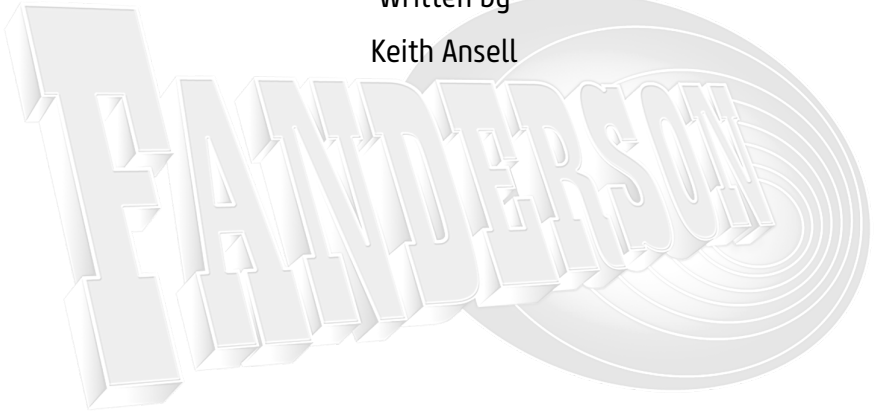


# SECOND CHANCE

A Captain Scarlet And The Mysterons Story

Written by

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Captain Scarlet disregarded the speed limit as he drove the Spectrum Saloon Car flat out along what seemed an endless motorway — towards a meeting with destiny.

The monotony was broken by the epaulettes on his uniform flashing and his cap mike swinging down in front of his mouth.

‘Any new developments?’ questioned Colonel White, seated at his control desk far above in Cloudbase, his voice losing little of its authority over Scarlet’s cap radio.

‘No, sir,’ responded Scarlet. ‘We are proceeding as planned to rendezvous with the World President and escort him to Spectrum Maximum Security Building.’

‘Captain Brown?’ called White.

The cap mike of Scarlet’s companion swung down. ‘Yes, sir?’

‘I’m putting you in charge of this operation.’

‘Yes, sir!’ said Brown, a look of pleasure on his face.

‘Captain Scarlet,’ added Colonel White, ‘after the rendezvous has been effected return here to Cloudbase.’

‘S.I.G.’

Scarlet turned to Brown as soon as their commander-in-chief had signed off.

‘Well, you first big assignment. I wish you luck.’

Thanks,’ said Brown. ‘Do you think the President’s life really is in danger?’

‘Well, judging by what happened on the Martian expedition I’d say the Mysterons have the capability of carrying out their threat,’ answered Scarlet thoughtfully.

‘If only we were fighting something we understood,’ said Brown. ‘Something tangible, something in three dimensions...’

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Suddenly the Saloon Car's nearside front tyre punctured in a violent release of air and Scarlet lost control. The car swerved and crashed through the barrier surmounting the top of the motorway embankment and plunged to the ground fifty feet below.

It burst into flame.

Scarlet and Brown had been thrown from the car on impact and now lay unmoving in pools of their own blood. Brown was already dead, his eyes open and unseeing, but Scarlet clung tenaciously to life as the flames closed in on him and engulfed his mortally injured body. He knew he was going to die, and yet would not give into the inevitable.

Scarlet was determined to survive — to crawl away from the flames. The pain became unbearable, and then he felt a wave of euphoria flood over him.

He could see a bright light before him and darkness all around. For a moment he wondered where he was — what had happened?

Then it struck him — was this death? He couldn't help laughing to himself.

This must be death... Or the last few seconds of his life spent in the refuge of madness to escape the pain.

He had always thought that when you died that was it.

Live life to the full because you only get one shot at it. Well, maybe he'd been wrong after all... Scarlet seemed to drift towards the light — for a second it seemed like two brilliant green circles and then it became one blinding white light again.

He realised he was uninjured. The horrible burns and torn flesh had miraculously healed.

Scarlet passed through the light and found himself in a white room. He saw Captain Brown standing nearby with a strange blank look on his face - but with not a rip or tear in his uniform from the car accident.

The room was silent - as silent as the grave.

Scarlet could not accept this. Soon he must feel the pain of the flames and this dream would end for good.

'I won't stay here!' he shouted, trying to force himself back to reality. 'I want to live. I won't let it end like this!'

