

New Autobot City. Some time ago. A Sunday. 01.13.25.4 Pacific Standard Time.

It's a dark and stormy night in New Autobot City. The pitch-black sky is lit every few seconds by the violent lightning of an electrical storm. Scattershot sits alone in the armory, working diligently. The Autobots are under-manned...most of their forces are on Cybertron, meaning that they are probably dead. It's very dark in the Armory, the power is still down. The power grid completely failed after Ultra Magnus ordered Scattershot to leave the power plant, it now seems improbable that the power will be back up in time for the Decepticon's attack...if they attack. Without electricity and man-power it would seem that preparing the weapons for a fight would be high-priority and in most cases it would. But there are still two-hundred thousand humans left in the city and all attempts to evacuate them have been hampered by the loss of power and by the storm. Resources are needed elsewhere, so Scattershot sits alone. He says nothing as he does his chore. He cleans and re-assembles the weapons. He tries not to think, he wants to focus on the task at hand. He tries in vein. The words that he heard Optimus say consume him. They strike fear into his soul.

He thinks, "The Matrix has always been a source of hope for the Autobots. Rodimus Prime took strength from the Matrix, though he feared that he wasn't as good of a leader as Optimus." At this moment, more than anything else, Scattershot wishes that Rodimus was still the leader. "Rodimus took strength from the Matrix but it wasn't his only source of strength...Optimus on the other hand, is almost like a parasite upon the Matrix. He doesn't know how to make a decision without it...for God's sake, he no longer remembers how to live without it! Optimus has always had the Matrix to guide him. Even after he was 'brought back' to save us from the Hate Plague, his only decision, without the Matrix, was to get it back from Rodimus Prime." Scattershot somehow manages to laugh, "It looks like Prime has always needed to cork his bat." He sighs, "I wonder what he was like before he was the leader. I wonder if he understood the concept of free thought. I wonder, did he ever...."

Scattershot's thoughts are broken by the intercom. Optimus Prime makes an announcement to the citizens of Autobot City, "My friends, it seems that an armada of Decepticons has decimated our home planet of Cybertron. The number of casualties number in the thousands. Our friends; human, Nebulon and Autobot gave their lives in defense of Cybertron and of freedom. We should...." Prime's voice falters momentarily, revealing a hint of his anguish. "We should have a moment of silence for those...for those brave souls."

For the next fifteen seconds Prime is silent. Scattershot feels empty, not due to a lack of emotion but due to an overwhelming amount of it. His mind is racing with bleak scenarios that grow less hopeful with each and every succeeding thought. An infinite amount of conflicting bits of information taunt his

sense of logic. The ones and zeroes of his thoughts become something of an algorithm, always resulting in pain. He fears that his father has been killed in the assault, he wonders if he will ever see his friends again. Then he thinks of Daniel..., he fears for Arcee's safety. Daniel and Arcee were more than friends, they shared a single existence for almost a decade. If Arcee perished, Daniel will be devastated. Scattershot clinches his fists and falls to his knees.

Prime continues on with his announcement, "It is now apparent that the Decepticons are indeed on their way to Earth. We're not certain but it is possible that they could arrive as early as tonight. It is also apparent that Decepticon losses in this assault on Cybertron were minimal. There were no verified Decepticon casualties.... I will do my best to make sure that we are victorious against Galvatron and his army. This is my vow to you, as leader."

Scattershot looks up, he realizes that Prime's words are empty. He realizes that Prime's conviction is great but his abilities are limited. He has so many thoughts running around in his mind that he becomes dizzy. He wishes to scream but can only manage to utter, "at least they fixed the intercom."

Scattershot sits alone for the next few hours, working in solitude. He does his work quickly but doesn't cut corners. If any of the weapons that he is preparing were to fail, it would mean certain death for the one who wields it. Shortly before completion he is told to come to the War Room as soon as he's finished his task. He obliges and, upon completion, joins Ultra Magnus, Kup and Optimus Prime in the War Room.

"Three old dogs of war like ourselves have seen many things," says Kup. "We were there when Megatron annihilated an entire crew of Energon Pirates in Sector Delta Two...we were there when he blasted open the prison colony in The Voxomillian System...we were there when he destroyed Autobot City. Galvatron doesn't have his predecessor's name...at least until now. He's wiped out the entire population of Cybertron. Everyone. Nothing was left, not even nannite. And he wants to do the same here."

Ultra Magnus interjects, "And we're not going to let that happen. Scattershot. How many of the weapons did you salvage?"

Scattershot responds, "All of them, Ultra Magnus."

"Excellent." Magnus looks towards Prime. "Optimus, is it time to inform Scattershot of your decision?"

Optimus nods, "Yes, old friend." Prime looks at Scattershot, "You have been volunteered by Perceptor to help the Protectobots in the removal of the humans from the city."

"But Prime, I'm needed in the Power Plant." Scattershot points to a map of the city on the wall. "I can get power back to half of the city in the next two hours! By the end of the day, I can have power back up to one hundred percent!"

Kup laughs, "You've done enough with the power plant already, haven't ya?"

"Yes, you caused our current situation, and, just six hour ago, the entire grid fell because of your help," says Magnus. "We have you to thank for the current problem and its complications."

Scattershot raises his voice, "I can't accept that! I won't accept that!"

Magnus says sternly, "You might as well accept it, we have evidence."

"What evidence? The log? Its not fool-proof, an error could have been made." Scattershot beckons to Prime, "Optimus, please! Let me help."

