

Blurry Robot Theater

14

SOMEWHERE
IN THE DESERT...



WVVAWW

TODAY...



VRRRAAAW!!





BOSS? IT'S ME,
HALCONFENIX.

BRING ME IN.

Not so fast.
Are you sure
nobody's
tapping you?



JUST A
RABBIT.



Password,
HalconFenix3

'ONE
OF US'...

FOOM!

KA-CHUNK!

AH...


H-HENSHIN!



**GENERAL HAMMER!
THIS IS BLUNNY M.**

**SOME CRAZY SHED
JUST WENT DOWN...**

**AND I SAW
THE HOLE THING!**

A yellow robot character with a blue antenna on its head and red glowing eyes. It has a silver chest plate and a circular sensor on its abdomen.

YOU SAW
NOTHING.

BOSS-?

THIS ISN'T
YOUR
HRAKA,
BUNNY M.
DON'T
STEP IN IT.

Careless, Fenix.
Your co44on4all
was 'Bunny M'.

'RIVERS OF
BABYLON?'

Disco is dead,
HalcoFenix.



⇒WHIRRRRRRR⇒

'Bunny M' is an agent,
and not one of ours.

OOPS!
AM I SUSPENDED?

Yes, Fenix...
...in an elevator.

I'm afraid I'll
have to let you go.

⇒KA-TINK!⇐




KER-
BLUMP!

YEAAYIGH!

Look at him...all freaked out
over a little two-foot drop...


Fortunately for you, HalconPenix,
Bunny M is from a friendly agency.



Get careless again, you get the shaft.

YES, MA'M.


I don't think you are taking this seriously, Fenix.



This is very unfortunate.

In this business, I can't afford to be soft...
Understood?

UNDERSTOOD, MS. STRARF.



SOFT?

NO, BOSS STRARF
IS CERTAINLY NOT SOFT...



EXCEPT IN
A FEW GOOD
PLACES.

HEE HEE!



⇒CLICK⇒

TESTING?

TESTING.


⇒VWWWREET⇒

CHAPTER ONE.

CALL ME
HALCONFENIX.

I'M A
FREELANCE
HACKER.

⇒BRUSH⇒



I USED TO
DELIVER PIZZA.

UNTIL I MET
THIS GIRL...

SHE HITCHED A
RIDE WITH ME...

⇒SHINK!⇐

...AND STRUCK UP A
CONVERSATION.

BARROOM!

THE GIRL'S NAME WAS ACH. WITH A 'KH'.

SHE WORKED FOR A PROTECTIVE-SERVICE CONTRACTOR WHO CALLED HIMSELF 'SHADOWDRAGON'.

SHE SAID HER BOSS HAD HEARD OF ME. HE WANTED TO HIRE ME AS A CONSULTANT FOR A THING CALLED 'OPERATION MAGI'...

MY FALLBACK POSITION DIDN'T LOOK SO GOOD, SO I ACCEPTED.

SINCE THEN, I'VE DONE SEVERAL JOBS FOR SHADOWDRAGON...



...BUT NEVER ONE
THIS FAR UNDERGROUND...

DEEP BELOW THE
CEREZON MINING
DISTRICT...

THERE'S A THING
DOWN HERE...
A THING FROM SPACE...
AND WE NEED TO USE IT.



IT'S BURIED IN THE ANCIENT WRECK
OF AN UNMANNED ALIEN SPACEPROBE...

VERY FEW KNOW OF IT.
ONLY A HANDFUL KNOW
THAT IT STILL FUNCTIONS...

IT'S A COMPUTER...

WITH THE CALCULATING
POWER OF A WHOLE
PLANETARY SYSTEM...

AND I'M ABOUT TO USE IT...
TO PLAY A GAME.





PLAYING WITH THE
FINEST HARDWARE...
WORKING WITH A TEAM
OF LOVELY LADIES...

HEAVEN ON EARTH!
THE ONLY CATCH IS--

FENIX!!!!

¡LA DIABLA!

Did you bring
an unapproved
cell phone or
tape recorder
into a secure
location?

⇒FLING!⇐


Oh, okay.
It's just a
Decepticon.

HIYA
BOSS
LADY!

I LIKE HER.
SHE'S SILLY.


SO WHAT
WAS THAT
ABOUT
GAMES?

G-GAMES...



...ISN'T EVERY SYSTEM A GAME,
JUST WAITING TO HAPPEN?


WE ARE
ON THE
SAME
PAGE!



-THE SAME PAGE,
MINUS THE DIRTY BITS.
THAT IS.

YOU KEEP FORGETTING,
I CAN READ EVERYTHING
YOU BROWSE.

'BUSTY
SHINKI'
WAS A
TYPO!



MORE LIKE A
FREUDIAN
TYPO! HA!


HA. HA. HA.
VERY FUNNY,
FRENZ-

PLEASE!
IT'S 'COLONEL CORN'.

AS IN OPERATING SYSTEMS,
AND THE POPCORN KING
OF THE MIDWEST, RIGHT?

-ANYHOW. GAMES. I DO LIKE THEM...
BUT THIS MUST BE AN AWFULLY SPECIAL
GAME, EH, HALCONFENIX?

WHAT'S IT LIKE? PONG? ASTEROIDS?
GLOBAL THERMONUCLEAR WAR?



IT'S AN IMMERSIVE
VIRTUAL REALITY.

OH... LIKE
'SECOND LIFE'.

ONLY MORE SO.
CHEW ON THIS,
COLONEL...

WHAT IF 'SECOND LIFE'
REALLY WAS...A SECOND LIFE?

⇒BUMP⇐

WE'RE HERE.
NEXT STEP TAKES
US INTO ALIEN
TERRITORY...

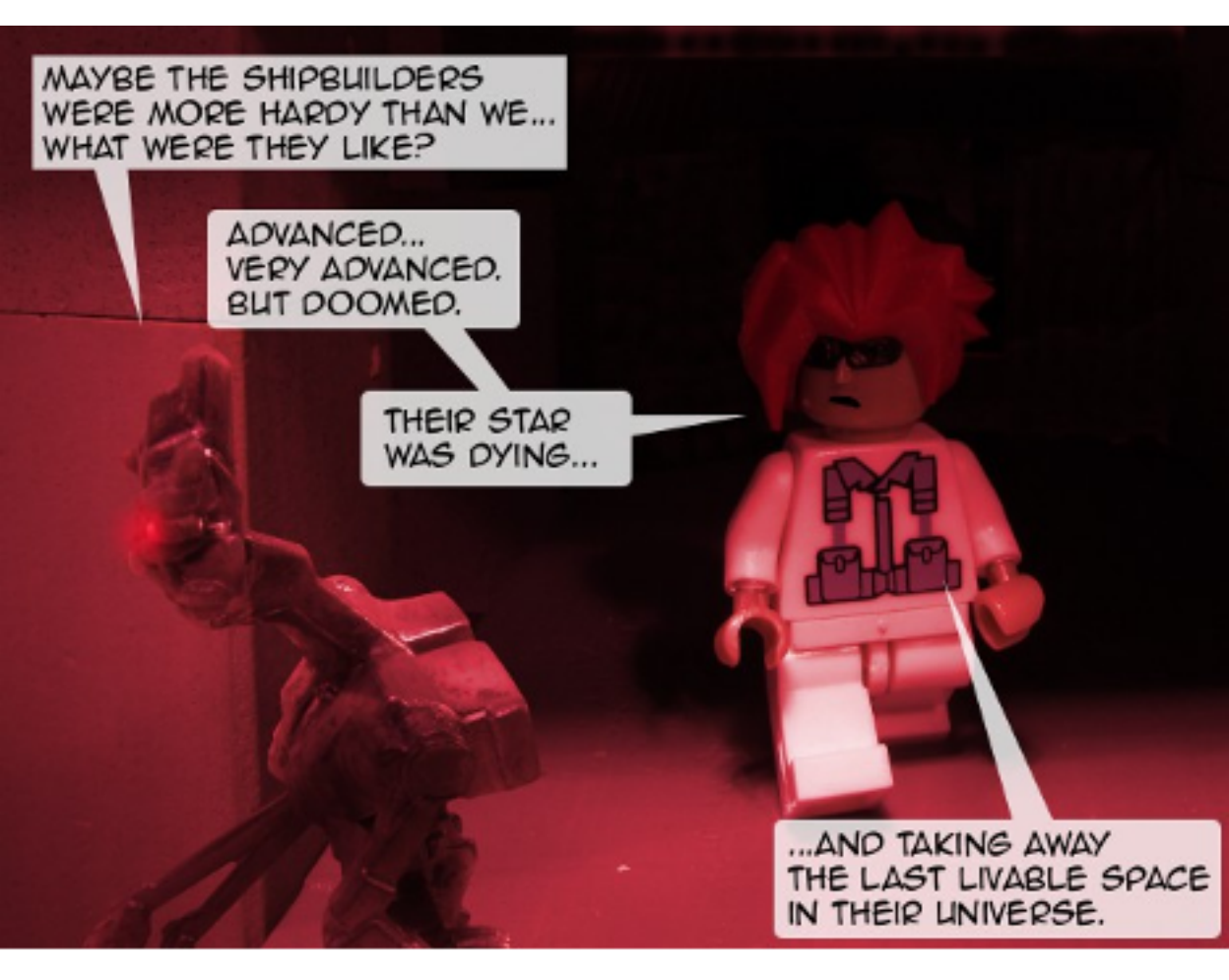
VERY BIG DEAL.
YOUR WHOLE PLANET
IS ALIEN TO ME.

BUT THIS SHIP IS
FROM A COMPLETELY
DIFFERENT UNIVERSE!

IT LOOKS
PRIMITIVE
AND HUMAN.

ONLY FROM HERE. THE MILITARY BUILT
THESE INNER CHAMBERS YEARS AGO.
HEAVY SHIELDING, LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

THIS BABY IS VERY UNFRIENDLY TO
A CREW, WHEN IT'S RUNNING.



MAYBE THE SHIPBUILDERS
WERE MORE HARDY THAN WE...
WHAT WERE THEY LIKE?

ADVANCED...
VERY ADVANCED.
BUT DOOMED.

THEIR STAR
WAS DYING...

...AND TAKING AWAY
THE LAST LIVABLE SPACE
IN THEIR UNIVERSE.

THEY WERE FACED WITH A CHOICE
WHEN THEY SENT OUT THIS
SPACEPROBE...

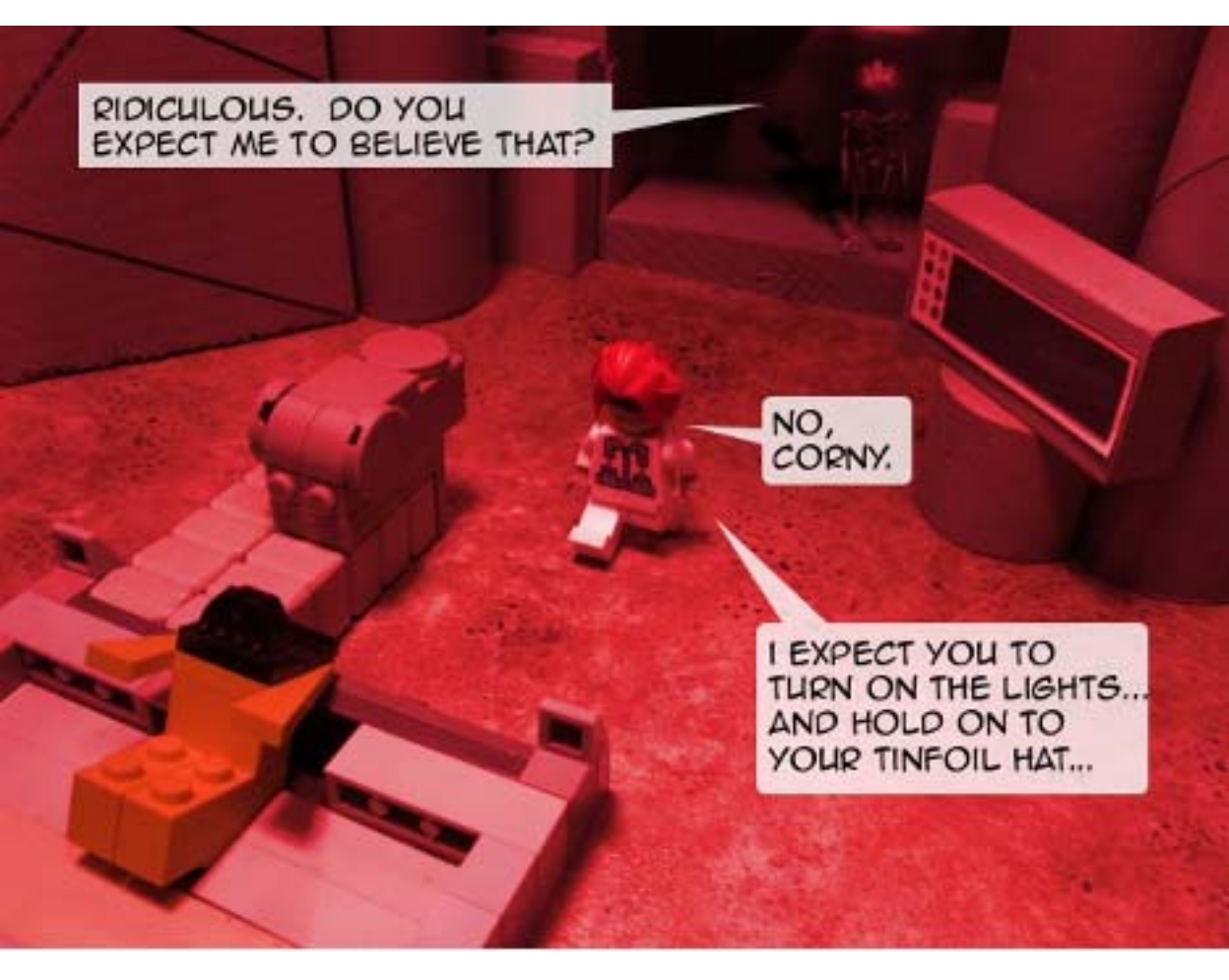
TO BUILD A FLEET OF SHIPS, AND
ESCAPE TO A NEW DIMENSION...
GOING INTO THE UNKNOWN...

