

IDW

#0 • FCBD 2014

SCIOLI
BARBER

FREE COMIC BOOK DAY

TRANSFORMERS
vs. G.I. JOE



TOM
SCIOLI

TRANSFORMERS vs. G.I. ★ JOE

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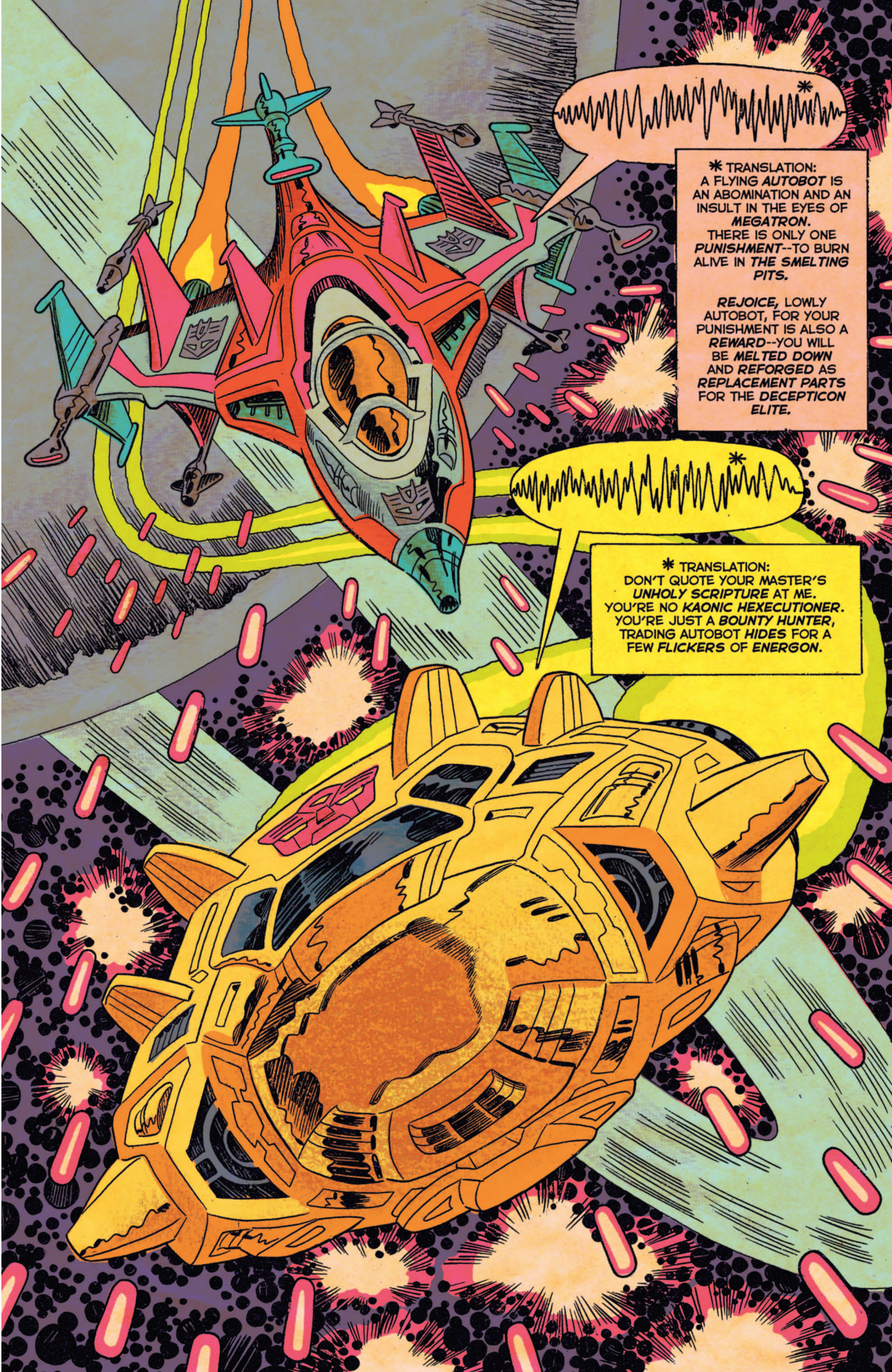
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* TRANSLATION:

A FLYING AUTOBOT IS AN ABOMINATION AND AN INSULT IN THE EYES OF MEGATRON.

THERE IS ONLY ONE PUNISHMENT--TO BURN ALIVE IN THE SMELTING PITS.

REJOICE, LOWLY AUTOBOT, FOR YOUR PUNISHMENT IS ALSO A REWARD--YOU WILL BE MELTED DOWN AND REFORGED AS REPLACEMENT PARTS FOR THE DECEPTICON ELITE.

* TRANSLATION:

DON'T QUOTE YOUR MASTER'S UNHOLY SCRIPTURE AT ME. YOU'RE NO KAONIC HEXECUTIONER. YOU'RE JUST A BOUNTY HUNTER, TRADING AUTOBOT HIDES FOR A FEW FLICKERS OF ENERGON.

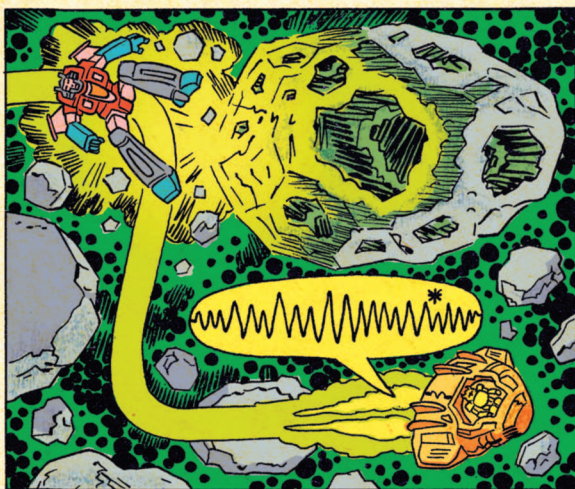
TRANSFORMERS v



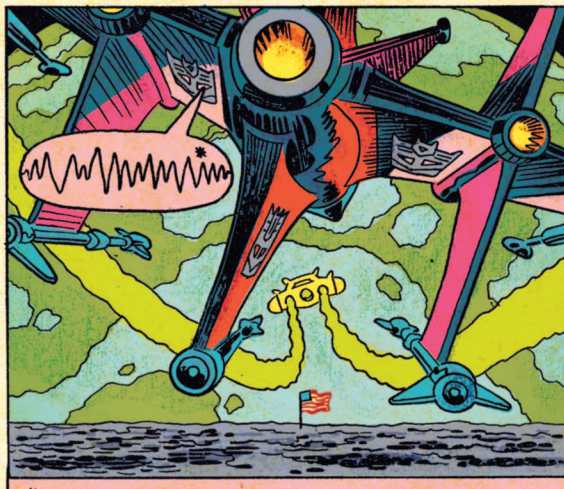
*TRANSLATION: THOUGH SOME LESSER WORLDS PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON GOLD, THE DECEPTICON BOUNTY ON YOUR SAD LITTLE HEAD WOULD SCORE ME BARELY ENOUGH ENERGON FOR THE RIDE HOME.



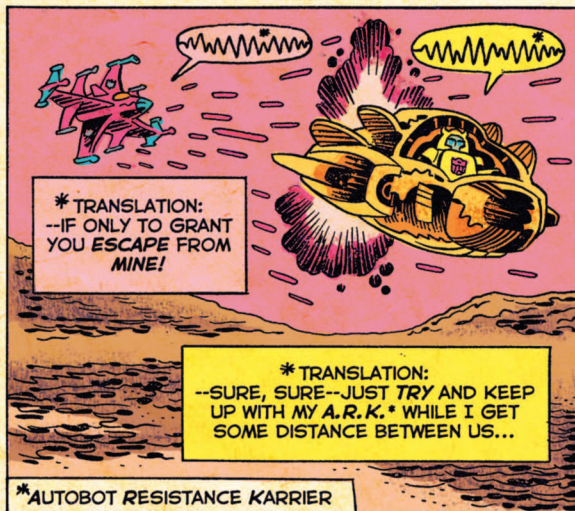
*TRANSLATION: NO--YOU'RE MY GOLDEN TICKET TO BIGGER THINGS--MY KEY TO THE DECEPTICON ELITE. YOU'RE THE LURE I'M GOING TO USE TO DRAW OPTIMUS PRIME OUT OF HIDING.



*TRANSLATION: IF THAT'S THE BEST YOU CAN DO, LORD OPTIMUS HAS NOTHING TO FEAR.



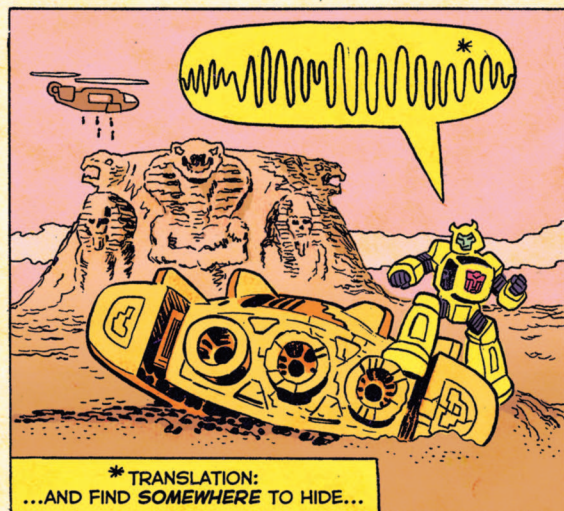
*TRANSLATION: BRASH YOUTH! YOU'LL SCREAM TO THE STARS THEMSELVES WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH YOU. YOU'LL BEG FOR THE DECEPTIKING'S WRATH--



*TRANSLATION:
--IF ONLY TO GRANT
YOU ESCAPE FROM
MINE!

