

Foreword

When I originally wrote this story I had what I would call (at the time) my *three* main buddies - Matt, David and Jeremy. I was infatuated with them and of course wanted to solidify our friendship in a story of who else 'me' rescuing them from terrorists... (What other closeted gay boy doesn't contain this fantasy?)

This would start a series of Ironman type adventures with my X-O suit and my various friends for the next few Zapbot stories. Now you have to understand I was completely unaware of what Ironman was or anything about the comic when I developed my X-O suit style adventures. It was just happen stance that a lot of the same ideas I came up with were made into movies later. (You can send me a check later Disney.) I had the whole concept of the suit morphing onto one's body before I was even aware of the Ironman story. It's funny on how great minds think alike (at least visually.)

This story also sets up some other characters for future use and begins to show the Zapbots exploring space which becomes a theme as Star Trek: The Next Generation was quite huge at the time of the original writing of this story.

Now in 2021, the story is mostly the same but the grammar *definitely* needed some rework.

Anthony S. Anselmo

The Escape

By Anthony S. Anselmo

Chapter 1

The snow had finally stopped falling, but there was still quite a lot on the ground. This gave the appearance of a winter wonderland to the small suburbia town in North Eastern Ohio.

Outside some children were playing, while others, including myself were enjoying a friend's company inside the warm gas heated house.

Friends meant so much to me. In the old days of high-school before my life changes, I hardly had any. When I finally made a new friend, it was a joyous revelation. Friends were someone you could talk to, tell all your fears, share all your secrets, and get you away from your nagging parents now and then. Unfortunately I often lost them due to anxiety. When a new person would befriend me, I was extra careful how I proceeded. Because of much heartache I had a greater appreciation for friends than most individuals. Probably because I had lost so many, and not because of death (thankfully), just stupidity on my part. The usual occurrence that would happen is that we just get to know each other too well and would start arguing like a married couple. Before you knew it we would go our separate ways.

I was watching my current best friend Matt play his video game on his 8-bit gaming system. We were located in his parents basement of his house during the cold winter months. The dark brown wood paneling was coupled with the grey chimney showing just a light bit of wear and tear. Next to us the sliding glass door showed the wintry landscape of the backyard. On the fireplace brick was the small television screen, connected to the game machine that lead the wire to his hands with the square controller.

His hands moved furiously along the controls and the animated character on the screen jumped back and forth, fighting off enemies and dodging attacks. I sat there for numerous hours, as he finally finished the game and destroyed the final monster, completing the adventure.

"HAH!" he cried, "Told you I could do it."

Although I was more than happy for the accomplishment he had made, I knew it was menial compared to what I had seen. I should have kept my egotistical mouth shut, but I didn't.

"Oh give me a break!" I replied. "That is not much of a challenge!" I replied.

"What! I like to see you do better!"

"Those graphics stink!"

"Whadda mean those graphic's stink?"

I turned around and grabbed the box I had brought with me for this various trip. I opened it up and pulled out the machine contained within it. I hooked it up to Matt's television via an RCA adapter and turned the device on.

"Okay, what's this now?" Matt asked.

"Patience my friend, you could never be a doctor cause you have no pat-ie-nts..." I said joking.

"Ha ha..." he mocked back.

Up on the screen came a list of games. I selected "Robots Revenge" and hit the start button.

On the screen came a slashing animated image of a robot, and then the words "Robot Revenge" sprawled across. A full multi-phonetic stereo soundtrack played in the background and Matt's eyes popped wide open seeing the advanced graphics, more realistic than anything he had seen before. Smooth animations that rendered near perfect human like quality similar to what was shown in one of our futuristic holerooms. It was technology way beyond anything he had seen.

"Oh shit, that's right, you had your Zapbots conjure up something. Just like that game area room or holographic something..." Matt commented.

"No actually I made this myself," I replied.

I pressed start and the action game had begun. The game played with animation smoother and colors crisper than anyone had ever seen before. It was extremely realistic as deadly robots came out attacking your character as you tried to defend your city from their onslaught.

"This is part of a training simulation we are going to be using for the Headmaster classes," I replied.

I beat the game three times. Matt never made it past level one.

While I was playing my electronic communicator went off. I got up, leaving my friend in his frustration and went off into the other room to answer it. I tapped the side of my head.

"Whats up?" I asked over the com.

"Master we have a Code 102, located in Sector 302, planet 3 and a..." started my Zapbot Boaty.

"English Boaty..." I replied.

"A star has mysteriously disappeared off radar. From our long range scans, no planets appear to be in any danger, but local inhabitants are asking what caused the..."

"All right, all right, I'll be back in a while, Prepare Misslemax for departure." I replied.

"Affirmative, Boaty out," and the line went dead.

I walked back into the room where my buddy was continuing to try and beat the game.

"What the dealio?" he asked me.

"Got a little problem I have to take care of, I'll be back tomorrow."

"Can't we're flying to California tomorrow, remember?"

"Oh..okay, Well I'll probably track you down with my radar and pop up anyhow. That is, if it's okay by you. You probably don't want to be bothered by all this high tech stuff on your vacation."

"NO, Fuck I don't care," replied Matt in his scratchy tone. "Just don't bring the media."

"Yeah I know they're getting to be a pain as of late."

"You think?"

"Funny, I'll see ya."

We walked to the back patio door as Matt opened it. I walked out into his back yard waving quickly, I started running and jumped up into the air, activating my X-O suit and transforming into my mini-jet so I could fly back to Fortress Misslemax that was floating in space near the moon.

I reached the bridge in my Shortstop body form which allowed my X-O suit to combine as the Shortstop body's head, allowing me to interact with my Zapbots at their level. The enormous bridge of Fortress Misslemax was glowing with activity as my valiant crew was getting ready for departure from Earth's orbit. It had been several months since our last encounter with a new evil menace that attacked our home planet. Now Gearatron was fully restored and continuing to grow, as we were hard at work helping Earth prepare for its first space flight outside the solar system.