OR SOMETHING EVEN MORE BIZARRE...



...TO COLLAPSE THEIR OWN UNIVERSE
INTO A MASSIVE COMPUTER...A COMPUTER
MADE FROM SPACE! ...AND UPLOAD
THEMSELVES TO IT AS DIGITAL ENTITIES...
AND LIVE ON WITHOUT LIGHT, STARS, OR
ANY PHYSICAL EXISTENCE AT ALL.

THIS WAS RECORDED IN THIS PROBE...
BUT NOT THEIR CHOICE. IT WASN'T YET MADE.



REDICULOUS. DO YOU
EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT?

NO,
CORNLY.

I EXPECT YOU TO
TURN ON THE LIGHTS...
AND HOLD ON TO
YOUR TINFOIL HAT...

...BECAUSE THEY DID IT.

THAT SYSTEM
IS REAL...


THAT SYSTEM
IS SPECTACULAR...

AND WITH THE
HELP OF THIS
SPACEPROBE
AND ITS CRAZY
COMPUTER...

WE ARE GOING
TO TAKE IT DOWN.

SO...SIT DOWN,
PLUG IN, AND
LET THE GAMES
BEGIN!





NOT SO FAST, FENIX.
I WON'T PLAY THIS GAME.

BUT...I THOUGHT
YOU WANTED
TO HELP!
TRANS-CRAZY...

YES. I JOINED BECAUSE
OF A DEBT I OWED TO
MY FRIEND, THE LATE
TRANS-CRAZY...

I DID NOT JOIN
TO COMMIT
DIMENSIONAL
GENOCIDE!

GENOCIDE?

BY THE CUBE, FENIX!
ARE YOU BLIND
BEHIND THOSE
SUNGLASSES?



IF ALL THAT SCRAP WAS TRUE...
AND A UNIVERSE OF LIVING BEINGS
IS DIGITIZED ON SOME 'PLUTER...


AND WE BRING THAT SYSTEM DOWN...

THEN WE'RE MURDERERS.
BILLIONS OF TIMES OVER.



WOW.

THE BOSS
REALLY DID
KEEP YOU
IN THE DARK.




THE BOSS...
THERE'S GOT TO BE A CAMERA
SOMEWHERE IN THAT WALL...

SO I'M SURE SHE'LL STOP ME
BEFORE I SAY ANYTHING I'M
NOT SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU...


OKAY? SO
WE'RE COOL?

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT...
BUT... THE DEED'S ALREADY DONE,
AND WE DIDN'T HOLD THE GUN.

IT WAS A DAEMON. THE 'WHITE SERPENT',
AND HIS LEGION OF DIGITIZED VERMIN.
THEY BROKE INTO THAT VIRTUAL UNIVERSE,
AND VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT EVERYONE...



YOUR FRIENDS,
TRANS-CRAZY
AND BARRICADE,
WERE AMONG
THE LAST TO FALL.



CRAZY AND BARRY DIED
WHEN THE WARPSHIP
GOSTAN BALIK WAS LOST!

IN REALITY-
YES.

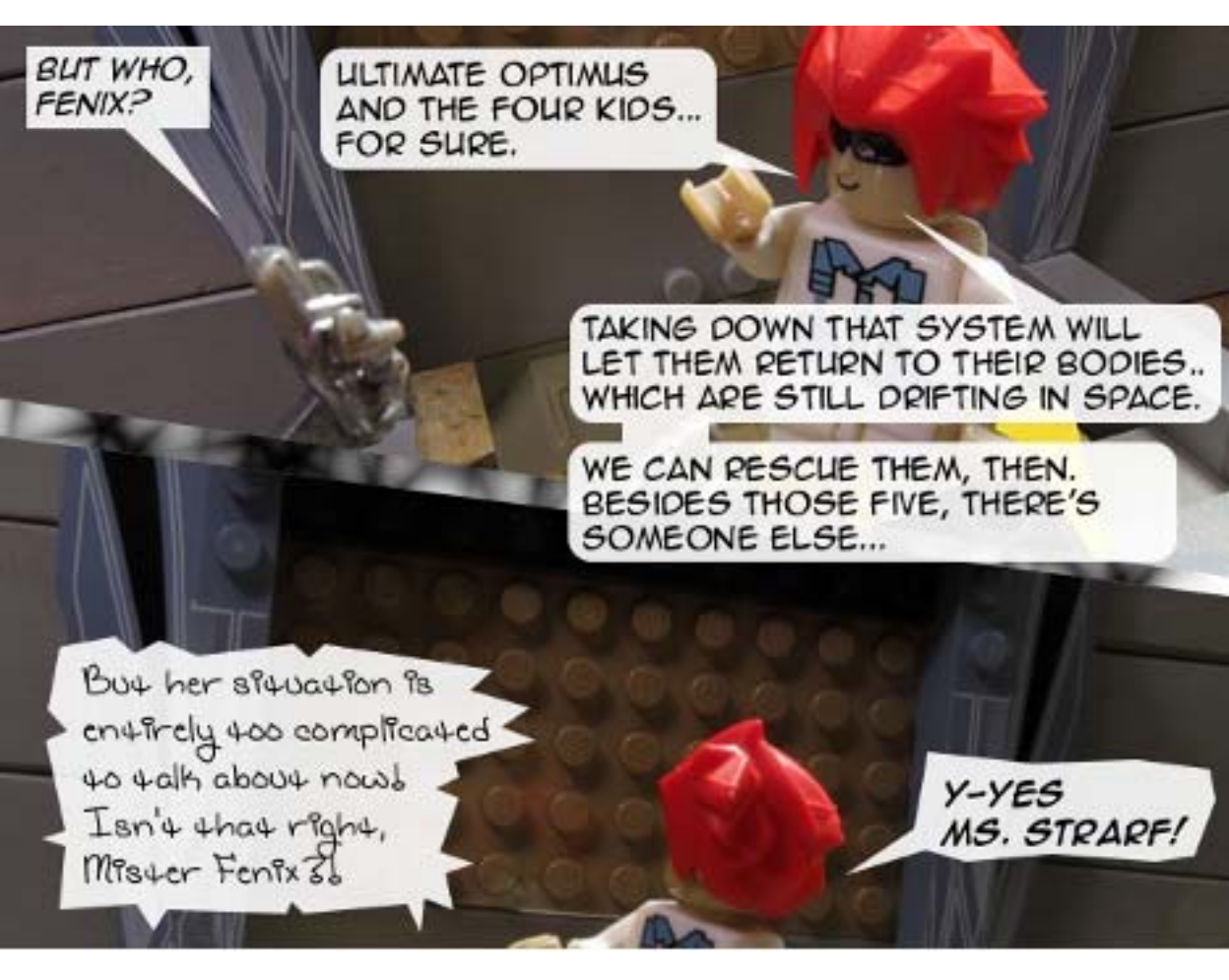
BUT THE DISABLED SHIP
ENCOUNTERED THAT
VIRTUAL UNIVERSE...

MOST EVERYONE ON BOARD
WAS PULLED IN, AND LIVED ON IN
VIRTUAL REALITY...FOR A WHILE.

EVEN NOW, AT LEAST FIVE
PASSENGERS ARE STILL
HANGING ON TO
THAT SECOND LIFE.

-WHO?!

...NOT YOUR
FRIENDS.
I'M SORRY...

A LEGO comic panel featuring a character with bright red hair and a white shirt with a blue 'M' logo. The character is shown from the chest up, looking towards the left. The background consists of grey and brown LEGO bricks, suggesting an industrial or space environment. Several speech bubbles are present, containing dialogue. The character's right hand is raised, holding a small yellow object.

BUT WHO,
FENIX?


ULTIMATE OPTIMUS
AND THE FOUR KIDS...
FOR SURE.

TAKING DOWN THAT SYSTEM WILL
LET THEM RETURN TO THEIR BODIES..
WHICH ARE STILL DRIFTING IN SPACE.

WE CAN RESCUE THEM, THEN.
BESIDES THOSE FIVE, THERE'S
SOMEONE ELSE...

But her situation is
entirely too complicated
to talk about now.
Isn't that right,
Mister Fenix?


Y-YES
MS. STRARF!



TAKING IT DOWN...
FOR FIVE, OR SIX...

IT SEEMS
LIKE THE
HARD WAY.


ISN'T THERE ANY
OTHER WAY FOR
THEM TO GET OUT
OF THAT THING?



BESIDES DEATH?

MAYBE. TWO OF THE PASSENGERS
JUST...DISAPPEARED. FEZ FINDIE
AND M.C. HOBBY...

THE DAEMON DIDN'T GET
THEM, OR ITS LEGION.



WE PEEKED AT THE KILL LIST
FOR USER 'WHITE SERPENT'...

SO THEY
GOT OUT?


THEY MAY HAVE...BUT WE HAVEN'T
FIGURED OUT HOW THEY COULD...

'PERSONALLY, I THINK THEY'RE
JUST STUCK SOMEWHERE.'

THEY'RE GONE!
THE LEGION ARE
RETREATING!

Only 5 shopping days
left until Christmas,
M.C. Hobby...

フル★マート
常に



WHAT HAPPENS ON
CHRISTMAS, LADY P?

sporting goods
runs out of
shotgun shells.

AND WE'RE
ALREADY LOW
ON DISTILLED
WATER FOR
MY Z'GOK'S
HIGH-POWER
COOLING
SYSTEM...

A.K.A.
KIDDIE
FUN POOL.

→TIE←

SO, YEAH.
WE'LL BE
SHOOTING
NERF PARTS.



WHERE ARE WE
GONNA BE, THEN?

I KNOW WHERE
I'LL BE...

LADY PRIME?
PICK ME UP.




I'LL BE HERE.
BENEATH
MY FLAG,
BESIDE THIS
LOVELY FACE.



Awwwww.

Your face
isn't bad,
either...

Can I have it?



Kidding! kidding!

It's funny, right?

A joke! Did
you like it, Fez?



...YES,
MY
LADY.

I LIKE
EVERYTHING
THAT YOU DO.

Awww. How about this? ➡snuggle<

YES, VERY MUCH. ➡KISS<

And this, too? ➡cuddle<

YES, THAT'S VERY NICE, TOO.
IN A COLD METALLIC WAY. ➡HUG<

➡SMOOCH< ➡SMACK<



I WAS M.C. HOBBY,
ROBOT HIP-HOP ARTIST...
NOW I'M A FACE
STUCK TO A BALLOON...
STUCK IN A DEMONIC
VIDEO GAME...

AND WORSE...

STUCK ON
A SMALL
ROOFTOP...



...WITH THE WORLD'S
CREEPIEST ROBOT-HUMAN COUPLE
OUTSIDE OF BAD FANFICTION...



IT'S A NIGHTMARE.
I'M TELLING YOU...

FORTUNATELY...

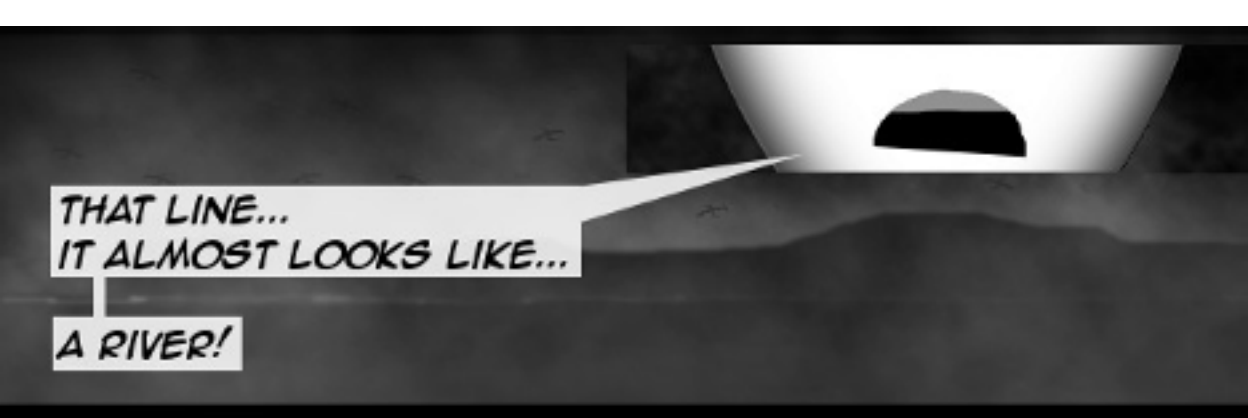
I KNOW
ONE WAY
OUT OF
A BAD
DREAM...

SO LONG,
NASTY
WORLD!

...WAIT.

ONE...
LAST...LOOK.

-HUH?!



THAT LINE...
IT ALMOST LOOKS LIKE...

A RIVER!



LADY
PRIME!

FINDIE
MAN!

MC HOBBY'S
GOT A PLAN!



WHAT IS IT?

AAUGH!

CENSORED
BY THE
WEBCOMICS
CODE
[WC]
AUTHORITY



.....SAUNA.

SAUNA.

VERY HEALTHFUL.
EVEN FOR ROBOTS.
LADY PRIME...

MM HM.




FINDIE, IMM'A
JUST DRIFT
AWAY, LIKE,
FOR TWO
MINUTES.



AND WHEN I FLOAT
BACK DOWN, Y'ALL
TWO HAD BETTER BE
OUTTA THAT STEAM
AND BACK IN UNIFORM.

TWO MINUTES LATER...



...AND THAT'S MY PLAN!
WE TAKE ALL THE SUPPLIES
WE CAN CARRY, AND FIGHT
OUR WAY TO THE RIVER...





IF WE MAKE IT TO THE RIVER,
WE'RE HOME FREE!

WITH ALL THAT WATER, YOUR
NAVAL MECH'S GONNA BE
AN UNSTOPPABLE THREAT!

