
Episode 230 – Less, much less than meets the eye.

The street café was bright, sunny and open, giving a relaxed and casual air that seemed almost at odds with the bustling futuristic metropolis around it. Its tables were filled, their occupants going about their everyday lives, engaged in conversations on all manner of topics from work to home to idle chatter. It was a perfect place to meet somebody if you wanted to blend in and not be seen.

That was why Matt was here, casually reviewing the local news on his datapad. There was very little interesting that immediately caught his eye; the local politics were largely stable and missable, and there was little sign of odd or unexpected cultural trends that might suggest that there was anything on this world out of the ordinary. That, of course, only made him wonder about his current part-time employer, the so-called Voice, even more.

“Sorry to keep you,” Rebecca began with a friendly smile, one that he knew had not a hint of sincerity to it. She sat down at the same table as him, dropping her own laptop on the tabletop before setting up.

“Not a problem. It’s good to see you.” His reply carried about as much honesty as her greeting.

“So, shall we skip pretending to be nice and get down to business?” She asked, still feigning at politeness, her body language suggesting somebody meeting a friend for coffee rather than a clandestine meeting that flew in the face of both their assignments.

“Of course.” He gave her a friendly nod and smile. “Rules are rules; we do not discuss anything not immediately relevant to the subject matter.”

“Nobody asks where the other got their information,” She agreed. “We probe the objective, not how we got there.”

Matt nodded. “So with that being said, I’ll show you mine if you show me yours.”

Rebecca smirked a little at the phrasing. “I have two things, one minor, the other potentially major.”

“Let me guess, Natasha’s tattoo is one of them.”

Rebecca nodded a little. “Yes. It’s a Terran Alliance crest, and an accurate one at that; the details put it down to the 2130s. She claims that she was drunk when she got it, but the truth is that she seemed to be unsure herself.”

“And you want to know why she has a thousand-year-old insignia on her shoulder,” He agreed.

“Natasha doesn’t strike me as the type to be interested in history,” Rebecca noted. “In fact, I suspect she rarely remembers what she did that morning.”

“Ties in to what I found.” He handed her a small picture, one that she glanced at.

“Fascinating.” It was a group of soldiers, all but one of which were wearing helmets. That one was a familiar-looking woman, her black hair tied into a messy ponytail. “Been able to verify it?”

"The original appears authentic," He agreed. "Which means that either Natasha has a forty-generation predecessor that she bears an uncanny resemblance to, or..."

"...or as strange as it seems, it provides a logical explanation for the tat," Rebecca agreed. "Either that or the family that she's been able to keep a startling resemblance to has made it some sort of hereditary mark. Not out of the question, but at the same time..."

"You think we need to find out more about her background." Matt finished.

"Exactly."

"So what was your other one?" He asked. "I assume it's not concerned with the tattoo?"

"Maybe." She shrugged. "There's something implanted in her back. It's set to a passive receive-only mode, and is guarded by a ferocious encryption key the likes of which I've never seen."

It was a nice apartment, well-lit, spacious and well furnished. A pair of nice, plush leather couches set the scene, arranged in a neat L-shape, with a small coffee table between them. What dominated the room, however, was the massive flat-screen against one wall, so big as to loom over all else around it. By comparison, the broad windows with views out over a strangely futuristic metropolis and the other doorways leading away to gods alone knew where seemed like afterthoughts.

"So in the end the band were pretty understanding that I did a gig without them," Natasha commented as she entered, her guitar on her back. "It was short notice and none of 'em had travelled that much. So for the most part things were fine."

"Glad to hear..." Rick replied as he followed her in, tablet in hand. "Wait. For the most part?"

She shrugged as she ducked into the kitchen, emerging with a beer. "Well, I had to make it up to them somehow, so I agreed to run a few errand for them in return. That and if I dig up any cool powered armour components or stuff they want first pick."

"Fair." Rick nodded. "Can't go wrong with quality salvage."

"Yeah, and if I find a good micro-missile launcher, well, I know I'll have a buyer." She grinned.

"Thanks for that though." Rick nodded. "Your show really made the night."

"I'm just glad that I got to miss the fic that came with it." She grinned.

"The less Delta invasion you have in your life, the better," Rebecca noted as she stepped into the room. "It's been known to cause cancer in lab rats."

"Delta Invasion is not fit for human consumption," Matt added as he followed her. "And that's coming from someone who read the two-minute summary."

"Shouldn't they be baiting each other and fringing politeness?" Natasha whispered.

"True, it's a bit odd. Makes me think that they're up to even more than usual," Rick simply replied.

"We're right here," Rebecca interjected.

"And you're also late. That's my job!" Natasha argued back.

"Well, she has us there." Matt shrugged. "The weight of evidence is overwhelming."

"Good morning all. It's good to see, you here, and it's been a while, Matt and Natasha." The Voice practically beamed as it cut in, killing all further discussion.

"And good morning to you, Henry Masterton," Rebecca simply shot back.

"So what's the day's hurt?" Natasha asked. "'cause it's gonna hurt, no matter what."

"Well today we have something new," The Voice explained. "Today we have a Transformers Prime fanfic."

"That's hardly new," Natasha scoffed. "We already did TransFic; in fact, it was the first ep that Matt and I did."

"That was a professionally published comic," Matt flatly stated.

"It was?" She shrugged. "Coulda fooled me."

"Anyway, if you'll take your seats, we'll get started," The voice continued, a little put off by the interruption.

"Guess we won't get paid otherwise," Rick admitted. "And that keeps me in bacon."

"Wouldn't want to miss out on that." Natasha nodded as she joined him, Rebecca and Matt following. "Roll the crap!" The big screen turned on, switching the world to script format.

> Forever and Always

Rick: The title of every sappy chick-flick ever.

> By autogal233

> Hi everybody! This is my first story! Go easy on me, please? Anyway, enjoy!

Rebecca: Since your name's not Kevin or Tom, then maybe.

> Prologue

> I woke up just about how I wake up any day.

Natasha: I stopped being asleep.

> To my alarm clock, ringing at full speed around 7:00 am.

Matt: Well I don't know about you, but so far I'm gripped.

> I

> sluggishly got up and walked over to my drawers. I opened the cupboard and took out a plain, red t-shirt
> and black jeans. I brushed my teeth in the upstairs bathroom,

Rick: I hope the rest of the fic isn't like this, guys, because I don't think I could take any more of this relentless action.

> along with all the other teenage orphans.

> Yes, I am an orphan. My parents were murdered a few years back and left me at this god-forsaken
> warehouse they call an orphanage.

Rebecca: Hoo boy. Cue incoming generic tragic past.

> The Jasper, Nevada orphanage is right near my school. I am a freshman in high school, which means
> I'm 15.

Rick: And didn't you have any relatives that could take you in? Close friends of the family? Nothing?

Matt: They were all victims of an incredibly localized and incredibly specific natural disaster.

> The orphanage has about 9 teenagers, (plus me) and it's really hard for a teen to get adopted. So, I'm
> basically am stuck in this heck-hole.

Matt: My, such harsh language.

> My name is Grace Harbort. I am 15 with long red hair with black highlight's. I am well toned and have
> forest green eyes. My parents are dead. My life sucks. I don't know how my life can get any worse.

Rebecca: Oh cry me a river; your life could be a lot worse. You have a roof over your head and a plentiful supply of food and clothes. It's not like you're a starving refugee in some third-world hellhole.

> Because, it didn't. It was the best life a teenager can get.

Rick: Ponies for everyone!

> Short, I know. But I promise it will get better! Review please!

Matt: Think about that; do you really want us too?

> Here is chapter 2! Enjoy and love!

Natasha: There any sort of refund if we don't?

> Chapter 2: Field trip gone horribly wrong

Rick: She's gonna be abducted by an alien baboon who has a red butt. [The others look at him] It could happen.

> I walked down the stairs and joined the other kids eating breakfast.

Rebecca: Raised on a diet of gruel and disappointment.

> One major rule at this place is:

Natasha: Two men enter! One man leaves!

Rick: Really Natasha?

Natasha: What? It's not like I'm the one who can't get beyond Thunderdome.

> Get up early, get more to eat.

Matt: Have to hurry; the Soylent Green goes fast.

> I looked all around the table and everything bowl was empty.

Rick: They were, quite literally, out of everything.

> All that was left was a single red apple.

Rebecca: Symbolic of something that's well beyond this fic's grasp.

> I grabbed and walked to the hallway closet to grab my black backpack.

Natasha: Think the colour of the pack will be important?

Rick: It had better be.

> I walked out the door and away from the leaky, chipped orphanage.

Matt: My, how positively Dickensian.

> My school was only a few blocks away,

Rebecca: Sure that it wasn't uphill in the snow just to be a little more miserable?

Matt: This is Arizona.

Rebecca: Fine, in a sandstorm then.

> so I was there in 5 minutes. School starts at 8:00 am sharp. I checked my brown, 5 dollar watch.

Rick: Black backpack, brown watch? Wow, don't go crazy on the details, fic!

> 7:45. 'Great, I'm early.' I thought.

> I arrived at school to see I wasn't the only one early.

Matt: A bunch of time travelers were already there. It happens.

> There were already people in groups, talking and waiting before school starts.

Rebecca: And circling the wounded waiting for them to die.

> I looked around the swarms of girls and boys

Natasha: And swarms of insects to boot.

> and tried to find my two best friends.

Rick: Rad and Carlos. This is gonna be a long fic.

> We call ourselves, the forgotteners. Not in the bad way, like no one likes us.

Rebecca: True, nobody likes them, but that's not why they called themselves that.

> But meaning we hang out most of the time together.

Matt: What that has to do with the name is beyond me.

Rick: Hold on, I know!

Matt: Oh? What is it?

Rick: I forgot.

> I looked at a particular group and noticed Emily Jackson,

Natasha: Demi-sister to a demi-god.

> talking to a group of girls.

Rick: The dreaded Teen Girl Squad.

> Emily was tall, with light brown hair and dark blue eyes.

Rick: But what colour were her watch and backpack?

Natasha: We may never know.

> She was creative, smart, encouraging, supportive, and thoughtful.

> She's someone you want to have back you up in an argument.

Matt: She gave to charity.

Natasha: She was kind to small animals.

Rick: She was a patron of the arts.

Rebecca: And her throne was made of the skulls of her vanquished foes.

> "Hey Em! Front center!"

Rick: Now forty-five degrees right.

Natasha: Don't get acute with me, mister.

> I cried. She turned around and smiled.

Matt: In a 'lobotomy patient' kind of a way.

Rick: That's when Peter Graves and Dick Sargent stepped out of the shadows.

> She walked towards me and said, "Hey Gracie! What's going on?"

Natasha: Very little, it would seem.

> We all

> had nicknames for each other. Mine was Gracie, Emily's was Em, and the other girl, Lucy Stevenson,
> was Luc.

Rick: Mine was Rick.

Natasha: Isn't that what we call you anyway?

Rick: I felt like pointlessly restating basic information.

> Speaking of her, before I can answer Em's question, Luc came in and said, "Hey guys! Vas happinin'!" I
> turned to Luc and said, "Nothing much. You?" Before I say what Luc says, I have to tell you about her.

Matt: Please. We need to stomp the pacing some more before we run the risk of the fic going
somewhere.

> She has curly, blond hair that goes a little under her shoulders and brown eyes.

Natasha: Aaaah! Harpo!

> She is the shortest of all of us, yet she's the toughest.

Rebecca: She gets drunk in sleazy bars and punches out bikers.

> She always makes good insults, banchers, and is awesome to hang around.

Matt: Take our word on this.

Rick: Block exposition! It's better than actual characterization any day.

> If the argument with me and Em in it went wrong, and they started fighting us, I hope I have Luc
> around, because she can break a bone. She did it once!

Natasha: It's all fun and games until someone gets charged with felony assault.

> Anyway, moving on.

Matt: Please, by all means keep expositing at us.

> Luc replied, "I'm going to hate the field trip today. It's going to be so boring."

Rick: But you're going to be looking at sand. What could be better?

> That

> reminds me, we have a field trip to the Jasper, Nevada Museum of Astronomy. I'm sorta looking forward
> to it.

Matt: It makes a pleasant alternative to the bleakness of her day-to-day life.

> "I think it will be interesting." said Em. Em loves astronomy and anything about alien sightings.

> She's crazy over it. "I don't know what's gonna happen,

Natasha: At a guess I'll say that the teacher in charge will pretend to be interested while glancing at their
watch and counting the seconds until they can be rid of you.

> but it might be ok."

Rebecca: The odds are pretty slim

Rick: Or you might end up being caught in an eons-long intergalactic conflict between sentient robots.

Rebecca: I'd say the odds of that are even slimmer.

> I said. All the sudden, the bell rang and everyone charged inside.

Matt: And across the barricades, waving the tricolor and shouting revolutionary slogans.

> I walked to my locker and dialed the combination. '26-0-6.'

Natasha: I'm sure this will be important later. And by that, I mean I bloody well hope it will be.

> I thought. The lock clicked and I opened my

> locker. I had a single hook and a shelf on top as my locker. I had tons of photos and sticky notes on my

> locker.

Matt: Why do we need to know all of this? What importance does any of this have to anything?

Rick: I have two theories.

Natasha: Should I ask?

Rebecca: It's best if you humour him.

Natasha: Right, so what are they?

Rick: The first is that this is all a part of an elaborate setup. We get every aspect of their mundane lives played out in minute detail so that the transition to the extraordinary and the alien will become even more shocking. We see these girls lives transformed and the old, simple things that they took for granted become fond memories of a better, simpler time.

Natasha: Interesting, but also a bit too 'high concept' for this fic.

Rick: Well that brings me to number two, and that is that we've all died and gone to hell.

Matt: I can buy that.

> Most are of assignments and pics of me, Em, and Luc.

Matt: There they are on the grassy knoll, there they are during the fall of Saigon... good times.

> I hung my backpack on the hook and took out my pink binder and shut my locker.

Rick: Pink binder, brown watch, black backpack... what does this mean, fic? What does this all mean?

> I walked down the loud and paper airplane filled hallways and into Mrs. Brown's room.

Natasha: Brown... like the watch?

Rick: You may be onto something here.

> Mrs. Brown was my teacher. She had brown, stale hair and wrinkles on her.

Matt: She had nicotine stained teeth and fingers, and started getting twitchy before break times.

> She was strict, but was not the spawn of the devil.

Rebecca: Maybe of some lesser demon though.

