

Foreward

And now we come to THIS story.

So, Shane was someone who transferred to my school around 11th grade. Through a bizarre and strange series of circumstances we became friends. I would say he was the first 'real friend' I ever had as we spent a LOT of time together. For most of my Junior year in High-School we hung out every day. It was a wonderful break from my trouble family life, and I was happy to *finally* have a real childhood friend.

He was also the first person I ever told I was gay and thus probably saved my life because I had something to finally talk to. It was a huge weight off my shoulders for me to be able to finally come out to someone. We were close friends for a few years.

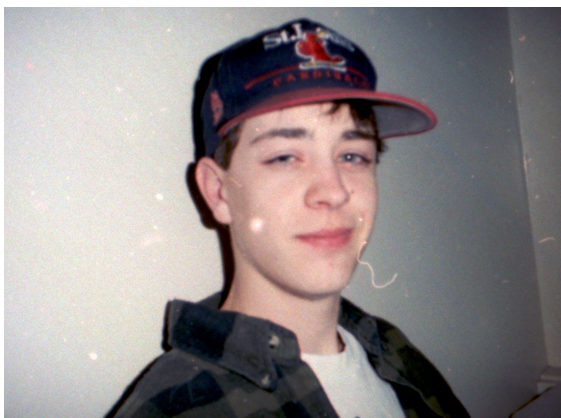
At some point he drew a robot character he wanted me to make into Zapbot of which I did and thusly I wrote this story about. This became the last story I ever wrote before I started the whole saga over again to rewrite in college. Since it was sort of the last story, I called it *Epilogue* because it came after everything else.

I lost touch with him once he got arrested for selling some drugs and made the local newspaper. A snide remark made by my sisters ruined my relationship as my parents were now aware of his devious dealings. At that point I was mostly at college and living in Columbus and life had started a new. I felt like Shane forgot about me and I decided to move on. I tried once to contact him via Facebook, but he never responded. However, his impact on my life still remains to this day and this story is for him.

When I started to rewrite this story, I googled Shane's name and saw that Shane had passed away in 2018 due to a horrific car accident. This makes this story a very important memory of someone that was very near and dear to my heart. It is a shame I never had the chance to reconnect with him. My condolences to his family.

Anthony S. Anselmo

William Shane Peterson March 14, 1977 - December 14, 2018 - Love & Light.



The only picture Shane ever let me take of him in 1994.



His Obituary pic.

Epilogue (Shane's Story)

By Anthony S. Anselmo

Chapter 1

"Personal Log, Stardate 2005.312. It's almost time for Christmas which I find myself depressed as of lately. With everything that has been going on I find that I'm not really myself. I sit sometimes pondering what the impending doom is I am going to face, as if all of this is a pointless story that goes nowhere. Days have started to blur together as I find myself wondering about my purpose.

"I've put Botimus on most of my shifts just so I can have some time to myself. I was involved in so many meetings I swear I hardly had time to sit down. I would run from discussion to discussion but found myself sometimes zoning out, feeling very much disconnected on things. I'm not quite sure what's going on now.

"My various friends have been reassigned to specific missions to keep an eye on things on planets such as Tockmak 3, Andreamia 4 and of course Earth. It's been relatively quiet here and yet I feel very much alone. Mike is finishing up school and should graduate here shortly. I'm not quite sure what the next step is here. I have never been in a situation such as this. I long for his return and then I ask myself 'then what?' Marriage isn't something that even legal on Earth yet and while my Zapbots have embraced same gender relationships in society, I'm not sure if Mike would even want that yet. Then there is the constant fear again. Will he be taken away from me like Matt was?

"I find myself wandering around the ship a lot these days, as if I'm trying to take pictures of everything with my human mind."

I was walking through the hallway of the human sections of Misslemax. It was too quiet on board. Usually, you could hear the cries of laughter from children or a rumble on the holorooms. Now and then the blast of music coming from one of the rooms. Humans would be discussing technical issues or working on the latest scientific discovery.

All that was quiet as of now, except the mummer of the vibrating ship. Times like this were rare and it was sad that this spaceship/city that was built for space exploration was cut short due to how the way things turned out. We had plans for vast ships for the Federation. Large scale efforts to help humans explore and colonize the galaxy. Very much everything I had seen on television and movies when I was a child.

But that all came to a stop when we discovered that Earth was being ruled by individuals who had ulterior motives. A vast collaboration of human conspiracy determined to rule humans with an iron fist, through media manipulation, religious dogma combined with wars. The data we discovered was mind boggling and disgusting. As such I had to turn away from my home planet, leaving them to deal with the ramifications on their own.

Thus, what was once was the flagship of our new Earth/Zapbot Starfleet was reduced to just Zapbots with the human corridors empty, silent.

Now I traveled the empty halls built for humans and mini-Zapbots, a possible version of the future that never happened. I reached the cafeteria level where my four helpers would get together occasionally. Click was there with Tiny and taking some time off playing some three-dimensional video games.

"Hey Master, would you like to join us?" Click asked.

"Thanks guys, I'm just pondering my thoughts. Carry on," I said.

"Anything I can get you?" asked Tiny.

"Naw, just wandering the halls right now," I replied.

I walked around the cafeteria and ran my hands over the tables and chairs. No dust of course due to the advanced filtering system. Even after all these years the Zapbot technology amazed me with what it could do. Especially making the simple things a lot easier.

Still, my thoughts kept coming back to the dreams I had and the interactions with the Matrix. Now back in my possession, the Matrix was still silent. As if I the path I had chosen had offended it and thus would not react to my concerns. I tried to think nothing of it but it still bothering me.

Click wandered up to the bar. As he was one of the few that knew my concerns, he understood me more than most.

"Want some advice Master?" Click said.

"Well, if you have any go ahead. I doubt it will help," I replied.

"Go on vacation. Spend a little time to find yourself again. You need to be away from this." Click

I paused and thought about this. The problem was my leaving Misslemax posed various challenges in case of emergencies as I was a core component to its function. Yet what did I have to worry about? Amphotron was defeated, Secretish gone, no word or anything from our other enemies in months. Maybe a brief vacation would be acceptable.

"You know what, maybe I will," I replied to Click tapping him on the head.

As I finished my thought, SuperRobot beeped in on the communicator system.

"Master, we're done with the special setup for Misslemax," SuperRobot said over the speaker.

"I'll be right there." I replied heading out the door with my two friends following me.

The blue colored walls of the Misslemax computer room light up the room. This was the main computer bank storage facility. Large cylindrical black towers went from the floor to the ceiling as the blue lights emanated around the walls. In the center was a new component added with, a large white square piece of machinery with four compartments carved out for insertion.

"Okay how does this work?" I asked.

"With this new input component, and our special mini transformations, we can transform and interface with the main computer and control Misslemax when you are away. This would allow us to run Misslemax in robot mode if needed." replied Experiment.

"How does the mind melt feature work?"

"Pretty good, we figure since we all get along, we should be able to work the ship," replied SuperRobot.

Each of my mini-Zapbots transformed into a floating object of a specific shape. Click a ball, Super a pyramid, Tiny a square and Experiment a rectangle. This idea was developed after several occurrences when I was not here and Misslemax needed to be transformed. The mind melt was when all the Zapbots would combine their thoughts and worked together to accomplish tasks. This wasn't perfect though as if anyone had an argument it could be problematic. It was a weird part of our technology and even the Zapbots that were involved couldn't explain it clearly.

The technology was previously designed to give an additional mental power boost during times of battle. As I transformed in the head of Shortstop with my X-O suit, Shortstop would interface to become the key transformation cog with Misslemax. My human sensors were constantly rerouted to larger and larger bodies as needed. This cumulated to the point that the entire planet of Gearatron could be transformed if needed into robot mode, with Fortress Misslemax then the Master key for that. The minis previously provided the extra cognitive function to help Misslemax move in space.

"Well guys you've done well, so Click I'm going to take your advice and go on a little holiday."

It was a weird feeling of knowing that the situation would be handled now. Botimus was a developed enough leader at this point. I trusted him with his decisions. If the minis could take care of transforming Misslemax, there really was no other reason for me other than the typical day to day governance of things. There still was the fact that I held the Matrix but at this point I decided that the risks were covered enough that I deserved some time to refresh.

With everything buttoned up I packed a few things to be carried in my X-O suit and prepared some time to find myself again. I flew out of my space dock garage and flew down to Earth.

I reached Earth's upper atmosphere and descending in the vast clouds. My X-O suit was a piece of technology that allowed me to transform into several different smaller vehicles for specific situations. While its main transformation was the head of my Shortstop body, a larger body that allowed me to interact with the Zapbots at their level. It also could transform into a mini jet, a very small car and various other alt modes. It wasn't much but just enough to get me from place to place in situations. I described it to have a motorcycle or mini plane you carried in your backpack.

I located my hometown in Northeastern Ohio and flew downwards. As the United States began to grow bigger, the blur of mountains became cities, that became streets and finally familiar houses would appear with the subsequent familiar streets.

