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Introduction

Due to the monetary windfall that resulted from the partnership of Marvel and Hasbro for the re-launch of the G.I. Joe brand in 1982, these two companies decided to renew their nuptials (and refill their coffers) with the introduction of another epic toy franchise.

In late 1983/early 1984, they utilized the über-successful three-pronged marketing approach which they devised for G.I. Joe: begin with a monthly Marvel Comic book which was distributed across America, pair the comic with a half-hour animated program constructed by Sunbow Productions that would air every weekday afternoon, and all-the-while utilizing the more traditional modes of advertising (magazine ads, television commercials, trade show displays, etc.) for an all-out media blitz. Using this trinity of marketing strategies, the new brand's success was inevitable. For the past 30 years, Hasbro's Transformers brand has made hundreds of companies who've licensed their Autobot and Decepticon characters rich beyond imagining. For instance, the worldwide box office gross for the second Transformers film, 2009's *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*, exceeded $830,000,000. That's in ticket receipts *alone*.

Furthermore, what child doesn't want to play with a colorful robot that they can change into a car or jet or weapons system and back again—hundreds of times? But only THEY can do this; with Transformers, children possess a secret knowledge—of how to change the robot into its alternate mode—a knowledge that 98% of all full-grown, intelligent adults could never even begin to fathom.

But what exactly happened behind the scenes at Marvel Comics all those years ago to get the ball rolling? Who were the creative types that struck the initial spark that would eventually conflagrate into this scorching toy line; a brand simply overflowing with characters that reside in toy rooms all around the world? Is there a kid on the Planet Earth that doesn't recognize Bumblebee or Optimus Prime or Planet Cybertron? Yet how many of those children know exactly where those names came from?

In the winter of 1983, Marvel Comics' editor-in-chief was handed the reins to develop the back story and characters for the Transformers franchise by Hasbro. EIC Jim Shooter, in an act of good faith, delivered the project to writer/editor Danny O'Neil who was coming off of his revolutionary 1970s run on DC's *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* and who made his bones at Marvel scripting and editing many of their flagship titles (e.g. *Amazing Spider-Man, Daredevil,* and *Iron Man*). O'Neil chose to work on *Transformers* because the pay for Marvel's toy tie-in projects was usually larger than that of standard comic book fare.

However, it appeared that O'Neil didn't "get it."

His Transformers back story and the characters he rendered were deemed unacceptable to Shooter, for even though he paid O'Neil for the project, the writer's entire draft was scrapped with the exception of a few lingering details that remained. The most important of these details: the heroic Autobots' noble leader was named Optimus Prime.

So then, on the mild afternoon of Friday, November 18th, 1983, at Marvel Headquarters—on the weekend before Thanksgiving break—Jim Shooter ran through the corridor that divided Marvel's editorial offices, desperate to find someone to re-create and develop the first series of Transformers characters over the weekend: a project that HAD to be completed by Monday morning. Shooter had taken it upon himself to draft an eight-page treatment that delineated to his chosen writer the canonical back story of the Transformers, and couldn't wait to unload it onto the desk of a willing writer.

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As Bob Budiansky recalls, he was the third or fourth choice to tackle the project, but upon asserting to Shooter that he could finish the job by Monday morning—an inconvenience since it was the weekend immediately before Thanksgiving vacation and everyone was getting ready to spend time with their families and/or significant others—the staffer wrote like a man possessed. In two short days, Budiansky rendered all of the Transformers' biographical information, authoring those iconic "Tech Spec" (Technical Specification) profiles for what would become the first wave of Hasbro's Transformers. Other than retaining Denny O'Neil's moniker for Optimus Prime (and perhaps Prowl as well; it's unclear if Shooter or O'Neil came up with the name for the Autobot Strategist, too...), it was Bob Budiansky who named almost all of the 28 original Transformers and fleshed out their character traits.

Although he essentially functioned as the *éminence grise* of the Transformers universe, Budiansky is largely unrecognized for rendering these personalities and most of the other Transformers who occupy a hallowed place in "Generation One" canon (he wrote all of Hasbro's Tech Spec bios and the "flavor text" on toy packages from fall 1983 until early 1989). Regarding his approach to authoring the original 28 Transformers' Tech Specs, Budiansky states: "I knew there was a certain use of language, a certain style of combining words and sounds in their writing that appealed to me... Drawing from my knowledge of comic books, science fiction, and my engineering background (I have a B.S. in Civil Engineering), I came up with jargon that I hoped would lend a pseudo-scientific, cool-sounding veneer to the characters."

And he nailed it on the first try. Then again, so did Shooter. For if we carefully review the eight-page treatment that the EIC handed to Budiansky to use as a template when drafting his biographies, readers will be stunned speechless to find that all of Shooter's words and ideas have been followed with surgical exactitude these past 30 years, whether in movie theaters, on the small screen, or in the four-color pages of comic books. What was originally slated to be a mere four-issue comic book miniseries (!) sprawled into something uniquely; a licensed property with an entire universe all its own. What follows is the first paragraph of the original treatment. Nothing has been changed or altered in 30-plus years:

