

Foreward

This story stemmed out of a graphic Movie trailer I made on my Apple IIe to match the music of 'Duke's End' by Genesis.

The animation went something along the lines of 'He's coming' and "In 1996 he will get his revenge." You know, like that one guys does with the deep voice. Something along those lines.

After drawing the graphic on my Apple IIe of Sliphead I decided to write a story about him and subsequently draw him. It became an interesting story that I still am pretty proud of today.

Anthony S. Anselmo

The Wrath of Sliphead

By Anthony S. Anselmo

Chapter 1

I wanted to shoot them.

My feelings of anger and resentment had all been put to a breaking point as I stood before my own kind. Or what I thought was my own kind. In a strange turn of events I had become the enemy, or had they? As I stood there transfixed at the constant flashes from the cameras and the constant roar of the crowd I attempted to figure out how it had all come to this?

Just a week ago I wasn't having to deal with this. The world... the Universe was very much a happy place at the moment. We had just succeeded in saving the life of one of our dearest friends, saved Gearatron for yet another time, and probably Earth as well. Things could not be better for *Team Zapbots* and myself.

And yet here I was dealing with the most arrogant and unintelligent humans one could ever deal with. An angry mob. As I sat and contemplated my next words I thought of the week before.

It was a typical day one would think. I arose to the sound of mountain rain hitting the panes of my slanted bedroom windows. As I moved the atomized fabric waves from my body, I slowly crawled out of the king size bed not disturbing my companion.

I walked to my door grabbing my robe and heading out towards the kitchen area. The automatic doors opened and closed with just the slightest of a 'swoosh.' It was my day off, or at least was I hoped would be my day off. Becoming a leader of a war machine you never could tell when things could get crazy from day to day.

I looked outside the windows and noted the rain slowing down and cumulus clouds slowly creeping in. Our home base of the newly rebuild Fortress Misslemax was stationed temporarily on Earth for an assignment. We sat on the largest patch of land we could find that could land a floating city, in the heart of Montana.

Being a few thousand miles from the surface in the tallest building you could ever be in, proved to be an immense pleasure to watch from the skies above. Walking in my slippers I yawned as I stretched and moved towards the food processor. Pressing a few buttons I ordered 'Breakfast number 1' and within seconds a plate of scrambled eggs, toast and juice were magically atomized into existence.

I took the plate to my study and sat down at my terminal to begin looking over the day's news. I heard a knock at the door and my companion entered half dressed with a bad case of morning hair.

"Morning sleepy head," I replied.

"Hey at least I don't sleep in till 11 on the weekends," Mike responded.

"You would sleep in if you had to go through all the stress that I go through," I replied.

"Yeah yeah... what are you doing?" he asked looking over my shoulder.

"Standard news protocol, email etc. Go get yourself some food," I responded.

Mike yawned and went out to the kitchen for his own food. As he left my eyes scrolled down to the story in the secondary headlines.

"Device Stolen from Gearatron Research Center. Scientists predict Nonocon involvement."

As I continued to read the information I brought up a correlation with our internal reports. I looked at the clock and counted to five...

"5...4....3....2..."

The intended result did not happen. Instead of a call on the speakers I heard a knock on the door.

"Come in?" I asked.

In came Click, my human-fun-sized Zapbot.

"Click?"

"Boaty said you probably were getting used to the call speakers, so he sent me up. Click" said Click.

"The missing generator right?"

"Correct, we presumed you saw the news feed."

"You came all the way up because you know I hate those call speakers?" I said.

"Well, also wanted to bring you this gift from your mother. Click" he said handing me the package.

Mike was chuckling in the background as he knew how much I loathed gifts from my mother. I kindly took the package and instructed Click to keep me posted as I continued to read the morning briefings.

"So let me guess, your day off is cancelled?" Mike said leaning up against the wall. His half naked body glistening in the light.

"What do you think?" I said.

"Why don't you let Botimus take charge for once and do the work?" he said.

I nodded, I was running myself ragged with responsibilities lately, and Botimus had shown himself to be a formable leader.

"You know, you're right. I think I'll leave this to the experts. What do you want to do today?"

"I don't know what do YOU want to do?"

"No no... I choose last week. You're turn."

"Nope you're the chief here..."

I could see this was getting us nowhere so I pulled up some entertainment that was hitting Broadway. I asked if New York would be fine as it had been a while since I had been there and I could use some distraction for now.

After a quick shower and shave for the both of us, I put on my X-O suit for travel, transformed into a small glider and we were off for a day of fun in the greater New York City area. Botimus and the Tech Team were on the Generator case but little did I know we would be joining them shortly.

Chapter 2

New York City, noon on a hot city day as everyone was in the hustle and bustle of the streets. One man was standing on the corner perfectly still with a 'The World is Coming to an End' sign on. We laughed as Mike Quartz and myself passed him by. Another man was miming on the other corner. We walked with my special hologram engaged to only allow Mike to see me clearly, as everyone else saw a young teenage boy. This was to avoid being recognized for my somewhat celebrity status.

The sun was killing Mike and we stopped at a stand and got some lemonade to quench our thirst. I leaned up against the high fence and looked around the city, pondering the excitement. As I was paying the lady at the stand Mike tapped me on the shoulder.

"Hey look!" said Mike as he pointed in the general direction of the bank. Here I saw two men running out of the bank and getting into a car. I could easily tell this was trouble.

Quickly I ran behind an alley and turned on my X-O suit and then engaged my new invisibility mode. I flew towards the car grabbing the bumper to slow it down. The bumper fell off, and I continued to fly under the car and proceed to pick it up into the air. I could hear the conversation from the thieves from above.

"Hey Larry, since when does this thing fly?" he asked.

