?

'COS IT'S
BAD FOR
YOU.

WHEREAS
ALL THOSE
WEAPONS
YOU BUILD—

ARE BAD
FOR OTHER
PEOPLE.



SO! THE
COUNCIL TOOK IT
UPON THEMSELVES TO
DECIDE WHICH OF MY
CREW GETS TO VISIT
CRYSTAL CITY! *FAGCIGTS!*

YOU REALLY
DON'T LIKE
THE COUNCIL,
DO YOU?

I THINK
IT'S MAINLY
THE HATS.



TSCHU-CHU-CHU-
CHE-TSCHU

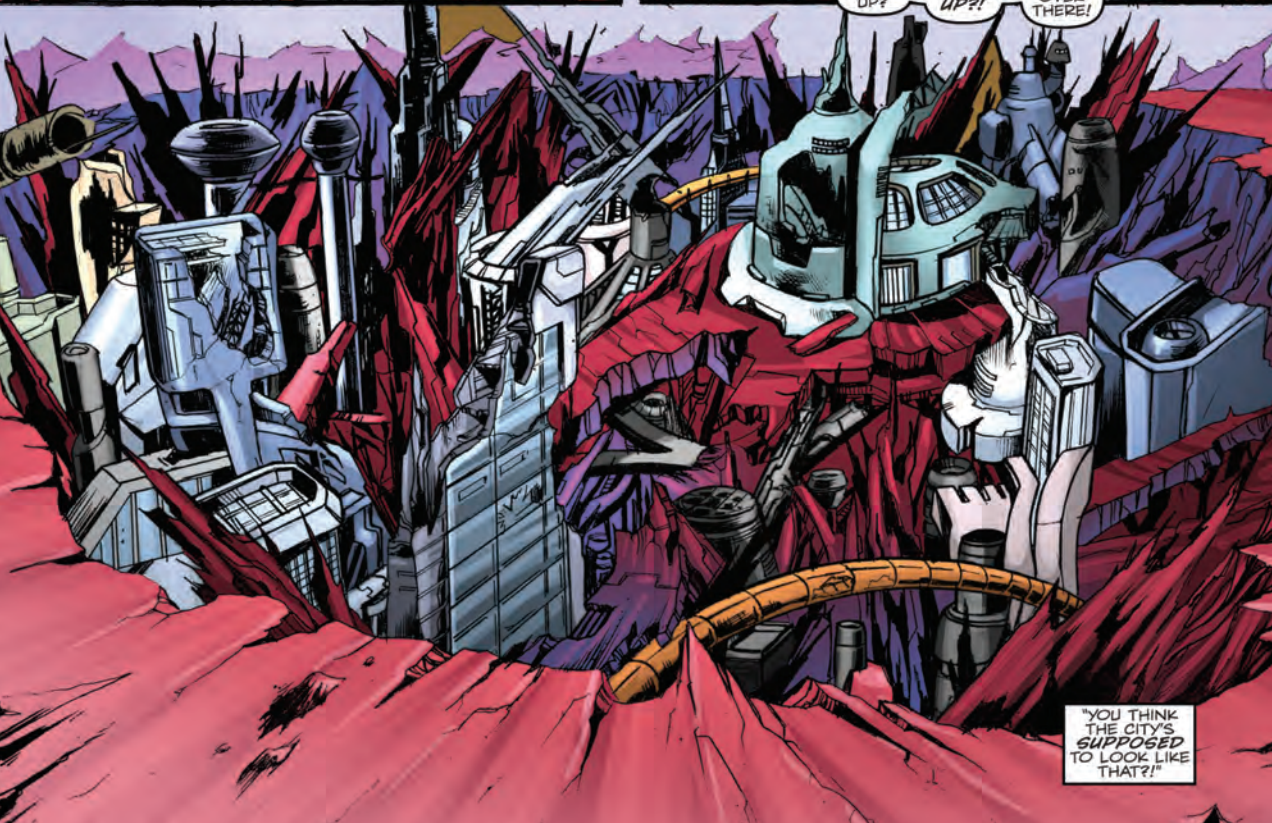
YOU SOUND
UPSET, DRIFT.
WHAT'S UP?



WHAT'S
UP?

WHAT'S
UP?!

LOOK
OVER
THERE!



"YOU THINK
THE CITY'S
SUPPOSED
TO LOOK LIKE
THAT?"



EVER GET THE FEELING THAT YOU'VE BEEN LIED TO?

LIED TO?

WE WERE ALWAYS TOLD THAT AFTER WE'D WON THE WAR, THAT'D BE IT: LET THE ENGEX FLOW AND THE GOOD TIMES ROLL. BUT THAT'S *RUBBISH!*

I THINK MY MISTAKE—I'VE ONLY JUST REALIZED THIS—MY MISTAKE WAS TO CONFUSE *PEACE* WITH *HAPPINESS*. 'COS THEY'RE DIFFERENT THINGS, AREN'T THEY?

THEY'RE DIFFERENT THINGS.



WE'RE NOT USED TO *NOT FIGHTING*. THAT'S ALL. *PEACE* TAKES TIME TO SINK IN.

HEH—I ALWAYS SAID I'D DO *TWO THINGS* AFTER WE'D WON: GET A NEW *ALT MODE*—SOMETHING TOTALLY SLEEK AND IMPRACTICAL—AND MAKE FRIENDS WITH A DECEPTICON.

BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT *ALL* PSYCHOPATHS, ARE THEY? SHOCK SAYS MOST OF THEM WERE CONSCRIPTED OR BRAINWASHED.



ME AN' SHOCK ONLY JOINED THE LOST LIGHT TO HELP OUT AN OLD FRIEND. I THINK WE'RE GONNA SPLIT WHEN WE PASS NEAR *HEDONIA* OR THE *PLEASURE HIVE*.

WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO NEXT?

WHAT, AFTER WE'VE FOUND THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON? UM... JOIN ANOTHER QUEST, I SUPPOSE. I LOVE A GOOD...

...HM.



WHAT'S UP?

YOU SAY IT'LL SINK IN—BEING AT *PEACE*—BUT WHAT IF IT *DOESN'T*?

OR WHAT IF IT *DOES* BUT I CAN'T DO IT *JUSTICE*? WE'RE NOT FIGHTING DECEPTICONS ANYMORE—I SHOULD BE TRYING TO CURE *CYBERCROSIS* OR COMPOSE NEW PROGRAM CODES, NOT *REARRANGING FURNITURE* TO FREAK OUT RED ALERT!



WHY NOT? *PEACE* IS THE FREEDOM TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.

UNLESS YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT *INNER PEACE*, IN WHICH CASE I DOUBT ANY OF US WILL EVER FEEL *THAT* AGAIN.

YOU CAN'T LIVE THROUGH WHAT WE'VE LIVED THROUGH AND EXPECT TO FEEL *THAT*. ALL YOU CAN DO IS BE THANKFUL YOU SURVIVED.

INSIDE CRYSTAL CITY



WELL,
CYCLONUS?

THE WHOLE
PLACE IS A
MESS—DEFINITELY
EVIDENCE OF
BATTLE, BUT
NO BODIES.

I JUST WISH I
KNEW WHAT HAD
HAPPENED...



DRIFT, IS THERE ANY WAY YOU
CAN USE YOUR GREAT SWORD
TO FORGE, LIKE, A *PSYCHIC*
LINK WITH DAI ATLAS'S
GREAT SWORD?

OH! OF
COURSE! I'LL DO
THAT RIGHT AFTER
I'VE CHOPPED YOUR
TINY LITTLE VIDEO
CAMERA HEAD OFF,
YOU *SARCASTIC*
PIECE OF—



SORRY!
SORRY.

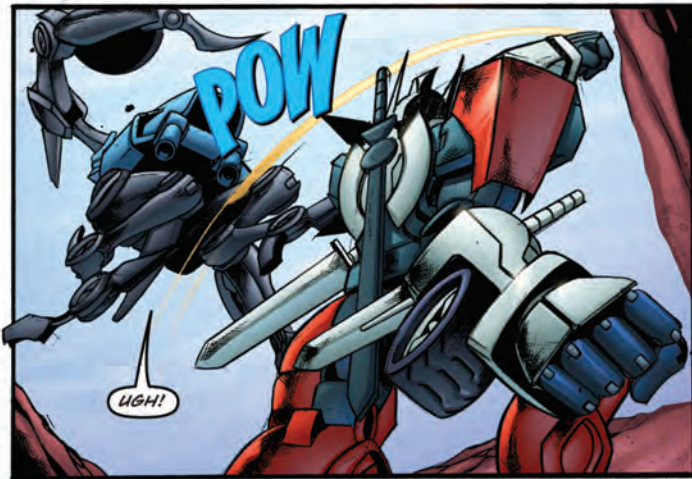
I'M JUST
SO USED TO
RATCHET
TAKING
THE—

—SORRY.



OH DEAR.
WHAT HAPPENED
TO *HAPPY CLAPPY*
DRIFT? *HAPPY CLAPPY*
HIPPI DRIFT?

HAPPY
CLAPPY
HIPPI DRIPPY
DRI—

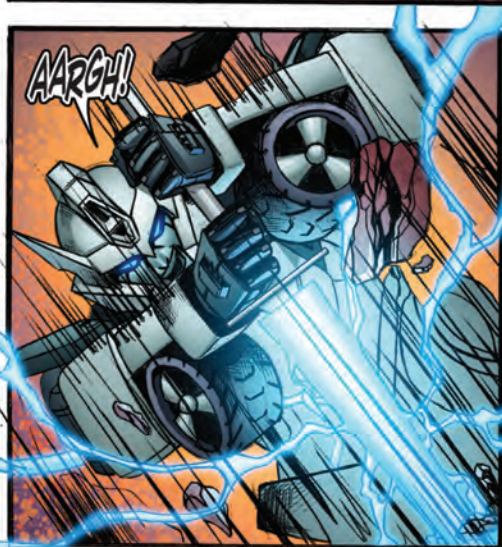
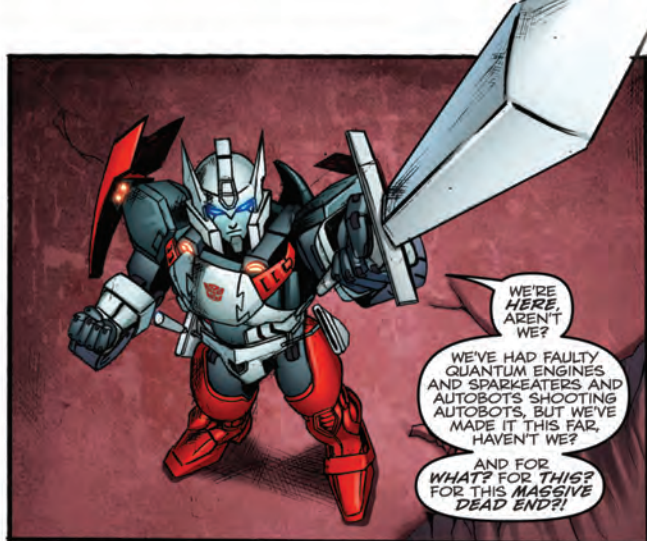


POW

UGH!



WHAT
NOW, EH?
WHAT
NOW?





ULTRA
MAGNUS—I'M
SORRY TO
HAVE KEPT
YOU WAITING.



HOW ABOUT
"SORRY FOR
TELEPORTING YOU
HERE AGAINST
YOUR WILL"?

I SHOULD BE
DOWN THERE,
WITH THE
OTHERS.

I DON'T
THINK SO.

I'M
SORRY?

YOU'RE
BETTER THAN
THEM, BETTER THAN
THAT PETULANT
CAPTAIN OF YOURS,
ANYWAY.



ULTRA MAGNUS,
I DON'T THINK YOU
REALIZE JUST HOW
YOU'RE **PERCEIVED**
BY THOSE OF US
FORTUNATE ENOUGH
TO LIVE BEYOND THE
FRINGES OF THE
CYBERTRONIAN
WAR.

YOU'RE A LAW
ENFORCEMENT
OFFICER OF A **MILLION**
YEARS' STANDING WHO
HAS SHRUGGED OFF
EVERYTHING HIS
ENEMIES HAVE THROWN
AT HIM AND KEPT ON
GOING, DRIVEN BY
YOUR BELIEF IN
THE LAW.

FORGIVE ME,
BUT THERE'S NO
OTHER WORD FOR
IT: YOU ARE
LEGENDARY.



I'M NOT EASILY
FLATTERED—

YOU
SURPRISE
ME.

—BUT I
AM EASILY
EMBARRASSED.
WHY AM I HERE,
CAPTAIN?

YOU'RE HERE
SO THAT I CAN
ASK YOU, ON
BEHALF OF THE
GALACTIC
COUNCIL...



...TO JOIN
US.



3: EPIPHANIES

"RELIGION IS THE ENGEX OF THE PEOPLE."
MEGATRON OF TARN, "AFTER THE ARK: NOMINUS PRIME AND THE ILLUSION OF PROGRESS"



METROTITANS—
I SHOULD KNOW
WHO THEY ARE,
RIGHT?

THEY WERE
THE KNIGHTS OF
CYBERTRON'S CHOSEN
MODE OF TRANSPORT:
LIVING CITIES CAPABLE
OF TELEPORTING
ACROSS VAST
DISTANCES.

THEY HAD
SUPER-SPARKS
THAT ALLOWED THEM
TO STRADDLE MULTIPLE
PLANES OF EXISTENCE
AND COMMUNE WITH
THE DIVINE.

HMM. THAT
WAS VERY
MUCH AN
EXPLANATION
OF TWO
HALVES...

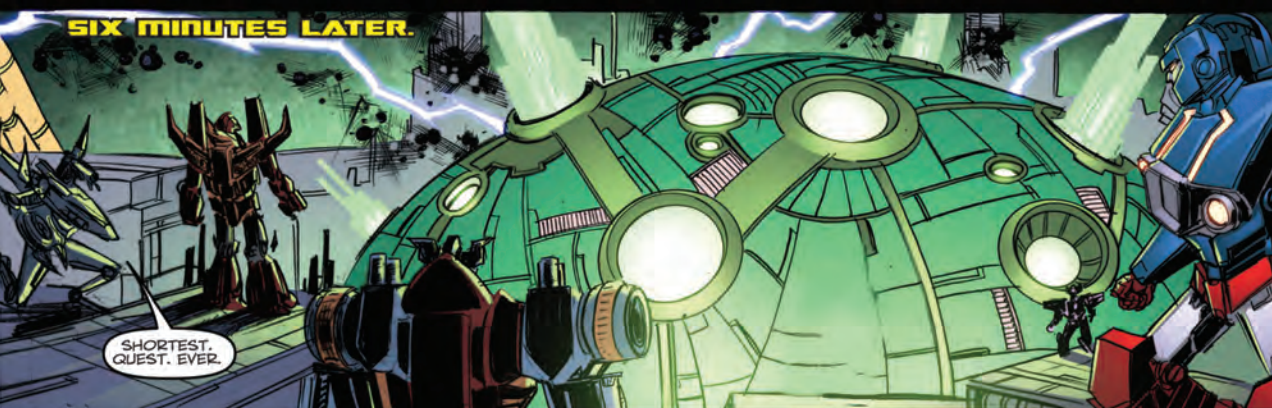


THIS
METROTITAN—IT'S
MASSIVE AND IT'S
DEAD. I GET THAT—BUT
PHYSIOLOGICALLY
IT'S JUST LIKE YOU
AND ME, RIGHT?

I KNOW
WHERE THIS
IS GOING...

I BET
YOU DO!

MY FELLOW
CRUSADERCONS—
WE'RE GOING ON A
BRAIN-QUEST!



SIX MINUTES LATER.

SHORTEST.
QUEST. EVER.



I NEVER
THOUGHT I—

AARGH!

I'M SORRY, IT'S
JUST—I DIDN'T
KNOW YOU COULD
SPEAK.



I WAS GOING
TO SAY, I NEVER
THOUGHT I'D SEE
A METROTITAN
AGAIN.

YOU'VE
SEEN ONE
BEFORE?

I USED TO PRAY IN
THEIR SHADOW. I USED
TO RECITE THE PRIMAL
SACRAMENT IN OLD
CYBERTRONIAN.

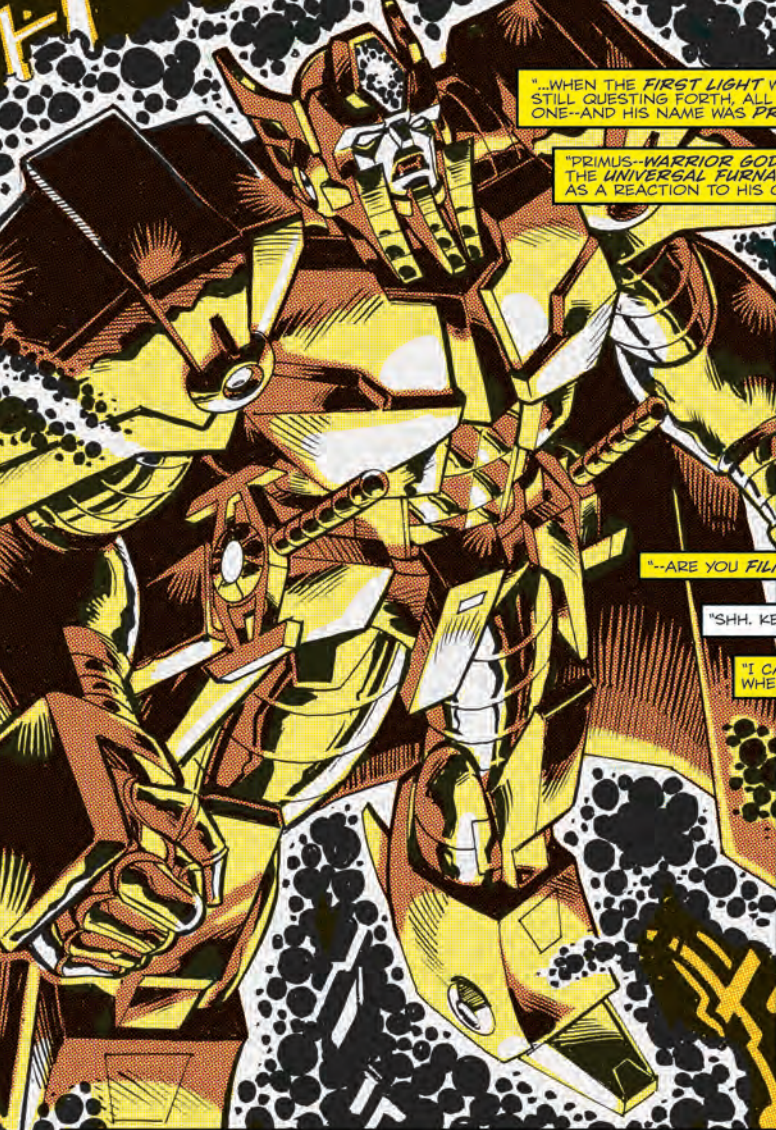


THE CREATOR
STORY? I'VE
ALWAYS WANTED TO
HEAR IT DELIVERED
BY—YOU KNOW—BY
A BELIEVER.

I DON'T
SUPPOSE...? SINCE
WE'RE HERE AND
EVERYTHING...

—SIGH—

"IN THE
BEGINNING, MOMENTS
AFTER THE
FORMATTING..."



"...WHEN THE *FIRST LIGHT* WAS STILL QUESTING FORTH, ALL WERE ONE--AND HIS NAME WAS *PRIMUS*."

"*PRIMUS--WARRIOR GOD!* FORGED IN THE *UNIVERSAL FURNACE!* CONCEIVED AS A REACTION TO HIS OPPOSITE--"

--ARE YOU *FILMING* ME?"

"SHH. KEEP GOING."

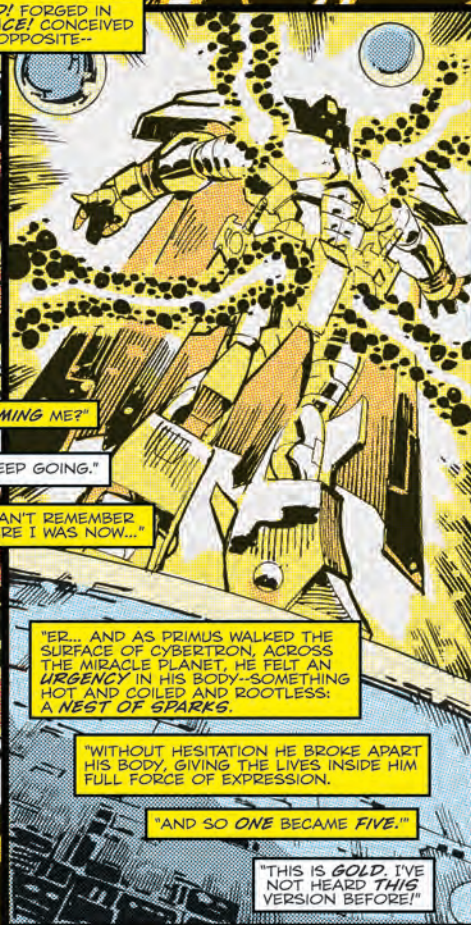
"I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE I WAS NOW..."

"ER... AND AS *PRIMUS* WALKED THE SURFACE OF *CYBERTRON*, ACROSS THE *MIRACLE PLANET*, HE FELT AN *URGENCY* IN HIS BODY--SOMETHING HOT AND COILED AND ROOTLESS: A *NEST OF SPARKS*."

"WITHOUT HESITATION HE BROKE APART HIS BODY, GIVING THE LIVES INSIDE HIM FULL FORCE OF EXPRESSION."

"AND SO ONE BECAME FIVE..."

"THIS IS *GOLD*. I'VE NOT HEARD *THIS* VERSION BEFORE!"



"*MORTILUS*, THE DEATH-BRINGER--THE NECESSARY COROLLARY TO LIFE."

"*PRIMUS!* LIGHT-GIVER! LIFE-GIVER!"

"*ADAPTUS!* BLESSED WITH AN INFINITY OF SHAPES!"

"*SOLOMUS!* WISDOM INCARNATE!"

"*EPISTEMUS!* KNOWLEDGE PERSONIFIED!"

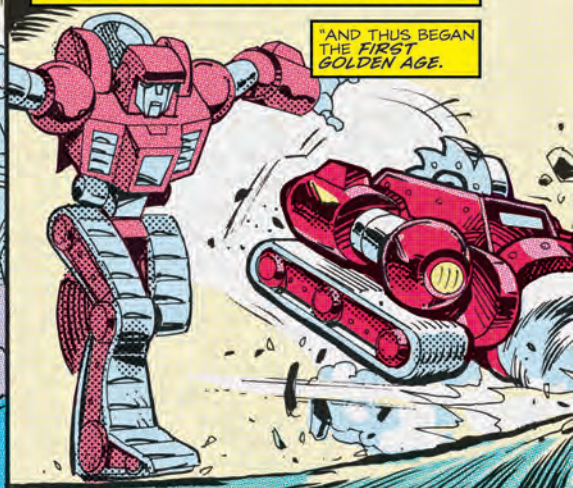
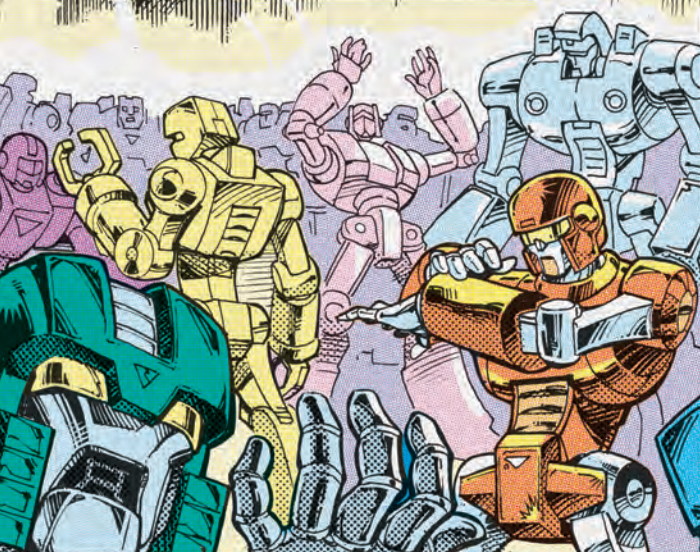


TOGETHER, THEY WERE KNOWN AS THE *GUIDING HAND*."

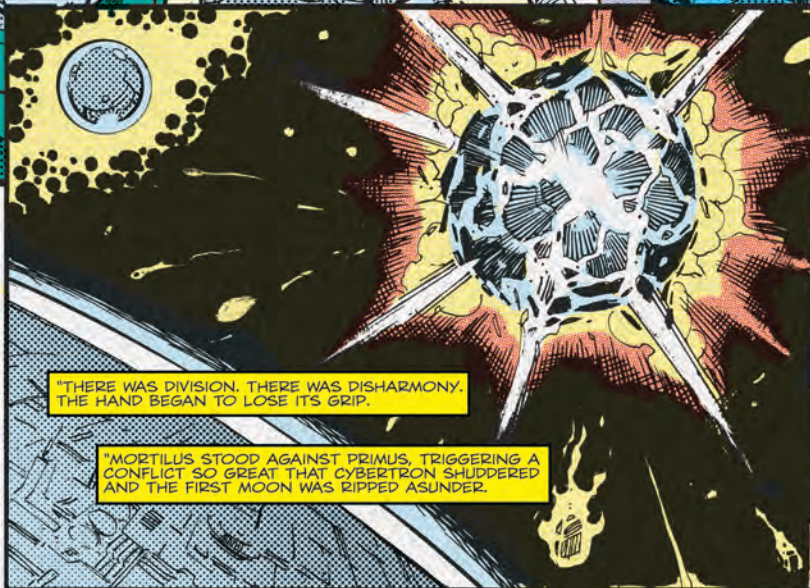
"A NURTURING PRESENCE, FOREVER REMOTE BUT ALWAYS WITHIN REACH, THE HAND POPULATED THE PLANET WITH A SINGLE GESTURE."

"PRIMUS DECREED THAT EVERY CYBERTRONIAN SHOULD PROVIDE FOR HIS BRETHREN, AND SO BLESSED ALL HIS CHILDREN WITH A **SECOND SHAPE** THAT WOULD MOST EFFICIENTLY MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PLANET AND ITS INHABITANTS."

"AND THUS BEGAN THE **FIRST GOLDEN AGE**."



"MORTILUS WAS EVENTUALLY DESTROYED, BUT AT GREAT COST TO THE REST OF THE GUIDING HAND."

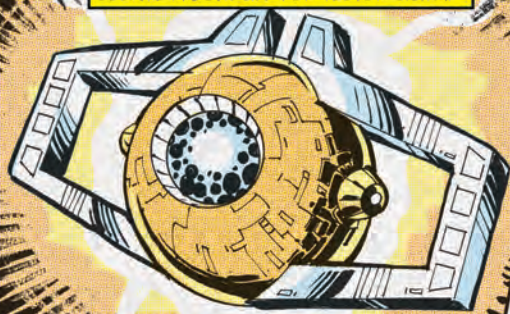


"THERE WAS DIVISION. THERE WAS DISHARMONY. THE HAND BEGAN TO LOSE ITS GRIP."

"MORTILUS STOOD AGAINST PRIMUS, TRIGGERING A CONFLICT SO GREAT THAT CYBERTRON SHUDDERED AND THE FIRST MOON WAS RIPPED ASUNDER."

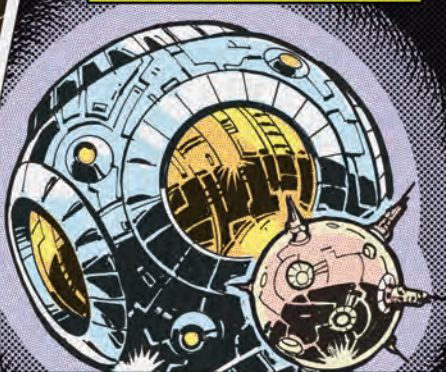


"MORTILUS' LAST ACT HAD BEEN TO TRAP SOLOMUS WITHIN A CRYSTAL PRISON-BUT THE WISE SOLOMUS WAS ABLE TO RECONFIGURE HIS PRISON SO THAT IT BECAME A **CONDUIT** FOR VECTOR SIGMA."



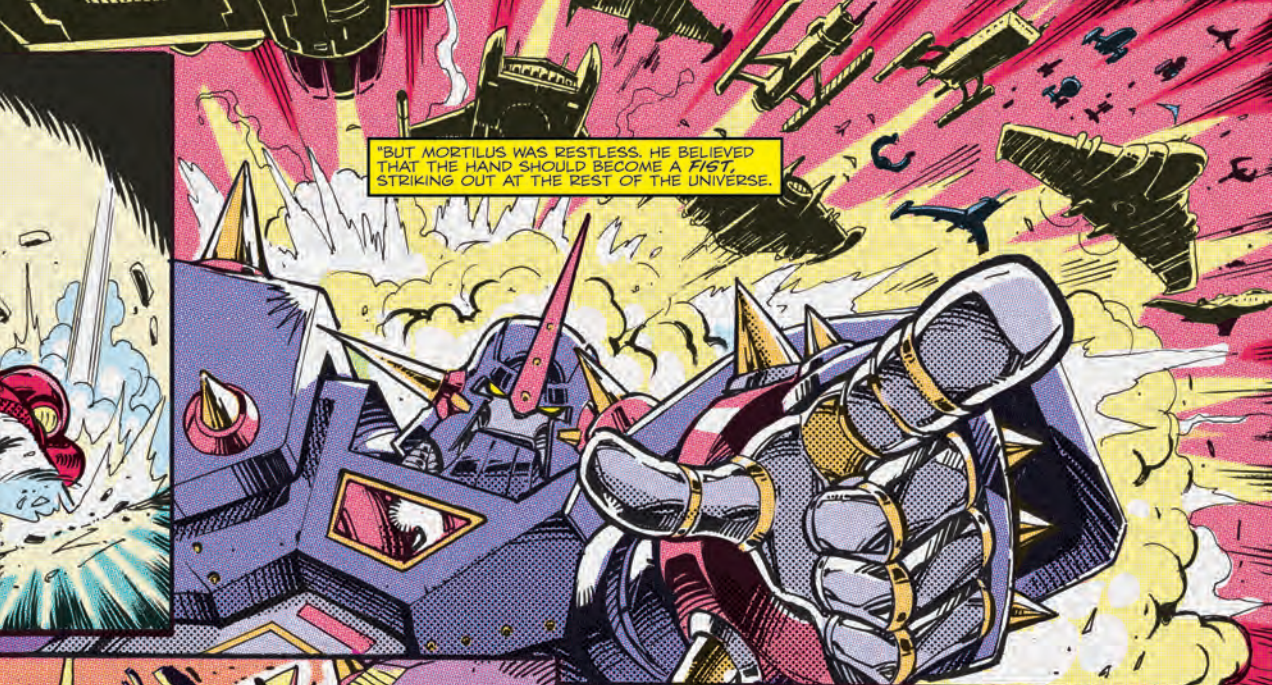
"BUT MORE THAN LIFE, HIS GIFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS WAS HIS **WISDOM**."

"EPISTEMUS AND ADAPTUS WERE NOT SO LUCKY: MORTILUS STRIPPED THEM BARE, REDUCING EPISTEMUS TO A **BRAIN MODULE** AND ADAPTUS TO A **TRANSFORMATION COG**."



"BEFORE THEY DIED, THEY OFFERED THEMSELVES UP AS BLUEPRINTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, THEREBY ENSURING THAT CYBERTRONIANS HAD THE INTELLECT AND THE FUNCTIONALITY TO MEET THE DEMANDS MADE BY THEIR ENVIRONMENT."



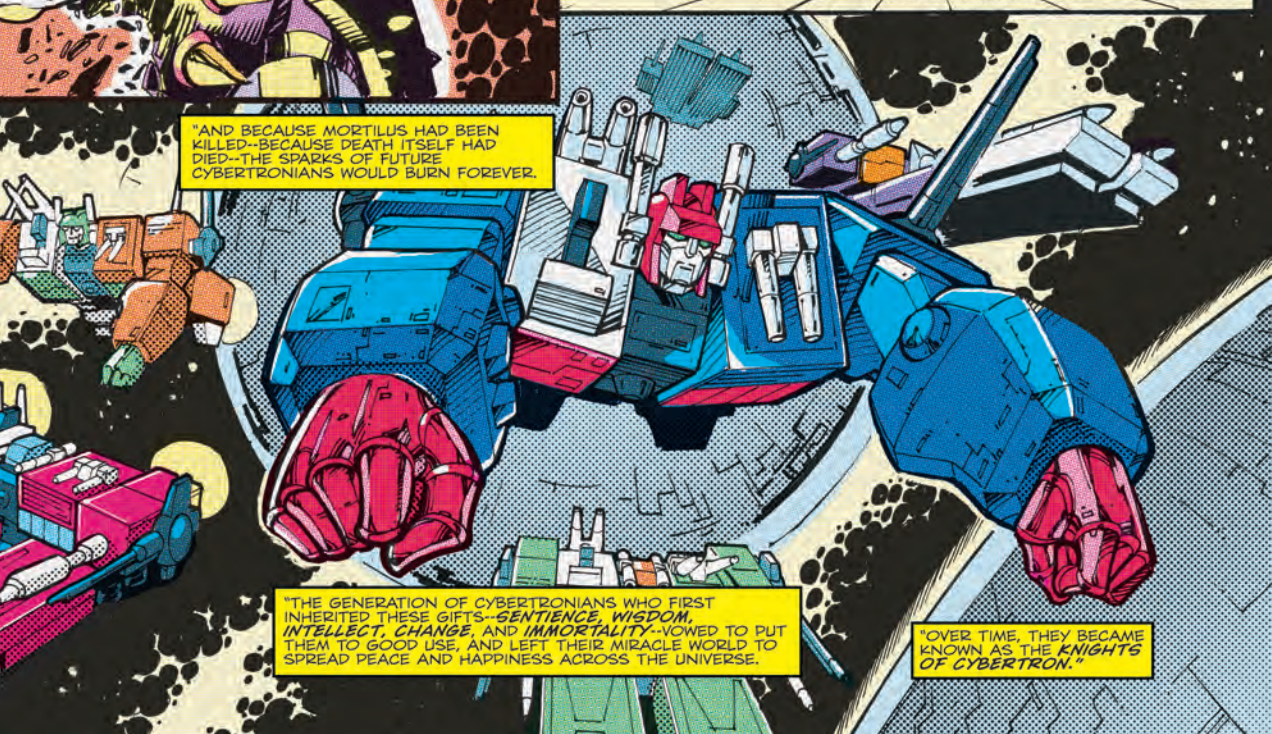


"BUT MORTILUS WAS RESTLESS. HE BELIEVED THAT THE HAND SHOULD BECOME A *FIST*, STRIKING OUT AT THE REST OF THE UNIVERSE.



"CLOSE TO DEATH, *PRIMUS* SOUGHT REFUGE AT THE HEART OF CYBERTRON, REINTEGRATING HIMSELF WITH THE FOLDS OF CIRCUITRY FROM WHICH HE HAD FIRST SPRUNG.

"OVER TIME, HIS BODY BECAME KNOWN AS *VECTOR SIGMA*, THE SOURCE OF ALL SPARKS--ALL SENTIENCE.



"AND BECAUSE MORTILUS HAD BEEN KILLED--BECAUSE DEATH ITSELF HAD DIED--THE SPARKS OF FUTURE CYBERTRONIANS WOULD BURN FOREVER.

"THE GENERATION OF CYBERTRONIANS WHO FIRST INHERITED THESE GIFTS--*SENTIENCE, WISDOM, INTELLECT, CHANGE, AND IMMORTALITY*--VOWED TO PUT THEM TO GOOD USE, AND LEFT THEIR MIRACLE WORLD TO SPREAD PEACE AND HAPPINESS ACROSS THE UNIVERSE.

"OVER TIME, THEY BECAME KNOWN AS THE *KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON*."



"...I WANT YOU TO BREAK INTO THE METROTITAN'S BRAIN, READ HIS MEMORIES, FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT, AND—SINCE I'M RECITING MY WISH LIST—MAKE THE GALACTIC COUNCIL LOOK STUPID."



YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK? I THINK LIFE IS PAIN. EXISTENCE IS AN ORDEAL DEVOID OF MEANING, HOPE, OR JOY. D'YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

I ONCE SPENT A YEAR STUCK ON STAKEOUT WITH PROW. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU MEAN.

DON'T GET ME WRONG: PEOPLE, I LIKE—FROM A DISTANCE, ANYWAY. UP CLOSE I FIND 'EM PRETTY OBJECTIONABLE.

I WAS JUST THINKING THE SAME THING.

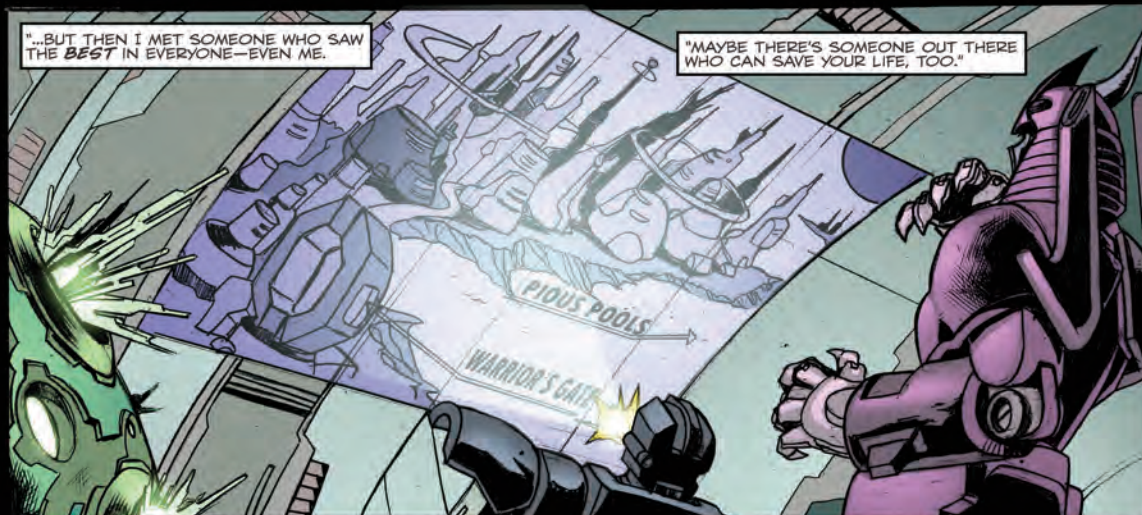
OH C'MON—YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. YOU'RE AS CYNICAL AS I AM.

CYNICAL? SKIDS, I WAS SUICIDAL...



"...BUT THEN I MET SOMEONE WHO SAW THE BEST IN EVERYONE—EVEN ME.

"MAYBE THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE WHO CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE, TOO."



ELSEWHERE.



YOU BELIEVE DON'T YOU? IN THE GUIDING HAND AND THE KNIGHTS?

ME? ER, YEAH, OF COURSE. WHY ARE YOU EVEN ASKING ME THAT?

I USED TO—CAN I BE HONEST WITH YOU?—I USED TO THINK YOU WERE A BIT SHALLOW.

I THOUGHT YOU USED TO JUMP FROM ONE OBSESSION TO THE NEXT—LIKE WHEN YOU WENT AFTER THE MAGNIFICENCE, OR VOWED TO FIND LUNA 1.

I USED TO THINK THAT, I DON'T ANYMORE.

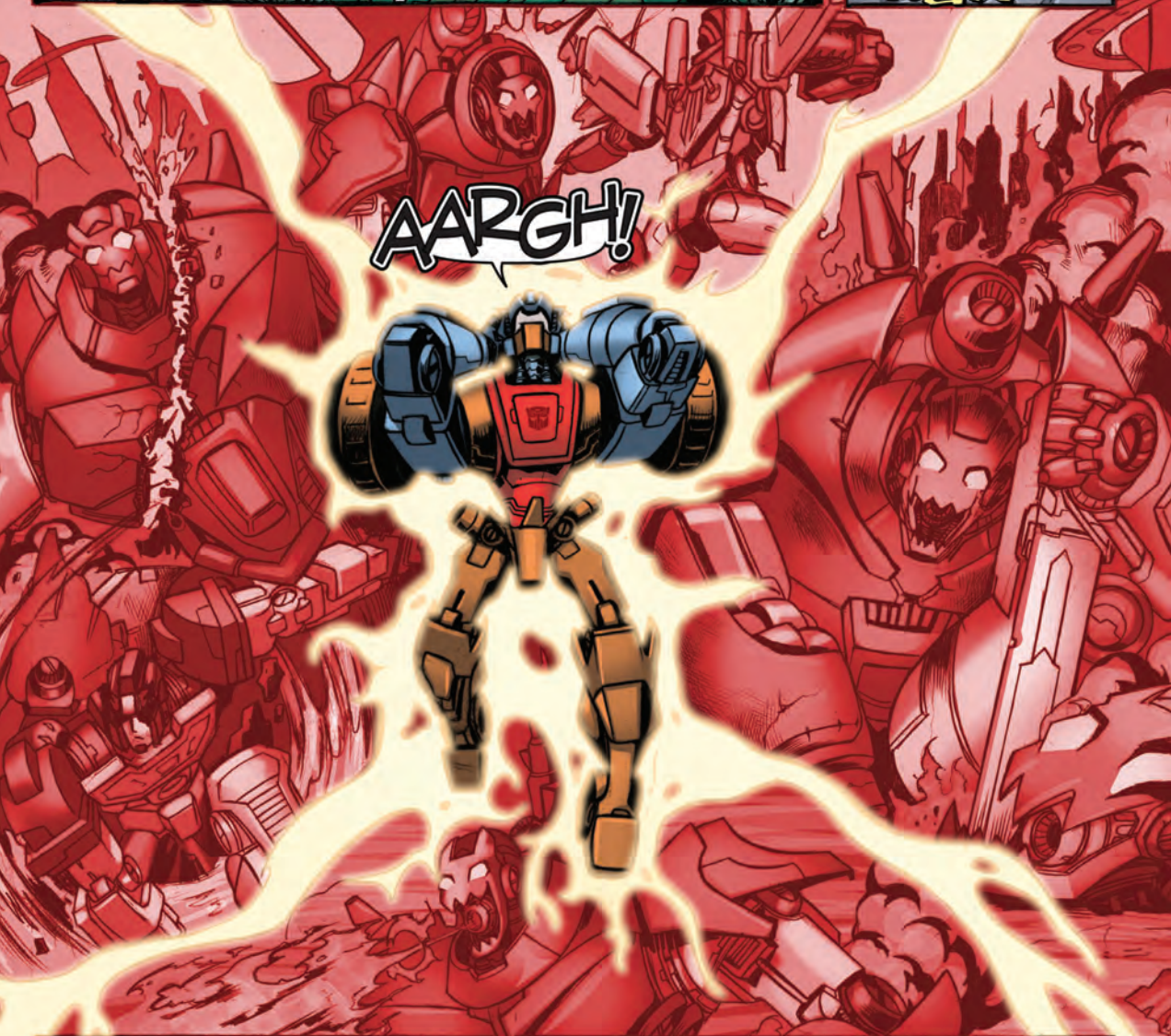
WELL THAT'S GOOD, BECAUSE—

—SHALLOW?

YOU'RE IMPORTANT, RODIMUS. MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVEN YOU REALIZE.

ONE DAY, EVERYTHING WILL DEPEND ON YOU.







—WORSE.

FAR BELOW

WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

WHAT'S THAT SHAKING?

THE METROTITAN'S *ALIVE*—AND SCREAMING. YOU CAN'T HEAR HIM, BUT—TRUST ME.

WHY IS HE SCREAMING?

WHEN CYBERTRON WAS REFORMATTED* HE HEARD THE SAME MESSAGE WE DID: "COME HOME." BUT HE *CAN'T*—THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT USED HIM TO POWER CRYSTAL CITY, AND NOW HE HASN'T GOT THE ENERGY TO TELEPORT. HE'S TOO BIG.

HE'S *HOWLING* IN FRUSTRATION AND *WILLING* HIS SPARK TO LEAVE HIS BODY, AND THE EXERTION IS *KILLING* HIM. I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER HE'S GOT.

*SEE TRANSFORMERS VOLUME 7: CHAOS

THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THE MESSAGE.

MESSAGE?

ON TAILGATE'S CHEST, IT DIDN'T SAY "LET ME OUT"—REWIND GOT IT WRONG—IT SAID "SET ME FREE."

THAT'S IT! THAT'S WHY THE PATIENTS IN THE MEDIBAY WERE COVERING THEIR AUDIO SENSORS! THEY COULD HEAR THE METROTITAN SCREAMING!

AND—AND—BEAR WITH ME—AND HIS SCREAM HAS HAD A SORT OF...*REVIVIFYING* EFFECT OF THE FEW PEOPLE WHO, ON SOME LEVEL, CAN HEAR IT!

YES! ALL THE *WEIRDNESS*—THE OFFLINERS, ORE'S RESURRECTION—THE *NANOCONS* COMING BACK TO LIFE—I BET IT ALL HAPPENED BECAUSE THE *LOST LIGHT* MOVED WITHIN EARSHOT OF THE SCREAM!

NO, YOU'RE NOT GOING BACK IN.

THIS METROTITAN WAS THERE AT THE *BEGINNING!* THROUGH HIS EYES I COULD SEE THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON, THE GUIDING HAND—*EVERYTHING!* PROOF, REWIND—PROOF OF GOD!



WAIT.
LET'S THINK
ABOUT—

RRRUUMMBBBLLE



IT'S A
SIGN!

YEAH—A
SIGN THAT THE
GALACTIC COUNCIL WANT
TO DRAG US BACK TO THE
SHIP. GUESS THEY FIGURED
TELEPORTATION WAS
TOO GENTLE.

WHIRL, TAKE A
TEAM OUTSIDE
AND KEEP 'EM BUSY
TIL CHROMEDOME'S
FINISHED. NO
FATALITIES,
UNDERSTAND?



I DON'T GET IT.
SHOULDN'T WE BE
HELPING THE
METROTITAN? HE'S
IN AGONY!

I'M
SORRY—THERE'S
NOTHING WE
CAN DO.

ACTUALLY,
FEARLESS
LEADER, THERE *IS*.
CHROMEDOME SAID
HE WAS TOO BIG TO
TELEPORT—SO WHAT
IF I MAKE HIM
SMALLER?

YOUR MASS
DISPLACEMENT
GUN?

I'VE BEEN
CARRYING IT THE
WHOLE TIME, IN ITS
MINIATURIZED FORM,
OBVIOUSLY.



CLEVER, BUT IT
CHANGES NOTHING.
WE NEED THE METROTITAN
HERE—THROUGH HIM, WE
CAN FIND OUT ABOUT OUR
ORIGINS, ABOUT WHAT
HAPPENED TO THE
CIRCLE OF LIGHT...

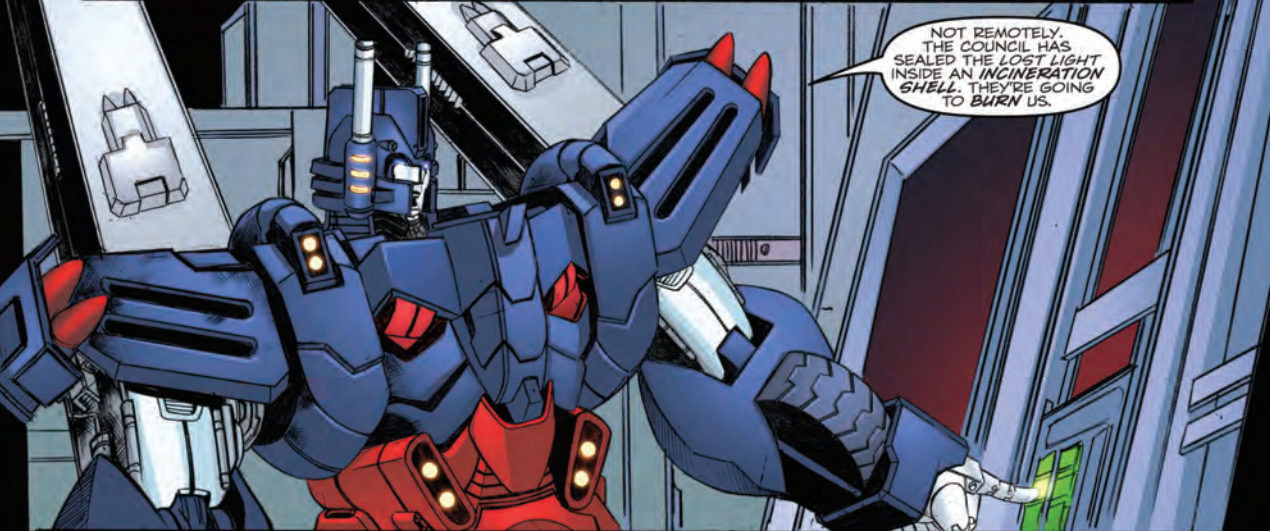
BUT HE'S
DYING! HE COULD
BE DEAD BY THE
TIME CHROMEDOME'S
FINISHED! IF WE'VE
GOT A CHANCE TO
SAVE HIM WE
SHOULD DO IT
NOW!



RODIMUS?
ULTRA MAGNUS
FOR YOU.



HEY. IS EVERYTHING ALRIGHT?



NOT REMOTELY. THE COUNCIL HAS SEALED THE *LOST LIGHT* INSIDE AN *INCINERATION SHELL*. THEY'RE GOING TO BURN US.



LISTEN--DON'T WAIT FOR US. JUST *GO*--QUANTUM JUMP OUT OF THERE.

CAN'T. THE SHELL'S DRAINING OUR POWER. THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING--TO SAY *GOODBYE*.

WHAT--? NO! THAT'S--THAT'S *COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE!* I ORDER YOU TO SURVIVE.



C'MON, RODIMUS. *DYING'S* BAD ENOUGH. DON'T MAKE ME DIE *DISOBEYING ORDERS*.

GIVE MY REGARDS TO THE *KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON*.

MAGNUS, WAIT! DON'T CLOSE COMMS...



"...PUT ME THROUGH TO *SWERVE*."

HEY--DO YOU BELIEVE IN *PRIMUS*?

WHOA, WHERE'D THAT COME FROM?



WHEN YOU'RE INJURED AND BLIND AND CONFINED TO THE *MEDIBAY*. YOUR THOUGHTS TEND TO TURN *INWARDS*--OR *UPWARDS*.

SO, DO YOU BELIEVE?



"AS IT HAPPENS, I DO. I MEAN, THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHING OUT THERE, RIGHT?"

"COS IF THIS IS ALL IT IS—GUNSHOTS AND SPACESHIPS AND SURVIVOR'S GUILT—THEN WHAT'S THE POINT?"

"IF THAT'S ALL IT IS, NO WONDER SO MANY PEOPLE JUST WANNA GET LIFE OVER WITH."

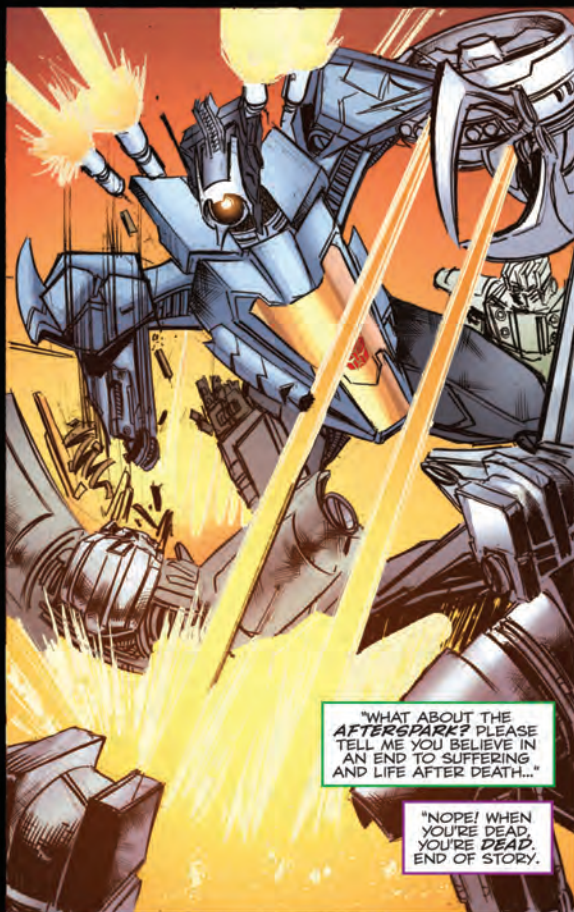


"AND YOU? LET ME GUESS: YOU'RE AN EVOLUTIONARY ENGINEERIST. YOU THINK IT'S ALL NATURALLY-OCCURRING GEARS, LEVERS, AND PULLEYS..."

"I'M NOT ANYTHING. I JUST THINK... PFFT. WHAT DO I THINK?"

"I THINK THAT LIFE IS VIOLENT AND CRUEL—AND PRECIOUS. YEAH..."

"I THINK YOU DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE IN A HIGHER POWER TO BE OVERAWED BY THE WORLD AROUND YOU."




"WHAT ABOUT THE AFTERSPAK? PLEASE TELL ME YOU BELIEVE IN AN END TO SUFFERING AND LIFE AFTER DEATH..."

"NOPE! WHEN YOU'RE DEAD, YOU'RE DEAD. END OF STORY."



"AND YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT DIVINE JUDGMENT. BAD PEOPLE DO BAD THINGS, AND SOMETIMES THEY GET AWAY WITH IT."



"THERE'S NO ONE TO JUDGE US BUT OUR PEERS. AND, ULTIMATELY, OURSELVES."



TAKE YOUR MATE **SWERVE**—HE'S BEATING HIMSELF UP BECAUSE HE SHOT WHATSISFACE, YEAH?

YEAH. **YES**. HE FEELS TERRIBLE ABOUT IT.

SEE, THAT'S **IMPORTANT**. IF IT DIDN'T BOTHER HIM, THEN HE REALLY WOULD BE A SCUMBAG.



Y'KNOW—**SWERVE**'S ALRIGHT. HE'S GOT THIS **REPUTATION**. AND—Y'KNOW—HE'S NOT SURE IF HE WANTS IT ANYMORE.

PLUS, **BLURR** LIKES HIM—AND HE'S **FAMOUS**!



WHEN I'M UP AND ABOUT, WE SHOULD HANG OUT—YOU AND ME AND **SHOCK**.


HELLO?

SORRY—SOMEONE'S CALLING ME.

RODIMUS?

SWERVE, LISTEN: YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT, BUT THE **LOST LIGHT**'S IN TROUBLE. I NEED YOU TO TELL ORE THE TRUTH, AS IN **NOW**.

THE TRUTH ABOUT—WHAT, ABOUT BEING MASHED INTO THE GENERATORS? IT'LL EITHER **KILL** HIM—AGAIN!—OR SEND HIM COMPLETELY **INSANE**!



I KNOW IT'LL BE A **SHOCK**—IN FACT, I'M **BANKING** ON IT. HIS REACTION SHOULD RE-ENERGIZE THE ENGINES, ENABLING THE **LOST LIGHT** TO **QUANTUM JUMP** TO SAFETY.

"**SHOULD**"? YOU'RE RISKING AN AUTOBOT'S LIFE FOR A "**SHOULD**"?

SHOULD, COULD, MIGHT, WILL—WHATEVER! **JUST TELL HIM!**



RODIMUS, I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TO ME...



WHAT ARE YOU—?

—NO—
NO!—JUST
LET ME—

—I'M
ORDERING
YOU TO—

—SWERVE—
DON'T YOU
DARE CLOSE
COMMS—



AAARGH!



THEY'RE
GONNA DIE.
ANY SECOND
NOW, EVERYONE
UP THERE IS
GONNA DIE
BECAUSE HE
SAID NO.

WAS THAT
ALL HE
SAID?

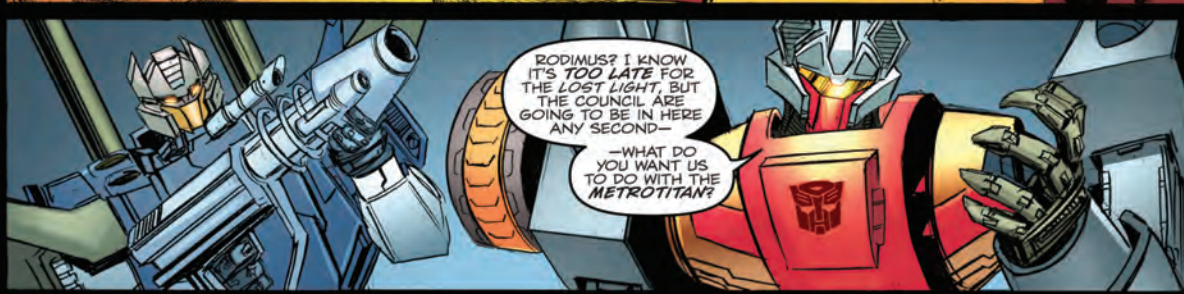


"RODIMPUS, I WANT
YOU TO LISTEN TO
ME. YOU'VE NOT
PRESENTED IT AS
SUCH, BUT YOU'VE
GIVEN ME A CHOICE:
HURT SOMEONE,
OR SAVE THEM.

"LAST TIME, I HURT
SOMEONE. NOT THIS
TIME. NOT TODAY.
TODAY, I CHOOSE
TO SAVE SOMEONE.
AND SURELY, AS AN
AUTOBOT, THAT'S
THE ONLY CHOICE
I CAN MAKE.

"SWERVE OUT."

PRETTY
MUCH.

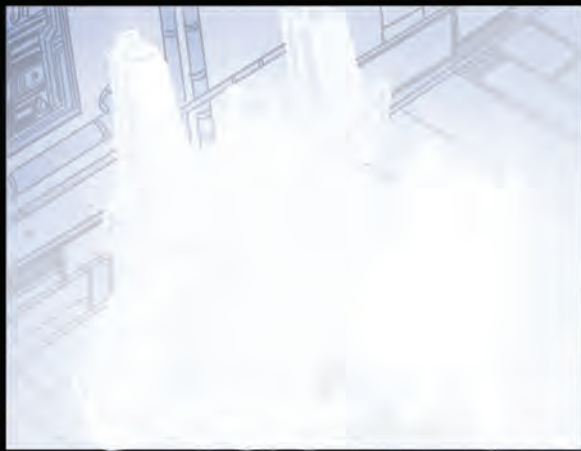


RODIMPUS? I KNOW
IT'S TOO LATE FOR
THE LOST LIGHT, BUT
THE COUNCIL ARE
GOING TO BE IN HERE
ANY SECOND—

—WHAT DO
YOU WANT US
TO DO WITH THE
METROTITAN?



SET HIM
FREE.



THE MEDIBAY. LATER.



SO ANYWAY, DRIFT SAYS THAT BY CHOOSING TO HELP HIM GO HOME RATHER THAN PLUNDER HIS MEMORIES, RODIMUS RESTORED THE METROTITAN'S FAITH IN THE CYBERTRONIAN RACE—

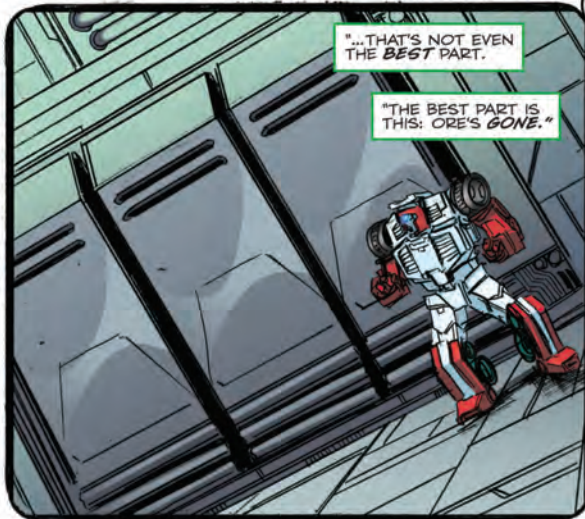
—WHICH IN TURN GAVE HIM THE STRENGTH TO TELEPORT OUT OF THERE.

AND BY WAY OF THANKS, HE TELEPORTED THE LOST LIGHT TO SAFETY. TA-DAH!

OH, BUT RUNG...

"...THAT'S NOT EVEN THE BEST PART.

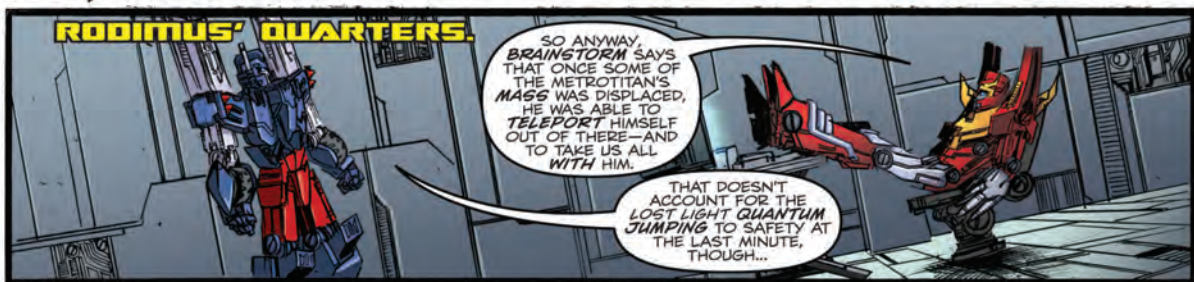
"THE BEST PART IS THIS: ORE'S GONE."



PRIMUS INTERVENED AND SENT HIM TO THE AFTERSHOCK.

NOW, I MAY BE OLD FASHIONED, BUT I CALL THAT A HAPPY ENDING.

RODIMUS' QUARTERS.



SO ANYWAY, BRAINSTORM SAYS THAT ONCE SOME OF THE METROTITAN'S MASS WAS DISPLACED, HE WAS ABLE TO TELEPORT HIMSELF OUT OF THERE—AND TO TAKE US ALL WITH HIM.

THAT DOESN'T ACCOUNT FOR THE LOST LIGHT QUANTUM JUMPING TO SAFETY AT THE LAST MINUTE, THOUGH...



AH, NOW THAT WAS BECAUSE OF ORE.

SKIDS THINKS THAT HAVING BEEN RESUSCITATED BY HIS SPARK, ORE WAS ESSENTIALLY AN EXTENSION OF THE METROTITAN'S BODY, SO WHEN THE METROTITAN TELEPORTED, ORE DID, TOO!

NO ONE KNOWS WHERE—ALL WE KNOW IS THAT THE RUSH OF TELEPORT ENERGY KICK-STARTED THE QUANTUM ENGINES. TA-DAH!



ALL OF WHICH LEAVES ONE UNANSWERED QUESTION: WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT?

CHROMEDOME RECKONS THEY'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED. HE THINKS HE SAW THEIR ABDUCTORS WHEN HE INTERFACED WITH THE METROTITAN, BUT HE CAN'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS: THE STOLEN MEMORIES FADED WHEN THE METROTITAN TELEPORTED.

BUT WE'RE THINKING... WHAT? DECEPTICONS?



ALL I KNOW IS THAT **BLASTER'S** INTERCEPTED REPORTS OF DECEPTION ACTIVITY NEAR THE ARGON NEBULAE, SO **THAT'S** WHERE WE'RE GOING NEXT.

FIRST WE FIND THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT, THEN WE FIND THE KNIGHTS OF CYBERTRON.

IF I DIDN'T KNOW YOU BETTER I'D SAY THAT WAS A **PLAN**.



YEAH, I'VE DECIDED TO STOP WINGING IT. I MEAN, THERE'S BLIND FAITH AND THERE'S BLIND **LUCK**.

THERE ARE A THOUSAND **OTHER** WAYS TODAY COULDN'T ENDED, AND THEY ALL INVOLVE US **DYING**.

YOU WERE **RIGHT**: THE UNIVERSE IS INNATELY HOSTILE, AND IF PRIMUS IS A **WARRIOR GOD**...



"...IT'S BECAUSE A LOT OF PEOPLE OUT THERE WANT TO SEE HIS CHILDREN **DEAD**."

SIR—I AM SUBMITTING MY REPORT ON THE CYBERTRONIANS. IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME FOR **REGIME CHANGE**, IT'S NOW...

...IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH ULTRA MAGNUS HE LET SLIP THAT THEIR FORCES ARE **SPLIT**.

I TAKE IT YOU ASKED HIM TO JOIN US?



"YES, AND HE **REFUSED**. HE SAID..."

I'M SORRY, BUT I **CAN'T**. I'M NEEDED ON THE **LOST LIGHT**.

SO THE NEEDS OF THIS **RODIMUS** AND HIS **CREW** OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS OF THE **TRILLIONS** OF PEOPLE WHO RELY ON THE COUNCIL FOR PROTECTION?

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE...



YOUR GREAT STRENGTH, ULTRA MAGNUS, IS YOUR **INFLEXIBILITY**. YOU'RE DETACHED AND IMPARTIAL AND REMOTE—AND THAT'S HOW IT SHOULD BE.

STAY WITH RODIMUS AND THE OTHERS TOO LONG AND THEY'LL **CHANGE** YOU. THEY'LL TURN YOU INTO SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT. THEY'LL TURN YOU INTO ONE OF **THEM**.



AND WHAT DID HE SAY TO THAT?

NOTHING.

HE JUST **SMILED**.





MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE ANNUAL COVER B

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**



ROBOTS IN DISGUISE ANNUAL COVER A

by **TIM SEELEY** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**

IN THE FAR REACHES OF THE COSMOS, CIRCLING A BURNING YELLOW DWARF STAR SPINS A PLANET--AS UNUSUAL AS IT IS DANGEROUS!

CYBERTRON--A TARNISHED JEWEL EMBEDDED IN A RING OF LIGHT WORN ON THE UNIVERSE'S CLENCHED FIST!

ITS HILLTOPS--ONCE GLISTENING OF STEEL AND CHROME--NOW BLACKENED BY ENDLESS MILLENNIA OF CIVIL WAR.

ITS INHABITANTS EVOLVED--NOT FROM CELLS INTO MUSCLES AND BONES BUT FROM METAL INTO GEARS AND LEVERS.

A UNIQUE ABILITY AROSE AMONG THEM--THE ABILITY TO CHANGE SHAPE AT WILL, TO BETTER SUIT THEIR SURROUNDINGS.

ACROSS THE GALAXY THEIR KIND WOULD COME TO BE KNOWN AND FEARED AS--THE TRANSFORMERS.

WAR IS THE LOT DECREED UPON THEM BY FATE--ENDLESS WAR...

...UNTIL THERE CAME A LEADER. ONE CYBERTRONIAN WHO UNITED THE PLANET--WHO ENDED THE FIGHTING--

--WHO GAVE THESE METAL GIANTS A NEW BEGINNING.

THEY CALLED HIM PRIME--

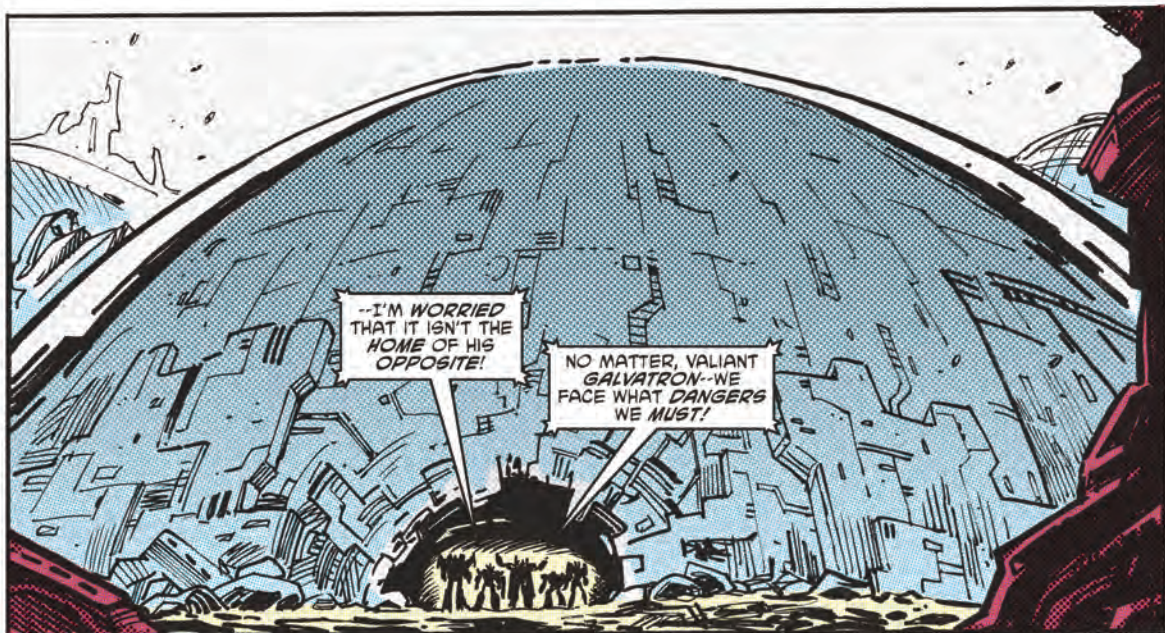
--NOVA PRIME!

HERE! AT
LAST--OUR
SEARCH ENDS,
OLD FRIENDS!

WE'VE
FOUND IT--THE
LEGENDARY LAIR
OF GREAT PRIMUS
HIMSELF--THE
BESTOWER OF
LIFE UPON ALL
OUR KIND!

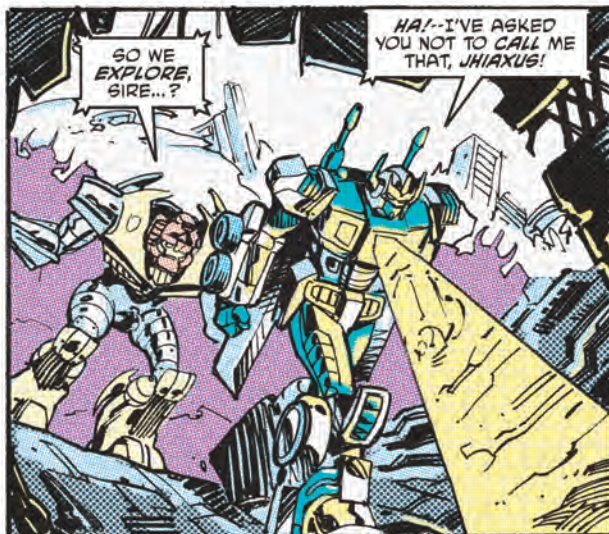
I HOPE YOU'RE
RIGHT, NOVA!
BECAUSE LOOKING
AT THAT PLACE--

THE TRANSFORMERS



--I'M WORRIED
THAT IT ISN'T THE
HOME OF HIS
OPPOSITE!

NO MATTER, VALIANT
GALVATRON--WE
FACE WHAT DANGERS
WE MUST!

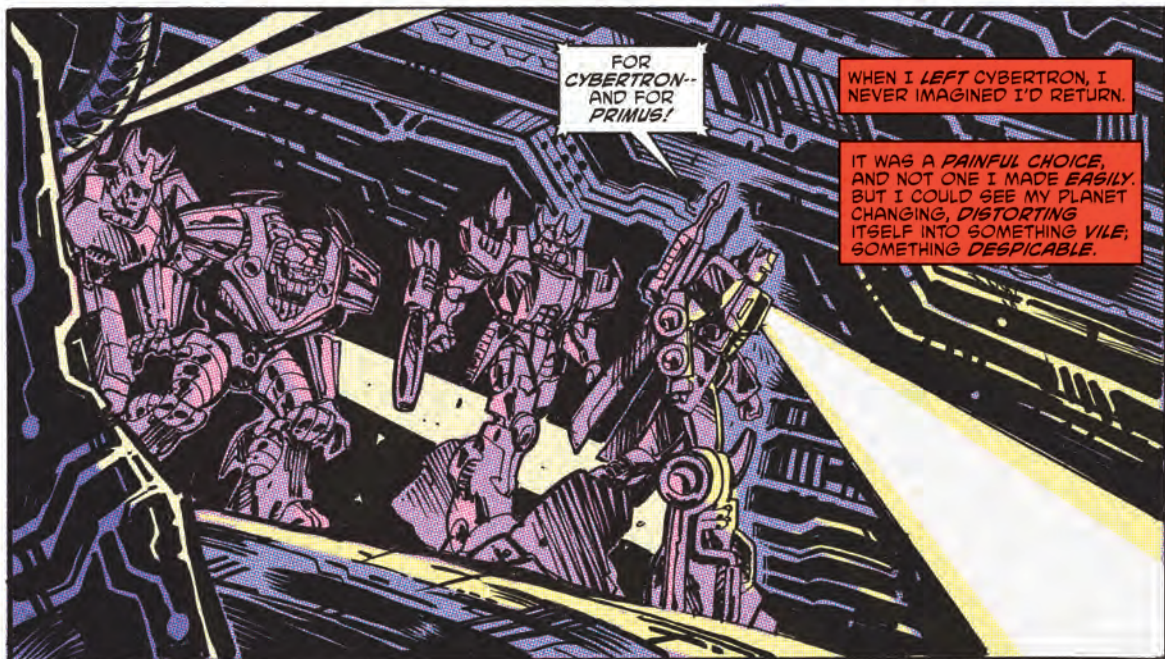


SO WE
EXPLORE,
SIRE...?

HA!--I'VE ASKED
YOU NOT TO CALL ME
THAT, JHIAXUS!



BUT YOU'RE
RIGHT! REGARDLESS
OF THE RISK TO
OURSELVES, WE PUT
OUR FEARS ASIDE!



FOR
CYBERTRON--
AND FOR
PRIMUS!

WHEN I LEFT CYBERTRON, I
NEVER IMAGINED I'D RETURN.

IT WAS A PAINFUL CHOICE,
AND NOT ONE I MADE EASILY.
BUT I COULD SEE MY PLANET
CHANGING, DISTORTING
ITSELF INTO SOMETHING VILE;
SOMETHING DESPICABLE.

THE AUTOBOTS BLAMED DECEPTICONS LIKE STARScream FOR STARTING THE VIOLENCE.

PRIMUS IS THE VOICE— HIS WORDS LEAD TO THE TRUTH.

PRIMUS IS THE STEEL— HE IS OUR BODY, HIS OUR SPARK.

PRIMUS IS THE GUN— THE HOPE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW.

I AM HIS BULLET— I AM THE PROMISED DAWN MADE REAL.

THAT'S... CHARMING. I DIDN'T THINK YOU CARED FOR POETRY, STARScream.

I'M NOT PARTICULARLY RELIGIOUS EITHER, BUT THAT PART ABOUT THE **BULLET** IS PRETTY FUNNY, RIGHT?

SKY-BYTE TOLD IT TO ME, OLD DECEPTICON POETRY. BACK FROM WHEN ZETA PRIME WAS STILL OPPRESSING US.

THE DECEPTICONS BLAMED THE AUTOBOTS FOR THE CORRUPTION WE ALLOWED TO OVERTAKE OUR WORLD.

AND YOU'D NEVER HEARD IT.

AND ME?

I DON'T KNOW WHO WAS CORRECT; I WAS NEVER SURE ABOUT THE RIGHT CHOICE.

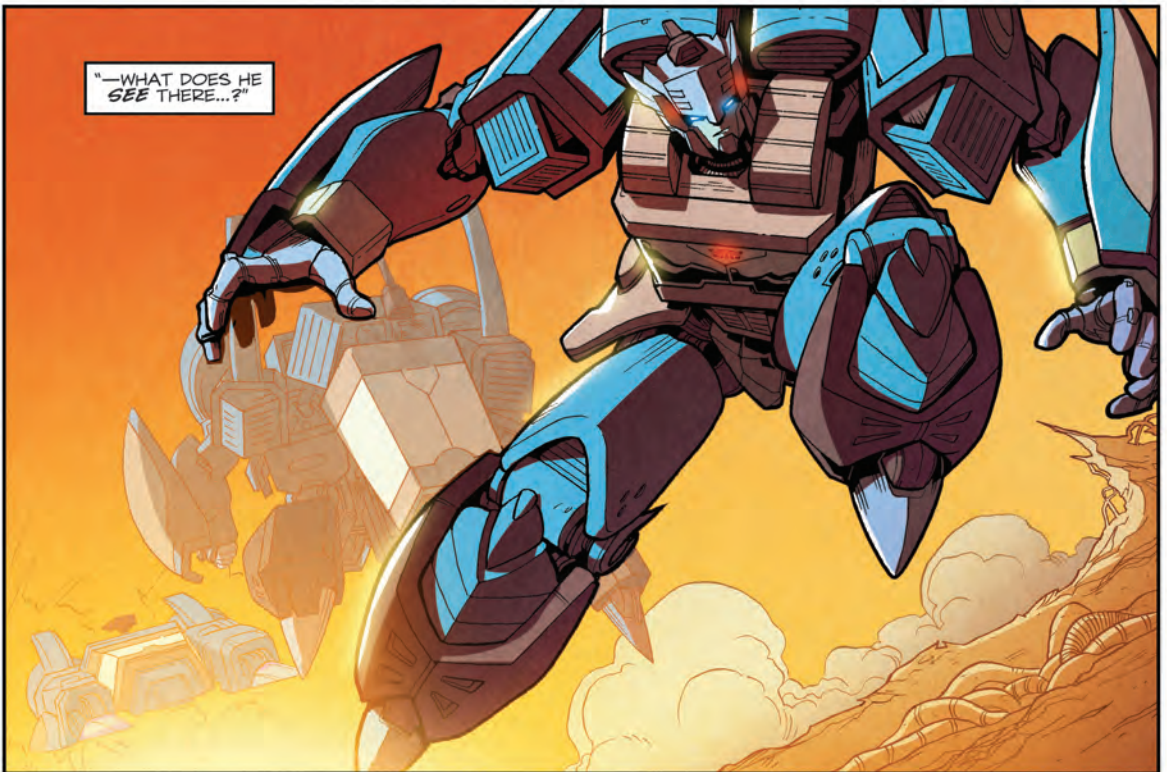
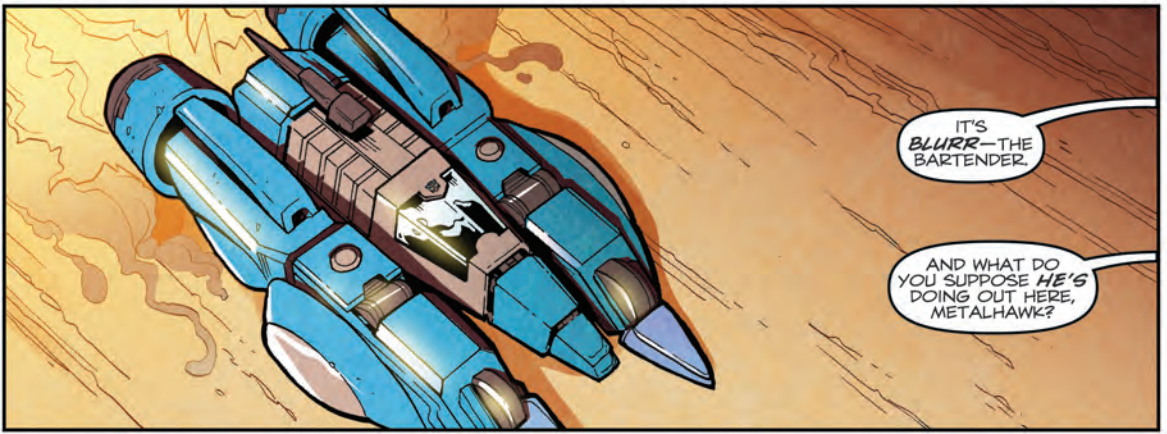
I WAS **BUSY** AND— LIKE YOU SAID, **METALHAWK**— I NEVER CARED FOR THE STUFF.

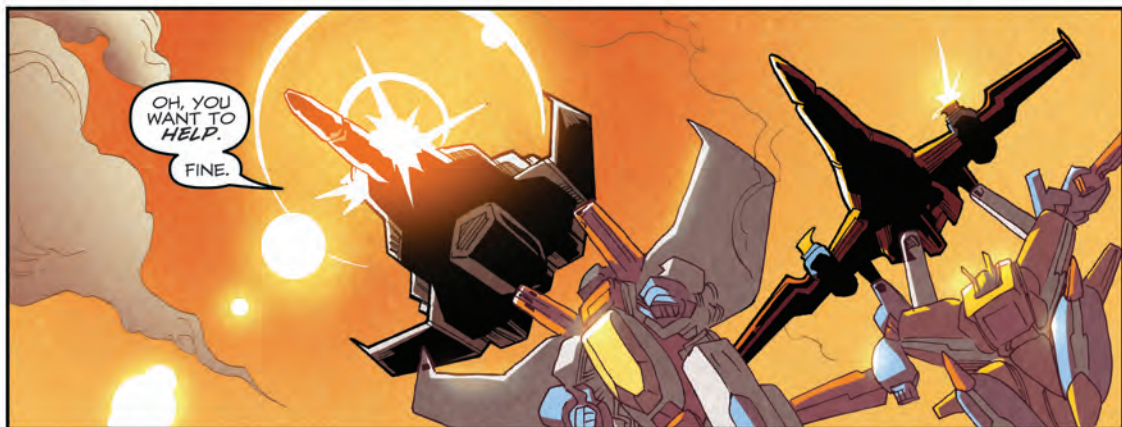
WE SHOULD CONTINUE THE SEARCH. **IRONHIDE** AND THE OTHER MISSING AUTOBOTS ARE OUT HERE, SOMEWHERE.