I landed down near my old high school. To prevent from being detected I turned on my cloaking device and became invisible. I gently sat down on the pavement and smelled the familiar air of my hometown. I looked around the old school yard and saw that nothing had really changed. Almost every tree, every bush was there.

I walked around the empty football/track field. It was a cold winter day, and the trees were barren. Saturday in fact, and no one was around yet. I remembered sitting on the bleachers watching my friend David play soccer or sneaking behind the school so Matt could smoke a cigarette. One of the technologies we improved on to help humans navigate off the horrible habits, allowing them to ween off with a vape pen. We also created an alcohol substitute that could easily be waved away at moments need. At some point the hollow rooms

were opened for adult style entertainment but that was a given. Even with that option, in general the world started to decrease their bad habits and became a healthier group of people.

We believed we were working towards world peace. We had accomplished numerous treaties and agreements, historically never seen before with anyone. Sadly, that did not last when we left as the nation's went back to their standard routines of trying to control everyone else. I had such hopes when that spaceship landed in my backyard, sent by the ancient Zapbots called Lighting, Bridge and Knife. Meeting them only once on a mission when we went back in time to save Gearatron. Their attitudes were very raw to what I knew of Zapbots today. I pondered how they were destroyed in the great war?

I proceeded to walk around the bleachers and sat down for a minute to stare at the soccer/football field. The trees in the background were so colorful and bright. I once painted a picture of this place, and now that picture hung on one of my walls at my parent's home. As I sat there the hard bleachers interfaced with my behind and my X-O suit adjusted to become more relaxed.

I just sat there, staring into blank space. The wind blew, the clouds moved, and voices echoed through my head. I didn't feel like crying but I definitely felt some sadness. I missed my friend Matt. His passing was traumatic to me, and I still couldn't come to terms with him leaving. Then coming to face with him in the Matrix was probably the most surreal thing I ever experienced. Whether or not that was his so-called spirit or just the Matrix providing me a familiar face I didn't know. I did know that it still hurt like hell.

I didn't feel anything. My mind was a total blank. Finally, I stood up and finished walking around the schoolyard. I went inside to the Middle School, then the High School and walked around. The schools had their usual smell of new paint and waxed floors. I remember giving them grants of money to rebuild the school and now I didn't recognize any of what use to be my old stomping grounds. Everything inside was rebuilt from the ground up. At the kids of tomorrow now had a fighting chance.

I walked back outside, and a soccer game had started. I watched the kids play and thought of the days when I was just a nerd. I remember people who downright hated me, some that didn't care and some that were nice to me but just pitied me. Standing invisible there I watched them run frantically for the ball. My hands clenched the fence and I finally turned away with frustration. It was time to move on with my life.

I went to the lot were my parent's house to be, having move their house to a new planet for safety reasons. The empty lot with trees still felt something to me, it was a weird situation. Something magically with at home feeling.

I finished up by walking around the old parts of the town. Some places had changed, but other stayed the same. Finally, I couldn't take it anymore. Trying to remember all of this was doing nothing to help me 'find myself.' It just brought back bad memories of a life lost long ago. I engaged my boosters, transformed into my space jet, and headed back to Misslemax. My home was up there now, in the clouds, in space. And for the most part I was happy with it.

I entered my room and plopped down onto the couch. As I sat there in disgust. I sent out a couple calls to my old friends who were working as Headmasters.

Rogish my oldest friend from kindergarten I reached out to and check in on. He was helping his son learn how to plow the fields on his farm. He said he would drop me a line later in the evening.

Bill another old friend from High School was working on waterproofing his house. The Build Team was there incognito helping him with some excavation. Sadly, he was going through a rough divorce with his high-school sweetheart and trying to get the house ready to sell. He said he would call me back when she wasn't around.

David my old friend from church was strangely enough at his church, doing some efforts to help pack food for the homeless. He said he would call me back later after they got done.

Jeremy was hanging out with his parents at a local football game in Florida. He too said he would get back to me when he could concentrate.

Mikey B. was at his house in Florida working on his illustrations for a next Comic-con convention. He had become quite known for his designs and artistic ability from our college days. We talked for a bit to catch up and then he had to go help his daughter with her homework.

Jason chatted with me and informed me him and his girlfriend were getting married and in the middle of planning the marriage. He would drop me a line later.

I tried to ring Mike Quartz but got his answering machine, he texted me back saying he was in the middle of class and would have to call me later.

I paused for a moment to reflect on Matt Eggbert and Alan who were now long gone in the story of my life.

All my human friends were busy doing things with their lives. Here I was stranded alone, and it was extremely frustrating. I was about to get up and go see what the minis were doing but just as I started for the door the com beeped in. I waited a few before I responded.

"Yes," I said tiredly.

"Master, we think you better come down here. There's something out there," replied Botimus.

I walked over to my window and outside of Misslemax right next to Earth, was a small blue swirling substance with a glow in the center. Just enough out of the way from Earth's satellites and moon, I recognized it immediately,

"A wormhole?"

Chapter 2

I engaged into my Shortstop mode and went down to the main bridge. Misslemax was fully repaired after several small incidents with the new bridge shining brightly behind the reflection coming from Earth's sun through the windows. The entire crew was also fairly refreshed from a recent vacation giving everyone some much needed energy and spirits. I reached my command chair and stood there looking at the instrument panel and view-screen. Slowly I sat down not believing the readings I was seeing on my screen.

"How'd we get a wormhole above Earth?" I asked.

"No considerable idea, it just appeared out of nowhere," replied Boaty.

"Are we sure this is really a wormhole?" Speedy asked.

"It looks like a wormhole, it's got to be a Nonocon trap," replied Flier.

Everyone turned around and looked at Flier as the statement seemed very uneducated.

"That's impossible, we have established boundary forcefields all around here and even at the farthest point of the solar system. No ship could make it through now without being detected." replied Scan.

"Even so a wormhole is a warp through time and space. What if the Nonocons have discovered a way to make wormholes?" asked Botimus.

"Our latest reports from various spies say the Nonocons are in shambles. They're still trying to figure out who is going to lead them." Hightone replied.

"Could it be some other enemy of ours?" Flier asked.

"Boaty, launch a class one probe and figure out where the other side exits. If it's a really a wormhole we should be able to tell what's over there." I replied.

Boaty pressed some buttons on his panel, and I saw a small probe come out from the lower end of Misslemax and head towards the bright light in the center. After a minute information started coming into our computers. I studied the input carefully from my station.

"It's stable for a while, two earth days to be exact. It leads to a part of the Universe undiscovered before. I am unable to pinpoint the location due to some magnetic interference coming from the worm-hole." Boaty replied reading his view-screen.

"Do you think we should go in it?" asked Flier.

"Could be dangerous, we don't know what's on the other side of that thing," Botimus replied.

"Even so, as long as it's going to be stable, and no enemy ships are detected, I think we should at least consider the exploration possibilities," replied Scan already chomping at the bit to see what was on the other side.

"Are we sure of its stability?" I asked Boaty.

"Yes Master, both my reading and Scan's concur," replied Boaty.

I crossed my robotic legs and pondered this. Something instinctually was telling me this was destiny.

"Take us in, impulse power. Hightone send a message to Earth high command and tell them of our status, and we are going to investigate," I replied.

Flier pressed some buttons and Misslemax slowly moved towards the giant swirling mass. We approached the purplish swirl slowly guiding our massive ship into the beckoning hole. Then we were surrounded with an array of intense colors as strands of lights flew past us.

Misslemax shook as we flew at an incredible speed through the tunnel. I looked around the ship and it was like everyone was in slow motion with waves of movements being bent with the light.

"We'reeee dooinnggg Warrrrppp thirtyy fiveee Massssterrrr," Boaty cried as Misslemax max was flying faster than we have ever done before.

A bright light filled the sky and then the stars reappeared. We proceeded out of the purplish hue again as we emerged on the other side of the wormhole. As we all readjusted our circuits again, we began to relax and look around.

"Status?" I asked.

"Ship is functional, no damage, but my audio receptors are killing me," replied Hightone.

"Then readjust your parameters," replied Scan.

"Master look!" pointed Speedy at the view-screen.

A bright blue planet was floating below us. Its composition looked very similar to Earth. The continents and landscapes were different, but it definitely was a class M type planet.

"Place us in standard orbit," I said getting out of my chair walking over to Boaty. "Scan the planets and systems and try to figure out where we are." I asked.

As my team began to do their due diligence, scanning the planet, the stars, and charting various computations, as I stood there on the bridge, I heard Matt's voice in my head as clear as day.

"You must go down!"

I jumped back a bit and looked around. Everyone was staring into their monitors. I checked my systems with a quick diagnostic check. Nothing. If it was the Matrix talking to me or something else, it definitely felt real.

"Class M planet, oxygen, plant vegetation, and water." started Scan. "I'm getting some specifics now... Master?" said Scan as he turned around and looked at me. "We are 25 million light years away from the nearest star-base!" he exclaimed.

"Master I'm picking up lifeforms down there," replied Boaty.

"Time to worm hole collapse?" I asked.

"We still have about 47 hours," replied Boaty.

