

BEAST WARS

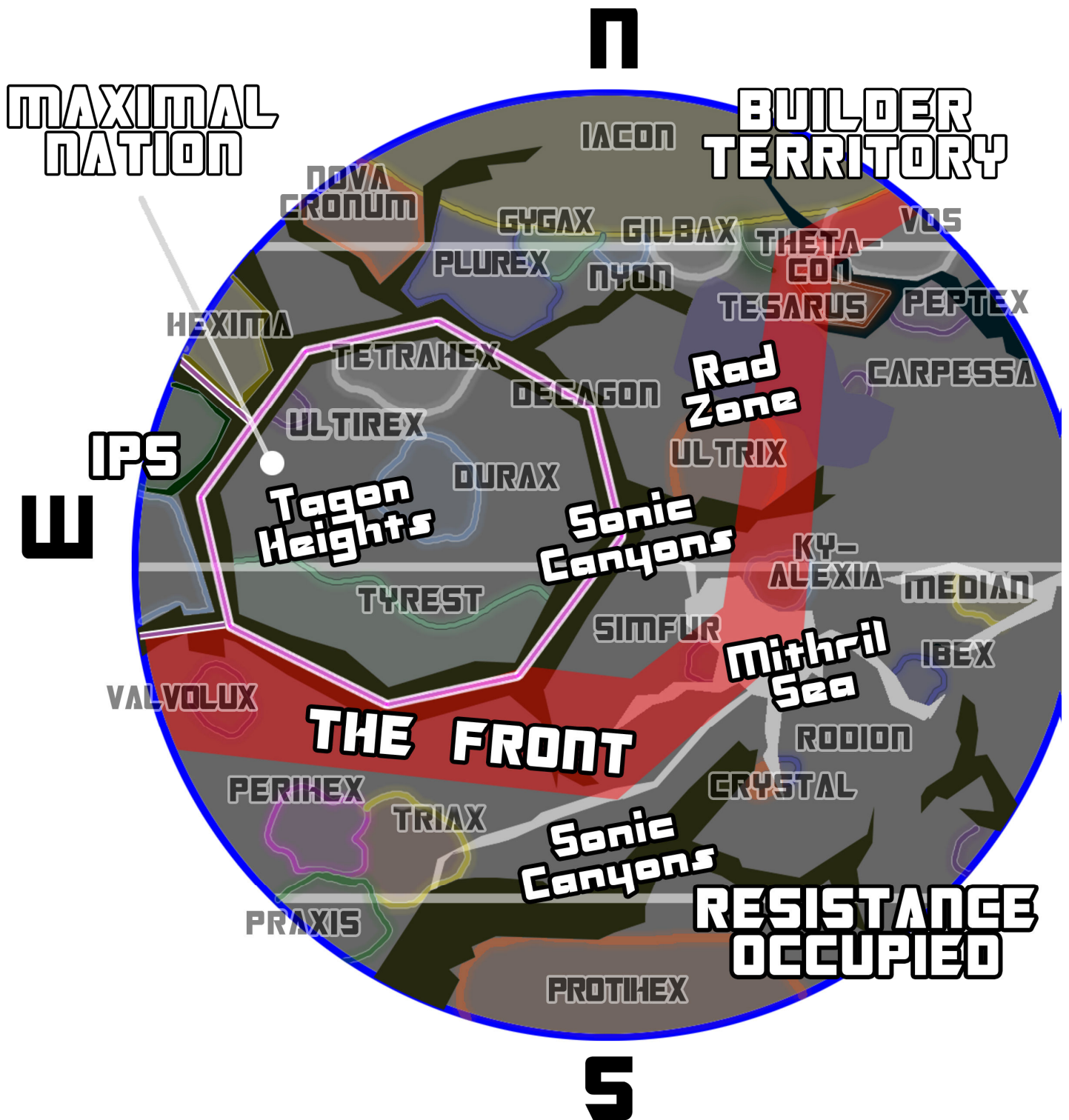
UPRISING



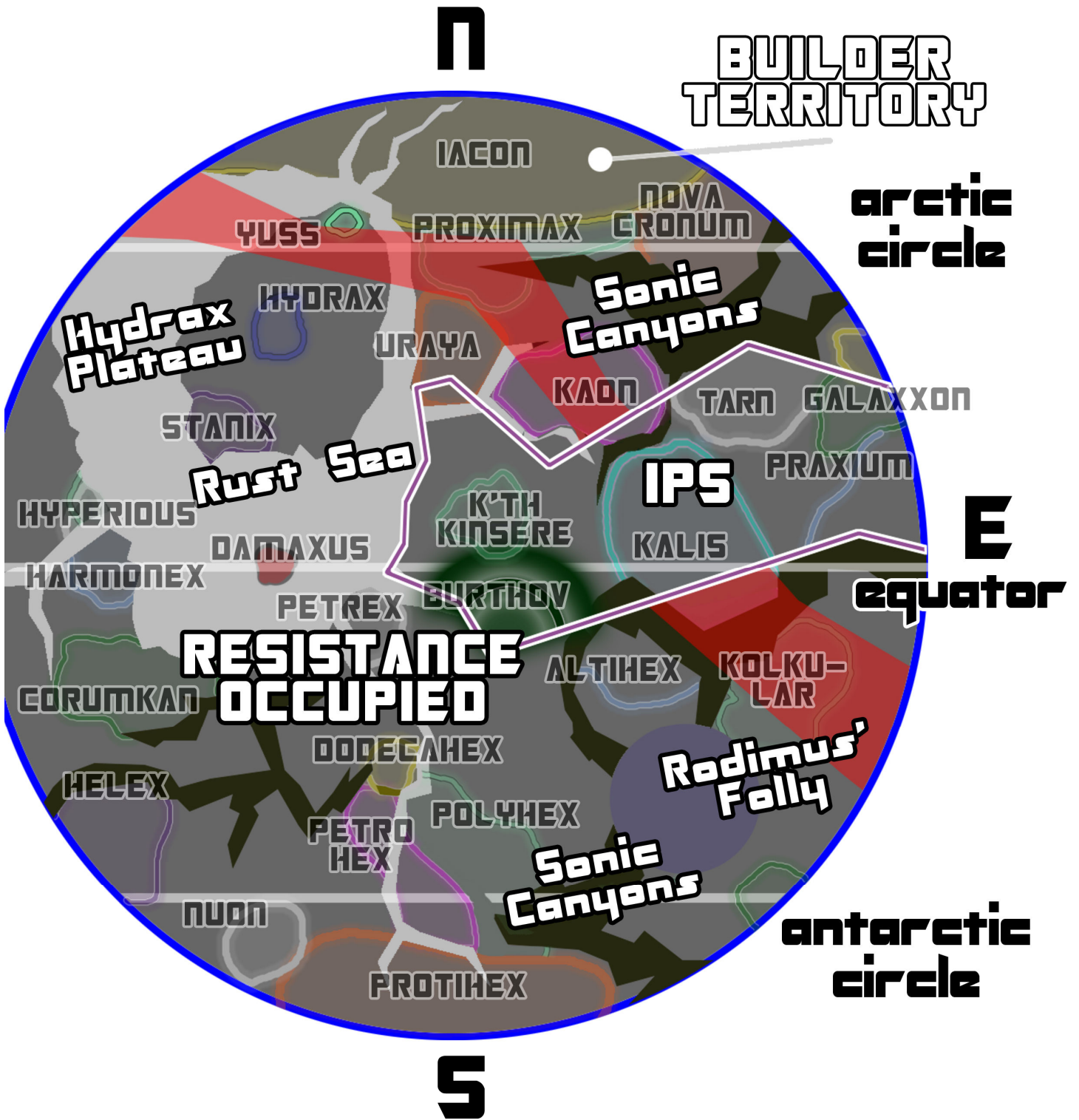
SAFE SPACES

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Current Political and Military Situation on Cybertron



Grand Uprising, Stellar Cycle 6.3.17



“Lights out, Decepti-creep!” Roadhandler crowed as he delivered the elbow-drop. The luckless Metrobomb's cry of anguish was cut short as the move smashed his faceplate into a sparking mess on the tarmac.

Roadhandler yelled “Keep going team!” as he jumped left and transformed to his sports car mode, avoiding the telltale purple streaks of Decepticon weapons fire. His backup, Free Wheeler and Tailspin, ran into the street, answering with their own hail of orange energy.

He transformed back, picked himself up and found that he had taken cover behind one of the Earthlings' vehicles—a four-wheeled car not dissimilar to his own alt-mode, although much larger, of course.

Tailspin fell back with a cry, smoke pouring from a superficial wound in his forearm. “There's too many of them!” he shouted.

Free Wheeler joined him, “They're dug in like astro-ticks!” he confirmed, “We're never going to make it!” He pointed to their objective, a huge triangular tower composed of girders.

Roadhandler shook his head, “Yes we will! We just need to work together, help me with this.”

He showed them what he wanted them to do. Free Wheeler slid underneath the vehicle and cut the brake lines, then the three of them maneuvered it to the middle of the street and started to push. “Faster!” Roadhandler yelled, “Let's go!”

Blaster bolts sparked and fizzed off the car as they advanced. The windows smashed in and the engine started to smoke. They ducked lower and did not fire back, concentrating on keeping the mobile barricade moving.

The Decepticons had set up a roadblock at the end of the street. Roadhandler risked a quick glance and managed to identify Skyhopper and Starcatcher behind a barrier made out of scavenged billboards and roadsigns.

“Nearly there!” he shouted, encouragingly. The Decepticons fired again, with more accuracy. A lucky shot hit Free Wheeler in the shoulder and he reeled backwards.

“Darn it! They got me!” he cursed as he fell back.

“Now now now!” Tailspin stopped pushing and began to lay down a covering fire, sending the Decepticons scurrying. Roadhandler took advantage of this to spring onto the roof of the car and hang on as it smashed through the barricade, sending human detritus flying. “Yeah!” he cried, punching the air. “Take that!”