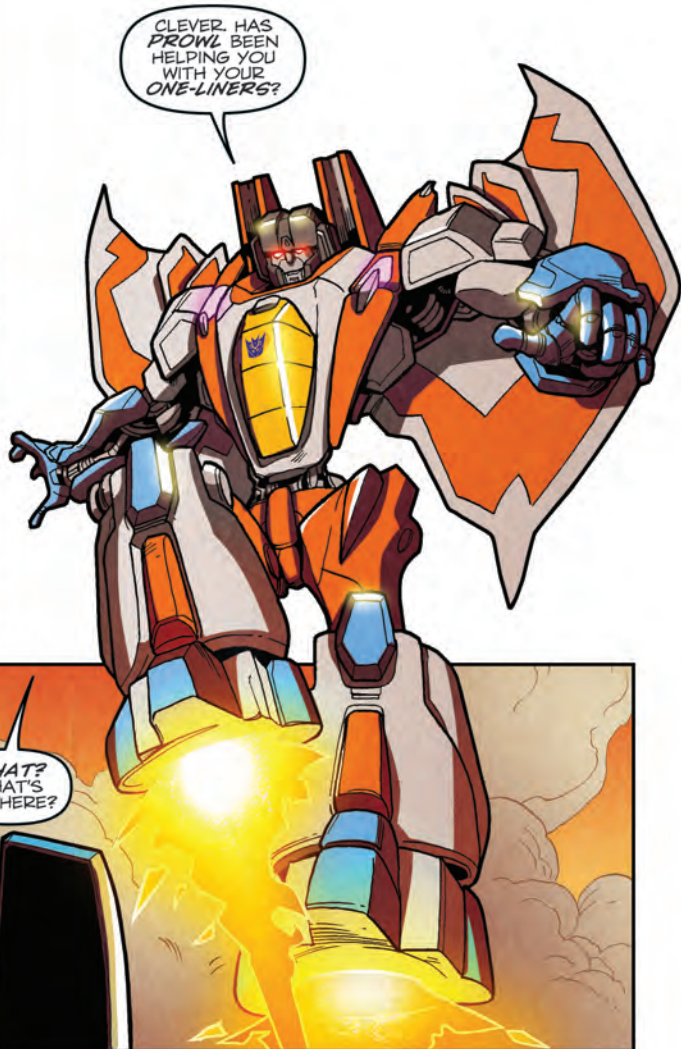
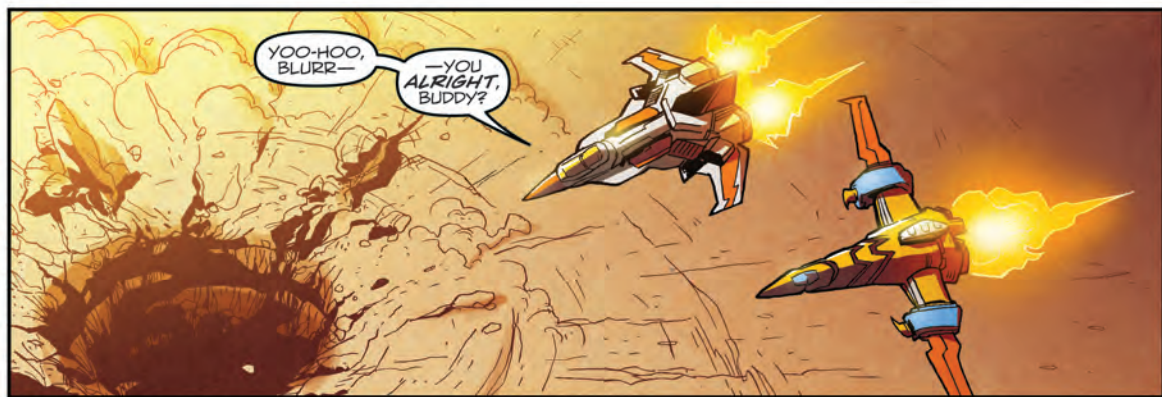
AND WRONG CHOICES...

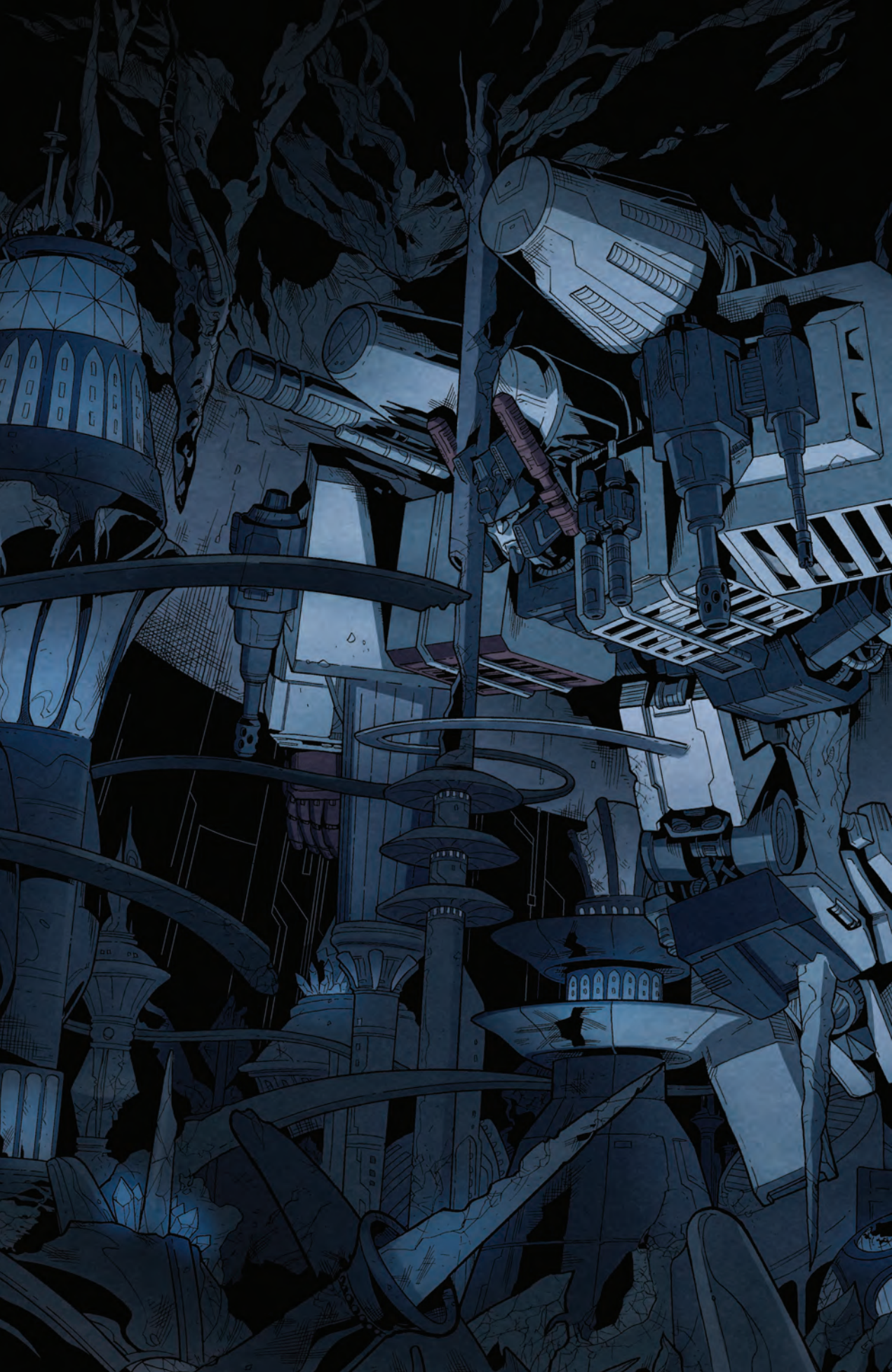
...WRONG CHOICES HAVE A WAY OF COMING BACK TO HAUNT US.

SURE, SURE— BUT WHO DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT IS?











...WE'VE GOT A
SITUATION.

PRIMUS
ALL GOOD THINGS

THE VALIANT CYBERTRONIANS DESCEND DEEPER INTO THE MACHINE-FILLED LANDSCAPE OF THEIR WORLD, CURIOSITY-AND A SENSE OF DANGER-MOUNTING...

WHAT IS THIS PLACE, NOVA PRIME?

THIS?

THIS IS MERELY THE PASSAGEWAY--THE ENTRANCE TO A SITE, THE ORIGINS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN LOST TO THE DEAD PAST.

THE ANCIENT ONE TELLS ME PRIMUS RESIDED HERE WITH HIS CLOSEST CIRCLE--THE GUIDING HAND.

GREAT SENTINELS PROTECTED THEM AND ALLOWED THEM TO CONTEMPLATE PEACE AND ART AND PROSPERITY...

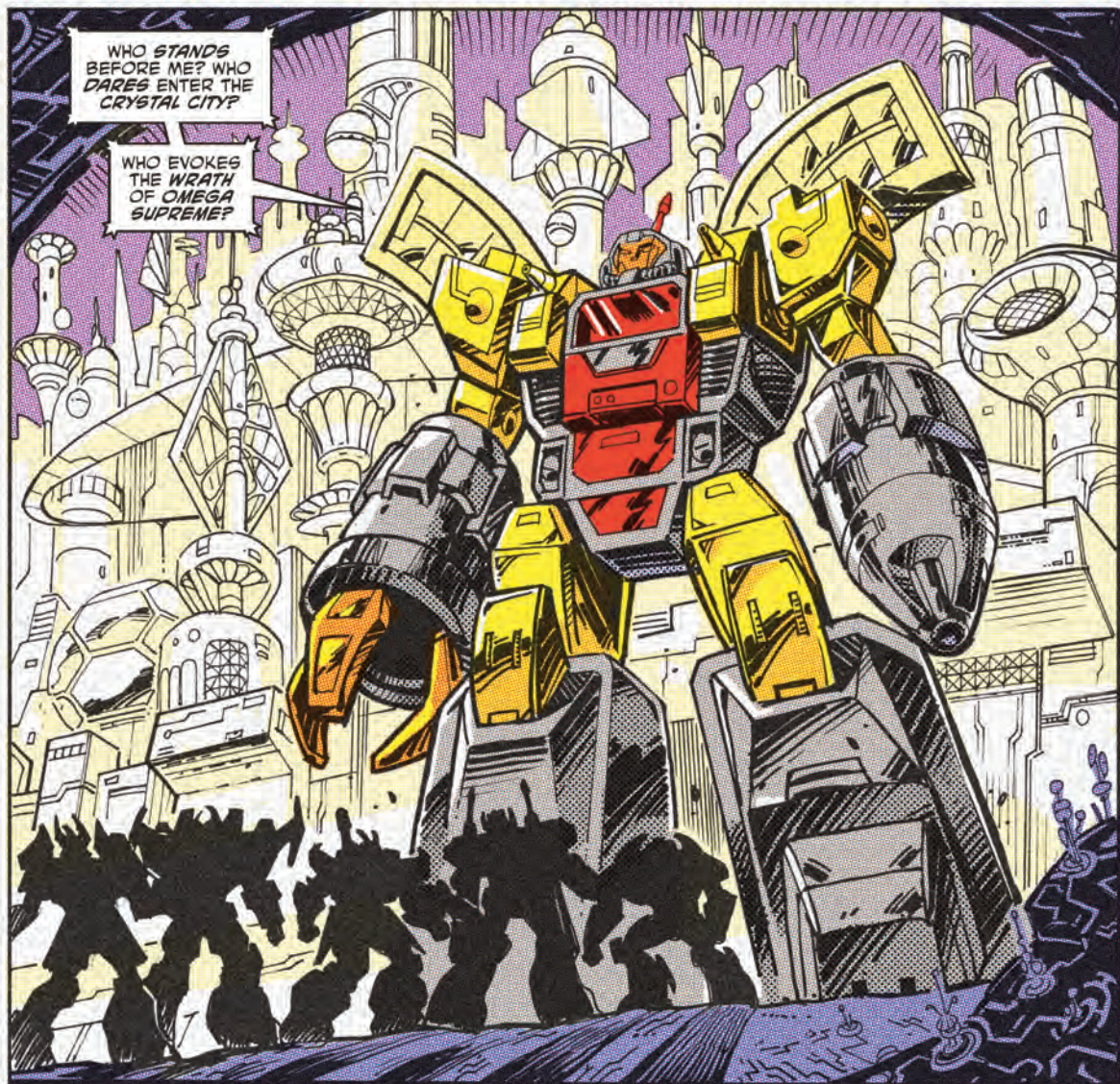
THINGS SORELY LACKING IN OUR WORLD, NOW.

JUST SO, CYCLONUS. JUST SO.

HERE--I SENSE OUR QUEST IS AT AN END--

!GASP!

PRIMUS BE WITH US!



WHO STANDS
BEFORE ME? WHO
DARES ENTER THE
CRYSTAL CITY?

WHO EVOKES
THE WRATH
OF OMEGA
SUPREME?



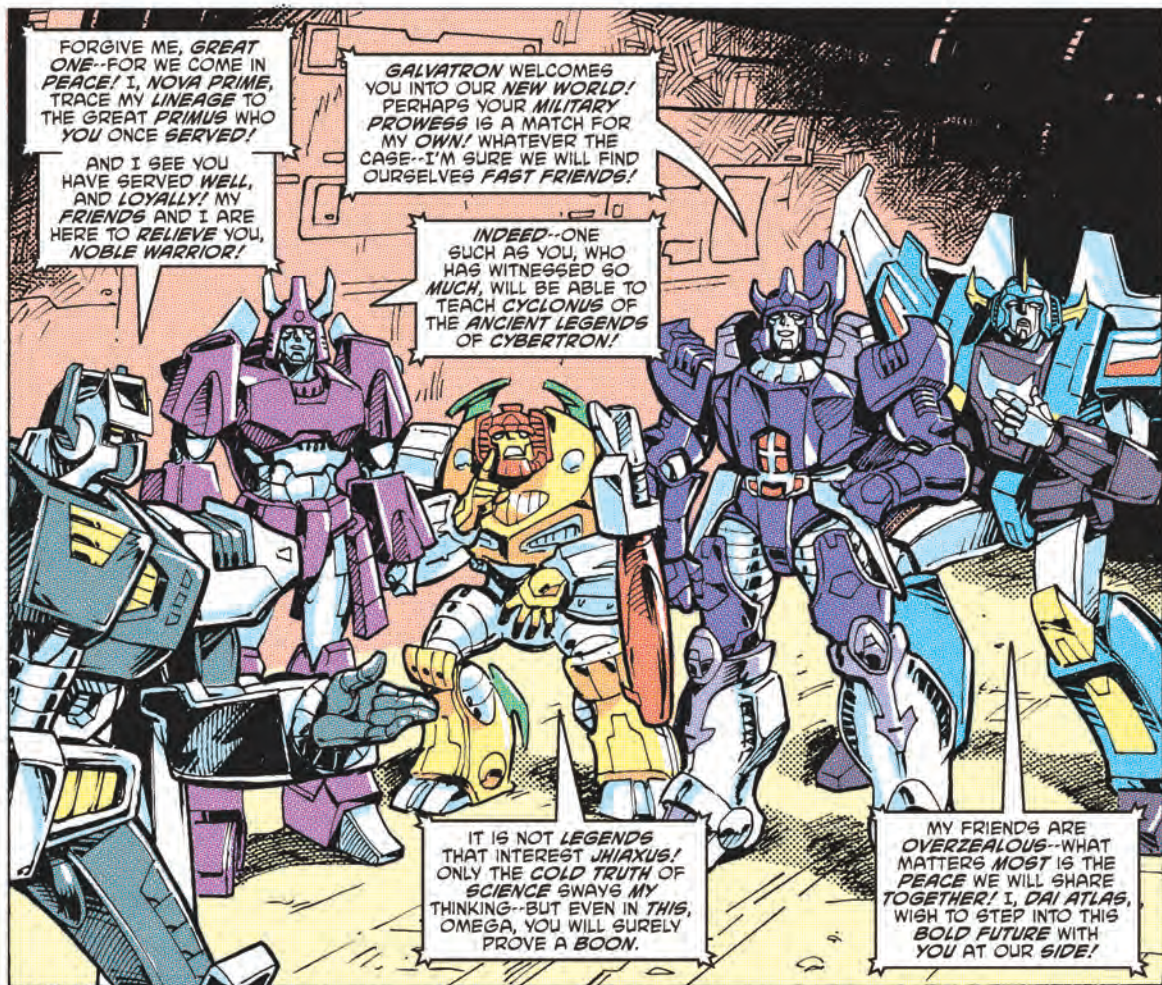
YOU--OMEGA
SUPREME? THE
LEGENDARY
LEADER OF THE
OMEGA
SENTINELS?

I BELIEVED
YOU TO BE
A MYTH!



YOU HAVE
ME AT A
DISADVANTAGE,
LITTLE ONES.

THAT IS NOT
A POSITION
I ENJOY.



FORGIVE ME, GREAT ONE--FOR WE COME IN PEACE! I, NOVA PRIME, TRACE MY LINEAGE TO THE GREAT PRIMUS WHO YOU ONCE SERVED!

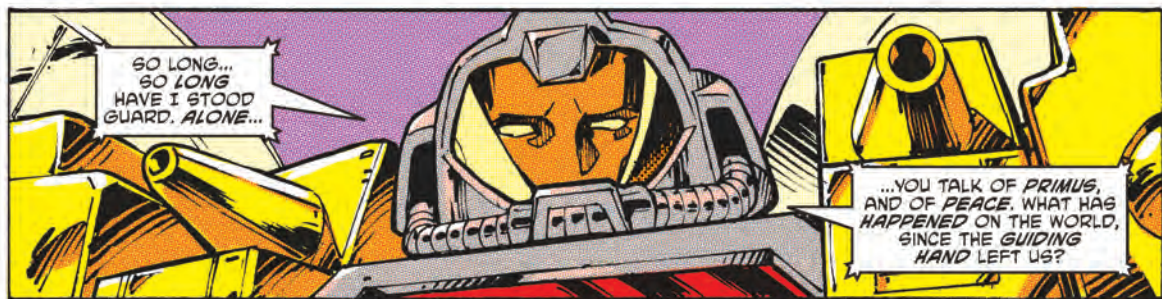
AND I SEE YOU HAVE SERVED WELL, AND LOYALLY! MY FRIENDS AND I ARE HERE TO RELIEVE YOU, NOBLE WARRIOR!

SALVATRON WELCOMES YOU INTO OUR NEW WORLD! PERHAPS YOUR MILITARY PROWESS IS A MATCH FOR MY OWN! WHATEVER THE CASE--I'M SURE WE WILL FIND OURSELVES FAST FRIENDS!

INDEED--ONE SUCH AS YOU, WHO HAS WITNESSED SO MUCH, WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH CYCLONUS OF THE ANCIENT LEGENDS OF CYBERTRON!

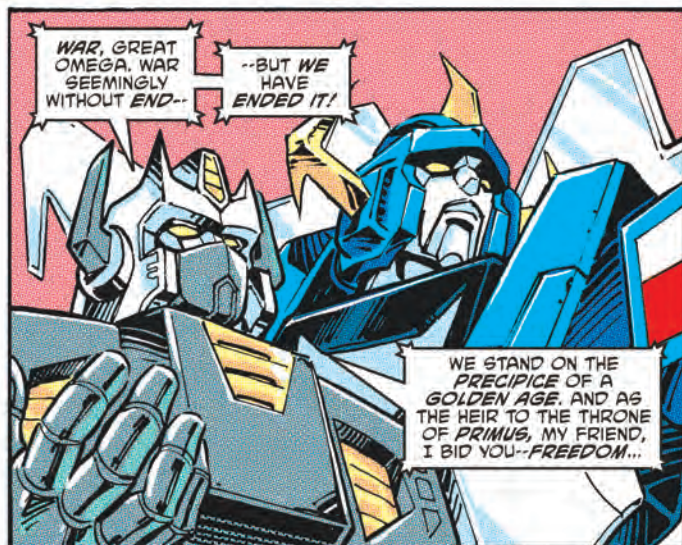
IT IS NOT LEGENDS THAT INTEREST JHIAXUS! ONLY THE COLD TRUTH OF SCIENCE SWAYS MY THINKING--BUT EVEN IN THIS, OMEGA, YOU WILL SURELY PROVE A BOON.

MY FRIENDS ARE OVERZEALOUS--WHAT MATTERS MOST IS THE PEACE WE WILL SHARE TOGETHER! I, DAI ATLAS, WISH TO STEP INTO THIS BOLD FUTURE WITH YOU AT OUR SIDE!



SO LONG... SO LONG HAVE I STOOD GUARD, ALONE...

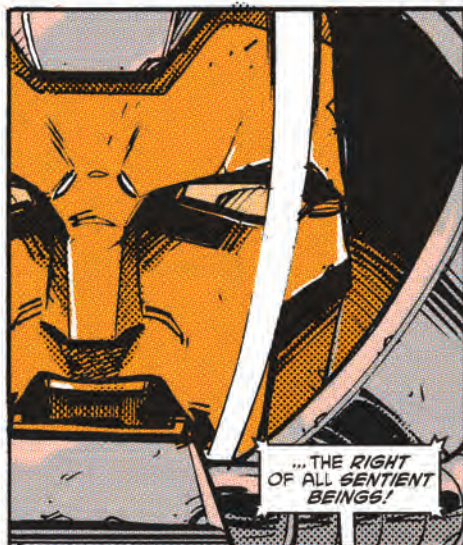
...YOU TALK OF PRIMUS, AND OF PEACE. WHAT HAS HAPPENED ON THE WORLD, SINCE THE GUIDING HAND LEFT US?



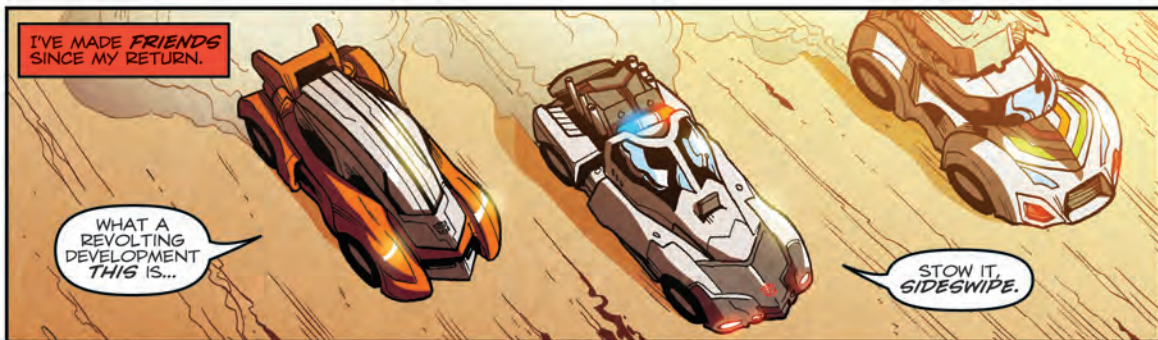
WAR, GREAT OMEGA. WAR SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END--

--BUT WE HAVE ENDED IT!

WE STAND ON THE PRECIPICE OF A GOLDEN AGE. AND AS THE HEIR TO THE THRONE OF PRIMUS, MY FRIEND, I BID YOU--FREEDOM...



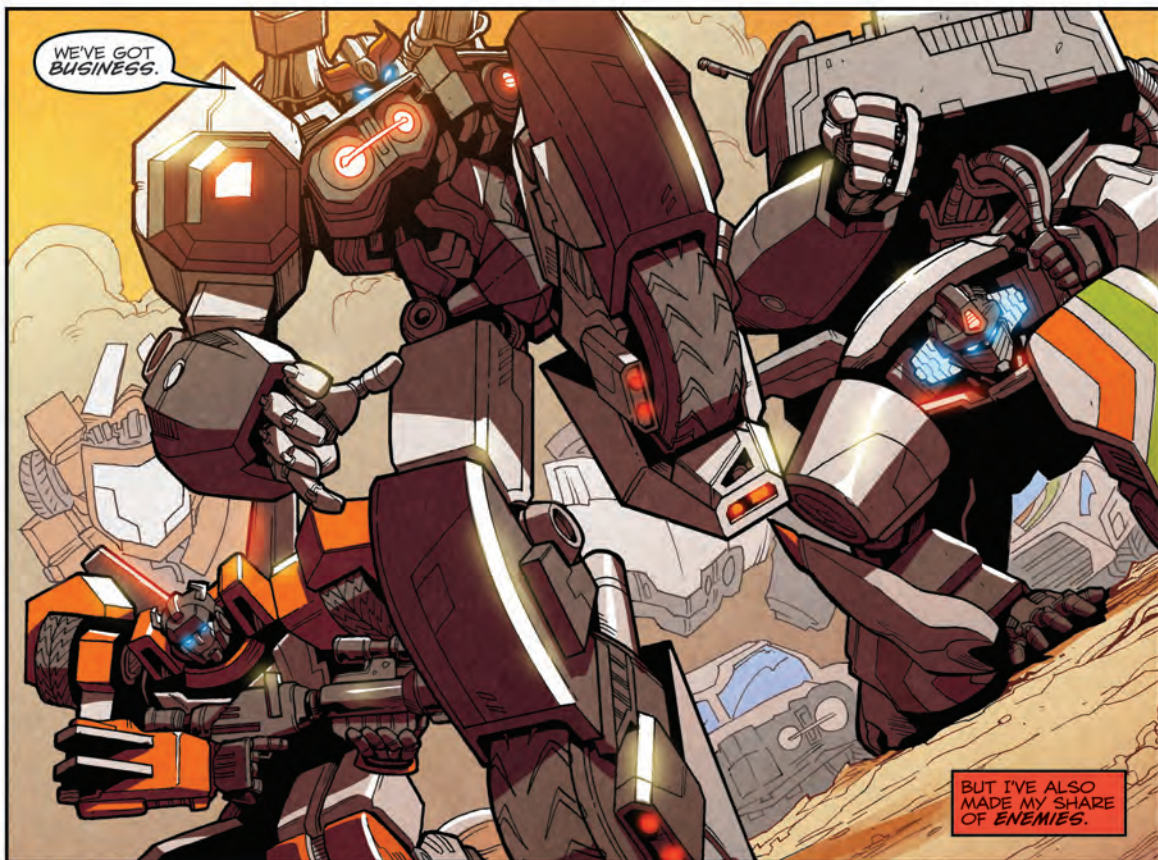
...THE RIGHT OF ALL SENTIENT BEINGS!



I'VE MADE **FRIENDS** SINCE MY RETURN.

WHAT A REVOLTING DEVELOPMENT **THIS** IS...

STOW IT, **SIDESWIPE**.



WE'VE GOT **BUSINESS**.

BUT I'VE ALSO MADE MY SHARE OF **ENEMIES**.



WELL, WELL, WELL—IF IT ISN'T MY THREE **FAVORITE** CYBERTRONIANS, ALL IN **ONE** PLACE.

PROWL!

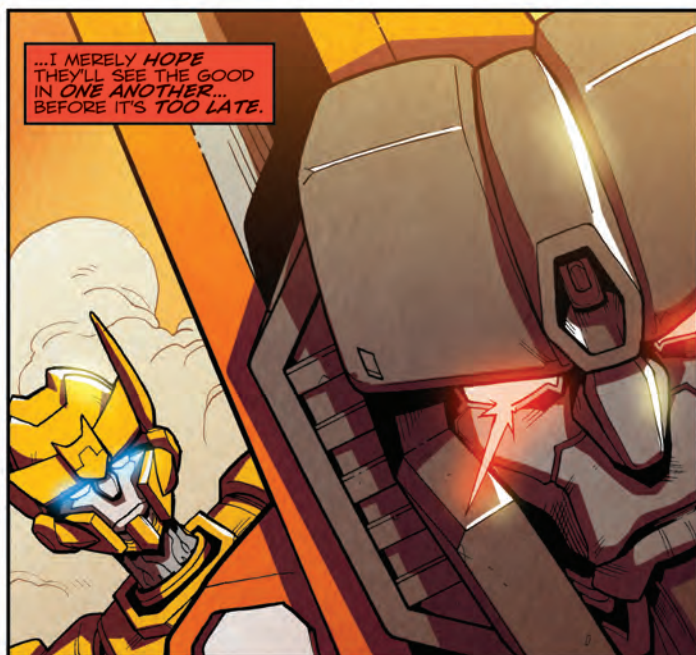
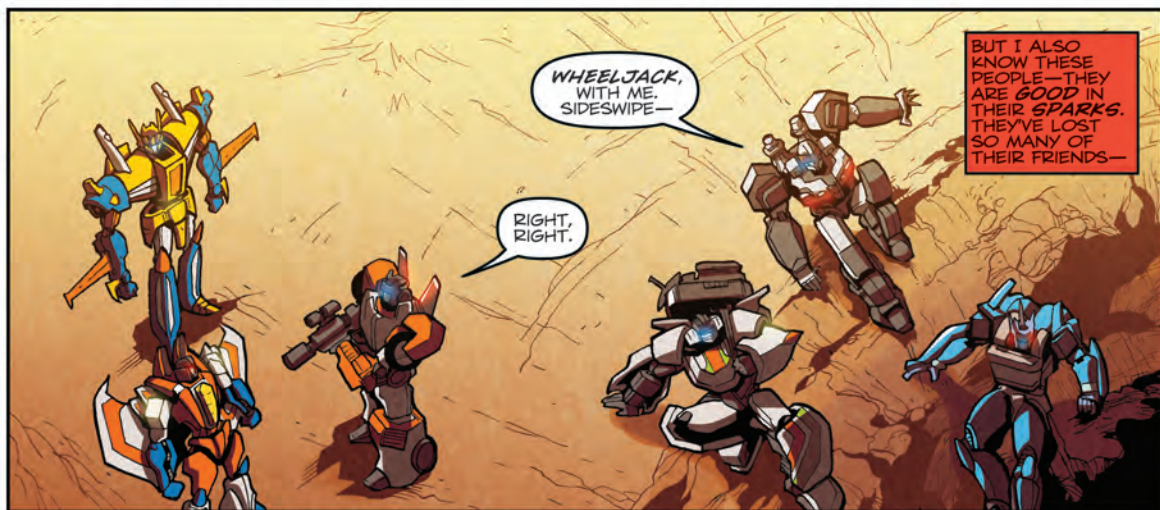
DAMMIT, OF ALL 'BOTS... MY CALL WAS FOR **BUMBLEBEE**.



BUMBLEBEE'S BUSY. MAYBE YOU HEARD ABOUT A MISSING **DECEPTICON** STARSHIP?

WASN'T **ME**.

IN FACT, I THINK THAT **THEFT** IS A **PERFECT** EXAMPLE OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SQUEEZE A PEOPLE **PAST** THE POINT OF **BREAKING**.



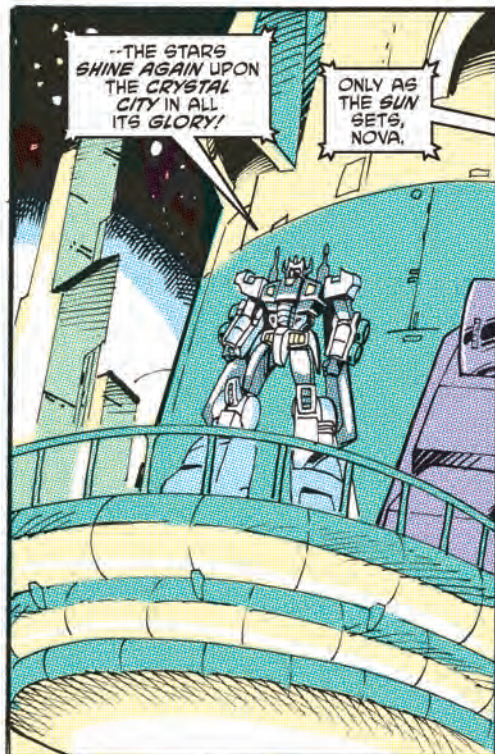
IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, THE WONDERS OF JHIAXUS' TECHNOLOGY RAISED THE GLEAMING SANCTUARY TO THE SURFACE!

AT
LAST--



--THE STARS
SHINE AGAIN UPON
THE CRYSTAL
CITY IN ALL
ITS GLORY!

ONLY AS
THE SUN
SETS,
NOVA,



TRUE, THEN.
BUT ON THESE
STARS--REVEALED
BY YOUR
SETTING SUN--

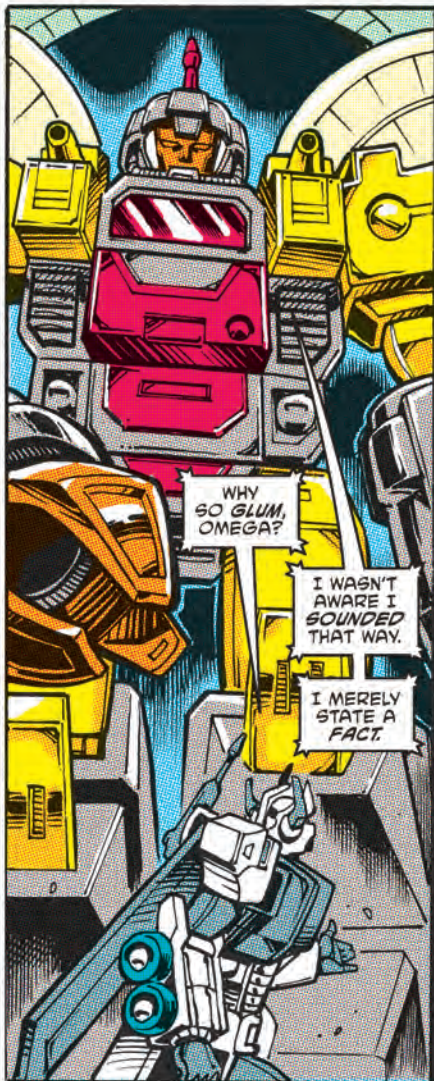
--ARE COUNTLESS
LIVES, COUNTLESS
SENTIENT BEINGS--



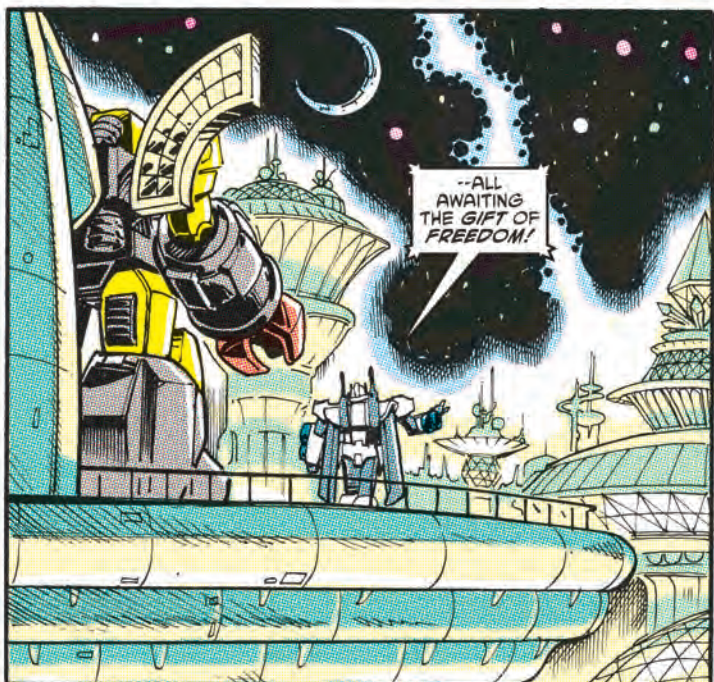
WHY
SO GLUM,
OMEGA?

I WASN'T
AWARE I
SOUNDED
THAT WAY.

I MERELY
STATE A
FACT.



--ALL
AWAITING
THE GIFT OF
FREEDOM!





I THOUGHT IT WAS **METROPLEX**, AT FIRST. BUT THIS IS SOMEBODY ELSE. SOMEBODY LIKE HIM...

A **TITAN**. THEY SERVED **PRIMUS** AND HIS FOLLOWERS... AT LEAST ACCORDING TO **LEGEND**.

COMMON SENSE TELLS ME THEY'RE JUST **BIG GUYS**.




YOU **KNEW** **METROPLEX**, RIGHT?



WE **MET**. HE SERVED AS OUR **FIRST HEADQUARTERS**, BEFORE HIS... HIS **SPECIAL MISSION**.



COULD THIS ONE HAVE A **SPECIAL MISSION**, TOO? BECAUSE I'M READING **TELEPORTATION ENERGY**. HE JUMPED HERE, USING A **SPACE BRIDGE**.



THEY'RE **SUPPOSED** TO BE ABLE TO DO THAT.

BUT THEY'RE JUST **"BIG GUYS"**. PROWL?

THIS **CITY**, DID IT **JUMP** HERE, TOO?



NO—IT'S **NATIVE**. I MEAN—IT WAS **ALREADY** HERE.

THAT'S **IMPOSSIBLE**. YOU'RE TELLING ME IT REMAINED AS-IS WHEN **CYBERTRON** **REFORMATTED** AFTER THE **CHAOS EVENT**?

YEAH, WELL, THERE'S **MORE**.



THE CHARGED
ANTI-PROTONS
FROM THE—THE
TITAN... THEY'RE
INTERACTING, UM,
ODDLY WITH THE
REGULAR PROTONS
OF THE CITY.

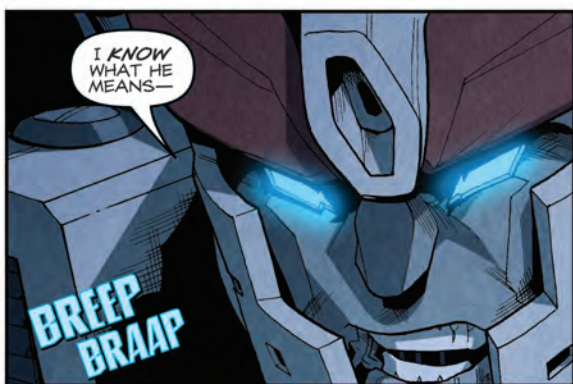
"ODDLY."



YEAH, THIS,
WELL—THIS SHOULDN'T
BE POSSIBLE, AND, I
MEAN, THIS IS JUST MY
INITIAL READING, BUT,
UM, VECTOR SPACE
SEEMS TO BE
DECAYING.

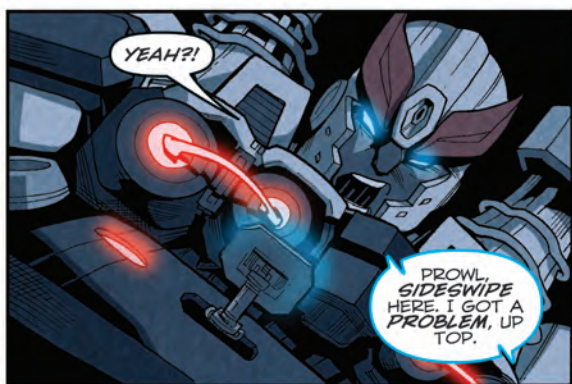
"VECTOR
SPACE."

HE MEANS
"REALITY ITSELF."
PROWL. HE'S JUST
TRYING TO SOUND
CLEVER.



I KNOW
WHAT HE
MEANS—

BREEP
BRAAP



YEAH?!

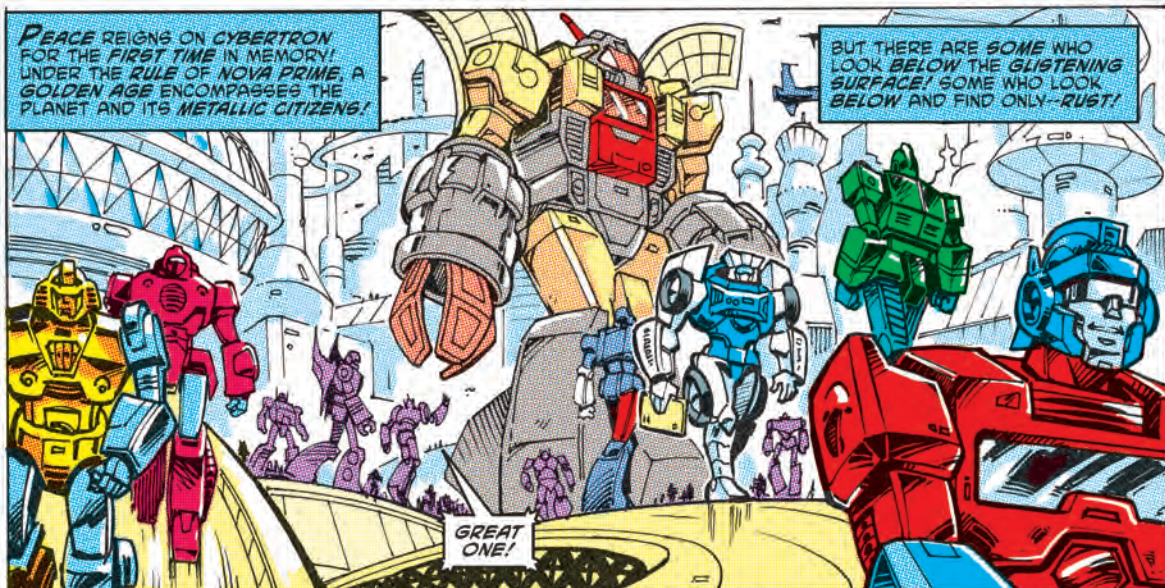
PROWL,
SIDESWIPE
HERE. I GOT A
PROBLEM, UP
TOP.



WHAT
NOW?

YOU
BETTER
COME SEE,
SIR.

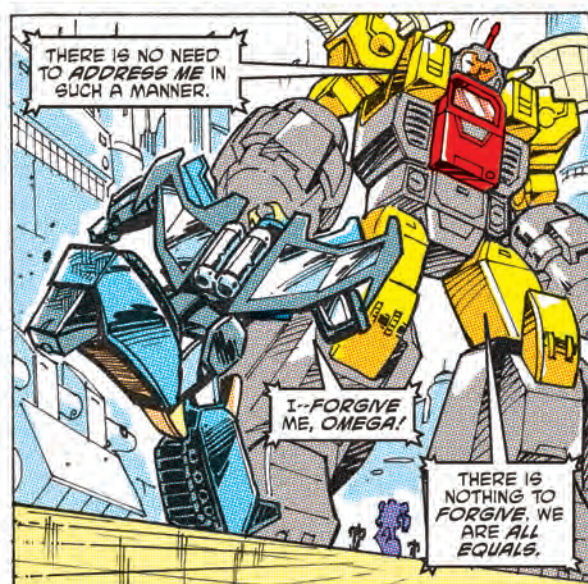
YOU'RE
NOT GONNA
LIKE IT.



PEACE REIGNS ON CYBERTRON FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY! UNDER THE RULE OF NOVA PRIME, A GOLDEN AGE ENCOMPASSES THE PLANET AND ITS METALLIC CITIZENS!

BUT THERE ARE SOME WHO LOOK BELOW THE GLISTENING SURFACE! SOME WHO LOOK BELOW AND FIND ONLY--RUST!

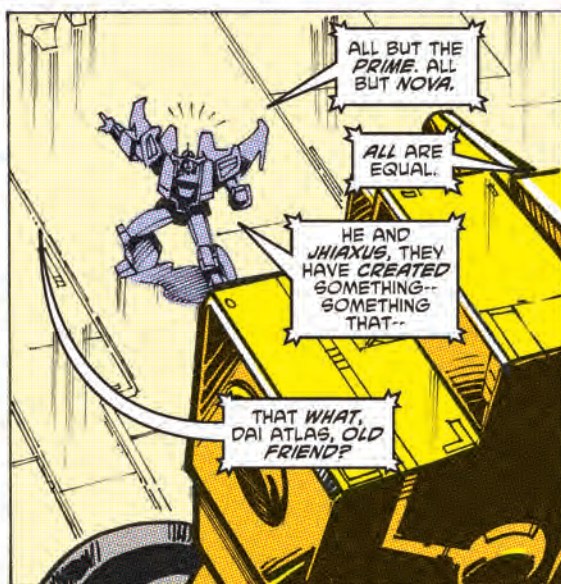
GREAT ONE!



THERE IS NO NEED TO ADDRESS ME IN SUCH A MANNER.

I--FORGIVE ME, OMEGA!

THERE IS NOTHING TO FORGIVE. WE ARE ALL EQUALS.

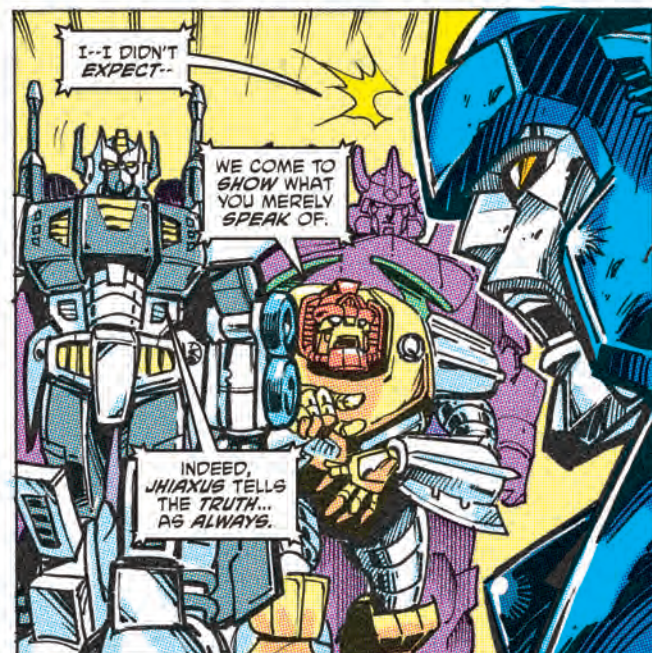


ALL BUT THE PRIME. ALL BUT NOVA.

ALL ARE EQUAL.

HE AND JHIAXUS, THEY HAVE CREATED SOMETHING-- SOMETHING THAT--

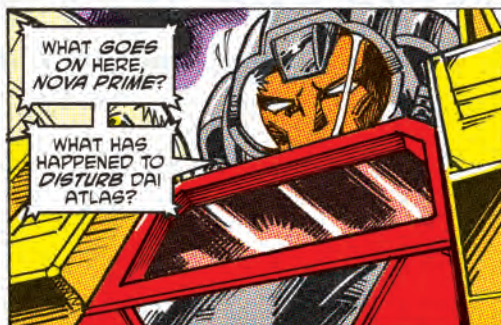
THAT WHAT, DAI ATLAS, OLD FRIEND??



I--I DIDN'T EXPECT--

WE COME TO SHOW WHAT YOU MERELY SPEAK OF.

INDEED, JHIAXUS TELLS THE TRUTH... AS ALWAYS.



WHAT GOES ON HERE, NOVA PRIME?

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DISTURB DAI ATLAS?



IGNORANCE, OMEGA. MERE IGNORANCE--AN AFFLICTION I SEEK TO OVERCOME. WITNESS--

--THESE SIX CYBERTRONIANS,
WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO BECOME
MORE THAN INDIVIDUALS!

BRISTLEBACK!

ICEPICK!

WILDFLY!

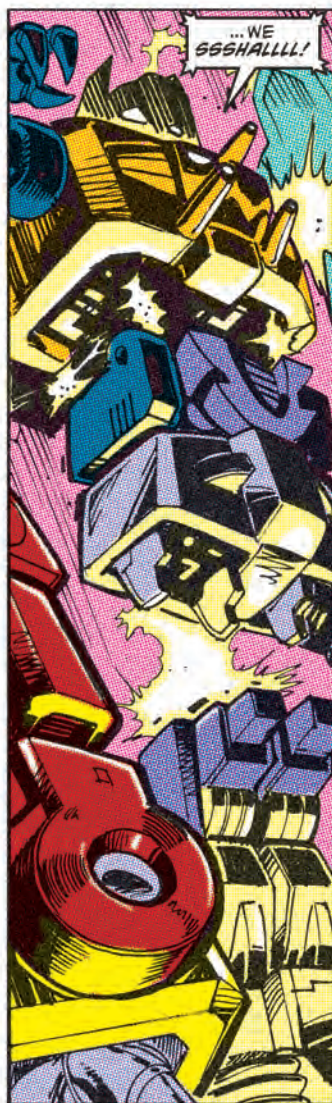
SCOWL!

BIRDBRAIN!

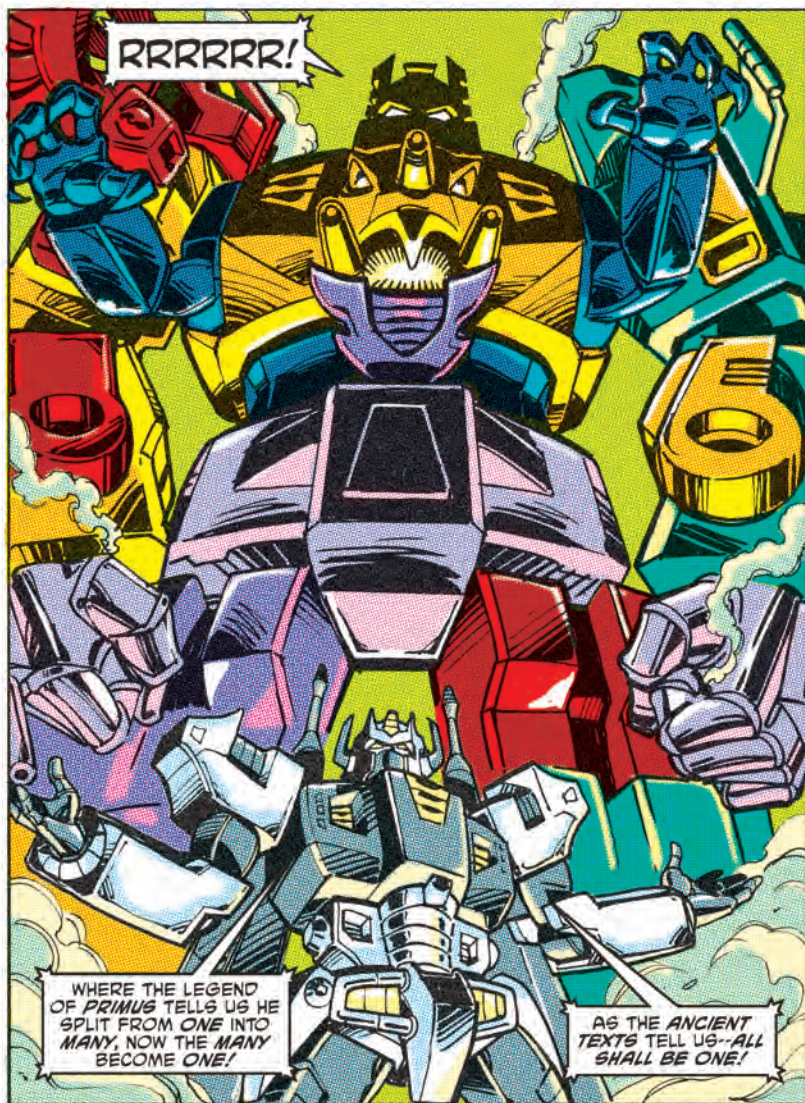
SLOG!

SHOW
OMEGA
WHAT YOU
CAN DO!

YESSS,
MAGSTERRR...



...WE
SSSHALLL!



RRRRRR!

WHERE THE LEGEND
OF PRIMUS TELLS US HE
SPLIT FROM ONE INTO
MANY, NOW THE MANY
BECOME ONE!

AS THE ANCIENT
TEXTS TELL US--ALL
SHALL BE ONE!




THEY ALL FEEL
WRONGED.

OKAY,
WHAT DO
WE...

...DAMMIT,
SIDESWIPE.

EACH AUTOBOT, EACH DECEPTICON...

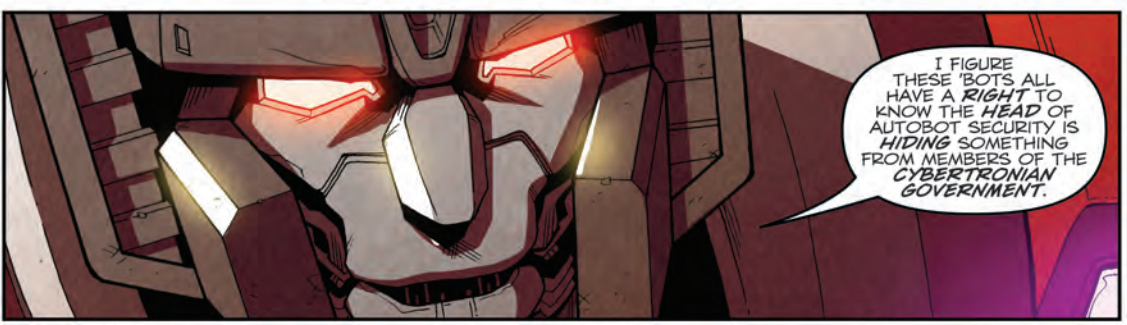


...EACH FEELS SO
HORRIBLY, UNFORGIVABLY
WRONGED BY THE
OTHERS THAT
THEIR SIMILARITIES
BECOME INVISIBLE.

I HOPE YOU
DON'T MIND—I
INVITED SOME
FRIENDS.

SORRY,
SIR, I DIDN'T
KNOW WHAT
TO DO.

THEY'RE
BEING...
PEACEABLE.



I FIGURE
THESE 'BOTS ALL
HAVE A RIGHT TO
KNOW THE HEAD OF
AUTOBOT SECURITY IS
HIDING SOMETHING
FROM MEMBERS OF THE
CYBERTRONIAN
GOVERNMENT.



LOOK—STARSCREAM, THANKS FOR THIS. THANKS FOR PUTTING ALL THESE 'BOTS IN DANGER.

WHAT'S DOWN THERE—AN OBJECT HAS **QUANTUM-JUMPED** BELOW THE PLANET'S SURFACE.

IT'S CREATED AN **UNSTABLE** SITUATION THAT'S LIKELY GOING TO **RESULT** IN A... WELL, IN SOMETHING **VERY BAD** FOR ANYONE STANDING **NEARBY**.



BLURR A CIVILIAN DISCOVERED THIS AND **RECOGNIZED** THE DANGER.

ALL CITIZENS OF CYBERTRON HAVE **FREEDOM**—BUT THAT **FREEDOM** DOESN'T EXTEND TO **ACCIDENTAL SUICIDE**.

BLURR HAS BEEN WRONGED BY HIS ENEMIES... AND BY HIS SUPPOSED **FRIENDS**. THERE ARE FACTIONS **WITHIN** FACTIONS.

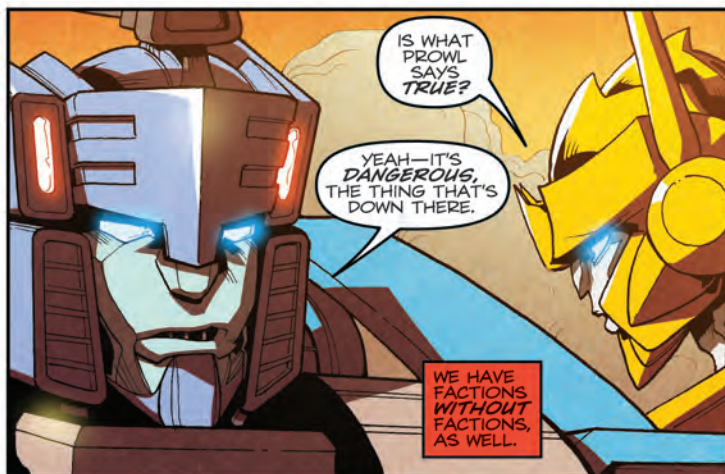
STILL—HE SEES ME AS AN **OUTSIDER**.



I NEED ALL OF YOU TO **BACK OFF**, AND I NEED A **PERIMETER** OF AT LEAST A FEW **KLIKES** IN CASE WE FAIL IN **CONTAINING** THE DANGER.

SIDESWIRE, GET **JETFIRE** AND A TEAM HERE, **STAT**.

BLURR SEES MY NEUTRALITY AS **ALIEN** TO HIS OWN.



IS WHAT **PROWL** SAYS **TRUE**?

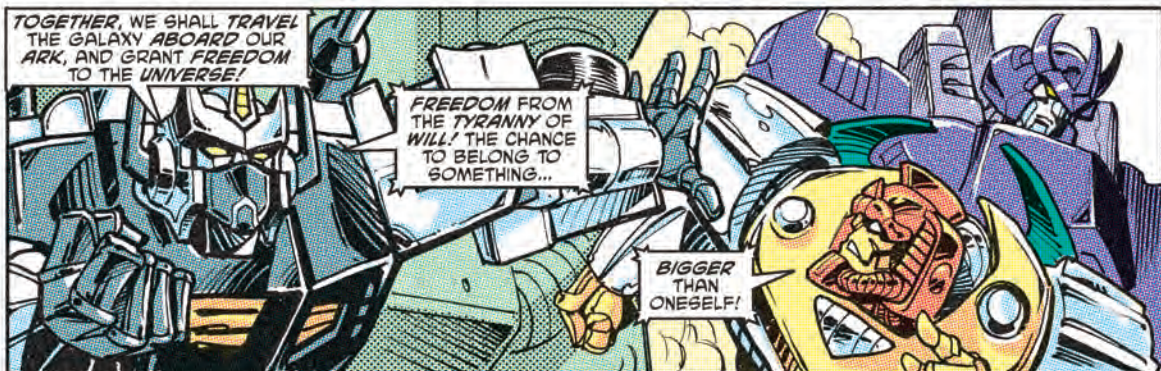
YEAH—IT'S **DANGEROUS**, THE THING THAT'S DOWN THERE.

WE HAVE FACTIONS **WITHOUT** FACTIONS, AS WELL.



BUT THAT'S NOT **PROWL'S** CALL TO MAKE.

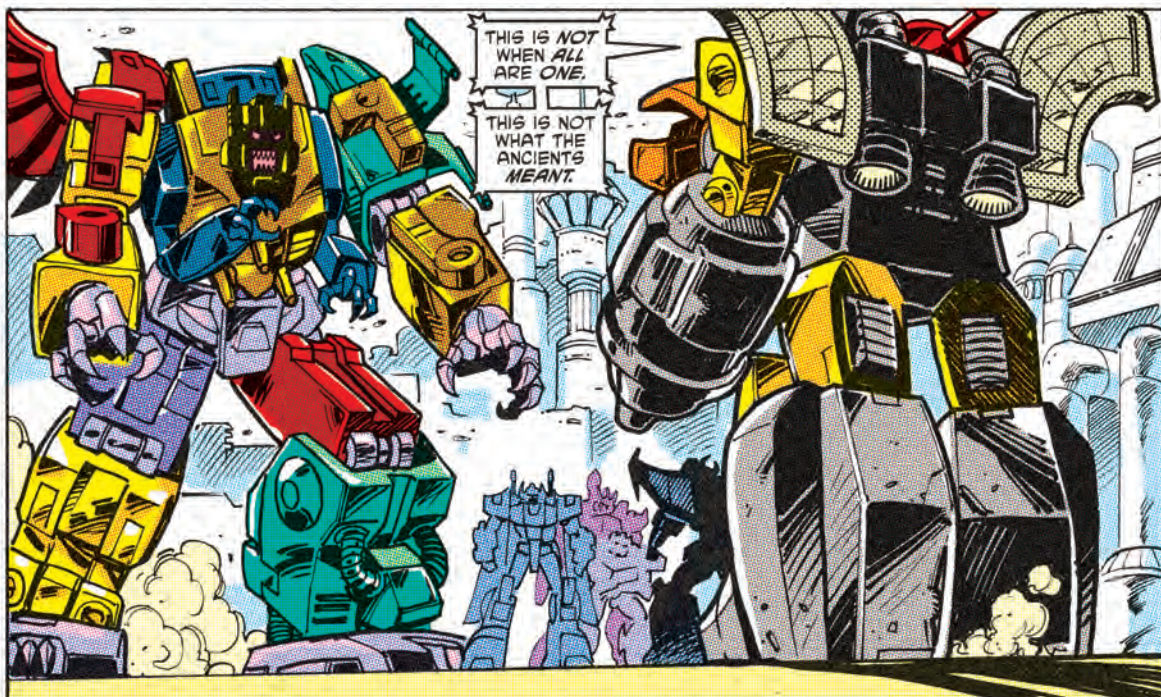
IS IT ANY WONDER WE'VE NEARLY **DESTROYED** OURSELVES?



TOGETHER, WE SHALL TRAVEL
THE GALAXY ABOARD OUR
ARK, AND GRANT FREEDOM
TO THE UNIVERSE!

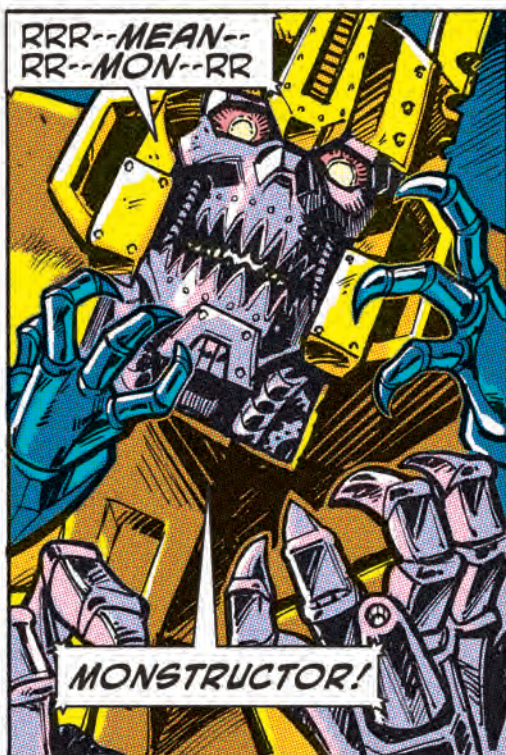
FREEDOM FROM
THE TYRANNY OF
WILL! THE CHANCE
TO BELONG TO
SOMETHING...

BIGGER
THAN
ONESELF!



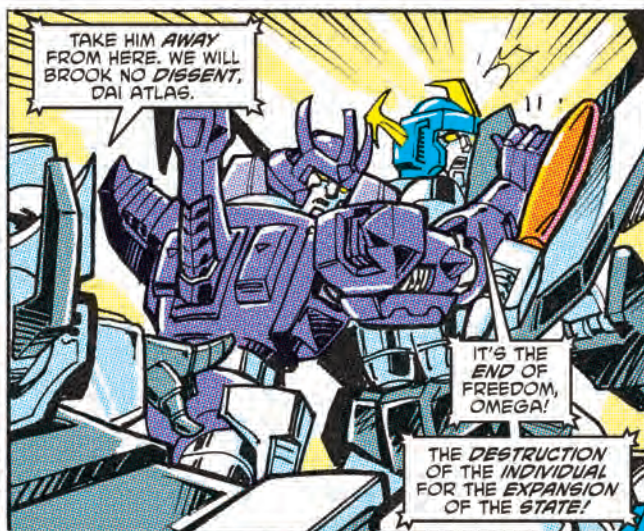
THIS IS NOT
WHEN ALL
ARE ONE.

THIS IS NOT
WHAT THE
ANCIENTS
MEANT.



RRR--MEAN--
RR--MON--RR

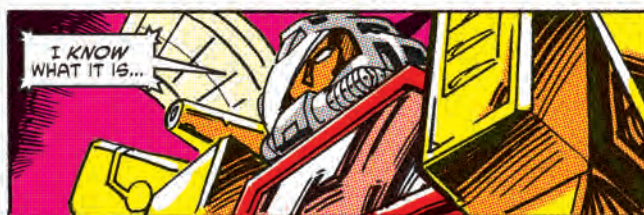
MONSTRUCTOR!



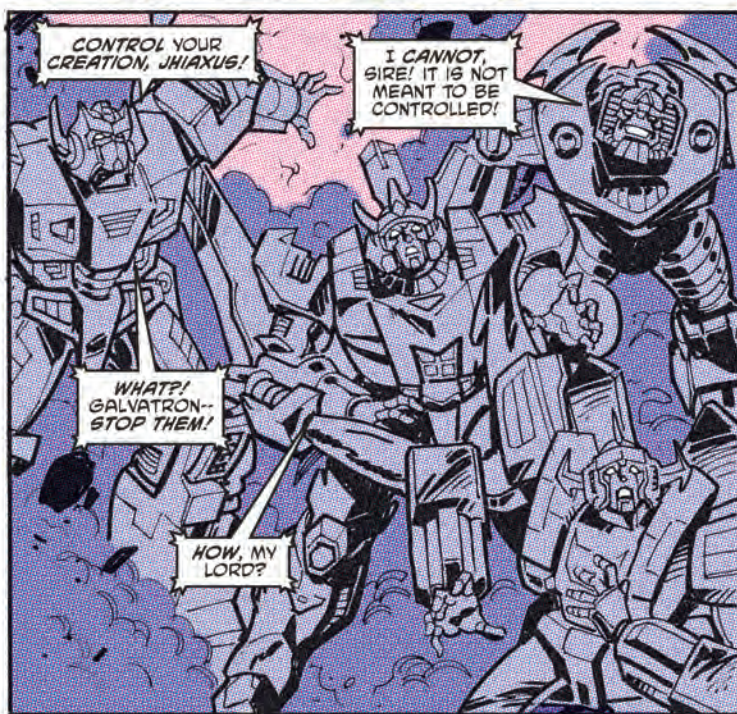
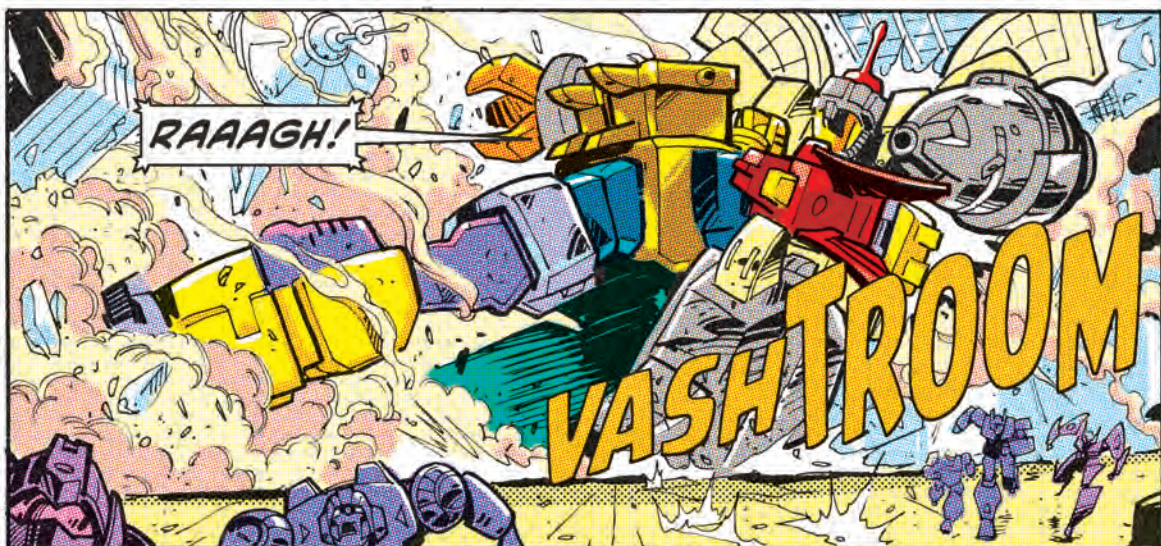
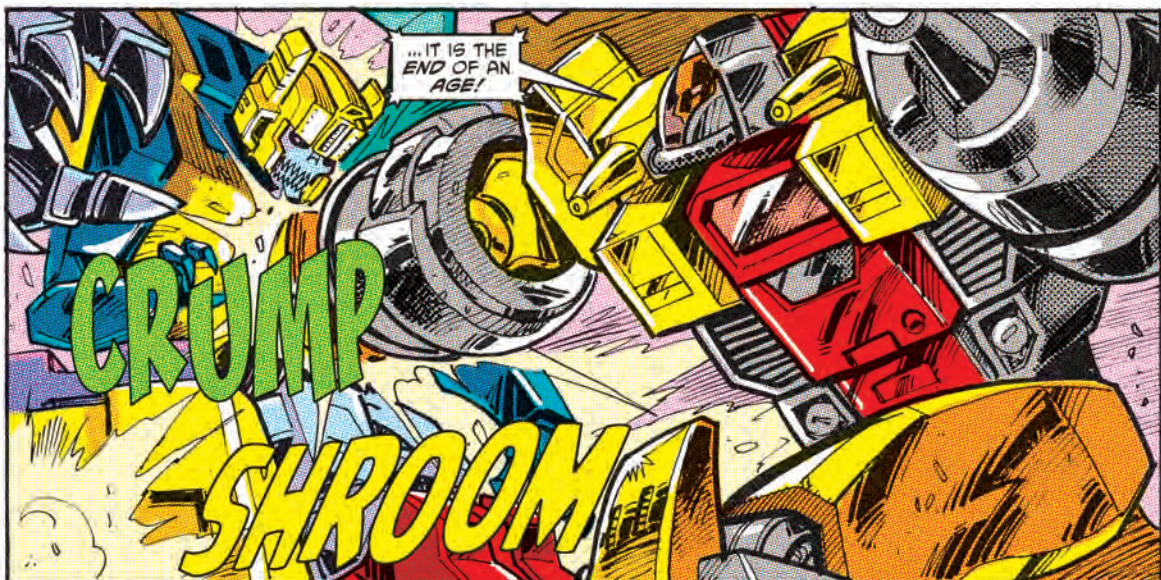
TAKE HIM AWAY
FROM HERE. WE WILL
BROOK NO DISSENT,
DAI ATLAS.

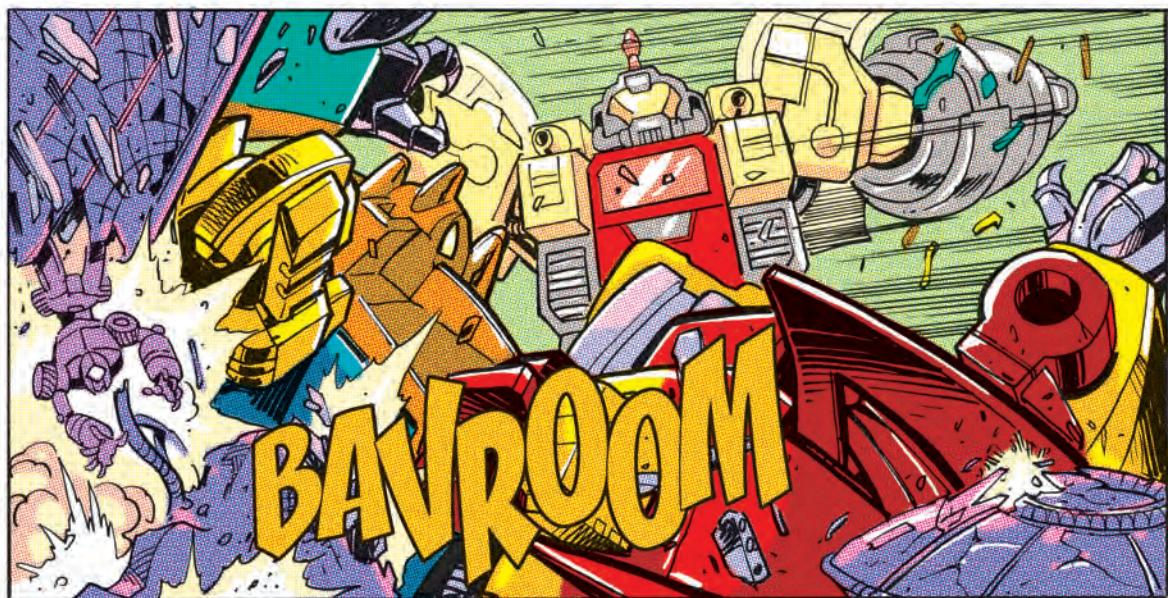
IT'S THE
END OF
FREEDOM,
OMEGA!

THE DESTRUCTION
OF THE INDIVIDUAL
FOR THE EXPANSION
OF THE STATE!



I KNOW
WHAT IT IS...

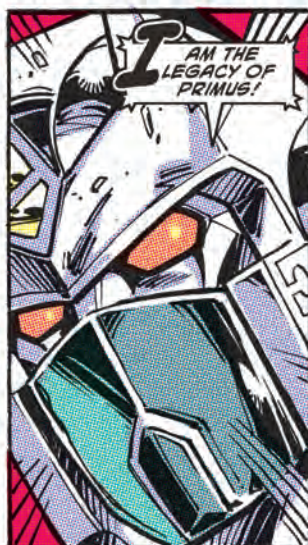




YOUR CASTLE FALLS, PRIME.

I HAVE NO NEED OF THIS CITY ANY LONGER. IT WAS A MERE SYMBOL, DAI ATLAS.

IT WAS THE LEGACY OF PRIMUS.



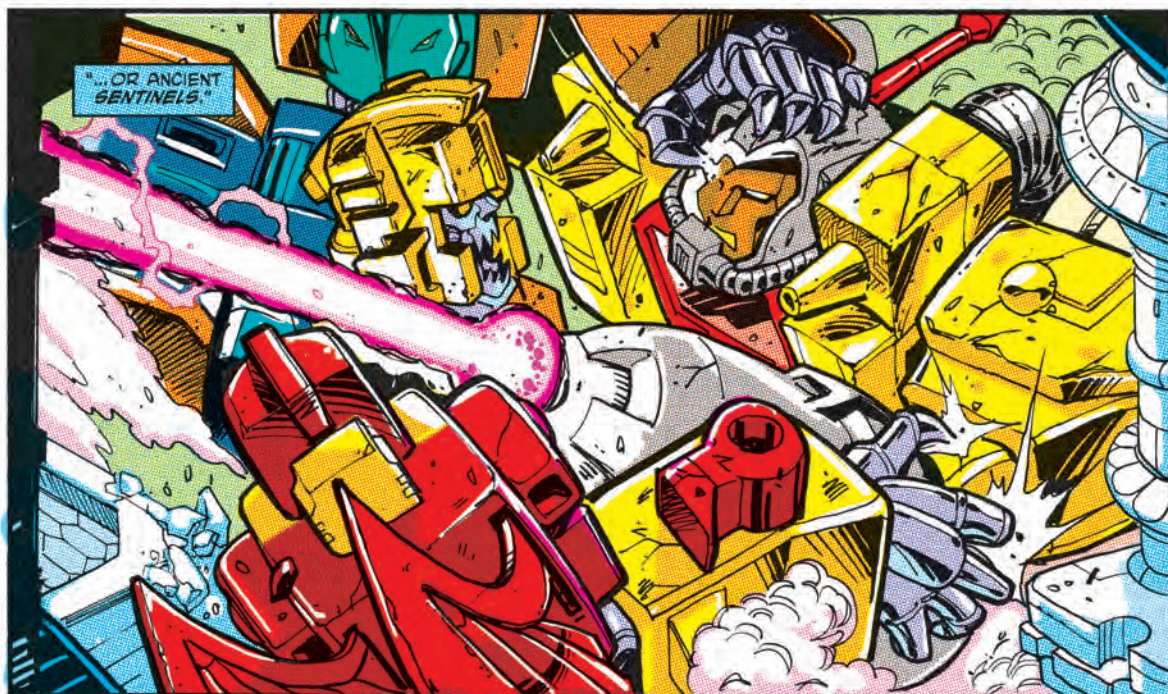
I AM THE LEGACY OF PRIMUS!



NOW GET OUT OF MY SIGHT BEFORE I HAVE YOU DESTROYED. YOU'VE LOST YOUR PLACE ON OUR ARK, ATLAS.

JHIAXUS HAS DISCOVERED A POWER--A SOURCE OF LIMITLESS ENERGY. WITH IT, WE SHALL TRAVEL TO THE STARS, AND SPREAD TO THE FARTHEST REACHES OF THE COSMOS.

PAX CYBERTRONIA, DAI ATLAS. I HAVE NO NEED OF ANCIENT CITIES...



"...OR ANCIENT SENTINELS."



TELL ME YOU HAVE SOMETHING, WHEELJACK. WE'RE AT TWO HOURS TO SUNDOWN.

IF WE'RE STILL OUTSIDE THE CITY WHEN NIGHT FALLS, WHATEVER CAUSED SKY LYNX TO GO CRAZY WILL START AFFECTING US.

SKY LYNX IS DOING BETTER, ACTUALLY.

ANYWAY—SUNDOWN'S NOT GOING TO BE A PROBLEM.



I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT.

YEAH, WE'VE ONLY GOT ABOUT AN HOUR UNTIL REALITY COLLAPSES. LOCALLY, I MEAN.

HOW LOCALLY?

I CAN GET A CONTAINMENT FIELD UP AND HOLD THE CONTAMINATED ANTI-PROTONS TO A LOW-LEVEL ANTIMATTER EXPLOSION, RADIUS OF ABOUT TEN KLIK. SAY FIFTEEN TO BE TOTALLY SAFE.



I'VE SEEN WORSE.

I'VE SEEN YOU CAUSE WORSE.

BUT HERE'S THE THING—THIS GUY'S OUT COLD. HE'S ALIVE—I'M READING HIS SPARK BURNING—BUT I HAVE ZERO NEOCORTICAL ACTIVITY.



BRAIN-DEAD?

WHO KNOWS? MAYBE THAT'S NORMAL FOR HOW BRAINS WORK AT THAT SCALE. MAYBE—

WHAT'S YOUR POINT?

I CAN SAVE HIM. I MEAN, I CAN STOP THE FLOW OF ANTI-PROTONS AND THE DECAY OF VECTOR SPACE.

I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA HOW TO WAKE HIM UP—HE'S ON HIS OWN, THERE.

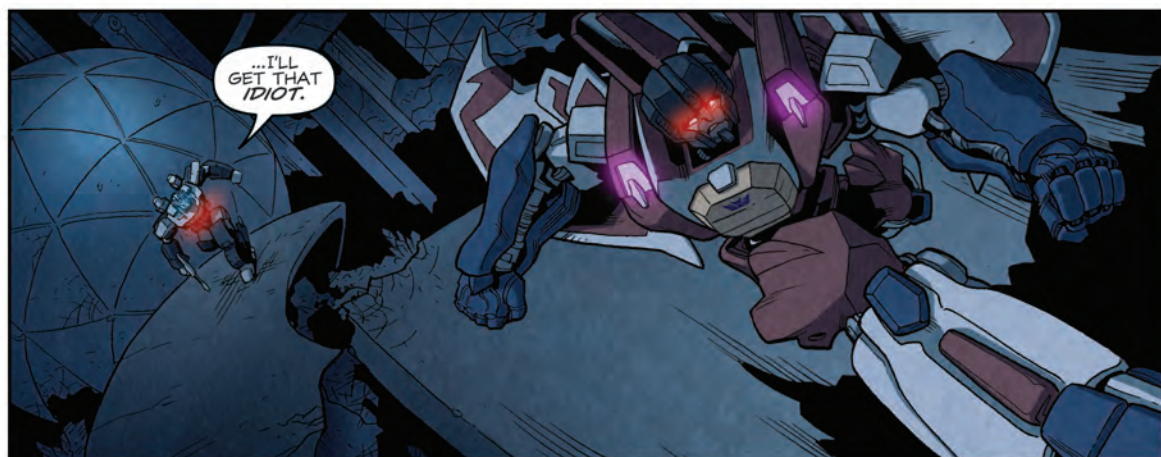
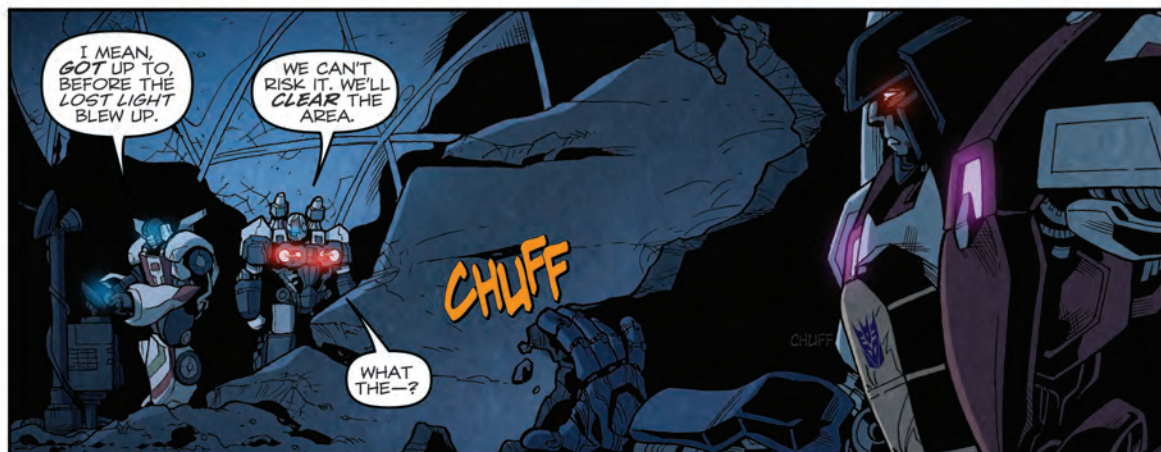


I ASSUME THERE'S A DOWNSIDE?