"Let's go down," I replied.

Arranging a landing party of Botimus, Hightone, Carry-On, Speedy, Iron and Terrain we flew down from Misslemax to the planet's surface. As we lowered our vehicle modes to the planet's extremely vegetated state, we landed in the clearest spot we could in a nearby forest.

"Master, I'm picking up the lifeforms," replied Botimus as we transformed into robot modes.

"Take it slow here guys, we're not sure what we are dealing with." I replied.

We moved through the tall grass and large trees with our robotic bodies just barely glancing over them. It was very similar to the various trips I had taken to the Amazon a long time ago.

"Hey dudes, how about I play some cool grooves for our trip," said Hightone.

"Are you crazy? Why don't you just tell whatever is here we're here?" exclaimed Iron.

"Hey man just trying to spice up this walk a bit more."

"We'll make more ground if we travel in vehicle mode. Zapbots convert," I ordered.

We all went back to our vehicle hovercraft modes and flew just slightly above the trees. As we scanned the horizon, I saw something looming in the distance. As we came closer it appeared to be a wreckage of small spaceship. We flew up to the wreckage and transformed back into robot modes and landed.

"Wow, whatever hit it, did a pretty bang-up job," said Speedy.

"Looks like a giant moonbeam ripped right through the shaft side of that sucker," replied Terrain.

"Life-form readings?" I asked.

"Close, too close," replied Botimus looking around looking at his arm.

Without any warning laser fire appeared out of nowhere and barely hit us. My Zapbots and myself scrambled for cover behind whatever we could find.

"Who? How? What? Where?" mumbled Speedy.

"Okay who's the wise guy trying to hit my rear bumper!" replied Carry-On peering up into the air.

I looked over a rock and saw standing on top of a cliff a large robot. His design was bipedal but nothing I had ever seen before. His body was completely white with detailed lines for his construction. He had a pentagon in his chest that was blueish white and wings sticking out of his side.

He aimed his arm canon and fired at me. I quickly ducked and the laser ray hit the rock. I could tell that his aim was a little off. I looked around and Botimus was lying on the ground next to me trying to figure out the situation as well. Speedy and Carry-On were hiding behind another rock, with Iron, Hightone and Terrain behind some trees.

"Master I'm going to kick that guy in his manifolds," replied Terrain over the radio.

"Just hold your position buddy, we don't hurt this until we know for sure he's an enemy," Botimus replied.

The robot fired some more shots. I commanded Hightone to broadcast our greeting message over all frequencies and languages. It didn't do any good, cause the robot continued to aim his firepower towards us.

"Terrain use your plasma gun and knock out the rock standing just below him," I ordered.

Terrain raised his gun and fired just below the robot. The cliff gave way and he fell and landed on another cliff that was shadowed by the sun.

"Carry-On use your infra-red," I replied.

Carry-On turned on his infra-red and we could see him standing on the edge of the cliff not moving as if he was anticipating his next move. We were trying to ascertain if he could pick up the infra-red light was revealing his location.

"Fire the net!" I ordered.

Iron launched his metallic net at the robot but before it reached him the robot jumped and charged towards Speedy. Carry-On saw the robot running towards them and fired his gun. The robot jumped into the air and did a complete flip, landing back on the ground avoiding the firepower. He fired and hit Carry-On knocking him several feet back into the trees.

We scrambled from out behind our holding spots to see the robot grabbing Speedy and aiming a gun at his head, attempting to hold him captive.

"Surrender or I will shoot!" said the robot. We realized he could speak English.

"Hold on buddy, we don't want to hurt you we just want to talk!" I said.

The robot looked at me with some sort of amazement.

"How do you know my language?" he asked.

"I was about to ask you the same thing," I replied slowly walking up to him. He began to somewhat lower his gun from Speedy's head.

"Where are you from?" the robot asked.

"Well, it's a long story but two planets really. Gearatron and the planet Earth. We come in peace."

"Gear...atron.. Earth.. Have you come to take us home?"

"Us...? Are there others?"

"Yes, there is three more. I can take you to them, but I need some proof that you are an ally. I just can't take anybody." He lowered his gun to his side now releasing Speedy from his grasp.

I wasn't sure what to do in this case.

"My name is Shortstop from the Planet Gearatron." I replied holding open my hands.

"Shortstop! The leader of the Zapbots!" he replied.

"Yes, you know of me?" I asked.

His head disengaged from his body and transformed into an X-O suit. He was a human Headmaster. He flew in front of his body with his boosters and waited there. I knew what he was doing. I disengaged from my body and transformed back into my X-O suit mode, flying above my headless torso as well. As I slowly floated towards him, I saw him take off his helmet. I saw a young man about my age, with hazel eyes and black hair, a smooth extremely Caucasian face. His eyes bulged out a bit to give him a bit of a nerdy appearance. As I approached him, he ran his fingers over my face as if it to ascertain if I was real.

"I never thought I would see my own kind again. How did you find us?" he asked.

"Whoa back the truck up, how did you even get here?" asked Terrain.

He just smiled and laughed.

"It's a hell of a long story, come follow me." he said recombining with his body. He transformed into an octagonal plane that I could only describe as a Chinese star and waited for us to do the same. We transformed into our vehicle modes, and he lead the way.

We flew over the high mountains and after we reached a peak, we saw our destination. It appeared to be some makeshift camp made up of spaceship parts and stone. It looked like whomever crashed here combined nature with machine to form a small camp. We landed in the center of the camp as we all transformed back into robot mode as the strange Headmaster walked towards the door of one of the buildings. He pushed the door away and we entered a dimly light room. Although there was little light, I could still see the figures of three robots. When they came into focus, I stopped dead in my tracks.

"Hello Shortstop, nice to see you again!"

It was Lighting, Bridge and Knife.

Chapter 3

"Sit down, it's not illegal for you to make yourself at home," said our mystery friend. The room was a combination of the inside of a spaceship with square stone filling in the missing pieces of walls. Torn fabric provided cover for what little light these Zapbots decided to allow into their home space through the windows. You can see the various dust sprinkled through the rays of light entering the cabin. Old machinery laid about and you could see there was a special section for a smaller human to sleep and shower.

"First of all, what is your name?" I asked.

"My Zapbot designation is Geo, my human name is William Shane Peterson. You can call me Shane," Geo replied.

"Well, Geo can you clarify on how you got to this planet on the far edge of the Universe?"

"I can explain," started Lighting. "You see and can presume Shortstop; we've been traveling the Universe since the days of the Dinosaurs on Earth. After we deployed the Matrix to the stars to hide it from the Junkicons and subsequently find you, we held down the fort on Gearatron for as long as we could; till we were overrun by the Junkicons. We barely escaped being destroyed by them as we left through this ship you see around you."

"We were on a constant chase from them for some time," replied Knife walking around the camp putting stuff together and tinkering with stuff.

"We traveled the universe collecting several different species of all kinds from different planets." continued Lighting.

"So, you just took this kid?" Speedy inquired.

"No, they rescued me, I was one of the Gongos' captured kids," replied Geo.

"We passed by Earth and met up with a Gongo ship, Shane was one of the kidnapped children on board as the Gongos were collecting them for their experiments. When we engaged the Gongo ship the wormhole appeared above Earth and we were only able to rescue him and make our getaway. We destroyed the Gongo ship, but they obliterated our thrusters causing us to enter the wormhole and thus being marooned here for several years." continued Lighting.

"Yes, we have several instances of rescuing various individuals from a Gongo raid on Earth." I replied. "How long have you been here?" I asked Geo.

"For about fifteen years." replied Bridge. "We've raised him since childhood."

"We've setup the camp you see here before you. We were able to set up a receiver and continuous watched the transmissions of Earth that appeared through fragments of the wormhole. We tried for many years to send S.O.S. calls but we never had enough energy to transmit outside the atmosphere. We taught Shane as any parents would and raised him with full knowledge of his world and ours. When he was fourteen, we built him an X-O suit and a robotic body. He was trained as you see now, a fully-fledged Zapbot." continued Lighting.

"We knew all about your exploits from Earth transmissions. Shane was educated and watched television constantly to learn about his lost home." replied Bridge.

"And now you're here you can finally take us home!" Geo replied.

"But I'm not getting something," Botimus said. "I thought you hated humans and thought they were disgusting. At least that what you thought of Master Anthony thousands of years ago when we warped back in time?"

"Years of space travel and visiting other planets will change even an old Zapbot's mind," replied Bridge smiling warmly.

I stood up and opened my robot chest and pulled out the Matrix. I held it to Lighting.

"This really belongs to you," I said.

Lighting just shook his head. "I'm old Shortstop, and I'm in no mood to lead the Zapbots again. You have done more in a small space of time than we ever did in a millennium. It's yours," Lighting replied.

I carefully put the Matrix back in Shortstop body's chest.

"We will gladly escort you home if you wish," I replied.

"Yes, we are more than eager to leave here," said Knife.

I heard a voice again in my head.

"The kid Anthony.."

I paused for a second and quickly recovered as I realized no one else had heard the voice.

"Oh, and I would be happy to take you back to your family Shane," I responded.