We had made contact with several new species already, and some of them were somewhat aware of the ancient Zapbots themselves. It was a weird feeling becoming an Ambassador to several types of flying blue aliens or a giant green glob of goo with a mouth.

"Flier set course for the sector, Warp 7," I said.

"Course already set Master, ready as ever." replied Flier.

I saw down in my chair next to Botimus Prime my second in command nodded my head.

"Engage," I said.

Misslemax started to rumble as it moved slightly to adjust course for light speed. Then the stars flew past us and we were off to the deep reaches of the galaxy.

Matt and his family were proceeding to board the plane at Cleveland Hopkins Airport. The heating system was broken in the airport and everyone was extremely hot and miserable. The stench

of human body odor hung in the air as hundreds of individuals moved through the corridors. Screaming babies and various other noises were pounding Matt's head as he had one major headache.

The boarding to his specific plane finally began and Matt ran to the plane door to catch a breath of the fresh air coming from the vehicle.

Little to Matt's knowledge and by *somewhat* random luck, my other good friend David and his family were also riding on the plane. However because their seats were so far apart, as they boarded the plane neither friend saw each other.

David was my friend from my local church youth group. An age younger than myself we bonded on nothing more than goofiness during the usually strict church services. Before the Zapbots came into my life, we would play games of spy in his basement, or proceed with adventures in his vast backyard. Slightly taller than me and with beach blond hair he was a foe to wrestle with especially in the pool.

Both Matt and David had been my good friends way before my Zapbots. Yet both of them were totally different. Because of this, I usually spent time with one or the other and hardly ever together. Both had started working to become Headmaster Zapbots, and both knew of each other, but they never really cared to hang out together. David was nice quiet, shy and conservative, while Matt was outspoken and thrill seeking.

Along the trip to California the plane stopped in Las Vegas. Yet again, unknown to my two friends already on the plane, another friend of mine was boarding. My pen pal friend Jeremy, from Florida boarded the flying vehicle, switching flights with his family.

Jeremy was a younger kid I met when I was at my Grandma's house in Florida. When we first visited I got to know him and his family as they lived a few houses down the road. Jeremy who was extremely hyper at the time got along with me very well. Throughout the years before the Zapbots we kept in touch via old fashion mail. I recently had him come visit the Zapbots as he had an interest in becoming a pilot and then also becoming a Headmaster.

David was looking at a magazine as Jeremy passed by. Jeremy was too busy trying to find his seat to notice David sitting there. Jeremy and his family sat down in the middle of the plane. Matt was in the back and fast asleep.

My three best friends, all together on a plane, by random luck one would have thought. It sounds like something that could only happen in a Twilight Zone episode. Now the plane was off the ground again, heading towards California. The crowd was calmer now, with cool air conditioning to sooth their aching bodies and nerves.

Midway through the ride two businessmen in suits got up and walked to opposite sides of the cabin. They went to the two separate bathrooms and reached underneath the toilet. A comrade before, a member of the cleaning crew made sure the specific item was in place.

The one man in a tall dark suit, who in the front of the cabin got out of the bathroom and grabbed the nearest stewardess. Holding the gun to her head he instructed her to unlock the cockpit door. Quietly she did, sweating and frightened. No one else in the plane knew what was going on.

The pilots were still looking at the various gauges and readouts for the plane. The man put the gun to the pilot's head and spoke in a low tone.

"Don't move," he said.

The copilot turned around and saw in horror what had happened, every pilot's nightmare. A hostage situation.

The dark stranger with the gun gave the pilot a new course correction and pilot adjusted his flight path. Both men trembled as the man with the gun watched over them. He reached over and turned the radio off.

The man then left and came into the main cabin. The other man had now emerged from the back bathroom and was waiting for his signal.

Without any provocation, the man screamed into the air and held his gun up.

"LISTEN UP!" he cried.

Everyone looked toward the center of the cabin as fear struck everyone in their hearts when they saw the shiny black gun in the stranger's hand.

"This plane is under our control now!"

A lady screamed and the man pointed his gun at her. Her mouth slammed shut, and everyone froze in his or her chairs. What was suppose to be a pleasant plane ride had now become a nightmare. People started praying, while other's mumbled "Why me?" under their breath. In everyone's heart, fear hung with despair, and depression set in.

People started forming plans in their heads, yet with all their conclusions they decided to just remain still for the time being.

The terrorists began giving directions to the passengers as 'everyone would remain calm and nothing would happen until they reached their destination.'

My friends sat still in their seats, all frustrated because they knew the situation would be different if I was there. If they could only get a message back to the Zapbots they would be saved. The plane continued towards the lone island as no one knew what awaited him or her.

Chapter 2

As we traveled through sub-space I was thinking about what had happened in the previous months. Several months ago, Unicron was destroyed for good, two months after that we came across a strange half monster/half machine race called the Gongos. Our attempts to make peace with them were futile and their weapon power, similar to ours but still primitive; proved them to be a worthy opponent. We had a few minor skirmishes before we left their sector trying to watch them carefully from a distance. With height as tall and as large as my Zapbots they reminding me somewhat of the Junkicons only more organic. While I was glad that threat was over, something inside of me told me to beware the unexpected in this life.

We continued through space, and the bridge was quiet as usual. I sat in my commander's chair with my consoles around me. To my sides were Botimus Prime and Ultra Attack in their secondary chairs. In front of myself were two workstations for Boaty and Flier. One was tactical and the other was flight controls. Speedy and TimeTravel had the weapons controls adjacent to them.

Along the sides of the room hung windows and in the front was the giant view-screen. The two front corners gave way to a staircase that lead down into the artillery deck.

