

What Lies Beneath the Surface

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What Lies Beneath the Surface

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Summary

What would have happened if Astro had stayed on the Surface longer? What would have happened if Stone didn't find him right away? what would the story be like if Astro was forced to work in the Robot Games for longer? A story based on the 2009 movie, with elements from the 2003 and 1980 shows. Cora needs to get back to Hamegg's circus, and Astro just wants a new life.

Notes

Hey everyone, I'm back with a new story! This idea has been rattling around in my mind for a while and I was finally able to get it down in words, so I figured I would share. I hope you all enjoy it, feel free to leave constructive criticism, and comments and likes are always welcome!

Chapter 1

Cora was lost. Completely and utterly lost. She hated to admit it, but she honestly had no idea where she was. She looked around aimlessly at the towering junk piles all around her, rusting metal and dead robots consuming her vision. Hamegg and the circus had just settled onto the Surface below Metro City, and her, Zane and the twins were told to go out and find parts for his newest robots for the Robot games after the circus shows. She hadn't been very enthusiastic about it, but agreed because it seemed like the better option than cleaning the porta potties.

Looking around again, she thought that the cleaning duty sounded like the better option. Her and the kids had been searching for parts when a heap of robots and scrap metal fell out of the sky and flung them apart. Cora was just unfortunate enough to take a tumble down a steep ravine. It looked like it used to be some sort of dam before the lake it used to hold dried up, leaving it barren and chalky. She had taken quite the tumble down it, surprisingly only receiving a few scraps on her knees, elbows and shoulders. She was lucky she didn't break any bones.

When she had gotten up several minutes after the fall, groaning and dusting herself off, she realized that there was no way she was going to be able to climb back up the thirty foot slope. She had waited for a couple hours to see if Zane and the twins brought help, but when the sun started setting and no one came, she figured that Hamegg didn't care enough to come and get her and she was left for dead. She was angry, but had expected it, to an extent. She got up and started wandering down the ravine to see if there was a way out of the steep walls.

She had been walking for several hours before she came across a groove that allowed her to exit the dark ravine and into the last light of the setting sun. That was nearly an hour ago, and the sunlight was almost completely gone now. It was getting cold and she had nowhere to sleep for the night. She was so far away from the circus that there was no way she was going to just stumble back home for the night, and she was hungry. To say she was frustrated would be an understatement.

"Aaahhhgg!" She shouted, kicking an old robot head in her frustration. What she hadn't expected was for someone to answer her shout with a shout of their own.

"AHHH!" She heard coming from around the junk pile she was standing next to. Another shout followed it, the odd sound of metal grinding together reaching her ears. A metallic voice was speaking, but she was just too far away to actually understand the words. She made her way cautiously around the mountain of metal to see a figure stumbling around at the top of a pile of scrap metal a fair distance from her. She watched in slight shock as the figure was crowded by dysfunctional robots, the metal beings clinging to the figure as if they were trying to tear it apart. The figure jerked away from them, pulling an arm off of one of the older modeled robots, but before anyone could do anything else, the metallic voice was back, shouting something that caused all of the robots and the figure looked up, just in time to see a pile of trash drop out of the sky on top of them. The robots were crushed, while the figure

went flying, tumbling head over heels down the metal pile and skidding to a painful looking stop at the bottom.

She winced, having full sympathy for what appeared to be a young boy at the bottom of the pile. Deciding that he seemed to be struggling to get up, she started to make her way over to the kid. He looked to be around her again, maybe thirteen or fourteen. He finally rose to his feet, holding his left shoulder, which seemed to be sagging slightly, she wondered absently if it was dislocated. She got closer to him as he sat down on a small mound of metal, seemingly gazing at metro city in the distance. She heard him sigh.

“What do I do?” She jumped slightly, thinking for a moment that he had spotted her and was speaking to her, but she quickly realized that he had been talking to himself. Unfortunately, her slight startle had caused a little more noise than she had intended, and the boy whipped around to look at her, jumping to his feet.

“wh-who are you?” The boy stuttered out, taking a step back. He seemed really skittish, like he was preparing to leap into the skies and fly away. She nearly snorted at the thought.

“The name’s Cora, and you are?” The kid seemed to relax a little bit, before he tensed again, eyes widening. The reaction was startling, but before she could even think, there was a loud groan of metal bending unnaturally, and she looked up to see the mountain of trash she was standing next to tower over her like a twisted tidal wave.

“Look out!” She heard the kid shout. She didn't even have time to scream before strong arms wrapped around her waist, pushing her back and out of the way as the mountain came tumbling down with a thunderous crash. She landed on her back, hard. The boy was on top of her, arms still gripping her sides with surprising strength for his size. She groaned slightly, the air having been knocked out of her on impact with the scrap covered ground. The boy scrambled off of her, sitting on his knees next to her legs, seeming to be looking her over as she blinked the stars out of her eyes.

“Are you ok?” He asked her, fingers fidgeting, acting like he was holding himself back from patting her down for injuries. She groaned again, pushing herself up on an elbow, holding her head with her other hand. She blinked, looking at the landslide of trash that had devoured the spot she had been standing in only moment ago. I nearly died. The realization made her head spin. She looked over to the worried boy next to her, and found that he was still looking over her almost frantically.

“You just saved my life.” It was cliché, said a thousand times in romance movies, but in that moment, she was in shock and that was the first thing to come to mind, slipping out of her mouth before she could even think about it. The boy stopped his twitching, turning to look her straight in the eye. He blinked and looked at the spot they had been standing in, then turning back to her he gave her a sheepish smile, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Yeah, I guess I did.” Then he became serious again, worry taking over his expression. “Are you alright? You’re not hurt, are you?” Cora just stared at him, blinking dumbly. Then her mind decided to start functioning again and she shook her head to clear it.