They were a bit perturbed when I landed them at the Police station. Surrendering themselves to the police I proceeded to fly back to where I was with Mike and revert back to my old disguise.

"Couldn't take a day off could you?" he said.

"Nope," I said as we walked towards the nearby theater to catch the show. A minor mishap I wasn't going to let this diversion cause concern.

Halfway through the show I received a silent message come over my optical sensors. I went into the bathroom area and connected with Boaty.

"I told you never to call me..."

"Master, Botimus and Tech Team have reported several findings at the laboratory."

"Boaty... Do you need me there this instant?" I asked.

"No Master but..."

"I'll look over the evidence when I get back."

"My apologies Master, but protocol says I must alert you on any news."

"I understand, and you are correct but I would like to enjoy my only 'free-day' if you get the drift?"

"Understood, I will send you text communication going forward for today."

"Thanks Boaty! Keep up the good work. 10-4!" I said turning off the line. I went back to the show and enjoyed a moment of peace for a few. The tenor was particularly astounding and his singing was sending chills up and down my spine.

After the show Mike and myself headed towards a spiffy restaurant. Heading in with a slightly altered appearance to give myself some finer clothes, we sat down at the table. The waiter brought us some menus and we proceeded to do a glance over.

"What is this?" he asked pointing at the item in French.

"Stuffed Octopus," I replied. "I don't recommend it."

"Your kidding?"

I gave him my I'm not kidding stare.

"Don't they just have a cheeseburger," he said.

"Yes but it's under 'cow parts.'" I replied.

We sat on the upper terrance of the restaurant looking out upon the city as dusk set in. The flowers were needly groomed in the pots and other couples were sitting enjoying themselves. It seemed like an ideal evening for once. I asked the waiter to bring an old fashion newspaper as I was curious about the local news. I started to read it when Mike decided to strike up a serious conversation.

"So when are we going to talk about it?" he asked.

"About what?" I said knowing full well what he was referring to.

"We can't go on like this. Hiding ourselves?" he responded.

"Mike, do you realize the damage this type of information could do if it got out? I still play a political role between two planets. Minus the leverage it could give some enemy of ours?"

"If your robots are fine with it I don't see how humans wouldn't be?" he said.

I laughed.

"Have you not seen what they have done to Michael Jackson lately?" I said.

As I was arguing a newspaper article caught my eye.

50 individuals wounded yesterday. Reports claims individuals saw a giant robot or machine shooting people. Investigators are looking into the claims.

I continued to read the article and it appeared they had very little information. I did not remember seeing any attacks in New York come over the news feeds. A quick scan from my memory banks also confirmed the story was true. I turned the page to read another story.

Investigators are looking into a strange power surge that is coming within the ground of the center of the city. The power surge is causing multiple problems to the city's electricity. The electrical company has no clue on what it could be. Digging starts Wednesday.

I could not help but think this was odd and usually Superrobot my assistant would be all over this stuff. Mike had ordered desert and I continued to do some scanning of the paper and looking up information with my optical sensors in my internal database connected to our satellites.

I was finishing up paying the waiter when my early warning sensors went off. I saw a robot fly over the restaurant. It had a skinny body and domed head appearing to look like a silver glass bowl. It appeared to be a bipod robot (two arms and legs) but nothing I had seen before.

A quick scan of the body showed that it was heavily armed. In facts most of its structure was ammunition. I grabbed Mike by the arm and with a fell swoop activated my X-O suit, transformed into my mini-jet mode and placed us both inside.

"What the hell was that!" Miked screamed.

"No time to talk, hold on I have to catch up to it." I said hitting the throttled on my jet hard. I followed him above the horizon of the city. As if he knew I was following him, he dropped down and swerved around a few buildings. I increased my speed as I came closer to him, but just as I was close enough to get a view as he swerved and I pulled up hard just

enough to barely scrape a nearby building. When I floated above the building I scanned and the robot was gone.

I dropped back to the ground and engaged a local officer to provide information. No one had been hurt, but this was strangely odd.

As we flew back to Misslemax our evening cut short, I continued communication with my team.

"I'm sending over recorded video now please distribute to everyone," I said.

"Okay, we are prepping for takeoff to your area, we will rendezvous with you midway," replied Boaty.

"Day off?" said Mike mocking me.

"Shut up..." I said.

Chapter 3

I walked into the Fortress Maximus meeting room as Fortress Misslemax was flying towards New York City. The usual team was there, but also someone not usually present at meetings. A very tall Aerial Zapbot and old friend Slipstream was standing in the corner of the enormous large ceiling rooms while the rest of us normal sized Zapbots sat down in the meeting chairs.

"Slipstream what brings you here today?" I asked walking in the room in my Shortstop form sitting down in my command chair.

"Master, I believe I know this strange robot you saw," he replied barely not hitting his head on the ceiling.

"Oh?"

"He use to be a simple Junkicon, but I heard rumors that he was rebuilt and now goes by the destination Sliphead." Slipstream said.

"Let me guess, this happened while I was dead?" I replied.

"Presumably, but needless to say him and I were... let's say competitors."

"Fascinating," replied Boaty.

"Details?" I asked.

"Apparently these events seem to be somewhat connected," replied Boaty. "Reports from Gearatron also describe Sliphead with the stolen laboratory device. It appears he's collecting objects for some reason..."

"And of course we're not sure of what that 'reason' is yet right?" piped in Flier giving his brother a hard time.

"Affirmative." replied Boaty calmly.

"What else do we know?" I asked.

"Our readings indicate that the power surge that New York is experiencing matching the stolen generator." replied Scan.

"So it seems he has made his base there in New York City." replied Botimus.

"Can we catch him?" asked Hightone.