To the right of Botimus and to the Left of Ultra were two other stations emerging from the wall. Flash sat at the right one for engines, and Hightone sat at the left for communications.

In the far back, the floor raised and two other stations stood. Science was manned by Scan and security was manned by Overload, as they hanged in the dark glow of the room with their kitchen like counters and computerized screens. In far back stood my office/ready room and the conference room.

We finally reached our destination in the sector and dropped out of warp.

"Master approaching Sector..." started Boaty but I interrupted him.

"Good, set up a scan," I replied.

I got up and the two consoles in front of me flew apart from my Shortstop body. My chair opened up and I walked over to the view screen and saw the graphics of the sector in space.

"Master, according to scans, the sun is having just a minor solar flare, nothing more." replied Scan.

"What? The people in the area figure this out for themselves?" cried Flier.

"You must remember Flier, not everyone is as technical advanced as we are," Botimus replied.

"Sensors indicate the incident with the star will not effect the planetary inhabitants in any way," replied Boaty.

"Okay, well that was a fun trip. Let's head home," I said starting to walk to up the ramp to the turbo lifts to leave the bridge. As I was just about to enter the elevator, Hightone's monitored beeped.

"Hey Master dude, I'm picking up an urgent message from Earth, you might wanna check this out," said Hightone.

I walked over to the screen and saw that the address was from the President.

Hightone played back the recording, and even before I knew the details I could see the President was upset. After seeing the entire recording, and then when I hearing those few words, I went explosive.

"FLIER! Set course back to Earth immediately, maximum warp!" I cried, "Hightone contact the President on subspace and try and figure out any details, meeting in fifteen minutes!"

Terrorists had taken over a plane, and sent it to a lone island. I looked at the boarding report, and I knew who was on it. Anger ran through me, like it never had before.

A short while later I gathered the team in the conference room. The conference room was your typical large room with enough space for even the larger Zapbots to move freely. A large table with chairs provided the the view of the large view-screen for information and discussion.

"Here is the information you requested Master," replied Boaty as he pressed some buttons on the table and up on the view screen came the playback recording of the hostages and terrorists.

The terrorists went over the typical speech, introducing themselves, their desires and their threats. The tape jumped and skipped at places as the terrorists continued to yell and demand certain things from the various governments. As I watched it, it seemed way too easily staged I thought in my mind, but then again you saw one terrorist tape, you saw another.

I sat there watching and listening while different images passed through my mind. Different thoughts collided and as I saw my friends. I could imagine them sick, tired and weary and was unsure of what the details were in this situation. Then I would skip back to things I had done with them, fond memories of days before. I couldn't believe this was happening, and a fiery fury burned inside of me, growing bigger and bigger by the second as I continued to watch the information displaying on the screen.

I was determined to get them back, and alive!

Alone from the fact that my three best friends happened to get on the same plane, the whole situation seemed weird. How did these terrorists take over the plane? Where was security? With all our new technology we introduced to the world, how could this have happened? It puzzled me, but my blood boiled, and I knew this was no time to get emotional.

The message finally ended and the screen fizzled and disappeared.

"The President has confirmed they have secretly given in to the first of the terrorist's demands. The terrorists let all but three people go, Unfortunately, these people, the ones still captive, are your friends Master," Boaty said.

"I don't believe it?" I cried. "Unbelievable!" Why them? Out of all the people in the Universe. It was like someone was trying to punish me. Scan started to talk as soon as I finished my statement.

"We have an overlay of the building complex where they are being held captive," replied Scan. Up on the screen came the outline of bunker in white outlines on a dark background, zooming around in three dimensions.

"It is a primitive fortress, but for some reason it contains a force field."

"A force field?" asked Botimus.

"How can that be?" I asked. We knew of no one else beside ourselves that could generate a protective shield. How did humans get one?

"Unknown, however, one thing is for sure, any direct attack on this base could have serious repercussions-" Scan tried to say, but then Flier butted in.

"I say we just go straight in and grab them Master!" cried Flier.

"That would not be wise," replied Boaty.

"Is there anyway to get past the shield?" I asked.

"We have found several weak spots that you might be able to pass through. They're small enough for a human, but a normal sized Zapbot would not be able to pass," replied Scan.

"Figures," replied Flier.

"I'll go in alone. I go in my X-O suit mode. Once I have them safely established I'll call for back up."

"I would suggest another course of action," said Boaty.

I turned to him in disillusion.

"Why?" I asked weirdly.

"First of all your X-O suit hasn't been checked out for a long time. It was suppose to be overhauled a month ago. Second with your current emotional state..."

"It's okay, I'm fine. This is my mission!" I said.

My mind was cluttered with emotions so I couldn't really pick a group to go with me. I had to ask the next question.

"However, who do you suggest I choose to go along with me Boaty?"

"I would advise the Animal Team. Their abilities would be suitable for this kind of maneuver," replied Boaty.

"Okay, approximate arrival time to Earth?"

"One hour and twenty minutes till we reach Earth's orbit," replied Botimus.

"Good, keep me informed. Alert the President of our plans and I'll be waiting at that time in the space dock. Dismissed."

Everyone got up and prepared to leave. I didn't move, but continued to look at the windows toward space. I didn't notice Speedy come around putting his arm on my Shortstop shoulder.

"Don't worry Master, we'll get them back," Speedy said.

"I hope so, I pray so," I replied to my little robot friend.

Meanwhile in the dark, damp room of the terrorist base, my friends sat quietly on wooden crates. Cold, tired and shivering, and most of all scared. Three sleeping hammocks, a small window, and a locked door made up their prison in the cold dark dungeon of the military fortress. Stationed on a deserted island near the pacific.

It had been a few minutes since they had been thrown into the prison. They sat there looking at each other. Unexpectedly the flap to the door opened and food slid in and my friends slowly got up to grab something to feed their starving stomachs.

