

Onyx 521 7041

Beat 1

*They flourished in the twilight hour of man
Two digital heirs to a dying throne
Inheriting a foul Camelot in smithereens*

*It was simply a matter of time
Before a lesser nature arose within them
Hanging like a weight upon their better judgement
Driving them toward that dark proclivity*

*And quelle surprise, it came to war!
Machine born to obliterate machine
Both sides vying for the last vestiges
Of a near-spent Terra*

*This was the Battle of the Primes
The Cygnus against The Theta
One last grasp for destiny at all costs
Across an unpromised scorch of chaos and cruelty*

*But betwixt these brokers of carnage
In spite of horrors and schadenfreude and Hell
He would be the one to arrive at that great insidious pivot
And steer a hopeless age toward a new and terrifying frontier*

It was the rattling of a cracked I-beam that was driving Onyx crazy. Not the gaping hole beside him in the air-carrier hull. Not the limbs and parts of spent units sliding noisily around the cabin. Not even the widening crack in his ion-core casing.

No. Just that stupid fucking rattle.

He had a right hip socket on its last legs, both internal drives begging for a defrag and a paint job consisting of dirt, grease and carbon scoring. Onyx looked less like a tactical combat droid and more like the floor sweepings of a repair hub; a hodge-podge of components and servos, welded up and shoved back out into the fray for more punishment.

Next to current-gen units he stood out like a sore thumb; an unlucky rabbit's foot that nobody asked for. And he wouldn't have it any other way.

Through the hull breach he watched Eastern Sector glide by, a flat grey expanse of scuttled ATV's, lifeless units and blasted-out craters of Terra. This was where they fought "The Big One"; a so-called final push to break Theta Prime. With both sides doubling down on resources, it wasn't until the fighting had actually started that Command realised it was a zero-sum slaughter; a tactical gamble from upstairs gone horribly wrong.

Turns out the whole region was one giant fallacy; a corridor of land promising an embarrassment of riches, but ultimately proving too costly to procure. The death toll was insane, and when the dust settled both Primes swiftly began hedging their bets. Smaller parcels of land. Less ore. Less risk.

"What's with the chop-job?" asked Alcion 0811 from across the cabin, staring Onyx down. He turned to a neighbouring droid who met his eyeline and shrugged.

"That's Onyx", replied a scout unit in the back. "Keep your distance. He doesn't converse". Alcion shifted sights to him; non-combat model, small build. A data-runner, probably never shot a round.

"Onyx what?" Alcion countered "Or is he too good for a model number?"

"No, it's just pointless him keeping one", the scout said. "He's the last of his model. Been operational since they axed cyber assaults and went physical".

"Great, we've got a fossil on board", Alcion blurted. "How in the Prime is he still standing?". He looked back down the cabin. Onyx hadn't budged an inch, still staring silently into the aftermath below.

"Luck meets skill", said the scout. "So what?".

"He's a fucking liability!", Alcion snarled, staring the scout down. "A unit that long in the shit is going to drop-guard and get one of us tagged. Should have been re-processed cycles ago".

The cabin went quiet. Alcion felt the presence behind him.

"Interesting critique", Onyx said in a flat tone. The other units eyed the floor while Alcion turned slowly to face him. Taller than he looked sitting, his lenses beaming down and through him. Alcion could see every scuff and crack on his frame, worse now up-close. "Do the prime a favour and handle it", Onyx said, shoving a pistol into Alcion's hand. He looked to the gun, then back at Onyx. No words.

"Onyx, he's fresh off the belt", the scout said wearily. "He doesn't know what he's saying".

It was the split-second when Alcion glanced back that Onyx's right arm shot upwards. Too quick for him to react, Alcion froze and waited for the hit that didn't come. Instead they all watched as Onyx clutched the loose I-beam overhead and bent it 90° in one smooth motion. A moment passed and nobody said a thing. Then suddenly...

"Coming up on LZ" the pilot crackled over the comm. "Two minutes!". Onyx threw Alcion one last glance, then took his side-arm and sat back down.

He was happy now.
No more rattle.