"We are unable to determine his exact location. It seems there is a scrambling field blocking our scans around the metropolitan area. I would be advisable that we sent a team down to investigate." continued Scan.

"Good, schedule a team and I'll lead it. Boaty I want you to stay with Scan and monitor the shield from up here."

"What happens if he appears again?" asked Speedy.

"Send the Protectors out to guard the city. Slipstream what is Sliphead's capacity for damage?"

"He's quite a formidable opponent, and very hard to catch," replied Slipstream from the back of the room.

"Okay. We have a plan, let's see what can do. I think everyone understands that this is New York, we need to focus on protecting humans. Dismissed."

With that everyone left the room and I ran up to my human headquarters for a quick chat.

"Are you fucking crazy?" I responded.

"What we've been in worse situations than this." Mike replied.

"You're not coming with me on a mission. It's an additional liability I don't need to worry about."

"You know I survived by myself in Germany pretty well for a good long time. We've had this discussion before. "

"I know... but this is different."

"How am I suppose to finish my Headmaster training if you don't allow me to come along on missions?"

"Mike, You have two choices, stay here or be sent back home."

I could tell I struck a nerve there as he clenched his fists and left the room. I heard him mumble about 'You owe me one!' as he walked out. I walked out of my apartment but for security precautions I locked the door.

Botimus, Iron, Terrain, Camper and myself in Shortstop mode flew down to the city while the Protectors flew across town and split up. The Protectors were a strange group of Zapbots. Most Zapbots had an actual organic part that tied into their central processing unit, so the equivalent of a human brain. This is what gave them unique personalities and more or less made them a living being. The Protectors however, had no organic part. Only a computer. So more or less androids, but specifically programmed to defend and protect human life. Their goal was defensive without emotions getting in the way. That being said, even with some basic programming they all had different personalities.

As we drove up the road in vehicle mode Botimus began to run scans to try and pinpoint the location of the generator.

"I'm reading a building up this way," Botimus said turning the curve. A few people pointed at the tractor trailing moving without a driver as we drove down the street.

"Click, could you come up here please? The food processor is not working," asked Mike over the call speaker.

"Sure, one sec, ^{Click}" said Click.

Within a few minutes Click strolled into my human quarters and proceeded to look around for Mike. As he continued to search the quarters he looked but no avail.

Unfortunately deactivating the security lock allowed Mike enough time to slip out the door and into an escape pod. By the time Click realized this, it was too late. A carefully worded 'Oh Ship! ^{Click}' was uttered by the mini-bot.

We drove up to an old beaten down warehouse. Strangely it was in an extremely deserted part of New York City. The pale warehouse hanged in the shadow of the towering skyscrapers. We approached transforming into our robot modes.

"The energy buildup is centralized right here Master," replied Botimus.

"Hold up, let me go in first," I said. I dis-engaged from my Shortstop body to approach in human mode, as the garage doors were not open and the warehouse did not seem to provide anyway for my Zapbots to enter successfully.

I entered the extremely dusty and dirty warehouse, looking around it appeared to not have been touched for ages. I continued to communicate with Botimus and the team.

"Okay I'm scanning for any energy surge," I said. I slowly walked into the large room as the sun shined through the broken windows. My steps made dust fly everywhere and it was captured in the light.

I walked up a flight up rickety steps to an upper level, barely held together. Then at the corner I saw a glow coming from a wooden box. I walked slowly to the box looking around to find no enemy of any sorts.

I was about five feet away from the box when it happened. If I did not have my X-O suit on I probably would be a dead. An intense explosion occurred as the box proceeded to unexpectedly explode and push me backwards into space. I fell onto the lower level below as the entire building began to collapse around me.

As the escape pod headed towards Earth, Mike was feeling pretty proud of himself. He had worked to get his way and his freedom in the situation. As he was sitting comfortably in the chair the clouds turned into the ground. He had put the destination as New York in the computer and waited eagerly for the pod to hit the ground.

It had been several years now with Anthony, and he was trying his best to complete all the Headmaster training. While other friends of Anthony had easily navigated to this rank he found the X-O suits way too compromising. This with everything else that was going on between the two of them, it just made it difficult for him to concentrate. He had killed Nazi's with his bare hands and yet something about technology just turned him off.

Yet he knew how to pilot a simple human shuttlecraft. He wasn't sure how he could help once he got to New York, but he hated the idea of missing the fight. Most of all he hated to admit that he worried about Anthony as much as he did towards him.

Unfortunately as he came closer to the ground the pod shook and as he looked out of the window he saw something oddly firing at the pod. He recognized it as a tractor beam. Something had locked onto the shuttlecraft and was diverting it off course. At first he figured it was someone from Misslemax, but alas, this was coming from the ground. He pressed every button he could on the computer screen, but nothing was working. He sat enraged in the chair as the shuttlecraft was being pulled towards an unknown destination.

Chapter 4

I awoke on the sidewalk with my Zapbots looking over myself, with me looking up towards them. My human vision and electronic sensors were slowly coming back online.

"Master are you functional?" asked Boaty.

"Yeah, I'm okay. What happened?" I inquired.

"A possible bomb that fooled our scanners. It obviously was a trap," replied Botimus.

"Yeah I could tell," standing up and getting myself together. "Do we know have a fix on the real one?"

"Not yet, but I have a general location," replied Botimus tapping his controls.

"Time is of the essence, let's go." I replied.

I recombined with my Shortstop body, as the team transformed into vehicle mode and drove on. More than ever I wanted to find this darn Sliphead character.

In other parts of the city the Protectors were busy keeping an eye out for any activity that was out of the norm. Double-Shot and Burn-Rubber were parked in an alley. Mind you, Double-Shot is a fully loaded tank so this explained their reason for staying out of the open for the immediate moment.

"See anything," asked Burn-Rubber.