"The U.S. is not giving into the demands," said the guard from behind the door. "Behave or you'll be punished too!"

Matt looked up and saw the dark eyes of the man behind the glass. He lurched up and swung with all his might towards the door. His efforts proved futile. The man closed the flap and walked away laughing.

It was in this light that my friends finally recognized each other.

"You know Anthony?" asked David.

Matt turned around startled, and then he remembered David.

"Anthony? The Zapbots guy? Yeah I know him too!" replied Jeremy.

My friends quickly got reacquainted with each other, as if a beam of light hit their hands they realized how strange this was. Deep in their hearts they had an inch of hope, that I would save them. At the present moment, that was the only thing that kept them going.

Chapter 3

I was standing in my quarters at the very top of Misslemax. The dim glow of the green lighted interior illuminated the body of stars passing my window. Click walked up to my still body after putting away the dishes.

"My three best friends, it took me so long to get them, and now somebody wants to take them away from me?" I said.

"Master, we'll get them back, Click, don't worry," Click said.

"Why... why can't everyone be peaceful. Why do people continue to use violence as their only way of solving problems. I was hoping that humans, my race, would have outgrown this by now."

"If that was true, we would have no job to do." Click replied.

Finally turning away from the window and heading to my bedroom, I walked into my walk-in-closet, where the doors opened with a "swish" sound and closed once again. I entered the circle on the floor. Then a ray of light hit me and my clothes dissolved and my basic X-O suit structure appeared on me. Then through the mechanical message, sent from my mind, I controlled my X-O suit armor to appear.

I walked out from my room, past my bathroom and turned to look at the pictures of my friends and myself at various vacation places around the Universe. I had started a wall of pictures not too long ago, hoping it would fill up after time. With sadness I sighed.

Walking back into the living room I then turned towards Click.

"Sometimes, I wish I didn't have a job," I said.

"I know Master, Good Luck, Click" he replied.

Now walking down the dim hallway to my garage, the white square in the floor opened up and I jumped down to my Shortstop body holding area. There I was combined with my larger Shortstop body and was lowered to the main bridge.

Not much time later I found myself standing next to my Shortstop vehicle covered in grass, with my Animalbots. [Dig](#) the Mole, [Dive](#) the Hawk, [Jumper](#) the Bear, [Huge](#) the Dolphin, and [Claw](#) the Lion all awaited my command as we set up base, a few hundred miles away from the terrorist's fortress.

I gave them specific instructions as this was to be done discreetly as possible.

"Wait here till I contact you, remember, we have lives at stake here, specifically my friends." I ordered.

"Yes Sir're! Gotcha Master!" said Claw in his rough voice.

Attempting to activate my cloaking device a system error appeared before my face viewfinder. It seemed Boaty was correct in that I needed a checkup more than I had figured. No time to turn back though, I would have to deal with my errors.

Running through a quick systems check I found nothing else wrong as I proceeded to give my Animalbots last minute instructions and started walking towards the base.

As I got closer to the base, I kept low. I didn't have my cloaking device so I would have to be extremely cautious going in. I passed through the shield with no problems, still wondering how they received this advanced technology to begin with? It made no sense. Something was definitely amiss.

Appearing through the shrubbery in front of me stood the main entrance to the base. A gate surrounded the steel wall with a single door. One lone guard stood at the door, blocking my path into the base.

I had to create a distraction. So I grabbed a rock and tossed it far away from the door. The old methods still work! The guard ran in the direction of the noise. I flew over the fence and ran through the door making my way inside the base.

Now I was out of the fire and into the frying pan. It was a dark, dim hallway. The smell of cigarettes and of drugs filled my nose. Taking a quick scan of the area I saw humans were everywhere. It would be difficult navigating through this base.

I heard a rumble from above and saw a loose ceiling plate. Looking up I viewed a ventilation shaft. An idea brewed within my mind.

Shutting down my armor, I still had my artificial bionic body parts, that were given to me when I was damaged in the first battle with Messy. This still allowed me the luxury to perform some incredible things. Leaping up I grabbed the plate and fell back down to the floor. I bent my knees to keep from making a sound and landed softly. Jumping up again and with one arm pulled myself into the shaft I made it into the air duct.

The duct was surprising big. Slowly I crawled through the tunnel, trying not to make a noise. Not out of fear for myself, but fear of my friends. I knew I could easily take anybody, but me being discovered would put my friends in danger.

With each crawl and each step I calculated the precise amount of pressure to get where I was going at the least cost of making any noise. My hands and feet spread out with Ninja like abilities. Finally reaching an intersection and following the graphical map that appeared before my eyes I continued. Soon it came to a dead end and I slowly pulled the grate away from the metal.

I stuck my head slowly down, and there was no one around. Leaping back down and turning on my X-O suit armor once again, the hallways were now almost pitch black. Turning on my night vision I saw garbage and manure lying everywhere.

Coming around corner you could hear voices. Quickly I snuck into the crack of a doorframe as two men walked by. I waited till they were gone and continued on my journey.

Then I approached a door which had a piece of paper taped on it with writing scrawled saying "Prisoners."

Scanning and seeing there were no guards inside I slowly fiddled with the lock with no luck. I put my hand to the door and created a magnetized force that pulled the lock open. Now pitch back and silent as I could be, I walked down the long corridor. I came to the end of the hallway and turned the corner and there at the end was a door with a single light coming from underneath it.

In anticipation I almost ran there, but I continued to walk slowly, scanning, to make sure I was still in stealth. I guess they didn't figure anyone would try or be able to rescue humans from here.

When I approached the door I repeated the same maneuver for the lock. My sensors showed three life signs. I slowly entered the room discreetly as I could.

As the door swung fully open I could see the room was filled with crates and boxes. In the back of the dark dirty room was three sleeping sacks and a poor excuse for a toilet.

