

BALANCE OF POWER: REFLECTIONS

By Thomas Xavier

Sunfire stared out through the viewport, looking at planet Earth; now a small fragile globe of blue and white hanging far off in the distance. Soon, if Hoist could get the hyperdrive working, they would jump into that celestial limbo called 'hyperspace'--and she would probably never see Earth again.

No, she realized, of *course* she'd see it again--they would *have* to come back, someday; come back, to fight the Decepticons.

To fight the Decepticons. She shuddered. *We'll be fighting Decepticons forever, at this rate.*

She turned away, staring now at the dark metal walls of the chamber; in this old, rusty shuttle that they'd dug up with the Ark. It was a wonder that it even worked at all. If it *hadn't*, they would all be dead.

Sunfire was alone, left in this chamber, all to herself... she refused to talk to almost everyone; and few pressed the matter. She was the only Autobot to hear Optimus Prime's dying words. Every Autobot knew what that meant, or at least *could* mean...

Throughout the history of the War, a dying leader's last words held immense power and respect--a leader's last wishes were always granted. These usually included special errands, requests on funeral arrangements, and, most importantly: the naming of the new leader.

Sunfire held tremendous power and opportunity in her grasp... but the more she thought about it, the more it burned her hand. Only *she* knew what Prime had said--and whatever she told the others... they would have no choice but to believe it.

And that power, this ability to affect the Autobot cause and ranks in whatever manner she desired... It had made her a nervous wreck.

Of course, Prime's death itself had wounded her far more deeply... more deeply than anyone could know. Sunfire didn't dare to recall the horrible scene... it was far too painful. She had tried everything she could to save Optimus Prime from Galvatron... but it wasn't enough. *She* wasn't enough. And when Galvatron had finished with Prime, he simply *ignored* her... as if she hadn't even been worth his attention.

That, in itself, had made her very, very angry.

She sighed, releasing her clenched fists. Sunfire was confused, and that was the bottom line. Prime's last words had been so vague, that their true interpretation was, to her, still somewhat of a mystery:

He had said, that Sunfire should make certain that the Autobots remain "pure and good". He wanted *her*, personally, to make sure of that. But that was far from a declaration of leadership. However, Prime had *not* specified any other Autobot for the task... and he knew, as well as anyone, that such an omission would leave an empty space at the top. Leadership, eventually, would fall upon whoever was next in line. In this case, it was Prowl--or Ultra Magnus, on Cybertron. Prowl was 'temporarily' in command right now, but he refused to assert any real authority until Sunfire had spoken...

And suddenly, it dawned upon her: had Prime left it ambiguous, just so Sunfire actually had the choice? Certainly, in almost all aspects, Sunfire was not ready for leadership... And yet, Prime had passed the task of choosing a new leader to her, *intentionally*.

It was a test -- to see if she was up for the responsibility.

A test Optimus Prime would never have seen the results of.

If Sunfire felt she could handle leadership, she could claim it, and none could rightfully dispute her. If she did *not* feel up to it--certainly closer to the truth--all she would have to do is point the finger at another. It *all* made sense now...

There was a sharp *rap-rap-rap*, on the door.

"Open," she said, surprised.

The door slid aside and Prowl stood in the doorway. His expression was one of gentle concern. "How are you feeling?"

She smiled slightly at him--her mood had improved somewhat at her realization. "I've been better," she replied quietly, "But not recently. Get in here--let the door close."

Prowl stepped in, the door closing swiftly behind him. "Hoist says he'll have the hyperdrive working in about half-an-hour." He paused. "How are you, really? Everyone's been worried about you."

"I'm touched." Her sarcasm cut like a laser beam. She turned to look out of the viewport again. "They should be worried about *all* of us."

Prowl drew closer, slowly. "Look, Sunfire--I'm not sure I understand what you're going through... but you can't go on like this. Please, let it go -- *tell* me what Prime said."

She turned around suddenly--but her eyes were softer, as they met his. "I'll never repeat what he said--never. But I will tell you what he *wanted*. In fact, I only just figured it out."

"Well? What was his request?"

Sunfire paused--the last few days reeling in her mind. She was at the sword's point... and she would choose her fate, *now*...

She suddenly took Prowl's hand, gripping it firmly. "To honor his wisdom, and respect his memory... and one other thing. I relieve you of command, Prowl. *I'll* have to take it from here."

"What?!" Prowl's optics widened. "Are you sure you're up to it? You're so young, and what you've just been through..."

"Is better left in the past. From now on, I'll just have to learn as I go." She forced a smile.

She released his hand. "Very well, Commander," Prowl said, and bowed deeply. "What are your first orders?"

Orders?" she replied, confused. "Well then... I suppose we'd better announce this to everybody. Then, I think I'll pay a visit to Hoist..." Sunfire glanced back at Earth, in the distance. "Hanging around here is giving me the creeps... if he can't get that damn hyperdrive working in *fifteen minutes*, I'm going to rip his head off."