

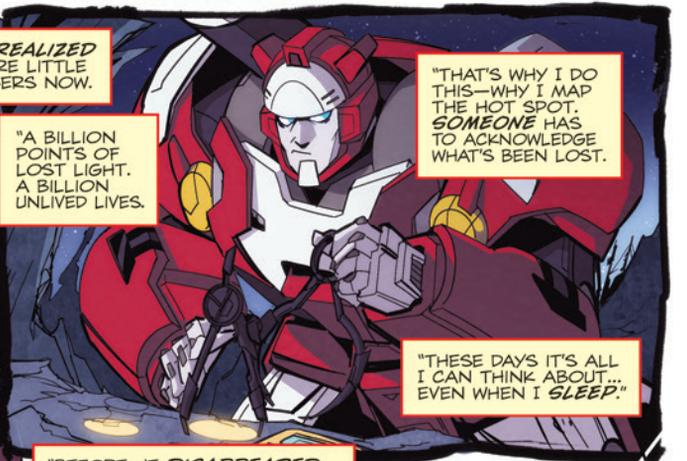


"EVERYTHING HAS AN ENDING."



"TAKE THESE *UNREALIZED SPARKS*—THEY'RE LITTLE MORE THAN EMBERS NOW."

"A BILLION POINTS OF LOST LIGHT. A BILLION UNLIVED LIVES."



"THAT'S WHY I DO THIS—WHY I MAP THE HOT SPOT. *SOMEONE* HAS TO ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT'S BEEN LOST."

"THESE DAYS IT'S ALL I CAN THINK ABOUT... EVEN WHEN I *SLEEP*."

"BEFORE HE *DISAPPEARED*—BEFORE THEY GOT TO HIM—*RUNG* USED TO SAY THAT DREAMS WERE YOUR MIND'S WAY OF TELLING YOU A *SECRET*."

"WHEN YOU'RE OFFLINE—WHEN YOU'RE *RECHARGING*—YOU'RE GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE TO NOTICE THINGS YOU *MISSED* FIRST TIME AROUND."



"THE DETAILS. THE SIGNS."



"THE *PATTERNS*."

"I'M NOT NAÏVE. I KNOW I HARBOR *PERSECUTORY DELUSIONS*. I KNOW I'M *PARANOID*."

"CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I THINK EVERYONE'S OUT TO GET ME."



"IT JUST MEANS I DON'T KNOW WHO *IS* AND WHO *ISN'T*."

"I HAVE TO LOOK FOR CLUES."



"EVERYONE SPEAKS IN *CODE*, OF COURSE. "NORMAL" CONVERSATIONS ARE THE OPPOSITE..."

THERE YOU ARE, *RED ALERT!* WE WERE GETTING WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

I'M ABOUT TO *HEAD OFF*—REPORTS OF A DECEPTIC TRAFFICKER SELLING *SPARK DISRUPTORS* IN IMMATURA.

I THINK IT'S TIME THE *DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD* DID SOME *ENFORCING*. CEREBROS HERE IS ITCHING TO FILL THE CELLS.



"...BUT YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO *READ BETWEEN THE LINES*."

THERE YOU ARE, *RED ALERT!* WE WERE GETTING WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

I'M ABOUT TO *HEAD OFF*—REPORTS OF A DECEPTIC TRAFFICKER SELLING *SPARK DISRUPTORS* IN IMMATURA.

I THINK IT'S TIME THE *DULY APPOINTED ENFORCER OF THE TYREST ACCORD* DID SOME *ENFORCING*. CEREBROS HERE IS ITCHING TO FILL THE CELLS.

THE EXTENDED PAUSE BETWEEN SENTENCES—ALMOST INDISCERNIBLE. WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE?