IT'LL BE DANGEROUS, BUT I CAN MAKE IT WORK.

NO, WE CAN'T RISK...

...HOW DANGEROUS?



THE FORCES UNLEASHED IN THE
BATTLE OF THE METAL GIANTS
WERE STAGGERING--INCONCEIVABLE.

WHEN IT WAS OVER,
PRIMUS' SANCTUARY
WAS LAID TO WASTE...
AND ONE CYBERTONIAN
REIGNED--SUPREME!

YOU... YOU
TOOK CARE
OF IT.

OF THEM.
THEY... ARE
NOT ONE.

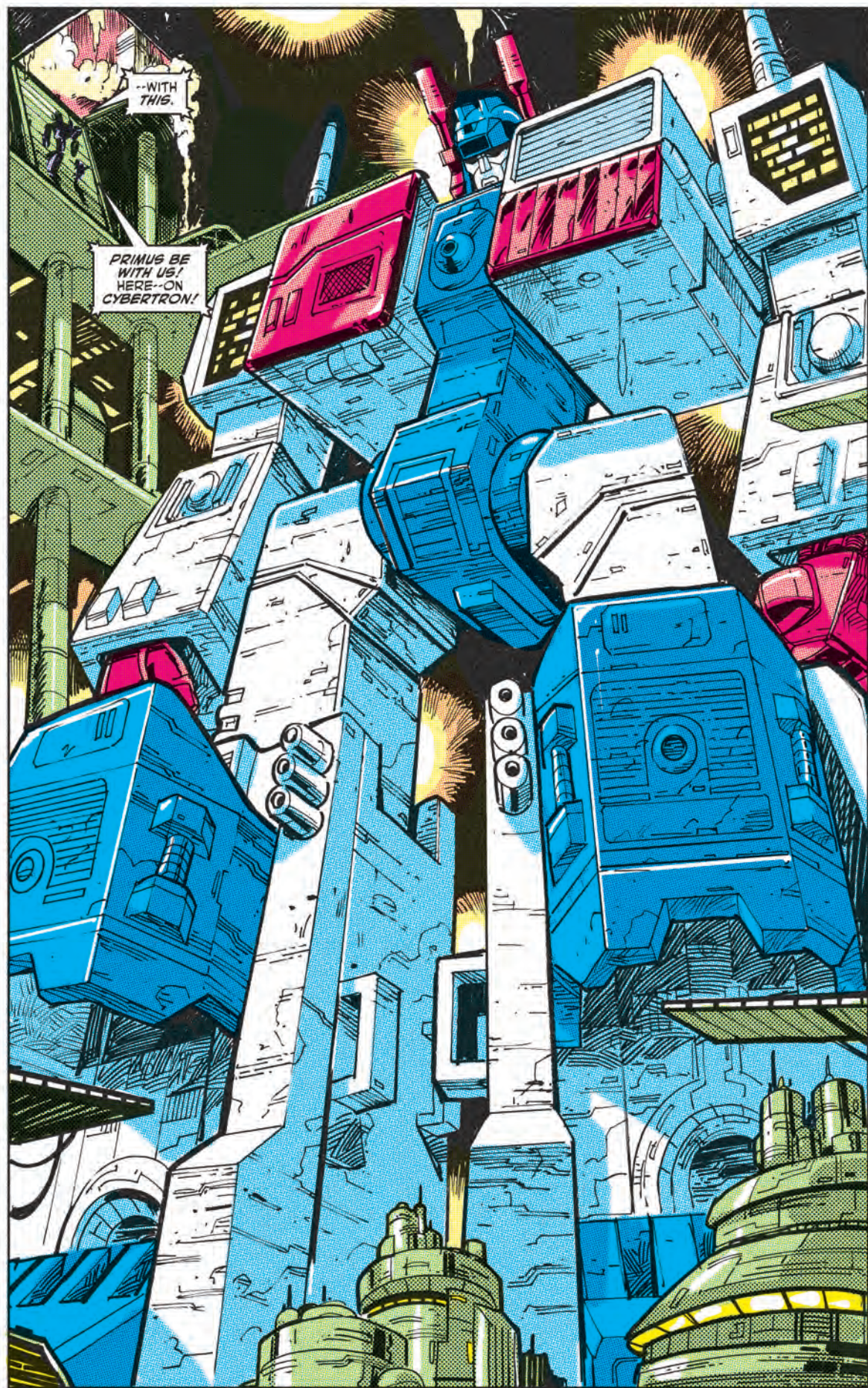
NOVA IS READYING
HIS SHIP TO MUCH
FANFARE, PREPARING
TO TAKE HIS ARK TO THE
BENZULI EXPANSE. HE
SAYS THEY'RE GOING
TO EXPLORE, BUT--

COME WITH
ME, DAI
ATLAS.

I--I NEVER
SAW THIS
PASSAGE, NEVER
SUSPECTED--!

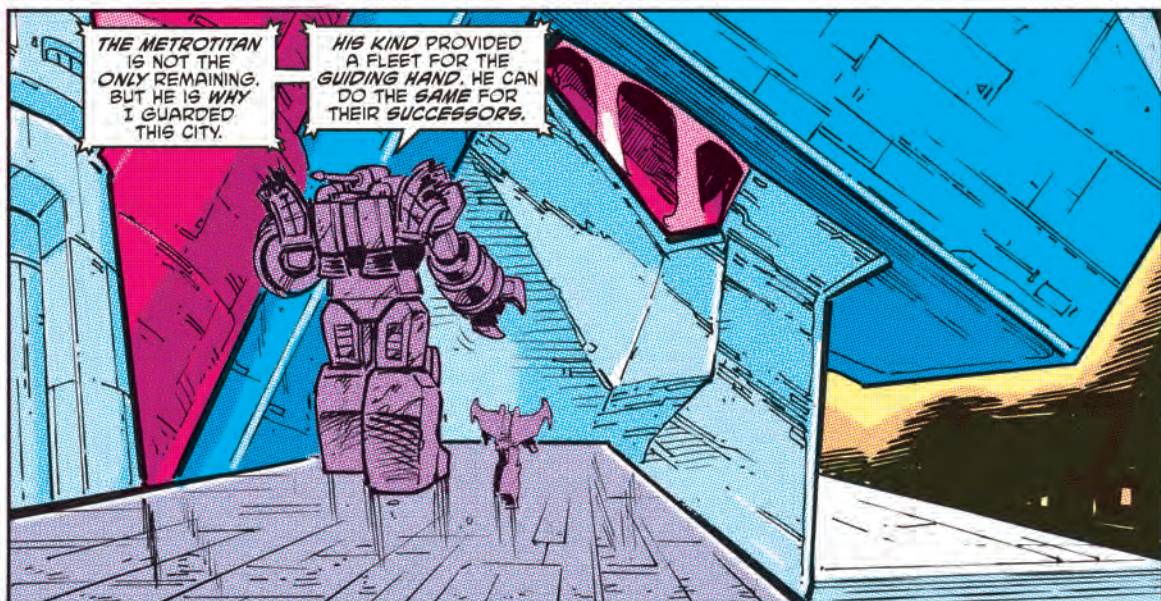
I TRUSTED NOVA
TO A DEGREE... AND
NO FURTHER. AND I
TRUSTED HIM NOT--

SHREEEE



--WITH
THIS.

PRIMUS BE
WITH US!
HERE--ON
CYBERTRON!



THE METROTITAN IS NOT THE ONLY REMAINING. BUT HE IS WHY I GUARDED THIS CITY.

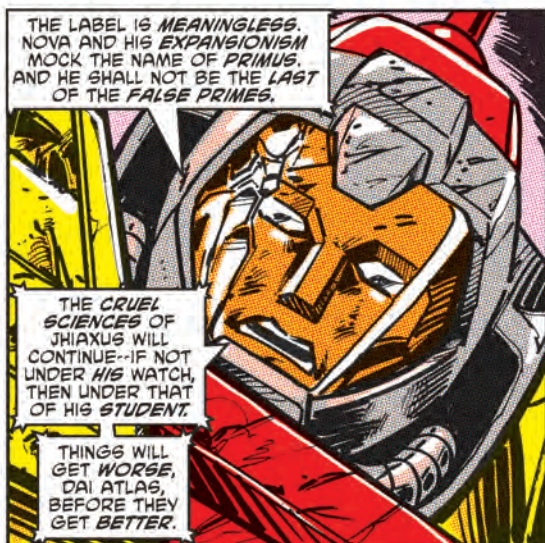
HIS KIND PROVIDED A FLEET FOR THE GUIDING HAND. HE CAN DO THE SAME FOR THEIR SUCCESSORS.



I... I DO NOT UNDERSTAND, OMEGA. WILL--WILL WE AWAKEN HIM?

NO. ONLY A GREAT CYBERTRONIAN CAN AWAKEN A TITAN.

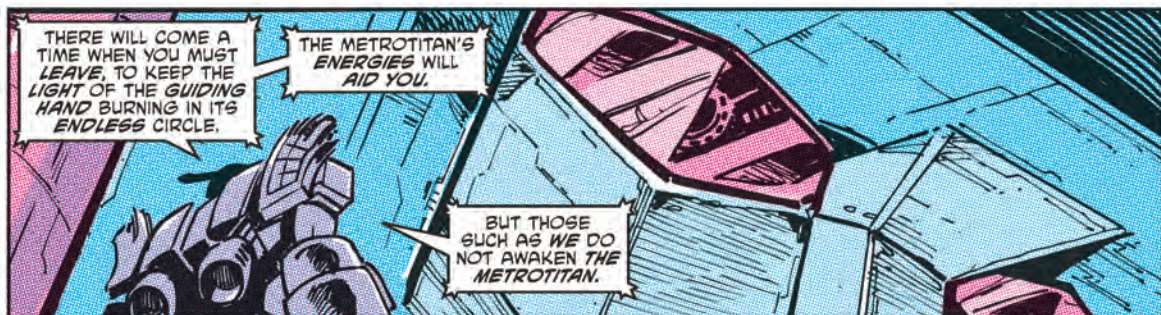
YOU MEAN A PRIME.



THE LABEL IS MEANINGLESS. NOVA AND HIS EXPANSIONISM MOCK THE NAME OF PRIMUS. AND HE SHALL NOT BE THE LAST OF THE FALSE PRIMES.

THE CRUEL SCIENCES OF JHIAXUS WILL CONTINUE--IF NOT UNDER HIS WATCH, THEN UNDER THAT OF HIS STUDENT.

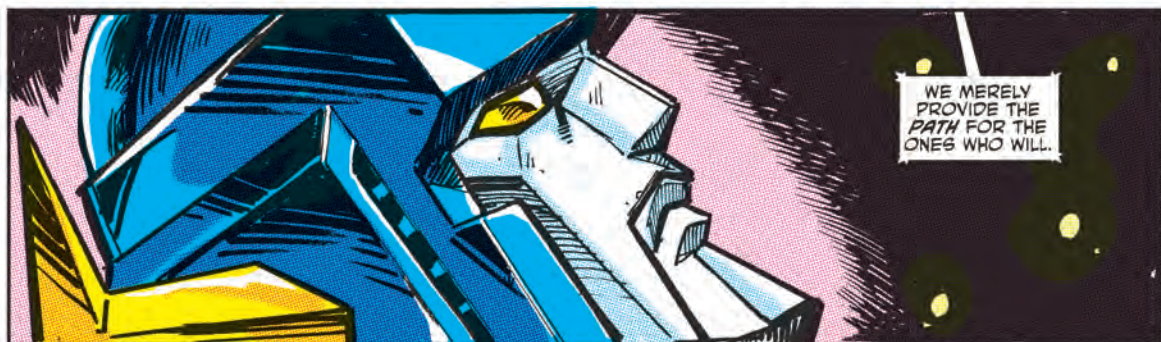
THINGS WILL GET WORSE, DAI ATLAS, BEFORE THEY GET BETTER.



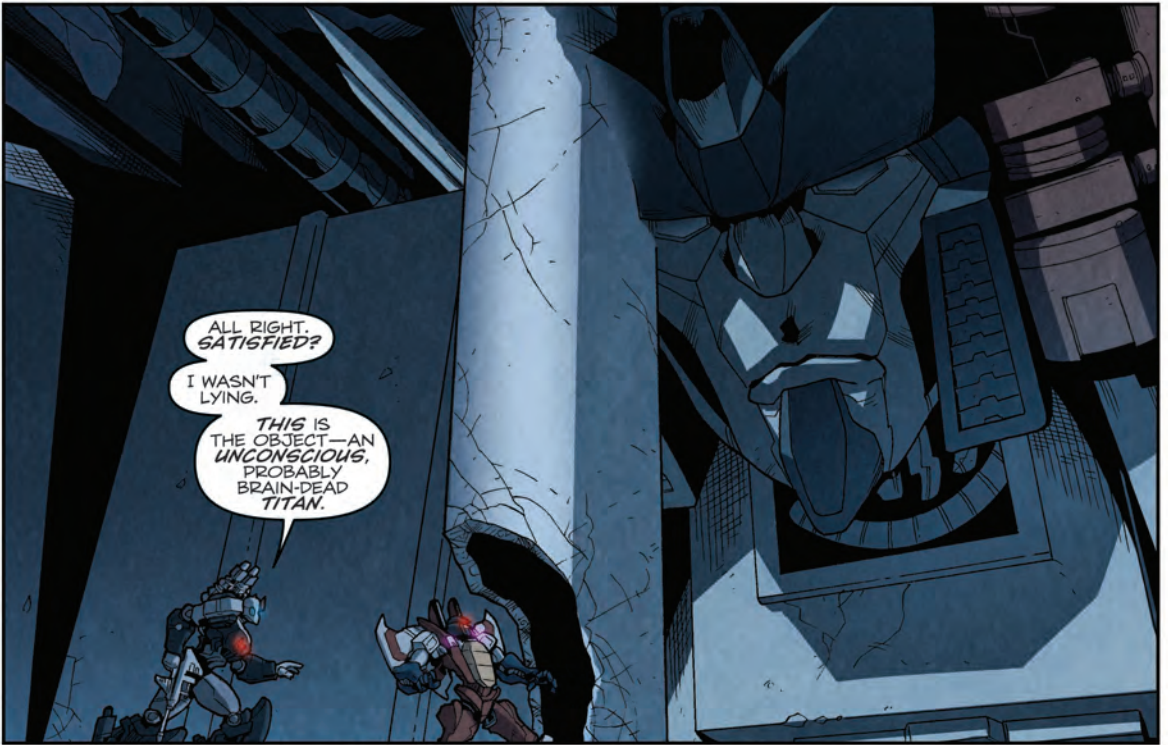
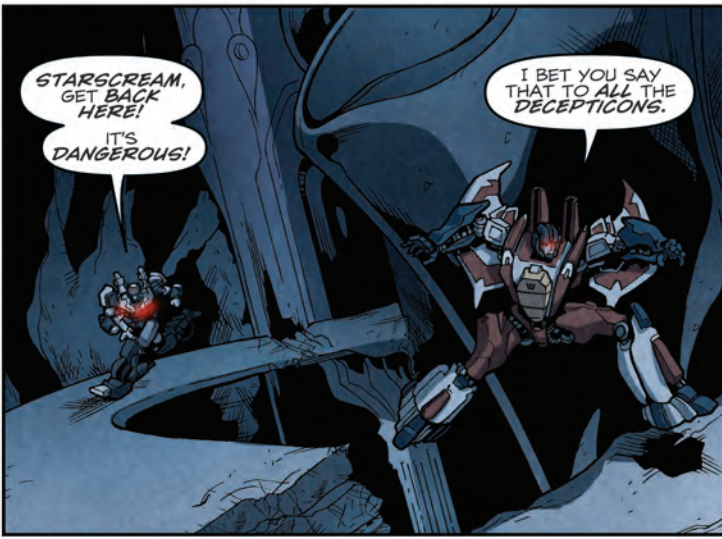
THERE WILL COME A TIME WHEN YOU MUST LEAVE, TO KEEP THE LIGHT OF THE GUIDING HAND BURNING IN ITS ENDLESS CIRCLE.

THE METROTITAN'S ENERGIES WILL AID YOU.

BUT THOSE SUCH AS WE DO NOT AWAKEN THE METROTITAN.



WE MERELY PROVIDE THE PATH FOR THE ONES WHO WILL.







I—I—I—
—AND YOU
JUDGE ME
GOOD...?



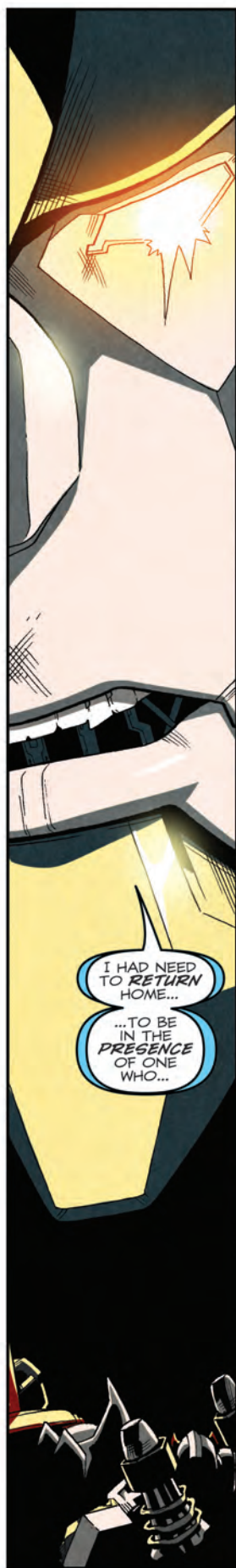
THAT
MATTERS
NOT...
...I HAVE
SEEN... I
HAVE
FELT...



...THE PAIN
OF REBIRTH...
THE WORLD
TEAR AND
BURN AND
LIVE...
...I HAD NEED
TO COME HOME...
TO BECOME ONE
WITH CYBERTRON
REBORN...
...TO SEE
GREATNESS
ONCE MORE.



WHAT
ARE YOU—
—YOU'RE SAYING—
STARScream?!



I HAD NEED
TO RETURN
HOME...

...TO BE
IN THE
PRESENCE
OF ONE
WHO...



...WHO
COULD
AWAKEN ME...
ONE FINAL
TIME.

I THANK
YOU.



NOW
GO—BEFORE
YOU ARE
CONSUMED
WITH ME.



I—WHAT
DO WE
TELL
PEOPLE?

NOTHING.

WHAT?

NO ONE WOULD
BELIEVE YOU,
STARSCREAM.

I
WOULD...



...I WOULD, PROWL...

I THINK WE ALL MIGHT.



IS IT ANY WONDER WE STAND ON THE **PRECIPICE** OF STARTING THE **CYCLE OF DESTRUCTION** OVER AGAIN?





WHEN I HEARD THE *CALL* OF
OUR REBORN HOMEWORLD...

...I CAME HERE.

AND WHEN I *ARRIVED*,
BUMBLEBEE GREETED ME.

HE, THE
CONQUERING
HERO—

—HE *GREETED* ME
AND SAID IT WAS A
TIME FOR *PEACE*.

HE DIDN'T TELL ME THAT
EVERY *ONE* OF US WAS
TO BECOME A *FACTION*
UNTO *OURSELVES*.

MAYBE THAT IS OUR *FATE*;
OUR *LOT* IN LIFE. PERHAPS
IT IS THE *GREAT CURSE*
OF THE *CYBERTRONIANS*:

WE *NEED* AN ENEMY
TO CONQUER.

IN *CONQUEST* WE FIND
FRIENDSHIP; IN WAR
WE FIND *INNER PEACE*.

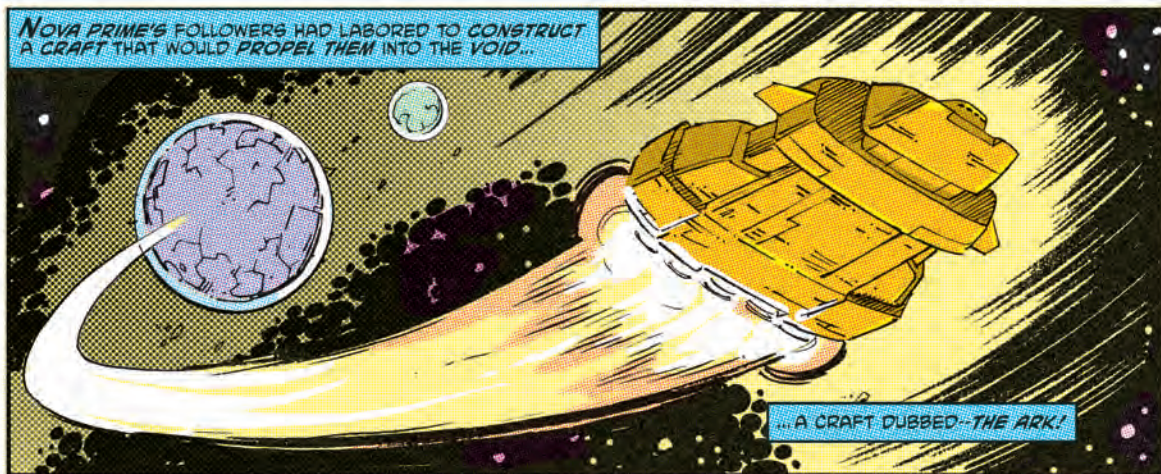
AND THUS THE TITAN WAS
RIGHT, AND STARScream *IS*
THE GREATEST AMONG US.

MY *FRIEND*...
STARScream.

PERHAPS THERE TRULY
IS *NO HOPE* FOR US.

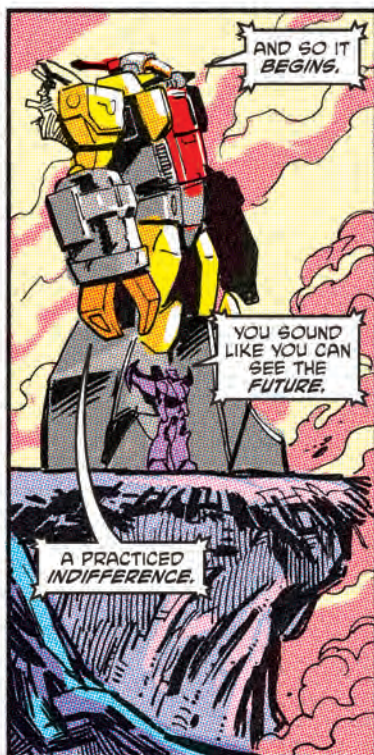
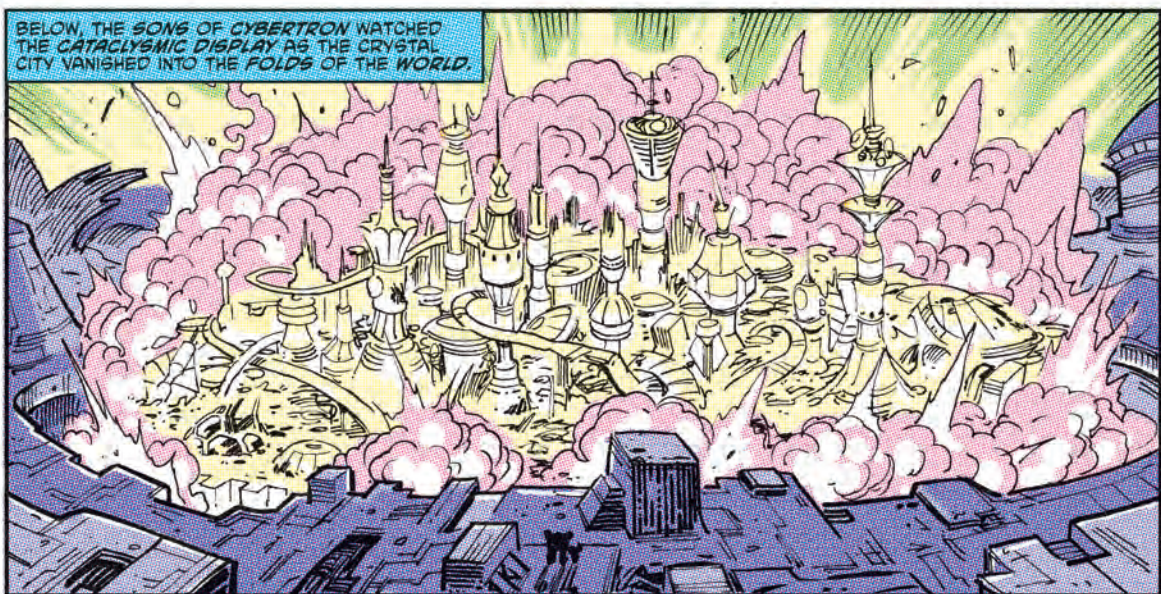
PERHAPS WE DON'T
DESERVE HOPE.

NOVA PRIME'S FOLLOWERS HAD LABORED TO CONSTRUCT
A CRAFT THAT WOULD PROPEL THEM INTO THE VOID...



...A CRAFT DUBBED...THE ARK!

BELOW, THE SONS OF CYBERTRON WATCHED
THE CATAclysmic DISPLAY AS THE CRYSTAL
CITY VANISHED INTO THE FOLDS OF THE WORLD.



AND SO IT
BEGINS.

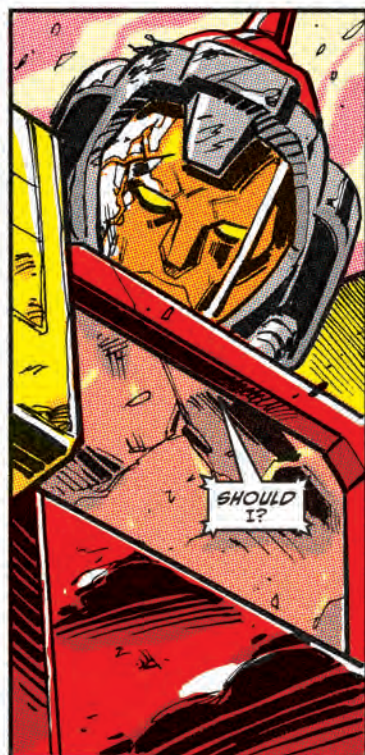
YOU SOUND
LIKE YOU CAN
SEE THE
FUTURE.

A PRACTICED
INDIFFERENCE.



THE FUTURE IS A
MYSTERY. I ONLY
KNOW THE PATH WE
TRAVEL, NOT THE
DESTINATION.

NEVERTHELESS,
YOU DON'T SEEM
HOPEFUL.



SHOULD
I?

WORD HAD REACHED
THE CITY BY THE TIME
WE ARRIVED *HOME*.

CYBERTRON HAD A
NEW *HERO*. A NEW
CONQUEROR.

ONE *PROCLAIMED SO*
BY A POWER NONE OF
US *UNDERSTOOD*.



SO, WHY DID SO
MANY *BELIEVE*?

AND WHY COULD I NOT REVEL
IN MY FRIEND'S *ADULATION*?

METALHAWK...

WHO—

—OH.

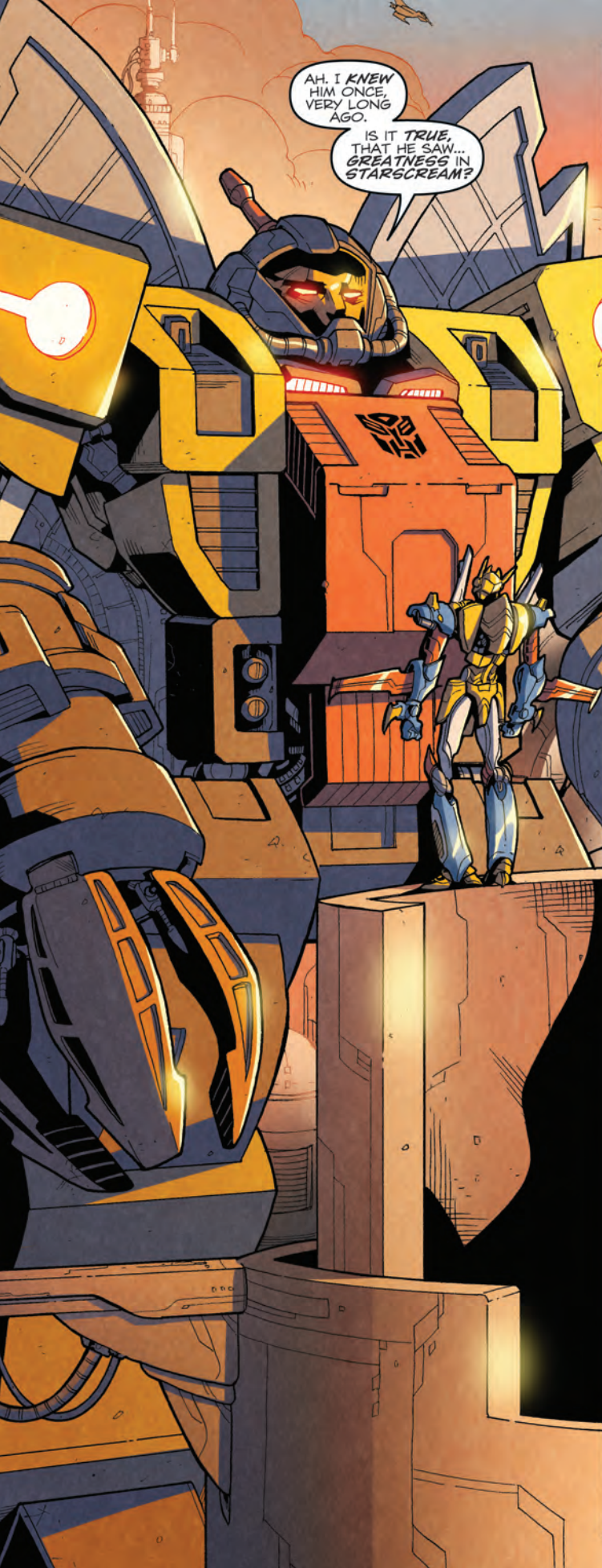
WE'VE
NOT BEEN
INTRODUCED, BUT
I HAVE HEARD
OTHERS *SPEAK*
OF YOU.

LIKEWISE.

TELL ME, YOU
SAW... YOU SAW *THE*
METROTITAN...?

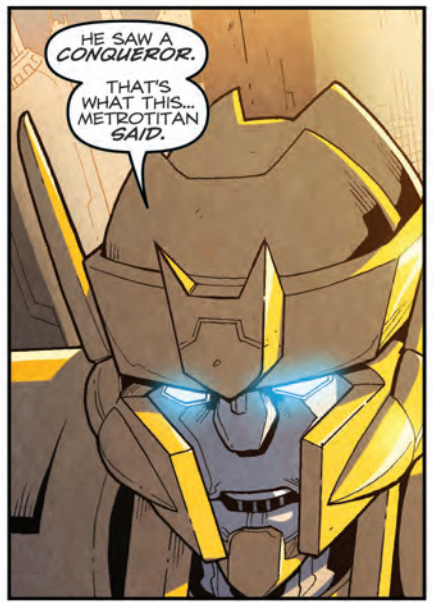
YES.





AH, I *KNEW*
HIM ONCE,
VERY LONG
AGO.

IS IT *TRUE*,
THAT HE SAW...
GREATNESS IN
STARScream?

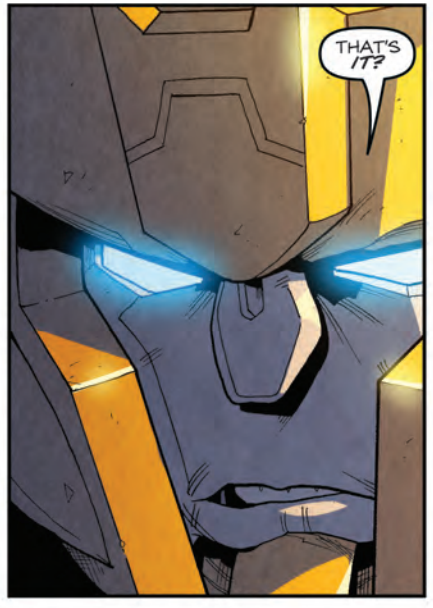


HE SAW A
CONQUEROR.

THAT'S
WHAT THIS...
METROTITAN
SAID.



HM.



THAT'S
IT?



I *KNEW* HIM. I DO NOT CLAIM TO UNDERSTAND HIS KIND.

BUT *YOU*... DO YOU *BELIEVE* HIM?



IF I BELIEVED THAT OUR SPECIES EXISTS ONLY FOR WAR... FOR CONQUEST...

...THAT WE EXIST TO SPREAD OUR EMPIRE ACROSS THE UNIVERSE...

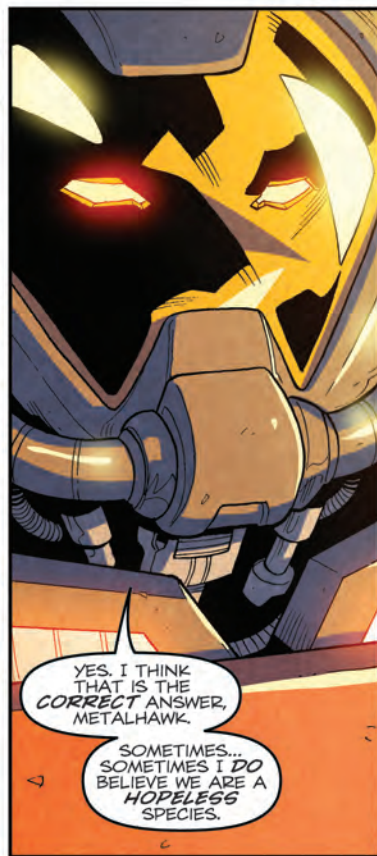
...IT... IT WOULD BE *WRONG* TO BELIEVE THAT, WOULDN'T IT?



THAT IS *NOT* WHAT I ASKED.

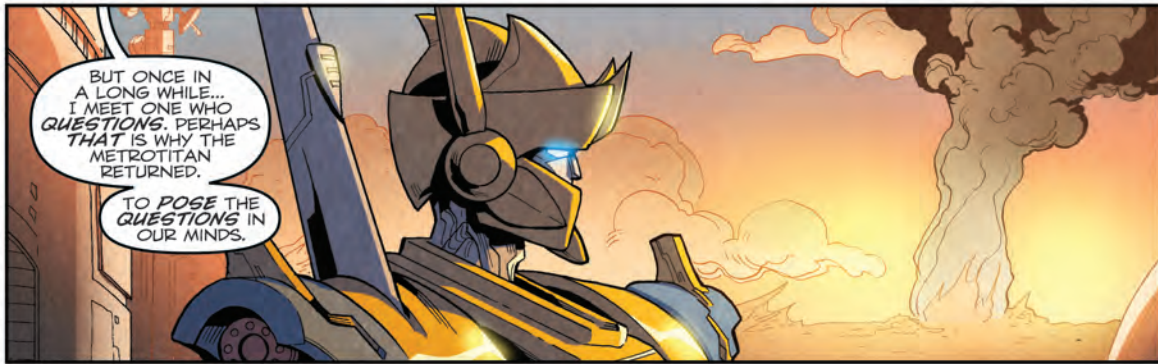
I ASKED IF YOU *BELIEVED* IT.

I... I DON'T KNOW ANYMORE...



YES. I THINK THAT IS THE *CORRECT* ANSWER, METALHAWK.

SOMETIMES... SOMETIMES I *DO* BELIEVE WE ARE A *HOPELESS* SPECIES.



BUT ONCE IN A LONG WHILE... I MEET ONE WHO *QUESTIONS*. PERHAPS THAT IS WHY THE METROTITAN RETURNED.

TO *POSE* THE *QUESTIONS* IN OUR MINDS.



TO FORCE US
TO *BELIEVE* OUR
PATHS CAN
CHANGE.

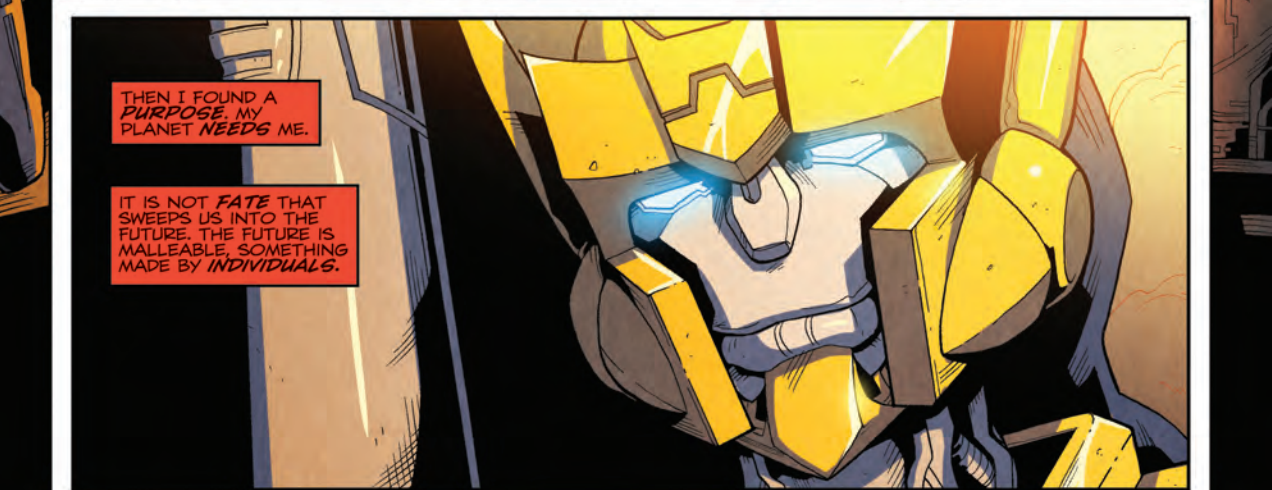
AND THUS, TO
MAKE CHANGE
POSSIBLE.

WHEN I *LEFT* CYBERTRON, I
NEVER IMAGINED I'D *RETURN*.

IT WAS A *PAINFUL CHOICE*,
AND NOT ONE I MADE *EASILY*.

BUT I COULD SEE MY PLANET
CHANGING, DISTORTING
ITSELF INTO SOMETHING *VILE*;
SOMETHING *DESPICABLE*.

AND WHEN I RETURNED,
I FOUND THE *SAME*.



THEN I FOUND A
PURPOSE. MY
PLANET *NEEDS* ME.

IT IS NOT *FATE* THAT
SWEEPS US INTO THE
FUTURE. THE FUTURE IS
MALLEABLE, SOMETHING
MADE BY *INDIVIDUALS*.

AND MY PLANET NEEDS *ME*.





ROBOTS IN DISGUISE ANNUAL COVER B

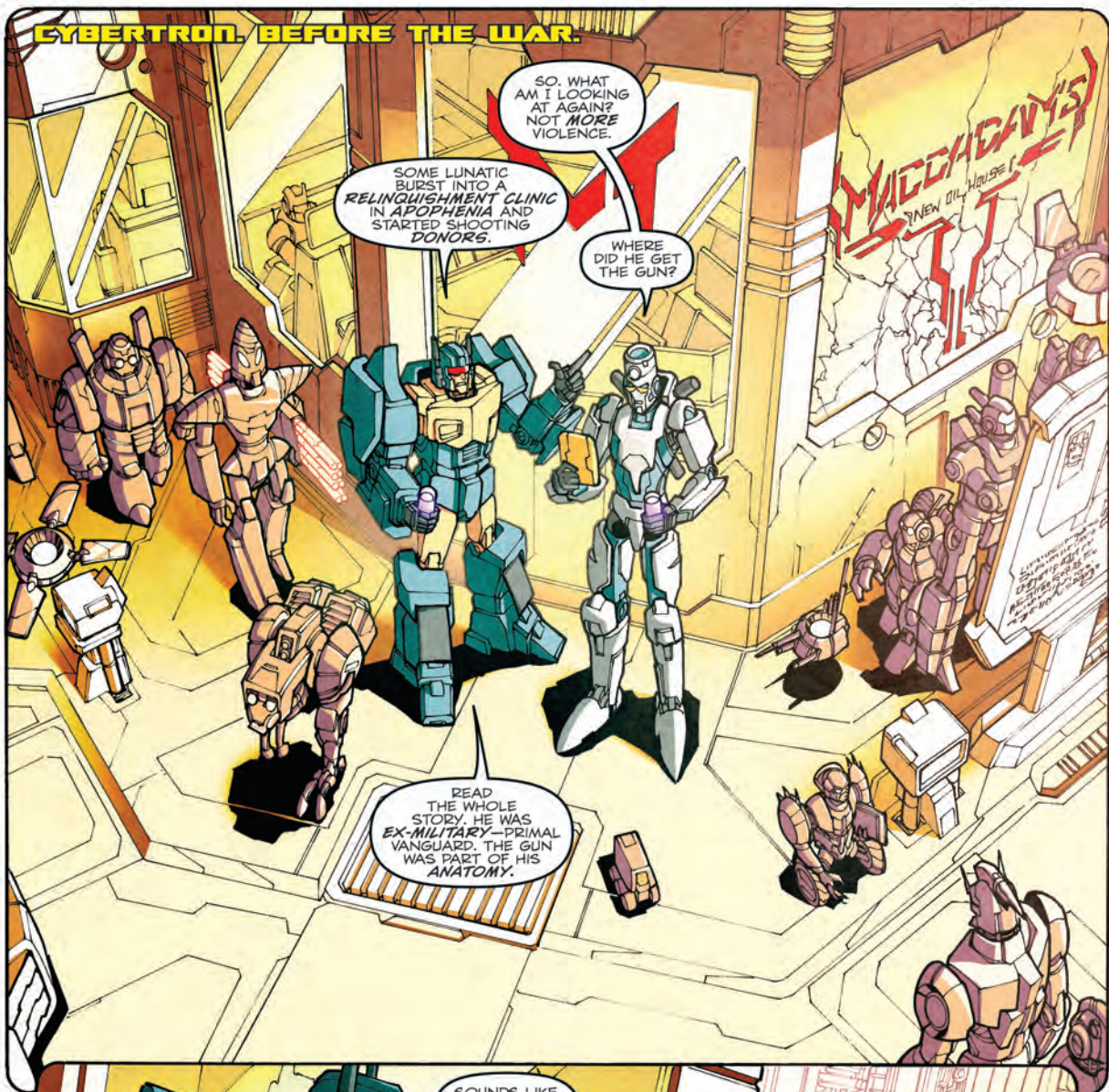
by **ANDREW GRIFFITH** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #9 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

CYBERTRON: BEFORE THE WAR.



SOME LUNATIC BURST INTO A RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC IN APOPHENIA AND STARTED SHOOTING DONORS.

SO, WHAT AM I LOOKING AT AGAIN? NOT MORE VIOLENCE.

WHERE DID HE GET THE GUN?

READ THE WHOLE STORY. HE WAS EX-MILITARY—PRIMAL VANGUARD. THE GUN WAS PART OF HIS ANATOMY.



SOUNDS LIKE ONE OF THOSE RECEPTICON FANATICS.

IT'S "D": DE-CEPTICON. AFTER THEIR SLOBBAN, YOU ARE BEING DECEIVED.

THANK YOU, NIGHTBEAT. I STAND IMMEDIATELY CORRECTED.



I KNEW YOU'D BLAME THE DECEPTICONS. YOU SOUND LIKE THE SENATE USED TO, BEFORE THE U-TURN.

I'M NO FAN OF THE SENATE. THEY SAID THE CLAMPDOWN WOULD MAKE CYBERTRON SAFE.



THE CLAMPDOWN IS INSANELY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THE CURFEWS, THE SKY SPIES... AND PRIMUS HELP YOU IF YOU'VE GOT A TARNIAN ACCENT.

YOU PUSH THE PUBLIC TOO FAR AND THEY'LL PUSH BACK.



CAREFUL.

WHAT?

JUST... CAREFUL... YOU SOUND LIKE A DECEPTICON RECRUITING AGENT.

NEXT YOU'LL BE, "WHY SHOULD YOU BE TIED TO ONE JOB JUST BECAUSE OF YOUR ALT MODE? WHY SHOULD YOU BE A FUNCTION SLAVE?"

TWO DAMN GOOD QUESTIONS...

SERIOUSLY, THIS WHOLE STREET IS PROBABLY WIRED. LOOK AT THAT 'BOT OVER THERE...



"...YOU'RE TELLING ME THOSE EYEBROWS AREN'T SECRET RECORDING DEVICES? THAT GUY SCREAMS GOVERNMENT PLANT."

"NO, QUARK, THAT GUY SCREAMS LONELY."



ANYWAY, SHUT UP.

I'M NOT ABOUT TO RUN OFF AND UPLOAD THE DECEPTICON MANIFESTO. SO DON'T HAVE ONE OF YOUR FREAKY FREAK OUTS.



YES, WELL, WE'LL SEE WHICH OF US IS RIGHT WHEN THEY REACH THE MAGIC NUMBER.

WHAT, "PROTEUS'S PROMISE"? NOT GONNA HAPPEN. AND IF IT DOES, SO WHAT?

YOU SAY THAT NOW—ONCE THE DECEPTICONS TAKE OVER, WE'RE DEAD. WE'RE NOT THEIR TYPE.



THEY HAVE A TYPE?

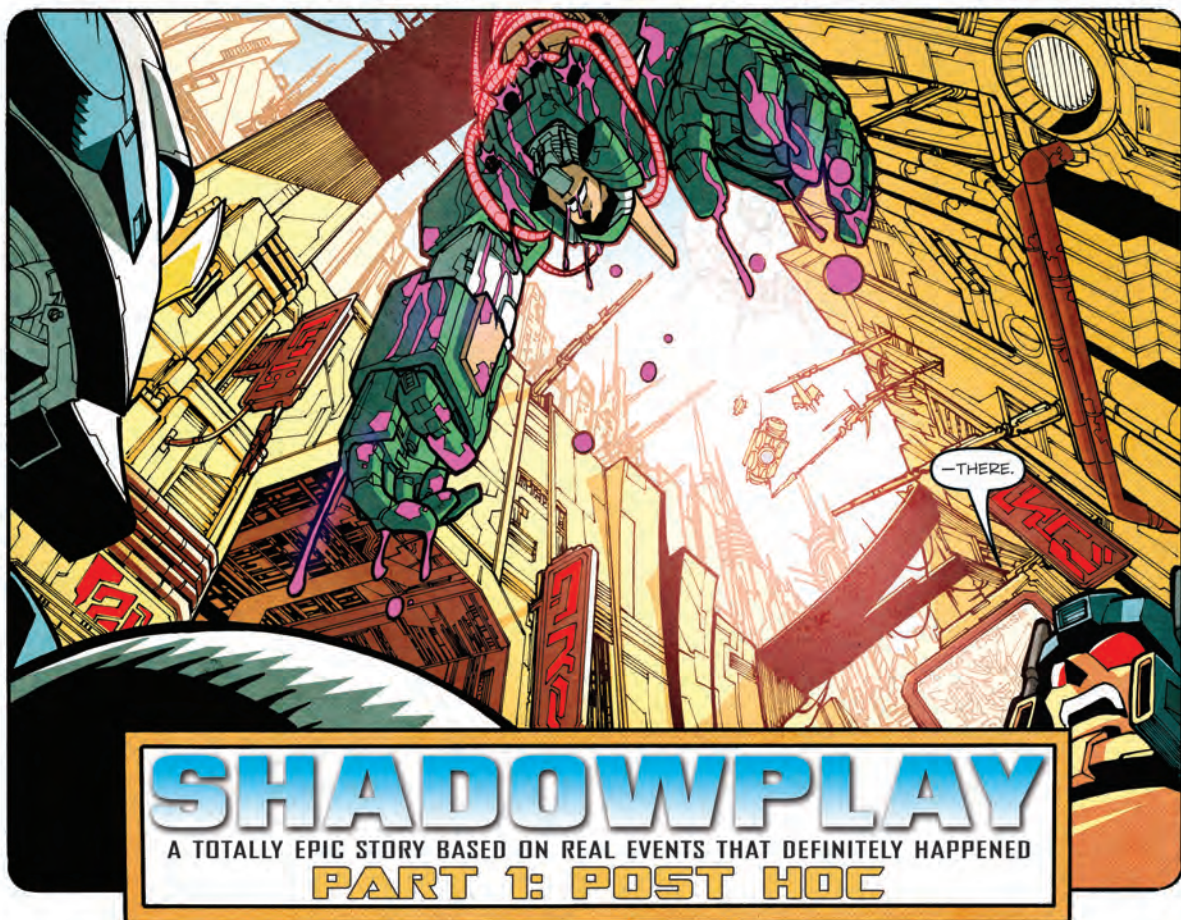
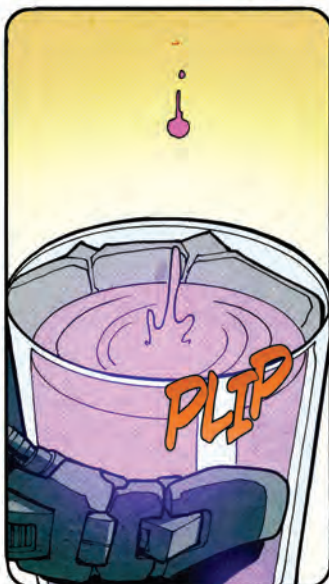
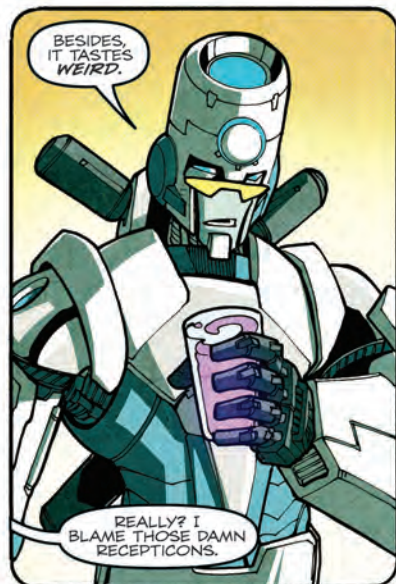
OF COURSE THEY HAVE A—THE MANUAL CLASSES! CONSTRUCTIBOTS, MINERS, HAULERS... THE DIRTIER YOUR JOB, THE GREATER YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL.

AND YOU SERIOUSLY BELIEVE THIS?



LOOK, I'M SCIENTIFIC CLASS. I TURN INTO A PROTON MICROSCOPE—THE FUNCTIONISTS ALLOW ME A DEGREE OF OCCUPATIONAL FREEDOM BECAUSE WHAT I DO IS SEEN TO HAVE ADDED VALUE.

COME THE REVOLUTION, THE DECEPTICONS WILL FORCE EVERYONE TO CHANGE SHAPE—AND ANYONE WITHOUT A DRILL BIT OR A SCOOP WILL BE SHOT ON THE SPOT. I'M TELLING YOU, IT'LL BE TRIAL BY—



FOUR MILLION
YEARS LATER...
SWERVE'S BAR.

RATCHET!
YOU MADE
IT!

I HOPE THIS
IS IMPORTANT,
REWIND. I ABANDONED
A LIFE-
SAVING
OPERATION TO
COME HERE.

THAT WAS A
JOKE. DON'T
ALL LAUGH AT
ONCE.

I WAS
ACTUALLY
SPRAY-PAINTING
MY HANDS.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

YEAH, THAT
WASN'T A
JOKE.

HOW COME
THE SIGN ON
THE DOOR SAYS
"CLOSED FOR
REPAIRS"?
RODIOUS ONLY
JUST RE-OPENED
THIS PLACE...

THE SIGN
GIVES US SOME
PRIVACY, BESIDES,
IT'S TRUE! YOU
SEE—

—WAIT
FOR IT—

—WE'RE
GONNA REPAIR
RUNG'S
BRAIN!



BY THE
VAULTED
HEIGHTS
OF—



YOU HAD HIM
HIDDEN BEHIND
THE BAR?!



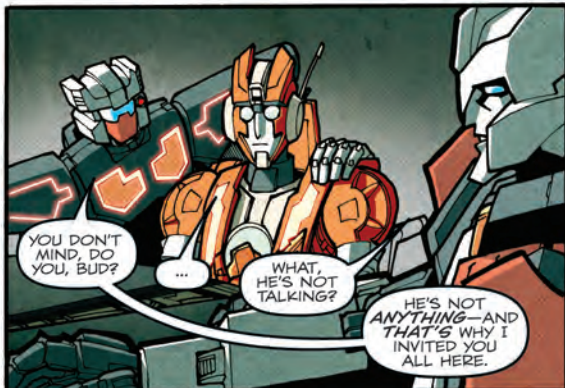
SO
EMBARRASSING.



—NOT
SERIOUSLY
TELLING ME HE'S
BEEN THERE
THE WHOLE
TIME?!



COOL.



YOU DON'T
MIND, DO
YOU, BUD?

....
WHAT,
HE'S NOT
TALKING?

HE'S NOT
ANYTHING—AND
THAT'S WHY I
INVITED YOU
ALL HERE.



GO ON,
DOMEY—TELL
'EM WHAT YOU
TOLD ME.

RUNG CAN'T RETURN
TO FULL OPERATING
STATUS UNTIL HE'S
MADE A NUMBER OF
CRITICAL NEURAL
CONNECTIONS—BUT
HE HAS TO DO IT
HIMSELF.

AND THE
LONGER IT TAKES
HIM TO DO SO, THE
GREATER THE RISK
OF TOTAL
SHUTDOWN.



ONE WAY OF
STIMULATING
RUNG'S CEREBRO
CIRCUITRY IS BY
TALKING TO
HIM—TELLING HIM
A STORY.

STORIES
RELY ON THE
LISTENER MAKING A
SUBCONSCIOUS EFFORT
TO BRIDGE GAPS IN THE
NARRATIVE—AND THAT
EXERCISES CERTAIN
HIGHER-LEVEL BRAIN
FUNCTIONS.

SO YES—YOU'RE
HERE TO HELP ME
TELL A STORY. A
TOTALLY EPIC STORY
BASED ON REAL
EVENTS THAT
DEFINITELY
HAPPENED.



THIS IS A
DIAGRAM OF A
SOCIOTEMPORAL
HOTSPOT. I KIND
OF—COLLECT THEM.
THE HOTSPOTS.
AS A HOBBY.

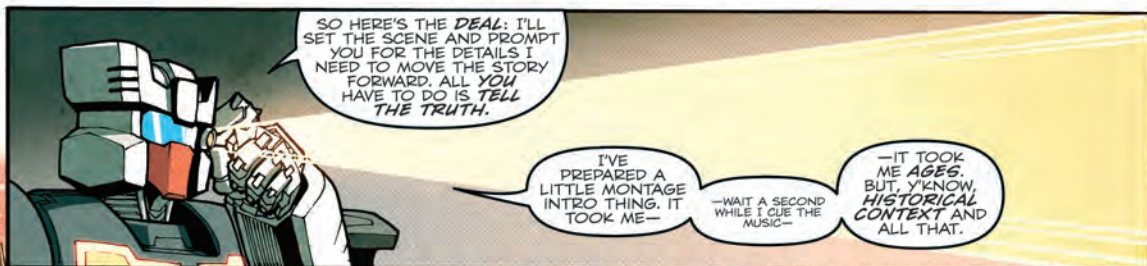
BUT FIRST,
LET ME SHOW
YOU THE
THEORY...



IF YOU DIG DEEP
ENOUGH—IF YOU SIFT
THROUGH ENOUGH
DATA—YOU'LL FIND THAT
EVERYTHING AND
EVERYONE IS
CONNECTED.

THE PATHS
THAT LED YOU
HERE ARE MANY AND
VARIED, BUT I'VE GOT A
BILLION LIFETIMES'
WORTH OF INFORMATION
ON MY DATABASE—NEWS
REPORTS, MEDICAL
RECORDS, C.C.T.V.
FOOTAGE, YOU NAME
IT—AND GUESS
WHAT?

FOUR MILLION
YEARS AGO,
THANKS TO ONE
AUTOBOT, YOU
ALL CAME WITHIN
EACH OTHER'S
ORBIT.



SO HERE'S THE DEAL: I'LL SET THE SCENE AND PROMPT YOU FOR THE DETAILS I NEED TO MOVE THE STORY FORWARD. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TELL THE TRUTH.

I'VE PREPARED A LITTLE MONTAGE INTRO THING. IT TOOK ME—

—WAIT A SECOND WHILE I CUE THE MUSIC—

—IT TOOK ME AGES. BUT, Y'KNOW, HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ALL THAT.

"RIGHT! IACON, 4TH CYCLE 501-PRE-WAR. A FEW CYCLES EARLIER, THE WORD 'DECEPTICON' FIRST APPEARED IN CONNECTION WITH SAMIZDAT WRITINGS CREDITED TO A CERTAIN MINER FROM TARN.

"NOMINUS PRIME HASN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, AND THE CLAMNDOWN IS IN FULL FORCE.

"PROTEUS AND AN INCREASINGLY FACTIONALIZED SENATE ARE STRUGGLING TO MANAGE A POPULATION WHICH IS DEMANDING GREATER INFLUENCE OVER DECISIONS TAKEN IN ITS NAME.

"YOU CAN TELL I REHARSED THIS, CAN'T YOU?"

"ER... THE SHANIX IS TRADING POORLY AGAINST THE GALACTIC CURRENCIES, THE PRIMAL VANGUARD IS EMBROILED IN THE PHOBOS CONTROVERSY...

"AND IN SPORTS NEWS, BLURR HAS WON THE IBEX CUP FOR THE TENTH CYCLE RUNNING."

YAY!



AND AT PRECISELY ARC 0-04 ON THE 1ST CHORD OF 4TH CYCLE 501—

—ACCORDING TO A POLICE REPORT RELEASED MANY YEARS LATER—

—TWO YOUNG CYBERTRONIANS ARRIVE OUTSIDE THE ORIGINAL MACCADAM'S TO INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF A BODY FOUND HANGING FROM WHAT WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE KNOWN AS THE INTERSTATE BRIDGE.

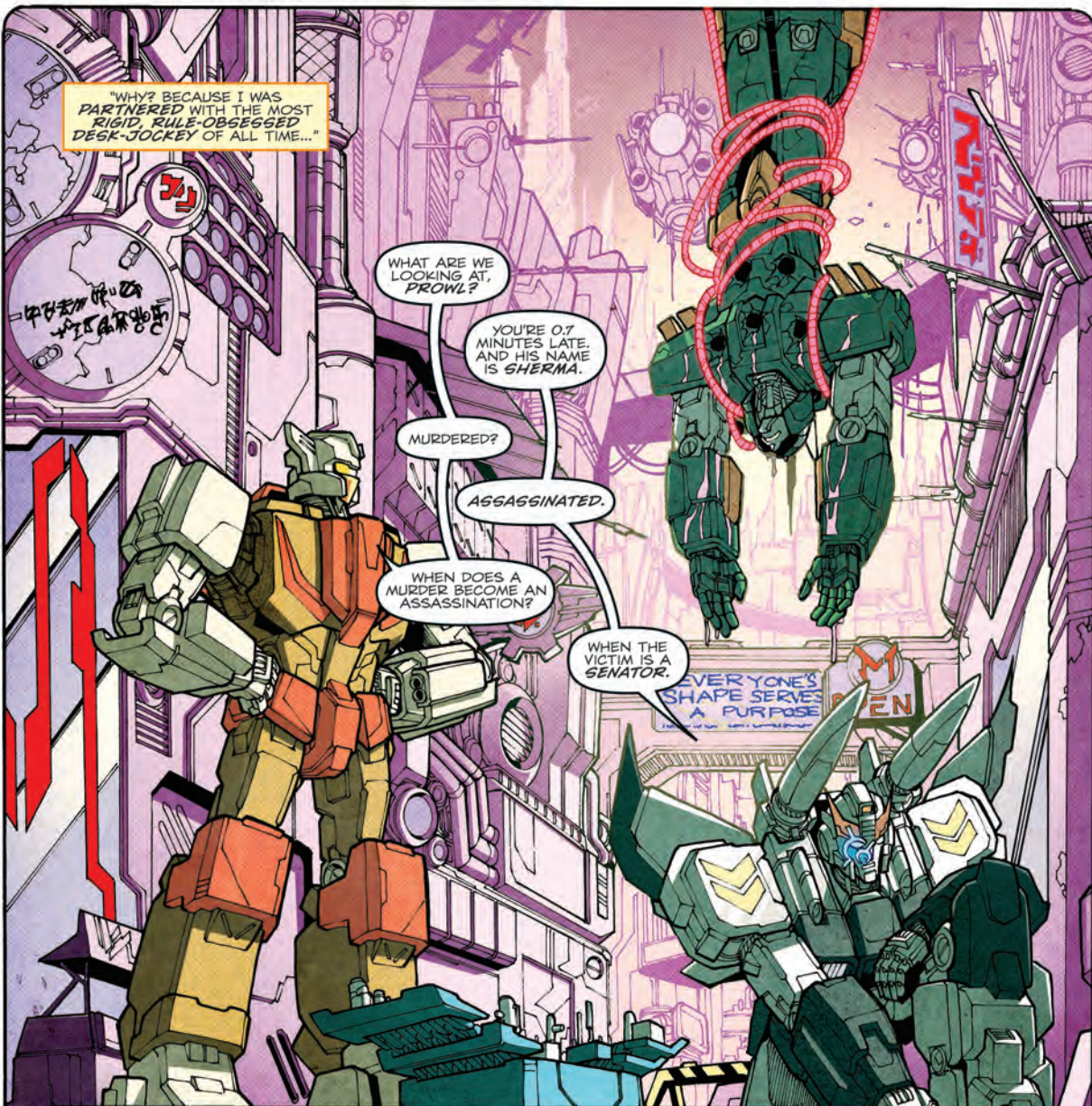
CHROMEDOME? TAKE IT AWAY!



OKAY, SO I WAS WORKING FOR MECHAFORENSICS AT THE TIME, COURSE BACK THEN I WAS ACTUALLY CALLED—

HOLD ON—JUST STICK TO CHROMEDOME, GETS TOO CONFUSING, OTHERWISE.

SO ANYWAY IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER WHAT MY ORIGINAL NAME WAS, BECAUSE BACK THEN EVERYONE JUST CALLED ME "UNLUCKY."



"WHY? BECAUSE I WAS PARTNERED WITH THE MOST RIGID, RULE-OBSESSED DECK-JOCKEY OF ALL TIME..."

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT, PROWL?

YOU'RE 0.7 MINUTES LATE. AND HIS NAME IS SHERMA.

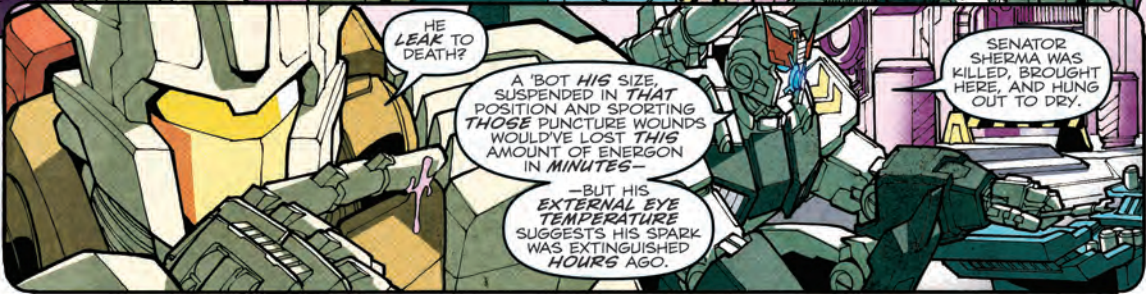
MURDERED?

ASSASSINATED.

WHEN DOES A MURDER BECOME AN ASSASSINATION?

WHEN THE VICTIM IS A SENATOR.

EVERYONE'S SHAPE SERVES A PURPOSE

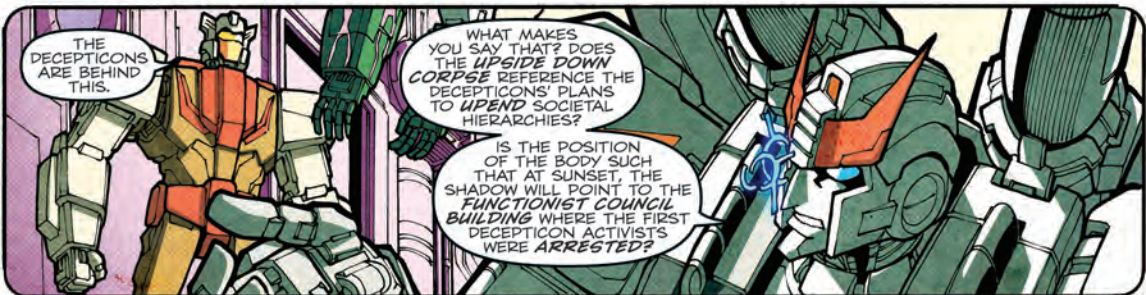


HE LEAK TO DEATH?

A 'BOT HIS SIZE, SUSPENDED IN THAT POSITION AND SPORTING THOSE PUNCTURE WOUNDS WOULD'VE LOST THIS AMOUNT OF ENERGIN IN MINUTES—

—BUT HIS EXTERNAL EYE TEMPERATURE SUGGESTS HIS SPARK WAS EXTINGUISHED HOURS AGO.

SENATOR SHERMA WAS KILLED, BROUGHT HERE, AND HUNG OUT TO DRY.



THE DECEPTICONS ARE BEHIND THIS.

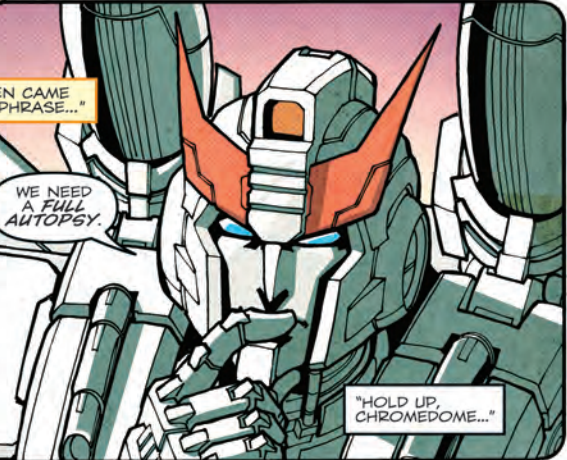
WHAT MAKES YOU SAY THAT? DOES THE UPSIDE DOWN CORPSE REFERENCE THE DECEPTICONS' PLANS TO UPEND SOCIETAL HIERARCHIES?

IS THE POSITION OF THE BODY SUCH THAT AT SUNSET, THE SHADOW WILL POINT TO THE FUNCTIONIST COUNCIL BUILDING WHERE THE FIRST DECEPTICON ACTIVISTS WERE ARRESTED?



THERE'S ALL THAT, **OBVIOUSLY**. BUT FOR ME THE **REAL CLINCHER** IS THE **MASSIVE DECEPTICON** SYMBOL GRAFFITIED ON HIS BACK.

"AND THEN CAME THE CATCHPHRASE..."



WE NEED A **FULL** **AUTOPSY**.

"HOLD UP, **CHROMEDOME**..."



IS THIS **PROWL** FELLOW GOING TO BE A **RECURRING CHARACTER**? 'COS IF SO HE NEEDS TO BE **FLESHED** OUT A BIT. I'M NOT **FEELING** IT.

IT'S **PROWL**! "PROWL THE **PRAGMATIST**!" YOU KNOW—**PROWL**!

OH! TURNS INTO A **PREDABOT**? POSTED AT **DELPHI**? LIKES A **HUG**?



NO! **PROWL** WITH THE **HEAD SPIKES** AND THE **CRUEL MOUTH** AND THE—

—**CROSS** ALL THE TIME! **EPICALLY**, **PRE-EMPTIVELY**, **EXISTENTIALLY** **CROSS**.

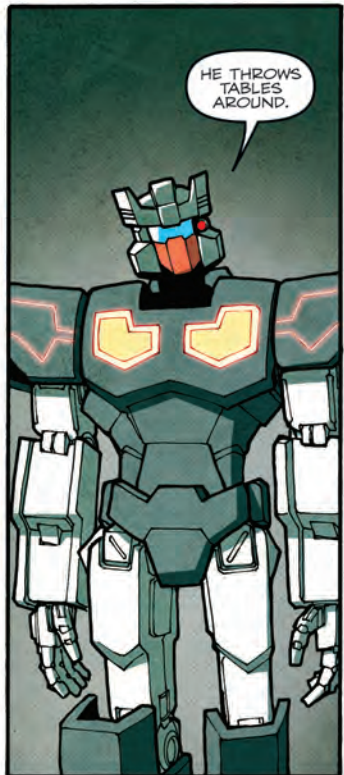
AND **COLD!** **SUPERCILIOUS** AND **COLD!** IMAGINE **ULTRA MAGNUS** WITHOUT THE **WARMTH** AND **PEOPLE** **SKILLS**.

HOW CAN YOU **NOT** KNOW WHO **PROWL** IS?

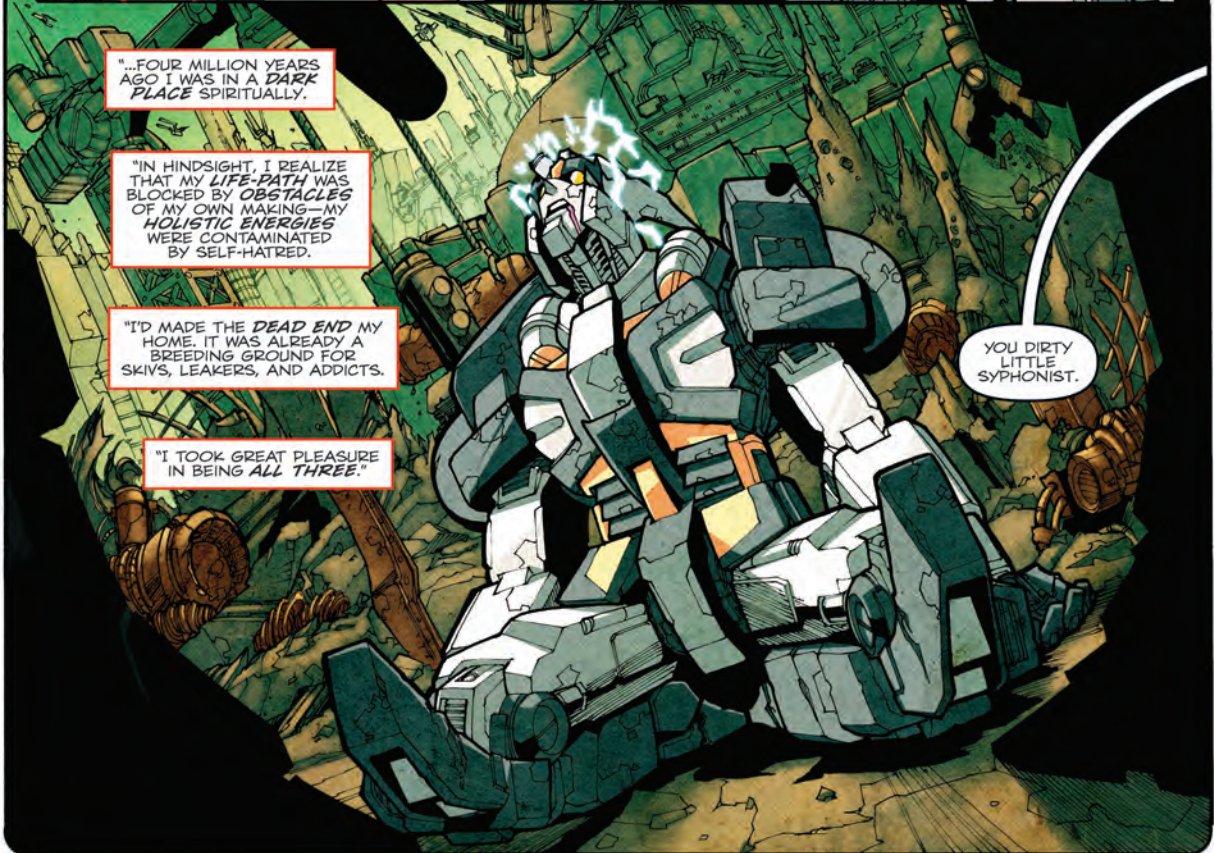
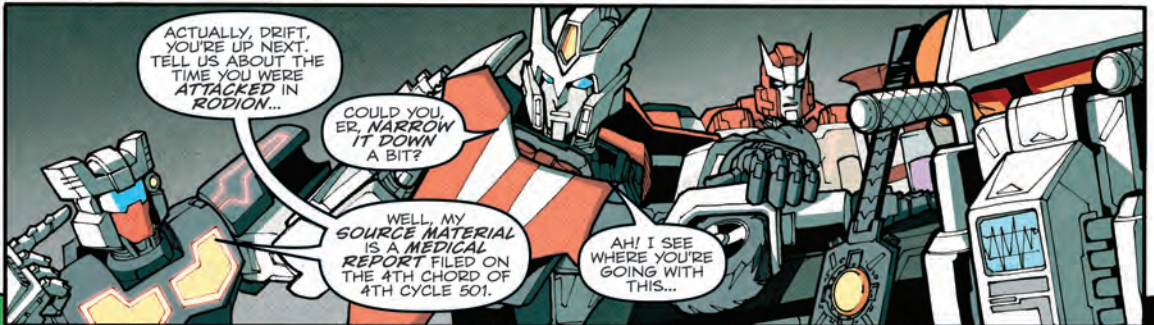


WHEN HE'S **REALLY** **MAD** HE DOES THIS:

HRNNNN!

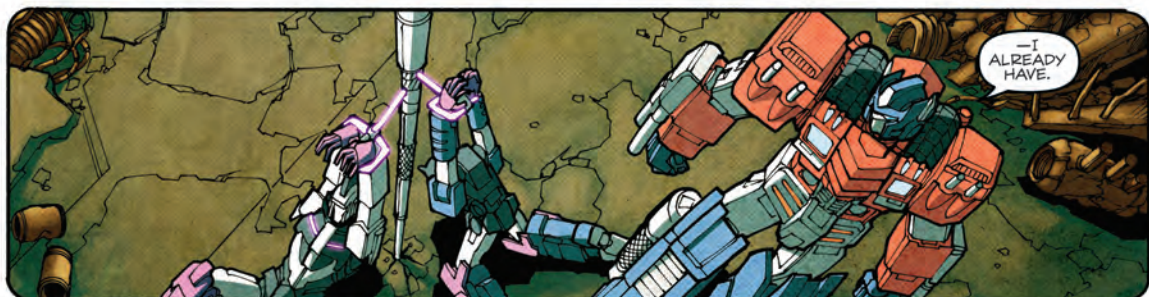
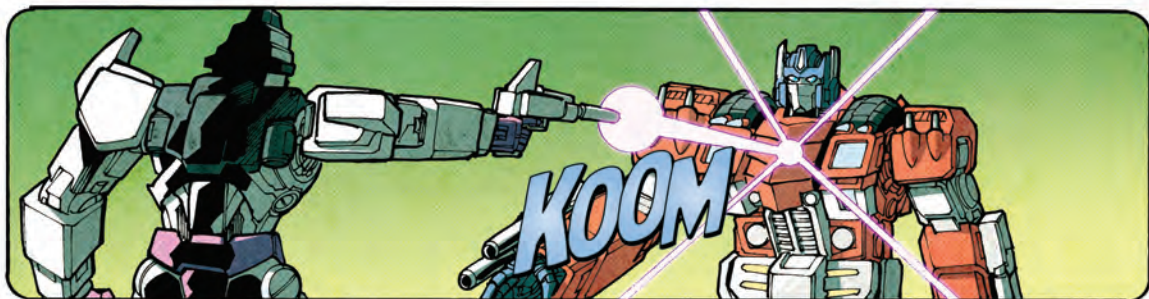


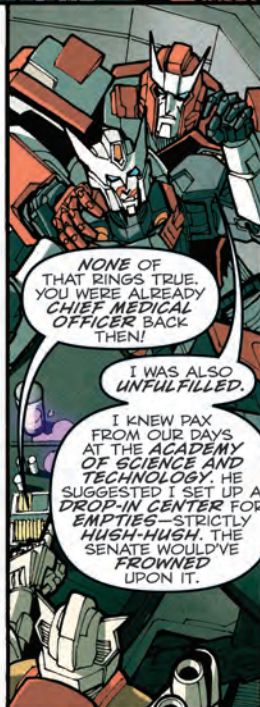
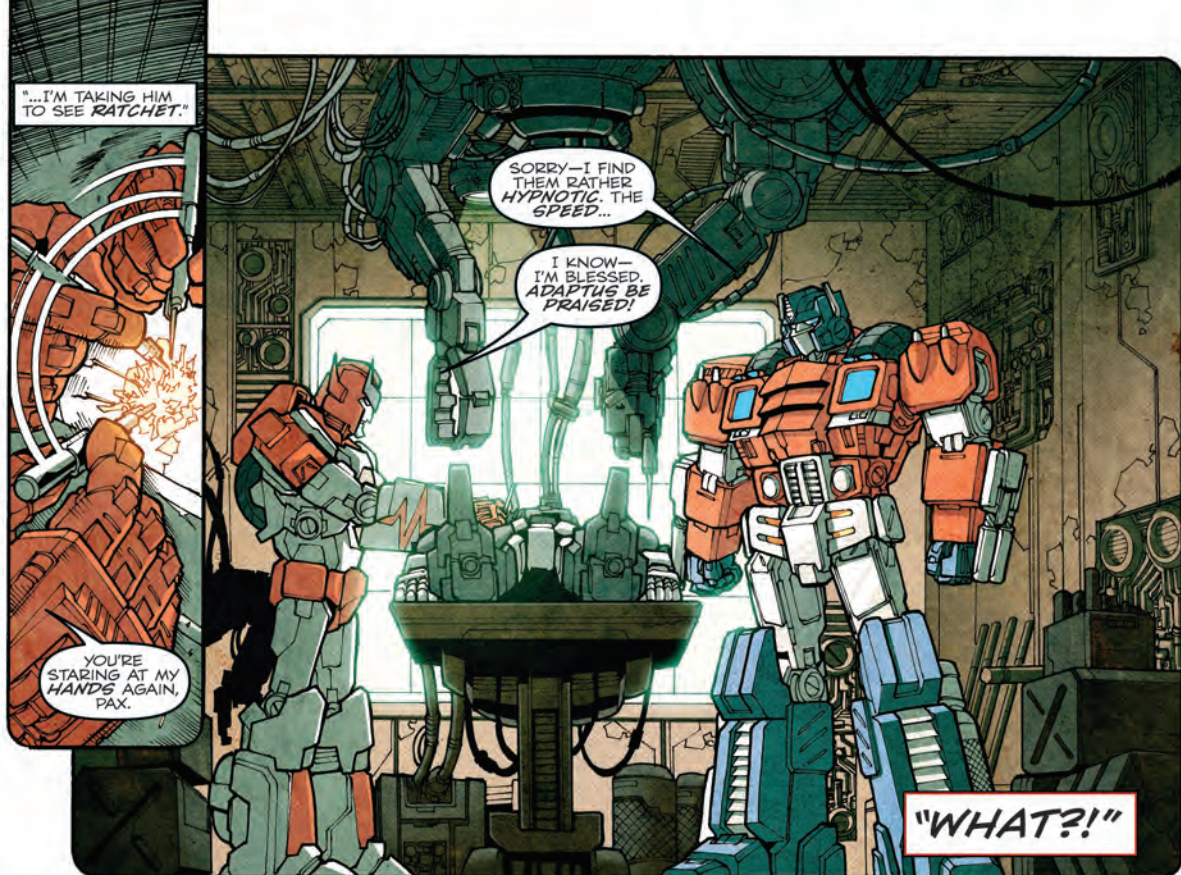
HE **THROWS** **TABLES** **AROUND**.

