

Transformers: Deadmetal

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Submitted: February 15, 2009

Updated: April 26, 2009

My first ever Transformers fanfic and since the first part seemed to go down well, I decided to continue it into a full story.

Roadtrain (c) Flankfire (of FA)

Transformers (c) Hasbro

Everything else (c) me (Amy)

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1 - Apache Hunter

The steady booming *whumps* echoed down the near empty, battered and beaten street, reverberating off any and all surfaces that was available to the sound, rebounding into the chill, crisp night air, mixing intently with the swirls of snowflakes that were once again lazily floating down to earth to coat everything in their soothing coolness. A little further down the street, beyond the parked cars that lined the curbs, awaiting their owners like loyal pets born of metals and plastics, some hidden beneath a thinning layer of old snow, the Apache AH-64A helicopter hovered down to a neat and clean touchdown on the cracked surface of an outdoor basketball court, sending whirlwinds of snow up around it. The few who still cared about what was going on in the outside world beyond their own little world, took a small chance to peek out of their windows and at the ugly chunk of machinery that had just landed where their children had played just hours before. Their curiosity sated about the singular commotion outside, in the darkness across the street, they ambled their way further into the depths of their houses, reluctant to become involved in whatever was about to happen beyond the old wood and brick walls of their abodes. A wise choice, subconsciously made, since behind the blacked out windows of the Apache, sat no pilot or co-pilot. Just an empty cockpit. Not that that sort of thing was unusual now, the army now setting up their craft to be piloted by remote control under the notion it's better to lose weaponry rather than a good soldier. Too many men and women along with innocent civilians had lost their lives to a war that had long since lost meaning and plot and course.

This Apache was far more different than any other, not only because it bore no pilots, but because it also wasn't a chopper controlled remotely by someone sat at a desk console in some distant military base. This one had a mind of it's own, a task of it's own and a war of it's own. Either oblivious to it's current surroundings or just plain not caring about the fact that it had landed in the middle of a rundown neighborhood, it seemingly stared into the sheltered depths beneath the fly-over, it's vision sensors switching from shades of electric red, green and blue, scanning each parked and abandoned vehicle that sat like metallic corpses beneath the dual carriage way that lay silent above their heads. No one on the outside could see these sensor beams sweeping over each vehicle, diagnosing and searching as quick as a blink of an eye. Only the Apache could see them as they investigated every square inch of rusting, dented and scuffed metal, plastic and glass. The diagnosis varied from vehicle to vehicle; shot transmission, blown gear box, a heavily abused engine. None of these vehicles were going anywhere fast anytime soon. Then the scanner beam flickered over the old 4x4 sat in the corner, beside a large, chunky concrete support pillar.

It looked battered and beaten from the outside. Even the up-holstery was fraying helplessly. Anyone would dismiss it as an old car that had been abandoned, cast aside to rot away, not worth the money to have it towed to the scrap yard. But the Apache knew better. This wasn't a regular 4x4, just as the Apache wasn't a regular gunship. The large four propellers came to an abrupt halt, a dull metallic *click* signifying the sudden end to the gradual slowing *whump* of metal slicing through air, the smaller, tail blades swiftly following suit as they folded back, shifting position as two legs emerged, followed by long, metallic arms, the wing-bound weaponry shifting to somewhere within the eighteen foot mechanical monster's fore arms as the rest of the Apache's armour manouvered about it's new shape, taking on the form of a bipedal robotic organism, a crest of three spikes lining the top of it's head.

The newly formed robotic organism, designated Deadmetal, watched as the 4x4 swiftly switched from the decaying heap of mechanics into a robot of similar shape. Shorter in stature, the freshly transformed 4x4 only stood at sixteen foot, but bore a far worse goal than that of the freshly changed chopper that stood defiant before it. The one their kind called Carjack was here to destroy, to make life a living hell for those that dared to cross it's path, be it of organic nature like the Humans, or mechanical of nature, like the Autobot it had locked gazes with. A brief moment passed, a flurry of snow, the first to fall since the morning of that day and enourmous limbs almost laborously swung into action with more grace than one would expect from such a large, technological creature. An alien alloyed fist connected hard with an alien alloyed jaw, an electronic wail of what could pass off as glee emanating from the Decepticon Carjack as he landed the first blow. Deadmetal may not have been the strongest of the Autobot aligned hunters, but he made damn sure he was persistant enough to get on the wick of any Decepticon who opposed him or that he was sent after. Either way, he didn't give up easily, and Carjack knew it, having spent two weeks trying to fend off the Apache being after having received orders to fall back and return to base once he had claimed what he'd been sent out for; something that couldn't be achieved easily with an Autobot hot on your trail. Carjack had tried throwing him off his trail several times at the cost of his preciouese and fast depleting energy levels, each one failing, even when he thought he'd succeeded in doing so. But now, there beneath the fly-over, it would end, one way or another, and both sentient machines were determined to end their opponent, which consisted of each other.

As the two collided heavily, a blade flicked from Carjack's forearm, shearing down on Deadmetal's shoulder, instead gaining only sparks and a powerful shot in the armoured abdomen from the chain gun that was tucked snugly away in the Autobot's lower chest, wedged between his chest plating, leaving enough room for a perfect rotation in any forward facing direction. Carjack stumbled a few steps backward, the concrete beneath his feet shattering, cracks creeping outward like a spider's web beneath his weight. An electronic sounding growl and a swift string of curses and a large, shoulder mounted gun rotated quickly into position, firing three rounds of heated plasma charges, two hitting home, sending the Autobot into a near somersault, the blades on his back spreading outwards as he landed heavily, the impact sending out shockwaves that rattled the old chainlink fences that partially encircled the outdoor basketball court, and a small amount of concrete dust being shaken from the underside of the fly-over. Carjack approached the felled Deadmetal, sure that his shots had done enough damage to keep the hunter down.

It was a mistake, one rarely made. Deadmetal's leg swung up as soon as the transformed 4x4 was within range, knocking him off balance, sending him crashing to the already irreparable concrete ground, the sudden motion allowing him to neatly return to his feet, to look over Carjack as he became the one sprawled on his back, the impact having momentarily knocked his vision sensors out of whack, giving him the effect of seeing double with the occasional blur of static. The intereferance may have only lasted a split second, but it was enough for Deadmetal to return to his feet and produce a gun, one that was now aimed at his head. Carjack rolled from the path of the hot plasma shots that rained down where his head was once at to hiss angrily in the thin snow, and he rolled in a semi-circle and back onto his feet, a metal arm arcing downward, slamming into Deadmetal's back making the four blades rattle in metallic protest at such an action.

Deadmetal staggered forward, one step, two, three and on four, regained balance and swung around, a heavy metal bird-like foot swinging upward on the end of a long metallic leg, slamming into Carjack's chest, sending him a little way off the ground and backward, the force of the kick being enough to send him rolling roughly upon landing, sparks flying, concrete shattering as he bounced across the ground,

only to come to an abrupt halt against one of the support pillars for the road that stretched out over their heads, buckling and splintering the reinforced cylindrical stack of concrete. The Decepticon managed to climb part-way back to his feet with a growl before Deadmetal charged toward him, his giant fist coming down and around, smashing into the side of his head, swiftly followed by a round of shots from his arm mounted gun. Sparks jittered from Carjack's shoulder, but it wasn't enough to stop the determined robot from attempting another attack. Blocking Deadmetal's next blow, Carjack rolled awkwardly back to his feet, using his damaged arm as a sort of flail, the blade sliding out once more into sight, slicing a deep scar across his opponent's face, gaining an electronic-esque scream in return.

If any of the residents were to dare to pay any heed to what was going on outside, they'd have seen a flash of blue-white light, the result of a controlled EMP shot being aimed towards the damaged 4x4 as it continued its battle to fell the transformed Apache, but the days of trying to outrun and lose the Autobot had taken its toll on his energy reserves, making him slow to react. Now he knew why Deadmetal had only been chasing him and not constantly attacking, only being evasive. The numerous sudden attacks Carjack had performed on the chasing Deadmetal had cost him a few extra, precious hours of energy. Deadmetal was tiring too, though. He could see that much, in the way he attacked, the slight lag in attack reaction; the slightly awkward movements slowly growing in regularity. But it wasn't as bad as what Carjack was suffering now. He'd either have to escape or be destroyed. He didn't like the thought of the latter, so he used another burst of precious energy to shift back into the 4x4, narrowly avoiding contact with a large, metallic fist as he tore off, swerving around Deadmetal's feet and vanishing down the road with an angry roar of cloned engine. A swift curse and Deadmetal was back into his Apache AH-64A, cutting across the rooftops, in pursuit of an all-too-fast battered 4x4 that looked as if it should have been scrapped years ago.

The image of a micro-chip spun through Deadmetal's mind. Carjack's main objective was to steal it from a high security military research facility out in the middle of the wastelands that bordered the small city. He didn't know how he'd gotten away with it. Stealing the identity of one of the vehicles; yes. Easy enough. But to get past security without a Human driver or ID... Carjack should've been destroyed upon entrance, or at least deterred by the massive amounts of artillery used to defend the small base. That riddle aside, one that could possibly be solved later, Deadmetal returned to his current objective; Retrieve the chip and destroy the Decepticon before he returns to base. Easier said than done... Deadmetal grumbled to himself as he flew low over the rooftops, Carjack still in view on the road below, but not close enough to shoot at yet. Expending a little more energy, the Apache sped up to keep an even pace with the swerving and swearing, frantically agitated 4x4 below. Then the roof of the 4x4 tore open as the chain gun above raged into action. Carjack slid in a U-turn, acidic words spitting forth as he tore off down a side - road, the fire exits and over-hanging roofs of the buildings he raced between halting Deadmetal's gunfire with a frustrated, metallic grinding noise emanating into the cold night, seemingly being absorbed by the growing snow.

On the other side of the buildings, Deadmetal had lost track of Carjack. Nowhere to be seen. Just a short lived set of tire tracks in the thin snow that melted back into black tarmac below. Lowering carefully, his descent sending up billows and swirls of snow, he inspected the tracks all the more carefully. Sure enough, Carjack had finally succeeded in losing the hunter as his vision flashed a warning red; a sign he was starting to become dangerously close to temporarily shutting down. It'd happened before, but it was in a more open area, more secluded from mankind. Deadmetal was just inches away from a low roof that jutted out over a narrow road behind a cluster of tightly packed houses. To shut down here, would mean to destroy homes and possibly even kill their denizens. A choice was

made. Deadmetal ascended, turned effortlessly and headed back the way he had come, in search of a place to re-charge emergency energy reserves, or energy permitting; fly back to base.

Winding down narrow back-roads, Carjack smirked to himself. There was no sign of the Autobot. *His energy reserves must have gotten the better of him...* He thought idly, a slight hint of victory and smugness entering his voice.

He turned onto a disused road and headed south-west, back towards his own base. Halfway down the road, he was pulled out of his musings on whether he wanted to hand the micro-chip over or not. He was about to come to a conclusion on that subject when a voice tore through his thoughts, violently derailing them.

"Carjack?! Where the hell are you?" A voice growled angrily. "You're two days late on your delivery!" He knew the voice well. It was Krusher, the leader of the small group of Decepticons he'd been assigned to be working with, and neither got along all that great.

"I came across a little problem. It's all sorted now, so don't get your circuits in a knot!" Carjack snapped, all the more annoyed at having to expend more precious energy with a possible petty bickering match that was threatening to rear its ugly head.

"What kind of problem?" Came the next growl.

"The Autobot kind." He retaliated. "Now, if you don't mind, I'm red-lining on the energy reserve front." He snapped again and only caught the beginnings of a growling stab-back when he cut off the communications link between himself and Krusher.

Everything had gone silent once more, bar the low, growling hum of his copied engine. The idea of swerving off in the opposite direction to re-charge in a secluded spot was tempting. Very tempting, especially since there were plenty of military aircraft about and he was in possession of an much sought after micro-chip, the kind of micro-chip that could give any being of any nature a serious upgrade towards the nigh on un-stoppable level. A very tempting thought indeed. There were plenty of worlds out there, all with wars of their own, each side secretly begging for mercy or a large, powerful weapon to wipe out their opponents with. With that kind of power, Carjack could become among the strongest Decepticons in existence, a world indebted to him, willing to do anything he wants them to do... An army of his own... No more Krusher... No more Autobots...

Another swift, sharp turn on the snow-slick road, and Carjack sped off in the opposite direction. He'd made up his mind. He'd become stronger and come back and destroy everything that lay in his path and more. It would be a beautiful sight to behold. Magnificent and awe inspiring even. Not even Deadmetal would be capable of doing anything about it. All would tremble before the mass of the little-known Decepticon that was designated as Carjack.

Once he'd had a chance to re-charge, of course...

2 - Nyxen 3

Parked at the side of an old dirt track Carjack had landed on after his three month stint in space, having been spat out by a malfunctioning Space Bridge, was a 4x4. His favourite type of vehicle, durable, decent armour and almost capable of travelling across the cruelist of terrains on all fours. And best of all, it was his favourite colour; deep green. *Shame it ain't the best looking of motors ever...* he grumbled to himself. *Oh well, anythings better than this spark - forsaken EuroFighter everyone seems so keen on flying about.*

A electric red beam flitted over the lost looking vehicle and a nono-second later, wings retracted, folding in on themselves as the foreign 4x4 swiftly shooed the high performance jet out of Carjack's system. *Damn flying machines ain't worth the scrap they're made from.* He spat mentally as he took one last sensory sweep of his surrounding area and sped off further down the road, secretly hoping that no one had noticed that an alien craft had morphed into a mchine of their own design. He continued grumbling and doging about things in general, with the slight feeling of paranoia lurking at the back of his mind, wondering curiously about what Krusher was doing about his sudden disappearance with his much sought-after micro chip, which was still safely stowed away within a special secret compartment that Carjack had specially created for it.

Sat beneath the sideboard of a family kitchen, a washing machine lurked, jerking about as the heavy load it bore spun wildly in it's water logged drum. As the house hold machine went about it's daily business, two Fox kits sprang past, arguing with each other; again, another daily ritual to behold in the Ferman household. Two children, a pet cat, a pet budgie and two overworked parents. A typical family, or so it led outsiders to believe...

"Nu uh! Otherwise I'll tell dad what you did to his tie!" The young vixen hissed, paws behind her back as she leaned menacingly toward her brother, of the same age and rust red colouration.

"You skank!" He wailed, as if he'd just been shot.

"Don't use that kind of language in my house young man!" An older vixen shouted from the adjoining room; the living room.

A glare from the brother, a protruding tongue from the sister and all hell broke lose, right there, infront of the washing machine, both children slipping on the cold linoleum floor and landing atop one another, paws flying, screams and curses tearing through the noise of the kitchen. The mother strode in, a plump woman, her brown, white streaked hair pulled back in a loose tail, fury etched upon her features. The children continued brawling on the floor unawares of the two, larger brown paws comming down on them. Two equally surprised yelps and they were back up on their small feet, ears caught between a fore finger and a thumb, one child per paw.

"What have I told you about fighting in the house?!" She shouted angrily. "Eh?! No. Fighting! How many times do I have to tell you?"

"S'rry mum..." They mumbled in unison when the initial shock of having their ears pincerd wore off.

"Now, your father already knows what you did to his tie, but it was me who fended off the inevitable month's worth of being grounded without TV. So for the love of the Gods, behave, or I'll ground you myself!" She fumed and let the two go.

The washing machine gave a horrible gurgle and the twins looked at it, brows furrowed.

"Somethin' wrong with the washer machine agen." They pointed out.

But, no sooner had they said that, it righted itself, continuing on with it's final spin.

The mother eyed it suspiciously. A run of bad luck had cost them the last three washing machines, and since this one was picked up second hand, no one expected it to survive beyond three months. Six years had gone by and it was still going, much to the relief of the parents of the two children. No repair man had to be called out, no belts or pipes had to be replaced. If someone said that the machine didn't sound right, it'd miraculously right itself almost immediately. The twins joked that it was from another planet, dubbing the machine Vox after one of their favourite cartoon characters, ironically an alien machine himself. No one in the house was the wiser to this irony, except for the machine itself.

"Leave it alone." Their mother said, recalling the last time one of them touched it; the door had sprang open and flooded the kitchen with dirty warm water.

Since that incident, no one, but her, was allowed to use it. The drum slowed it's spinning, the remnants of the water draining as soon as things came to a peaceful halt. The mother open the door carefully, and once sure nothing bad was going to happen, no leaks, no flash floods, no fires from within the drum, she grabbed the near-by blue plastic basket and scooped the wet clothes from within the machine and pushed the door to before wandering out into the garage with the loaded basket to where the tumble dryer sat squat and ugly.

The twins looked at the washing machine, leaning in for a better look. Nothing amiss. Just an ordinary, square machine with a circular glass door, a machine built to do the duty of cleaning clothes, no matter how grubby. The two flinched at the sound of the front door slamming. Their father was home and the two exchanged a quick panicked glance and bolted for the back door, seeking sanctuary in the sun bathed back yard.

No one outside the household knew of their fear of the tall, gangly, business suited man that entered the kitchen. Only the machine did, and he considered this furred fleshling to be of no use other than to be used as target practice. The briefcase was slapped carelessly onto the crowded table top of the kitchen table and he took a deep breath and called out to his family. A slight delay in reaction and the two young Foxes walked in, un-enthusiastic in their movements. There was no hug or welcome home. Just a thick silence following the mumbled "Hi dad."

Then the woman walked in, empty laundry basket in paw. She stopped short of the kitchen table and eyed her husband warily.

"Hello, George. Nice day at work?" She finally said, managing an 'everything's okay here' smile.

"It was crap." He snorted, the sudden aroma of alcohol filling the air. "I lost three fracking clients today." He ambled over to the washing machine, eyeing up the small dribble of greasy water that trickled down it's front, puddling on the floor.

With a sharp kick he snorted; "This piece of crap still going? Fuuuck... We shoulda scrapped it years ago, y'know. Gotten ourselves one of those nice, fancy large drum machines. Maybe then you could get my washing down in time for important meetings."

"We've never had the money to buy anything new. Even this house is ex-council." She snapped back, clipping her sentence short as she realised what she was doing.

The children darted from the room and back out into the more friendly sunlight as George started toward his wife, paws clenching into fists, anger blazing in his eyes.

"How many times have I told you not to use that tone of voice with me, woman?" He snarled.

She backed up. He encroached on her. She screamed as his fist pulled back. And the washing machine just sat there, continuing to watch the daily life of the Ferman's unfold before his visual sensors.

"I don't even know why I agreed to this!" Complained a small wagon.

Then another joined in on the complaining.

"We didn't. It was *him* who bullied us into it." He growled.

Two small, white transporter lorries, both sporting the word MANN on their fronts followed an overloaded KAMAZ, who was equally as annoyed by the sudden change in plans. Instead of delivering much needed supplies to the Decepticon forces beyond the city, he was stuck here, heavily burdened, not only with repair supplies for the damaged Space Bridge, but burdened with two young Decepticons, who both think they know better than anybody, including those with more experience welded firmly under their belts.

"Stop grinding your gears over this! If it weren't for me 'bullying' you into this job, you'd be stuck scraping out the waste ditches surrounding base!" He snapped angrily.

There was an audible groan from behind that was quickly silenced by one of Roadtrain's sudden curses about fliers. An unidentified jet transformed mid upwards arc and free fell the rest of the way to the ground, battering the already damaged road by his weight. Two red eyes focused sharply on the three transporters, and a small grin tilted the corners of a metallic mouth.

"Krusher has sent me to escort you to the Bridge." He rumbled.

"We don't need no escort. Especially from the likes of you!" Roadtrain snapped, the stress of the past week slowly becoming all too much for him to handle. He didn't need, nor want a fighter jet bound Decepticon scout adding to his burdens. They always got in the way of things, even if they could fly.

"Tough nuts, Roadie. You're stuck with me, and I'm stuck with you until this job's done. We can't have you rolling off into the distance like our old *pal* 'Jack did."

A whisper of an electronic sniggering passed between the two young transporters behind him, and Roadtrain growled.

"Quit yer sniggering, or I'll make sure that you'll never snigger again, got it?!"

Both went silent and Roadtrain set his sensors back on the jet in front of him.

"Get yer rusting bolts outta the road then, yer mis-firing piston!" He shouted.

Panels and wings slid back into place and the unrecognisable jet took off at an almost vertical angle, with a burst of yellow fire.

"Damn flyers, bane of my existence... Alright, move out!" He barked and the small trucks trundled along laborously after their temporary boss.

3 - Domesticon

"Stop blaming yourself." Raid said calmly, casting a sideways glance over at Deadmetal, who was leaning against the roughly carved stone wall.

The transformed Apache and tank were stood in the remains of the intel room on what was left of their ship. Metallic green fingers skittered across the control panel almost mindlessly, typing in codes and directions, things that went beyond Deadmetal's knowledge.

"We will locate Carjack and that micro chip, so stop worrying before you frazzle your circuits." Raid added, glancing at an image that appeared on the main screen, then cast it aside, burying it beneath a whole lot more data images. "Go see Flashpoint and have your shoulder seen to."

"My shoulder doesn't need anymore work doing to it. It's perfectly fine."

"No it isn't. The quick fix you performed is comming undone. Quite literally. So go see Flashpoint." Deadmetal made a face and Raid gave a slight glare.

"That's an order." He stated flatly.

Deadmetal turned and made his way out of the room, trying his hardest not to stalk away. This week had been a bad one. An important, lethal piece of technology had been stolen by the enemy, the Space Bridge had been destroyed and just the other day, the governments of the world had announced a fuel dry-up. There was no fuel left, and what little was left, was given to the armed forces, in a hope that it would provide one last ditch attempt at ending a centuries long war. So far, even with monitoring the military channels, nothing seemed to be changing. No new plans were being made, no new strategies being unveiled. Though these things weren't discussed over the airwaves in any shape or form, it wasn't just the Decepticons who had tiny spies all over the place. The Autobots did too, a handfull of tiny Insectibots having infiltrated many army bases world wide to keep a constant tabs on the goings on in the Human's own war, searching for a possible Decepticon tendril. A silvery door slid to one side with a squeeking groan and bright light flooded the corridor. Flashpoint, the team's medic sat at a far countertop, tinkering with a small mechanical device. A small, electronic squeek swiftly followed by a flurry of small wings. He'd been working on that Insectibot all day, and having getting the tiny spy back online again after it's run in with a fly zapper, was a small victory, as even for the mechanical organisms, supplies were running low.

Flashpoint looked over his shoulder then spun around on his stool, a grin forming on his mechanical features as he rose, the tiny tools he'd used to repair the Insectibot still gently gripped in his bulky but nimble fingers.

"I've been wondering when you'd stop by to see me, Dee." He said.

"I'm just here on boss' orders. Think you could patch us up?" Deadmetal said.

"On the table." Flashpoint replied.