*TRANSLATION:
--SURE, SURE--JUST TRY AND KEEP
UP WITH MY A.R.K.* WHILE I GET
SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN US...

*AUTOBOT RESISTANCE KARRIER



*TRANSLATION:
...AND FIND SOMEWHERE TO HIDE...

THE FLIGHT OF BUMBLEBEE

SOME MISSIONS ARE SO SECRET, SO SENSITIVE, SO ERIOUS THAT AS FAR AS AMERICA'S ARMED FORCES ARE CONCERNED—THEY NEVER OCCURRED. THE AGENTS SENT ON THESE CLASSIFIED MISSIONS ARE CODE-NAMED.....

G.I. JOE

SCARLETT, WHEN ARE WE GONNA GO TO DINNER?

REMEMBER, JOES—DON'T STEER, JUST LEAN. IT'S INTUITIVE. YOU'LL GET THE HANG OF THESE J.U.M.P.S.* IF YOU DON'T OVERTHINK IT.

WE'VE EATEN TOGETHER ALMOST EVERY NIGHT SINCE YOU JOINED UP, DUKE.

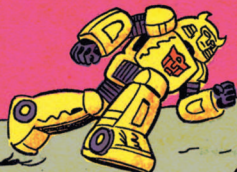
**OPERATION:
DOOMSDAY
SEED**

*JET UNIT:MOBILE PROPULSION

**A
HASBRO
IDW
SCIOLI
AND
BARBER
PRODUCTION**

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT YOU AND ME SITTING ELBOW-TO-ELBOW IN A MESS HALL FULL OF JOES. I'M TALKING ABOUT AN OLD SCHOOL REAL AMERICAN DATE. LIKE THE 80'S.

SCARLETT DOESN'T FRATERNIZE, ROOKIE.



SNAKE EYES
Lone Wolf with a
Samurai Sword

COBRA!!

BOOM!

YOU SEEM LIKE A NICE
GUY, DUKE. MAYBE COVER
GIRL WILL GO TO DINNER
WITH YOU.



ROADBLOCK
World's Deadliest Chef



DUKE
The New Guy



SCARLETT
Two Words:
Crossbow Grenades

LEMME GUESS,
SCARLETT...
"I'M MARRIED
TO G.I. JOE."

IT'LL HEAL,
BREAKER.

EXACTLY! OUR MISSION IS
ALL THAT MATTERS--I CAN'T HAVE
DISTRACTIONS INTERFERING WITH
MY COMBAT EFFECTIVENESS.

SO YOU'RE SAYING YOU'LL GO
OUT WITH ME WHEN THEY PUT
A MAN ON SATURN?



DOC
Good with a Knife



COLONEL "TOMAHAWK"
ABERNATHY
You Can Call Him "HAWK"

I'M SAYING, DUKE--I'LL START DOING THE **NORMAL** THINGS **NORMAL PEOPLE** DO WHEN THE WAR IS OVER...WHEN THE MAN WHO KILLED MY PARENTS--WHO KILLED SNAKE EYES' SISTER--IS **CAUGHT AND PUNISHED**.

THE JOE WHO BRINGS ME COBRA COMMANDER'S SHINY CHROME HELMET...

...I'LL MARRY THAT JOE.

SO THIS IS DOCTOR VENOM'S **PROJECT CREEPER**. KILLER VEGETABLES. THE NAME SAYS IT ALL.

TERRIFYING, ISN'T IT, BLUDD? HOW QUICKLY THESE **G.I. JOES** THROW THEIR LIVES AWAY.

THE GARDEN OF DARKNESS, DEADLIEST OF LAIRS--

JUST TRY AND SURVIVE OUR APPLES AND PEARS.

SCARLETT, IT'S A DATE!

ROCK 'N' ROLL
Jimmie Paige on a Machine Gun

STALKER HAS THE RIGHT IDEA. WE CAN USE OUR JETPACKS TO TAME THESE HUNGRY VINES.

DONTCHA WISH YOU HAD A J.U.M.P. PACK NOW, ROADBLOCK?

BAZOOKA, WATCH YOUR LINE OF FIRE. I LIKE MY FACE JUST THE WAY IT IS.

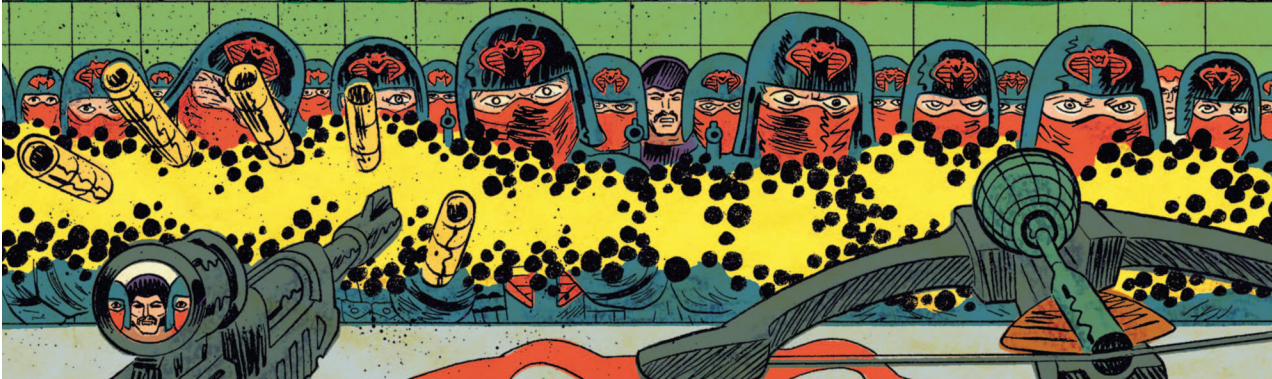
SORRY, SNAKE.

I LIKE A ROAD-TESTED TECHNOLOGY I CAN TRUST.

MY M.A.C. SALAD SHOOTER IS JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED.

BAZOOKA
When Brute Force is Called For

STALKER
Warrior
Wunderkind



THANK GOODNESS
YOU ARE HERE.

OH, THE THINGS
THESE TERRORISTS
MADE ME DO.

IF YOU HURRY, PERHAPS YOU CAN
STOP COBRA COMMANDER FROM
DROPPING TONS OF THESE SPORES
ON A CITY FULL OF INNOCENTS.

JUST DOING
WHAT YOU WERE
TOLD, RIGHT?

MY ARM!
MY EYE!
GET HELP
BEFORE
I DIE!



MAJOR BLUDD
Terrorist
Poet



DOCTOR VENOM
Healer
Man of Medicine

JOES, YOU HEARD
WHAT THIS CREEP SAID--
WE'VE GOT TO FIND THE
HEAD COBRA BEFORE HE
STARTS DROPPING THIS
GARBAGE ON
CIVILIANS.

CREEPER
BOMBS.
CREEPER
MISSILES.
CREEPER
GRENADES.
THEY'VE GOT
BOXES OF
THIS STUFF.

WE CAN COVER MORE GROUND
IF WE SPLIT UP. NOW GO TO IT!

SCRAMBLE

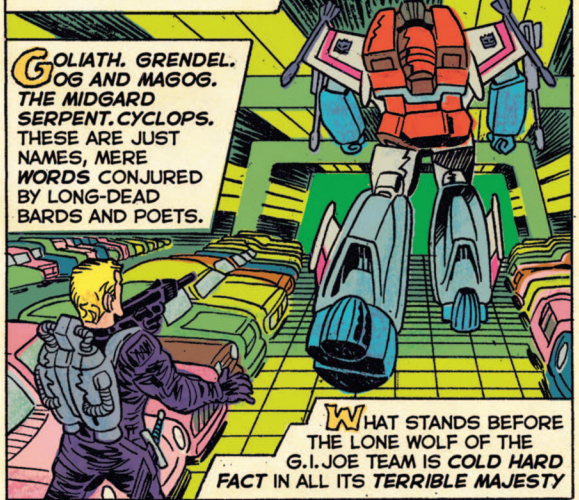
★ SILENT INTERLUDE

CARS! ONE OF EVERY KIND. COBRA COMMANDER IS AN INDISCRIMINATE CONSUMER OF WORLDLY GOODS, WITH NO ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE! LIKE THE PHARAOHS OF OLD, HE'S GATHERED THE TREASURES OF THE WORLD.



DON'T YOU REALIZE, COBRA COMMANDER--YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU!!?

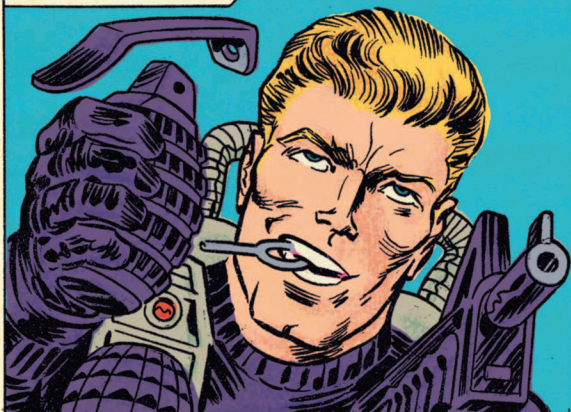
THE SIGHT THAT FILLS SNAKE EYES' STEELY BLUE EYES IS ONE TO FREEZE THE BLOOD AND STOP A CLOCK--A PANORAMA THAT HARKENS BACK TO ANCIENT DAYS.