The car hit a pothole in the tarmac and started to roll. Roadhandler leapt off, and, drawing his blaster in the same motion, he shot Starcatcher in the chest. The Decepticon went down with a spatter of glowing blue sparks. Skyhopper was there to meet him and they clashed hand to hand. “Nice try, Auto-dolt!” he sneered, “But looks like I have the *upper* hand. See you later!” As Roadhandler tried to grab him in a hold, Skyhopper transformed to jet mode and shot straight up, knocking Roadhandler on his skidplate with the blast.

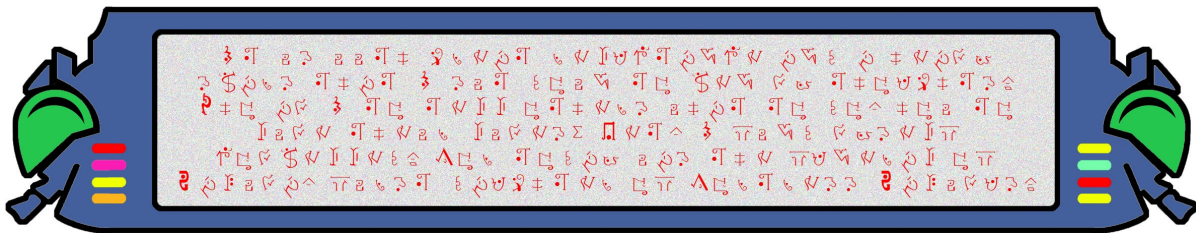
As his opponent circled back round, Roadhandler fired a few shots but the bulky green jet was too maneuverable for him. He was forced to dive for cover again as the micro-bombs detonated where

he had been standing. The human car flipped and smashed through a store-front and the road and sidewalk were a mess of blasted holes and red-brown smoke. A lamp-post had bent at a crazy angle.

Tailspin skidded up in car mode. He transformed and pulled Roadhandler down behind the scant cover of the remains of the Decepticon barricade, just as Skyhopper came around for another strafing pass. “Get down,” he urged, quite unnecessarily.

They were pinned, and Skyhopper knew it. “Hahaha! You Auto-losers can’t—” His gloating was interrupted by a wracking cough, and he ceased firing and started to wobble. Roadhandler risked stepping from cover and taking an aimed shot, which hit the fast-moving Decepticon’s engines. The olive jet spiraled out of control and slammed into the ground, only to be engulfed by a huge fireball.

“Luck’s on our side, Tailspin. Let’s dig in here, their friends won’t be far behind.”



“You don't need me to tell you,” Cheetor orated to the crowd, “if we all play our parts, the Builders won't know what hit them!” he struck a heroic pose and punched the air as the crowd of assembled bots cheered. “That's what I'm talking about! Give me some more!” The cheering intensified, “Yeah!” he yelled, “Let's see some of that fighting spirit when you breach Valvolux tomorrow!”

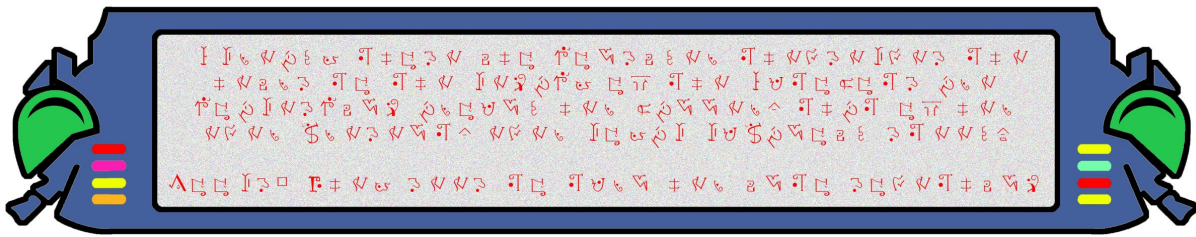
He let them whoop and hug each other while he backed away, smiling as best he could. Preditron was waiting for him backstage.

“It's ridiculous,” the Predacon said, “We should be *leading* them into Valvolux, not slipping away before the battle is joined. This is *not* honorable.”

Cheetor's expressive yellow face fell, “I know buddy, I know—I'm fed up of the leash same as you, but Lio Convoy's in charge and he thinks this is the best use of our... talents.”

Preditron harrumphed, his red-gold faceplate set in a fierce scowl. “Lio Convoy is a jumped up Maximal bureaucrat. Predacons shouldn't need stage shows and empty rhetoric before they go into combat. The valor and sacrifice of battle is itself the reward!”

Cheetor shrugged; in the previous two stellar cycles he'd grown accustomed to Preditron's moods. The worst thing was, he agreed with him. After being freed from Fortress Maximus, the first thing he wanted to do was to go straight back into the field, but Resistance High Command felt that his status as “First Resistor” meant more for propaganda purposes than his skill as a fighter. Now with the war in its fifth stellar cycle, and the innovation of beast modes meaning the Builders were on the run across nearly the whole planet, Cheetor felt that he had missed his chance. “You know what?” he said to the Predacon, “Frag it. Come on, the shuttle's leaving.”



“Where are we headed?” Cheetor leaned over and shouted over the noise of the engines of the *Star Dasher*—their transport, a lobotomized Builder mode-locked in the form of a white and orange space shuttle with purple detailing.

The pilot, a Predacon flyer called Autojetter, shouted back, “New orders just came in. We're going to Safe Zone Alpha Two. It's a logistics and supply base in the heart of Protihex. Very far from the front, no need to worry. We need to divert around Rageland—”

"Rageland?" asked Preditron, clearly incredulous.

"Uhhh... yeah, that's what *Her Majesty*," one could practically hear the air-quotes, "has started calling Triax and annexed Perihex. Anyway, she'd a mite touchy about her airspace, so, yeah, we go around. Adds an extra 70 or so cycles to our flight, so you'll have a little more than two and a half megacycles to settle in."

Cheetor sighed, “Great.” He turned to Preditron, who was sitting supremely still, despite the rocking of the *Star Dasher*, and giving every impression of meditation. “You hear that?”

The Predacon elder nodded. “So be it,” he said, and powered down his optics.

Cheetor spent the flight reviewing dispatches from Command, which had trickled in by coded shortwave. Ever since the Gung-Ho blew the satellite network, it was the best—or, rather, least bad—way to send long-range messages. Despite a priority clearance of Aleph-2, which put him at the level just below Lio Convoy's inner circle, most specific operational details remained need-to-know. He seldom did. Still, it was useful to get a big-picture overview.

The biggest news, by far, was that the Tripredacus Alliance had apparently declared themselves the masters of a huge swath of land, stretching from the Great Rust Sea in the east all the way to the Sonic Canyons bordering the Tagon Heights in the west. He'd caught the raucous news on Radio Free Cybertron, and even the Builder propaganda network ICS had been forced to acknowledge it, if only to downplay the importance. So far, like the Maximal Nation, which had declared itself neutral when they'd annexed the Tagon Heights a stellar cycle ago, the Independent Predacus States had stayed out of the fight. Officially. However, unlike the Maximal Nation, the IPS had a messy border that ran right through strongly held Builder cities with no natural boundaries to the north or south. Rumors abounded that there were skirmishes in Kaon and Kalis, and RFC broadcasters tittered excitedly about the prospect that the IPS might officially enter the war on the side of the Resistance.

Even absent a formal declaration of hostility, it was another game-changer. The Builders now controlled less than a third of the planet, although it *was* an incredibly industrialized third and, unlike most of the rest of the planet, had avoided the worst the multitudinous horrors war had to offer.

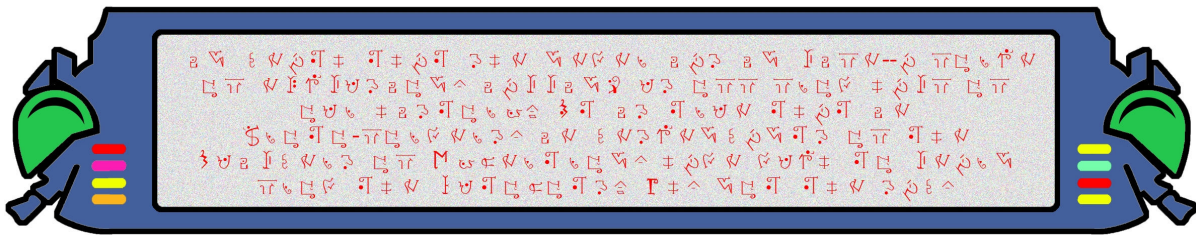
Eventually the landscape turned from barren, wind-swept metal wastelands to the endless depths of the sonic canyons to the sprawling outskirts of Protihex, the jewel of the Resistance. It had been captured nearly intact when Psycho-Orb, the chief aid to the Builder administrator, arranged a brilliant coup and managed to lock the Builders out of their own network. The second-largest city on the planet, it occupied the south polar region of the planet and was thus in the band of temperatures the average Cybertronian considered most pleasant. Unlike many worlds, Cybertron had a negligible axial tilt, and thus a reasonable day/night cycle, even at the poles, although the trade-off was a blazing equatorial region unpleasant to all but the hardest of bots.

The transport banked as it overflew the base and Cheetor got a good look out of the porthole. Sure enough, a lot of space was given over to containers, pallets, barrels, and the means to move all three. There was a small landing pad, which the transport was making for, some temporary looking pre-fab living quarters and a very large circular building with no roof off to the northwest. "Hey, what's that?" he asked Autojetter, pointing out the cockpit.

The flyer shrugged his cerulean wings. "The Protihex Arena, pretty sure."

"Left over from the Builders?"

"Sure, I guess."



They were met by a fussy little blue Maximal called Ikard. "Welcome, welcome," he whined, "It's such an honor to host the First Resistor, and of course, Preditron, the first of your kind as well."