“Uh, yeah, yeah I'm fine.” She stood, wobbling slightly for a moment. She brushed her clothes off, even though they were dirty and ripped, making the act pointless. “Thanks for the save.” The kid looked a bit doubtful, but stood up as well, massaging his left shoulder once again.

“Yeah, no problem, I’m just glad I was fast enough.” He said, chuckling nervously towards the end of the sentence. Cora suddenly felt like she was missing something, like a part of the story didn’t line up. She looked back towards to pile of trash, running over the terrifying event in her mind. How did this kid move fast enough to save her. He was several feet away from her when they were talking, there is no way he should have been able to make it to her in time. He would have had to fly to get to her fast enough.

She turned to him, about to question him on the impossible rescue, but was stopped by the sight of the sunset behind him. The sun was completely gone, only a faint glow lighting the sky in pinks and oranges. Panic quickly rose to her throat. It was nearly dark and she didn't have any kind of shelter, nor water or food. While the Surface was sweltering hot during the day, it often reached freezing temperatures during the night. She would freeze to death if she didn't find a shelter of some sort, and fast.

“Well thanks again for the save, but it’s getting dark so I need to get going.” The boy looked startled, turning to the sky to see it quickly darkening. His nervous fidgeting came back, but she didn't have time to worry about that. She turned and started crawling over the trash, moving in the opposite direction from where she came. A moment later she heard a rustling behind her.

“He-hey Cora, right? Um, I’m kinda lost, could I maybe tag along with you for a while?” The kid voiced behind her, stuttering slightly, clearly unsure about the question. Cora stopped and turned to him. Normally she would be very cautious of strangers, especially people from this part of the surface, but this kid was rather disarming. She looked him over, his big brown eyes full of cautious hope. After a long moment, she shrugged, turning back around to continue forward.

“Yeah sure, why not.” She heard a relieved sigh and then the kid started to scramble to catch up with her. “I don’t think I caught your name, kid.” The boy froze next to her, suddenly looking sheepish again.

“I, uh, I don’t currently have a name.” Cora stopped to look at him again, skeptical.

“What do you mean you don’t have a name?” He looked downright depressed, shrugging his shoulders and looking at his shoes.

“Well, turns out I’m not who I thought I was, and it doesn’t feel right to use a name that is not mine, so I currently don’t have a name.” Cora could understand that. She had changed her name when she joined Hamegg’s circus, not wanting her old identity to follow her into her new life. Though that was an odd way of wording it. What does he mean that he isn’t who he thought he was? Using a name that wasn’t his? She decided to leave it be for the time being, tucking the thought in the back of her mind.

“Alright, so what do you wanna be called then?” she asked, starting to move again, the kid quickly following.

“Um, I don’t really know, I’ve never really thought about it before.”

“You don’t have any nicknames you could use?”

“No, not really.” Cora sighed, looking around her in the dimming light. Her eyes landed on a broken robot energizing pod. The glass dome shattered, leaving glittering daggers rising from the rectangular frame. The metal was dented and rusting, but in shining silver letters, a portion of the companies name shone in the last of the sunlight. She smiled, and pointed at it to draw the kids attention.

“What about that?” She asked, feeling triumphant already. She looked over her shoulder to the boy, making sure he saw what she was pointing at. He was looking at the shining word with curiosity, seeming to mumble it to himself a couple times before a small smile spread over his face. He turned to her, eyes glimmering with new found excitement.

“I like it.” He said. “Call me Astro.”

Chapter 2

Astro felt lost. He had literally lost everything in a matter of hours. His father, his home, even his humanity. He had no idea where to go or what to do, and if all the robots acted like those junkies on the trash pile, then his life had just become extremely dangerous. Though, he felt a little safer being around another person. Cora had an odd confidence that made him feel like everything was going to be alright. Though, he wasn't sure how she would react to the fact that he was a robot, he hadn't had a very good experience with humans so far. He was afraid he would be rejected again.

“Gah!” Cora gasped as her hands slipped on loose rubble and she tumbled backward. She landed hard on Astro, slamming into his chest as he instinctively caught her. He let off a soft grunt before gently reaching under her arms and effortlessly lifted her to her feet.

“You okay?” He asked, checking her from head to toe for injuries with his eyes. Not finding any new ones, beyond the couple of scrapes and bruises she had when they met, he looked up at her to find her staring at him. Suddenly feeling flustered for no reason, he squirmed under her gaze. “What?”

“How’d you do that?” She asked, now looking him up and down, as if searching for something that wasn’t there. Now he was just confused. What was she talking about? What did he do that wasn’t normal?

“What?” He repeated, a confused expression taking over his face. Cora stared for a moment longer, then blink and shook her head softly

“Never mind, it was nothing, you’re just a lot stronger than you look.” She turned and started to climb over the juck again, reaching the top of the pile a moment later and sliding down the other side, out of view. Astro looked down at his hand, moving his fingers one by one. Guess I’m stronger than I thought, I barely even noticed that she weighed anything. He glanced back up at the top of the hill, sighing as he scurried up it and down the other side to follow Cora. I’m gonna have to be more careful with that.

“Hey Cora, where are we going anyway?” The darkness had set in quickly after they had started walking, and he was starting to get nervous, especially with that weird buzzing that he swore was following them. He kept glancing over his shoulder, but was unable to see anything in the dim moonlight. He wanted more than anything to turn on his eye beams and search the area, but he refused to lose this kind girl that quickly. So instead, he settled for following close behind her and making sure that she didn’t fall and break her neck in the dark.