I felt a slight smack on the back of my metal robotic suit helmet and turning around to find Matt falling backwards and a piece of wood vibrating furiously in his hands. I grabbed the wood and it stopped moving, but the sound of the impact of the wood to my X-O suit rang throughout the corridor. I quickly tapped it and it stopped.

"ANTHONY" cried Matt getting to his feet. David and Jeremy came from behind the boxes and all three ran up to me and embraced my X-O suit body.

"Hey Shhh... are you guys all right?" I inquired.

"Where the hell have you been!?" asked Matt.

"Oh God, am I glad you're here!" cried Jeremy.

"It's okay, I'm here now. Don't worry," I said.

They continued to hug my robotic body and I slowly patted each on the head. My X-O suit made me a bit taller than the rest of my friends and it was a very 'dad' like moment.

"When can we leave?" asked David.

"I dunno, I have to set up a diversion to get you guys out of here safely," I replied. "Are you guys all right?"

"Oh Anthony, it's so horrible.. They torture us constantly?" said Matt with tears coming to his brown eyes.

"What!" I said, barely catching myself screaming.

My jaw dropped as Matt lifted his shirt and there they were, red marks on his back.

"Hold on," I said. Out from my X-O suit's side came a secret compartment with a First Aid can. I grabbed the can of special cream and spread it all over his back. Slowly the cracks and bruises began to heal instantly. After Matt I applied it to Jeremy and David healing their wounds as well.

I attempted to contact my Animalbots on a secret channel.

"Master...r..yo..r.bre..ak..in..up!" replied Claw.

Something was wrong here, but it wasn't my X-O suit. Someone or some thing was jamming the frequencies.

"That's impossible. Who else has the technology like we did to jam..." I stopped dumbfounded and worried.

Taking another internal check of my X-O suit, more of my systems were going out and I was losing energy fast for some reason. I had little time to extract my friends from this situation.

"I'll be back soon, I need to go explore the rest of the compound. Just sit tight," I said.

"Don't leave us!" cried Jeremy. Slowly I walked over to my friend and put my hands on his shoulders.

"I'm not leaving you. I'm getting you out of here. Be brave Jeremy. I know you can do it. I'll be back before you know it."

"Okay," he said and slowly hugged me like a little kid, crying. I felt my friend's frustration with the whole situation. But at least they were alive and in no immediate danger.

Carefully exiting the room I went exploring throughout the complex.

Chapter 4

"Gahhh I don't approve of us waiting here!" said Jumper.

"Be quiet!" yelled Claw. "Master Anthony knows what he's doing!"

"Yeah why do we always have to take orders?" cried Dig.

"Because the people who give us orders gave us life!" replied Claw.

"Claw, I'm picking up something approaching," said Huge.

"What?" asked Dig.

"I'm not sure..." replied Huge.

My Animalbots stood up and peered out of the makeshift bunker. Out of the distance in the sky an array of black dots flew towards them and proceeded to grow in size at an extreme rate.

"Grrr, who could this be?" said Jumper.

As the images came closer to my Animalbots they finally began to take form. Bodies of metal intermixed with organic matter standing on flying sled machines. Giants with shells of a turtle and mechanical plates everywhere. Two huge amphibian eyes hung on the top and giant gnashing teeth stuck out front.

"GONGOS! TAKE COVER!" ordered Claw pulling everyone down.

Unexpectedly laser shots came out and my Animalbots hit the dirt. How they approached Earth undetected was unimportant for now and Claw knew something was wrong with the situation. He hadn't heard from his Master in two hours but now they had another problem to deal with.

"Animalbots! Transform and attack!" cried Claw.

At that moment all of my Animalbots except Huge transformed into their animal transformations and proceed to fly out of the bunker towards their oncoming enemies.

Claw became his lion form and as an approaching Gongo came up the hill he leaped out of nowhere and attached himself to the Gongo's mechanical leg, tearing it apart.

Dive transformed into a bird and started his air assault. He flew high above the others and proceeded to drop bombs on the approaching Gongs on their flying jet sleds. The Gongs fell to the ground below and proceeded to scatter as Dive continued his bombardment.

The Gongo's ran everywhere as the battle continued. Dig began his typical attack, appearing from under the ground to surprise individual bodies. He would knock out a Gongo and then jump back into the dirt, taking them out one by one.

Jumper was chasing a pack of Gongs in his bear form and Huge (still in robot form, he was a dolphin) stood high above the hills and fired repeatedly at the oncoming Gongs. Giant bursts of water from his bubble gun disabled the various warriors causing them to be really confused and extremely wet.

For the time being my Animalbots had the upper hand with the situation. The Gongs were scattered and confused on what to do with these new Zapbots. My Animalbots pressed on as they realized who may have been behind this obvious entrapment of their Master.

Meanwhile, I continued my survey through the complex, constantly switching from the air ducts above to the ground and various forms. Several times I almost got caught, but I was able to conceal myself at the last second, impressing myself with my stealth abilities.

I finally made it underneath the main control room. Peering above through the floor grate I looked inside the complex machinery they had here. I studied the generator for the shield. Suddenly I knew how these terrorists were able to achieve a futuristic technology force field shield.

"Gongs..." I whispered. I tried my radio, but I still received no response from Claw or the others. This was all starting to make sense now.

I began attaching my special devices and muddled around with the various wires with the equipment. People came in several times, but I would just simply stop and wait for them to leave. I

could see their shadows through the grate of the machinery as I pulled myself up into the huge generator.

When I was done quickly I made it back as fast and as quietly as I could to my friends. I placed my smoke bombs in various places around the building as this would act as a small diversion to allow us to leave the building.

I made it back to my friends' prison was to find David gone.

"Where's Dav...?" I asked.

"They took him away to get his usual punishment," replied Jeremy crying.