"No? You?" replied Double-Shot.

"No you?"

"Not much."

"Hey by the way I learned another Earthling joke. Why did the chicken cross the road?.... To get to the other side."

Double-Shot didn't laugh. His lower engine stirred at the annoyance of attempting to deal with human laughter. Double-Shot was conscience of who he was and what he was. They were a special team meant for a single duty. Protect humans at all costs. He also knew that trying to assimilate with them would only cause him to possibly feel those weird things called emotions. He didn't want to deal with that. Get in, get the job done, go home. That's all he cared about.

Burn-Rubber on the other hand was fascinated with the humans as it was something he never could quite get a grasp of. He too understood what he was, but had no problem trying to gain a better understanding of the humans he was protecting along the way.

Suddenly, the ground started to produce a rumble and a giant blast from the street was produced. Burn-Rubber and Double-Shot both rolled out of their alleyway to see a robot fly out of a newly made hole in the ground. Cries from the public were heard as humans began to scatter everywhere. Cars screeched to a halt and attempted to backup or change direction.

Sliphead stood there, a large towering robot, his body was mostly reflective Gearatronian steel. A giant dome covered the top of his body as it appeared to be his head. He slowly moved around surveying the area looking for a target.

In the street a lady fell down clutching her baby in her arms. Sliphead turned to approach but Double-Shot fired first, knocking the robot backwards into hot dog stand and then into a building. Double-Shot in his tank mode began rolling towards the robot as he proceeded to get up and readjust himself. Double-Shot fired again but Sliphead leapt up into the air.

Burn-Rubber transformed into robot mode and jumped into the air to do battle. However Sliphead saw his ascending approach as he fired hitting Burn-Rubber. He fell back but regained himself and fired back at Sliphead missing. Sliphead changed direction and dived down towards him grabbing the Zapbot and throwing him into the top of a nearby building. Burn-Rubber skidded to a stop once he hit the door well.

Sliphead hung there in the air and was prepared to fire again but was hit on his backside from the air. He turned around to find a jet and helicopter coming his way.

"I believe that is the Nonocon we are looking for," replied Phiston.

"Yes, I believe so," responded Copter.

The two other Protectors had arrived in quick time and their firepower drove Sliphead back towards the ground. When he landed Double-Shot transformed into robot mode and began running at him.

Sliphead raised his arm to fire, but Burn-Rubber jumped him. The two went down to the ground as the two robot continued to fight and struggle engaging their fists and arms. With a swift move Sliphead shoved Burn-Rubber off with his leg and he flew back till he landed on his feet in the street.

Copter and Phiston both landed and transformed into robot mode. The two Protectors were an inseparable duo. Phiston was the calm collective one who always knew how to win a battle, while Copter was the more passive one always looking for a way of peace. Both felt compelled to help defend lower lifeforms at any cost.

The four Protectors formed a circle around the antagonist and slowly crept forward with their weapons in tow.

Sliphead did one fast move that was so incredibly smooth no one could believe it. With one moment he reached down and generated a giant sound wave from the ground, he then let the wave go and as he did blasted off into the air and transformed into jet mode. The end result caused the Protectors to be knocked back into walls and various structures causing immense damage to the area around them. When they got their bearings back online they looked around to find Sliphead has disappeared.

"Where he go?" asked Burn-Rubber.

"Coward! Copter, Phiston get up there and try to trace him!" ordered Double-Shot. The two aerial bots transformed and flew up into the atmosphere above.

Burn-Rubber knelt down to pick up a piece of debris on the ground. It appeared to be a computer chip of some sort.

"I have a feeling this might be handy." replied Burn-Rubber.

"Good, but we has some wounded humans we need to get them to safety," replied Double-Shot. They looked around to find several broken humans lying in the street.

It was at this point my Zapbots and myself drove up and met up with the two Protectors. Burn-Rubber immediately handed Botimus the chip he found. The rest of us went to work to help secure the humans and take them to safety.

"I apologize Master, we were not successful in capturing the Nonocon," replied Double-Shot.

"It's okay, you did the best you could and diverted him away from the situation," I replied.

"I fail to comprehend what his intentions area," replied Burn-Rubber.

"Master, I have a feeling this little chip could be valuable." replied Botimus.

"Can we read it here?"

"No it appears to be highly encrypted. Scan might be able to decode it back at base."

"Okay, Protectors continue to help get the wounded to nearby hospitals. Boaty, Flier you two assist. Botimus you and I are heading back to base."

My Zapbots nodded in acknowledgement. Botimus and I transformed flying out of the area as quickly as possible. Sliphead had escaped again and I was getting more than a bit annoyed at the situation.

When I walked onto the bridge of Misslemax I gave the chip to Scan as he transformed into computer mode and began to process it. Click chimed in from the com channel. Up on my visor screen came his image.

"Master, need to talk to you, Click" he said.

"One second Click I have to see what's on this thing," I responded.

"Master your friend..." replied Click.

"Master, scan completed," replied Scan transforming back into robot mode and proceeding to throw up the information on the screen.

"Mike's gone!" replied Click.

It didn't strike me all at once but when I looked at my control screen and saw the shuttle craft light on, it all became clear. Then on the view-screen came a recorded message transmitting from Scan. The picture was dark and I heard Sliphead's voice. It was extremely low with a huge bass sound and crackling sounds of high trills.

"I see you have located my presence in this city. And I know that if you ever found me Shortstop you would terminate my plans. So I have developed myself a little insurance measure," the robot replied. Then on the screen a light appeared and was aimed at a human being. I realized the human being too well. It was Mike Quartz.

"This little visitor I found traveling to Earth in one of your crafts. So if you would like to see this human survive, you will come alone, and challenge me to win him back!"