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Anger welled up inside him.

If he was dead he would prove that he still had some... independence - some guts. Scarlet walked towards Captain Brown and tried to grip his colleague's shoulders, but his hands passed right through him.

Then Captain Black appeared and began to walk towards him.

The two men stood facing one another.

'Where am I?' asked Scarlet.

'You are dead,' answered Black solemnly.

The words struck Scarlet like a physical blow.

'No - I won't accept it!' roared Scarlet, raising his fists towards Black.

Captain Black suddenly hit Scarlet with a blow to the chest - and it hurt him.

Scarlet tried to defend himself but Black was unstoppable and had soon pummelled him to the ground.

Scarlet rose to his feet again, angrier than he had been in a long time.

'You are dead,' repeated Black, easily avoiding Scarlet's punches. 'But I think you are still strong enough for me to resurrect you.'

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To Scarlet these words were like thunder in his mind and he fell almost senseless to the ground again.

The white room disappeared — and so did Captain Brown. Scarlet and Black were alone now in a colourless void.

'I don't understand any of this,' gasped Scarlet. 'I must be going insane.'

'Your physical body is dead,' explained Black, 'but your mind — or your soul; call it what you will — was captured by the Mysterons and transferred here when they engineered your fatal car crash.'

'Where is here?'

'We are in - cyberhell.'

'Cyberhell?' Exclaimed Scarlet.

'Our minds have been somehow trapped within the Mysteron's computers on Mars. You have got to stay angry Paul — otherwise you begin to lose your sense of identity, like Brown.'

When it first happened to me I could feel my mind just slipping away until I focused on fighting the Mysterons and regaining control of my body. They are using it as a conduit for their powers on Earth - I've become a murderous puppet in their hands and I'll stay that way unless Spectrum can find some way to defeat them.'

'How do you know all this?' queried Scarlet sceptically.

'One thing the Mysterons overlooked is that because my body is still alive I'm aware of every instruction they give it — of every move they make on Earth. I've also gained enough knowledge to send you back.'

'God knows I want to live and fight these murderous Martian bastards,' cried Scarlet, 'but I was badly injured and burnt in the car crash—'

'The Mysterons have created an indestructible duplicate of you to help carry out their threat to kill President Younger,' explained Captain Black. 'When the time is right I'm going to transmit your mind into that body. You will become Spectrum's greatest weapon in fighting the Mysterons - and you must defeat them otherwise they will eventually destroy all life on Earth.

Stay angry, Paul. Stay very angry'

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Scarlet concentrated on hating the Mysterons. They had to be stopped - they had to be destroyed...

It could have been days or it could have been only minutes before Black spoke again - time was meaningless in this featureless cyberspace.

'They Mysterons have failed in their threat to kill the World President and they have abandoned the duplicate of you as I hoped they would. Get ready to be returned to the real world,' said Black soberly. 'You may not remember any of this when you leave here'.

'What about you?' asked Scarlet.

'I must stay — I've got nowhere to go with my body under Mysteron control.

Look upon it as penance — I started this damn war of nerves.

Goodbye, Captain Scarlet. And good look.'

Scarlet did not know what to say as Black mentally operated the Mysteron beam that would carry his consciousness through hyperspace back to Earth with pin-point accuracy.

Would the Mysterons detect Black's actions in time to stop him? Maybe they knew what he was doing all along and this was part of some insane cosmic

game to test Mankind. Maybe none of this was happening — and yet it seemed so real.

So real. So real...

A wave of euphoria flooded over Scarlet.

He could see a bright light before him and darkness all around.

Scarlet seemed to drift towards the light - for a second it seemed like two brilliant green circles and then it became one blinding white light again.

Suddenly he was falling from a great height - and there were bullet wounds in his chest.

He screwed up his face in agony as he saw the ground getting nearer and nearer...

Then blackout.

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When Scarlet awoke hours later in the Medical Centre on Cloudbase all he could remember after the car crash were the flames engulfing his body — and then darkness...

Scarlet was alive again and miraculously in a body that had somehow been created by the Mysterons in his own image — a body with amazing regenerative powers now under his control.

Scarlet had a second chance at life and he was determined to make a difference this time — he would become a key player in this insane interplanetary war.

He cursed Black for his role in starting these events.

**The End**