I heard footsteps and slid quickly behind the door next to the wall. It opened and David flew in and hit the floor with a thud. When the door closed I ran to his side. He was shaking and crying and bloodstains emerged from his shirt.

"David!" I started to whisper.

"Oh Anthony... Take us home... take us home now...please," David responded crying.

I couldn't stand it any more. The pain of my friends being abused had drove my anger over the edge.

"Guys gets yourselves together, we're getting the fuck out of here." I said.

Chapter 5

It was now or never. The pain of my friends had made my blood boil hotter and stronger than it ever had before. As I gave them specific directions, telling them my plan for the escape I proceeded to activate the smoke bombs.

You could hear the roar of them throughout the building. The power went out and we were left in the dark. I pushed the door open and started my procession out. My friends slowly followed sticking closely to my side. We proceeded out into the main hallway as I turned on my light, it barely lit the darkness of the place. I was scanning, but alas it was too late, before I could react to what was coming.

"HALT!" yelled a guard from behind us. I heard the loading of a weapon and jumped in front of my friends. I quickly set up a force field and his bullets rebounded off of it heading into the walls. I raised my arm to fire, but found another bug in my system. I did some quick reprogramming of my main weapon's program and it kicked in. After a sputter a laser hit the guard and he fell over stunned to the floor.

We ran through the dark corridors as my friends followed my movement. As more guards came around the various corners I would hit them unconscious before they had a chance to react.

The emergency power came back on and some bulbs barely lit the hallway. I was continuing to scan the area and then I found something overlooked before. A service tunnel was right underneath our feet.

"Hold it!" I said and fired at the floor in front of me. It opened up to a tunnel far below. I grabbed my friends and jumped down into it.

It looked like a subway tunnel with few lights and a long rail track. Scanning ahead I saw what appeared to be an entrance from the side of a mountain. Pointing to my friends I ushered them towards this exit.

This time I went behind my friends to protect them. All at once, I heard a roar from behind us. The roar of vehicles, and I knew it was only a matter of seconds before they would catch up with us.

Grabbing all three of my friends I engaged my feet turbo boosters. I transformed into my mini-jet and we all were seated inside a small transport jet with my human body. I engaged my controls and we were off as we flew down the tunnel towards the exit. The enemy vehicles came just around the corner before we made it out into the sunlight.

Pulling the stick back the plane flew high into the atmosphere. It was my presumption that we had made it, but laser fire came out from the complex.

"Fuck lasers?" I shouted as we dodging the lasers trying my best to pilot on such low energy.

I migrated towards my Animalbots location. Without warning my jet got smacked and the whole planet swerved in my vision. Pressing the stick forward and proceeded down into the forest for cover.

We crashed through the trees and landed on the ground. I retransformed into armor mode and as the metal flew back around my body, my friends were abruptly sitting on the dirt.

"Come on!" I cried as we began running once again. Up ahead I saw what seemed to be a structure. It looked like a small cottage. Hitting the door I kicked it in and stopped for a second to observe. It was abandoned and I ushered my friends inside for concealment.

Closing the door I turned around to look out the window to fight any approaching enemies. Scanning ahead I observed they were too busy fixing the fires at the complex to chase us. We had made it a good thousand miles away with my jet ability, and I figured it would take them at least a day to find us.

With that thought I looked around the cabin. It was filled with old weapons, supplies, and guns and was apparently a weapons depot for this island. My friends had made it downstairs to the bunker where they found some poor excuses for beds and rested in fear.

"It's okay, We'll be safe for now!" I indicated.

The cabin was pretty big, with a kitchen, one big room upstairs, and the basement was actually pretty clean. I inspected it before I turned off my X-O suit to save energy.

"It's not home, but it will do for now," I said taking a break.

I maintained watch upstairs while my friends rested in the basement. Proceeding to distribute some food, drinks, and special Zapbot energy brownies they devoured them as soon as I laid them out. I was a lonely warrior with three teenagers in a lone cabin in the woods, waiting for something to happen.

Hourly I tried to contact the Animalbots or Misslemax, but I was so low on energy, and had so many bugs I couldn't get anything through the interference. I continued to rework my program, fixing the bugs and setting up temporary subroutines for the time being, until at least I could get back to Misslemax, my home.

As I strolled down to visit my friends later that evening, they were resting, laying in the beds with their eyes at the ceiling. I came over to them and sat down on Jeremy's bed.

"Everyone alive?" I asked.

"Any word from Claw?" asked Matt.

With a heavy sigh I lowered my head.

"I'm sorry guys, I shouldn't have tried this with my suit in such sad shape," I replied.

"Well at least we're not getting whipped anymore," said Jeremy. I grabbed his head and gave him a typical friendly rubbing with his lofty hair.

"Don't worry Anthony, we'll get out of here if it kills us," said Matt.

Everyone looked at him as if he just told the worst joke in the world.

"Well...I didn't mean it like that," he said abruptly.

"Yeah we know," I said laughing.

Standing up I walked back upstairs and sat on a box watching out the window. The wind blew the leaves in the trees around the cabin furiously. This had to have been planned. This had to have been a trap to capture me?

Unexpectedly, I felt a tap on my shoulder. I jumped around to find Matt standing there.

"Hey don't do that," I exclaimed.

He said nothing but sat down next to me on the crate.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Nothing, I just came to check on you for a change," he said.

"Why, I'm fine."

"Yeah right! I know you better than you think Anthony. I know deep down inside you're hurting, or you're worried."

"Matt," I paused. "It's just when I heard you guys were captured I jumped into this rescue mission without thinking. Now we're in a deeper mess. I have almost no energy, my Animalbots can't even get to us and, I dunno..."

For the first time I started to cry. I put my hand over my mouth and watched the leaves blow. All of my emotions came out and I felt so alone, so tired... It took a lot for me to become this vulnerable and I never liked the feeling.

