

Ridin' Out the Storm

A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 2

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Weather Report: 3500-02

Well that was a fun-filled two days. Rex and I yell at each other, I don't even remember what for. He throws a bottle of beer at me, I dodge, the bottle hits the food dispenser and shatters, and beer gets into the circuitry. We then spend the next two days repairing the freakin' thing, starving because we can't get any food.

Why did it take two days? Funny you should ask.

Neither of us took any electronics courses, so we pulled out the manual, only to discover it was written in Ancient Fundarian. Or maybe it was Norellian. Maybe it was Elvish. Hell if I know. It was so useless that Rex dumped it into space, and we begged Central Command to send us a repair video.

So Central Command sent us a video of Snot-Nose's coronation. We deleted it and requested the repair video again. They sent us the latest episode of *Dancin' With the Admirals*. We deleted it and requested the repair video again. They sent us a video teaching us how to read Ancient Fundarian. We sent back a message worded so strongly that subspace in this part of the galaxy melted. They finally sent us the video showing us how to repair the food dispenser.

And remember, it takes hours for each of these communications to get through. By the time we finally fixed the thing, we were wondering if we could eat the wiring.

Then I got a message from Shelandra saying that she had been assigned as a port gunner on Admiral Brighton's flagship, the *Heir Apparent*. (Yes, that's its real name.)

She's a gunner on the flagship. I'm the pilot of an unarmed throwaway vessel called *Scout 1*. Why didn't they just name our ship the *Expendable Dirtbags*? Or maybe *Hey Come Shoot Me I'm A Sitting Duck*? I lay curled up in my bunk and got drunk.

The next morning, Rex came to get me. We'd reached our destination. It wasn't a planet full of hot babes and cold beer, it was an uninhabited swamp pit. The survey bots reported that it would produce about six PV per fortnight. We relayed the data, and CC gave us another star system.

I thought about running for it. I really did. Just turn off the transponder, cut all communication, and get lost. But then who would help us fix our food dispenser?

Besides, there's nowhere to run to. According to the news reports, the whole galaxy is now in a state of war. All the treaties have dissolved, and every empire is accusing every other empire of stabbing it in the back. Everyone's trying to get as much real estate as possible. It really looks like it will be a case of Last Empire Standing. Everyone is our enemy.

There's nowhere safe. Nowhere at all.

So we punch it for the next star system, just tryin' to ride out the storm.