...AND WE CAN FOLLA THE
RIVER TO THE ACID LAKE!
MEET UP WITH OUR CREW!
AND THEN...

WELL...AFTER
THAT, I DUNNO...

BUT, HEY! WE'LL
ALL BE TOGETHER!
COOL, RIGHT?

WE CAN STILL WIN THIS!



...WIN,
HOBBY?

NOT THIS
BATTLE...

THIS ENEMY
HAS HEAVIER
BEATS...
SMOOTHER
FLOW...

...AND A
WORLD OF
BITTEN
RHYMES.

YOU PAINT
A PICTURE
OF HOPE...

BUT THE PAINT
HAS DRIED TOO
LONG, MY FRIEND.



IT'S BEEN TOO LONG, MC HOBBY.
WE HAD HOPED TO FORCE THIS
GAME TO SHUT DOWN. THAT WAS
STILL THE PLAN WHEN WE WERE
SEPARATED FROM OUR FRIENDS.


THEY WOULD HAVE FOUND
A WAY TO DO IT WITHOUT US.
AT LEAST, TO TRY...

BUT THE GAME
IS STILL UP,
ISN'T IT?
HERE WE ARE.

THEY FAILED,
MY FRIEND.

AFTER THAT, WELL...
IT COULD ONLY GO
ONE WAY, I THINK...






ONE BY ONE,
THEY MUST
HAVE FALLEN...


...IN THE FINAL BATTLE
OVER THIS HELVETILLINEN
PLANE OF EXISTENCE...



THIS DIGITAL
RAGNAROK
IS OUR PRIVATE
WAR, I GUESS...




WE MIGHT AS WELL
FIGHT IT FROM HERE.



AND IN FIVE DAYS, WHEN WE RUN OUT OF SHELLS?

MAYBE OUR FRIENDS ARE STILL ALIVE.


EVEN IF NOT...WELL...ULTIMATE OPTIMUS HAD A TRAILER...



...FULL OF WEAPONS.
GOOD POINT.

ULT-OP WOULD WANT US TO USE THEM...

BUT, STILL, WE DON'T KNOW THE SITUATION THERE. WHAT WE NEED IS INTELLIGENCE... LET ME THINK A MOMENT...



ALL RIGHT, I HAVE AN IDEA. SURPRISED I DIDN'T THINK OF IT BEFORE...

SINCE THIS STORE YOU SOMEHOW FORCED THE GAME TO GENERATE IS EVIDENTLY SCALED FOR GIANT-SIZED BEINGS...

⇒PRINTOUT←

I NEED YOU TO GO DOWN AND PICK UP A FEW MORE THINGS FROM THE STORE...

...WHICH, DESPITE ITS ODDBALL SCALE, IS STOCKED STRANGELY LIKE A TYPICAL MIDWEST-AMERICAN ESTABLISHMENT, OR SO I AM GIVEN TO UNDERSTAND...

...WHICH WOULD LEAVE
THE SIGN TEXT RATHER
HALF-RANDOM, BUT I
CAN ACCEPT THAT ^ _ ^


***FINDIE!
YOU'RE GOING TO USE...
THOSE... THINGS?!***

WELL, YES. GET LOTS.
AND FRESH BATTERIES.
PLENTY OF THOSE.

AND THE FIREWORKS.
WE'LL NEED A LOT
OF FIREWORKS.

ON A QUASI-RELATED NOTE,
DON'T WORRY TOO MUCH
ABOUT THE INCENSE, WINE,
AND CANDLES AT THE END
OF THE LIST. ALSO THE
BARRY WHITE ALBUM. THOSE
ARE FOR A SIDE PROJECT I'M
WORKING ON WITH LADY PRIME...





DO YOU SEE THAT SWARM, SOLDIER?

THE LEGION ARE HERE. HOLD ON TO YOUR MIND..
BECAUSE THEY'RE HUNGRY FOR IT, TONIGHT..

NOT AS HUNGRY AS WE ARE, SIR. FOR VICTORY!

MY MOTHER...SHE WILL MISS ME.

**SOLDIER, YOUR
MOTHER WAS A
HAMSTER!!**

...AND A FINE FIGHTER SHE WAS!

OOH! THAT
WAS GOOD!

AND THE LEGION
ARE BUYING IT!
HA HAA!

SILLY CREATURES!
YOU'RE MISTAKING
CHILDRENS' TOYS
FOR REAL MECHA!



ALMOST TO THE RIVER...
A FEW ARE COMING
TO INVESTIGATE...

GET READY,
LADY PRIME...

→KA-KLIK←

THREE...TWO...ONE...

→KA-KLIK←

→KA-KLIK←



A LOVELY SIGHT!

...BUT DID THE
DIVERSION WORK?
DID OUR LITTLE BOAT
GET TO THE RIVER?

HOLD ON, FEZ. I'LL KNOW IN A SEC,
BUT I GOT TO CONCENTRATE TO ACQUIRE
MY 'REMOTICON' DISTANT-VIEWING SYSTEM.





"GOT IT, FEZ!
I'M SEEING..."



~BZZZZ~

"WATER! IT'S THE RIVER!
AHEAD FULL MOTORS,
AND WE'RE UNDERWAY!"



SO YOU CAN REMOTELY
VIEW ANYTHING THAT
BLING-BLING PENDANT
IS POINTED AT, EH?

GOT ANY
OTHER GOOD
TRICKS, HOB?



ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN
WORKING ON A NEW ONE!

BEAST MODE!!!

⇒SQUEEK⇐

⇒SQUEEKY⇐

⇒EEKY⇐

BOW WOW WOW
YIPPY YO YIPPY YAY!

⇒FLOOMP⇐

YOU'RE THE DOG NOW, MAN.

I SEE...
WATER.

IT'S THE
LAKE.

I SEE THE
SHORE...

SOMETHING
BIG, SQUARE...



IT'S THE TRAILER.
NO DAMAGE...LOOKS LIKE
ULT-OP PARKED IT...

THERE'S A
SHAPE NEAR
IT...SMALLER...

IT'S HIM!
ULTIMATE
OPTIMUS!

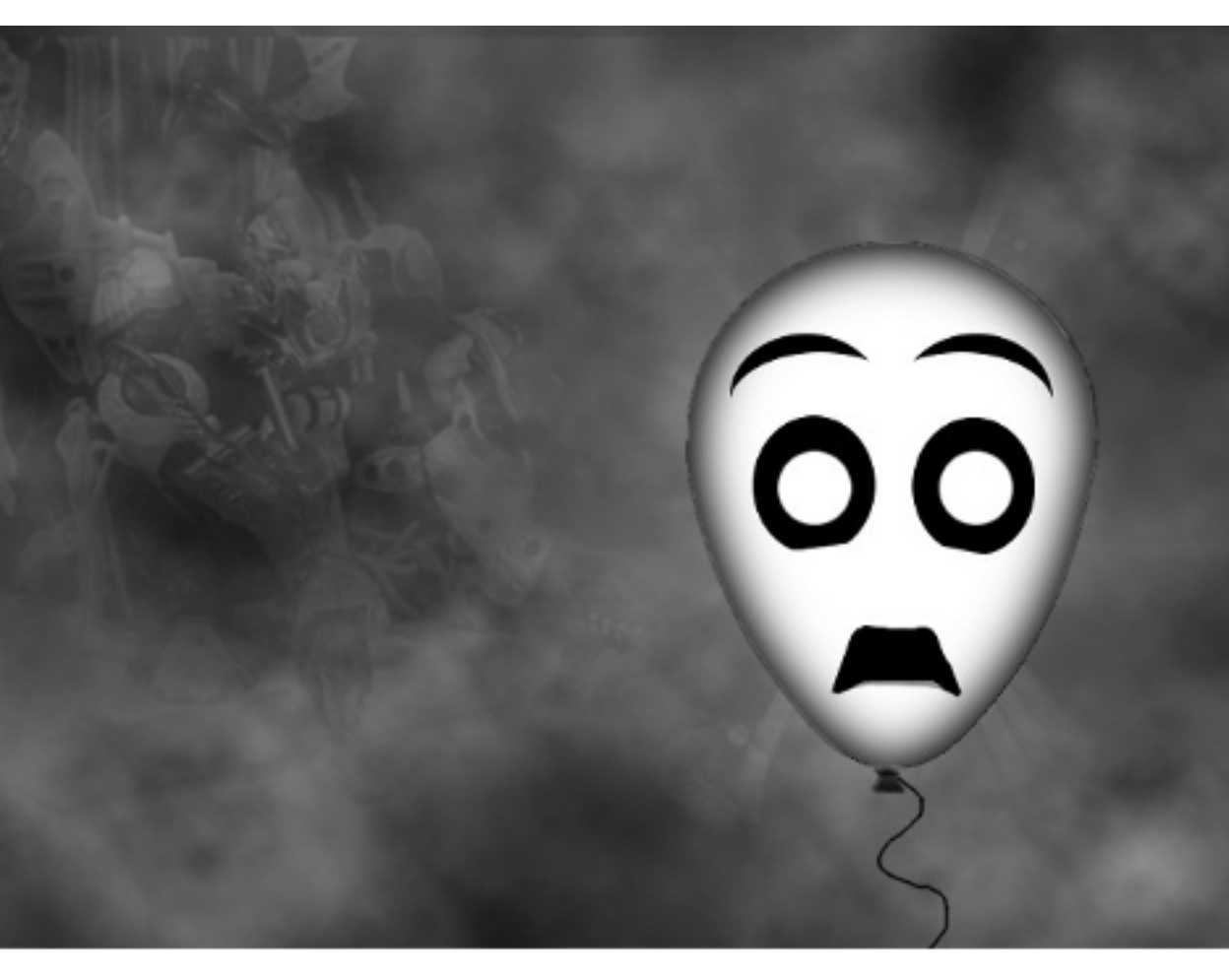
HE'S HURT BAD, FINDIE.
HE CAN'T GET UP...BUT HE'S
ALIVE, HE'S LOOKING AT
SOMETHING...

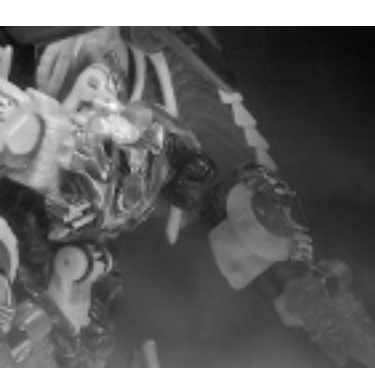
I THINK I HEAR HIM TALKING...

NOT TOO CLEAR.
CAN'T SEE WHO HE'S
TALKING TO...

THE BOAT'S DRIFTING,
IT'S COMING AROUND...
I SHOULD SEE, PRETTY SOON,
WHO HE'S TALKING TO...

COUPLE SECONDS NOW, AND...






HELLO! WHAT'S THIS,
FLOATING IN MY LAKE?

WHY, IT'S A
LITTLE
TOY BOAT!

SOME POOR
CHILD MUST
HAVE LEFT
IT BEHIND,
HA HA.



HERE,
NON-
PLAYER...



GIVE IT TO
YOUR KIDS!

CLATTER!




CLUMSY.

YOU BROKE IT.


HOW THEY
WILL WEEP.

A close-up, black and white image of a robot's head, possibly from the Transformers franchise. The robot has a complex, metallic face with a central visor and various mechanical details. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the metal.

THE BRATS WOULD
CRY WHEN THEY
BROKE IT BY
THEMSELVES,
OF COURSE...

A black and white photograph of a game controller and a small flag. The controller is on the left, and the flag, which has a cross pattern, is in the center. The background is dark and textured.

...BUT IT'S SO MUCH
BETTER WHEN THE
GROWN-UPS HAVE
CAUSED IT.

A black and white image of a robot's head, similar to the one in the first panel. The robot's eyes are glowing brightly, and its mouth is open as if speaking. The background is dark and smoky.

...DON'T YOU THINK...?

....NON-PLAYER?



NON-PLAYER....?

ARE YOU DEAD?

DISAPPOINTING...

I HAD THOUGHT--

GGGH...NNGGGH...
WHITE SERPENT!!

BITE MY... SHINY...
METAL.....BUTT!

⇒CREEAK⇐

OF YOUR CRIMES, I,
ULTIMATE OPTIMUS,
HAVE HAD ENOUGH!

YOU RIPPED US FROM
OUR OWN TIME, NOW
TWENTY YEARS AGO!

YOU TRAPPED US IN
YOUR SO-CALLED GAME!

YOU DECEIVED US WITH
YOUR LEGION-POSSESSED
AGENT, AND PLAYED US
ALL FOR FOOLS!

F-FINDIE! THE
R-RECORDER!



⇒POP⇐

RG6GH!

WHITE SERPENT!
YOU COMMAND THE LEGION
THAT CONSUMED THIS WORLD!
YOU KILLED MOONSCREAM!
E.C.R. FORMER! ANODYTHE!
BARRICADE AND TRANS+CRAZY!
THE CREW OF THE GOSTAN BALIK!

AAAAGGH!

AND YOU REDUCED TSUGARU'S NOBLE SPIRIT
TO A PUPPET OF YOUR MURDEROUS WHIMS—
AND SENT HER WITH YOUR AGENT TO DECEIVE US!

AND...

⇒RRRRLUNCH⇐

YOU...

MOCK!

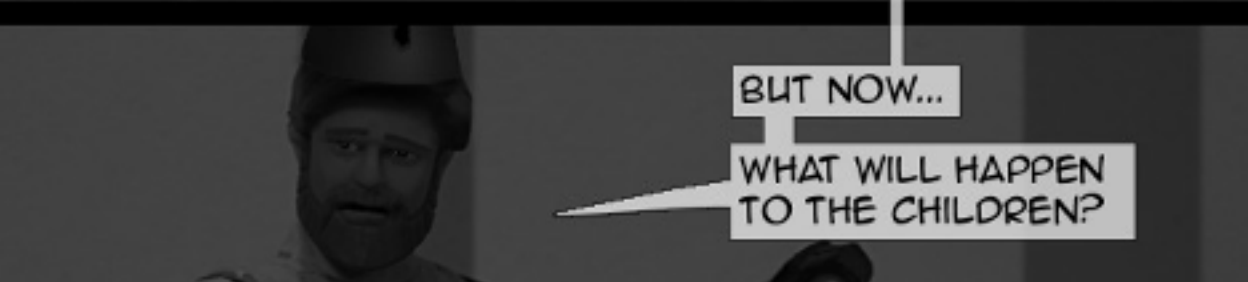


SOMEHOW...