GOLIATH. GRENDEL. OG AND MAGOG. THE MIDGARD SERPENT. CYCLOPS. THESE ARE JUST NAMES, MERE WORDS CONJURED BY LONG-DEAD BARDS AND POETS.

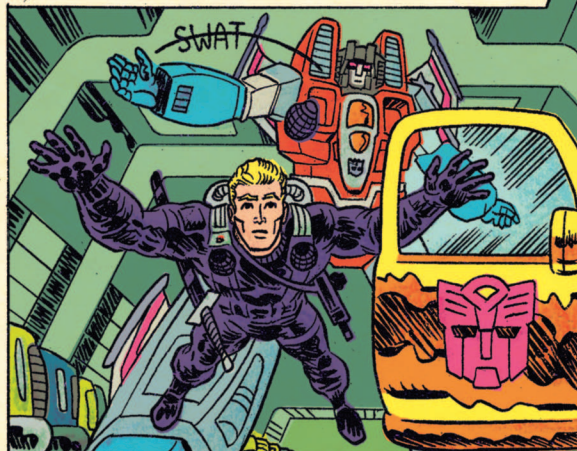
WHAT STANDS BEFORE THE LONE WOLF OF THE G.I. JOE TEAM IS COLD HARD FACT IN ALL ITS TERRIBLE MAJESTY

SNAKE EYES HAS THE SPEED, ACCURACY AND SILENT CUNNING OF A NINJA AND THE TRAINING OF A JOE. HE DOES MORE PLANNING IN A SPLIT-SECOND THAN MOST PEOPLE DO ALL DAY.



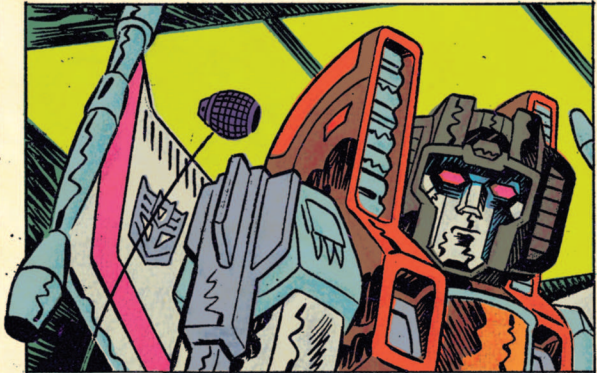
IN THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE YOU OR I TO BLINK, SNAKE EYES ASSESSES THE SITUATION AND CHOOSES THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB.

IF SNAKE EYES THINKS THIS ANGEL OF DESTRUCTION WILL MEET HIS NEMESIS IN SO WORKADAY A WEAPON, SNAKE EYES DESERVES EVERYTHING HE GETS.



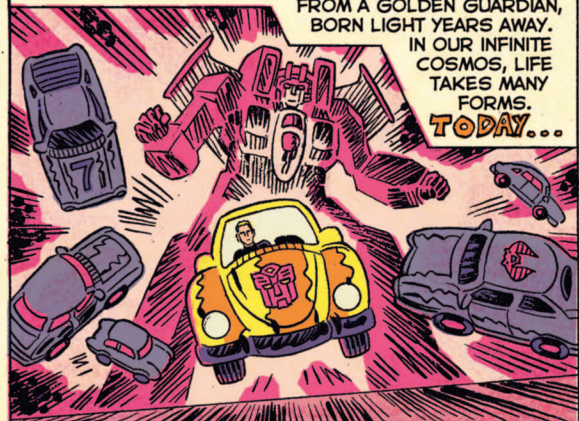
BUT WHEN THE GODS OF WAR CLOSE A WINDOW, THEY SOMETIMES OPEN A DOOR.

HE HURLS IT AT THE COLOSSUS OF KOH-BURU-LAH! ANY OTHER DAY, THIS WOULD BE ENOUGH--BUT TODAY IS NO ORDINARY DAY. SNAKE EYES DOESN'T--CAN'T--COMPREHEND THE REVELATORY TERROR THAT HE FACES.



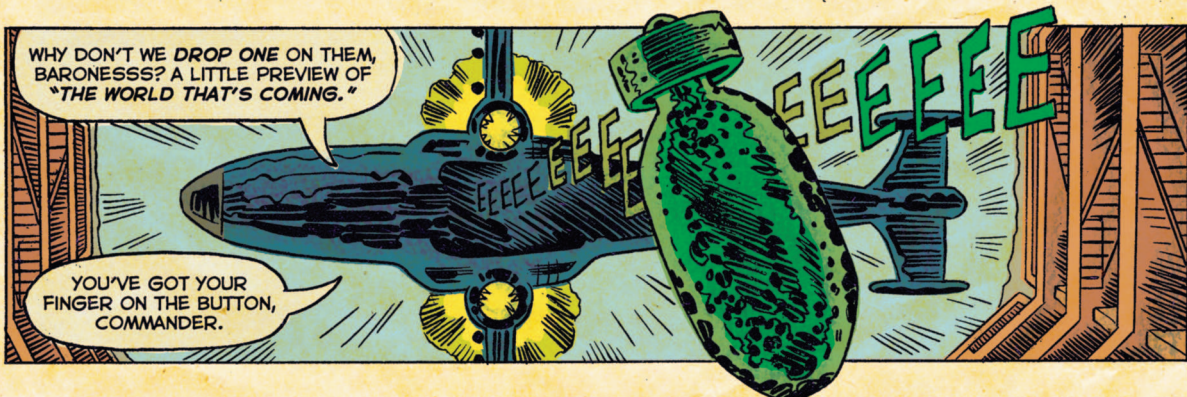
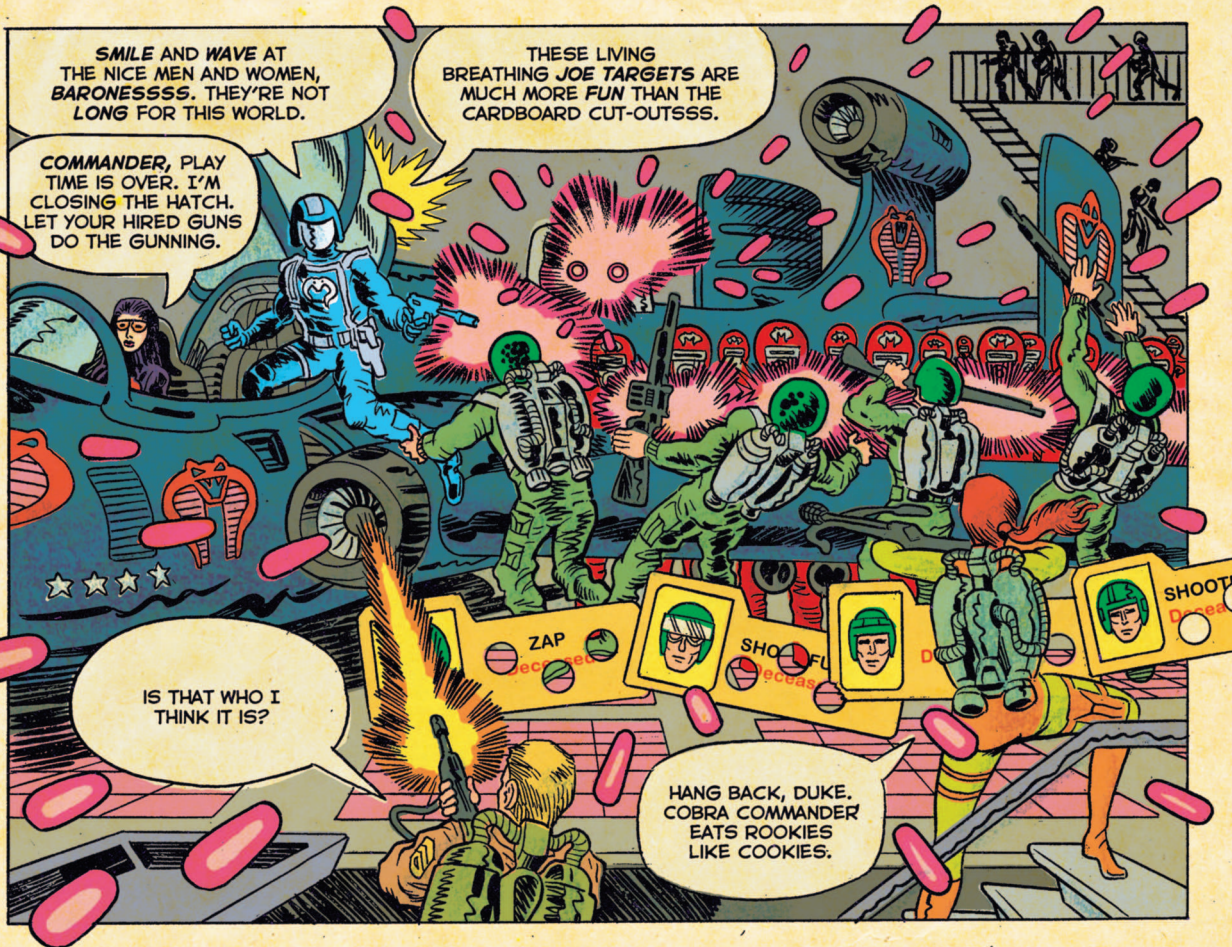
WHAT HE THINKS IS A COBRA COMBAT DRONE IS REALLY A LIVING ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION FORGED IN THE RED GLARE OF THE SMELTING PITTS OF AN IMPOSSIBLY-DISTANT GREY WORLD OF ETERNAL WAR. THIS PARAGON OF DEATH GOES BY THE NAME--STARScream!