> I took my seat in the middle of the classroom and watched as people walked into the room.

Rick: Tom Dyrton was, as always, late for class.

> Em and Luc came in and took their seats, too. Em sat to my right and Luc sat in front of me.

> We swapped notes and never got caught. Never.

Matt: That's what Mrs Brown was hoping they'd think. Instead, she was quietly building an extensive case against them to take to Homeland Defense.

> "All right class! Take your Seats!" cried Mrs. Brown.

Natasha [Mrs Brown]: Schnell! Schnell!

> The class rushed to their seats and Mrs. Brown

> straightened up. "Now, as you all know, we are taking a field trip to the planetarium. I want you all on your

> best behavior.

Rick: So if you're going to have a secret origin story, then make it quiet and orderly.

> Lucy, That means no crying, 'Boring!' in the middle of the tour." Some of the teens

> laughed at Luc. She did it every year, no matter what kind of punishment she got.

Matt: The detentions had failed and now she was up to working on a chain gang.

> I knew even from behind her that she rolled her eyes and grinned.

Natasha: Luc had already been expelled from every other school in the county. She keeps this up and her parents will have to move interstate.

Rebecca: If they're smart, they won't take Lucy with them

> "Now, everybody head to the buses and choose partners to sit with." cried Mrs. Brown.

Natasha [Mrs Brown]: Ze stragglers will be shot! Schnell!

> The room emptied fast as teens were rushing to the buses.

Matt: Fleeing from the danger zone while emergency services took over.

> Em,

> Luc and I sat together on the bus, even if we were crammed We were so thin that we do that all the

> time.

Rick: So if Luc's so thin, how does she manage to break bones during schoolyard fights?

Rebecca: It's the brass knuckles that do it. That and the roid rage.

> We walked out of the room and down the hall.

Natasha: Wall-crawled past some trash mobs, looted the treasure chest then made it into the boss' room.

> There were 3 buses, all in lined up.

Rick: They were all actually Decepticons, a part of a nefarious ploy to use the kids as slave labour and human shields in their secret Energon mine.

Rebecca: Decepticons? In a Transformers fic? What were you thinking?

Rick: I'm sorry. I forgot that this is a series all about high school girls and their locker combinations.

Rebecca: Thank you.

> We decided to go in the one up front.

Matt: Thrill as they choose which bus to ride on! Experience edge of your seat tension as you wait to see where they sit! Gasp as they debate over who gets the window!

> As we were lining up to get

> into the bus, I saw something out of the corner of my eye. A red and blue semi-truck was stopping at a

> red light.

Natasha: Well, given what series this is, it's pretty clear what that is.

Rick: Definitely. Gotta be Road Ranger.

Natasha: That's not what I meant!

Rick: Right, so it's Rhino, probably deployed against some secret VENOM operation.

Natasha: That's not it and you know it.

Rick: Of course; it's the truck from Knight Rider.

Natasha: You're not even close!

Rick: But I thought the Battletruck only menaced New Zealand.

Natasha: That's... wait what?

Rick: Battletruck. A cheap knock-off of Mad Max 2 that was made in NZ and featured a massive armoured truck that went around obliterating small peasant villages. The hero rode a bike that was powered by chook poo. It's better known by its International release name, Warlords of the 21st Century.

Natasha: That sounds kind of cool actually.

Rick: It's one of my favourite bad movies.

> The truck looked pretty awesome. "Hey guys. Check out that semi-truck over there. Cool or

> what?" I told Em and Luc.

Natasha [Em]: This is Arizona. They're all over the place.

Rebecca [Luc]: You really don't get out much, do you?

> They turned to look at the truck. "Pretty cool." Luc said. "Not bad." said Em.

Rick: The one with the flames painted on it was cooler though.

Matt: I liked the black one with the teal trim.

> We loaded onto the bus and sped towards the planetarium.

> Planetarium

Matt: Please don't hold back, fic! I want to know every last detail of the trip.

Natasha: Really?

Matt: No.

> As we got off the bus, I took a good look at the planetarium. It was big, and I guess glass buildings are
> in style now.

Rebecca: The brown paper and string school of architecture had been short lived, but produced some memorable, if also short lived buildings.

> "This is gonna suck." I heard Luc say.

Rick: The fic? We're well aware of it already.

> "Be a little optimistic here, Luc." Em said. "No." said Luc.

Natasha: Remind me why they're friends again?

Rebecca: They were the last to be picked for sports. And it was either Luc or the weird girl who claims that she's married to Draco Malfoy on the astral plane.

> I rolled my eyes.

Matt: Ah, that wacky Luc! She always surprises and or delights with her zany comedy antics!

> I get use to them having their little arguments. Sometimes it's fun to watch.

Rebecca: And sometimes it turns ugly and you have to call the cops.

> In the end, Luc always wins.

Matt: Beating Em's head into the pavement was an effective counter-argument.

> "Alright. I want everyone to stay with the group and pay attention! We will have a quiz
> on this tomorrow so be prepared!" I heard Mrs. Brown yell.

Natasha [Mrs Brown]: Stick with ze group or you will be devoured by ze volves! Schnell!

> I elbowed Luc and grinned. She rolled her eyes at that remark.

Rebecca: Dear fic. We, by this point, understand that Luc rolls her eyes at every single thing anyone says or does. You don't need to keep repeating it endlessly.

Rick: I dunno, it could be a part of some elaborate setup, like she's actually about to suddenly keel over of a fatal brain hemorrhage or the like and the eyerolls are a warning sign

Matt: Well that was dark for you, and yet also very amusing a thought.

> I knew that she will pay no such attention to the tour and wander off.

Rebecca: One time, Luc wandered off during their field trip to a power station. Not only did it trigger a red alert but they had to call out the national guard and lock down the facility. Cost the state's taxpayers millions too.

> We walked into the planetarium to be greeted by the tour guide. "Hi! My name is Hannah, and I will be
> your tour guide!

Rick: Hannah the tour guide will be their tour guide.

Matt: Their tour will be guided by Hannah who will guide their tour.

> Today I will let you view the science lab where all of our research is done.

Natasha: Today they're conducting experiments into bombarding organisms with gamma radiation. Nothing can go wrong with this.

> Then, we will visit..." This goes on for a while. 5 minutes later,

Rick: Hannah had told everyone what colours her folder, backpack and watch were, the combination to her locker and what was in it, what her walk to work was like and where she sat on the bus.

> "Alright! Lets begin the tour." She walked to the left and

> we followed her into a room with a label at the top of the door that said 'Research facility'.

Matt: It was actually the lunch room. Astrophysicist humour.

> As we walked in, we were surrounded by glass.

Rick: They'd been trapped in the agony booth.

> On the other side of the glass were people in white lab coats, walking

> around and studying what ever was in that room.

Natasha [Overly serious]: Just as we thought. This is a chicken.

> "Alright, lets begin! Here we have a triangular shaped

> object that we found in Montana. It has a strong, nuclear reaction around it..."

Rick: So they found a Minicon Panel?

Rebecca: Of course, why you're taking shcoolkids through the lab which has unknown artefacts that are giving off strong radiation is another matter.

> I trailed off along with Luc to the other side of the room.

> "What the heck is that?" Luc said. I looked on the table and saw a cube shaped object on it.

Rebecca: It's an artifact from a long forgotten age and an alien culture.

Natasha: Who?

Rebecca: The eighties. It's a Rubik's Cube.

> It had markings on it that did not look familiar.

Matt: One dot on one side; six on the opposite. Three on the top, four on the bottom. Five on the other side, two on the last.

Rick: Tricky.

> "Guys, what are you doing? We should be with the other group now."

Rebecca: Ah don't be a wuss. It's just an unknowable artifact from beyond space and time.

> I turned around and saw Em walking to us.

Natasha [Em]: Em not feel good. Radiation make Em brain go funny.

> "Aw, come on, Em. This is cool." I said. Em looked through the glass and saw the object.

Rick: She'd always wanted her own Gom Jabbar.

> "Ok, it's cool. But come on, we have to go." said Em.

> "Uhhh...guys. I don't want to break up this little tea party, but...look." said Luc. I turned to see the cube glowing. It glowing a bright blue color.

Rick: The Cosmic Cube!

Natasha: See, I didn't get that in Avengers. Why call it a 'Tesseract'? Why not go with the simple 'Cosmic Cube?'

Matt: Likely because they felt it was too silly.

Natasha: It's a film in which two Norse gods, a big green guy in purple pants and a drunk in a suit of armour fight during an alien invasion of New York while pirate Samuel L. Jackson looks on and calling it the 'cosmic cube' is too silly?

Matt: Clearly.

> But the strangest thing was no one seemed to notice.

Matt: Luc was levitating and speaking in tongues.

> "What's happening?" cried Em. "Don't ask me. Ask that thing!" replied Luc.

Rebecca: Damn enigmatic alien artifacts never come with a user guide.

> Just as Luc and Em were beginning to argue, three beams came out of the cube and went straight to our chests.

Rick: At last, we finally have a secret origin story. Now all we need to do is wait another four hours until Uncle Ben is killed and then another six of uncomfortable staring at Gwen Stacey.

> "What the...!" cried Luc. "Holy crap!" I cried. The beams were at us for about 10 seconds and then they stopped. We panted like crazy and looked at each other.

Natasha [Luc]: Again!

> "Weird." said Luc. "You're telling me." I said. We stared at the cube. "We never speak of this." I heard Emsay. "Ditto." I said.

Rebecca: And when they lay dying of horrible radiation poisoning while the doctors scratched their heads over what had caused it, the three of them continued to maintain their silence.

> And we walked away. Shocked. Creep out. And questioning.

Matt: Largely over what such a dangerous artifact was doing at a publicly-accessible planetarium

> They get their powers! Also, I had a hint of the Autobots in that.

Rick: Really? I must have missed it.

Natasha: Oh come on, Rick. It was the red truck! Even you can figure out what was with that.

Rick: Of course, silly me. I should have realized.

Natasha: Well derr.

Rick: It was Scattorshot.

Natasha: ...who?

Rick: A European exclusive version of the 1993 Combat Hero Optimus Prime, sold under a different name. He had different stickers as well.

Natasha: ...do you do this on purpose?

Rebecca: I've often wondered that myself.

> Don't worry, there will be more! Review! That's what keeps me going!

Matt: Even the bad ones?

Rebecca: They keep the fic going out of spite.

> Hey guys! I AM SO SORRY ABOUT THE VERY LONG DELAY. My computer was being weird to me
> yesterday

Rick: The Caps lock key got stuck.

>and it said that I updated the story.

Natasha: 'The computer ate my homework' is always gonna be a lame excuse.

> Well, that was wrong!

Matt: Friend Computer would never lie to you, citizen.

> I am really sorry and I promise you guys I will update more and more.

Rebecca: No excuses! It's the salt mines for you.

> Also, I'm brainstorming some new stories.

Rick: Give me a call. I'm sure we could work something out.

Natasha: So you could steal the idea?

Rick: Maybe just have a controlling interest in it.

> Hope you like this chapter. Peace out!

> Disclaimer: I don't own the Transformers.

Matt: But I do own Inhumanoids. It was cheap.

> If I did, I would bring them to school for my late biology project. ;)

Natasha [Mrs Brown]: While your collection of plastic toy robots is impressive in and of itself, they have nothing to do with biology. You have failed the subject and must leave my class. Schnell!

> The Discovery

Rick: We discovered Australia! Hooray!

> My mouth remained closed the whole day.

Natasha: Line?

> I didn't speak, neither did Em or Luc.

Natasha: Line?

> We just listened to the tour and said nothing.

Natasha: Does anyone have a line?

>When it was finally over, I walked back to the orphanage and climbed into my bed.

Natasha: Forget it!

> I looked up at the wooden soaked roof and let out a long sigh.

Rebecca: It was soaked with the tears of her fellow orphans and lined with their crushed dreams.

>Thoughts bounced around my head.

Rick: Like spastic pinballs on speed.

> What was that thing? Did it do anything to us?

Natasha [Grace]: Would we end up growing extra limbs?

> Sure hope not. As if my life could get any worse.

Matt: Yeah, you're so envious of Congalese civil war refugees.

> I skipped dinner and stayed in my room. When it was around 9:00,

Rick: She watched the pile of shows she'd recorded on her Digital Set-Top.

Matt: Her life is a hellish misery, remember?

Rick: Oh yeah. She carved stone tablets then cried herself to sleep.

> I decided to go to bed. I didn't feel like changing, or brushing my teeth.

>I started to shut my eyes when I heard my iPhone ring.

Natasha: So if she leads such a bleak and miserable and deprived existence, where did she get an iPhone from and how is she paying for the service?

Rebecca: She shivved another kid for it. Way to go in these Dickensian hellholes.

> It was all the way across the room.

Rick: Across the frozen wastes, past the impenetrable mountains and across the sea of fire.

> I really did not want to get. I lazily stretched out my hand trying to use the force or something,

Matt: Use the Force! Summon your iPhone with all your rage, all your hatred and your journey to the Dark Side will be complete!

>but nothing happened.

Rebecca: The laws of physics chose to stay as they were.

>I tightened the muscles in my arm and the strangest thing happened.

Natasha: They exploded.

> My phone began to float.

[Matt gives a sinister chuckle]

>At first, I didn't know what to think.

Rick: Dull Surprise!

> I though it was some stupid prank,

Natasha: In her younger days, Jean Grey was an incorrigible prankster. Didn't work out so well when she got older though.

Matt: What happened?

Natasha: Her 'devour your sun' routine got old fast.

> but my phone was floating by itself.

Matt: I guess her provider likes to leave her hanging.

> I thought the place was haunted, but I don't believe in ghosts.

Rebecca: You don't believe in ghosts and yet you still think the place is haunted. There's a flaw in your logic.

Rick: She doesn't believe in ghosts in general, but Poltergeists in specific are another matter.

> I moved my hand up a little and the phone followed.

Rick: This is like a cat with a laser pointer. [Moves his hand up and down] I could do this all day.

> Holy shit! I cried in my mind. I put my hand down and my phone dropped back on the dresser.

>My laziness turned into strength as I got up and started to run out of the orphanage.

Rebecca: Confronted with the unknown? Why yes, running blindly into the night is easily the best solution.

> I ran about two blocks when I stopped.

Matt [Grace]: I had no idea where I was.

>What the hell am I thinking?! Where am I going? I thought.

Natasha: And, more to the point, did you remember your pants?

>I thought about going to Em's. I trust her, and she's pretty smart.