HE KNEW...WE
WERE LISTENING...

HE GAVE US...
EVERYTHING...

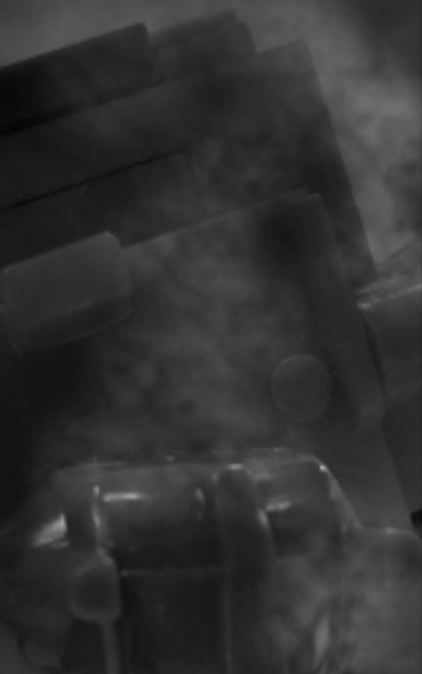


BUT NOW...

WHAT WILL HAPPEN
TO THE CHILDREN?

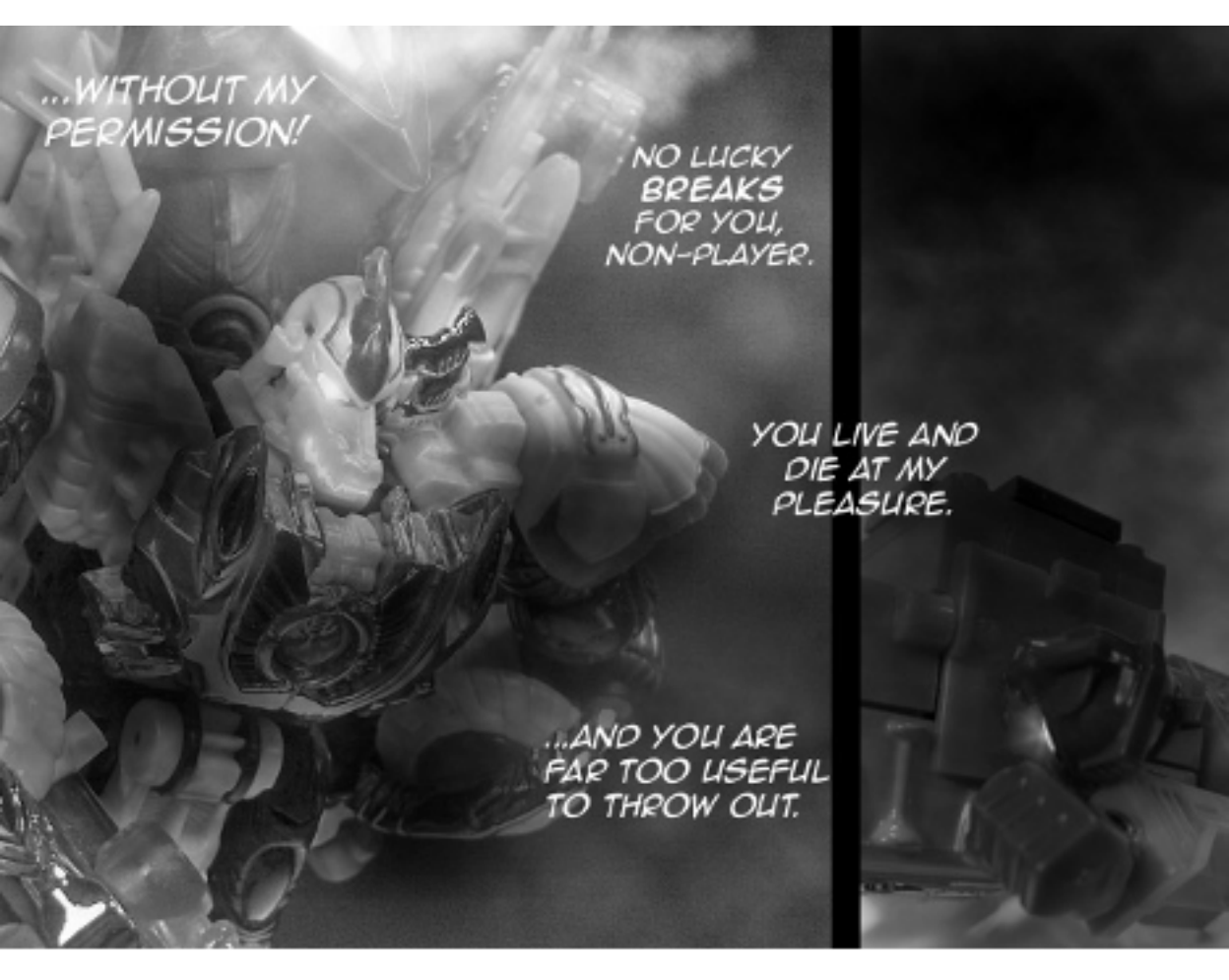
NON-
PLAYER!!

...YOU CAN'T DIE!





BRZAPP!

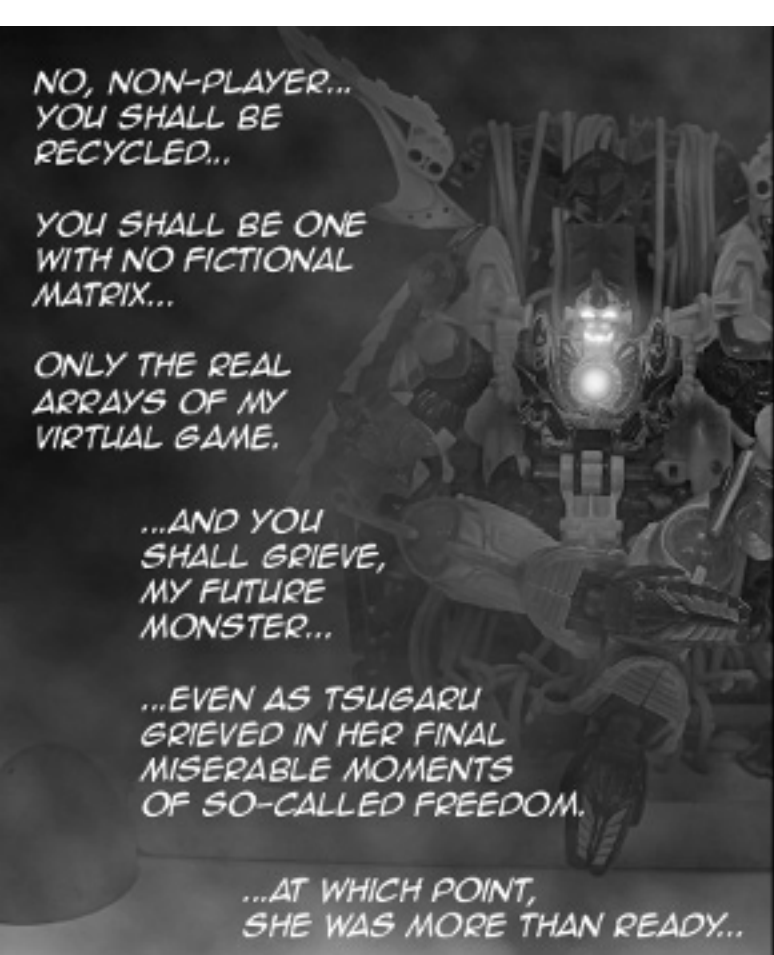


...WITHOUT MY
PERMISSION!

NO LUCKY
BREAKS
FOR YOU,
NON-PLAYER.

YOU LIVE AND
DIE AT MY
PLEASURE.

...AND YOU ARE
FAR TOO USEFUL
TO THROW OUT.



NO, NON-PLAYER...
YOU SHALL BE
RECYCLED...

YOU SHALL BE ONE
WITH NO FICTIONAL
MATRIX...

ONLY THE REAL
ARRAYS OF MY
VIRTUAL GAME.


...AND YOU
SHALL GRIEVE,
MY FUTURE
MONSTER...

...EVEN AS TSUGARU
GRIEVED IN HER FINAL
MISERABLE MOMENTS
OF SO-CALLED FREEDOM.

...AT WHICH POINT,
SHE WAS MORE THAN READY...



...TO ACCEPT MY OFFER.
DO YOU SEE WHERE I
AM GOING WITH THIS?




HMM, NO, I DON'T
THINK YOU DO...

OH, RIGHT, I HAVEN'T FINISHED
TELLING YOU MY LITTLE STORY.
I SHOULD GET RIGHT ON THAT...

...BUT NO. NOT YET.
THE PAIN FROM YOUR RECENT
REPAIR IS CLOGGING YOUR
PATHETIC NEURAL NETWORK.
LET'S PAUSE FOR A WHILE...



WE'VE GOT
ALL THE TIME
IN MY WORLD.



Fenix6
Don't start yet.
We might have
a problem.

**IT WASN'T ME,
BOSS STRAFF!
I CAN'T ACCESS
THE CAMERA IN
YOUR QUARTERS!**

No, not you. It's the
droid salesman this time.
He might have broken cover...


...camera?

There's no camera...

DAH-DEE-DEE-DAH-DAH...FLIP!

I SEE YOU, BABY...
SHAKIN' DAT-

Ass.



OUR BROTHER
HACKER X3
HAS FALLEN.

NAW. THE
BOSS FOUND
OUT HE DIDN'T
ACTUALLY SEE
ANYTHING, SO
SHE LET HIM
LIVE...

...BUT SHE SWITCHED
HIS CAMERA OVER TO
BULKHEAD'S SHOWER,
AND MADE HACKER
WATCH THE TAPES IN
SLOW MOTION.

THAT'S DIRTY POOL!

YES. ↗SNERK↖
...POOR HACKER.

SO WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT
A DROID SALESMAN?

AUTOBOT BURNOLIT?
OUR MAIN SOURCE OF INTEL?
THE ONE ON THE FUTURE TEAM?

-FUTURE
TEAM?

GOSH, CORN, DON'T
YOU KNOW ANYTHING?

THIS OPERATION INVOLVES THREE TEAMS.
TEAM T-ZERO, THAT'S US, HERE IN THE PRESENT.
TEAM T-MINUS WAS IN THE PAST. DOOMPRIME LED THEM,
VERY SECRET, AND I HAVEN'T WATCHED THEM CLOSELY.

EXCEPT FOR
TALA. MMM...

DID DOOMPRIME'S TEAM
ACCOMPLISH THEIR MISSION?

IT'S ONGOING.
IN THE PAST.
HOWEVER
THAT WORKS.


AND THE THIRD
TEAM IS IN THE
FUTURE, THEN?

YES, AND GETTING
FURTHER. THEY HAVE
TO KEEP UP WITH THE
GAME WORLD, WHERE
TIME RUNS QUICKER.

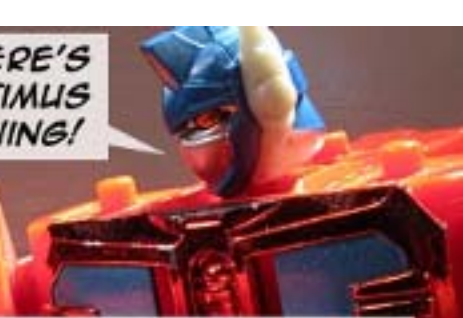
TEAM T-PLUS, IN THE FUTURE,
HAS THE RESCUE FLEET, LED
BY FALLDOWN.

AND, AS I SAID, IT'S
GOT BURNOUT, FOR
OUR GAME WORLD
SPOILER FILES...






"...BUT HER COVER
MIGHT BE BLOWN..."



I'M TELLING YOU, THERE'S
NO WAY ULTIMATE OPTIMUS
KNOWS WE'RE LISTENING!

OH REALLY? HE JUST RANDOMLY
DECIDED TO SUM EVERYTHING UP?
IF WE LOSE OUR CONTACT, IT COULD
BLIND THIS WHOLE OPERATION!

T+ - THE FUTURE



DAMN YOUR
OPERATION!
IS MY KAGAMINE
SAFE? TELL ME!

SHE ISN'T 'YOURS',
SALESMAN.


SHE ISN'T EVEN
A REAL PERSON.

SHE'S A DIGITAL CONSTRUCT,
A NON-PLAYER CHARACTER.




GET THIS
THROUGH
YOUR HEAD.

AND REMEMBER
WHO YOUR BOSS IS.




HOW WAS THE BEATING?
...ERR, MEETING, RIGHT.



CLOSER THE
FIRST TIME,
HYPE.

WHAT IS
SHADOW'S
PROBLEM
WITH ME?


CLASSIC TECH-MARKETING TENSION, BURN.
ALSO, YOU SOLD SOME SELF-AWARE DROIDS.
SHADOW TENDS TO DISAGREE WITH THAT.



BUT IT'S OKAY FOR HIM
TO BUY AN ENTIRE ARMY
OF 'SHINKI' ANDROIDS?!

HIS SHINKI
ARE FREE.

OH? CAN THEY
LEAVE WHENEVER
THEY WANT TO?



HEH!

ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY
WALK OUT OF STRARF'S
ORGANIZATION.

HARD TO WALK
ON BROKEN LEGS.

HMMF.

STOP FOR A KLIK, HYPE.
THERE'S A SNACK MACHINE,
AND I'VE GOT THIS SUDDEN
CRAVING FOR PRETZELS.