Prime sits silently for a few moments and then looks towards Magnus. Magnus shakes his head in disapproval. Prime then looks at Kup and the aged Autobot frowns. Prime then turns to Scattershot, "I'm sorry Scattershot but my decision is final."

Scattershot accepts his duty and leaves the War Room.

Sunday, 16.00.00.0 Pacific Standard Time.

Scattershot meets up with the Protectobots in New Autobot City's War Memorial residential district.

First Aid is waiting for Scattershot in front of the main apartment building. "Scattershot, it's good to have you here. I still wish that you were working on the power, your previous efforts helped us tremendously. Now, that we have no power at all, we're forced to rip the doors off of each individual room...that's slowing us down."

"Thank you for having me. How many people are left in the city?"

"About one hundred and fifteen thousand. I begged Prime for more help. There are almost fifty Autobots that have been assigned to sentry-duty. Surely that's more than is needed. And it gets worse, we're now forced to move the humans to the city's underground bunkers once they're freed. Last night's storm caused massive damage to the surrounding roads. That puts the humans at great danger when the Decepticons finally arrive."

Sunday, 23.00.00.0 Pacific Standard Time.

The storm has now been over for almost twelve hours and the sky has just begun to clear. The stars are a welcomed sight, though from them, death will surely rain within hours. With Scattershot's help the Protectobots have been able to free all of the humans that were trapped in their homes. Word has come from the War Room that a massive invasion force has been sighted, traveling at great speeds towards Earth. Prime gave no orders, other than to "prepare ourselves." Each of the Autobots have been given a weapon and a brief pamphlet describing how to use it.

All of the Protectobots but First Aid leave Scattershot to his thoughts. First Aid says to Scattershot, "I suppose that you are the most fit to answer this question, what do you think?"

Puzzled, Scattershot says, "What? What do you mean?"

"What do you think of our current situation?"

"I'm trying not to think. But I feel condemned."

"Condemned to what?"

"What indeed?" Scattershot thinks for a moment and remembers something. "Daniel!?!? Have you seen him?"

"Yes, he's in the bunker but you can't contact him, not now. The magnetic doors have been sealed."

"But, I have to make sure that he's okay."

"He's only one man amongst thousands, correct?" First Aid smiles, "sorry, I was only playing devil's advocate. I'm sure that he's okay. Believe me."

Scattershot begins to speak when Perceptor hurriedly makes his way towards the two Autobots.

Perceptor says with great fear in his voice, "Scattershot. Oh, my! The comm system is down again! I couldn't tell Prime, we have to hurry! We have to hurry!"

Scattershot questions, "What's wrong Perceptor? Please, slow down."

Perceptor says slowly, "Look...up."

Scattershot looks up. "Yes, what is it?"

Perceptor responds, "Isn't something missing?"

First Aid speaks, "...the Supernova...."

Scattershot scans the sky. "What? Where is it? There are no clouds, the moon isn't obscuring it. What could have happened to it?"

"It's still there...but If I were to tell you what is hiding it, you would call me mad." Perceptor transforms, "look for yourself." Perceptor raises his objective lens towards the area where the Supernova is supposed to be.

Scattershot puts his right eye to Perceptor's ocular lens. He pulls back and taps the lenses of his right eye to make sure that they are in proper working condition. He looks again. What Scattershot sees is incomprehensible, even to his most capable mind. This is beneficial, for if he were to treat what he sees as anything but raw information, he would surely go insane. "It's length is twice the diameter of Earth's moon and it is apparently within four hundred-thousand miles of our current location. It's mass is almost equal to the entire state of North Carolina...."

First Aid questions, "What? What is it?"

Scattershot speaks as if he doesn't even believe the words he says, "Apparently, it's the Decepticon's Armada."

Perceptor transforms, "Please, First Aid. Transform and go warn Prime."

First Aid begins to speak, "But shouldn't...."

Perceptor says, "Don't think, just go!"

It takes First Aid ten minutes to reach the Central Headquarters in New Autobot City. Scattershot and Perceptor join him, by air, three minutes later.

When they arrive, First Aid has already warned Prime and the others of the impending danger.

"Thank you...First Aid, Perceptor and Scattershot," says Prime as he sits in the command chair. "But...I was already aware of the danger. Galvatron contacted me two hours ago."

Scattershot tries to hide his anger, "He contacted you??? What did he say?"

"He ordered me to surrender the city and the planet to Decepticon control."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him to...Go to Hell."

Scattershot exclaims, "WHAT!?!?!?"

Perceptor questions, "What did he say?"

Prime responds, "He said nothing. He smiled and abruptly terminated his transmission. Fear not, I've made preparations. Our troops stand ready and waiting for the attack. You three should join them. All hands are needed."

Prime says more but Scattershot doesn't hear it. He feels drawn to the nearest window. He exits the war room, again, Prime says more and it is apparently directed towards Scattershot. The words have the same effect, they still go ignored. Scattershot finds the nearest window and he looks out into the world. He looks out into world one last time, for it will never be the same again...regardless of the outcome. Scattershot has never been one to notice nature in action. He watches as the wind blows the leaves of a nearby tree. He watches a bat capture an insect in the sky and carry it off into the night. For a brief moment, he feels at peace with himself and the world. That moment ends quickly as a streak of lightning dances across the night sky. Scattershot realizes that it was no streak of lightning, but a bolt of plasma from a fusion cannon. For an instant, Scattershot considers deserting his fellow Autobots and fleeing what will soon become the battle scene...he then thinks of Daniel and it all becomes clear to him. He knows what he has to do. He takes up arms and makes his way outside. He stands waiting, waiting for the impending battle to consume him-- and his world.

End of Chapter Four.