Matt: Em was smart enough to know that Grace would believe anything you told her, especially that she could trust her.

> I started to jog towards her house.

> Em was really rich.

Rebecca: Which makes me wonder why she hangs around with a dirt-poor orphan.

Rick: They're forming their appropriately diverse group of friends. All they need is a Native American lesbian and a black Muslim in a wheelchair and they're set.

> Her house was covered in flowers.

Natasha: Damn Triffids get everywhere.

> It was a white house, with tan roofings and wooden floors.

>When I got to Em's, I bent down and started to pant. I ran, like, 9 miles to her house and I was beat.

Matt: And it took her, what, five hours?

>"Grace?" I looked up. It was Em and all her glory.

Rebecca: Radiating light from her halo, angelic choir behind her.

> "Hey." I said.

>"C'mon in! You look exhausted!

Natasha [Em]: It's as if you did something dumb like run across town.

> And there's something really important I need to tell you!" she cried.

Rick: If this is about Snape and Dumbledore... she knows.

> I had a feeling on what the really important topic was.

Matt: The changes in the Mongolian philosophies from destruction to conquest during Kublai Khan's reign in China.

> She guided me to her room. It was a large room, with green spots all over it

Natasha: Room should see someone about that.

> and infested with

Rick: Ninjas!

Rebecca: Not you too.

Rick: Well, since Dan's not here, somebody had to.

> fluffy pillows. When she shut her door, we shouted our names out at the same time.

Rick: TETSUO!

Natasha: KANEDA!

>"You first." I said. She took a deep breathe and let it all out.

Rebecca [Em]: I woke up and had a shower and got dressed and had breakfast and then I went to school where I met you outside and we talked for a bit and then we went into the class and Mrs Brown shouted at us and...

> "Okay, so, when I was coming home from

>school today, I tried to open the door to my room, but I couldn't!

Matt: Doorknobs are hard work.

> My hand went right through!

Rick: In retrospect, the tissue-paper door was not a good idea.

> I literally walked into my room not having to the freakin door!?" she shouted.

Natasha: In all fairness, that's the way that Kool-Aid man does it too.

> "I made my phone levitate in mid air! You think you have it easy?!" I shouted back.

Rebecca [Grace]: Having superpowers is tough! You have no idea how horrible it is, man!

Rick: So... any Claremont X-Men comic ever?

Rebecca: Pretty much.

>Just then, Em's phone rang. She answered it. "Hello?" she said. There was silence.

Rick: Great. We're being crank called by Marcell Marceau

> Then, "OMG! Get thefrick over here,

Natasha: Ermigerd.

Matt: Dialogue by your Facebook wall.

> wegotta tell you something. Grace is with me by the way." Silence.

Rebecca: The empty air is the best dialogue yet.

> "See ya." she said, the hung up.

> "What's wrong?" I asked. "That was Lucy. Her father has a ton of cement blocks in her garage, don't ask me why,

Matt: Her father is an enforcer for the local Mafia family.

Natasha: It would explain a lot

> and they fell on her!"

Rebecca: For no reason other than to demonstrate that she had superpowers.

Rick: It often happens.

> "What!" I shouted. "Is she alright?"

Rick: Crushed every bone in her body. But thanks for asking.

> "She lifted the god forsaken blocks off of her like they were made of plastic!" she said.

Rebecca: Just take her word for it even though there's no evidence at all to support it.

> At that very moment, Luc arrived.

Matt: That was fast. What did she do, phone from just outside?

Natasha: She also got teleportation powers.

> We heard a door open downstairs and then shut. Then, Em's door was opened.

Rick: Intense door opening action!

> "Dude, this has been the craziest day of my whole freakin life!" she yelled.

Rebecca: It's crazy, it's zany and maybe even a little bit whacky.

> "I know! What the hell is going on!

Matt: Given that this is a Transformers fic, I'd say it's a bizarre and yet not that unprecedented genre shift.

Rick: Maybe it'll become an Animated fic, and they'll fight Angry Archer and Professor Princess.

> Gracie can lift things with her magical hands, I can walk through door knobs,

Natasha: Not actual doors, just doorknobs. Not that useful a power.

> and you make a weight set look like they were made of wood!" cried Em.

Rebecca: Actual type of wood may vary.

>That made me giggle.

>Em's door opened to her mom. "Emily! What in god's name is going on!

Rick: Secret files and origins, mum.

> Micheal is trying to sleep."

> Micheal was Em's little brother.

Natasha: Reckon he got super-powers too?

Rick: Naw, but I bet he'd be great for getting imperiled at script-appropriate moments.

> "Mom I can explain..." she started. "Honey, I am sorry, but if you want to

> finish your little conversation or whatever, do it somewhere else." interrupted Em's mom.

Rebecca: In what world is shooing your teenage daughter out of the house late at night a good idea?

Matt: Responsible Parenting: not like this.

> We sighed.

> "Let's head to my place." said Luc. We nodded in agreement.

Rick: Yes! Let's head out in the middle of the night all on our own! Nothing can go wrong with this.

> We followed her out the door. Luc's house required going through a bit of desert, because she lived on

> the poor side of Jasper.

Rebecca: So, to re-iterate, three fifteen year-old girls are going for a hike through the desert to the bad part of town at night. In what world is any of this a good idea?

Rick: I'd say that it sounds like an origin story set-up, but it already happened.

> Her house was better looking than the orphanage will ever be.

Matt: It had four walls and a roof. The luxuries!

Natasha: In case you missed it, her life sucks.

> When we reached the desert, the heat hit we like a rocket.

Rick: Pretty hot out here in the middle of the night

> Luc began to complain about the heat, and Em was attempting to shut her up. I never said a word.

Rebecca: ...do you think they'll ever find the bodies?

> The Nemesis

Rick: On the fringes of Fahl space, beyond the K'Tor cluster..

> "Commander Starscream." said a vehicon.

Matt: Transformers? In a Transformers fic? What is this madness?

> The commander grumbled. "That's LORD Starscream to you."

Rebecca: Earl of Worchester, heir to the throne of Essex.

> he yelled. It always tended to tick him off when someone said commander instead of lord.

Natasha: Not when it applied to him specifically, just in general. It's a quirk of his.

> Ever since Megatron left, Starscream has been trying

> to modify the Decepticons into something better.

Rick: He'd so far managed to teach them to pick up after themselves. Baby steps.

Rebecca: In all fairness, removing Megatron from the equation is usually the best way to improve a Decepticon army.

> But instead, they managed to go into hiding,

Matt: Living in Brazil under an assumed name.

> collecting energon and getting ready to fight again for three earth years.

Rick: Ready to corner the Energon market.

>"We've detected some energy readings. Three to be precise."

Rebecca: Guys, I don't want to jump to conclusions, but it does appear that the plot has arrived.

> said the vehicon, ignoring what Starscream had said before.

Natasha: When the nameless extras don't give you respect, you might as well give up trying

> "What type of energy readings?" asked Starscream.

Rick: Cheese, and lots of it.

> "It's not energon. It appears to be moving.

Matt: Really? To me it seems more like it's slowly going nowhere.

> And we have no Autobot life signals in the area." the vehicon said.

Natasha: Of course, since it's out in the desert the place is probably crawling with Rock Lords.

> Starscream thought. Then, pointing to a squad that just arrived,

Rick: They're like one of the second-string DC superteams.

Matt: How so?

Rick: They're the doomed patrol.

> "Search that area and report back." he snapped.

Natasha: And while you're out there, get some milk. Oh, and some bread too. We're almost out.

> They bowed their heads and transformed into jets.

Rebecca: Easily disposed of goons who turn into jets. The cornerstone of the Decepticon army since 1984.

> They deployed off the Nemesis and sped towards the energy reading.

Rick: And then went to get burgers at the drive-through.

> Grace's POV

Matt: Fic, you can use things like dialogue or description as a way of introducing a scene change rather than stage directions. Looks better and works better too.

Natasha: But isn't that something like hard work?

Matt: It does require a bit more effort, yes.

Natasha: Then screw that.

> "I'm just saying, we should all take a trip to Alaska or someplace."

Rebecca: This is the next most logical step after getting superpowers, I suppose.

Rick: Yeah, but they'd probably end up spending all their time sitting around and doing nothing but playing Jenga all day.

> complained Luc. I was getting really tired of her constant wining.

Natasha: Remind me why they're friend with her again? It's not like she's shown a single reason why they'd want to hang around her otherwise.

Matt: It's all part of an elaborate confidence ploy on Luc's part. She's wormed her way into their lives to the point that they can't remove her. It's what I'd do.

> I put my fingers on the bridge of my nose and said, "Someone kill me."

Rebecca: Gladly.

Matt: Really, Rebecca?

Rebecca: Hey, she asked.

>"Guys, look!" said Em. I looked at her. She was pointing to the sky.

Natasha: Yes, Em, there are such things as stars.

> I looked up and saw purple jets all in unison coming strait to us.

Matt: She can see that the jets are purple at night? Did she get super-eyesight with all that?

Rick: Her generic set of special super-hero abilities includes a broader scale of vision.

>They started to fire red lasers out of these guns.

Natasha: I thought that Decepticons used hot pink lasers.

Rick: They changed it because they didn't want people to make fun of them.

Natasha: Way too late for that.

> "Shit, I didn't mean it!" I shouted.

Matt: Maybe grievous bodily harm, but not actual death

> I jumped out of the

> way a shot. I pulled myself up and joined Em and Luc on the side of the curb, taking cover behind a
> rock.

Rick: Damn cover mechanics never work out right. You can only ever take cover behind designated 'take cover' objects, or it has your character leap halfway across the screen and into enemy fire to get out of enemy fire.

> "What the hell are those things?!" shouted Em.

> "This seriously has been the craziest day of my life!" shouted Luc!

Natasha: The moral of this story is to never go on a field trip ever.

Matt: Clearly.

> I heard thousands of shots being fired at us.

Rebecca: She also got the power of super-counting.

Rick: As well as [rolls dice] the ability to turn into liquid, to [rolls dice] spin super-fast and [rolls dice] super sense of taste

> I pulled my arms over my head and shut my eyes.

Natasha: I'm surprised that she didn't take this opportunity to remind us of how awful her life was.

> Sand covered my back from the shots.

Rick: Oh-oh, they're running the risk of a sudden Anakin Skywalker attack.

>I looked up and saw the jets were no longer...well, jets.

Matt: Rather they were using a form of reactionless impulse drive.

> They became giant, purple robots.

Rick: Great. We're back in Delta Invasion.

Rebecca: Better get out that random-roll table again.

> They had red eyes

Natasha: Aaaah! Cylons!

>and a strange symbol on their chests that just spelled evil.

Matt: Well, I suppose it does if you read alien hieroglyphics.

Rebecca: Oddly enough, to most fangirls the symbol spells 'just misunderstood' or 'in need of a hug'

> We just sat there, frozen in fear.

Natasha: And pooped your pants

> One of them reached an arm down about to grab me,

Matt: Now would be a good time to start using those superpowers you spent so long getting and were, if in a roundabout way, the reason for this pointless trip into the desert.

Rick: Yeah, but I'm not sure how a super sense of taste is going to help right now.

> when another robot hit him in the face.

Natasha: Voltron's intervention, while unexpected, was not unwelcome either.

Rebecca: Yeah, but it's always Lion Voltron. Nobody ever remembers Vehicle Voltron.

> He stumbled backwards and fell to the ground.

> I looked at the robot that helped me. It was blue with hints of pink

Matt: I take it then that, because it's pink, it's a girl robot?

Rick: Surprisingly enough, it's not necessarily the case. Pink is a rather common colour among Decepticons though.

> and unlike the other robots, it had blue eyes and a different insignia on it's shoulder.

Rebecca: A ghost in a no-smoking sign. Somebody had gotten their eighties franchises mixed.

> "Stay down!" she cried. Her arms turned into guns and she fired blue bullets at them.

> Then their hands turned to guns and fired red bullets.

Matt: Lasers colour-coded for your convenience.

> I hardly noticed that the girls climbed over the rock to the other side

Rebecca: Em and Luc had decided to leave her there to gawp while they made their escape.

> until Em tapped me on the

> shoulder. I turned away from the bloodbath

Natasha: Is there any actual blood?

Matt: I suppose that it's more of an oil bath then.

> and looked at her. "C'mon!" she shouted.

> I climbed over the rock and crouched by Luc. "What in the name of christ is going on here?" asked Luc,

Rick: This is the Robot Holocaust.

> raking breathes every three words.

> "No clue." I said. "GUYS LOOK!" I turned around and another of those purple robots was behind us,
> armed and ready to fire. But then, he fell limp and fell to the ground.

Natasha: Performance anxiety affects giant space robots too.

> When he did, he revealed a yellow robot with blue eyes and that insignia on him.

Rick: JaAm!

Rebecca: Come on, Rick, nobody who isn't a Transformers fan is going to get that.

Rick: Yeah, but his shoulders hurt!

Rebecca: Besides which, the Prime Hot Shot is blue.

Rick: He is? Wow, his life is pain.

> "I think he's a good guy." said Em. "Well duh." said Luc, sarcastically.

Matt: With no evidence at all to go on beyond 'he's shooting at the other robots'. It's not the sort of conclusion you want to leap to.

Rick: The genre says they're right.

Matt: Well true, but I'd say that these girls are less genre-blind as they are genre-heads encased in concrete

>The blue robot managed to finish off the other purple ones

Rebecca [Robot]: Tell my wife and kids I-

> and walked over to the yellow one.

Natasha: They're identified only by colour? What is this, Reservoir Cogs? [The others groan]

> "Came just in time Bumblebee." she said.

> "You know how I am, Arcee.

Rebecca: Yellow, kid-friendly and turning into some sort of car?

> Besides, traffic was killer."

Matt: He got stuck behind some Gobots.

> said Bumblebee. He said it in beeps and bleeps, but somehow I can understand him.

Rick: I guess we can chalk that up to magic superpowers too.

> Luc being Luc said,

Natasha [Luc]: Stupid robots, why did they have to be dumb and stupid and stupid and dumb.

Rick: And then she rolled her eyes.

Natasha: Of course.

> "You guys obliterated them. Sweet!"

Matt: Stuff blowing up is cool. Proven fact.

> They seemed to turn their attention on us. Worried looks plastered on their faces.

Rebecca: They'd just realised that this trio of little snots were the author's OCs and that they'd be calling the shots.

Rick: I wonder if any of them want to tell you all about the Transformers.