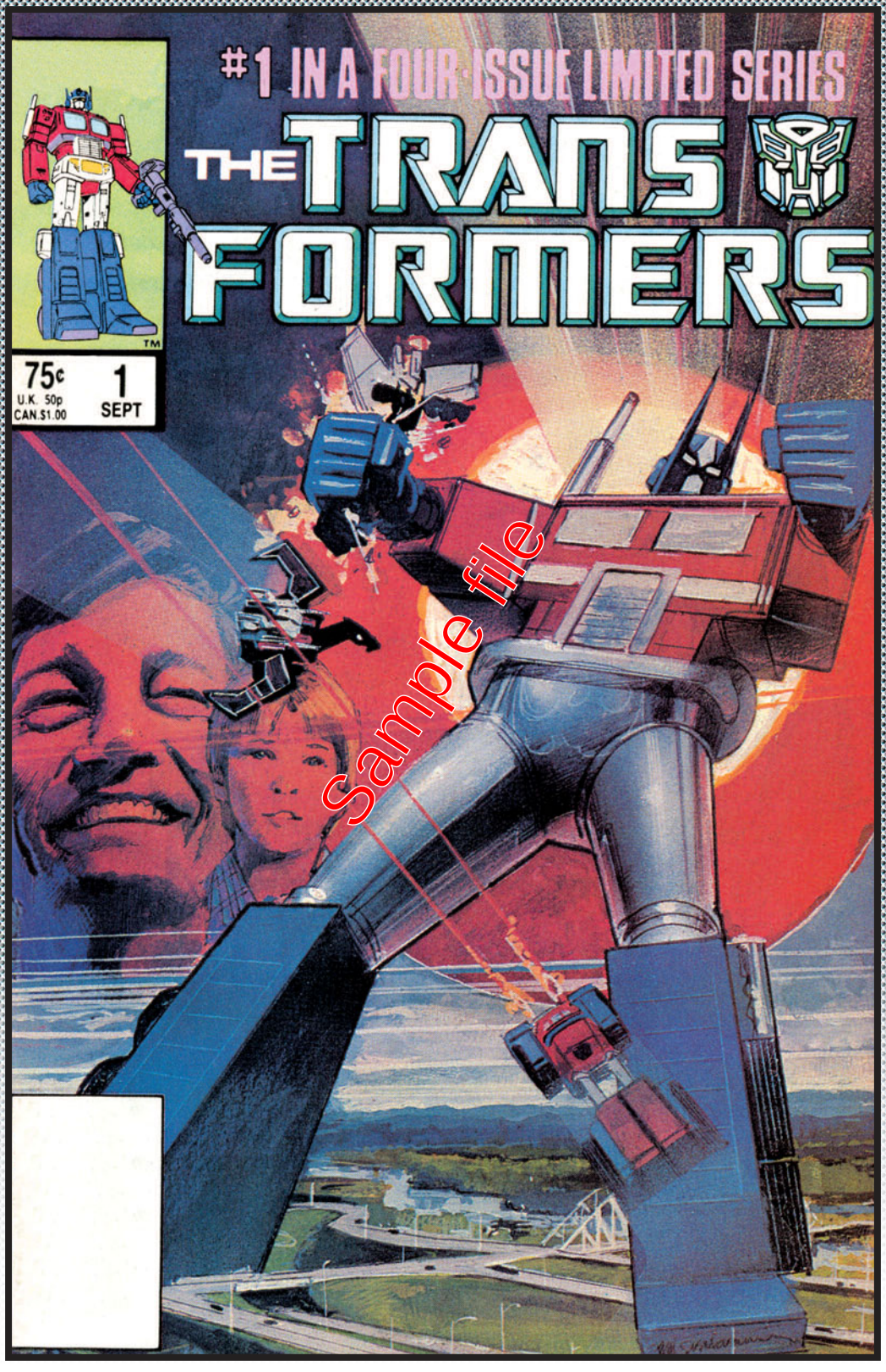
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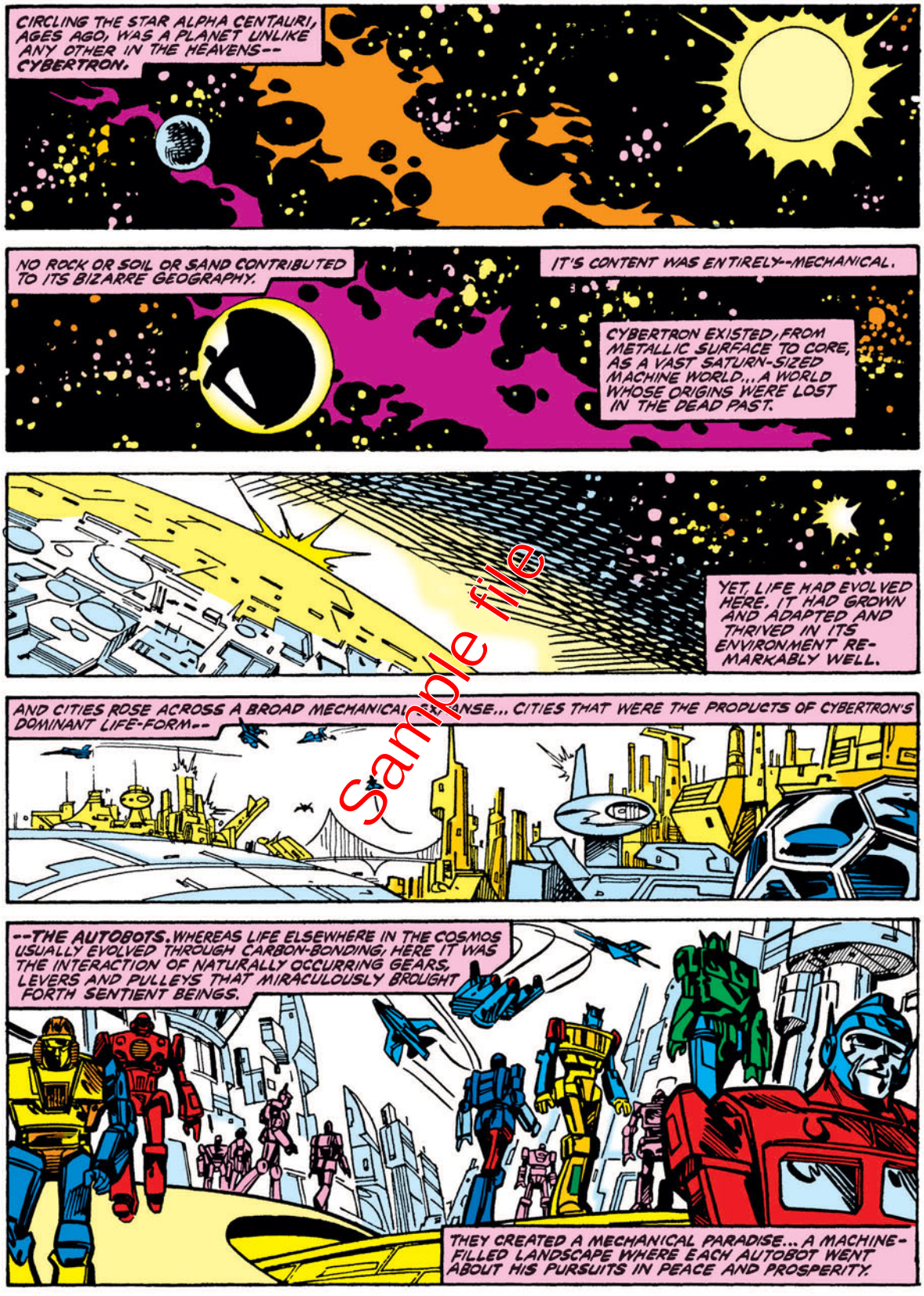
"Civil war rages on the planet Cybertron. Destruction is catastrophic and widespread, and yet no life is lost. None, at least, in the sense that we know life--for the inhabitants of Cybertron are all machines. There is NO 'life' on Cybertron save for mechanical, electronic, 'creatures.' As mankind is first among the organic denizens of Earth, intelligent, sentient robots are the dominant species on Cybertron. Even the planet itself is one vast mechanical construct. Perhaps there was once a 'real' world upon which Cybertron was built on, into, under, and through until no trace of the original planet can be found, but the origin of the planet is unknown, lost in antiquity. Similarly, it is unknown whether the robotic 'life' of Cybertron was originally created by some mysterious, advanced, alien race in the dim, distant past, or whether these strange metallic beings somehow evolved from bizarre, basic life forms beyond human comprehension."