Deadmetal looked at the flat surface and tried counting the times he'd landed on there. Or been dropped on there by his comrades... One too many times he'd decided. Either way, he obeyed, not wanting to ruin his friend's mood with his own. Flashpoint put down the small tools and picked up another, long hook-like tool. The gently curved hook end was lowered into the mechanical wound, pushing loose wires to one side so that Flashpoint could get a better look and see how deep the cut reached. Deadmetal stared at the opposite wall, ignoring the probing, something he'd learned to do many, many years ago. A slight tut and Flashpoint withdrew, putting the hook down on the table beside Deadmetal.

"How bad is it, doc-bot?" He asked, trying to make his mood more upbeat.

Flashpoint shrugged helplessly.

"Flash....?" Deadmetal prompted slowly.

"Admittedly, it's deeper than I first expected, but it's nothing compared to having to weld your arms and rotar blades back on." A small smile and Deadmetal gave a low, growling murmur. "And you call me that again, and I'll have to amputate and use that arm of yours for spare parts..."

The washing machine sat, squat, plain and inconspicuous beneath the sideboard of the Ferman's kitchen. At the crowded kitchen table, George Ferman sat, a bottle of whisky in one paw, a glass in the other. His knuckles were almost raw, having worn the fine brown fur down, by either taking his stress out on his wife or children, or just by simply smashing the balled up paw into the nearest available object, sometimes it being the washing machine, as evident by the dents and scuff marks on its ordinary, harmless white surface. Washing machines had feelings too. Admittedly, it was only this particular washing machine that had feelings, and even those were limited. It could see, sense its surroundings, hear and even register when it was being hit by something. A brightly coloured children's ball, a plastic arrow with a red sucker pad on its tip, a chair leg, even a foot. And being restricted to only having a few hours alone, made it all the more difficult to hammer out those dents, and cover up those scrapes. The only one who was kind enough to the machine was the woman. Although it may have been because it was the only washing machine they could afford, and one that had survived six years of abuse by being used everyday, she still made sure it was still in good condition. Healthy, one might say...

Right now, George was slowly losing out to fatigue and alcohol, his head dipping forward every now and then, eye lids drooping and the occasional yawn being stifled. Although it was not in the nature of any Decepticon to grow attached to a fleshling, let alone to even deem one worthy of protection, the machine that sat beneath the relative shelter of the side board couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret deep within his circuitry towards the children, especially the woman, a fleshling seemingly hellbent on keeping the machine in good condition, scoffing at any mentions of sending it to the scrap yard. George looked around fuzzily, his groggy gaze finally settling upon the washing machine. He squinted hard at it, trying to keep it from sprouting legs and rearranging its panels and door and water pipes...

He pulled himself upright, bracing himself against the table as his knees suddenly turned into jelly, his matted tail twitching behind him as he watched the much abused washing machine scuttle out seemingly elegantly from beneath the side board. George's eyes went wide, again, trying hard to focus as the machine brought itself upright out of its Dinosaur hunched-like stance. Now standing at six foot, the Decepticon looked about. It'd been a while since he'd seen the backyard, or even the kitchen from this high up. Then his attention turned back to George, red eyes narrowing menacingly as he took a step toward the Fox.

"Wha...? Th' fook're yoo?" He slurred angrily.

"Poor little fleshling..." The washing machine hissed as it circled around the table towards him. "Such meager natural defences you have... It'll be easy shredding the flesh from your bones!"

George let out a sharp gasp and fell over backwards onto a clothes horse, sending it, along with its burden of damp materials down to the thinly carpeted floor, in turn knocking the vacuum cleaner over sideways causing it to slam into a small, one legged table that bore a small burden of its own; a vase of flowers, which shattered upon impact on the living floor. So much racket in the dead of night, accompanied by George's strangled yelp as he tried scooting backwards into the living room, his progress of escape being hindered by the mess he'd made of the clothes horse and the table with its

vase.

"Not feeling so tough now, are you bone bag?!" The Decepticon snarled and leapt effortlessly over the felled kitchen chair that the Fox once occupied and leaned over him, piercing red lenses staring down into George's soul.

Or at least that's what it felt like the machine was doing. A spindly, lightly armoured arm shot up, hovering in front of George's muzzle. The Fox watched, tail firmly planted between his legs as a series of long, thin spikes flicked outwards.

"Oh my God!" George exclaimed and jerked his head to one side as the spikes came down at him.

"Help! The washing machine's gonna kill me!" He wailed and wriggled free of the tangled mess, suddenly feeling extremely sober, and unbelievably terrified.

He darted across the living room and swung up the stairs, colliding with his wife and kids, felling them on the stair case.

"What the hell is going on down here? It's three am!" She growled angrily.

The children backed up a few steps, but George's wife held firm, knowing that not even her abusive husband could deter her from a hard earned sleep.

"You better have a damned good explanation for this!" She snapped, towering over the cowering and shocked Fox.

For the moment, the memory of the washing machine transforming before his eyes vanished in the midst of the sudden role reversal that stood fuming before him.

"The... The washing machine...." He mumbled, eyes wide as he looked up at the plump, sleep deprived Vixen.

"What have you done to my washing machine?!"

A moment of silence, the role reversal still in play.

"It tried to kill me! I swear on my mother's grave!" He wailed, a finger pointing down at the bottom of the stairs.

"Your mother ain't dead yet, so don't try that one on me again!" She snapped and pushed past him, making her way down the stairs in all her sleep bedraggled fury.

A quick electronic sounding snigger and the washing machine Decepticon spun on its alien alloyed heel and skittered silently back across the white linoleum surface and slid back into place beneath the sideboard, the final panels sliding back into place just as she strode into the room. Four sets of green eyes scanned the room. If they were alien robot eyes, then they'd have picked up on the washing machine that the children called Vox; an entirely fitting name due to its origin, although not the Decepticon's true designation. She strode over to the machine, glared at it, then glared back at the near empty bottle of whisky sat on the table top then at her husband and back at the washing machine again. She gave it a nudge with a slipper clad foot and said, rather aptly;

"Are you alive, Mr. Washing Machine?"

No answer. Another nudge with a slipper clad foot and still no reaction from the machine. She spun on her heel, making both her children and her drunken husband flinch back.

"Help, help, the washing machine is trying to kill me!" She mused angrily in her sleep deprived state.

"Now hear this, George. The next time you raise a paw to my kids, I will spread that one like wild fire."

She growled.

The twins gave small grins, a small prayer going out to their god of choice that the threat would be enough to stave off any fresh bruises for a while. He was a proud business man, and his remaining clients would quite happily sit back and listen to stories about how their boss and advisor had discovered his newly found fear of washing machines. George swallowed hard, weighing the effects in his head and

mumbled;

"I'll sleep on the couch tonight..."

She knew she'd feel for it when the new day got off to a proper start, but she couldn't help it...

"Good. There's an old walking stick in the cupboard beneath the stairs should the need arise to defend yourself against any rogue household appliances." She sniffed and shepherded her children back to bed, leaving George in the wake of a horrible hallucination.

Carjack wound around the bends of a country road that lay hidden on the outskirts of a town. So far, he was disappointed to hear no sounds of any ongoing wars.

Pity... He thought to himself and turned back onto a main road, his cloned engine growling softly at a traffic light that had seemingly appeared out of nowhere. He slowly approached it, having very little concept of its meaning. Sure, he'd come across traffic lights before. Earth seemed to be riddled with the damnable things, stopping the flow of traffic when you least wanted, hindering your progress, especially if you'd been ordered onto an incognito job, that required the use of four wheels only and no smashing up anything that got your way. Which meant obeying the law. To a certain extent, of course. He boosted his scanners and sensors to their limits, scanning the surrounding streets and air above. No sign of any road-bound vehicle, the only air-bound vehicle being a passenger plane. And so, with the lights on red ahead of him, he didn't give his wheels a chance to stop rolling, instead speeding up and racing through the lights. Admittedly, he had no idea where he was going, or what his destination was. Then the saner part of his mind kicked in. Find a place to rest. Re-charge and have a good think about his next move. It was either that or the car pound.

The various coloured traffic lights became a blur as the heavy 4x4 slid effortlessly around corners, a feat that shouldn't be able to be accomplished in such a machine. Carjack continued his search for a decent place to stay overnight, finding only one or two spaces free, and it being sod's-law that they were too narrow for him to fit in. With a grumble he set off for the outskirts, navigating the many roads that snaked between housing estates. On his way past one particular house though, a familiar insignia flashed up on his sensors. A Decepticon insignia. He slowed down and pried further. No contact was made, all communications to this 'bot had been cut off on purpose. Carjack continued on by, promising to come back later and investigate further.

4 - Chinook Krusher

Krusher stood before the damaged Space Bridge, bulky hands placed firmly on what the organics would call 'hips'. The transformed MH-47G Chinook towered over all others, glowering at them all, barking out orders, much to his small team's distaste. It wasn't their fault that the Space Bridge had been nearly destroyed. It was Carjack's, the rogue 4x4 having set off some kind of power surge as he went through, causing a small explosion in the base electrics of the large device, in turn sparking a fire which gutted one of the support pylons. Now the Space Bridge was being supported, held upright by a few lengths of thick wire that were connected to the roof of the large underground cavern, that the Decepticons had claimed for themselves.

"Get a move on, you worthless pieces of scrap!" He growled angrily.

A digger spun on it's catterpillared base, seemingly glaring at Krusher.

"We can't do much more until Roadtrain and his crew get here!" Steele snapped back, equally as angry. Everyday, since Carjack had rolled off with the micro chip, Krusher had been in more of a foul mood than usual, and three worthy Decepticons had been lost to his temper already, Steele slowly making his way up Krusher's personal list of who was going to be next. Krusher looked over at him and took a menacing step forward. Steel didn't budge, holding his ground, the Constructicon secretly hoping to take some of his own stress out on his leader. Before anything more could be said, the low rumbling of diesel engines underscored by the grinding rythmic tune of a guitar grew steadily louder as it echoed down one of the main tunnels and into the cavernous chamber. Two small, deep grey and white lorries rolled into view, closely followed by a slightly larger KAMAZ, all three kicking up dust, dirt and gravel as they came to an unsteady halt mere metres away from the disgruntled Chinook, who in turn, eyed up the three new arrivals with annoyed curiosity.

"And what took you three so long?" He rumbled.

"If some ridiculous whirly bird hadn't have overloaded us and given me two inexperienced transporters to deal with, I'd have been here on time!" Roadtrain snapped, the music beating from the empty cab inadvertently getting louder with his snap of anger before shutting off altogether.

"Is everything intact?" Krusher queried, knowing that his own boss had refused to send him another transporter as experienced if he lost this one.

"Of course it is! I didn't get to where I am today by breaking everything I had to transport." A quick glare at the two younger Decepticons that sat unusually quiet just off to his left and right.

"Good. Now get back to work. Steele, Hookshot! Get yer worthless tail pipes over here and unload these guys!" He barked, the order rebounding around the cavern like a misfired bullet.

The digger manouvered it's way over to where Roadtrain and the two younger transporters sat, squat and overloaded with heavy cargo. Soon to follow was a crane, the one designated Hookshot. Both trundled over to Roadtrain first, having grown a liking to the disgruntled, ageing transporter and his seemingly never ending hatred for all things air borne, and carefully started unloading him, his cloned suspension and chassis groaning metallicly under the growing loss of weight, just as they had done as the load was set down upon him. Roadtrain just stared ahead, seemingly studying the broken Space Bridge. There really was alot of work to be done just as Turbulance had said...

There was only one way for Carjack to get a better look at this Decepticon he'd detected. He'd have to

go back to that tidy little house and try and get a glimpse through the windows without being caught in the act. He held no fear over the smaller Decepticon, since that the mechanical creature's communications were cut off, could only mean he'd been one of the lucky ones and been cast out, his Spark still intact. Or he could be a run away, like Carjack. He'd spent all afternoon exploring as much as possible, locating as many hide outs as possible and making notes of the quickest routes to and from his various little hide outs. Since his arrival, he'd managed to get his small holographic projector back up and running, scanning the surrounding local organics and forging himself a 'driver' to sit behind his cloned wheel. The driver wasn't exactly to his liking, but it would do for now, having reduced the amount of stares he had been gaining over the past few days, for now, he was no longer an empty vehicle, but he had a grey and black marked Terrier gripping the steering wheel, it's face as impassive as a brick wall. He rolled to a stop at a red light and a bleeper went off as a green symbol in the shape of a man with a tail became illuminated on both of the light poles. A group of people passed each other on the road, all different shapes, sizes and species. A little girl, gripping her mother's paw firmly stared at the un-moving Terrier behind the wheel of a large 4x4 then at the vehicle itself, slowing her pace to get a better look. She could've sworn on all her pocket money that the machine looked at her with red, curved lenses that lay secreted away behind the grille. Then her mother said something and jerked her paw, dragging the little girl further towards the relative safety of the pavement. The lights went green again and the traffic flowed onwards, business as usual.

George stood in the archway that gave a vague separation from the kitchen to the living room. He looked across the over-stuffed table and at the washing machine. To him, a once relatively innocent looking household appliance now looked devious and held many un-told horrors. Mind you, that could explain the mystery of where socks went, leaving you with just one odd sock that should really be a pair...

His wife strode into the room, her right eye slightly swollen from the escapade that morning. George told himself she deserved it, he even stated it out loud to her before his fist connected with her face. But he couldn't shake off the slight feeling of paranoia that had settled in the back of his mind, that tiny little voice, the one that had hissed at him in the early hours of that day, telling him how easy it would be to tear the flesh from his bones, that horrible, mechanical face, near featureless, glaring down at him, a smile hidden behind a face plate of sorts. Whether there was actually a mouth of some description behind that small mass of interlocking metal panels, he didn't know, nor did he want to find out, since he got the distinct impression that the machine that cleans his clothes every day, was staring at him, watching him like a predatorial bird.

"Considered getting a new washing machine?" He asked.

"We've already had this discussion. And you know the answer." She replied, stuffing some bed sheets into the drum.

"I'm just suggesting, y'know. We've had this one for a while, and it's getting to be on it's last legs. And Andy and Gene down the road are selling theirs, even though it's only two months old..."

The washing machine was set into motion by the turn of a knob on it's front, a watery gurgle emanating from it's pipes, something that once seemed annoyingly innocent enough, now held an undertone of menace.

"Andy and Gene are asking four hundred for theirs, and we can just barely pay a two hundred electricity bill. And besides, this one's very economical for it's age." She protested.

George frowned and his paws started to ball up. Another gurgle from the busy machine and he shook his head, turned and walked away.

"Now where're you going?" She asked, feeling the edges of anger setting in.

"Pub." He replied simply.

She opened her mouth to say something, saw the time on the clock and swore, picking up her bag and car keys. It was time to pick the children up from school. The washing machine watched her leave and continued on with doing it's duty: Cleaning the clothes.

Deadmetal ducked out behind a felled mass of metal and rock. He took a quick peek around the ragged edges of his temporary shelter and saw a silver and black blur of motion roll from beneath a mangle of devastated girders and vanish with a dull metallic *thud* into a hole in the ground born of a mis-fired plasma missile some time ago. No sound followed, not even at a sub sonic level. Both Autobots remained deathly quiet, contemplating their next move. Deadmetal cast a quick glance upwards. Hanging by a few threads of wire, a relatively heavy looking steel pipe hung. If he could lure Speeder out of his hole and sever the wires at the same time, he may just win this little battle... He thought a moment, calculating how fast Speeder would be able to move in such a short distance and also how fast he would be able to take aim and shoot at those cables. *Not long*, he mused, *a few seconds, maybe less...* With that calculation and a semblance of a back up plan, the Apache Autobot rolled out, gun at the ready. Speeder had also been doing some calculating of his own in the short amount of time he'd had to recover from the last attack. He leapt from the hole, and wheels made contact with the rough ground instead of his mechanical feet, and with a twin burst of blue fire from the small jets mounted on his back between his shoulders, he raced forward, like a speed skater, small metal plates sliding out and rearranging themselves around his fist as it pulled back, ready to strike.

Deadmetal reacted quickly, but not quickly enough, executing his plan with dead aim, sending the pipe swinging down on one steel thread, missing Speeder as his armoured fist smashed into Deadmetal's stomach, sending him sailing backwards, landing roughly against the remains of a bulldozer, promptly tearing the already battered hunk of metal in two. Speeder approached the spot where Deadmetal lay unmoving, but it was an action performed with much caution. He stopped just out of Deadmetal's reach, watching and waiting. Then his fellow Autobot swung himself upright, EMP cannon at the ready, an electrical shot just missing Speeder by a scant few inches as he raced off in a semi-circle, to try and throw him off balance. Only this time, it worked the opposite way around; Deadmetal knew this move well and repositioned himself, ducking down, a leg swinging out, tripping Speeder over and sending him face down, sprawling in the dirt and debris. A metallic, bird like foot landed heavily on Speeder's back, pinning him to the floor and another metallic sound echoed into the war chamber; the metallic sound of a robot clapping.

"Didn't see that one coming." Raid grinned.

"That's the first time I think I've seen Speeder succumb to his own speed." Flashpoint added.

Speeder looked up, his vision clearing of all sudden static from the impact.

"Ow..." He grumbled, a hand coming up to rub at the side of his head.

Deadmetal removed his foot from Speeder's back and helped him back to his feet.

"We've just got word that the Space Bridge is being repaired." Raid stated. "Once it's fixed, we can get a better fix on Carjack and retrieve that micro chip."

"But, ain't the Bridge, in, oh I dunno, Decepticon territory?" Speeder asked uncertainly.

"That it is, but anybot as fast enough and sneaky enough as you two can get through the Bridge. The most the Decepticons can do is close that portal once they realise you're on the otherside." The Tank said bluntly, trying to reassure Speeder.

A look was exchanged between the pair and they then looked over at their leader.

"So, if we go through, you can guarantee that we'll be coming back?" Deadmetal asked slowly.

Raid nodded.

"No one gets left behind. *Ever.*" Flashpoint added.

"How far into the repairs have they got?" Deadmetal asked after a moment.

"At the rate they're going, another two days, at best." Flashpoint replied almost automatically.

5 - Lurking In The Darkness

A robotic foot carefully lowered itself into the back yard of the Ferman's house hold, careful not to disturb the small water feature or the flower beds that outlined the oblong patch of green. No matter how careful Carjack may have been, he still managed to leave large footprints, the likes no one on the planet Nyxen 3 have possibly ever seen before. He looked at the rear of the house. It was a similiar situation around the front; no lights on, all organics inside were firmly tucked away in their beds. The only movement being from that of the pet Budgie that flitted about it's cage in a fluster, the pet cat that had darted off to hide beneath the sofa and the cause of the pet's commotion; a spindly, six foot tall figure standing upright and flexing it's mechanical limbs. A sub sonic message, more of a prompt to gain a reply, or even the smaller Decepticon's attention, was sent out. The washing machine stopped mid flex and slowly turned around, his piercing red eyes going wide. The small Decepticon, titled Vox by the children of the house, spun around on his metallic heel and sprang neatly over the crowded kitchen table and fled through the living room, a single finger rearranging itself to become a lock-pick of sorts, the small amount of magnetism it gave off, being perfect for the job of getting out of the house without raising any alarms. Carjack swore as he saw the Decepticon bolt through living room and tear off down the street. Without realising he was being watched from an upstairs window as he crouched down to look through the large kitchen window, he raised himself carefully and swiftly, navigating back over the flimsy wooden fence and lept out onto the road, transforming mid-leap, the doors, panels and cloned engine surfacing and sliding back into place as he gave chase.

The young vixen ran from her room, brother in tow, their eyes wide with what could only be described as terrified wonderment. Their parent's bedroom door loomed ahead of them, the main goal of their over excited and near panicked trajectory. The door swung open, banging loudly on the cabinet that lay just inside the threshold of the adult's room and both children pounced on the bed, shaking awake their mother and father.

"Mum, mum!" The boy said in a near shriek.

"There was a robot in our garden!" His sister continued.

"It was huuuge! The size of the house!"

"Nu uh! It was *bigger!*"

George growled something under his sleep laden breath and his wife hauled herself up onto her elbows, fur and hair ruffed up from tossing and turning in her sleep.

"A what now?" She asked groggily, letting a large yawn escape her chest and through her wide open maw.

"A *robot!*" Her son said, nearly whining to put his point across.

George forced an eye to open, mentally kicking his brain into first gear.

"A robot?" He sighed, his voice floating up from the pillow.

"Yeah, and a big one!" His daughter stated, stretching her arms as wide as they would go, to put that little bit more emphasis on her words.

George's other eye snapped open. Suddenly he was feeling very awake, and extremely paranoid. He pulled himself out of bed and pulled a shirt on and stalked out of the bedroom.

"In the garden, you say?" His voice called from the landing.

His children bounded out onto the landing with him as he peered cautiously through the narrow window there, before making his way into the children's room. He placed a paw flat on the wooden face of the door and pushed it open slowly, black ears forward, eyes wide, muscles ready to spring his body into action and run for the nearest robot proof cover. Where that robot proof cover was, he had yet to find out.

He placed a foot into the room. Paused. Sniffed. He didn't know why he sniffed the air. *Maybe they smell like old oil...?* he asked himself. Then another thought occurred to his tired mind: *What does space smell like, anyway?* And with a puzzled expression firmly planted on his red furred features, he crossed the threshold and stepped fully into the brightly coloured bedroom. He crept up to the window and peeled back a curtain, not sure if he wanted to see what was out there. Then the curtain was being held back in a quaking paw. He peered out, his wife having suddenly appeared over his shoulder and his children squirming between him and the window-sill, trying to get a better look. There was nothing in the garden. Except for the giant, oddly shaped imprints on the lawn...

Sliding around an empty street corner that was illuminated by a single light, a six foot, spindly robotic creature skittered, metal feet grinding and smacking hard against the concrete paving slabs, sending up sparks as it moved in a near blind panic. The transformed washing machine almost slid over, stretching a long, thin arm out to try and steady himself, regaining his bearings and continuing his sprint for whatever safety he could find, that need intensifying when an engine roared and a large, brutal looking 4x4 slid around the corner with a screech of tires. He hazarded a glance over his thin shoulder and at the beast of a car that was following him, chasing even, and let out a short, electronic sounding wimper as he continued to run, almost colliding with a late night wanderer, barrelling into the drunken Spaniel, sending them both to the ground in a tangle of organic and technical limbs. Dazed and ever so slightly confused the Spaniel look at the monstrosity that he had become inadvertantly entangled with and gave a yelp, frantically trying to escape when a pair of piercing red eyes focused on him, the glowing red lenses seemingly narrowing before the mechanical creature took off again, all this commotion crammed into a mere estimated second, leaving the canine all the more confused as he watched it tear off down the street with long, powerful strides like that of a small Dinosaur giving chase to it's athletic prey. Then the 4x4 appeared, and just as soon as the Spaniel caught a glimpse of the large vehicle, it too was gone, lost to the network of roads that laced the town like a spider's web.