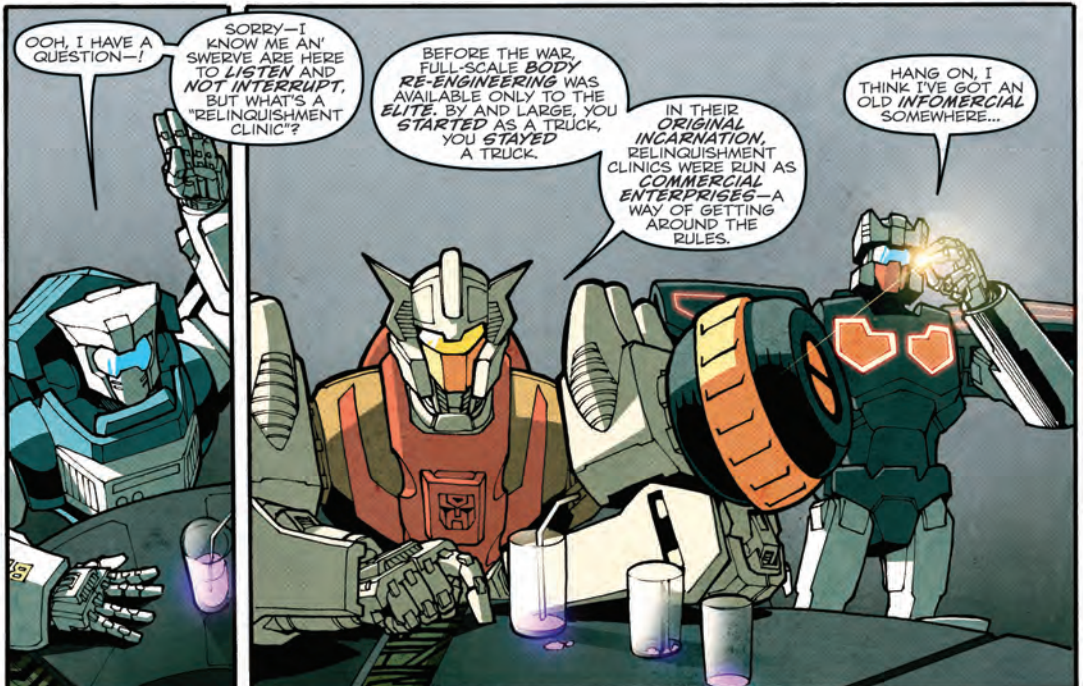


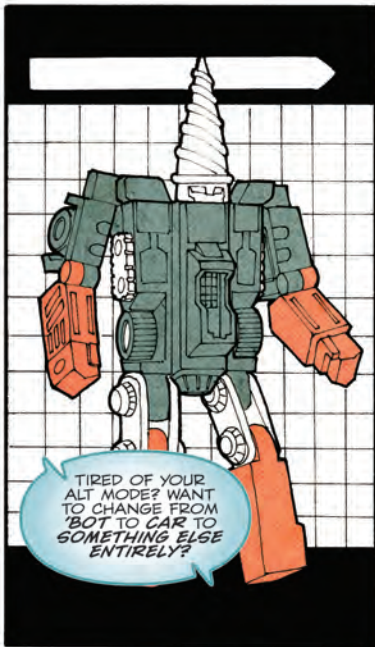




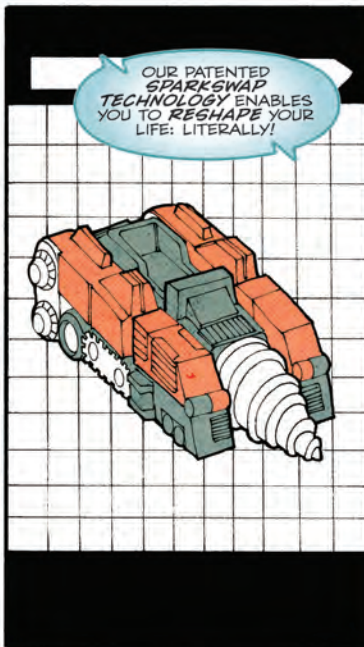




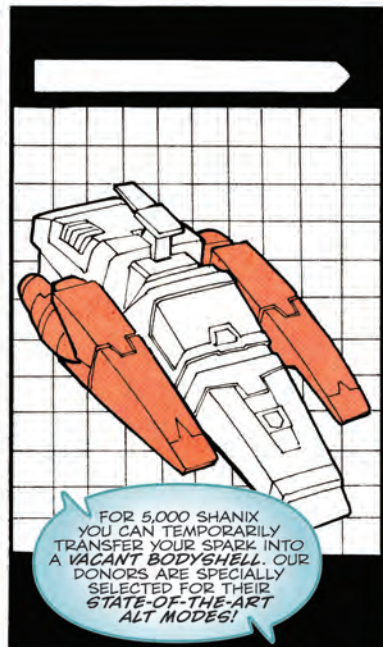




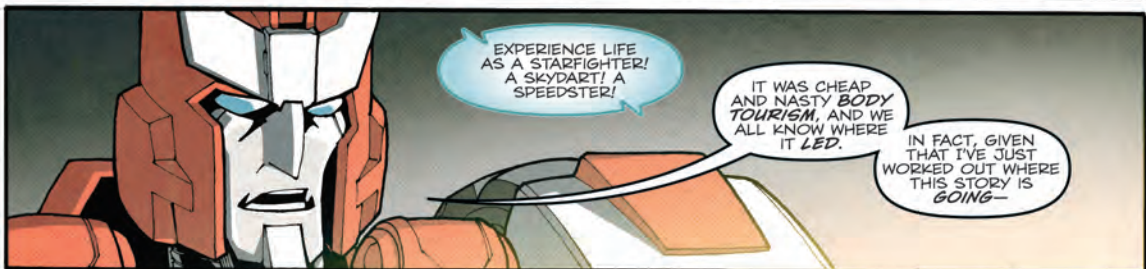
TIRED OF YOUR
ALT MODE? WANT
TO CHANGE FROM
'BOT TO CAR TO
SOMETHING ELSE
ENTIRELY?



OUR PATENTED
SPARKSWAP
TECHNOLOGY ENABLES
YOU TO **RESHAPE** YOUR
LIFE: LITERALLY!



FOR 5,000 SHANIX
YOU CAN TEMPORARILY
TRANSFER YOUR SPARK INTO
A **VACANT BODYSHELL**. OUR
DONORS ARE SPECIALLY
SELECTED FOR THEIR
STATE-OF-THE-ART
ALT MODES!



EXPERIENCE LIFE
AS A STARFIGHTER!
A SKYDART! A
SPEEDSTER!

IT WAS CHEAP
AND NASTY **BODY**
TOURISM, AND WE
ALL KNOW WHERE
IT **LED**.

IN FACT, GIVEN
THAT I'VE JUST
WORKED OUT WHERE
THIS STORY IS
GOING—

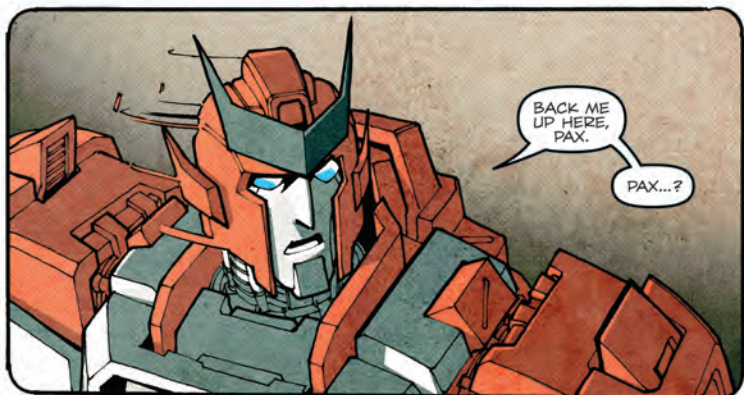


"—PERHAPS I
SHOULD TAKE OVER
THE NARRATION."

IT'S CHEAP
AND NASTY **BODY**
TOURISM, KID—WHO
KNOWS WHERE
IT'LL LEAD?

YEAH, BUT IT
PAYS WELL—AND
LET'S FACE IT, MY
ALT MODE IS MY
ONE REMAINING
ASSET.

TRUST ME:
THERE'S SOME
MONOCYCLE OR
PROTON
MICROSCOPE OUT
THERE WHO'S
ALWAYS WANTED TO
TURN INTO A
SPEEDSTER.



BACK ME
UP HERE,
PAX.

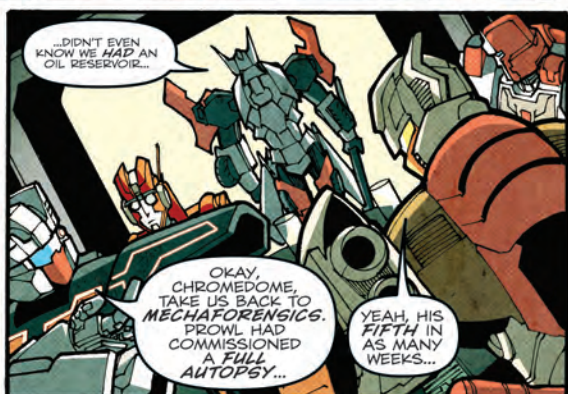
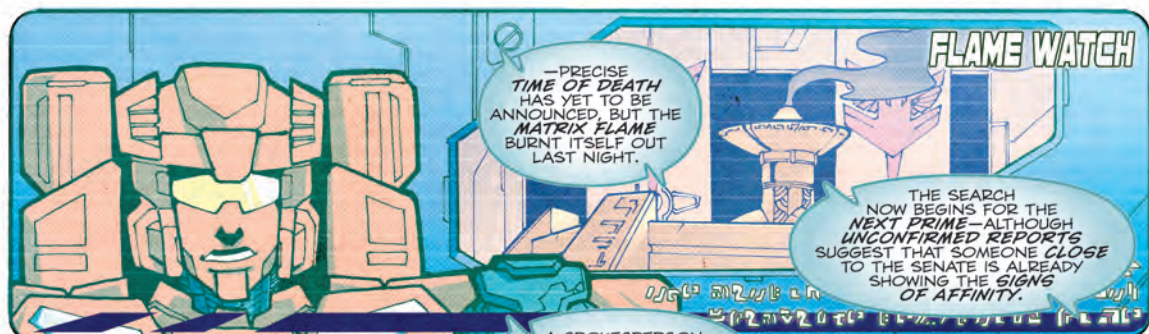
PAX...?

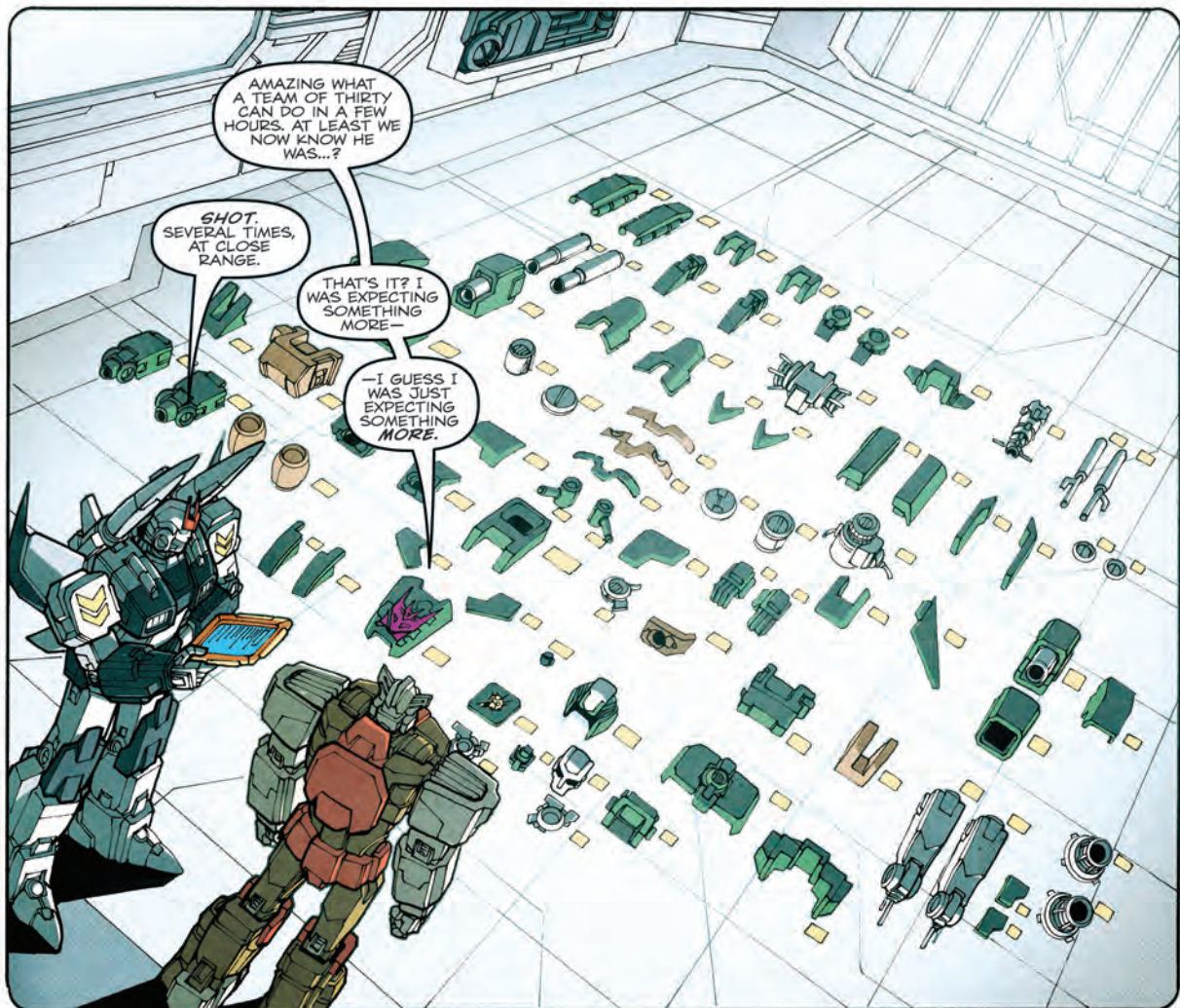


YOU AND
T.V.! YOU'RE
WORSE THAN
ROLLER.

Y'KNOW, I MISS
THE **OLD** NEWSFEED
SERVICE. THESE
DAYS ALL YOU GET IS
STATE-SPONSORED
SCRAP ABOUT PROTEUS
MAKING FIRST CONTACT
WITH THE POVIANOS OR
FROTH LIKE "THE TOP
10 METROPLEX
SIGHTINGS."

IT'S
NOMINUS.
HE'S DEAD.





AMAZING WHAT
A TEAM OF THIRTY
CAN DO IN A FEW
HOURS. AT LEAST WE
NOW KNOW HE
WAS...?

SHOT.
SEVERAL TIMES,
AT CLOSE
RANGE.

THAT'S IT? I
WAS EXPECTING
SOMETHING
MORE—

—I GUESS I
WAS JUST
EXPECTING
SOMETHING
MORE.

WHY WASN'T
THE **BRAIN**
MODULE
DISMANTLED?

WE'VE BEEN
TOLD TO
LEAVE IT INTACT.
LOBE AND HIS
CEREBROSURGEONS
ARE TRYING TO PULL
LIVE DATA FROM
DEAD BODIES.

SINCE WHEN?
YOU KNOW I'M
INTERESTED IN
MNEMONOLOGY.

WE'LL
TALK ABOUT
IT **LATER**.
NOW—TAKE A
LOOK AT
THIS...

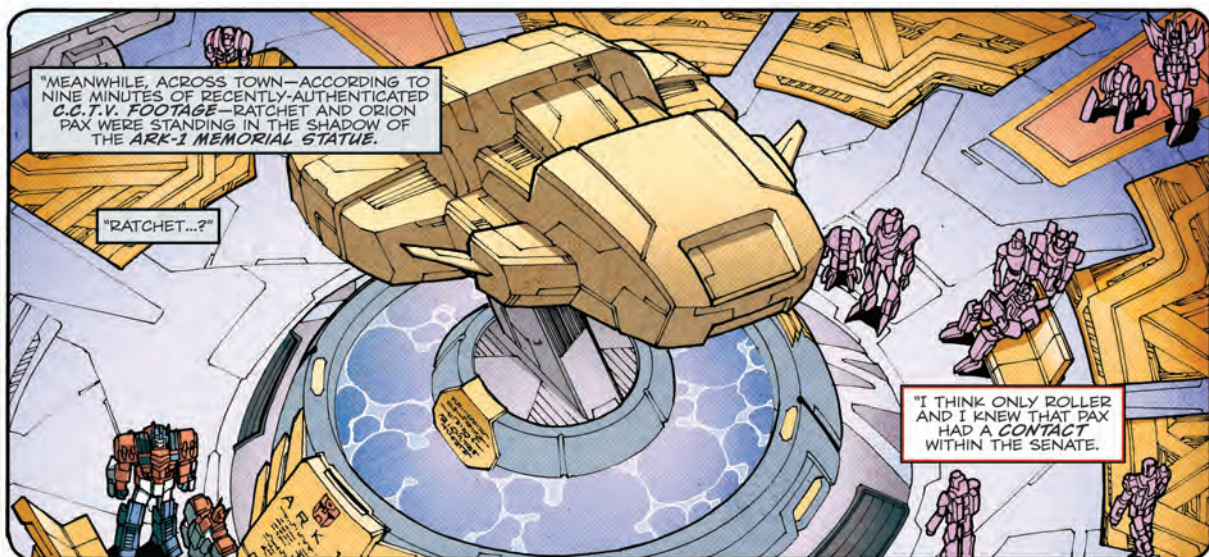
...IT'S
POWDERED
GLASS. IT WAS
RECOVERED FROM
SHERMA'S BOOTS
AND **TRACTION**
TREADS.

IT'S **CERULEAN**
GLASS—I
RECOGNIZE THE
GRAIN. ONLY PLACE
YOU'D FIND GLASS
LIKE THAT IS AT
TRANSLUCENTICA
HEIGHTS.

WELL
DONE.

WHAT'S
THAT?

A **SEARCH**
WARRANT.



"MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN—ACCORDING TO NINE MINUTES OF RECENTLY-AUTHENTICATED C.C.T.V. FOOTAGE—RATCHET AND ORION PAX WERE STANDING IN THE SHADOW OF THE ARK-I MEMORIAL STATUE.

"RATCHET...?"

"I THINK ONLY ROLLER AND I KNEW THAT PAX HAD A CONTACT WITHIN THE SENATE.



"ROLLER USED TO TEASE HIM ABOUT IT: 'HE'S STRINGING YOU ALONG, ORION! YOU'RE HIS GO-TO 'BOT WHEN HE WANTS TO SHOW OFF, AND YOU LOVE IT.'"

"TYPICAL ROLLER.

"ANYWAY, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME PAX HAD ASKED ME TO ACCOMPANY HIM TO ONE OF HIS RENDEZVOUS.



"HE SAID HE JUST WANTED THE COMPANY."

HEROES, ONE AND ALL...



"...I'VE LOST COUNT OF THE MILLIONS I'VE SPENT ON SEARCH MISSIONS.

I HEAR YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN EXPLORATION.

AND RETRIEVAL, YES. I LIKE TO FIND THINGS THAT ARE LOST. LUNA 1 IS ANOTHER OBSESSION.

I THINK YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER.

ONLY BY SIGHT.

THIS IS RATCHET. I TRUST HIM.

THEN SO DO I.



"WHILE THEY TALKED IN WHISPERS IT WAS MY JOB TO PLAY THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER. THAT'S WHY I WAS **REALLY** THERE."

OF COURSE THEY HAD NOMINUS KILLED! THE MOMENT SENTINEL REALIZED THAT THE MATRIX IN HIS CHEST WAS A **FAKE** HIS FATE WAS SEALED.

AND DOESN'T THAT **BOTHER** YOU?



BOTHER ME? ORION, IT WAS ALL I COULD DO TO STOP MYSELF STORMING UP TO SENTINEL AND TEARING HIS **HEAD** OFF.

BUT MY ANGER HAS GOT ME INTO TROUBLE IN THE PAST—THESE DAYS I HAVE TO KEEP MY **VOLATILITY** IN CHECK.

ALSO, MY... **INFLUENCE** WITHIN THE SENATE IS ON THE **WANE**. I SPENT MOST OF MY **POLITICAL CAPITAL** INTERVENING TO **SAVE YOUR LIFE**.

*TRANSFORMERS VOLUME 5: CHAOS THEORY



NO REGRETS, I **HOPE**.

PLEASE—YOU REMAIN MY **BRIGHTEST HOPE**.

LOOK—I KNOW YOU WANT TO SEE THE SENATE **HUMBL**ED AND REPLACED BY SOMETHING **BETTER**. I KNOW YOU WANT TO SEE PROTEUS **REMOVED**. BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT **USE** YOU HAVE FOR **ME**.



FORGET PROTEUS—SENTINEL'S THE ONE TO WORRY ABOUT. THE SCALE OF HIS **AMBITION**—IT'S FRIGHTENING.

THERE'S SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME—I CAN HEAR IT IN YOUR **VOICE**.

I... HAVE A HUNCH. A HUNCH THAT SENTINEL'S **PLANNING** SOMETHING—AND THAT IT INVOLVES THE **DECEPTICONS**.



MEGATRON—IS HE **ALRIGHT**?

WELL HE'S **SAFE**. IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN. THEY DAREN'T **KILL** HIM FOR FEAR OF **MARTYRING** HIM, SO THEY'VE SHIPPED HIM **OFF-WORLD**. THE LAST I HEARD HE WAS MINING **NUCLEON** ON MESSATINE.

"AAAND..."



"...STOP! THAT'S A **CLIFFHANGER**. RATCHET—RIGHT THERE!"

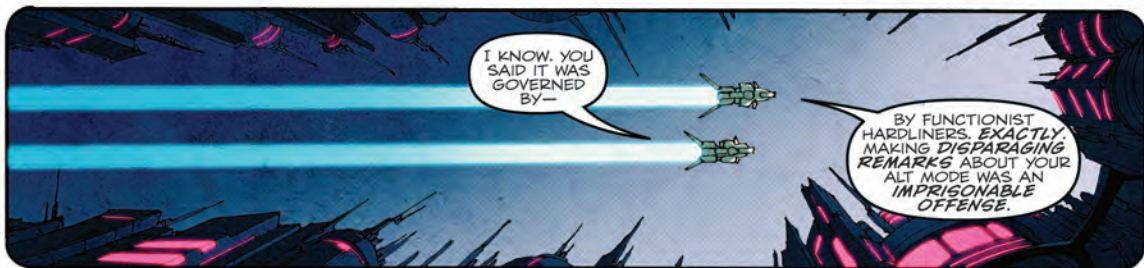
"BUT BEFORE PAX SETS OFF ON HIS **JOURNEY**, LET'S CATCH UP WITH OUR HEROES FROM MECHAFORENSICS, **CHROMEDOME**...?"



"SO BY THE TIME WE REACHED **TRANSLUCENTICA HEIGHTS**, THE **CURFEW** HAD KICKED IN. THE STREETS WERE **DESERTED**."

YOU KNOW, IF WE HAD **DECENT ALT MODES** WE WOULDN'T NEED SKYDARTS TO GET AROUND. WE COULD JUST **FLY EVERYWHERE**.

I SPENT MY FORMATIVE YEARS IN **PETREX**, A **TWIN-MODE TOWN** NORTH OF THE **PANCONTINENTAL EXPRESSWAY**.



I KNOW. YOU SAID IT WAS GOVERNED BY—

BY FUNCTIONIST **HARDLINERS**. **EXACTLY**. MAKING **DISPARAGING REMARKS** ABOUT YOUR ALT MODE WAS AN **IMPRISONABLE OFFENSE**.



SOUNDS LIKE HELL.

OH, I DON'T KNOW. IT TAUGHT ME TO RESPECT RULES. WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, WE'RE **LOST**.



COURSE **THESE DAYS** THEY'D SEND YOU TO **THE INSTITUTE** AND BE DONE WITH IT.

PFFT.

HOW DO YOU EVEN **MAKE THAT SOUND**?



YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN **THE INSTITUTE**, DO YOU?

I DON'T KNOW—BUT WHETHER IT'S REAL OR NOT, THE **IDEA** OF THE INSTITUTE FASCINATES ME.



THE WARDEN HERE IS ONE OF OUR MOST ENTHUSIASTIC INFORMANTS. OBSESSED WITH **TRIPLE M**. THEN IT WAS THE **DECEPTICONS**...

...THIS WAS BEFORE **PROTEUS** MADE HIS RATHER ILL-ADVISED PROMISE.

NONETHELESS, IF SENATOR SHERMA HAD **BUSINESS** HERE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIND OUT WHAT—



*MILITANT MONOFORM MOVEMENT



HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE HERE? TWO THOUSAND?

2,987.

IACON'S MOST PRIVILEGED—AND EVERY ONE OF THEM **ALT MODE** EXEMPT.

YOU COULD BE TOO IF YOU GOT YOURSELF **RECLASSIFIED** AS A MEMBER OF THE **INTELLECTUAL CLASS**.

EASIER SAID THAN DONE. MY BRAIN GOT ME AS FAR AS **MECHAFORENSICS**—NO FURTHER.



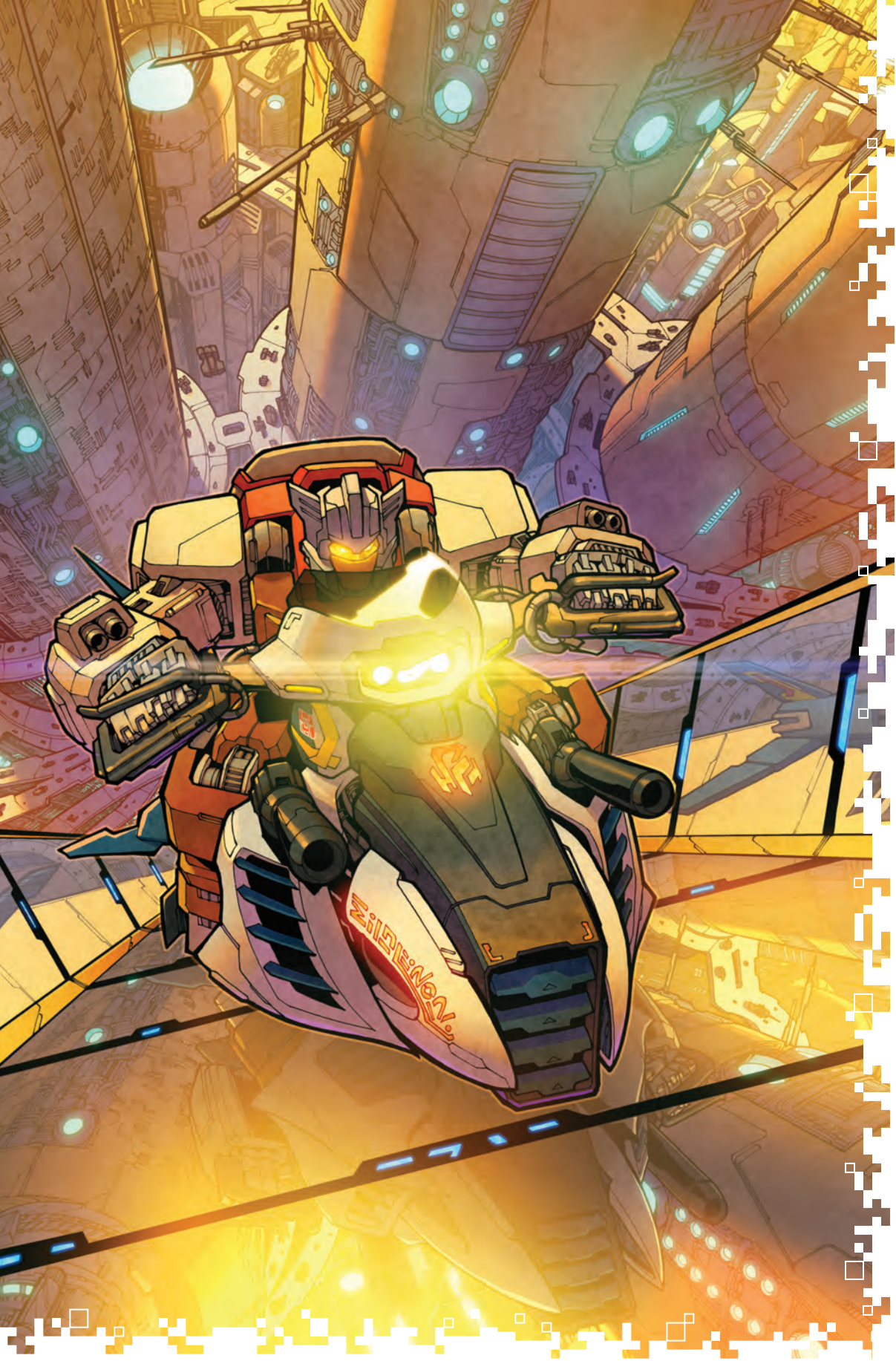
THE OIL RESERVOIR.





MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #9 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #10 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

CYBERTRON. BEFORE THE WAR.



IN OTHER NEWS, SENATOR PROTEUS HAS REFUSED TO BLAME THE KILLING OF SENATOR SHERMA ON THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT. DESPITE CLAIMS THAT A PURPLE SYMBOL WAS PAINTED ON THE CORPSE.

KLIK

KLIK



WE SHOULD LET THE MURDER INVESTIGATION RUN ITS COURSE.

IN THE MEANTIME, I STAND BY THE PLEDGE I MADE WHEN I ANNOUNCED THE DECEPTICON REGISTRATION ACT—

INS



—NAMELY, THAT I WILL GRANT THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT **FORMAL POLITICAL PARTY STATUS** IF—AND ONLY IF—AT LEAST 10,000 "DECEPTICONS" REGISTER THEMSELVES AS SUCH.

UNDER THE TERMS OF "PROTEUS'S PROMISE," DECEPTICON SUPPORTERS HAVE **48 HOURS** LEFT TO REGISTER BEFORE—

KLIK



—CAN CONFIRM THAT NOMINUS PRIME'S ASCENSION TO THE ALLSPARK WILL BE MARKED WITH A **FULL STATE FUNERAL**, WITH HIS BODY BEING—

KLIK

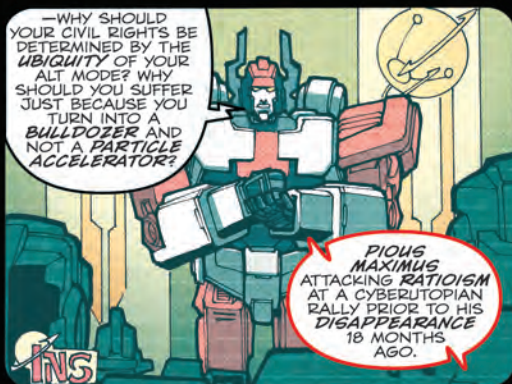


NOVA'S **POPULATION AUGMENTATION PROGRAM** LED TO WIDESPREAD ENERGEN DEPRIVATION AND, WORSE, A VIRULENT **RACISM** THAT PERSISTS TO THIS DAY.

IT SHOULD MAKE NO ODDS WHETHER YOU'RE **FORGED OR—**

KLIK

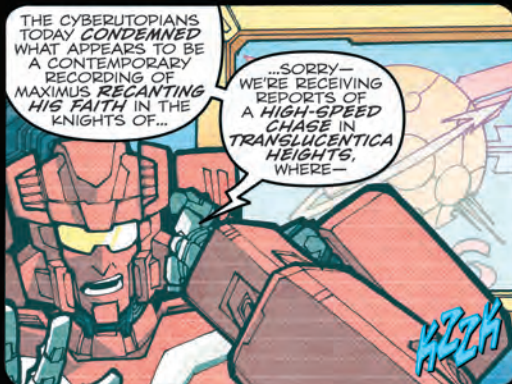
*LIVE FROM THE I.A.A.T. LECTURES



—WHY SHOULD YOUR CIVIL RIGHTS BE DETERMINED BY THE **UBIQUITY** OF YOUR ALT MODE? WHY SHOULD YOU SUFFER JUST BECAUSE YOU TURN INTO A **BULLDOZER** AND NOT A **PARTICLE ACCELERATOR**?

PIOUS MAXIMUS ATTACKING RACISM AT A CYBERUTOPIAN RALLY PRIOR TO HIS DISAPPEARANCE 18 MONTHS AGO.

INS



THE CYBERUTOPIANS TODAY **CONDEMNED** WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CONTEMPORARY RECORDING OF MAXIMUS **RECAPTURING HIS FAITH** IN THE KNIGHTS OF...

...SORRY—WE'RE RECEIVING REPORTS OF A **HIGH-SPEED CHASE** IN TRANSLUCENTICA HEIGHTS, WHERE—

KLIK

SHADOWPLAY

PART 2:

PATTERNISM

TRANSLUCENTICA
HEIGHTS,
NORTHERN IACON

CITIZEN,
I—

—SIGH—

CITIZEN, I AM AN
OFFICER WITH THE
MECHAFORENSICS
DIVISION, AND I AM
NOT CHASING YOU
FOR FUN.

YOU'VE BEEN
CAUGHT FLEEING
THE SCENE OF A CRIME;
I AM CHASING YOU TO
GIVE YOU THE CHANCE
TO *ELIMINATE*
YOURSELF FROM
OUR INQUIRIES.

"...AND THEN HE
STARTED *FIRING*
AT ME!"

THE LOST LIGHT,
FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER

BAM!
BAM!
BAM!

HE BANKED RIGHT,
THEN LEFT, THEN HE
CORKSCREWED, AND I
WAS TIGHT ON HIS TAIL,
PUSHING THE SKYDART
INTO OVERDRIVE, WHEN
HE MADE HIS *BIG*
MISTAKE...

"...HE FLEW INTO THE
PEDESTRIAN DUCTS."

STRICTLY NO ALT MODES

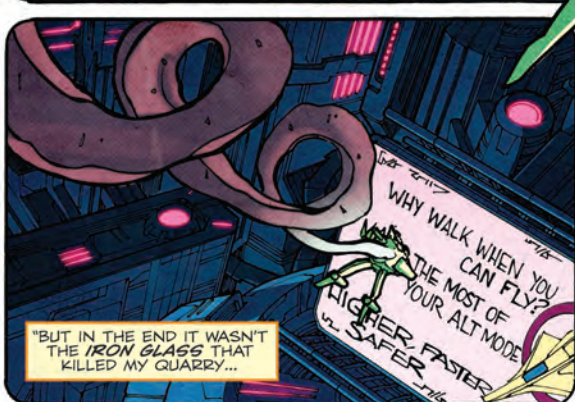


"NOW, WHEN IT COMES TO THE GLASS AT TRANSLUCENTICA, THERE ARE TWO THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND.

"FIRST, IT'S REINFORCED—'IRON GLASS.' WE USED TO CALL IT. AND SECOND, WHEN YOU'RE FLYING AT SPEED...



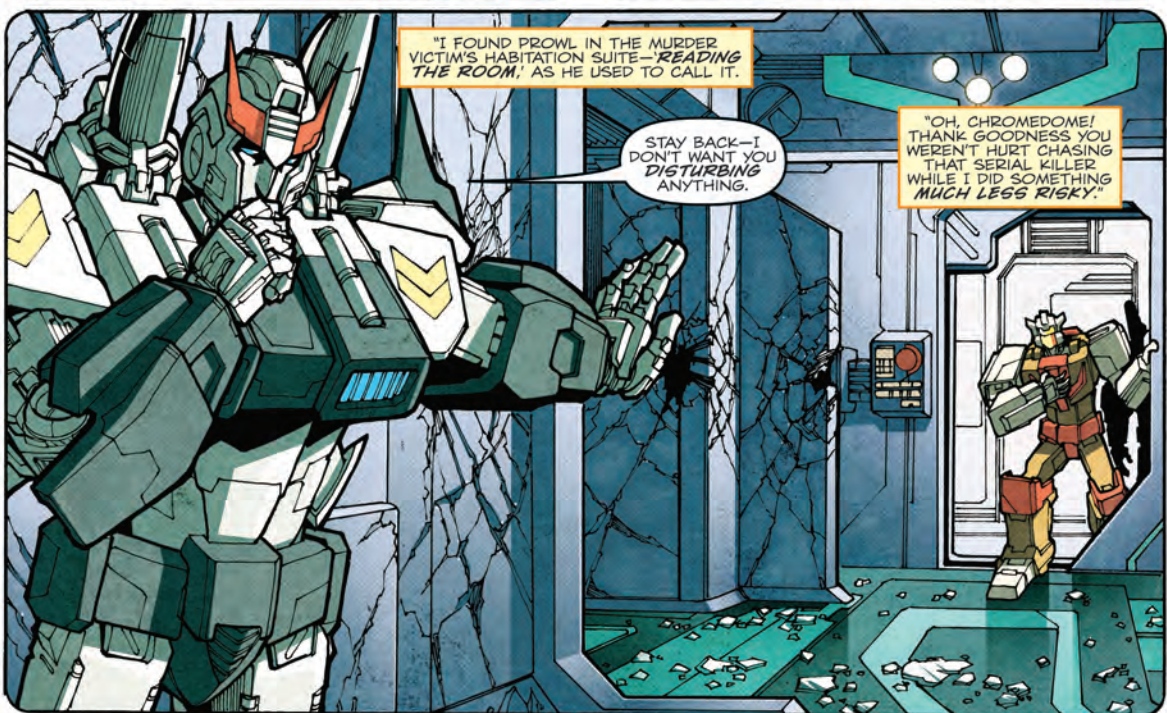
"...IT'S PRETTY MUCH INVISIBLE.



"BUT IN THE END IT WASN'T THE IRON GLASS THAT KILLED MY QUARRY...



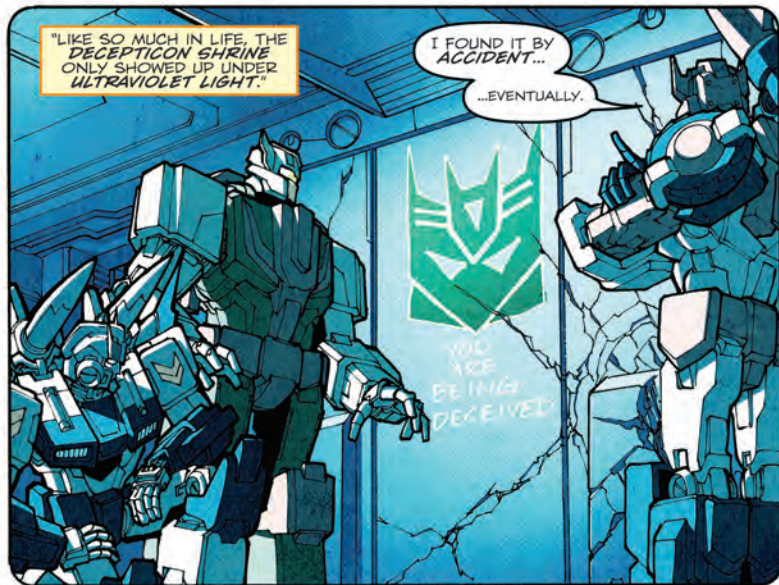
"...IT WAS THE IRONIC BILLBOARD.

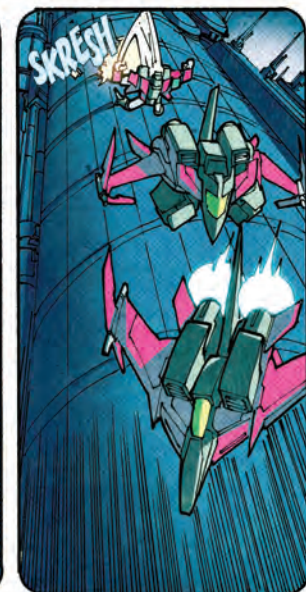
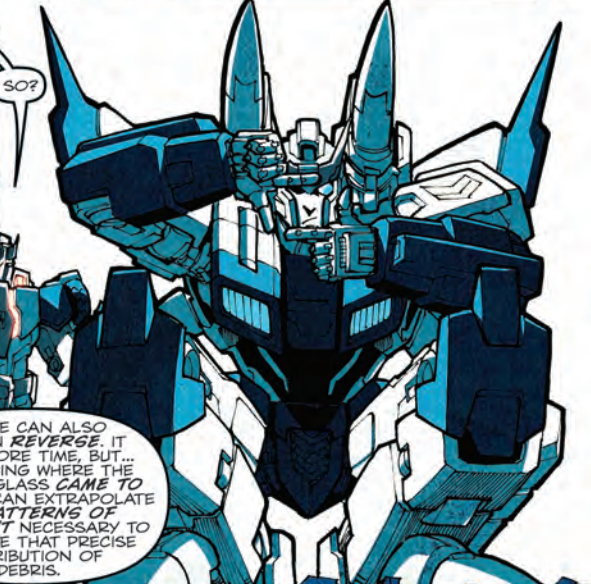


"I FOUND PROWL IN THE MURDER VICTIM'S HABITATION SUITE—READING THE ROOM,' AS HE USED TO CALL IT.

STAY BACK—I DON'T WANT YOU DISTURBING ANYTHING.

"OH, CHROMEDOME! THANK GOODNESS YOU WEREN'T HURT CHASING THAT SERIAL KILLER WHILE I DID SOMETHING MUCH LESS RISKY."





THE LOST LIGHT: SHUTTLE BAY 3

"MAGNUS, YOU TOOK YOUR TIME."

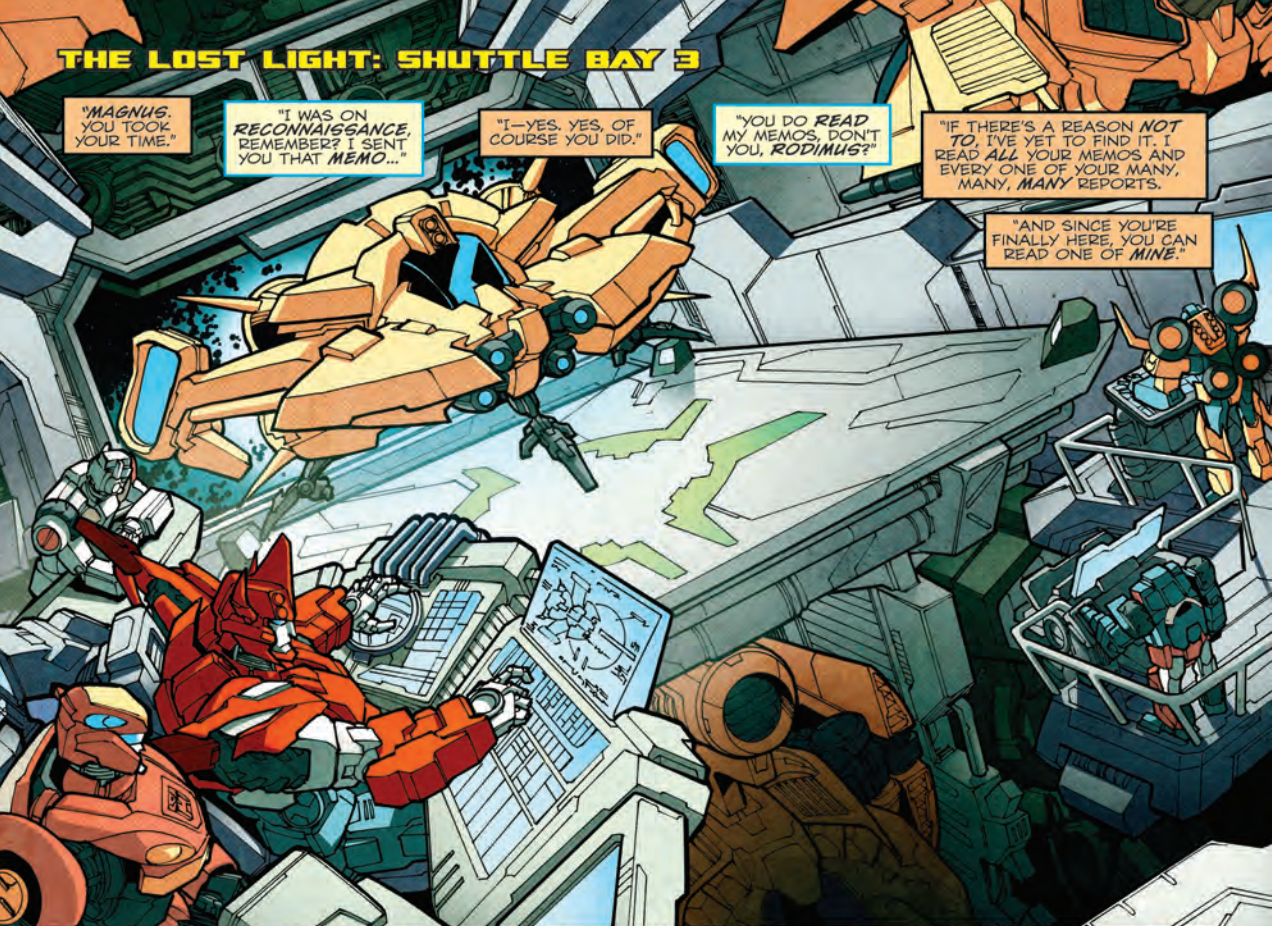
"I WAS ON RECONNAISSANCE, REMEMBER? I SENT YOU THAT MEMO..."

"I—YES, YES, OF COURSE YOU DID."

"YOU DO READ MY MEMOS, DON'T YOU, RODIMUS?"

"IF THERE'S A REASON *NOT* TO, I'VE YET TO FIND IT. I READ ALL YOUR MEMOS AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR MANY, MANY, MANY REPORTS."

"AND SINCE YOU'RE FINALLY HERE, YOU CAN READ ONE OF *MINE*."



PERCEPTION'S LAB MAKESHIFT INTERROGATION ROOM

"WE FOUND RED ALERT IN THE OIL RESERVOIR. NO HEAD. PRETTY SURE CYCLONUS IS TO BLAME—OBV. WATCH THIS SPACE."

"OBV" STANDS FOR OBVIOUSLY.

NO, I, ER—I GUESSED THAT.



HOW'S RED ALERT?

THERE'S A WEAK SPARK. WE FOUND HIS HEAD, SO FIRST AID THINKS HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE HIM.

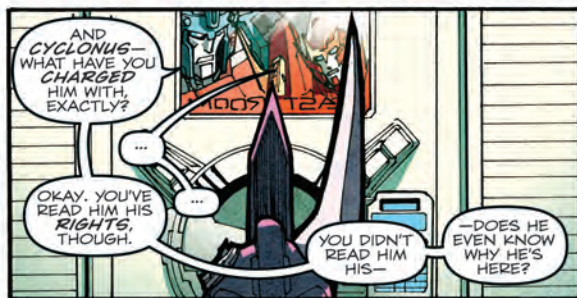


AND CYCLONUS—WHAT HAVE YOU CHARGED HIM WITH, EXACTLY?

OKAY, YOU'VE READ HIM HIS RIGHTS, THOUGH.

YOU DIDN'T READ HIM HIS—

—DOES HE EVEN KNOW WHY HE'S HERE?



WAIT—HAVE WE SHAPPED ROLES OR SOMETHING?

I'M THE ONE WHO GAVE HIM A CHANCE—YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HATES HIM.

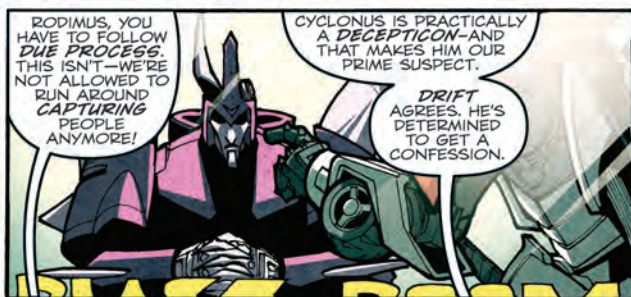
"SCREW UP AND I'LL DEMOLISH YOU." DID I SAY THAT? OH, NO, WAIT, THAT WAS YOU.

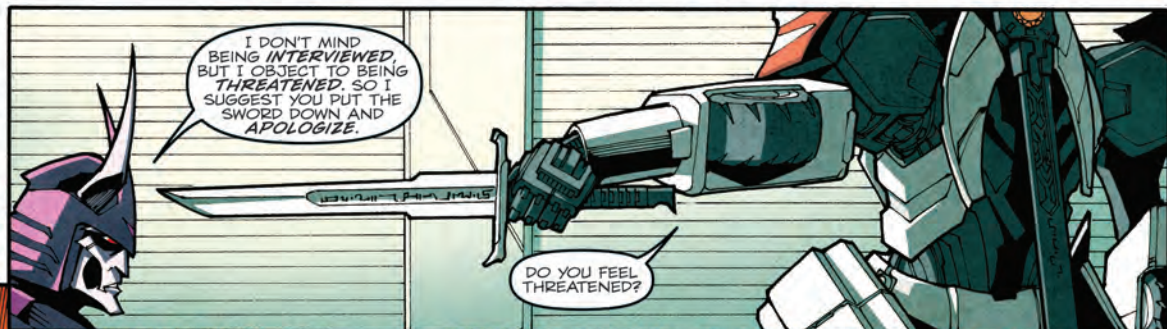


RODIMUS, YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW DUE PROCESS. THIS ISN'T—WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO RUN AROUND CAPTURING PEOPLE ANYMORE!

CYCLONUS IS PRACTICALLY A DECEPTICON—AND THAT MAKES HIM OUR PRIME SUSPECT.

DRIFT AGREES. HE'S DETERMINED TO GET A CONFESSION.







THERE!
NOW DO YOU
SEE WHY I WAS
SUSPICIOUS?!

WHAT I SEE IS A
SUSPECT REACTING
TO EXTREME
PROVOCATION.



I'M
GOING TO
SAY THIS
ONCE.

AFTER THAT, YOU
CAN SUBJECT ME TO
WHATEVER TORTURES—
SORRY, "INTERROGATIVE
TECHNIQUES"—FALL WITHIN
AUTOBOT COMMAND'S
EVER-WIDENING AMBIT OF
"JUSTIFIABLE CAUSE," BUT MY
POSITION, AS STATED
WILL NOT CHANGE.



I MET RED
ALERT TWICE.
I FOUND HIM
PARANOID, JITTERY,
DELUSIONAL, AND
APPALLING AT
HIS JOB.

I LIKED
HIM. I LIKED
HIM FOR HIS
FLAWS.

THE REST OF
YOU, YOU'RE SO
DAMN PLEASED
WITH YOURSELVES.
YOU'VE WON A WAR
AND YOU THINK
THAT ELEVATES
YOU.



YOUR
POINT...

AS I SAID, I
LIKED HIM—BUT
IF I'D WANTED
TO KILL HIM, HE
WOULD BE
DEAD.

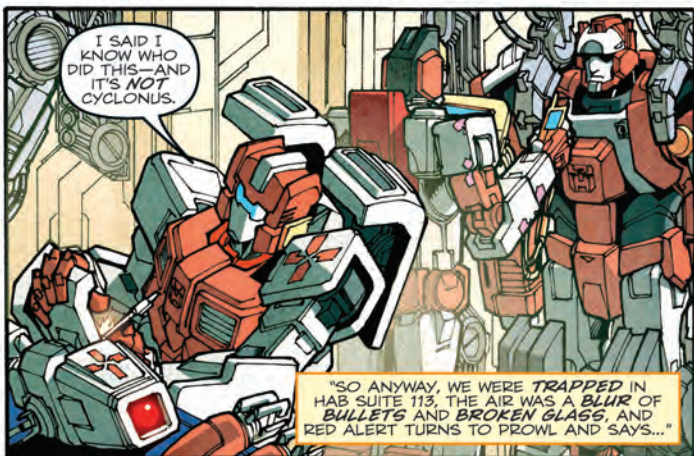
FORGET
LAST-MINUTE
RESUSCITATIONS AND
REVERSIBLE SPARK
DECAY AND ROSSUM'S
RULE OF THIRDS—HE
WOULD BE DEAD, AND I
WOULD BE GONE.



FOR SOMEONE
WHO DOESN'T
TALK MUCH, YOU
SURE CAN—

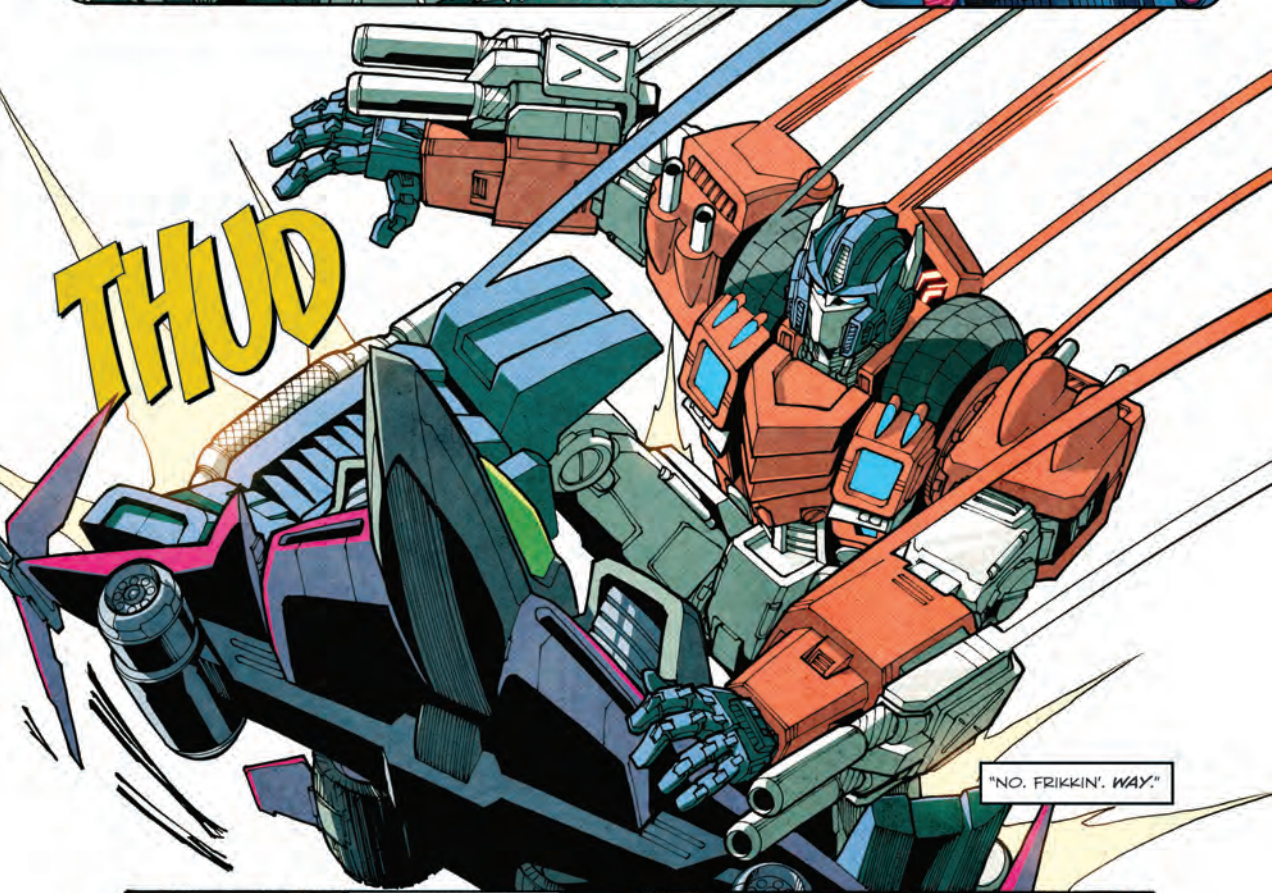
WAIT. COMMS
CALL.

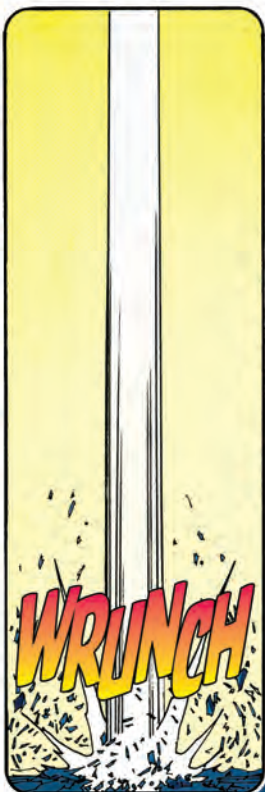
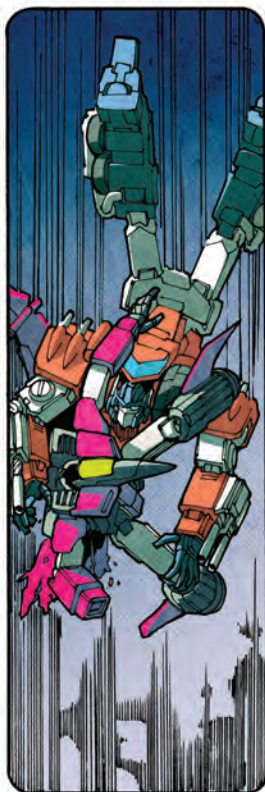
SAY
THAT
AGAIN,
FIRST
AID.



I SAID I
KNOW WHO
DID THIS—AND
IT'S NOT
CYCLONUS.

"SO ANYWAY, WE WERE TRAPPED IN
HAB SUITE 113. THE AIR WAS A BLUR OF
BULLETS AND BROKEN GLASS, AND
RED ALERT TURNS TO PROWL AND SAYS..."





"BY THE TIME WE GOT OUTSIDE IT WAS CLEAR WHO'D WON THE FIGHT..."



"...BUT IT WAS THE LOSER WHO HAD THE SMILE ON HIS FACE."

He666
S66666
S666!

NO!

HIS SPARK'S COLLAPSING!

"I CAME TO KNOW IT AS 'THE DEVIL'S GRIN'—THE PRECISE MOMENT YOUR LIFE LEAVES YOUR BODY."



I SUPPOSE YOU THINK THAT WAS CLEVER? PLAYING THE HERO! WHEN ORDINARY CITIZENS START TAKING THE LAW INTO THEIR OWN—

MY NAME IS ORION PAX. READ MY PALM: I'M A REGISTERED LAW ENFORCER.

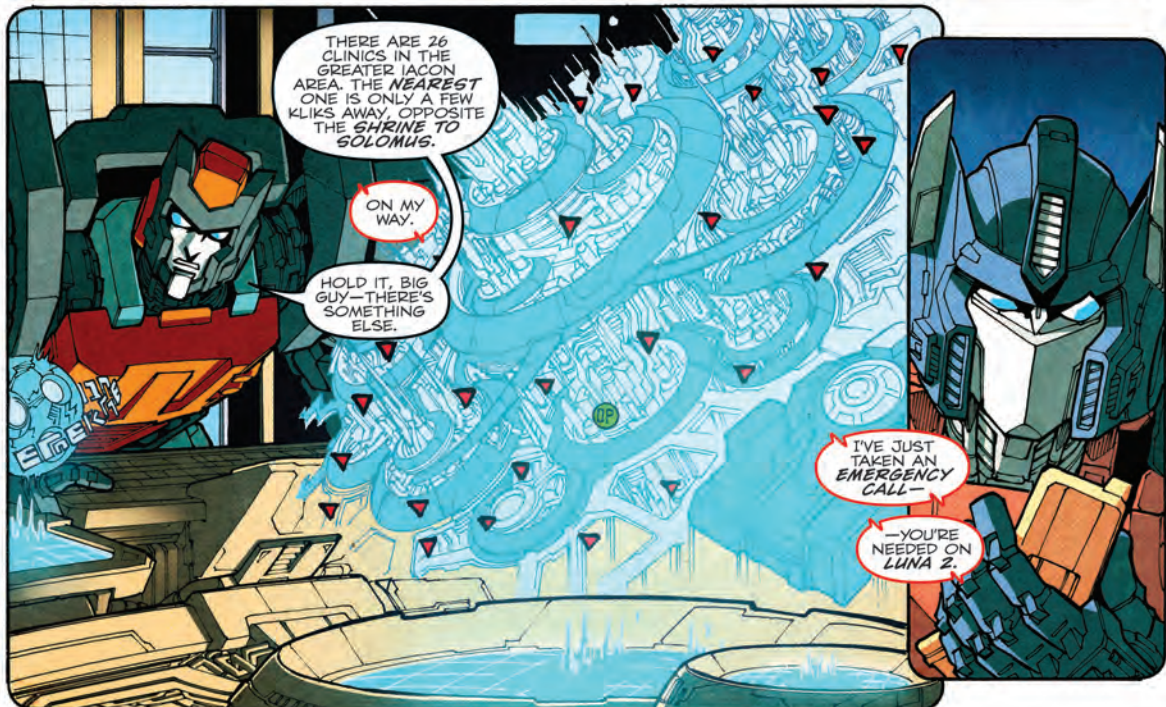
YOU MUST BE PROWL. I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU. I'D ASSUMED MOST OF IT WAS EXAGGERATED.



"PAX SAID HE WAS IN TOWN AT THE REQUEST OF A FRIEND WHO'D HEARD ABOUT SHERMA'S MURDER AND CONCLUDED THAT MOMUS WAS AT RISK."

"THE MOMENT PAX CONFIRMED THAT SHERMA, LIKE MOMUS, WAS A CLOSET 'CON, EVERYTHING FELL INTO PLACE."

SHERMA AND MOMUS WEREN'T KILLED BY DECEPTICONS—THEY WERE BEEN KILLED BECAUSE THEY WERE DECEPTICONS.



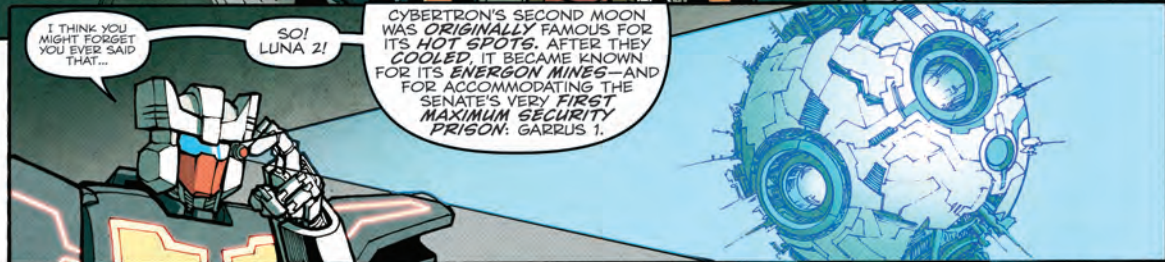


FINALLY!
THIS WAS
TURNING INTO THE
CHROMEDOME
AND **PROWL SHOW**.
TWO STUCK-UP
KNOW-IT-ALLS SWAN
AROUND CYBERTRON,
FOLLOWING CLUES AND
PRETENDING THEY
DON'T LIKE EACH
OTHER.

YOU
ARE *SUCH*
A—

WHAT? IT'S
OBVIOUS
PROWL WAS
YOUR **HERO**.

WHAT DO
YOU THINK,
REWIND?



I THINK YOU
MIGHT FORGET
YOU EVER SAID
THAT...

SO!
LUNA 2!

CYBERTRON'S SECOND MOON
WAS **ORIGINALLY** FAMOUS FOR
ITS **HOT SPOTS**. AFTER THEY
COOLED, IT BECAME KNOWN
FOR ITS **ENERGON MINES**—AND
FOR ACCOMMODATING THE
SENATE'S VERY **FIRST**
MAXIMUM SECURITY
PRISON: **GARRUS 1**.



YOU WERE A
MINER?

HE WAS A
PRISONER,
TAILGATE. A PRISONER
WHO ON THE 6TH
CHORD OF 4TH CYCLE
501 WAS VISITED BY
ORION PAX—AND
CONSIDERING WHAT
HAPPENED **NEXT**, I'M
ASSUMING HE TOLD
PAX SOMETHING
IMPORTANT.

LITTLE GUY
REALLY DOESN'T
KNOW ME THAT
WELL, DOES
HE?

IT WAS
PAX'S FAULT
I WAS IN
PRISON—

RUBBISH!
IT WAS **YOUR**
FAULT YOU WERE
IN PRISON! PAX
WAS THE ONE WHO
ARRESTED YOU!



WHIRL
ATTACKED
MEGATRON
IN HIS CELL.

THIS WAS
BEFORE HE
WENT BAD. IN
FACT, MANY
SAY THAT THE
REASON HE
WENT BAD
WAS—

BUT WASN'T
MEGATRON
LIKE THE **MAIN**
BAD GUY? OR...
HAVE I MISSED
SOMETHING VERY
IMPORTANT?



HEY!

CAN I JUST
TELL MY PART
OF THE STORY?
IT'S ONLY A
FRIKKIN' COMEDY
AS IT IS!

YEAH?

YEAH?

RIGHT.
NOW...

"...I HADN'T SEEN PAX SINCE WE'D VISITED THE **GRAND IMPERIUM** TOGETHER. HE'D TAKEN ME THERE AFTER I ATTACKED MEGATRON—YEAH, YEAH, WHATEVER—I WAS WORKING FOR THE SENATE'S ENFORCERS AT THE TIME.

"NOW, PAX MADE SUCH A SONG AND DANCE OF MY **PETTY MISDEMEANOR** THAT THE SENATE COULDN'T TURN A BLIND EYE: I WAS SENT TO GARRUS 1.

"THEY GIVE YOU A **COMMUNICUBE** WHEN THEY IMPRISON YOU. SINGLE CHARGE. ONE CALL.

"I'D SAVED MINE..."

FIVE MINUTES.

TEN IF I HEAR HIM SCREAMING.

WHIRL? WHO DID THIS TO YOU?

DON'T WORRY, CAPTAIN, I'M KEEPING A LIST...

YOU HAVE **RIGHTS**, YOU KNOW. IF YOU GET INTO A FIGHT, THEY'RE OBLIGED TO PATCH YOU UP.

"THANKS TO MY THINLY-DISGUISED APPEARANCE IN MEGATRON'S LATEST **POLEMIC**, EVERY TWO-BIT PROTO-DECEPTION DEADBEAT WANTED TO TAKE A POP AT ME—THE MINERS NEXT DOOR WERE GETTING THEMSELVES ARRESTED IN THE HOPE OF GETTING WITHIN KILLING DISTANCE."

I APPRECIATE THE **FEIGNED CONCERN**, BUT I DIDN'T CALL YOU HERE TO **BLEAT**.

WHY DID YOU CALL ME?

YOUR FRIEND IS IN DANGER.

MY FRIEND? WHICH FRIEND?

I DON'T KNOW HIS NAME. HE'S A **SENATOR**. THEY KNOW HE **FRATERNIZES** WITH YOU AND THAT HE'S WORKING AGAINST THEM—THE SENATE. THEY'RE GONNA **KILL HIM**.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?

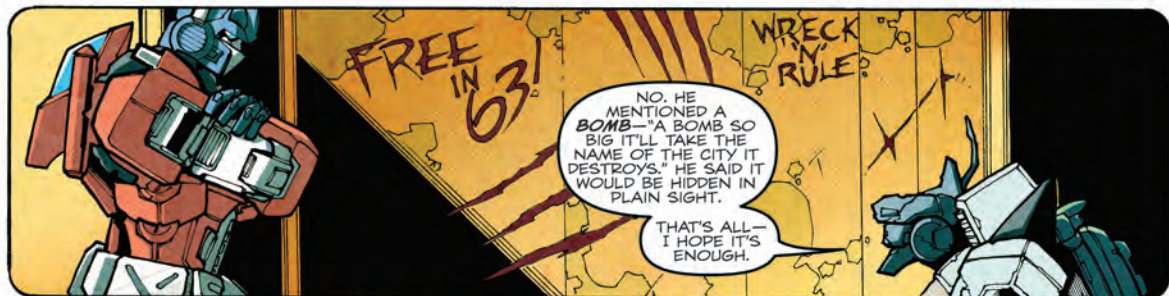


A
CELLMATE—ONE
OF MY OLD
HANDLERS.

HE MUST
HAVE FRIENDS IN
VERY HIGH PLACES,
BECAUSE HE ARRIVED
YESTERDAY AND
LEFT **THIS MORNING**.
AND AS HE WENT,
HE SAID:

IT'S ALL
GONNA KICK OFF.
YOU'LL SEE. BEFORE
THE WEEK IS OUT,
PROTEUS WILL **BREAK**
HIS PROMISE AND
SENTINEL WILL **MAKE**
HIS MOVE.

THAT ALL
HE SAID?



FREE
IN
63!

WRECK
MY
RULE?

NO. HE
MENTIONED A
BOMB—"A BOMB SO
BIG IT'LL TAKE THE
NAME OF THE CITY IT
DESTROYS." HE SAID IT
WOULD BE HIDDEN IN
PLAIN SIGHT.

THAT'S ALL—
I HOPE IT'S
ENOUGH.



I'VE
MISJUDGED
YOU.

I NEVER HAD
YOU PEGGED AS A
STRAIGHTFORWARD
CRIMINAL—I KNEW YOU
AND THE SENATE HAD
HISTORY JUST BY
LOOKING AT YOU—BUT I
UNDERESTIMATED YOUR
COMPASSION.

NO, YOU
UNDERESTIMATED
MY THIRST FOR
REVENGE.

THE SENATE
MUTILATED ME,
GOT ME TO DO THEIR
DIRTY WORK, AND
ABANDONED ME. I
WANT YOU TO **HURT**
THEM. I WANT YOU TO
CRUSH THEM. I
WANT—

—I WANT—



I WANT
MY HANDS
BACK.

"PAX GAVE ME SOME
FLANNEL ABOUT KEEPING
IN TOUCH AND LEFT. TWO
MINUTES LATER I HEARD
THE DOOR OPEN."

HEY,
FINGERS...

...MEET
YOUR NEW
CELLMATE.



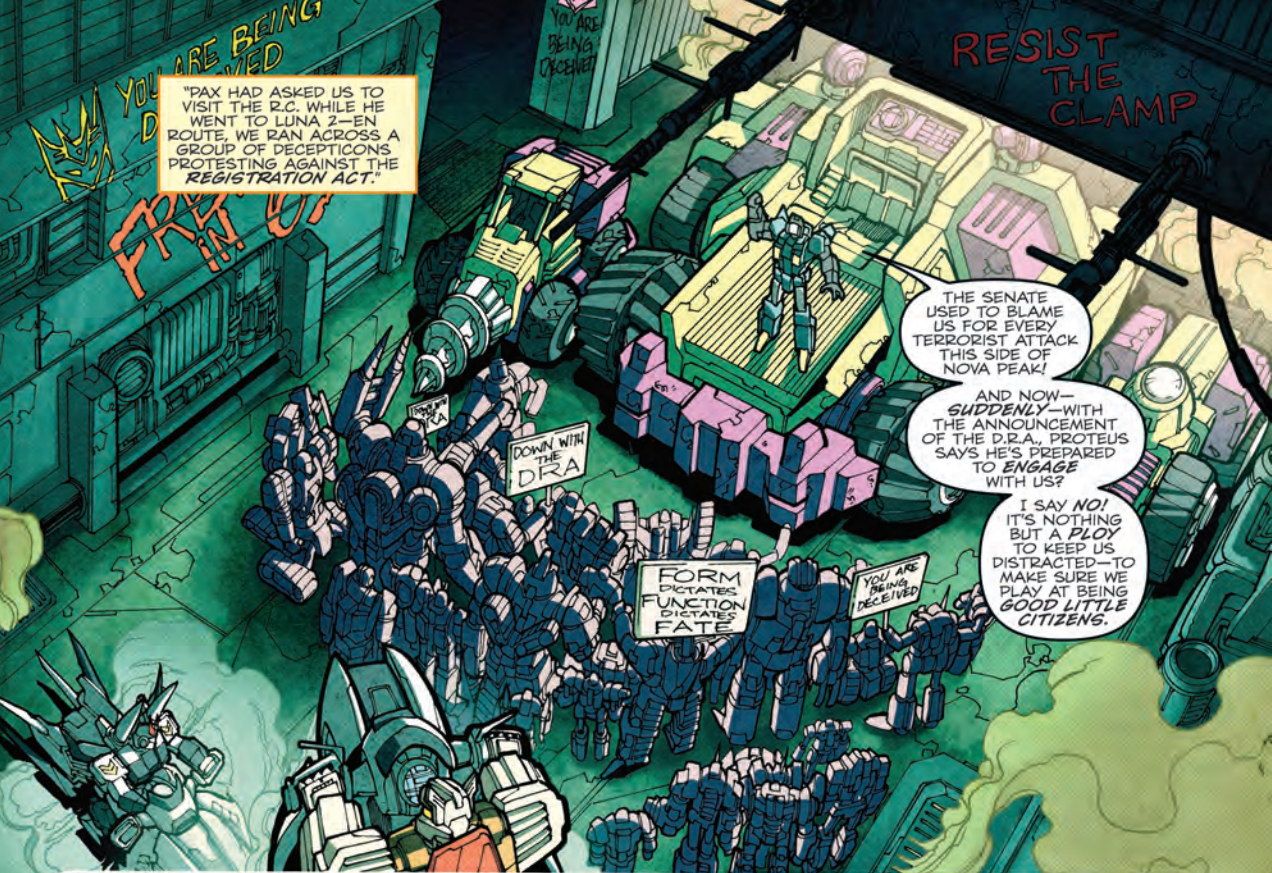
IMPACTOR?!

IMPACTOR WAS
YOUR **CELLMATE**?!
THAT'S HOW
YOU MET?!

AND—AND I
BET HE PROMPTLY
ADDED YOUR NAME
TO THE LIST OF
WARRIORS WHO
WOULD ONE DAY
BECOME... **THE**
WRECKERS!

NO—HE
PROMPTLY **BEAT**
ME TO THE BRINK OF
FADE-OUT AND LEFT
ME IN A **CRITICAL**
CONDITION—AND
YEARS LATER WE
MET AGAIN.





"PAX HAD ASKED US TO VISIT THE R.C. WHILE HE WENT TO LUNA 2-EN ROUTE, WE RAN ACROSS A GROUP OF DECEPTICONS PROTESTING AGAINST THE REGISTRATION ACT."

RESIST THE CLAMP

THE SENATE USED TO BLAME US FOR EVERY TERRORIST ATTACK THIS SIDE OF NOVA PEAK!

AND NOW—SUDDENLY—WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE D.R.A., PROTEUS SAYS HE'S PREPARED TO ENGAGE WITH US?

I SAY NO! IT'S NOTHING BUT A PLOY TO KEEP US DISTRACTED—TO MAKE SURE WE PLAY AT BEING GOOD LITTLE CITIZENS.

HE HAS NO INTENTION—NONE WHATSOEVER—OF KEEPING HIS PROMISE! WHY? BECAUSE HE HATES US! HE FEARS US!

IF PROTEUS TRULY BELIEVED THAT OUR VOICES DESERVED TO BE HEARD, HE'D GRANT US PARTY POLITICAL STATUS WITH A WAVE OF HIS HAND—INSTEAD, HE SETS SOME ARBITRARY QUOTA!



EVER WONDER WHERE THIS IS ALL HEADING?

WHO DOESN'T?

THE NEWSFEED SERVICE SAYS THERE'S A DECEPTICON PRESENCE IN EVERY GEOSECTOR NOW. I DON'T KNOW, THAT SOUNDS—

I DON'T KNOW.



I HAVE A FRIEND—A HOSTAGE NEGOTIATOR—WHO SAYS THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT IS ATTRACTING EVERYONE FROM THE CYBERUTOPIANS TO THE ANTI-VOCATIONIST LEAGUE...

YOU SEND OUT A MESSAGE, YOU CAN'T CONTROL WHO HEARS IT...

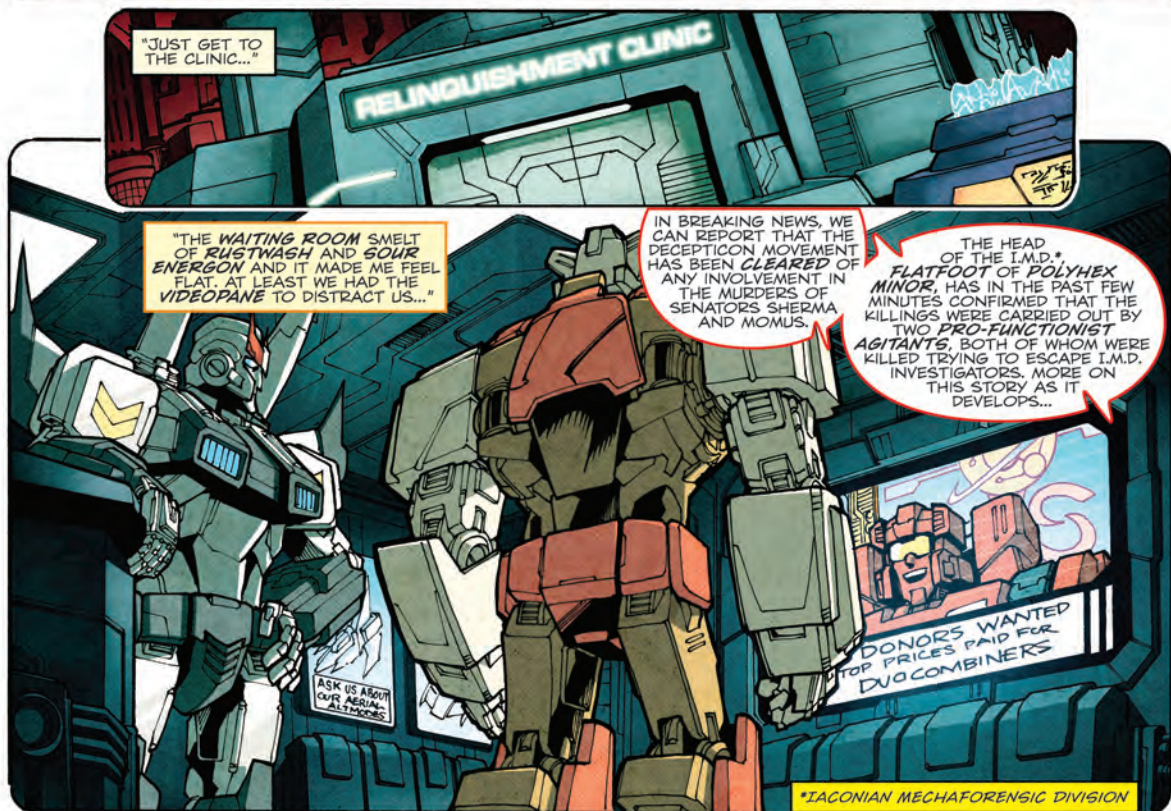
THAT'S JUST IT—MY FRIEND THINKS IT'S ALL ABOUT JOB EMANCIPATION, BUT I THINK IT'S MORE THAN THAT. I THINK THIS IS ABOUT A NEW WORLD ORDER.

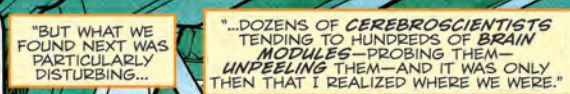
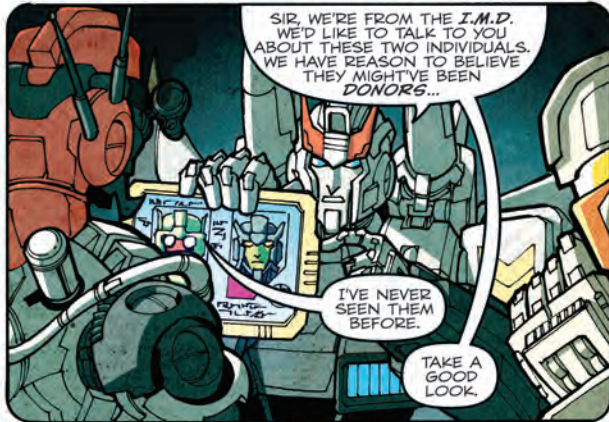


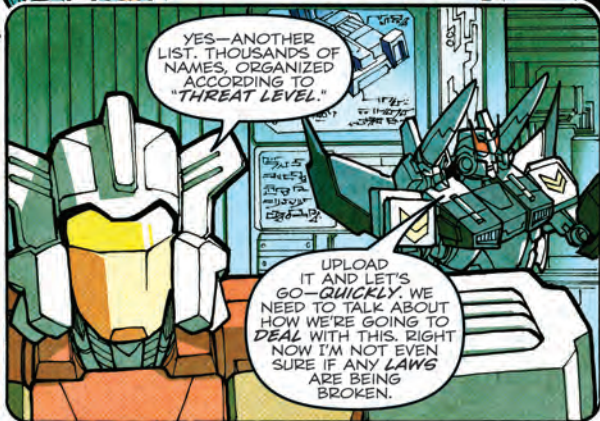
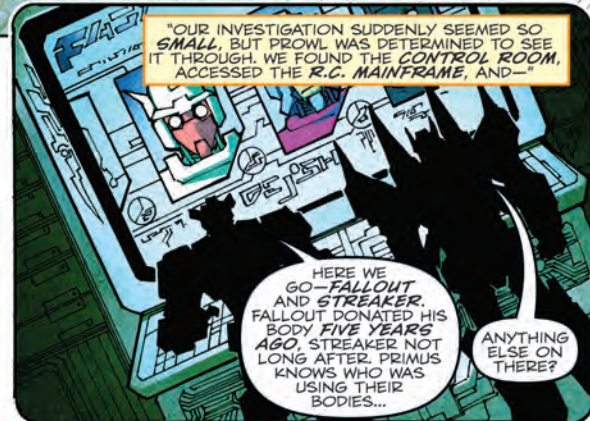
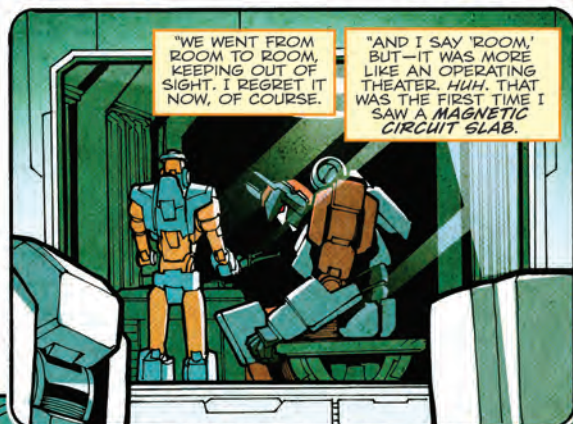
IF THE SENATE KEEPS TIGHTENING THE CLAMPDOWN AND THE DECEPTICON MOVEMENT KEEPS GROWING, WE COULD BE LOOKING AT A FULL-BLOWN INSURGENCY.

