

MARS3

tags: 1966, mars2, spiro_mold, tab2

31 March, same day.

"You're not supposed to be here."

TAB2 from a distance, the eight year old holding a shoebox full of Mold Industries action figures tucked under his arm. Picked up a rock. Chucked it the twenty yards.

Spiro went down.

Partway up the runway he'd felt a hand on his shoulder, or maybe it was a finger running down his spine. Turned around and there was TAB2, just off the south end, shouting something, probably vulgar, but too far away to be heard clearly. Spiro stood straining his ears until the unseen projectile skinned off the side of his face, dropping him spiraling into the pavement, nose down, Paris Air Show '89. Where he stayed.

TAB2 caught up with him.

"Say, are you all right?"

"When a headline ends with a question mark, the answer is no."

Spiro spat, laying flat on his back as the pesky youngster skylined himself against the dusky firmament, twin moons surfacing the waning daylight to frame TAB2's visored visage like a pair of Kenner TIE fighters mustering for a critically important, late-day strafing run. The spit landed back on his own face.

"Your face is fucked."

Indeed, Spiro's cheek had split in two, strange colors pouring out of him. His mask was puking rainbows. He rolled over onto his stomach, face down, purposely draining his life's blood onto the slowly cooling tarmac. But death seemed to be ghosting him, and TAB2 couldn't help but feel responsible.

"Tell you what," TAB2 began. "I'll just give this back to you."

He dug into his shoebox and produced a wax cylinder, tossed it onto Spiro's lap. It looked familiar.

"My apartment's only a couple hundred miles from here. If we get started now we can be home by, oh, I'd say the first of October."

Spiro looked around.

"I'm calling Sue," he said.

Cells collapsing, he melted into the runway.