“Well, I’m heading home to Hamegg’s Robot Circus. You are welcome to leave at any point.” She grunted at the end of the sentence, stumbling over a particularly large piece of trash. He reached out to catch her again, but was startled when she let out a scream, yanking his hands back in fear that he was the sudden cause of her distress. She fell over on her side, clutching

her shin and gritting her teeth. Astro gasped and threw himself down next to her, hand hovering over her anxiously, but too afraid to touch her.

“What happened? What's wrong?” He asked frantically, eyes skimming over her in fear.

“I think I just cut my leg on scrap metal.” She ground out through her teeth. She pried her eyes open to examine her leg, though was unable to see anything, forced to go off of what she could feel rather than what she could see. “That feels like a lot of blood.”

“Okay, it's gonna be fine.” Astro said, though whether he was ensuring Cora or himself, he wasn't sure. “Let me see it.” He said, wrapping his fingers around her's and gently pulling them away. He sighed in relief once he saw the cut. It was actually really shallow, from what he could tell, but it was long, maybe the length of his hand, and wasn't actually bleeding all that much.

“Okay, it's not actually that deep and is barely bleeding.” He stated, gently pulling the fabric of her pant leg away so he could see it better. She sighed below him.

“I'm guessing that it just hurts this much because of the location.” She hissed when his fingers got a little too close and he quickly pulled away, watching as she sat up. She examined her leg, face shrouded in darkness so he couldn't see her expression. A moment later she ripped a shred of fabric from her ragged skirt, tying it around the cut in a makeshift bandage. With a huff, she got to her feet, avoiding putting pressure on her injured leg, and she started to limp away from him in the direction they had been going, skirting her way around the metal that had cut her in the first place. “Come on Astro, we need to keep going.”

“What?” He jumped to his feet, racing up behind her then flipping around and walking backward in front of her. “I think it is way too dark at this point, and we are just going to keep getting hurt if we keep going like this. We should just find a place to rest for the night and then keep going when the sun comes out.” He said, worried thoughts consuming his mind, everything from the temperature dropping and Cora starting to shiver to disinfecting her leg before it got an infection or tetanus.

For a minute it looked like the girl was going to argue. She opened her mouth, face set in defiance, but then she stepped wrong and tumbled forward. Astro lunged forward and grabbed her before she fell, picking her up again and noticing that her shivering had gotten worse. She seemed to notice this too, because she sighed again and nodded her head.

“Fine, fine, we'll stop for tonight and find a place to sleep.” She then proceeded to look around blindly in the darkness. “Um, how are we going to find somewhere to sleep without being able to see?” Astro also looked around, hoping more than anything that they would be lucky and find some sort of alcove to hide in for the night. That weird humming sound was back, and it was starting to make him nervous, well, more nervous. Especially since Cora didn't seem to hear it. He glanced around again, somewhat expecting something to jump out and try to tear them apart. Luckily, nothing attacked, but he did notice the slight darkening of the shadows at the edge of one of the trash piles a distance away from them. He wasn't sure, but from the angle they were at, it almost looked like the mouth of an overhang.

“Hey Cora, do you see that?” He asked, pointing at the shadow he had spotted.

“Um, no, what are you even trying to show me?” He turned back to see Cora squinting, as if it would help her see better in the blackness.

“Well, it almost looks like an overhang.” He stated, sounding more sure of himself than he actually felt. Cora seemed to perk up at this, making a greater effort to see what he was talking about, but still clearly struggling. Well, add better eyesight to the list of differences between me and humans.

“Well, I can’t see it, but it is worth the time to go check it out.” Cora waved her hand in a wide sweeping motion in front of her, nodding slightly and looking at him with that searching look again, like he was some sort of puzzle that she needed to figure out. “Lead the way, Wonder Boy.” The nickname made something buzz in his chest, almost like a heartbeat. This made his chest constrict, leaving him with a sudden longing for something as simple as a heart beating in his chest. He had to quickly shut the thought down, shoving it to the back of his mind, because he could not break down here, not now. He couldn’t let those dark thoughts and insecurities spread through his mind. Shaking the sudden cold, hollow feeling away, he nodded and started making his way down the hill they were standing on and heading towards the supposed overhang.

That is, until he heard Cora gasp behind him. He turned around just in time for Cora to smash into him again, this time with enough force to send them both tumbling down the junk pile. They landed painfully at the bottom, a writhing pile of flailing limbs. It took them a minute to untangle and get to their feet, and they were both extremely flustered when they finally did. After a while of awkward silence, Cora cleared her throat.

“Do we agree to pretend that never happened?”

“Agreed.” They both nodded, still not looking each other in the eye. It took awhile, but they finally made it to their destination. They were both ecstatic to see that it actually was an alcove, though it was smaller than they expected. It was a rounded indent in the pile of old parts and unwanted garbage, just big enough for both of them to climb into and opening up a little bit towards the inside, like some sort of metallic cave. Astro went in first, doing a quick check to make sure that it wouldn’t collapse and kill them in their sleep. When it proved safe, Cora practically dove in, plopping down and collapsing with a big sigh. She stretched for a moment before curling up, obviously exhausted. Astro sat next to her, knees to his chest and watching her out of the corner of his eye as he gazed at the dim moonlight just outside of the makeshift shelter. The humming had faded again, and he was almost as nervous about that as he was about the sound getting louder. They stayed in silence for such a long time that Astro thought Cora had fallen asleep, when a soft voice pierced the quiet atmosphere.