Deadmetal, Speeder, Raid and Flashpoint snatched a glance around the corner of the large chamber. There were only a few Decepticons in their way, standing between them and the newly repaired Space Bridge. An alien fighter jet screamed in with a burst of yellow fire, transforming mid-flight, wings, panels and blacked out cockpit glass sliding out of place and repositioning themselves to form a large, bi-pedal mechanical monster. Turbulance looked around at his surroundings and his lenses finally settled upon the Bridge, a devious smile curving his metallic mouth. The hidden Autobots watched silently as Turbulance approached the Space Bridge and started typing something into the control panel, his actions halted by a rough sounding voice.

"Hey! Where d'you think you're going?" Roadtrain snapped from his shadowed corner.

Turbulance turned his head and frowned.

"I'm a hunter, take a wild guess, rust-bucket." He replied evenly.

A low growl and Roadtrain settled back down on his rock, hitching a large, metallic foot up, resting an arm on his now raised left knee.

"You got permission to go through that thing from that hunk of worthless metal we're forced to call *sir?*"

Turbulence cast a look over his shoulder and at the transformed KAMAZ who was seemingly lounging in the shadows.

"Are you searching for a way to get me dismantled, Roadie?" Turbulence grumbled.

"Now why would I do a thing like that?" Was his reply.

Turbulence just grinned.

"When I have Carjack, you can bet your rear axel that you're next."

The Space Bridge flared into life, a large, circular electric blue portal appearing between the two pylons. Both Roadtrain and Turbulence looked up at it, as did the hidden Autobots, a slight air of quiet awe spreading out through the chamber where the travel device stood. Turbulence took step forward, toward the portal.

"I look forward to the challenge..." Roadtrain growled as the jet stepped through.

Raid leaned back against the wall, concentrating on the small screen that was secreted away beneath a panel on his fore arm. Deadmetal and Speeder turned their attention from the goings on out in the chamber and to their leader as he tracked Turbulence's spacial trail. After a moment, Raid looked up, a frown on his mechanical features. Deadmetal gave him a questioning look as Speeder returned to view the chamber alongside Flashpoint. A sub-sonic message was passed from one Autobot to the other and something behind Deadmetal's lenses flickered briefly, before he nodded. It was going to be a long trek across the galaxy, but Deadmetal didn't care. He just wanted to reduce Carjack to his component parts and use them as spares. He'd grown tired of chasing the Decepticon and was now bent on ending it anyway he recognised as possible. The only problem was; Turbulence had left before them, after the same goal, and there was another Decepticon in the way, between them and the Space Bridge. Who knows how many more Decepticons are lurking in the shadows, waiting for the moment to pounce on any unsuspecting intruders. A nudge in the back, between his folded rotar blades, and Deadmetal turned to find Speeder looking at him with a devious look on his face. Deadmetal and Raid edged closer to where Flashpoint was still positioned and the message was clear now; get to the Space Bridge and bring down any Decepticon that got in their way. Flashpoint and Deadmetal stuck to the shadows, edging their way across the wall, their movements careful and planned so as not to grind their metallic bodies up against the stone. Speeder and Raid went in the other direction, doing the same, gradually edging closer and closer to the Bridge.

When they became close enough to the massive device, Speeder tore across the floor, the closing the distance between himself and the Bridge in a mere second. As soon as he got to the control panel, he typed in the coordinates that Deadmetal had passed onto him. No sooner had the second digit of the eleven digit number code been typed in, Hookshot rumbled into the large chamber, closely followed by small twin lorries of white and deep grey. The crane focused on a partially stunned Speeder and no sooner had the Autobot resumed typing and the portal had flared into life, Flashpoint, Deadmetal and Raid had flung themselves forward to attack the crane mid-transformation. The sudden attack hadn't stopped the crane's panels and long, steel lifting arm from moving postions though. The much large Hookshot swung around as his legs emerged to bring himself upright, slinging the attacking Autobots off of him. As the three Autobots landed roughly, the twins transformed too, standing much shorter than Hookshot at eighteen foot.

"Dee! Thecoordinatesareinlet'sgo,c'mon,c'mon,C'MON!!!" Speeder shouted hurriedly over the din of colliding metals.

Deadmetal swung one of the small transport lorries off his back, his fore arm mounted gun springing into existence sending a barrage of heated plasma bullets into the chest of the Decepticon, watching as the

light armour gave way in a chorus of electronic scream and buckling metal. With one twin down, a hole boared through his chest, red eyes un-glowing, Deadmetal raised himself from his kneeling position it had rendered him in and spun on his heel, making a mad dash for the open portal as it flickered patiently. He ducked and rolled, narrowly avoiding a large crane hook that had been propelled toward him at high speed, lodging itself into the hard ground upon impact. Hookshot gave an irritated groan and was toppled in his bid to free his hook as Flashpoint and Raid came back at him for another attack.

Hookshot fell heavily and the remaining twin screamed something, launching himself into a charge at Flashpoint. The fire engine distracted himself from the bucking and swearing Hookshot, his fist suddenly coming up to connect with the twin's head, the impact so severe and sudden, his head snapped back with a loud metallic *crack*. The twin remained on his feet at an awkward position for a few seconds before toppling over backwards to lie limply in the dust and debris. Standing on the first step to the Space Bridge, Deadmetal looked back at the two Autobots as they wrestled Hookshot.

"Get through the portal and find Carjack!" Raid bellowed and ducked a large fist.

Deadmetal hesitated a moment then continued on, through the portal. Roadtrain, still sat, undetected, in the shadows, watched as Hookshot was disabled by the two Autobots, a small grin playing his metallic lips. He watched as the portal went dark once more and settled back down onto his rock, spectating as the Autobots Flashpoint and Raid fled the scene, but not before locking the Space Bridge down, stopping anyone from coming or going.

6 - Car 372

Up in the clouds in the early hours of the morning, a lone Apache AH-64A flew in the dense white of the clouds, purposely trying to avoid any other air borne traffic. Any other air borne traffic that did pick the alien gunship up on radar merely dismissed it as a blip; a fault in their system, something they'd have checked out when they touched down at their destination. Deadmetal had picked up on Carjack's presence almost immediately after the Space Bridge had thrown him out. The only problem was; the Decepticon was a four week's journey away from his current location, something that irritated the Autobot beyond belief. Who knew how far ahead Turbulance was? *He better not be that far ahead...* Deadmetal grumbled to himself and sped up, the only comforting thought being that Speeder had made contact with the hunter as soon as all com static had cleared. He'd said he'd had a rough landing, but was still in one piece and currently being ferried across an ocean towards the continent where Carjack was located. He was two weeks away from the target. He just hoped that his speedy friend had done the wise thing and downloaded as much information on the planet as possible from the various satellites that sat in orbit around the large planet, something Deadmetal was still in the process of doing; Ninety percent of basic information had been downloaded and he groaned inwardly.

The washing machine sat back under the relative safety of the side board in the Ferman's kitchen, after having been found abandoned in someone's garage on the otherside of town. No one knew how it got there, except for the washing machine itself, the monstrous 4x4 that had been chasing it and even George had an inkling as to how it had ended up on the otherside of town too. Now it sat, watching the daily goings on once again, a slight hint of paranoia to call his own niggling away at the back of his mind. He'd managed to outrun the larger Decepticon, but how long would this bout of normality last? "I'm off to work!" George shouted.

His wife merely muttered, her words too quiet for him to hear, but not quiet enough to avoid the washing machine's attention. She was somewhat relieved to see the back of him, having gained another badly bruised eye from the previous night's argument about so-called giant robots, killer washing machines and regular burglars. The Decepticon ran through the various ways in which he would like to dismantle the violent Fox, but his train of thoughts was nudged to the side, a Decepticon insignia flashing up in the corner of his vision, a message attached to it. He recognised the code from which it had been sent; it was the Decepticon who had been chasing him the night before. A fresh bolt of panic, a watery gurgle and he stopped dead, his sopping wet load being held in his drum, submerged by grubby, soapy water. The vixen with the swollen eye looked at him, a look of puzzlement on her features. She walked up to her washing machine, inspected it, then turned a knob, pushed a button and made sure the door was pushed firmly shut as a small dribble of water escaped. She said something under her breath, this time he didn't catch her words, his mind too busy with something else that posed a greater threat than any scrap yard ever could. He dimly watched her pick up the wall-suspended phone, then he finally realised what she was doing; phoning the repair man. Another moment's hesitation and the drum started spinning again, albeit slowly and laborously, but to her, the machine had once again righted itself. The phone was put back in the cradle and she settled down to her pile of overdue bills.

The washing machine seemed to study the message, debating to itself whether or not to look at it. The

message was untitled. But it was a Decepticon message. But most Decepticons wanted him dismantled, melted down for spare parts, something which he didn't like the sound of. Finally, curiosity got the better of him he opened it, reading through the short message. It was a request. A simple one that carried a generous reward; second commandmanship of the Decepticons. At the bottom of the message was a single name; Carjack. He'd heard of Carjack before during his little bouts of spying on the Decepticon chatter, tapping into their network undetected. What he'd heard about this Carjack was that he was unreliable, a possible traitor to the Decepticon cause. *Sounds like my kinda bot.* He mused to himself. And being smaller than Carjack was, he could get into his joints if ever he went back on his word...

Anybody walking amongst the parked cars in the crammed parking lot would surely have noticed the strange-looking four wheeled vehicle, silver and blue in colour with a sports car shape about it. People who admired the vehicle assumed it to be a modified super car; something a car fanatic had been working on in his garage at home for years until he got the beautiful four wheeled monster just right, achieving that vision of perfection that only he wanted. Unbeknownst to the admirers, the vehicle had a name and a personality, a personality that went beyond the shining paint job and chrome, and the engine. Speeder just sat in the parking space, putting the two vehicles that were parked either side of him to shame, seemingly lapping up the attention. Pictures were taken on what he recognised to be camera phones, comments were made and speculations about his top speed and how fast he could reach it were added to the froth of awed and jealous chatter of the furs. Then his attention was pulled away from his musings over the differences between the Humans and the furs that now stood before him, admiring his body. It was a message, received from Deadmetal. Apparently, Carjack's signal had been slowly but surely moving from one side of the country to the other before completely disappearing. He'd asked for Speeder to stay put just incase it was a ruse, to throw them off his trail, an order Speeder could quite happily obey, what with all the admiration he was currently receiving. The only thing that truly bothered him, was that Deadmetal had relayed an order from Raid; To ditch his Cybertronian look and find something to blend in with, thusly making it more difficult to be spotted by Carjack. The only upside to the new 'guise he'd been ordered to take on was that Deadmetal too, had to ditch his Apache AH-64A, something that grated on the hunter's mind, having grown attached to the helicopter due to it's manouverability, speed and firepower.

With those orders in mind, all Speeder had to do was wait until the coast was clear enough for him to pull away and to go and find a new 'guise. Though he was sat in a car park, stuffed full of all kinds of vehicles, neither one of them seemed fitting to him. All family cars, poor excuses for sports cars; something referred to on Earth as a 'Hair Dresser's Car', a title Speeder and a few other Autobots, including some Decepticons, agreed fitted the curved, lady-like vehicles. He wanted something that would avoid Carjack's attention completely, yet be able to get away with prowling the streets without being noted as suspicious. Or too suspicious anyway. And so, the day wore on, people came and went and so did the cars, the sun, much to Speeder's relief, following suit, sinking down to just above the building tops. This was his chance to get out of the car park. Not too many people around to notice an un-manned super car drive itself out onto the street.

The street was quiet, although far from empty. People were still going about their daily business, either on foot or by vehicle. Some pedestrians had anticipated the day's weather by wielding their umbrellas at their sides like weapons, as if ready for a sudden attack from above. The dark clouds were rolling in low and fast, a thick, grey mist hanging beneath them on the horizon; a sure sign of rain. Speeder continued on, on a constant vigil for the vehicle that matched his personally set requirements. He turned a corner

at a junction, going left, then across at the next then right. A red light stopped him as a group of furs walked by on the white striped markings painted onto the dark tarmac. As the people filtered past he saw what he was looking for; his new disguise. A small, secluded parking lot opposite, containing the vehicle he desired, one that seemed abandoned, unlike its blue and silver counterparts that were parked up neatly in the road opposite. The light went green and he moved forward again, pulled into the right hand lane and swung into the small parking lot where the battered car was sat under an eaves made of corrugated steel sheets and scaffolding. The area was perfectly secluded, only a questing eye would've spotted it. He rolled up to the old car and examined it. a set of blue and red lights sat atop its roof, the only panels that weren't dark blue but white were the front doors, the boot lid and the bonnet, which suffered a hefty dent. The rear windows were darkly tinted and the front windows were lightly tinted. Across the sides, written in large, capital letters was the word POLICE outlined in a deep, bronze style colour. Three of the four tyres were flat, but it didn't bother Speeder one bit.

I can suffer with this... He mused to himself, and an electric blue laser swept over the damaged police cruiser, something that was only visible to Speeder himself. It only took a split-second for the information to become embedded into his system, shunting his true form aside and manipulating his light blue into a darker shade, the simply stated word POLICE fading into view on his swiftly re-shaping doors. The sirens seemingly grew out of his roof to fix themselves onto him and before any passerbys had a chance to notice, the odd looking super car had been reformed into a clone of the cruiser that sat, useless beneath the eaves of the small parking lot, bull-bar and all. A quick tap into the police network revealed that car 372 had been vandalised after being abandoned in the industrial park on the other side of town after a group of thieves somehow managed to steal it. It was now listed as a write-off. Speeder chuckled at the thought of a group of bored teenagers stealing a cop car. Although it was good to see the law trying to stop crimes. Back on Earth, the police had all but given up. He reversed carefully back out onto the road and pulled away as the rain started making itself known.

7 - Turbulance

George stamped into the kitchen, his bushy tail twitching angrily behind him. His wife was stood at the back door, cigarette wedged firmly between her fingers, her deep brown paw shaking lightly. She knew what was coming. Every night something was found to argue about, and that inevitable argument would always lead to the inevitable thrashing. The washing machine always took notice. He secretly looked on, hidden red lenses focused on the fuming Fox as he approached his wife. She still had her back to him. But that soon changed when his paw landed on her shoulder, jerking her around to face him. This time the argument was about some paperwork. Apparently it had gone missing and he was a laughing stock at work without the notes he was currently ranting about. She pleaded ignorance, he snapped and soon crimson liquid, thicker than water, dripped to the floor, dribbling from between her raised fingers as she cupped her nose, hunched over and tears rolling down her cheeks. This time she wasn't to blame, as if she always was to blame. The fights were usually of his creation, but this one wasn't. It was the washing machine's doing. During the night, he'd pried open George's briefcase and pilfered a few sheets of paper from it, the writings on which he knew were important to his goal. The case had been quietly snapped shut once more and slid delicately back into its original position. Come morning, the irritable and unstable Fox was none-the-wiser. Until he got to work, that is. And once the sun had sunk beneath the horizon once more and the family had gone to bed, the washing machine would transform yet again and meet up with the rogue Decepticon, Carjack and set his plan into motion, for the unsuspecting George held the key to Carjack's wanted upgrade that his newly acquired micro chip held.

Studying the planet from afar, a strangely styled space shuttle of deep green and fiery orange colouration orbited a small moon. The shuttle had tapped into the various satellites and was listening intently to the goings on. Nothing seemed different to it; a massive war that had lost course and cause was fast enveloping the planet, coupled with major fuel depletion and high counts of death and wanton destruction. The only thing new to the shuttle was the world itself. It was called Earth, and in appearances, was a far cry from the beautifully sculpted Cybertron, alas a planet long since dead, caught up in what could only be described as an intense power struggle. The signal the behemoth was tuned into wavered. A quick burst of blue fire and the ship rotated in a slow and nimbly controlled fashion, a maneuver any astronautical pilot would be proud of. The light from the nearby star the planets were orbiting struck the side. If anyone were to see the markings, they would see the ship's name printed proudly in fine orange scrawl of old beside what could only be described as mechanical red tribal mask that seemingly glared out into space. The space shuttle, designation Galaxy, finalized its rotation, finally having relocated the signal it was tuned in to. All was well. The signal was back. It continued listening...

Down on the street light lit main roads of a large town in the west of the largest continent on Nyxen 3, a spindly, tall mechanical creature slunk from shadow to shadow. If anyone had seen it, they'd have assumed it to be a late night connoisseur that prowled around the generous red light of the town. But on closer inspection, they would find themselves mistaken, for they would see dark silvery alloyed bones intricately entangled with black wires glaring out into the night from between a grubby white exoskeleton

that the creature wore like a light-weight armour. They would also take note on it's Dinosaur-like movements and piercing red lenses that bore the same function of the organic spheres that sat in the fur's heads it saw on a regular basis. Except his 'eyes' were sharper, could detect more things, things that weren't viewable through organic issue optics. They could also see further and clearer. The six foot Decepticon bolted down the street in an elegant, bouncing stride, his bird like feet clacking metallicly against the hard surface, head swinging from side to side, on a constant vigil for anymore late night wanderers. This time he had a destination in mind, marked by a small blue dot on a small, see-through map that lay at the bottom right of his line of sight, something only he could see.

He was making his way towards a research facility, the place where George worked. The Fox may not have been one of the scientist's there, but he was still useable. Although, now he'd been used for the scant few pages of information the washing machine Decepticon needed, he could be expelled from existence, something that would be considered entertaining to do. Bounding over a metal bench, a discarded newspaper page fluttering lightly in the night breeze from it's curved iron armrest, he landed neatly and raced across the wide main road, paying no heed to the security cameras that dotted the street, some clinging to lamp posts, others clinging to the shop fronts they were protecting. Skittering off down a back road that was littered with old, overflowing rubbish bins and stacks of black bin bags piled high, he made his way to the dead end; the Decepticon making light work of traversing the old brick wall, ignoring the shards of glass that lined the top as they broke and crunched beneath his movements as he swung himself over and landed neatly in a crouch on the otherside, head swaying from side to side, red optics scanning the new area. He was close to his destination; a scant few blocks away, infact.

The area was grassy, resembling a playing field. He noted that it was infact, true. A wide, black path wound between the large spaces of green and wooden benches of oak and pine dotted the treed landscape, occasionally breaking up the monotamy of greens. A strange grunting sound caught his attention and he swung his head in it's direction. Red lenses focused sharply on the purpotrator; a scruffy, hagarad looking figure with a crooked tail and bitten ears lay snoring on a tableless bench beneath a tree, a floppy, battered piece of cardboard box serving as a form of warming protection from the summer elements. A fat lot of good it'd do the tramp though; the rain was on it's way yet again. An electronic sounding sigh and the washing machine took off across the field in long bounding strides, tiny clumps of wet grass and mud being flung up into the air after each foot step. The tramp grunted as the Decepticon sprinted past him, all that he felt was a rush of air and heard a strange clacking sound when mechanical feet impacted repeatedly on the black tarmac of the path, soon to be swallowed up again into dull thudding as he made his way onto the next large area of grass opposite, knowing that just beyond the tree line in the close distance, the laboratory he was headed to, lay squat and dark in all it's modern day glory.

High above the roof tops of a large town that lay swathed in darkness, only the flicker and soft yellowish glow of street lamps lighting up certain roads, a silver and black alien jet flew, silent and almost invisible to the naked eye of any wandering organics who happened to choose that moment to look up at the rolling storm clouds. The alien craft moved slowly, as if searching for something. Or someone. Either way, it was definately looking, red lenses secreted away somewhere in the vicinity of the blacked out cockpit, scanning the streets below. Still nothing. Only heat signatures of the dormant organics, and those who were staggering the streets in a drunken stupor, singing softly to no one inparticular. A week, and Carjack had remained undetectable, having somehow removed his signature from view of anyone who decided to go looking for him. Sweeping around in a long, slow circle, Turbulance came back on his

original trajectory, curses for the rogue Decepticon moving through his mind as fast as his processor would allow, giving him the chance to spin off as many choice words and insults about Carjack and sometimes even a certain Roadtrain, faster than a human heart could beat under extreme moments of stress.

As he came back over the church he took note of something moving swiftly in the fielded areas beside the ancient building. It was running in a rather sneaky fashion, as if someone was looking for it. The style in which it ran reminded Turbulance of the way the predatorial, bipedal Dinosaurs ran in the vids he'd been subjected to witnessing when he downloaded a mass of information from Earth's satellite's to learn more about the planet. He focused on it; it held no heat signature like the organics did, but it retained an aura he knew all too well. It was a Decepticon. A small one, about six foot - nine inches and thin, but that didn't mean it was harmless. And the fact that the running Decepticon's ID was weak and wavering, made the hunter all the more curious. One run away was fun. *But two run aways... Well, that's just sport.* He thought cruelly. And maybe, this one had a connection of some description with Carjack.

Car 372 idled at the darkened curb, spectating a pub brawl that had spilled out into the street, from a distance. Those sober enough to have an ounce of sense about what to do in these situations were desperately trying to break things up or were trying to attract the copper's attention by screaming at him. The Human term *The lights are on, but nobody's home* sprang to Speeder's mind repeatedly as he watched. There was nothing really, he could do. At least, not without blowing his cover and gaining the wrath of Raid. That's not a thought that comforted him in any way, shape or form, especially since his secondary form was a tank. *And a bloody big one at that, too.* He thought, a hint of sourness edging his tone, a sure sign that he was getting incredibly bored with sitting around and waiting for something to happen. Something besides pitiful, drunken brawls and plastered furs banging on his heavily tinted windows and slurring at him in their loudest possible voice. He ignored the jibe about "useless fracking coppers" and pulled away from the curb, trying his hardest not to spin his wheels and kick up some oily road-grime the rain had brought to the surface of the dark, cracking tarmac in a retaliation to the punter's booze fueled comments.

As the small Decepticon broke into the laboratory, Turbulance touched down around the back, making sure he was in the relative cover of the trees and a few out-buildings. Once down, he gave a moment to survey the area for any signs of activity, all the while keeping a tabs on his small quarry, who was now ascending the stairs. Then silver and black panels moved, switching positions and rotating, the blacked out cockpit glass falling down as a head emerged, swiftly following a set of long legs and powerful arms, the four-set wings folding back and downward at his back, secondary plasma guns just showing their noses either side of his head. Turbulance scanned his surroundings once more. Five security cameras. Simple in design, yet effective for their job description. They were also very easy to take offline, the screens at the security desk inside the building wavering, flickering then showing nothing but angry static, something the guard put down to technical difficulties. After all, it wasn't the first time it'd happened. The scientists and their tinkering with new technologies and the like were absent minded buggers for putting the building's power supply on the fritz on a regular basis. And so, the Blood Hound replaced his polystyrene cup of coffee back on the desk, hauled himself stiffly to his feet and went in search for whoever was left in charge. Outside, Turbulance grinned to himself as he knelt on one knee, his opposite hand spread across the floor, bracing himself as he tapped into the in-building sound monitors and cameras, watching as the small, spindly Decepticon went about his business.

8 - Joy Ride

To say that Krusher was in a foul mood, would belie the actual extent of his current state of mind. His lenses were glowing an avid red, hard and fiery and to look him in his optics, Hookshot feared he might melt. Indentations were left battered in the hard rock ground when he walked, cracks spidering outwards in a distressing pattern.