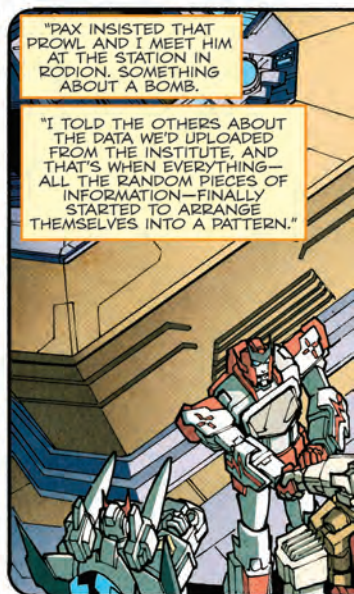
I'M NOT—YOU'LL SAY I'M BEING ALARMIST, BUT I CAN SEE IT HAPPENING.

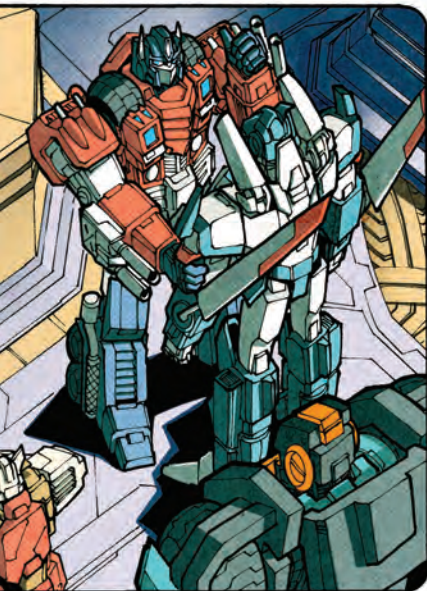
THIS CAN BE DEFUSED. TRUST ME.











THAT'S
IT—THAT'S
THE LIST.

THE
LIST?

THE DECEPTICON
REGISTRATION
ACT—THAT'S THE LIST
OF REGISTRANTS. I
RECOGNIZE SOME OF
THE NAMES.



WAIT—JUST
GIVE ME A
SECOND
TO—

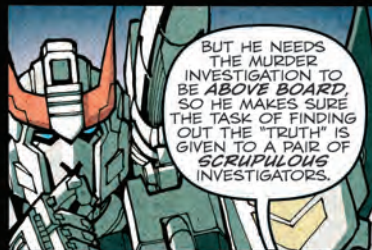
OKAY. LET'S
SAY THE D.R.A. IS
THE SENATE'S WAY
OF *FLUSHING OUT
THE ENEMY*. BUT THE
DECEPTICONS DON'T
TRUST THE SENATE—WHY
WOULD THEY, AFTER ALL
THE PROPAGANDA?—SO
REGISTRATION IS POOR.



PROTEUS
STARTS TO
PANIC—HE ONLY GETS
ONE SHOT AT THIS. HE
ARRANGES FOR SHERMA
AND MOMUS TO BE
MURDERED, KNOWING
THAT THE DECEPTICONS
WILL *EXPECT*
THE SENATE TO
BLAME THEM.



INSTEAD,
BY REFUSING
TO JUMP TO
CONCLUSIONS, HE
CAN USE THE DEATHS
TO DEMONSTRATE HIS
EVENHANDEDNESS—
AND CONVINCE THE
SKEPTICS THAT
HE'S NO LONGER
ANTI-DECEPTICON.



BUT HE NEEDS
THE MURDER
INVESTIGATION TO
BE *ABOVE BOARD*.
SO HE MAKES SURE
THE TASK OF FINDING
OUT THE "TRUTH" IS
GIVEN TO A PAIR OF
SCRUPULOUS
INVESTIGATORS.



WHEN THE
DECEPTICONS
ARE CLEARED OF
ANY WRONGDOING,
PROTEUS LOOKS
LIKE A MODEL OF
PROBITY. THE
RESULT: A
LAST-MINUTE
SURGE IN
REGISTRANTS.



PROTEUS GETS TO BREAK
HIS PROMISE AND SENTINEL
GETS HIS EXCUSE TO ROUND
UP EVERYONE ON THE LIST
AND *BRAINWASH*
THEM—RENDER THEM
PASSIVE AND
DOCILE.

GREAT! SO A
BOMB'S ABOUT
TO GO OFF ANY
DAY NOW, AND WE
DON'T KNOW
WHERE.


HEY, BIG
GUY...



...CHECK
THIS OUT.

—EXCLUSIVE
FOOTAGE OF
NOMINUS PRIME'S
BODY BEING LAID IN
THE PRIMAL BASILICA.
TOMORROW, THE FIRST
OF AN ESTIMATED
MILLION MOURNERS
WILL VIEW HIS
CORPSE.

FOR MANY,
IT WILL BE THE
FIRST TIME THEY
HAVE SEEN THE
MATRIX UP CLOSE.



THE MATRIX—
THE *FAKE*
MATRIX—THEY'VE
TURNED IT INTO A
BOMB. A BOMB THAT'LL
KILL THOUSANDS
AND DESECRATE
A RELIGIOUS
LANDMARK—

THE *ULTIMATE*
ACT OF
PROVOCATION.



WE HAVE
TO STOP
IT.

HOW? WE CAN'T
TELL THE SENATE,
WE CAN'T TELL
MECHAFORENSICS—
WE CAN'T TRUST
ANYONE.

WE HAVE TO
HANDLE THIS
OURSELVES.
WE HAVE TO
NEUTRALIZE
THE THREAT.

WHAT
ARE YOU
SAYING?

I'M
SAYING...



...WE HAVE
TO *STEAL* THE
MATRIX.



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #10 COVER B

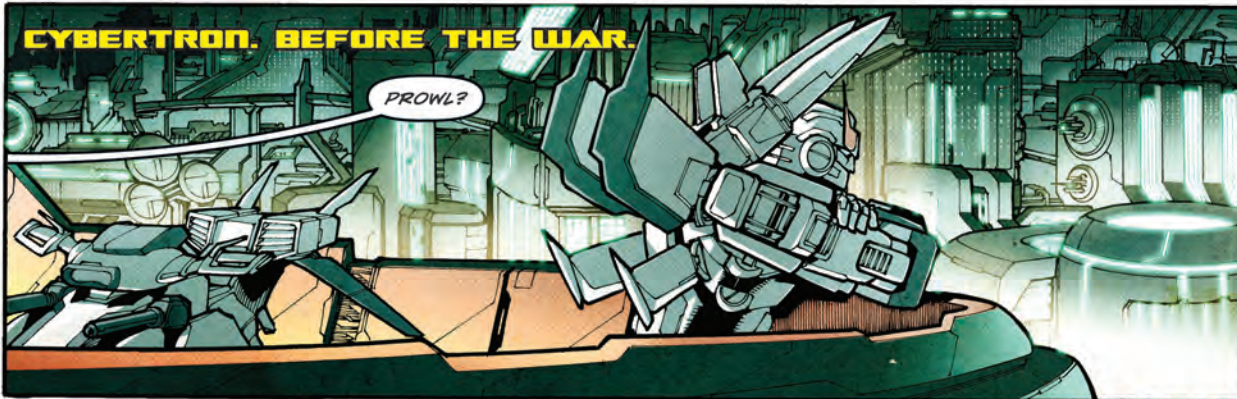
by **CASEY W. COLLER** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #11 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

CYBERTRON. BEFORE THE WAR.



PROWL?

YOUR PARTNER WAS LOOKING FOR YOU EARLIER. HE'S GONE TO THE ACADEMY WITH ROLLER TO GET HELP.

WHICH MEANS YOU'RE ACTUALLY GOING TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS.

I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND.

GOOD! GOOD, BECAUSE I DON'T.

LET ME— LET ME **SPELL THIS OUT** SO YOU CAN HEAR THE **MOUNTING INCREDULITY** IN MY VOICE.

ON A HUNCH, YOU'RE GOING TO ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF "SPECIALISTS" TO BREAK INTO THE **PRIMAL BASILICA** AND STEAL THE MATRIX FROM NOMINUS PRIME'S CORPSE.

WHY? BECAUSE YOU **THINK** THAT THE "MATRIX" IS ACTUALLY A **BOMB** THAT'LL KILL HUNDREDS OF CIVILIANS. AND WE CAN'T TELL OUR RESPECTIVE SUPERIORS BECAUSE **EVERYONE'S IN ON IT.**

APART FROM YOUR **SENATOR** FRIEND, OF COURSE, WHO JUST HAPPENS TO BE THE **ONE GOOD 'BOT** IN A ROTTEN SYSTEM.

YOU'RE SKEPTICAL.

"SKEPTICAL"? PAX, I THINK YOU'RE **MAD.**

BUT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO FOUND THE **INSTITUTE...**

I DON'T KNOW **WHAT I FOUND.**

WELL YOUR **PARTNER** SEEMS TO—

MY PARTNER SEEMS TO HAVE FALLEN UNDER YOUR **SPELL**— JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

LOOK, HE'S GOOD AT HIS JOB—NOT THAT I'D EVER **TELL** HIM—BUT HE'S GOING TO THROW IT ALL AWAY FOR THE SAKE OF THIS... **ESCAPADE.**

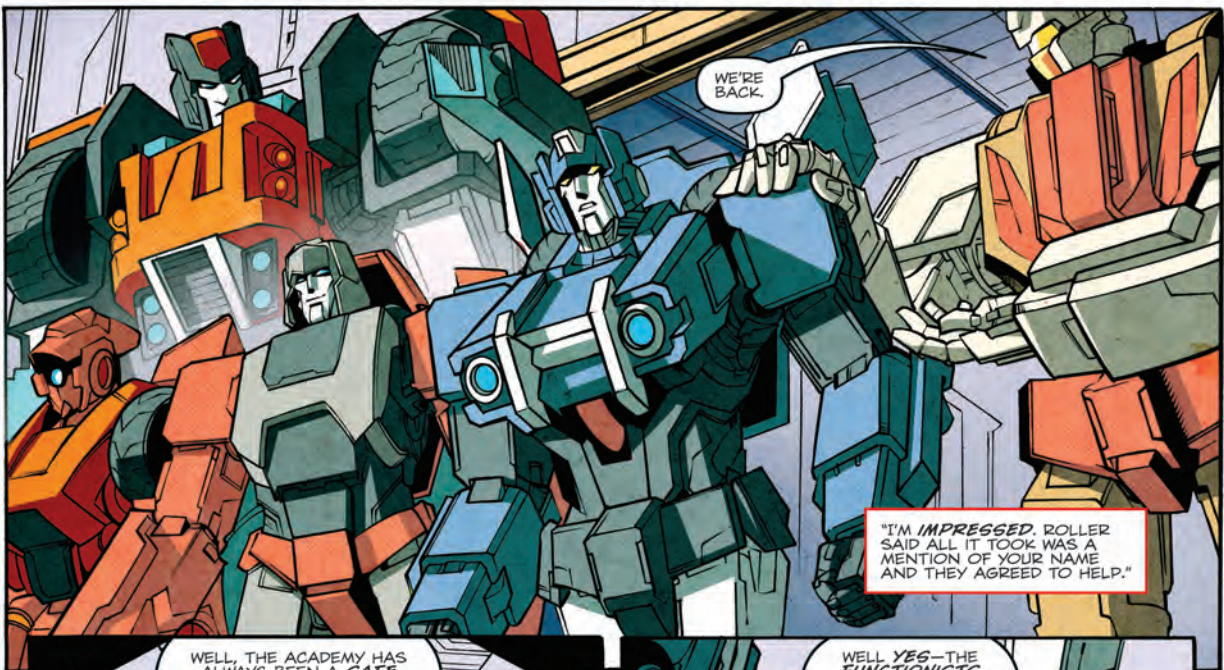
I WANT YOU TO TELL HIM TO **STAY BEHIND.** HE'LL LISTEN TO YOU.

PROWL, WAIT—

LISTEN. THIS GOES AGAINST THE VERY **GRAIN** OF MY BEING, BUT... I WON'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT YOUR LITTLE **HEIST** IF YOU PROMISE TO DO ONE THING FOR ME:

KEEP HIM OUT OF THIS.

PAX?



WE'RE BACK.

"I'M IMPRESSED. ROLLER SAID ALL IT TOOK WAS A MENTION OF YOUR NAME AND THEY AGREED TO HELP."

WELL, THE ACADEMY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SAFE HAVEN. YOU SEE, THERE IS VARIATION AMONG OUR RACE. CERTAIN OUTLIERS HAVE GIFTS THAT SET THEM APART.

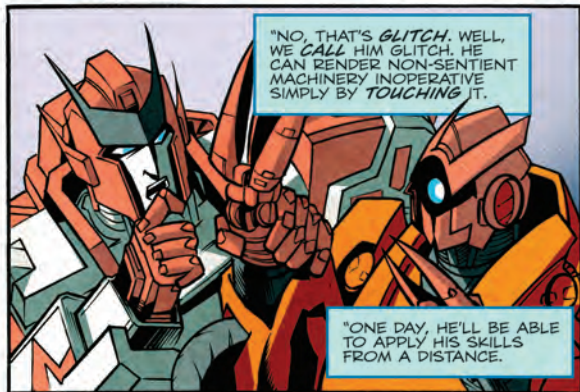
I TAKE THEM IN. *NONE THEIR SKILLS.* PROTECT THEM FROM PERSECUTION.

PERSECUTION, SENATOR?

WELL YES—THE FUNCTIONISTS HATE THEM BECAUSE THEIR EXISTENCE UNDERMINES THE PRINCIPLES OF MODE DETERMINISM.

AN OUTLIER'S GIFT BEARS NO RELATION TO THEIR ALT MODE. YOU SEE, I HAVE A STUDENT WHO CAN GENERATE FORCEFIELDS—AND HE TURNS INTO A TRUCK. WHAT'S THE LINK? THERE IS NO LINK.

IS HE THE ONE WITH THE CLAWS?



"NO, THAT'S GLITCH. WELL, WE CALL HIM GLITCH. HE CAN RENDER NON-SENTIENT MACHINERY INOPERATIVE SIMPLY BY TOUCHING IT.

"ONE DAY, HE'LL BE ABLE TO APPLY HIS SKILLS FROM A DISTANCE.



"WINDCHARGER—THE LEVITATOR—IS A LIVING ELECTROMAGNET. IT'S ALL IN THE ARMS.

"HE'S VERY GOOD; BUT HE COULD BE ASTOUNDING IF HE JUST LEARNED TO CONCENTRATE."



"AND THE JITTERY ONE IS SKIDS. I WAS LUCKY WITH SKIDS; HE JOINED THE ACADEMY AS A TRAINEE THEORETICIAN, BUT HE APPEARS TO BE AN OUTLIER."

"IN WHAT SENSE?"

"HE'S—HOW CAN I PUT IT? HE'S A CONGENITAL EXPERT. A SUPERLEARNER. HE ACQUIRES NEW SKILLS AS OFTEN AS THE REST OF US GET NEW PAINT JOBS."

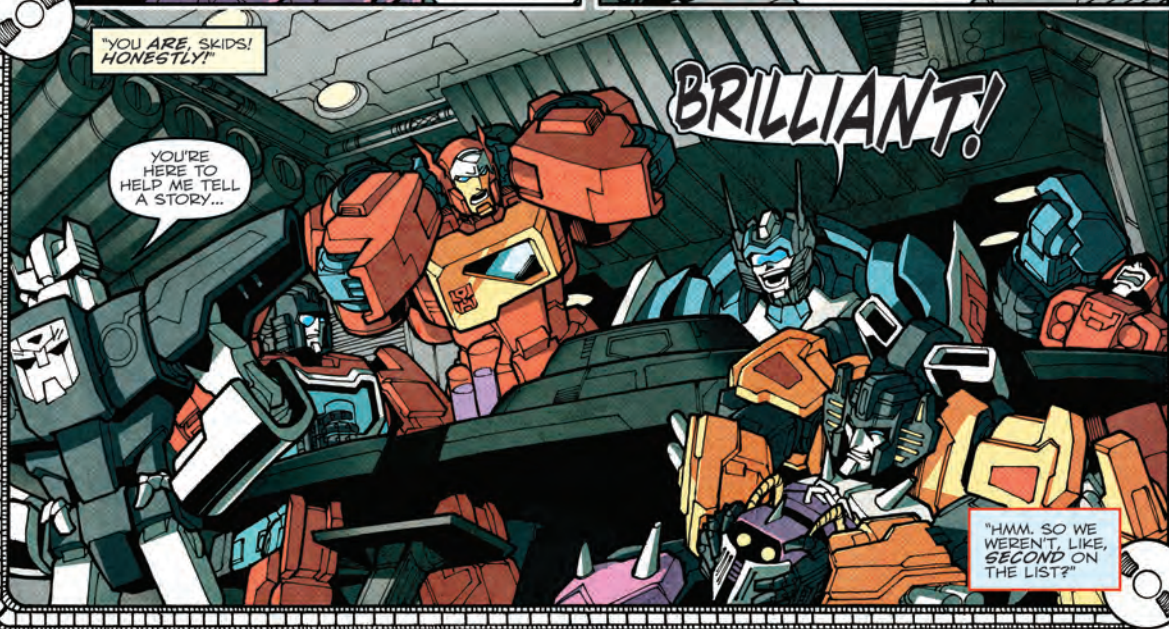


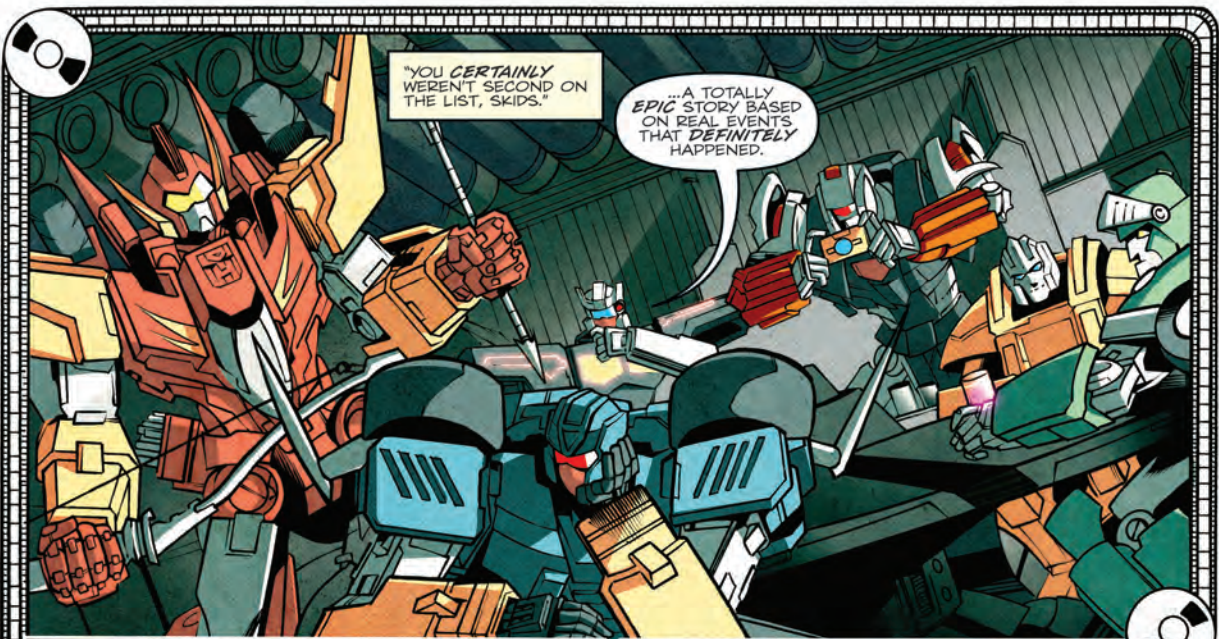
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF. YOU CHANGE YOUR COLORS PRACTICALLY EVERY DAY...

HA! I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR MY BRAINS AND MY BEAUTY.

"SORRY, SWERVE. I NEED THE SECRET PASSWORD."

THE LOST LIGHT. FOUR MILLION YEARS LATER.





"YOU CERTAINLY WEREN'T SECOND ON THE LIST, SKIDS."

"...A TOTALLY EPIC STORY BASED ON REAL EVENTS THAT DEFINITELY HAPPENED."

WHAT ARE YOU--? HEY! TAILGATE'S BEEN TAKING NOTES, EVERYONE!

SO WHAT? THE STORY'S GETTING COMPLICATED. IT'S ALL "PRO-VACATIONISTS" AND "ANTI-FUNCTIONARIES" AND PEOPLE I'VE NEVER HEARD OF.

NICE. THAT'S NOT HOW YOU SPELL... MOST OF THOSE WORDS, ACTUALLY.

I'VE HAD TO DO A SPECIAL PAGE SO I CAN KEEP TRACK OF WHO'S WHO.

HOW'S RING?

YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY, WRUNG--NO. WAIT, THAT DOESN'T WORK.

DON'T; HE HATES IT WHEN PEOPLE MISPRONOUNCE HIS NAME. HATES IT.



THERE. I'VE MADE HIM LOOK CROSS.

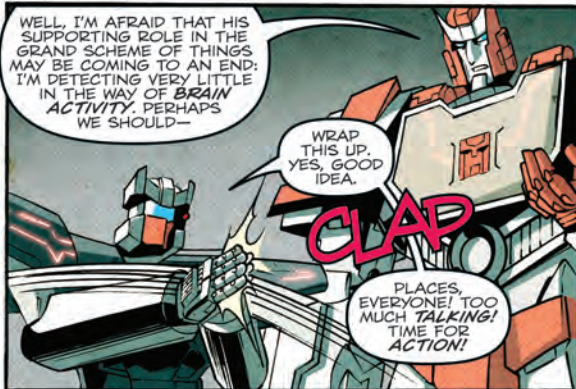
"GRRR. DON'T GET MY NAME WRONG."



OF COURSE THE IRONY IS THAT IF ANYONE ELSE WAS IN THIS CHAIR, RUNG WOULD BE AT THE TABLE, HELPING TO TELL THE STORY.

I MEAN, **UBIQUITOUS** ISN'T THE HALF OF IT--I ONCE CROSS-CHECKED HIS FACE AGAINST MY DATABASE AND IT NEARLY FRIED MY NEOCORTEX. BILLIONS OF MATCHES.

HE'S LIKE A HISTORICAL CONSTANT--AN OBSERVER, BUT NEVER AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT.



WELL, I'M AFRAID THAT HIS SUPPORTING ROLE IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS MAY BE COMING TO AN END: I'M DETECTING VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF **BRAIN ACTIVITY**. PERHAPS WE SHOULD--

WRAP THIS UP, YES, GOOD IDEA.

CLAP

PLACES, EVERYONE! TOO MUCH TALKING! TIME FOR ACTION!



SO-- CHROMEDOME AND ROLLER HAVE JUST PICKED UP THE SPECIALISTS FROM THE **ACADEMY OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY**.

I LOVE IT HOW NO-ONE GIVES THE ACADEMY ITS FULL NAME ANYMORE...

I GOT BACK TO THE STATION TO FIND PROWL HAD GONE. NO EXPLANATION--HE'D JUST LEFT. I NEVER REALLY FORGAVE HIM FOR THAT.

"I WAS TAKING MY IRRITATION OUT ON THE WALL WHEN PAX APPEARED AND STARTED STARING AT—WELL, STARING AT YOU, SKIDS."

IS... ANYTHING WRONG?

YOU'RE WEARING A MINATURE MATRIX. NOTHING'S WRONG, YOU JUST—REMIND ME OF A FRIEND, HE WAS RELIGIOUS, TOO.

"SKIDS' TRINKET GAVE PAX AN IDEA. HALF AN HOUR LATER I WAS AT MECHAFORENSICS..."

"...PAYING A VISIT TO THE BALLISTICS DEPARTMENT."

IRONFIST?

OH! SIR! SORRY, I WAS JUST—COME IN, COME IN!

IS NOW A GOOD TIME?

NOW'S A GLORIOUS TIME! I'VE JUST BOUGHT THE POWER BOOSTER ROD THAT DELTA MAGNUS USED TO TRICK THE NEBULANS INTO THINKING THAT HE WAS A GOD...!

WOW. THAT'S... THAT'S...

I KNOW!

"BACK THEN, IRONFIST WAS OBSESSED WITH DELTA MAGNUS AND THE PRIMAL VANGUARD. AND BECAUSE—I DON'T KNOW, PROBABLY BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE MADE FUN OF HIM, I PRETENDED TO HAVE AN INTEREST TOO."

SIR, PLEASE—TAKE A SEAT. I'LL SHOW YOU THE REST OF MY HAUL.

"TROUBLE IS, HE'D COME TO ASSUME THAT I WAS AS BIG A FAN AS HE WAS..."

THIS IS THE FOREVER GLASS FROM MOLDAVITE VI—THE ONE THAT TRAPS LIGHT?

YOU CAN STILL SEE CROSSCUT'S REFLECTION. HE'S WATCHING THE NEUROPARASITE CLIMB OUT OF AMBIT'S MOUTH...

GLORIOUS.

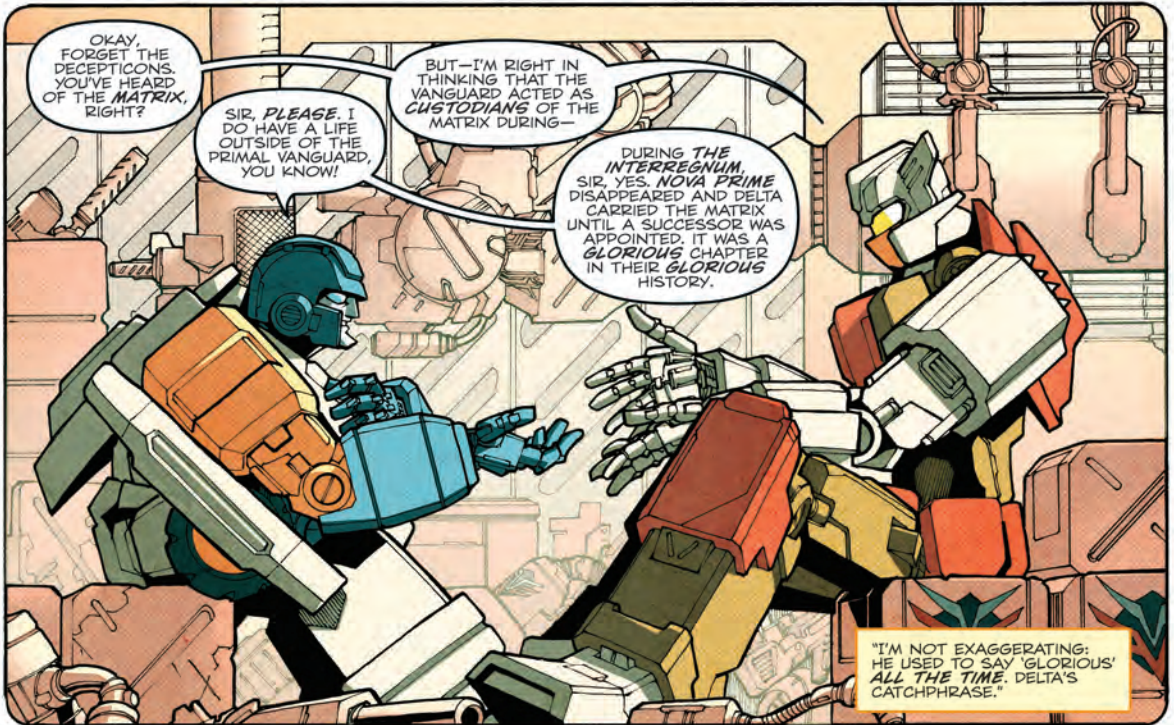
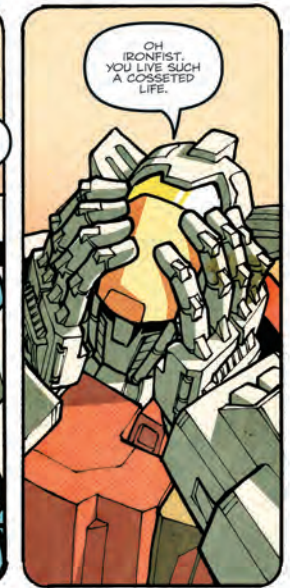
THIS IS BOREBIT'S SPARE DRILL, AND SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE IS A BOMB DISPOSAL KIT ONCE USED BY—

IRONFIST!

JUST—RELAX. PLEASE, PUT THE DRILL DOWN AND STEP AWAY FROM THE MEMORABILIA.

I'M SORRY, I—I GET CARRIED AWAY.

DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO PROWL. HE TOLD FLATFOOT I WAS SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME ON MY HOBBY AND THEY CONFISCATED MY LIFESIZE MODEL OF DELTA MAGNUS.





HOLD UP, CHROMEDOME. DO YOU MIND IF I—

INTERRUPT THE NARRATIVE FLOW? GO AHEAD, RATCHET.

THIS IS IMPORTANT. AFTER YOU GOT BACK, ROLLER TOOK ME AND PAX TO ONE SIDE... I THINK IT WAS THE **LAST TIME** THE THREE OF US WERE TOGETHER.

"FOR THAT REASON ALONE, I'D LIKE IT IN THE STORY..."

WHAT IS IT, ROLLER? WHAT'S THE MATTER?

HIM. WHAT DO YOU **KNOW** ABOUT HIM? **REALLY?**

NOT THIS AGAIN.

HEAR HIM OUT, PAX.



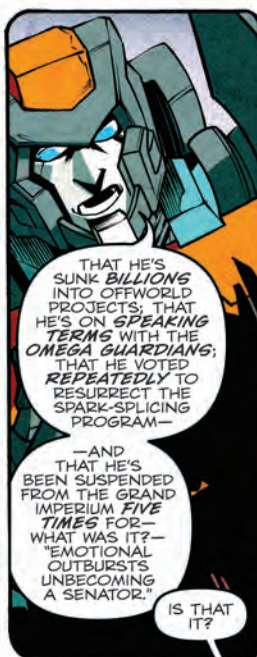
THING IS, BIG GUY, I'VE DONE SOME **DIGGING**. AND—

YOU'VE WHAT?

I HACKED INTO THE **MUNICIPAL MAINFRAME** LOOKED AT HIS **VOTING RECORD**. MADE SOME VERY **DISCREET** ENQUIRIES AND—

OKAY, YOU ACTUALLY LOOK **ANGRIER** THAN I ANTICIPATED.

WELL? WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?



THAT HE'S SUNK **BILLIONS** INTO OFFWORLD PROJECTS; THAT HE'S ON **SPEAKING TERMS** WITH THE **OMEGA GUARDIANS**; THAT HE VOTED **REPEATEDLY** TO RESURRECT THE SPARK-SPLICING PROGRAM—

—AND THAT HE'S BEEN SUSPENDED FROM THE GRAND IMPERIUM **FIVE TIMES** FOR— WHAT WAS IT?— "EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS UNBECOMING A SENATOR."

IS THAT IT?



ACTUALLY, PAX, NO, IT ISN'T.

THERE ARE—OTHERS. OTHER PEOPLE LIKE YOU. PEOPLE HE'S **BEFRIENDED** AND **MODIFIED** SO THEY CAN CARRY THE MATRIX...



LISTEN—I DIDN'T FALL IN WITH HIM BECAUSE I THOUGHT HE'D **SINGLED ME OUT**. I FELL IN WITH HIM BECAUSE, LIKE MEGATRON, HE OPENED MY EYES TO A CYBERTRON I'D BEEN TOO QUICK TO **IGNORE**.

EMPHRATA AND **RATIOISM** AND THE **INSTITUTE**... HE FORCED ME TO RECOGNIZE THEM FOR WHAT THEY WERE. **SYMPTOMS OF A WORLD GONE WRONG**. AND I **OWE** HIM FOR THAT.

I **TRUST** HIM, ROLLER. END OF CONVERSATION.



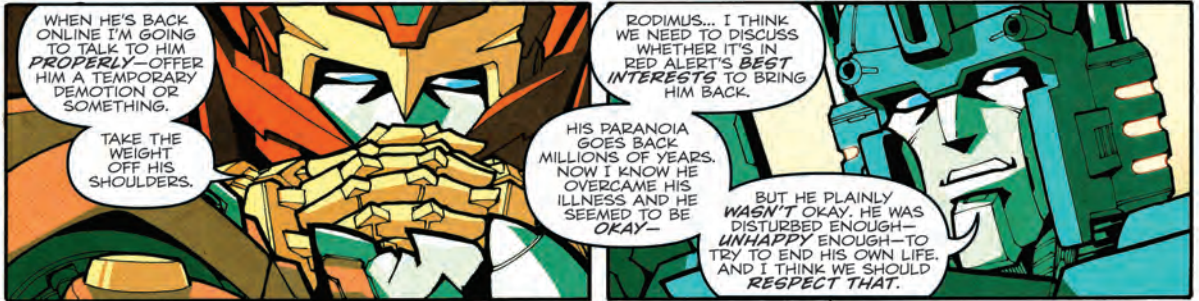


IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, RED ALERT WAS DEEPLY UNWELL.

I KNOW—I EVEN SPOKE TO HIM MYSELF...

WAS THAT WISE?

I CAN DO "SENSITIVE." YOU KNOW! I TOLD HIM I WAS WORRIED ABOUT HIM! I TOLD HIM EVERYONE THOUGHT HE WAS LOSING IT.



WHEN HE'S BACK ONLINE I'M GOING TO TALK TO HIM PROPERLY. PERHAPS HIM A TEMPORARY DEMOTION OR SOMETHING.

TAKE THE WEIGHT OFF HIS SHOULDERS.

RODIMUS... I THINK WE NEED TO DISCUSS WHETHER IT'S IN RED ALERT'S BEST INTERESTS TO BRING HIM BACK.

HIS PARANOIA GOES BACK MILLIONS OF YEARS. NOW I KNOW HE OVERCAME HIS ILLNESS AND HE SEEMED TO BE OKAY—

BUT HE PLAINLY WASN'T OKAY. HE WAS DISTURBED ENOUGH—UNHAPPY ENOUGH—TO TRY TO END HIS OWN LIFE. AND I THINK WE SHOULD RESPECT THAT.



YOU ARE ONE FRIGHTENING PIECE OF WORK...

YOU'RE SAYING WE LET HIM DIE?

NO, I'M SAYING WE PUT HIM IN STORAGE. AND WHEN OUR QUEST IS OVER—WHEN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE MORE CONDUCTIVE TO HIS MENTAL WELL-BEING—WE RESUSCITATE HIM.



I DON'T KNOW. WHAT DO YOU THINK, DRIFT?

WITH RESPECT, WHAT DRIFT THINKS IS NEITHER HERE NOR—

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT DRIFT THINKS.



COLD STORAGE.

SEE YOU LATER, RED.



PROMISE.

"EVERYONE—YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE. WINDCHARGER, CAN YOU JUST—CAN YOU PUT SKIDS DOWN FOR A SECOND?"

THANK YOU. NOW...

LATE LAST NIGHT, RATCHET WAS GIVEN A GUIDED TOUR OF THE PRIMAL BASILICA. HIS "HEALTH AND SAFETY INSPECTION" GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO FAMILIARIZE HIMSELF WITH THE BASILICA'S SECURITY SYSTEMS.

THE GOOD NEWS IS IT'S VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO BREAK INTO THE BASILICA WITHOUT GETTING KILLED.

THAT'S GOOD NEWS?

I DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE WORD "VIRTUALLY."

"AS WELL AS A FLEET OF SKY SPIES, THE BUILDING IS SURROUNDED BY A NO-FLY ZONE: THE AIR IS LACED WITH GLUCOMETRIC PARTICLES THAT SCRAMBLE ONBOARD GUIDANCE SYSTEMS—I KNOW, I HADN'T HEARD OF THEM EITHER.

"THE POINT IS, ANY AIRCRAFT PASSING WITHIN 25 MILES OF THE BASILICA WILL CRASH.

"THE PERIMETER ITSELF IS PATROLLED BY THE SENATE'S TRIORIAN GUARD—NEARLY A HUNDRED MULTI-TERRAIN TRIPLE CHANGERS, ALL OF THEM UNDER ORDERS TO KILL SUSPECTED TROUBLEMAKERS ON SIGHT—

"—WITH THE EMPHASIS ON 'KILL' OR 'SUSPECTED,' DEPENDING ON WHICH GUARD YOU TALK TO.

THE PRIMAL BASILICA

"NOMINUS PRIME'S BODY IS ON THE HIGH ALTAR, NOT FAR FROM THE ATRIUM.

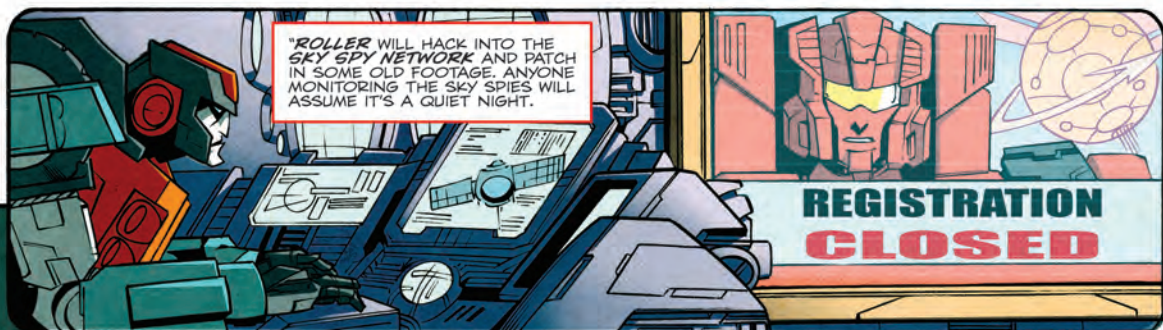
"THE ENTIRE FLOOR IS COVERED IN HYPERSENSITIVE PRESSURE PANELS: ANYTHING HEAVIER THAN A SHADOW WILL SET OFF THE ALARM."

AND WHEN THE BASILICA'S IN LOCKDOWN—WHICH IT WILL BE TONIGHT—EVERY SQUARE INCH OF INTERIOR SPACE IS DISSECTED BY DETECTOR BEAMS.

BREAK A BEAM—STEP ON A PRESSURE PANEL—AND 98 TRIGGER-HAPPY GUARDS WILL RUN, FLY, OR DRIVE THROUGH THE PORTICO DOORS.

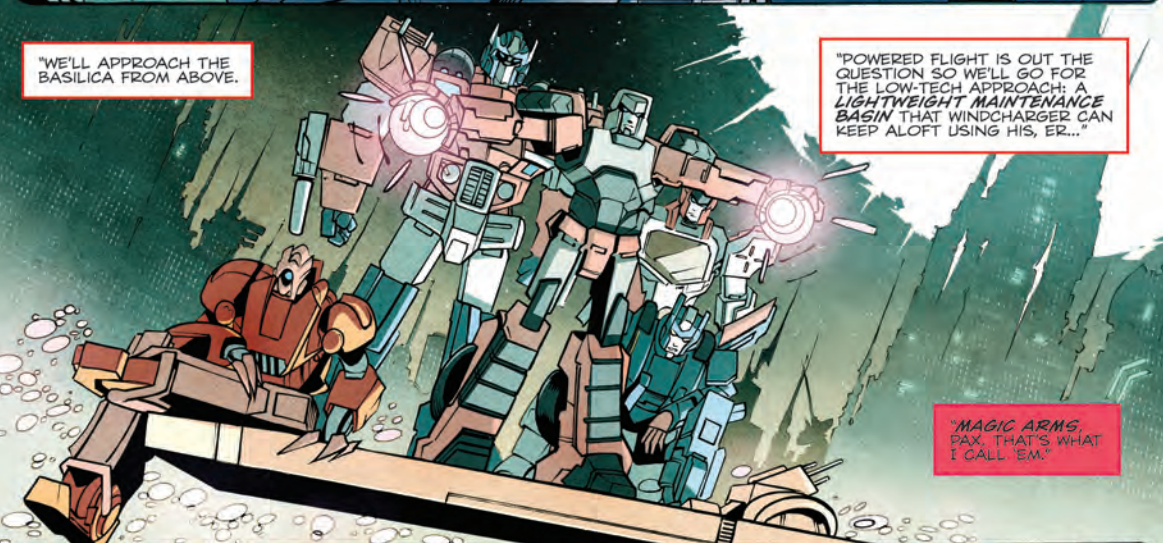
WHAT I'M ABOUT TO PROPOSE IS BOTH HIGHLY NECESSARY AND HIGHLY DANGEROUS—BUT FIRST, I'M GIVING ALL OF YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO WALK AWAY.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAY, THANK YOU—AND LISTEN CAREFULLY. BECAUSE HERE'S HOW WE'RE GOING TO DO THIS...



"ROLLER WILL HACK INTO THE SKY SPY NETWORK AND PATCH IN SOME OLD FOOTAGE. ANYONE MONITORING THE SKY SPIES WILL ASSUME IT'S A QUIET NIGHT."

**REGISTRATION
CLOSED**



"WE'LL APPROACH THE BASILICA FROM ABOVE."

"POWERED FLIGHT IS OUT THE QUESTION SO WE'LL GO FOR THE LOW-TECH APPROACH: A LIGHTWEIGHT MAINTENANCE BASIN THAT WINDCHARGER CAN KEEP ALOFT USING HIS, ER..."

"MAGIC ARMS, PAX. THAT'S WHAT I CALL 'EM."



"A VERTICAL DESCENT SHOULD REDUCE THE CHANCES OF US BEING SEEN BY THE PERIMETER GUARDS."



"WE'LL LAND BY THE ATRIUM. WINDCHARGER WILL KEEP WATCH WHILE RATCHET, SKIDS, GLITCH, AND I BREAK IN."

NEARLY THROUGH...



"ONCE WE'RE IN THE CEILING ABOVE THE CENTRAL CHAMBER, GLITCH CAN USE HIS GIFT TO SHUT DOWN THE DETECTOR BEAMS."

OW! OW!
OW!

SHHH!
WHAT'S WRONG?
DOES IT HURT?

IT ALWAYS HURTS!
AND—OW!—IT'S GOING
TO GET WORSE. THIS
GENERATOR POWERS A LOT
OF BEAMS; ANY MINUTE
NOW I'M EITHER GOING
TO SCREAM OR
PASS OUT...



"WE'LL HAVE TO WORK QUICKLY—ESPECIALLY SKIDS."

I SHOULD
HAVE SAID THIS
EARLIER, BUT—AS A
TRAINEE THEORETICIAN
WHO CAN MASTER
VIRTUALLY ANY SKILL,
I'M KIND OF INSULTED
THAT YOU BROUGHT
ME ALONG FOR MY
GRAPPLING
HOOK.

"AND THEN ALL I HAVE TO DO IS REPLACE THE MATRIX BOMB WITH THE NON-EXPLOSIVE REPLICA."

A LITTLE BIT LOWER...

...AND STOP.

I'M OPENING NOMINUS' CHEST NOW.

"AFTER THAT, IF IT ALL GOES TO PLAN, WE MAKE GOOD OUR ESCAPE—AND NONE OF US WILL EVER SPEAK OF THIS AGAIN."

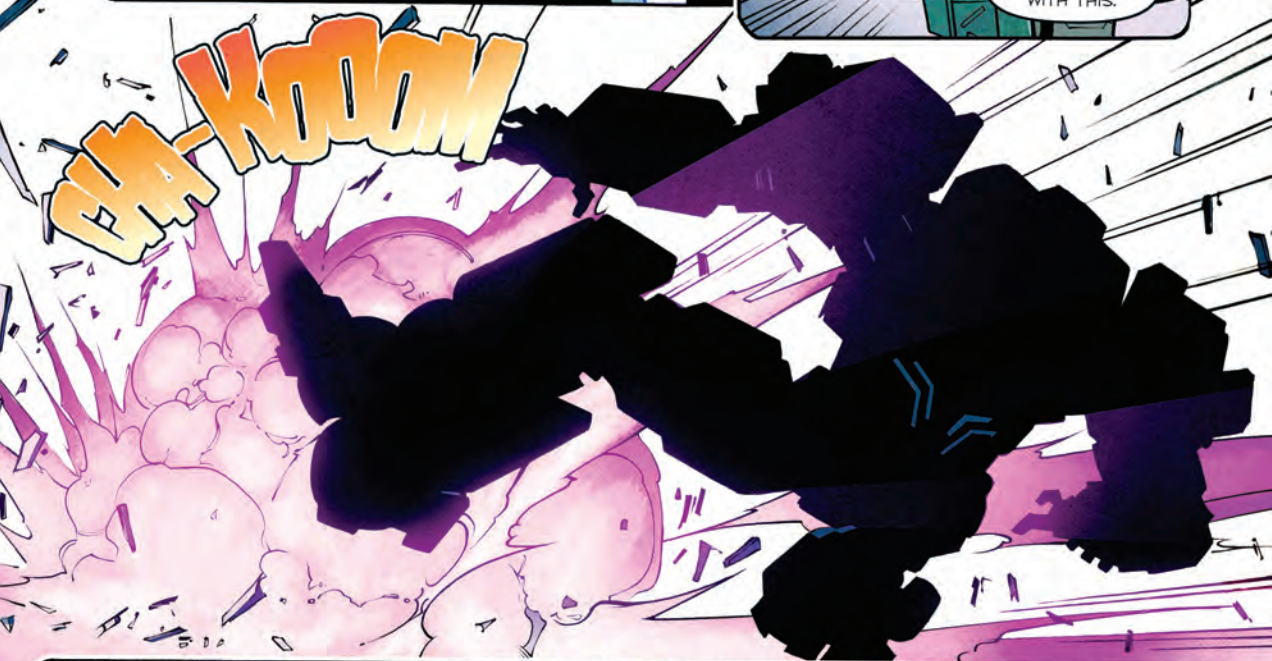
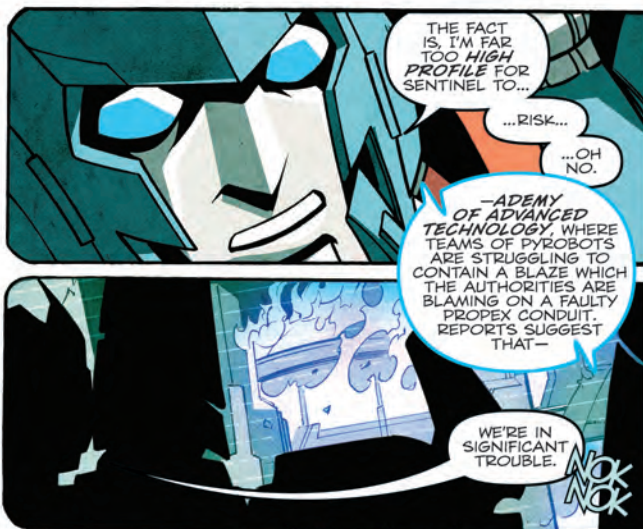
RATCHET? WE HAVE A PROBLEM.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN JUST SIT THERE, ROLLER. YOU AND I SHOULD BE HELPING PAX, NOT—

NURSEMAIDING ME?

THAT WASN'T WHAT I WAS GOING TO SAY. I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE PAX TOLD ME TO STAY BEHIND.

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, THIS "PROTECTIVE CUSTODY" ARRANGEMENT? I THINK PAX IS BEING OVERCAUTIOUS.





RATCHET?
I SAID WE
HAVE A
PROBLEM.

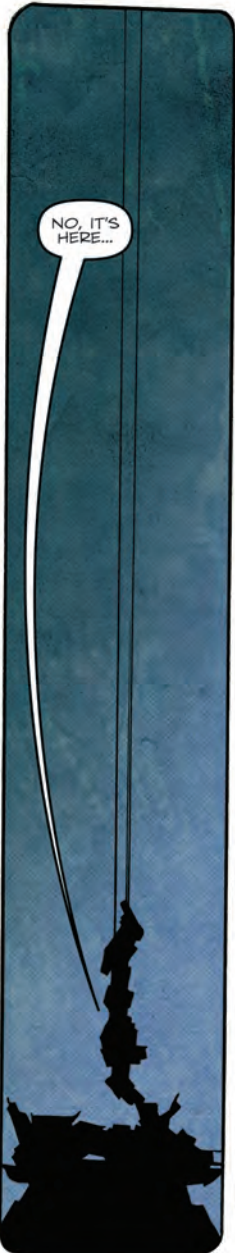


I HEARD
YOU, PAX.
I JUST—

GLITCH IS ABOUT
TO PASS OUT DUE TO
EXERTION-RELATED
NEURALGIA AND SKIDS'
ARM HAS NEARLY POPPED
OUT OF ITS GLENOHUMERAL
SOCKET. OR, IN LAYMAN'S
TERMS: **HURRY UP.**

I CAN'T.
IT'S THE
MATRIX...

DON'T
TELL ME:
IT'S NOT
THERE.



NO, IT'S
HERE...



...IT'S JUST
HELD IN
PLACE VERY
SECURELY.

IT'S GOING
TO TAKE ME
HOURS TO
PICK THESE
LOCKS.

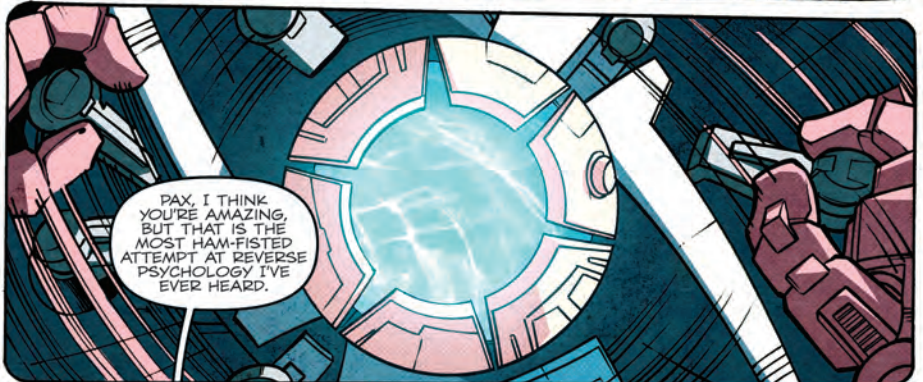
IN THAT
CASE...



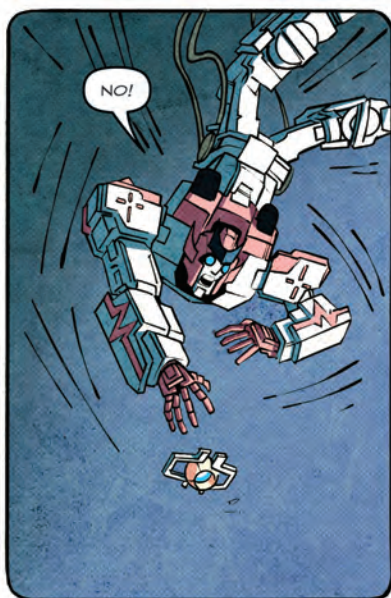
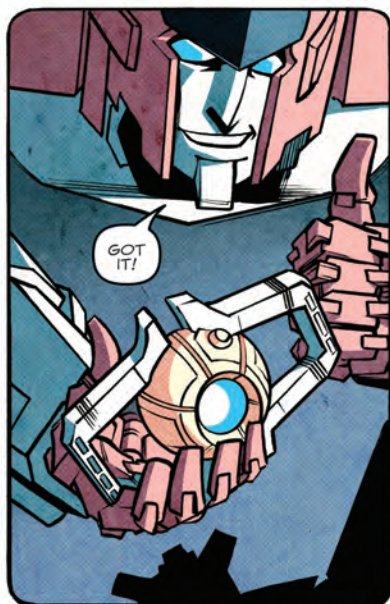
"...YOU'D BEST
LET AN **EXPERT**
HANDLE THIS."

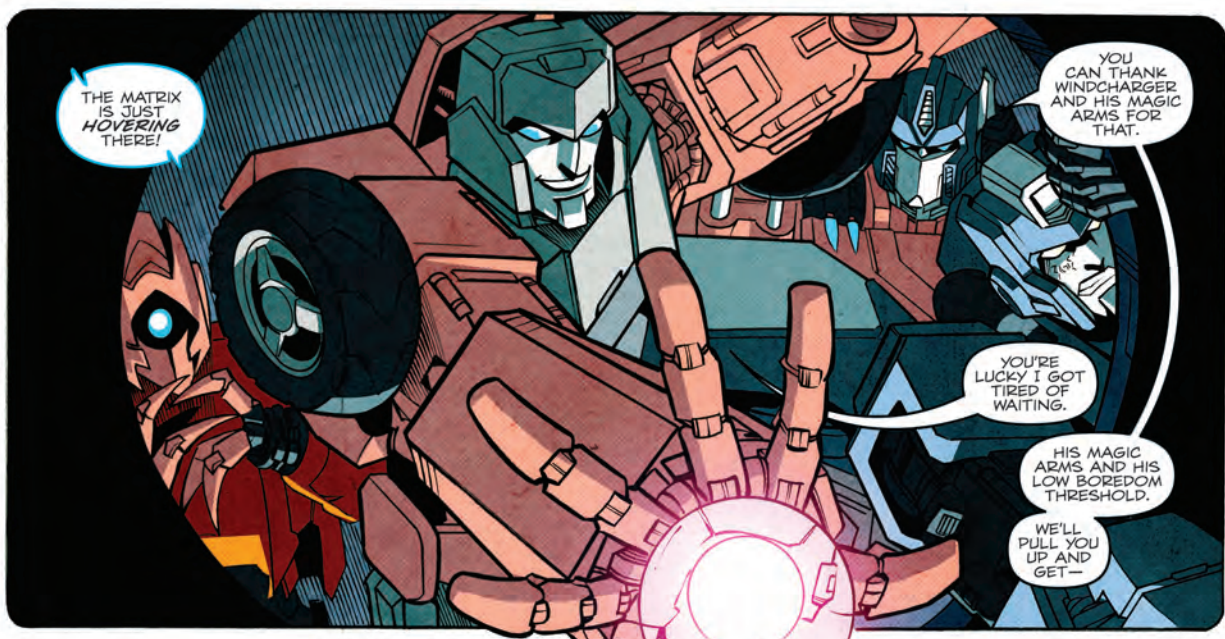
OKAY, THEY'VE
WIRED IT IN LIKE
A TAMPER-PROOF
FUEL PUMP. A **440**—
THE MOTHER OF ALL
FUEL PUMPS. IF I PUT
A FINGER WRONG,
IT'LL **EXPLODE.**

IN THAT
CASE DON'T
DO ANYTHING.
NOT EVEN **YOU**
CAN DISABLE A
440 BY HAND.



PAX, I THINK
YOU'RE AMAZING,
BUT THAT IS THE
MOST HAM-FISTED
ATTEMPT AT REVERSE
PSYCHOLOGY I'VE
EVER HEARD.





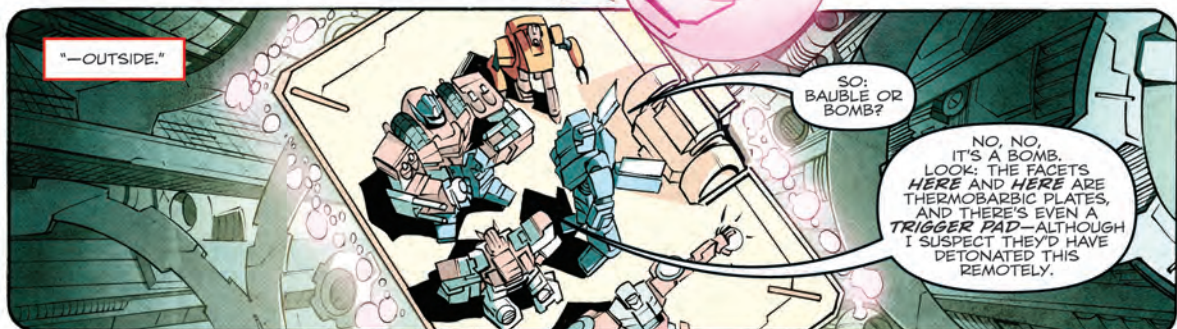
THE MATRIX IS JUST HOVERING THERE!

YOU CAN THANK WINDCHARGER AND HIS MAGIC ARMS FOR THAT.

YOU'RE LUCKY I GOT TIRED OF WAITING.

HIS MAGIC ARMS AND HIS LOW BOREDOM THRESHOLD.

WE'LL PULL YOU UP AND GET—



"—OUTSIDE."

SO: BAUBLE OR BOMB?

NO, NO, IT'S A BOMB. LOOK: THE FACETS HERE AND HERE ARE THERMOBARBIC PLATES, AND THERE'S EVEN A TRIGGER PAD—ALTHOUGH I SUSPECT THEY'D HAVE DETONATED THIS REMOTELY.



CAN WE GO ANY FASTER, WINDCHARGER? I'D BE BETTER OFF DRIVING...

"FRAID NOT—MAGNETIC TRAVEL IS ALL ONE SPEED. ANYWAY, WHAT'S THE RUSH?

ROLLER WAS SUPPOSED TO CALL ME AND HE HASN'T.

WELL, IF YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT DRIVING I CAN SET US DOWN—OR IF YOU'RE REALLY IN A HURRY YOU CAN JUMP.



PAX? I WAS ONLY—
WOW.

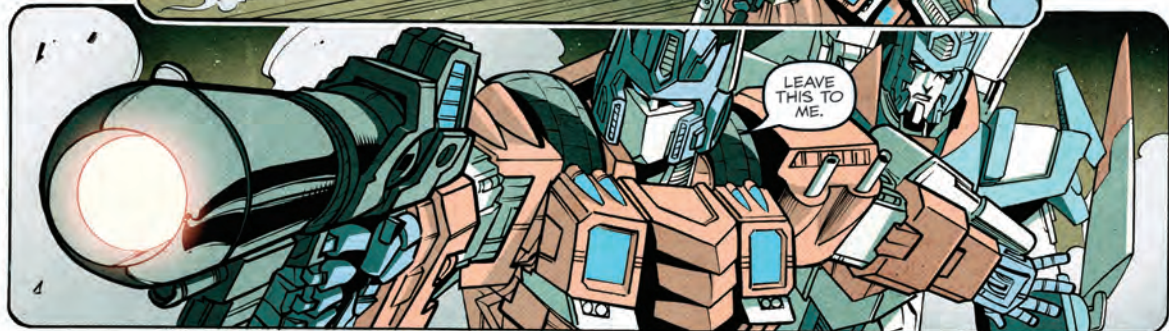
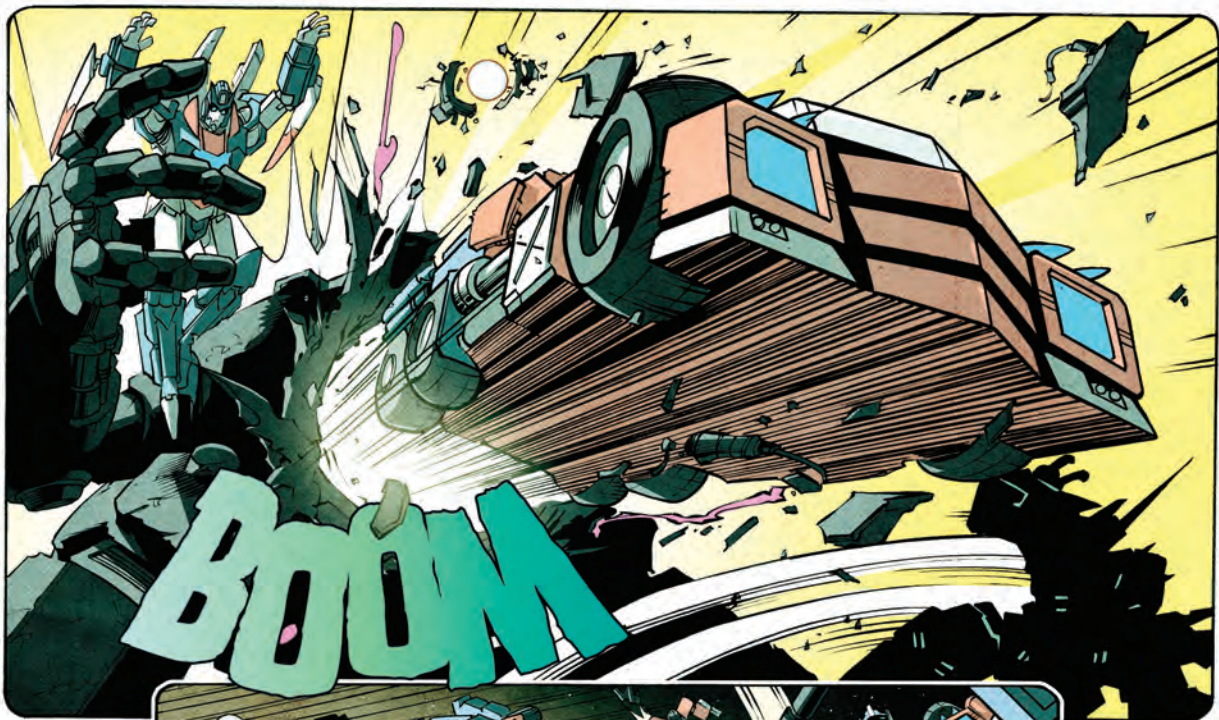


WHAT A LOT OF TROUBLE YOU'VE CAUSED. FLIRTING WITH AGITATORS IS ONE THING, BUT BUILDING AN ARMY OF OUTLIERS? WHAT DID YOU THINK SENTINEL WAS GOING TO DO WHEN HE FOUND OUT?

GO TO HELL, KROMA.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE CLEANSED AND CONTROLLED—AND IT'S BEEN A VERY LONG TIME COMING.

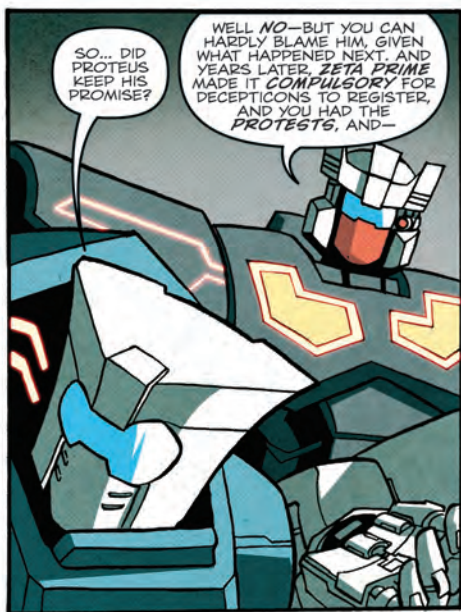
IF I WAS A MORE COMPASSIONATE PERSON I'D SHOOT YOU IN THE HEAD RIGHT NOW. AS IT IS, I—







THERE.
THE END.



SO... DID PROTEUS
KEEP HIS
PROMISE?

WELL *NO*—BUT YOU CAN
HARDLY BLAME HIM, GIVEN
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. AND
YEARS LATER, *ZETA PRIME*
MADE IT *COMPULSORY* FOR
DECEPTICONS TO REGISTER,
AND YOU HAD THE
PROTESTS, AND—



OOH! OOH!
WHAT ABOUT
ORION PAX?
WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM?

ORION
PAX...?

HE WAS
GREAT! I REALLY
LIKED HIM. "I TRUST
HIM, ROLLER. END
OF CONVERSATION."
I'M GONNA START
SAYING STUFF
LIKE THAT.

TAILGATE—
ORION PAX
BECAME *OPTIMUS*
PRIME. THEY'RE
THE SAME PERSON.
I THOUGHT YOU
KNEW THAT.

WHAT?!



YOU MEAN
THIS IS
ORION PAX?

WELL I'M
FLOORED.
I DID NOT
SEE THAT
COMING.



THE ALARM!
EITHER WE'RE
UNDER ATTACK
OR SOMEONE'S
TRODDEN DIRT INTO
ULTRA MAGNUS'S
OFFICE...

BATTLE
STATIONS,
EVERYONE!
SKIDS—CAN YOU
TAKE RUNG
BACK TO THE
MEDIBAY?

SURE.
I JUST
WANNA TRY
SOMETHING
FIRST.



HEY,
EYEBROWS.
IT'S ME.

I SHOULDN'T
CALL YOU
EYEBROWS. SHOULD
I? IT'S NOT VERY
RESPECTFUL. FROM
NOW ON, IT'S
RING—I MEAN
RANG.

IT *IS*
RANG, ISN'T
IT? RANG AS
IN BELL?



...
IT'S
RUNG.
FOREVER.

CYBERTRON. (NOT LONG) BEFORE THE WAR.

ORION
PAX?

DO I
KNOW
YOU?

NO, BUT
WE HAVE
A MUTUAL
FRIEND.

I'VE NOT
HEARD FROM HIM
FOR A WHILE—AND HE
TOLD ME THAT IF HE
EVER *DISAPPEARED*,
I WAS TO SEEK
YOU OUT.

MY
NAME'S
ZETA.

THE INSTITUTE (ONE OF MANY).

...AMPUTEE
SUPPORT
GROUPS HAVE
CALLED ON THE
SENATE TO
OUTLAW THE
CONTROVERSIAL
EMPURATA
RITUAL.

ANY
GOVERNMENT
THAT *MUTILATES*
ITS CITIZENS FOR THE
EXPRESS PURPOSE OF
PRECIPITATING *SOCIAL
STIGMA* IS, FRANKLY,
UNFIT TO GOVERN.

BUT A
SPOKESPERSON
FOR THE SENATE
DEFENDED
THE ANCIENT
PRACTICE...

...SAYING THAT
HEAD-AND-HAND
REPLACEMENT WAS
RESERVED FOR CRIMINALS
WHO DESERVED TO
BE *PUBLICALLY
HUMILIATED*.

CHANGEOVER.
ANYTHING TO
REPORT?

NOT REALLY.
THEY BROUGHT
SOMEONE IN FOR
TREATMENT. A
SCREAMER.

HERE—TAKE
A LOOK AT
WHAT THEY'RE
DOING TO
HIM.

JEEZ.
EMPURATA AND
SHADOWPLAY?

THE EMPURATA
IS JUST OUT OF
SPITE—THEY
KNOW HE WAS
FORGED—BUT THE
SHADOWPLAY...

LOBE CALLS IT
TOTAL PERSONALITY
INVERSION. IT'S THE
MOST AMBITIOUS PIECE
OF CEREBRAL
RE-ENGINEERING I'VE
EVER ATTEMPTED.
BY THE TIME—

IS THAT
SUPPOSED
TO BE
LOBE?

SHUT YOUR
STUPID BLUE FACE.
"BY THE TIME I'M
DONE WITH HIM, HE'LL
BE LUCKY TO MUSTER
AN EMOTIONAL
RESPONSE TO
ANYTHING."

I RECOGNIZE
THIS GUY. HE'S
A POLITICIAN,
RIGHT?

I GUESS
SO. MUST
BE.

WHAT'S HIS
NAME?



"SENATOR
SHOCKWAVE."

**SHADOWPLAY
(CONCLUSION)
AN INTIMATE
BEHEADING**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #11 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**



ROBOTS IN DISGUISE #10 COVER A

by **LIVIO RAMONDELLI**



DEEP SPACE.

I'M SICK OF ALL THIS FLOATING AROUND. IT'S BEEN WEEKS, MAN...



...I MEAN, THIS SEEMS LIKE A GREAT PLANET. ERRATIC ORBIT AND EVERYTHING.

LET'S JUST SAY WE LOOKED AROUND AND GO HOME AND REPORT BACK TO SHOCKWAVE. I MEAN, WHAT DOES HE WANT FROM US?



PROXIMITY ALERT!

GYAH! WHERE DID THAT PLANET COME FROM?!

SPECTRO, SOMEDAY YOU'RE GONNA LEARN TO KEEP YOUR TRAP SHUT.



SPYGLASS—PREP FOR LANDING, AND HE'S RIGHT, SPECTRO—SHUT UP.

THAT'S WHAT THIS BUCKET OF BOLTS HAS BEEN FLYING US TOWARDS.



IMPOSSIBLE—THE AMOUNT OF DUST, THE RESIDUAL SPARK ENERGY, THE CORROSION...

HE'S BEEN HERE FOR FIFTY YEARS.



WHAT THE HELL?!

WHAT WAS THAT?!



BOSS—ARE YOU OKAY? I SAW—I MEAN—

—I COULDN'T FEEL ANYTHING!

WHATEVER IT WAS, IT SWALLOWED OUR ENERGON STORES.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? WE'VE GOT A HUNDRED YEARS WORTH OF ENERGON!

VIEWFINDER, FOR SERIOUS—



—WE GOT A PROBLEM.

AFTER SPENDING MONTHS TRACKING JHIAXUS, WE'D FINALLY DETECTED A DECEPTICON SHIP. IT WASN'T THE RIGHT ONE...



BUT AS WE SET DOWN
ON THIS WORLD—

—LV-117, WHERE *WHEELIE*
SPENT MILLIONS OF YEARS,
ALONE AND STRANDED—

—I QUICKLY LEARNED I'D
HAVE TO *SETTLE* FOR
MORE QUESTIONS...

IMPOSSIBLE—

—THE AMOUNT
OF *DUST*, THE
RESIDUAL *SPARK*
ENERGY, THE
CORROSION...

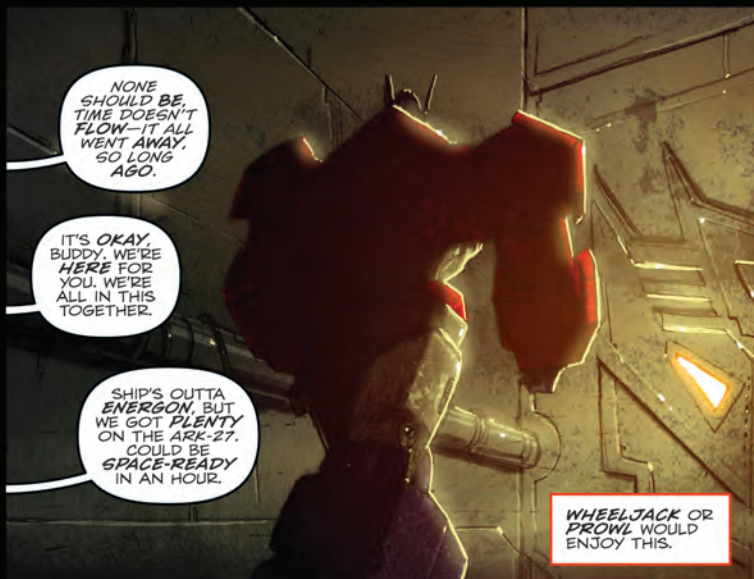
HE'S BEEN
HERE FOR
FIFTY
YEARS.

MORE LIKE
SEVENTY-PLUS.
PRIME, WE WERE
TRACKING THIS
SHIP—I KNOW IT'S
THE SAME SHIP—*TEN*
MINUTES AGO!

SYNDROMICA [2]



HUH.
DEJA VU.

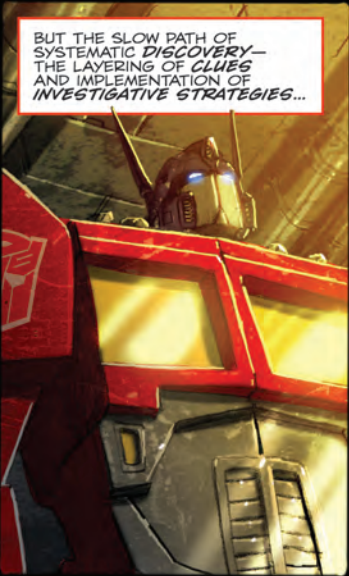


NONE
SHOULD BE
TIME DOESN'T
FLOW--IT ALL
WENT AWAY,
SO LONG
AGO.

IT'S OKAY,
BUDDY. WE'RE
HERE FOR
YOU. WE'RE
ALL IN THIS
TOGETHER.

SHIP'S OUTTA
ENERGON, BUT
WE GOT PLENTY
ON THE ARK-27.
COULD BE
SPACE-READY
IN AN HOUR.

WHEELJACK OR
PROWL WOULD
ENJOY THIS.



BUT THE SLOW PATH OF
SYSTEMATIC *DISCOVERY*--
THE LAYERING OF *CLUES*
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
INVESTIGATIVE STRATEGIES...

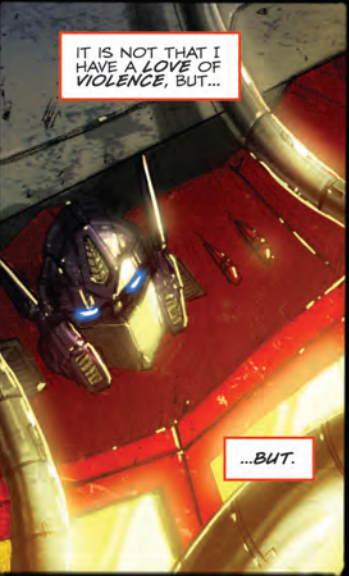


JHIAXUS
AND THE OTHERS
STOLE THE CRASHED
DECEPTICON SHIP.
BUT *WHEELIE*
WOULDN'T LEAVE
WITHOUT YOU.

THANK
YOU, OLD
FRIEND.

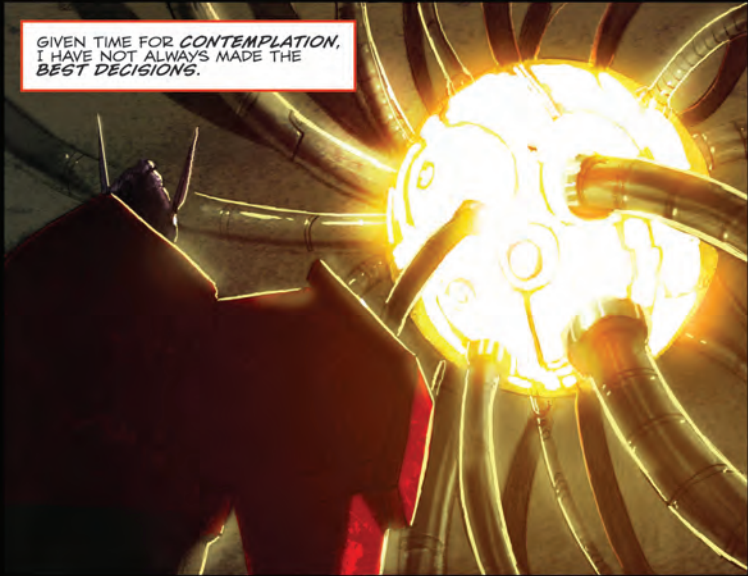


...IS NOT MY
NATURE.

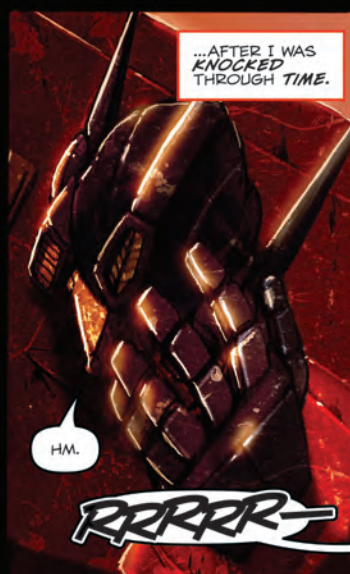
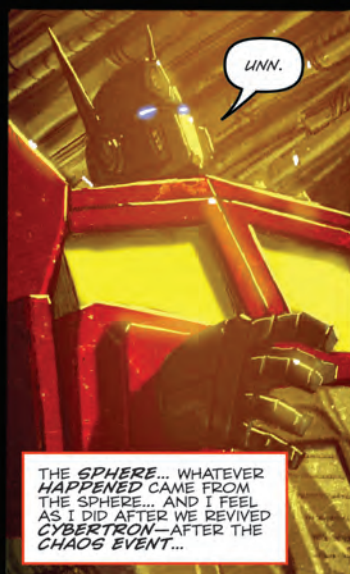


IT IS NOT THAT I
HAVE A *LOVE* OF
VIOLENCE, BUT...

...BUT.



GIVEN TIME FOR *CONTEMPLATION*,
I HAVE NOT ALWAYS MADE THE
BEST DECISIONS.





-RAAAGH!!

THAT CAN'T BE
A GOOD THING.

WHEELIE—
GARNAK—
—WHERE
ARE YOU?





NOT I. NOW I
SEE—OUR LAST
MEETING HASN'T
HAPPENED...
YET.

JHIAXUS
RETURNS FOR
ME, BUT FOR
YOU...

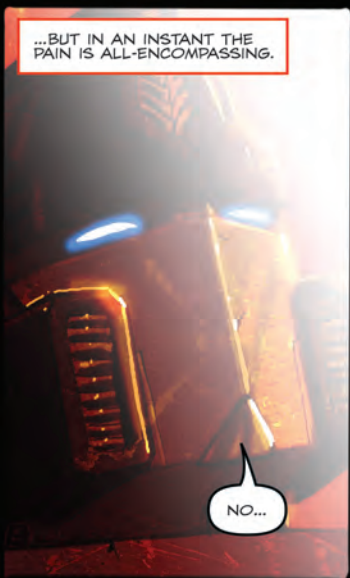
...TAKE MY
LESSON AND
HOLD IT CLOSE
TO YOUR SPARK.
ORION PAX:

YOU
OVERESTIMATE
YOUR IMPORTANCE.



WHERE—
BLUDGEON.
WHAT DO—

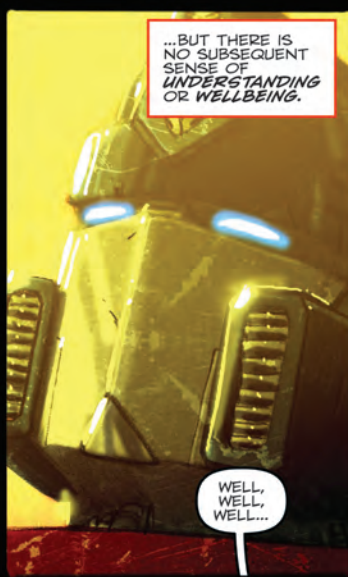
IT STARTS
SMALL...



...BUT IN AN INSTANT THE
PAIN IS ALL-ENCOMPASSING.

NO...









AND YOU TELL ME THIS BECAUSE...

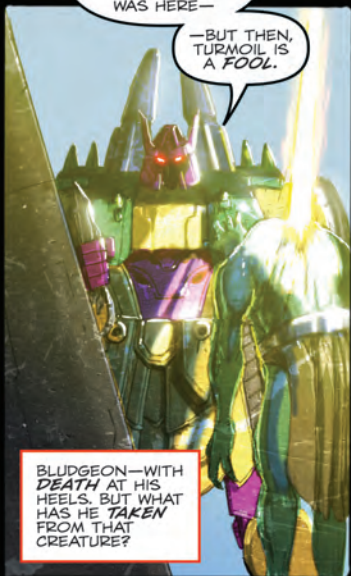


BECAUSE HE SAID ANYTHING I **FIND** IS MINE TO DO WITH AS I **PLEASE**...



...ANYTHING I FIND.

TURMOIL ASSUMED A TRIBE OF **NATIVES** WHO'D SPENT GENERATIONS **MASTERING** SHOCKWAVE'S TECHNOLOGY WOULD BE ALL THAT WAS HERE—



—BUT THEN, TURMOIL IS A **FOOL**.

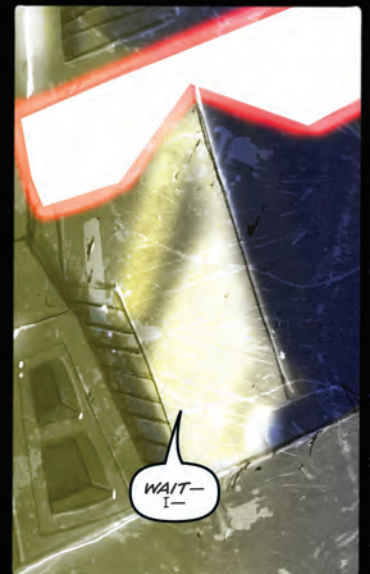
BLUDGEON—WITH **DEATH** AT HIS HEELS, BUT WHAT HAS HE **TAKEN** FROM THAT CREATURE?



BLUDGEON—FACE ME LIKE A DECEPTION THIS TIME!

NO, **THIS TIME** I WILL RUN...

...NOW THAT I HAVE A WAY TO **FOLLOW** YOU.





AND AGAIN,
EVERYTHING
CHANGES.

WHAT IS
HAPPENING...?