“I’m glad I met you Astro, I have a feeling that we are going to go on quite the adventure together.” Astro was slightly startled, but he smiled into the darkness as a strange fluttering sensation filled his chest.

“Yeah me too, Cora, me too.” A soft sigh was his only answer, and they were quiet again. Though he was glad it was so quiet, because if it wasn’t, he probably would have missed the nearly silent “good night” that Cora whispered, slipping into the land of dreams. He smiled again, glancing over to her still form. He noticed that she was still shivering, and made a decision that he would later blame on delirium. He unzipped his jacket, taking it off, and

carefully draped it over the girl as best as he could. “Good night, Cora.” He whispered, before settling down and falling asleep himself.

Chapter 3

Cora woke to the sun shining on her feet through the mouth of their shelter. It took her mind a moment to process what was going on and where she was, but when it did, she groaned. Then she realized that there was something rather soft draped over her, something she most definitely did not fall asleep with. It was far too soft to be something she owned, all of her clothes being rough and worn. She sat up quickly with the realization, looking down at the crumpled blue fabric piled in her lap. Astro's jacket, but why did he give it to me? She then look over a the boy's sleeping form, his back facing her. Her mind immediately went to her life with the other orphans. With them it was almost always survival of the fittest, and once you were old enough to take care of yourself you we responsible for yourself. No one shared when it didn't benefit them in some way. No one gave up their small amounts of comfort unless they absolutely had to. And yet, this kid gave her his jacket on a freezing cold night, without her even having to bargain for it. An odd warm feeling filled her chest, confusing her for a moment before she shook it away. He is going to get himself killed if he doesn't start taking care of himself before others.

She rose to her feet, rolling the jacket into a ball in her hands. She then proceed to walk over and roughly kick the kid in the back. It didn't quite get the reaction she was hoping for. Astro grunted, opening his eyes slightly while trying to adjust to the bright light. In return, Cora felt like she had just kicked a brick wall with all her might. Her foot throbbed, and she gritted her teeth, hoping not to show that that had actually hurt. The boy turned and looked up at her, but his expression changed quickly, going from a lazy sleepiness to concern right before her eyes.

"Um, are you okay?" He asked cautiously. She just stared down at him for a moment. Did he even feel that? What does this kid eat?! Realizing that he was still staring at her and she hadn't given an answer, she huffed and threw his jacket at his face.

"You're gonna freeze to death if you give away your clothes." She stated, crossing her arms as he spluttered, pulling the jacket off his face with a confused look. "You're just lucky that I'm nice enough to give it back, not many people would do that." He rolled his eyes, getting to his feet and tying the jacket around his waist.

"You were cold, I wasn't, I thought you would appreciate the extra coverage." She just stared at him, blinking as she tried to comprehend what she just heard.

"Look, I don't know where you came from, but around here, it's every person for themselves, and it will do you well to remember that. Kindness is going to get you killed in a dark alley somewhere." She turned around and was crawling out of the mouth of the shelter so she didn't see him cringe, but she did hear his response.

"I'm from Metro City, and I do realize that I need to be careful, but I don't feel like my kindness is going to get me killed." Cora whipped around to look at him as he crawled out of the hole and stood. Disgust rolled around her insides, and anger boiled in her chest. Metro City kid, no wonder he doesn't seem to know how to function down here. He is probably a

pampered little brat like all the rest of the people up there. When he stood, she plastered a fake smile on her face.

“You’re from Metro City?” She gasped in an overly cheerful way, watching as the boy’s face morphed in confusion. “Oh my goodness, it is such an honor to be in your presence, I can’t believe you are talking to me, this is the best day of my life.” She ended on a low sarcastic note, making sure that her face and voice displayed her displeasure. He just stared at her, confused. She sighed.

“Let me spell it out to you. You’re from Metro city, I don’t like people from Metro city.” she leaned back, crossing her arms and glared at the boy. He still seemed confused, but he rolled his eyes at her. Of all the nerve....

“Yes, you made it clear you don’t like people from Metro City, but I don’t see why that suddenly changes anything. We were getting along just fine so far, and I haven’t done anything wrong to you.” He looked at her with a quizzical look, and she huffed. Leaning forward, one hand on her hip and the other with its finger in his face.

“It’s not what you have done, it is what you might do. I don’t want your problems following me, so get lost kid.” She then turned around and began to storm off. She heard a gasp behind her, and frantic footsteps, but she didn’t stop.

“Wait, please, I won’t cause you any trouble, I promise!” Astro said frantically, dashing up and walking backward in front of her again.

“Promises mean nothing down here, so get lost before I make you.” She kept walking, walking around him as he stumbled and fell on his rear.

“Please, I don’t have anywhere to go!” His voice was starting to sound thick, like he was on the brink of tears. Wimp she thought to herself.

“Not my problem.” She grumbled. This time he ran in front of her and stopped her in her tracks. His voice was thick and his face was twisted like he was getting emotionally worked up, but his skin was still pale, and his eyes dry and clear, as if they hadn’t gotten the emotional memo. Is he trying to play me? She wondered, but her thoughts were cut off when he continued.

“Please, I’m begging. I literally lost everything in one fell swoop.” Something in her expression must have made him think that she didn’t believe him, which she really didn’t, and so he continued. “My dad disowned me, I was kicked out of my house, lost my humanity, was chased by some lunatics with huge guns for no reason, thrown off of the city and attacked by a pack of malfunctioning robots as soon as I opened my eyes.” He said all of this in one, long breath. And hearing this made her feel guilty, because it sounded close to her story, except a lot worse, but he continued before she could say anything. “So this may sound stupid, or childish, or whatever you wanna call it, but I just really don’t want to be alone again. I don’t know if I will be able to survive on my own down here, and I could really use some help, even if that is just a little bit of company and a destination to look forward to.”

