

Cold.

That's what I am. I'm an empty shell. Anything that I once was means nothing now. If my...life...held any value, it's long past.

No.

Not cold.

Hot with fire.

Somewhere, deep down, there's an inferno in my belly and it wants to be free. I try to extinguish the flames but I can't.

This is all I'm good for now. I'm a vehicle for depression and self-loathing. I want to fight free, to use the fiery rage in my belly, but it's not there for strength. It's my own personal Hell.

I would wish to die...but I'm already dead.

Earth, Western Washington State, 2042 09.10.25.4, Global Standard Time.

Blackness. As black as the heart that once beat in Galvatron's chest. I stand here in total darkness. The room is devoid of light; dark; empty; disappointed....

"...from the evidence presented to me...I must plead, guilty as charged." They play it back over and over again. Wasn't once enough? I try to think but I can't get past the...wanting...I want nothing more than to die.

"From the evidence presented to you?" The inquisitor pauses, "Is that your final answer?"

"Yes...it's my only answer. The amount of evidence is incredibly damning. Whether I can remember committing the transgression or not, I must be guilty...it's the only logical explanation. I fired upon Perceptor."

"Scattershot, do you understand the gravity of this situation?" His voice is flanged, reverbed and distorted beyond recognition but his feelings ring true. He wants, me to be innocent. I wish I felt the same way.

"I do."

"Then you understand the consequences of your guilt?" His voice is altered for his own anonymity but his speech pattern is all too familiar...Inquisitor Number One is Goldbug.

"Yes."

Another, equally distorted, voice calls my name from the darkness, "Scattershot?"

"Yes...?"

"Do you have nothing at all to say in your defense?"

"I...I remember nothing after 22:15:15.7 Global Standard Time on the day in question. Earlier that day, I was notified that Perceptor was under direct orders from Optimus Prime, himself, to have no contact with me."

"You chose to disobey his orders?"

"Yes. Prime's order seemed unfair, ill-timed and irrational."

The voice responds, "nonetheless, they were Prime's orders." Inquisitor Number Two is Brainstorm.

"Yes...my decision was foolish...regardless of my opinion, Prime's orders must be obeyed." Scattershot turns away, "regardless...he is Optimus Prime...."

Inquisitor Number One, Goldbug, asks "is that all?"

"Other than stating that I can't imagine myself doing that...act, yes...that is all."

Inquisitor Number Two, Brainstorm adds, "Well, from this point on, this Tribunal's duty is merely a formality...Number Three, proceed with the hearing."

A third voice, like a blitzkrieg, unerringly proceeds, "Scattershot, on the night of the thirteenth, did you in fact enter Optimus Prime's quarters and demand of him to rescind his orders regarding you and your relationship with Perceptor? Yes or No?"

"Apparently."

Sternly, Number Three responds, "'Apparently' is not 'yes or no.' I repeat, did you enter Prime's quarters and make said demands of him? Yes or No?"

"I repeat, apparently...I don't remember."

"Note that 'apparently' will be recorded as 'yes.' Did you in fact use a weapon against Perceptor?"

"Yes, you have the footage and my admission."

"Note that the accused refers to exhibit 'B.'"

A monitor appears. On it, I see myself arguing with Prime...we're in his quarters. There's no audio but I'm visibly enraged. It's so utterly uncharacteristic of me. So utterly uncharacteristic...it's like I'm watching someone else. Prime stands up as to calm me down. It's odd, I watch Prime and he acts like himself--his old self. He acts as if he's the Prime that I've only heard about. Anyone else would surely have taken this as an act of aggression. I see myself draw a weapon. Utterly uncharacteristic...I can't believe it. I pull my weapon on him but I'm pulled away--by Perceptor. I turn around and fire. The first shot hits him in the shoulder. Another shot misses and hits the wall. Falling, Perceptor draws his gun and fires blindly. I'm struck in the face. I fall to the ground...dead. The screen dies with me.

I sometimes have an unfathomable contempt for my own existence. This is one of those times.

"I'm not proud of that."

"Nor am I. You've brought shame upon the Autobots, Scattershot. You're good at that, though. Aren't you?"

I listen to the speaker's words. He has a deep disdain for me...he doesn't try to hide it. His words echo in my mind when I realize...I don't know who this speaker is.

I grow sick of this. "When do I face my sentence?"

"I'll get to that momentarily," he says. "Both Optimus Prime and Perceptor testified earlier, as you are well aware." The tone of his voice bites into me. It is no less than I deserve. "Perceptor testified in person and Optimus Prime by proxy. They both testified...on your behalf."

"What?"

He tries to hold back his disgust and it is nearly killing him. "Upon conferring with Perceptor, Prime has removed his grievance against you. After the incident, an imperfection in your cerebral router had been discovered. It had apparently impairing your ability to think for years. It is...apparently...to blame for your actions."

The weight on my shoulder disappears and moves to my brain...this is all too confusing.

"Upon earlier testimony, Prime's charges have been dropped and your punishment has been commuted to time served. You are free to go."

End of Chapter Seven.