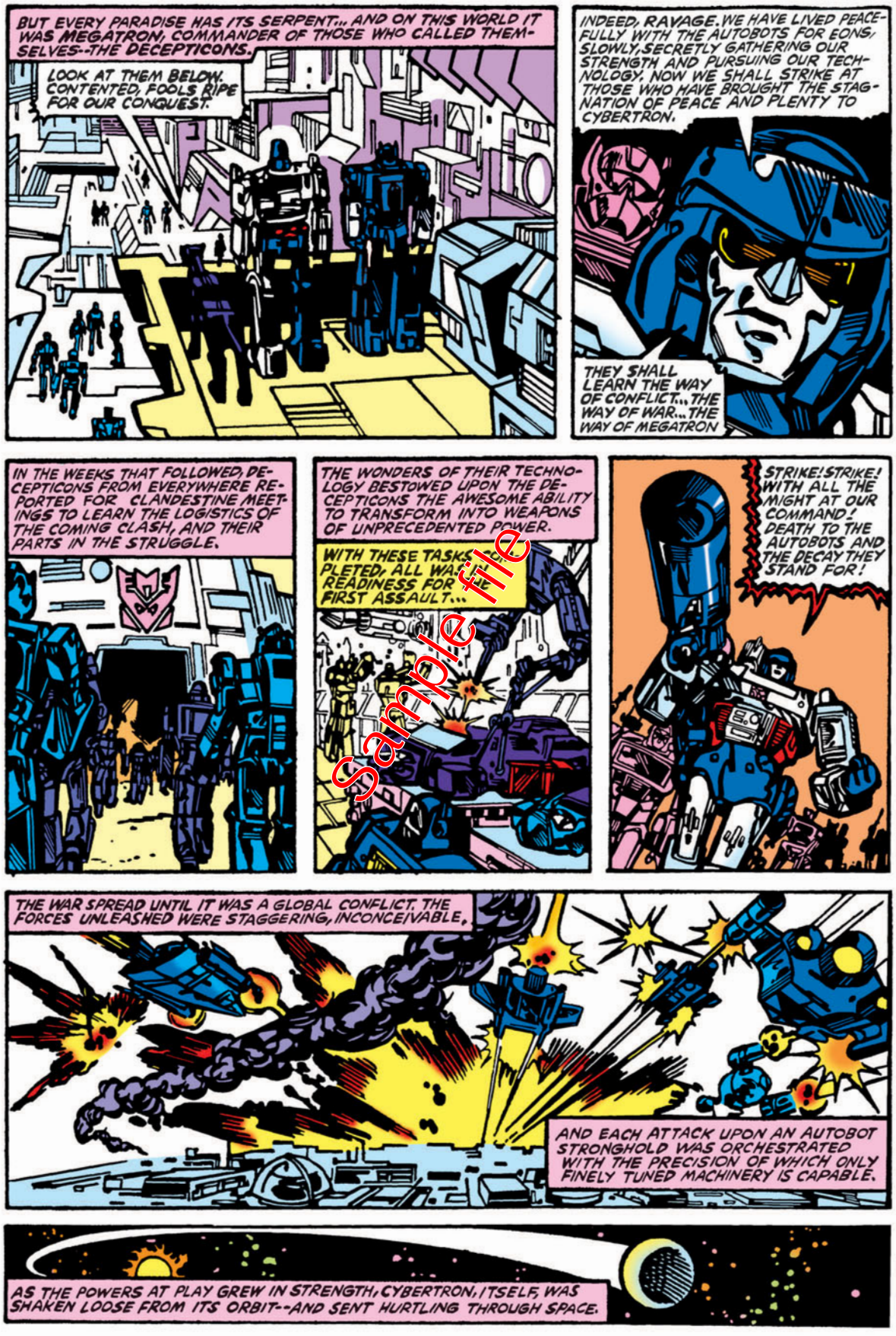
"What is certain is that the sentient, robotic beings of Cybertron are destroying one another."