"Why haven't you fixed the Space Bridge yet!?" Krusher bellowed angrily.

Hookshot and Steele winced. Roadtrain merely grunted and folded his arms across his chest.

"We're only Constructicons, sir!" Steele pleaded, nervousness edging his tone.

"Yeah, we build stuff, like architecture and stuff. We don't do programming!" Hookshot persisted.

Krusher growled something unintelligible and turned to face the large flat screen that hung, embedded into the rock wall.

"Maybe if you hadn't have reduced 'ol Cable Cutter to her component parts, then we wouldn't have this problem, would we?" Roadtrain grumbled from his point beside Hookshot.

Krusher clenched his behemothic fists, small panels on his right fore arm shifting swiftly, rotating and changing, a small, arm mounted machine gun being unleashed within a matter of nano seconds. The transformed Chinook spun around, right arm swinging upwards, Roadtrain in his crosshairs. But the KAMAZ was expecting a reaction like this. He always did around any air borne capable bots, be they on his side, or not. He slid nimbly to one side, but wasn't quick enough to avoid a few well aimed hot plasma balls as they slammed into his shoulder plating, leaving small, smouldering holes where they'd melted through. The small impact may not have looked all that significant to Hookshot, but Steele being the smaller of the remaining Constructicons, and also the most likely to be shot and beaten no matter what the situation, knew full well how irritating a small shot like that was. Roadtrain removed his hand from his shoulder, gave it a quick visual once over and swore as he fingered one of the three black charred holes in his armour.

"How many times do I have to warn you about your language, Roadtrain?" Krusher said smoothly as his weapon folded back out of sight. "Just remember that you aren't as heavily armed or armoured as the rest of us are. The next time, you won't be so lucky." He warned and turned back to face the giant screen.

A thick silence fell over the cavernous main chamber. The remaining Decepticons looked at each other. "Well? Are you going to un-lock the Space Bridge, or what?" He growled testily without looking over his shoulder.

A few murmurs were exchanged and the three moved from the chamber and made their way to the chamber in which the Space Bridge was located.

"Y'know, they're trying to repair the Space Bridge." Flashpoint stated bluntly.

"I know." Raid replied just as bluntly. "But Krusher has two Constructicons and a Transport working on it. I don't think any of them is programmed to do such a thing. Successfully, anyway." He added.

"And you realise what'll happen if the blockage is removed, right?"

Raid merely nodded. "Why d'you think I sent Speeder along with him? Deadmetal may like to take his time, but that's when he's working on his own. And right now, we can't afford the patience he's earned himself over the years."

"So Speeder's primary function of being there is to pester our dear little Hunter into getting a move on?"

A sly grin tilted the corners of Raid's mechanical mouth.

"Of course. And if Krusher comes after us, we aren't exactly low on back-up."

"Oh..?" The fire engine prompted slowly.

Raid pushed a couple of buttons and the main screen flickered on. Once the brief moment of static had cleared into a crisp and clean picture, Flashpoint saw the odd looking space shuttle against the backdrop of space, a dull grey planetoid covering half the image behind the machine. Flashpoint focused on the red insignia and orange lettering it bore on it's side. He grinned broadly.

"Galaxy..." He muttered.

"The one and only." Raid conceded, somewhat triumphantly.

Deep green was the colour of the menacing 4x4 that idled at the dark curb. Rain bounced off it's panels in a slow succession of one another; the rain was moving in, and it was going to be a downpour. The engine became silent with a mechanical gurgle and it waited for it's new partner. A small group of furs, two canine, two feline and a female ferret walked out of the park, bottles of alcho-pops in paws, laughing loudly and in general, trying to make themselves look mature, and failing in a somewhat spectacular way. One of the felines, a brown and orange tom, sauntered over to the 4x4, pressing a paw against the right hand side window. He looked down at the driver's seat, then into the back and then at the steering wheel, his yellow, hungry adolescent eyes finally falling onto the ignition. No key. Nobody around but him and his buddies. His mates walked around the car, circling like hungry Vultures. A kick to the rear left tyre, a whistle of what could only pass as leanient admiration.

"Looks like a customised job." A Border Collie said as he ran a tentative finger across the deep purple mask insignia on the bonnet.

"Probably. You don't get leathers like this, unless you order straight from the dealership...." The feline replied as he continued to peer through the tinted glass.

"Could get a fair bit for one 'o these." A scruffy Terrier announced. "Got a mate the next town over who wants one of these."

"Oh yeah? What's he willing to part with for one?"

"Enough to keep your bit of stuff supplied with all that fake gold she seemes to like." He laughed.

"Hey!" The Ferret whined sourly. "This ain't fake! This's real carrots, this!" She flicked an over sized hoop earring in protest.

"If he pays up, we split the cash." The Panther said.

The bottles of alcho-pops were placed on the floor, once the Ferret's arms were full with what bottles she could carry and a mobile phone as the lads got to work on breaking into the car.

Carjack just sat and did nothing. Infact, he was quite amused at trying to be stolen. It wasn't a first, but terrorising them once they got in, was well worth it. Everyone has a different reaction when it comes to self driving vehicles, especially one's that shouldn't be driving themselves... Something inside the door clicked as the slim-jim hooked onto it and pulled. The indicators flashed as four, whirring clicks sounded out, seemingly louder than an explosion, the indicators brighter than the sun. They paused, frozen in their positions. Eyes swivelled in their sockets. No one around, no one watching. All was well, especially now the central locking had been forced open. The bottles were expelled over the park's outer fence and the large doors swung open silently on finely greased hinges. The smell of new car hit them before they even got in.

"Brand new, un'all!" The Terrier excalimed.

"Now we just gotta get her running. So shove over!" The Panther said and climed into the driver's seat.

Her? Carjack growled to himself. *Why does everybody call machines her!?*

Once everyone had piled in, the doors slammed shut and locked. They all looked at each other, nervousness etched upon their features.

"What'd you just do, Marky?" The Terrier asked.

The Panther looked over his shoulder and at his worried friend beside him.

"I thought you did that..."

"I can't slam all four doors at the same time and then lock us all in!" He whined.

"We better not be stuck in here!" The Ferret whined.

"Will you shut your face, 'Chelle?" The Panther snapped.

"Hey! Don't you be having a-go at her!" The tom cat snapped back angrily.

Before the bickering could get into full-swing, the engine roared into life, the smooth, angry sound filling the dark street, making them all jump. The rain became slightly heavier and the waterfalls that were trickling down the windscreen were wiped away by the smooth movements of the windscreen wipers. The teenagers swore and faught to get out of the vehicle. The doors were jammed, the glass un-breakable, their panic fuelled even more as the handbrake lever snapped downwards and the gear stick moved into first, the clutch pedal dipping again as it shifted into second, the un-manned action repeating until fifth was reached and sixty-five was gained. Sufficient speed to scare any unsuspecting car thieves half out of their minds. The teenagers screamed, paws banging at the windows, gripping the steering wheel and working the brakes. The hand brake refused to come upwards and the brake pedal, as the accelerator and clutch pedals, had a mind of its own. No one was leaving the car. They'd get the car ride of their life time, something the annoyed, yet amused Decepticon would make sure of. A red light went past in a blur, the sound of an angry horn belonging to a heavily loaded lorry fading into the distance. The teenagers screamed even louder at the very near miss. The wing mirror righted itself, pulling itself back into its sockets as the 4x4 continued on, engine roaring angrily as it tore down the main street, sliding sideways around sharp corners, the terrified teenagers trapped inside the rampaging car.

Then it stopped, the suddenness of the stop throwing them forward, making them headbutt the back of the seats and the slick black dashboard. When they regained their wits, they peered up cautiously. The engine noise had been reduced to a low rumbling, allowing the sound of the rain bouncing off the metal sound louder. The headlights, still on full beam, were seemingly focused on a pile of scrap metal. The doors clicked. They'd been unlocked. Carjack's frightened passengers bailed out swiftly, a couple landing in a heap on muddy floor during their bid for freedom. Then they ran. Ran hard, and straight into a solid brick wall. The car doors slammed shut and the 4x4 slowly trundled around and rolled towards them. The sopping wet furs were pressed hard and huddled against the grimey wall of the small dump. A few whimpers were emitted, much to Carjack's enjoyment. He stopped short, a mere foot and a half away. The Ferret gave a short scream and pursude the inner call of survival to hide, partially burying her face in her boyfriend's shoulder, a wide, scared eye peering out at what was unfolding before them. The car was changing. It suddenly grew arms and legs, the panels and windows shifting, moving, sliding, revealing a new shape. It was bipedal, at least sixteen and a half foot tall and sported a sadistic grin on its mechanical face. Carjack leaned down, massive hands braced on his knees as he loomed over the small group. His red lenses focused on them, one after the other. Then he looked at them in general. He opened his mouth.

"Boo!" He said evenly, but with enough depth and menace in his voice to send them screaming and skittering for sanctuary.

He watched them running for the gate screaming and swearing in utter fear, laughing cruelly as the rain dripped from his alloyed chin. Then, as quick as he transformed, he changed back into his 4x4 and rolled casually out onto the streets once more, having just received a query from Spinner-Vox, his fellow run-away Decepticon.

The smaller Decepticon sprinted back across the fields, thick crimson staining his silvery metallic claws. He'd just managed to persuade the top scientist at the laboratory to do his bidding. Now he just needs to re-locate Carjack to set things into full swing. *The sooner, the better.* He grumbled to himself as he ran, heedless to the sleek monstrosity that was following him from above.

9 - Baited

The sun glinted sharply off the MH-47G Chinook's scarred panels as it made its way slowly and laborously towards a small encampment of green and grey shades of assorted tents that lay within the industrial wastelands that was slowly being reclaimed by the near-by forested area. A handful of different vehicles lay dotted about; small helicopters, light-weight tanks and vehicles for goods transportation uses. Ignoring all calls the Chinook descended into landing, all eyes falling upon the large chopper. One soldier, closest to the mechanical behemoth shouted something. He'd spotted the deep purple, scarred face style insignia it bore on its nose, and a wave of panic rippled through his colleagues. Seeing no one onboard, the midday air was torn apart by shouts and the sounds of powerful shots slamming into metal as the Chinook seemingly folded in on itself, transforming and raising itself up on large legs, piercing red lenses scanning the fast growing crowd of military Humans, both men and women alike as large, alien weapons were unleashed upon the organic beings, hot plasma shots tearing mercilessly through flesh, blood and bone spraying the surrounding area. The death cries and screams and shouts of utter panic soon started to fade as the remaining Humans made their escape. Something beneath his giant, alien alloyed foot crunched horribly and a gut-churning scream was cut abruptly short. He peered down and watched blood seep across the shattered concrete where a soldier had once stood. He ignored the messy demise of the fleshling and continued on with his terrorising of the small make-shift base.

Most, if not all, would call this recent Decepticon attack mindless, needless. But to Krusher, it wasn't mindless. The sudden destruction had a purpose, one of equal cruelty. He wanted to lure the Autobots out into the open, knowing that their base was somewhere near his current location, but not knowing its exact location frustrated him to no end, forcing him to come up with new and fresh ideas for bait. And he wouldn't stop his current rampage until Raid showed himself. He would give up the blocking code, even if he had to beat the damned tank into pieces.

"The Eastern military camp has just been wiped out." Flashpoint announced, not in the least bit surprised.

Raid stared at the large screen, the images the security camera they'd tapped into flickering angrily, yet showing enough information for a decided reaction. Standing in the center of the devastation, Krusher stood, the twin sets of Chinook rotor blades folded at his back like wings rattling and vibrating as more powerful shots were released onto the base. Then he transformed and the two Autobots watched as he took off slowly, ascending higher and higher until he was out of view of the damaged camera.

"Any ideas as to where he's headed next?" Raid enquired.

A moment of silence, then the transformed fire engine spoke up.

"My guess? He's moving onto the next, closest base, makeshift or otherwise."

"Call Galaxy in then meet me up on the surface." Raid ordered.

Flashpoint gave a brief nod and his bulky fingers skittered across the control panel, the scene of the destroyed camp vanishing into static before clearing back to the timid and tranquil view of space. The deep green and fiery orange shuttle was still there, waiting patiently. Then, a few moments later, a burst of blue fire, then another and another, and the alien space shuttle started forward. Flashpoint grinned.

Krusher landed once more, and for the third time that day, started further ruining the lives of the male and female soldiery that came within range. Through the explosions and screams and gunfire, a siren could be heard. A loud one, angry and obnoxious. To be more precise, it was the siren of a fire engine rushing to a new emergency. Krusher grinned. He knew who it was. And he knew that the vehicle following closely to Flashpoint would be a Cybertronian tank by the name of Raid. A group of fleeing soldiers swerved out of the way as the fire engine forced its way through the main gates, soon followed by a large green and silver tank.

Krusher cast a look over his shoulder and spun around, swinging his arm up and firing at Raid and Flashpoint. A short streak of bright white collided with Krusher's own plasma shot, the perfect aim exploding violently, shredding the already damaged concrete beneath it to pieces and destroyed everything within range of the sudden spherical explosion.

"So you finally decide to show yourself after, how many years...? Three hundred and seventy eight?" Krusher growled in anticipation.

"You missed me so much, that you counted our years apart? I never had you pinned as the sentimental type, Krusher." Raid said before performing a swift transformation, going from alien, twin cannoned tank, to alien, twin cannoned robot.

Both Autobot and Decepticon alike stood at a distance from one another, lenses locked firmly on one another. A few moments of silence passed.

"Tell me the blocker code you have used on the Space Bridge." Krusher finally growled.

Raid cocked his head. No more words were exchanged, not even on a sub-sonic level.

The two monolithic masses of alien technology swung into motion, heavily armoured limbs moving in an all too elegant fashion for such huge beings. Then metal collided with metal and the two leaders grappled, trying to topple one another in any way possible. A low electronic sounding growl and both sets of arms jerked to one side as a huge foot shifted position, slamming back into the concrete below, giving just enough leeway to topple the Autobot to one side. The panels on the fire engine shifted and rearranged themselves. Flashpoint stood upright, shoulder cannon readying for the shot. A deep green crane and a small digger of the same colouration came to life within the debris of what was once a small storage hangar, powerful diesel engines roaring angrily into life, the arms on both construction machines lowering and extending, swinging around together, slamming into Flashpoint's shins, sending him over, sprawling on the battered and torn concrete before he could line up a clear shot. Flashpoint grunted something from his position among the debris scattered on the ground and tilted his head to one side just in time to see a large steel hook flying towards him. Then a blur of static, swiftly followed by darkness.

Raid rolled onto his back, a chain gun emerging on his right forearm, pointing upwards, Krusher in his crosshairs. The large Decepticon loomed over him. But that was soon remedied. A harsh, shredding round of shots was let off, tearing across Krusher's chest plates, moving in an upward diagonal, sending some of the smaller, and somewhat weaker shoulder plates flying in a flurry of bullets and sparks. He rolled neatly out of the way again, narrowly avoiding a large foot as it came crashing down on the area of broken concrete where Raid's head had previously been. The tank rolled up and back onto his feet, a surge of anger and dismay as he saw, out of the corner of his optics, one of his oldest friends be carted away by a pair of battered, re-painted Constructicons. A momentary distraction, but enough of a distraction to give Krusher the upper hand. He quickly regained himself and swung around, hitting Raid hard in the side. Raid had been partially unprepared for this and stumbled. The kick he'd received was swiftly followed by a well aimed EMP shot. Raid didn't anticipate the move. He didn't know about Krusher's arm mounted EMP cannon. Very few did. Raid went down hard. The fight had ended as

abruptly as it had started.

Two figures lay on their backs on a small square of greenery. The pair who lay in the small garden consisted of a grey Donkey with heavily pierced ears and a tattooed creamy white Hare. Both male. Both bored. They stared up, squinting into the spattering of fluffy white clouds as they played and skittered across the sun, imagining what the endless amounts of different shapes the thick masses of vapour reminded them of. They joked and laughed about how one of them reminded them of their second year math teacher, what with the large nose and beady eyes the cloud seemed to sport. Another cloud gained a string of crude jokes, some of which were aimed at the mail man and his tendency to gain entrance into the abodes of the females he delivered to. The next cloud, a long, thin trail of white and grey almost gained a crude comment too. The comment halted in the Donkey's mouth, seemingly bouncing back off his teeth, ricocheting back down his throat. Something odd had appeared from the cloud. He pointed up and nudged his friend.

"Dude." He said slowly. "What is that?"

The Hare squinted in the designated direction.

"Dunno.... Looks military..." He mused, growing as befuddled as his companion.

They squinted harder, propping themselves up their elbows, finally manoeuvring themselves onto their feet, paws shading their eyes from the sun. Whatever it was, it was flying low enough for them to make out a few details. The craft was small, bulky, yet held a relative streamline to it. Two small wings protruded from it's sides. It seemed to be a deep green, almost black.

"Alien?" The Hare asked, squinting up.

"Nah. That's shoot. No such thing as aliens. Gotta be some kind of military test, y'know? They're more 'an likely testing a new type of plane, or summink."

"Planes don't have propellers!" The Hare said pointedly, spying the near see-through black circle that seemed to keep the craft airborne.

"Well, not anymore. I mean, those things were permanently grounded fracking years ago. Like, a hundred years ago."

As the growing debate about long since grounded airborne crafts and avionics of old thickened, the unidentified craft moved on, heedless of the quarrel it had just started. And unbeknownst to the two teenagers, the craft had a name; Deadmetal. And Deadmetal was indeed alien, having travelled to their planet from its adopted home world, Earth in search of another like itself.

"Carjack's here!" A voice said in near protest.

The suddenness of the exclamation almost toppled Deadmetal from the sky. He wasn't expecting Speeder to communicate quite so soon in the afternoon. The scheduled contact was another three hours away, at sunset. And he could tell by the impatient lilt in Speeder's voice that he was getting bored.

"Where?" Deadmetal asked, hoping for a more informative string of words.

"A town called *Bresham*." Was his reply. "In the west of *Koli*. I dunno what he's doing, but I've spotted Turbulance lurking about and almost ran over another Decepticon, one that I ain't never seen before." Absorbing the names of the location, he probed further about the new Decepticon.

"Dunno. Never seen 'im before. He's a spindly bundle of bolts for his height. My guess is, he's a runaway."

"What makes you think that?"

"The way he was scanning the area as he ran." Was Speeder's reply.

"Right, I'll be there in about two days. Don't do anything stupid." Deadmetal said and headed for the new location that had appeared on his map.

10 - Head Ache

The Great Dane sat hunched over the white, sterilised desk, a long, black, cylindrical device to his eye. He peered through it and at what was spreading across the petri dish at a mind-numbing pace. His head hurt. The bright, artificial lights weren't helping, and to make things worse he still hurt from the beating he had received the night before. How he wished it was just the usual breed of thug; cloathed in dark cloth, wielding some form of recognisable weapon like a gun or bat or knife, and was composed entirely of flesh, bone and fur. But instead, the research laboratory's top scientist was given a good hiding from something composed of metals. Everytime he closed his eyes, he could still see those piercing red lenses boring into him, the feel of the long, thin blades pricking his throat... And the voice... Oh, gods, the voice it spoke with! It was nothing of this world, something he could never imagine. If that mechanical beast spoke with such force, what would it's cohort sound like? What would it even look like? Would it look like a larger version of the spindly thing that had broken into his lab and attacked him...? In an hour, he would surely find out, much to his growing dismay...

George, once more sat in the kitchen, a glass tumbler full of light brown liquid firmly gripped in one paw, the bottle of his alcohol of choice positioned within a lazy-man's grabbing reach just opposite him. He eyed the washing machine suspiciously. He'd gone past wondering whether he was losing his mind. He now no longer cared to question it. All he knew is that the damnable appliance had sprouted legs, grown arms and morphed a head, all of which were attached to something mechanical that definately was *not* a second hand washing machine bought on the cheap some years ago. He took another swig of the liquid and felt it burning down his throat. The glass was empty again. He reached forward. Instead of grabbing the three quarters empty bottle, his paw diverted numbly towards his brief case. Two golden styled locks flicked open and the lid was clumsily pried upwards. The now gently swaying Fox peered in and reached into the mass of paperwork with a paw and started to have a good rifle through his week's work. A soft, yet bitter curse and soberness started to return to him, much to his brain's distaste. "Where th' frack're they?" He mumbled to himself.

He gave up his search for the suddenly required paperwork and removed his paw, letting it drop limply onto the crowded kitchen table top. He looked up and out into the back yard. The sun was slowly sinking beneath the horizon. A glance at the digital clock that sat beside the cooker. A squint. The fuzzy numbers morphed slowly into coherent digits. **6:03** they announced boldly. The lab wouldn't be completely shut down for the night until seven. He cast another suspicious glance at the ilde washing machine. A shiver ran the length of his spine as the feeling of being watched by something horrible crawled across his body. At least he'd be away from the washing machine for a while. And as an added bonus he decided, *Away from the inlaws...*

He rose unsteadily from his seat, screwed the cap on the bottle and stashed it away back in its secret hole beneath the stairs. The glass made its way into the sink and then he made his way to the front door.

Once the front door shut and clicked locked, the washing machine slid out from beneath the counter of its own accord, panels repositioning themselves and folding in on themselves, revealing the tall, spindly mechanical creature that it truly was. Spinner cocked his head, red lenses searching for any signs of

organic life within the house hold. The Budgie. That's all. The cat was outside. The mother and her children wouldn't be home for another hour or so yet. He pried open the back door and slipped out, edging along the wall and ducking out behind the bushes that lined the tall fence. He made his way to the rear of the garden and wriggled his way through the hole in the bottom of the fence that the weather and various other creatures had worn out over the years. Now free of the confines of the house, Spinner gave one more scanning sweep of his new surroundings. It was a field. Untouched by civilisation. Grass almost as tall as he was. Perfect cover. He moved on, the destination being the laboratory.

Many, many miles above Earth, just piercing the atmosphere intact, an alien space shuttle appeared, its deep green and orange colouration engulfed in fire as it descended at an all-too quick pace. If anyone were to be watching, no doubt that they were, phone calls to higher places would be made and troops possibly maneuvered for resistance against the possible threat that had just materialized. The space shuttle, designated Galaxy, was not in the least interested in the Humans below that awaited her arrival. It was those beings composed of the same metals that interested her the most. The message she had received was from an old acquaintance, whom she had not seen or heard from for many hundreds, if not thousands of years. Locking on to his signal, she banked sharply as the flames surrounding her finally subsided and vanished and homed in on the signal's current location. The shuttle bore one occupant, who was currently tapping frantically away at a keyboard in the cockpit, grumbling to itself. It was spindly, wore no distinctive mouth and its bright blue eyes came in a set of three. It swore again and the shuttle shuddered.

"Watch how hard you're pushing my buttons!" Came a dominant sounding female voice from the speakers embedded in the cockpit dash.

The smaller Autobot cringed slightly at the tone of voice.

"Sorry. Getting a little anxiose here, y'know? It ain't everyday I get to leave Cybertron and go somewhere else... In fact, I think the only other place I've been is the neighbouring system...." He trailed off, a sharp alloyed finger-like claw raising slowly to the face plate where his mouth should have been, tapping it ponderously.