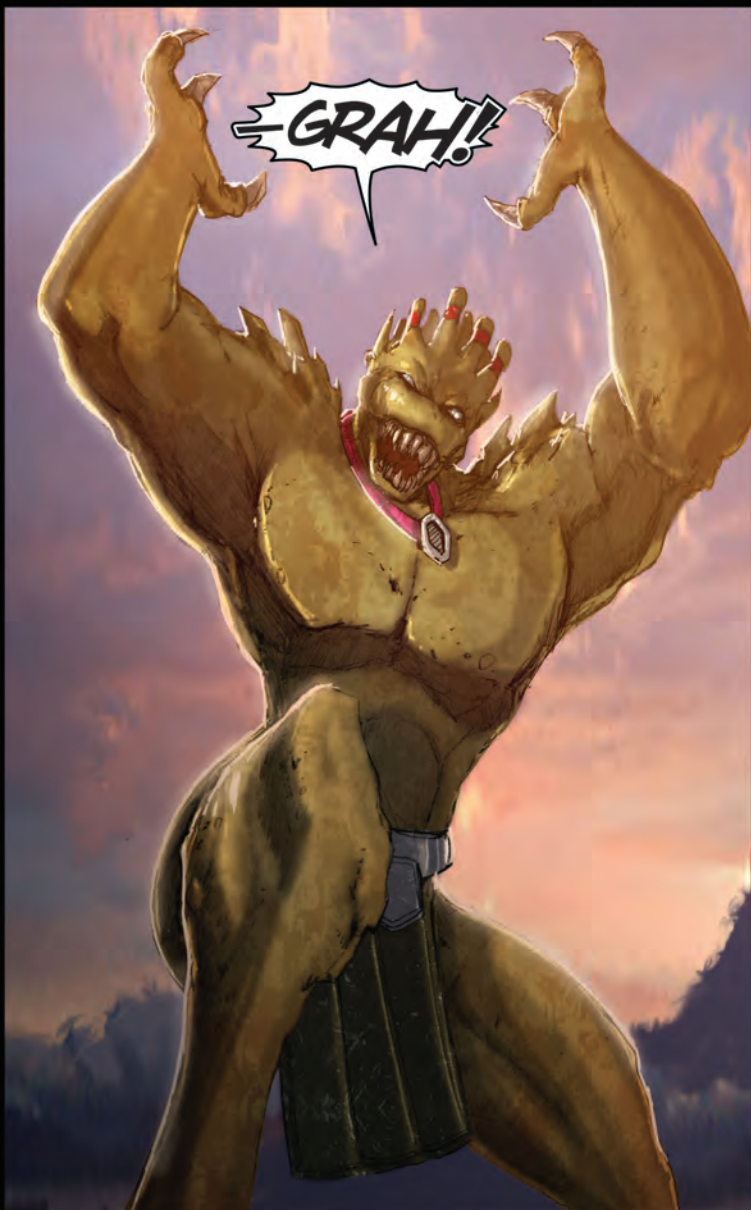
(SYNTAX
ERROR)



LITTLE
FRIEND—DO
YOU KNOW
WHERE WE
ARE?

GGGGG—

SCATCH



—GRAH!



METAL MEN
ARRIVE FROM
SKY—
VARTA'S
FRIENDS AND
FAMILY DIE.



VARTA, I AM
ORION PAX. I'M
AFRAID I MAY HAVE
DRAGGED YOU
WITH ME...

(SYNTAX
ERROR)

TALKING TO THIS HAPLESS
CREATURE IS GETTING ME
NOWHERE. I HAVE TO
ASSESS THE SITUATION.



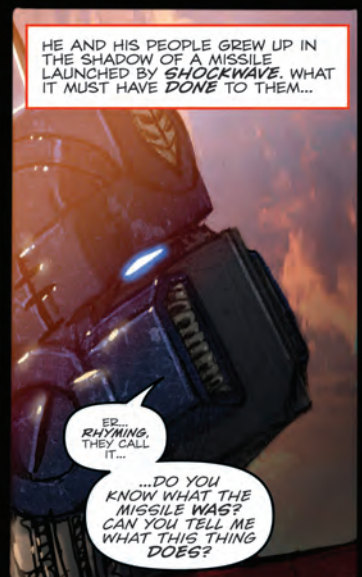
SOMETHING'S DRAGGED THE MISSILE AWAY, BUT... ODD. IT SEEMS TO HAVE HAPPENED YEARS AGO.

MAYBE THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO. BUT I JUST SAW IT...



ARRIVED AT THE DAWN OF TIME, SO LEGENDS SAY: GAVE US OUR SKILLS, NOW A PRICE WE MUST PAY.

YES, OF COURSE.



HE AND HIS PEOPLE GREW UP IN THE SHADOW OF A MISSILE LAUNCHED BY SHOCKWAVE. WHAT IT MUST HAVE DONE TO THEM...

ER... RHYMING, THEY CALL IT...

...DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE MISSILE WAS? CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT THIS THING DOES?



THE GREAT MACHINE CHANGES ALL TIME— TO MISUSE IT IS THE GREATEST CRIME.

WE MOVE OUR WORLD THROUGH CHRONAL SEAS— WHAT THE METAL MEN DO IS SPREAD DISEASE.



...OR I KILL THIS SENTIENT BEING. YOU WOULDN'T LIKE THAT, WOULD YOU?



LOOK—FAR UP, IN THE SKY! A SHIP—IT CAN BARELY FLY!

AT FIRST, I'M AS EXCITED AS VARTA— TURMOIL'S SHIP, AND A CHANCE FOR ANSWERS.



THEN DOUBT ENSNARES ME—COULD IT BE JHIAXUS RETURNING? BUT FINALLY I REALIZE WHEN WE ARE...

WAIT, VARTA... DON'T APPROACH THEM...

(SYNTAX ERROR)



...WE'RE SEEING THE SHIP ARRIVING AS HARDHEAD TRIED TO MATCH ITS COURSE.

THE SAME SHIP, OVER AND OVER.

MADNESS.



LISTEN TO YOU, ORION PAX.

AND THEY CALL ME MAD.



BLUDGEON!

I THOUGHT
YOU *RAN*
HOME,
COWARD!



I *NEVER*
RUN FROM
AUTOBOTS.

YOU SET
ME *ADRIFT*—
YOU SENT
US *FALLING*
THROUGH
TIME.



I DON'T
KNOW
WHAT—

—NO, I'M
NOT PLAYING
YOUR *GAME*,
MADMAN.

WHERE
DID VARTA
GO? WHERE IS
JHIAXUS? AND
WHY DID YOU
LEAD ME
HERE?



WHY WAS
JHIAXUS CALLING
MY *NAME* WHEN
HE WAS OUR
PRISONER?

UHNH!

CALLING
YOUR
NAME...?



AH, YOU
FLATTER
YOURSELF,
AUTOBOT.



THERE IS **FAR MORE** AT STAKE THAN THE DESTINY OF A **SINGLE** AUTOBOT.



WHAT'S HAPPENING—
WHERE ARE
WE NOW?!

IS
THAT—



...IT
CAN'T
BE...

...THANK
PRIMUS I'VE
FOUND
YOU—

—**WHEELIE!**
AND **VARTA!**



OPTIMUS
PRIME! YOU'VE
COME AT LAST!
BOARD MY SHIP.
WE MUST LEAVE,
AND FAST!

I KNOW
YOU—I SAW
YOU YEARS PAST!
NOW HURRY
ALONG BEFORE
THE DIE IS—



INDEED.







FWIP

ANIMALS
MARRIED BY
THE DECEPTICON
SIGIL—
TAKE THEM
TO ANOTHER
WORLD TO
KEEP VIGIL!

WOONP



BUT
NOW WE NEED
THEM AT OUR
SIDE—FROM
THEM THERE'S
NO PLACE TO
HIDE!



YOU FORGET
YOUR PLACE,
LITTLE
AUTOBOT.

MOREOVER,
YOU FORGET—



RAAAGH!!

—MONSTRUCTOR!

WE FOLLOWED THE **APPROACH VECTOR** OF THE **DECEPTICON CRAFT** AS CLOSELY AS WE COULD... AND WE LANDED A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER IT.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO **FORGOT** WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH, **JHIAXUS**!

CRACK

UNF!

FWIP

ALL MUST LEAVE ME TO MY FATE—
STOP THIS CREATURE FULL OF HATE!

TURMOIL—IF WHAT HE SAID IS **TRUE**, HE ARRIVED HERE **FIVE YEARS AGO...** AND LANDED **THOUSANDS OF YEARS** IN THE PAST.

—YOU'RE TOO LATE—
—THE DEVICE IS ACTIVATED.

COULD **JHIAXUS** HAVE LANDED AT THE **END OF THE WORLD...**?

BUT I HAVE THE **CONTROL DEVICE**, **JHIAXUS**!

BLUDGEON WAS JUMPING **BACKWARD** IN TIME, LEADING **JHIAXUS** AND **MONSTRUCTOR** AFTER ME, AS I TUMBLED **FORWARD**.



RAAAGHGG!

NO—

WOOMP

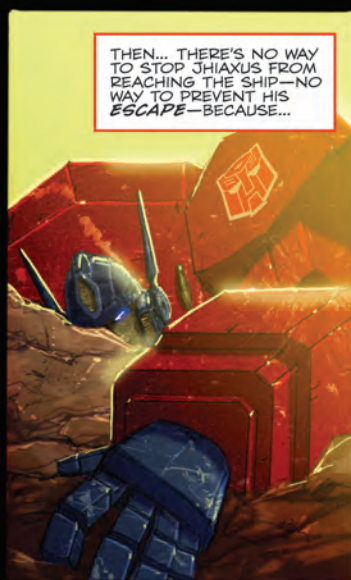


THE MISSILE—
IN TURMOIL'S
ERA—PROVIDED
BLUDGEON WITH
A REPLACEMENT
CONTROL DEVICE
FOR HIS MASTER.



I HAVE
THE DEVICE!
I WON'T LET
YOU GET
AWAY!

THE DECEPTICON SHIP
WAS THEIR GOAL—THEY
REACHED IT WHEN I
TOUCHED THE SPHERE...



THEN... THERE'S NO WAY
TO STOP JHIAXUS FROM
REACHING THE SHIP—NO
WAY TO PREVENT HIS
ESCAPE—BECAUSE...



...IT ALREADY
HAPPENED.

UNNH...



PRIME!

MY
FRIENDS,
YOU'RE ALIVE.
WHEN—WHEN
IS THIS?



YOU
DISAPPEARED
A MONTH
AGO.

NOW THAT
YOU'VE SEEN
WHAT I'VE SEEN—
MAYBE YOU CAN
SAY WHAT IT
MUST MEAN!



JHIAXUS AND THE
OTHERS STOLE THE
CRASHED DECEPTICON
SHIP, BUT WHEELIE
WOULDN'T LEAVE
WITHOUT YOU.

THANK
YOU, OLD
FRIEND.



I TELL THEM AS
MUCH AS I CAN.

HARDHEAD PLOTS A
COURSE OUT. HE
FOLLOWS OUR INITIAL
VECTOR AS CLOSELY AS
THE CONDITIONS ALLOW.

GALACTIC POSITIONING
TELLS US WE LOST
ANOTHER TWO WEEKS
LEAVING ORBIT.



A GHOST PLANET,
UNHINGED IN TIME,
DROPPING ITS VISITORS
TO DIFFERENT ERAS
DEPENDING ON THEIR
ANGLE OF APPROACH.



IN MY YEARS, I'VE WITNESSED
GREAT WONDERS AND
TERRIBLE HORRORS. I'M
NOT SURE WHICH THIS IS,
ANYMORE.

I KNOW JHIAXUS AND
SHOCKWAVE ARE PLAYING
GAMES WITH THE UNIVERSE.



AND I
KNOW I
HAVE TO
STOP
THEM.

ANOTHER
QUESTION BURNS
STRONGER—
WHAT CAUSED THE
DESTRUCTION OF
LV-117...

...AND
WHEN?



WAS IT
SHOCKWAVE?

OR SOMETHING
WORSE?



ROBOTS IN DISGUISE #10 COVER B

by **CASEY W. COLLER** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #12 COVER A

by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**

-99 minutes, 24 seconds

**SCOUT SHIP
"THE
LEADING
LIGHT."**

**APPROACHING
TEMPTORIA, IN THE
ARGON NEBULAE.**

FRONT SECTION.

**WE KILL CONG!
WE KILL CONG!**

WHADDA
WE DO?

WE KILL CONG!

CAN I HAVE
YOUR—?

HELLO?
IS ANYONE
LISTENING
TO ME?

BACK SECTION.

**WE KILL
CONG!**

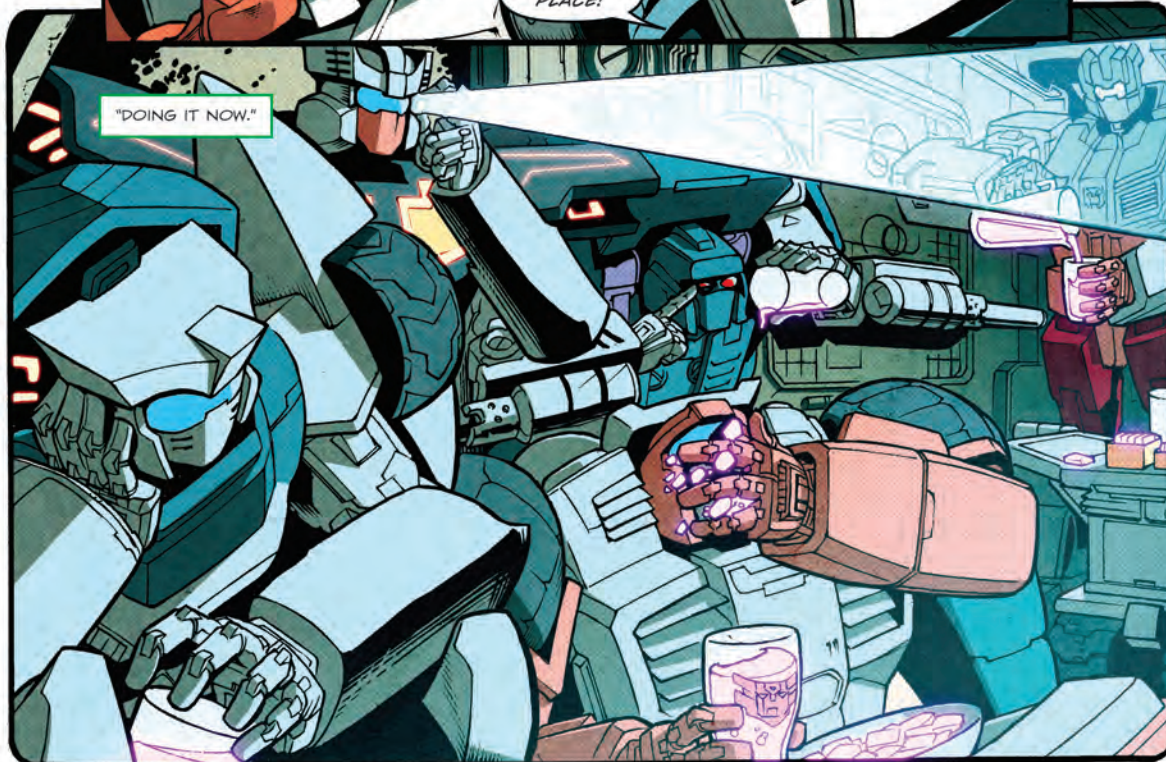
SHUT!

UP!

BEFORE

&

AFTER





-82 minutes, 30 seconds

SENSENSICA. "THE BATTERY."

YOU GOT
HERE FAST,
ER... BLOT,
IS IT?

BLIP. YOU
PRESSED THE
BUTTON. THE RED
LIGHT FLASHED. I
RAN IN HERE.

WHAT
IS IT?

I'M NAUTILATOR.
BY THE WAY,
ONE OF SNAP
TRAP'S CREW.

I THOUGHT
YOU'D WANT
TO SEE THIS.

WOAH,
SAY THAT
AGAIN.

WHAT?

YOU SOUND
EXACTLY LIKE
MEGATRON.

EVERYONE
SAYS THAT. BUT
I REALLY THINK
YOU SHOULD
LOOK AT THE
MONITOR.

HA! BRILLIANT.
IS THAT YOUR
ACTUAL VOICE?

SAY, UM,
YOU KNOW—
SOMETHING
SOMEHOW
TYRANNY.

THE
MONITOR...?

YEAH,
YEAH,
SORRY—

—NICE TO MEET YOU.
IT'S AMAZING: SIX WEEKS
SINCE WE JOINED FORCES
AND HUN-GAR STILL
HASN'T INTRODUCED
US TO EVERYONE.

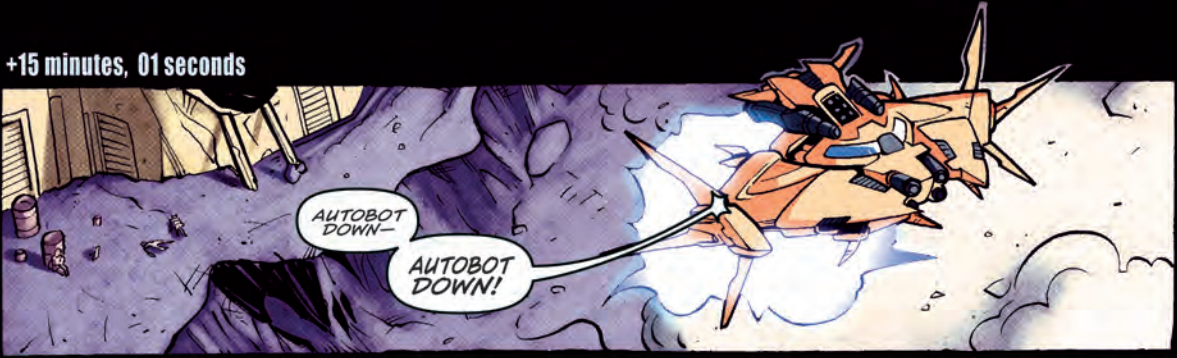
NOW, THIS
MONITOR. WHAT
DID YOU WANT
ME TO—

WHAT?!

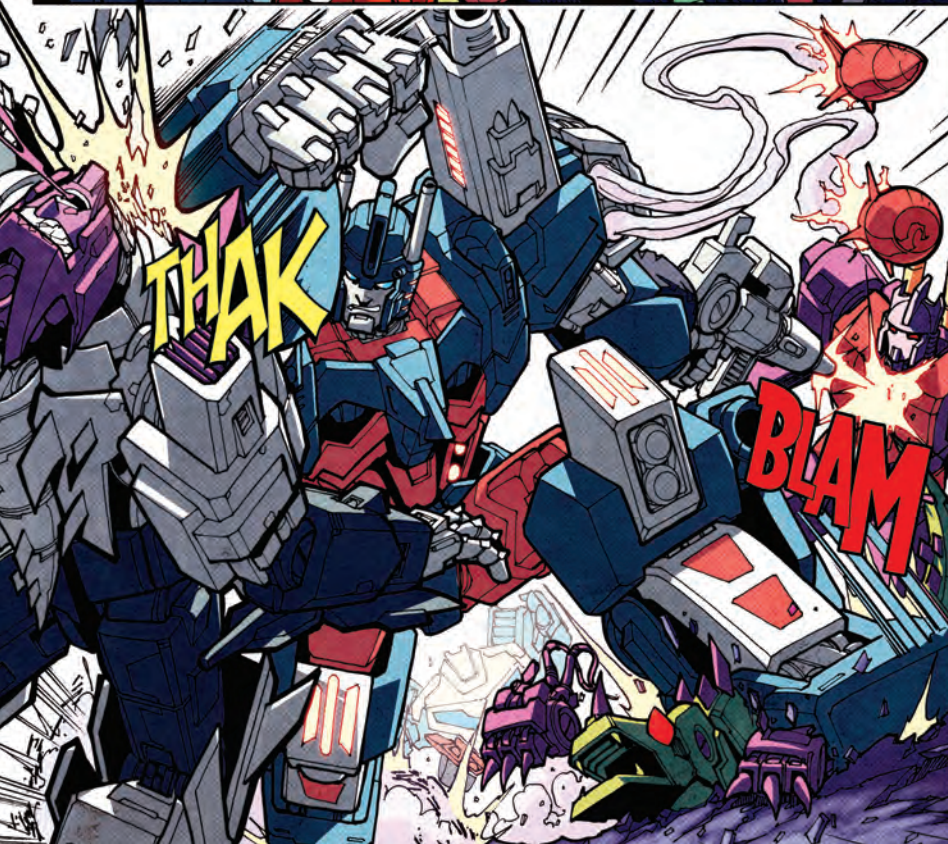
FOR THE
LOVE OF—

IT'S RAINING
AUTOBOTS!

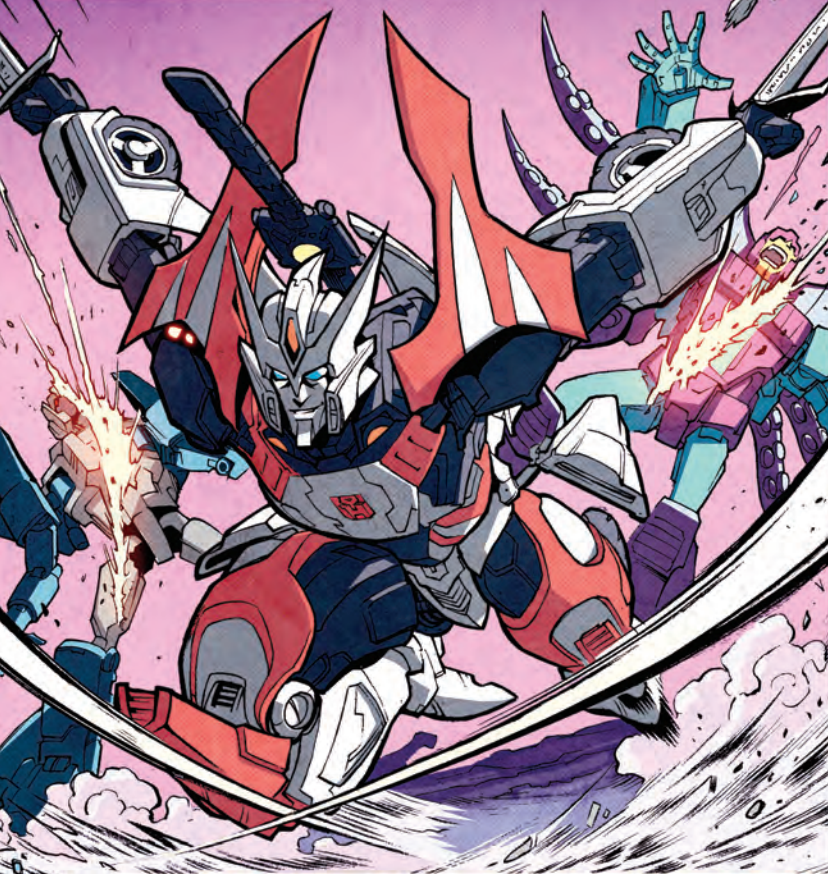
+15 minutes, 01 seconds



-70 minutes, 43 seconds



- 50 minutes, 25 seconds



THIS IS
WHAT YOU GET
FOR KIDNAPPING
INNOCENT PEOPLE.
SNAK TRAP: A
SHIP-LOAD OF
AUTOBOTS IN
YOUR FACE!

WAM, BAM,
IN THE VAN!

A TURN OF
PHRASE WORTHY OF
OPTIMUS PRIME.

AND IT'S NOT
KIDNAPPING—IT'S
PROCUREMENT.

EVERY RACE
HAS THE RIGHT TO
SUSTAIN ITSELF.



NOT
COOL.

I HAD
HIM.

THE ONES
WITH SWORDS
ARE *MINE*
REMEMBER?

+35 minutes, 15 seconds

**THE LOST LIGHT.
SHUTTLE BAY 4.**



+38 minutes, 43 seconds

CORRIDOR L5/119



+40 minutes, 34 seconds



+45 minutes, 11 seconds



THE MEDIBAY



I'M SORRY THIS FALLS ON YOUR SHOULDERS, CHROMEDOME, BUT REWIND NAMED YOU AS HIS *CONJUNK ENDURA*—HIS SIGNIFICANT OTHER.

I NEED AN ANSWER.

AND IT'S REALLY AS BAD AS YOU SAY...?

HIS *BRAIN'S* INTACT, HIS *T-COG'S* INTACT—BUT HIS *SPARK* IS SHRINKING BY THE SECOND.

AND—HE'S *SMALL*.

A BIGGER 'BOT—A *MAGNUS*—WOULD BOUNCE BACK, BUT REWIND...



SO WE EITHER DO NOTHING IN THE HOPE THAT HE'LL FIND THE STRENGTH TO REIGNITE HIS SPARK...

OR YOU LET ME *JUMPSTART* HIM, YES.

I'D HOOK HIM UP TO A *COMPATIBLE SPARK* AND HOPE THE SURGE DOESN'T KILL HIM.

I TRIED IT ON *FORTRESS MAXIMUS** AND IT—I MEAN, NO ONE KNEW WHAT HE WAS GOING TO DO WHEN HE CAME 'ROUND—BUT IT WORKED.

ISSUE 4

REC



REWIND'S *VITREOUS POSITIVE*.

IT'S A RELATIVELY RARE SPARK TYPE. ONE IN 150, ONE IN 200.

I'M V-POSITIVE.

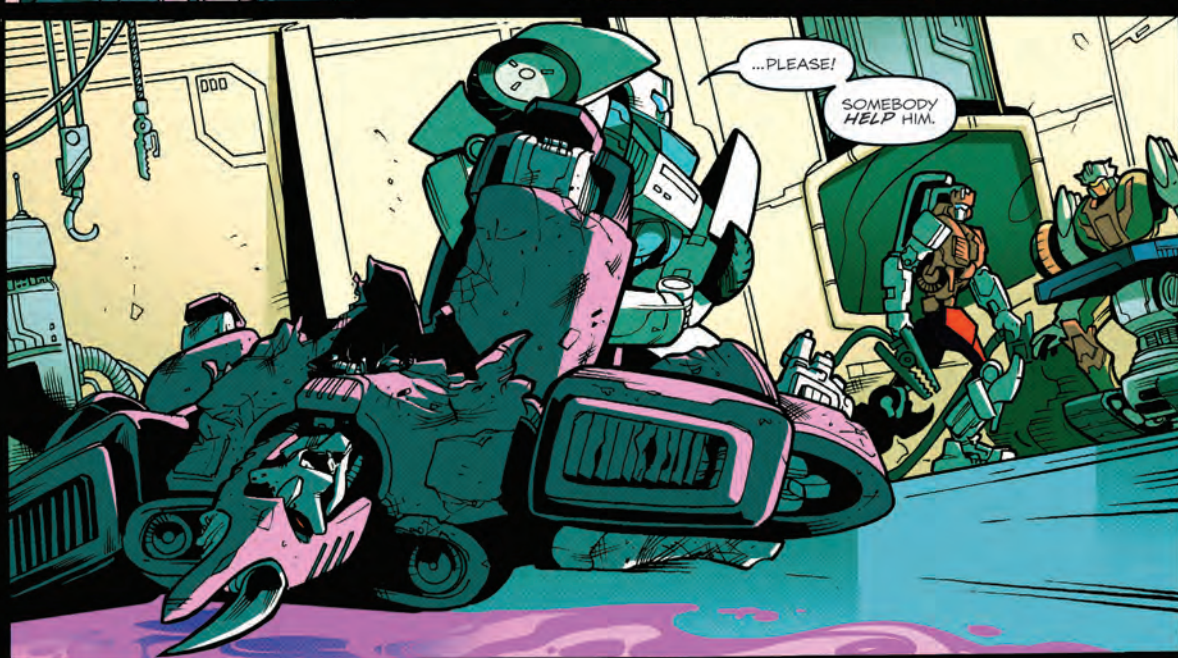
I KNOW.



OKAY THEN.

HOOK US UP.

SOMEBODY...



...PLEASE!

SOMEBODY HELP HIM.

-38 minutes, 22 seconds



"CAN YOU SEE THEM?"

"REWIND, CAN YOU SEE THE PRISONERS?"

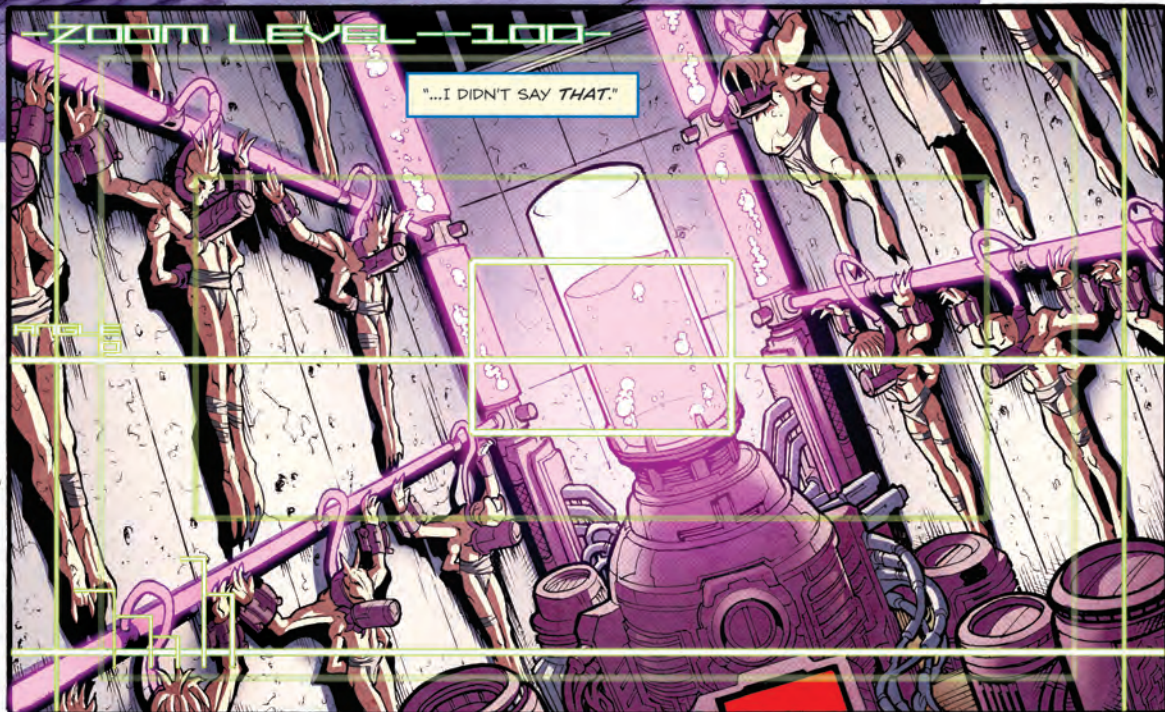


JUST ZOOMING IN, AND...

YEP. GOT 'EM.

HOW ABOUT THAT? RODIMUS WAS RIGHT. THE DECEPTICONS DID KIDNAP THE CIRCLE OF LIGHT.

AH, NOW...



-ZOOM LEVEL-100-

"...I DIDN'T SAY THAT."

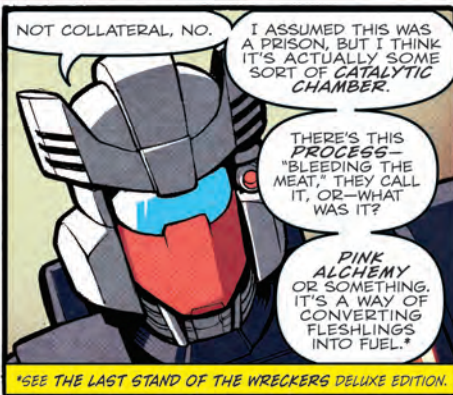


THEY'RE ORGANIC. TEMPTORIANS, I PRESUME. NATIVES OF TEMPTORIA.

WHY WOULD THE 'CONS WANT TO HOLD ONTO THEM? COLLATERAL?

"THE 'CONS-- RIGHT. 'COS YOU'VE BEEN FIGHTING 'EM YOUR WHOLE LIFE..."

REWIND...



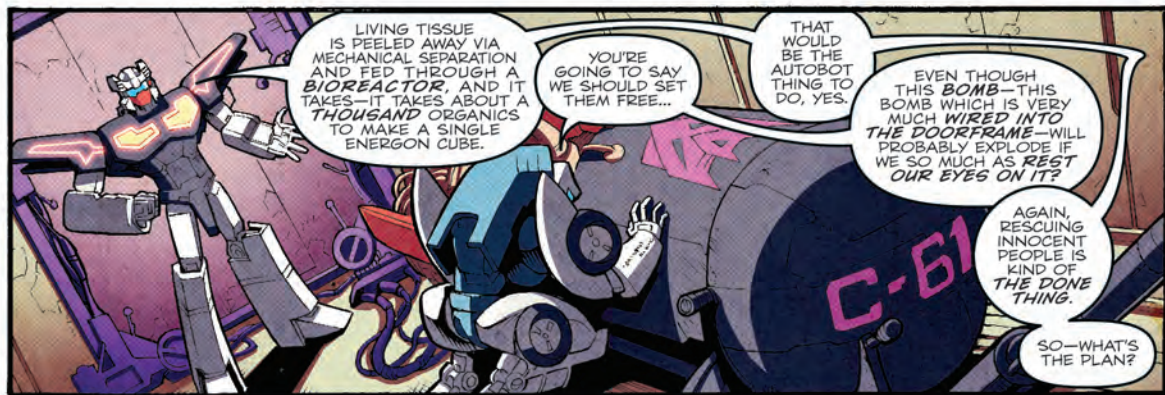
NOT COLLATERAL, NO.

I ASSUMED THIS WAS A PRISON, BUT I THINK IT'S ACTUALLY SOME SORT OF CATALYTIC CHAMBER.

THERE'S THIS PROCESS-- "BLEEDING THE MEAT," THEY CALL IT, OR--WHAT WAS IT?

PINK ALCHEMY OR SOMETHING. IT'S A WAY OF CONVERTING FLESHLINGS INTO FUEL.*

*SEE THE LAST STAND OF THE WRECKERS DELUXE EDITION.



LIVING TISSUE IS PEELLED AWAY VIA MECHANICAL SEPARATION AND FED THROUGH A BIOREACTOR, AND IT TAKES—IT TAKES ABOUT A THOUSAND ORGANICS TO MAKE A SINGLE ENERGEN CUBE.

YOU'RE GOING TO SAY WE SHOULD SET THEM FREE...

THAT WOULD BE THE AUTOBOT THING TO DO, YES.

EVEN THOUGH THIS BOMB—THIS BOMB WHICH IS VERY MUCH WIRED INTO THE DOORFRAME—WILL PROBABLY EXPLODE IF WE SO MUCH AS REST OUR EYES ON IT?

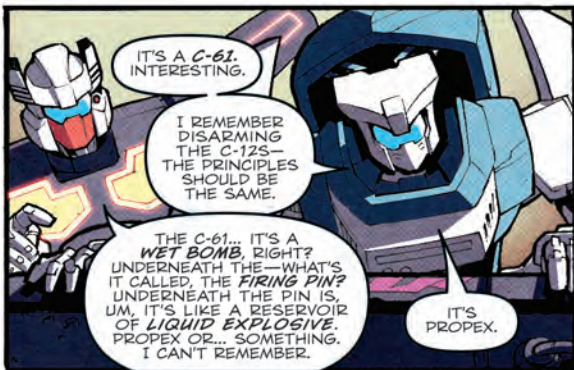
AGAIN, RESCUING INNOCENT PEOPLE IS KIND OF THE DONE THING.

SO—WHAT'S THE PLAN?



WHAT'S THE PLAN?

THE PLAN, REWIND, IS TO LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS.



IT'S A C-61. INTERESTING.

I REMEMBER DISARMING THE C-12S—THE PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE THE SAME.

THE C-61... IT'S A WET BOMB, RIGHT? UNDERNEATH THE—WHAT'S IT CALLED, THE FIRING PIN? UNDERNEATH THE PIN IS, UM, IT'S LIKE A RESERVOIR OF LIQUID EXPLOSIVE. PROPEX OR... SOMETHING. I CAN'T REMEMBER.

IT'S PROPEX.



D'YOU MIND IF I FILM THIS? IF I DIE, I DON'T WANT MY LAST RECORDED FOOTAGE TO BE OF WHIRL PUNCHING HIMSELF IN THE FACE TO PROVE HE'S "SUPER-UNVINCIBLE."

FILM AWAY.

COOL. SO, WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO?

THINK ABOUT IT.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE ME?



I'D... WELL, I WOULDN'T REMOVE THE PRESSURE CAP, 'COS THAT'S BOUND TO BE FITTED TO A TREMBLER DEVICE.

UM... I'D—OH! OH! I'D SUPERHEAT MY FINGERTIP, BURN THROUGH THE FUZE WELL AND DRAIN THE PROPEX!

PRECISELY. THAT WAY, EVEN IF THE BOMB DETONATES, THE BLAST RADIUS IS REDUCED AND THE PRISONERS WON'T GET HURT.

YOU'RE A GENIUS!



OKAY, SO I'M ABOUT TO COMMENCE THE RENDER SAFE PROCEDURE.

YOUR EYES...

DON'T WORRY. PANIC KEEPS ME FOCUSED.

THE DAY I SNUGGLE UP TO A BOMB AND DON'T FEAR FOR MY LIFE IS THE DAY I GET SLOPPY.



THINKING ABOUT IT, MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET CLEAR.

CHROMEDOME WOULD NEVER FORGIVE ME IF—Y'KNOW.

WELL, CHROMEDOME'S NOT HERE, IS HE?

HE'S RUNNING AROUND PRETENDING TO BE OPTIMUS PRIME, MAKING UP FOR ALL THOSE YEARS HE SPENT INDOORS.

WELL, YOU CAN MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL BY KEEPING AN EYE ON THE OTHER DOOR...

-29 minutes, 19 seconds

"...IT SOUNDS LIKE THE 'CONS ARE RIGHT OUTSIDE."

PLEASE! I SURRENDER!

DON'T SHOOT!

THAT IS UNCANNY. HAS ANYONE EVER—?

MEGATRON, YES, I KNOW! JUST DON'T SHOOT!

OKAY, YOU BE MEGATRON, I'LL BE PRIME.

"YOU, WHO ARE WITHOUT MERCY, NOW PLEAD FOR IT?"

WAIT WAIT. TRY AGAIN: "YOU, WHO ARE WITHOUT—"

NOT DEEP ENOUGH. "YOU, WHO ARE—"

HOW CAN ANYONE'S VOICE BE THAT LOW?

AH, FRAG IT.

HEY, WHIRL—I'M OUT OF JUICE!

THROW ME YOUR SPARE!

SCRA-KOW

HERE, TAKE THE SHOOMER.

OOF!

BRAINSTORM ONLY MADE IT YESTERDAY. IT STILL SMELLS OF NEW.

CAN'T EVEN GET A GRIP ON THE DAMN THING.

WHY'S IT CALLED THE—

SHOOM



"REWIND'S PRETTY OLD.
NOT AS OLD AS YOU,
BUT—PRETTY OLD."

"OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE
SWITCH TO THE *NEW CALENDAR*.
OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE RISE
OF THE *FUNCTIONISTS*, AND THEIR
GRAND CYBERTRONIAN TAXONOMY."

"NOWADAYS, HIS ALT MODE'S
KINDA UNIQUE—NOT THE
SIZE—THAT'S JUST *STUPID*—
I MEAN THE FACT HE TURNS
INTO A *MEMORY STICK*."

"NOT MANY OF *THOSE*
AROUND ANYMORE."

"BUT BACK IN THE DAY
THERE WERE *MILLIONS* OF
'BOTS LIKE HIM. IN *RATONIST*
TERMS, HE WAS A MEMBER
OF THE *DISPOSABLE*
CLASS: THE LOWEST
OF THE LOW. NOWADAYS
WE'D CALL THEM *SLAVES*..."

"WHEN *ZETA PRIME* TOOK OVER HE
GAVE THE DISPOSABLES SOME *RIGHTS*—
BUT THAT WOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED
HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR ONE PERSON: A
CAMPAIGNER NAMED *DOMINUS AMBUS*."

"REWIND'S 'NUMBER ONE.'"

"I'M DOING HIM A *DISSERVICE*
BY CALLING HIM A CAMPAIGNER."

"HE WAS MORE OF A—*PRIMUS*,
WHERE TO START? *SCIENTIST*,
DOCTOR, *AUTHOR*, *EXPLORER*."

"I HATE HIM."

"REWIND WORKED FOR HIM WHILE
HE WAS LOOKING FOR A CURE FOR
CYBERCROSIS. ACTUALLY, 'WORKED'
IS PUSHING IT: DOMINUS USED
HIM AS A *DATA RECEPTACLE*."

"AMBUS WOULD SECRETLY TOP HIM
UP WITH *PREMIUM ENERGON*
RATHER THAN LET HIM RUN ON
THE CHEAP STUFF THAT THE
DISPOSABLES WERE USED TO."

"THEY BECAME FRIENDS, AND
DOMINUS REALIZED JUST
HOW—HOW *MARGINALIZED*
THE DISPOSABLES WERE."

"HE WENT ON TO DEVELOP THESE
SENSE TESTS TO PROVE THAT
ALL THE *MEMORY STICKS* AND
LASER POINTERS WERE JUST AS
WORTHY AS THE REST OF US."

"SO DID THIS ATTENTION-
SEEKING DO-GOODER FIND
A CURE FOR *CYBERCROSIS* AS
WELL? PLEASE TELL ME *NOT*."

"HIS SEARCH TOOK
HIM AND REWIND
INTO SPACE."

"LIKE ALL ROMANTICS,
HE'D BECOME CONVINCED
THAT THE ANSWER TO
ANYTHING COULD BE
FOUND ON *LUNA 1*."

"HE AND REWIND CAME BACK
EMPTY HANDED—NOT EVEN
THE MIGHTY DOMINUS COULD
FIND *THE SEETHING MOON*.
WHILE THEY'D BEEN GONE, THE
PLANET HAD GONE TO HELL."

"CYBERTRON WAS AT WAR AND THE
DECEPTICONS WERE A HANDFUL OF
CITY-STATES AWAY FROM GLOBAL
DOMINATION. DOMINUS AND REWIND
UNDERWENT THE *RITE OF AUTOBRAND*
SECONDS AFTER THEY TOUCHED DOWN."



SO YOU MET ON THE FRONT LINE...

ACTUALLY, WE MET AT A RELINQUISHMENT CLINIC.

YES! WITH THE ADVERTS AND THE BODY-SWAPPING AND THE—

NO, THOSE DAYS WERE LONG GONE.

THE FEW REMAINING CLINICS OFFERED A NEW SERVICE, STRICTLY ON THE QUIET: YOU WENT THERE TO BE MURDERED.



DO YOU REALIZE HOW HARD IT IS FOR A CYBERTRONIAN TO DIE BY HIS OWN HAND? YOU CAN JUMP OFF A BUILDING, BLOW YOURSELF UP, CUT OFF YOUR OWN HEAD—AND YOU STILL MIGHT SURVIVE.

SO YES—IF YOU'D HAD ENOUGH OF THE WAR BUT DIDN'T HAVE THE MEANS TO LEAVE THE PLANET, YOU COULD CHECK INTO A CLINIC FOR A DISCREET AND CONCLUSIVE SUFFOCATION OF THE SPARK.



"I WAS THE ONLY AUTOBOT IN THE WAITING ROOM; I REMEMBER THAT. THREE DECEPTICONS AND ME, ALL QUEUING UP TO BE KILLED. IN THAT MOMENT, I THINK I FELT CLOSER TO THOSE DECEPTICONS THAN I HAVE TO ANYONE ELSE, BEFORE OR SINCE."

"WHAT HAPPENED?"

"I HEARD SHOUTS COMING FROM THE NEXT ROOM. NO, NOT SHOUTS; I DON'T MEAN SHOUTS. I MEAN CRIES. CRIES OF ANGUISH."



"I FOUND REWIND IN THE MORGUE, STANDING OVER A COFFIN. I KNOW THIS SOUNDS GLIB, BUT—

"I THINK I'D BEEN SO CONSUMED BY MY OWN PROBLEMS THAT I NEEDED TO SEE SOMEONE ELSE IN EVEN MORE PAIN—SOMEONE HURTING EVEN MORE, BUT, Y'KNOW, CARRYING ON—TO SNAP ME OUT OF IT."



"ASSUMING HIS FRIEND HAD AVAILED HIMSELF OF THE CLINIC'S SERVICES—ASSUMING HE WAS GRIEVING—I SAID."

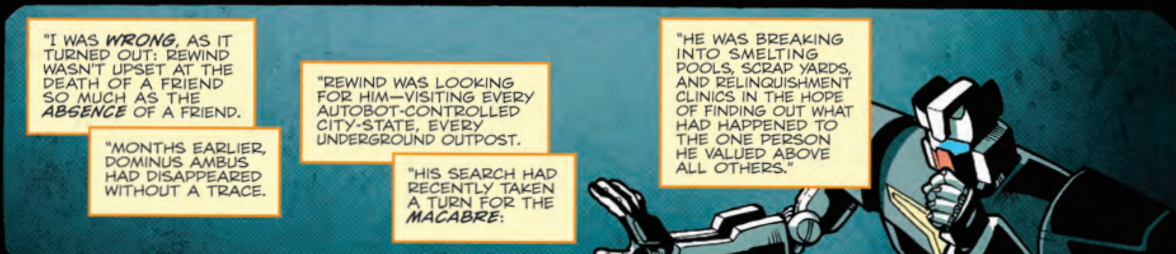
THE WORSE THE DEATH, THE MORE PAINFUL THE MEMORIES.

WHO ARE YOU?

EVERYONE CALLS ME CHROMEDOME.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.



"I WAS WRONG, AS IT TURNED OUT: REWIND WASN'T UPSET AT THE DEATH OF A FRIEND SO MUCH AS THE ABSENCE OF A FRIEND."

"MONTHS EARLIER, DOMINUS AMBUS HAD DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE."

"REWIND WAS LOOKING FOR HIM—VISITING EVERY AUTOBOT-CONTROLLED CITY-STATE, EVERY UNDERGROUND OUTPOST."

"HIS SEARCH HAD RECENTLY TAKEN A TURN FOR THE MACABRE:

"HE WAS BREAKING INTO SMELTING POOLS, SCRAP YARDS, AND RELINQUISHMENT CLINICS IN THE HOPE OF FINDING OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE ONE PERSON HE VALUED ABOVE ALL OTHERS."

+73 minutes, 44 seconds

AND TO
THIS DAY HE'S
NOT STOPPED
LOOKING.

FORGET
THE KNIGHTS;
THAT'S THE
REAL REASON
WE'RE ON THIS
QUEST.

SWERVE SAID
REWIND WAS BUSTED
FOR BRINGING SNUFF
MOVIES ON BOARD.

EXECUTIONS
AND *HOLLOWINGS*
AND STUFF...

ANYTHING
THAT MIGHT SHOW
DOMINUS ALIVE
OR DEAD. I EVEN—
I EVEN PROMISED
REWIND I'D CONTINUE
THE SEARCH SHOULD
ANYTHING HAPPEN
TO HIM.

ANYWAY, THAT'S
WHY REWIND INSISTS
ON FIGHTING ALONGSIDE
THE REST OF US: HE THINKS
THAT WHEREVER THERE ARE
CYBERTRONIANS—AUTOBOT
OR DECEPTICON—THERE'S
A CHANCE OF MEETING
DOMINUS.

YOU THINK SO?
OR DO YOU THINK
HE WANTS TO BE
THERE BECAUSE
YOU'RE THERE.

HE CAN'T
BEAR THE
THOUGHT OF
YOU PUTTING
YOUR LIFE AT
RISK WITHOUT
HIM.

3AHEME

DID IT
WORK?

FIRST
AID, DID IT
WORK?

BUT YOU
SAID WE WERE
COMPATIBLE!

YOU
ARE.

THEN
WHAT?
WHAT IS IT?

IT'S YOUR
SPARK.
IT'S *LOW*
YIELD.

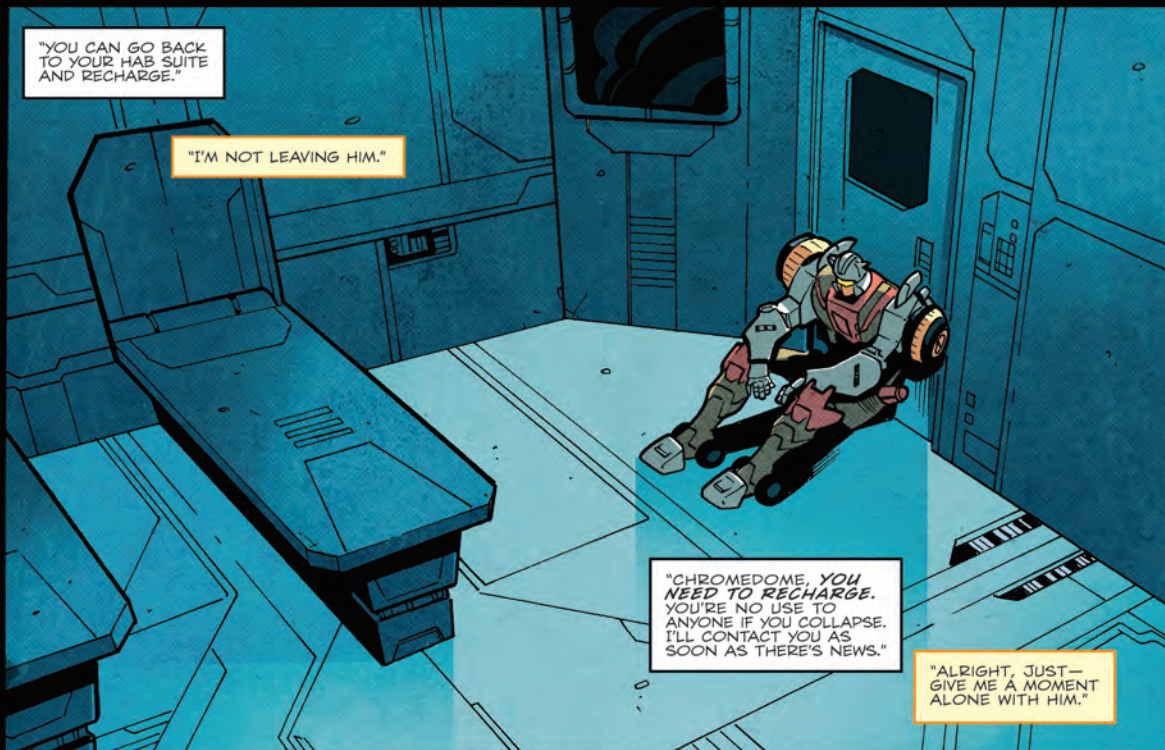
WHAT DOES
THAT EVEN
MEAN?

IT MEANS IT'S *WEAK*.
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT,
OR WHETHER—SOMEHOW—
IT'S A BY-PRODUCT OF ALL
THE INTERFACING YOU DO—
BUT YOU'RE NOT STRONG
ENOUGH TO SAVE HIM.

LISTEN...
THERE MIGHT
BE SOMEONE
ELSE WHO CAN
JUMPSTART
HIM.

IT'S A
LONG SHOT—
STATISTICALLY—
BUT I'LL PUT THE
WORD OUT.

WHAT
CAN I
DO?



"YOU CAN GO BACK TO YOUR HAB SUITE AND RECHARGE."

"I'M NOT LEAVING HIM."

"CHROMEDOME, YOU NEED TO RECHARGE. YOU'RE NO USE TO ANYONE IF YOU COLLAPSE. I'LL CONTACT YOU AS SOON AS THERE'S NEWS."

"ALRIGHT, JUST—GIVE ME A MOMENT ALONE WITH HIM."



YOU IN THERE?

CHROMEDOME, IT'S ME. OPEN UP.

C'MON... OPEN UP.



CHROMEDOME, WHAT HAPPENED THIS MORNING—TEMPTORIA—IT CHANGED THINGS, DIDN'T IT?

IT PROVED THAT THERE ARE DECEPTICONS OUT THERE, AND THEY STILL POSE A THREAT—TO INNOCENT PEOPLE, TO US, TO *EVERYONE*.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IF I TOLD YOU THERE WAS A WAY TO GIVE US THE UPPER HAND, ONCE AND FOR ALL? A WAY TO TIP THE BALANCE *DEFINITELY* IN OUR FAVOR...



NO MORE DECEPTICONS, CHROMEDOME. NO MORE THREATS. AND WHAT HAPPENED TO REWIND?

IT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN TO *ANYONE ELSE*.

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, JUST OPEN THE DOOR.

THERE'S SOMEONE IN THE BASEMENT I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET.



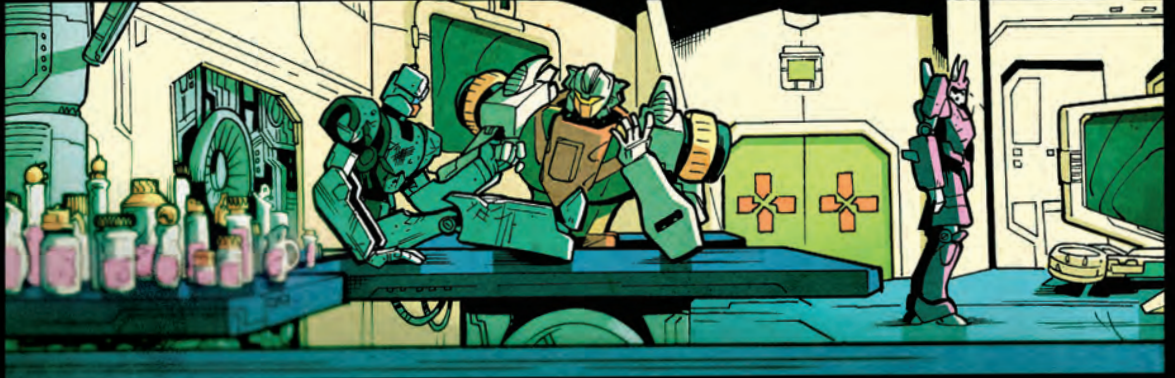
CHROMEDOME?

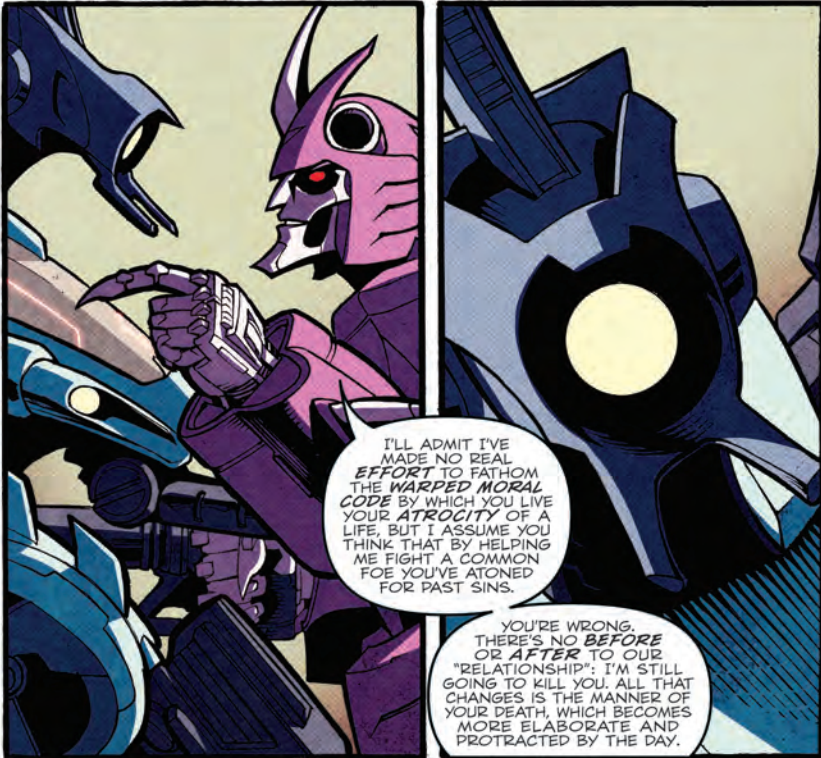
FIRST AID...

PLEASE—GET DOWN HERE NOW...

+97 minutes, 10 seconds







- 31 seconds

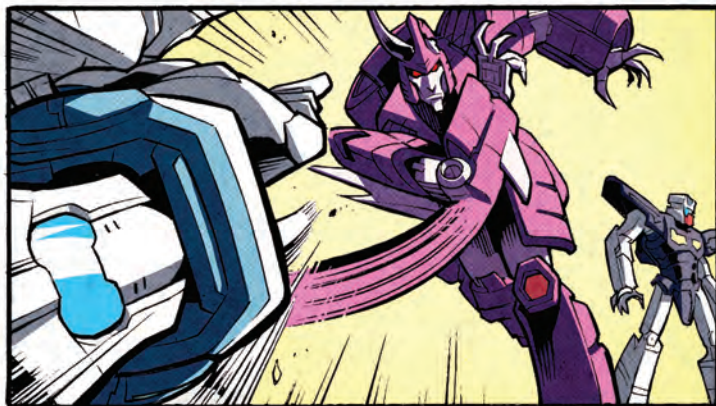
HE WON'T LISTEN TO ME!

HE'S TRIGGERED SOME SORT OF **TIMER**—30 SECONDS AND COUNTING—BUT HE'S TOO STUBBORN TO WALK AWAY!

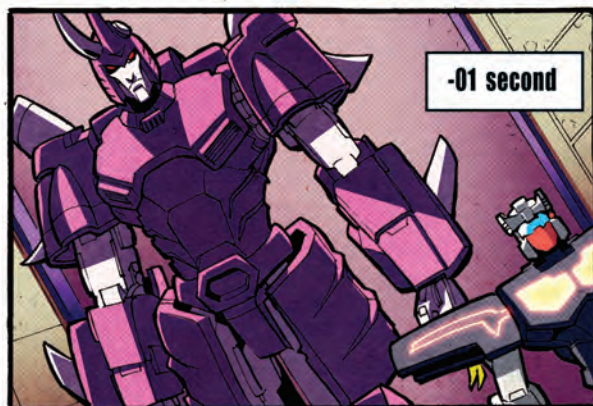
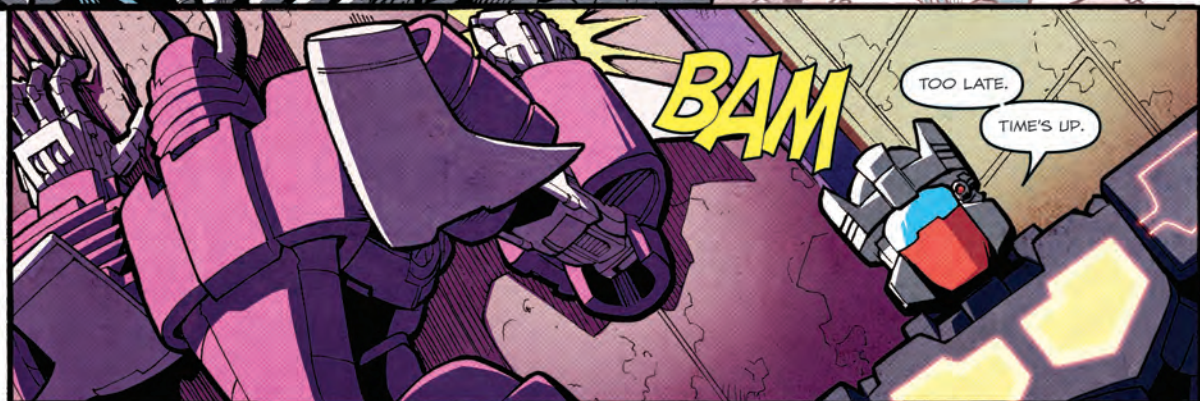
I CAN'T LEAVE WHEN THERE'S STILL PROPEX INSIDE!

IT'S NEARLY EMPTY! THE BLAST WON'T REACH THE PRISONERS!

YOU DON'T KNOW THAT!



-09 seconds





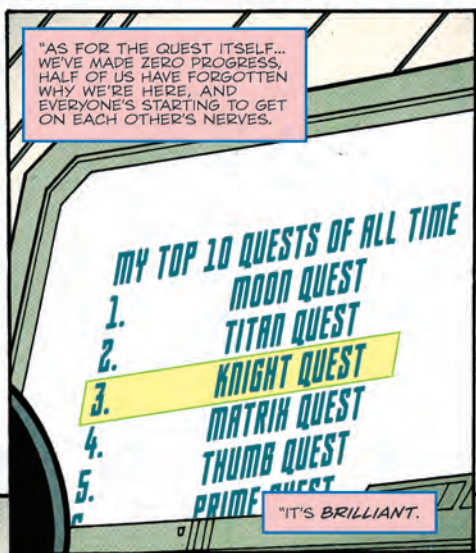
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #12 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #13 COVER A

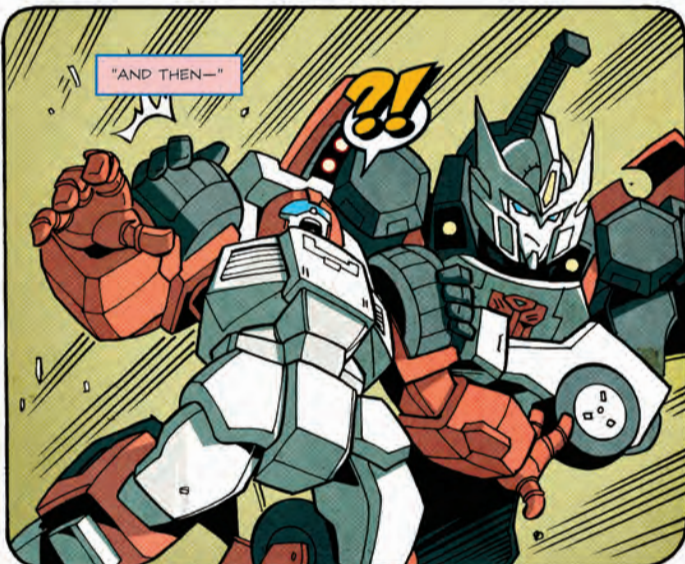
by **ALEX MILNE** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**





"...I WAS HEADING TO WORK—
MORE ON THAT LATER—AND
I HEARD THIS AWFUL NOISE.
IT SOUNDED LIKE THIS:"

REARRRGH
HURRGCH



"AND THEN—"

?!



HEY!
UNWELCOME
TOUCH!

AKAK
SHEARRGH



DRIFT!
WHAT DID WE
SAY ABOUT
UNDER THE
ARM?

SORRY, BUT
YOU WALKED
STRAIGHT INTO
A SECURITY
OPERATION.

THE
SCREAMING?

IT'S COMING
FROM THE BOOM
THAT LITTLE PANICKY
GUY WITH THE LEGS
SHARES WITH THAT
DECEPTICON-WHO-
SAYS-HE-ISN'T.



TAILGATE?
CYCLONUS?
YOU TWO
ALRIGHT IN
THERE?

HURRGCH
REARRRGH

I ALWAYS
KNEW THIS
WOULD
HAPPEN.



WELL?

I'M JUST
WONDERING IF
THERE'S TIME TO
EXPAND MY AURA
AND CLEANSE
THE AREA OF
AGGRESSION...

I... DON'T
THINK SO,
DRIFT.

ON MY
SIGNAL,
THEN.

THREE,
TWO,
ONE...



"...NOW!"

HANDS ON YOUR HEAD, YOU—

WAIT! WAIT!

STOP!



WHAT'S GOING ON, TAILGATE? WE HEARD SCREAMING...

YOU HEARD SINGING!

THAT WAS YOU?

ER...



THAT WAS YOU?!

YES. WHY IS THIS SURPRISING? A TRUE PATRIOT SINGS LOUDLY— AND OFTEN.

"GLORY TO CYBERTRON, GLIMING IN THE HEAVENS!"

A HYMN TO THE HOMELAND. YOU DON'T REMEMBER.

TOO YOUNG.



YOU SING IN THE MOTHER TONGUE, DON'T YOU, CYCLONUS?



OLD CYBERTRONIAN? I'VE NEVER HEARD IT SPOKEN, LET ALONE SUNG.

I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SO...

TERRIFYING.

BEAUTIFUL?

THAT'LL BE THE TETRAHEXIAN ACCENT. AND THE VOLUME. AND THE, ER... THE GUSTO.

THE BALLADS ARE EVEN MORE INTENSE.

CYBERTRONIAN HOMESICK BLUES

"A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF DRIFT, BUT I'VE ALWAYS FOUND HIM TO BE THE ARCHETYPAL SYK-ADDICT-TURNED-DECEPTICON-PSYCHOPATH-TURNED-AUTOBOT-NINJA-TURNED-FLAKY SPIRITUALIST."

"I LIKE HIM."

MOVE INTO YOUR HAB SUITE? SERIOUSLY?

SURE—THERE'S A VACANCY.

I MEAN, YOU'D HAVE TO MAKE IT ONTO THE **SHORTLIST**, BUT—in principle—WHAT DO YOU SAY?

I'M FLATTERED, BUT—WHEN I HAVE TIME TO MYSELF I PREFER TO SPEND IT ALONE, IN A STATE OF **HEIGHTENED ISOLATION**, EXPLORING THE LIMITS OF SOLITUDE.

HEY, ME TOO!

WE COULD EXPLORE THE LIMITS OF SOLITUDE TOGETHER!

YOU'VE BEEN AGES.

SORRY, FALSE ALARM.

WHERE WERE WE?

YOU WERE TEACHING ME HOW TO **PARRY**. WHAT KIND OF FALSE ALARM?

OH, JUST—CYCLONUS WAS SINGING IN FRONT OF TAILGATE.

THOSE TWO HAVE A VERY ODD RELATIONSHIP.

EVERYWHERE I LOOK I SEE RULES BEING **STRETCHED** AND LAWS BEING **BROKEN** AND PROTOCOLS BEING **DROGGED OUTSIDE** AND **KICKED TO DEATH**.

I'VE MADE A LIST: **ONE**, SKIDS KEEPS USING THE MAINTENANCE DROIDS FOR TARGET PRACTICE; **TWO**, WAYERIDER AND SURESHOT **MISST** ON PLAYING **HAND-GRENADE TAG** OUTSIDE MY OFFICE...



...THREE: THE WARNING SIGNS THAT DIPSTICK'S PUT UP IN THE ENGINE ROOMS ARE RIDDLED WITH MISPLACED APOSTROPHES. FOUR: SPROCKET KEEPS TOUCHING HIS—

MAGNUS!

CAN WE JUST—
CAN WE JUST
PAUSE FOR A
MOMENT.

THESE RULE
BREAKERS—AND
I USE THE TERM IN
AN EXCEPTIONALLY
LOOSE SENSE—
WHAT'VE YOU DONE
WITH THEM ALL?



I'VE... IMPOSED
APPROPRIATE
DISCIPLINARY
PROCEDURES.

IS THAT
MAGNUS-
SPEAK FOR
I'VE HAD
THEM ALL
KILLED?

I PUT
THEM
IN THE
BRIG.

YOU PUT
THEM IN
THE—?

WITH THE
DECEPTICONS?

YOU'RE
TAKING
THIS WAY
TOO FAR.

YOU THINK
YOU'RE BEING—
WHAT? DILIGENT?
WELL YOU'RE NOT;
YOU'RE JUST BEING
PREPOSTEROUS.



(SIGH)

MAYBE I
HAVE BEEN
TAKING THINGS
TOO SERIOUSLY.
MAYBE I SHOULD
TRY AND... AND...
WHATEVER.

THERE'S
A WORD
FOR IT.

RELAX?

THAT'S
NOT EVEN
A WORD. I'D
HAVE HEARD
OF IT.



LISTEN—WE'RE TWO HOURS
AWAY FROM HEDONIA.
MAYBE THE CREW DESERVE
SOME SHORE LEAVE.
YOU IN PARTICULAR.

WHAT
DO YOU
RECKON?
HM?

SWERVE
COULD SHOW
YOU THE
SIGHTS...

WHOA,
SWERVE
COULD
WHAT?



C'MON—
IF ANYONE
CAN CHEER
HIM UP,
YOU CAN.

YOU SAY "CHEER
HIM UP" LIKE IT'S
SOMETHING OTHER
THAN A CENTURIES-
LONG UNDERTAKING
DESTINED TO END
IN MADNESS AND
SUICIDE.

I THINK IT
WOULD REFLECT
WELL ON SOMEONE
WHO WANTS HIS
BAR LICENSE
RENEWED...

BUT I
DON'T EVEN
HAVE A—

AH, I SEE
WHAT YOU
DID THERE.



HEY,
MAGNUS!

SEE YOU
IN TWO
HOURS!

"THERE WERE ABOUT A HUNDRED PEOPLE ON THE SHUTTLE—HALF OF THEM CELEBRATING THEIR RELEASE FROM THE BRIG.

"TO GIVE RODIMUS HIS DUE, HE WAS VERY **GENEROUS**; HE PERSUADED DRIFT TO GIVE EACH OF US 50 SHANIX SPENDING MONEY.

"I MADE SURE THAT THE **SWERVE POSSE** WERE ON BOARD:

"REWIND..."

"...RUNG..."

"...TAILGATE..."

"...AND **SKIDS**."

"AND FOR THE RECORD, WHIRL **ISN'T** PART OF THE POSSE—HE JUST TAGS ALONG.

"(HAVE YOU EVER **MET** WHIRL? HE'S THE ONLY AUTOBOT I KNOW WHO INTRODUCES HIMSELF BY SAYING HE HAS **NO KNOWN WEAKNESSES**.)

"TAILGATE AND I ARE PARTICULARLY CLOSE..."

OKAY, EVERYONE—**LECTURE TIME**.

MOST OF HEDONIA'S TOURIST HOT SPOTS ARE RESERVED FOR **ORGANICS ONLY**, SO I WANT ANYONE VISITING THE ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT TO SEND THEIR **HOLOMATTER AVATARS** IN FIRST.

SO LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT: YOU'D RATHER SHARE A HAB SUITE WITH A **SURLY, MONO-HORNED PSEUDO-DECEPTION** THAN MOVE IN WITH ME?

CYCLONUS IS THE ONLY LINK I HAVE TO MY OWN TIME.

WE WEREN'T JUST **CONTEMPORARIES**—WE WERE GONNA BE **SHIPMATES**!

ANYWAY, THE **SURLINESS** IS AN **ACT**...

IT'S A VERY **CONVINCING** ACT. I WAS **CONVINCED**.

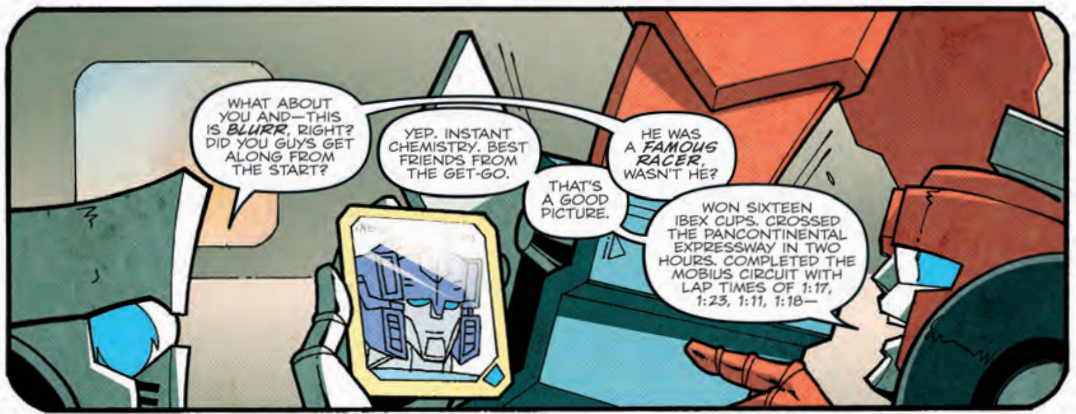
MY FRIENDS ON **KIMIA**? THE ONES HE **KILLED**? THEY WERE **TOTALLY** **CONVINCED**.

OH YEAH—**RUNG** AND **BRAINSTORM** HAVE MADE THE **HOLOMATTER** PROGRAM MORE **INTUITIVE**: YOUR NEW AVATARS SHOULD NOW BETTER REFLECT YOUR **PSYCHE**, MAKING FOR A MORE **CONVINCING** **DISGUISE**.

I SUGGEST YOU USE THE **HOMO SAPIENS** TEMPLATE. IT'S NICE AND **NON-THREATENING**. REMEMBER TO **ADJUST** FOR **SCALE**—AND DON'T **DRAW ATTENTION** TO YOUR **HAIR**.

TO SUMMARIZE: HAVE FUN, **CHILL OUT**, SEE THE **SIGHTS**... JUST MAKE SURE YOU GET BACK TO THE SHUTTLE BY **SUNRISE**.

YOU'RE **LATE**, YOU'RE **LEFT**.



WHAT ABOUT YOU AND—THIS IS **BLURR**, RIGHT? DID YOU GUYS GET ALONG FROM THE START?

YEP. INSTANT CHEMISTRY. BEST FRIENDS FROM THE GET-GO.

THAT'S A GOOD PICTURE.

HE WAS A **FAMOUS RACER**. WASN'T HE?

WON SIXTEEN IBEX CUPS. CROSSED THE PANCONTINENTAL EXPRESSWAY IN TWO HOURS. COMPLETED THE MOBIUS CIRCUIT WITH LAP TIMES OF 1:17, 1:23, 1:11, 1:18—



WHAT ARE WE—MOVE OVER—TALKING ABOUT?

OH, NOTHING IMPORTANT.

REALLY? SOUNDED INTERESTING. STATISTICS.

I HAVE A REAL **PASSION** FOR—



LOOK! THE FIFTH RIVET IN THAT SEQUENCE—IT'S 30 DEGREES WIDE OF THE WELD LINE!

I **KNEW** THERE WAS SOMETHING ODD ABOUT THIS SHUTTLE.



BETTER MAKE A NOTE SO WHEN I GET BACK I CAN—

NO.

RESIST THE URGE, MAGNUS. YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO REFLEX.

...
OR WHATEVER THE WORD WAS.



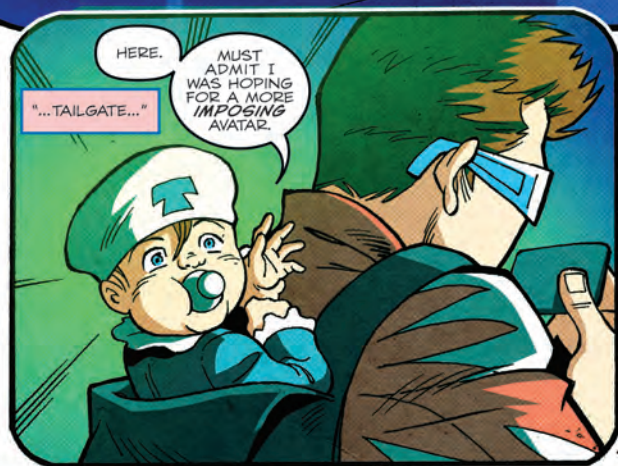
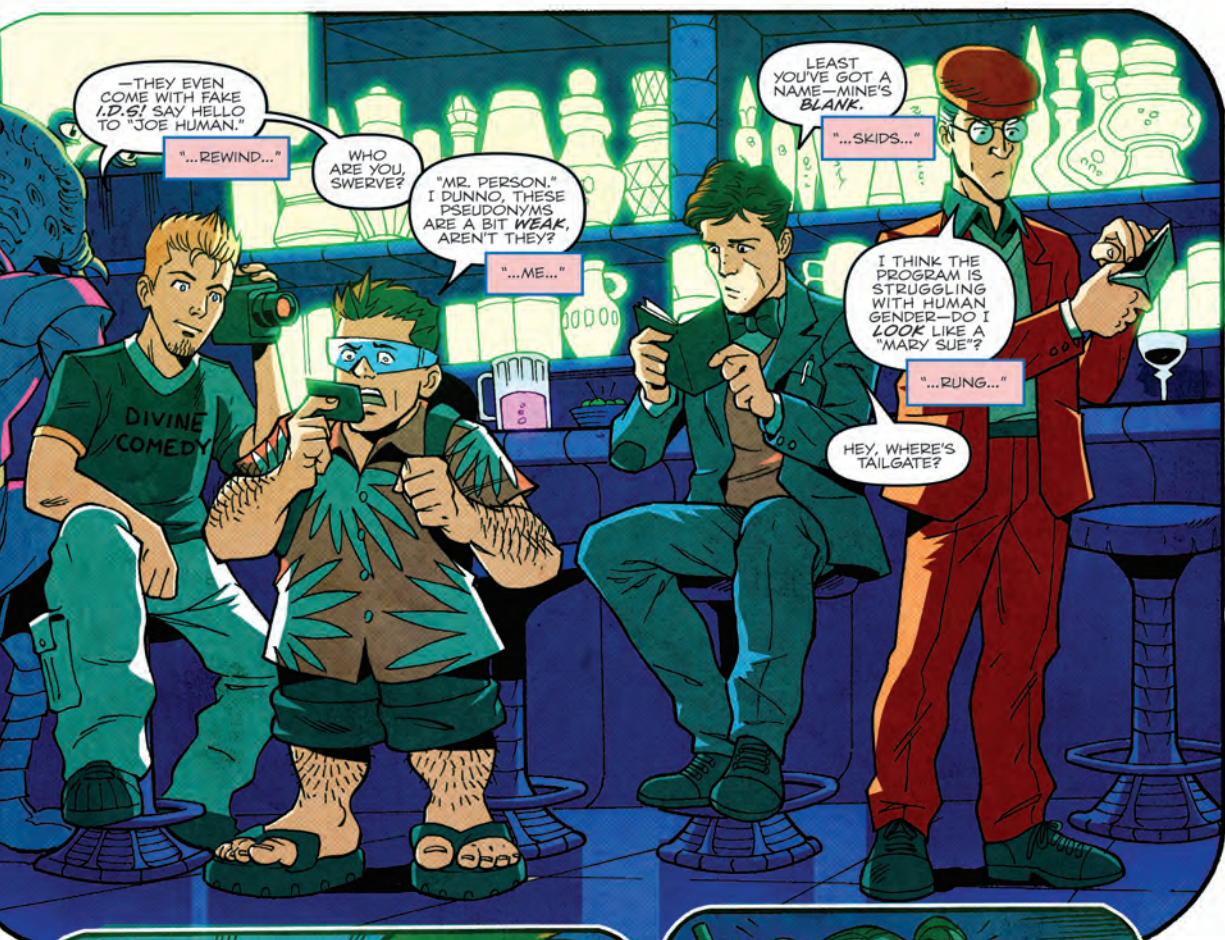
"WHEN WE REACHED HEDONIA IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT.

"I'D MADE AN **ITINERARY**: THE LUBE PITS, THE SIMULTRONIC SUITES, AND THEN—BIT OF CULTURE—A QUICK TRIP TO THE **TEMPLE OF THE RAGING PRISM**.

"BUT FIRST WE WERE GONNA STOP OFF AT A **BAR** FOR A QUICK NIP OF FUEL, AND WE WERE **GOOD**—WE DID AS RODIMUS TOLD US: WE SENT OUR DECOYS IN AHEAD OF US..."

BAR

THESE HOLOMATTER AVATARS ARE **BRILLIANT**—





SORRY—I WAS TALKING TO THE PROPRIETOR ABOUT FIRE EXITS.

I CAN'T—YOU KNOW, R-WORD—UNLESS I KNOW THE PREMISES ARE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMPLIANT.

OH, AND I THINK THIS PLACE IS MECH-FRIENDLY. THEY'VE GOT 20 TYPES OF ENGINE OIL BEHIND THE BAR.

"WE DEACTIVATED OUR AVATARS AND RETURNED TO THE BAR IN PERSON. AND THEN IT STARTED..."



WHAT'S THIS?

IT'S CALLED A MOOD WHIPLASH—CARBONATED ENGEX AND A DASH OF PETROL.

GO ON—DOWN IN ONE.

RIGHT. ALL OF IT? ONLY I'VE NEVER—

I DON'T OFTEN DRINK.



VERY PLEASANT.

YOU'RE NOT—YOU DON'T FEEL ANY DIFFERENT?

SHOULD I?

WAITAMINUTE. YOU HAVEN'T DEACTIVATED YOUR FUEL INTAKE MODERATION CHIP, HAVE YOU?

...

MAGNUS, UNLESS YOU DEACTIVATE YOUR F.I.M. CHIP YOU MIGHT AS WELL BE PLUGGED INTO YOUR RECHARGE SLAB. DEACTIVATE YOUR CHIP AND YOU'LL LOOSEN UP.