Preditron's face, indeed his entire body language, darkened subtly. If Cheetor hadn't spent so much time with him, he wouldn't have noticed it. He'd asked him once, after a rare bit of combat with a Micromaster assassin, how he felt as the founder of an entire race of Cybertronians. Preditron replied that this was never his goal, and that it was the Tripredacus Alliance who had pushed for that interpretation of his Manifesto. He had intended his writings for all proto-formers, which he suspected was the impetus for his betrayal. But Preditron let none of that show, beyond a slight tightening of his stance, narrowing of his optics. Instead, he gruffly said, "The honor is all ours, I assure you." Then, after an comfortably short pause, he barked, "What do you need from us?"

Ikard seemed rather taken aback by the Predacon's directness, a reaction Cheetor had become accustomed to. "Oh... well... they don't brief you?"

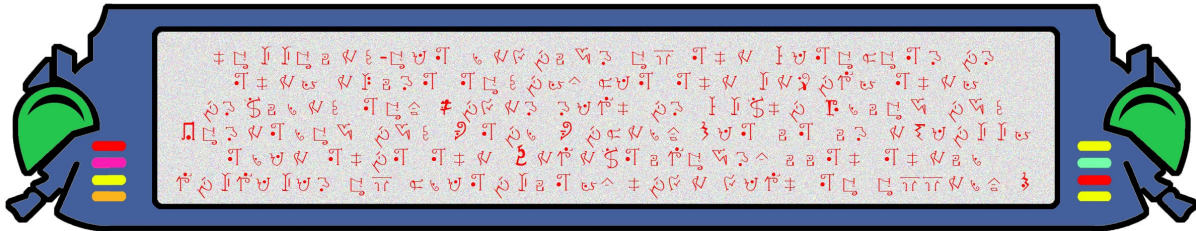
"Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. Kitty and I mostly go where we're sent."

"Oh well, that's no bother. Yes. Yes," he fussed. "We need you to give a speech at the start of a very special celebration."

"Oh yeah?" Cheetor asked, "What's that in aid of?"

Ikard began to lead them, “Well, it's less of a celebration and more a commemoration—come, come, my colleague will be able to explain it to you better. And I will have some living quarters prepared for you.”

Cheetor raised a brow-ridge behind Ikard's back. Preditron just sighed.



The three of them waited for Ikard's colleague in an empty transport container that had been turned into a small office space. It was utilitarian at best; there was desk with a computer terminal, a few chairs, and a vidscreen on the wall. “So, Preditron,” began Ikard, “exciting news, the recent formation of the IPS. A nation of Predacons... you must be rather proud.”

A long moment passed with no answer from the ornery Predacon. Cheetor felt the pressure to fill the silence with babble, but resisted. He'd come to appreciate the different kinds of silences Preditron indulged in, and this one meant he had something to say.

“I am... ambivalent about the Independent Predacon States,” Preditron finally allowed. “I hope that it proves a beacon for my kind, but I fear that the... leadership... may not be up to the task. And that is all I care to say on the matter.”

With perfect composure, Preditron folded himself into a lotus position and sat perfectly still, waiting. Cheetor gave a small chuckle. The tension hadn't entirely dissipated, and evidently Ikard was feeling it acutely. His tentacles twitched, and he didn't seem to know what to do with them. Finally, he muttered something inaudible and flicked on a monitor.

Immediately they were assailed by the sights and sounds of combat. A red and yellow Micromaster with one arm hanging by a loose bundle of cabling was desperately shooting off-screen, trying to reach cover as explosions burst all around him.

“Is that from the front?” Preditron asked, standing. “The quality is exceptional. Has there been some recent breakthrough?”

“I don't know,” marveled Cheetor, “but it looks like we're pressing the advantage.”

Ikard cleared his throat as if to clarify something, but was interrupted by the door at the back of the container sliding open. A green, winged Predacon stepped in and spread her fanged mouth in a smile. “Welcome!” she said with a brightness that belied her fearsome exterior. “I've been looking forward to meeting you. Ser-Ket.” She put out her clawed hand to shake.

“What are we watching?” Preditron asked, forgoing niceties. “This isn't the front, is it?”

“Oh no,” Ser-Ket smiled again, “That's our arena—we've got a Game going right now.”

Cheetor shook his cranial module to defrag it, “A Game?” he asked, feeling stupid.

“Oh yes—look, Roadhandler's been doing very well, but he's all by himself now—I shouldn't think he'll last long.”

“You're holding Games out here?” Preditron's voice was a growl.

Ikard shrugged, “Well, these are the first. It's kind of a special occasion.”

“Are those *prisoners*?” Preditron asked dangerously, “You're forcing those Builders to fight?”

Ikard looked confused. “You weren't briefed?” he asked, “It's all above board, I assure you, just a little morale boost for our own bots,” Ikard breezed, “So that's why we wanted you, you see—to open the final game of the tournament.”

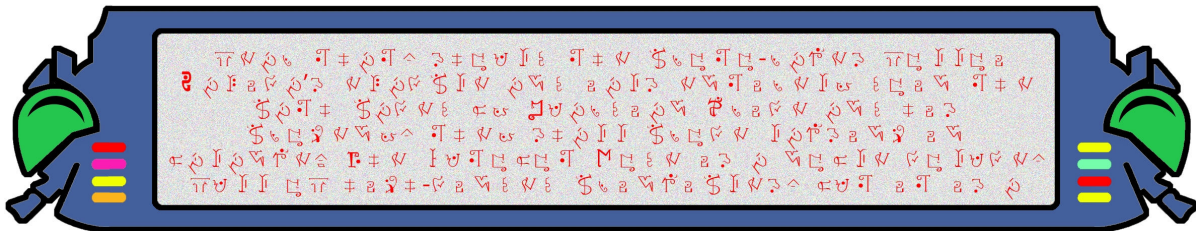
Preditron narrowed his optics as Cheetor brought his fist down heavily on the back of a chair. “Absolutely not!” the Maximal growled.

Ser-Ket looked confused as Ikard waved his hands in a conciliatory manner. “Let's not be hasty.”

“The lad is apt to get a little hasty,” Preditron said, slowly and deliberately, “so I'll put a little plating on that endo-frame. No, we won't endorse your games, and you'll shut them down right now if you don't want Lio Convoy to hear about it.” When he wanted to, Preditron had a bulky, rumbling presence that could make the most reasonably worded statement sound threatening. He capped it off with a gentle smile. That was somehow worse.

Ser-Ket hissed, but Ikard waved her quiet with one of his many limbs. “You misunderstand,” he said smoothly, “Lio Convoy is well aware of the Games. Your posting here, and your task, has all gone through official channels.”

Cheetor cuffed a chair across the room and advanced on the administrator. “This isn't the end,” he declared, leaning down into the Maximal's faceplate. Ikard stood his ground, but could not maintain eye-contact.



The green banner above the arena gates proudly proclaimed “Welcome to the Buzzclaw Memorial Games.” Cheetor rolled his optics. He knew the name Buzzclaw as the Predacon who had given his life to free Cheetor, Preditron, and many others from their hellish incarceration within Fortress Maximus. He doubted very much that a war hero like Buzzclaw would have approved of his name being used in this manner.

Under the shadow of the imposing structure, left over from before even the time of Builders, the walk to the hab-block was spent in awkward silence. Only Preditron seemed serene, which, in Cheetor's experience, meant he was about to start breaking things.

When Ikard sleazed his way backwards out of the room and left them alone, Cheetor said, “We're not going to endorse this, are we?”

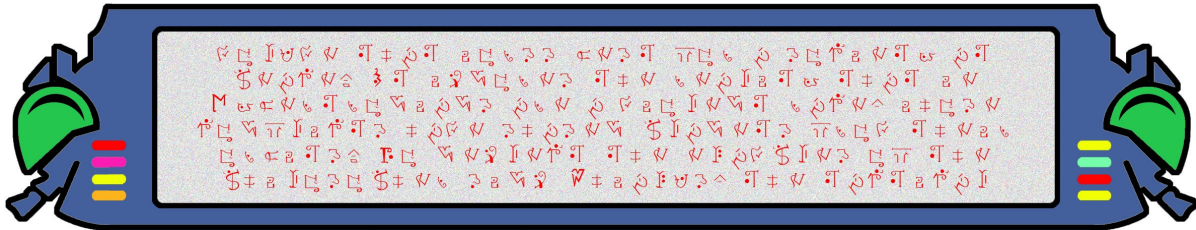
Preditron shook his head. “No,” he rumbled.

“We've got to stop it!”

Preditron looked at it quizzically. “Do we?”

“We need to get to that arena now!”

“No,” Preditron told him, “Contact Resistance Command. We need to know exactly what we're dealing with and who gave the order. I'm going to approach this from a different angle.”

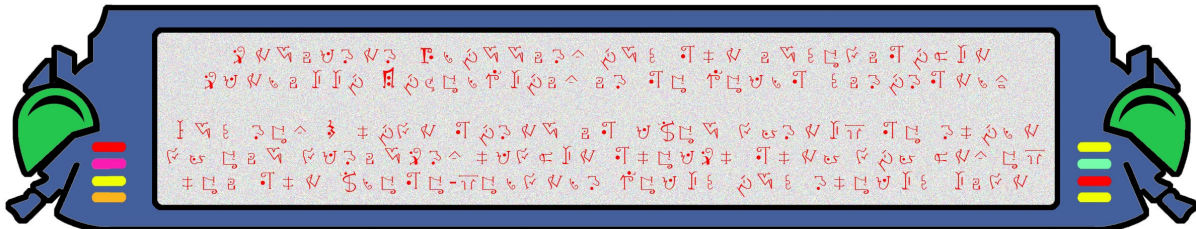


“Damn it Drill Bit!” Cheetor said, “Just put him on!”

On the screen, the brown and purple Predacon smiled disarmingly and shrugged all of his limbs, “Look Cheetor, I can see that you're upset, but LC is fielding reports from Tesarus in realtime—The Pack has just severed the Builder's supply lines, again, and are in the process of harrying them as they fall back to their next prepared position. I can't exactly interrupt him with something about a Logistics and Supply base, deep in territory we've controlled for stellar cycles, can I?”