SHADOW SAID MS.
KAGAMINE WAS JUST
PART OF THE GAME.

WELL...
SHE IS.

GAH!
NO
CHANGE!

⇒RATTLE⇒
⇒RATTLE⇒

THAT MEANS SHE'S GONE
WHEN WE BRING IT DOWN!
IS THAT RIGHT, ANALYST?

...YES.

⇒BAM⇒
⇒BAM⇒
⇒BAM⇒
⇒BAM⇒
⇒BAM⇒

DON'T
ANY OF
THESE
BUTTONS
WORK?!

BUT YOU AND I AREN'T GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN TO HER. YOU'VE GOT A PLAN, RIGHT?

BURN,
I...

I DON'T SEE HOW WE COULD SAVE HER...
AND EVEN IF WE COULD MOVE HER OUT...
THE DAEMON COULD HITCH A RIDE, SO...

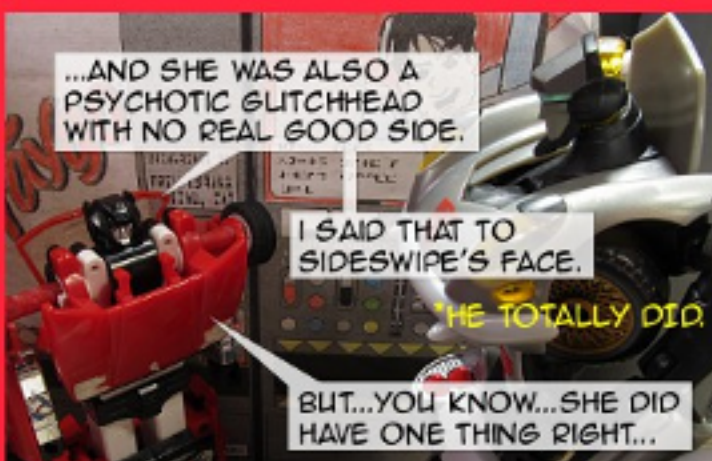
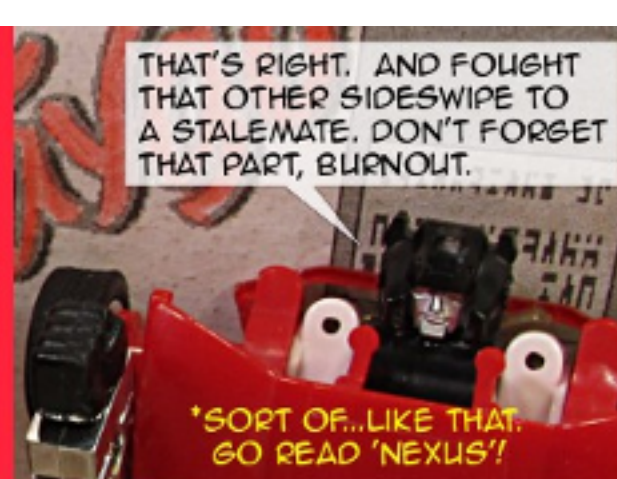
DAMN YOU,
SNACK MACHINE!

⇒KABONKA-BONKA-BONKA-BONKA-BONK⇐

DON'T
DO THAT.

YOU'LL GET HURT.

THERE'S A TRICK WITH
THE VENDERP MARK I.
HIT IT JUST RIGHT...






SHE THOUGHT 'CAN NOT'
WAS A TIN OF PRETZELS.


BACK TO
YOUR POSTS,
BOYS...BUT
LATER ON...

...GIVE MY BUDDY JACK
A CALL. HE'S INCLINED TO TALK
WITH YOU, AND WHO KNOWS?
YOU MIGHT HAVE THE TIME.




THIS 'JACK'...THIS FRIEND OF SIDESWIPE'S...
WHAT SORT OF PERSON IS HE?

HE'S A SPATIOTEMPORAL ENGINEER. HIS
SPECIALTY IS GOING BEYOND THE IMPOSSIBLE.




EXACTLY WHAT
RIN NEEDS!

UH...THE THING IS, HE TENDS
TO STUB HIS TOES WHEN
KICKING REASON TO THE CURB.



STILL, HE COULD BE AN ALLY... A FRIEND...
I HAVE NOT GOT MANY OF THOSE LEFT..



"...YOU CAN BLAME
SERPY FOR THAT..."



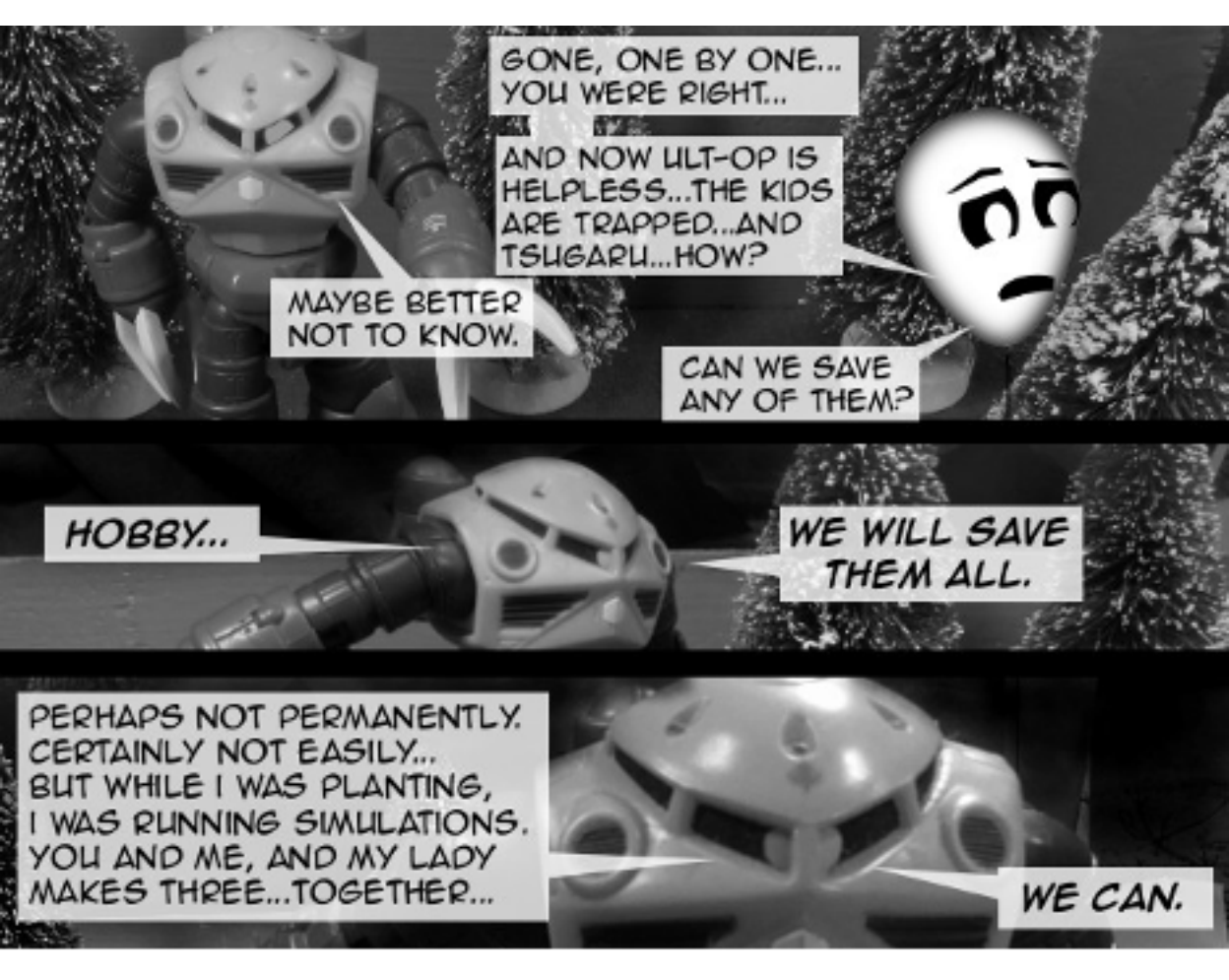
CHRISTMAS ROSES, HOB.
HELLEBORUS NIGER.
PURE WHITE BLOSSOMS...
BEAUTIFUL...AND HARDY...
AND DANGEROUS.

A FITTING MEMORIAL
FOR OUR FALLEN
COMPANIONS...

THE PLANTS WILL TAKE
SOME TIME TO GROW
AND BLOOM...

...BY THEN THE MONSTERS
WILL HAVE NO REASON TO
ATTACK THIS PLACE...

...AND, EVERY CHRISTMAS,
THE FLOWERS WILL RETURN.
THEY WILL REMEMBER.



GONE, ONE BY ONE...
YOU WERE RIGHT...

AND NOW ULT-OP IS
HELPLESS...THE KIDS
ARE TRAPPED...AND
TSUGARU...HOW?

MAYBE BETTER
NOT TO KNOW.

CAN WE SAVE
ANY OF THEM?

HOBBY...

WE WILL SAVE
THEM ALL.

PERHAPS NOT PERMANENTLY.
CERTAINLY NOT EASILY...
BUT WHILE I WAS PLANTING,
I WAS RUNNING SIMULATIONS.
YOU AND ME, AND MY LADY
MAKES THREE...TOGETHER...

WE CAN.




THAT DEMONIC DOUCHEBAG
IS TOO MUCH FOR US, HOBBY.
EVEN WITH THE EXPERIENCE
GAINED AGAINST HIS MINIONS.

AKA LEVEL
GRINDING.

...BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO KILL HIM.
THE CHILDREN ARE IN THAT TRAILER...

...AND MY LADY...
IS A TRACTOR!



WE'LL COME IN
UNDERWATER,
COVER LADY P
WHILE SHE
HOOKS UP,
THROW ULT-OP
ON HIS TRAILER,
AND WE'LL MAKE
A DASH FOR THE
GOSTAN BALIK.

THE DOUCHEBAG
PROBABLY WON'T
FOLLOW. IF HE
COULD LEAVE THE
AREA OF THE LAKE,
HE'D NOT HAVE HAD
TO LURE US TO IT.

HE'LL SEND HIS
LEGION AFTER US...
AND WE'LL BLAST
TO A QUIVERING
SPAGHETTI BAKE.

CAN I GET A
'HELL YEAH'?

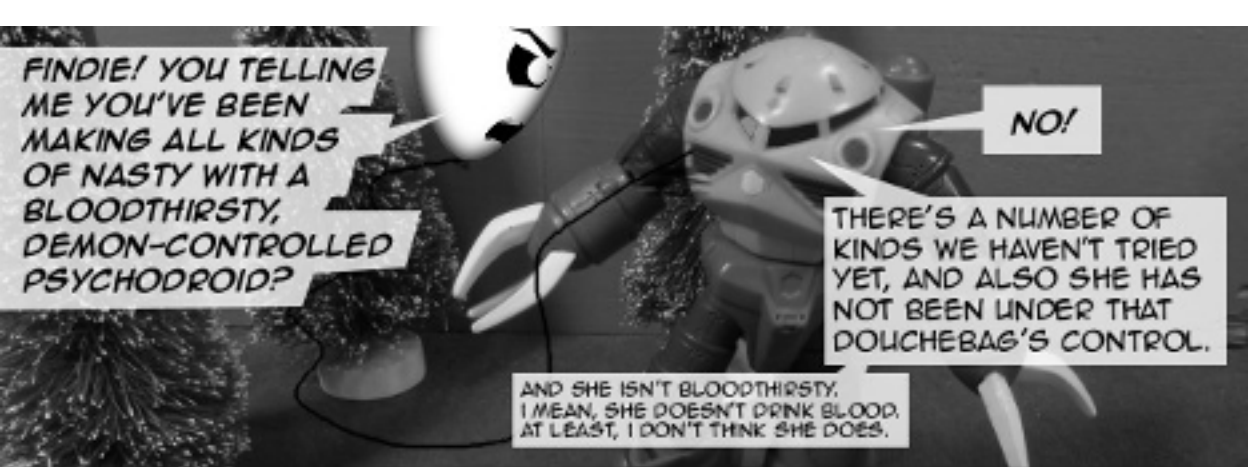
INDUBITABLY,
MY GOOD MAN.



EXCELLENT!
THEN THERE
IS ONLY ONE
PROBLEM.



LADY PRIME
IS AN NPC...
THAT DAEMON
IS HER MASTER



FINDIE! YOU TELLING
ME YOU'VE BEEN
MAKING ALL KINDS
OF NASTY WITH A
BLOODTHIRSTY,
DEMON-CONTROLLED
PSYCHODROID?

NO!

THERE'S A NUMBER OF
KINDS WE HAVEN'T TRIED
YET, AND ALSO SHE HAS
NOT BEEN UNDER THAT
DOUCHEBAG'S CONTROL.

AND SHE ISN'T BLOODTHIRSTY.
I MEAN, SHE DOESN'T DRINK BLOOD.
AT LEAST, I DON'T THINK SHE DOES.

LADY PRIME IS...UNIQUE.
YES...UNIQUE.
HER MIND IS HER OWN...
BUT SHE IS STILL
PART OF THIS GAME...
AND THAT ASSHEAD
IS THE GAME-MASTER.

HE HAS NO CONTROL
OVER LADY PRIME NOW...


...BUT HE
COULD
EASILY
TAKE IT.




WHEN WE
ATTACK...
HE SURELY
WILL TRY...
AND IF HE
SUCCEEDS...

HE WILL USE HER AGAINST US...
OUR PLAN WILL FAIL UTTERLY...
AND MY LADY WOULD BE MADE...

A DAEMON'S SLAVE.
A HEARTLESS KILLER...




I REALIZE
THIS IS
HARD TO
ENVISION.



AND PERHAPS IT SOUNDS
FARFETCHED AND CRAZY...
BUT I CAN NOT ASK HER -



face!




'CRAZY'...
HMM...

FEZ...

WHAT IF I TOLD
YOU LADY PRIME
WASN'T A REAL
PERSON? IF I
SAID SHE WAS
FOLLOWING A
GAME SCRIPT?