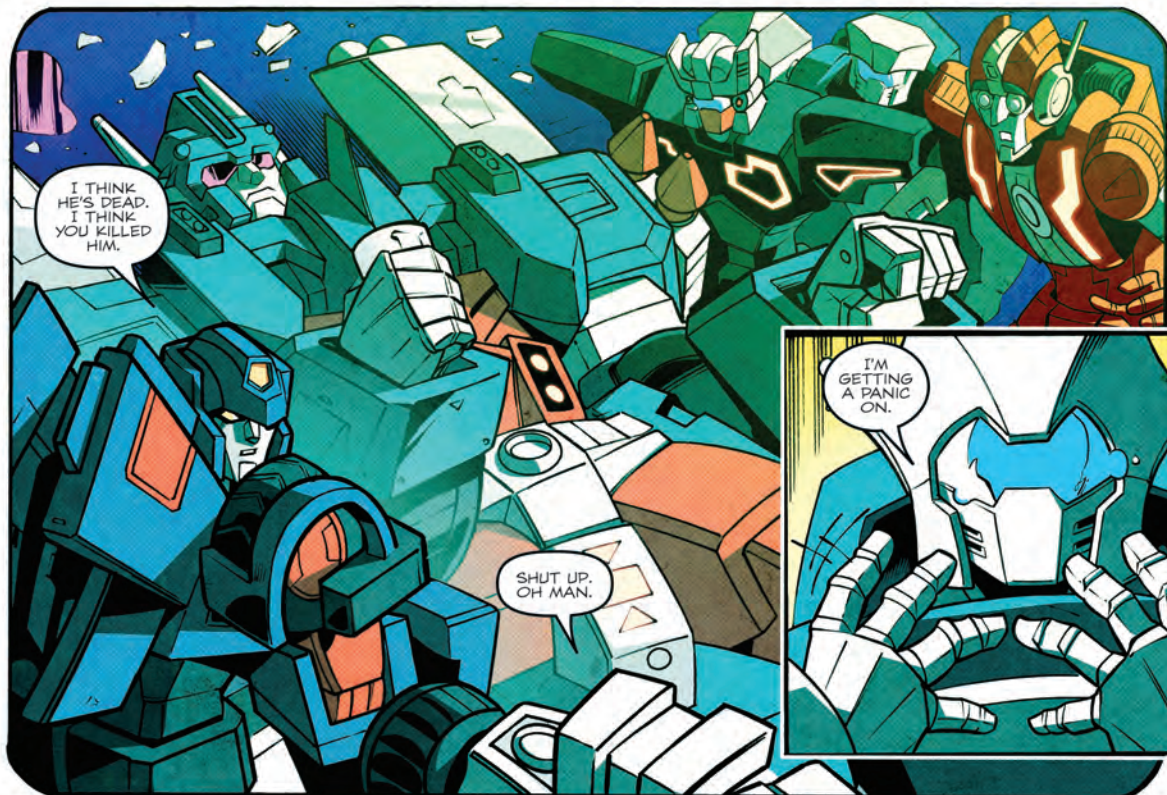


OH, VERY WELL.

KLIK

THERE. NOTHING.





"TWO HOURS LATER
MAGNUS **STILL** HADN'T
STIRRED. WE'D RESORTED
TO THE NEMESIS GAME."

EASY.

KILLMASTER.

GUY
WITH THE
WAND...

UGLY AS SIN,
WHICH MEANS HE
WAS PROBABLY A
MONOFORMER.

URGH.
THAT MAKES
HIM EVEN
WORSE.

ANYWAY,
DEAD
NOW.

I CAN PICTURE IT: WHIRL AND
KILLMASTER AND A FIGHT TO
THE DEATH ON TOP OF AN
EXPLODING WARWORLD—WITH
THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE
LITERALLY HANGING IN
THE BALANCE!

LITERALLY?

YES, SWERVE,
LITERALLY.

KILLMASTER
LUNGES FOR
HIS WAND!

WHIRL
SOMERSAULTS
BACKWARDS AND—
POW!—BOOT TO
THE FACE—COFF!
—KICKS HIM OVER
THE EDGE!

AM I
RIGHT?

YEAH, SORT OF. I BROKE INTO A
DECEPTICON MEDICAL FACILITY
AND CRUSHED HIS BRAIN WHILE
HE WAS RECHARGING. AND
THEN I SHOVED HIS WAND
UP HIS—

THANKS
FOR SHARING,
WHIRL!

WE ALL KNOW MY
QUOTE UNQUOTE
"NEMESIS"—ANYONE
WHO USES THE WORDS
PSYCHIATRY AND
PSYCHOTHERAPY
INTERCHANGEABLY.

BUT WHAT
ABOUT YOU,
SKIDS? WHO'S
JHAIKUS TO YOUR ARCEE?

UM...

OKAY, SO...
EXCLUDING
MEGATRON, 'COS
EVERYONE PICKS HIM...
EXCLUDING MEGATRON,
MY NUMBER ONE,
ALL-TIME NEMESIS
IS... UM...

MISFIRE.

MISFIRE?!
WHY'D YOU
HATE HIM?

WHAT DID HE
DO, APART FROM
REPEATEDLY FAIL
TO SHOOT YOU?

OH, BAD
THINGS. I
DON'T WANT
TO TALK
ABOUT IT.

WHY DO I GET
THE IMPRESSION
THAT YOU CAN'T
REMEMBER YOUR
WORST ENEMY...?

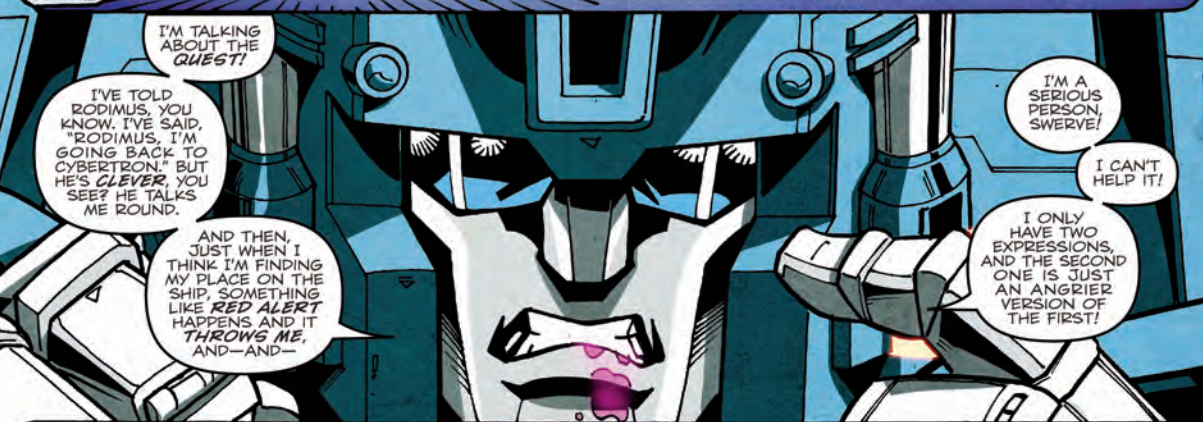
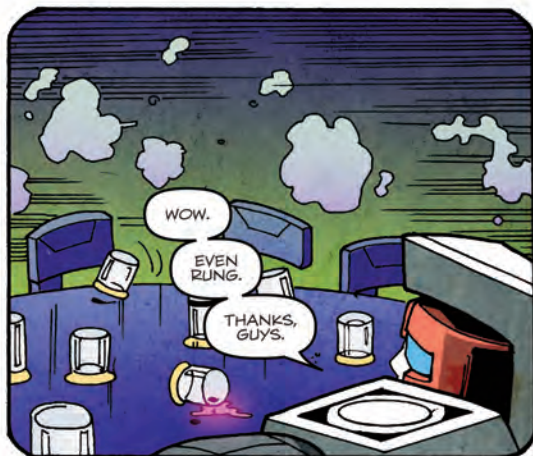
'COURSE,
YOU KNOW
WHO MISFIRE
REMINDS
ME OF...

SHADDUP.

AND YOU'RE
A BAD SHOT!

NOT AS
BAD AS
MISFIRE!

MY HEAD
BEGS TO
DIFFER.





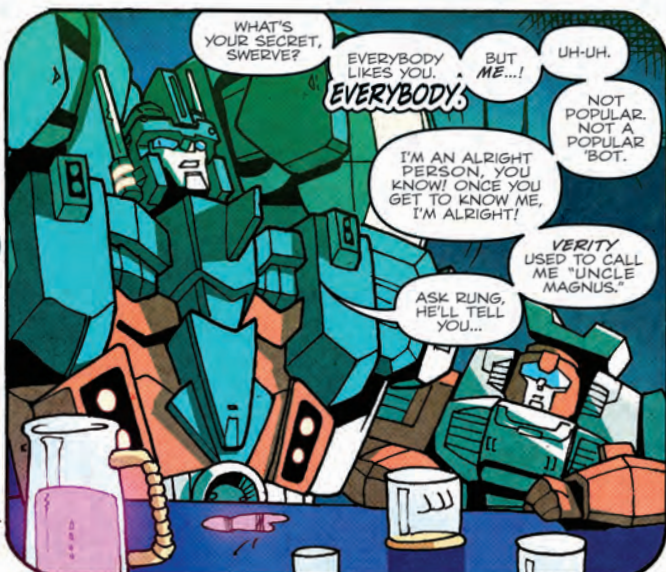
MAGS, I'M NOT PRECISELY SURE WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, BUT—

"MAGS."

TSK-TSK-TSK! SHORTENING A SENIOR OFFICER'S NAME.

TECHNICALLY AN OFFENSE.

I'LL LET YOU OFF.



WHAT'S YOUR SECRET, SWERVE?

EVERYBODY LIKES YOU. BUT ME...! **EVERYBODY!**

UH-UH.

NOT POPULAR. NOT A POPULAR 'BOT.

I'M AN ALRIGHT PERSON, YOU KNOW! ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW ME, I'M ALRIGHT!

VERITY USED TO CALL ME "UNCLE MAGNUS."

ASK RUNG, HE'LL TELL YOU...



HEY, I KNOW FOR A FACT THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK YOU'RE GREAT.

REALLY?

SURE! THEY JUST THINK YOU'RE A BIT TOO WORK-FOCUSED.

THAT'S BECAUSE I WORRY ABOUT KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE!

YOU, RODIMUS, DRIFT—WELL, NOT SO MUCH DRIFT.



BESIDES, I DO HAVE OTHER INTERESTS, YOU KNOW!

LIKE?

WHATEVER.

COME ON, MAGS, LIKE...?

LIKE MUSIC!

REALLY? WHAT KIND OF MUSIC?

EVERY KIND! MUSIC IS THE ONLY THING IN THE WORLD THAT MAKES ME—



STOP EVERYTHING. WHERE'S YOUR BADGE?

MY AUTOBOT BADGE?

NO, YOUR ASKING STUPID QUESTIONS BADGE.

I DON'T—HEH, BIT OF A DIG THERE—I DON'T HAVE A BADGE AT PRESENT.

IT GOT DAMAGED. I HAD A TEMPORARY ONE, BUT IT LOOKED STUPID.

I KEEP MEANING TO GET A REPLACEMENT BUT THE BAR'S BEEN REALLY BUSY, AND... YEAH.



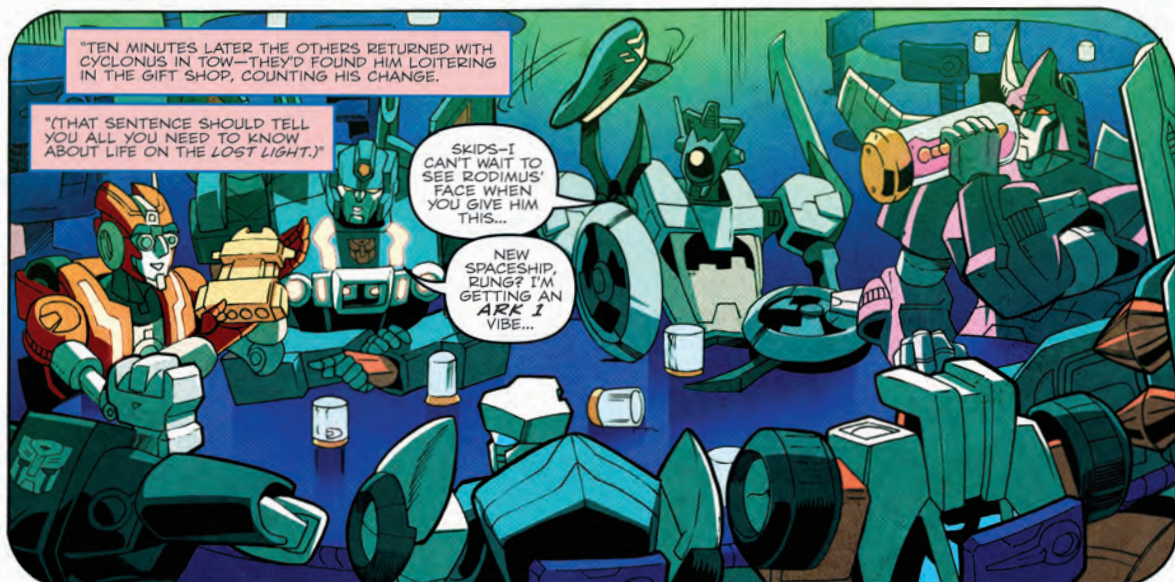
YOU KNOW YOUR PROBLEM?

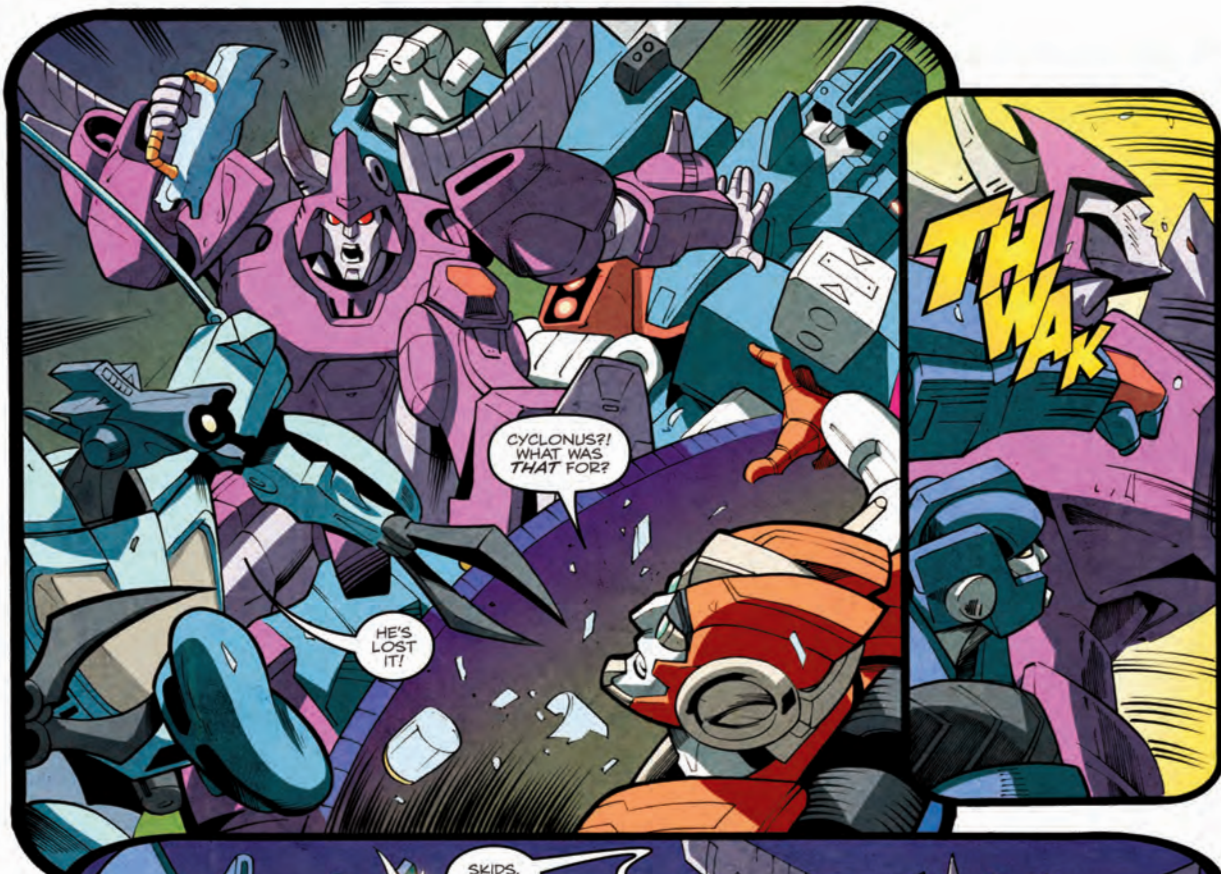
YOU'RE A SHIRKER. YOU SHIRK.

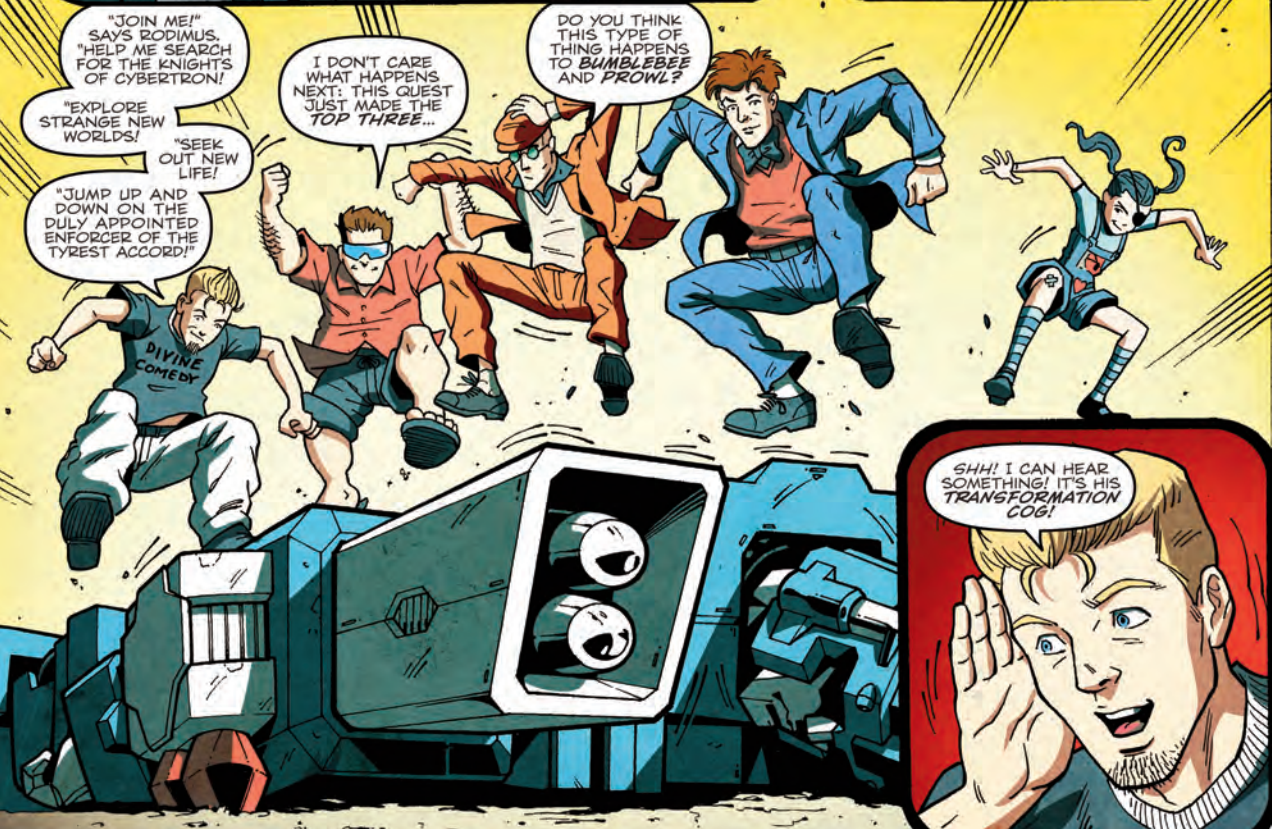
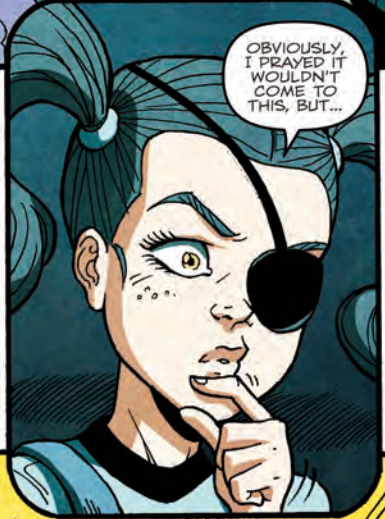
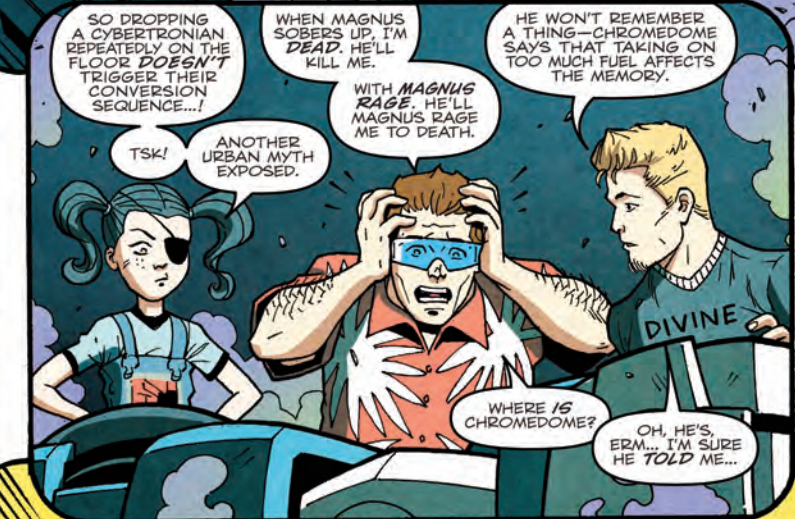
YOU'RE A METALLURGIST, BUT YOU PRETEND TO BE A BARTENDER.

BUT THAT'S THE PLAN!

ME AN' BLURR AN' A BAR! THAT'S BEEN THE PLAN FOREVER...!







TSCHE-
CHU-
CHU-
CHE-
TSCHE

OH, YOU
HAVE GOT
TO BE
**KIDDING
ME!**

"WE EVENTUALLY MANAGED
TO **FLIP HIM OVER**, AND BY
SHRINKING OUR AVATARS
WE WERE ABLE TO SQUEEZE
INTO HIS CAB."

"FINALLY, WE WERE
ON THE ROAD..."

I DON'T KNOW
ABOUT ANY OF
YOU, BUT I'VE HAD
A **GREAT TIME**
TONIGHT.

ME, TOO.

IT'S NOT BEEN
AS **FULL-ON** AS A
WRECKERS NIGHT
OUT—BUT...
YEAH, IT'S BEEN
MEMORABLE.

SAVOR
THIS FEELING,
EVERYONE...

...YOU NEVER
KNOW WHAT'S
AROUND THE
CORNER.

"OKAY, SWERVE, YOU'VE
HAD **NINE HOURS**.
TIME TO WRAP IT UP."

YEAH,
YEAH, TWO
SECONDS.

I'VE LOST
MY THREAD
NOW...

OH,
YEAH—

AND **THAT'S**
HOW WE GOT
MAGNUS
BACK TO THE
SHUTTLE.

MAGNUS
WASN'T THE
LAST, THOUGH:
CYCLONUS AND
TAILGATE ARRIVED
MOMENTS
BEFORE TAKE-
OFF.

"WHICH REMINDS ME: I MUST ASK
TAILGATE HOW HE MANAGED
TO CALM CYCLONUS DOWN..."

SIT DOWN.
YOU'RE
FREAKING
ME OUT.

SIT
DOWN.

ONE MINUTE
YOU'RE SMASHING
THIS PLACE UP,
THE NEXT YOU'RE
PAYING FOR THE
DAMAGE.

WHAT'S THIS
ABOUT?

YOU.
THE REAL
YOU.

CYCLONUS—

I WAS A
SENIOR OFFICER
ABOARD
THE ARK.

I KNEW
WHO WAS
SUPPOSED
TO BE ON
BOARD.

THERE WAS
A TAILPIPE, BUT
NO TAILGATE.

WHAT
ARE YOU
SAYING?

I'M
SAYING
YOU'RE A
LIAR.

OKAY.

OKAY.
YOU
GOT
ME.

I ASKED
DOC RATCHET
TO WRITE THIS AFTER
HE FIXED ME.

BUT IT'S ONLY
HALF TRUE:
IT SHOULD
SAY WASTE
DISPOSAL.

I'M A SANITATION
BOT, CYCLONUS.
A SLUICER.

FOURTH
CLASS.

I WAS GIVEN
THE JOB OF
RINSING OUT THE
ARK'S COOLANT
CHUTES BEFORE
IT TOOK OFF.

IT WOULD
HAVE BEEN THE
HIGHLIGHT OF MY
CAREER; NORMALLY
I JUST SHOVED
SCRAP.

AND THE PRIMAL
VANGUARD?

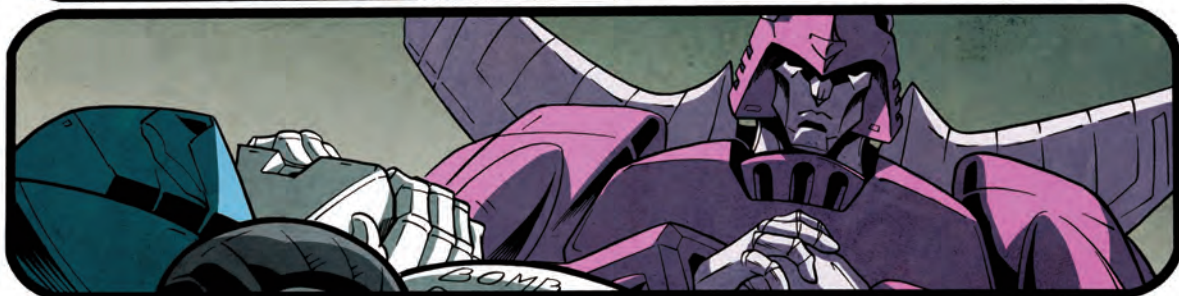
NOPE.
I MADE THAT
UP, TOO. S'ALL
MADE UP.

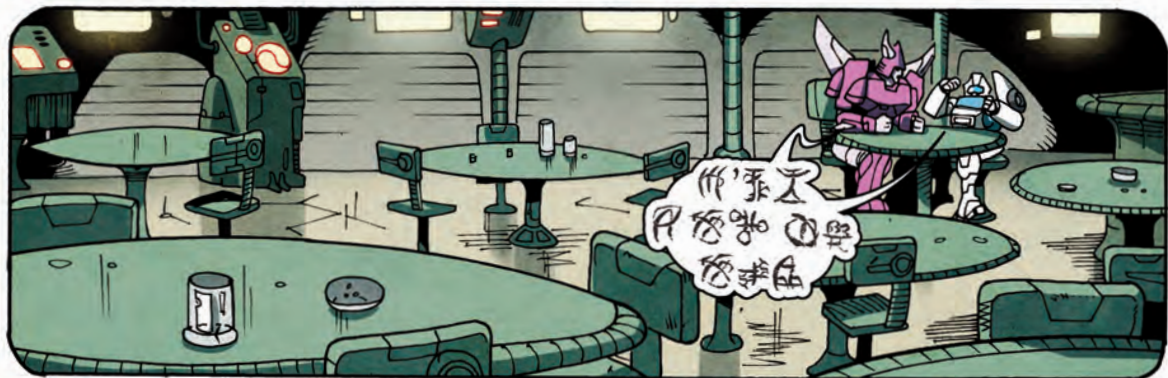
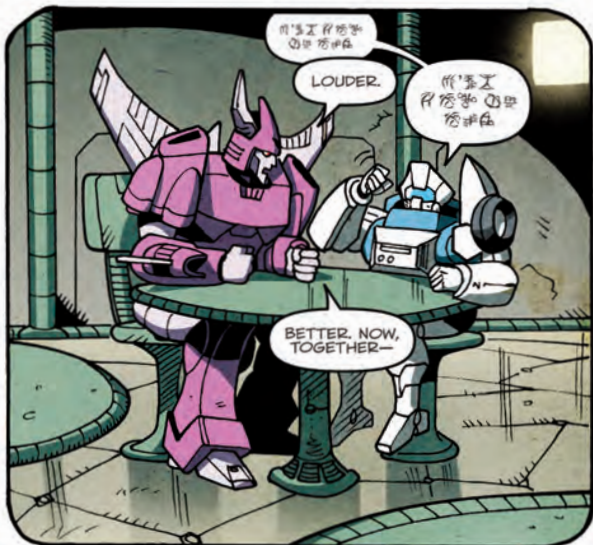
I'D NEVER
EVEN SEEN A
BOMB UNTIL
TEMPTORIA...

BUT YOU
DRAINED IT—
YOU REDUCED
THE BLAST
RADIUS...

I TOOK MY
CUES FROM
REWIND.

TAKE IT FROM
ME: IT'S AMAZING
HOW EASY IT IS
TO FAKE YOUR WAY
THROUGH LIFE.





FOUR MILLION YEARS AGO.

YEAH, IF YOU COULD MAKE IT OUT TO SWERVE, THAT'D BE...

I THINK YOU'RE GREAT, BY THE WAY. REALLY BIG FAN.

AND WHAT DO YOU DO, SWERVE?

ME? I'M TECHNICALLY A METALLURGIST, BUT I'M HOPING THE FUNCTIONISTS WILL LET ME RUN MY OWN BAR.

YOU EVER BEEN TO THE CIRCLE DOWNTOWN?

THE MUSIC'S AWFUL, BUT OTHERWISE IT'S PRETTY COOL.

I THINK I MIGHT BUY IT WHEN I RETIRE.

HEY, WE COULD OPEN A BAR TOGETHER!

GIVE ME YOUR PERSONAL HAILING FREQUENCY AND I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I'VE GOT MY OWN PLACE!

I PROMISE!

LOOK, BUDDY, I DON'T REALLY—

PLEEEASE?

ARE YOU SURE THAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

DOESN'T SEEM LONG ENOUGH.

NO, THAT'S, UM... THAT'S DEFINITELY IT.

THAT'S DEFINITELY IT.





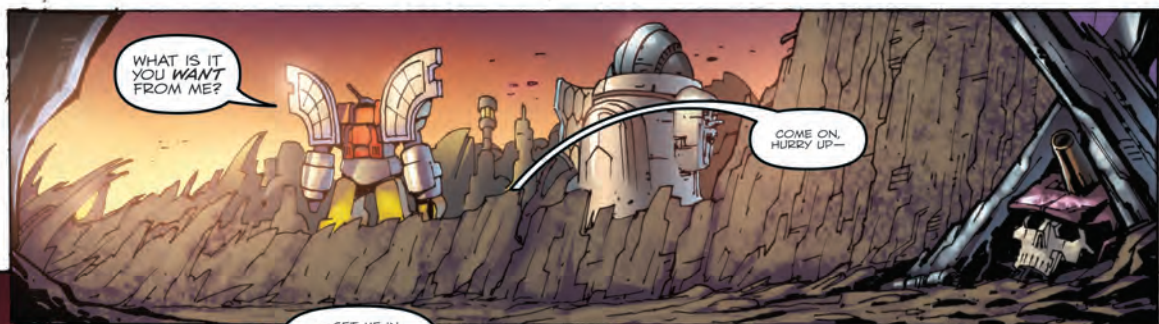
MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE #13 COVER B

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **JOSH BURCHAM**



ROBOTS IN DISGUISE #11 COVER A

by **ANDREW GRIFFITH** Colors by **JOSH PEREZ**



WHAT IS IT YOU WANT FROM ME?

COME ON, HURRY UP—

—GET ME IN THE FRAME AND GET US BROADCASTING.

I KNOW MY JOB.

WHY, GREAT **OMEGA SUPREME**—I WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR LONG SERVICE TO THE **CYBERTRONIAN CAUSE!**

THOUGH WE FOUND OURSELVES ON **OPPOSITE SIDES OF OUR LONG CONFLICT**, IT WAS ALWAYS WITH THE **UTMOST OF RESPECT** THAT—

I ASKED WHAT YOU WANT, **STARScream**.

AH, SO YOU DO REMEMBER ME, AS YOU KNOW, I MET A UH, **COLLEAGUE** OF YOURS—THE **METROTITAN**, WHO SUGGESTED THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHING **SPECIAL** ABOUT ME.

I WAS **CURIOUS**—THE **PUBLIC** WAS **CURIOUS**—IF YOU HAD ANYTHING YOU WANTED TO **ADD** TO HIS... **ENDORSEMENT?**

THERE IS NOTHING TO ADD, NOW LEAVE ME. I HAVE MATTERS TO **PONDER**.



THIS IS **CIRCUIT**, COMING TO YOU LIVE AND DIRECT ON THE **IACON COMMUNICATION SERVICE!**

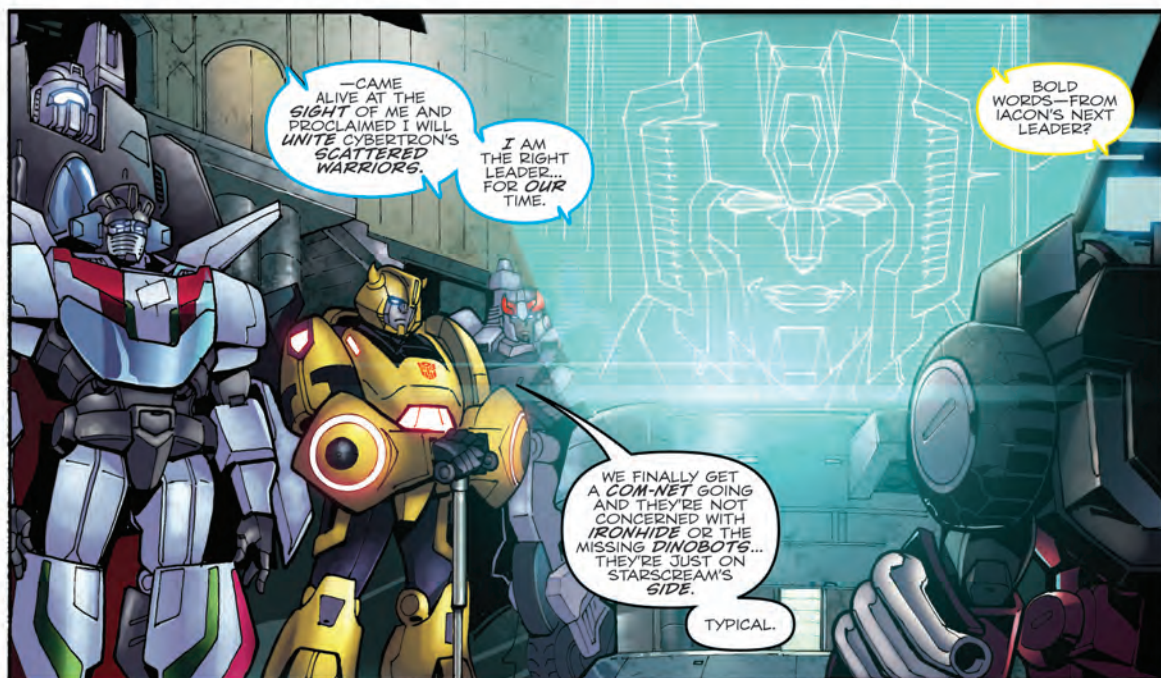
EVEN THE GREAT **OMEGA SUPREME** IS STUNNED BY THE REALITY OF A **TITAN** COMING AWAKE IN YOUR **PRESENCE**—SOMETHING WHICH HAS HAPPENED ONLY **ONCE BEFORE** IN RECORDED HISTORY, TO THE FORMER AUTOBOT LEADER, **OPTIMUS PRIME!**

CYBERTRONIANS EVERYWHERE WANT TO KNOW—HOW DOES IT **FEEL** TO BE HANDED THAT **HONOR?**

WELL, **OPTIMUS** AND I HAD OUR **DIFFERENCES**, BUT CLEARLY HE WAS THE **RIGHT LEADER** FOR HIS TIME—A TIME OF **WAR**.

NOW IS A TIME OF **PEACE**, AND THE **FACTS** ARE **CLEAR**. **POOR, FALLEN METROTITAN**, WHOSE LIFE MY **OPONENTS** FAILED TO **SAVE**—





—CAME
ALIVE AT THE
SIGHT OF ME AND
PROCLAIMED I WILL
UNITE CYBERTRON'S
SCATTERED
WARRIORS.

I AM
THE RIGHT
LEADER...
FOR OUR
TIME.

BOLD
WORDS—FROM
IACON'S NEXT
LEADER?

WE FINALLY GET
A COM-NET GOING
AND THEY'RE NOT
CONCERNED WITH
IRONHIDE OR THE
MISSING DINOBOTS...
THEY'RE JUST ON
STARSCREAM'S
SIDE.

TYPICAL.



HE'S GOING TO
DESTROY
EVERYTHING WE'VE
WORKED FOR.
PROW... IF I DON'T
CALL ELECTIONS, I'M
JUST ANOTHER
DICTATOR!

WE DIDN'T
SACRIFICE SO
MUCH TO INSTALL
ME AS THE NEW
ZETA PRIME...
OR THE NEW
MEGATRON.

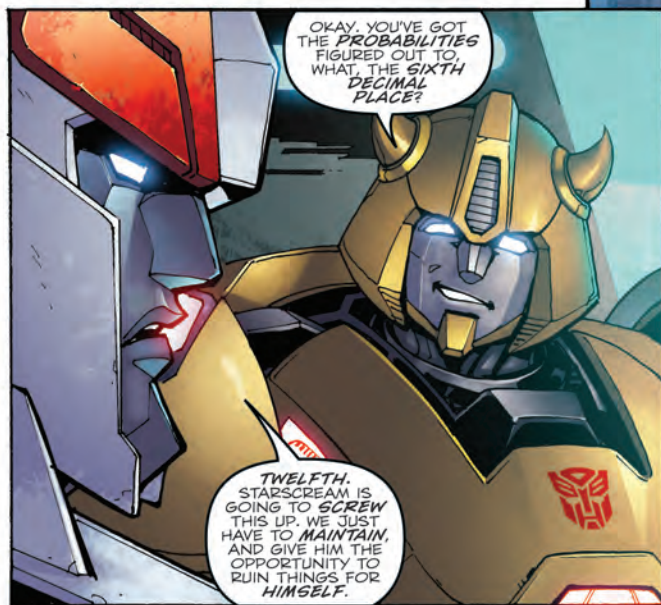


YOU'RE NOT
MEGATRON.
BELIEVE ME.

AND THE
ELECTIONS
ARE STILL
WINNABLE.

RIGHT.

BEE.
WHO DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE
TALKING TO?



OKAY. YOU'VE GOT
THE PROBABILITIES
FIGURED OUT TO
WHAT THE SIXTH
DECIMAL
PLACE?

TWELFTH.
STARSCREAM IS
GOING TO SCREW
THIS UP. WE JUST
HAVE TO MAINTAIN
AND GIVE HIM THE
OPPORTUNITY TO
RUIN THINGS FOR
HIMSELF.



WE WILL
WIN, BEE.




I AM
TOTALLY
GOING TO
WIN.



STARSCREAM,
THE IMPLICATIONS
OF METROTITAN'S
WORDS GO FAR
BEYOND YOUR OWN
AMBITIONS.

PLEASE, HE'S
JUST A BIG 'BOT WHO
WOKE UP AND SPOUTED
SOME NONSENSE. YOU
CAN'T POSSIBLY BELIEVE
IN THAT ANY MORE THAN
YOU DO IRONHIDE'S
VISION!



WHAT MATTERS IS
WHAT THE YOKELS
MAKE OF THE
NONSENSE.

YOU'RE
BELIEVING
THE HYPE.

BUT—
BUT WHAT
IF THIS IS
SOMETHING...
GREATER
THAN US?



OMEGA SUPREME
AND I TALKED OF THE
FORCES THAT BROUGHT
THE TITAN TO US. THE
PLANET NEEDS—

METALHAWK—
LISTEN TO
YOURSELF. THE
ONLY FORCE THAT
CONTROLS THE
UNIVERSE...



...IS
ENTROPY.

THWOCK



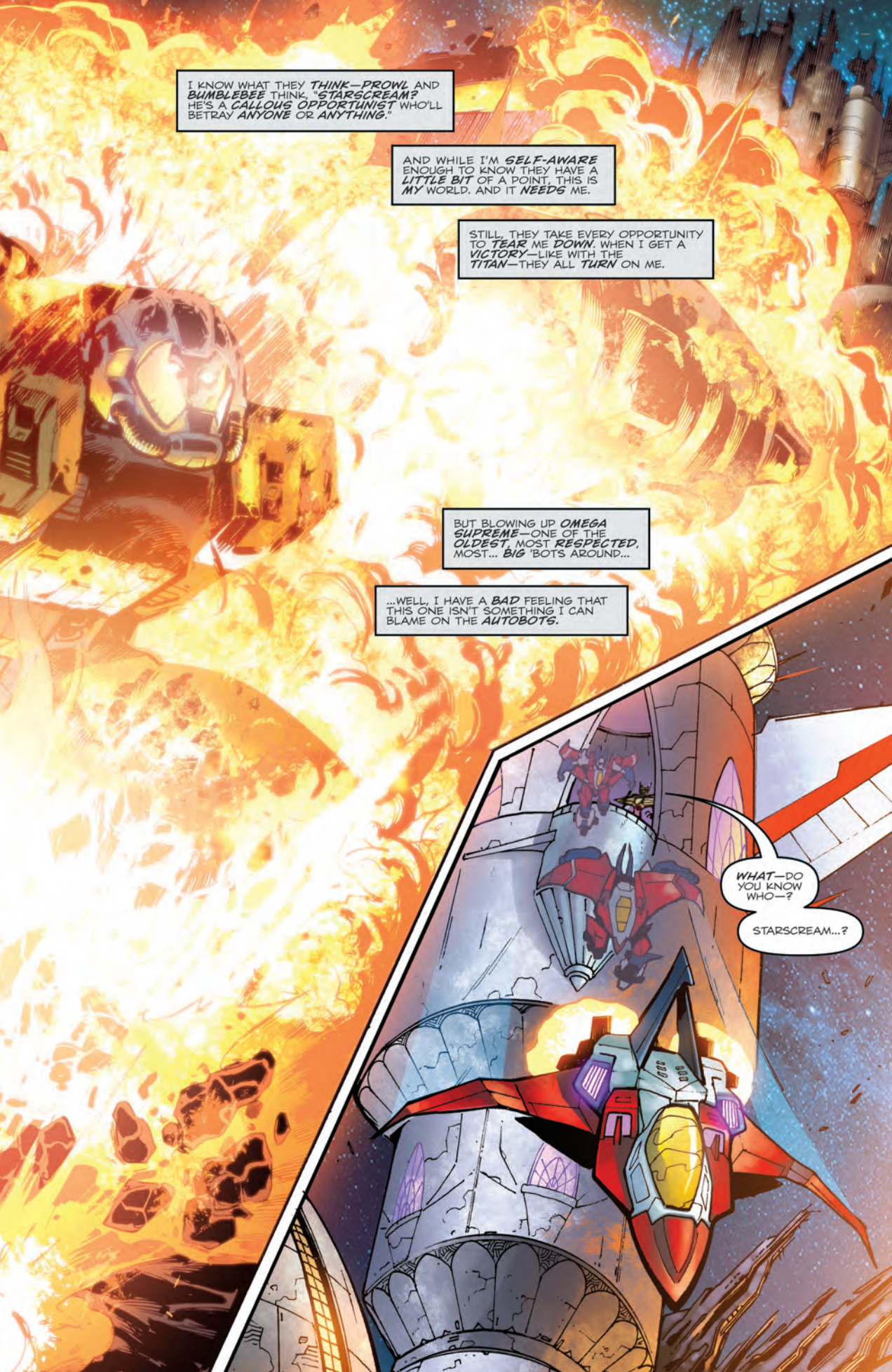
OH, NO...
NO...

THEY'RE
GOING TO RUIN
EVERYTHING.

MILLIONS OF YEARS OF WAR,
OUR PLANET **WRECKED**, AND
FINALLY—**FINALLY**—WE HAVE THE
BEGINNING OF A **STABLE FUTURE**.

WITH **ME** IN THE
MIDDLE OF IT.

**THE END OF
THE BEGINNING
OF THE WORLD**



I KNOW WHAT THEY *THINK*—*PROWL* AND *BUMBLEBEE* THINK, "*STARSCREAM?*" HE'S A *CALLOUS OPPORTUNIST* WHO'LL BETRAY *ANYONE* OR *ANYTHING*."

AND WHILE I'M *SELF-AWARE* ENOUGH TO KNOW THEY HAVE A *LITTLE BIT* OF A POINT, THIS IS *MY WORLD*. AND IT *NEEDS* ME.

STILL, THEY TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO *TEAR ME DOWN*. WHEN I GET A *VICTORY*—LIKE WITH THE *TITAN*—THEY ALL *TURN* ON ME.

BUT BLOWING UP *OMEGA SUPREME*—ONE OF THE *OLDEST*, MOST *RESPECTED*, MOST... *BIG 'BOTS* AROUND...

...WELL, I HAVE A *BAD* FEELING THAT THIS ONE ISN'T SOMETHING I CAN BLAME ON THE *AUTOBOTS*.

WHAT—DO YOU KNOW WHO—?

STARSCREAM...?



HOT SPOT—GET THE FIRE OUT, NOW! GROOVE, STREETWISE, MOVE EVERYBODY OFF THE STREET.

FIXIT, YOU KEEP OMEGA ALIVE—BY WHATEVER MEANS ARE NECESSARY.



STARScream—LEAVE. YOUR KIND IS BEHIND THIS.

PROWL... IT, UM, COULD BE THE NAILS.

OR WHATEVER WE'RE SUPPOSED TO CALL THEM.

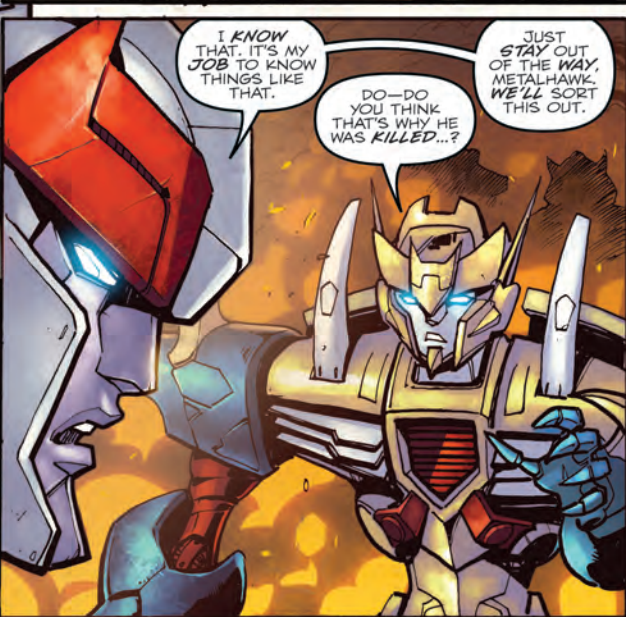
WHEELJACK, I NEED YOU DOWN HERE!



I'M HERE. I'M HERE.

THIS IS TOO CLOSE TO THE TITAN'S DEATH TO BE COINCIDENTAL.

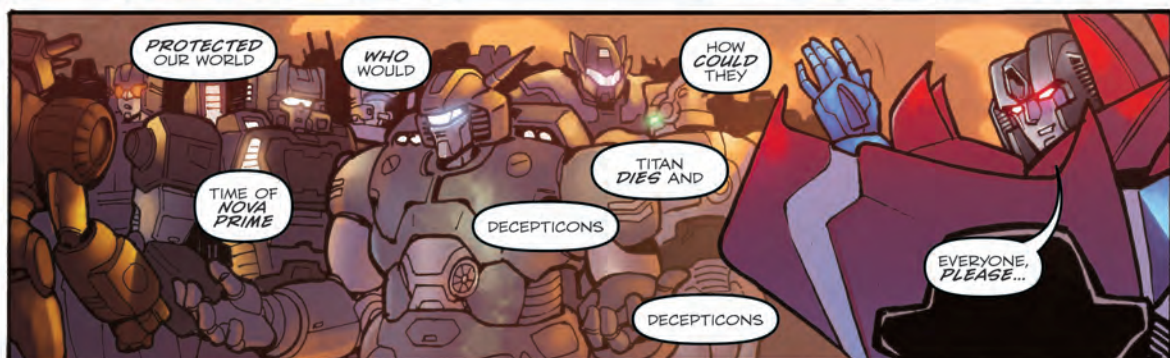
HE—OMEGA KNEW THE TITAN.



I KNOW THAT. IT'S MY JOB TO KNOW THINGS LIKE THAT.

DO—DO YOU THINK THAT'S WHY HE WAS KILLED...?

JUST STAY OUT OF THE WAY, METALHAWK. WE'LL SORT THIS OUT.







—AND IF THIS CITY *NEEDS* ME TO SERVE IT, SERVE IT I *SHALL*.

WHAT A *SOUNDBITE!* NOW HIS OWN *FRIEND* GETS AN *ADVANTAGE* OVER THE *SCREAMER*—



SWINDLE...
WHAT
HAPPENS
NOW?

WELL,
THAT'S UP TO
SHOCKWAVE.
HE'S CALLING
THE *SHOTS*.



BUT... HE STOLE A
SPACESHIP FROM
THE *AUTOBOTS*. HE'S...
DID HE *BLOW UP* *OMEGA*
SUPREME BECAUSE OF
WHAT I TOLD HIM?

DID HE JUST
TAKE OUT THE
STRONGEST
AUTOBOT SO
HE COULD... SO
HE *CAN*...?



LOOK, I *HAD*
MY TIME ON *TOP*,
BACK ON EARTH,
AND I *KNOW* MY
BEST DAYS ARE
BEHIND ME.

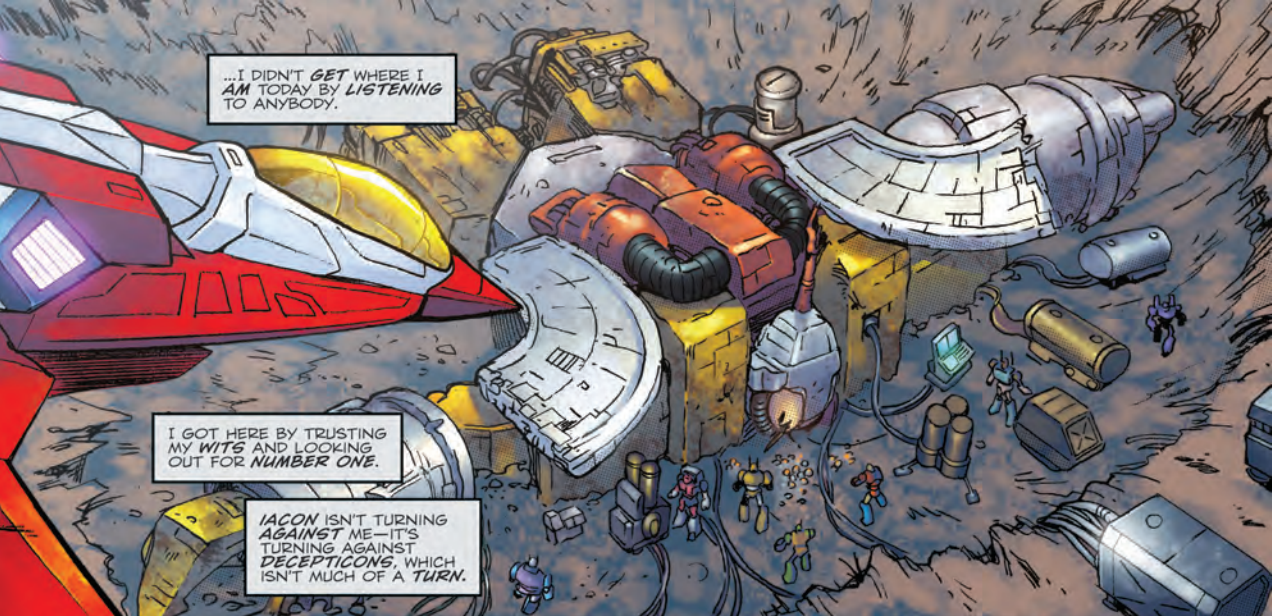
I'M *OKAY*
WITH THAT.

YOU SHOULD
BE, TOO. *LET*
THINGS HAPPEN. WE
DON'T HAVE TO BE
AT THE *CENTER*
ANYMORE, *DIRGE*.



I NEVER
WANTED
TO BE. NOT
EVER.


THEY SAY NOBODY EVER
GETS WHAT THEY *WANT*.
BUT *HERE'S* SOMETHING
ABOUT *ME*...



...I DIDN'T GET WHERE I AM TODAY BY LISTENING TO ANYBODY.


I GOT HERE BY TRUSTING MY WITS AND LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE.

IACON ISN'T TURNING AGAINST ME—IT'S TURNING AGAINST DECEPTICONS, WHICH ISN'T MUCH OF A TURN.

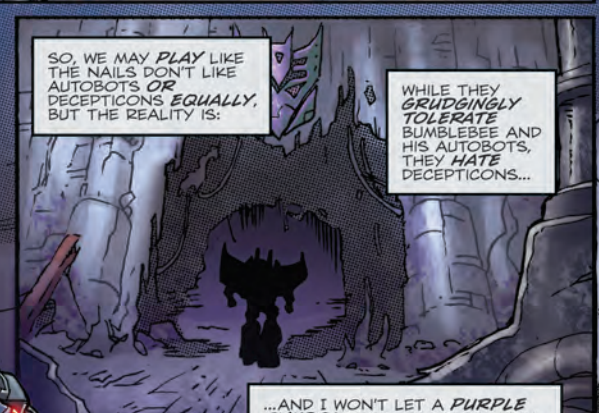


THE UNAFFILIATED 'BOTS OUT THERE, PROWL'S NON-ALIGNED INDIGENOUS LIFEFORMS... IF THEY EVER TOOK A SIDE, THEY WERE AUTOBOTS WHO GAVE UP ON THE WAR.

EX-DECEPTICONS USUALLY WIND UP AS A LITTLE SCORCH MARK ON THE GROUND, ONCE THE DECEPTICON JUSTICE DIVISION GETS DONE WITH THEM.




AND THE ONES THAT DO GET AWAY, LIKE SKY-BYTE, THEY USUALLY DON'T HAVE MUCH AFFECTION FOR THE DECEPTICON CAUSE.



SO, WE MAY PLAY LIKE THE NAILS DON'T LIKE AUTOBOTS OR DECEPTICONS EQUALLY, BUT THE REALITY IS:

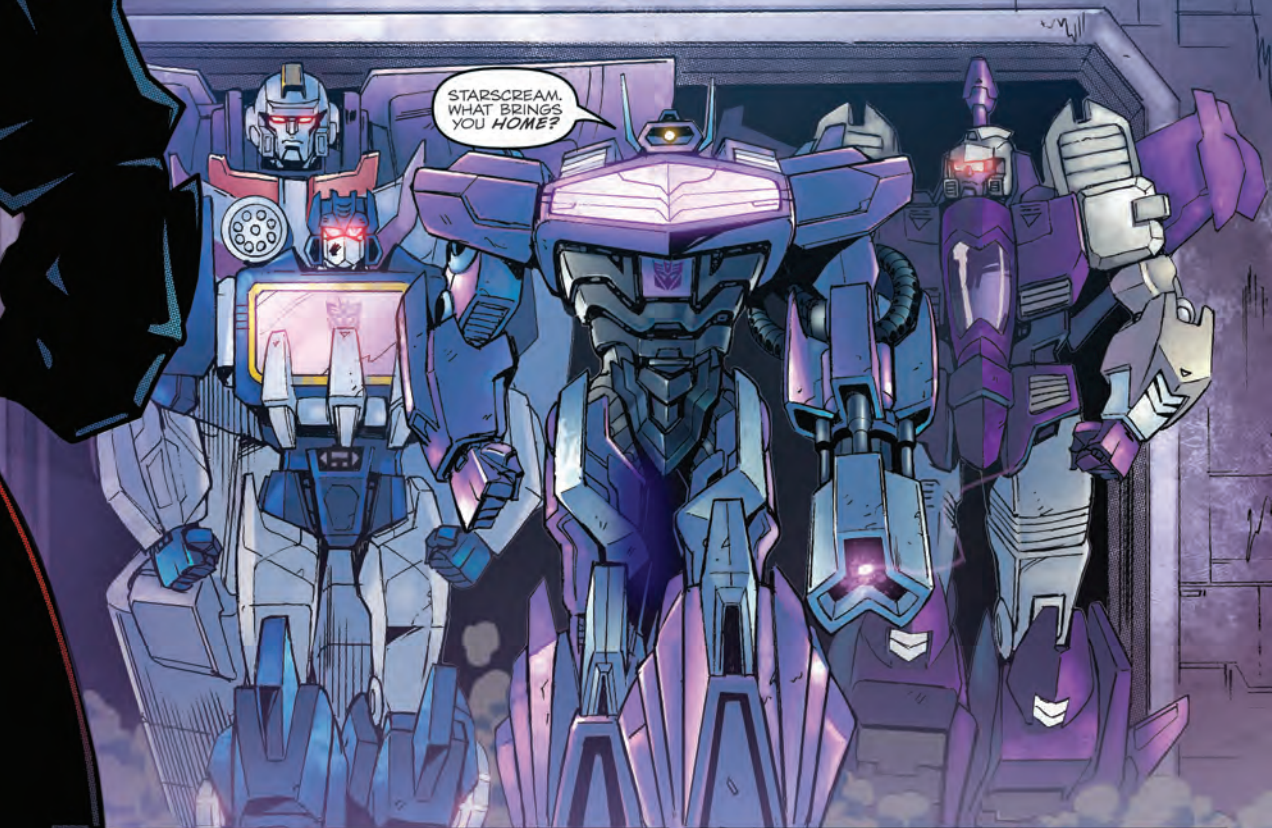
WHILE THEY GRUDGINGLY TOLERATE BUMBLEBEE AND HIS AUTOBOTS, THEY HATE DECEPTICONS...



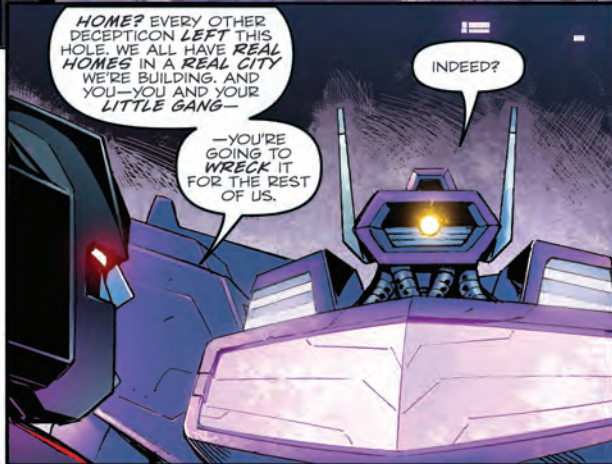
...AND I WON'T LET A PURPLE SYMBOL DRAG ME DOWN WHEN I'M ABOUT TO GET EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED.

SHOCKWAVE!

GET OUT HERE!



STARScream.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HOME?



HOME? EVERY OTHER DECEPTICON LEFT THIS HOLE. WE ALL HAVE REAL HOMES IN A REAL CITY WE'RE BUILDING. AND YOU—YOU AND YOUR LITTLE GANG—

—YOU'RE GOING TO WRECK IT FOR THE REST OF US.

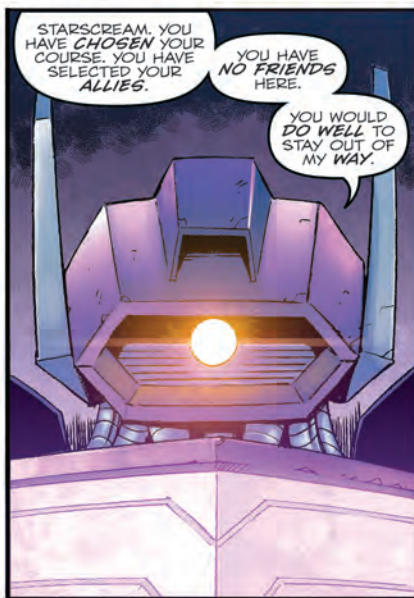
INDEED?



I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE PLANNED, BUT I'M SURE YOU STOLE TURMOIL'S SHIP, WITH THE TIME DRIVE.

YEAH—I KNOW ABOUT THE TIME DRIVE.

I KNOW THERE'S SOME TOP-FLIGHT SCHEMING GOING ON BEHIND THAT EYE OF YOURS, BUT ALL YOU'RE GOING TO DO IS TEAR DOWN EVERYTHING I'VE BUILT.



STARScream. YOU HAVE CHOSEN YOUR COURSE. YOU HAVE SELECTED YOUR ALLIES.

YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS HERE.

YOU WOULD DO WELL TO STAY OUT OF MY WAY.



THAT IS ALL. RETURN TO YOUR... GOVERNMENT.



IF THAT'S HOW OL' ONE-EYE WANTS TO PLAY THINGS, AFTER ALL THE TIME HE'S KNOWN ME...

STARScream.





I TOLD YOU HE'D SCREW UP.

I DON'T THINK IT WAS STARScream THAT DID THIS.

IT DOESN'T MATTER. HE'S GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION. AT LEAST IN PEOPLE'S MINDS.



AND YOW?

TELL ME YOU'RE NOT LISTENING TO METALHAWK'S NONSENSE.

AM I WEARING BLINDERS BECAUSE YOU'RE MY FRIEND?

ARE YOU EVEN MY FRIEND?



HOW—HOW CAN YOU ASK THAT?

BEE... I KNOW I'M NOT THE EASIEST AUTOBOT TO GET ALONG WITH, BUT YOU KNOW I BELIEVE IN YOU. IN WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE.



SIGH. YEAH, SURE. IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY, PROWL.

OMEGA'S HANGING ON TO LIFE BY A THREAD. AND YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I TALKED TO HIM SINCE HE CAME BACK TO CYBERTRON WITH US?

ZERO. I TALKED TO HIM ZERO.



I WANT TO KNOW WHO DID IT. IF IT WAS DECEPTICONS, FINE. NAILS? WHATEVER.

I WANT THE TRUTH. NOT A RAMPAGE.

THEN I WANT TO GET BACK TO FINDING IRONHIDE AND THE OTHERS, BECAUSE HE'S MY FRIEND AND FRIENDS LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER.



I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE THIS A POLITICAL THING.



I'M WILLING TO MAKE THIS POLITICAL.
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.

STARSCREAM—
YOU'RE CONTAMINATING
THIS BALCONY
EVERY SECOND
YOU'RE HERE.

A SAD
LITTLE BIRDY
TOLD ME
SOMETHING.



HE CONFIRMED
WHAT METALHAWK
SAID. I MEAN,
WHAT EVERYBODY
SAYS.

HE SAW YOU
KILL BOMBHELL.
HE KNOWS YOU
KILLED THE
CONSTRUCTICONS
IN COLD BLOOD.



COLD BLOOD? THEY
HAD ME SURROUNDED.
THERE WERE FIVE OF
THEM AND I DID WHAT
I HAD TO, TO
SURVIVE.

HE KNOWS
ABOUT ARCEE.



YOU'RE
NOT PLAYING
ME INTO
ELIMINATING
YOUR RIVALS
AGAIN.

OH, YOU
FIGURED
THAT OUT, HUH?
WELL, FIGURE
THIS OUT: I
DON'T HAVE
RIVALS.

WE HAVE
RIVALS.



YOU AND I WANT
CYBERTRON TO GROW
AND PROSPER. WE
INSTIGATE OUR LITTLE
MACHINATIONS—

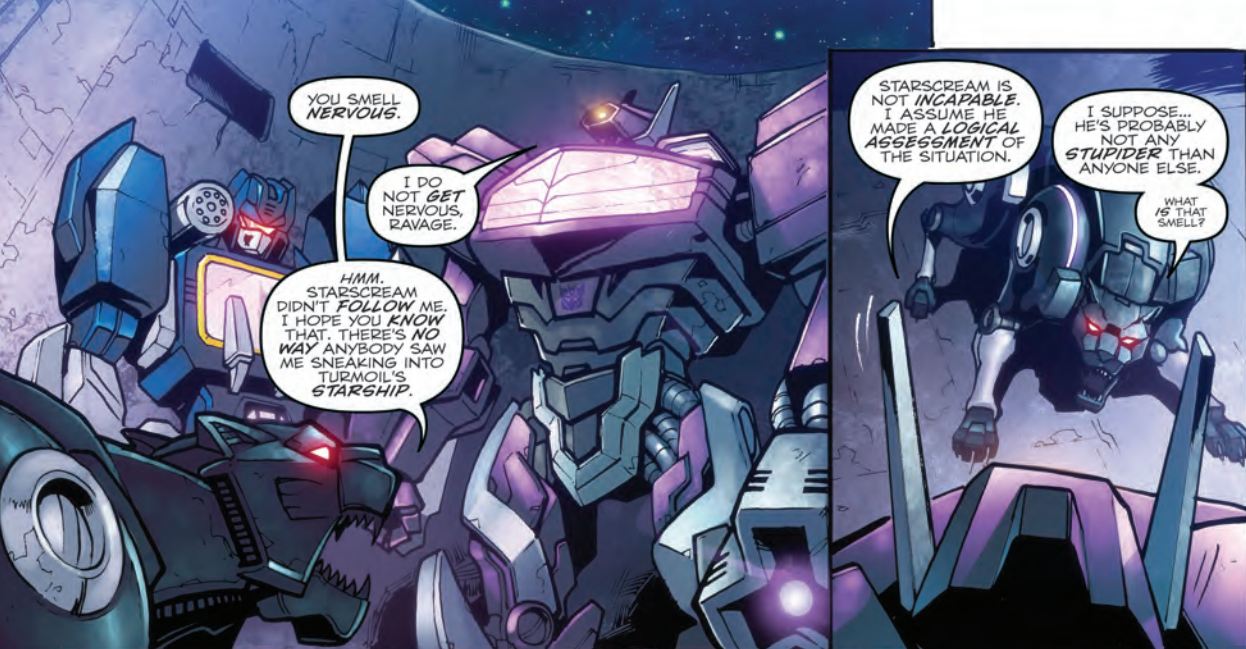
—NO PUN
INTENDED—

—BUT WE WANT A
FUTURE. WE BOTH
THINK IRONHIDE'S GONE
BINARY, BUT WE BOTH WANT
HIM BACK BECAUSE DEEP DOWN
WE WANT HIS STUPID VISION
TO COME TRUE, WHETHER
HE IMAGINED IT OR NOT.



SHOCKWAVE
AND SOUNDWAVE?
THEY WANT THE WAR
TO START AGAIN.

AND
DIRGE TOLD
THEM WHAT
YOU DID.



YOU SMELL NERVOUS.

I DO NOT GET NERVOUS, RAVAGE.

HMM. STARSCREAM DIDN'T FOLLOW ME. I HOPE YOU KNOW THAT. THERE'S NO WAY ANYBODY SAW ME SNEAKING INTO TURMOIL'S STARSHIP.

STARSCREAM IS NOT INCAPABLE. I ASSUME HE MADE A LOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION.

I SUPPOSE... HE'S PROBABLY NOT ANY STUPIDER THAN ANYONE ELSE.

WHAT IS THAT SMELL?



ANYWAY— DO YOU WANT ME TO TAKE CARE OF DIRGE AND THE OTHER ONE?

DO AS YOU WILL, RAVAGE.

YEAH, I LIKE IT WHEN THE BOSS SAYS STUFF LIKE THAT.

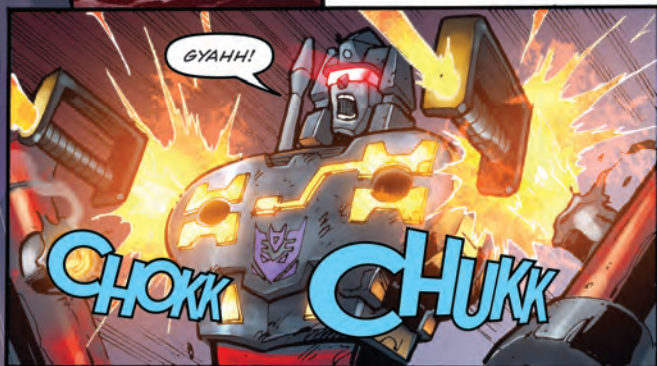
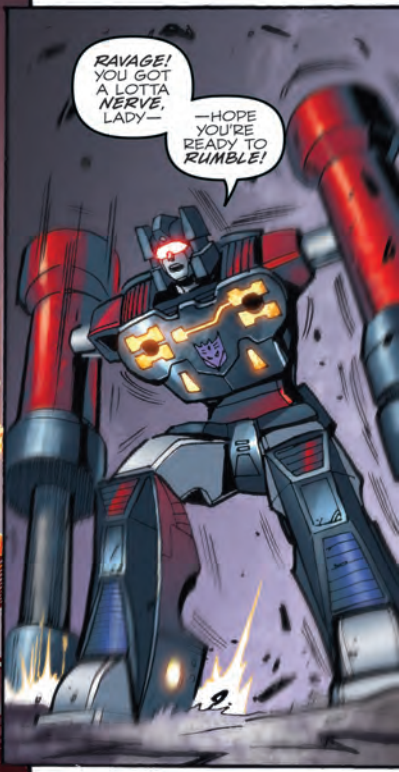
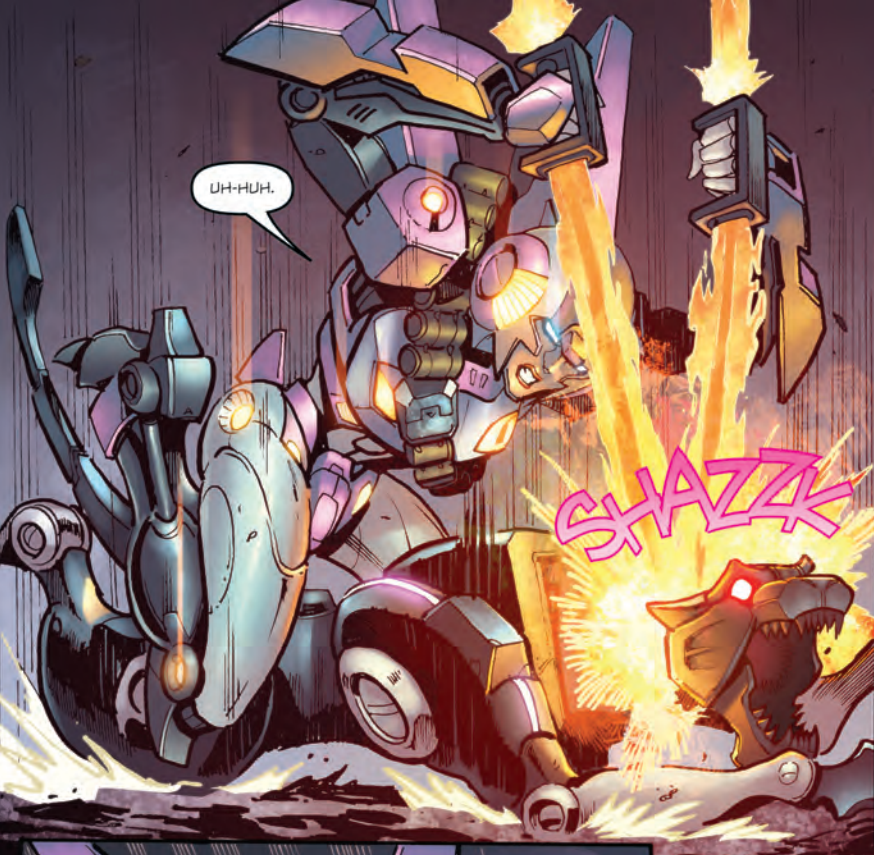


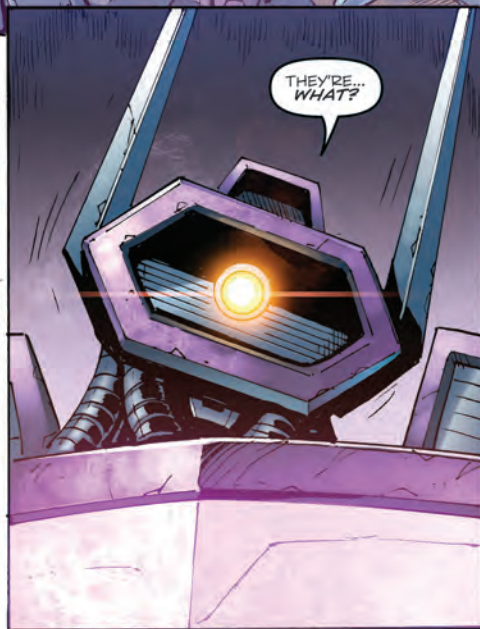
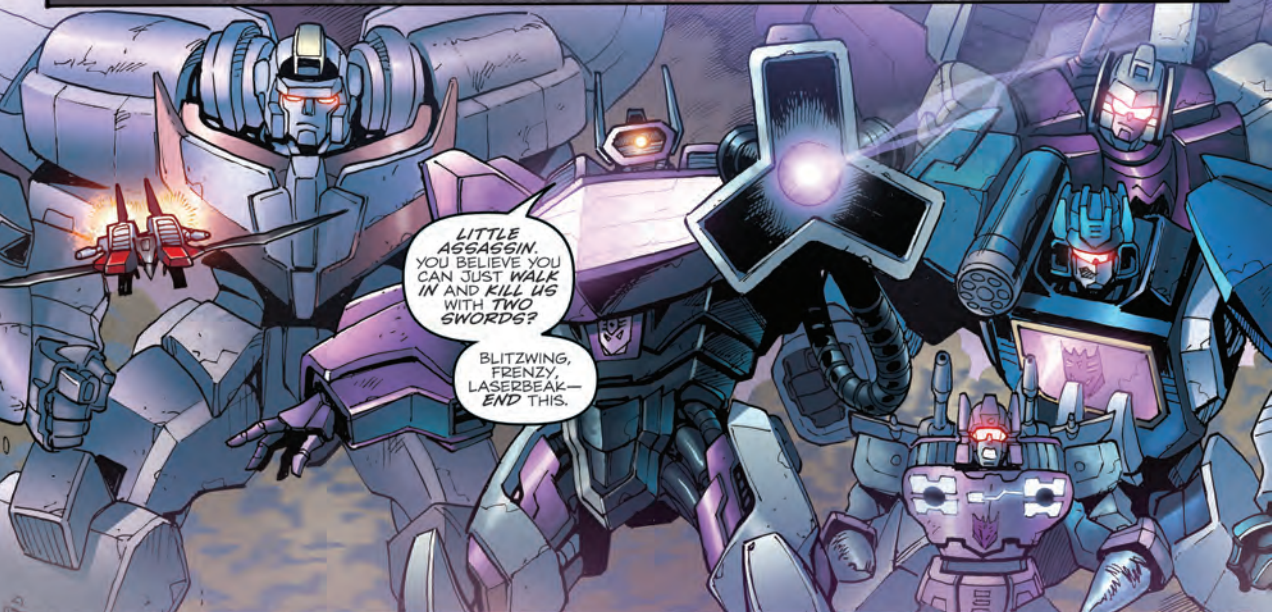
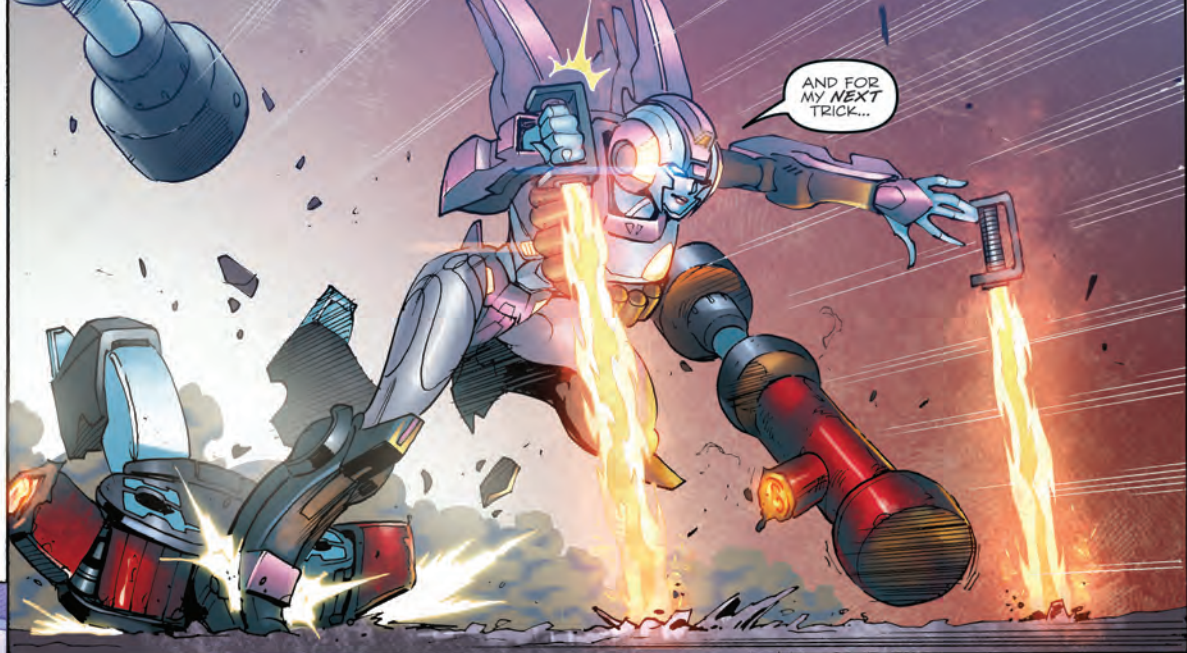
WHA—?

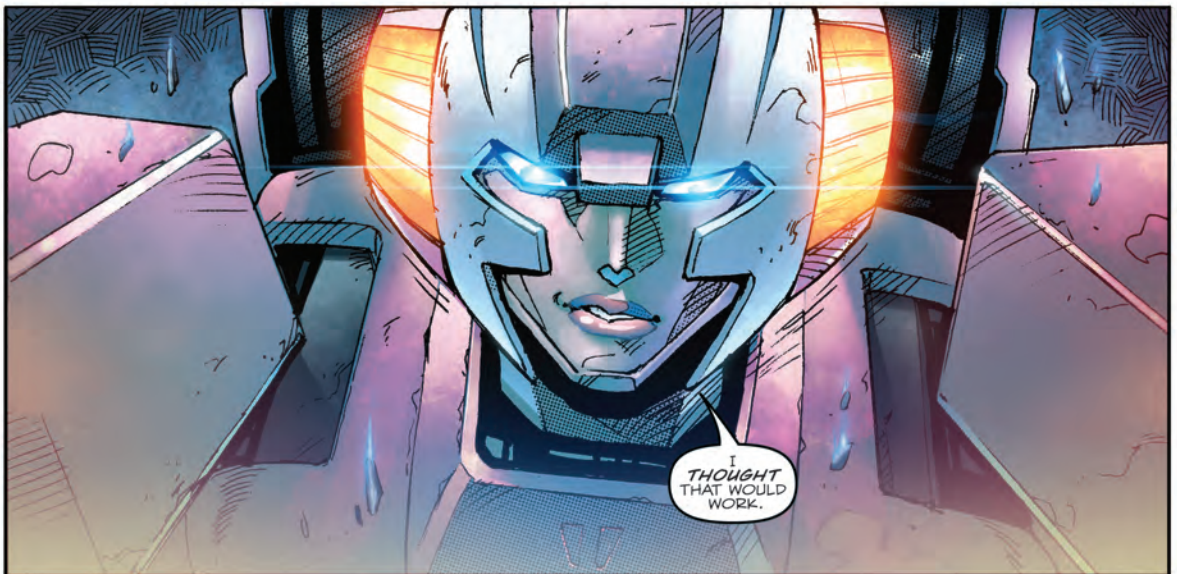
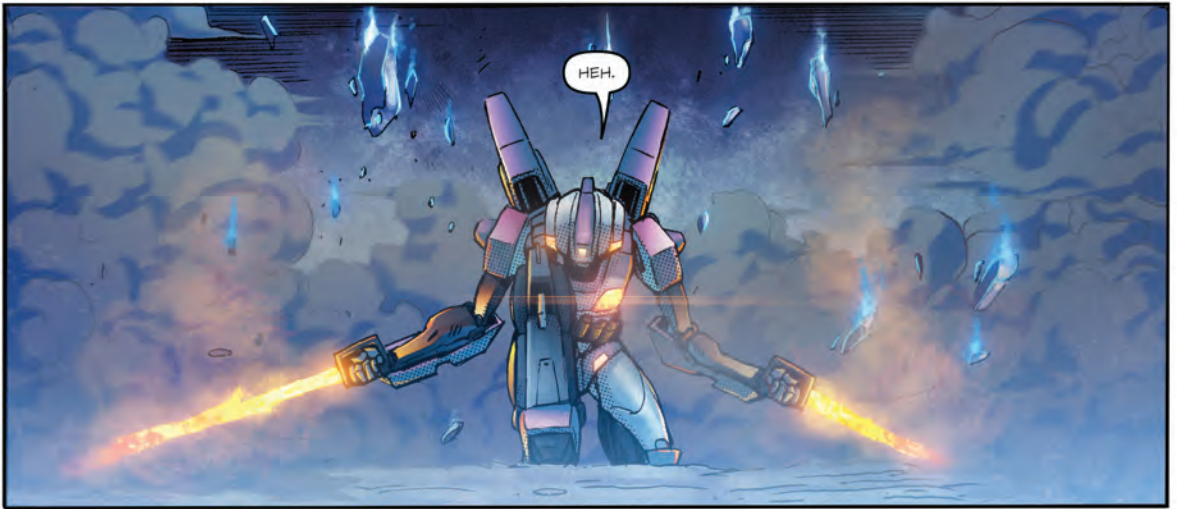
THE LOOKOUTS—!