"Anthony, what else could you do? If you didn't move like you did we'd probably be getting skinned right now. Granted we are in a tight spot, but we'll pull through. You always do."

"I know, I just don't why it had to be you three."

Without warning, the house shook and I heard a vibration coming from the basement. I ran to the top of the steps and saw the ground underneath being uprooted. I turned on my X-O suit fearing the worst.

A giant robot hand emerged, and then a head. It was Dig!

"What's up Doc!" he said.

"What...How...Where...?" I mumbled.

"Ahhh Claw sent me to recover you after we got the faint call. The other guys are fighting the Gongsos right now and we need to get out of here. All communications are dead due to the Gongsos," Dig replied.

A grin came to my face, but it was short lived, cause I heard the rumble of something outside and I knew it was trouble. Looking out the window I saw large machinery moving through the forest in the moonlit night.

"Tanks approaching, let's go!" Dig yelled. He slowly helped them down into the tunnel he had made. The tunnel was about the size of two subway tunnels and Dig had put illumination sticks all around.

The door upstairs-busted open and I heard humans moving above towards the stairs.

"DIG! GET THEM OUT OF HERE! I'll follow," I said running down the stairs to cover my friends.

"Master?"

"DO IT!" I yelled.

Jeremy was the last to go as then the guards flew down the steps firing. I aimed my gun at them and fired what I had left of my energy. Knocking the first group out, but then the second group came down with continued firepower. Then out of the corner of my eye, behind my energy low warning I saw a grenade being thrown into the room.

"Shit!" I cried.

I ran to grab it, but it was too late.

My friends were back in the tunnel when the explosion occurred. They stopped running and turned around. Where the hole use to be was now a pile of rubble, Jeremy ran scrambling to the rocks and began clawing away, crying for fear of my life. Matt grabbed him by the chest pulled him away.

Dig retransformed into his animal mode and began slowly pulling rock by rock away.

My friends stood back and slowly held back tears and fears as they held each other. The emotional trauma of the entire thing had been enough, now they might have lost their savior and best friend.

The rock broke free and Dig grabbed my X-O suit's robotic hand. Slowly he pulled and I emerged from the rubble extremely dusty.

My friends all ran up to me as Dig placed me gently on the ground. They knelt down and brushed the dirt off of my face.

"Anthony?" cried David.

"Bpwth... is it time to go to school all ready??" I said coming into conscience seeing my friends and Dig standing over me.

They all busted out laughing, and after that Dig went into animal form again as we followed him down the tunnel to the exit.

As we emerged from the tunnel exit we felt a great sigh of relief. 'We had made it, and it was over!' I thought. I would take my friends home and head back to sleep and wake up thinking this was all a dream.

Out of the blue, I heard an evil voice from behind us. A voice deep and chilling, the likes the Grim Reaper himself. I knew who it was the second I heard it....

"Very good, Zapbot leader..."

Chapter 6

I turned around and there on the top of the cliff was Aster, the Gongo leader. I looked around and saw we were surrounded by hundreds Gongos.

"Why you rat! This has all been a trap to capture me!" I yelled, finally putting the pieces together.

"Clever, you're not so dumb as you look," he replied.

"How did you get past our defenses?" I cried.

"Every defense has weaknesses. You forgot to scan one area on Earth, Antarctica!"

We never figured anyone could land on Earth in such harsh temperatures. I made a mental sticky-note to make sure we took care of that, once we got out of this mess.

"Go ahead Aster, you're in the driver's seat!" I yelled.

"Fine, I will."

As we were taken prisoners the Gongos came and jumped Dig and myself. We were encased in energy bonds preventing any movement. My friends were grabbed by a large Gongo and thrown along with myself into a cage. Once again I was frustrated and upset with myself.

Dig was lead away to a cage with the other Animalbots a bit away from our smaller holding cage. My friends, although tired, were okay otherwise.

Jeremy looked at me and whispered.

"Anthony?"

I just looked at him and dropped my head in frustration and depression.

"I'm sorry," I replied.

I really couldn't stand this scenario as my powerful Zapbots were being overtaken by such a savage race of hideous monsters. My X-O suit was totally out of whack and I couldn't even use my Matrix power. My insides burned in frustration and sadness. I felt like puking as my stomach turned.

I searched my mind for answers, or a possible escape.

"Pssst, Master," whispered Claw.

"What happened?" I asked back to the cage next to us.

"I do not know, but they got the upper foot, and took us by surprise and well..."

"I know, this whole day has been bad." I replied.

"Doesn't look like it's going to get any better," said Jumper and motioned his head to the firing squad beginning to form.

I looked around the cabin, saw the sad eyes of my friends and had a glimpse of hope in my soul.

"Claw, are you guys still fully functional?" I asked winking.

"Correct Master, if I'm interpreting what you're saying right?"

I nodded in consent, looking at the cages with the electron chains around my Animalbots and myself. However because my human friends were thought as menial they were left unchained.

"Matt come here!" I whispered.

"What?"

"Do you still have those brownies I have you?"

"Yeah why? A bit."

"Shhh, Take them and throw them at the Animalbots chains. The chocolate should short circuit the frequency."

I knew this sounded crazy, and it was a struck of luck that Matt still had a few brownies. It was ironic a human snack could save the universe. The Zapbot energy brownies has special ion proteins in them that were developed for human infantries. My logic was the frequency should should short out the Gongo energy chains setting us all free.

Matt grabbed his brownies and when nobody was looking, tossed it at the Animalbots chains. David and Jeremy took their remaining food and tossed them as well.

Sadly, they missed by a wide mark. David taking his last one and touched my chain and the chain fizzled away within seconds. Looking at Matt's hand he had one left. As he looked at my face, he then passed it to me. Still containing my artificial arms, and even without my armor, I still had perfect aim.

