

HEROES AND LEGENDS

Optimus Prime

By Tony "Thunder" Klepack

Sometimes I wonder if it's all worth it. The pain, the killing, the death and destruction that this conflict between our two sides has caused. Its a vicious cycle that feeds upon itself as it goes. Is killing in the name of peace worth the price of our innocence?

I mull the matter over in my mind, gazing at the night sky and taking in the silent beauty of the stars beyond. I haven't had the opportunity to do that in quite a while. It's funny how we take the simple things in life for granted sometimes.

Dark. Silent. Beautiful. And more then that, peaceful. Perhaps that's why it means so much to me here and now. I can't remember how long it's been since I've known peace in my own life...

It would be my time to walk among them soon enough. I hadn't been off-world in some time and I looked forward to my upcoming expedition. We had worked hard to keep the Decepticons from finding out our plans and I was reasonably confident we wouldn't have to worry about their interference in our operation.

"Prime!" I turned slightly at the summons. "Glad I found ya. I've been lookin' all over!"

Ironhide. One of the oldest of my warriors and one from whom I'd learned a lot in my time. It's safe to say without comrades such as Ironhide, Alphatrion and Kup I likely wouldn't have become the warrior I am. Certainly not the Supreme Commander of the Autobots.

"What do you have to report?" I asked.

"Everythin's loaded and ready to go," he replied. "Trailbreaker and Bluestreak are checkin everything against the manifest. Shouldn't be too much longer. Wheeljack and his team are doing the pre-flight checks."

"There were no problems?"

"Nothin serious. Our sentries haven't reported any activity out of Polyhex either. Looks like the Decepti-chomps are none the wiser."

I nod. "That's good news. The stakes are high enough without Megatron's interference in our plans." I find my gaze drifting to the night sky once more. "Let me know when we're ready to launch."

"You got it," I hear him say. He takes a step then stops. "Is there something else?"

"Are you alright, Prime?" he asks. "You seem a bit distracted, if you don't mind muh sayin."

He doesn't miss much, I'll give him that. That's likely why he's survived as long as he has. "I was just lost in thought," I tell him. "It seems like I don't get much time to myself anymore..."

He nodded. "The Prime is the greatest of us, they say. That goes as much for his burdens as well as it does for his strengths." He tapped me lightly on the shoulder. "Enjoy your time while ya can, my friend."

I watched him turn and move down the spiral staircase beyond the balcony before turning back. He was a good soldier and a good comrade. They all were. All of them looked up to me and respected me as their commander.

They all believed in me, believed that I was the wisest and most powerful among them. If only they knew my secret fears, would they still find me such an icon of strength? I suspect not, but then I know the role I am to play and I accept it even though it is merely an image and not the truth.

I was taught long ago by my mentor that people respect confidence first and knowledge second. This has proven true time and again in my life. Even now, when I have time to meditate on the matter, I feel like I'm not worthy of the honor and responsibility that has been granted me. But I understand too

well that someone needs to lead our people and I can be confident and charismatic when needed.

Supreme Commander of the Autobots. I had done well for a minor dock technician from Iacon. All those years ago...so long now, I had started out as Orion Pax, a simple mech with simple dreams. I knew nothing of galactic conquest, mass extermination or the horrors of warfare.

I lived my life in blissful ignorance, performing my duties day in and day out, making sure my small contribution to the Cybertronian supply system was executed competently. In my off time, I enjoyed the companionship of my one love, Ariel. She was everything I loved in life—smart, beautiful and full of a fiery spirit which could never be tamed.

Our kind were set apart from most of the other species we had encountered upon entering the bigger mosaic of our galaxy. They were predominantly organic, set in two flavors: male and female. The two sexes serving some sort of biological necessity for further propagation of their respective species. Cybertronians were of a mechanical nature and therefore gender was not required for multiplying our numbers. Despite that, over time our kind also took on masculine and feminine traits—mostly due to interacting with the organic species and acquiring a desire to be able to better relate to them and their unique ways of life.

