

Ridin' Out the Storm

A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 10

Douglas Neman

Weather Report: 3500-10

Rex and I spent the next two days giving ourselves a crash course on our new assignments. We set all fun and games aside, learned that kitchen from top to bottom, discovered that the kitchen staff actually has a menu we're supposed to follow, learned the menu, taught ourselves to cook everything on it, and – most importantly – left ourselves little sticky notes everywhere.

Everywhere.

Every.

Where.

I know what you're thinking, dear non-existent reader. Rex and I get serious and work hard? Ha ha! Pull the other one!

You betcha. It's amazing what you can do when your survival depends on it.

Then we spent two days sleeping every spare moment.

Once all that was out of the way, we could finally get down to our real jobs: solving our mystery. We are both now officially obsessed.

We started by making friends with the crew, which was easy because we would have done that anyway. We sought out the lowest scumbags we could find (and again, I'm pretty sure we would have done that anyway).

Our first score – and our biggest by far – was Jerry. We met him in the rec lounge one morning, and we zeroed in on him because he was alone. He'd finished his

drink, so we brought him another, sat down with our own, and said hello.

Jerry wasn't on that ship by choice, as all non-violent felons had been drafted on the war's first day. He showed us a special ankle bracelet he had to wear. "They think it'll track me if I run," he said.

"They think?" Rex asked.

He smirked. "They completely forgot what I was in for."

"Oh, and what was that?" I asked. "Now I'm dying to know."

"Oh, I just hacked Empire First and moved a few million from one account to another."

I whistled. Rex looked suitably impressed, nodded, and raised his glass in salute.

"So how'd you get caught?" I asked.

Jerry let out a soft snort of disgust. "They'd instituted a new level of security just that morning. Dumb luck, that's all."

"Aw, man," Rex said. "And now you're here."

Jerry shrugged.

"And you hacked your ankle bracelet?" I asked.

"First day."

"And where did they assign you?" Rex asked.

"Machine shop. I'm officially forbidden contact with the ship's main computer." He smirked and took a sip. "Officially."

Rex and I glanced at each other, and silently agreed to take a chance. "Maybe you could help us solve something," Rex said.

We told Jerry our mystery. We didn't leave out any detail. He listened without interruption.

He thought a few moments, scratched his chin, and said, "Yeah, I like a good mystery. I'm bored, anyway."

"You think you can maybe access a few files which'll have an answer?" I asked.

"You think maybe you can fix me some steak, salmon, and chocolate cake on a regular basis?" he asked.

"Teach us how to fake the ration records without getting caught, and that'll be nooooooo problem," Rex said.

Jerry smiled and nodded. "Gents," he said, "we're in business."