13. WHY IS HE USING MY FULL NAME? ON THE LAST 56 OCCASIONS HE CALLED ME 'RED'. WHAT'S CHANGED?

14. AN ODD INTONATION IN HIS VOICE. SARCASM? FEAR? FEAR OF WHAT?

15. A STRANGE EMPHASIS. WHY THOSE TWO WORDS?

16. MAX IS WELL TRAVELLED. YET MISPRONOUNCES THE NAME OF A WELL-KNOWN PLANET. DELIBERATE? SOMETHING I'M SUPPOSED TO NOTICE?

17. WHO REFERS TO THEMSELVES IN THE THIRD PERSON? AND AGAIN WITH THE STRANGE—AND UNNATURALLY SUSTAINED—EMPHASIS. WHO TALKS LIKE THIS?

18. AND THAT IS A FLAT-OUT UNNATURAL SPEECH PATTERN. I KNOW CEREBROS. WHY IS HE INTRODUCING HIM TO ME?

"THE LAST TIME THINGS GOT TOO MUCH—BACK ON THE LOST LIGHT—I THREW MYSELF INTO THE OIL RESERVOIR—



"—HEAD FIRST.



"THEY FOUND ME.

"THEY SAVED ME.



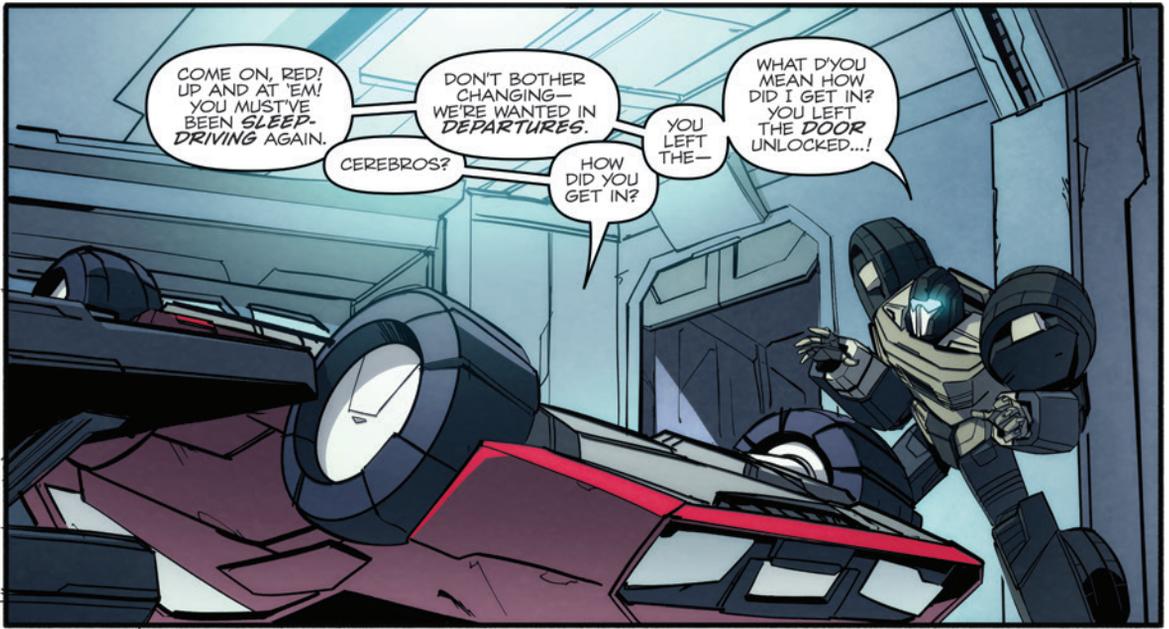
"AND EVENTUALLY THEY BROUGHT ME HERE, TO LUNA 1—THE MOON THAT GOT AWAY...

"THINGS WERE GETTING BETTER.

"THEY'RE NOT ANYMORE."

"RED ALERT!"





COME ON, RED!  
UP AND AT 'EM!  
YOU MUST'VE  
BEEN *SLEEP*.  
DRIVING AGAIN.