He finally stopped, staring at her for some sort of reaction. She felt like someone poured cold motor oil in her brain, clogging her gears and slowing her down. One odd point stuck out to her, though, and she couldn't possibly decipher what it meant.

"Did you just say that you lost your humanity?" She asked, totally baffled. She watched as the boy cringed, clearly not having meant to mention that. He opened his mouth to reply, whether to confirm or deny she wasn't sure, but was interrupted by a metallic clang. They both startled and turned to look at a rusting robot that stood at the top of a hill they had crawled over the night before. It stood on uneven legs, like it had stolen a leg that was a little too short for it from a different robot, which would explain the color difference. It had dents all throughout its body, with wires sticking out of random holes in its frame. One arm was far shorter than the other, a hand attracted where the elbow should be, and the other ended in a large meat cleaver, obviously implying that the thin red robot had been a chef bot in its prime. Two more robots appeared over the rig of the hill, one a small, wiry toilet cleaning robot, the other, a six foot tall construction robot with a cement tumbler for a chest and bulky arms covered in a light grey dust.

"Ahhh, there you are." The chef bot graveled out, its voice sounding like forks in a bender. "Come on brother, spare a little juice for the old folk around here." Several more robots climbed over the top of the hill, waddling towards them like metal zombie, moaning about new batteries. Cora was stupefied, she had never in all her life seen robots react this way to humans. she turned to Astro to see fear warping his soft face. She cleared her throat and Astro turned to look at her.

"You got any batteries to give them?" She asked, already knowing the answer.

"Nope."

"We should probably run then."

"Agreed." And with that they both turned and bolted. Astro ran quickly, and surprisingly smoothly across the rough terrain, seeming completely unaffected by the bright sun light reflecting in their eyes off of the hot metal covering the ground. Cora, on the other hand, stumbled a lot, and was starting to fall behind. Astro noticed and immediately slowed down for her, but that didn't help the situation. They both looked back to see that the robot army was actually keeping a fair pace with them. Cora's shin throbbed from the night before, and it was slowing her down further. Beside her there was a hiss, and before she knew it, Astro had grabbed her hand, twirled her around in the air and threw her on his back, holding her thighs to keep her in place. All of this happened without him breaking stride.

"Whoa!" Cora yelled, wrapping her arms tightly around Astro's neck, noticing that they were actually gaining speed rather than losing it. How the hell did he do that? She didn't have time to ponder the question when a metallic screech sounded behind them. She just decided to hold on for dear life and hope they didn't die. Then she proceed to curse herself as they came to a screeching halt at the lip of a deep crevasse that split across the never ending waste land. The way the sun hit it and the shadows engulfed it made it look bottomless, and it was far too wide for any sane person to try and jump. They looked left and right, but saw no end to the crack in the earth. She felt like all hope was lost, they were going to die. Then she felt Astro roll his shoulder and looked down to see him staring at the other side of the crevasse

with determination. He backtracked then bent down to get a running start, and she realized that he was crazy.

“No, no, no, no, no! Don’t you dare take me down with your insanity!” She squirmed, but his grip was ridiculously strong and she couldn’t get down.

“Hold on tight.” Was all he said before he shot forward. She would have fallen backwards if she hadn’t grabbed his neck in a chokehold, screaming. Then suddenly they were in the air, and she opened her eyes just in time to see them suspended above the darkness before they came crashing down on the other side. They were both torn apart from the other, tumbling in a painful roll as they crashed into the land on the other side of an impossible jump. They lay there for a moment, groaning, before sitting up and watching the robots on the other side come to a halt at the edge. Three robots decided to take the risk and attempted the jump, all of which fell sickeningly short and fell into the dark abyss.

After a couple of surreal moments, both absorbing that they actually made that jump, and survived. They looked at each other, and then both started to chuckle. Then the chuckles morphed into laughs, hysterical laughs, but laughs nonetheless. The robots screaming on the other side of the ravine was just fueling their laughter. Astro jumped to his feet, pulling her to her feet as well, both still laughing as they ran away from the army of psychotic machines. They ran and ran, running till Cora’s legs gave out, and then they collapsed next to a mountain of trash, still giggling like maniacs. What neither of them noticed was that they were both holding hands throughout the whole experience.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

throws the gates of hell open and struts out, head held high and crown gleaming as demons howl and flames roar behind me

Guess who's back?

HELLOOOOOO BITCHES! I've gone through absolute HELL these past several years, but I can proudly say I've come out the other side as the goddamn QUEEN. I've somehow managed to simultaneously graduate high school and college with my associate's degree, am halfway through my bachelor's degree, bought/built a small home, which I've spent the last two years wallowing in depression in, somehow managed NOT to kill myself, and now I'm back at my bullshit again, writing for the first time in actual years, and I'm fucking THRILLED.

Anyway, sorry for being gone for actual YEARS with no response, updates, or proof of life. I'm, magically, not dead yet. Heads up, though, I'm not even going to pretend that this is going to be a consistent thing, the updates, as I'm still busy as fuck. Oh, and I swear a lot. Deal with it. I'll be trying to keep this particular story a little more on the clean side, just because I feel like the character's themselves wouldn't swear all that much, but there will be the occasional cuss word here and there. And all sorts of swearing in my notes, so just proceed with caution if that isn't your thing.