"Rifle!" Galaxy snapped. He immediately derailed his current train of thoughts. "Get on with the download! Y'know I can't track and research at the same time!"

"Almost done. Sorry..." Robotic alien fingers started tapping away on the keyboard once again.

A set of sickeningly brightly glowing chains tied Raid and Flashpoint to the carved walls of the underground cavern. Krusher stood before them, red optics shielded from the glowing. The chains were designed to not only secure prisoners, but to torment them too by giving off a horrendous glow, rendering the captive blind. All Raid and Flashpoint could see of the transformed Chinook through the bright glow that coiled around their necks was a dim, black blot in the center of bright colours, which were now ever shifting, going from luminous pink to green to yellow to red, cycling through all colours known in existence, a sure sign that their optics were fast becoming severely damaged. But that wasn't the only part of them being slowly destroyed. With each un-answered or 'wrong' question, Krusher would do damage to the Autobot who didn't speak, leaving the one who had answered - or hadn't - with the growing guilt of inflicting pain on their companion of many years. Panels were dented, torn and a few even lay at the feet, torn away from the bodies of the transformed fire engine and tank.

"One last try." Krusher growled, his impatience rapidly growing. "What is the *code*?"

Raid and Flashpoint held their ground and stayed defiant. Neither would speak. Krusher grumbled. A heavy fist drew back and came hard towards Raid, slamming into his abdomen with a horrible metallic *crunch*. Raid tried not to wince, but failed. Contrary to popular belief among the Humans of Earth and various other organic worlds they've travelled to, just because Raid, Krusher and their teams, along with the rest of their kind, were composed of various kinds of metals, does not mean they are impervious to feeling. Though at the current moment in time, both Autobots wished it were true, that they were indeed mere robots with a one track mind. Raid squinted through the ever changing colours, his failing optics focusing on the black blot that was Krusher. He grinned. Krusher went mad, and so the beatings continued.

Rolling up an access road that was separated from the main building by a row of tall trees, was a large 4x4. The setting sun glinted poorly off the metal work of the vehicle as it filtered through the trees. Just around the sharp bend it rolled to a halt at a large steel door. Something clicked on the otherside, a yelp and a scuffle, then a thud. The door slowly rolled upwards, revealing a large storage bay on the otherside. A tall, spindly robot with red lenses stood off to one side, pressing firmly against a steel container with what seemed like breathing holes drilled neatly into the sides in rows of four, trying to blend in with it. Carjack gave a soft chuckle. The smaller Decepticon was still paranoid about him. He watched carefully and suspiciously as the 4x4 pulled in. The door rolled back down, cutting them off from the darkening outside world. Before transforming himself, Carjack scanned the area. Crates; wooden, plastic and metal of all shapes and sizes littered the area almost haphazardly. Towards the rear of the large loading - cum - storage bay, was a large, heavy white curtain, the bright white light cast by a handful of desk lamps creating the dark silhouette of a tall, bulky figure.

"He's the one who's gonna upgrade ya, so don't go blowing him up!" Spinner hissed and spun around on a narrow heel and took off towards the curtain, diving through a near-invisible slit in the fabric. The organic figure turned his head. Placing whatever it was he held in his paws back on the table, he slipped cautiously out from his little sanctuary behind the curtains and edged around the stacks of crates. When his eyes fell upon the expensive looking 4x4, his shoulders sagged a little. Whether it was in disappointment or relief, neither Decepticon knew. But for the Great Dane, it was somewhat of a relief. Having only experienced the heated and colourful threats of the spindly mechanoid stood beside him, and not having experienced what he, or his cohort that was now idling before him, could do, all he was expecting to do, was to tweak the car's engine or something. Then his face fell, lower jaw dropping as he witnessed the 4x4 shudder, the lines between panels flowing and sliding as the large vehicle rearranged itself, growing large limbs, a head sprouting and rotating into position atop a set of giant shoulders from somewhere in the vicinity of the car's front grille. The scientist's head ache had just gotten much worse within a feeble two and a half seconds.

11 - Micro Chip

The Great Dane Scientist, also known as Professor Markus, circled the 4x4 that was now stood on a set of legs that, by all natural laws he could think of, shouldn't exist. Carjack watched him move around at his feet, turning his head as far as he could when the scientist disappeared around his back. An electronic sounding sigh of boredom emanated from the transformed washing machine's direction and he tapped a bird-like foot on the concrete of the large storage - cum - loading bay.

"So... An upgrade you say....?" Professor Markus stated slowly, the thought of speaking to a pair of robots having some difficulty settling into his pained mind.

"Can you do it or not?" Carjack rumbled.

Markus winced. He wished he'd have sat out that last headache, instead of swallowing his last aspirin. He really could use one right now. He rubbed at his forehead, the slight pressure easing the throbbing pain temporarily.

"I need to have a look at these blue-prints you've got, including a set of your own, to see what I can and can't do." He replied uncertainly. "That's assuming I can do anything at all...."

"Oh, I'm sure you can do alot." Carjack replied.

A large alloyed hand that was forged on a distant planet lowered to Markus' height, the large fingers opening slowly to reveal the tiniest of shapes lay in his palm. The stolen micro chip was eyeballed. A paw tentavely reached out and plucked the tiny piece of wire and plastic from the behemothic hand.

"I think I have something to read this with..." The Great Dane murmured, almost to himself.

"Good." Spinner snapped. "Let's get on with this. I gotta be back soon."

The very much out-of-place Apache AH-64A landed within the confines of the remnants of an old warehouse foundations. It scanned its immediate surroundings, swiftly moving on to scan further away. The industrial estate was near empty. It was late afternoon, so almost everybody had gone home, or were starting to depart. It was also time to make contact with Speeder again.

"What's your current status, Speeder?" He queried over a secure line.

A slight delay in the reply.

"My current status? Bored out of my mind! How far away are you from Bresham?"

"I have another hundred miles to fly. I've just set down for a quick recharge, then I'll be on my way again."

"How long?" Speeder probed.

"A half hour recharge. That do you?"

"Yeah... Just remember what Carjack has in his possession and what he intends on doing with it. Oh and also, we ain't alone and he ain't the only Decepticon here either."

Speeder was starting to feel extremely impatient now.

Over head, spearing through the late afternoon sky was what most would consider a UFO. But to others, especially to the bored form Speeder who was roaming the back streets, the alien craft bore a name and a personality one wouldn't want to encounter in a dark alley. The silver and black aircraft's name was Turbulance. He flitted from cloud to cloud, keeping perfect time and course with the Autobot below that

had disguised himself as a police car, and was slowly descending with each burst of speed. He knew Speeder wasn't oblivious to his presence. The Autobot had paid for his ignorance of his surroundings some time ago, having found himself suddenly trapped and severely damaged in an old Energon mine during a brief scuffle between the two back on Cybertron. And Speeder wasn't one for making the same mistakes twice. But then, neither was Turbulance. Speeder was leading him away from as much civilisation as possible, much to Turbulance's distaste. The Decepticon relished chaos and destruction more than most, it seemed, and having an Autobot try and thwart that yet again frustrated him.

Wings adjusted, panels shifted and relocated to their new positions to reveal Turbulance in all his menacing bipedal glory as he executed a free fall, using his thrusters to home in on Speeder like a missile. Speeder accelerated and Turbulance followed suit with a burst of black fire. He tilted and turned seemingly effortlessly in mid air ahead of Speeder and slammed into the ground, shattering the road surface. Tires squealed in protest at the sudden stop in motion and the police cruiser jerked to one side sharper than should have been possible and rolled, a swift transformation being executed. Speeder landed neatly in a feral crouch, arm mounted weapons, a small plasma cannon on his left and a machine gun on his right, pointed directly at Turbulance who stood defiant in his midst. No words were exchanged. They just locked gazes for a brief few moments. Turbulance was the first to move, performing a swift, low and sweeping kick. Speeder leapt, but his foot was grazed by Turbulance's and the touch knocked him slightly off kilter. Speeder recovered easily, bringing his gun up and firing, shots plowing into Turbulance's strong chest armour, merely denting it. He shifted position again, skipping back and then abruptly darting off to his left as the Decepticon charged, long arm blade at the ready.

Mounting the steep verge that protected the road from the farm land that lay off to its side, Turbulance lost his footing and stumbled, his fall made all the more rougher as Speeder proceeded to help him down by landing a kick in his lower back, sending him sprawling and cursing. Speeder came in to follow-up with another blow, but Turbulance rolled deftly to one side, Speeder's massive, but slim fist burrowing deep into the verge. The menacing blade attached to Turbulance's forearm arced downwards from the side and sliced through the armour on Speeder's back, the blade going deep enough to touch upon the sensitive circuitry hidden beneath. Pain registered and Speeder recoiled to one side, the sudden and awkward movement jerking the blade from his back, doing more damage than good. In a rage, he let off a volley of plasma shots, the heat slamming into the offending Decepticon's armour, making his body temperature rise at an alarming rate. Turbulance tried to defend himself, but the totally outraged Autobot had him locked within his crosshairs and was refusing to let him go. With each stagger backward, Speeder would approach.

The damage being done to Turbulance was becoming too much, too fast. He hadn't anticipated this kind of reaction. It was the first time he'd witnessed Speeder to be so brutal and straight forward with an attack. He steeled himself and pushed aside the swiftly growing pain that was enveloping his circuits, threatening to shut him down permanently, and performed a ducking roll which led to an awkward somersault and transformation back to vehicle mode. *Speeder may have won this small spat, but he won't win the next.* Turbulance growled to himself as he propelled himself back into the sky as more shots of heated plasma seared after him. He needed to cool off and assess the full extent of the damage that the damnable Autobot had done. Hopefully, it was just cosmetic, and nothing more.

Professor Markus sat his desk, computer mouse in one paw, his other trained on the keyboard as he eyed the specs and other pieces of data that scrolled across the computer screen, manifesting in their

respectful different folders. His shoulders sagged a little further. He had no idea what the language was he was seeing. He'd never come across anything like it. He hazarded a quick glance through the parted curtains and into the more open floor space of the storage bay. Carjack was back in vehicle mode and waiting silently. As to what the mechanoid was thinking, Markus didn't know. And where the monstrosity's little friend had gone, also eluded him. He stared hard at the screen once more, trying his damndest to make heads and tails of the foreign language that was appearing on the screen. He'd been flitting through his computer's translator programs with a sliver of the foreign words as a test, to see if he could find a match and translate. He'd exhausted all of the planet's languages, finding not one match. A few similarities, but even they didn't make much sense to him.

"Uhm, I'm having some difficulty in reading this, uh, data..." He hazarded.

The 4x4 the semblance of a question was aimed at remained unnervingly silent. The prolonged silence made the scientist think he was losing his mind and that the transforming car had been a product of the headache that had seen fit to assault him at midday, mixed with a severe lack of sleep and nourishment.

"What's the problem?" Carjack announced suddenly.

The Great Dane flinched.

"I don't understand the language. It's not in my database or any others I've connected to." He said pointedly.

"The language is Called English, so of course it won't be in your databases." Carjack sniffed.

Markus suppressed an irritated grumble. Then the idle computer monitor to his left suddenly went mental, a trail of words appearing and then vanishing into freshly created folders, just as they were on his primary screen. A moment later, it calmed down and went idle again, leaving a large blueprint image in its wake.

"There." Carjack stated tiredly. "I managed to interface with your systems and translate it for you. Now get to work."

Markus blinked in astonishment at the screen with the blueprint on it. It'd been translated all right. And he gaped when he saw what the alien mechanoid wanted doing.

12 - Galaxy

Flashpoint shut his eyes, cutting off the blinding light of the heavy glowing chain that bound himself and his comrade, Raid. Krusher had finally given in with the beatings and stomped off down a side tunnel, leading away from the chamber they were being held in. A few torn panels of armour that had been torn away from both Autobot's bodies lay at their feet. Raid grumbled something, just loud enough for Flashpoint to hear.

"Galaxy should've entered the atmosphere by now..." The transformed fire engine whispered back.

"What's taking her so long?"

"Probably our lack of communications making it harder for her to locate us." Flashpoint replied.

Raid grunted and both halted their talk when another Decepticon walked in. He looked them over, trying to avert his gaze as much as possible from the optic burning glow of the chains. To the two Autobots, the newly arrived Decepticon looked like a mere plain white dot amidst a sea of ever changing colours.

"Come to finish Krusher's dirty work?" Raid commented with a snort. "Wouldn't be the first time he's done something of the like."

"Nah. I'm just here to keep an optic on you. Make sure you don't escape or anything." Roadtrain replied evenly and strolled almost aimlessly over to a spot where a cluster of rocks had been discarded from the carving of the chamber.

He sat down on it and watched them, only averting his attention elsewhere when he started seeing luminous green spots hovering before his lenses.

Rifle looked out the cockpit window and gave an electronic whistle of admiration.

"Lot more greenery down there than I imagined." He commented.

Galaxy couldn't help but agree.

"Yeah. You'd think it'd be more of a dead brown colour, what with what the planetary news has been saying about this two hundred year war. Heck, I'm even surprised such a primitive species has survived for so long on a planet like this."

"Eh, each to their own, I guess." Rifle replied evenly with a half-hearted shrug.

He settled back down in his seat and strapped himself in. He knew what the large Autobot was like for her landings on newly discovered planets. Some were smooth, and went according to plan, others, they were lucky to make it out with their Sparks intact.

The trees rose up higher and higher by the second, their green canopies stretching up to graze Galaxy's under-carriage. Then the large foliage gave way to an unmistakable sight; That of a warzone. Where buildings once stood proud and inhabitable, now stood torn and blackened shells, broken and flattened images of a battle long since lost. Galaxy's powerful visual sensors flicked through the debris, even as she slowed, looking for any signs of life. Amongst the wild life of birds, insects, canines and felines alike, lay the charred skeletons of those who fought in that particular segment of the war, their now permanent grins belying what had been done to them. It was not cheerful, and Galaxy suppressed a shudder. Rifle just looked on with his equally powerful optics, staring at the scenes with interest as they flitted by. Why would anyone flee their own war-torn planet to supposedly seek refuge on another war-torn planet was beyond them both.

"So, this is what Earth looks like up close, huh?" Rifle muttered.

"I hope it ain't all like this. I've seen enough death and destruction to last me three life cycles." Galaxy snorted.

"And yet you're still bent on ripping Krusher apart..." The much smaller Autobot mused and almost fell out of his seat when Galaxy banked hard.

A few moments of silence passed during the low flying. Then a clearing in the industrious wasteland opened up ahead of them.

"I can set down over there." She stated.

"And then what? We're miles from our target location!"

"I need to rest regularly too, y'know!" She snapped and proceeded to lower her landing gear.

The wheels of the alien space shuttle grazed the surface of the debris lightly, before slamming down abruptly, sending up rocks, mortar, greenery and various other pieces of debris in up her wake. In the cockpit, Rifle gripped the arm rests with all the force he dared as Galaxy came to a rough skidding halt. A deep, feminine electronic sounding grunt was emitted from the speakers.

"Easier landin' in a damned tar pit!" She mumbled angrily to herself.

"No damage done, right?" Rifle queried with one optic held shut.

"No." Galaxy replied simply.

Sat hunched behind an old building on the far outskirts of the industrial estate that had long since seen better days, Turbulance inspected the damage he'd unexpectedly received from Speeder. His circuits were cooling down nicely and the areas where he'd been hit were badly dented, but thanks to Speeder's slight negligence in maintaining a same-area-shot, his armour was not penetrated. This he allowed a sigh of relief for. He'd live to see another day, the day that would see Carjack returned to Earth and Speeder reduced to his component parts. A metallic finger slid across the dented surface of his chest armour and a low growl escaped him. So very close to his most vital area. A few more well aimed shots there, and his Spark may well have been thoroughly extinguished. His fist clenched and slammed into the ground between his legs, sending cracks spidering away in all directions from the resulting mini-crater. Many ideas wound through his mind, each one viewed in as much detail as he could muster. He'd just reached the fifty-ninth way in which to destroy Speeder when black clouds started to roll in, a heavy mist hanging below them. Yet another down pour was on its way.

George wound his way through the large, sterile building, briefcase in paw, a frown furrowing his brow. He knew he'd left it behind. He always left something behind, usually something important. He rounded another corner and came to a halt at the lifts. Pushing a button he waited almost impatiently, foot tapping the hard white linoleum floor. A ping and the chrome lift doors slid open. He stepped in, mind on another world and pushed another button absent mindedly. Not like he needed to concentrate on where he was going. He took this route every damned day, so often that he could probably navigate his way to his office blind folded. Thoughts of a homicidal washing machine free existence played through his mind. So did the fantasy of what he would do to the machine when he got the upper hand. He was so into his musings that he neglected to pay attention to the tall, spindly robotic figure pressed into the corner of the lift.

Red lenses studied the back of the Fox's head with as much interest as a starving Cat would eye up a Mouse who'd strayed too far from its hole in the wall. The Decepticon took a slow step forward. The lift

stopped. He froze as George shifted. A ping and then the doors opened. George exited swiftly ignorant to being followed. Carjack could do whatever the hell he wanted. Spinner had other things to do. Like getting a little revenge on a certain flea bag who'd kicked him, insulted him and tried to flog him to the highest bidder at every moment available. And also for beating the one person who actually seemed to care about the second-hand washing machine, even if it was just because it'd lasted longer than three months without breaking down. He followed him into a wide corridor that was plushly furnished like that of a five star hotel. Deep red carpet and creme walls, with matching half-tables and soft seats lined against the walls at regular intervals. The doors that dotted the light painted walls were a deep brown, some doors being framed by rectangles of frosted glass. Spinner was about to continue when a fresh set of foot steps sounded out. He swore inwardly in Cybertronian and swung out of sight, pressing himself up against the wall just around the corner. A few words were exchanged; nothing important, then the foot steps vanished through a door, which promptly clicked shut behind them.

Spinner hazarded a look around the corner and into the corridor. George's back was receding into the near distance, a paw pulling a key out of his pocket. He stopped at a door that lay to the right at the end of the corridor and the key was inserted into the lock and twisted. The lock clicked and the door was pushed carefully open. George vanished through the portal and into the room beyond, letting the door close behind him. Spinner took one last check of his surroundings and made a dash for the door. Once there, his spindly metallic fingers gripped the door knob, red lenses peering carefully through the frosted rectangles of glass, his optics giving him a clearer view of what was going on than any organic optics could. George had sat down, briefcase on his desk in front of him. He bent down slightly, pulling a desk drawer open and rummaging through it. Apparently not finding what he wanted, he spun around in his chair and set upon the cabinets behind him. Only then did Spinner proceed with gently and oh-so very carefully opening the door.

13 - Hillside

"There's no way ever that I'm gonna fit down there!" Galaxy exclaimed, gesturing loosely at the large mine entrance.

"Of course you can!" Rifle piped cheerfully. "Remember when you squeezed into that ventilation shaft back on Cyber-"

"DON'T! Remind me." She said, with a visible shudder, cutting the much smaller Autobot's sentence off. They eyed up the hillside once more. *This can't be the entrance to the Autobot's hideout, can it?* Galaxy thought with a slight sour edge.

"I'll go in first. Scout ahead, see if there's anything of danger down there." Rifle stated eagerly.

"Yeah, you do that. I ain't going anywhere anytime soon." The large mechanical female grunted, folding her large arms across her chest.

Rifle gave a small electronic *chirrup* and darted off into the darkness. *Always so excited to explore a new planet, whether it's in pieces or not.* She grumbled mentally, wondering why she'd been paired with the excitable intel officer in the first place.

A leaping bound over a derailed mine cart full of rock and Rifle stumbled to a halt at the edge of a sheer drop. Three blue lenses peered carefully over the edge and into the black abyss below, the final resting place of the rest of the track that had been sheered off instead of continuing across the the large gap and vanishing off down one of the many tunnels opposite. He took another step toward the edge and kicked a rock into the hole. He tracked it for about half a mile down then lost sight of it, the all-consuming darkness overpowering his powerful optical sensors. Soon after losing sight of it, he heard the faint click of the rock hitting something in the distance, something, he assumed to be the ground. He hoped. He sidled around the tattered edge of the pit, spied some sturdy looking out-crops and indentations in the carved wall and lept into action, thin metallic fingers gripping and latching onto the small jutting portions of rock as he swung and bounced and shimmied across to the otherside. He took one final leap of faith and just barely landed on solid ground, his thin arms windmilling as he sought for his balance. Balance found, he froze, lenses darting from side to side, top to bottom. No signs of danger.

Or at least of the Decepticon variety, anyway. A lunge forward and he landed roughly, all semblence of previous perfect balance crashing down with him. He looked up and spied a neat marking on the wall of the tunnel that branched off to the right and downwards. He focused on it, the image becomming clearer. To anyone else, it would look like some kids had carved some kind of graffiti onto the rock surface. There were enough discarded tools laying around. But to Rifle, it looked like a variation on a familiar symbol, one that he himself bore on his chest plates; the insignia of the Autobots. He scrambled to his feet and darted forward, into the tunnel. Skittering around and over fallen debris, Rifle made his way downward, following a small signal. The signal was getting stronger with each step he took. The tunnel widened dramaticaly and opened out into a small chamber. Rifle slowed his pace to a stop and peered around at his new surroundings. The chamber wasn't man-made. The domed chamber walls bore a pattern of carving he recognised all too well. This chamber was created by the hands of a mechanical being who could think for himself.

Two more tunnels lead off in different directions opposite him. Sensing no one in the chamber but

himself he proceeded. Only to have his trajectory cut short by a large set of feet slamming down in front of him. The tall crane stood menacingly before him, a deep, scarred purple mask insignia stamped on his chest plates. Still donned in his military green, Hookshot glared down at the small Autobot. Rifle had no idea where the Decepticon had come from, but right now that wasn't an immediate issue. The Constructicon was between him and his planned route, and he wasn't about to give up the search for Raid and Flashpoint, especially after the distress signal himself and Galaxy had picked up soon after the first transmission that was sent out to them.

"Going somewhere, short stuff?" Hookshot sneered.

Having been knocked off his feet by the sudden impact of Hookshot's abrupt landing, Rifle scrambled to his feet, mind a whirl. He'd been in situations like this before. It was one of the major cons of being in the intel group. *Be prepared for more trouble than you can handle.* His section commander had told him when he first joined. *You never know when and where a Decepticon may attack.* So far, Rifle had been attacked on every single mission he'd undertaken. How he'd managed to survive with his Spark and every other part of his body intact for so long, he still had no idea.