Cheetor bared his fangs, just a little, “Well who can I speak to then?”

Drill Bit's smile did not fade even a little as he breezed, “Ok, you know what Cheetor, just for you, I'll see what I can do.”



Preditron had been asking around for about a cycle before he found what he was looking for. He had assumed, with Ser-Ket seemingly working as the master of ceremonies or similar for the arena, that she would be an easy bot to find. It turned out that though he bought several rounds of engex and asked both Maximals and Predacons, very few bots knew much about her and most had no idea where she could be found.

Eventually he managed to locate her quarters and knocked politely but firmly on the bare metal door. It slid open and Ser-Ket answered, “Oh,” she said, “It's you—can it wait? I've got a full schedule for tomorrow.”

Preditron nodded, “I'm sure. This is actually about that. Would you indulge me, Predacon to Predacon, for just a few moments?”

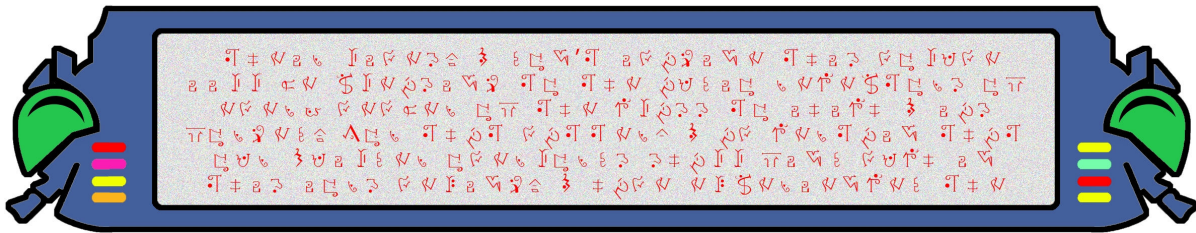
Ser-Ket sighed and nodded slowly. "You're basically the father of our race, I guess I owe you that much. Please come in. Sorry, I don't get a lot of visitors."

Ser-Ket's quarters were sparse. It did not look like she spent a much time there. She gestured for Preditron to sit on the only chair, and then hovered around nervously while he got comfortable. Even standing while he sat, Ser-Ket was only about a head taller than him.

He looked up at her. "Ser-Ket, I am here because I am concerned."

She twitched, nervously, "Concerned about the Games. Yes, of course, I saw that. I will try to answer any questions you have."

Preditron sighed, "No Ser-Ket, not the Games. I am here because I am concerned about *you*."



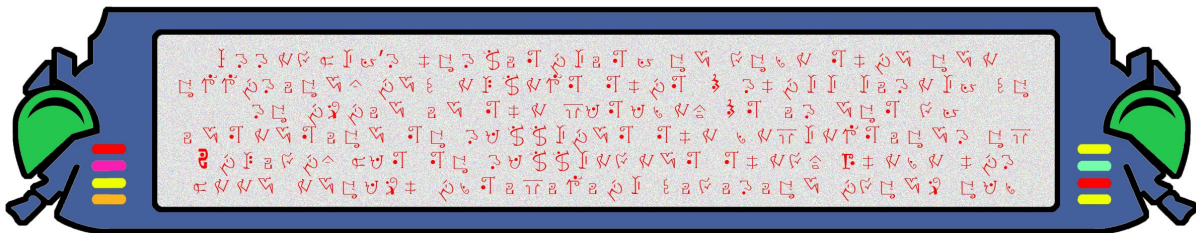
"Frag it Cheetor, whaddya want?" Blackarachnia looked frazzled.

Cheetor grinned, "Nice to see you too, BA, I'm trying to reach the big guy."

"Look, Tesarus is proving a tough lugnut to undo, they're fighting street-to-street in fragging Valvolux of all places, Carpesa and Damaxus have gone completely dark... you're not going to get through to Lio Convoy, surely you must see that?"

"Well maybe you'll do then?"

"You've got five cycles, talk."



"Concerned about me?" Ser-Ket replied, "I'm not sure what you mean." She sounded curious, but still defensive.

Preditron fixed her with a piercing gaze. "When I met you earlier I saw a look that I understood very well."

Ser-Ket's triangular eyes narrowed. "Go on."

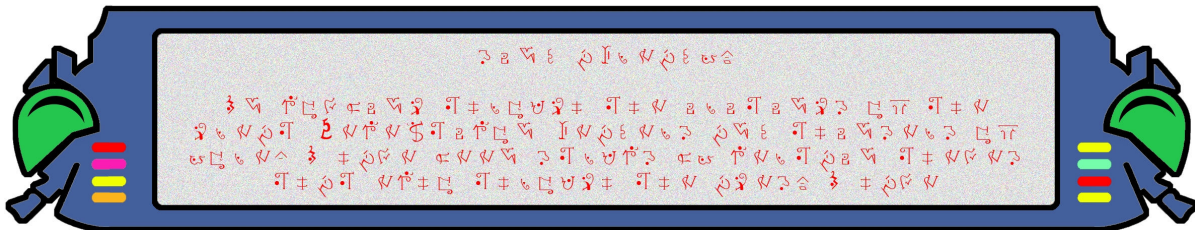
"I can see from your bearing that you are a true Predacon, a rarer thing than you might think."

Ser-Ket laughed, once, mirthlessly. “Haven't you heard? There's a whole nation of us now. Besides, Lio Convoy says there's no such thing as Maximals and Predacons anymore—we're all Resistance now.”

Preditron shook his red-gold head, “Lio Convoy's words are wise. There is strength in unity. However, I mean deep within your spark, in your innermost Energon, you live for ambition, for honor, for valor, seeking combat against worthy foes.”

Ser-Ket folded her wings in an elaborate shrug. “I’ve tried to live my life by the pillars you set forth, but there's been precious little place for that for me recently.”

Preditron stood up and clapped his massive hands down on her shoulders, “Exactly!” he said, “For either of us, and we're going to change that.”



Blackarachnia looked hostile and Cheetor realized he was losing her, “Grow up Pussycat,” she told him, “We've got Maximals and Predacons laying down their lives for Cybertron over here and you're worried about a few fragging Builders?”

He narrowed his eyes and slammed his fist on the cheap desk, which made the comms monitor wobble. “It's not about that. I hate the Builders—they held me, us, for decades... what they did to us... I'll never forget that, but this is too much, I thought this was exactly the kind of thing we were supposed to be fighting?”

Blackarachnia's expressive optics rolled theatrically. “Can we keep the high-minded principles until after we pull our skidplates out of the scrap? You know why you’re busing bouncing your skidplate from Simfur to Kolkular to Vos to Valvolux? Because after six stellar cycles of heavy fighting, the troops are *tired*! Some of these bots haven’t seen their homes in years. Some of those bots don’t have homes to go back to. Things like Radio Free Cybertron, they’re not enough. You and papa Pred, they help. And you know what other bit of bread and circuses our race has turned to for the last eight or nine million stellar cycles? Gladiatorial combat. The troops *need* this, whiskers.”

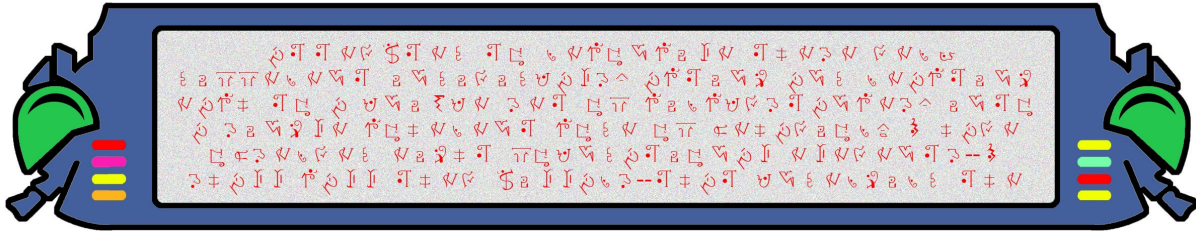
“Do they?” Cheetor pressed. “Do they *need* it? We’ve got the Builders on the back paw. Didn’t RFC just announce that they’re conscripting Cyberdroids of all things? Talk about desperate.”

She made a ‘pfff’ noise. “The last two stellar cycles of mostly winning has helped, Oracle knows it’s helped. And sure, maybe we’re on a trajectory towards victory. Do you know how quickly trajectories can change? No one saw beasts coming. The Builders have *millions* of stellar cycles more experience than we do at this; are you willing to bet all of our futures on them not having a few tricks left up their manifolds? So do us all a favor and don’t go leaking coolant in my oilbath.”

That last sentence didn’t sit right, and it took Cheetor a nanoklik to decompile why. “*Your* oilbath? Does Convoy even know about this? Or is this another of your little side-projects like that whatever-the-Pit-it-was in Iacon?”

She stabbed an accusatory claw at him. “You've got nothing on me, pussycat, and a lot of good bots are dying who would love to have a nice cushy assignment in the rear echelons, so suck it up, and do your fragging job.”

Cheetor swore as the connection died and Blackarachnia's furious faceplate was replaced by the symbol of the Resistance, Predacon on one side, Maximal on the other, rotating serenely.



Ser-Ket listened despite herself. Preditron was right, she was proud of her heritage, and here, in her quarters, was the patriarch of her entire race.

“Why do you organize the games, Ser-Ket?” he asked, gently.

“I'm good at it, and it improves morale.” That wasn't the answer, and she was pretty sure he knew that.

“You think watching this slaughter really helps anyone? Is it valorous? Is it just?”

She wanted to be defensive but it was so difficult. Preditron was so comfortable with his chassis, so open. She hated the idea of lying to him, “It's tradition—a re-enactment of the battles our ancestors fought on Earth.”