It was with this in mind that I was designed with a male nature and I had met Ariel, a partner of feminine attributes. By our times, several eons had passed and the male/female dynamic had fully permeated our own society.

We spent many wonderful years together, virtually inseparable. I loved her dearly and I know she felt the same about me. Those were some of the best times of my life and I have seen very little since that can compare to the sheer joy I experienced then.

There is a saying among the Elders, that nothing good lasts forever... and so too was my time with Ariel numbered. I wish sometimes that I had known the end was coming so that I could have appreciated our time together even more. And yet, I know rationally that I likely would have done little different even if I had known at the time.

As I lingered under Ariel's enchantment, the world was changing. The benevolent Cybertron I had always known and loved had succumbed to uncertainty and chaos. No one knew exactly where or how it had all started, but the world began a long descent into something else. Something darker. Crime became rampant. The economy dipped into recession. The few off-worlders present on Cybertron became scapegoats for all of our society's ills. But all that was merely the start...

The Decepticon movement seemed to emerge out of nowhere, drawing large numbers to its ranks by advocating quick answers for our problems. If there was crime, wipe it out. If the aliens present were subverting our society, ban them from Cybertron altogether. Naturally, this mentality appealed to many of the mob—simple mechanoids that lead simple lives and did not consider the broader implications of such brash action.

The High Council was forced into expanding its security forces greatly in those years, combating the street violence harshly, trying desperately to keep order at all cost. Of course, we had heard about the unrest and even seen some of the effects first-hand. But I was confident the Council knew what steps to take to maintain the peace and in my ignorance, I was not vigilant to the danger that lurked all about me.

One night as Ariel and I walked home from work, we were besieged by a group of miscreants—whom I would later learn were Decepticon initiates. I tried valiantly to defend Ariel but she would have none of it and joined me in our futile attempt to combat our attackers. I managed to subdue two of them before I was taken by surprise from behind. I succumbed to a stun stick and collapsed to the ground. Ariel turned in time to see me as I fell and that was when one of the attackers revealed his weapon. He shot her several times and I watched helplessly as she succumbed to her wounds and dropped. That was my last memory before shutdown and I wasn't certain why they hadn't finished me as well. It turns out that Council security had arrived moments later and pacified most of them while two escaped their assault. I was told later by one of the medical technicians that Ariel's wounds had been too severe, her

laser core fiercely damaged in the fight and her spark extinguished as a result.

I was devastated. It took several months before I could think clearly and not fixate on Ariel, our life together and the circumstances of her death. But with time, I was able to think clearly and I decided I'd had to choose a side in the escalating conflict. The Decepticons had been responsible for what happened to Ariel and it didn't take much to realize they had to be stopped permanently or their entire group could take our world to war.

I underwent a voluntary upgrade and joined the enlisted wing of the Council security forces, determined to put a stop to the Decepticon threat.

I threw myself into the fighting, unconcerned by the fact that the conflict was getting worse and worse with time. Each Decepticon I killed or apprehended was one less threat loose to wreak havoc on innocents.

The fighting reached a boiling point with a terrorist bombing of the Transyech Terminal in Lower Iacon. With the bombing, it seemed a certainty that the Decepticons had finally declared their intentions openly and war was inevitable.

Not long after, the Decepticon Leader Teryhex disappeared and a new warrior named Megatron replaced him. It was never revealed for a certainty but we suspected Teryhex had been assassinated to make way for this new leader. Megatron had more charisma and cunning than his predecessors. Where they had advocated violence and revolution, Megatron seemed in favor of using the political process open to him to advance their cause. Gradually, the threat of war eased and for some years it seemed like peace would prevail.