With that the screen went black and coordinates were displayed on the screen.

"Master! I'm so sorry," replied Botimus.

Click and Super were stationed in the human observation deck high above. Super called out to me below.

"We tried to find him, but by the time we located him, it was too late," he cried.

"It's okay," I replied. I turned to Slipstream who was standing in the corner, once again barely hitting the ceiling. "How serious is he?" I asked.

"Oh believe me, he doesn't play around," replied Slipstream.

"Master we have other issues," replied Hightone, punching his console and throwing a news broadcast up on the view-screen. Up came an image of an asian female in a white suit, standing in front of a destroyed building with a microphone.

"It seems the gigantic robots had no other desire than to destroy our city in all out rumble causing seriously injury to several local individuals. Hospitals are now scrambling to help in several emergencies as New York is recovering from the destruction from these reckless Zapbots." went the news broadcaster.

I continued to watch in horror as the news continued to completely trash the Zapbots due to the incident. Instead of portraying us as rescuers we were vilified as the enemy. We had always had a good relationship with the media and now they were portraying the attack as our fault?

"Hightone what is going on here?" I asked.

"I've begun digging into some research on the human Internet Master, I need some time to compile information to get back to you." Hightone replied.

"Okay, well in the meantime it seems I need to go save Mike... yet again," I replied.

"Master we can't let you go alone!" replied Botimus.

"Who says I'm going alone! I always bring protection," I replied. While I was coy about the situation deep down in my human body I was feeling pain, anger and dread for Mike. But mostly anger against Sliphead.

Chapter 5

I arrived at the coordinates and landed to the ground in my Shortstop form with a thud. The location was an old junk yard with wreckages of cars piled a mile high. I pondered the safety of the location as I continued to scan for any sign of Sliphead.

Inside my compartment I had two stowaways in their smaller compact forms. As I walked around the area I was looking for some sort of sign from my counterpart.

The ground shook and the sand began to disappear. A small door opened and I saw below my robotic self, steps leading down somewhere. I walked down the flight of robotic stairs pondering who builds stairs for robots that can fly? As I entered the dimly light area I inverted my vision to night vision so I could proceed down the very confined hallway. Without warning, a light shot up from the floor. I jumped back to see a three dimension holographic image display. It was Mike, as his body was in some sort of makeshift dungeon. He was dirty, sitting with a ripped shirt and his hair was a complete mess.

"Sliphead!" I yelled.

"Come and get him!" the voice said and the image dissipated.

I was now enraged. This was my worst nightmare times ten. Not only had someone who I cared deeply about been captured, but they were being used against me to cause pain and frustration. If I had something to punch, I would hit it. All I could do was clench my fists.

I continued walking down the hallway as my robotic feet continued to echo as they hit the cold ground.

Without warning giant spikes shot out of nowhere at my general direction. I hit the floor as more spikes went by. I heard them crash into the walls at the other end of the hallway. After a few seconds had passed I stood up and prepped a shield if needed for any other coming projectiles. As I continued to walk the floor fell out and I fell. It took only a moment to catch this and engage my turbo-boosters as I lowered myself to the ground.

When I hit the bottom I looked around to find myself in a dimly lit arena of some sorts. It reminded me of my old High-School gym but instead the walls were black and red. I saw giant walls of glass. From above Sliphead descended and landed on the ground. He spoke once again in his usual voice.

"So you made it this far!" he replied.

"What do you want?" I replied staring down the silver robot encased with myself in the giant glass arena.

"Nothing yet, but you shall serve as amusement!" he replied.

I turned and fired directly at him. My weapons bounced off some sort of force field he was standing behind. He chuckled with laughter.

From behind me a door opened and something large began to emerge from within the shadows. I turned to see a large roller type robot appear. He had three rollers for his base and large metal top with two arms. It was significantly larger than my Shortstop body and I realized why I was in this arena.

My silent helpers slowly whispered to me.

"Let us take care of this guy and you grab Sliphead and find Mike," replied Hightone.

With a swing I grabbed the two companions from my Shortstop compartment and they transformed from a boom-box style radio and miniature computer into two large Zapbots.

"Let's rock and roll!" replied Hightone.

Hightone ejected his companions Slywing, Muncher, Steel, Scout and Flapbat. The mini-robots immediately engaged the giant monster bot and began to aggravate him. As he swung his mighty arms the robot was unable to attack the miniature Zapbots firing upon him as they were stinging him with their lasers. Scan then ejected several of his Disk style weapons and they provided extra protection or firepower for the miniature team.

"Go!" cried Scan turning in my direction.

I ran with all my might and engaged my own force field, jumping right into arena wall. The colliding impact caused it to buckle under the stress and Sliphead headed off down a long narrow hallway corridor. As I followed him a door began to come down of which I ran right through this time causing slightly more damage to my Shortstop body.

I continued to follow the Nonocon as he weaved and turned down the tunnels. Not enough room to transform and fly we both continued to run on foot till finally he came to a large room where Mike was held. He lifted up the makeshift cage into the air holding his canon near it. I stopped dead in my tracks upon entering the room.

"Any more and this flesh creature gets it. Now surrender and tell your Zapbots to do the same!" he ordered.

Back in the arena the Tapes had their hands full taking down the giant roller droid. The droid continued to have problems figuring out which item to target first as the multiple targets kept flying around his head and body. Steel and Scout had climbed up behind the giant robots head. They slowly attached a device to it and with one swift move they leapt off the giant's head.

"Let's go!" Steel cried.

With an explosion the large robot's head exploded and he went limp, deactivating and going silent.

"This way dudes!" replied Hightone.

I stood there not know what the proper course of action was. If I surrendered then Sliphead would have two prisoners. If I took action it could endanger Mike. Once again I felt powerless without the Matrix and wondering why the Universe had an agenda to make my life difficult.