SNAKE EYES ISN'T THE KIND OF MAN WHO ASKS FOR HELP. HE RELIES ON THE BRAINS HIS MOTHER GAVE HIM, THE TRAINING HIS MASTER GAVE HIM, AND THE TOOLS G.I. JOE GAVE HIM--BUT TODAY UNEXPECTED AID COMES FROM A GOLDEN GUARDIAN, BORN LIGHT YEARS AWAY.



IN OUR INFINITE COSMOS, LIFE TAKES MANY FORMS. **TODAY...**

SALVATION IS A GOLD BUG!





WILD BILL--ACE--THAT'S THE MAN OF THE HOUR, COBRA COMMANDER, AND HE'S GOT A PAYLOAD OF CREEPER BOMBS HEAVY ENOUGH TO LEVEL A CITY. THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT.

YEE-HAW! WE GOT THIS, HAWK--SIT BACK AND WATCH THE FIREWORKS.

WILD BILL
Helicopter
Pilot

ACE
Jet Pilot

CAREFUL, WILD BILL. I SEE AN UNKNOWN BOGEY AND...IS THAT SNAKE EYES IN A... TAXI CAB?

AM I TOO LATE FOR THE PARTY? BETWEEN CARS THAT DRIVE THEMSELVES AND FLYING COBRA DRONE ROBOTS, MY DANCE CARD IS PRETTY FULL.

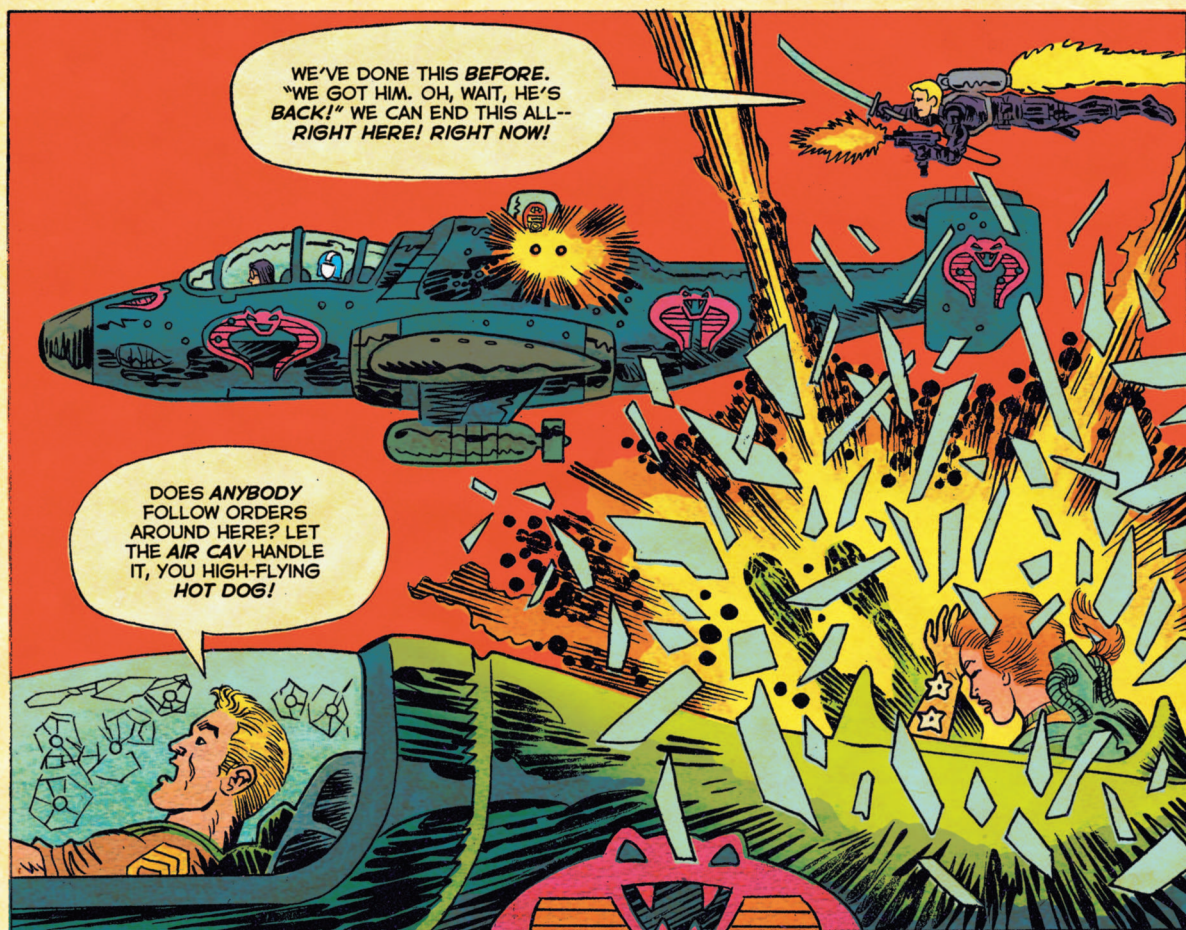
WE MISSED YOU, SNAKE EYES. WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.

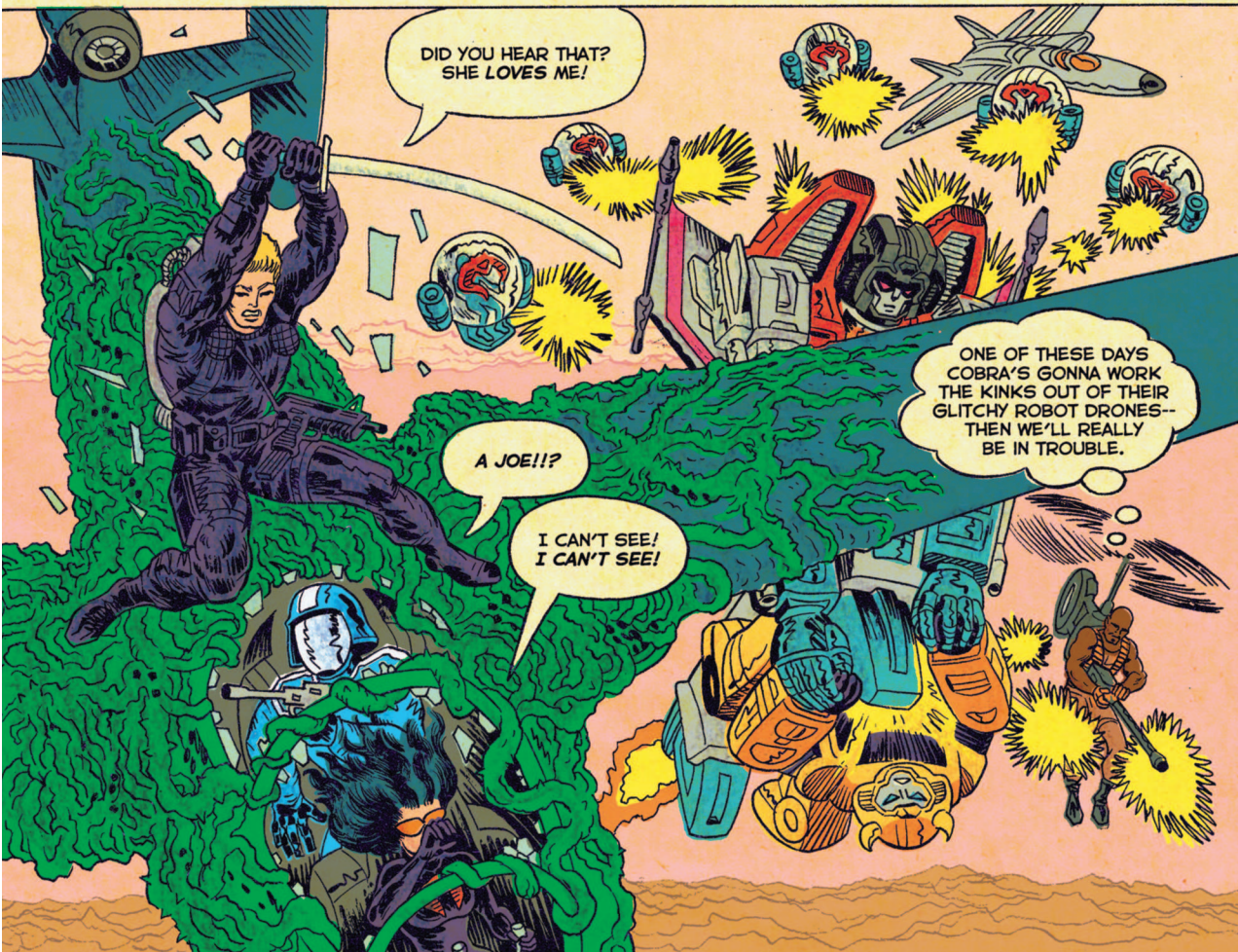
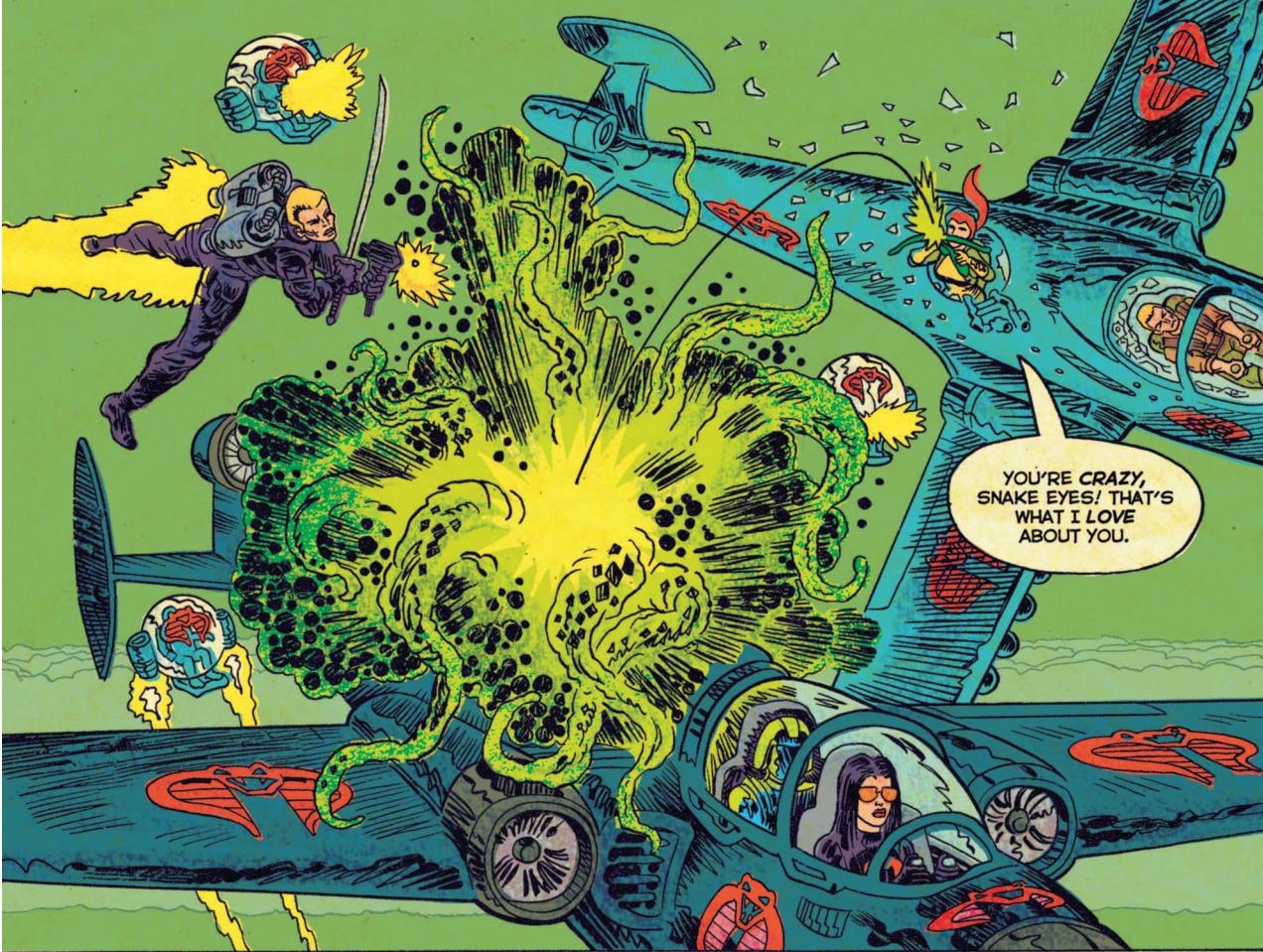
HAWK TO SCARLETT AND DUKE--KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. WILD BILL AND ACE CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE--OVER.

