

Ridin' Out the Storm

A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 1

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Weather Report: 3500-01

What a way to celebrate graduation. Get drunk, make a lousy pass at the hottest brunette I've ever seen, find out she's an admiral's daughter, and wake up with a hangover and a first-class ticket to nowhere.

And why did I get drunk? Because stupid me finally showed Shelandra my journal after all these years, and she just stared at it, then she laughed. "Why do you call it the Weather Report?" she asked.

"Don't you get it?" I asked her.

"Uh...no, sunshine."

I started talking to her like she was in the drone zone. "Because my name's Jake Storm. So if a guy named Storm makes a journal entry, he can call it the Weather Report. Get it?"

She just looked at me like I was crazy and laughed again. So I said screw it and got drunk. I think I have a dim memory of Shelandra even telling me on the dance floor, "You know she's Admiral Brighton's daughter, right?" but all I heard was blah-freakin'-blah, and my next memory is waking up on my own ship, locked in my cabin.

Yeah, that's right. Fresh out of the academy and I've already been given a command. Starship? Destroyer? No. A *scout ship*. One of the first ever built. Rex told me Admiral Brighton signed the order himself, along with the words, "Make sure that junkfilth excuse of a private stays as far away from this planet as possible for the rest of his career." Or some such sentiment. Yeah. The feeling's

mutual. I hope his precious daughter marries a politician.

According to the orders I found lying next to me, I ship out tomorrow. They finally pulled the plug on old Kickbrass Karsten, so his wet-nosed snotty little son is our new emperor as of yesterday afternoon. And guess what Diaper-Rash wants to do? That's right. Conquer the galaxy. Prove to everyone that he's not the wet noodle that he really is. Get out of daddy's shadow. And what better way to do that than to send a war fleet to drop some bright and flashy greeting cards on our neighbors. Yee-haw. Go get 'em tiger. I think he's compensating for something, *big-time*. I also think his generals will kill him within a year. Hell, six months, if we're lucky. But until then, we're all on a crash course for war. The crown wasn't on Snot-nose's head more than two seconds before he commissioned new colonizers and a big fancy defensive space station, and told his existing scout ships to go find his enemies yesterday.

So between Emperor Baby-Tantrum and Admiral My-Daughter's-Too-Good-For-You-You-Low-Life-Scumsucking-Garbage-Disposal, I won't be seeing home again for at least a year. I'll be out in deep space. Alone. With no weapons. Or shields. Or escort. Or a bottle of hooch. Not even a good book to read. Not a freakin' thing.

I hope Cryboy's generals kill him within the next week.

Rex says I shouldn't say stuff like that about the emperor. He thinks it'll get me killed. Right. Like anyone would ever be interested in the journal of a J5 private. Besides, I'm just sayin' what everyone else is thinkin' but is too

scared to admit. So am I brave or stupid? I really don't give a toss.

Yeah. I really hope she marries a politician.

You wanna know how droned out our Esteemed Wunderkind is? Fearless Leader actually renamed our *entire empire* last night! Our empire is now named...

Wait for it...

Benevolence, Ltd.

Yeah. Real cute. But in space, no one can hear you laugh sarcastically.

Hell, maybe deep space is the best place to be. Get as far away from that nutjob as I can. Maybe I can find a nice planet where the people are sane and settle down. Maybe it'll be like those commercials where the guy lands on the planet full of hot women and cold beer.

Yeah. Right.

Anyhoo, that's it for this fun-filled weekend. Freshly graduated, commissioned a J5 private, drawin' a freakin' paycheck, and headed for adventure.

But really, all I want to do is ride out the storm.

Addendum

I won't be alone, after all. Rex just came on board and let me out of my cabin. He's been assigned as my copilot, and he says it's *my fault!* Apparently, Sarge told someone higher up that we're an inseparable team and we always get in trouble together, so Rex says he's being punished by association! I told him the only one being punished here was me, but he didn't think that was funny.

Anyhoo, now we're stuck in this tin can together for the next year.