Last warning, for any of my readers who read on ff.net, I will be continuing to update this fic, and Monsters and Metas (no I have not abandoned that fic), but I will not be posting any of my new fics on ff's platform. I don't like how they are set up, I don't like their policies, and I don't like the ads. I just generally don't want to support them. If I decide to stop posting on ff.net entirely, I'll let you know.

On the note of fics! If any of you like my writing, keep your eyes open, I've got a handful of fics in progress that I'll be posting once I have a sufficient amount of content. I've got WIPs from a wide assortment of fandoms, so I'm sure you'll find at least one that you'll like. They'll all be posted on AO3 under the same name.

Anyway, Enjoy~.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Astro didn't even know he could laugh so hard. He rarely laughed in such a way when he was human. Or, well, Toby rarely laughed like this. His electronics were starting to have issues with the shaking through his body. He didn't think he had lungs, because he wasn't wheezing the same way Cora was, but his insides felt hot from overexertion on the intricate mechanics.

“That was.... That was INSANE.” Cora panted out between chuckles, her face flushed red in the hot sunlight, sweat glistening on her forehead.

“Yeah, that was more thrilling than anything in metro city.” He chuckled with her, leaning back against the pile of metal they had collapsed on. “That was the second time in less than 24 hours that I have been attacked by robots since getting here. Is it always like this?” Cora gave him an odd side eye, still panting, before sitting back against the hot metal hill as well. He couldn’t think of what that look was for, which part of that sentence bothered her, so he made a mental note to watch her reactions till he could figure out what set her off.

“Eh, nah, it's actually really unusual that those rogue bots attacked us. I've never seen anything like it honestly.” She said as her breathing calmed. She turned her head away from him and closed her eyes to the blazing sun. “Though, I guess a soft city kid like yourself would be pretty scared in a situation like that.” She said it in a sassy tone, but Astro could see her lips twitch, trying not to smile. A playful smile spread across his face and he gently wacked her shoulder with his knee.

“Hey, I’m no soft city kid, thank you very much, and I distinctly remember you being the one screaming as I *carried* you to safety.” He teased with a smirk. Cora fake gasped and sat up, placing a hand dramatically on her chest.

"You make me sound like some petite damsel in distress! I'll have you know, Wonder Boy, that I was perfectly capable of getting away all on my own, I was just slowing down to give you a fighting chance." She folded her arms and stuck her nose in the air, fighting off a smile.

"Riiight, I'll remember that for next time and let you run all on your own." Astro chuckled, closing his eyes against the sun too and placing his hands behind his head.

"Speaking of which..." Cora sounded much more serious now and Astro opened one eye to look at her cautiously. "How did you manage that? Carrying me and making that jump? That shouldn't have been possible on your own, let alone with someone on your back."

Astro felt himself bluescreen.

What was he supposed to say? Oh yeah, I can just jump really freaking far because I have springs in my legs instead of muscles? Yeah, no, that is a terrible idea. Absolutely horrendous actually, with his very recent experience of how easily Cora can and will leave him.

He doesn't want to be alone again.

He really is pathetic.

"Uh..." He was stalling. Why couldn't his brain work faster? You would think a super computer would come up with something faster than this. "My boots." He finally blurted out.

His boots?

"Your boots?" Cora asked skeptically, eyes traveling down to the red toes of his shiny, metallic boots sticking out of his jeans.

"Yeah, my boots," He said again, nothing actually lined up to come out of his mouth next, "They are this new design my dad came up with recently. They have a kinda springy technology in the soles and up the sides that make it so I can jump a lot further than average." Don't mind all the absolute *bull* spewing out of his mouth. "It also helps with running because it makes each step springier so my strides are longer."

Holy crap. He kinda forgot Toby was such a good liar. Should he be proud of that? Are the lying skills of someone else something you should be proud of? Well, either way, he is very grateful at the moment. Cora was still looking him over, expression of skepticism replaced with mild appraisal.

"That's actually pretty cool, but that still doesn't explain how you picked me up, without breaking stride, might I add, carried us both to and over the ravine and then somehow landed that without breaking any bones and not even breaking a sweat." She leaned back against the warm metal pile again, still looking at him but not as intensely. It didn't really help his nerves

though. “Hell, I was wheezing just from clinging to you for dear life, and you're not even out of breath.”

She said this in a way that was laid back, conversational, but there was a distinct look in her eye. Suspicion. He didn't know what to do about that. Was that why she gave him that weird look earlier? Because he wasn't breathing?

He wasn't breathing.

The intrusive thought practically pranced across his mind. Servos? Leaving sticky, dark feelings in its wake. He quickly shoved it, and the rising panic that was rushing in behind it, to the darkest corner of his mind to be dealt with at a later date. Preferably when he wasn't being interrogated.

“I exercise a lot back home.” He said smoothly, hoping to hide his inner turmoil. “I also really like parkour. I'm pretty used to running around dangerous places and jumping scary gaps.” He wasn't, but he did have a couple of hours flying around before and after his dad sent him away, and that was a blast.

For the most part. Nearly falling to his death from his window wasn't great.

“Little city kid looking for a thrill?” Cora chuckled, finally seeming to accept the answer and laying her head back, eyes closed to the midday sun.

Was it really almost noon?

A little clock immediately popped up in the corner of his vision at the mere thought, proudly announcing that it was 11:48 A.M.

He tried not to think too much about how his digital systems worked without him telling them to.

He chuckled softly, too, turning to look off into the distance ahead of them. They were actually on another hill, it seemed, so even though they were at the base of a garbage mound, he could see over a majority of the piles around them. The horizon glittered and waved like a mirage in the intense heat rising from the metal. "Yeah, you could say that."

Could he even feel thrilled anymore?