THANKS, SCARLETT. I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT BACK AT T.H.E. P.I.T.

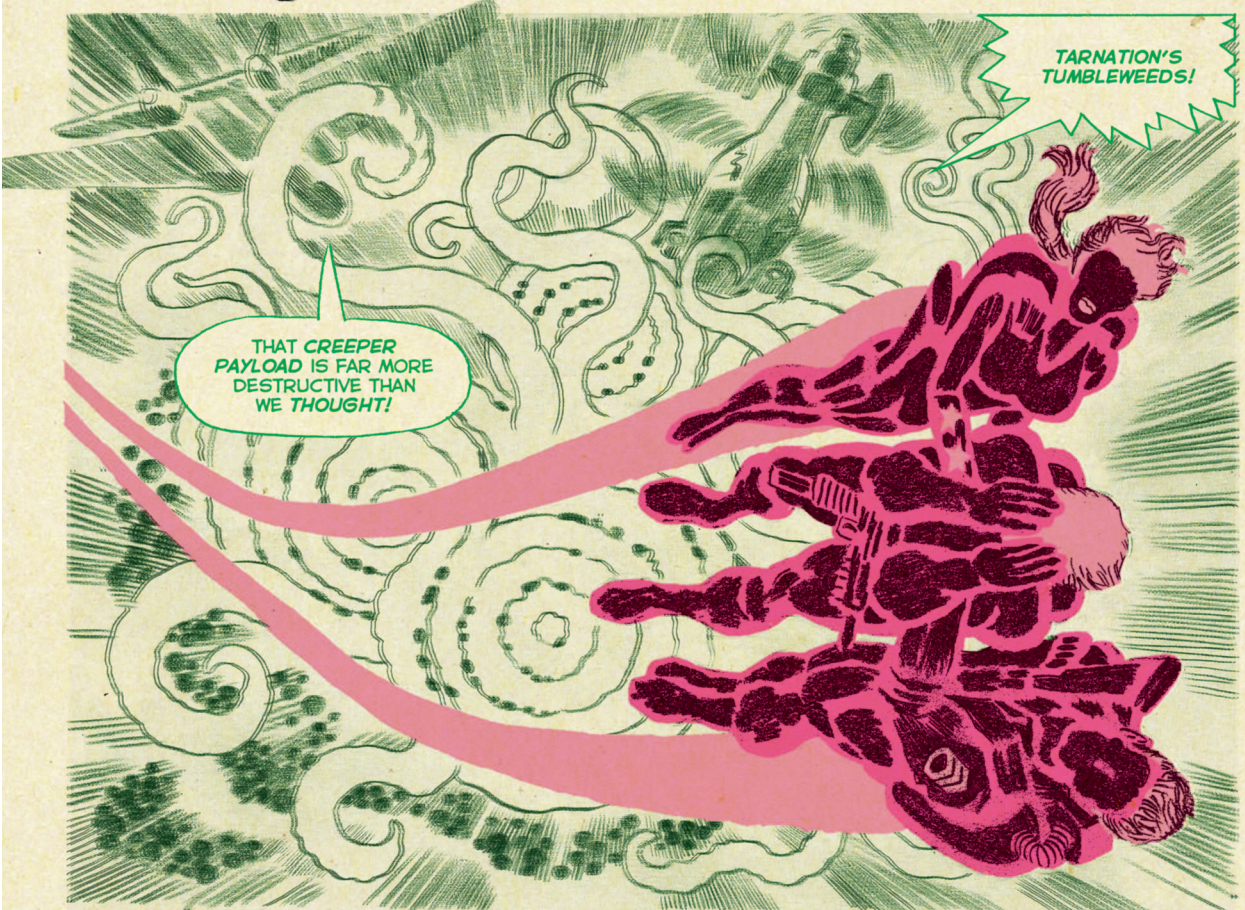
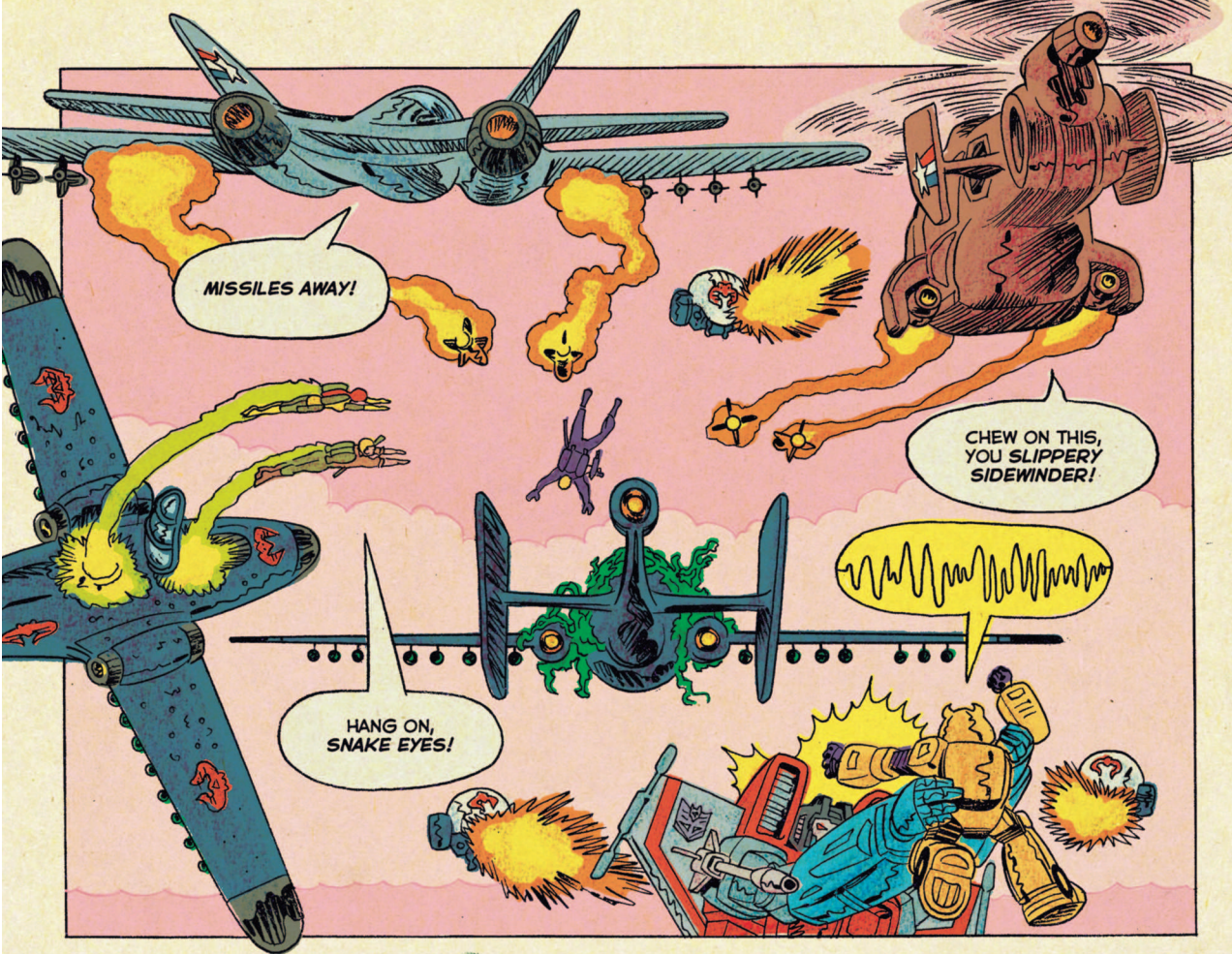
COBRA COMMANDER
Public Enemy
Number One