Breaking the ensuing train of thought before it even entered the station, he ducked out of the way, narrowly avoiding a massive alloyed fist as it slammed down hard into the spot where he'd been standing. Rolling to his feet, he darted off around Hookshot, skittering, sliding and darting about as the transformed crane tried to stamp on him. Hookshot let out a growl of frustration. Small targets were hard to hit with projectile attacks, but stamping on them just seemed nigh on impossible, when it should have been easier. Hookshot's foot slammed down again, massive cracks spidering out from the area of impact before a large hook forged of an alloy not found on Earth slammed into the ground a scant few inches from Rifle's heel. The Autobot gave an electric shriek of dismay and darted between the Decepticon's feet, one of the two tunnels in his sights. It was slowly, but surely, dawning on him that it was his small size and his nimbleness that had kept him alive for so long, a pair of traits he'd always taken for granted. He heard a series of familiar *clicks* from behind and immediately dived for cover, landing behind a pile of old, discarded mine carts and steel girders. Projectiles ricocheted off the native metals as Hookshot unleashed a barrage of rounds from his small arm mounted gun.

Rifle pulled out his own arm mounted guns and returned fire. The much smaller rounds pounded into Hookshot's armour with all the force of a common house fly flying into a window. Hookshot laughed off the return attack and ceased fire as he strode forward to where Rifle was hunched. The mine carts were sent flying off to the side along with the girders when a massive hand came down and dislodged them un-ceremoniously revealing Rifle. Hookshot made a grab for him and Rifle flinched back, going into a sprint, racing off down the narrow tunnel behind him. Hookshot lunged forward and slammed into the chamber wall, his arm sliding into the tunnel, hand outstretched and fingers grabbing for the Autobot who was already well out of reach and racing down the tunnel without a glance backward. A howl of anger and dismay was the only thing that chased him down the tunnel.

Hookshot withdrew his arm from the tunnel entrance and stood upright once more. This wasn't good. An Autobot had escaped him and was heading towards the Decepticon's base. He may have been small, enough even for Roadtrain to handle with ease, but who knew what kind of back-up he had with him? *Best not to dwell on that one...* Hookshot thought to himself and looked up at the tunnel he'd come from. There was no way he was getting back up there. He looked around. The largest tunnel led the long way round. If he was quick enough, maybe he could get back to base before the Autobot found it. He took off down the wide tunnel as fast as he could go, hoping that Rifle would succumb to a pitfall of some sort.

Turning the final corner, Hookshot slid to a halt. In the chamber he'd just entered, stood a by no familiar metallic bipedal shape. Rifle slowly looked up at Hookshot who was now grinning down at him. He took a step toward the Autobot, paused momentarily, then pulled back his left fist and lunged toward Rifle, right hand outstretched. Rifle misread Hookshot's actions and mistook the pull back for a punch. *Never underestimate a Constructicon. No matter how thick they seem.* The miserable mental comment occurred just as quickly to him as his legs reacted, springing him to the side at an awkward angle. He landed roughly just as a splayed hand landed on the spot he'd just been occupying. His attention momentarily distracted, Hookshot's left fist unfurled and plunged forward, grasping Rifle and lifting him from the ground. Everything turned upside down when Hookshot stood. The pressure that now enveloped Rifle's slim body doubled and a dull pain registered. A sadistic, growling laugh from Hookshot and Rifle's vision fizzed with faint static. Then the topsy-turvy surroundings shuddered, debris falling from the roof of the large, domed chamber.

A thick-set figure landed gracefully amongst the tumbling rubble, straightening in the chaos to reveal its full height, something not easily achieved in the current environment of the new situation. Blue lenses pierced the settling rock dust and a large hand shot forward, gripping the crane arm attached to Hookshot's back, another hand shooting out and gripping the Decepticon arm that bore Rifle, squeezing hard. Hookshot let out a yelp, and tried to pull away, but failed. Metal buckled, Rifle was let go and Hookshot cried out in pain as his crane arm was bent backwards, out of shape. His hand spasmed as delicate circuits became crushed under the pressure of the buckling armour. Fighting through the haze of pain, Hookshot brought up his free hand and slammed his fist into Galaxy's chest plate. The awkward blow was enough to merely induce a light dent in her deep armour, but enough to anger her more. The femme Autobot growled something under her breath and relinquished her grip, though it was only temporary. She pulled back, then came back at him before he could react. Galaxy slammed into him and sent him rolling hard across the chamber. He slammed into the wall and the angry red faded from his lenses. She looked down and at Rifle who lay sprawled on the ground.

"You okay, lil' man?" She queried.

"I've said it once, and I'll say it again; It damn good to have a partner three times the size of those trying to kill you."

Galaxy grunted something and leaned down to set him gently back onto his feet. Albeit slightly unstable once upright, Rifle managed to keep his balance.

"How'd you get down here anyway?" He asked, brushing off some rock dust from his person.

Galaxy gave a slight shrug.

"Brute force and ignorance."

"The usual way, then." Rifle replied light heartedly.

14 - Too Big

A lone JCB digger sporting a military green paint job, sat beside the road being practically ignored by the seemingly never ending stream of soldiers and heavy-built vehicles, weapons and transports alike. An out-of-place white KAMAZ rolled down the small embankment that seperated the town from the small canal that weaved through its middle and braked to a stop beside the digger. The Human march continued on, a mere few glancing in the vehicle's direction, some with a confused look on their face or for those old enough and knowledgable enough; worry settling into their aging features at the sight of the unmanned vehicle.

"They're taking it directly to the enemy, now." Roadtrain stated bluntly as a Challenger 2 rumbled by.

"Now they're on the last of their fuel, they have to do something." Steele replied evenly.

"Well, if they don't do something about the fuel soon, we'll have to move on. Again."

"What a shame that'll be." Steele grumbled. "Can't wait to get off this miserable little rock." He added a bit more quietly, but with just as much conviction.

Silence settled once more between the two Decepticons as they watched the tail end of the march file past in a low, growling rumble of large and powerful engines, all heading towards the docks.

Once again, Galaxy stood before an old mine entrance, large arms crossed across her chest in defiance and a sour look etched upon her mechanical features. Her lenses met with the three blue lenses of Rifle who was stood just inside the entrance of the man-made tunnel. He didn't move under the strength of her rapidly increasing irritated glare. Not this time. Not ever again would he cave in.

"What short-stacked primordial mass of *goo* would build tunnels so *tiny*!" She growled angrily.

"Uhm, the *Human* kind of short-stacked primordial mass of *goo* would. It's just the right size for what they intended to do around here." Rifle pointed out.

Galaxy narrowed her optics and leaned down a little. Rifle could've swore that he felt himself shrink a foot or two under that menacing blue stare of hers.

"There is no way, in the name of Primus, that I'm getting through *there*!" She rumbled menacingly.

"But the tunnel widens a little way down!" Rifle countered, but to no avail.

Galaxy straightened as much as the Cybertronian carved chamber would allow her to, and her hands went firmly to her hips. Rifle backed down.

"Well, we always find other ways, don't we?" He said, a slight defeated sheepishness creeping into his tone.

The office door swung open, banging hard against the cabinets behind it as a wirey Fox fled the room. An electronic screech persued him down the lush corridor and a spindly robotic figured skittered out onto the carpet, guouging four claw-like marks in the carpet as he fought for traction. His grip found, Spinner darted forward in pursuit of the rapidly fleeing George. Turning the corner sharply, the Decepticon spied the tail tip of the Fox vanishing around another corner. Spinner promptly charged in that direction, only to find the ensuing area empty. It was a large reception area, a flight of stairs neatly tucked away in the far left corner beside the large, marble styled reception desk. His head swung from side to side, searching for any signs of the organic. A line of fading heat leading off towards and down the stairs signified George's route. Spinner took off again, metal feet tapping against the hard floor.

George took the steps three at a time, a slight wonderment lingering in the back of his mind about how he hadn't fallen and broken his neck. But those kinds of thoughts would have to wait for later, once he'd escaped his rampaging washing machine. His smart, black shoes slapped hard onto the waiting marble floor at the bottom of the many flights of stairs he'd just tackled. His lungs burned through being worked too hard and his heart pounded, threatening to stop. He clutched a paw to his chest and squeezed his eyes shut. Was this some kind of punishment? *Punishment*. He thought. *God's punishing me*. The thought came swiftly, but weakly. The sound of metallic feet tapping hard against polished marble echoed down the stairs. The damnable demon appliance was still hot on his trail. George took a deep breath and sprinted off down another corridor. He knew who'd still be at work during this time of night. Professor Markus. He always worked over-time, always striving to perfect his new brain-child; nano technology. If he found Markus, chances are, the washing machine would stop chasing him. For the time being. That assumption was based on the memory of when it'd first attacked him in his own kitchen. It'd scurried back beneath the sideboard and resumed its disguise when the family came down to inspect.

He rounded another corner and through the blur of growing sweat and pain, a set of black double doors outlined with stripey black and yellow hazard tape came into view. They were the main doors to the loading - cum - storage bay, and for some unfathomable reason, the scientist had set up base in there recently. No matter though. He could see the glimmer of light through the cracks between the doors and their frame. And if it weren't for the noise of his heart pounding in his ears, he'd have heard the mumbled words of a rather intrigued, yet befuddled and decidedly pretty much one-sided conversation going on. He barged through doors and into the large crate riddled space and entered the scientist's little hide away that was shrouded by a series of heavy white sterile curtains. Within lay a network of wires all leading to a massive computer set-up with various scientific instruments scattered about on the surrounding tables that meant very little to George in way of their uses. A strange mechanical whirr sounded out and Markus scurried back into his little area, a pair of pliers in one paw and a heavy duty looking hammer in the other.

"Mr. Furman!" The Great Dane blurted, obviously extremely surprised. "What brings you to this little corner of the building?"

George shrugged, his mind blank for excuses, something which was very rare. Not that he'd had a chance to think of an excuse for dropping by for a visit. *After all, it's not everyday you get chased by a homicidal transforming washing machine*. He thought tiredly.

"I just thought I'd drop by and see how our very talented nano-technologist was doing." He said, feigning a smile. He was not in the mood to crack a smile.

Markus looked slightly puzzled. His eyes wandered over George, taking in his ruffled suit and slightly sweaty fur.

"I'm just fine... You...?" He lied. There was nothing remotely *fine* or *okay* about having to do upgrade work on an alien machine who's threatening to remove your skeleton whole if you don't obey.

Technically, it wasn't really possible to do such a thing. But Carjack wasn't from Nyxen 3, and if he could transform into an ugly, yet posh 4x4, then who knows what else he's capable of?

The two furs stood opposite each other for a few moments in silence. George was struggling to control his breathing and hoping and praying that the washing machine wouldn't spring through the doors and disembowel him on the spot, whilst Markus secretly praying to every god he could think of in every language he knew, that Carjack wouldn't grow impatient and slaughter them both.

On the other side of the curtains, Carjack sat on his four wheels once again, grumbling inwardly. Turbulance was here. And so were two of the Autobots. *If the upgrade isn't finished soon, we'll all be finished.* He thought unhappily. The Autobots may not harm other beings by some stupid ancient law, but that wouldn't stop Turbulance from crushing them for aiding in Carjack's personal mission. And as far as Carjack was concerned, Professor Markus was his to destroy, not some up-tight Seeker type's. Once the upgrade was complete, Markus would no longer be. Having a group of Decepticons and Autobots knowing what you were up to was bad enough. But to have an organic do the upgrade for him? Pitiful, but something that needed to be done. He listened in on the ongoing, albeit slightly awkward conversation that was happening between the two organics on the otherside of the curtains, until he heard Spinner approaching.

"Don't enter!" Carjack growled.

He heard Spinner slow to a stop just outside the double doors.

"Why not?" He snapped angrily.

"To disturb the two would hinder my progress. So stay out of sight until the damned Vulpine leaves." He growled menacingly.

The com crackled slightly and a short, electronic sigh echoed through the silence.

"Fine." Spinner snapped. "Spoil-sport." He added in a mutter.

Galaxy swatted dirt and debris from her large form and huffed. She'd managed to find another route, but it'd cost her many precious minutes. Rifle was stood a little before her, peering carefully around a corner. There was definitely someone in the newly discovered chamber. There was more than someone, in fact. There was four. Two free-standing and two chained to the far wall. Rifle averted his gaze from the harshly glowing chains and eyed up the massive form of the transformed Chinook that bore the name Krusher. Alongside him stood a transformed digger in a similar military green colour scheme. The colour may have been misleading to some, but it was definitely a Constructicon. Rifle looked up and over his shoulder and at Galaxy, a silent message being swiftly passed between the two on a secure frequency they'd developed between themselves over the years. Galaxy gave a brief nod and Rifle scurried into the chamber, making a bee-line for the ensnared Raid and Flashpoint, his optics down-cast, wanting to avoid as much of the ensuing optical damage as possible.

15 - Blind

Krusher stood before Raid, a special set of lenses shielding his optics from the damaging glow of the chains that held the two Autobots bound. All Raid could see now, was a tiny black speck in a sea of greys against the backdrop of the purest white imaginable.

"You Autobots can be so stubborn some times." Krusher commented. "Four days you've been here. Surely you're blind by now, hm?"

The Decepticon's tone was calm and collected, conversational even. True, Raid was effectively blind now, but over the few days, he'd learned to interperate the grey shades as shadows of figures, tracking them as they moved. But he was still, unmoving. Weather he'd still be able to interperate the greys blotches when he moved around, was still unknown, as was the current state of the medic's optics. For several hours now, Flashpoint had been silent.

"It's a shame, really." Krusher continued. "Because, since you basically pose very little threat to me now, I'll be bored. Should've given you a pair of these, really. Made things more interesting..." He said, tapping the specialised lenses lightly.

"You could've just used our ordinary chains instead, boss." Steele commented absent mindedly. Krusher looked across at the Constructicon and growled something. Flashpoint chuckled, the first sound he'd made in a while, taking everyone by surprise.

"But that would mean the bastard reject would have to raise the energy to torture us properly for once." The fire engine sneered light heartedly.

Krusher roared and swung a behemothic alloyed fist into the medic's jaw. A metallic crack resonated throughout the chamber. Flashpoint kept his head tilted to the side and his lenses downcast. Out of the corner of his optic, Raid saw a smaller shadow move swiftly across the open expanse of the chamber. He focused his remaining senses on the small figure. It was definately running. He could hear the dirt muffled *click, click* of small metallic servos slapping against the ground in fast succession. And it was getting closer; the trajectory, Raid estimated, was him. He tried listening beyond those small sounds, wondering if there was anything, or anyone, else lurking about, and wondering if Krusher or Steele had noticed the possible intruder.

Something small slammed into Raid's foot and a pair of tiny claws scrabbled against his ankle, fiddling for purchase to ascend, something easier said than done, since Rifle had his optics shut tight, cutting off the blinding light of the bulky chains. Raid looked down carefully, trying not to draw the attention of either of the Decepticons. The figure was clumsily climbing his leg. When his small hand touched upon the first thick ring of many on the chain, Krusher chose that moment to inspect why Raid had suddenly decided to look at his own leg. A large gun was unleashed and shots fired. The rounds skittered past Rifle's back, scorching black marks in his armour and melting it slightly. Rifle swore in pain and felt panic rising up within him, threatening to take over all rational thought processes. Seeing that he'd missed the tiny Autobot infiltrator, Krusher surged forward, massive hand outstretched, ready to seize the battered form of Rifle when a terrible scream set him off balance. Steele had been floored like a rag doll by a tall and bulky dark green and vivid orange marked figure. Krusher's hand swung toward Rifle and tore the robot from Raid, smothering him in a mass of cold metal.

He could feel Rifle's feeble attempts at escape, small stings and tiny thumps against his palm as the

Autobot tried to escape. The grip was tightened and all effort from within ceased with a horrible sound of buckling metal and a muffled electronic shriek to make even the most seasoned warrior shiver coldly. Krusher turned slowly, drawing himself up to full height, facing Galaxy, who also drew herself up to her full height. She still towered over him.

"I'm assuming this piece of scrap belongs to you?" She said coolly, kicking the badly damaged Steele who lay unmoving at her feet, whilst trying to ignore his still balled fist.

Krusher merely snorted.

"As does this, to you." He replied and stretched his arm out in front of him before releasing Rifle, who fell awkwardly to the ground.

Galaxy sniffed at the gesture, trying to ignore the fact that her long-time partner had just been killed.

Krusher grinned cruelly.

"I take it you weren't all that close to the little intel officer, hm?" He queried politely. "Or were you?"

He took a small step forward and his massive foot landed heavily on the still form of Rifle. With a twist, Krusher ground Rifle's remains into the ground like a finished cigarette. Galaxy growled. She'd been working with Rifle for many, many years up until now. In truth, she liked the little Autobot, even if his curiosity and other distinct quirks had a tendency to irritate her beyond belief. And now he was gone. Ground into scrap metal by someone she used to admire a long, long time ago, before the war between the two factions started. Another smile from Krusher. Galaxy took a quick glance over at Raid and Flashpoint, and the torn panels of their armour. Some pieces were even lay at their feet, on the floor. Her optics focused on Krusher's.

"I'm gonna grind you into dust, you waste of Spark!" She roared angrily and charged at him.

Krusher ducked out of the way, but his movements weren't fast enough. She'd anticipated his reaction and a large wing split in two, swinging out and cracking his jaw. The momentum of the moment swung his feet out from beneath him and he landed on his back, twin rotar blades sprawled. She spun instantly, rage fueling her once slow reaction time, renewing her energy to slam a large fist into his shoulder, buckling the muzzle of the cannon that had emerged there.

Krusher howled and rolled to the side, coming neatly to his feet, deftly avoiding another blow. Another swing from Galaxy and another evasion from Krusher.

"Come'ere, ya little cretin, so's I can mash you into a tiny cube!" She roared, her lenses flaring a violent blue as she spun on him once more.

Her next attack was countered before it was even launched. Krusher's fist landed heavily against the weaker armour on the side of her waist, leaving a horrible dent. Powerful shots then tore across her body, starting at her left hip and finishing at her right shoulder, leaving a smouldering, blackened trail of heated plasma residue. She stumbled backward several paces and unleashed her own weaponry in swift retaliation. A few missiles shot forth from the vicinity of her left shoulder as did her own barrage of plasma shots, knocking the transformed Chinook off his feet.

"When was the last time you really fought, Krusher?" She snarled, not pleased with his performance.

Krusher grunted something from the floor. The missiles and plasma shots seemed to have made contact in all the wrong places.

"Seems to me that you're getting *weaker* in your old age." She continued as she approached him, weapons still on show and smoking, ready to fire once more. She stood over him and glared down.

"Because the last time I saw you, you were stood, triumphant in a sick way, over the badly mangled bodies of an elite squad of Autobots. What's the matter Krusher? Don't you have the *bolts* to do anything like that anymore? Is that why your high commander put you in charge of a pair of bumbling

Constructicons and a Transport who would more than likely jump at the chance to rip the Spark from your body if presented the chance?"

"You merely took me by surprise." He grumbled. "I wasn't expecting such a violent reaction. From Raid? Yes. From Flashpoint, Deadmetal or Speeder? Definitely. But you?" He broke off into a laugh. "I remember when you two were first put together. I'm surprised you didn't crush the little tin can yourself." She brought her foot down hard onto his chest and the sound of breaking metal echoed through the chamber along with a garbled scream which faded into silence. Galaxy looked down at Krusher and snorted.

"We ain't dead yet." Came the feeble voice of Raid.

Galaxy turned to look at the two. She then looked down at Krusher. She bent and plucked the special lenses from his face and put them to her own lenses, shielding her optics from the glow of the chains. She approached them and got a good grip before tugging as hard as her shoulder would allow. A metallic creaking and the sound of cracking stone and the chains were pulled free. Both Autobots fell forward. Flashpoint fell to his knees, but Raid was adamant that he would keep his balance. He swayed on his feet, his lenses un-focusing.

"What can you see, Raid?" Galaxy asked steadily, dreading the answer.

"Grey. And lots of white." He replied evenly.

Galaxy closed her optics and heaved a silent sigh.

"Flashpoint?" She asked.

A moment of silence. Then he spoke up.

"Sillohouettes. I can probably reverse the damage done to my optical sensors, but I'm afraid, I'm not sure about yours, Raid. Sorry."

"Don't be. They didn't get the code. Turbulance is outnumbered. Chances are, Carjack won't appreciate his presence." He replied and took an unsteady step forward.

He raised a hand slowly and fumbled a bit, before finally resting it on Galaxy's arm.

"You okay?" He enquired quietly.

"I've suffered worse." She said almost blankly.

"I'll go get Rifle." Flashpoint said in a conversational way.

Galaxy could imagine Rifle swearing at Flashpoint's comment about 'collecting' him, as if he were still a new Autobot who'd just come online and was awaiting to see the world he'd just been brought into. A flicker of a smile that faded as quick as the small Autobot's Spark did. Truth be told, he left a large gap in her being. He had become like a little brother, always mithering and poking fun at every chance he got. She pulled those thoughts aside and steadied Raid as he swayed on his feet. He grunted a small protest then promptly swung an arm around her for support as he felt his balance going.

"We need to get back to base and make some repairs." She said.

Raid nodded.

"Lead the way." He said.

16 - Upgraded

Sneaking across a carpark sparsely littered with an array of different vehicles, Deadmetal crept, stepping over a car here, ducking into the blind spots of security cameras there as he made his way towards the boundary wall. A security light spontaneously switched on, flooding a large portion of the parking lot in its false light, a cat scurrying off around the corner. Deadmetal swung into the nearest patch of darkness, hunkered down, lenses swivelling in all directions, all senses straining to pick up any encroaching signs of life, be they organic or otherwise. A few moments passed, and the sudden urge to scan a nearby car and change disguise subsided. His Apache AH-64A guise was safe once more. The security light switched itself off and Deadmetal started moving again, rising from his crouch and moving toward the grubby stone wall. Another look at his surroundings. Still no one. He swung a leg over the wall, then the next and stepped into the field on the otherside. Above, the low whining of an engine sounded out. He glanced skyward. Piercing the looming black clouds, a single white light and a set of smaller, red lights glided by overhead. *A native machine to this planet, not the enemy.* He told himself, knowing that Turbulance was lurking around somewhere.

Carjack lifted a hand, fingers spread, and rotating it as far as it would go as if to inspect it. Infact, that's exactly what he was doing. Inspecting the scientist's handy-work. Professor Markus had gone to extreme lengths in just a few days to ensure that Carjack recieved his desired upgrade, even if the Great Dane's primary motivation was that if he didn't comply, he'd be crushed and ground into dust. Markus stood nervously before the giant mechanoid. The last step was yet to be taken. All neccessary wires and new curcuits were in their respectful new places and weapons were enhanced. All that was needed to be done now was to activate the micro chip that was now embedded deep within the bulky Decepticon. Markus took a deep breath and scurried back to his computer. His fingers flew across the keyboard, typing in a long series of codes in the alien language Carjack had called English. Still complete gibberish to him, he hoped and prayed that what he was typing was correct, and his finger hovered above the Enter key on his keyboard and a glance was cast over at Carjack.

"What're you waiting for?" Carjack growled impatiently.

"Commencing the final stage of the upgrade..... Now." He declared, trying to keep his voice steady. The Enter key was pressed and the codes on the screen started to vanish. Markus instinctively leaned toward the monitor that was displaying the alien characters and symbols.

"Don't!" Carjack growled angrily.