Swinging with all my might with seconds seeming like hours the energy pack flew through the air and then made contact with the center of their Animalbots chains. A bright light filled the area, and when it passed my Animalbots were standing up.

"What the hell!" yelled Aster turning around after being blinded by the light.

My Animalbots busted out of their metallic cage. As metal ripped open my Animalbots came out firing. Tired of playing around with the Gongos, Claw issued a specific command.

"Animalbots, unite!" he ordered.

It was so fast it looked like they just morphed into each other. They all jumped into their special places as body parts moved with metal twisting and connecting. Soon a much larger Zapbot was standing in clearing of the forest.

Monsterator the Combiner robot... My hope came back and I was ready for action.

The Gongos started running everywhere in mass confusion as Monsterator opened fire with his arsenal. He kicked aside the firing squad with his feet and continued to lay waste to the Gongos' base that surrounded us. The Gongos returned fire towards Monsterator but the tiny lasers bounced right off my Gestalt Zapbot. He continued to walk slowly, abolishing everything in his path.

"Gongos are DEAD!" Monsterator cried.

Some Gongos got on their flying sleds and swung around Monsterator. He grabbed them like a piece of paper, and then threw them down to the ground shattering their machinery in the process.

Monsterator grabbed our human cage and split the bars apart. Grabbing my friends I began running for the deep forest for safety, away from the battle area. As we ran, suddenly the sky got very dark, and as I looked up a huge city was filling the atmosphere. It was just enough to leave the forest in sunlight.

"Misslemax! Finally!" I cried.

Out of the docking bay I saw tiny figures fly towards our location. As they came towards the ground I saw Botimus transform into robot mode and land next to me.

"You okay Master?" he asked.

"Tired, worn out, pissed off, but thankful," I replied, "Take my friends back to Misslemax now!"

Scan came flying down and landed besides Botimus. He opened his compartment and out came a small piece of metal, looking like an X-O suit.

"Master, we have a new X-O suit for you," he said. "It may need some adjustment to suit your size, but"

"Okay, okay, just give it to me!" I said. Grabbing the piece of armor I fell over trying to get it on quickly. My friends helped me up as I put the giant body armor on. I sent out the radio signal and my Shortstop body came flying out from the forest.

Botimus grabbed my friends and placed them into his chest compartment, as Scan and himself proceeded back up to Misslemax with more reinforcements coming out of the floating city.

Jumping into the air as the Shortstop body flew under myself transforming into robot mode, I lowered myself into the head spot and felt my body grow as a new surge of energy fluxed through my veins. Ready to proceed with kicking some butt, and especially Aster's, I flew off into the sky in search of the evil mechanical reptile.

I hit the air looking for the Gongo leader and finally saw him trying to flee on his hover-jet. Flying right into him and proceeding to knock him off his mobile sled he fell towards the ground. He

swung his fist at me cursing me as I turned around and started firing at him. He dodged past the lasers and began running up the cliff of the nearby hill.

Flying up to him and knocking him over he sat up as I landed on the ground, standing high about his organic body.

"No, Shortstop! Please! Don't hurt me!" he cried putting his reptile hand up.

I was so pissed at him that the thought of death ran through my brain. Anger was in my veins for what he did to my friends, their families, myself and all the turmoil I had to go through. I was in complete rage mode at this point but I still had my values.

"No, I'm not like you Aster. I'm giving you once last warning. NEVER enter any of our sector again! You or any of your damn Gongos!" My body was vibrating furiously as my finger was just holding back on the trigger of my rifle.

"Fine, I won't....." he said, but the way he said it was funny. I saw a twitch behind his back. I went to move, but out came a laser.

I put up my arms to block the blast, but heard a clash of metal and saw Aster being lifted off the ground by Monsterator.

"No, NO DON'T EAT ME!" Aster cried fumbling around in the giant robot's hands.

"Ummmm, yummy," mocked Monsterator.

I laughed, for I knew he was in no harm. "Aster, Zapbot's don't eat shit!" I cried from the ground below.

Looking around once again my Zapbots had triumphed. My fear dissipated as at last I was relieved that my friends were safe with the enemy soundly defeated.

Chapter 7

We were in the human sickbay on Misslemax bandaging my friends' wounds. It had been a long trip, and my friends were glad to be safe and sound once again. The Gongos had been captured and were ready to be transported to a nearby penal colony on the planet Elba.

As their parents were also anxious to visit with their children they ran at lighting speed onto the ship to meet them. It was a joyous time with a lot of hugging and emotion as three families were glad the nightmare was finally over.

My friends and I had been through a lot, but we also became very close. Now the small inconsistencies didn't bother them, for they all knew each other. They had all been through their first adventure and bonded from the experience.

David's mom came up to me and after hugging me asked the most obvious question.

"How can we ever repay you?" she asked.

I stopped for a minute, scratched my head, and replied with a smirk on my face.

"Next time, ride Anselmo airlines," I replied jokingly.

Everyone laughed in the room as a celebration of life started.

It was later that evening with my three friends, myself alone in my quarters as we just sat and enjoyed some quiet time together, chatting.

"Anthony, although you're a total dork, you really are the best friend anybody could have," Matt said.

"Sheesh that's corny, but honestly. I can only hope that we will always remain friends," I replied.

"Of course we will, why wouldn't we?" Jeremy yelled.

"To friends," David said hosting his drink into the air as we toasted to our friendship, and our adventures yet to come.

"Oh we have something for you," said Jeremy bringing over a box they had snuck into my quarters.

"Okay," I said laughing, "What's this?"

"Open it!" they said in unison.

I proceeded to tear off the colorful paper, as I opened the box my heart jumped in excitement. I took the glowing object out. I paused...

It was a picture frame of all of them, and it was framed with gold! In the bottom of the frame was an inscription.

"To Anthony, the best friend in the Universe..."

I looked at my friends with tears in my eyes and knew our adventures had only begun.

The End