> They knelt down and Arcee asked, "What did you see?"

Matt: More than I ever wanted to.

> "The whole thing. And then some." answered Em.

Natasha: They got the two-disc DVD set with out-takes, deleted and extended scenes and the behind-the-scenes featurette.

> Confusion was now on Arcee's face. "What do you mean by, and then some?" she asked.

Rick: They had multiple camera angles on some of the shots.

> "Those things attacked us. We weren't doing anything until they came and shot at us." I said, acting all
> innocent.

Rebecca: Maybe they'd been reading the fic too.

Rick: Naw, one of them's a friend of the kid that Luc beat up.

> They gave each other glances. Arcee then lifted her arm to what I guess was her ear.

Matt: Or local equivalent.

> "Optimus, this is Arcee, come in."

> There was silence, until Arcee described the situation.

Rick: And then howls of mocking laughter in response.

> "'Cons must've gotten to the energy source before we did." she finished.

Rebecca: See, this is where it'd be nice if these were movie Transformers and thus speaking in their own language.

Natasha: Any reason?

Rebecca: Then we couldn't make out the dialogue.

Natasha: Fair.

> "Energy source?" asked Em, quietly to us. We shrugged. "I ain't the genius here." commented Luc.

All: We know.

> "What?!" said Arcee in shock. "What do you mean the energy signal is still..." she paused and stared at
> us.

Matt: Deciding which one of them to devour first.

> "Ratchet, I think I found the energy source.

Natasha: A whole barrel full of Tang

> We'll bring it to base." she ended her conversation.

Rick: "The conversation ended on this"

> "So, where is this energy source?" asked Luc.

Natasha: Luc, remember that glowing green rock you found at the science lab that you thought nobody would miss?

> "Come with us." said Arcee. She transformed into a sick motorcycle

Rick: It was pale, sweaty and kept throwing up.

> and Bumblebee transformed into an awesome muscle car. He opened the door.

Matt: I'd be worried that none of them show even the slightest apprehension about this, but then this is the same trio of girls who decided that hiking through the desert in the middle of the night to get to the bad part of town was a good plan.

> "See ya guys later!" shouted Luc. She hopped into Bumblebee and signaled Em to climb in with her.

> "Meh, what the hell." sighed Em.

Natasha: Em was determined not to be the last girl in school with a giant robot buddy.

> She climbed in with Luc and the door shut. That left me with Arcee. I swung my leg over the side of her
> and felt a sense of pride go through me.

[long pause]

Rick: Well really, I don't think there's anything we can say that would be more funny than the inadvertent giggles that last line gave me.

Rebecca: Fair point. Voice, can we go now?

Voice: No.

Rick: If I say that I hate it already, can I go?

Voice: No!

> "Hold on!" she shouted. I can see why. She burst off and left me nearly fallen behind. I hung onto those
> handles as if my life depended on it.

Matt: Congratulations, you have learned how to Motorcycle.

> We drove some miles before Arcee was driving strait into a wall.

Natasha: She's determined to get rid of the brat, no matter what.

> "Arcee!" I shouted at the top of my lungs. But she went at her same speed.

Rick: She'd gone to plaid.

> two double-decker doors opened and we were led inside a tunnel.

Matt: It was the Batcave. Funny story there...

> "Sorry," said Arcee. "security reasons."

Rebecca: That and the look on her face was priceless.

> I let out a sigh. Arcee and Bumblebee drove us to a wide room with green screens all around it.

Rick: The giant robots are going to be digitally added later.

> A red and white robot was standing by some screens and looked displeased to see us.

Rebecca: As it is in the show, Ratchet is once again the only sane man.

> I bet twenty bucks that he was a medic.

Matt: Wouldn't it be funny if the guy who turned into an ambulance wasn't a medic? Or if he was some sort of psycho killer who just looked like an ambulance to fool people?

> I hopped off Arcee and looked around the room.

Rick: You are in a gigantic subterranean chamber. There are three robots in the room as well as an ancient red dragon sleeping on a pile of gold.

Matt: I steal some of the gold and run out of the room.

Rebecca: I deliberately trip Matt over.

Natasha: While those two are arguing, can I sharpie a wang on the dragon's forehead?

> "Did you have the same heart attack as we did at the front door?" asked Em. "Heck yeah." I replied.

Rick: The exact same heart attack. They only have the one heart and have to share it around.

> "Wow," said Luc, and ran towards a green bulky robot.

Matt: Guess they have Zakus here too.

> I think she was creeping him out a little.

Rebecca: Luc has that effect on people. Usually best if you keep her chained up in the basement and away from all human contact.

> Until the

> red and white one interrupted, "Arcee, you were suppose to bring the energy source, nit humans!"

Rick: What if they use humans as an energy source? And they want to hook these girls up to some giant machine that will use them as fuel while putting their minds into some bizarre computer-generated fantasy world? And that fantasy world is controlled by computer-generated AI agents to keep its inhabitants from finding the truth about their existence?

Natasha: That's stupid.

Rick: Yeah, dumb idea, I know. What was I thinking?

> he shouted.

> "Ratchet," she said, in defense, "I know this is crazy, but, I think they are the energy source."

> "Well, that's highly absurd. Humans can't be an energy source. It's impossible!" Ratchet complained, > again.

Matt: And he should know. He was in charge of a five-year, multi-billion dollar green energy development team that researched the concept. Not only did they find nothing and not only was it a huge waste of time and money, but everyone involved felt pretty stupid afterwards.

Rick: So what did they do in the end?

Matt: Threw money at the first dumb schmuck green-tech venture capitalist they came across.

> We all hated it when we were being insulted. A school, I'm always bullied because I'm an orphan.

Rebecca: And, just in case we'd missed it the last six thousand times, your life sucks.

> Luc and Em always stood up for me. Now, I'll stand up for them.

> "Hey, if it could happen, it's possible.

Rick: All you need is some enigmatic alien deus ex machine and you'll be set.

> Sorry to be rude, but, what are you guys?" I asked. I thought it > was racist at first,

Matt: Yeah you only talk to the white robot.

> but I could imagine how many times they had to ask humans.

Rebecca: Two and a half. Third time they got bored and gave up

Natasha: Well to be fair, it was Luc.

> I heard loud footsteps echo throughout the base. I turned around and looked up at a red and blue robot > that was at least 30 feet tall.

Matt: The platform shoes helped. After all, those were what was making all the noise.

Natasha: I did wonder.

> Kindly, he said, "We are autonomous robotic organisms from the planet of Cybertron,

Rick: A planet where life evolved from naturally occurring simple mechanisms.

Natasha: Now you're being silly.

> or Autobots."

> "Autobots." I heard Luc repeat.

Matt: Sounding it out slowly. Very slowly.

> "So, who were those guys back their?" she asked. I think she was
> refering to those other robots that tried to implode us.

Natasha: Actually she was referring to the other members of her class who were on the field trip. Luc's not that fast on the uptake.

> "Those were Decepticons, our arch nemesis.

Rebecca: Their arch enemies in the battle for your toy-buying dollar.

> We are fighting a constant war between them that has consumed our home planet.

Matt: It started out as a simple dispute over Megatron's burning rubbish in his back yard. Things got out of control pretty fast.

> Earth is the Autobot's last stand."

Rick: -of the Wreckers.

> he said.

> "Wow," said Em,

Natasha: I imagined her standing there during all this with a sort of 'duhhhhhh' look on her face throughout.

Rick: Dull surprise!

> "I'm sorry, I don't think I got your name?" she asked.

Rick: Convoy. John Convoy.

>"I am Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots.

Natasha [Luc]: I didn't vote for you!

Rebecca [Em]: They're alien robots. You don't get to vote for them.

Natasha [Luc]: Man, we're living in a dictatorship.

> You have probably met Arcee and Bumblebee.

Matt: But then, how often does anyone acknowledge the valet's existence?

> Ratchet is our medic.

Rick: Mister Spock is the science officer, and Sulu has the helm.

> And this is Bulkhead. We are the only known Autobot's on your world." replied Optimus

Rebecca: Although the place is crawling with illegal Minicon immigrants.

> "My names Emily, and this is Lucy and Grace." said Em. "Pleasure to meet you." I said, trying to make
> a good first impression.

Matt: Any chance of that happening passed a long time ago.

Rebecca: Especially now that Luc's licking the paint.

> I'm sorry to cut it short, but I have to got to school really soon.

Rick: So here's a thought; why not wait until you've got a full chapter and then upload it?

Natasha: But then how are they supposed to keep their hit count up?

> Review, review, review! There will be more chapters if you review.

Matt: And yes, that is a threat.

> By the way, if you haven't noticed already, I'm not including Jack, Miko, and Raf. SORRY!

Rebecca: Why apologise? They're the lucky ones.

> I will do a story with them soon, I promise!

> Hey Guys! So this is Darkness Rising part 2-ish.

Rick: So from here on in, it's just going to be retelling Prime episodes with these three little horrors crudely shoved in.

Matt: Which makes me wonder, then, if they're replacing Jack, Miko and Raf then what was the point of giving them super powers?

Rebecca: So they can be the center of everything.

> I will have the next chapter up sometime this week and

> it's been decided that Grace will go with Ratchet and Optimus. Yay!

All: Yay?

> Review, fav, and enjoy!

Natasha: Do we have to?

> Disclaimer: I don't own Transformers. All rights are reserved for Hasbro.

Rick: Hasbro; not the first company insane enough to make a live-action movie based off an action figure franchise, just the first who made it profitable.

> Darkness Rising part 2

Rebecca: There was barely enough plot in Darkness Rising to make one movie; splitting it into two was

just a shallow attempt to stretch out the franchise.

> "Ratchet, would you stop scanning us already!" cried Luc as another blue beam went through us.

Natasha: He's scanning for any traces of personality, likeability or individuality in you. So far it's a big fat nothing.

> Right now, I was standing in a glass sealed cylinder, with my arms out, and constantly getting scanned.

Matt: And having all that sent to a 3D printer.

>This has been going on for about ten minutes.

Rick: That's to convert you so you can live on Metaluna.

> Too long for Luc.

Rebecca: In all fairness, Luc get testy if she has to wait more than thirty seconds for the toaster.

> "These scans are mandatory. If we are to know about your powers than this is one way how." replied
> Ratchet.

Matt: Option two is to drop heavy objects on you and see how you react.

Natasha: Scans it is!

> "Well, this sucks." said Luc, rolling her eyes.

Rick: That aneurysm can't come fast enough.

> Sometimes I feel that girl has the patience of, well, nothing.

Matt: I believe the point has been well hammered home by now.

Natasha: Maybe Grace only hangs around her because Em's the only person in the school less popular than she is.

>"Fine, your done." Ratchet groaned.

Rebecca: Ratchet is millions of years old and comes from a race of seemingly immortal robots and even he feels like he's wasting his life on this.

>The tube opened and we walked out of it. "Ratchet, what is your status?" asked Optimus.

Rick [Ratchet]: I'm coloured red and white and turn into an ambulance.

Matt: Good to know.

> Ratchet started to press some buttons then said, "Energy readings are off the
> scales." said Ratchet, his voice shaking.

Rebecca: He is way too sober for this.

> "Is that good or bad?" I asked. Please don't be bad, please don't bad. I prayed.

Matt: That depends on how you feel about exploding

> "It is bad." said Optimus. Crap! I screamed in my head.

Natasha [Grace]: No wanna asplode!

> "Because your energy readings are so high,

Rebecca: Could you give us a quantifiable number as to how high? Maybe a figure it might be in excess of?

> it is likely that the Decepticons will stop at nothing to capture the three of you."

Rick: And put you in some sort of cosmic carnival, I guess.

Natasha: Or you could stay on as guests of Club Con.

Rick: And then you'd be... uh... forced to work at the car wash of doom. I got nothing.

> I heard Em swallow. "And since you know of our existence, that puts you at a greater risk.

Matt: The first rule of giant space robot club is that you don't talk about giant space robot club.

> I fear that the Decepticons know of yours." said Optimus.

Rebecca: Funny thing is that those three Decepticons didn't even know about the girls. They were out shopping when one of them thought he saw a bug and panicked.

Rick: Truly, the life of the evil minion is a short and often harsh one.

> "So if we them, do we call the cops or something." asked Em.

Matt: You call the Giant Robot Police.

Natasha: So Prowl then?

Matt: ...I guess so.

Natasha: But what if you got Barricade instead?

> "Yeah right Em. That's what everyone tells us to do.

Rebecca: It's almost like they want you to deal with problems in a responsible and sensible manner

Rick: Luc will have none of that.

> Except, these guys are blood-thirsty Decepticons." back sassed Luc.

Natasha: They could be perfectly nice Decepticons who would rather be out frolicking in the flowers for all you know.

> "It is best that for the time being, that you three remain under our watch.

Rick: And confined to the ball-pool and slide area.

> Until we know the Decepticons intentions."Optimus said.

Rebecca: Conquer Earth and take its energy?

Matt: Well there you go.

> "Optimus, with all do respect, these children are just as in danger here as anywhere else." whispered
> Ratchet.

Matt: I'd say that they're likely a lot safer inside a secret subterranean lair that was designed to withstand a nuclear attack, but then I also figure that Ratchet's just making an excuse to get rid of them.

> "Children?!" cried Luc. "You know, we can hear" I said.

Matt: Well you are technically and legally still children.

Rick: If you want to be taken seriously, go off and form your own teen hero team. Then you can have all sorts of adventures and save the world and die horrible, horrible deaths so that the adults will take you seriously.

> "They have no protective shell," continued Ratchet,

Rick: They're no longer mint on card.

> "If we just so happen to step on them, they are as good as dead."

Natasha: And then there'd be an awful mess on the floor and somebody would need to clean it up.

> He stomped his foot, making us flinch.

> "Then for the time being Ratchet, we will watch our step." replied Optimus.

Rick: This plan is coming from the person who's also in charge of Bulkhead. Make of this what you will.

Rebecca: Yeah, but in the show he hangs out with Miko and hasn't squished her yet.

Rick: Miko's pretty much indestructible. I mean, she can survive what she gets herself into, so after that, being stepped on by a giant robot is nothing.

> "Well, if you do happen to step on us, me and Em won't feel a thing."

Matt: It'll be quick and painless.

> said Luc, acting like she had the greatest advantage in the world.

> "And why is that?" asked Optimus.

Natasha: No brain, no pain.

> "Well, my power is super strength, and hers is she can walk through stuff, so I think we're okay." she
> said.