Markus flinched away from his computer and spun in his chair at the sound of Carjack's voice. His eyes widened as he watched Carjack transform, not into the posh 4x4, but into something else. Something bigger, and meaner looking. He'd doubled in size, panels warping and taking on new shapes, shifting positions and effectively giving birth to more panels. He flexed his limbs, emitting strange grinding noises, sparks flew from joints and lenses flared a violent red as an involuntary electronic shriek garbled forth. Markus took several steps back until he came into contact with the back wall that lay hidden behind the rear white curtain as the mechanical monstrosity continued its transformation, arching upright to a point where his back bowed, arms jerked and fingers twitched. A behemothic mechanical foot lifted laborously off the floor and slammed back down as new armoured panels split off the originals and grew and bent into shape.

Then all movement ceased, the only sound was that of professor Markus' heavy breathing as he pressed up hard against the wall. Carjack lowered his head. He looked down at himself and flexed his limbs. Three times his original size now, he grinned broadly and allowed himself a moment of manic glee. Even Krusher himself would have difficulty taking him down now. He glanced upwards, right hand in mid-rotation. His line of sight landed directly upon the quivering scientist.

"You did well, professor." He said in a tone that was now much deeper, and much coarser than it had been before the codes had been downloaded. "You did *very* well." He repeated, unleashing a weapon and looking at it admirably.

He took a step toward the quivering scientist and bent down so he was practically lense - to - eye with the man. Markus instinctively shrank back, away from that large, menacing head.

"Before I go, there are two things I would like to say to you." He continued in a casual tone. "One; Thankyou. And two; Sorry."

He grinned and his arm blade slid forth and came hard at the Great Dane, the massive blade slicing with ease through his middle, severing him in two. Carjack removed his blade and used one of the white curtains to wipe it clean with before turning and leaving the two pieces of the scientist sprawled on the floor in a mess of intestines and blood.

It was spitting with rain as the battered police cruiser sped around the corner, sending up a fine spray of water in its wake. Regaining his grip on the road once more, Speeder continued on. Deadmetal may have been in town now, but he couldn't wait any longer, and so now he was racing toward the large, modern looking building that housed the laboratories and offices where Carjack and Turbulance were supposedly meant to be, with his copied sirens blaring loudly warding anyone off who dared to stray too close. A week and a half had passed already. Too long. *Way* too long, in Speeder's opinion. Carjack should've been stopped as soon as he was located. But no. Deadmetal had persisted that he be patient and await his arrival, that came three days too late. Sliding around another corner, the building came into view, skirted thickly by tall conifer trees, a set of large, neatly mown lawns lay either side of the main driveway leading up to the main entrance. Just off to the left, a curving access road wound its way around to the rear of the building. That's the road Speeder chose, slowing down to twenty from eighty-seven as he cautiously made his way toward the rear of the compound. The loading bay doors were still open with no sign of any delivery in any shape or form.

Speeder stopped just before the threshold and peered in, scanning the area as thoroughly as he could. Only one thing of interest; a cooling mass that lay at the rear of the large area hidden within the confines of several thick white curtains that shielded people from seeing the technology within and also shielding the technology from what was outside. Speeder kept his vehicle form and rolled silently in, his tires making the barest of squeaks when he shifted direction to avoid a large steel crate that lay at an awkward angle. He came to a halt a few feet away from the frontal white curtain. Light pierced the gaps between it and its neighbours. Checking one last time that no one was around, the police car reformed itself, shifting panels and wheels, moulding itself to fit the body of a tall, thin bipedal robot. Another scan of the area. The building seemed to be empty. Speeder carefully reached a hand forward and pushed a finger into the slit between the curtains and pulled one back to one side. Within he found a central curtain, separating two areas. The curtain was smeared heavily with blood. He stepped cautiously in and pulled that curtain to one side.

"Ahhh, this is gonna please everyone..." He sighed unhappily upon seeing the mutilated form of what was once the Great Dane scientist, professor Markus, both parts of his body at an awkward, slumped

angle in a wide spread pool of bodily mess.

He let the curtain fall back and headed out, back into the growing drizzle of the night.

Deadmetal wasn't far away. He could see Speeder racing out back onto the main road ahead.

"Speeder, wait-!" His message was cut very short by a heavy thud from behind.

He spun around, arm mounted weapons at the ready. Turbulance stood before him, a slight grin on his mechanical features. The Decepticon slowly shook his head.

"I can't believe I'm gonna say this..." He sighed. "Carjack has already recieved his upgrade, and trust me; you don't wanna go up against him alone now. I suggest, the three of us work together." Those words came hard to him, and he cringed slightly at saying them.

Deadmetal just stared, the muzzles of his weapons leveled for a chest shot.

"Work together...?" He repeated, albeit slightly amusedly. "You, me and Speeder. Working together....?"

Turbulance grumbled. This was unbelievably difficult for him. He hated all Autobots with an unyielding passion, and to offer assistance to one, nay, *two*, was like moral suicide to him.

"Yes." He snapped peevishly. "We work together."

"Then everything goes back to normal...?"

"About as normal as things can get for us." Turbulance replied, feeling all the more unhappy with the current situation.

Deadmetal paused a moment. Speeder would more than likely never let him live the decision down, but he grudgingly agreed. A temporary truce was called. And Autobot and Decepticon started working together like a finely rusted machine recieving its first dose of axel grease for over ten years.

"Where's Carjack now?"

"Heading towards town, so don't dawdle, Autobot, otherwise there'll be more than hell to pay."

Turbulance growled before taking a leap into the air and seemingly folding in on himself as his vehicle mode took hold.

Deadmetal followed suit and contacted Speeder as he followed Turbulance towards the town center.

17 - On The Local News

Galaxy ran a metallic thumb across her chest plates, admiring the fine repair work of the half-blind Flashpoint. His optics were slowly on the mend, thanks to a two-hourly routine maintenance check, but he knew his sight wouldn't be like it was prior to the torture that Krusher had put them through. True, he could get his hands on replacement optical components, but Cybertron was so far away, and those particular components were incredibly difficult to come by. He let out a soft sigh and replaced the fine headed screwdriver he'd been using back on the table-top.

"You gonna give Raid another try?" Galaxy asked quietly.

Flashpoint shook his head solemnly.

"I could, but I've probably done more damage to his optics by trying to repair them."

Galaxy gave him a look.

"I could try and perform an optical replacement on him, but it'd take years for the new optics to get here, even *with* the aid of the Space Bridge. And then, there's the question of whether the new set would be compatible with him, also there's the amount of intricacy involved in such an undertaking...." He trailed off.

"He spurred that one, didn't he?"

Flashpoint nodded slowly.

"Yeah. He can be right stubborn sometimes. He's adamant that his vision's coming back, but...."

"But...?"

"I really doubt it. My optics were designed to withstand such a performance, but his weren't."

"Basically, he's permanently blind." Galaxy grumbled and folded her arms.

"In my medical opinion; Yes."

Tucked snugly beneath a sideboard, in an almost forgotten kitchen somewhere within the suburbs, a washing machine sat, patiently awaiting a call that it was sure would never come. Three out of the family of four currently sat at the now cleaned up dinner table that dominated the small kitchen - cum - dining room. The two children and their vixen mother, a plump woman in her mid forties, who seemed confined to living the life of a housewife, unhappily bound by a delicate gold band and the law to a man who found more interest in his work and his booze; for to work is to earn money, and to earn money is to earn the right to spend it however and where ever you wish. According to him, anyway. The washing machine sat and watched, a practise for every night, as the three ate. A pea was then launched across the table by the boy. The girl whined, and a pea was shot back, toward her brother with an imprecise aim from a flimsy knife. More peas were launched, some hitting home and others skittering and rolling across the table, some landing on the floor.

"Lee! Polly!" The mother snapped angrily. "Eat your tea *nicely!* Otherwise no desert."

The brother and sister whined simultaneously, then promptly went quiet and instantly behaved when the front door clicked open. George wandered absent mindedly into the kitchen. A glare was exchanged between the two adults. It was eight thirty, and he was late. They'd started eating their tea without him, something that wasn't uncommon.

"How many times do I have to tell you?" He growled. " Wait until I'm home, that way, there won't be any

complications."

His wife's brow furrowed, then a look of understanding crossed her face. She nodded slowly. The scent of stale beer and cigarette smoke drifted across the table.

"You've been to the damned pub again, I see." She mused half heartedly. "Serves you bloody right. Your tea's in the oven. Three minutes in the microwave, or eat it cold. Your choice." She grumbled and lay her knife and fork next to each other on her almost empty plate.

A low growl contorted his features and he stepped forward. Forks full of food paused halfway to the children's mouths as they stopped to watch what their easily angered father was about to do next. Sometimes he'd leave it, most, he'd take up the looming argument and take it further.

A fist slammed down on the table, jerking the glasses full of liquids, small amounts of coffee and lemonade dribbling down the side of the tumblers and the single mug, pooling around their bottoms and soaking into the blue gingham print table cloth. The washing machine looked on, ignoring the low murmuring of the nightly news on the small TV that sat on a small table beside the back door. Things here were getting interesting yet again.

"Unlike *some people*," He growled angrily, leaning over the table "*I* have to *work* for a living! It's *me* who keeps this roof over your heads and food on the fracking table!" He hissed angrily.

The children looked on, forks full of food slowly lowering back down towards the plate. The muscles in their legs twitched, signalling for them to run. They looked slowly over at their mother, who sat still, not making eye contact with him. Then something else caught their eye. The news. Nothing ever catches their attention on the news. But this time, it was different. The camera man was shooting one of the weirdest things anybody on Nyxen 3 had ever witnessed. Possibly the scariest too.

"Look at th' telly!" Lee blurted, pointing furiously at the small screen that sat in the corner.

"Not now, Lee!" George snapped.

"But daddy! Look! There's giant robots fighting each other on the news! Mummy!" Polly whined, tugging at their sleeves to try and garner their attention.

The unexpected mention of giant robots drew everybody's attention toward the small, battered TV, including the washing machine's. The reporter, a Doe, was perched in the open door of the news station's chopper. She was babbling excitedly, raw fear tinging her husky voice as she tried to fight for vocal dominance over the noise of the chopper and the explosions and growls and shouts and sirens that came from below. Her eyes were wide, and glued to the small screen beside the camera man as she too, spectated what was unfolding in the streets below.

"--- why are these monsters here? Where did they come from? Who created them?!" Her tone was almost frantic now and she let out a yelp as she fell over forwards and onto her knees as the pilot evaded a stray white-hot streak of self-regenerating plasma. "The government are now ordering a full scale evacuation." She stuttered, with a finger pushed against her ear piece. "The army is moving in to subdue these *creatures*--" Another yelp, this one turning into a scream and both the camera man and pilot swore violently as an ugly, deep military green chopper soared close by, Earth based rotar blades nearly colliding with the much smaller triplet set of rotar blades that the news chopper bore.

"What in the *hell* was that?!" She howled in dismay, thankful that she was firmly strapped to the interior of the craft.

The Furmans watched in silence at the events unfolding on the TV.

"We told you we saw a giant robot!" The little girl protested excitedly.

"Get yer bags, we're staying with yer aunty Mavis for a few years!" George gibbered and moved swiftly toward the stairs.

A familiar electronic grinding noise stopped him dead in his tracks. He slowly looked over his shoulder and at the washing machine.

"I'm gonna kill 'im! I'm gonna rip his Spark out and sell 'im for spares!" Spinner howled angrily, yet not the least bit surprised, at Carjack's sudden change of mind.

The children were practically scooped up by their mother and hauled protectively towards the wall as the washing machine changed, taking on a new form, one that had become all too irritatingly familiar to George. She screamed, the children cried out in utter awe and George nearly died on the spot from sheer terror, as the words that were uttered by the sentient machine seemed to be aimed directly at him. A flood of dirty water gushed out like a mini tidal wave across the kitchen floor as the small amount of laundry was discarded from its chest cavity, and water pipes retracted, wrapping around both spindly arms.

"Oh my God! It's gonna kill me!" The words came all too easily and rang out all too familiar.

But right now, he really didn't care about the repeated words. He just cared to keep himself intact for as long as possible. He dove off to one side as the Decepticon lept clear across the table and landed neatly on the otherside. His head swung from side to side, taking in the mixed looks that were etched upon the faces of the family. He hissed something in his own language and sprang towards the front door.

"Oh cool! Vox is alive!" Lee squeaked excitedly and squirmed from his mother's grip, his sister following suit swiftly, leaving their stunned mother standing up against the wall as if she were still clinging to the children.

Polly and Lee sprinted to the wide open front door and charged to the bottom of the drive.

"Vox!" Lee shouted after the washing machine. "Where're you goin'?"

"Ain't it obvious? He's going t' help his friends defeat that monster!" Polly squeaked in excitement.

The two stood in silence for a moment as the sound of metal hitting pavement echoed into the distance.

"Getcha arses in 'ere *now!*" George howled after his kids and appeared at the front door.

18 - Friendly Fire

High above, odd pieces of metal plating that were formed on a distant planet came into view through the clearing static. A slow look to the right revealed a bulky white figure and a pained look to the left revealed a now yellowish green and deep purple coloured figure. Hookshot and Roadtrain, both of whom were standing relatively smugly over their felled leader.

"I wouldn't suggest moving too much right now. You might pop something out of joint." Roadtrain said. Krusher grumbled.

"Where are they?" He growled impatiently, still aching from the beating he'd received off Galaxy.

"Gone." The transformed KAMAZ replied simply. "Along with your specialised pair of optical shields."

"What!?" He roared, suddenly finding new energy.

He sat bolt upright, much to the painful protests of his battered body and something, somewhere went *pop* and *click* simultaneously. His fists clenched down on the sides of the large repair table he'd been lay upon, buckling the tough metal slightly.

"I did tell you."

Krusher growled angrily and his lenses flared a violent red as he practically wheeled on the smaller, weaker Decepticon, swinging his legs over the edge, then thinking twice about attempting to stand. The world still swam around him in a warped manifestation of its proper self, sending his internal balancing system off kilter momentarily. Once everything had stopped dancing mockingly around him, he continued in a more subdued, more controlled tone.

"Never mind them. Their leader is sufficiently damaged and unable to properly perform his duty for some time, if ever." He said in a collected voice. "What of Turbulance? Has he located Carjack yet?"

"We got a message from him yesterday. But due to the Space Bridge being locked down by the Autobot's code, the transmission was somewhat distorted..." Hookshot put in.

"Well?" Krusher snapped after a moment, then regained his composure. "What did he have to say?"

"From what we could make out, Carjack's gotten his upgrade from the micro chip."

Hookshot and Roadtrain then took several steps back, in which they hoped were inconspicuous enough to not warrant a thrashing of some sort.

"That irritating, little pile of slag!" Krusher bellowed and stood up, ignoring the pain that coursed through his circuits. "I should never have entrusted such a mission to that mass of scheming belligerence!" He howled and started stomping around the chamber. "When I get my hands on him, I'm gonna tear him apart and melt him down for scrap!"

Roadtrain and Hookshot looked on, watching their enraged leader with mild amusement.

"On the upside, boss," Roadtrain added brightly, "we still got Steele on our side."

Krusher stopped dead. His lenses focused on Roadtrain, who didn't move an inch.

"Here we go again..." Hookshot murmured.

Krusher unleashed his weapons that were still functioning properly and took aim on Roadtrain.

Stamping down the cramped street, a tall, black and deep green figure composed of alien metals moved, crushing everything that got in its way, sending cars, bicycles and lorries alike hurtling through the air, some going skyward. A low, whining sound, that was intimately familiar to the monstrosity, made

its massive spines that doubled down its back ripple in what could be described only as mild amusement. The large head spun to face the noise as the body twisted allowing the almost impossible movement to be performed. Turbulance was homing in once more, all weapons at the ready. Down below, zipping around his large feet, a blue and silver blurr dodged and took shots whenever and where ever he could. Movement on the ground was becoming increasingly difficult for Speeder.

"Is this guy gonna stop growing, or what?" He howled in frustration.

"He *has* stopped growing, so stop whining and start shooting!" Turbulance growled and let off some shots.

Some hit home, others slammed into the ground, narrowly avoiding the speeding Autobot. The missiles he'd launched were batted out of the air like tiny insects, instead colliding with the surrounding buildings or exploding harmlessly on impact on the monstrosity's massive hand.

"Mindwhereyou're shooting, I'm having enough problems as it is!" Speeder yelped wildly as he swerved and spun out trying to avoid said shots and a foot that belonged to what was once Carjack.

A fine string of yellow streaked past Turbulance as he transformed mid-air, slamming into the monstrosity's neck.

"Get your puny aft over here Deadmetal, and put in some real effort!" Turbulance snapped at the whirling Apache as it seemingly tormented the helicopter-like aircraft.

Deadmetal growled something quietly. Trying to shoo away the overly curious organics was taking a toll on the other two. Turbulance swore at him again, and a stray missile was launched in the Decepticon's general direction.

"Watch where you're aiming, dammit!" He roared, strafing a much larger missile that erupted from the vicinity of Carjack's shoulder.

Deadmetal left the flailing chopper and fully joined the ongoing battle, determined to win. On the ground, Speeder was flipped into the air by a well aimed plasma blast. He transformed mid-rotation and landed roughly face down in the cracked and buckled tarmac of what was once the road. He rolled onto his back and readied his own plasma cannon and let an unwavering stream of heated shots off. Large, fiery red lenses swung down to glare at him as plasma tore across his thick chest plating.

"Incompetent fool." Carjack rumbled sourly.

A mass of black spikes shot forth from his massive right hand and shot downward, toward Speeder. The low rumble of a pained groan echoed into the wet, night air. The result of Deadmetal and Turbulance's onslaught on his neck. The large, menacing spikes slammed and embedded themselves deep into the ground around Speeder. The smallest of twitches on Carjack's part had saved the Autobot's life.

Knowing that it more than likely won't happen again, Speeder scabbled out from beneath the thwarted offensive and opened fire again once he regained his footing. He knew where the others were aiming, and joined in with the assault on Carjack's vunerable neck.

Above the robotic commotion, the news chopper circled, the excited yet utterly terrified reporter still babbling away into the mic as she and her camera man clung on for dear life as their pilot maneouvered as best he could around and away from any stray shots that came near.

"Are you still getting all this, Bob?" She asked with wide eyes.

The camera man nodded swiftly and zoomed in on what was happening below.

"No one knows where these creatures came from," she said, determined to continue her report, the insignia of the international news network bobbing in her mind like a sweet piece of candy, "or why they're here. Could it be the start of an invasion?" She stopped briefly, casting a glare at her camera man as he rolled his eyes. "Or could our humble little world be the chosen arena for some kind of

intergalactic gladiator competition?"

"Ooooh shiiiit...." Bob the camera man groaned, lowering the camera from his shoulder slowly as he watched something small and white hot spiralling toward them.

"Hang on!" The pilot called over his shoulder. "We're going down!"

The stary plasma shot skimmed across two of the three sets of rotar blades, the severly close call melting the flimsy metals, rendering them useless and sending the craft tumbling out of the sky, its occupants screaming and swearing. Deadmetal saw it as it happened. Nothing he could do for them now. The stubborn organics didn't take the hint and flee, and now they were paying for it. In the close distance, Turbulance saw it happen too and let out a bark of laughter as they spiralled down, trailing smoke, the craft lodging and becomming skewered on the large series of metal spikes that rowed Carjack's back, whom grunted in distaste when he hazarded a quick glance over his shoulder.

"You puny, *worthless* creatures!" He roared in disgust as sparks flew from his neck.

The doe news reporter cracked her eyes open. She'd survived the crash, albeit a tad painfully. A groan burbled through the rear of the felled chopper. Her camera man was pinned to the far side by a large black spine of a metallic origin she had never seen before. The tip was very close to piercing his lower jaw. She cast a quick, painful glance over at the cockpit. The pilot was skewered like a piece of raw meat on a metal kebab stick, a thinner spike spearing him diagonally through the hip and upwards through his shoulder. The beast on which they'd landed shifted abruptly, as if looking down at itself, and the camera man let out a shriek that quickly formed into a thick, wet gurgle. The tip of the spike was now barely viewable at the top of his head. He spasmed a few times and then went still. Once her brain had figured everything out, she let out a scream and several sobs of panic and terror. Then a low rumble, like that of thunder, made her look up. A single red lense glared down at her. She scabbled across the bent and buckled debris of the chopper and made for the passenger door of the cockpit. It just barely opened and she slid out, only realising the full extent of what she was doing when she placed a finely manicured cloven hoof on the cold, rain soaked spike beneath. Another quick glance up and she swallowed hard and half slid, half fell, half scrambled down Carjack's back as more shots rained out, cutting and sizzling through the night-time rain.

Carjack swung around, ignoring the growing pains in his neck, and slammed a large fist into the ground after the fleeing survivor, who screamed loud enough for the flailing Speeder to hear. Another thing that was heard over the din; the sound of powerful engines and the squeeking and rumbling of metal treads on concrete and tarmac. The army was moving in, and fast, from all different directions. A swift scan and Carjack let out a harsh laugh.

"How pitiful..." He mused and two new cannons erupted from his forearms.

Deadmetal knew exactly what was going to happen. The new cannons were pointed at the ground at an angle, and the hum of a pair of charging EMPs vibrated through the air. He circled and let off a barrage of everything he had at Carjack. A few small panels peeled and flew away from his neck, revealing small patches of sensitive and highly important circuitry beneath. Under the combined force of both Deadmetal and Turbulance's relentless onslaught, his armour was becomming bent and buckled and damaged beyond repair. The twin humming went to a singular sound, and a massive arm swung up and outward, taking the Decepticon and Autobot by surprise and knocking them out of the way with all the force he could muster.

As Turbulance and Deadmetal disappeared into the mists of the drizzle, Speeder seized the moment and darted between his feet, scooping the woman up and clutching her to his chest as he sprang for cover, the force of the double EMP sending him further than anticipated. The wave of blue electric tore through everything, including the closing-in tanks and various other heavy artillery, destroying them and those that manned them. An unpleasant howl of laughter as all went silent. Then something caught his attention and silenced him. The sound of hurried metal clicking against the road made him turn. Then it went silent again. All was not well. The others may well be dead, but there was one who was still alive. He scanned the surrounding area. Nothing. Carjack went to move forward, until something lept from the rubble and landed within his back spikes with a startling precision that only something of Cybertronian origin could muster.

19 - Wire Cutter

"I'm gonna tear your wires out, you good - for - nothing waste of Spark!" Spinner howled as he scrambled swiftly up Carjack's newly acquired body.