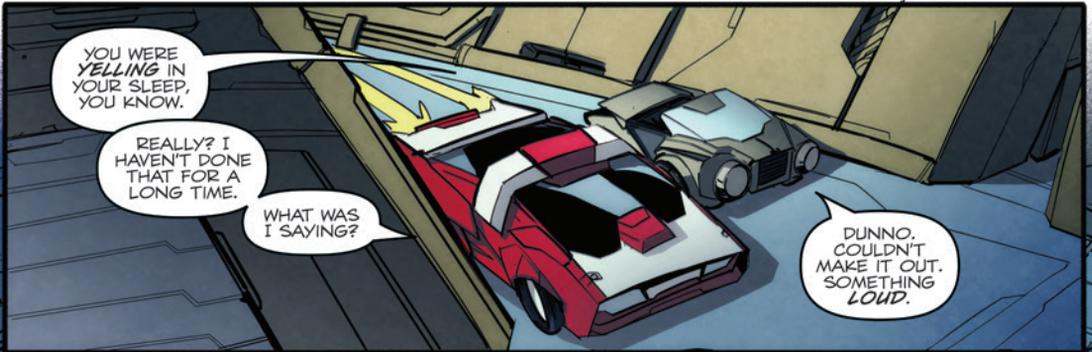
DON'T BOTHER  
CHANGING—  
WE'RE WANTED IN  
*DEPARTURES*.

WHAT D'YOU  
MEAN HOW  
DID I GET IN?  
YOU LEFT  
THE *DOOR*  
UNLOCKED...!

CEREBROS?

HOW DID YOU  
GET IN?

YOU LEFT  
THE—



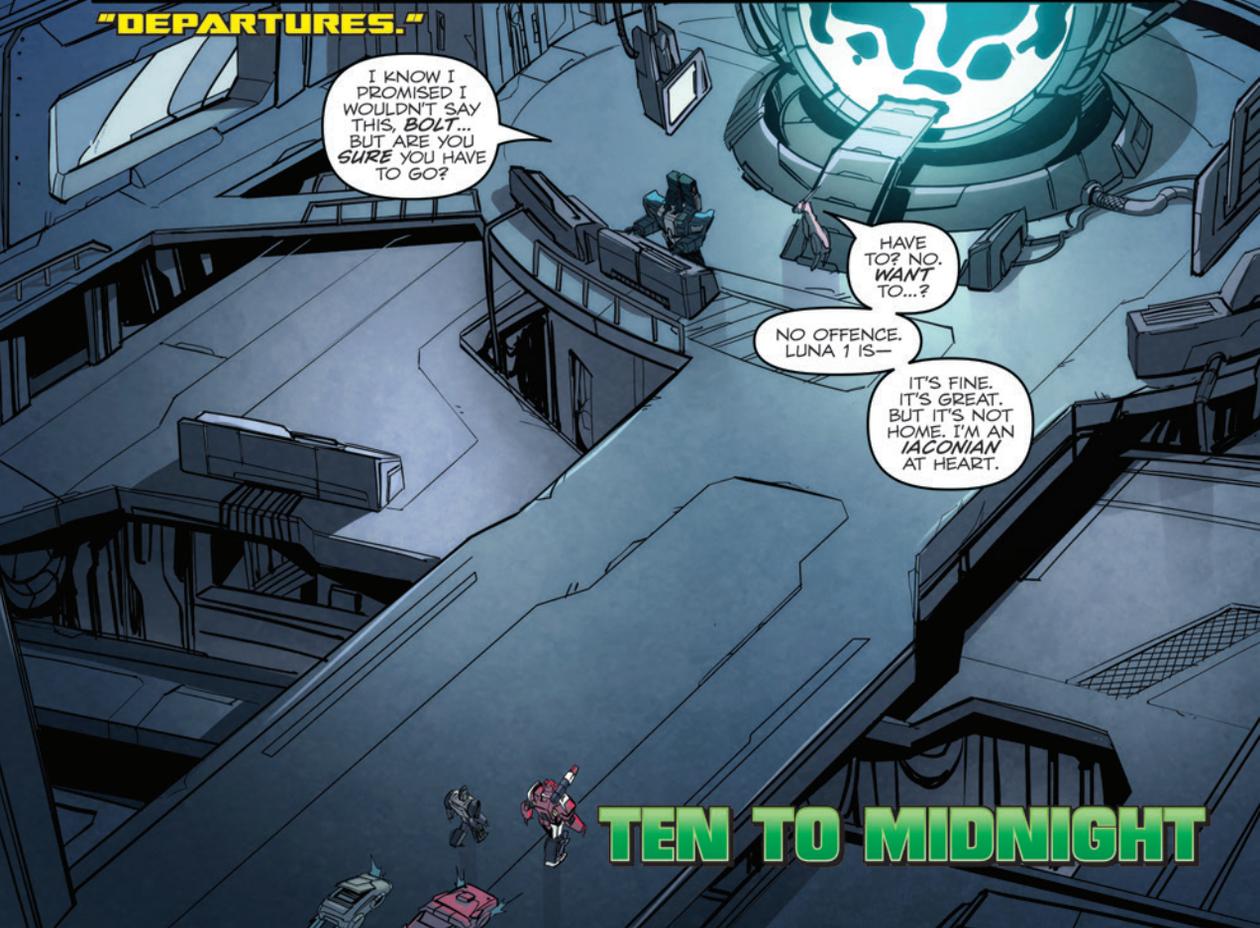
YOU WERE  
*YELLING* IN  
YOUR *SLEEP*,  
YOU KNOW.