"I've been ready for many years," replied Geo.

Pliers proceeded to give Knife, Bridge, and the Lighting a full checkup. For ancient Zapbots they were in excellent shape with only a few gears and join parts needing replacement. Their survival skills were incredible in that they were able to maintain energy on a small starship for long, hoping across the universe. It was weird to see Zapbots that use to be younger with quite the pompous attitude now older, wiser and be more reserved. I could tell those millions of years had changed their opinion of the universe. We were already chomping at the bit to see what we could learn from these elders.

Shane himself was getting the regular medical examination by Click in the human medical bay. I walked into the medical bay after I checked on the larger Zapbots to see how the new human cohort was doing.

"So, tell me a little about yourself," I asked the new stranger sitting on the medical bay bed trying to open up a dialog. Without his X-O suit he was a scrawny 5'7" young adult, yet you could tell he kept himself active with his body shape.

"I've been on a planet with three robots pretty much all my life, what else is there to tell," he replied snarky.

"Do you have any hobbies? Like sports? Um, if you got TV signals from Earth you must have had a favorite TV show?"

"Hobbies include camping out, living in the forest, and blasting trees apart. Sports including running and baseball although the robotic parents really don't play very well. Bridge will usually play certain games with me, but I can tell he doesn't enjoy it. 'Too Primitive' he would mumble."

"Uh huh," I said nodding and trying to figure this kid out. He really wasn't a kid, only a few years younger than me at this point, so a young adult.

"My favorite TV show is Guiding Light," he said.

"Did you get any music on the planet? Radio?" I asked.

"Music is varied, let me ask you a question. Who are your influences?" Shane asked.

"Well started with the music my parents listened to. 50's do-wop, Frankie Valli, Beach Boys, Neil Diamond and then I discovered Phil Collins. I rather enjoy him."

"Phil Collins! You like him?" he said laughing.

"Yeah why?"

"He sucks!"

"No, he doesn't"

"He sounds like he's castrated!"

"He's been around for twenty-five years. That's a pretty big accomplishment if you ask me!"

"You probably like Elton John too?"

"Yeah why?"

"Ah ha!"

I stopped as I noticed his laugh. It started really low and then cracked really high, just like someone I use to know. I couldn't quite make out his attitude, it was a little of an Italian 'busting your chops' with a bit of seriousness mixed in tone.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"You remind me of someone I once knew," I replied trying not to let my voice be somber.

"Oh really? who?"

"A friend I lost in battle," I replied.

"Where you real close to this kid?"

"Yeah..."

Shane paused as he realized he may have trodden into an unknown territory with me and began to try and change the topic.

"Did anyone tell you, you're kind of geeky?"

"Ha!" I laughed. "Yeah, I've heard that before. My friend use to say that."

"Oh, Damn I hate being compared."

"Well, I'll try not to bring it up. You just remind me of him."

"You can talk about him, just don't compare me to him. I'm better."

"A little self-confident, aren't we?" I asked.

Shane just sort smirked.

Click came over and handed me a tablet to review his statistics. I quickly glanced at the details. I must have made a confusing face as I read through the details.

"What?" he asked.

"According to this, you in perfect physical shape, except for excessive carbonation in the lungs, alcohol stimulus to the brain and it seems you took some kind of drugs at some time?" I asked.

He waited a second, got up from the medical table and grabbed his shirt.

"Knife was able to setup a solar power generator. That's how we got energy. It was never enough to get off the planet though. With a broken replicator he was able to make some food for me. I found out how to make cigarettes from watching TV and found tobacco in a nearby field. I made alcohol from the grains too and they gave me some medicine to stop my seizures. I was really sick when I was little. As such I'm kind of addicted..." Shane replied.

"If you wish I can transition you off that stuff," I replied.

"How?"

"We have a version of alcohol that and cigarettes that are completely healthy and can help individuals ween off of them." I replied.

"I didn't know you had a medical degree," Shane said once again seemly trying to prod me.

"I don't. I have a large assortment of information from the Matrix and part of my brain is replaced by a computer. I can recall information as needed immediately."

"Well, all I can say is I'm glad you finally found us. It was getting incredibly lonely on that planet."

"You know my Zapbots can travel very far in vehicle mode, did you guys ever attempt just flying somewhere?"

"No other planet in close proximity. The wormhole was closed for years. We never had the ability to travel very far. So, beyond that what do you guys do for fun here? I want to see this whole ship!"

"I can give you the grand tour, you'll love the holorooms. It's a virtual environment that can recreate anything you desire."

"Well fuck what are we waiting for, let's go!"

He turned around and ran into the wall. I laughed so hard Click down the hall heard me. He was an odd duck, a little bit of a smart ass but he definitely had a personality.

"The door is over there," I pointed. "A little excited, aren't we?"

"It's been a long time since I've seen a real girl. Let's create one!"

"Well then let me show you the pleasures of the holorooms." I said politely ushering him out the door. I turned to Click, "Click hold my calls, I have a feeling we're going to be busy for a while," I said.

"Got it Master," ^{Click} replied Click giving me the thumbs up.

We strolled out of the medical bay down the hall to the turbo-lift. As the doors opened and closed with a 'swoosh' I replied. "Holorooms" for the turbo-lift to take us down a few floors.

A short while later I found myself in gleeful combat with the new individual in the holoroom. Strangely this was the same program I use to play with Matt, but this time my opponent was losing. He wandered aimlessly in the darkness of the jungle like forest. For fairness reasons I took my X-O suit off and also turned down my mechanical body parts to a more human level.

My mind was torn as he reminded me hugely of Matt. The way he acted made me very much revert back to my younger days of childish play, way before the Zapbots arrived. I could tell that he too was looking for companionship as if he was lost for the longest time and now the first human, he met he just exploded onto. I pondered what psychological problems he had.

Boaty had confirmed with research that he was who he said he was. Disappeared from Earth around age ten from Texas area. I had Hightone discretely contact his family to make them aware that his survival. A family of Native American Indian origin he was definitely the whitest Indian I ever saw.

I watched him behind a bush, he moved slowly but steady as he looked every which way trying to find me.

I leaped from my position and launched myself at him. I knocked him to the ground and started to put him in a wrestling hold. Before I could react, he flipped me over and had me in a neck hold. It happened so fast that he caught me by surprise.

"Gotcha, what ya going to do now?" Shane said.

"Take it easier there, don't choke me," I replied.

"Surrender!"

Somewhat out of respect and somewhat for the fact I was enjoying it, I was letting him somewhat have the upper advantage.

"I've only surrender to a few beings in my lifetime, I don't think it's going to be you." I answered him.

He kneed me to the kidneys which did not feel good.

"Hey, you can't do that, that's cheating!" I cried.

"No, it's not, I've seen wrestling on TV before."

"Well, I don't know what channel you saw but in America that's considered cheating."

"Oh, stop being a pussy."

"Fine, well let's take this up a level, Computer level two!"

The floor disappeared and we were falling down an endless canyon. Shane being shocked let go and we were both falling down rapidly between two cliffs. The computer controlled the air pressure so it wouldn't hurt our ears, but the thrill of your stomach dropping to your feet was still there. The cold wind rushed past us, and the bright moonlight was the only light to see with. The cloud blue sky set the mood.

"STOP!! MAKE IT STOP!!" Shane yelled at the top of his lungs. I realized that my therapy had taken a wrong turn.

"Computer freeze program." I said.

We both slowed down till we stopped completely and turned slowly upright. A floating rock appeared underneath our feet. Shane stood there for a second and then yelled at me.

"What the hell you do that for!" he cried.

"You don't have to worry. The safeguards prevent anything bad from happening to you. The program freezes things so you won't get hurt."

"Well thanks a lot you idiot for telling me that before I came here! Why don't you give me a fucking heart attack!"

"I apologize, I didn't know you were aware of this, and I presumed from watching TV..."

"How the hell was I supposed to know this from TV!"

"Okay I'm sorry Shane! I would never do anything to put you in danger!"

He sat down and sort of put his face in his hands. I sat down next to him on the floating rock.

"I'm sorry buddy, it was never my intention to scare you." I replied.

He looked from his hands with a smile on his face. He proceeded to pounce me again holding me down.

"I believe you do seem to be captured there almighty Anselmo!" he replied. I swerved under his arms and put him in a headlock.

"I'll guess we'll have to see who can out-wrestle who," I replied.

"Hey no fair, let go!" he replied.

I let my grip go, only to find that that allowed him to take advantage again and proceed to pin me down. The male-on-male wrestling continued for about another five minutes before we finally gave it a rest. Laying on the ground catching our breath I could tell this individual had a lot of energy he needed to get out.

"You are one crazy human," I replied.

"Yeah, but you're a geek."

"Idiot!" I replied mocking him back.

"Moron!"

"Goofball!"

"Okay don't make me pound you again!" he replied.

"Um, I let you win," I replied.

"Oh, I don't think so," he childishly said.

"Well, I guess we're going to have to try another level."

Shane paused for a moment and proceeded to bump my shoulder with his fist.

"Hey thanks for far for everything."