BARONESS
Death From Above









Below **CLASSIFIED** lies the G.I. Joe Headquarters, testing ground, and recuperation center...

T.H.E.
P.I.T.*

IF THIS IS WHAT
WINNING FEELS LIKE,
HAWK, I DON'T WANT
TO BE AROUND WHEN
G.I. JOE LOSES.

YOU'RE ONE OF THE
LUCKY ONES, DUKE.
I'D SAY THE SAME
ABOUT SCARLETT, BUT
JUST LOOK AT HER.

YOU CAN SEE HIM
NOW, SCARLETT.

*TACTICAL HIGHEST ECHELON--PROTECTION, INVESTIGATION, AND TRAINING!

THEY NEVER FOUND HIS BODY
IN THE WRECKAGE...OR
THE BARONESS.

BUT THEY
FOUND THIS.

SO, SNAKE EYES--
YOU READY TO PICK
A DATE?

TRANSFORMERS vs. G.I. JOE: BATTLE DAMAGE

THE
END

EPILOGUE

AN UNIMAGINABLE DISTANCE AWAY! A DARK GALAXY,
FAR FROM THE WARMTH AND GLARE OF A LIVING SUN.

YOU HAVE DONE *WELL*, STARScream. I WOULD
HAVE PREFERRED HIM *WHOLE*, BUT UNDER THE
CIRCUMSTANCES, PRIME'S *GOLDEN BOY* IS FULL
OF INFORMATION...ENOUGH TO MAKE OPTIMUS A
MERE FOOTNOTE IN MY STORY OF CONQUEST.

YOU HAVE DELIVERED THE KEY
TO THE *DECEPTICON FUTURE*.

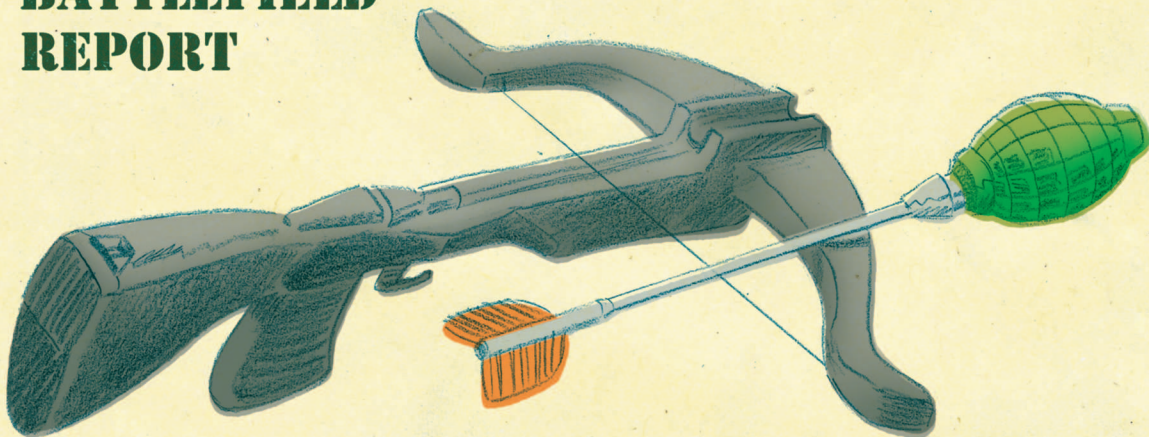
THERE WILL BE A PLACE
FOR YOU IN THE *HIGHEST*
ECHELON OF MY NEW
ORDER, STARScream.
ALL I CAN GIVE--IS *YOURS*
FOR THE ASKING.

MEGATRON--
--IS A KIND--
--AND
GENEROUS
GOD.

TRANSFORMERS vs. G.I.JOE:
THE GOLDEN BOYS
by TOM SCIOLI and JOHN BARBER

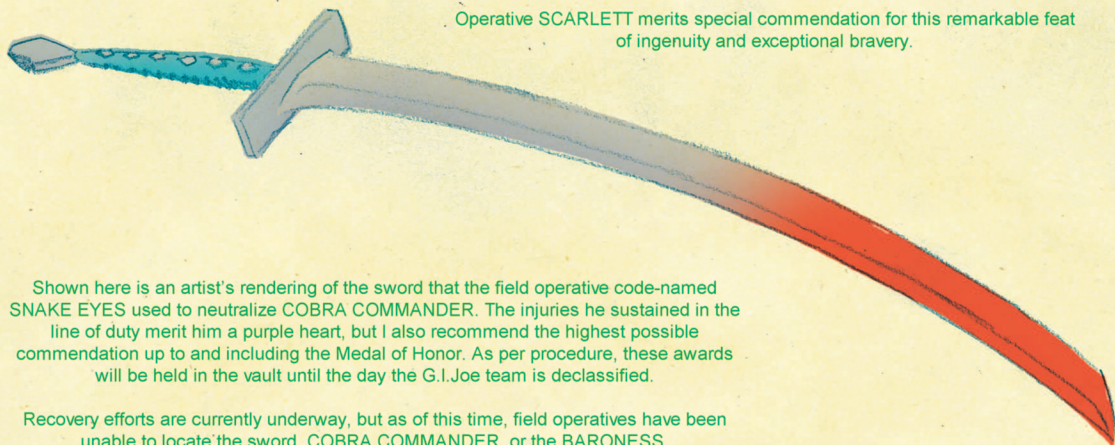
BE HERE IN 60 FOR MORE--AND BETTER!

BATTLEFIELD REPORT



The operative code-named SCARLETT improvised a "green arrow" by attaching one of the confiscated CREEPER GRENADES to an interchangeable crossbow bolt shaft. The field-constructed chemical weapon proved highly effective in the pursuit of COBRA COMMANDER.

Operative SCARLETT merits special commendation for this remarkable feat of ingenuity and exceptional bravery.



Shown here is an artist's rendering of the sword that the field operative code-named SNAKE EYES used to neutralize COBRA COMMANDER. The injuries he sustained in the line of duty merit him a purple heart, but I also recommend the highest possible commendation up to and including the Medal of Honor. As per procedure, these awards will be held in the vault until the day the G.I.Joe team is declassified.

Recovery efforts are currently underway, but as of this time, field operatives have been unable to locate the sword, COBRA COMMANDER, or the BARONESS.



Heirloom weapons are not unheard-of in combat situations, but this one is perhaps the strangest affectation I've ever encountered. Field Commander COLONEL ABERNATHY, code-named HAWK, carries an ancient tomahawk into battle. Its effectiveness as a weapon is dubious. The edges are dull, making it more of a bludgeon than a blade.

COLONEL ABERNATHY has led countless field missions, often placing himself deliberately in the thick of the battle, and has sustained no lasting injuries. Whatever he's doing is working and there's no reason to second guess his success rate. He has, in a moment of candor, admitted to me that he attributes his sterling combat record to the "luck" this family heirloom brings him. I see no reason to challenge COLONEL ABERNATHY on his assertion. As a matter of fact, if there were ever a candidate to succeed me in my post as Commander of PROJECT G.I.JOE, he would be on my short list. Considering the fact that he led the team that neutralized PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE, I recommend him for promotion to general.

F

- Brigadier General Lawrence J. Flagg
Commander
PROJECT G.I.JOE

AFTERWORD

BY JOHN BARBER

This may not be the first time that the G.I. JOE team has come head-to-head with the TRANSFORMERS crew—but, my friend, there has never been a comic like *TRANSFORMERS vs. G.I. JOE*!

IDW Publishing and Hasbro have been working hard at putting out the best TRANSFORMERS and G.I. JOE comics for the better part of a decade now, and we've always wanted to put the two casts together and really let things rip... but we didn't want to do it unless we had a story titanic enough to need the combined efforts of Earth's and Cybertron's finest heroes and vilest villains. So we let the idea percolate, until one night a brainstorm struck:

Tom Scioli, creator extraordinaire—he who brought us the *Myth of 8-Opus*, who delineated the smash *Godland*, who told the tale of the *American Barbarian*, and chronicled the history of the *Final Frontier*... What would Tom do with these iconic characters? Would he have any interest?