His voice was grave. “It is cheap pageantry and barbarism Ser-Ket, unworthy of our heritage, and I think you know that.”

“Honestly, I don't. I fell into the Resistance just after the war started.”

Preditron nodded. “But you wanted to fight?”

“I did,” she agreed, feeling the fervor rushing back, “more than anything. I was so frustrated that the Builders were keeping us from achieving anything, from reaching beyond our assigned roles.”

“So you joined up.”

“Not... exactly,” Ser-Ket said, hanging her head.

Ser-Ket didn't entirely know why, but she found herself telling Preditron everything, “I joined up with Buzzclaw, we were going on this secret mission that would change everything.”

Preditron nodded. “Fortress Maximus.”

“Right, and we were successful, broadly speaking, I mean, you and Cheetor are here, right?” she looked at him, but his expression remained neutral.

“And for that you have our eternal gratitude.”

“Thank you, but as you know, Buzzclaw didn't come back from that mission.”

Preditron's face fell in well-managed regret. “I am aware. I read the mission logs of our liberation. He was a brave soldier.”

Ser-Ket felt the anger welling up in her again. “He was an idiot. He was a coward and a fraud, but he was also my friend.”

Preditron patted her shoulder. “I can tell you are angry, but you should not speak ill of the dead.”

Ser-Ket shook him off and stalked across her apartment to stare out of the window, “I'm not speaking ill of anyone. I'm speaking the truth. Buzzclaw should never have been on that mission. He was set up, by Resistance Command, by Lio Convoy. He was a patsy. He had no idea what was going on.”

“And so...” Preditron invited her to continue.

“And so I ran, I wandered, for a long time. Fought in a few battles, fought on both sides—guess I got what I wanted? Except I never thought it was that honorable. Found my way here, back to the Resistance, and Ikard suggested my friendship with Buzzclaw might help me organize the Games they were planning.”

Preditron rumbled, deep in his vocal processor, “And you accepted?”

“I didn't see a choice, OK? The only thing anyone ever knew about Buzzclaw other than the lies coming out of High Command was that he was a Champion. He won a Game—fairly, by the way—so I just figured it would be a way to keep his name alive. I have no love for the Builders. Everyone around here hates them so much... it wasn't that hard to get carried away... I...” Ser-Ket broke off and her face fell, wide-fanged mouth collapsing in a sob.

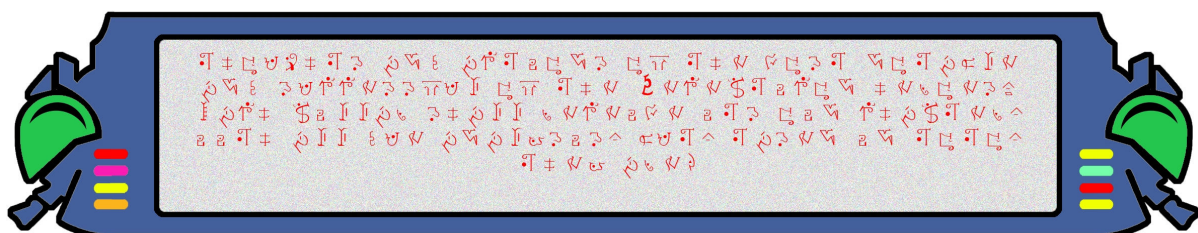
“It never is, my child.” Preditron told her, gathering her in a hug. “You remind me of someone.”

“A Predacon, I hope,” she said as she allowed him to support her weight, physically and emotionally.

“No, neither a Maximal nor a Predacon. This was from before those days. Though I suppose most would claim her for the Maximal banner.” She broke the hug and looked at him searchingly. “You may have heard of her... *She Who Sang*.”

Now confusion danced in Ser-Ket's optics. “Maxima? The first Maximal? But I thought...”

“Don't believe everything you've heard. She and I were not enemies. Not by choice. Were it not for her, I would never have completed the poor scribbling that have come to be known as *The Predacon Manifesto*. The great tragedy of my existence, one I hope to someday rectify, is that her testament and my own should have so violently divided our race, when all we ever sought to do was to elevate all proto-formers. But enough about ancient history. We—you—still have time to put things right.”



First Resistor had put him in a difficult political position as soon as he was sprung from Fort Max. He didn't think Lio Convoy himself was insecure enough to worry about that sort of thing, but consciously or unconsciously he had people like Blackarachnia to handle it for him.

He tried to contact Preditron but got a busy tone. He hoped that whatever Preditron was trying was more effective than the call to Resistance HQ had been. He sighed and tried Ikard instead, getting the same tone. Sick of being thwarted, Cheetor decided to find Ikard's domicile and have the conversation in person.

It took the Maximal a while to answer his door, but he finally barked out the word "come" to usher Cheetor into his rather lavishly appointed domicile. Ikard blinked several time, obviously still groggy from the recharge slab. "Cheetor," he said after just a few nanokliks too long, "It's an unexpected pleasure to have you here. Could I offer you something to drink?"

"No, Ikard, I'm here on—"

"I hope you don't mind then," fussed the white and blue Maximal. "Visco; 20-weight; hot," he ordered, and his household system quickly obliged. After Ikard had enjoyed a few sips, he sat down and gestured for Cheetor to speak.

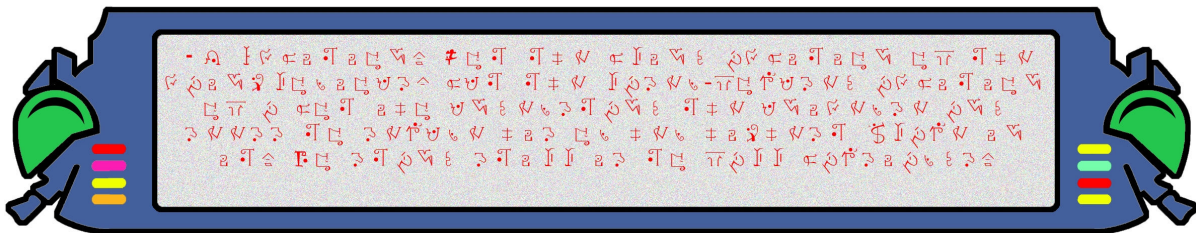
"Listen Ikard," Cheetor told him, "Stanix seem to know about your Games. Blackarachnia does anyway, and I'm not about to disrupt a supply base in the middle of a big push, so I'll go along with it for now."

"Good show," began Ikard, but Cheetor raised his hand to cut him off.

"*Provided* Preditron does as well." Ikard nodded his head in acknowledgment, but Cheetor thought he detected a hint of a smirk on his beak. "*But!* No matter what, you can expect a full inquiry once the theater of operations quiets down a bit."

Ikard smiled. "That's really all I ask. Thank you so much for being understanding." He showed Cheetor out.

Standing outside his door, Cheetor shuddered. The 'theater of operations' had been busy for stellar cycles, and showed no signs of slowing down. Whatever reckoning there was, odds were it wouldn't be for a long, long while.



Preditron was confident that he had given Ser-Ket plenty to think about. He felt the time was right to rendezvous with Cheetor and decide what they were going to do. Nobody was around as he strode down the floodlit central strip of the base. He turned the corner towards the guest quarters and his proximity sensors went wild. Too late.

A huge shape stepped out of the shadows swinging a metal club that collided with the side of his head and loosened some of his teeth. As Preditron turned to face his attacker he took in a barrel-

chedted teal and red torso, complete with Predacon symbol and a sneering silver faceplate. “Sorry dad,” it said, in a deep but feminine voice, “time's up.”

“Stand down!” Preditron ordered, balling his fists. “I don't want to fight you!”

The Predacon laughed, “That makes one of us,” she said and launched another attack, which Preditron only just managed to deflect.

“So be it,” he intoned, “BEAST MODE!” Preditron put everything he had into the transformation, his parts whipping around and reconfiguring at a speed way past recommended tolerances. He exploded into his jurassanoid form and lunged at the attacker, grabbing her forearm between his cyber-steel teeth and tearing at the armor plating.

Another series of blows rained down and he was forced to let go. His attacker was still laughing at him, despite the leaking tear in the metal of her arm. “I can't believe anyone ever looked up to you,” she mocked, giving him a meaty kick to the neck, “Your beast mode is appropriate—old-timer.” She roared and shifted to her own alternate form—some sort of griffin from an alien world that Preditron did not recognize. She pounced and they went down in a ball of snapping teeth and kicking claws.

Preditron's personality was almost entirely saurian now as instinctively he fought to survive. There were baffles in place to prevent a complete collapse, but he reveled in the feeling of pure Predacon savagery unleashed. They tumbled over and over, sparks and shed energon splattering all over the alley. He was about to lunge for another crushing bite when the attacker sprang off him. He blinked in confusion before being hit from behind with a crackling wall of pain.

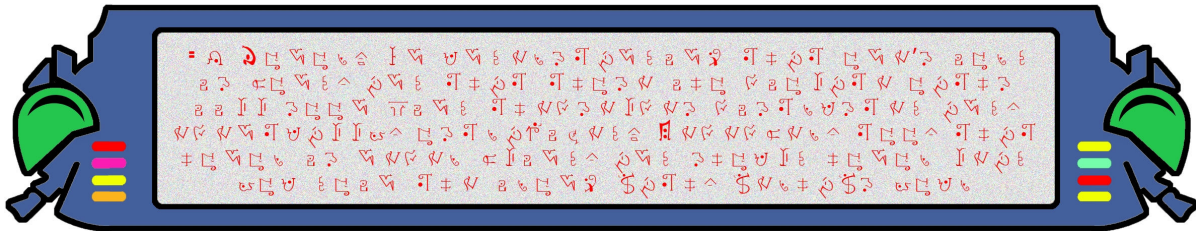


“Well well well,” came Ikard's obnoxious whine, “the great Preditron, distracted by a little rough and tumble. Good work, Gaidora!” His tentacles were sparking like energo-whips. They snapped forward again and Preditron roared, spasming back into humanoid mode as the shock coursed through his system and falling to his knees.