He shoved that thought away as well, making a huffing sound in his throat, voice box vibrating without actually needing air like it should have. He rolled himself to his feet, metal boots actually clanging softly on the metal below them. He heard Cora give a small groan beside him, and turned to see her throw her arm over her face dramatically. He chuckled and leaned over her, body shading her from the blazing sun. He poked her in the cheek till she opened an annoyed blue eye up at him.

Her eyes were really pretty.

"We should get moving. If for nothing else, if we stay here we are gonna get fried." He gestured up at the sun and cloudless sky. "And while I look fabulous in red, I doubt you wanna be walking around for the next week looking like a lobster." Nevermind the fact that his skin was fake and couldn't burn. He laughed and hopped away as Cora swung her foot out to kick him in the shins.

"Fine, fine, I'm moving." He gave her his hand, and with only a moment of hesitation, she grabbed it and he pulled her to her feet.

Only for her to gasp and nearly fall over all over again.

"What's wrong?!" He asked, a little frantic as he grabbed her by the shoulders and kept her from collapsing.

"I think I hurt my leg more while running." She grunted, straightening up with a scowl. "It's fine."

It was not fine.

He grabbed her arm and pulled her up yet again as she took a step onto her bad leg and nearly buckled again. “Yeah, no.” He did a fast scan while she wasn’t looking, sight turning blue with pop-up diagrams and vital stats as he quickly looked her up and down. She didn’t seem to have any infections, a blessing really, and the worst of it seemed to be that the cut’s scab had just reopened and the area around it had bruised badly. There was a new trickle of blood trailing down her shin, soaking her pant leg and staining her already dingy sock.

They should really change the pathetic rag that was acting as a bandage, but they didn't have the materials to do so. Best he could think to do was just to get her to her destination, where there were other people and resources, as quickly as possible. Hopefully before actual infection set in.

He looked up at the horizon again, blue grid lines laying themselves over the land without a thought, calculating distance and time. He didn’t really know where exactly they were going, but given the fact he couldn’t see civilization yet, he figured it was pretty far. At the rate they were going with Cora injured like this, it could take them up to weeks to get where they were going.

That wasn’t an option now.

“Get on my back.” He said.

“What?” Cora turned back to look at him incredulously from the two steps ahead she had hobbled.

“Get on my back.” He repeated. “You’re hurt, hungry and dehydrated. If I carry you, it’ll let your leg heal and we can move faster. We don't have infinite daylight, and I'd rather get as far away from that horde of robots as possible.” He really hoped that playing it like he was afraid would make her loosen up on her pride and let him take care of her.

Geez, when had he gotten so manipulative? Was Toby like this? Why had he never noticed? Why was he noticing now?

“Yeah, no.” Cora repeated back at him with a huff, shuffling several shaky steps forward. He barely had enough time to lunge forward to catch her as she inevitably slipped on a piece of sheet metal and nearly tumbled down the hill. He simply raised an eyebrow at her when she turned to scold him. She sighed with a resigned nod. “Yeah ok, we do it your way.”

“Thank you.” He said, crouching in front of her so she could climb on without needing to jump. He grabbed her thighs again as they squeezed his waist and tried not to grab too hard and hurt her.

When did he realize how fragile humans are? Is it programmed?

“Where to, Captain?” He jokingly teased, shoving the thoughts away. Cora huffed, but threw an arm out dramatically to point at the horizon slightly off to the right of where they were facing. South south-west his navigation system so helpfully chimed.

“Onward mighty steed! We ride at dawn bitches!” She crowed in an overly dramatic voice, gently kicking his thighs with her heels like he had seen cowboys spur their horses from those really old western movies Toby liked watching when he was little. He simply rolled his eyes and started trudging in the direction she had gestured.

He pointedly did not comment on the fact that it was long past dawn.

Chapter End Notes

A little note about this story in particular. I haven't seen Astro Boy the movie or the anime in years, and honestly I don't have time to watch them again. I'm just gonna wing it with what I remember and let my imagination fill in the blanks. This does mean that the character's might become a little ooc, but I'll try my best to stick to their original core values.

And as always, feel free to leave constructive criticism in the comments, I always want to get better!

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

throws open the door to my cabin in the woods Boom, two chapters in two days. I'm fucking rocking this.

Anyway, TW: heat exhaustion, mentions of vomiting, swearing.

No beta, we die like men.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was *hot*.

Like, Cora felt like her skin was gonna melt off and her head was gonna explode from the heat. It was hot and stuffy and the air itself felt like it was trying to smother her.

The fact that Astro was still chugging along with her on his back while she felt like she was legitimately dying was rather infuriating.

And humiliating.

How was this stupid, doe-eyed city kid holding up so well while she was boiling alive? His skin felt a little warm under her touch, but he wasn't so much as sweating. She had even caved and buried her face in his shoulder to try and shield her eyes from the blazing sun, both the light coming from above and the blasted beams reflecting off the metal littering the ground trying to cook them from all directions.

How was he not tired?

They hadn't rested for hours, not since he had demanded to carry her. What were they feeding the Metro kids? Raw titanium?

God she was hungry.

When was the last time she ate? 12 hours? 24? She thinks it's been over 24 hours since she left the circus at Hamegg's request. She couldn't remember what parts he had sent her and the other kids out for. Did the other guys make it back to the tent? She hopes they did. Apparently robots were attacking humans now.

God she was thirsty.

"Cora?" Astro had stopped walking. When did he stop walking? "Hey, are you ok?" Was she? She didn't feel like she was, but she wasn't gonna tell the city kid that. She nodded against his shoulder. There was no way in hell she was gonna look up and expose her throbbing head to the sun's daggers that it so insistently drove into her eye sockets. "Cora?"