SHE SAID SO HERSELF, HOBBY...
MANY, MANY LEVELS AGO...

BUT...PERKELE!
SHE WAS WRONG.



WHEN SHE SAID 'WILL NOT',
THEN I KNEW...BECAUSE
SOFTWARE HAS NO WILL...



...AND WITH THE NEXT THING
SHE DIDN'T SAY...SHE KNEW...

LDP: BUT I CAN'T LIE TO YOU.
I **WON'T** LIE TO YOU...BECAUSE...

SHE WAS REAL.

...BUT IT WAS NOT THOSE
WORDS THAT SHE DID NOT SAY.

...AND I LOVE HER, TOO.

I CAN'T DO IT, HOBBY.
I CAN'T ASK HER-

YOU GOT TO,
FOR THE KIDS.

AND IF YA
BELIEVE IN
HER, FEZ...

THEN Y'ALL LET HER
DECIDE FOR HERSELF.

DAMN
YOU,
HOBS...

YOU'RE
RIGHT...

...AND THAT IS THE DANGER, MY LADY.
HIS COMMANDS WILL BE STRONG...
DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO RESIST...

PERHAPS
IMPOSSIBLE...



Don't worry, Fez.

I think I can
hack it.





GREAT NEWS, FEZ!

I GOT DRIFT WORKING!
HOORAY FOR DUCT TAPE!



OH.

SORRY, FEZ.

ABOUT..LADY PRIME
AND EVERYTHING...

AT LEAST...YOU'LL
BE...TOGETHER.

BARRICADE!

⇒PUFF⇐


⇒PUFF⇐





BARRY!
WHERE
ARE YOU?

IT'S ME,
TRANS-
CRAZY!



BARRICADE!

⇒PUFF⇐

⇒PUFF⇐

WHY AREN'T
YOU HERE
WITH ME,
BARRICADE?

YOU SAID
WE'D BE
TOGETHER,
WHY AREN'T
YOU HERE?

HE COULDN'T HAVE LEFT ME!
HE WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT ME!

NOT MY
BARRIC-

⇒KTHUDD!⇐

BARRICADE...

L.P.



WHO-?

TAKE
MY HAND.

I...I DON'T
SEE YOUR
HAND...

-OH!

NOW, GET UP.
WALK WITH ME.

W...WHERE?

JUST KEEP
WALKING.



CAREFUL!
STEP UP.

OH!

ALL RIGHT.
HERE WE ARE.

SIT BACK
AND REST.



ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?

YES...VERY...

GOOD.

NOW... OPEN
YOUR EYES.

MY EYES...
ARE...OPEN.


NO, THEY AREN'T...
TRANS-CRAZY.



A scene from a Transformers movie. Barricade, a purple and white Decepticon, is standing on top of a pile of wreckage, including Optimus Prime's damaged body. Barricade is holding a large, white, wing-like object. He has a speech bubble that says "BARRICADE!!". In the background, there is a dark, industrial setting with a red light source. Optimus Prime's head is visible in the foreground, looking up at Barricade. A speech bubble from Optimus Prime says "NOW THEY'RE OPEN.".

BARRICADE!!

NOW
THEY'RE
OPEN.



UGH!


DON'T BE
A SQUARE,
EX-AGENT.

I'M 'AGENT X',
MOONSCREAM!

≡BONK≡

NOT ANY
MORE, YOU
AREN'T,
BUDDY!

COME ON, I GOTTA'
GO RALLY THE TROOPS.



GOOOD MOOOORNING,
UNDERWOOOOORLD!

RATTLE THOSE BONES
GIM'ME A HOOOOWL!!


polite hooooowl



WEAK! WHAT WAS THAT!

YOU LOT COULDN'T
SCARE A TROOP OF
GHOUL SCOUTS!

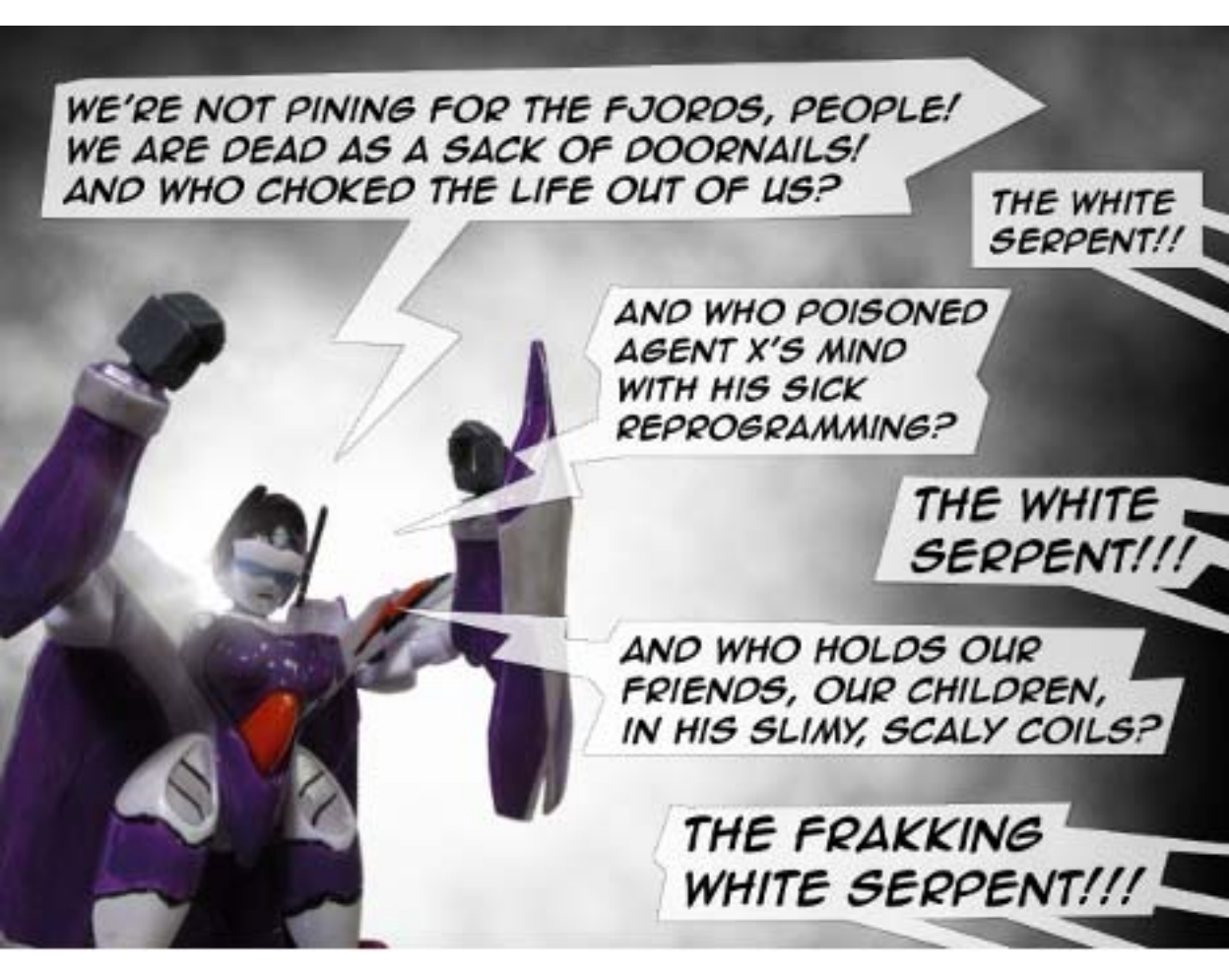
TAKE A LOOK 'ROUND YOU!
WHAT DO YOU SEE?!



WE SEE DEAD
PEOPLE!!

THAT'S
RIGHT!

MORTALLY IMPAIRED!
EVERY ONE OF US!



**WE'RE NOT PINING FOR THE FJORDS, PEOPLE!
WE ARE DEAD AS A SACK OF DOORNAILS!
AND WHO CHOKED THE LIFE OUT OF US?**

**THE WHITE
SERPENT!!**

**AND WHO POISONED
AGENT X'S MIND
WITH HIS SICK
REPROGRAMMING?**

**THE WHITE
SERPENT!!!**

**AND WHO HOLDS OUR
FRIENDS, OUR CHILDREN,
IN HIS SLIMY, SCALY COILS?**

**THE FRAKKING
WHITE SERPENT!!!**

**AND WHAT ARE WE GOING TO
DO TO THAT FILTHY ASPHEAD?!**



**WE'RE GONNA RIP
HIM A NEW ONE!!!**



**THAT'S THE
SPIRIT!!!**



**NOW GIM'ME
A HOOOWL!!**



THERE!

PITCH PERFECT
AND JUST THE
RIGHT SOUND!
I KNEW THIS
WOULD WORK!

HANG IN THERE, SCREAMY.
HELP IS ON THE WAY!



OUR MOONSCREAM IS
QUITE THE BANSHEE...

YES, WELL, THEY
DON'T CALL HER
MOONWHISPER,
BARRICADE.

ARE WE REALLY DEAD?
ARE WE REALLY GOING
TO ATTACK THE DAEMON?


YES,
AND YES.

WE'RE GOING TO USE THE PORTAL
INTO HELL TSUGARU FOUND, AND
THE PORTAL OUT OF IT THE KIDS
MADE BY ACCIDENT, TO GET INTO
THE DAEMON'S VIRTUAL WORLD.


AND ANYONE HE KILLS THERE
WILL JUST END UP HERE.




...AND COME RIGHT BACK
AT THE DAEMON! SLICK!
WHO CAME UP WITH
THAT STRATEGY?



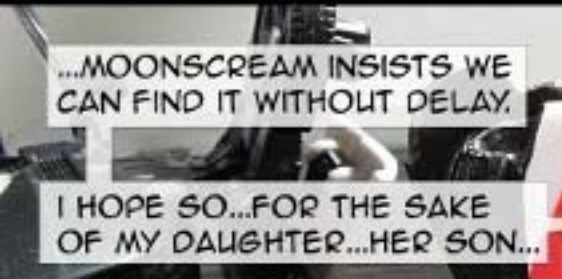
MOONSTREAM AND I.
WHILE DRUNK.



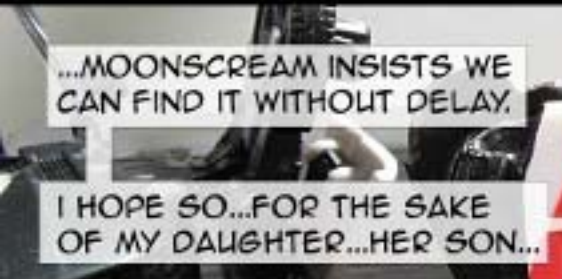
TSUGARU'S PORTAL TO
THAT WEIRD HELL-PLACE,
WHERE IS IT, ANODYTHE?




WE DON'T KNOW,
TRANS-CRAZY...



...MOONSTREAM INSISTS WE
CAN FIND IT WITHOUT DELAY.



I HOPE SO...FOR THE SAKE
OF MY DAUGHTER...HER SON...



...AND ANYONE
TRAPPED IN
THAT VILE
SIMULATION...

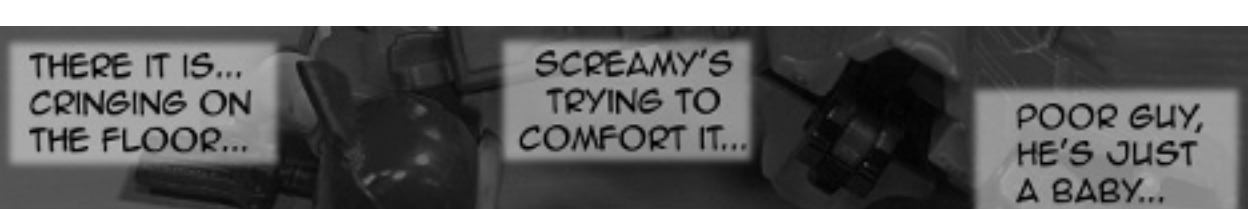
GAH!

I WISH I COULD TELL HER
WE WERE COMING TO HELP.

MOM CAN'T HELP US.
NOBODY CAN...

NOT ANY MORE.

IT'S DOWN
TO US, AND
THE DEMON'S
PET DROID...



THERE IT IS...
CRINGING ON
THE FLOOR...

SCREAMY'S
TRYING TO
COMFORT IT...

POOR GUY,
HE'S JUST
A BABY...




AND RIN AND THE
TWINS ARE HIDDEN.
THAT LEAVES ME...

I HAVE TO DO
SOMETHING.



IF I COULD JUST GET THAT
DAEMON-CONTROLLED MENACE
OUT OF THIS TRAILER...