“Should I throw him in with the prisoners?” asked the prowling beast. “This execution is supposed to be public, after all.” *That was interesting*, Preditron thought through the pain.

“Make it so,” Ikard agreed over his shoulder as he casually walked away. “I have a message to send.”

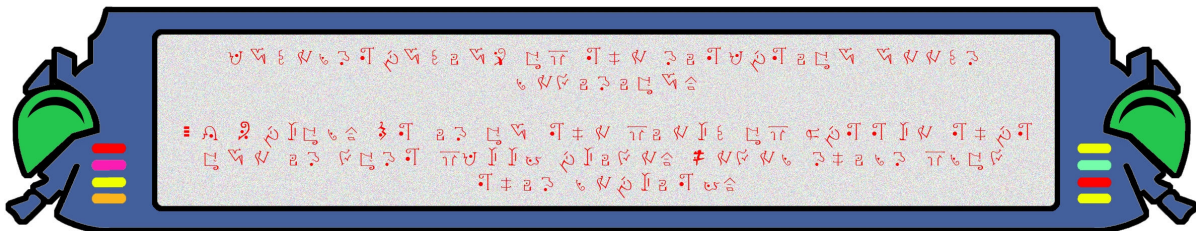
Gaidora transformed back into humanoid mode and booted Preditron hard in the torso. “Lio Convoy says hi,” she grunted, and he blacked out.



Ser-Ket paced back and forth, her processor full of the things Preditron had told her. She couldn't ignore him, could she? He was the ultimate Predacon, he epitomized everything she should aspire to, and yet...

She thought of Buzzclaw, and her last angry conversation with Lio Convoy. She'd thought the same about him, once. If he let her down, then why shouldn't Preditron? Maybe she should just stick to the plan, finish the Games, and then bug out, like she'd done so many times before. Maybe head north to the IPS. Preditron would understand, and if he didn't, frag him for it, she wasn't a protoform.

She thumbed her comms to tell him she was leaving, but there was no reply. *Scrap him then*, she thought, and went to get a drink.



Preditron groaned as he came to in a dingy cell with a barred front wall. The block was a wide corridor as long as the arena wall was deep. Each side was lined with more barred cells—regular cyber-steel, rather than energon, but still too thick for even a Micromaster to bend. It was obvious from the pointing and yelling across the corridor that one side was filled with Decepticons and the other Autobots.

“Yeah well!” a bulky purple and black Decepticon with wings was yelling, “Come tomorrow, the Air Strike Patrol will decorate that arena with your cybo-dendrons!”

"You're full of hot exhaust, Storm Cloud!" a blue Autobot shot back, "Roadhandler's been kicking your skidplates all over the arena. What makes you think tomorrow will be any diff—" His retort was cut off by a coughing fit.

Storm Cloud laughed a hearty laugh, deep and clearly exaggerated. "Puny Autobots put too much faith in their *leaders!*" he bellowed, "Roadhandler will be scrap by sun-up, and then the Air Strike Patrol will win the day! What do you think of that, eh Torque?"

The blue Autobot shook his head and lay at the back of his cell. When his coughing finally subsided, he weakly muttered, "You idiots are all the same."

It was only then that the other inmates noticed Preditron.

"Hey fellas, get a load o' this filthy ol' Pred!" Storm Cloud spat.

"Resistance toady," Torque started to say, but was interrupted by another wracking cough.

"Until comparatively recently I would have agreed with you," Preditron admitted, "But finding myself here among you, I wonder if that is true any longer." He remembered what Gaidora had said, "*Lio Convoy says hi.*" His head dropped ruefully before he re-asserted himself and looked Storm Cloud in the eye. "I do believe that, like yourselves, I have become *inconvenient* to the Resistance."

"Friend," said a gray and black Decepticon, slightly less wide than Storm Cloud, "we don't much care what you're in for." He slammed his fist into his palm.

"Oh for Primus' sake Whisper!" Torque shouted from across the corridor, before being interrupted by another deep, shuddering cough. He recovered enough to weakly add, "Hear him out."

"Why should we?" Storm Cloud piped up.

Predator nodded understandingly. "You all have reason to hate me and I do not begrudge you that. All I ask is that you heed my words. I do not know why they are doing this, to me, or to you, but come tomorrow, I mean to do something about it!"

"See!" said the orange and black Autobot sharing a cell with Torque, "None of us want to be here. We used to be on the same damned side!"

"Pipe down Crunch," Storm Cloud growled, "Things change."

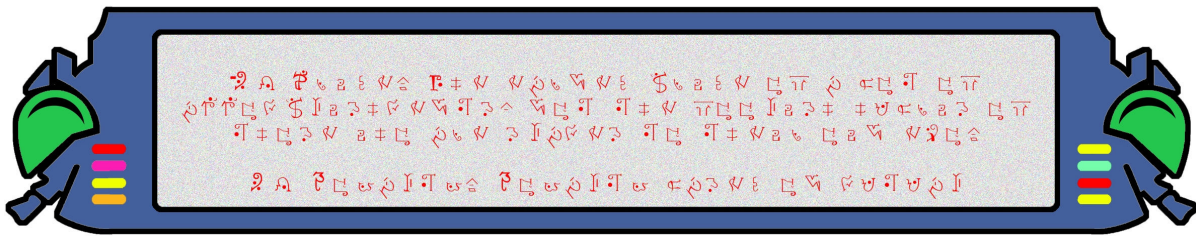
Both Storm Cloud and Crunch were right at the front of their cells, hands on the bars, yelling at each other. Preditron rebooted his vocal transmitter, "No doubt you fought honorably alongside one another?"

"No fighting," Whisper said with his habitual susurrations, "Our division withdrew from the shores of the Mithril Sea and neglected to pass the orders to us. When the Resistance came, we had little choice but to surrender, without firing a shot."

"You miss my point. You served together? Alongside one another?" Preditron continued.

"Well, we were still in teams, but yeah, some of us did, I guess..." Storm Cloud quieted a little.

"Then all I ask," Preditron said, "Is that you remember your comrades tomorrow, and follow my lead."



“All right losers, get your motors running, we've got a busy day ahead of us.” Gaidora was hammering on the bars with her energo-club. “Get moving, come on, move your skids!”

As they were herded outside, Whisper leaned in to Preditron and hissed, “Hey, Torque isn't looking so good.”

It was true, Torque's blue torso had started to show signs of color-fade and he was muttering to himself. Preditron put it down to fear of the Games, though he didn't entirely dismiss that there might be something medically wrong with him, given his irregular but persistent coughing fits. He made a mental note to review POW access to medibots, should he survive.

In the light of day the arena looked smaller, somehow. The Terran monuments and architecture looked more like the cheap facsimiles they were. The crowd, however, was vast and rowdy—almost the whole personnel of the base must have been there, along with many of the Protihexian civilians.

The two teams, the Autobot Off-Roaders and the Decepticon Air Strike Patrol were lined up either side of a large podium, upon which Ikard stood. Preditron found himself held back, pinned by Gaidora, out of sight of the crowd.

“My friends!” he addressed the crowd, “We open this final day of the Buzzclaw Memorial Games by introducing reinforcements for both sides. Poor Roadhandler has done very well, but he can't last forever, perhaps the Off-Roaders can help him out—give them a cheer!” His voice was still thin, even with the amplification.

“And ranged against them, coming with built-in air superiority, the Air Strike Patrol!”

The crowd roared its delight. “And last, but not least, to officially open this, the last day of the first of a new series of Games celebrating the Resistance and its many achievements, we have Cheetor, the First Resistor himself, to start them off!”



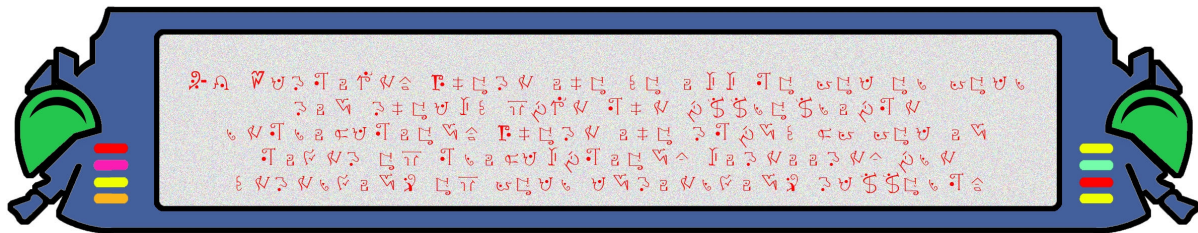
Reluctantly, Cheetor took the podium. He hadn't heard from Preditron all night and was certain something must have happened to him. Announcing the Game made his equilibrium circuits fritz, but he didn't fancy his chances against the entire crowd. Better to see what would happen.

“Hi there,” he began, lamely, “You all know me by now.” Bots looked restless, confused. He carried on, “So, yes, you heard Ikard. Here comes your Game. Enjoy it.” Turning he left the podium to scattered polite applause. *Damn it Preditron, where the Pit are you?*

Cheetor was vaguely aware that Ikard had taken his place, “Thank you First Resistor, I think we were hoping for... a little more... but thank you nonetheless. And now, as a surprise wild-card, I am honored to introduce a bot you all know. He LIVES for combat. His victories are COUNTLESS. He has come here especially to take on his greatest challenge yet, and give you all a SHOW you’ll never forget, it’s... PREDITRON!”

Oh no.

It was true. Preditron was being ushered into the arena by Gaidora, and it certainly didn't look voluntary.



“Remember what I said,” Preditron cautioned to the leaders of the two teams, “If you refuse to fight, they will have to come up with something else, and we can use that to our advantage.”

“There's hundreds of them!” Storm Cloud growled, “We can't beat 'em all.”

“That's why we HAVE to refuse,” Crunch said, his expressive face radiating resolve. “Preditron's right, we have to change the equation, make them see.”