Rick: Emphasis 'think' as you haven't exactly given these powers a thorough testing so far. For all you know it could have been a one-off thing or depend on you thinking about it or the like.

> "So, what's your power?" asked Arcee. "I think it's called telepathy, or telekenisses.

Natasha: -Kyle.

> Whatever, mine is I can lift things with my mind."

Natasha: And kill a yak at 200 yards – with mind bullets!

> I said, touching my head.

> All the sudden, green lights started to flash and an alarm went off.

Matt: Could it be? Could something not directly connected to Teen Girl Squad here actually happen in this fic? Or shouldn't I get my hopes up.

> "What the hell's happening?" asked Luc.

> "Proximity sensors." said Bee.

> "What?" asked Lic, shrugging. "Proximity sensors." answered Em. "Someone's up on the roof."

> Ratchet pulled up a video of the roof. A helicopter just landed and a man stepped out. "It's Agent > Fowler." he said, a hint of annoyance in his voice.

Rebecca: Agent Fowler who calls you in advance to let you know that he's coming and not to set off alarms and potentially trigger an unexpected response?

Matt: It sounds like you're being reasonable there, and we can't have that.

> "Wait, so other humans know about you guys. I thought it was just the three of us." I said.

Natasha: Ha! Not so special now, are you?

> Optimus turned around and spoke, "Special Agent Fowler is our designated liason to the outside world.

Rebecca: He performs that most vital of plot-related issues, being the man who keeps the lid on the big secret.

Matt: I wonder if he has the option to use lethal force if he feels the situation warrants it.

Rebecca: We can but hope.

> He tends to visit only when there are...issues."

Rick: Decepticons spraying graffiti on the Statue of Liberty or stealing the Kremlin or stuff like that.

> I think this Fowler guy sounds like a jerk-face.

Matt: Based on the fact that you know nothing about him.

> "It is best that you do not meet him at this time." finished Optimus.

Rick: Looking at your likes and dislikes, you two aren't even remotely compatible. Also that'll be twenty bucks for the match.

> That was our cue to hide. We ran behind the staircase and kept our mouths shut.

Rebecca: I'm amazed that Luc can manage that.
Matt: Keep it up too long and her head might explode.

> I could hear
> the elevator descend from the roof, and onto the floor above us. Then, "Seven wrecks! Thirty-four
> fender benders! A three hour traffic jam!

Rick: So your everyday commute in LA then.
Natasha: Pretty much.

> And particular reports of a speeding motorcycle and a black and custom mussel car."

Natasha: A black and custom mussel car? There can't be too many of them that are that colour.
Rick: So what is a mussel car?
Natasha: It's like... a bivalve mollusk, but a car. I think.

> he screamed. I was able to take a quick peak and see Fowler.

Rick: Just as she thought, it was Hugo Weaving.
Natasha: Ahh! Megatron! Kill him!
Rick: That's just how Hugo Weaving allways looks.

> He was a fat African-American, with a blue suit and was about as tall as Em.

Rebecca: So then I have to assume that Em is some sort of freakish mutant, since Fowler is neither the smallest or slimmest of people.

> He almost caught sight of me, but I ducked behind the wall in the nick of time.

> "So, anything to get off your tin chest, Prime?" he asked. I wanted to go and say something, but Em
> held my hand and shook her head.

Natasha: This just in, Em did something!
Rick: I am amazed.

> "We have the situation under control, Agent Fowler." replied Optimus. It seems he doesn't have a mean
> bone in his body.

Matt: But then, he doesn't have any bones.

> "They're back aren't they?" asked Fowler.

Rick [Fowler]: Damn roaches. I told them that we needed to spray for them.

> "If you are referring to the Decepticons,

Natasha: Actually he was referring to the Machine Empire. What giant space robots were you thinking of?
Matt [Fowler]: Right. Time to go recruit five teenagers with attitude.

> I have doubts that they ever left.

Rebecca: Rather they just hung around at the buffet table for hours, eating the snacks.

> Your planet is much to valuable."

Rick: It is the universe's only known source of Bacon.

> "Valuable?" I turned my head and stared at Luc. I shrugged.

> "Then maybe it's time for me to wake up the pentagon." said Fowler.

Natasha: And put their secret anti-robot task force into action.

Rick: So Sector Seven then.

Natasha: No, not that one.

Rick: Right, then they'll activate RAAT.

Natasha: That's not it either.

Rick: Of course; it's a job for Skywatch.

Natasha: Not them either!

Rick: So they'll call out the Armoured Robot Hunters.

Natasha: Not them, no.

Rick: So it's the Extra-Terrestrial Response Division then.

Natasha: ...where are you getting all of these from?

Rick: They're all a part of Transformers canon. Really.

> We gasped, quietly.

> "Hear me, Agent Fowler. We are your best, possible only defense against the Decepticon threat." said

> Optimus.

Matt: Our last, best chance for peace as it were.

> "Says you." said Fowler. I took a step, ready to speak my mind,

Rebecca: Mainly whining about how awful her life is, I'd imagine.

> butEm got to me first. "Don't worry." she whispered.

Matt: The Bad Government Man can't hurt you.

Rebecca: Yeah, and I'm sure you'd never ever do anything bad in the line of duty.

Matt: Never [he grins]

> "Hey fleshy!" yelled Bulkhead. All eyes turned to him. "Did anyone get splattered on that freeway.

Rick: You blew up a busload of nuns!

Natasha: Okay, besides them!

> Team Prime knows when to use force."

> He yanked off a crane. "And how much to use." he squeezed at it.

Rebecca: And that is why Sir Isaac Newton is the deadliest motherlover in space.

> Ratchet ran over to him. "Bulkhead, I needed that!"

Natasha: Bulkhead is like a Saint Bernard in a small apartment full of fragile, irreplaceable china. Sooner or later, something will happen.

> "Enough!" cried Optimus. Guess he gets irritated at times. Well, we can't all be perfect.

Rebecca: I'd say that Em's introduction pretty much made her out to be, but then she's done nothing since to prove it.

> He continued, turning to Fowler, "Military involvement will only result in catastrophe.

Rick: Or maybe a two-hour long recruitment film showing US military hardware blowing stuff up real good.

> Perhaps you can condone widespread human casualties. I, however, can not."

> "Then do us both a favor and handle this, Prime. Under the radar."

Matt: Discretely and preferably without blowing up any famous landmarks.

> And that was it. Fowler turned

> around and left the hanger. But before he left, He announced,

Rick [Fowler]: Do you know what the penalty for concealing a Mary Sue is?

> "Or I will." The door shut. Coast was clear.

> "What a total jerk! You defend our planet and get that in return!

Matt: It's almost like he's trying to contain this conflict and stop it from spilling over and escalating. What a jerk indeed.

> He's a total embarrassment to humans. And he makes me sick." cried Luc.

Natasha: Yeah, and it's not like you're exactly an upstanding citizen either.

> I had to agree with her. If all humans were like that, they would've left and let the Cons kill us.

Matt: Yeah, it'd be terrible to have a planet full of dedicated, loyal and brave people who are willing to face down incredible danger to protect others.

Rebecca: Tragic.

> Well...probably not. But still.

> "Pretty big bearings, for a human." said Bulkhead, letting it sink in.

> "Agent Fowler is only concerned for his world, Bulkhead. As he should be.

Rebecca: And as an added bonus, he's not prone to hysterical outbursts or basing their opinion of someone on a conversation they eavesdropped on.

> "Still," said Luc, now the attention was all hers, "that doesn't mean he could be like that."

> "Not all humans are nice, Luc. And you know it." said Em, trying to keep her contained. But she just
> rolled her eyes.

Matt: They popped out of her skull and rolled off across the floor.

> But that hit me with something that Optimus mentioned.

Rick: Something about ape law and the like.

> "Hey...uh, Optimus?" I asked. He turned towards me. "What did you mean by our planet is too valuable?"

Rebecca: It occupies prime land by the lake. They're looking to build holiday condos.

> "Your planet is rich with energon.

Natasha: It has a creamy nougat filling.

> The life-blood of Autobots and Decepticons alike." he replied.

Matt: Black gold, Texas tea.

> "And Megatron seems to have every mine to himself." said Arcee. "Megatron?" asked Em.

> "Megatron is the leader of the Decepticons.

Rick: Ruling in a reign of violence, terror, destruction and giant purple griffon fortresses.

> And we have not heard from him in some time." replied Optimus.

Matt: He never calls, he never writes.

> "That's a relief." said Luc.

Rebecca: No, it's worse. They might put somebody competent in charge instead.

Matt: Being fair, it is Prime Megatron, not G1. World of differences, such as not being pants-on-head retarded.

> We heard a small beeping. We turned towards the main screens. "Blasted Earth tech!" cried Ratchet.

> "Cliffjumper's life signal just popped back online."

> The three of us climbed up a ladder and onto another platform. "Who's Cliffjumper?" asked Luc.

Rick: The most electrifying Autobot in the history of giant space robots.

Natasha: If you smell what he's cooking.

> "How is that possible?" asked Optimus, not seeming to care about Luc's question.

Matt: Trust us, he's not the only one.

> "It isn't. It's just another bug. The systems full of 'em." replied Ratchet.

Rick: They wanted it out the door in time for Christmas, regardless of the state it was in. Datamine enough and you'll find the Droid Factory

> "If there's any chance Cliff's alive..." said Arcee, a hint of care in her voice.

> "Ratchet, prepare sick bay. We may need it."

Matt: Have a quart of oil and an emergency fuel pump bypass on stand by.

> said Optimus. A mouth guard appeared around his mouth, preventing us from seeing his mouth.

Rick: His mouth guard guards his mouth.

Natasha: He guards his mouth with his mouth guard.

> "Hey, wait a sec!" cried Luc to Optimus. He turned to her. "What do we do?" she asked.

Rick: Sit in the corner, do nothing, say nothing, touch nothing.

> "Remain with Ratchet." he said. "Aww. We get superpowers and we have to stay here." she
> complained.

Rebecca: Super-powers that you know next to nothing about and still cannot fully control.

Matt: I think Luc complains for the sake of it.

> Ratchet sighed. Guess he hated us being here as Luc did.

Natasha: He's not the only one.

> All the sudden, green, purple and white light appeared

Rick: I didn't know they opened up a dance club in here.

> and I took a step back. Optimus ran towards it, along with the others and cried, "Autobots, roll
> out!" They transformed and ran strait through. And then disappeared.

Matt: They were never seen again.

> "Wow! What the hell just happened!?" cried Em.

Rebecca: The plot. And you're not a part of it.

> "I transported them to the designated coordinates with the ground bridge." said Ratchet.

Rick: Wasn't it obvious?

> "Ground Bridge?" I asked.

Natasha: That's when you build a bridge over a canyon or gorge rather than a body of water, right?

Rebecca: Sure, let's go with that.

> Ratchet sighed, "Scale down version of space bridge technology."

Matt: They've scaled it down to a mobile app.

> he said, acting like it's the easiest thing in the world.

Natasha: Sure, like who doesn't know what a Ground Bridge is.

> "You seriously didn't know?" said Luc. I rolled my eyes.

> "Since we don't currently possess the means or the energon requirements..."

> "Your stuck here." I interrupted. "On Earth...with us."

Matt: Stuck with these three? That is a horrible fate.

> "Yes, but I constructed the ground bridge to transport us here, to anywhere on your planet." boasted
> Ratchet.

> "Sweet!" said Luc.

> "Does it work for humans?" asked Em. "Naturally." replied Ratchet.

Rick: You just come out the other end sorta funny-looking.

Natasha: Funny-looking?

Rick: Yeah, funny-looking.

> A thought came to mind.

Rebecca: About turtles. Nothing to do with the current situation though.

> "So, I can ground bridge all the way to Afganistan to see my brother?" I asked.

> My older brother, John (25), was a captain in the army.

Matt: Well so much for the 'I'm a poor lonely orphan' thing. If she has an adult relative, then that kind of throws out the question of why she isn't with them.

Rebecca: Because John, 25, doesn't like her.

> He was stationed to leave this spring, and I've been so super excited to see him.

Rebecca: Super-excited when you're not moping about how much your life sucks, right?

> "Within moments." said Ratchet. "In fact allow me to send you their immediately, all three of you."

Rick: You think Ratchet knows nothing about Earth and has no issues with sending kids to a hellhole like that?

Natasha: Do you think he cares wither way?

> Luc got infront of me and went up to Ratchet. "Hey, watch it Ratch." she said. "I ain't going to
> Afganistan."

Natasha [Luc]: Its full of foreign people!

> She turned towards me. "Sorry."

> I smiled. "No prob."

Matt: Just another entry in the 'why do we like her' file.

> We started to fiddle around with some stuff.

Rick: You know, stuff.

> "What's this thing do?" asked Luc, who made her way down the stairs.

Natasha: It's the monkey destruct button. You don't wanna mess with that.

> "Broken don't touch." snapped Ratchet. Luc grinned and slowly moved her finger to touch it.

> "Don't touch that either." he snapped again. Luc drew back. "Let me guess, we can't touch the floor
> either." she said, irritated.

Matt: Ratchet's idea of child-minding would be to lock them in a cage and throw away the key. With this trio, I can't say that I'd disagree with him.

> On the screens popped up a red x.

Rick: Check your HTML. You have a broken image tag.

> Ratchet looked clearly pissed. "How come you guys are using human computers?" asked Em.

Rebecca: To maintain compatibility with an ancient legacy system that nobody is brave enough to replace and nobody is left who knows how to update.

> "It certainly wasn't my choice. It was handed down from the previous owners of this misslesylo.

Natasha: What's a missilesylo?

Rick: I have no idea. Maybe it's like the Chicken Pots.

> I made modifications as I see fit." he answered.

Rebecca: Overclocked the CPU, installed a new graphics card and cooling fan.

> Just then, tons of those x's appeared all over the screen.

Matt: Ratchet furiously Alt-F4ing as he went.

> Ratchet growled.

> "I think I can fix those." said Em. She sat down and took out her laptop. Em was amazing at computers.
> She was into hacking and never got caught.

Rick: She once hacked into her own Facebook page and changed her own status to 'Nerd'. Brilliant!

> "Really?" said Ratchet, sarcastically. "You do know that this is complex technology. I mean it isn't a
> child's toy."

Natasha: Says the child's toy.

> But Em didn't seem to listen nor care. She typed in some stuff and said, "Now give it a shot."