"Oh?" I inquired

"For being nice and everything."

"Why wouldn't I be?" I asked surprised.

"I'd figure you be some rich nose snot person and blow me off."

"Oh... is that the way it was conveyed about me on the news you saw?" I asked.

"Kind of, but I didn't think you be this geeky."

"What's your deal with me being geeky?"

"Nah, I'm just joking, you're pretty cool. For a human..."

We proceeded to get up from the floor of the simulation and exited the room through the giant double doors. We continued to discuss about who won the wrestling match of which I finally let him think he won... for now.

Chapter 4

The next day we were helping our stranded friends pick up what they wanted to keep from their camp and make living arrangements on Misslemax. Shane had immediate plans to catch up with his family on Earth. I was helping Shane pack up various belongings as my other Zapbots were working to grab the equipment Bridge, Lighting and Knife wanted to keep.

His makeshift room was being transported as whole. Made out of an old Zapbot replicator, it had one large window, a bed, grayish walls with the paint peeling off them, cables running towards the ceiling, a bathtub, sink, toilet, replicator, desk, and mirror. It gave the appearance of a crappy hotel room but with all the plants Shane had around it was somewhat feasible for a living space. Various computer chips and made shift clothing laid around for him to use.

"What's this?" I asked holding up some rock-life object.

"It's a rare rock, not found anywhere else in this region. It's unknown anywhere else in the Universe. I use it for a paperweight," he replied.

"I see you have lots of animal feathers here."

"I'm very much into my Indian religion," he replied.

"I see said the blind man." I replied jokingly.

We finished packing his stuff into containers and proceeded to transport them back to Misslemax. Bridge and Knife had all of what they wanted already aboard. Lighting was carrying his last box of stuff out.

As the last transport left for Misslemax, we saw the automated boxes head up into the atmosphere on their booster jets. I took a note of the time.

"We have about two hours left," I noted to everyone.

Without warning laser rays came out of nowhere. Shane and I recombined with our Headmaster bodies and took cover in the shadow of the door. I looked out the door to find an army of Gongs coming over the hill. Hightone beeped in over the com.

"Master dude, a Gongo ship is reported sighted off the...."

"Yeah, I know, nice timing! Send re-enforcements down here!" I replied.

Geo (Shane), Knife, Bridge, Lighting, Botimus, Boaty, Flier and I hid behind the various pieces of ship parts and buildings to return fire on the oncoming army. As we scanned there were numerous Gongs coming over the ridge, with huge weapons firing towards our directions. One of them fired a rocket launcher in our direction and it landed right on the main building shattering it to pieces.

"Where did they come from?" asked Geo.

"The Gongs are known for being sneaky!" I replied. They must have followed us through the wormhole or something.

We dodged and returned fire from our position, but the Gongs had us pinned down as the firepower was starting to destroy the elements we were hiding behind. I threw up a large shield to encase us in a shield.

"That won't last long," Botimus replied.

"I know." I replied.

"I believe we have re-enforcements!" replied Bridge pointing at the sky.

Up from Misslemax came a familiar team who had lots of experience with Gongs. The Animal Team featuring Dive the robotic Hawk, Dig the robotic mole, Huge the robotic Dolphin, Jumper the robotic Bear and Claw the Lion. As they landed, they transformed and began their attack.

Dive flew up into the sky and turned around going straight for bombing the Gongs. He dropped a few bombs on their locations causing them to disperse in confusion. When he circled back, he proceeded to grab a few with claws, lifting them high into the air and dropping them a few hundred yards away from the battle.

"Hey, come back and fight you miserable robot!" cried the Gongs.

"Sure!" said Dive as he circled back again sending laser rays their way, causing them to flee in fear.

Popping rapidly out of the ground and grabbing Gongs and proceeding to bury them, Dig would be seen for only a moment as he took out several Gongs placing them comedically upside down in the dirt, with their legs wailing in the air.

Huge transformed and dived into a nearby lake. He created a tidal wave from his swimming causing a large wave to hit the oncoming army leader in his approaching vehicle. Jumper and Claw then proceeded to sink their teeth and claws into the various machinery to disable or cause them to explode.

"Let's go!" I cried coming out from behind the rocks.

We proceed to run against our attackers joining the fight, pushing them back as they soon realized now they were outnumbered in firepower and ability. I noticed that the Ancient Zapbots although older could still give as good as they could get and were knocking several Gongs out as we proceeded forward.

We finally transformed into our vehicle modes and headed up towards Misslemax. The Animal Team proceeded to transform in robot mode and fly up past us.

"Do we have everything?" I asked.

"Yes, we need to destroy the site otherwise they may steal the technology," said Bridge.

"Misslemax," I replied over the com. "Fire a torpedo at the site!"

As we circled back and landed to the front docking bay and landed, a torpedo came from the underside of Misslemax hitting the wreckage and destroying the remains of the technology.

Walking into robot mode on the main bridge, I knew time was short and we could not stay here.

"Flier, get us out of here and head back to through the wormhole!" I ordered.

"Rodger dodger!" Flier replied.

Misslemax slowly entered the wormhole and was once again met with the bright light and array of colors circling it.

"Massterrrr... the gongs... are... following..us..." said Boaty. The ship was shaking like crazy once again and I could from our rear view-screen the Gongo ship was on our tail like a summer flame on the fourth of July.

Without reason a torpedo was fired out of the Gongo ship, however due to the strange nature of the wormhole the torpedo was knocked off course and hit the outer end of the wormhole.

A gigantic bang hit both our ships knocked everyone to the floor. Misslemax did a complete flip from the blast. The next thing I saw was a bright light and I blacked out.

I found myself again by the greyish clouds but this time total darkness. I was floating in thin air, as the cool wind rushed passed me. Light was all around but when I looked to find where it was coming from, it moved. Images and faces moved and danced around my eyes. Clouds turned into the heads of the Zapbots I knew. Finally, I came to a bright light.

"Matt" I cried.

"Hello again," Matt said.

"Why am I here? Am I dead?"

"No, you are not dead. Your time is very far off."

"Then what is this?"

"I wish I could explain. My time here is limited, my message for you is you have to protect Shane. Whatever else happens, you must not let anything happen to him. He is key."

"Why what is going to happen?"

"I must go. You have chosen your path now."

"No wait!"

My optic sensors turned back on. As my system came back online and focused, I found I was lying on my back. There was a dim light surrounding the bridge. I did an internal damage check and found myself leaking lubricants, but beyond that immediate damage I was okay.

I sat up and looked around. The Zapbots emergency devices slammed shut over the window, providing the view-screen as our only method for visuals. The view-screen itself was off and the only light there was coming from sparks flying out of the ceiling. Yet it was bright enough for me to see that we were in bad shape.

I stood up and turned my lights on. Everyone was slumped either over the floor or their chairs unconscious. Wires and parts were all over the place with some chairs disconnected or screens blown out.

"Computer, verify working condition," I said.

"Copyright 1990, ROP system online," the computer responded.

"Turn on emergency lights and report status."

The emergency lights came on and the bridge was lit for the moment.

"Status: The warp drive is discharged, shield inoperative, turbo-lifts inoperative, energy at fifty percent, weapons are offline...."

The computer continued to list the numbers of the problems we were now facing. I walked around shaking my Zapbots to get them to turn back on. They responded and reactivated. They seemed okay but a couple of them were badly hurt. Flier and his arm disconnected, and I helped him in a chair. Speedy was leaking all over and Overload was stuck in his transformation mode.

I finally came to Bridge, Lighting and Knife. They were knocked out cold and didn't respond. Then I remembered Geo and looked for his body. He was lying in the corner of a turbo-lift. His head as disconnected and he was lying in his X-O suit on the floor, not moving at all.

I disconnected from my Shortstop mode and flew to him. I picked up body and was going to go through the turboshaft that lead to the Headmaster's garage in the ceiling, through

the area to my room and sickbay. However, the door that opened when my Zapbot body was lowered did not open. I commanded my Shortstop body to shoot it and with remote control. It shot the panel and a giant hole formed. I flew up to the Headmaster garage and then to the turbo shaft which all Headmasters used to gain access to their Headmaster bodies. I then came out on the top floor of my room and flew up one half-level to sickbay.

Power was off here as well so I blasted the sickbay door open. I put Shane's body on the device of last resort. The lifesaver.

"Computer divert power to sickbay!" I yelled. Immediately lights came on and everything started working again.

I closed the lid to the Lifesaver, and it turned on. It immediately began to scan Shane's body to find out what was wrong. Up on the screen came the report of internally bleeding, broken bones, and a punctured heart. I waited as it began to fix and repair what it could. It was only about five seconds while it regenerated tissue, atoms for bones, cells, arteries, tissue and blood, but it seemed like hours, and the voice of Matt must of rang through my ears continuously to protect Shane.

Finally with a sigh of relief, the computer responded that it had repaired his total body and he was functioning. It shut off and the lid opened to the bed with a swoosh sound. Shane slowly opened his eyes and sat up.

"What... what happened?" he asked.

"How do you feel?" I asked.

