

## “Braces Are the Original Transformers”

If you saw me during my freshman year of high school, you'd never know what was really going on. I had something even cooler than a 30-foot tall alien robot that can change from a car into a killing machine that saves the day. I had braces – braces that would take my mediocre, overlapping teeth and change them into perfection. Sure, I might not be saving the world alongside Optimus Prime, but my seriously straight teeth would allow me to smile my brightest and spread contagious optimism. And personally, in a battle between optimism and Optimus Prime, I'd want that optimism and great smile to win.

Braces truly are the original transformers. They are able to transform a part of the human body by attaching little pieces of metal that act as more than that. They are those “robots in disguise.” Their true abilities are disguised by their appearance. Even more than that, braces transform who people are, not just their teeth. Since having braces, I have become a more confident person. The metal that shaped my teeth also inexplicably changes my personality. Getting that support and transition from pre-teen to teen life with the help of braces made it an original growing experience.

Much like the alien robots that act as guardians for vulnerable Earth, there's always a part of my original braces that are there to watch over my surprisingly malleable teeth. I feel as if there's Bumblebee sitting behind my front row of lower teeth, waiting to lend a helping hand and keep the unruly Decepticons (or teeth) in their very straight line.

Maybe I'm not a movie star. Maybe my life isn't full of near-death experiences. What I do know is that braces have impacted my life just as powerfully and were the original transformation that has prepared me for all the changes left to come in my life.

## “BRACES ARE THE ORIGINAL TRANSFORMERS”

Tick-tock. As I lay awake in the chair, my mind wanders. Tick-tock. The clock counts down the minutes. As my tongue runs over the metal on my teeth, I begin to drift into a daydreaming sleep, pondering about the contraption in my mouth...

After years of oppression, the little teeth people of Mouthtopia were at a loss. Their once straight, aligned life had been ruined by the awful Decepticon. This terrible being was not something that the teeth people could see, but a force inside of them, driving the teeth people into utter chaos. Having complete control, the Decepticon caused them to isolate themselves, overcrowd one another, or grow into crooked teeth people. He even made some fall out of Mouthtopia altogether! Because the Deception had ultimate power over the teeth people, their hopes of returning to a straight and orderly life grew dim.

Every night they wished for someone to save them from their misery. But then, the teeth people saw something in the distance that was shimmering with wonder. It was Optimus Prime! He was the guardian of the teeth people! His long thin bands were wired together with courage, while brackets of strength reached out to each tooth person. With Optimus' touch, every tooth person was filled with empowerment, drowning the Decepticon. Using his strength, Optimus pulled the teeth people out of their rut and banded them together, placing each tooth person neatly beside the other. The teeth people beamed with gratitude and pride. Optimus Prime had transformed the chaotic teeth people into an object of pure beauty in Mouthtopia...

I woke to the sound of “you're all finished, go ahead and take a look”. As I peered into the mirror, I saw the straight pearly whites beaming back at me. My tongue glided over the smooth surface, lost without the feeling of metal and wires. Yet, looking at my smile once again, I saw how my mouth of chaotic teeth was transformed by my guardian metal and wires into the beauty of a smile I share with the world every day.