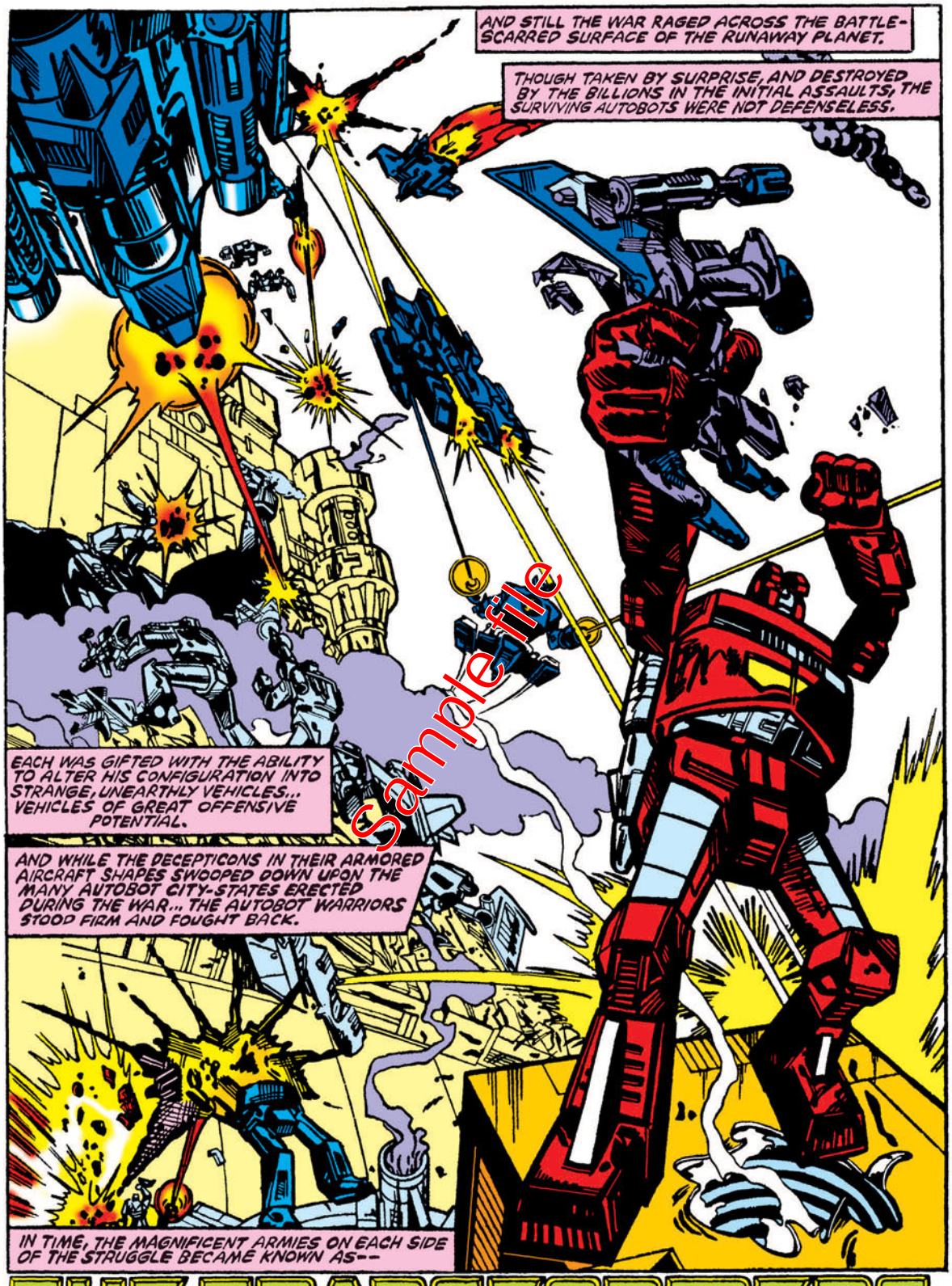
Mark W. Bellomo

Mark Bellomo has written over 200 articles for *ToyFare*, *Wizard Magazine*, *Lee's Toy Review*, *Tomart's Action Figure Digest*, and for *Toy Shop Magazine* where he served a lengthy tenure as their Action Figure Columnist. He has written several college rhetoric/composition texts, published articles on the American Modernist movement, and has authored a number of books on toys: *Warman's Action Figures Field Guide*, *Transformers: Identification & Price Guide*, *Warman's Field Guide to Transformers*, the 1st and 2nd editions of *The Ultimate Guide to G.I. Joe: 1982-1994*, and *Totally Tubular 80's Toys*. He also contributes annually to three chapters to the world's best-selling collectible reference guide, *Toys & Prices (2007-2011)*.


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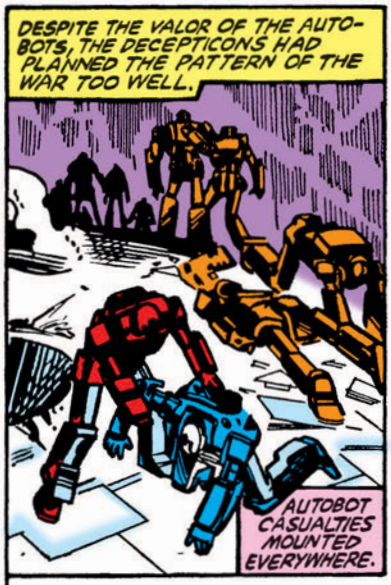

CIRCLING THE STAR ALPHA CENTAURI, AGES AGO, WAS A PLANET UNLIKE ANY OTHER IN THE HEAVENS-- CYBERTRON.
NO ROCK OR SOIL OR SAND CONTRIBUTED TO ITS BIZARRE GEOGRAPHY.
IT'S CONTENT WAS ENTIRELY--MECHANICAL.
CYBERTRON EXISTED, FROM METALLIC SURFACE TO CORE, AS A VAST SATURN-SIZED MACHINE WORLD... A WORLD WHOSE ORIGINS WERE LOST IN THE DEAD PAST.
YET, LIFE HAD EVOLVED HERE. IT HAD GROWN AND ADAPTED AND THRIVED IN ITS ENVIRONMENT REMARKABLY WELL.
AND CITIES ROSE ACROSS A BROAD MECHANICAL EXPANSE... CITIES THAT WERE THE PRODUCTS OF CYBERTRON'S DOMINANT LIFE-FORM--
--THE AUTOBOTS. WHEREAS LIFE ELSEWHERE IN THE COSMOS USUALLY EVOLVED THROUGH CARBON-BONDING, HERE IT WAS THE INTERACTION OF NATURALLY OCCURRING GEARS, LEVERS AND PULLEYS THAT MIRACULOUSLY BROUGHT FORTH SENTIENT BEINGS.
THEY CREATED A MECHANICAL PARADISE... A MACHINE-FILLED LANDSCAPE WHERE EACH AUTOBOT WENT ABOUT HIS PURSUITS IN PEACE AND PROSPERITY.
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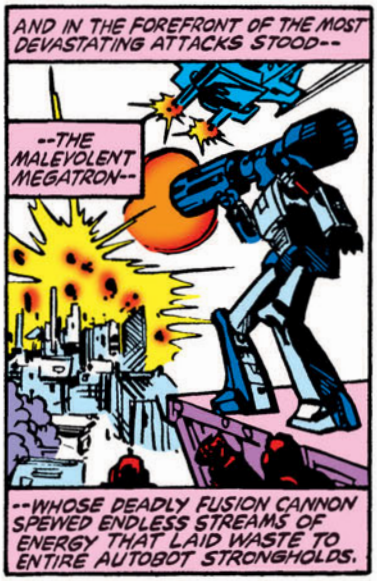