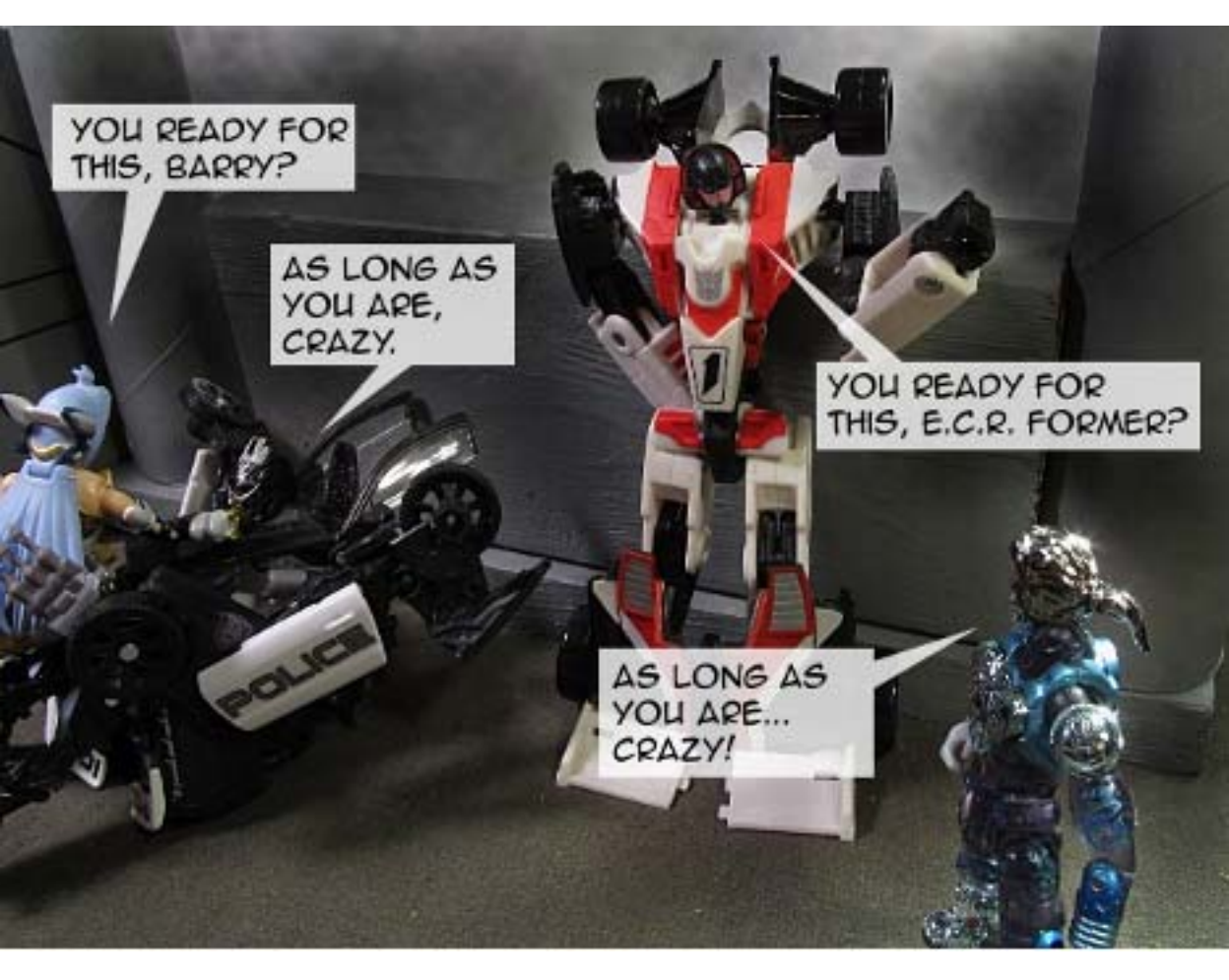
BUT SHOULD
I EVEN TRY?

MAYBE I SHOULD
WAIT A WHILE...



GO!



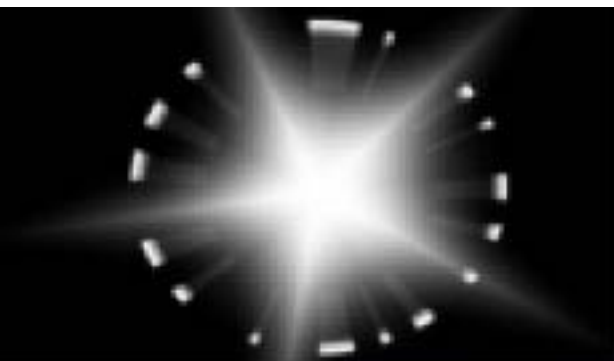


YOU READY FOR
THIS, BARRY?

AS LONG AS
YOU ARE,
CRAZY.

YOU READY FOR
THIS, E.C.R. FORMER?

AS LONG AS
YOU ARE...
CRAZY!



World Finished.



Have a nice day.

OUTSTANDING,
HACKER X3!

YOUR PATCH WORKS
PERFECTLY IN THE
FULL SIMULATION!

OF COURSE,
HALCONFENIX.

READY TO
START THE
REAL GAME?

YES...BUT...



PLEASE CAN
I CHANGE MY
AVATAR?

NOPE.

⇒SNEEK⇒

OKAY,
TEAMS!
CHECK
IN!

HYPE-1,
FUTURE!

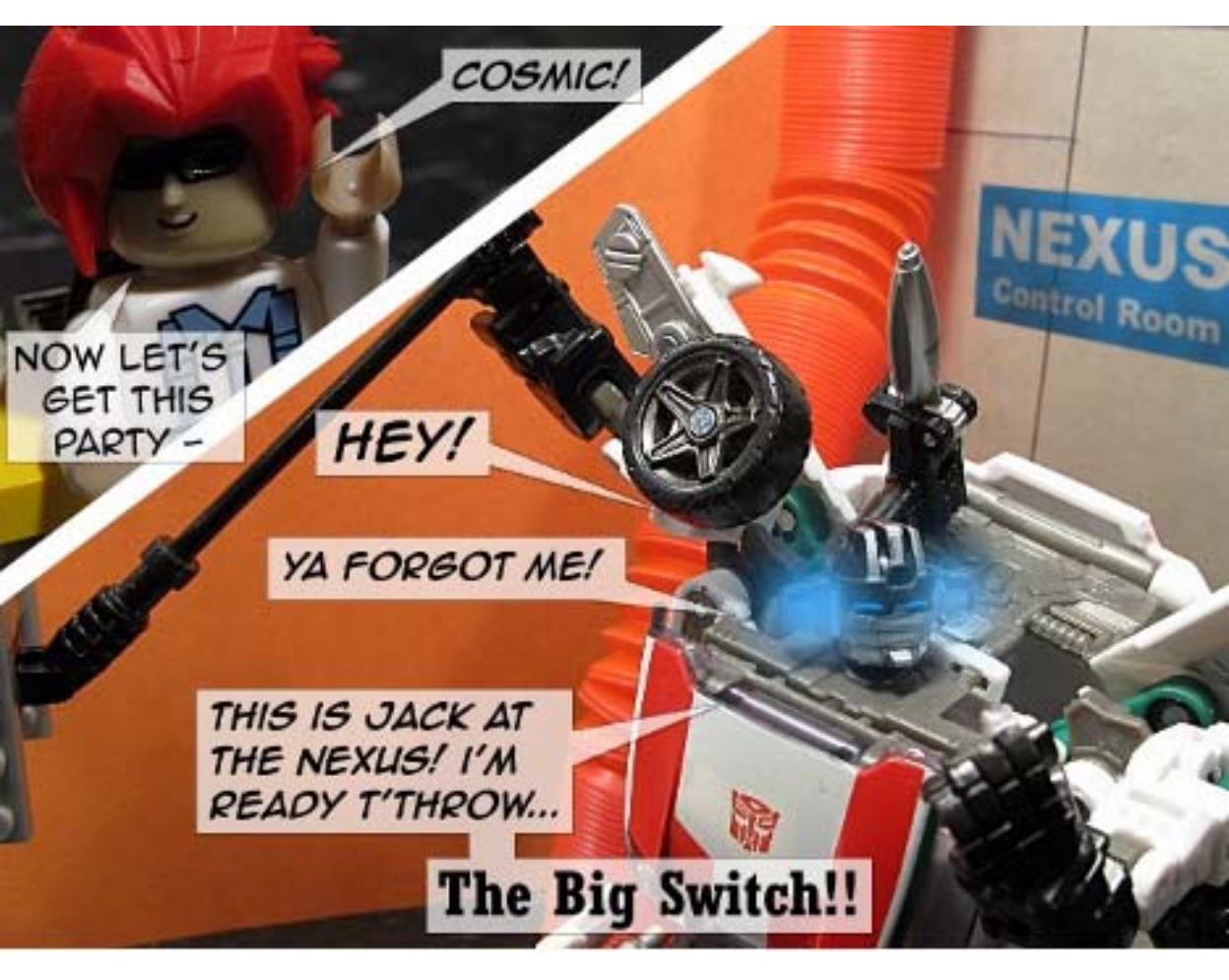
TRANSWARP
DATALINK IS
ALL SET!

RAPTAS,
PRESENT!

DATA CENTER IS
READY TO GO!

FALLDOWN,
FUTURE!

THE FLEET IS IN
POSITION AND
WAITING FOR
OUR ORDERS!



COSMIC!


NOW LET'S
GET THIS
PARTY -

HEY!

YA FORGOT ME!

THIS IS JACK AT
THE NEXUS! I'M
READY T'THROW...

The Big Switch!!

A LEGO Star Wars comic panel featuring a grey dragon-like creature (Halcon) and a character with red hair (C3PO) sitting on a yellow block. The background is a brown, textured wall. There are four speech bubbles with text. The character with red hair is pointing towards the dragon.

WHAT DOES THAT
BIG SWITCH DO,
HALCONFENIX?

NOTHING, UNLESS WE NEED IT.
STRARF HAS SOME SORT OF
FAIL-SAFE DEVICE WIRED TO IT.

SO THE BOSS DOES
CARE ABOUT OUR SAFETY!

I DON'T THINK 'FAIL-SAFE' MEANS
'SAFE FOR US', CORNCHIPS...
LET'S TRY NOT TO NEED IT...

⇒KACHUNK⇒




⇒KLIK⇒



⇒PFSSSH⇒



KAGAMINE SAN!
BURNOUT DESU.
DAIJOUBU KA?



<MR.
BURNOUT!>

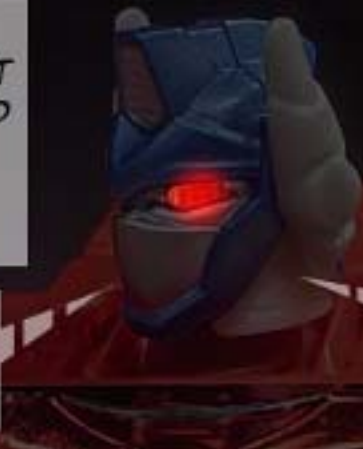
<YES, I'M ALL
RIGHT!>

<MR. BURNOUT! WAS IT
YOU THAT SENT THAT
LITTLE TOY BOAT?
WAS MY...MY SPECIAL
UPGRADE..IN IT?>

<SSH! TOO LOUD!>


<I'M SORRY...MS.
KAGAMINE...I HAVEN'T
BEEN ABLE TO SEND
THE PROGRAM...
I SWEAR I'LL GET IT
TO YOU...>

...AS FOR THE BOAT,
I DON'T KNOW WHAT
BOAT YOU MEAN.>



<I DIDN'T SEE IT, BUT
THE MONSTER SAID->

<MS. KAGAMINE!
LISTEN, PLEASE!
I DON'T HAVE
MUCH TIME...>



<IS THERE ANY PLACE IN
THAT TRAILER, SAFER THAN
YOUR CURRENT POSITION?>

<MMM...THE CORNER,
BY THE COFFEE POT?
IT'S FURTHER FROM
THE...SMALL MONSTER,
WITH LOTS OF BOXES
TO HIDE IN...BUT I WON'T
HEAR OUTSIDE AS WELL...>

<CAN YOU GET THERE
WITHOUT BEING NOTICED?>

<OH YES,
DEFINITELY!>

<THEN GO THERE AND HIDE. RIGHT NOW!
MS. KAGAMINE, YOU MIGHT BE HEARING...SOME
WEIRD THINGS...HAPPENING OUTSIDE. SOON.
DO NOT LEAVE THE TRAILER! STAY INSIDE!
IF YOU DO THAT, I PROMISE YOU'LL BE SAFE.>

<PINKY SWEAR,
MR. BURNOUT?>

<PINKY SWEAR,
MS. KAGAMINE...>

<...SOMEONE'S
COMING. GOT
TO GO NOW...>

<NEXT TIME
I CALL, DON'T
MENTION THIS
CONVERSATION.>

Hey!

Why is this
locked?

Who's in there?

UH...JUST
A MINUTE!
I'M...UH...

⇒SSSSSSSHH⇒

⇒KLIK⇒

TAKING
A LEAK.

YES.

In the
broom
closet 36

UM...

YES...
YES, MS. ELKRANTE.
THERE WAS...
A SINK, AND...WELL...

I JUST...
COULDN'T
WAIT...

⇒SQUEEK⇐

That's
nasty.

You're
nasty.

I KNOW...
I'M SORRY...

AUTHORIZED
PERSONNEL
ONLY

Get back to your post.
You're holding everyone up.

Fez...



I'm
ready.

SO
QUICKLY?

TIME IS
TOO BRIEF.





Hobby and
Drift are...
are waiting
for us...



ARE THEY,
ALREADY?

THEN WE SHOULDN'T...
KEEP THEM WAITING...
SHOULD WE?







login: _


⇒TAPPATAK⇐

Stop!

B-BOSS?

The operation
is canceled.

Sorry.




SHADOWDRAGON!

MASTER BURNOUT?
YOU'RE STILL HERE?

DAMN THE CHECK!
YOU CAN'T JUST PULL THE
PLUG ON THIS OPERATION!


SIGN YOUR
PAPERS AND
GO HOME.
THE CHECK
WILL BE IN
THE MAIL.




WHAT A STRANGE THING TO HEAR,
FROM A MECH OF BUSINESS...

I EXPECTED MY
TECHNICAL CREW
TO BE UPSET...

BUT NOT
YOU.




I'VE GOT A STAKE
IN THIS, TOO!




IT'S GOOD TO HEAR
YOU SAY THAT. REALLY.

...BUT WOULD YOU
WASTE RESOURCES
ON A PROBLEM THAT
NO LONGER EXISTS?