"Fine."

I held back tears and slowly moved into hug him. I was able to save another friend, a bite a new one I still considered him a friend.

Click, SuperRobot, Tiny and Experiment came through the blasted sick bay door.

"What happened?" asked Super.

"All the turbo-lifts and lights are out all over Misslemax. Including human sections," replied Tiny.

I was still hugging Shane and realized that this looked awkward. I started to pull back and regain my composure.

"Guys stay here and help Shane recover. I'm going to go see what needs to be done." I replied.

"If you need us just give the word," replied Experiment.

"Keep life support functional at all costs and if you have time repair the doors I just blasted," I replied.

"I will come and help you Anthony," replied Shane.

"You better not, you really had a close call."

"I'm fine, you need all the help you can get."

"Alright let's get back to our larger bodies. Team, keep me posted if anything happens."

Shane got back into his X-O suit, and we headed back down the turbo-chute and made it towards the main bridge. We recombined with our damaged Headmaster bodies and walked up to Botimus and a few standing Zapbots.

"I don't like to give you bad news, but we are in bad shape," replied Botimus pointing to the view-screen. I saw that we were still in the wormhole, and the torpedo had shocked the wormhole into a frozen stage. The lights slowed down and both Misslemax and the Gongo

ship were floating aimlessly in space. I knew a frozen state in a wormhole didn't last long and if we didn't have shields up and it started again, we had the possibility of being crushed by gravity.

"I would presume the Gongs are probably in as bad a shape as we are and probably starting or working repairing their ship. If that wormhole starts moving again, we'll be in deep shit if we don't have shields. Concentrate on getting us shields. First priority. Boaty, Pliers, work on getting anyone to sick bay. None of the turbo-lifts work so you'll need to take the emergency chutes. If you find Repairs tell him, we need shields pronto!"

"We're on it!" replied Boaty and him and Flier walked towards the emergency tubes.

"Master, Repairs is coordinating with Pliers," replied Scan from his station.

"Acknowledged," I said pressing the button on my chair for a ship-wide hail.

"Attention crew, we're in trouble and we are extremely short on time. Everyone is going to have to do their best to and try get us back in working order. I know all of you, and I trust you. We can do this." I released the call button and looked at everyone.

"Let's go!" I said.

Chapter 5

"Botimus!" cried Repairs through the room of cloud and smoke. "You better come take a look at this!"

Botimus made his way over to the other side of the engine room. The Engine probably suffered the most damage from the blast. Walls had collapsed, holes in the floor, wires and plate exploded everywhere with computer screens completely destroyed. The reactor core still remained intact, as if it had been breached the whole ship would have imploded.

"What is it?" asked Botimus.

"Take a look," Repairs said pointing to the only working monitor.

System Analysis

SIF: All reactors destroyed.

IDF: All reactors destroyed.

"You are telling me that all the generators are down and in pieces?" Botimus asked.

"I sent Sand to check them manually for visual inspection. I doubt this is just a computer glitch."

"But without generators...."

"Yeah, I know..." replied Repairs.

Repairs and Botimus had something to worry about. The Structural Integrity Field kept extreme stress and weight off Misslemax. Without this, Misslemax would bend like hot cheese at warp speed. The Inertial Damper Fields kept the gravity on Misslemax in accordance with space travel. It also kept the crew from getting squashed like bugs when they went to warp speed. The computer automatically adjusted the gravity to match the speed of the ship. When the ship did experience sudden responses (say a torpedo) it rarely was able to compensate quickly enough which lead to us getting thrown out of our seats often.

So, if either of these two systems were offline, then any sudden movement would not only squash Misslemax, but the gravity could kill us entirely.

Sand came rolling in and transformed with a worried expression on his face.

"Hey dudes, all the reactors are in more pieces than Bop's energy pie at Thanksgiving," Sand said.

"Wonderful, if that wormhole resumes movement, we can just say goodbye to our..." Botimus started but was interrupted by Repairs.

"If I can get the constant shield up, and if we don't have any further sneak attacks, we should be able to make it out of here alive. At least out of the wormhole." replied Repairs.

Knife came strolling into the engine room.

"It takes more than that to stop us old timers. Light and Bridge are working on the *bridge* so I decided to come down here to see if I can offer an extra hand." Knife replied.

"Any chance you happen to have an extra SIF or IDF in your hand?" asked Repairs.

"In fact, I don't but I could build one in five minutes in my younger days. Just give me some tools and some diagrams and I'll go to work."

Repairs handed him his toolbox and a tablet with diagrams. Knife copied the design specs to his internal memory and then ran to go repair the fifty generators, which was an almost inconceivable task.

"He's got to be kidding if he can tell me he can reconstruct that many generators that fast," replied Repairs.

"Remember some of their technology was different from ours. He may know a better way to build one. You continue to work on those shields and let him try to repair the generators." replied Botimus.

"I will try my best, don't give me any more bumps right now," said Repairs going back to his working station.

"What do you want me to do now?" asked Sand.

"As the humans would say, PRAY!"

"I'm telling you we need to finish repairing these power cupplings!" cried Vebox.

"Shortstop wanted the shield up as soon as possible. We have to finish working on the power grid." replied Pliers.

Pliers and Vebox and were on sub-deck 13 trying to bring some normalcy to the situation. As the ship was being held together but what seemed to be low power generators, emergency force fields and duct tape, the technicians and repair team were working around the clock to try and hasten safe propulsion in order to move us out of the wormhole before its rotations began again.

"A lot of good a shield's going to do us if we don't have any power!" rebutted Vebox.

"If we repair them now without an adjusted shield, we'll blow the circuits!" Pliers continued as Repairs walked over.

"If we don't have any energy online to work with, we can't adjust anything!" Vebox argued.

Botimus Prime proceeded to walk into the tense situation and immediately saw the Zapbots were letting their emotions get in their way.

"Gentlebots, why doesn't one of you work on the cupplings and other two the shield generators. It doesn't have to be done at once. "

Pliers, Vebox and Repairs just stood there for a second as the simplicity of the situation had seemed to evade them. Zapbots usually made the best logical decisions and usually with precise timing and speed. However, this was a standard case of the team letting their emotion brains overcoming their logical artifacts.

"Guys turn your emotion locks on," Botimus replied.

Once again, the team looked at each other as if they were embarrassed.

"Sorry Botimus, We just didn't want to meet death with half a brain." replied Pliers. The Zapbots had the ability to turn off their emotion side in stressful situation. While this didn't completely remove their personality it did give them a sort of a settling calm in situations.

"Don't worry guys, we've been through worse than this," Botimus said putting his hand on their shoulders.

"I'm not sure this ranks pretty high up there," replied Vebox as he turned around and ran back to work on the cupplings.

"Hand me the next piece," I said to Shane. The two of us were on the human levels attempting to resolve the holes in the ship. The blast ripped about fifty some holes in the human section of Misslemax. As we installed forcefield attachments over the holes, they would provide some stability so when the ship did move to hyperspace it would maintain its integrity.

I put in the last piece and hit the connection, the shield was established, and the room was filled with oxygen and gravity. As we worked in our X-O suits to provide our bodies the protection needed and to prevent us from being sucked out into space.

"I can't believe we just fixed ten holes in the ship," Shane replied.

"11 if you count the scratch in Section D," I answered.

"So where are all the humans?" Shane asked.

"It's a long story. We had plans for a whole human group to co-exist with us on the ship as we searched the galaxy. But sadly, once we started digging into Earth's government, we realized from the corruptions Earth wasn't ready for this."

"But you have all these empty rooms, with furniture even. They're not even being used."

"I know, I'm not sure what the future of this will be. It's sad because we really spent a lot of time trying to figure out the best-case scenario for us. It really is an amazing work of engineering. Maybe someday we'll be able to go...."

My com beeped in and Boaty came on the visual line.

"Master, just wanted to let you know we have main power for life-support and turbo-lifts working again. That is for the turbo-lifts that are still in one piece." Boaty replied.

"Good work, but what about the shields?" I asked,

"Teams are still working on them, but Scan..."

"Will you help Scan?" I asked.

"Master, I would dare say Scan is not in the best of moods."

"Oh, so I guess it would be more logically if you stayed out of his way?"

"That would be the logical choice."

"Alright, what else is there to do?"

My com was beeped again. On my visor screen the image of Boaty moved to the background and Scan came up on view.

"Hey!" I said.

"Master, you won't believe this," said Scan.

"What Scan?"

"Knife just repaired all fifty generators around the ship in one hour. Not only that Lighting helped him increase their power out by 40%!"

"Holy crap! How'd he do that?" I asked.

"Knife knows a lot about shields and stuff," Shane commented.

"I'm definitely going to take this Zapbot out to lunch and find out what he knows but Master, it's a miracle!" replied Scan.

"Great, so what's the status of the shields?" I asked.

"Still working on them, hoping to have them up soon!" replied Scan.

"Scan, time is a luxury we do--"

"I know, I know! I'm on it." said Scan as his image dropped out and Boaty came back in view.

"Master, I'm going to work with Bridge on weapons. He seems to have advance knowledge of this," replied Boaty.