Carjack tried getting at the miniscule Decepticon as it ascended his frame like a spider up a wall, but he just couldn't reach, Spinner always dodging and skittering around his body with each attempt at a grab. Carjack growled in utter frustration and Spinner just laughed manically and continued the climb, reaching his partially exposed neck in no time at all, the gaps in the multitude of small armour plates the perfect size for him to reach into and cause some serious damage. He wrapped his long, thin claw - like fingers around a mass of wires and pulled with all his might. A massive hand came up, ready to swat Spinner away, but a certain wire was pulled too hard and his arm jerked. A low growl that turned into a shriek and cry of dismay and pain rang out across the partially abandoned town as sparks flew from his neck. His body twitched, knees buckled and Carjack fell helpless, to the broken road, Spinner keeping his stubborn grip on the sensitive wires, still pulling and digging his claws in, severing them with some effort. A garbled string of words fled from Carjack and his lenses flickered briefly then went dark as a mass of wires hung free and sparking from the hole in his neck.

But the small robot wasn't done. He produced a small, spherical device with a red light embedded into its flawless, silver surface. The light was pushed down and then came alight, flashing slowly, gaining in speed. The device was stuffed deep into the felled Carjack's neck and Spinner fled as fast he could, seeking shelter beyond the rubble of the surrounding buildings. Moments later, a violent explosion shook the surrounding area, tearing through the body of Carjack. Spinner peered over the top. Only a small amount of him was still intact. The rest, was strewn about like litter after a street festival. He sneered at the sight.

The muffled sound of something tapping metal echoed across the wasteland of the town. Then some muffled words became included. Speeder grumbled and rolled groggily onto his back. The Deer that he had shielded from the brunt of Carjack's last attack had taken its toll on him and every circuit in his body buzzed painfully. He stared upward and into the dark sky, peering through the haze of the continuing drizzle.

"Are you okay...?" She hazarded slowly, not knowing whether the machine could understand her or not. To him, her words sounded blurred and warped and completely alien. Well, her language is alien to him. But he should know it. *Shouldn't I..?* He thought idly. *Yes. Yes I should know it.* He decided abruptly as he slowly, but surely gathered his senses and checked himself over. He looked to one side and eyed her up. She was battered and bruised, and pretty much looked how he felt; terrible. But that didn't stop him from trying to communicate with the organic that stood unsteadily before him. Unfortunately for the pair of them, the first words that he uttered were polite enough, but not in the correct language.

"I can't understand you..." She said slowly, feeling awe slowly overwhelming her.

Speeder processed her words, and finally found a match in his data banks. He repeated his question in her language.

"You okay?" He asked roughly.

The reporter looked startled.

"You know our language?"

Speeder hicthed himself up and nodded slowly, trying to avoid making the pain any worse.

"I know every language on this planet." He replied.

She still looked stunned. Not stunned of his claim, but stunned that she was talking to what seemed to be a fully sentient machine, something that shouldn't really exist. Until her reporter side kicked in again.

"Where d'you come from?" She asked abruptly.

"Oh, you're definately fine." He grinned as he pulled himself upright.

Turbulance wandered unhappily through the devastation that was once the army. He kicked at the rubble of felled buildings and made his way unsteadily toward where the remnants of Carjack lay. Deadmetal was following at a distance. Neither could be bothered to launch an attack on each other, unless it was verbal. Too much energy had been expended, and too much damaged sustained. Their bodies were still working to repair themselves. Deadmetal was trying to get ahold of Speeder and Turbulance was roaming and inspecting the confined battle field. Neither noticed the small, slim robotic figure scurry over the rubble and and down the street.

"Looks like your pet beat us to it." Turbulance grumbled sourly.

Deadmetal sighed inwardly and gave up trying to contact Speeder. For now. He looked about himself and at the mess.

"I don't think Speeder did this..." He said blankly.

Turbulance turned and cast him look. After a moment he sighed and shrugged.

"Well, whatever. I can go home now."

Deadmetal hesitated a moment.

"No you can't. Not until we find Speeder."

"What? Why do I have to wait for that bucket of bolts?" Turbulance grunted.

"Because without him, none of us can get back through the Space Bridge."

"What d'you mean by that...?" Turbulance asked, threat creeping into his tone as he took a few steps forward.

"He put a blocker code in before he followed me through. An only he knows the code to unlock it."

Deadmetal said pointedly.

Turbulance put a hand to his face.

"Oh, how cliche." He grumbled testily.

"Maybe so, but it ensured that Carjack wouldn't be able to get back to Earth to and cause some serious damage."

"Oh no, because the Humans are doing that just fine without outside help." The Decepticon replied humourlessly.

Their attention was swayed when they heard someone shout. It was Speeder, and he had a small figure dressed in grey perched precariously on a thin shoulder. Deadmetal eyed the woman up once they came to a stop.

"What?" Speeder asked, still speaking in the woman's language.

Deadmetal stuck to his own language.

"Oh, I found her." Speeder said, replying to his question, automatically switching back to Cybertronian.

"Can I keep her?"

Turbulance snorted a laugh.

"No pets." Deadmetal said. "Remember what happened to your Gerbil?"

"He had an *organic* pet?" Turbulance laughed.
Both Autobots ignored him as he creased up laughing.

"I need you to unlock the Bridge." Deadmetal said.
Speeder looked blank for a moment. Autobot, Decepticon and organic alike, looked on.
"The Bridge is now unlocked." He stated. "The nearest warp point suitable for us is on the outskirts, to the north-west."

The reporter slid from his shoulder with his help and landed heavily on a chunk of concrete.

"We gotta go now, Leanna." Speeder said, switching language.

"What, already?" She blurted. "Can't you just stay a few moments and answer some questions?"

"Not a chance." Deadmetal injected.

"But, we could learn so much from you and your friends!" She protested.

"Friends?" Turbulance spat.

Leanna looked at him, with a look of puzzlement.

"There is no way *ever*, that I would be friends with these two. The very thought sickens me to the core."
The Decepticon sneered and lept neatly into the air, switching swiftly to his jet mode and flying off trailing black fire, in the direction Speeder had stated.

Leanna looked on in complete and utter awe once more. Then she snapped out of it and turned to the two Autobots.

"Don't ask." Deadmetal said before she could say a thing.

"See you around." Speeder said and wandered off with Deadmetal who had already started walking, frustrated that he couldn't transform properly.

20 - Return

Hookshot wandered aimlessly around in circles in the chamber that housed the Space Bridge. Someone had recently unlocked it from off-planet and he'd been sent to greet whomever it was that would first appear through the portal. He'd been waiting three hours already, and just when the boredom had almost gotten the better of him, the Bridge flared into life. Bright light filled the chamber then subsided as fast as it had come. The electric blue sphere lingered uncertainly between the two large pylons and a figure was spat out. Speeder rose unsteadily and dusted himself off, pausing when he saw Hookshot staring at him. Without another moment's hesitation, a heavy crane hook shot forward, knocking the Autobot off his feet. Speeder landed heavily on the lower steps of the Space Bride's platform. Deadmetal was next through, startling Hookshot, who suddenly realised he was now outnumbered. Deadmetal took one look at Speeder as he rose unsteadily back to his feet. The transformed Apache then unleashed the full force of his chest-bound chain gun on the Constructicon, knocking him backward a few steps, denting his thick armour.

The portal fizzed once more and Turbulance, still in his jet form, soared gracefully into the chamber, heated plasma shots raining down on Deadmetal. Speeder was too damaged to join in on the attack, much to his distaste, and instead darted unsteadily toward Deadmetal and grabbed him by the arm, hauling him off toward the exit and vanishing into the darkness of the old mine shafts and tunnels. Turbulance swooped low and transformed, the panels of the alien jet fighter shifting and rotating, the twin wings repositioning to fit snugly around the bipedal form of the Decepticon.

"Never again, will I do such a thing..." He grumbled to himself.

"What?" Hookshot asked blankly, ponderously fingering the fresh hole in his armour.

"Nevermind." Turbulance replied. "Where's Krusher? I have some rather disappointing news for him."

"Uh, bad news...?" Hookshot asked uncertainly.

"Yeah. Where is he?" He growled.

Hookshot thought a moment. *Let someone else be beaten up for once this week...* He mused, eyeing up Turbulance's dented and scarred armour.

"In the main chamber." The Constructicon replied innocently.

Turbulance gave him a look. Hookshot never sounded innocent. *He's always guilty of something...*

That thought aside, Turbulance made his way towards the main chamber, wondering if he'd missed out on anything remotely exciting during his absence.

"Galaxy?!" Deadmetal exclaimed as he looked up at the tall, thick built Autobot that loomed over him with her arms folded; A sure sign that she was irritated.

"What took you guys so long?" She rumbled.

"We, er... Had some complications...." Speeder said, casting a quick glance at Deadmetal, who now felt three feet tall.

Galaxy glared down at Deadmetal.

"Taking things slow again, eh?" She grumbled. "It'll be the death of you, boy. Primus knows it was almost the death of Raid and Flashpoint."

"What?" He exclaimed. "What happened to them? They alright?"

"Barely. Flashpoint's having difficulty seeing the innards of his little Insectibots, and Raid's completely blind!"

Both Speeder and Deadmetal gaped. This was not what they wanted, or expected to hear.

"How?" Speeder asked.

"Krusher. Lured them into a trap, chained them up with his *special* chains and tore their armour off bit by bit."

A moment of guilty silence.

"Where're they now...?" Deadmetal hazarded.

"Both in the med bay." She rumbled and stepped aside, allowing them to manoeuvre past her as fast as their aching joints would allow them.

They peered around the corner and into the well lit room. Raid was perched atop the operating table, staring straight ahead. Flashpoint was fiddling with some small instruments and only noticed them when he turned around.

"Ah, Dee, Speeder." He said with a smile.

"Good to see you both back in, er, one piece..." The medic said looking the pair of them over.

"How did it go?" Raid asked, still staring ahead. "Did you stop Carjack?"

Deadmetal nodded, then promptly stated his answer vocally.

"Yeah." He said, feeling somewhat ashamed. "Unfortunately, not without a major pitfall..."

"Oh?" Raid prompted.

Both Autobots stood in the doorway, trying to form a decent answer in their minds.

"Carjack got the upgrade that the micro chip held." Speeder finally said.

Raid looked at them with his unseeing gaze.

"What happened to him?"

"Something, uhm.... Not easily explained. It's like, the micro chip either wasn't powerful enough or was too powerful, and it messed him up. He didn't look natural." Deadmetal said.

"Kinda like something out of an Earth monster movie." Speeder added.

Krusher sat in his chair and looked out into the large main chamber. If he'd had a crown, Turbulance mused silently to himself, He'd end up resembling something like a king.

"Well? Answer my question." He rumbled impatiently.

Turbulance stopped eyeing up the Chinook's dented and scuffed armour and formulated a quick reply, one that wasn't to Krusher's liking.

"A large portion of Carjack was destroyed in an explosion." He said almost casually.

"*What!?*" He bellowed angrily. "Who blew him up!?"

The large Decepticon was on the verge of rising from his seat as he glared heatedly down at Turbulance.

"Possibly the Autobot Speeder, sir." He said coolly.

"You let the Autobots get to him first?" He growled, finally obeying the subconscious commands and rose steadily from his throne-like chair.

Turbulance hesitated. There was no easy, gentle way to explain it, and he swore a part of his pride and dignity had died through offering a temporary allegiance to the two Autobots. So he opted to state it matter - of - factly, something he was very good at.

"I had to ally briefly with the two Autobots, Deadmetal and Speeder, to stop Carjack. Unfortunately, my plan didn't go quite according to plan..."

Krusher was furious.

"*Plan!*?" He howled, "What *plan*? The plan to undermine my orders or the plan to retrieve the micro chip!?"

Turbulence was on the verge of saying "Both" when Roadtrain and Steel came into the chamber, soon followed by Hookshot. Krusher ignored them, and continued to focus on Turbulence, who remained silent, eyeing up Roadtrain out of the corner of his line of sight. A small grin played his features and a surge of anger flowed through Turbulence. He looked back at the advancing Krusher and a new plan came to light.

"I was too damaged to give the debris a proper sweep." He said abruptly. Krusher continued advancing.

"With a few swift repairs, I will go back and search for the Micro Chip. It can't have gone far, not in all that mess."

Krusher stopped and eyed him carefully.

"Are you suggesting this foolish plan just so you can keep your head, or are you being utterly serious?"

Krusher rumbled.

"Oh, I'm being serious." Turbulence replied.

Krusher thought about it a moment, then gave a slow nod.

"Very well. Steele, get him repaired." He ordered.

The digger looked vaguely surprised, but said nothing.

"And Turbulence, if you pull a stunt like Carjack did, or if the Autobots get to the micro chip before you, I suggest you remain on that planet and cease all communications with the Decepticon allegiance." He warned smoothly.

"Oh, don't you worry. I *will* get the micro chip." He ensured.

Turbulence turned away and headed for the exit, getting a sour look from Roadtrain.

"Suck up." Roadtrain grumbled peevishly as he walked by.

21 - Devastation

The outskirts of Bresham's town centre was a wasteland. Buildings had been collapsed, roads shattered, powerlines badly damaged, and the purpotrator of all the devastation lay in pieces in the midst of it all. High above the scurrying emergency services and news crews that were busying themselves with their set tasks, a multi-toned black and silver fighter jet of an alien design soared, almost soundlessly, circling the area of destruction, powerful optical sensors picking through the debris as best they could from that altitude. *If those disgusting bags of meat weren't down there, I'd have had the micro chip by now!* Turbulance growled angrily to himself as he watched the ongoing scurrying of the people on the ground below. Then he noticed someone familiar. It was the female news reporter from the previous night. He kept his optics fixed on her as she wove around the debris and dodged those who got in her way. Apparently, by the way she was moving, she'd found something of interest. Turbulance descended a little lower until he could see her paws. A shrill shriek of surprise came from his depths as the Doe, Leanna, took up the remains of a quiet corner and inspected something small and black. It was the micro chip. Compared to the images of it he held within his data banks, it looked a little battered and charred. He'd only know if it still functioned if he got ahold of it. He continued circling, vanishing fast into the early morning clouds whenever another air craft threatened to reveal him, only reappearing when it had flown into the near horizon to continue his watch on the Doe.

"What've you got there?" Asked a stout golden Ferret with a camera perched heavily on his shoulder. Leanna jumped, almost losing her balance on the piece of rubble she was situated on and almost dropping the charred remains of the micro chip.

"Huh? What? Oh, nothing. Just the remains of my phone, that's all." She replied hastily, slipping the micro chip into her pocket.

She looked blankly at the new camera man. He stared back with an equally blank expression of his own.

"Well?" He prompted slowly. "You up for a report?"

She blinked. Every fibre of her being ached and twinged. She really needed to go home, get cleaned up and go to bed, maybe even call in sick the next day. She looked around at the devastation that the giant mechanical beings had made. The harbinger of it all was still lay in the middle of it all; head gone, torso shredded and behemothic legs and what was left of the arms un-moving. Among the machine's debris, was the remnants of her chopper. It was empty now and had been removed from the massive spikes of the beast's back by the emergency services. Remembering the look on Bob's face as the spike was pushed up and into his head, and the sight of the skewered pilot prompted an easy answer.

"No." She mumbled. "Not yet. Sorry." She said and walked precariously off in the opposite direction, away from the mess of the battle, heedless of what was following her from above.

Turbulance watched patiently as she exchanged sentences with another fur covered organic before walking unsteadily away. He kept track of her, moving as slowly as his jet form would allow, flying tight circles in the morning sky. It didn't matter where she was going, so long as she got as far away from the masses of other organics, so he could retrieve the micro chip. She wandered down endless abandoned streets and, much to Turbulance's relief, finally came to a stop in an empty car park. She practically fell onto the old bench that was situated in the corner and tilted her head back, eyes closed. He circled

down lower and at twenty feet above the surrounding roof tops, his wings rotated and slid back along with the rest of his panels, the nose and the cockpit folding down to form the chest, revealing a dark face with piercing red lenses. Leanna cracked open an eye upon hearing the familiar grumbling hissing sounds of an alien engine. Then her eyes widened and she pressed hard against the bench as Turbulance settled coolly to the ground in the middle of the car park. He just looked at her for a moment. A few minutes passed, the only sounds were that of the work being done in the distance, before Turbulance finally broke the silence.

"I do believe you have something that belongs to me." He said smoothly, taking a delicate step towards her so as to not damage the concrete beneath his massive feet; enough damage had been done no thanks to Carjack revealing himself to a scientist and a group of teenagers before going on a rampage in the middle of town.

Leanna just stared up at him, unmoving, with wide eyes.

"Something that belongs to you...?" She mumbled.

Turbulance nodded in reply, feeling his patience dwindling rapidly.

"That small piece of debris you picked up from the... *Scene*..." He said. "It is very important to my kind."

Leanna looked him over. Her eyes settled upon the deep purple insignia that he bore on his shoulder armour, an identical, slightly more scarred insignia on the nose cone of his jet form that lay at his chest.

She remembered the insignias on the other two robots; both of which were very much different.

Speeder's didn't look as sleek in design, nor did it appear to her as devious looking.

"Why's your, uh, badge, different from the other two?" She asked.

Turbulance just blinked. That wasn't what he was hoping for.

"I am not here to discuss the nature of my insignia or why it's different to those of the others." He sneered unhappily.

Leanna looked back into those fiery red optics of his. He leaned in closer.

"Give me the micro chip. Now." He growled coldly.

"Micro chip?"

Turbulance's patience snapped. He now had an intense dislike for all reporters. His hand shot forward and pinned her roughly to the bench. She gasped out loud as her already aching body was almost crushed once more.

"You *will* relinquish the micro chip or perish!" He growled menacingly.

Leanna tried to squirm, but couldn't. His grip was too tight, and her efforts to move were only making his grip tighter. As much as she wanted to keep the small piece of melted debris for herself, to possibly have analysed for any further details of the incident, she also very much wanted to stay alive and intact. She felt something break. Her left arm. She let out a laboured cry of pain and forced a furious nod.

Turbulance grinned broadly. His grip was relieved from her body and she flopped back onto the bench panting heavily, tears streaking her dirty cheeks. Her good arm moved and her paw dipped into her trouser pocket, fumbling around for the micro chip. Her raw fingers closed around it and she extracted it from her pocket, holding it out in her flat palm for Turbulance. She tried hard not to shrink back when he reached for the micro chip, and was rewarded with a surprising gentleness, as his large metallic fingers just barely grazed the surface of her palm as he took the small piece of burned plastic. He looked it over as he held it between thumb and fore finger. He grinned and turned away, leaping high into the air and transforming before vanishing into the clouds above, leaving the battered Doe behind on her rusty old bench. He soared high, the micro chip now firmly in his grasp. All that needed to be done, was to make sure it still held all the data intact. But his musings were cut short as a missile shot past him. A look to

his aft explained the origin of such a device. It was an Apache AH-64A that went by the designation of Deadmetal. Another missile. This time Turbulance anticipated it and banked sharply, coming up behind Deadmetal, who promptly countered, swinging his tail around, a thin string of heated plasma erupting from the chain gun beneath.

Turbulance banked again, transforming mid-maneuver, and unleashed his own weaponry, his own plasma shots hitting home for a scant few seconds, before the evading Earth styled chopper dropped and strafed around the Decepticon, transforming for a brief few moments to let off an EMP before reverting back into vehicle mode. The EMP washed over Turbulance. He was still tired from the excursion with Carjack, and Deadmetal's sudden appearance and evident renewed energy was almost his demise. The EMP knocked him offline, sending everything dark and silent. When he looked about himself, he was in free fall, with the ground coming up very fast. He engaged his propulsion system again and charged upward to where Deadmetal was.

"Wanna see my new party trick?" The Autobot taunted.

Turbulance growled angrily and leveled his own EMP cannon at his enemy. The air seemed to shimmer around Deadmetal. Then he started to fade and Turbulance promptly flew through where the Autobot had once been hovering.

"*What!?*" He roared.

Before he could continue, he remembered his primary objective. And realised that he'd just been robbed whilst he was blacked out. The micro chip had gone. Deadmetal had taken it. *That's why he sounded so smug....* Turbulance thought sourly. And he wasn't willing to go into the depths of Autobot territory to retrieve it, either. Especially with the likes of Galaxy and Raid there, even if their leader was now blind. Feeling fatigue close in around him, he leveled his trajectory and went in search of a safe hiding place to recharge. *No micro chip, no return to base.* He thought, remembering Krusher's sour and sadistic threats.

George hazarded a glance into his kitchen and promptly fell back, hiding back behind the large folding door that separated the living room from the kitchen. The washing machine was there. His children were sat on the sofa, peering through the large archway and into the kitchen, a wonderous look etched upon their young Vulpine faces. George's wife stood in plain view of the machine, a basket full of laundry in her paws. She eyed up the machine, then slowly walked toward it.

"What're you doin' woman?" George hissed from around the corner.

She looked over her shoulder at him as she crouched before the robotic washing machine.

"Doing the laundry, what else?" She said evenly, even though she herself felt as bad about this whole scenario as her husband looked. Which wasn't all that great.

She pulled gently at the door. Nothing happened. The door opened easily. The laundry was stuffed in, powder and softener was administered and buttons were gingerly pushed. The washing machine got to work. There was no incident. Nothing to cause alarm. For now, anyway. She rose steadily to her feet and turned to her family.

"It's the only one that's outlived its warranty." She said blankly.

George gaped. The children rejoiced. The alien washing machine was apart of the family now, whether George liked it or not.

Flashpoint stared intently through the micro-scope and at the burned and beaten micro chip. After a moment, he removed it and placed it within the confines of a small machine and the small screen on the

wall above it lit up. Letters and symbols streamed on in fractured patches at a laborous speed. Then the data seemed to fizz and the screen went blank. Flashpoint turned to his waiting companions.

"The micro chip is worthless now. It was too badly damaged, and the data is corrupt beyond any form of retrieval or repair." He stated bluntly.

"Well that sucks." Speeder huffed. "All that trouble for nothing."

"Not necessarily for nothing.." Raid pointed out. "We have one Decepticon less to worry about."

"I think that number could be upped to two. Turbulance could be in for a rough ride when he gets back to base, minus the micro chip." Deadmetal said.

"If you plan on doing any raids when their in their current weakened state, so long as you leave some for me, I won't complain too much." Galaxy injected.

"Don't worry, Galaxy. We know how much you like Krusher." Raid grinned.

Krusher stood before the Space Bridge, hands held at his back as he stared on at the massive structure. Roadtrain trundled into the chamber and braked to a halt before transforming.

"Still no sign of Turbulance?" He queried.

Krusher remained silent for a moment before answering.

"No." He stated coolly. "It's been two days now."

"He could've made off with the micro chip. Assuming it's still in one piece and working." Roadtrain stated.

Krusher didn't take his optics off the Bridge as he replied.

"I trust Turbulance a great deal more than any other Decepticon I have worked with. He wouldn't do something so foolish."

"Oh?" The KAMAZ prompted.

"He's clever. *Very* clever. He knows what I'd do to him if he tried such a stupid feat."

"So, he's followed your orders, and left...?"

Krusher looked down at Roadtrain.

"Yes." The reply was simple and demanded no more questions.

The mission was now well and truly over. Carjack had been destroyed, and the micro chip lost, possibly destroyed too, and Turbulance had taken Krusher's advice and left his team after his failure.

One down, one more to go... Roadtrain sneered privately as he looked up at Krusher one last time before transforming and driving away.