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END OF THE ROAD

Rahn stopped the Iron Rosie when it was safe. This was a waypoint, not the final destination. It was safe here, and everyone could take a breath. People were tired, some had even died on the way out and Auto said a prayer to the Sponsor, hoping they would live on in Syndication. He then thanked the Sponsor and looked to Rajah, who was sitting with other survivors just as important to her. He was glad they were safe too.

He found Connie, and Chuck. Redline. Willow was safe. In fact, they hadn't lost a single TV and it seemed every member of the Iron Rosie had lived. Later Rajah would tell him this was her idea of winning in the face of all they had lost.

"Where are we going next?" He'd asked Tes.

"ANYWHERE WE WANT TO!" Tes said with fire and life in his eyes. But to Auto, those words came with a catharsis. He'd lived in Campbell his entire youth, and moved to Bravo never being part of a caravan. He'd done some travel with BFG, and there was the time when he was a Jones, but he'd never truly traveled as one might think.

Looking up at the sky, later that night, laying across the wagon he'd built for Rajah, Auto studied the moon and the stars for the first time he could remember. He let his thumb run across the knife point of her nail a few times enjoying the stab of pain while the weight of her head on his chest soothed away all his fear. She was still listing places they could visit, conjuring images he'd only seen through the static veil of the oracle box. For the first time, Auto didn't have a plan. There was only now, and that was all that mattered.



can't go home again

The skull turned to powder, small flakes floating into the air around Auto as he dropped from the passenger side of the Serenity. He looked at the level of destruction not knowing how much of the black and empty lands were claimed by the burning season or the bomb that Bravo had built. Once again, Bravo proved there wasn't a problem they couldn't solve without the proper application of enough explosive power.

Redline came around to look at what Auto was staring at as the Director began the scene; "Oh my, God. I'm back. I'm home. All this time." He fell to his knees and continued, "You finally did it." Driving his fist into the ground he shouted, "You maniacs! You blew it up!" he punched the ground again and went silent.

There was long pause as Redline just watched, then looked at the destruction without being phased by Auto's outburst. Auto stood up to explain, "Original *Planet of the Apes*. It's about how the Old'cestors were eventually going to lead to their own downfall."

"Like the great fall." Redline said with a nod, understanding.

Auto nodded, "There's nothing left for us here. The memories of the people who died for us is all we need to take back. If they're forgotten then, and only then, will Bravo have truly failed."

They climbed back into the Serenity and Redline started the monster back up again. "We're going to need to stop and re-fuel. It's going to be a DJ outpost."

Auto sighed and sank in the seat to get more comfortable. "Yeah, yeah. I know. 'Stay in the Cab'." And with that Redline nodded and began the journey back.

It was supposed to have been an easy and direct route to meet up with the Iron Rosie's next stop. Only it wouldn't be as direct, and the trip would be anything BUT easy.

But that's another story.