"Hurry Boaty, we have limited time," I replied.

Boaty gave me a nod and his image dropped off my visor. I looked at Shane, he kind of smiled at the ridiculousness of it all.

"Well.. what do you think?" I asked him.

"I think you're crazy man," he replied.

"It takes one to know one," I said getting up from underneath the bulkhead.

"I'm going to head off and help Knife..."

"No!" I said and stopping at my immediacy. "I need you here."

"Why?"

"Just... because..." I said. As I finished my sentence, I saw the metal on the one side of the room fly inwards as an explosion blasted a hole through the back of the room as a Gongo came flying in through the hole.

Air and gravity began to recede from the hole as the Gongo flew in with a modified space jetpack. I quickly threw out a shield disk at the hole causing it to encase it with a modified shield, thus returning gravity and air to the room. I realized without shields this left Misslemax open to direct attack on our ship. I turned to fire at our intruder, but the Gongo was quicker than myself and a laser ray hit my X-O suit knocking me back up against the door. He tried to fire upon Shane, but Shane was too quick and fired his ammo at the Gongo knocking him off balance. Shane ran up to the Gongo lunging on top of him and the two began to wrestle with for domination.

I staggered up from with my damaged X-O suit having a hole in it, showing my human skin. I'm not sure how much Shane knew about the Gongs. They did have razor sharp claws that could easily cut a human in half if they wanted to. When I got to my feet, I saw Shane on the floor with the Gongo standing in from of him ready to strike.

"NO!!" I yelled as my hand reached out and fired the Matrix power at Gongo. It hit the Gongo immediately sending him flying towards the other side of the room. The Gongo hit the wall with bones breaking and a sharp crack indicating his neck was broken. With a huge burn mark in his back, he fell to the floor dead.

I ran to Shane and pulled him to his feet. He was a bit shaken but alright.

"Now, I know why you want me around you, to protect YOU!" Shane said.

"No, it's not to protect me, it's another reason," I said. I wished at the moment I could have let my emotional defenses down. I quickly radioed the bridge.

"Attention, we've had an invasion from the Gongo here on level 13, all hands be aware of possible intruders!" I replied. Shane and I stumbled out of the room as we ran to our Headmaster bodies. My robotic first aid went into effect providing some protection to my damaged body.

We walked onto the bridge as the crew itself was piling into their chairs. Speedy cried while pointing at the view-screen.

"Shortstop, the wormhole is increasing in speed!"

Chapter 6

"Engine room! I need those shields now!" I yelled to the com to the engine room.

"I'm trying Master, I just need a couple of more minutes!" replied Repairs.

"We don't HAVE a couple of minutes! It's now or never," I cried. The wormhole started to slightly rotate, as the colored beams of lights began to move.

Scan began to connect the final wires he needed to the main computer and closed the drawer. He got up from his knees and hit the button on the side of the machine.

"All right!" replied Scan giving the thumbs to Repairs. He went to work adjust the final grid on the shields. "Computer activate shield startup sequence," he said.

"Subordinate systems are not calibrated," replied the computer.

"Understood, start them up anyways."

"Procedure is not recommended."

"Override!"

The computer finally began the sequence and the images on the screen of the various generators began to glow.

"GUYS!" I cried over the com.

"Almost there Master!" replied Repairs.

From the bridge I could see the wormhole slowly gaining in speed as it began to fall out of static shock. Everyone was running madly to their stations engaging with their devices directly to provide the fastest interactions. Each Zapbot began to program their stations as quickly as possible. Misslemax began to hum with its familiar background white noise as systems booted up.

"Wormhole is gaining speed." replied Boaty.

"You got shields Master, but we don't know how long they are going to hold," replied Repairs from the engine room.

"Shields up!" replied Botimus.

From my view-screen, the image of Misslemax's exterior came up and just as Misslemax started to shake, the lines of the shields came up and shields were established. The ship stopped shaking and the screens verified that they were holding.

"Master, scanning the Gongo shield they are activating shields as well." replied Boaty from his chair.

Two torpedoes came out of the Gongo ship hitting Misslemax and knocking everyone around a bit. Still the shield held as their improved efficiency kept us intact.

"Get us out of here!" I replied. Misslemax engaged its propulsion engines and started to fly out of the wormhole. The mighty ship with a huge amount of structure damage slowly pulled out of the moving light show and floated out into regular space. We came just above the Earth and stood stationary above its atmosphere.

"The Gongo ship, is right behind us," replied Flier.

As we exited the glow of the wormhole, and stationed ourselves above Earth, Misslemax turned toward the oncoming Gongo ship exiting the wormhole as well.

"Prepare to Transform to Battle Station mode!" I cried.

With a whirl of the machinery the ship surrounded us with the noise of the gigantic transformation filling our audio receptors. Misslemax lowered columns and extended weapons

to provide additional artillery. Giant currents transformed into action and rotated towards the oncoming ship. The sirens rang throughout the ship as Zapbots ran to their battle stations. We directed all of our weapons towards the oncoming ship.

With much certainty and determination, I ordered the command.

"FIRE!" I cried.

Out from Misslemax came an array of lasers, torpedoes, weapons, and bombs. They flew at tremendous speed towards the Gongo ship, hitting it directly causing massive holes and gashes as a result. As the weapons impacted the ship, it buckled causing its internal walls to fall, and finally exploding. Debris fell into space as the as the Gongo ship was finally destroyed.

"Flier prepare to take us back to the nearest space dock for repairs," I commanded.

"Master, Duplaflex entering Earth orbit," replied Boaty.

"Hale them and transform back into city mode."

Up on the screen came Gaxator and Ultra Attack from the bridge of Duplaflex.

"Ahoy there Shortstop, what is your status?" Gaxator said.,

"We are functional, I need you to hold orbit here until the worm-hole closes as we head back to Starbase for repairs," I replied.

"Very well Master, we will guard this with every weapon..."

I pressed the button to cut him short before he started into a speech.

"Master, another Gongo ship is approaching!" cried Speedy. Looking at the view-screen another Gongo ship flew out of the wormhole at high speed. It swerved around the space and started to fire at both Misslemax and Duplaflex. Both ships returned fire and hit the Gongo ship causing minor damage. Duplaflex rotated in space prepared to follow the ship as it moved.

"We need to close that wormhole now before any other ships come out," I replied.

"A quantum torpedo should cause the desired effect Master," replied Boaty.

"Speedy, fire one at the wormhole!"

"Master, that will..." started Scan.

"I know. If we don't close this wormhole any enemy will have a direct line to Earth, and it would be impossible to guard it. Fire the torpedo." I replied.

Speedy nodded and punched in the coordinates aiming for massive swirling cloud. With a single connection, he fired a torpedo out of Misslemax hitting the wormhole. Giant explosions of light hit the wormhole, causing it to collapse. As we did that, Duplaflex fired a final torpedo at the remaining Gongo ship, causing a direct hit to their engines and a massive explosion.

Breathing a sigh of release, I saw back in my chair and collapsed. The Gongo threat was finally over, and we navigated back to the nearest Starbase.

I was sitting in Shortstop form in my ready room as I continued to review the information I found. It was extremely disturbing. It was one of those situations where you didn't know what to do. I decided to consult the expert. Geo (Shane) walked into the ready room.

"You called?" Geo said.

"Yeah, sit down." I replied.

"What's up?"

"How long have you known Bridge, Lighting and Knife?"

"All my adult life? Why? What's Up?"

"This," I pointed toward a transmission pattern on my computer screen. "Hightone recorded it while we were fixing up the ship. Someone was receiving a signal or sending one to another ship."

"Who?"

"Any Zapbot registered here would have an I.D. number with transmissions like this. However, there is no I.D. number with this transmission. Geo, one of three, Knife, Bridge or Lighting told the Gongs where we were."

"The only guy who knows anything about communications is... BRIDGE!"

"Shortstop to Security, take Bridge into custody immediately," I said over the com.

"We're on our way," replied Terrain.

"Wait no!" cried Geo.

"We have to check on this, just hang tight," I replied getting up from my chair and heading down to the lower decks.

Terrain and Overload the two heads of security located Bridge and ran down to deck 10. They reached his room and knocked on his door. He opened the door not expecting to what we knew.

"Yes," Bridge asked confused to see the two security officers.

"You're under arrest," replied Overload. Bridge looked at them with a weird confusion on his face, as if someone was playing a joke.

A giant explosion came from within Bridge. His lower chest cavity exploded, and his body went flying backwards. Shielding their faces Terrain and Overload stepped back and then as they lowered their arms and seeing his damage immediately ran to his side.

"It was a sabotage bug, Shortstop," replied Pliers showing me the diagram on his pad. Bridge was hooked up into the machine in the sickbay. His life signs were stable for the time being. Repairs and Pliers had done an amazing job repairing the damage to his body, while Lighting and Knife helped to provide the extra knowledge for their dear friend. Bridge's body was something he had never encountered before as the technology was leaps and bounded beyond what we currently had. Still with perseverance the team was able to replace his outer shell before he lost too much oil.