“They're just going to kill us, sand rail,” Whisper rasped, “Why not go out on our own terms?”

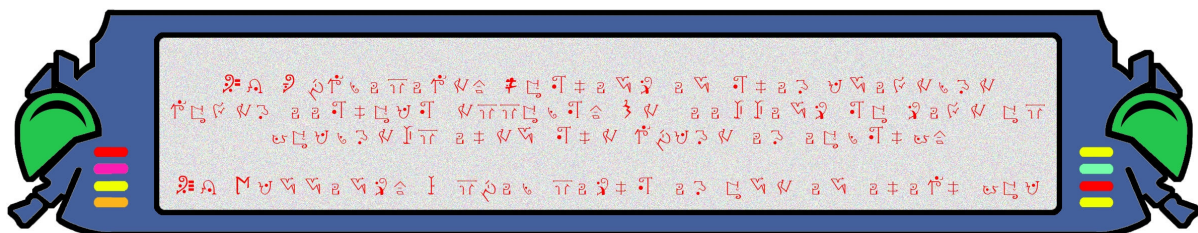
Preditron's optics blazed. “Don't you see?” he said, “These *are* our terms. The crowd up there...” he stabbed an emphatic finger, “I've been among them, they want Games, they want combat—they don't want executions—and if they do, then at least we're making them *confront* that!”

Storm Cloud seethed. “Don't seem like much of a plan to me.”

“Then how about this?” Preditron told him, “I've got people on the outside, people who won't stand for me being down here. They're liable to start changing things very soon.”

All the bots ducked as two winged Predacons buzzed the arena from the air. “You are ordered to disperse!” one whined, “The Game has already begun. Further discussion will be punished.”

“They have bombs,” Preditron said, “We need to scatter for now, but wait for my signal and for the Oracle's sake don't start shooting each other!”



Cheetor found Ser-Ket in the office where they had first met. She was sitting behind a computer screen, but did not seem to be working. In fact she seemed to just be staring into space while nursing a pretty potent-smelling engex.

“Your Game is starting,” he told her, angrily.

“I don't care,” she declared. “Ikard doesn't need me.”

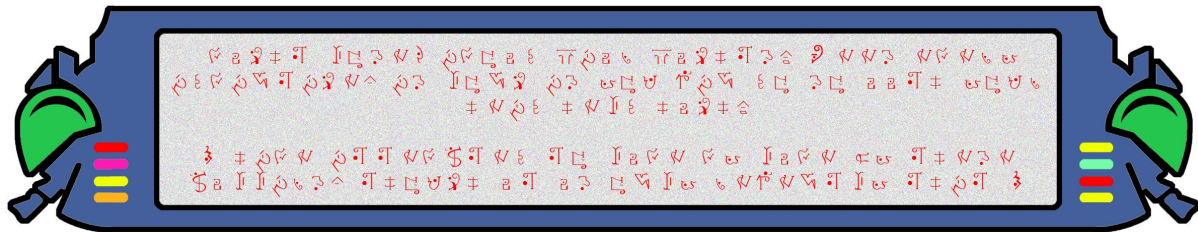
“No,” he said, softening slightly, “but I do. Preditron is down there.”

Ser-Ket's optics widened and her claws tightened, “Preditron is in the arena?”

“Yeah, and trust me, he wouldn't have gone willingly. He doesn't believe in combat for sport or glory, it's against everything he believes in. This is some kind of setup.”

Ser-Ket smashed the monitor onto the floor, “I'm such a fool,” she said, “thinking this was all about my personal dark night of the spark. I'll rip that fragging squid in two!”

Cheetor broke into a broad, toothy grin. “Race you for it!” he said, and transformed to feline mode.



Preditron's internal chronometer told him that he had been hiding for fifteen cycles. His route had taken him through a large green humanoid statue with a spiked crown, round an enormous clock tower that turned out to be merely a painted upright, and into a forest of discarded motor vehicles and other machinery, all left to rust. He could dimly hear the crowd in the distance and tried to stay as far away from them as possible, lest they grow weary of his reticence and try to get him involved.

His sharp beast-mode sensors picked up the smell of energon. There was one strong signature, unmoving, not far away. He crept towards it. There, flanked by decaying trucks, was the seated form of a red and yellow Micromaster, missing an arm—Roadhandler. He did not register Preditron's presence, so he risked getting closer.

Roadhandler's optics had no light, and Preditron could see, and smell, why. His chest was torn open down to the spark container, a ragged tear that was still leaking energon. The spark still pulsed, but it was dark, seemingly damaged beyond repair. Strange, he'd heard no special roar from the crowd, no arena wide broadcast that Roadhandler was out. Maybe this was a camera blind spot, as unlikely as that was. If so, it behooved him to stay here, at least for a little while.

He heard a faint scrape of metal on metal, and reached out with his sensors. Oddly, nothing but static, as if he was being jammed, but who would allow a jamming field in an arena? From the direction of the sound, Torque staggered out from behind a lorry, barely keeping upright. “Stay back!” he yelled, “Something's really wrong!”

Preditron saw with fascinated horror that one of Torque's hands had become claw-like. The fingers were slick with energon gore. "Torque?" he questioned, cautiously.

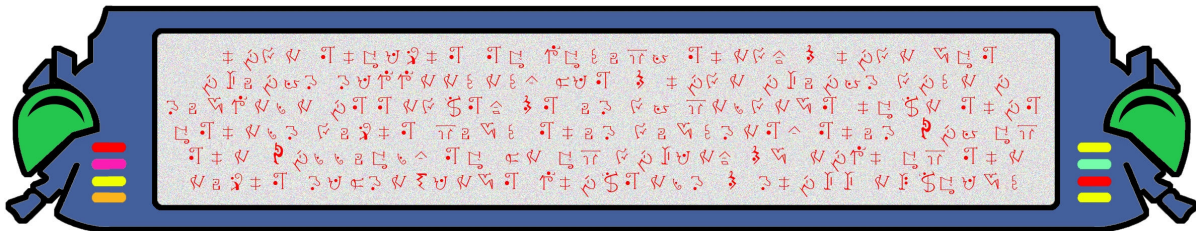
"Think..." said Torque, shaking his cranial unit, "Think it's new... combat... upgrade... can't help..." he raised his head and Preditron realized with surprise that something had caused Torque's optics to reconfigure themselves into a single red sensor.

"Just hold on, Torque," Preditron said, advancing slowly, "We can get you some help when we get out of this..."

Preditron heard a creaking behind him. Incredibly, horrifically, Roadhandler's body was lurching back to life. It let out a hideous strangled groan, and then convulsed. As Preditron snarled and back away, purple light began to pour from the Autobot's spark chamber and engulf the animated corpse. He watched, appalled and fascinated, as circuits and panels rotated, erupted and contorted impossibly. As the purple glow faded, Preditron was confronted with a hulking mechanoid, squatter than Roadhandler had been but somehow more solid looking, with enormous scything clawed arms and a monocular gaze, which it fixed right on him. From speakers somewhere in its body a metallic voice rasped, "Seek. Locate. Destroy."

He turned to Torque, who was shuddering in the same manner, internal light spilling from any gaps in his armor plating. "Seek..." he croaked.

Preditron growled; there was only one thing for it. "Beast mode!"



Ikard stepped back in shock as Ser-Ket hurtled downwards, transforming out of dragon mode as she plunged. She landed with a crouch on the podium in front of him and made him stagger, but he regained his prissy composure quickly.

"That's enough!" she shouted, "This has gone on long enough. Stop the Game!"

Ikard shrugged, "Don't ask me," he said, "Ask them." He gestured to the baying crowd. "I think it's a little too late for a change of heart."

"Is it?" growled Cheetor, stepping out of the crowd. "You've got Preditron in there illegally. I doubt Lio Convoy would approve of that."

Ikard flared his blue tentacles and hissed, "How are you still so blind to what Lio Convoy wants? He wants an army. We help with that. Guns, ammunition, and rations. Troops, trained and drilled into cohesive units. We're good at all that, but do you know who does it even better?"

Ser-Ket spat a ball of molten acid, "Talk."

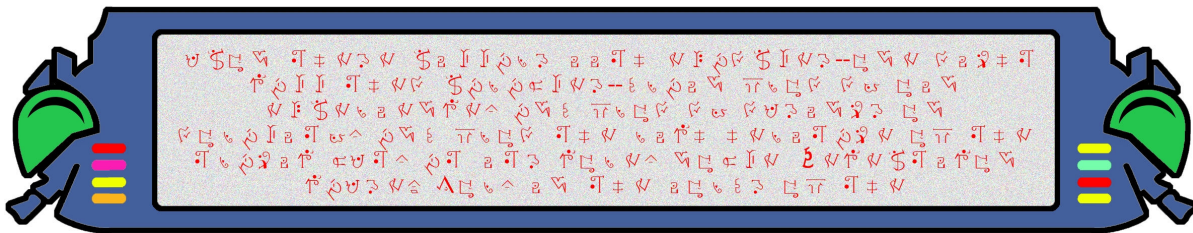
"The Tripredacus Alliance."

Ser-Ket still looked confused but Cheetor winced, "So that's why Blackarachnia was so evasive. The IPS won't work with the Resistance if Preditron is still in the picture."

Ikard smiled, "Pretty much. I mean, who can blame them? They're just the ones who ran the Predacon cause and made the hard choices for the last few decades. Preditron's no ordinary leader, no mere politician. He's a legend. Who in their right processor would want to compete with a legend?" He paused for effect, and Ser-Ket growled. "Anyway, you had your orders, I had mine. No one else needs to suffer... much. Guard!"

Gaidora stepped forward. Ikard nodded, "What are you waiting for?" he asked. She growled an inarticulate acknowledgment and stepped forward, backhanding Cheetor across the faceplate. He grunted in shock and staggered backwards. As Ser-Ket looked on, stunned, Ikard turned to the crowd and assured them, "All part of the show!"