REALLY? I  
HAVEN'T DONE  
THAT FOR A  
LONG TIME.

WHAT WAS  
I SAYING?

DUNNO.  
COULDN'T  
MAKE IT OUT.  
SOMETHING  
*LOUD*.

### "DEPARTURES."



I KNOW I  
PROMISED I  
WOULDN'T SAY  
THIS, *BOLT*...!  
BUT ARE YOU  
*SURE* YOU HAVE  
TO GO?

HAVE  
TO? NO.  
*WANT*  
TO...?

NO OFFENCE.  
LUNA 1 IS—

IT'S FINE.  
IT'S GREAT.  
BUT IT'S NOT  
HOME. I'M AN  
*IACONIAN*  
AT HEART.



KEEP IN TOUCH.

CAN YOU PLEASE NOT—

FORTRESS MAXIMUS!

BOUNDARIES, REMEMBER? NO PETTING.



YES. YES, OF COURSE, I'M STILL GETTING USED TO THE NEW YOU.

I THINK YOU MEAN THE OLD ME.



GREETINGS!

NO OUTRIGGER?

HE'S ORIENTEERING.

SORRY, "TITANEERING."

A WORD THAT RIGHTLY COMES WITH ITS OWN APOLOGY.



SPATIAL VECTORS ARE IN ALIGNMENT BLAH BLAH BLAH. CYBERTRON AWAITS!

MAY YOUR WIRES NEVER CROSS AND YOUR LUSTER NEVER DULL.

YEAH, LIKewise.



I REALLY THOUGHT HE'D STAY. HE SEEMED TO LIKE IT HERE. I MEAN, THEY ALL DO—ALL THE ROBIDS—BUT HE SEEMED... CONTENT.

WE ONLY EVER KNEW HIM IN HIS MODIFIED STATE. HE WASN'T REALLY HIMSELF UNTIL I REVERSED THE DOMESTICATION PROCESS.\*



WHO'S NEXT ON YOUR LIST OF PATIENTS?

BRACE. THEN BUCK. THEN SPRINT. THEN CLUTCH. THEN THE NEXT BATCH. THEN THE NEXT.

I KNOW IT'S NOT EASY. REWIRING THEIR BRAINS, REPLACING THEIR TRANSFORMATION COGS, RESTORING THEIR PERSONALITIES... I KNOW IT TAKES FOREVER.

WELL. ABOUT THAT. I MAY HAVE FOUND A WAY TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS.

\*A FORM OF LOBOTOMY—SEE MTMTE #46.