If only the Council had realized their folly... Megatron had no intention of restoring the peace, he had merely been biding time while his followers worked in secret, recruiting more and more warriors to their cause and making plans for all out war. Finally, the time came and he lured our commander, Sentinel Prime, to the Council headquarters in Iacon under the guise of signing a peace treaty. Instead, he assassinated Prime and most of the Council, leaving our leadership in ruins and decimating our ability to coordinate a retaliation before his forces could sweep the globe.

It worked too well and the Decepticons nearly took Cybertron in the years that followed. The enlisted forces were reorganized as the main body and took on the name Autobots while the remaining Council Elite protected what was left of our Council Elders against further aggression.

It went that way for years, while we fought a desperate guerilla war against the Decepticons. To read the historical texts now, it makes it seem like I singlehandedly organized the Autobots and forced the Decepticons back. But that is a oversimplification of the events that followed.... in reality, there were several commanders at that time and without all of our efforts, Cybertron would have been lost to tyranny eons ago. No one ever mentions the contributions of Ultra Magnus, Fortress Maximus, Xaaron, Grimlock and dozens of others that helped keep the fires burning in those dark early years.

There is another in need of mention, but his contribution was so important to my life that I felt he needed separate mention here. Alphatrion. My mentor, my advisor and my friend. Without him, I could never have become the leader that I am today--more likely, I would've been dead long ago in the early days of the war. Alphatrion was ancient even when I first met him and he never gave me a satisfactory answer as to his origins--but that was of little consequence. His strategic council and wisdom enlightened me in ways I never thought possible. If Ariel taught me about love, then Alphatrion taught me about power. He taught me to respect my troops and trust in them like a warrior trusts his instincts during battle. He showed me that being confident and instilling it in others was far more valuable than anything else. He showed me many of the ancient secrets of our world--such as Vector Sigma and the Matrix. He taught me to shine brightly in darkest night...

There came a time when the factions of the Autobots united further and the varied commanders elected me as their Supreme Commander, the new Prime. Alphatrion was also instrumental in getting the varied voices of the resistance to place their faith in me when I was not certain I was the correct choice. When I took on our sacred vessel, the Creation Matrix, I was upgraded further, taking on my

strongest form ever and the one I hold even now.

It almost seemed as if Alptrion had been grooming me for that one purpose all along, guiding me along my path until I reached my ultimate destiny. Was I his personal choice or was there some sort of grand mystical purpose behind it I did not comprehend? Whatever his reasoning, I will never know it. Not long after I was appointed, he simply disappeared. No search anywhere was able to locate him again. Some feared the worst but given his nature, it is entirely possible he had felt his purpose fulfilled and retreated to some haven unknown to all but himself.

I will never be able to thank him for what he has done for me and indeed, all of our people. I feel disappointed sometimes that he will never know my gratitude and yet, other times I think that wherever he is he must already know.

I hear footfalls behind me and turn.

“Optimus?”

It’s Prowl, my intelligence officer.

“Is it time?” I ask.

He nods. “Time to go,” he replies.

I glance back at the cybernetic landscape about me one last time then turn to leave.

Eons of warfare... at best, we have held back the Decepticons from conquering our home world and fulfilling their goals of galactic domination. Not a victory, but a worthy endeavor nonetheless.

I follow Prowl down to the deck and the enormous golden structure that lay beyond.

Now I must go to defend this world from a cosmic danger worse than any it has ever faced before. Our world’s rogue orbit has taken us into the path of an asteroid belt and if someone doesn’t act, the planet will be decimated. We have constructed an enormous vessel, the Ark, to carry us into danger so that we might be able to clear our world a safe path in advance.

Is it all worth it? In the grand scheme of things, I believe it is. Megatron is wrong—we should be working with our celestial neighbors, striving for a greater peace not warring with them. Looking for commonality, not focusing on differences.

Until that day, until are one, I will never stop. The Decepticons must not be allowed to succeed, no matter what. I will fight until the last flare of my spark to make sure they are destroyed. We must fight, to bring peace and justice to our world. To remind our people what honor and peace are, for they have been too long without.

It is time to get to work...