BUT EVERY PARADISE HAS ITS SERPENT... AND ON THIS WORLD IT WAS MEGATRON, COMMANDER OF THOSE WHO CALLED THEMSELVES--THE DECEPTICONS.
LOOK AT THEM BELOW, CONTENTED, FOOLS RIPE FOR OUR CONQUEST.
INDEED, RAVAGE. WE HAVE LIVED PEACEFULLY WITH THE AUTOBOTS FOR EONS, SLOWLY, SECRETLY GATHERING OUR STRENGTH AND PURSUING OUR TECHNOLOGY. NOW WE SHALL STRIKE AT THOSE WHO HAVE BROUGHT THE STAGNATION OF PEACE AND PLENTY TO CYBERTRON.
THEY SHALL LEARN THE WAY OF CONFLICT... THE WAY OF WAR... THE WAY OF MEGATRON
IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, DECEPTICONS FROM EVERYWHERE REPORTED FOR CLANDESTINE MEETINGS TO LEARN THE LOGISTICS OF THE COMING CLASH, AND THEIR PARTS IN THE STRUGGLE.
THE WONDERS OF THEIR TECHNOLOGY BESTOWED UPON THE DECEPTICONS THE AWESOME ABILITY TO TRANSFORM INTO WEAPONS OF UNPRECEDENTED POWER.
WITH THESE TASKS COMPLETED, ALL WAS IN READINESS FOR THE FIRST ASSAULT...
STRIKE! STRIKE! WITH ALL THE MIGHT AT OUR COMMAND! DEATH TO THE AUTOBOTS AND THE DECAY THEY STAND FOR!
THE WAR SPREAD UNTIL IT WAS A GLOBAL CONFLICT. THE FORCES UNLEASHED WERE STAGGERING, INCONCEIVABLE.
AND EACH ATTACK UPON AN AUTOBOT STRONGHOLD WAS ORCHESTRATED WITH THE PRECISION OF WHICH ONLY FINELY TUNED MACHINERY IS CAPABLE.
AS THE POWERS AT PLAY GREW IN STRENGTH, CYBERTRON, ITSELF, WAS SHAKEN LOOSE FROM ITS ORBIT--AND SENT HURTLING THROUGH SPACE.
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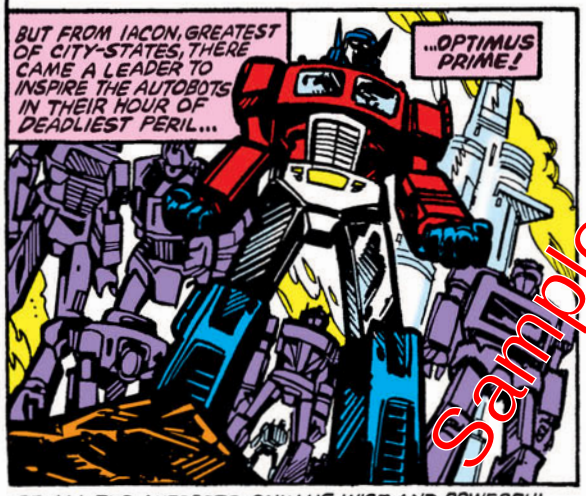
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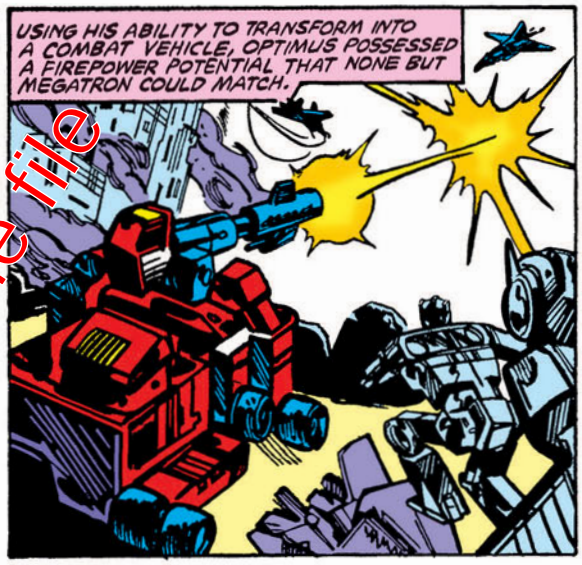
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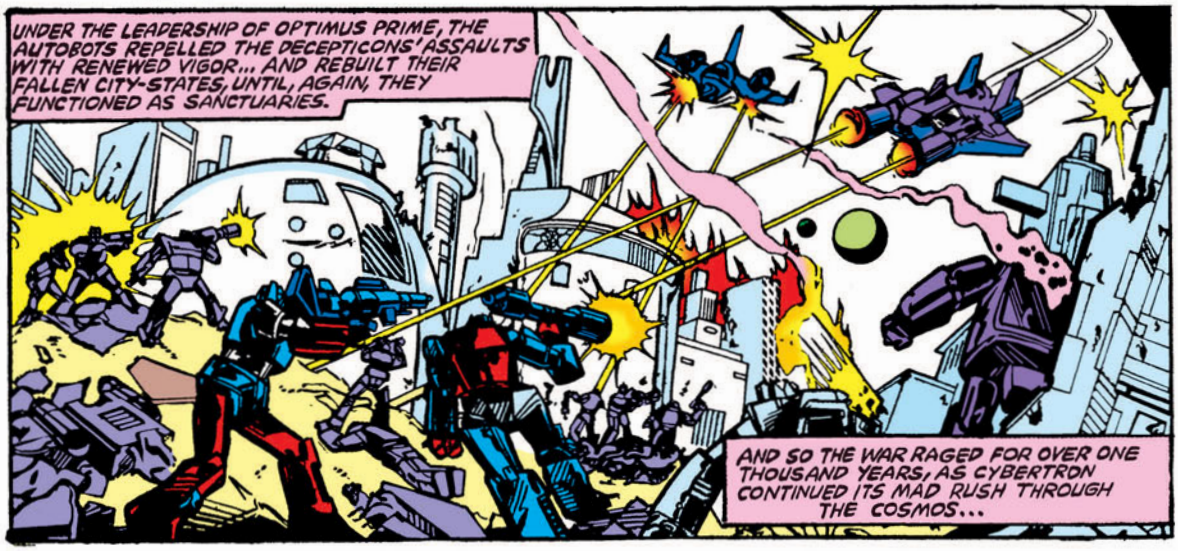