Rebecca: I'm going to hazard that the author's knowledge of hacking amounts to 'I saw somebody do it in a movie once.' A missile silo, especially one that's been given over to an ultra-secret organization like this is going to have system security that goes well beyond 'five seconds with a laptop.'

Rick: This is the same logic that Tom's mad hacking skillz ran on.

Rebecca: Which is not a good thing either.

> Ratchet turned and all the x's turned to check marks. Ratchet turned to Em, stunned. "How did you..."
> he began.

> "She's a smart ass." interrupted Luc. "It's what she does."

> Em crossed her arms and sat back in her seat.

> :Ratchet, we need a ground bridge now!

> Without a second to spare, Ratchet opened a bridge.

Rick: Fic discussion! Attempt to add tension to the fic, or just an excuse to show off how awesome Em is?

Matt: Show off.

Natasha: Show off.

Rebecca: Reminding us that Em exists.

Rick: Good point. Let's move on.

> All four of them came through, followed by a blue blast of smoke.

Natasha: That's what happens when Dr Manhattan farts.

> Ratchet quickly closed the bridge and Optimus did an awesome flip.

> "Cool." we said.

Matt: The Romanian judge wasn't as impressed, however.

> "Cutting a bit close." said Ratchet. "Where's Cliffjumper?" he said, silently. They looked down at the
> floor.

Rick: Nobody wanted to admit that they left him at the bus station.

> I slid down the ladder. "I'm so sorry." I said.

> "Arcee, what did you see." asked Optimus.

> She crossed her arms. "Not Cliff. At least...not anymore.

Rick: You gotta call him Dwayne Johnson for legal reasons.

> He was mutated, butchered, something like those Con experiments during the war."

Rebecca: Their quest to develop a new diet soda had unfortunate side-effects.

> she said, sounding like she was going to cry. I was close to. That sounded awful.

Matt: More awful then your hellish life?

Rick: Only for the moment.

> She fell over onto some crates.

> "Arcee..." said Bee, coming closer to her. She held up a hand. "I'm fine, just, dizzy."

Natasha: It's only severe head trauma, no big deal.

> She sat up and Ratchet started to scan her.

Rebecca: Converting to a readable PDF file.

> It grew red when it hit some purple stuff on her hand.

Rick: Your basic Nickelodeon-issue slime. It just washes off.

> He took some off and Bee took her to get de-contaminated.

Matt: She's got human germs.

> "Optimus." I turned to see Em with her phone. "I hate to rude or anything, but there are no bars." she
> said.

Natasha: Not even a small bar-fridge stocked with tiny mixers.

> "A security precaution. These walls isolate all frequency waves." he replied. Pretty thick walls. I thought.

Rick: Luc was headbutting the walls by way of measure.

> "If I don't tell my parents where I am, I'm pretty sure the cops are going to looking for me." she said.

Rebecca: And be on the phone to her parole officer.

> He leaned forward. "Have you broken the law?" he asked. Embraking the law. That's never ever going
> to happen.

Matt: That's what she wants you to think. She's done a good job of hiding the bodies.

> Luc on the other hand...

Natasha: Luc on the other hand has to be home on time so she can practice for the Hunger Games.

> "It's called curfew. It's around ten. I got be home or I'm dead." she said.

Rebecca: Wait, what? Am I to assume that everything that has happened since Grace first noticed her powers – the walk to Em's, waiting for Luc, the Decepticon attack and rescue, the scanning, Fowler's visit and now the Autobot raid – has taken place in less then an hour?

Rick: It feels like it's a lot longer.

> "Same with me. My dad would ground me till college." said Luc.

Rick: Silly Luc, with your academic performance you're never going to collage.

> Optimus turned towards me. "What about your parents?" he asked. That made my heart sink. "Oh...uh,

> I...I don't have parents. They died when I was fourteen. I live at an orphanage. But they don't care

> whether I'm alive or dead in a gutter." I said.

Matt: You do have an older brother though.

Rebecca: Yeah, her brother seems to have been a momentary lapse of wangst.

> I think Optimus wanted to change the subject.

Rick [Prime]: Most of my race is dead and my homeworld is a burnt-out husk populated only by their corpses. So cry me a river.

> "Your safety is still our priority. Bulkhead, accompany Lucy home." he said.

Natasha: Bulkhead drew the short straw.

> "Sweet! My dad's gonna freak!"

Rebecca: I think Luc's dad freaked out long ago. After all, he's the one who keeps a huge stack of cement blocks for no real reason.

> she cried. But Optimus spoiled her joy. "And maintain covert survailence, in vehicle form."

Rick: To better disguise himself, Bulkhead covered himself in NRA bumper stickers and tied a steer skull to his grill.

> "Curb side duty, got ya." replied Bulkhead. "Aww." whined Luc.

> "Bumblebee, accompany Emily home." Bee looked at Em, and she smiled.

Rebecca: Em is the perfect human buddy for Bumblebee. She talks about as much as he does.

> "Ratchet," began Optimus.

> "Busy. And Arcee still being de-conaminated." he interrupted.

Matt: They thought of excuses first.

> Optimus then looked at me. "Then I will
> accompany Grace home." he said. I gave a small smile, and he smiled back.

Rick: But I thought his mouth was guarded by the mouth guard that guards his mouth.

> He transformed and opened the door. I climbed in and strapped a seatbelt around me.

Natasha: Thrill as Grace, superpowered teenager, gets into a truck!

> Man, Optimus had tons of buttons and stuff on the dashboard.

Rebecca: Stuff! The non-specific substance that covers most of this fic's narrative.

> "Wow." I said.

> "Don't worry Grace, I will handle the driving." he said. I sighed and leaned back, hoping that I could've
> driven.

Matt: A fifteen year old handling a semi-truck. That will end well.

> We drove out of base and into town. "Where is the orphanage located?" asked Optimus.

Rebecca: Victorian London, probably by the docks and convenient to a coal mine.

> "Go down here, make a left and keep going a while and I'll tell you when to stop." I said.

Natasha: You'll know it when you find that all of the happiness has been sucked out of the world.

> There was silence. Then, "I am sorry about mentioning your parents at the base." said Optimus.

Rick: She hadn't yelled out that she was an orphan or had angst recently, so it's kinda understandable.

> I looked at the dashboard. "It's fine, don't worry. I'm use to it." I replied. "What do you mean?" he asked.

> "There are these girls at school that tease me because I'm an orphan.

Rebecca [Grace]: Did I mention my life sucks? My life sucks.

Matt: She spent years hiding under the stairs in the off-chance that Hagrid would come by and tell her
she's actually a witch. No luck.

> So, I'm use to it when people say things like that."

> "I'm sorry." he said. "Don't be sorry. I don't like it when people are always saying that. I'm fine Optimus,
> really." I said.

Matt [Prime]: I mean, I'm one of the last of my race, and I have killed countless in the name of an all-
consuming war. So yes, I think I understand your teenage angst.

> We finally reached the orphanage. I got out and stopped. "Thanks Optimus." I said.

> "Your welcome." he replied. "I will stay and drive you home tomorrow in the morning."

Rebecca: Meanwhile, he'll be watching you sleep.

> I smiled. "Okay. Good night." I said. I turned around walked to the orphanage. I climbed the stairs and
> walked into my room. I put away my phone and flopped on my bed. I was out before I even hit my bed.

Rick: The exciting life of a teenage superhero.

Matt: Mmm. Gripping.

> Cool, right! C'mon, give me some sugar! That means give me reviews! I love you all, peace out dogs!

Natasha: You know what? I'm not giving you any sugar. You've had enough already.

> Hey guys, I'm back and here's the new CHAPTER! (claps to herself) By the way, here's the break down:

Rebecca: He turns into a truck and is Knock Out's partner in whatever sense of the term you want to take it.

Rick: I'd say that deserves a cushion but... it's true.

> Grace=Jack

Rebecca: In that she has a loving mother, a sense of responsibility, a focus on helping others and doesn't pointlessly wangst.

Rick: When you put it like that...

> Emily=Raf

Matt: In a purely 'take our word for it' kind of a sense.

> Lucy=Miko

Natasha: Loud, brash, easily excitable, not the sharpest tool in the shed...

Rebecca: Remind you of someone?

Natasha: Yeah, Rainbow Dash.

> Review please! and don't forget to press the FAVORITE button. Do as your told!

> Disclaimer: I don't own Transformers. If I did, I wouldn't be so lonely. :(

Rick: You could have all the friends and toadies that your corporate position could buy. Or at least, until there was a corporate restructuring and you find yourself assigned to the mail room.

> I watched as Optimus and Ratchet swung at moving, purple glowing objects coming towards them.

Natasha: This is what happens when you fight in a rave.

> They moaned like zombies and acted like them, too.

Matt: Statistics suggest that these are, indeed, Zombies.

> One caught Optimus off guard and he fell to the ground, with zombies crawling all over him.

Rebecca: Do robot zombies eat brains?

Rick: I guess they eat CPUs or the like.

Matt: What about cyborg Zombies?

Rebecca: You're better off not knowing.

Matt: Rrrreally...

> Then they piled on Ratchet.

Natasha: He dies as he lived... complaining.

> From where I was, in the corner, I yelled out, "OPTIMUS!"

Rick: ADRIAAAAAN!

> But I knew he couldn't hear me. The moans of the zombies drowned out my cry.

Matt: The old lady in the flat below called the Zombies and asked them to keep the noise down.

> But another 'bot did. All I saw was purple eyes.

Rebecca: Courtesy of some rather effective light-piping

> I saw a large gun being lifted and charged up,

Rick: Ima firing my lazer!

> then,

> purple light bursted through and hit me like a speeding car and I crumpled to the ground, with the

> zombies crawling around me, eating my flesh.

Matt [Fake British]: Delicious

> "I took care of your little pet Prime!

Rick: And your little dog too!

> How does that make you feel?" I heard.

Rebecca: Moderately annoyed, he'd just paid to get her chipped, vaccinated and de-sexed.

> "Grace, NO!"

> I jolted up and screamed. Sweat trickled down my face and I started gasping for air. I felt my body, all

> intact. I looked at my bed and saw that I was literally sleeping in a pool of sweat.

Rick: In high school, I had an English teacher who hated 'it was all a dream' endings with a passion. And by that I mean 'come round to your house with a shotgun if you wrote one' passion.

> What was the dream?

Matt: And why had Leonardo DiCaprio been in there with a spinning top?

> I thought. Who was that guy who shot me?

Rebecca: Lee Harvey Oswald.

> Then, a thought came to mind. I jerked my head around my tiny room and sighed.

Natasha: Quick reminder of suckiness of her life, then back to the narrative.

> No zombies, no battle, no nothing. Just a dresser and a door.

Rick: A man-eating carrot, a guy in a bunny suit and an antique writing desk, all of which were welcoming her home.

Natasha: It's one of *those* dreams

> I looked at my clock. It read 6:00 am. Then, I looked out my window.

Matt: Red skies and dinosaurs fighting pirates. Not a good start to the day.

> There, a red and blue semi truck

> stood in the parking lot. I was confused, but then, Oh yeah! He's Optimus Prime, my guardian.

Rebecca: It does seem like a bit of a waste of resources to have your commander watching one girl full-time.

> I quickly got up and took off my sweaty clothes. I took out a green turtleneck and some baggy jeans. I

> crept out of my room and down the stairs.

Matt: You know, I never realized just how riveting the average morning of a teenage orphan would be.

Rebecca: And how riveting is it?

Matt: Not one bit.

> I grabbed my bag and put in my phone and an apple I'll eat at base.

Natasha: You could eat the phone too. It's also an Apple. [The others groan]

> I put on my shoes and silently walked out the door. The smell of morning hit me and it felt good.

Rick: Mmm, uncollected garbage.

> The

> deserts are cold at night, yet hot in the day, so it was just starting to warm up. It reminded me of

> Montana, the smell of morning in the mountains. That was where I used to live before...

Matt: Quickly cutting off the wistfulness, but if she lived in Montana before her parents were killed in some generic tragedy, then why is she in an orphanage in Arizona?

Rick: I have two theories

Matt: This should be interesting.

Rick: Theory one is the author comes from Montana and, as such, has to have their OC come from there

as well. The move to Arizona is to be convenient to the show.

Matt: Interesting and metafictional. The second then?

Rick: The incident that killed her parents blew up the entire state.

Matt: ...you don't hold back with these, do you?

> I pushed the thought away and walked towards Optimus. "Hey." I said.

> "Hello Grace." he greeted. "I expected you would sleep in."

> I chuckled. "Nah, I'm more of a morning than evening person."

Rebecca: Not an evening person that ran nine miles in only a few minutes.

Natasha: You should see how far she gets when she's fresh.

> I hopped in the car and he snaked a

> seatbelt around me. I yelped then sighed. "Jeez." I said.

Matt: Road safety is such a drag.

> We sped off towards base. Along the way, Optimus asked if I had any other family members.

Natasha: Somebody else he could palm you off on.

> I don't know what the hell is on his mind. But I told him anyway.

Rebecca: Look out guys, wangst incoming.

> "I have an older brother. John. He joined the military and is a current captain.

Rick: In the 303rd Sanitation Brigade: The Scrubs.

> He scheduled to come back to Jasper around Spring."

> "I see." he said. "Do you have family?" I asked.

Matt: He is descended from a long and proud line; Optimus, son of C-3PO, son of Gort, son of Robby.

> "No, I do not." he said. Feeling sympathetic, I patted the dashboard. "I'm sorry." I said. "I know what it's

> like, to lose someone."

Rebecca: Yeah, when your entire planet's a desolate wasteland then you can talk.

> There was a moment of silence.

Rick: Awkward.

> Mainly because we arrived at base. The doors opened and we were greeted to a thing attacking

> Ratchet!

Natasha: Somebody fed Luc after midnight and this is what happened.

> Optimus transformed, putting his mask on

Rick: His mouth guard that-

Rebecca: We get it.

> and shielding me with his right arm. With the other, he blasted the little bitch thing with his gun.

Matt: Take that, you undefined object!

> It started to twitch and stand, but not before Optimus smashed it.

Rick: Optimus' irrational hatred of Tickle Me Elmo knew no bounds.

> "And stay broken!" cried Ratchet.

Rebecca: No warranty period for you!

> Optimus allowed me in his hand, but made sure I was safe. "Nice

> Ratchet." I said. He gave me a death glare.

Natasha: In all fairness, that's how he reacts to most things.

> "Now, what could've caused that!?" he cried.

Matt: Some very clever puppetry plus a little bit of CG to hide the strings.