"It can't be his fault! Bridge would never do anything to hurt me, or us..." replied Geo.

"It's not, somehow a bug got planted into his body without his knowledge. The bug recorded all conversations and directed it back to the Gongs. How it got there I don't know, but I probed his memory banks, and he never met a Gongo face to face." replied Pliers.

"What.. if it was sent to him?" I asked.

"I checked his memory banks, and he was never sent anything. He did recall feeling sharp pain when they entered the wormhole for the first time several years ago."

"That's got to be it! The ship was almost in pieces when they went, we went down." replied Geo.

"I can concur that does seem logical," replied Boaty "Some further investigation can confirm this."

"I would say I never felt any negative thoughts from Bridge," I replied. "So, we are just presuming that this device was imposed upon him at some point, and when he was about to be arrested it self-destructed?"

"Correct." replied Pliers. "And I know what you're thinking, with their knowledge of technology why wasn't this discovered before, well all I can tell you it was really really small. Like almost atom size. Wouldn't even register on our scanners."

"I want to stay with him, until he gets better," said Geo knocking my shoulder. I nodded as he walked over to his adopted parents all at the table. Lighting put his arm on Geo's shoulder.

"Take whatever time you need, I'll check on everyone in a little bit," I said.

I was sitting in my ready room again going over the repair logs. Misslemax was almost completed with repairs as we docked at Starbase 42. Duplaflex and Omega Dupreme indicated no further instances of Gongs were sighted anywhere in the sector. Yet I am still on somewhat a high alert. I thought I could take a vaca-

"Nice Job Anthony," said Matt.

I looked around and found myself surrounded in the familiar matrix settings. Once again, my mind had drifted into the realm of the Matrix. Once again stood my old, departed friend, my lover who had left me.

"Matt. Again?" I said.

"You did what needed to be done," Matt said. Once again standing within the cloud-like settings. I wanted to cry out of frustration.

"What is the point of this?" I yelled.

"Your actions have set the wheels in motion for the conclusion to this."

"A conclusion...?"

"Yes, you will be the 'savior' of the Universe. With the combination of your trip to the other reality and your actions you have set the ball in motion for the redemption of the Universe. Shane and all your friends are integral to all of this."

"Oh, really?"

"Yes, he is required for the next event."

"Next event? Really Matt? I'm getting a bit annoyed at all of this. Do you think you control my life? Do you think I'm enjoying this Ultimate doom you keep foreshadowing? For once why doesn't the Matrix just HELP me. Why doesn't it just tell me what to do to just make peace in this forsaken piece of shit we call a universe."

"The events that will play forth have already been written."

"By whom?"

"The writer of all of this?"

"And who is that? God? The Universe?"

"Some call it God, others call it the Universe, others call it fate. Either way it is the cosmic forces at work here. The Matrix is tied to this. The Matrix combined with your friends will be an integral part of saving this Universe. You have completed all you needed to do to put this motion and to provide the best possible outcome."

"Let me guess, this is the best-case scenario out of all possibilities."

"Correct."

"How did I know that. So, what's next..."

"Your time here is limited, spend what time you can with those you love. When the time comes you will know what to do, as you have conversed with the three that you require."

I knew who he was referring to, as if I could hide the actions that I set in motion with Click, Boaty and Timetravel. As if I could hide my thoughts from the cosmos.

"I think I have a general idea..."

"So, then I wish you farewell...this will be the last time you see me." Matt replied.

"No wait..." I cried reaching out. "I need to know one thing..."

"I think that question you want to ask you already know the answer to."

For the longest time I always pondering. With our brief experiences beyond just our friendship, did he feel the same towards me. It was then I knew the answer.

"Goodbye Anthony,"

"Goodbye Matt. Thank you."

-tion. I guess I'm destined to suffer no matter what.

".... dammit Matt... damn it." I thought.

Chapter 7

"Master's Personal Log, encrypted. The event I fear is coming soon. Through this frustration I have found a new friend and it's a weird feeling. A very odd feeling of pain and hope. I wish I could put words around it but I can't. As Misslemax completes repairs after closing the wormhole we will head back to Earth to continue our mission of silent protection.

"The more information I heard from Earth; it appears not good. Several nations seem to be on the verge of war with the United States. Constant chaos stroked by those behind the shadows seem forthcoming. There is nothing I can do at this point.

"In other news, Lighting, Bridge and Knife will receive a hero's welcome coming back to Gearatron. With great fanfare the ancient Zapbots were applauded for these efforts of saving the planet and helping rebirth the modern generation. We have much to learn from these heroes and I am somewhat excited by what information they can provide to help us.

"With repairs done I have directed my attention to spending time to those who I deeply care about. I do not know how much time I have left, so I will use it wisely. Mike is coming back in two days. I do not know what I plan to tell him."

I closed the file on my screen and sat there for a few seconds. I got up and walked out of my ready room. I realized that the everywhere I went, someone was following me. However, at this point, I did not care.

I walked into the sickbay to find Bridge sitting on the tabled finishing up receiving repairs from Pliers. Geo was sitting nearby watching the work at hand. With the last final close of the piece of metal Bridge stretched out.

"I feel like a new robot!" said Bridge.

"He's going to be okay," Pliers said walking over to me.

Geo came up to me with Bridge.

"Thanks, Anth...Shortstop, you've saved my family," Geo said.

"I'm so sorry for all this you have to endure," said Bridge.

"It is not a problem and was not your fault from all our investigation. We appreciate your hard work to save the ship." I replied.

"What's next?" asked Geo.

"You need to go visit your family, so Omega Dupreme will take you back to Earth here shortly. I will be back there in a few days."

"Shortstop, I sense something you are not telling us," said Lighting.

"Lighting, I need you three to do whatever you can to convey all your knowledge to the science teams on Gearatron. I wish I could go into further details, but just do what you can to educate us as best you can."

"Understood."

"You can rest assured, we will do whatever we can to protect our home," replied Knife.

"I know you will."

It was a week after Shane had returned to Earth and filled in what he needed to do with his family. After spending some time accumulating to Earth again, we also got him some physiotherapy to help him become better adjusted with all the stress. Off the drugs he was now

clean and feeling much better. This was a new life for a human and Zapbot combined. I was excited to have him in my life to provide me another point of view on the Universe.

As I spent some more time with him, he became to know me more than very few people did. It was very odd the connection we had together. It was like I found a long-lost brother I never had as he continued to try and 'get-my-goat' constantly.

We sat on the edge of a tranquil creek in my hometown in Eastern Ohio. A place I sometimes went to visit. A rusty old bridge hung over the creek, a relic from the days long long ago.

"I still think Phil Collins sucks," Shane said.

"Well, I am usually singing his songs in the shower," I replied.

"Thankfully I don't watch you shower often!" Shane replied.

"Yeah..." I said somewhat softly.

"So, what's wrong, you seem fucking depressed lately?"

"It's hard to explain..."

"So, this Mike guy, is he your boyfriend?"

"Yeah, sort of. It's a weird situation, you picked up on that."

"You like talk to him every night."

"Yeah... it's been bit of a journey between us. Until I met him, I always kept myself guarded. I always thought I was going to going to hell because of the miseducation of my parents. Then the Zapbots happened, and my attention was shifted to saving the world, then the Universe. What a fucking load on my shoulders that turned out to be. Then I met Mike and as we hung out, and as I became educated, I started to come out. Now I don't know what's going to happen next."

"Why would anything happen next?"

"Something is always on the edge of that horizon." I said staring into the sunset. But I will say this that I am very glad to have gotten to know you, and to have you in my life." I turned toward Shane and smile extremely goofy like.

"Oh, don't get all mushy...."

"I'm serious..."

"Well back at you Anselmo. It's been fun."

I continued to smile at my new friend and wrapped my arm around him. I sat with my buddy and watched the sunset, unsure of the future but thankful for the present.

The End

(The Real) Epilogue

In the far depths of space, a spaceship pulled up an area of destroyed asteroids, rock, and metal. Bits of pieces of a destroyed planet floated in space, forming a giant mess of both machinery and ground.

Upon his chair on this spaceship, Skyscream slowly waited in the command chair. Taping his fingers, he began to get anxious as his team upon the bridge continued to work through their various screens, scanning for something.

"Have you found anything!" mocked Skyscream.

"Continuing scan," reported back Low-Tone

"Are you sure you want to go through with this?" asked SkyDust.

"SHUT UP! I am ALWAYS sure with what I want," Skyscreamer yelled back at the black plane Nonocon.

"I've found something..." replied Creater pointing at the image up on the screen. From his chair Skyscream got up and walked towards the screen.

"BRING IT ABOARD!" he barked.

"Wait! That's not the only thing!" Creater continued.

"Well then bring that aboard as well!"

The Nonocon walked down to the loading bay as the tractor beam proceeded to bring the debris into the bay. As he walked through the door Shock was finishing up bringing the cargo into the bay and gently setting them down upon the floor.

Skyscream walked over to the body, charred, almost barely still together. He then saw the other body, in the same condition, yet painted a bit yellow.

"So... we meet again Amphotron."