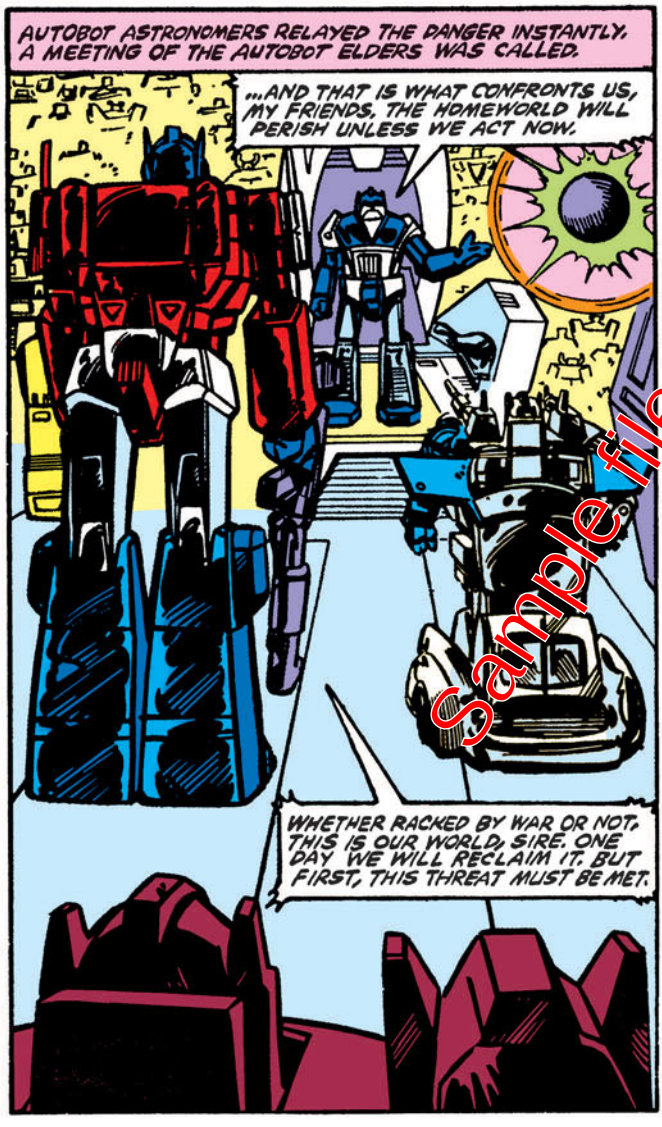


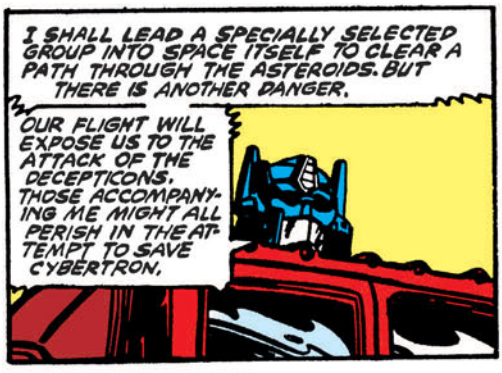
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OF ALL THE AUTOBOTS, ONLY HE, WISE AND POWERFUL BEYOND UNDERSTANDING, WAS ABLE TO UNITE THE SCATTERED WARRIORS INTO A FULLY EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE.

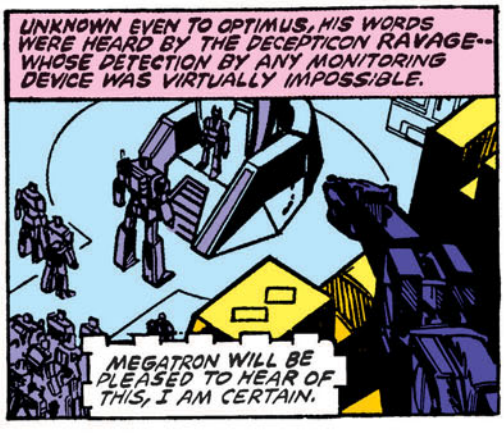



...UNTIL CAME THE DAY WHEN DANGER THREATENED FROM WITHOUT AS WELL AS WITHIN.
CYBERTRON'S COURSE HAD PLACED IT DIRECTLY INTO THE PATH OF-- AN ASTEROID BELT.


AUTOBOT ASTRONOMERS RELAYED THE DANGER INSTANTLY. A MEETING OF THE AUTOBOT ELDERS WAS CALLED.
...AND THAT IS WHAT CONFRONTS US, MY FRIENDS. THE HOMEWORLD WILL PERISH UNLESS WE ACT NOW.
WHETHER RACKED BY WAR OR NOT, THIS IS OUR WORLD, SIRE. ONE DAY WE WILL RECLAIM IT. BUT FIRST, THIS THREAT MUST BE MET.

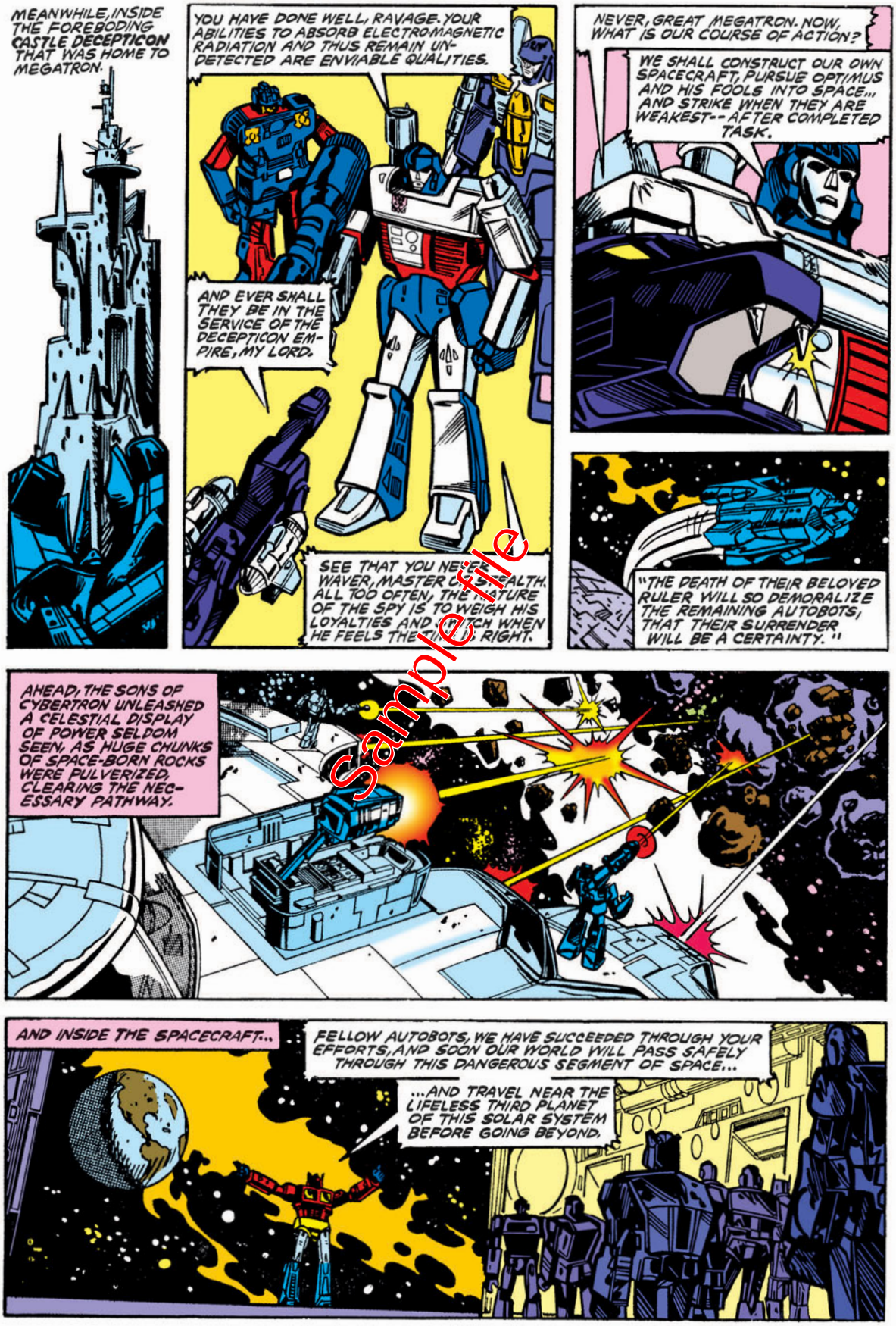

I SHALL LEAD A SPECIALLY SELECTED GROUP INTO SPACE ITSELF TO CLEAR A PATH THROUGH THE ASTEROIDS. BUT THERE IS ANOTHER DANGER.
OUR FLIGHT WILL EXPOSE US TO THE ATTACK OF THE DECEPTICONS. THOSE ACCOMPANYING ME MIGHT ALL PERISH IN THE ATTEMPT TO SAVE CYBERTRON.