> Optimus took his mouth guard off

Natasha: Which-

Rebecca: No.

Natasha: Awww.

> and spoke, "I have a grave suspicion Ratchet. Dark energon."

Rick: Evil McGuffin. Just like the regular McGuffin, only more likely to create Zombies.

> He let it sink in.

Natasha: Dark Energon, our worst nightmare made flesh. [Pause] What's Dark Energon?

> Ratchet placed the thing in a tube and placed it in some box.

Rebecca: And placed that in a egg which was placed in a duck which was placed in an iron chest buried under an oak tree on a magic island that nobody can find.

> "If the residue found on Cliffjumper brought your broken equipment to life, it would stand to reason that
> the same residue, brought Cliffjumper from the dead."

Rick: This is perfectly sound superhero physics.

Matt: I have no doubt.

> said Optimus, as he closed the lid. He set me down on the ground and they continued.

Natasha: This is grown-up talk, so Grace, leave the room.

> Ratchet looked like he was stroking a fake beard

Rick: Would you make a fake beard for a robot from steel wool?

> and said, "That would account for his life signal popping back up,

Rebecca: A ghost in the DOS-shell, so to speak.

> but dark energon?! It's so scarce it's virtually non-existent. What would it be doing on earth?"

Matt: In Transformers canon, sooner or later everything ends up being buried on earth. You get used to it.

> Optimus looked worried. Then said,

Natasha: It was spread to earth by rats that hid away on ships.

> "It was transported, by Megatron."

Rick: Megatron runs the biggest Dark Energon cartel in the country. His couriers bring in truckloads of the stuff and unload it on the junkies at extortion rates.

Natasha: Harsh?

Rick: If you can't pay for your fix, he'll take your accessories, your minicon, your O-Parts or whatever else you have.

> I gasped. Megatron?! The evil

> guy that was supposed to be dead?! No wonder Optimus is worried! I thought.

> But Ratchet sounded like he didn't care. "For what purpose?" he asked.

> "To conquer this planet, by raising an army of the undead." replied Optimus.

Matt: Well that seems like a perfectly logical conclusion to me. Smuggling energy? It must be to make Zombies.

> I finally spoke up.

> "That doesn't sound good. Sounds creepy."

Rick: Eh, it's Zombies. They're so overused they're passé these days.

Natasha: But they're robot Zombies.

Rick: Good point. Okay, you can be scared again.

> I shivered. What Optimus just said seemed to finally startle Ratchet.

Matt: That and his threat to leave the kids with him again.

> But then, he chuckled.

> "Well, Megatron going to break quite a few toaster ovens, I mean, where on this world, would he find
> that many Cybertronian dead?"

Rebecca: Try eBay or, failing that, go cruising garage sales.

Rick: The discount isle of your local Toys R' Us will usually have an abundant supply of last year's stock.

> he stated. I chuckled. Ratchet eyed me and I raised my hands. "What?"

> It was kinda funny." I yelled.

Matt: Grace didn't just murder the joke, she shoved it in the woodchipper and buried the mulch in Jersey.

> Just then, Arcee, Bulkhead and Bee came in.

Rick: Along with Zeppo, Groucho and Harpo.

Natasha: Wow, could you imagine if Groucho Marx was your Powermaster partner or something?

Rick: That would be awesome. You'd run just off sharp comebacks alone.

> Em and Luc came out, laughing. I ran to them.

> "Dude, that was so fun! Can we go again?!" Luc cried at Bulkhead and me.

Rebecca: The joyride though Mogadishu was the highpoint of her day.

> "We'll see, Lucy." Replied

> Bulkhead, which ticked her off a bit. "Bulk' how many times do I have to tell ya? Call me Luc."

Matt: Don't make her angry. You wouldn't like her when she's angry.

> Em turned to Bee. "I wanna rematch." Bee chuckled. I rolled my eyes.

Rick: Aaaaah! Its spreading!

Natasha: Only one solution. Kill it with fire.

> "Autobots, prepare to..." began Optimus. Then, he stared down at us.

Matt: Awkward pause. Should we re-shoot?

> "Roll out?" asked Arcee.

Rebecca: Get ready to catchphrase!

> "Remain here." said Optimus. "Arcee, we will be out of the communications range for some time. So I

> am putting you in charge."

Rick: When he gets back he'll find that the place is a mess and the kids are gone and Arcee will have no idea how it happened

Matt: She'll probably raid the fridge the instant he's out the door.

> "Optimus, with all do respect, babysitting is not what I cut out for.

Rebecca: That's her excuse. Fact is, nobody wants to be around these brats.

> Besides, Ratchet hasn't fought since the war." stated Arcee.

> "My pistons maybe rusty but my hearings as sharp as ever." retorted Ratchet, making me chuckle
> again.

Rick: There a carbon monoxide leak in here or something? Because Grace is giggling at every damn thing.

> "Babysitting?" asked Luc. "Great, first we were children and now we're babies. You know, we can here!"

Matt: Yeah, we can here too!

Rebecca: I am Mary Sue, and so can you.

> Arcee ignored her.

[They all applaud discretely]

Natasha: Hopefully she'll eventually get bored and go bother somebody else.

> "For the moment, it's only reconisense." said Optimus.

> "Then why do I hear an edge in your voice?" retorted Arcee. I think I heard it, too.

Matt: He gets testy when fic authors just recycle chunks of existing episode dialogue. And, in truth, don't we all?

> "Arcee, much has changed in the past 24 hours,

Rick: Jack Bauer has saved the world again and yet still has no idea why he even cares about his wife.

> and it's best we adapt." said Optimus,

Rebecca: To transform yourselves, as it were.

> trying to control Arcee.

Matt: But he'd lost the batteries for the remote.

> He turned towards Ratchet and said, "Ratchet, bridge us out."

Natasha: Op's search for a new catchphrase wasn't going well.

Rick: So this is the abridged fic then?

> He fired up the bridge and they started to leave. I turned my head to see Luc and Em, Em trying to keep
> Luc under control from snapping Arcee's neck.

Matt: So Luc is trying to pick a fight with a giant robot. That girl really has no survival instinct whatsoever, does she?

> I had an awful feeling that there was going to be a fight.
> I hates fights, especially when Luc's in them. Someone always ends up in a hospital.

Rebecca: And yet, during her introduction, the narration seemed proud of the fact that Luc was getting into fights all the time, and almost burbling over with glee at the fact that she broke somebody's arm. Inconsistency much, fic?

> I made my decision, and slowly and carefully crept through the ground bridge.

Matt: Luc's attempts at violent self-destruction provided a fantastic distraction.

> I ended up in some
> canyon, with tons of smoke making it look eerie. I saw Optimus and Ratchet just up ahead and I ran
> towards them. Oh man, they're gonna kill me!

Rick: So why run towards them?

Natasha: She left backpack with her homework in it in Optimus' cab.

Rick: That's the black backpack, right?

> Well, that's what Ratchet wanted to do.

Natasha: And who can blame him?

> He turned around and his face turned from curious to angry. That made this a lot better.

Rebecca: How is 'angry' any better?

> "What in the all spark, are you doing here, Grace!

Matt: That's pretty much what we've been wondering since the fic started.

> You were suppose to stay at base!" he shouted, making it feel even worse than it was before.

Rick: You stupid! You soooooo stupid!

> "I will call for a ground bridge." said Optimus. I hesitated. Then I said, "Wait! Please don't send me
> back,"

Natasha: Look, kid, you're still within the free exchange period. If he doesn't send you back now there's no way he can get full value on you towards a different brat.

Rick: Yeah, and the aftermarket price on used Self Inserts is pretty terrible.

> Optimus then turned his attention to me. "I wanna help. I don't know why I got my powers, but I
> do know, that I'm suppose to help. Please Optimus." I begged.

Rebecca: She really is eager to get herself killed, isn't she?

> He stared at me. Then at Ratchet. "As long as you stay by us, you maybe safe." he finally said.

> Maybe safe? That's reasurring. I thought. At least that meant I can stay.

Matt: Yeah, you can stay and face an unknown danger that's the result of unknowable alien technology that even the aliens themselves are frightened of. You sure this is what you want to do, kid?

> I smiled at Optimus, "Thank you." I said.

Natasha: Thanks for the chance at certain doom, Op! You're the best!

Rick: Now if it was Armada Prime, he'd not have a single shred of concern about putting Alexis, Carlos and Rad in mortal peril.

Natasha: Wow, that is harsh.

Rick: Well, he was an idiot, and those three were pretty much indestructible, so...

> Ratchet scoffed and turned around. I followed behind them.

> Finally, Ratchet asked, "Optimus, what do we hope to find here?"

Rebecca: A place to park. They're already a few miles back from the mall entrance.

> "The sight of the largest battle sight in the this galaxy." he answered,

Rick: The Black Friday store opening.

> making we swallow. So we're going to a graveyard? He must be kidding.

Matt: Again, Grace, are you sure you want to do this? Think very carefully.

> "On earth! You must be joking." exclaimed Ratchet.

Rick: Again, Transformers Earth. Whole place is one giant Cybetronian garbage heap.

> "Do you recall the later period in the war, when both sides began hiding their energon spoils off world?"

> said Optimus.

Natasha: Know this, oh Prime. Between the Fall of Cybetron and the rise of the live-action moves, there was an age undrempt of.

Rick: Nice.

> "Of coarse, it's the reason energon deposits exist on planets such as this one."

Rebecca: You mean we can't blame the Precursors for all this?

> stated Ratchet. So, the Transformers new about earth for a while?

Matt: Long enough to have already invested in the property market.

> Wonder how long... I thought.

Rick: She thought about wondering.

Natasha: She wondered about thinking.

> "It is also the reason that battles came to be waged on planets such as this,"

Rebecca: The Transformers touched many worlds during their long war, oft inappropriately.

> said Optimus "And I fear Megatron's memory is as long as history."

Matt: Megatron remembers every slight, every insult, every wedgie, every swirly, every wet willy...

> I swallowed. Curiously, I asked, "How long have you guys known about Earth?"

> Optimus looked down at me and said, "A long time, Grace. When civilization was beginning to take its first steps."

Natasha: They made contact with humans during the early period of the Filth Age.

> I whistled at how long that is, "That's pretty long. How long has human kind known."

Rebecca: About Earth? For some time now.

> "We have still remained in secret." he answered.

Matt: They have been robots in disguise, so to speak.

> And there was silence.

Rick: Then somebody farted and killed the tension.

> We walked for about a mile until we came to a much wider canyon. Dead, buried bodies covered it.

Natasha: So if they were buried then how were they covering the canyon?

Matt: They were buried above the ground. Really complicated funeral rites.

> I gasped.

> "Do not worry, Grace." I heard Optimus say. I looked at him and nodded.

Rick: We're only walking into a canyon full of dead robots looking for a device that has the power to make Zombies out of dead robots.

> "For the first time in my life Optimus, I had hoped you were wrong." said Ratchet. "Now that's trust." I
> said. But Ratchet ignored me.

Matt: It's almost like you were crudely added into this scene after the fact.

> Suddenly, I heard a roaring jet fly over us.

Natasha: Sure, a house near the airport is cheap. Its only after you move in you realize just why.

> It landed on a cliff tower almost. It was huge, bigger than Optimus.

Rick: I'm huge!

> He was silver with hints of purple and a large gun on his arm.

Rebecca: The dreaded Decepticon overlord, Disco Stu-Tron.

> Purple eyes. I thought. I swallowed.

Rick: Oh look, a precognitive dream. I've never ever seen such an original and unexpected plot twist.

Matt: Says the guy who works in superhero comics.

> "Optimus, been well?" he cried, judging by his voice.

Natasha: Sounds like you've got one hell of a throat infection there.

> "I see you brought your trusty watchdog, I was certain he'd be in a scrap yard by now."

Rebecca: Or behind the woodshed with both barrels

> Ratchet stepped forward, "Why don't you invite him out here for

> check." Him? Megatron. This is not going to end well.

Matt: It's simple. He makes a big speech, you beat him around and he flies off swearing revenge while crying like a small girl. Repeat every Saturday morning for as long as the line stays viable.

> He glanced at me. "And I thought I would never see the day that you would started to bring vermin's
> with you."

Rebecca: And he hardly even knows her.

> I growled.

Natasha: Bad Grace! Back! Sit! No biscuit.

> "I know why your hear, Megatron." said Optimus.

Rick: While they are mortal enemies, Optimus and Megatron share a love of geo-caching.

> "Hardly a surprise Optimus, after all, you and I have been through this a long time.

Matt: We talk, we fight, we do it all again... can't you all just get along?

> And your time, has come to an end." cried Megatron.

Rebecca: He's being paroled for good behavior.

> He grabbed a bright, purple shard and raised it in the air. Then, he threw it at the ground. The second it
> did, the canyon lit up purple. We stepped back.

Natasha: Behold the power of his nightclub dancefloor.

> "Rise my army!" cried Megatron. The second he said that, Transformers started coming up from the
> ground, glowing purple.

Rick: Somebody call the MCP; we've got a crossover going on here.

> "Dear god." I said.

> "By the All Spark." said Ratchet. Different religion.Meh.

Matt: And thank you so much for that pointless interjection.

> The more that came up, the more they began to moan and groan.

Natasha: Processors... processors...

> It was like on of those movies, where

> a couple is in a graveyard, and when the moonlight shows, the dead began to rise.

Rick: And people keep tripping over the cardboard headstone while trying to run away from Tor Johnson and somebody who isn't Bela Lugosi.

> But this wasn't a movie.

Rebecca: It was a CG television series.

> This...was...

Matt: Wait for it, wait for it...

> real.

Rick: No stumbling, blocky cell-shading crudely interposed on drawn backgrounds for you.

> "Behold! The power of, Dark Energon!" cried Megatron.

Natasha: Now I dunno about you, but I'm thinking that, while impressive, his alternate energy pitch might not go down too well with the investors.

> They let out a menacing moan in applause.

Rick: You're not funny!

Natasha: Bring on the brains!

> "Megatron has desiccated the resting place of our fallen ancestors. And his own." said Ratchet.

Matt: His plan to build a McDonalds on an ancient burial ground had not worked out too well.

> "Not even the dead are safe from his war mongering." said Optimus.

Rick: Hear that, draft dodgers? Being dead won't help you.

> Were screwed! I yelled in my head. I took small steps back. "DESTROY THEM!" yelled Megatron.

Natasha: And then they fight! And it only took us fifty pages to get there!