Well, a quick email got an affirmative answer, and we were off to the races. Somehow I attached myself on as “co-writer”—a euphemism for “getting dragged along by the runaway freight train of creativity that spawned this magnificent masterpiece!”

Tom whipped up a quick billion-page outline for the most epic of all epics; we threw around a couple ideas for a prologue story that could be a Free Comic Book Day comic, and Tom dove headlong into some intense research on the G.I. JOE and TRANSFORMERS characters and comics!

Tom built a fantastic outline for an introductory tale, I turned that outline into a script and sent it over to Tom, then he turned it into a completely *different* script (incorporating what worked from my version, of course!) and devised the strikingly compelling layouts you've just read.

Somewhere along the line, this project took on a life of its own—make no mistake, Tom is firmly in the pilot seat while I'm sitting back, throwing out a suggestion here and there, and sipping cocktails while riding on Tom's coattails... but this comic book became something more than I could have ever imagined.

What I thought would be some sort of an emotionally honest pastiche turned into a comic book the likes of which I've never seen before. By turns poignant, funny, exciting, and bizarre—every page is an innovation; every panel a fractal fragment of eternity itself; every line of dialog a microcosm of teeming, bursting life.

In the pages that follow, you'll see some of Tom's process—and you'll see the range of TRANSFORMERS and G.I. JOE comics IDW has to offer. 2014 is the 30th Anniversary of the TRANSFORMERS, and the 50th Anniversary of the original G.I. JOE—and you better believe we're pulling out all the stops.

In addition to our thrilling collections of classic comics from throughout the histories of both brands, G.I. JOE: A REAL AMERICAN HERO continues the original 1982 G.I. JOE series—written by the legendary Larry Hama and drawn by the great S L Gallant. Meanwhile, watch for an extremely exciting announcement soon about the future of our *other* G.I. JOE books... I know what's coming, but I can't let the secret out yet. Rest assured: it's big, it's exciting, and it's going to combine the best of everything IDW and Hasbro have done while looking solidly at the future!

Over in TRANSFORMERS-land, don't miss DAWN OF THE AUTOBOTS—the perfect jumping-on point to our two monthly ongoing series, TRANSFORMERS: MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE by James Roberts and Alex Milne and TRANSFORMERS: ROBOTS IN DISGUISE by yours truly and Andrew Griffith! Plus, debuting just as you're reading these words is TRANSFORMERS: WINDBLADE—a 4-part epic by Mairghread Scott and Sarah Stone that you won't want to miss.

There's a lot more coming this year, and into the future. So welcome aboard, if you're just joining us—and thanks for sticking around, if you're returning. And set your watches, mark your calendars, and get ready for the event that will set the tone for the rest of the millennium:

TRANSFORMERS vs. G.I. JOE #1 hits the stands in July and picks up where we just left off. As to where we're going... well, you wouldn't believe me if I told you!

John Barber
(lucky to be along for the ride)

THE GREAT MACHINERY

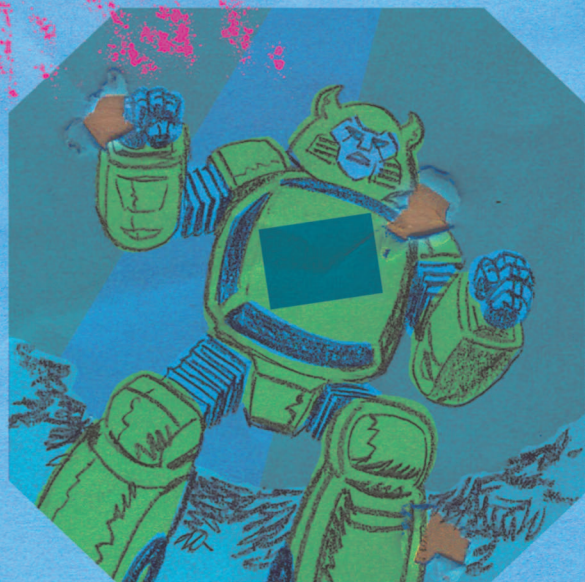
THE GREAT MACHINERY



THE GREAT MACHINERY

THE GREAT MACHINERY

THE GREAT MACHINERY



THE GREAT MACHINERY

STORY COMMENTARY

BY TOM SCIOLI & JOHN BARBER

PAGE 1

John: Open on some epic action... can't go wrong there. You and I revised this script so many times before we ever turned it in to anybody, I can't remember if this was always the opening... no, the original version of the outline was all from the G.I. Joe point of view, with Starscream and Bumblebee showing up later, right?

Tom: Right. Things really fell into place when we started it with the Transformers instead. It is *Transformers vs. G.I. Joe* and not the other way around. This scene echoes the early moments of the first *Transformers* cartoon, the chase through space from Cybertron to Earth. The scale of the ships is not given. The assumption would be that it's two vast space dreadnoughts filled with armies of Transformers rather than Starscream in his spaceship form chasing Bumblebee in a one-seater version of the Autobot Ark. I tried to come up with a design for Starscream's Cybertronian form that referenced the Decepticon flagship from the first *Transformers* cartoon. There was a version of the script where the mini-Ark was Bumblebee—that Bumblebee committed the ultimate crime against Megatron, hacking into his own transformation cog and becoming a true flying Autobot.

That first *Transformers* cartoon made a big impression on me. I think I was in first grade at the time, and you heard the characters referring to Megatron before you actually saw him. I wanted a little bit of that here. Build him up as this frightening character whose name is regarded with equal parts fear and reverence.

PAGE 2

John: This one definitely had some changes. I think Carlos [Guzman, series editor] pointed out that the original transition was a little difficult to follow.

Tom: You mean the transition from the space action to the Joe action? You and I were batting this story back and forth so much that we had a perfect understanding of every bit of it. Carlos was the first fresh set of eyes to look at it. In the early version it wasn't clear whether this space scene took place decades before, centuries before, or concurrent with the Joe mission. That final panel is what sets it all together. The Joe Tomahawk chopper and Bumblebee in the same panel. This isn't a long time ago in a galaxy far far away, this is right here, right now. The eternal present, which is where I think a new monthly comic works best.

John: Also, I'd like to point out that I love the flying over the flag on the moon, and I love the color changes here, from the purples of space on the top tier, to the greens as they approach Earth, to the magentas and yellows in the desert.

Tom: That flag on the moon feels right. It's such a late '70s, early '80s symbol. It was on a really memorable poster for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, with the Enterprise in the background. It was the centerpiece for the Phantom Zone criminals' first encounter with earthmen in *Superman 2*. It feels like it's part of the zeitgeist that *Transformers vs. G.I. Joe* evolved out of.

PAGE 3

John: I think "Doomsday Seed" is my biggest contribution to this comic book—it's a reference to the title of the 1982 *G.I. JOE #1*, which was called "Operation: Lady Doomsday." I love the way you overprinted the Cobra on it.



Tom: We had a million different titles for this issue. "Doomsday Seed" is a good one. It feels very Kirbyesque. I think his *Super Powers* comic was subtitled "Seeds of Doom." I'd say your biggest contribution to the story was continually pushing it in the direction of adventure. I came at it initially wanting to make almost a *Hurt Locker* type of real war early '00s period piece. The things you added kept pushing it more and more into the realm of sublime comicbookery. Having it take place in the ruins of ancient Cobra-La, having them fight the creeper vine, which was more of a background element in early drafts, stuff like that. Things that take advantage of the unlimited special effects budget that you have in a comic.

John: I love this page—this was one where you made a fairly late addition to the scene. Initially Snake Eyes was going to look like a regular guy straight through, right? This was way more dramatic.

Tom: The cast kept getting shuffled. At one point there was no Duke, no Snake Eyes; or one but not the other. The thing that fascinated me reading the comics is how similar Snake Eyes, Duke, and Hawk look prior to Snake Eyes' accident. I liked the visual of three identical musketeers having adventures together and one of them meeting a bad end. That initial impulse evolved into something more interesting, allowing the characters to be who they are. This being the first issue of a new continuity, how could we resist the opportunity to show Snake Eyes' origin as part of the mission?

PAGE 4

John: This was the craziest page in the script. No, wait, that's a lie, I think page 9 was the craziest. But this one was *pretty* crazy. The temple thing came from the first script I sent you,

right? Or was that in the outline? We had more set pieces that wound up on the cutting room floor, but we definitely kept the strongest material.

Tom: There were way more scenes than we could've ever fit into a single comic book. There was a chase through a system of canyons called "The Maze." You had the insight that we make it literally a maze, an ancient ruin. At a certain point in the process of consolidation we made the chase through the Maze and the Cobra base all one epic scene.

John: The thing here, and this is all you, is the way this splash page works. It's totally different from the way splash pages usually work in comics. You put it really eloquently in an email describing what you were doing...

Tom: It's almost anti-Kirby, or at least what we think of when we say "Kirbyesque." All the legions of tiny figures, the view far from the action, but Kirby actually did lots of pages where there are hordes of tiny figures particularly in his war comics and S.H.I.E.L.D. comics. This is a panel you can get lost in, following the details and the little figures. I want to reward close reading as much as possible. There's something very video game-like to it also.

John: There's so much story conveyed in this page. I mean, in all the splashes. It isn't just layering dialog or text on an image to add more information, it's that the image itself tells the story of an event or a unit of time. It's kinda like a Harvey Kurtzman cover in that way, or like a Carl Barks image—they'd both use single images that still encapsulated a sense of movement through time.