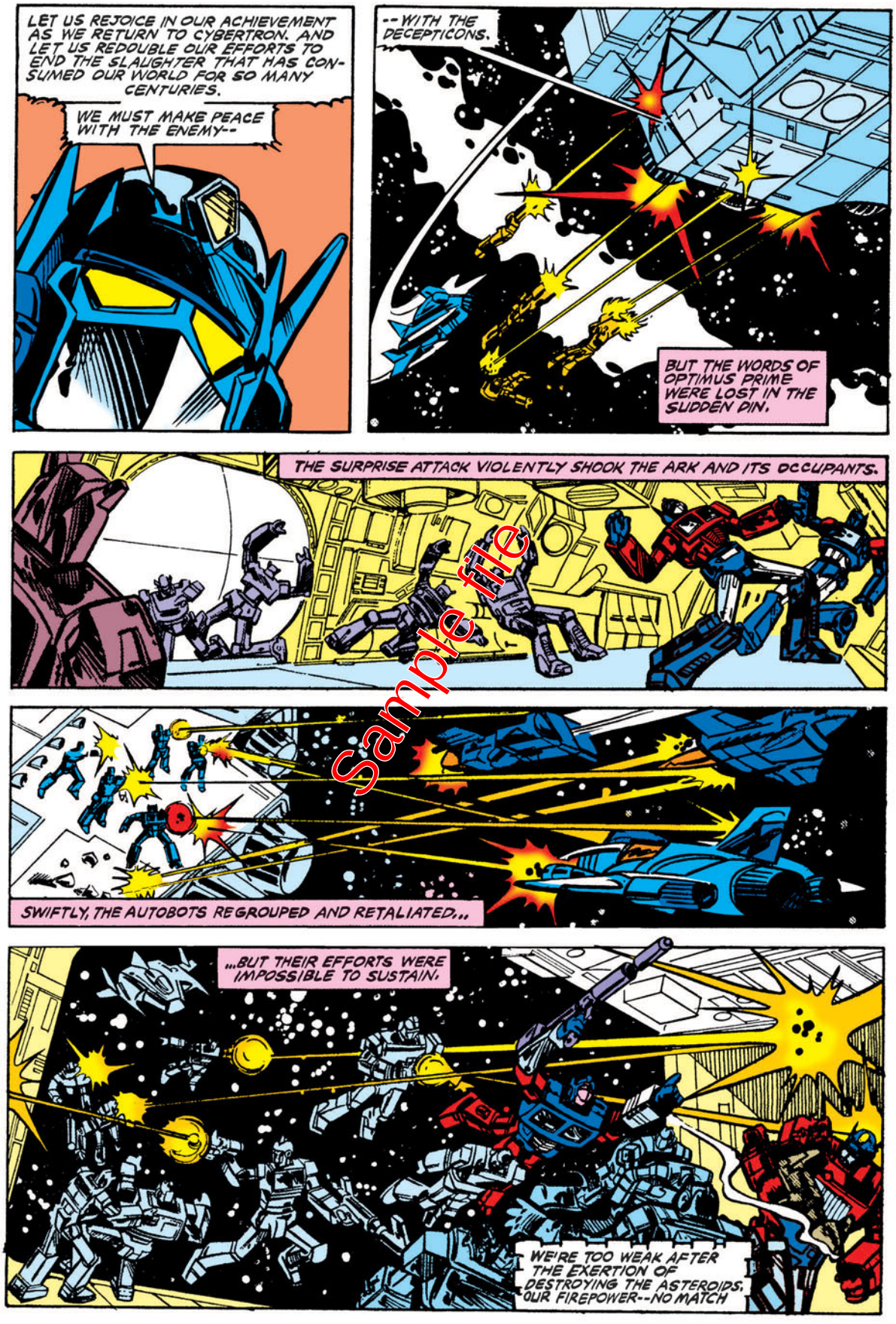

BUT I SHALL BE THERE TO MEET THE ENEMY SHOULD HE STRIKE.