"Come on Shortstop I don't have all day," cried Sliphead.

I could see movement from behind Sliphead's hand and Mike was free and flying. Flapbat proceeded to carry him out of the cage and away from Sliphead. Sliphead seeing this fired at Flapbat hitting him as he dropped Mike. Sliphead reached out to grab the human, picking him out of the air and then with one fell swoop transformed placing him in his cockpit. He fired some sort of ray at the air and a swirling hole of light appeared. He flew into this object and then within seconds disappeared.

Hightone and Scan ran into the room as I stood with disgust in my failure to procure my friend.

"Where he'd go?" asked Scan.

"Apparently he has some sort of teleport technology," I replied.

"The devil!" responded Hightone as his little tapes came back to him.

Botimus came over the com and his image appeared up on the screen.

"Master, we've tracked the energy surge, it's disappeared from New York!" he replied.

"What! So he must have the device on him!" I replied.

"Yes, but you're not going to believe where it is now. It's at the North Pole!"

Chapter 6

The snow crunched under our tires as we drove low to the ground to avoid being picked up on the scanners. The arctic temperatures were well below freezing and any normal human would have died an hour ago as we progressed further into the snowy tundra.

Botimus, Carry-On, Pick-Up, Terrain and myself were joined by a new team we recently had developed to handle this harsh temperatures. The Snow Team (or Snowbots) were specially designed to handle Earth's coldest climates.

Sledski - The scavenger of the group. His speciality was in scouting ahead to make sure the path was clear for the rest of the team.

Puncer - The bickering snowcat vehicle. While a good warrior his over anxiety would sometimes cause issues with the team at times. Even through his spark was always in the right place he had problems restraining his energy.

Killer - Another extremely capable warrior and snow tank. He also could be very stubborn about his battles and his opinions.

Plower - Basically provided the clearance to pass through rough terrain in ground vehicle mode. His specialized heating plow was carving a path for us as we drove through the channel of snow.

Twirl-Spin - Our specialized reconnaissance helicopter, helping to keep an eye for us in the air.

We continue to drive on as our sensors navigated towards the energy surge we were monitoring. As our internal systems were trying the best to keep up with the cold, we had no choice but to go on the land to try and track down Sliphead's hideout as he had escaped us through a single use teleportation device.

"Approaching the site Master" replied Twirl-Spin recognizing a structure forming in his optical view in the distance."

"Let me see this Nonocon geek, I'll bash him!" replied Puncer.

"I'm quite anxious as well to see what he's got," commented Killer.

"I appreciate the excitement guys, but remember priority first, rescue Mike and get that Gearatron device away from him. I responded from my cockpit as the laser wiper blade cleared the view from my Shortstop vehicle mode.

"I have received the self-destruct code from Hightone," replied Botimus.

"Let's hope we don't have to use it," I replied.

"There it is!" cried Sledski.

In the distance stood a large metallic structure, expertly intertwined between the snow and mountain. The large fortress barely appeared out the blurriness of the snow storm we were traveling in.

From the giant fortress laser shots came our way, we scrambled to divert into other areas to avoid being hit.

"Take cover!" I cried.

My Zapbots scattered as an impressive array of firepower plummeted the snow, causing the ground beneath it to explode in an array of dirt and ice. My Snow Team transformed into robot mode and proceeded to attack the structure on foot.

As we came to the front door, Plower ran right into it, knocked the giant metal door flat against the floor. We continued to run in holding our guns up against our sides preparing for any type of armament.

A laser ray engulfed the corridor and everyone fell close to the floor. The ray was somehow draining us to the point of barely able to move.

"Engage your force fields!" ordered Killer. With a combined power we created a giant shield to protect us from the rays. This gave our internal repair systems time to kick in. While holding our hands up to maintain the shield we move forward in the hallway till we came to a gigantic open chamber within the icy fortress.

At the top of the room Mike laid on a ledge, not moving. I could not tell if he was alive. I flew up towards him and a jet rammed my Shortstop robot mode causing me to fall abruptly back to the ground with a crash. The jet transformed into robot mode and Sliphead stood on the ledge laughing.

"You fools! It's too late, I've unlocked the power of this generator!"

Out of nowhere, a laser blast hit Sliphead and he fell backwards right on his side. He looked up to see a familiar jet flying high above the arena.

"YOU!" he cried.

Slipstream transformed into robot mode and hung in the air pointing his gun at the Nonocon.

"Brother! Stop this now!" he cried.

We all looked around and said the same thing 'Brother!?"

The realization became all too clear to me now as it appeared we had a case of a brotherly rivalry between Sliphead and Slipstream. It made so much sense to me now I cursed myself for not seeing the forest through the trees.

"You fool! Don't you see I have no choice!" Sliphead responded. He grabbed something from his side and placed what appeared to be a piece of technology shaped as a cube into his chest.

"Sliphead don't! You don't know what that will do to you!" screamed Slipstream.

Sliphead was engulfed with the electric glow that could only come from a gigantic power-source. The generator part had consumed enough energy from the entire New York City core to cause a reaction that we didn't expect. Sliphead began to transform, but this wasn't any normal transformation. His external skeleton began to expand, and bits of metal slabs transformed to expand and progress outward as he was now growing in size.

"HAHAHA" laughed the maniacal voice, "I AM ALL POWERFUL!" he cried as he grew three times his size within a giant energy glow.

"Fire!" ordered Botimus and my Zapbots began to shoot directly at the ever growing giant. He began to move towards our direction and we scattered as his feet made circular implants in the floor.

With the quickest of movements I motioned to Twirl-Spin to grab Mike. He flew over and grabbed the human slowly bringing him down to me. I placed him into my Shortstop compartment and engage my emergency status lock that I had as a backup for my human body.