I KNOW THAT SMELL!



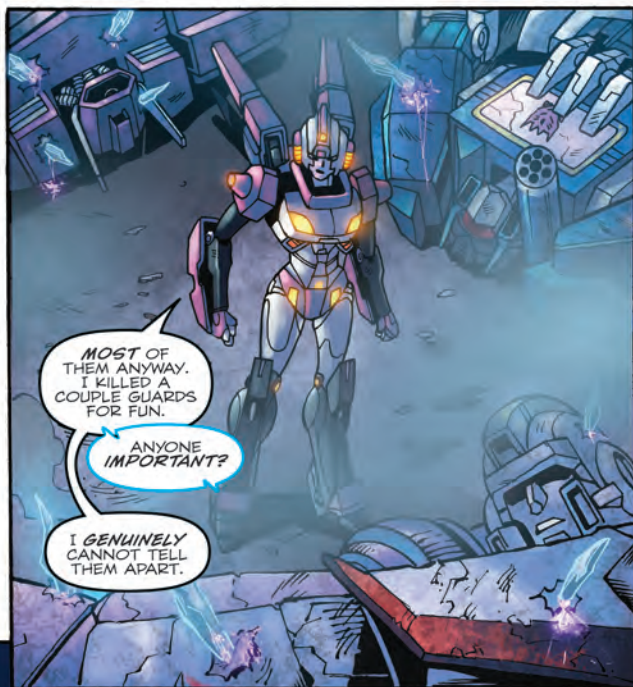






YOUR LITTLE GIZMO WORKED, TOO.

LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE ALIVE.



MOST OF THEM ANYWAY. I KILLED A COUPLE GUARDS FOR FUN.

ANYONE IMPORTANT?

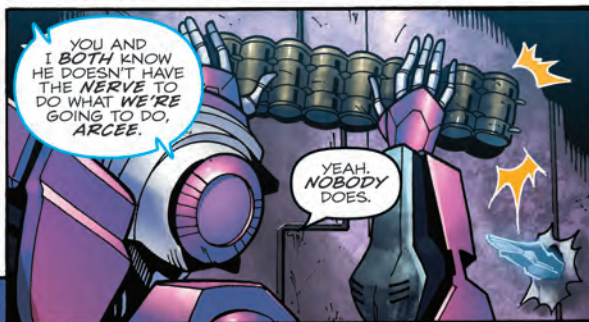
I GENUINELY CANNOT TELL THEM APART.



AS LONG AS WE HAVE SHOCKWAVE AND SOUNDWAVE, THEY'RE THE MASTERMINDS.

TAKE THEM TO THE BLACK ROOM, WITH THE OTHERS.

AND PLANT THE EXPLOSIVES. BUMBLEBEE CAN'T KNOW I HAVE ANY PRISONERS.



YOU AND I BOTH KNOW HE DOESN'T HAVE THE NERVE TO DO WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO, ARCEE.

YEAH. NOBODY DOES.



YOU'VE GOT FIFTEEN SECONDS.

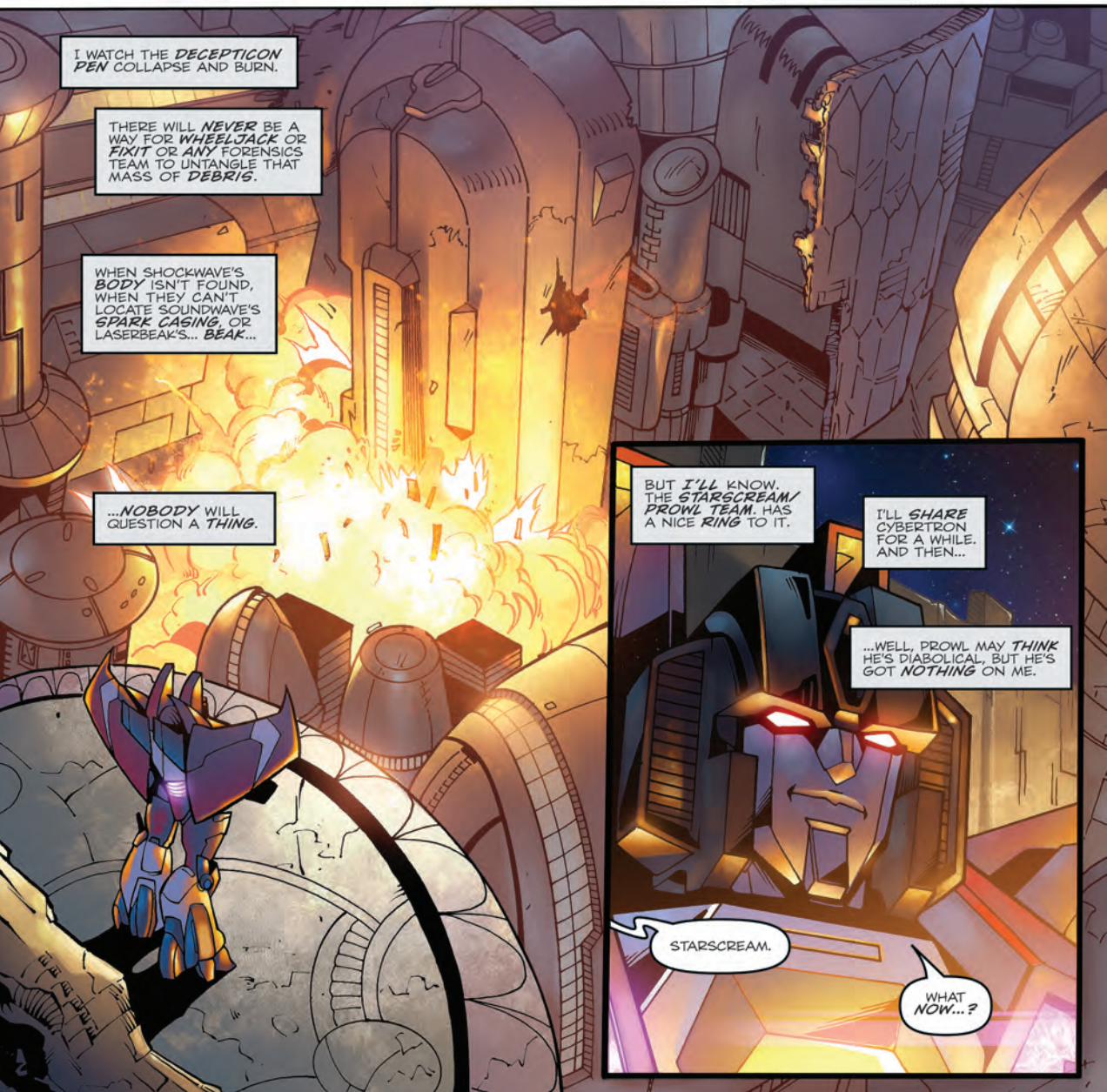
STREETWISE, SIDESWIPE— STAY BEHIND ME. THEY MAY HAVE BOOBY-TRAPPED THE GATE.

REMEMBER, STAY SPREAD OUT. THIS IS FOR EVERYTHING. MOVE!



I WATCH PROWL TAKE
A FACEFUL OF
HIGH EXPLOSIVES.

VERY CONVINCING.



I WATCH THE **DECEPTICON
PEN** COLLAPSE AND BURN.

THERE WILL **NEVER** BE A
WAY FOR **WHEELJACK** OR
FIXIT OR ANY FORENSICS
TEAM TO UNTANGLE THAT
MASS OF **DEBRIS**.

WHEN SHOCKWAVE'S
BODY ISN'T FOUND,
WHEN THEY CAN'T
LOCATE SOUNDWAVE'S
SPARK CASING, OR
LASERBEAK'S... **BEAK**...

...**NOBODY** WILL
QUESTION A **THING**.

BUT I'LL KNOW.
THE **STARScream**/
PROWL TEAM HAS
A NICE **RING** TO IT.

I'LL **SHARE**
CYBERTRON
FOR A WHILE.
AND THEN...

...WELL, PROWL MAY **THINK**
HE'S DIABOLICAL, BUT HE'S
GOT **NOTHING** ON ME.

STARScream.

WHAT
NOW...?



YOUR PROBLEMS ARE GONE. THE DECEPTICONS ARE **UTTERLY LEADERLESS** NOW, AREN'T THEY?

AND IT **WON'T** BE A VICTORY FOR BUMBLEBEE. IT'LL BE **DUMB LUCK** THAT THEY BLEW **THEMSELVES** UP WITH THEIR OWN BOOBY-TRAPS.

IT'LL BE DOWN TO YOU AND METALHAWK. BUT **YOU'LL** WIN THE ELECTION, AND PROWL WILL BE THERE **BEHIND** YOU. **THINKING** HE'S PULLING THE STRINGS...



...OR WILL HE BE PULLING THE STRINGS?



WELL, I HAVE **DIRGE** AS INSURANCE, DON'T I?

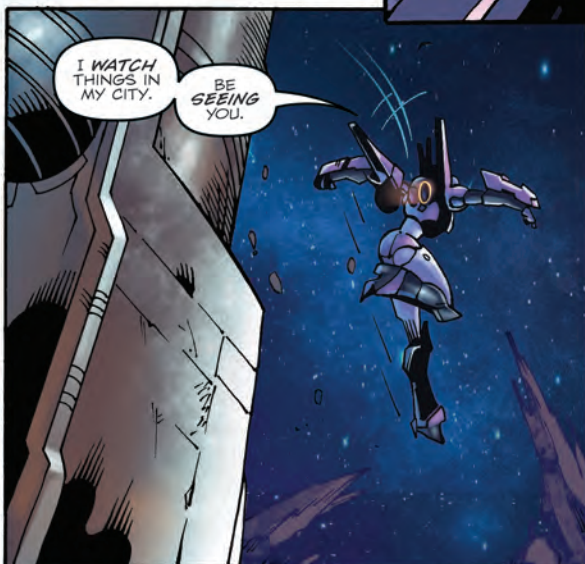


OH, **YEAH**. YOU HAVE HIM IN THAT SECRET **SAFEHOUSE** YOU BOUGHT FROM SOME **NAILS**.

THE ONE **ONBOARD** THE **ALCHEMY-SEVEN**. DECK TWENTY-THREE.

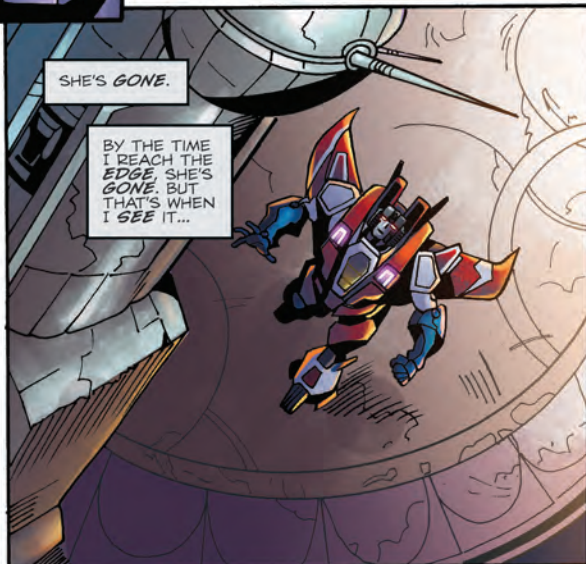


UH.



I WATCH THINGS IN MY CITY.

BE SEEING YOU.



SHE'S GONE.


BY THE TIME I REACH THE **EDGE** SHE'S GONE. BUT THAT'S WHEN I SEE IT...



...I HAD IT **ALL**. EVERYTHING I **EVER** WANTED.

NO.

I HAD IT **ALL** AND THEN **HE** CAME BACK...



...I HAD IT ALL AND THEN
MEGATRON CAME BACK.

AND IT ALL STARTED
CRUMBLING TO DUST.



ROBOTS IN DISGUISE #11 COVER B

by **CASEY W. COLLER** Colors by **JOANA LAFUENTE**



SPOTLIGHT: MEGATRON COVER A

by **NICK ROCHE** Colors by **LEN O'GRADY**

ANOTHER DAWN,
ANOTHER RESURRECTION.



WHEN ONE IS **REFORMATTED**
(IN A WAY SEEMINGLY UNIQUE
TO OUR RACE), ONE NEVER
KNOWS THE **SITUATION** INTO
WHICH ONE AWAKENS.

THE FIRST THING TO
DO IS ESTABLISH WHAT
ELEMENTS FROM YOUR
PREVIOUS FORM ARE
CARRIED OVER TO
YOUR NEXT.



ARMS, TWO:
CHECK.

LEGS, TWO:
CHECK.

HEAD, ONE:
CHECK.

LEMB-MOUNTED
WEAPON WITH
CIVILIZATION-
THREATENING LEVELS
OF DESTRUCTIVE
CAPABILITY: CHECK.

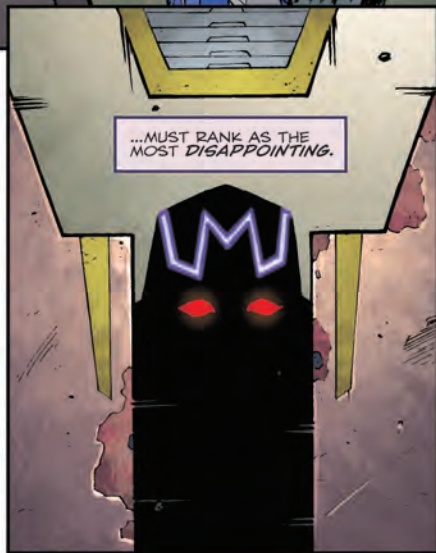
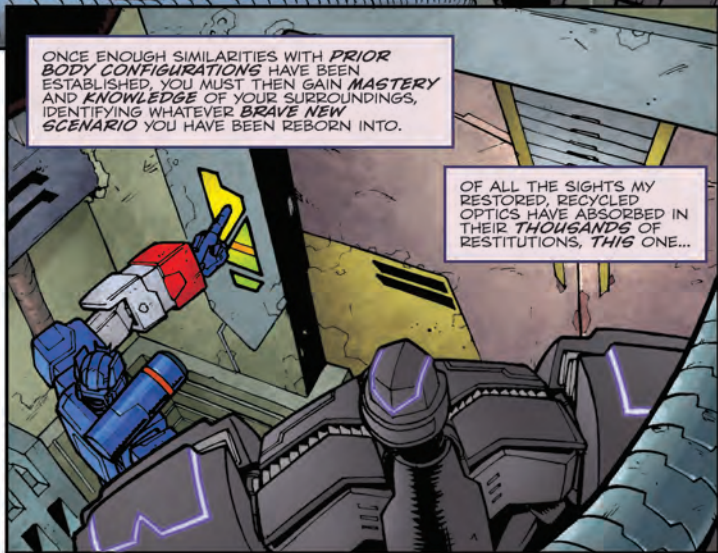
HATE: CHECK.
RAGE: CHECK.


SO FAR SO
SIMILAR.

ONCE ENOUGH SIMILARITIES WITH **PRIOR**
BODY CONFIGURATIONS HAVE BEEN
ESTABLISHED, YOU MUST THEN GAIN **MASTERY**
AND **KNOWLEDGE** OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS,
IDENTIFYING WHATEVER **BRAVE NEW**
SCENARIO YOU HAVE BEEN REBORN INTO.

OF ALL THE SIGHTS MY
RESTORED, RECYCLED
OPTICS HAVE ABSORBED IN
THEIR **THOUSANDS** OF
RESTITUTIONS, **THIS ONE...**

...MUST RANK AS THE
MOST **DISAPPOINTING**.





THE DECEPTICONS.

MY LEGACY.

A SINGULAR VISION OF RIGHTEOUS DOMINANCE MADE *LEGION*. A PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF MY IDEOLOGIES TASKED WITH BENDING ALL OF CREATION TO MY WILL.

AND *THIS* IS WHAT HAS BECOME OF THEM.

IT FALLS TO ME TO BREATHE *LIFE* INTO THE DYING EMBERS OF THEIR RAGE...

DECEPTICONS... MY DECEPTICONS... THE DAYS OF SORROW AND DEFEAT ARE ALREADY BEHIND US. YOU *DESERVE* BETTER THAN THIS.

RETRIBUTION—HORRIBLE AND TOTAL RETRIBUTION—WILL BE VISITED UPON THE AUTOBOTS.

SO TAKE UP ARMS, AND DO NOT STOP UNTIL YOUR DIGITS ACHE FROM *SQUEEZING* THE TRIGGER OF YOUR BLASTERS AS THEY *EMPTY* INTO THE ENEMY! *REVENGE* SHALL BE YOUR REWARD!

BUT MEGATRON...



EVEN IN THE VACUUM OF SPACE, ON A FLOATING ROCK BEREFT OF ANY AIR, SHOCKWAVE SUCCEEDS IN SUCKING ALL ATMOSPHERE OUT OF A ROOM.

...I MUST INSIST THAT WE FURTHER TEST YOUR BODY'S INTEGRATED SPACE BRIDGE FUNCTIONALITY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

YOU INSIST? SUCH ARDOUR. SHOCKWAVE, WE HAVE ALREADY PUT IT THROUGH ITS PACES.

BE PROUD OF YOUR WORK, OR AT LEAST SIMULATE THE FEELING.

MY TIME WOULD BE BETTER SERVED RULING OUT A ROGUE ACTIVATION OF YOUR BODY'S OWN LOCALIZED BLACK HOLE CONNECTION.

THE SPACE BRIDGE NODES RECOVERED FROM METROPLEX DRAW UPON YOUR OWN ONBOARD DIMENSIONAL SEPARATORS TO CREATE THE BRIDGE'S DESTINATION PATH.

WITHOUT REGULATING THE STABILITY, I CANNOT ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY OF ARRIVING, NOT ON EARTH, BUT AT THE EPICENTER OF A MASSIVE EVENT HORIZON OR SOME OTHER CATAclysmic LOCATION.

BUT THAT SOUNDS LIKE EXACTLY THE SORT OF DESTINATION YOU'D ENJOY VISITING.

SHOCKWAVE, THE SPACE BRIDGE IS IN FULL WORKING ORDER, AND YOU HAVE MY GRATITUDE FOR MAKING IT SO...

I FEEL A CHILL DOWN MY SPINAL STRUT—THE SORT OF UNBIDDEN EMOTIONAL REACTION UTTERLY FOREIGN TO SHOCKWAVE.

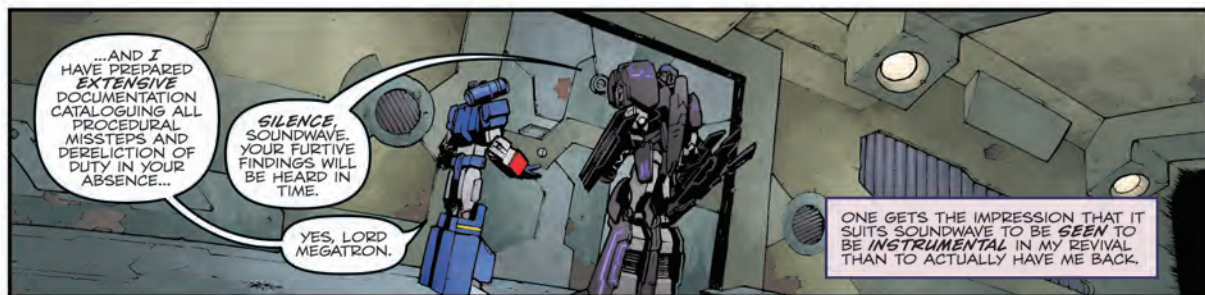
IF HE HAS ASSISTED IN MY RESTORATION, THEN IT IS ONLY BECAUSE IT SUITS HIM. I DO NOT WISH TO BE SEEN AS ANYBODY'S CONVENIENCE.

...BUT FOR NOW, I REQUIRE YOU TO CONTINUE PREPARING THE WEAPON CACHES FOR DISTRIBUTION AMONG THE FLESHLINGS UNDERSTOOD?

OF COURSE, LORD MEGATRON.

IT IS MY EXPERIENCE THAT THOSE WHO EXTEND THEMSELVES TO DISGUISE THEIR TREACHERY ARE THE ONES WHO MUST BE SCRUTINIZED MORE THOROUGHLY.

AS I SET OFF DOWN THE CORRIDOR WITH SOUNDWAVE, THAT THOUGHT SOLIDIFIES FURTHER.



...AND I HAVE PREPARED **EXTENSIVE** DOCUMENTATION CATALOGUING ALL PROCEDURAL MISSTEPS AND DERELICTION OF DUTY IN YOUR ABSENCE...

SILENCE. SOUNDWAVE, YOUR FURTIVE FINDINGS WILL BE HEARD IN TIME.

YES, LORD MEGATRON.

ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION THAT IT SUITS SOUNDWAVE TO BE **SEEN** TO BE **INSTRUMENTAL** IN MY REVIVAL THAN TO ACTUALLY HAVE ME BACK.

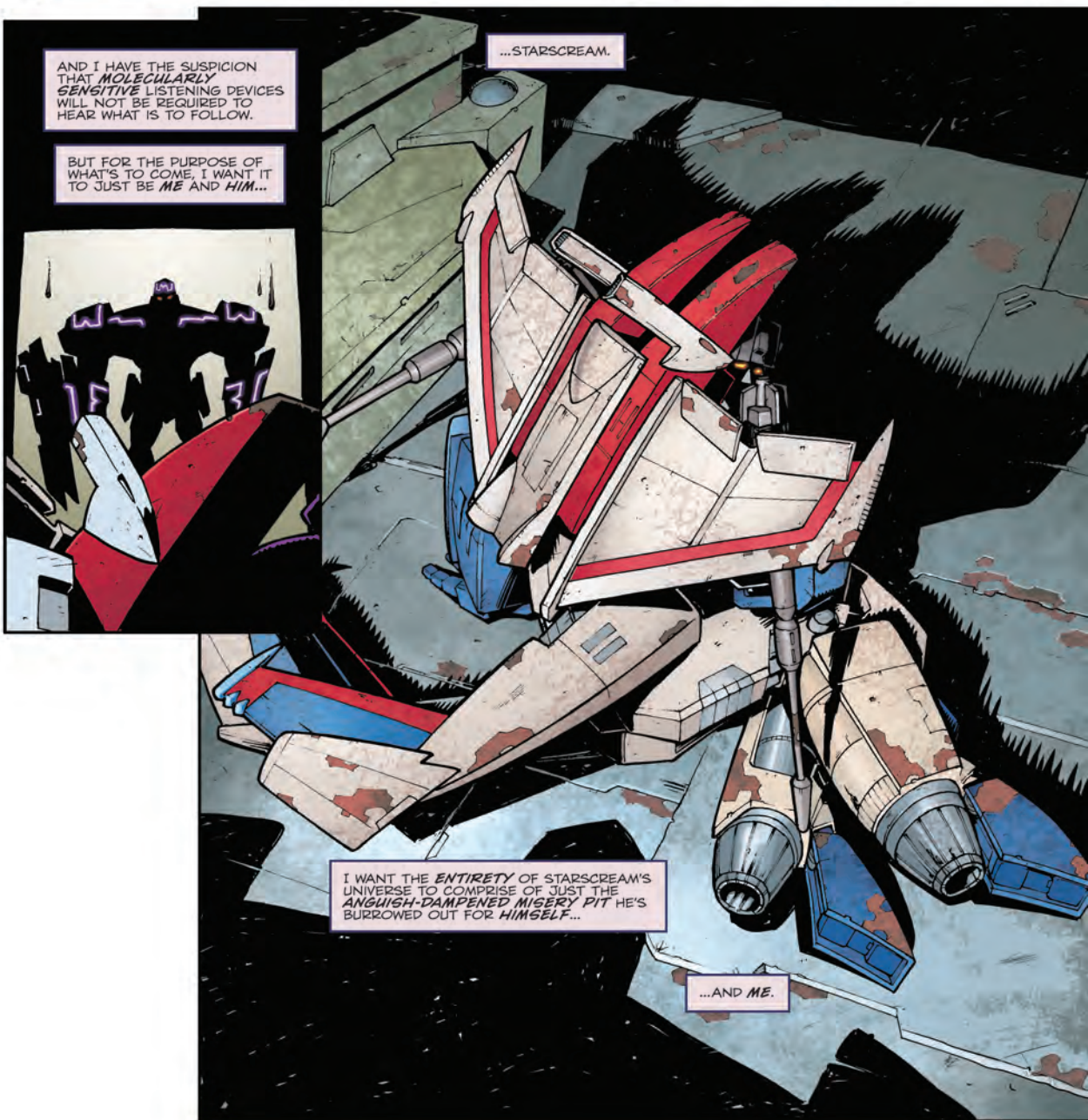


WE'VE REACHED THE **FINAL STOP** OF MY TOUR OF **INSPECTION**, SOUNDWAVE. I WISH TO BE LEFT **ALONE**.

AS YOU DESIRE.

A **FUTILE** REQUEST—ONE IS NEVER '**LEFT ALONE**' BY **SOUNDWAVE**.

HIS **SLAVISH** DEDICATION TO THE COLLECTION OF **SECRETS** AND THE ERADICATION OF **PRIVACY** ENSURES THAT NO SURFACE GOES **UNSURVEILLED**.



...STARScream.

AND I HAVE THE SUSPICION THAT **MOLECULARLY SENSITIVE** LISTENING DEVICES WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO HEAR WHAT IS TO FOLLOW.

BUT FOR THE PURPOSE OF WHAT'S TO COME, I WANT IT TO JUST BE **ME** AND **HIM**...

I WANT THE **ENTIRETY** OF STARScream's UNIVERSE TO COMPRISE OF JUST THE **ANGUISH-DAMPENED MISERY** PIT HE'S BURROWED OUT FOR **HIMSELF**...

...AND **ME**.







AH YES!
THAT'S NOT
ALL, IS IT? IT'S
EASY TO FORGET
YOUR **CREDENTIALS**
FOR THE JOB. THE
AUTOBOT MATRIX
WROTE YOU A
GLOWING
REFERENCE.

YOU WERE
COMMENDED TO
THE POSITION BY
A **WHIMSICAL**
ORNAMENT
JUST LIKE AN
AUTOBOT.

THIS **MATRIX**,
STARSCREAM...
WAS IT EVERYTHING
WE **HOPED** IT
WOULD BE. ALL
THOSE YEARS WE
HAD PURSUED
IT?



DID PLANETS
FALL BEFORE
YOU AS YOU
BRANDISHED
IT?



WAS **VICTORY** A
MERE **FORMALITY**
AFTER TILTING IT
BACK-AND-FORTH
UNDER A STRONG
LIGHT?



DID YOUR
FOLLOWERS **RESPECT**
YOU SIMPLY BY DINT OF
YOU **PRANCING** AROUND
WITH IT **TASSELLED** TO
YOUR NECK?



OF ALL THE
TREACHERY
YOU'VE PEDDLED
OVER THE EONS,
STARSCREAM—

—THIS **SPARK-**
QUENCHINGLY
WRETCHED MESS YOU'VE
MADE OF LEADERSHIP
IS THE MOST
AFFRONTING.

NOTHING. NEITHER
SNEER NOR **SMIRK**.

AND I WONDER IF WHILE
RUNNING THE LEGACY OF
THE DECEPTICONS INTO
THE **DIRT**, STARSCREAM
ALSO SUCCEEDED IN
DESTROYING **HIMSELF**.



YOUR SILENCE IS WEARING, STARScream, SO IT FALLS TO ME TO SUMMARIZE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS.

UNDER YOUR RULE, THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE DECEPTICON MILITARY BODY LIES IN TATTERS, WITH NO FUNCTIONING COMMUNICATION NETWORK IN OPERATION THROUGHOUT THE FORCE.

OUR RACE HAS BEEN REDUCED TO PILFERING SCRAPS OF ENERGY FROM SUBSTANDARD ALIEN SOURCES AND JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS FOR FUEL AND SHELTER AMONGST THE FLESHLINGS.

THE HIGH COMMAND OF THIS ONCE-FEARED ARMY HUDDLE ON AN ASTEROID OF NO STRATEGIC WORTH, WHILE AT THEIR FEET, THEIR UNDERLINGS CONSUME AND CANNIBALIZE ONE ANOTHER.



I HOPE IT WAS EVERYTHING YOU'D WISHED FOR, BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE WHEN YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT.

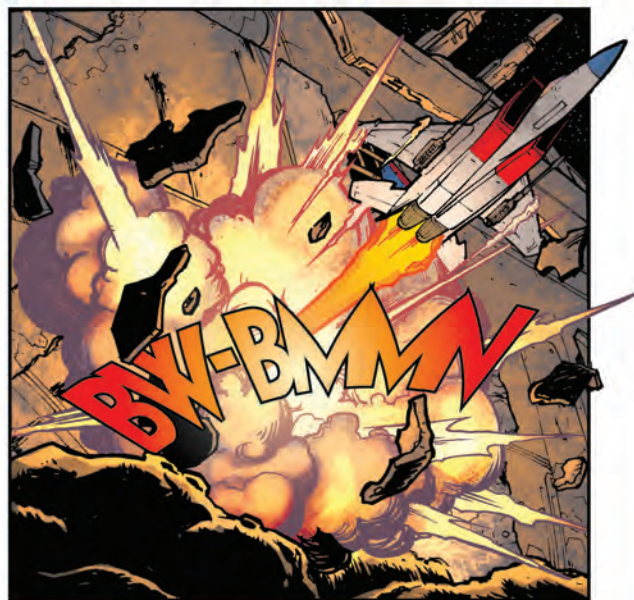
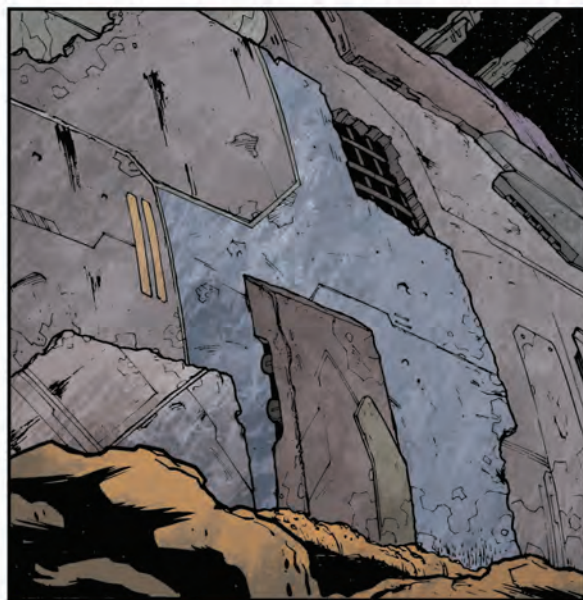


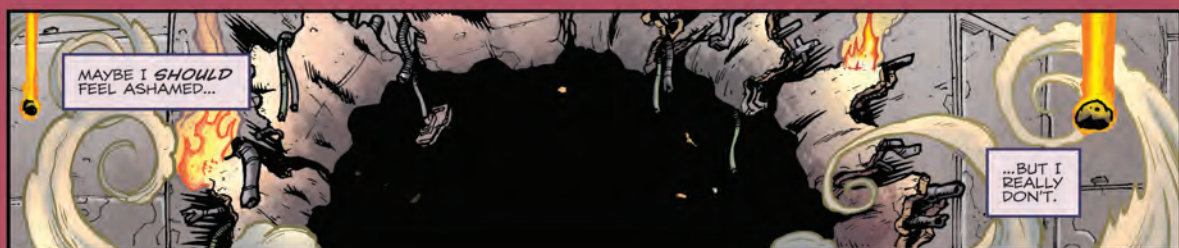
ALL.

HAIL.

STARScream.

YOU MUST BE VERY PROUD.





MAYBE I *SHOULD*
FEEL ASHAMED...

...BUT I
REALLY
DON'T.



EVEN *WITHOUT* KNOWING
WHAT HAD OCCURRED DURING
MY ABSENCE, I AWOKED IN A
NEW BODY, BEDECKED WITH
NEW AND *TERRIBLE*
MODIFICATIONS...

...AND THE *FIRST* THING
I THOUGHT OF AS MY
TRANSFORMATION COG
FOUND ITS BITE WAS: "I
CANNOT WAIT TO BEAT
THE LIVING SPARK OUT
OF STARScream."

IT WAS TO BE A HEALTHY
EXERCISE—I COULD WORK
OFF MY RESENTMENT
TOWARDS *HIM*. HE COULD
VENT HIS REBELLIOUS
URGES UPON *ME*.

I WOULD EXERT
MY *DOMINANCE*
AND WE WOULD
MOVE ON.

FOR ONE *HORRIBLE*
MOMENT, IT SEEMED AS IF
ALL MY NEEDS WOULD GO
UNSPENT, AND THAT I HAD
COME MERELY TO PICK A
FIGHT WITH A *PHANTOM*.

BUT NOW...

...NOW HE SEEMS
KEEN TO GIVE ME
WHAT I WANT.

WHICH IS WONDERFUL,
BECAUSE A NEW **ARMATURE
RIG** IS NOT A **BODY** UNTIL
THE MANIFOLD COUPLINGS
ARE **DENTED** AND **DOTTED**
WITH AN OPPONENT'S **FUEL**.
OR SO THE SAYING GOES.

LIKE THE
NEW LOOK,
STARScream?
WINGS **BECOME**
ME, NO?

WHAT'S MORE, NOT
ONLY IS HE PREPARED
TO GIVE ME SOME
SATISFACTION, HE
ALSO APPEARS TO BE
NURSING SOME **RAW**
AND **BLOODY**
EMOTIONAL WOUNDS.

**EMOTIONAL
WOUNDS**, INDEED. THE
WEIGHT OF THE MATRIX
HAS LITERALLY WORN
THE **SHARP EDGES**
FROM HIS **SIGIL**.

IS FLYING
REALLY
THIS EASY,
STARScream?

OR HAVE
YOU JUST
LOST YOUR
COMPETENCE
IN **THAT**,
TOO?

I VOW **NEVER** TO GIVE SOUNDWAVE
AND SHOCKWAVE THE THANKS
THEY'VE **TRULY** EARNED...

...BUT THIS
NEW FORM
HANDLES LIKE
A **DREAM**.



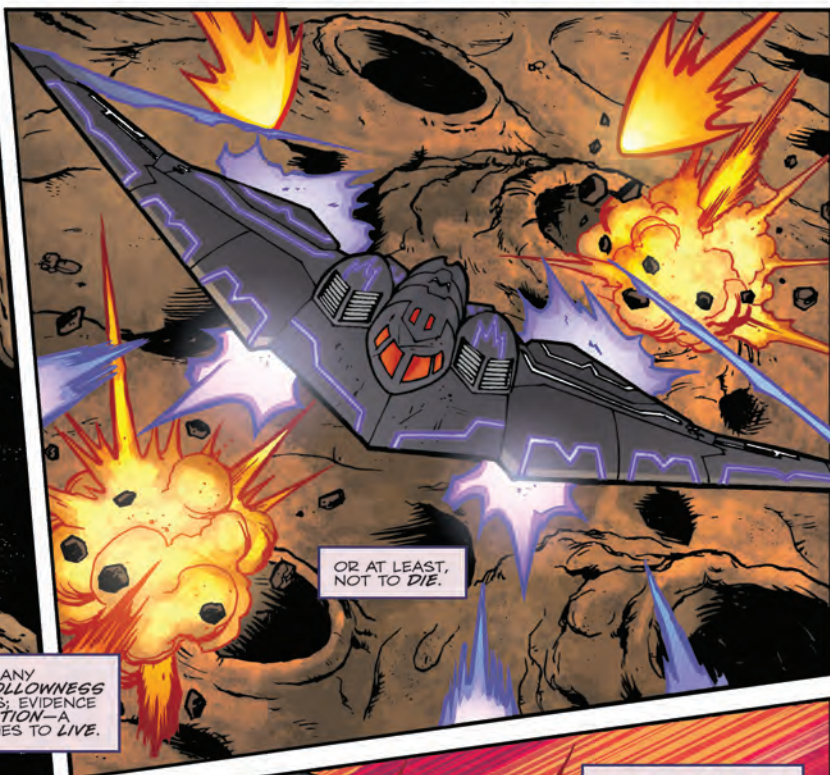
AS
HEARTENING AS
IT IS TO SEE THE
CHARGE IN YOUR
SPARK ONCE MORE,
STARSCREAM...

...IT'S ONLY
FAIR TO WARN YOU
THAT YOUR EFFORTS
TO EVADE ME WILL
FARE NO BETTER
THAN YOUR ATTEMPT
AT LEADING THE
DECEPTICONS.

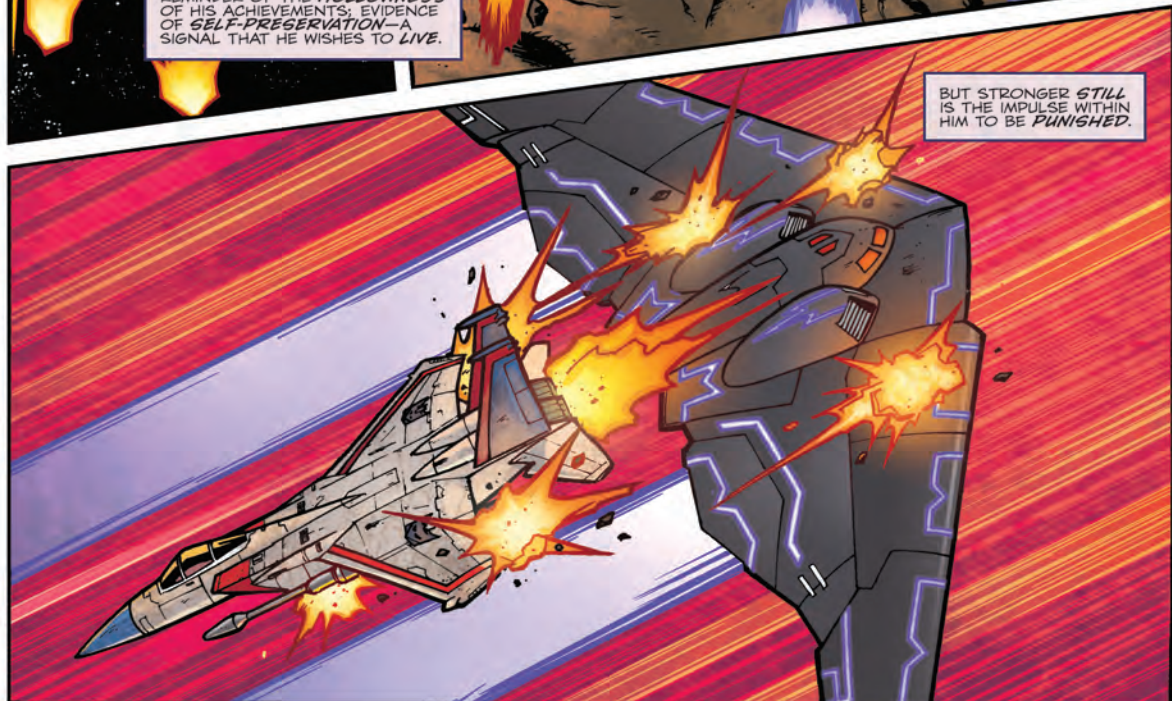


AND THERE IT IS—THE
ALKALI! IN THE APERTURE!

HE LASHES OUT AT ANY
REMINDER OF THE *HOLLOWNESS*
OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS; EVIDENCE
OF *SELF-PRESERVATION*—A
SIGNAL THAT HE WISHES TO LIVE.



OR AT LEAST,
NOT TO DIE.

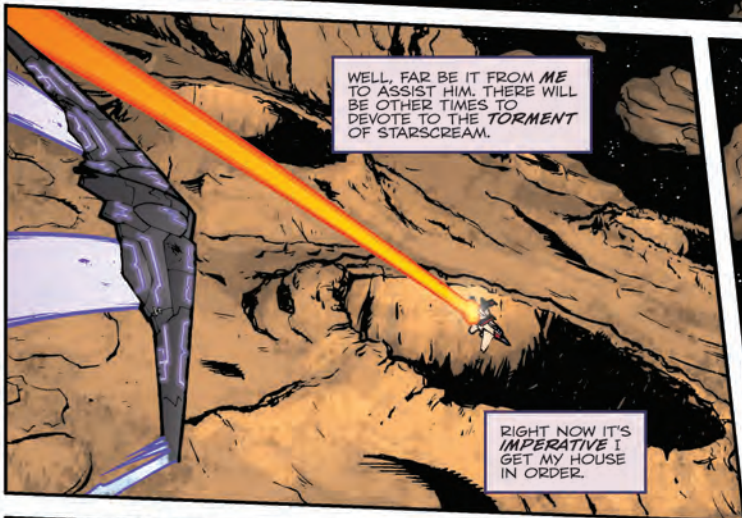


BUT STRONGER *STILL*
IS THE IMPULSE WITHIN
HIM TO BE *PUNISHED*.



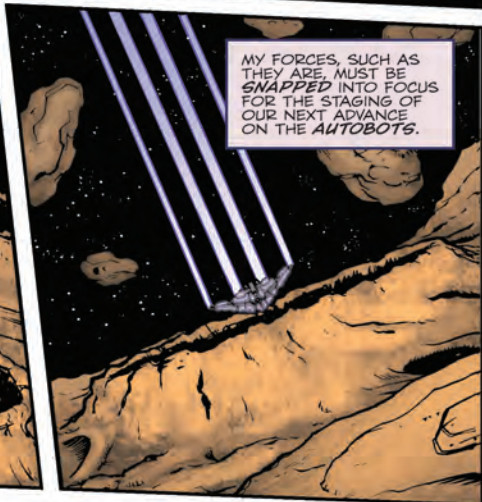
NO—NOT
PUNISHED...

...HE BELIEVES THE *PHYSICAL
TRAUMA* I INTEND TO ENACT
UPON HIM WILL BE *RESPIRE*
FROM THE *DAGGERS OF GUILT*
HE HAULS HIMSELF OVER.

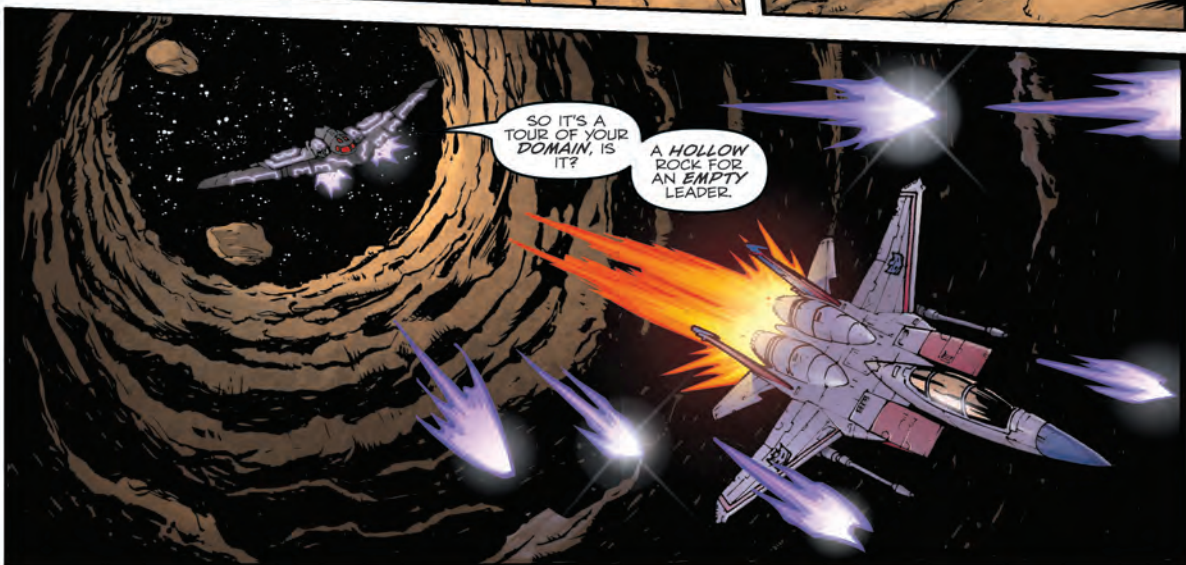


WELL, FAR BE IT FROM *ME*
TO ASSIST HIM. THERE WILL
BE OTHER TIMES TO
DEVOTE TO THE *TORMENT*
OF STARScream.

RIGHT NOW IT'S
IMPERATIVE I
GET MY HOUSE
IN ORDER.



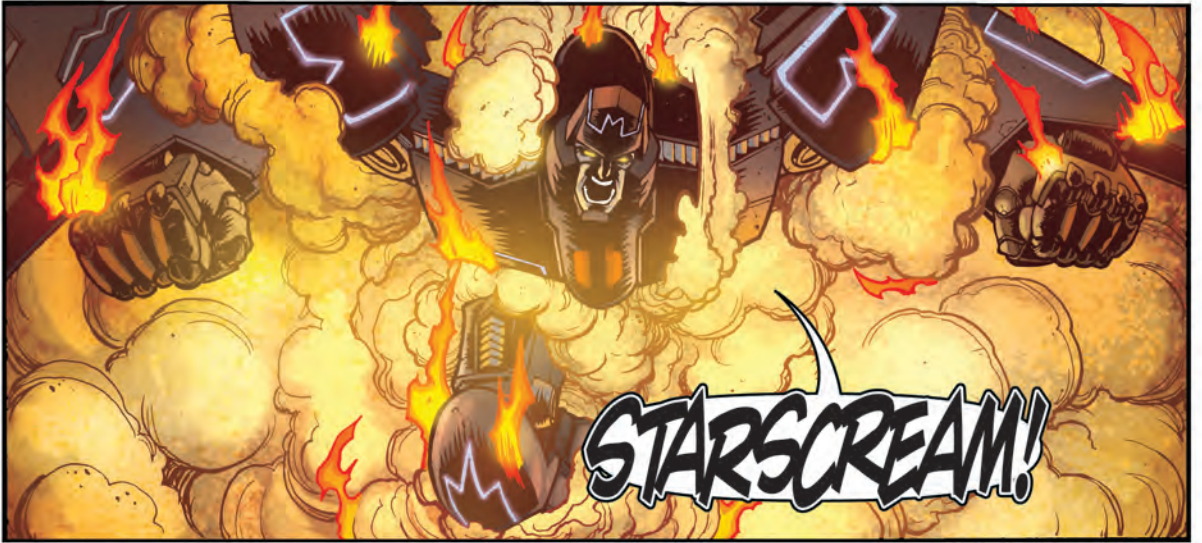
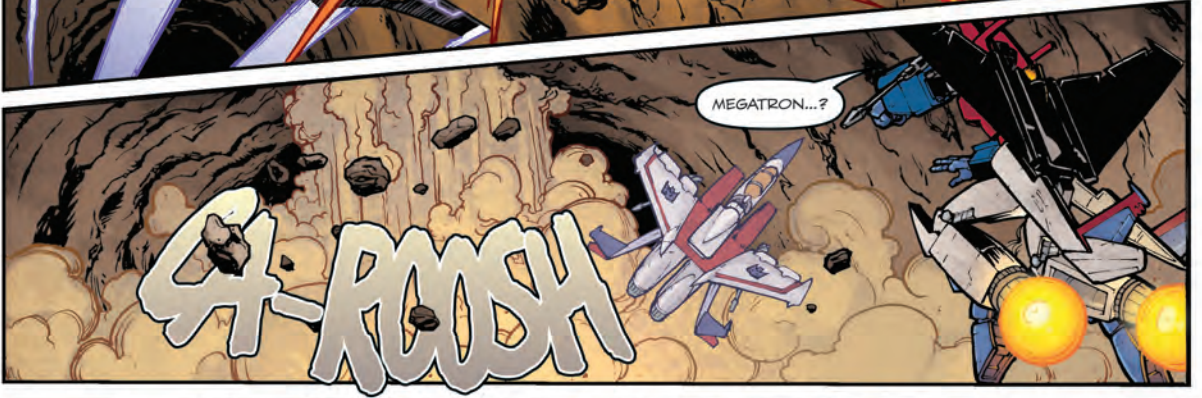
MY FORCES, SUCH AS
THEY ARE, MUST BE
SNAPPED INTO FOCUS
FOR THE STAGING OF
OUR NEXT ADVANCE
ON THE *AUTOBOTS*.



SO IT'S A
TOUR OF YOUR
DOMAIN, IS
IT?

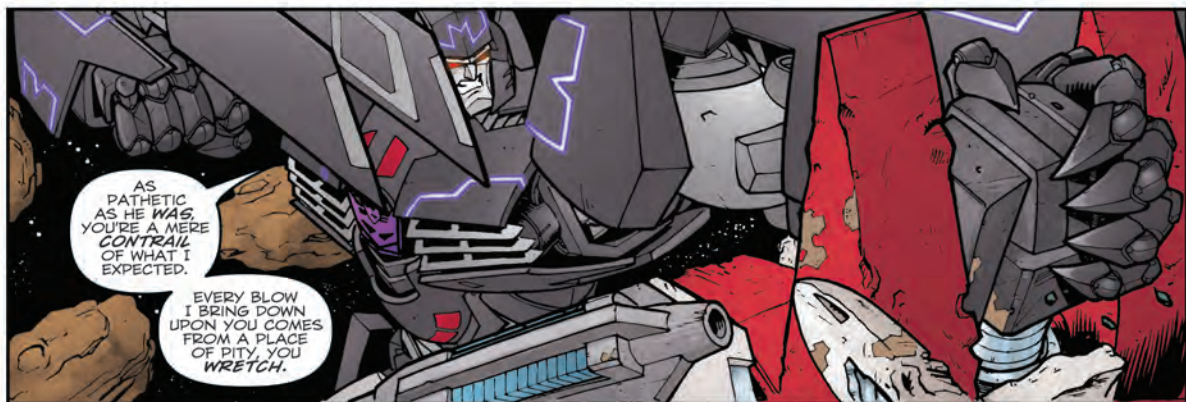
A *HOLLOW*
ROCK FOR
AN *EMPTY*
LEADER.











AS PATHETIC AS HE WAS, YOU'RE A MERE **CONTRAIL** OF WHAT I EXPECTED.

EVERY BLOW I BRING DOWN UPON YOU COMES FROM A PLACE OF PITY, YOU **WRETCH**.



WHAT A MESS... SHOULD WE **STOP** THEM?

IF YOU **DO**, I'LL TELEPORT MY **FIST** INSIDE YOUR **ABDOMEN** AND **WAVE**.



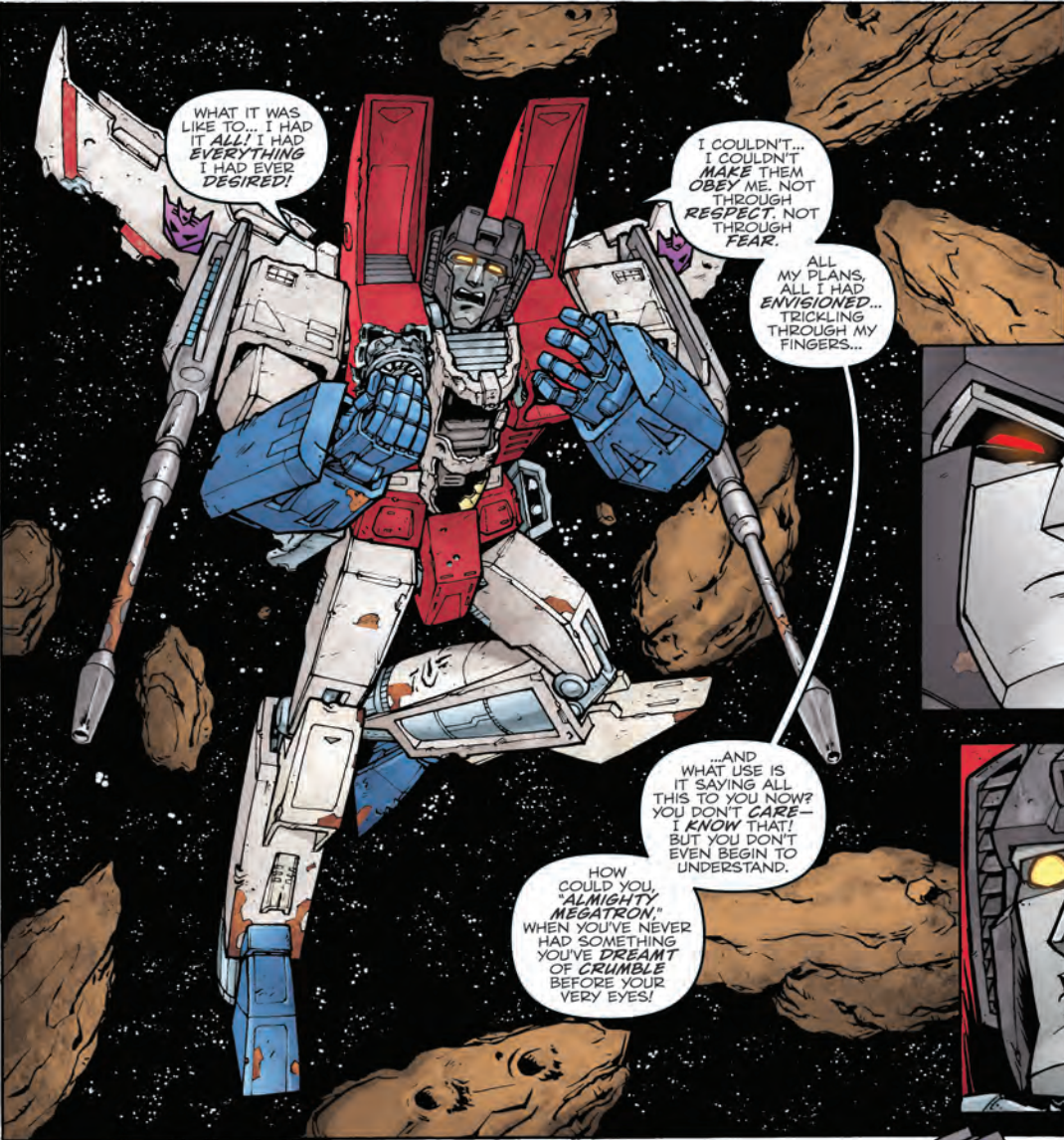
TUH-TALK, MEGATECH? YOU WANT ME TO **TALK**? OR DO YOU WANT ME TO **APOLOGIZE**; TO **BEG** FOR MY LIFE, FOR FORGIVENESS— IS THAT IT?

IS IT MY FORGIVENESS YOU SEEK? IS IT **ME** WHO YOU HAVE LET DOWN?



YOU DON'T **UNDERSTAND**! I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND...

UNDERSTAND **WHAT**, STARScream?



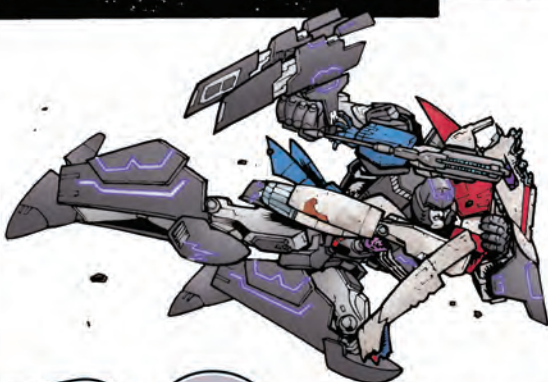
WHAT IT WAS
LIKE TO... I HAD
IT ALL. I HAD
EVERYTHING
I HAD EVER
DESIRED!

I COULDN'T...
I COULDN'T
MAKE THEM
OBEY ME. NOT
THROUGH
RESPECT. NOT
THROUGH
FEAR.

ALL
MY PLANS,
ALL I HAD
ENVISIONED...
TRICKLING
THROUGH MY
FINGERS...

...AND
WHAT USE IS
IT SAYING ALL
THIS TO YOU NOW?
YOU DON'T CARE—
I KNOW THAT!
BUT YOU DON'T
EVEN BEGIN TO
UNDERSTAND.

HOW
COULD YOU,
"ALMIGHTY
MEGATRON"
WHEN YOU'VE NEVER
HAD SOMETHING
YOU'VE DREAMT
OF CRUMBLE
BEFORE YOUR
VERY EYES!



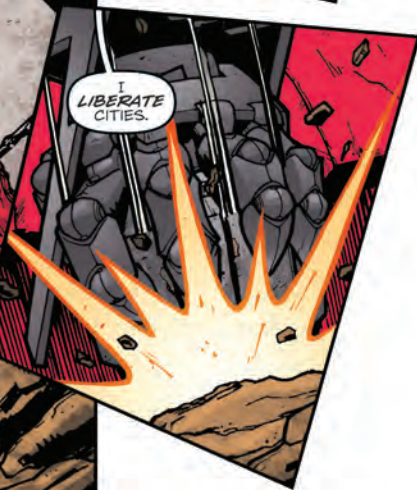


I FREE
SLAVES.

IMPLANT
IDEOLOGY.



I BUILD
THEM UP.



I
LIBERATE
CITIES.



I TOPPLE
WORLDS.

IT TAKES
EONS.

THEN I
SLUMBER FOR
THREE. TINY.
YEARS.

AND WHEN
I WAKE UP,
THIS IS ALL
THAT IS LEFT.

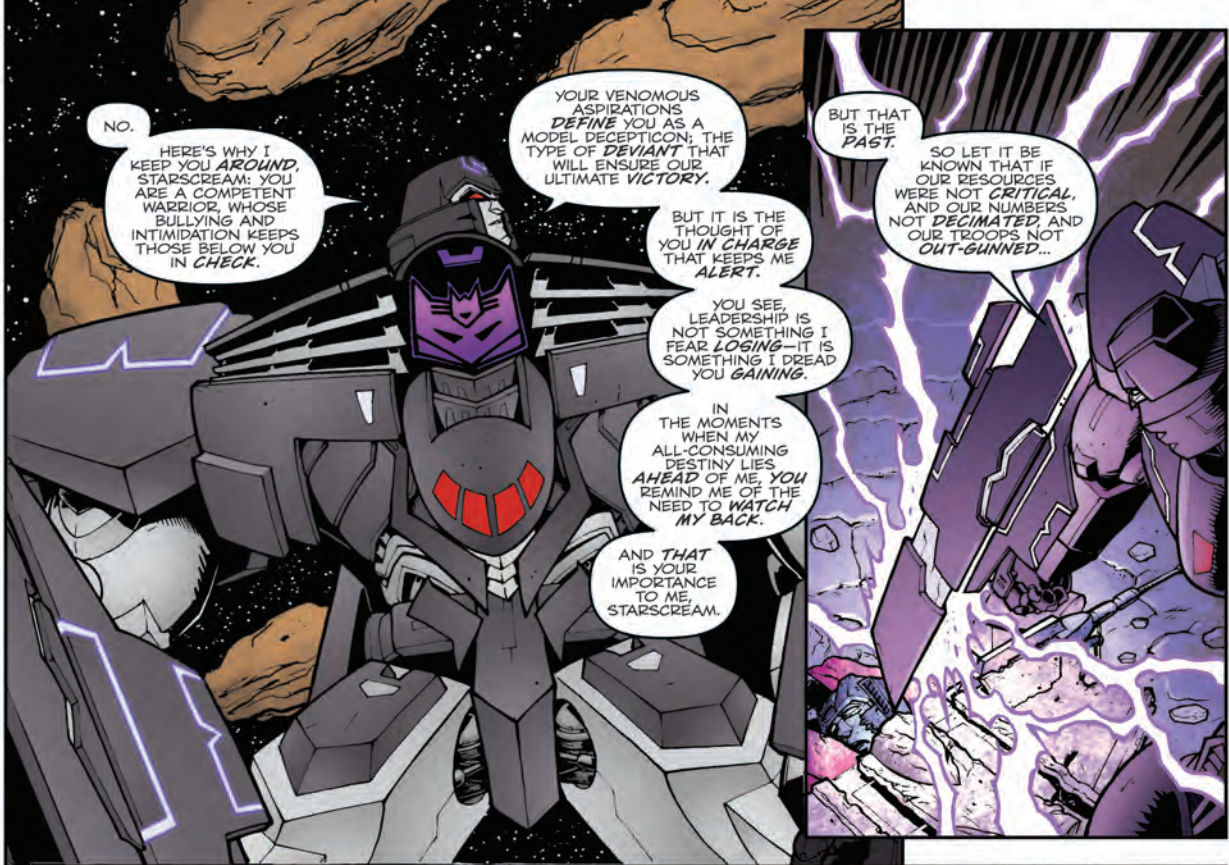
SAY IT
AGAIN, THAT I
HAVE NO IDEA
WHAT IT'S LIKE TO
SEE A LIFETIME'S
WORK DESTROYED
AND MADE
MOCKERY OF.



YOU AND
I HAVE ONE THING
IN COMMON...
THE PERSON
RESPONSIBLE FOR
LEAVING BOTH OF
OUR LIVES IN
TATTERS...

...IS
YOU.

THEN
...JUST...
END
THIS...



NO.

HERE'S WHY I
KEEP YOU **AROUND**,
STARScream: YOU
ARE A COMPETENT
WARRIOR, WHOSE
BULLYING AND
INTIMIDATION KEEPS
THOSE BELOW YOU
IN **CHECK**.

YOUR VENOMOUS
ASPIRATIONS
DEFINE YOU AS A
MODEL DECEPTICON; THE
TYPE OF **DEViant** THAT
WILL ENSURE OUR
ULTIMATE **VICTORY**.

BUT IT IS THE
THOUGHT OF
YOU **IN CHARGE**
THAT KEEPS ME
ALERT.

YOU SEE,
LEADERSHIP IS
NOT SOMETHING I
FEAR **LOSING**—IT IS
SOMETHING I DREAD
YOU **GAINING**.

IN
THE MOMENTS
WHEN MY
ALL-CONSUMING
DESTINY LIES
AHEAD OF ME, YOU
REMINDE ME OF THE
NEED TO **WATCH**
MY **BACK**.

AND **THAT**
IS YOUR
IMPORTANCE
TO ME,
STARScream.

BUT THAT
IS THE
PAST.

SO LET IT BE
KNOWN THAT IF
OUR RESOURCES
WERE NOT **CRITICAL**,
AND OUR NUMBERS
NOT **DECIMATED**, AND
OUR TROOPS NOT
OUT-GUNNED...



...I WOULD
ATOMIZE
YOU.

I ALMOST
MEAN IT.

THAN—



DO NOT
THANK ME. IT
IS YOUR **OWN**
INCOMPETENCE AND
POOR JUDGMENT
THAT HAS SAVED
YOU THIS DAY,
STARScream.

INSTEAD,
REPAY ME.



THIS ALL-
CONSUMING
SELF-HATRED?
USE IT.

TIRED OF
THE BONE-DEEP
CHILL OF LOSING,
STARScream?
THEN STAND
WITH ME.

FOR IT HAS
NEVER BEEN
A BETTER TIME
TO BE A
DECEPTICON.

YES... **LORD**
MEGATRON.





SPOTLIGHT: MEGATRON COVER B

by **LIVIO RAMONDELLI**



SIGNAL TO NOISE

(A *Lost Light* Interlude)

Rung stepped out of the elevator 20 floors earlier than intended, his nascent claustrophobia getting the better of him. It was quiet, and that didn't help either. It was never quiet aboard the *Lost Light*. Not *this* quiet. Not the kind of quiet that forced you to listen to your inner workings—to the sound your body made as it struggled, hour after hour, to keep you upright and alive.

Rung, who had been around for a long time, knew his somatic soundtrack better than most. He knew, for example, that if he was to direct his audio sensors fully inwards he'd hear a muffled cacophony of moving parts: a thousand keys turning in a thousand locks. He often wondered why more Cybertronians didn't collapse in awe at the miracle that was their body. Surely if you ever stopped and stood and studied yourself—the way you worked—the way all those little pieces inside you lunged and spun and spinnied—you'd fall to your knees, humbled by the sheer audacity of mechanical life.

He'd always remained true to his original design, eyebrows and all. Mode fidelity, they called it. Not for him the redesign or the remould—he looked today as he had always looked. Perhaps that was why everyone seemed to look past him; why he so consistently failed to register: he was so unchanging he'd become part of the landscape.

While he had stayed the same, his friends had grown in size. In a post-Functionist society where your body was your primary weapon, size was everything—at least until you become so energon-hungry that you could barely make it from one mode to the next without seizing up. But until that critical threshold was crossed—and some people reached it sooner than others—every upgrade was an exercise in accretion and accession and the annexing of surrounding space.

Back on Kimia he'd written a monograph on the relationship between war and body size and then promptly filed it away with all the others, never to be circulated. His time as a psychiatrist of note was long gone; he knew that. Rival practitioners such as Froid may've been long dead, but the damage they'd inflicted on his reputation was irreparable.

The thought made him quicken his pace, as if he was afraid that the past would catch up with him. The gears in his legs screeched in protest, which only made him more anxious. Like all Cybertronians of a certain age, his visits to the medibay were triggered not by an uncomfortable

sensation, but by an unfamiliar sound—cogs refusing to mesh, an intransigent axle, a screw too slow on the turn. He knew, however, that his anxiety was misplaced. After six weeks in the medibay—six weeks recovering from that short, sharp shot to the head—he was in better shape than ever.

He remembered very little about the moments leading up to his hospitalization, and the few details that he could recall were thin and brittle and prone to fragmentation: his arm around Fortress Maximus; Overlord's preternaturally expressive lips; a dash of light and a wink of shattered glass.

Six weeks later, when he'd woken up on the circuit slab and opened his new eyes for the first time, he'd not recognized the people standing around his circuit slab; or rather, he'd not recognized them as people. As far as he was concerned, Skids, Swerve, and Whirl were indistinguishable from the rest of the medibay (a common side-effect of brain injury). With First Aid's patient tuition he was eventually able to separate people from their surroundings—that was the first breakthrough; the second was learning to move again, and for that he had Swerve to thank.

He'd been shown footage of the metallurgist perched on a barstool by his circuit slab, his legs at right angles to his body, and talking to him, nonstop, for 147 hours. He couldn't remember a single word of what was said (apparently it was mostly about Blurr), but Swerve's incessant talking had elicited a response. During the 147th hour, a twitch in his right hand had blossomed into a loose and languid gesture: slowly, tentatively, Rung had unfurled his forefinger and placed it delicately over his lips.

Not long after that, he'd been transferred to a sedentary circuit slab—Hound called them “wheelchairs”—and treated to a series of stories emceed by Rewind. Again, he knew this only in retrospect: at the time, he was buried too deep in the landslide of his own thoughts to make sense of what was going outside the rubble. In fact, aside from the smile on Skids' face when he'd corrected the persistent mispronunciation of his name, his one abiding memory of those lost days, strangely enough, was of the neat rows of bottled engex lined up behind Swerve's bar.

After the recent battle on Temptoria, which he'd been forced to sit out (something for which he was secretly grateful), he'd been invited to help Brainstorm make the holomatter avatars more energy-efficient. This had proved impossible, even for Brainstorm (an Autobot who insisted that Perceptor had once offered him a billion shanix for his brain), so they settled on creating “super-intuitive avatars” instead. A literal projection of the Cybertronian psyche, SIAs could be deployed over longer distances than their precursors—and the hair looked more convincing.

They'd tested the new SIAs during the recent trip to Hedonia. And it had been in a badly lit

Hedonian gift shop that Rung had realized that he'd done something bad. No, something awful. He'd done to someone what everyone else always did to him: he'd forgotten about them.



Tap. Tap. Tap.

"Why are we wasting our time in a gift shop," said Tailgate, "when we could be wasting our time not in a gift shop?"

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Skids reached for another hat and frowned. "How can someone who spent six million years in a cave complain of being bored? Hm?" He found his face in the mirror and adjusted the hat. "Anyway, no-one's forcing you to browse. Forced browsing is not the Autobot way. Wait outside."

"I'm not going outside by myself—Nutmeg's out there."

"So?"

"So he knows I'm easily led. He'll talk me into assassinating Rodimus or swapping my Transformation Cog for a hand grenade or something. And to be honest, I'm starting to think—and don't you dare tell him this—but I'm starting to think he's not stable."

They looked down the aisle, between the shelves filled with souvenirs for the indiscriminate pleasure-seeker (everything from hypersensitive bodysuits to mouth food to elixirs laced with dopamine) and saw Whirl gently banging his head against the glass. Tap. Tap. Tap.

"We should count ourselves lucky," said Rewind, as he and Rung leaned in to see what the others were looking at. "When he's bored he tends to shoot someone. He's not allowed in museums because people end up dead."

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Rung shook his head sadly. "Poor thing. He's trying to relieve the pressure on the part of his brain that he blames for his unpredictable behavior."

"I'm pretty sure Chromedome would tell you it doesn't work like that," said Rewind.

"I'm sure he would. But if Whirl wants to *think* it works like that, we should let him."

Skids jabbed Rung playfully on the shoulder. "You alright, Eyebrows?"

"Not really, no. I feel guilty about leaving Swerve to handle Ultra Magnus. Do you think he'll be able to calm him down?"

"Calm him down?" Rewind muttered, fiddling with his head-mounted videocamera. "You think we're really in trouble?"

"Well, let's see," said Skids, folding his arms. "We allowed Whirl to intoxicate to the point of temporary shutdown the galaxy's least forgiving law enforcer...Of course we're in trouble! We're in a rich tapestry of trouble! We're in shades of trouble so subtle and multifaceted that you probably have to take several steps back to fully appreciate the breadth and scale of the trouble we're in."

Tailgate snapped his fingers. "Let's run away. Let's join the Cosmic Carnival and get into scrapes."

"If Magnus is going to arrest us and put all our sparks in the naughty jar, then maybe we *should* get out and about," said Rewind, tapping the chronometer on his wrist. "We've only got half an hour before the shuttle leaves. Half an hour to uncover the dark secret at the heart of Hedonia..."

"Dark secret?" said Skids approvingly. "Tell me more."

"I'm just guessing," admitted Rewind, "but—look outside. The smiling tourists, the friendly locals, the overwhelming sense of contentment and bonhomie. There's always a dark and horrific secret in places like this."

Rung raised a perfectly rectangular eyebrow. "You're saying the more outwardly peaceable and well-adjusted a society, the greater the likelihood—"

"Of it having a sinister underbelly. Yup."

Skids shook his head. "Even Lovetopia, off Regel VII?"

"Lovetopia? Please. The Lovetopian elite were selling the lower classes to the Macerators. The 'magic ingredient' in every pint of Yum Yum juice? An impoverished family of six."

"Cuddlex, in the Benevolon Sector?"

"A wonderful place for a vacation—if you ignore the fact that they breed haemoslaves to fight in service to the Antigod. And don't even get me started on the living hell that is Giggleopolis."

"Hold on everyone," said Tailgate, balancing a shelf to get a better view of the street outside. "Where's Whirl gone?"

"Beats me," said Skids. "But look who's just turned up."



Cyclonus entered the shop and acknowledged Tailgate with a nod so subtle it could have been a trick of the light. He proceeded to stalk the aisles, picking things up, turning them over, frowning at them, and putting them down again.

"He can't afford anything," concluded Skids.

"No, no, he's loaded," said Tailgate. "He's, like, a multi-billionaire or something. Tetrahexian real estate. No, he just thinks possessions are a weakness. Actually, he thinks everything's a weakness. I like him, but he's phenomenally stern."

"He's humming," whispered Rung, picking up a model spaceship rather than glance in Cyclonus' direction.

"It must be the browsing," said Skids. "It pacifies him. Maybe that's where we've been going wrong all these years: rather than trying to defeat the Decepticons using force, we should've taken them shopping."

"Firstly, he's not a Decepticon," said Tailgate. "And secondly, why are you obsessed with browsing?"

Rung smiled and left them to it, walking to the pay-port with the spaceship in his hand. He was stopped in his tracks by a display rack full of memory sticks, each one stamped with a legend that invited customers to *Relive the Hedonian Experience*.

"No need to buy one of those," said Rewind, steering Rung away from the rack. "I'm making my own recording." He bent back his right hand, ejected a memory stick from his wrist, and caught it. "See?"

"It's not that. I've just remembered something. Someone. I've just remembered someone."



Rung turned another corner and moved closer to the heart of the ship. He thought he'd be able to hear the dry whine of the quantum engines by now, but no, the silence persisted: epic, devastating, all-encompassing. Until:

"You may have noticed that I'm not much of a conversationist," said Ultra Magnus, turning to look at him for the first time since they'd set off from Rung's office 20 minutes earlier.

"No, no, don't apologize," said Rung quickly, straining to keep up with his companion. "But to be honest, I'm not sure you need to accompany me to Rodimus' quarters."

"Under normal circumstances, I'd agree. But Rodimus may not be in the best of moods."

"Oh. Really? Why's that?"

"Blaster's plan to use the subspace network as a means of communicating with Cybertron has come to nought, we've lost our only lead in terms of locating the Circle of Light, and our quest to find the Knights of Cybertron has all but ground to a halt. In addition, Rodimus is struggling to come to terms with the fact that the aspects of his personality that give him an edge in the field—principally his capacity for quick, decisive action—work against him in a postwar environment in that they encourage him to take unnecessary risks whenever the opportunity arises."

"That was remarkably... succinct. You really are very deliberate with your choice of language, aren't you?"

"I'm not one for padding, if that's what you mean. As far as I'm concerned, each deviation from the point amounts to a minor failure of nerve."

"Fascinating. To you, speech is like a vehicle for conveying information, and you like to get from A to B using as direct a route as possible."

"I beg your pardon? 'Vehicle'...?"

"I didn't literally mean a vehicle... It was a simile."

Ultra Magnus narrowed his optics. "I've spent years weaning myself off figurative language. It clouds the facts. I occasionally resort to a simile if the situation absolutely demands it, but I remain intensely distrustful of extended metaphors."

Rung stared at him, searching for traces of irony. "That follow-up appointment," he said at

length. "I'd really encourage you to make it. Or just turn up—my door is always open."

"Always? I'm sorry, but your office contains highly sensitive information about members of the crew. As Director of Security I must insist that you lock your door at all times."

"No, again, I don't mean that I literally left the—ah. You're joking." Rung paused, considered his options, and decided he should laugh, but the moment was lost.

"People keep telling me to 'lighten up,'" continued Ultra Magnus, "but whenever I try to make a joke it falls flat." He scaled a flight of stairs in a single stride and waited for Rung to catch up. "Rodimus says it's my delivery. He says—what does he say? He says I sound like someone phoning in a bomb threat."

"I think you just need to find the kind of humor that works for you. And I think that deep down you actually *like* talking to people."

Magnus stopped, raised himself to his full height, and held up his forefinger to signal the impending arrival of another gag.

"If Primus had intended his children to make light conversation he'd have equipped us all with vocal synthesizers." Pause. "Sorry—with more energy-efficient vocal synthesizers. That's right: he'd have equipped us all with more *energy-efficient* vocal synthesizers."

A silence deeper and truer than any Rung had ever known descended upon them both. Minutes stretched into hours. Empires rose and fell. Molecular clouds formed stars that collapsed and went supernova. The universe succumbed to its inevitable heatdeath.

"I should have said energy-efficient vocal synthesizers," said Ultra Magnus quietly, in a manner reminiscent of a pathologist estimating the time of death.

Rung was so embarrassed for his crewmate, and so desperate to change the subject, that he fleetingly considered confessing to a Category A crime. In the end, however, a more natural distraction presented itself.

"What's this?" he said, examining a gold rectangle on the wall outside Rodimus' quarters. "'The captain of the *Lost Light*, Rodimus of Nyon, resided here for the duration of his awesome quest to find the Knights of Cybertron.'" He straightened up and scratched an eyebrow. "A plaque? Isn't that a tad... premature? Not to mention—well, one doesn't have to be a psychiatrist to detect a certain degree of..." He trailed off as he remembered that he was standing next to Rodimus' second-in-command. "I suppose 'arrogance' is too strong a word to use."

"No comment," said Ultra Magnus, directing Rung through a doorway surrounded by stencilled flames that recalled the pattern on Rodimus' chest.



Rodimus sat cross-legged on his desk holding a laser scalpel that he was using to make patterns on its surface. "Rung!" he cried, looking up and flashing the smile that allowed him to get away with pretty much anything. "Take a seat!" He shuffled to the edge of the desk. "You're a psychotherapist, right? What's *wrong* with people? Why am I the only normal one around here?"

Rung realized that Rodimus wasn't joking, but the smile stayed on his face, too embarrassed to move.

"Everyone's miserable," Rodimus continued, "and I can't be doing with it. Yes, we've had some 'setbacks,' but come on! It's got to be better than Cybertron, right?" He looked over at Ultra Magnus, who was in the corner of the room, tidying the furniture. "I said it's got to be better than Cybertron, right?"

"Speaking as someone whose been strangled, attacked by a technoparasite, and taken hostage—and shot in the head—I'm *still* glad I signed up to this quest," said Rung, sincerely. "And I'm certain everyone else feels the same. Everyone who's, um, still alive."

"Thank you, Rung. That's good to hear. Thank you for coming." Rodimus clicked the laser scalpel back on and resumed his doodling.

"Er..." Rung looked helplessly at Ultra Magnus, who put down a table and synthesized a cough.

In the right hands, a cough could be a weapon: properly deployed, it could silence an argument or empty a room. But Ultra Magnus liked to take things to extremes, and in his supersized hands a cough carried the force of a full-scale nuclear assault. An Ultra Magnus cough was loud enough—intimidating enough—to make an army of Decepticons turn and run. Only the Duly Appointed Enforcer of the Tyrest Accord could clear a battlefield by clearing his throat.

Rodimus jumped, snapping his scalp in two.

"Rung asked to see you," said Magnus patiently. "Not the other way round."

"Oh. Sorry. Sorry, Rung. What did you want to see me about? It's not about visiting Fortress Maximus in the brig, is it? Because I think that's a comically bad idea."

"It's about Red Alert, sir."

The atmosphere in the room changed. Rodimus climbed off his desk and sat down behind it. "Magnus?" he said, without taking his eyes off Rung. "Make sure we're not disturbed."

Ultra Magnus left the room, stopping only to straighten a chair. The door closed behind him.

"You heard about the accident," Rodimus said.

"While I was on shore leave, yes. I heard there was an explosion—something to do with the engine rooms. I've heard various accounts."

"Right," said Rodimus slowly, pretending to be more interested in the broken scalpel.

"Before my own accident, Red Alert paid me a visit. Sir, what I'm about to tell you—you know I'd never divulge confidential patient information unless lives depended on it. You understand that, don't you?"

"What makes you think lives are at stake?"

"Red told me he'd heard a voice—a voice from below decks. From underneath the ship itself. He thought something was going on. And not long after that... he had his accident."

Rodimus leaned forward conspiratorially. "The thing you have to remember about Red Alert," he whispered, "and I'm choosing my words carefully because mental illness is a sensitive subject, and because I respect what you do... but the thing you have to remember about Red Alert is that he's as mad as a bag of scraplets."

"He's *what*?"

"I mean I like him—I like him a lot. And I feel bad that he's out of commission. But..."

Rung snatched the two halves of the scalpel and fixed them back together with an impatient twist of his wrist. "I heard it as well," he said firmly. "The voice." He fixed Rodimus with a stare. "What do you think of *my* mental health?"

"You heard it too?"

"Red recorded it. Put it on a data slug. He played it to me."

Rodimus held up his hands in surrender. "Okay. I'll look into it. First I've got to see Brainstorm about the proton missile launchers, and then—"

"I didn't know we had any proton missile launchers."

"Yeah, we bought from the Hedonians—turns out they're the most well-connected arms dealers in the galaxy. Can you believe it?" Rodimus smiled and shook his head at the thought. "And then I promised Perceptor I'd let him tell me about some scientific discovery or something. There are only so many times you can do a Prime before someone calls you out."

"Do a Prime...?"

"When Optimus wanted to get out of doing something he'd say he'd had a Matrix-induced vision and he had to work out what it meant."

Rung looked at him skeptically. "And after Perceptor?"

"After that, as I say, I'll look into it. If there's something going on—and it sounds like there might be—I'll get to the bottom of it."

Rodimus ushered Rung into the corridor and raced off, leaving a scribble of tyre marks in his wake.

"How did it go?" asked Magnus, adjusting the plaque so that it was at right angles to the door.

"Did you hear any of that?"

"No. If Primus had intended for his children to eavesdrop, he'd have—"

Rung laughed. "Actually, I could do with a chat."

"A chat?"

"Don't worry. I'll do all the talking. I just need someone to listen to me."

INTERLUDE ENDS



TRANSFORMERS

THE IDW COLLECTION • PHASE TWO, VOLUME 3



The *Lost Light* finally reaches the Crystal City, home to the mysterious Circle of Light. Plus, follow along as **Rewind** tells the crew a pre-war story involving **Orion Pax**! Meanwhile, in the present day, the former **Optimus Prime** follows a rogue group of Decepticons into one of the greatest mysteries ever to face the Autobots. Back on Cybertron, violence breaks out in the heart of the city and **Prowl** looks for someone to blame!

Collects *More Than Meets The Eye* #9–13 and the 2012 *Annual*, *Robots in Disguise* #10–11 and the 2012 *Annual*, plus the *Thundercracker*, *Bumblebee*, and *Megatron Spotlights*.

IDW[®]

www.idwpublishing.com

Licensed By:

