

HEROES AND LEGENDS

Grimlock

By Tony "Thunder" Klepack

I wake up with a start.

I don't know where I am at first.... my memories are all jumbled. I remember images, a world of steel and lights...endless war...friends and comrades...

Even then, there's an imperative in my mind. Something I must do, above all else.

Defend the *Ark*, at all cost.

The *Ark*...

After a moment, I begin to remember who I am and how I got here.

Me... Grimlock.

Me—I am Grimlock, an Autobot lieutenant under our leader, Optimus Prime. I lead the elite commando unit, the Dynobots. Together, we undertake the missions too difficult for Prime's regular warriors.

We were on a mission to stop our world, Cybertron, from being destroyed by an errant asteroid field while it's rogue orbit sent it through their midst.

We'd just succeeded when our enemies, the Decepticons, ambushed us somehow and boarded the *Ark*. In our depleted states, we were no match for them. They simply had too much power and were ready for action while we were already wasted from our earlier efforts.

We fought as best we could. The battle was still going on when something on the ship exploded and we dipped abruptly. The last thing I can recall is tumbling uncontrollably toward a bulkhead.

Then, darkness...

I'm still in the *Ark* and I've been reformatted in the CR chamber. I have some sort of new form, my body adapted to the new terrain that the ship's apparently come in contact with. That means we crashed somewhere after the explosion but the ship is still intact—or reasonably so, anyway.

The chamber opens and I take my first step out into the new environment we've found ourselves in.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I saw it but the ship's in far worse shape than I could've imagined. Literally half of the corridor I'm in is missing, replaced by a wall of sheer rock protruding through some jagged metal.

There is debris everywhere, even in the parts of the ship I can walk through. It seems like nothing has been left untouched in the wake of our crash. I gaze at the remains of the great vessel about me and find my mind wandering.

Are the others all dead? Am I the last of our kind here? And, if so, then why did the ship choose now to reactivate me? Or was that act some kind of malfunction on the computer's part?

The part of the ship with the bridge is buried deep down and totally inaccessible to me from here. Any answers I could get from Teletraan-1 or clues from the remains of Prime or the others are cut off to me. The computer core might be accessible but I decide to leave that for the moment and find my way outside instead. I want to know exactly what kind of environment I'm dealing with here. I might be stranded for a long time and I like to know what I'm up against before I get too deep into any situation.

The outside is nothing like Cybertron. It's organic, soft, mushy... there is jungle in the adjacent valley, several flying life forms are buzzing about it randomly, going about their daily routines, unaware of the Cybertronian presence in their midst.

I walk a little distance and look around. None of the native life seems to take any interest in me, which is good. I suspect they're not too bright... wildlife, at best. Nothing advanced, no civilization—at least, not anywhere near where I am.

I see a range of volcanoes nearby. The Ark's remains are jammed soundly in the base of one of the larger ones, although it seems dormant at the moment. Others are in various states—most dormant but one or two seem to have seen recent activity from the looks of it.

The world around me reminds of a place that has been hell up until very recently. Now, vegetation and life forms are beginning to conquer it in their own ways. One day this world could be a paradise—if things work out right anyway. All too often a native life form rises and becomes dominant then goes too far in taming their environment... maybe that'll happen here. Maybe not.

I hope to be long gone before that can happen...

I take one more quick glance around then turn and head back for the Ark. Some small group of furry animals sees my movement and reacts in fear, sprinting away from me.

I try to suppress my amusement.

I am king here. King Grimlock... lord of the rodents!

It's a stupid thing to think but I'm all alone and the humor helps me forget that for a moment before I have to go back to facing the reality of my situation.

I may be the last of my kind here—wherever here is. Does Cybertron know where we are? Is Cybertron still out there or has it been destroyed by the strife of it's people finally? There's simply no way to know...

Defend the Ark!

I enter the ship once more and decide to return to the CR chamber I started out from. Maybe if I can find some of my deactivated comrades I can jury rig the chamber to regenerate them... even as the thought occurs, I know it's a long shot. But it's all that I have right now...

The journey back is quick enough. There's a row of chambers where I was reactivated and I notice now two are open. Mine and another...

I hear a noise nearby and instinctively draw my weapon. Tracking where I think the source is, I round a nearby corner only to find—

I am not alone.

The other warrior is a Transformer, adorned in gold and red armor with gold spikes. His rifle is up and trained on me even as I arrive at his position.

But I know this Transformer.

“Snarl!”

“Grimlock!” he responds. “I thought I was the only one of us left alive.”

We both lower our weapons. “Did you just come online?” I ask.

“Yep.”

I nod. “Me too. I didn't realize there were any others alive—I was disoriented when I came online, I never even thought to look. I thought I was alone...”

He smiles. “Sorry to disappoint you buddy!”

I find my spirits lifted at his smile and gaze about. “I wonder if we're the only two...” I respond. “There's a few other CR chambers here.”

“Where are we?” Snarl asks. “What's going on?”

“We crashed on some kind of organic world,” I tell him as we move to investigate the other chambers. “Primitive, desolate... I don't think there's much out there.”

“Why are we online? Did the computer malfunction or...?”

Defend the Ark!

I shrug. “No idea. Me—I—woke up and looked around a little bit outside before I came back in. But m—er, I don't have any answers really. Just questions, like you...”

“I think your vocal processor is damaged,” he replies. “You said “me” a couple of times there.”

"I'll worry about that later," I reply. "Maybe we can get Ratchet or somebody online and fix it later. First thing's first, though... we need to gather some intel."

Snarl nodded. "Hey! I think I've got a live one here..."

I turn and glance at the chamber he's inspecting. "Are they...?"

"The clock's at ninety five percent," he responds. "Should be online shortly."

Behind us, a high-pitched hiss sounds, alerting us as another CR chamber opens. A large red and grey Transformer steps out of it slowly. He's clearly disoriented, much like we were when we awoke. Instinctively, I draw my laser rifle... I want the upper hand if the Ark has accidentally animated a Decepticon or something.

"Who are you?" I demand as the Transformer turns and see us for the first time.

"Grimlock!" the newcomer snaps. "Snarl! I-is that you?"

I lower my weapon. "Sludge!" I exclaim. "Me didn't recognize you at first!"

"What's happening?" he asks, a look of consternation on his face plates. "Where...?"

Before I can answer, the chamber that Snarl had been investigating earlier hissed open behind us.

Snarl instinctively raises his weapon but I don't. I've started to see a pattern here...

A new Transformer emerges and I recognize his face instantly, confirming my suspicions.

"Hold on, Snarl!" I order. "It's Swoop!"

"Grimlock..." Swoop whispers. "Snarl? Sludge?"

It's us," Snarl answers, smiling. "Welcome back to the land of the online, buddy!"

"Me--I wonder if Slag is here somewhere, then..." I say aloud. "So far, the ship's switched the rest of the Dynobots online. It makes sense that he's here too."

"I wonder why it chose us," Sludge chimes in. "What--" he trailed off, trying to gather his jumbled thoughts. "I... what reason would Teletraan-1 chose to animate a team of Autobot commandoes first instead of somebody like Optimus Prime--or even Ratchet or Wheeljack?"

"Maybe they weren't accessible?" Snarl asks. "Or perhaps they were damaged too much?"

Defend the Ark!

"Maybe it needed a team of commandoes," I reply. "For security. In case there's some sort of terrestrial danger here that we're not aware of."

"Or maybe there's some Decepticons out there looking for us?" Swoop added. He draws instant glares from the others but I wonder if he isn't right. Of all the Autobots on this ship, surely there were better options to reanimate first. You'd only call on the big guns first if you *needed* them...

"Let's find Slag," I say instead.

As it turned out, Slag was in another CR chamber nearby. We didn't have to wait long to reactivate him either. The Dynobots were once again whole and ready for action. And, for the first time since I came back online, I was feeling optimistic. With my comrades, who I always treated like brothers, I felt we could accomplish anything at all.

We did a reconnaissance of the Ark's remains and managed to find a few of the core sections were still intact. We detected no survivors anywhere near our position but the computer's main processors were relatively undamaged, heavily shielded as they were for the space combat with the asteroid field we'd originally designed the ship for.

Most of the computer systems were in standby mode while we were there but a small segment was operating and we took our time to investigate further.

It was while we there we found the answer to the mystery of our resurrection...

"I think I've found something, Commander," Sludge said nearby while investigating a computer terminal.

I glanced up from the console I'd been investigating. "What is it, Sludge?"

"I know why we were brought back online," he replied. He tapped a few buttons and the large

view screen nearby lit up with footage of the outside. “We have company.”

I gazed up at the images and noted a lone Decepticon investigating the environment about him. He was tall, monocular and purple colored. Unmistakable...

“Shockwave is here!” I exclaimed.

“The Decepticons second-in-command?” Swoop asked. “Why is he here?”

“To rescue Megatron?” Snarl asked.

“Or to make sure he’s finished off,” I said. “Whatever the case, we need to make sure he doesn’t succeed. If he does, Prime and the others are done for!”

“But you don’t even like Prime!” Swoop exclaimed. “Would that really be so bad?”

“Me not agree with everything he does,” I admitted. “But that doesn’t mean all those Autobots under him deserve permanent shut down either. Besides, if the Decepticons harvest this world then there won’t be much the others back on Cybertron can do to stop them. We owe it to the others to make sure that doesn’t happen!”

I could see the looks of agreement in the others’ faces.

“Besides, we get to take on Shockwave,” Sludge added. “Get to see just how tough he really is!”

“I can go for that,” Slag agreed.

“Five on one—that sucker won’t stand much chance,” Swoop retorted. “Too bad for him—I can’t have much pity for a Decepti-creep!”

I gave the matter a moment of thought. Obviously, Shockwave couldn’t know exactly where the *Ark* was or he would’ve already been here and Teletraan’s efforts would’ve been in vain.

“We need to get a tracking system online and then find a way to get to him before he gets too close and figures out where we are,” I said. “Let’s get to it!”

When it became obvious to us that our new modes were of terrestrial beasts native to the bizarre world we now occupied, we located an old hover skit and managed to restore it well enough to get us to our prey. Except for Swoop, our modes were too slow to be effective in traversing the distance in a reasonable amount of time.

And time was of the essence here. Every moment Shockwave was allowed to roam free was another moment he had to locate the *Ark* and our helpless comrades.

We used the *Ark*’s satellite positioning system to track our prey, getting to his location before he had any idea his presence was known.

We find Shockwave investigating some kind of local ore when we arrive. He seems quite interested in whatever it is he’s studying and somehow he doesn’t notice us until it’s too late. I strike first in my new saurian mode, biting into his gun arm and making our presence known.

The others tackle him too, using their tails, teeth and missiles in Swoop’s case. We strike hard and fast, trying to gain the upper hand on our opponent. For the briefest moment, it seems like we are winning...

And then, just like that, Shockwave tosses us all aside in a single movement. Like the strongest warriors the Autobots have at their disposal—like *we*—are nothing. He strikes out, knocking us all off a nearby cliff face in rapid succession. Only Swoop manages to escape, thanks to his aerial mode.

Even his reprieve is short lived though. Shockwave moves incredibly fast, grabbing our brother and tossing him into a nearby pool of viscous black liquid. Impossibly, our comrade begins to sink rapidly into the fluid... part of my mind wants to rescue him but I know Shockwave will pick us apart if we let him. Also, our species doesn’t need oxygen like organics do. The bath will annoy him, maybe even incapacitate him—but Swoop will survive.

We try to rally but Shockwave blasts into us, knowing he has the upper hand. He has us trapped between the pond of liquid and the cliff face. I use my flame breath on him, but he’s easily able to avoid the blast and when I have to cycle to the next blast, he returns fire on me, sending me flying. I

just narrowly avoid the pond.

But he's overconfident... as he toys with us, he fails to see Snarl go to work on the cliff's base below him. His tail makes short work of the rock and by the time Shockwave realizes what's going on, it's too late.

He tumbles down with the rest of the cliff, the debris strikes all of us dead-on and we all splash right into the pool of sticky black goo behind us. I only have seconds to see Sludge and Snarl sink below the surface nearby. I gaze up to see Shockwave thoroughly trapped under several tonnes of rock...

We're finished—but so is he.

Nearby, Slag begins to go under too...

We did it. Not the way I would've preferred--but at least the other Autobots are safe and the threat of Shockwave has been dealt with.

As I sink beneath the surface and begin to short out, I just hope somebody somewhere finds us someday. That we're not destined to rust forever on this world, lost in space so far from home...