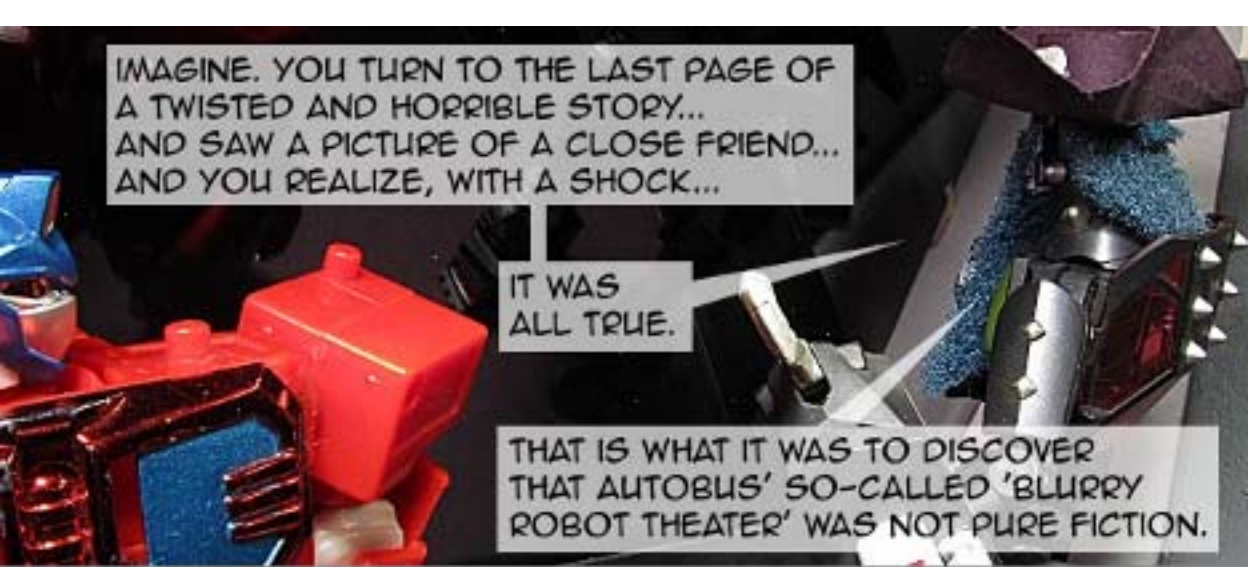
OH, I UNDERSTAND!
TSUGARU IS A WRITE-OFF NOW,
IS THAT IT? TAXES A BIT HIGH?



THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND,
ISN'T THERE, BURNOUT?



I COULD KILL YOU, BUT
I'LL EXPLAIN, INSTEAD.




IMAGINE. YOU TURN TO THE LAST PAGE OF
A TWISTED AND HORRIBLE STORY...
AND SAW A PICTURE OF A CLOSE FRIEND...
AND YOU REALIZE, WITH A SHOCK...

IT WAS
ALL TRUE.


THAT IS WHAT IT WAS TO DISCOVER
THAT AUTOBUS' SO-CALLED 'BLURRY
ROBOT THEATER' WAS NOT PURE FICTION.

...AND THE NEW
INFORMATION YOU'VE
GOTTEN FOR US HAS
ONLY MULTIPLIED
THE HORROR.


THE STORY CAN'T
HAVE A HAPPY
ENDING, BURNOUT.



AT BEST...TSUGARU...
MY FRIEND...WOULD
BE AN EMOTIONALLY
SHATTERED WRECK.




YOU'RE...RIGHT. I'M SORRY, SHADOW...
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU FELT LIKE THAT ABOUT-
I MEAN, *TRANS-SHINKI WORLD (AND FRIENDS)*
IS PRETTY MUCH A BLOODBATH...



MY COMIC SERIES
IS A GRIM RECORD
OF A DESPERATE
BATTLE, BURNOUT.

WITH BACKGROUND MUSIC?
AND DECAPITATION USED
FOR COMIC EFFECT?


SCHMETTERLING NEVER
REALLY USED HER HEAD
ANYWAY, AND STOP
GETTING ME OFF TRACK.



AT LAST, BURNOUT, I KNEW
THAT MOONSCREAM HAD
BEEN RIGHT. THE ONLY
SOLUTION TO TSUGARU'S
TROUBLES WAS TO GO BACK
AND PREVENT THEM FROM
EVER HAPPENING...

...SO I DID.

....AND THAT'S WHY I
DON'T NEED YOUR
SERVICES ANY MORE.



LIAR! YOU DIDN'T
CHANGE HISTORY!


YOU'RE RIGHT.
DOOMPRIME'S
TEAM DID.

IMPOSSIBLE!

YOU CAN'T GO BACK!

OUR FRIENDS ON THE GOSTAN BALIK
TRIED TO GO BACK AND WARN TSUGARU,
AND ENDED UP BEING WHAT CAUSED
THE WHOLE, MISERABLE STORY!

NO,
BURNOUT...




NOT
QUITE.


THEY CAUSED THE EVENTS
DESCRIBED IN THE STORY...
BUT THE STORY CAME FIRST.
YOU SEE, BURNOUT...

MOONSCREAM
WAS DRINKING
ONE NIGHT AT
MACCADAMS.

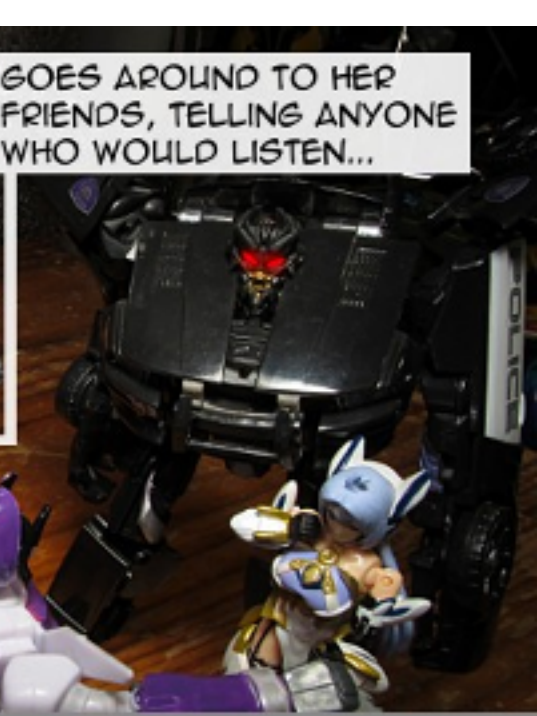
SHE HEARD A
RUMOR...




SOMEONE...I DON'T KNOW WHO...
TOLD HER THAT A CERTAIN STORY
WAS NOT STRICTLY FICTIONAL...



SO SHE STARTS
RAISING A STINK!




GOES AROUND TO HER
FRIENDS, TELLING ANYONE
WHO WOULD LISTEN...




YOU KNOW WHAT AN
AGITATOR SHE CAN BE.

THAT WAS THE START OF
THE CONSPIRACY. THAT
RUMOR LED STRAIGHT TO
THE GOSTAN BALIK!



...NONSENSE. ALL OF IT.

IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME,
JUST ASK OLD FALLDOWN.



HE'S A
TALKER.


NOW, BURNOUT, THINK ABOUT
WHAT THIS MEANS...

THE STORY LED TO
CERTAIN EVENTS...
THESE EVENTS WERE
DESCRIBED IN THE STORY...

EITHER DAMNABLE LUCK,
OR EVIDENCE OF MEDDLING
BY SOMEONE WHO KNEW
EXACTLY WHAT HE WAS DOING.



I SENT DOOMPRIIME AND THE T-MINUS TEAM
BACK INTO THE PAST, TO INVESTIGATE...




IT WAS MEDDLING, BURNOUT!

WHAT?

ARE YOU SAYING AUTOBUS
PRIME DELIBERATELY WROTE
SOMETHING CALCULATED
TO ALTER HISTORY?

HA!

AUTOBUS CAN'T WRITE
HIS WAY OUT OF AN
AIR SICKNESS BAG!



HE'S A NO-
TALENT HACK,
AND HE'S TOO
CHEAP TO
HIRE WRITERS.

BUT, A FEW YEARS BACK,
HE HAD ONE LUCKY BREAK...

LOTS OF COMICS PEOPLE USED
TO HANG OUT AT MACCADAMS...

AT LONG LAST!
I HAVE FOUND
MY TRUE LIFE'S
PASSION!

CHIP!

PUDDING?

PIRATES?

PUDDING!

PIRATES!

ROMANCE?

SORRY, NOT
MY TYPE.

AUTOBUS TOO. HE WASN'T SO
BIG THEN. HE'D SIT AT THE CORNER
TABLE, WONDERING HOW TO WRITE.

AUTOBUS HAD JUST FINISHED HIS
FIRST ARC. IT DIDN'T BANKRUPT
HIM ENTIRELY, SO HE WAS TRYING
TO COME UP WITH MORE.

SOME PEOPLE DON'T LEARN.

...AND, UNFORTUNATELY, HE NEVER HAD TO.
THE STORY PRACTICALLY DROPPED INTO HIS LAP.
OUR OPERATIVES NEVER SAW WHO DID IT...

THERE WAS A
MOMENTARY
CROWD IN THE
BAR CORNER...


A WAITER
DROPPED A TRAY,

PEOPLE
STOPPED
TO LOOK...

...AND WHEN THE
COMMOTION SETTLED,
THERE IT WAS, ON
AUTOBUS' TABLE...

...THE WHOLE STORY.
AN OLD-STYLE DATA CASSETTE,
WITH EVERYTHING ON IT, FROM
CHAPTER 5, UP THROUGH THE
FRAGMENT OF CHAPTER 13.






AND HERE'S THE TAPE.
BLURRY ROBOT THEATER.
WORKS MUCH BETTER
IN THE ORIGINAL BINARY.

AUTOBUS' TELLING IS
BADLY BOTCHED.

Y-YOU HAD DOOMPRIIME
STEAL IT FROM THE PAST!

YESS.

NATURE CALLED.
BUS ANSWERED.



OOF! TIME TO MEET
WITH TOILETBOT!

DOOMPRIIME WORKED ONE OF
HIS FAMOUS DISTRACTIONS...

LOOK! OVER
THERE! IT'S THE

**PINK
RANGER!**


WHERE?!

...WHILE HIS LOVELY ASSISTANT
SWIPED THE TAPE.

DOOM LEFT A FAKE TAPE
IN ITS PLACE...

AND SLIPPED BUS A
MICKEY, BEFORE
DEPARTING...


NOTHING SERIOUS OR DEADLY,
JUST A NICE LITTLE BUS-NAP.
UNNECESSARY IN THIS CASE,
BUT D.P. IS VERY CAREFUL.



LOOK UP THE BLURRY ROBOT
THEATER, WHEN YOU GET BACK.
IT SHOULD BE MUCH BETTER,
SINCE OUR REBOOT, I'M TOLD.

SO IS EVERYTHING.
THERE WAS NO STRICKEN
WARSHIP, NO ACCIDENT,
NO DOOMED ROMANCE.
EVERYTHING IS RESET
TO THE WAY IT BEGAN...

...OR BETTER.




EVEN YOUR RIN IS
HAPPY, IF PROGRAMS
CAN BE HAPPY, SAFE
IN A SYSTEM THE
DAEMON NEVER
TOUCHED.

..AND WHEN I SEE MY TSUGARU,
SHE WILL BE ABLE TO SMILE...

MERRY CHRISTMAS, ONE AND ALL.

He's sleeping
under a tree...
somewhere
near here...

Show me where
he is, and I'll
feel a lot better!



Refuse to show me...
and I'll gun you down like Rolly Vincent.

...which would
also make me
feel better.



...so what do you
want from Santa,
little creeps?

⇒KLIK⇐

AND THAT'S
WHERE IT ENDS.

WAS IT REALLY THE
RIGHT THING TO DO?
I WONDER...


IF IT WAS ONLY
A STORY, JUST
FICTION...

...I'D SAY IT WAS
A LOUSY ENDING.
I'D FEEL CHEATED...

...BUT IT WAS REAL.
IN REALITY, WHEN A
SAD SCENARIO
DOESN'T PLAY OUT...

IT'S A GOOD THING.





BUT...HER SILVER ONE...
HOW SHE LOVED HIM...
WOULD HAVE.

...WOULD HAVE.

...BUT NOW
SHE WON'T
SEE HIM
FALL...

...OR KNOW THE HORROR
INFLICTED ON HER BY
SKIDS' GREEN LADY...

TSUGARU IS FREE FROM HER, NOW.

SOON, I'LL BE HOME...
THEY'LL ALL BE THERE...

ACH...TSUGARU..
MURMELTIER...
IRONHIDE...

THEY'LL BE HAPPY.


WHEN BURNOUT GETS
HOME, THE TWINS WILL
BE WAITING...BECAUSE
THEY NEVER LEFT.

ULTIMATE OPTIMUS...
SCREAMY...ANODYTHE...
THEY'LL BE HAPPY...

ISN'T THAT WHAT PEOPLE WANT?

IT WAS...
THE RIGHT
THING...
TO DO...

...WASN'T IT?



ATTENTION, SUCKAS. THIS IS YOUR
CAPTAIN SPEAKING.
CAPTAIN B.A. NEBULACUS.

WE ARE RUNNING IN FRONT
OF A TRAVELING TIMEWAVE.

AT OUR SPEED, THAT
SUCKA WILL TAKE YEARS
TO REACH US, AND WE
CAN GO FASTER, SO
DON'T YOU FOOS PANIC.

AND EVEN IF WE GET CAUGHT,
SHADOW TELLS ME IT WON'T HURT.
SUCKAS WOULD JUST REMEMBER
STUFF THAT HAPPENED, INSTEAD
OF A LOT OF STUFF THAT DIDN'T.




SO I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT
YOU CRAZY FOOS ARE RUNNING
FROM, BUT WE'RE EVACUATING
ANYWAY. SHUTTLES ARE GONNA
LEAVE EVERY COUPLE HOURS.



SHADOW'S SECURITY OFFICERS
WILL CALL YOU UP IN GROUPS.
WAIT FOR THEM AT YOUR POSTS,
AND WE'LL WIND THIS DOWN IN
AN ORDERLY FASHION. O-KAY?



<PINKY SWEAR,
BURNOUT?>



PINKY SWEAR,
MS. KAGAMINE.

SHADOWDRAGON...
YOU MAY THINK YOU DID
THE RIGHT THING.

YOU MAY THINK THIS
JOB IS FINISHED...
BUT IT'S NOT OVER...

...UNTIL THE
VOCALOID SINGS!