Sliphead marched forward and crashed right into the side of the circular wall of the snow domed arena. The ceiling began to come down as he pushed his way through the metal fighting his way to the outside. Slipstream flew out through the debris to the sky and the rest of us scattered on land to escape the collapsing tower coming down on our robotic heads.

We flew out of the broken fortress as we saw Sliphead slowly moving away. He slowly turned around and fired his oversize weapon directly at us. We all flew up into the air as the ground beneath us exploded into another mess of dirt and ice.

"We need to destroy him before he causing any damage." I replied.

"No Master," replied Slipstream flying up to me. "Please."

"Fine time to tell me pertinent information now," I replied.

"I'm sorry but there is good in him, I know it!" Slipstream replied.

"Okay Mr. Skywalker, we need to deactivate that device and bring him back down to our size!" replied Botimus.

"Master! We can tackle him!" replied Killer.

"You know what you have to do," I replied.

The Snow Team all nodded their heads, in a quick series of movements they began to transform into their special mode. Two legs began to form that interlocked with a larger body. This combined with two arms and very soon a head emerged to form the Combiner Defender.

Sliphead now took a step back as a robot now the size of himself marched toward him on the snowy terrain. He fired his laser arms directly at Defender who immediately threw up a force field shield that blocked the rays, knocking them off in different directions.

With a mighty punch Defender hit the giant Sliphead dead on, causing him to fall back onto the ground. He rolled over and returned fire knocking Defender off a bit. He continued to fire as Defender continue to put up his shield taking the firepower out of the robot.

Defender once again fired upon the giant robot and due to his extremely large size he could not move fast enough to get out of the way. The blast knocked out the device from his core and he began to re-transform back to his smaller size. The energy glow began to fade as the interlocking mechanisms began to revert as his body continued to shrink.

"NOOOO I must not fail!" he cried.

Within a few seconds the robot sat hunched on the ground, barely maintaining his composure. As Defender walked closer to Sliphead he jerked pulling out something from his inner core cavity!

It was Mike!

"WHAT!" I screamed. I checked my compartment and saw the body I had grasped was nothing more than a decoy.

"Stay away!" said Sliphead holding Mike dangling in the air in the middle of a frozen tundra.

"Stay back!" I ordered.

Defender sensing the critically of the situation separated and became five Snowbots again. Slipstream flew down from above and landed on the ground a few feet away.

"Sliphead! Don't do this! You were never like this before!" Slipstream said.

"NO!!!! I must! He makes me! He drives me!" cried Sliphead holding his head as he was exclaiming we all saw something in the side of his head blinking. It seemed that it was causing him immense pain.

"He's got a cerebro shell implant!" replied Botimus.

"So he's being controlled," I responded.

I looked beyond the broken robot in the snow and high above a cliff a shadowy image appeared.

"What's the matter Sliphead, don't like that little device we planted there!" said a dark figure with his Nonocon army appearing out from within the cliffs above.

"SECRETISH!" I cried as we all pointed towards our enemies on the cliff. Sliphead went back and forth between dangerous dangling Mike over the ground and holding his head as the chip began to glow redder. Poor Mike was trying to figure out what to do as he was dangling in air in the middle of the Arctic.

"Slipstream?" I asked.

"Master, him and were separated at creation. It wasn't until recently I discovered we were brothers," replied Slipstream.

"How smart of you to find that out now. You see, Amphotron had the knowledge to try and take a Zapbot and turn him into a Nonocon. However Sliphead's spark was so strong, he would not turn to our cause." replied Skyscream floating high above.

Sliphead continued to pound his head.

"Amphotron decided to put this little device within him so he would follow orders. Unfortunately he escaped and apparently was attempting to use this generator of yours to revert to a size so powerful that he could easily remove it." continued Secretish laughing as he talked.

"So all this time, he was just trying to save himself?" cried Botimus.

"I... I... was not going to hurt the human... I just needed some time!" cried Sliphead in extremely agony and pain. "They made me do this! I had to get away!" he yelled.

Sliphead's grip flexed and Mike was falling in air. Within split seconds Slipstream reached out and carefully grabbed the human pulling him out of his fall and placing him carefully in his human storage compartment.

"ARRRGGGGGHHHHH" cried Sliphead and with a single movement he reached up and ripped out the side of his head containing the device. His eyes went dark as his body went limp against the ground. His metallic body hit the snow and stopped.

"Sliphead! NO!" cried Slipstream.

We turned around to look back up to fire upon the Nonocons, but it was too late. Secretish and his team were already gone.

Chapter 7

And this brings up back to where we began. ..

I had spent the last hour explaining the situation to the press. How Sliphead was not inherently bad. How he was just trying to find a way to get rid of the controlling device in his head. How Amphotron had placed the device in his computerized skull after capturing him right after inception. How he never intended to cause pain to humans, but was only putting on a show to distract us. How when he aimed he fought with the device to never hit us directly, or if he did how he lowered his energy levels to cause no damage. I explained to the press how it was like a psychopathic human, who was trying to fight a war, but was aware of who was the light and the dark side of the situation. I also tried the split-personality example, aka Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. I informed them that all our scans on his computation cortex proved these assumptions true. In short, he wasn't evil. He was clever, so clever that he faked his way to follow the commands set for by Secretish but never executed it fully enough to cause anyone harm. The bomb that he put in the factory, detonated with half the caliber it needed to destroy me. As he was given the command to capture the shuttle craft he fought to make sure that it landed safely and even though he kept Mike hostage, he did his best to fight with the negative programming to protect Mike at all costs.