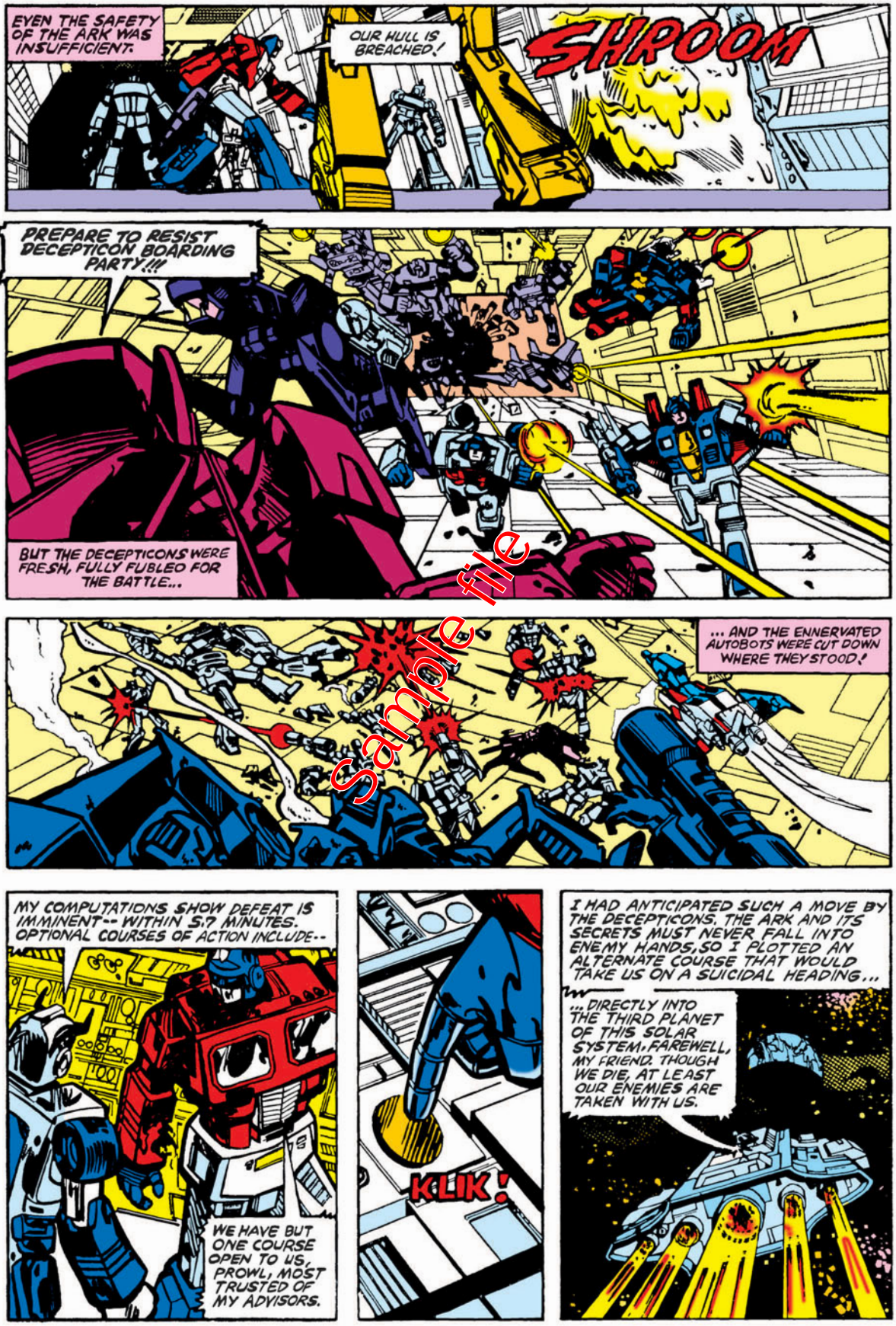

UNKNOWN EVEN TO OPTIMUS, HIS WORDS WERE HEARD BY THE DECEPTICON RAVAGE-- WHOSE DETECTION BY ANY MONITORING DEVICE WAS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE.
MEGATRON WILL BE PLEASED TO HEAR OF THIS, I AM CERTAIN.


THE AUTOBOTS LABORED TO CONSTRUCT A CRAFT THAT WOULD PROPEL THEM INTO THE VOID... A CRAFT DUBBED-- THE ARK.

Sample file


MEANWHILE, INSIDE THE FOREBODING CASTLE DECEPTICON THAT WAS HOME TO MEGATRON.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, RAVAGE. YOUR ABILITIES TO ABSORB ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION AND THUS REMAIN UNDETECTED ARE ENVIABLE QUALITIES.
AND EVER SHALL THEY BE IN THE SERVICE OF THE DECEPTICON EMPIRE, MY LORD.
SEE THAT YOU NEVER WAVER, MASTER OF STEALTH. ALL TOO OFTEN, THE NATURE OF THE SPY IS TO WEIGH HIS LOYALTIES AND SWITCH WHEN HE FEELS THE TIME IS RIGHT.
NEVER, GREAT MEGATRON. NOW, WHAT IS OUR COURSE OF ACTION?
WE SHALL CONSTRUCT OUR OWN SPACECRAFT, PURSUE OPTIMUS AND HIS FOOLS INTO SPACE... AND STRIKE WHEN THEY ARE WEAKEST--AFTER COMPLETED TASK.
"THE DEATH OF THEIR BELOVED RULER WILL SO DEMORALIZE THE REMAINING AUTOBOTS, THAT THEIR SURRENDER WILL BE A CERTAINTY."
AHEAD, THE SONS OF CYBERTRON UNLEASHED A CELESTIAL DISPLAY OF POWER SELDOM SEEN, AS HUGE CHUNKS OF SPACE-BORN ROCKS WERE PULVERIZED, CLEARING THE NECESSARY PATHWAY.
AND INSIDE THE SPACECRAFT...
FELLOW AUTOBOTS, WE HAVE SUCCEEDED THROUGH YOUR EFFORTS, AND SOON OUR WORLD WILL PASS SAFELY THROUGH THIS DANGEROUS SEGMENT OF SPACE...
...AND TRAVEL NEAR THE LIFELESS THIRD PLANET OF THIS SOLAR SYSTEM BEFORE GOING BEYOND.
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LET US REJOICE IN OUR ACHIEVEMENT AS WE RETURN TO CYBERTRON. AND LET US REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO END THE SLAUGHTER THAT HAS CONSUMED OUR WORLD FOR SO MANY CENTURIES.
WE MUST MAKE PEACE WITH THE ENEMY--
--WITH THE DECEPTICONS.
BUT THE WORDS OF OPTIMUS PRIME WERE LOST IN THE SUDDEN DIN.
THE SURPRISE ATTACK VIOLENTLY SHOOK THE ARK AND ITS OCCUPANTS.
SWIFTLY, THE AUTOBOTS REGROUPED AND RETALIATED...
...BUT THEIR EFFORTS WERE IMPOSSIBLE TO SUSTAIN.
WE'RE TOO WEAK AFTER THE EXERTION OF DESTROYING THE ASTEROIDS. OUR FIREPOWER--NO MATCH
Sample file


EVEN THE SAFETY OF THE ARK WAS INSUFFICIENT.
OUR HULL IS BREACHED!
SHROOM
PREPARE TO RESIST DECEPTICON BOARDING PARTY!!!
BUT THE DECEPTICONS WERE FRESH, FULLY FUBLED FOR THE BATTLE...
... AND THE ENNERVATED AUTOBOTS WERE CUT DOWN WHERE THEY STOOD!
MY COMPUTATIONS SHOW DEFEAT IS IMMINENT-- WITHIN 5.7 MINUTES. OPTIONAL COURSES OF ACTION INCLUDE--
WE HAVE BUT ONE COURSE OPEN TO US, PROWL, MOST TRUSTED OF MY ADVISORS.
KLIK!
I HAD ANTICIPATED SUCH A MOVE BY THE DECEPTICONS. THE ARK AND ITS SECRETS MUST NEVER FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS, SO I PLOTTED AN ALTERNATE COURSE THAT WOULD TAKE US ON A SUICIDAL HEADING...
... DIRECTLY INTO THE THIRD PLANET OF THIS SOLAR SYSTEM. FAREWELL, MY FRIEND. THOUGH WE DIE, AT LEAST OUR ENEMIES ARE TAKEN WITH US.

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