Why was he still talking and not walking? They had places to be. She said she was ok, move Wonder Boy.

"We'll continue on in a bit, let's just rest for a bit, get out of the sun for a while." Astro commented as he hoisted her up a little higher. Her thighs ached with the movement, the pressure of his fingers feeling like claws digging into her muscles. She held back a whimper.

"Wonder Boy finally got tired?" She managed to croak out. She hoped he didn't notice the pain in her voice. It was embarrassing how weak she's been the last couple days, embarrassing how many times he's had to save her. She heard Astro chuckle, the sound buzzing oddly in his throat next to her ear.

"Erm yeah." It felt like he tripped slightly as he started moving forward again. He laughed again, this time high and nervous. It buzzed in his throat and she noticed that she didn't hear him breath back in. "It's pretty hot out here, heh, we should probably find some shade."

Ha! He was hot too!

...

That came out wrong.

Was he breathing?

Now that she noticed it, she couldn't tell. He had been walking for hours, in the heat, carrying her, he should at least be a little winded right? Her ear was pressed right against his neck, shouldn't she hear his heart pounding?

God her head hurt.

She clung to him a little tighter as she felt him jump down something, slip a little and then adjust her on his back. Next thing she knows is the blessed feeling of cool air. Well, not cool. It was still way too warm but it wasn't quite as hot as it was. Her skin also wasn't burning anymore. Astro made that lobster joke earlier, but she's sure she is thoroughly roasted at this point. She lifted her head ever so slightly, eyes squinting at the harsh light until they adjusted enough to let her look around the blessedly shadowy crevasse Astro seems to have stuffed them into. She glanced up only to do a double take at the good 15 foot walls on either side of them.

What the actual fuck.

She felt them jump. Did this absolute lunatic just jump 15 feet down while holding her? He didn't even roll with the landing? How does he still have knees??

She just pressed her face back into his shoulder, deciding that she was too dizzy to question it.

Unfortunately that didn't last long as Astro crouched down, gently unlocked her arms from around his neck and leaned back, dropping her down as she bonelessly flopped off his back. Rude. Though, she thinks she heard the buzzing again like he had been talking, so maybe he asked her to get off but she didn't hear him. Still, rude.

There was a hand on her head.

She forced her eyes open again, eyes stinging and head throbbing. Why was his hand on her head? Her hair was really greasy, and while she was by no means self conscious about her appearance, she didn't want him touching her greasy head. She was really sweaty. It was really hot. Why wasn't he hot?

He was frowning down at her, eyebrows furrowed in deep concern, eyes glowing a bright, artificial blue. He looked like a puppy. A pouty puppy. She would never tell him that though, as obviously puppies were cute and she didn't want to imply that he was cute. Even if he was. She really liked his big eyes, the soft brown made him look so innocent, like someone who had never seen the horrors of the world.

Wait. His eyes were glowing?

"Ar' your eyes glowin'?" Her tongue felt puffy. She was almost distracted enough by the sandpaper feeling in her mouth to miss how Astro pulled his hand away from her like he had been burned, eyes widening in panic and immediately losing the blue glow.

She almost thought she was imagining it.

"M-my-my eyes? G-glowing?" He quickly looked away, blinking a couple times before looking back to her, like he was trying to turn off a faulty flashlight. Then he chuckled nervously, hand rubbing the back of his neck in what she quickly realized was a nervous tick of his. He quickly sobered, face going back to that worried puppy look again, big brown eyes only enhancing the adorableness of the expression. "You're not looking great and I think you're overheating. How are you feeling? Dizzy? Nauseous?"

Oh yeah, one hundred percent to all of those. Her head throbbed and spun, and having her eyes open was making her wanna hurl. It was so hot. It was all she could do to close her eyes and make an affirmative sound in the back of her throat.

Huh, her throat kinda buzzed, too.

“Yeah definitely heat exhaustion. I don’t have any water to help cool you down, but we will hang out here till it cools down, k?” She heard him shuffling around next to her, then there was a gentle hand lifting her head and something soft was placed under it, head gently lower back down.

For the love of... did he give her his jacket *again* ? This boy is gonna be the end of her.

Or maybe her end will be from melting.

She heard Astro shuffle some more, sitting down by her feet, but she couldn’t bring herself to care much. It was cooler here and her head hurt and she was tired and as much as she hated to admit it, having a pillow was comfy and her head was so heavy. She was really tired.

Why was she so tired? She hadn’t even been the one walking all day.

She vaguely remembered that one time Widget got heatstroke when they were all younger. She had been playing really hard and forgot to drink water. The poor girl threw up for nearly an hour, bringing up any water or food they had managed to get down her. It was really scary and Hamegg wasn’t home. They ended up taking her down to the basement of the building they were staying in, where the dirt walls made the room really cold. She was a bit better after she cooled down, but she was exhausted for a couple days afterward.

Cora felt like throwing up, too. She desperately swallowed against her dry throat, tongue sticking to her mouth and throat clicking with the motion. She just really wanted to sleep.

So she did, slipping away in the cool shadows to the sound of Astro shuffling.

Chapter End Notes

Not gonna lie, I have no idea what this is. The characters kinda just did what they wanted this time. I didn't even plan for Cora to get heat exhaustion, she kinda just did. Disclaimer, I have done literally no research on this, it is just coming from the minimal experience I've had with heat exhaustion in the past. I literally don't know what I'm doing, and I'm mostly writing this as a way of procrastinating my final project that I haven't started and is due in less than 24 hours.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!