> They charged. Optimus took out his guns and started blasting the zombies.

Rick: Oh no! They got Calcar!

> Sometimes they would fall, permanently dead.

Rebecca: Sometimes they would just fake a hurt for the referee.

> But sometimes, they'd keep going. If they're already dead, how the hell do we kill them?!

Matt: With fire.

Natasha: A cricket bat also works well.

> Ratchet said that, too. Optimus just kept firing, but they kept getting closer and closer.

Rick: Didn't I see this in every Zombie movie ever?

Natasha: And every Zombie computer game ever?

Rick: And every computer game that had Zombie content needlessly shoved into it for no real reason?

> "Ratchet, Grace retreat bridge yourself back to base!" cried Optimus.

Matt: See, this is the point that you yell at Grace for being an idiot and walking into certain danger in the first place.

Rebecca: You watch; she'll end up saving them and be congratulated for it, even if it was saving them from something that wouldn't have happened if she wasn't there in the first place.

> Ratchet's hand became sword

Rick: I guess his bonesaw is ready.

> and he yell, "No! I will stand with you, Optimus. You may require a medic when this is over."

> He charged at them and started chopping their asses off.

Rebecca: An oddly specific and questionably effective move.

Rick: They got Windmill!

> "Grace, find some cover now!" cried Optimus.

Natasha: And use the control key to couch. I know it doesn't help much, but the tutorial window won't go away until you do.

> "On it!" I shouted. I ran toward a large rock and climbed it, getting me an amazing viewpoint.

Rebecca: What part of 'cover' don't you understand, Grace?

Matt: The part where she doesn't needlessly risk her own life?

Rebecca: Given that this is the girl who walked through the desert to the bad part of town in the middle of the night... good point.

> Optimus had just turned his hands into swords

Natasha: He turned his hand into a sword. And even more impressively, he can turn his sword into a hand!

> and if I thought Ratchet chopped their asses off,

Matt: This fixation with rectal surgery is distressing.

> sorry, but Optimus was just being a total badass out there.

Rick: Freedom is the right of all sentient beings, as is flipping out and killing Zombies.

> They started to make their way to Megatron. I followed behind them, alternating rocks. For some
> reason, they never saw me.

Natasha: It's almost like you weren't in the scene and were shoved in at a later date.

> But the zombies saw Optimus and Ratchet.

Matt: Two giant, brightly coloured robots leaving a trail of devastation in their wake are hard to miss.

Rebecca: The Zombies had their AI tweaked in the last patch. Up until recently, you could just stroll by them and they wouldn't react

> They circled them and piled on Optimus bringing him to his knees.

Rick: See, this is what happens when you out-run the healer.

> Then, they moved onto Ratchet.

Rebecca: I just don't get this Zombie speed-brain eating thing.

> "OPTIMUS! RATCHET!" I yelled. But I knew they couldn't hear
> me. The moaning of the zombies drowned out my call.

Matt: You may be being devoured by the animated corpses of your revered dead, but the fact that you can't hear Grace makes it all worth it.

> But Megatron heard me. "Let us see what happens, human, when dark energon infects you!"

Rick: Downside is you turn into a freakish techno-Zombie. Upside is that next time the other kids tease you for being an orphan, you can use your unholy strength to rip them open and eat the guts.

> he cried.

> He raised his cannon. I remember the dream I had last night. He would raise his cannon and I will
> perish. That wasn't a dream. It was a warning.

> "Sorry, Megatron! But I ain't planning on dying today!" I cried. And he fired. No sooner had the bullet
> nearly touched my heart that I ducked and it shaved me.

Rebecca: Okay, first up that gun doesn't fire bullets. It's a fusion cannon, one that fires bursts of insanely powerful charged particles. It's also something that, even if it 'just grazes' a human would still burn them

badly.

Matt: You're also thinking far too much about this.

Rebecca: Regrettably, this is also true.

> I gasped for air.

> "My subjects! You have a new target! Destroy the human!" cried Megatron.

Natasha: Go Megatron! You're now my favourite person in this fic!

> My heart started to pound

> on my ribcage. They started to moan towards me. I backed up against a wall. I needed a weapon. I saw

> a knife looking object and I grabbed it.

Matt: Knife status approved by Crocodile Dundee.

> I grabbed it in my right arm and chucked it at one of their faces. Bullseye! It fell to the ground dead.

Rick: Not you too, Big Rescue Force!

Rebecca: Any Zombie that can be killed by a teenage girl throwing a knife at its head deserves it.

> But that didn't stop them all. I quickly started to grab sharp objects and fling them at them,

Matt: The lacerated hands were a problem, but they still beat eaten brains.

Natasha: Yeah, but wait till she realizes that she hasn't had her tetanus shot.

> sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing.

Rick: One of the Zombies was taping her efforts to upload it to Failblog. Right after the brain-eating, of course.

> I turned towards Megatron. He was grinning. He was enjoying my panic.

>The zombie hoards started to get even closer.

Natasha: All they want to do is eat your brains.

Rick: They're not unreasonable; no-one's going to eat your eyes.

> I ran out of stuff to throw at them.

Matt: She'd worked her way through her entire backpack, even including the packed lunch.

> I was backed up against the wall. Dying's not so bad. I thought.

Natasha: Coming back to life as a Zombie, on the other hand, does kind of suck.

Rebecca: On the upside, she might try and eat Em and Luc's brains.

> Of course it's bad! I never got to know why I got a power! Wait a second! My power!

Rick: And there you have it, folks. After being introduced three hundred pages back and being the catalyst for all this crap, Grace's super-power is finally useful to this fic.

> I shot my hands out focusing it on the first row of zombies. At first, it didn't do nothing,

Matt: And that's when she realized that her power only works on iPhones.

> but when I put

> my back into it, they flung back, knocking into, and killing, the first three rows of them.

Rebecca: This is what happens when you don't space out your Zombies. One falls over and kills a whole bunch of them.

> But that didn't stop them.

> One of them lunged at me and I was too late to use my power. They were a centimeter from my face

> when its face imploded!

Rick: Chevy Aveo Swerve!

> It was Optimus! And Ratchet! They fought my zombie attackers.

Natasha: Their escape from being overwhelmed by the Zombies was both spectacular and gripping. Take our word for it.

> "Grace! Are you alright!" cried Ratchet.

> "Nope! I'm nearly dead and I'm about to have a heart attack!" I cried.

Rick: And if this was an eighties action show, we'd freeze frame on them laughing at her and roll the credits.

> They made their way to the very end.

Natasha: Simon Pegg is Optimus Prime in Run fat Autobot Run!

> "Bravo Optimus! Though this is but a prelude.

Matt [Optimus]: A what?

Rick [Megatron]: A... look, I messed up my villain speech. Can we go back and start it over?

> You may wish to save your strength for the main event." said Megatron.

Natasha: The Decepticon Army Shakespeare society's full-length production of Hamlet.

Rick: With Lord Zarak as Yorrick.

> Optimus, angered, climbed the rock face to him.

Matt: Hey Rebecca. Rock-climbing.

Rebecca: Thrilling.

> They said something, then Megatron looked at me.

Rick [Megatron]: Me? I thought she was with you.

> "Human, this is an ordeal that you cannot comprehend

Rebecca: You're telling us?

> if you are on the wrong side. The power you possess should be used on the right side.

Matt [Megatron]: Join me and together we will rule the galaxy as father and son!

> Join the Decepticons or perish. It is your choice." he yelled. I gritted my teeth.

Rick: Wow, monster constipation there.

> "I'll join the Decepticons when hell freezes over!" I cried. Optimus took a swing at him, but Megatron
> was to fast.

Matt: He hammered the block button

> He transformed and flew off.

> I noticed Ratchet climbing the cliff face. I followed. He made it up there when I was halfway up. When I
> finally reached the top, they were waiting.

Rebecca: No doubt arguing over who's idea it was to bring her in the first place.

> "You going to join the Decepticons?" asked Ratchet.

Matt: With more than a hint of hope in his voice.

> "Nah.To much purple and hatred." I said.

Rebecca [Hippie]: Too much red in your aura.

> He gave me a hand and I took it. He put me in Prime's hand. "Can't wait to tell the others what
> happened here." I finally said.

Rick: Zombie apocalypses are fun!

> Optimus touched his ear and said, "Arcee, we require a ground bridge."

Natasha: And also check on the other two brats to make sure that neither of them got into trouble while nobody was looking.

Matt: It's at that point that somebody noticed that Luc had ground bridged to a factory that made fireworks, sledgehammers and glass unicorn statues.

> There was silence, then, "What happened!"

Rick: A retelling of a Transformers Prime episode with a pointless new character and her contrived powers needlessly inserted into it.

> OMG DID ANY OF YOU GUYS SEE THE LATEST TRANSFORMERS PRIME VIDEO?!

Rebecca: It's so shocking that her capslock key got stuck.

> IT'S SO

> FREACKING SAD AND AWESOME AT THE SAME TIME! I got some new info for ya.

> So, Transformers Prime will begin on March 22nd and it will be the last in the Prime series.

> NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Matt: Breathe!

> OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

Rebecca: Not over-reacting a bit here, are we?

> OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO OOOO!

Natasha: Special guest appearance by Mr Pe.

Rick: DO NOT WANT!

> and yes at the same time.

Rebecca: If a quietly understated 'yes', but one no less.

> But the will have a new animated transformers after the 2014 release of the new movie.

> So, there goes Transformers Prime.

Rick: At least it gets an ending. Animated would like a word with you about that.

> But at least the Transformers will live on. What do you want it to be about?

Natasha: Sky-Byte, the greatest poet in the history of the Decepticons and his futile quest for respect.

> Comment and let me know! Also, review! I will have the next chapter next week, so, yeah.

> Bye bye peeps! ;)

The big screen turned off, reverting the world to written format. "Well that was... a fic," Natasha commented.

"Yes, yes it was." Matt nodded. "It was a fic. And not much else."

"It takes forever to start and then... it stops." Rebecca shrugged, "Not that I'm really complaining, all things considered."

"Well, since the fic's over, could I get your reviews?" The Voice asked.

"Let's start with Grace," Rebecca began. "Here was have a lead character who spends their time

wallowing in self-pity and will gladly wangst at the first opportunity. However, for all that, her life is far from as awful as it would seem. She has a living brother and two good friends who she sees regularly, so it's not like she's all alone in the world. Likewise, even if it is in a nonsensically Dickensian orphanage, she still has a roof over her head and a regular source of food, so it's not like she's cold, miserable, starving and homeless. In short, She's miserable for the simple sake of being miserable; it doesn't add anything to the plot save for possibly aiming for some sort of sympathy ploy – one that instead backfires.”

“Likewise, Em and Luc are pretty shallow characters,” Natasha continued. “Luc is a troublemaker who seems to mock everything around her, but is never given any exploration beyond that, no reasons why or how. Instead, the author has her roll her eyes at everything without going anywhere beyond that. Em, on the other hand, doesn't even have that much. Beyond some faint reassurances that she's the nicest person in the world, she doesn't have a shred of personality and is almost entirely forgotten.”

“I still want to know why the rich attractive girl is hanging around the orphan and the troublemaker from the wrong side of the tracks,” Rebecca interjected. “It just doesn't follow through that what should be a popular girl – after all, she's supposedly pretty, smart and likeable – would hang out with the misfits.”

“Maybe it's a sense of charity,” Matt noted before continuing. “That aside, what struck me was how little effect the girls had on the overall plot. Yes, they are replacing members of the canon cast, but at the same time there's little point to that replacement. The only true change is to have Grace be present for the battle against the Zombie Transformers, and even then she doesn't affect the outcome in any way; the same things happen, only now they happen with an author-created character present. While the fic was all about the girls, they were also completely redundant to it.”

“And yes, they have superpowers,” Rick finished. “To which I can say ‘big whoop.’ So far, those powers have accomplished two things; the first is to provide a handy plot device that puts the kids under the Autobot's care. Thing is, of course, in the original episodes, the same thing happened to Raf, Jack and Miko without the added complication of them getting powers from the Cybernet Space Cube. The second was that, yes, they allowed Grace to kill some Zombies, but as said above, that didn't change anything that wouldn't have happened otherwise.”

“So in short, the girls and their powers are pointless,” Natasha finished.

“Pointless and inane,” Rebecca added.

“Pointless, inane and, in Em's case, almost entirely forgotten,” Matt concluded.

“Well, thanks for the laughs guys,” Natasha spoke up as she stood. “I gotta run; I had a great idea for a song during the fic, and I wanna get some notes down before it leaves me.”

“Actually, I meant to ask,” Matt spoke up. “Where did you learn to play guitar?”

“Oh this?” She glanced at her instrument. “Picked it up in my spare time, actually between salvage jobs and the like.”

“Makes sense.” Rebecca nodded. “So where did you learn to operate an aquatic salvage frame?”

Natasha blinked a moment as if she was unsure of the answer. “On the job training,” She finally managed with only moderate conviction. “It's pretty easy; after all, I learned to drive stick-shift.” That bought out a grin. “And besides, my car is cool.”

“Really?” Rick perked up.

"Classic muscle." Natasha seemed to have resumed her confidence. "Sure, it was left abandoned somewhere for a few decades and it's got some rust problems and the paint needs a touch-up, but it's awesome."

"Got any pics?" Rick asked. "I could use some colorful vehicles for characters and the like."

"I'll show ya." She nodded. "And you can scrawl while I work or the like." The pair of them headed out, leaving Matt and Rebecca sitting there in silence.

"So the question is, what's she hiding?" Rebecca finally spoke.

"The question is, does she even know?" He replied.

Author's notes:

Battletruck/Warlords of the 21st Century was my 'gateway' bad movie, the one that made me first learn to enjoy it for the badness. And, as a bit of trivia, at the time of filming, the Battletruck itself was the largest and most expensive prop in the history of New Zealand cinema.

All the various Zombie Transformers named during the scene really do exist, even Big Rescue Force. True, some of them are more than a little bizarre in and of themselves...

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Forever and Always written by autogal233

Rebecca Bartley, Natasha Isavia, Rick R. Mortis and Matt Simmons created by Rick R. (natch)

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Enigmatic Alien Artifacts? Email us at [elmerstudios00 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com) and register your Jeff.

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<http://www.heavens-feel.com/elmer/>

All of Elmer Studios' MSTings, random DELTA Invasion Episode Generator and other stuff in one spot

>That left me with Arcee. I swung my leg over the side of her and felt a sense of pride go through me.