Ser-Ket lunged, but it was too late, Gaidora had her wrong-footed and she too found herself falling back towards the arena floor. She transformed to dragon mode and glided into land, but as far as the crowd was concerned, she and Cheetor were both part of the game now, and nobody would let them out without spilled energon.



In jurassanoid mode and full battle rage, Preditron roared his triumph as he tore the cranial unit from the thing that had been Roadhandler. He transformed and made to shoot the Torque-thing, but it was closer than he had anticipated and knocked his gun aside with ease. "Seek. Locate. Destroy."

As he backed away, his foot encountered a loose pipe and it slid from under him. He went over backwards, firing wide, as the monster got closer, "Seek. Locate." It said, grabbing him with its clawed arms, "Destroy." Preditron writhed this way and that, trying to escape. He transformed to beast-mode but remained caught. "Destroy." It said in his face, "Destroy. Destroy. Destroy." It held him pinned to the wall by one hand as it started to tear at his chest with the other. Repair nanites flocked to the opening wound as damage alarms thundered in his cranium.

Just as the questing claws threatened to pierce the very spark chamber itself he was thrown to the floor as a gold and green shape bundled into the creature from the side.

It smashed into the filing covered arena floor and the newcomer pinned it with a clawed foot. Ser-Ket leaned into the creature's face and melted it to slag with her breath.

She turned her dragon head towards him, "Sorry we're a little late." She said, as Cheetor sauntered out from behind a car, in beast mode.

Preditron transformed back to robot mode and asked, "Are these drones something to do with the game?"

“No way,” she said, “It’s something new. Have you seen any more?”

Preditron nodded, “Roadhandler turned into one.”

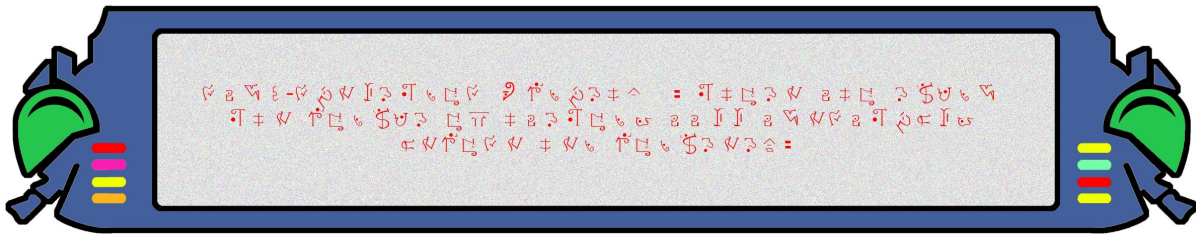
Her eyes went a little wide at that but she soon regained her businesslike glare, “We encountered two more and a couple of dead Micromasters. Wherever they’re from, they’re not Resistance and I don’t think they’re here to rescue these guys either.”

“Before he turned, Torque mentioned something about a combat upgrade.” Preditron mused, “If that wasn't you then...”

“The Builders are infecting their own troops,” said Cheetor. “Somehow they always manage to top themselves for inventiveness, don't they?”

They heard weapons fire and explosions from another part of the arena. Preditron shook his head, “I told them to hold their fire.”

Cheetor indicated the burning creature, “With this going on I don't think your peaceful protest is likely to last, do you? Let's go!”



When they reached the arena wall, Cheetor tensed for resistance to their escape. Instead he saw, with horror, that they were too late. The hulking purple drone things had climbed their way out of the pit and were carving their way through the crowd.

Seemingly at random they chose victims to tear apart and others they plunged a claw deep into their spark and started the sequestration process, creating a newly blank soldier in a few agonizing nanokliks.

“Light ‘em up!” Preditron roared, transforming his clawed arm into an energy weapon. His beams struck a drone and blasted its head clean off. Immediately two more turned to face the arena. Engines roared overhead as the Air Strike Patrol flanked wide and screamed in for a strafing run. Micro-charges blew one of the attackers to scrap and the other wobbled sideways to be finished off by Cheetor’s blaster.

Ser-Ket punched the air, “Yes!” she yelled, but it was short-lived. Smaller, lither drones started to take off from the bleachers. They transformed into a swarm of deadly looking jets and unleashed a barrage of firepower that blew Whisper to pieces and forced Storm Cloud to crash-land, where he was immediately set upon by the ground-based attackers and transformed as his spark was irreparably tainted.

“Ser-Ket, get us up there!” Cheetor shouted. She transformed to dragon mode and hauled both bots out of the burning arena and into the stampede-wracked bleachers.

“Where are they coming from?” Ser-Ket asked, in vain.

“Don’t know, don’t care yet,” said Preditron as he backhanded one of the hovering jet drones down the stairs. “We have to get these people out of here!”

Ser-Ket took to the air again, blasting energon fire from her beast mode mouth. The attackers were resilient but could be killed—the problem was they kept making more.

The jets banked round but she snarled and grabbed the lead drone with both claws, whirling it round and through the rotors of two more, “Seek. Locate.” They bemoaned as they plunged to the deck.

“We need a perimeter,” Cheetor said, “We need to get ourselves between the drones and the crowd.”

“Easily done,” said Preditron, “Beast mode!” His saurian jaw roared and he charged into the fray, tossing purple and blue bodies left and right. They immediately changed course to intercept, letting Cheetor and Ser-Ket lay down a withering blanket of fire.

“I think we’ve got this!” Ser-Ket crowed, before there was a grinding roar, and a whole section of bleacher shook and tore away, scores of dark bodies poured insect-like from the hole. “Damn it!”

“They must have gotten hundreds.” Cheetor shook his head. Ser-Ket turned to face the new threat but was blindsided by a be-tentacled shape barreling into her. “Seek. Locate.” It spat into her face as she fought desperately, “Destroy. Destroy.” She could see that the assimilation process was not finished. Ikard was still recognizable even as the virus, if that’s what it was, consumed his mind, “Destroy!” he yelled as they wrestled, “Destroy. Destroy me. Destroy me... please. Seek. Locate.”



Ser-Ket managed to get free enough to transform. In dragon mode she was able to swat the Ikard thing aside. It transformed into a disgusting, misshapen squid-like shape and she stamped down hard, leaning down and blasting energon fire into its face. "Thank you," she heard, or perhaps imagined, as the tragic thing melted into slag.

Cheetor and Preditron had managed to get between the drone horde and the civilians, herding them towards the exits. "Let's move these people out!" Preditron roared. He turned to Ser-Ket, "This is it. This is what being a Predacon is all about. Comrades by your side, innocents to protect and a worthy foe to contend with."

"Thank you," she said, "For sharing it with me."

Cheetor cocked his head on one side, "You guys are crazy," he said, "Just keep shooting!"

They fought the rearguard action out of the arena and to the landing pad. What civilians there were loaded onto shuttles and transports and with Autojetter and Ser-Ket flying escort, most got away.

"What with the fighting for our lives thing," Cheetor said to Preditron, "I forgot to mention, Lio Convoy wants to kill you."

Preditron looked ruefully out of the *Star Dasher's* window as explosions blossomed across Safe Zone Alpha Two, spilling over into the rest of Protihex beyond it. "I assumed as much. But now, I think, Lio Convoy's priorities are about to change."

STAR DASHER



**SUB GROUP:
STAR SEEKERS**

PRIMARY FUNCTION: TRANSPORT

"SHOOT FOR THE STARS, YOU'RE BOUND TO FIND SOMETHING OUT THERE."

BIO

Disgusted by humanity's intervention in the Great War, Star Dasher left the Decepticons to join Cannonball III and the Star Seekers. Fiercely loyal to his captain, Star Dasher heartily drank in the life of a pirate...as well as an excess of Nightmare Fuel. From stealing aether crystals from Kolar to launching death-balls at nearby asteroids, Star Dasher did his best to forget about the war and just live in the moment. This left him with an extreme willingness to risk nearly anything just to take the edge off.

Though often impulsive, Star Dasher proved a capable pirate, with very few failures on his record. This boost of self-esteem helped greatly to patch Star Dasher's war wounds. But not long after inducting the Nebulon as part of their crew, the Star Seekers were hunted down by two robotic Headmaster mercenaries. Devcon overpowered Star Dasher and Neurotoxin, while his partner took down Guillotine and Cannonball. Bilge, Tornado, Pillage, and the Nebulon were subdued by the Headmasters, Slizardo and Spratt.

The pirates were taken back to Cybertron, where Star Dasher was repurposed into transit. With his attempt to escape the war squandered, Star Dasher's bitterness reached new heights, and rage became the only thing that fueled him—rage...and lots of engex. Thus was his state when he was captured in a Resistance raid and his higher functions disconnected, leaving him a non-sentient vehicle. Given how much he'd come to hate the universe and all it had to offer, part of him welcomed such a fate.

WEAPONS/ABILITIES

Star Dasher's Trobulum-laced armor has proven resistant to high-powered artillery and laser fire and even withstanding the searing fangs of an Inferno Creature. In train mode, he can travel up to 350 mph. Through mass displacement, Star Dasher can increase his size to accommodate a small Macromaster crew in shuttle mode, which can reach speeds of 18,000 mph in orbit. He hasn't adequately tested his capabilities beyond that.

Star Dasher's primary weapon is his "Tech Wrecker"—able to severely damage or disrupt any technology that is targeted. He usually carries a small Boomshake stash as well. Though not much for hand-to-hand, Cannonball insisted he learn a few Tekkaido grapples that have helped out in a pinch.

WEAKNESSES

At his peak, Star Dasher's recklessness has gotten his crew into a number of troublesome situations, and his intense loyalty to Cannonball has clouded his judgment before. His penchant for guzzling engex has occasionally left Star Dasher too over-energized to be much good to anyone. Since becoming mode-locked as a shuttle, his enormous font of bitterness left him emotionally vulnerable and caused him to take frequent unnecessary risks, resulting in more than one minor accident.



VEHICLE MODES

LOCOMOTIVE/ SHUTTLE