PAGE 5

John: If I'm not mistaken, you did this page last. So much going on here... I mean, it's intentional chaos. Scarlet having her talk with Duke and Snake Eyes while they're in the midst of all this is pretty funny.

Tom: Scarlett's pronouncement is Joseph Campbell Hero's Journey stuff. Scarlett with her bow and arrow feels like a mythological figure to me, a huntress. I studied the names' histories and geographical origins for a lot of the characters. Destro's Scottish origins led me to Hawk Abernathy's Welsh (Pictish) origins. There's not a lot of surviving information about Celtic mythology, but there seems to be a good bit with Welsh mythology. Scarlett's "challenge" feels like something out of the Mabinogion. "If you want a date, you'll have to bring me a bauble, but not just any bauble... Cobra Commander's glimmering glistening dome." It's a symbol for what is important to her, a symbol for *her* quest, *her* mission, to bring an end to Cobra's reign of terror.

PAGE 6

John: Do you remember when we started having Bludd rhyming throughout? That was in your outline, wasn't it?

Tom: I don't remember. I kept referring to him as a poet, like he is in the Hama comics, but I think you were the one to make him into a conversational rhymier, like the Alan Moore version of Kirby's Demon Etrigan. In the G.I. Joe cartoons, there are all these coarse, broad, Dick Van Dyke in Mary Poppins caricatures of English accents, Major Bludd being one of them. It occurred to me that we could incorporate some cockney rhyming slang into his poems, hence the "apples and pears" as a synonym for "up the stairs," as I learned in *Austin Powers 3*.

John: And there's Hawk's tomahawk. It's a great design.

Tom: There's so much of "The Western" in G.I. Joe. It wasn't a big genre for our generation, but for the writers and artists that crafted G.I. Joe, it was the defining genre of TV and movies. A tomahawk seemed like a good fit. If G.I. Joe is a Real American Hero, what's a more uniquely American weapon than the tomahawk? It's shaped somewhat like the "Action Team" logo of the 1970s G.I. Joe toys. I wanted to have some relics that suggest a deep history to G.I. Joe, perhaps dating back centuries.

PAGE 7

John: I love this. The original "Silent Interlude" was *G.I. Joe* #21, the silent issue. It's a real icon for our generation of comics creators... at least for me, it was the first comic I read that really made me think of the *form* of comics. There've been a lot of homages to it, over the years, but I think this one-page version is the most unique. You added this in fairly late in the game, too. It seems so integral now.

Tom: Right, it's the most famous issue of *G.I. Joe*, the one issue that's got a rock-solid place in the pantheon of all-time-great comic books. Prior to working on this series, it was one of the few G.I. Joe comics I owned. I sought it out based on its great reputation and it did not disappoint.

Also, I was trying to move away from my Kirby influence when we started working together, and you kept encouraging me to embrace my Kirby roots. This is the page where I really dived head-first into the Kirby pool. The breathless narration, the six-panel grid, the drawing style all scream "Kirby!!!" The idea of having a comics page with this many words, but no actual dialogue, and calling it a "Silent Interlude" was too much to resist.

PAGE 8

Tom: I think there were a bunch of drafts where Cobra Commander didn't show up at all, he was just an off-camera presence that was talked about but not seen. Now I can't imagine this issue without him. Since it's a #0 issue, I felt like we couldn't put everything into the mix just yet, but I realized "this is *Transformers* vs. *G.I. Joe*." In a way, this issue is the first G.I. Joe story and the last G.I. Joe story. It's the epilogue to the *Transformers*' story. The war is over. Megatron rules Cybertron and Optimus Prime lives in exile. Their separate stories end here. Next issue you're no longer reading *Transformers*, no longer reading *G.I. Joe*, you're reading this new thing called "*Transformers* vs. *G.I. Joe*." We're in uncharted territory.

John: This is a great page—the action is complex but you distilled it down to three images. The structure of these panels is very complex. They're super-easy to read, but there are so many events going on at the same time—I mean, there's a rule of thumb in comics that every panel should have one event in it, that there should be only one thing changing states in a panel. But we talked from day one (or, you talked and I nodded along on the phone) about throwing that convention out the window.

PAGE 9

John: Here's everybody all together for the big crescendo. This was the page that was totally nuts in the script. You actually wrote in "just trust me," right?

Tom: I knew there was a lot going on, but the system of cartooning, the Hama-esque way characters are embodied by their vehicles, I knew I could make all the multiple vectors work. But, yeah, as a written description I knew you guys would be wondering "how is he going to fit all this into one picture?"

PAGE 10

John: I love the action here. Duke picked a heck of a day to join G.I. Joe.

Tom: Duke being a rookie is interesting, too. Everybody in G.I. Joe comes there from their various former careers. Duke obviously achieved a lot before he joined G.I. Joe, but once there, among the best of the best, he's just the new guy. It goes back to the things that hit me reading all those old Joe comics in preparation for this. I knew the TV cartoons. I thought Duke was the main guy. Reading the comics, he's a johnny-come-lately. He shows up 20-some issues in, starts barking orders at everybody and they're all like, "who the hell is this guy?"

PAGE 11

John: The creeper bomb detonates, and nobody has time to process what's going on with Starscream and Bumblebee.

Tom: Right, they're just a particularly crazy element of the chaos, so they don't seem like anything too out of the ordinary. Cobra uses robots which often go berserk turning on their creators, so the Joes assume that's what's going on here.

John: I just noticed you went to full-bleed [the art extending past the edge of the page] here. I'd missed that. Smart move... it ramps things up. I bet most people don't see that, but they'll feel it.

PAGE 12

John: Silent. Neither of us ever suggested adding text here, did we? Or, I mean, did I? It's way better this way. I hope I didn't suggest that.

Tom: I don't think so. Snake Eyes is known for silence, for his silent interlude, his silent demeanor, so this moment where we witness the birth of the Snake Eyes we know (and the death of Cobra Commander) demands a moment of reverent silence. I tried to make the black of the background darker than the black line that's been employed throughout the rest of the issue. I want it to be a deep funereal black, where you can almost see your reflection in it. This is the most important single moment of the story. I never drew a page that had this much weighing on its shoulders. This is the turning point. Up until now things were kind of swashbuckly, '60s-style comic book fun. Now we've moved into a realm of real stakes and consequences.

John: I do remember that as we were closing in on the final version of the script, this page was on a right-hand-page for a draft. You hated that. I thought it worked—and I wasn't just saying it, I really thought the page had a powerful pull that drew the eye over to it so you were fighting to stay on the left-hand page (which was also a splash). It was something Victor Moscoso would do, where there was a big image on the right, or on the bottom of a page, that made you say "how does that

happen" even when you're not "supposed" to be seeing it yet, because you're on an earlier panel.

All that said, you're 100% right; it's better on the page-turn.

Tom: I know what you mean, and I see the virtues of it being on the right hand side of the page. You're exactly right, the gravity of seeing a glimpse of a moment in the future there's all kinds of cool subliminal stuff that happens that enriches the reading experience. Talking about things that you can only do in comics, that's one of them for sure. I'd like to work on something that does that, but not this moment. It really felt like it had to be something that hits you in the face. A moment this important had to be on the page turn.

PAGE 13

John: This is what passes for a calm page in this comic. The use of color, switching between the magenta and greens, is wonderful throughout this scene.

Tom: We've talked about the artistic influences being brought to bear in this series. Kirby being the big one. Hama and [original *G.I. Joe* artist Herb] Trimpe. Steranko. One that I really wanted to incorporate was [Frank] Miller. The bottom panel and the prior page are where the Miller influence starts to seep in.

PAGE 14

John: One last page of breathless action—no time to even pause before we're off to the next scene.

Tom: This is dénouement for the continuous action sequence that's made up most of the comic up to this point. I like Ace and Wild Bill as a Laurel and Hardy, Artoo and Threepio contrasting comedy duo. For some reason in the course of writing I saw them as almost embodying Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. Wild Bill with the moustache and sunglasses bears a similarity to Stan's persona. Ace's aloof, just-the-facts, slightly sci-fi demeanor reminds me a bit of Jack.

PAGE 15

John: The colors here surprised me the most of any pages. I wasn't expecting brilliant red-white-and-blue, but it's so, so powerful when you turn the page. Also, a pretty convincing false ending...

Tom: I wanted to show T.H.E. P.I.T. as a blueprint. Maps and schematics pop up here and there in the old Joe comics, sometimes in-story. I wanted to see how far I could push that. The red inset panel made sense. It's underground. A red knockout panel seems to suggest that while setting a red white and blue color scheme. This is a point where the characters are adjusting to a new reality, having just had the adventure of their lives. If they only knew that the mission awaiting them next issue is even wilder.

PAGE 16

John: I love this page. We'd talked about changing it so we'd end on Prime, right? Actually, the very first script *did* end on Prime. This is better. Starscream kneeling to his leader, we hear "Megatron" for the first time... this is great stuff. Great composition... and the colors sell it. Going from the last page to this... there's no hiding the menace here.

Tom: Right, you wrote an epilogue page where Prime shows up. I felt strongly that when Prime shows up in the series it should be a real moment, where it gets to play out. Having him show up as a teaser for next issue didn't feel right. That said, everybody loves Optimus Prime. I love Optimus Prime. You buy a comic with the name "Transformers" on it, you want to see Optimus Prime. So we give a little taste, a hologram, but his grand entrance is yet to come.