The press would have none of it. They continue to call me a liar and interrupt me as if to prove me wrong with logic and facts that they didn't understand. They would say something completely incorrect, and when I corrected them they would just rebuke the statement for the case of a talking point on the evening news. I was the bumbling ruler of the Zapbots who let this happen, letting the evil robotic plague invade New York City causing massive destruction, hundreds to be hurt, and the loss of their freedom. I was the evil one in their eyes and I should now be punished because of this.

Yet at this stage we knew way more than anyone else in the room had ever realized.

Sliphead was brought in for repair and thankfully due to Pliers's amazing skills he was able to save the Zapbot by quickly repairing his head. As I was sitting in the medical bay on Misslemax talking with Slipstream, Hightone and Scan came into the room.

I had asked them to conduct a little research on the human internet and began looking into some classified files. Hightone sent his tapes into the Pentagon and that turned to lead to other various organizations that we were unaware of. As we continued to dig through piles and piles of information it became overwhelming for my human brain and I realized there was a human conspiracy behind everything that was happening in the world.

I was struck with profound sadness as I discovered secret groups working on ways to control humans through fear and propaganda. The conspiracy theories we were told as kids, well that wasn't even close to the sick and twisted information we started to discover. We soon found out there was a whole organization attempting to take control of Earth back from the Zapbots. They had started working with even some of our enemies to try and destroy us. When that didn't work they started to control the media and thus a smear campaign to turn the public against us.

We saw as they enacted Orwellian types of actions. The result, was the dumbing down of society to such a base level that common sense or objective thought would be eliminated from the populace. While not every plan worked, the end goal was working. As such humans were becoming less intelligent, and more susceptible to false information.

Science was being used as a tool to control the public and they continued to lap up the historically awful lies without cause of concern.

As we continued, delving further into the roles specific individuals played in controlling the populace, we discovered there was an attempt to basically reduce the world's population. But most of all, they wanted the Zapbots out of the picture at all costs. We provided the human race hope for the future and they hated that.

And now I stood before a room of illogical, unintelligent reporters who if they had the chance would tear me down and beat me if they could.

I had met with the High Council and my commanders on Gearatron once this discovery was found. Botimus, Ultra Attack, Gaxator, myself, and Earnon all presented the data we uncovered through espionage. It was sad and disgusting. My own race had reverted back to primates, unable to comprehend the destruction their new world order was leading them to.

And such the decision was clear. When the reporters had finally stopped yelling I finally spoke again. I provided them clarity on what I thought. I flat out insulted their intelligence and informed them that personally I didn't give a damn what they thought. They were wrong and the human race was going to have to live with it. Second I told them that going forward, minus interactions with enemies from other planets attacking Earth or recently developed colonies, the Zapbots would be leaving any concerns with helping humans or being involved with any type of government role.

In short, the humans were on their own.

"The destiny that you shall now choose is in your hands. We will no longer get involved. The Zapbots are leaving Earth." I replied.

I turned around and walked out of the room as they continued to throw questions and insults my way. The news would erupt the next day as the Great Anthony Anselmo had basically said 'Fuck Off Earth!' The technology that we provided would be the last. News reporters would exclaim 'After destroying New York City the Zapbots decided to abandon Earth.' Some danced in the street while others clamored to our communications channels begging us not to go.

But our minds were made up at this stage of the game. We could not save the humans, my race... from themselves.

While I knew that some of my words had been slanted, we all realized that in order to continue to protect Earth from dangers we would have to remain a presence on the planet. Which meant that we truly were - Robots in Disguise now. A verdict was laid out that any Zapbots stationed on Earth had to maintain vehicle mode, and transform only if absolutely necessary. Flight modes were not possible in crowded human areas as we now had become spies across the world. I still had friends and those I cared about on the planet, so I would have to be careful with visitations.

For my companion Mike, I sent him back to his university school to finish his studies. With everything that we had been through I could not justify a relationship now. If word got out for even that, it would cause more pain for all of us. I told him I would still keep in contact, but for right now his first priority was to acclimate back into society, finish his degree and keep an eye on things for us and my other Headmaster friends, all of which who also went into seclusion.

It was a sad day for me as I sat alone again in my living quarters in Misslemax. Click, Super, Tiny and Experiment stopped by to check on me, but I kindly told them that yes, I was

saddened by the turn of events, but we needed to move forward. I slept alone that night for the very first time in weeks, as Misslemax hung behind Earth's moon shadow for now, to provide distance and secrecy.

The following day was Sliphead's inauguration onto the Air Guardians team with his brother. He had been fully repaired and was turning out to be a truly loyal and loving Zapbot. Though the mental torture he endured would haunt him for years, Pliers and Repairs would meet with him regularly to help him through his recovery.

For fun Slipstream and Sliphead were flying banners during a local football game in arena in Germany. I was riding along in Sliphead to provide him some explanation on the sporting event and how it works.

"This is called a marketing promotion, it generates money for a company," I explained.

"And they don't use credits or energy they use something called Noney?" replied Sliphead.

"No it's called MONEY!" replied Slipstream laughing.

"Oh!" replied Sliphead.

I laughed as the brothers continued to bond as I peered out the window to keep an eye over the humans. And one very special human. He knew I was there just by looking up and recognizing the planes, but he kept quiet for now until we knew what the Universe would bring.

The End

Epilogue

As I watched the video of the twin towers fall I sat in my chair feeling helpless, unable to do anything.

Yet something was not right.

When the Pentagon was attacked I felt a pit of despair hit my stomach.

"This isn't right?" I thought to myself.

In another time and another place, and another reality things were different. The world felt like it was coming to an end and I had no power to save it. I shrugged off these heroic thoughts as fantasies. Who was I? I was just a website programmer working for a company called Mega Solutions? Who was I? What could I do?

Something wasn't right about this...