

# Ridin' Out the Storm

## A Galac-Tac Chronicle – Episode 7

Douglas Neman

### Weather Report: 3500-07

Stuff just got weird. Super weird.

Rex and I got back to the system where we met Vance, Veronica, and Janice, and it's a popular place now. But that's what happens when word gets around about Jake and Rex in the System of Love – everyone wants some.

(I didn't just write that.)

We had a colonizer from our own empire, a colonizer from Still Standing, and a colonizer from Heart of Fire hanging nose to nose to nose.

"Awesome," I said. "I think we got enough people here for a disco." I reached for the communicator with my right hand.

Rex said, "Leeeeeet's...hold off asking colonizers to be friends. I don't know about the other empires, but there's an officer on board our colonizer."

At the word *officer*, I froze. I reached over with my left hand, grabbed my right hand, and pulled it back from the communicator.

Nothing kills a party faster than an officer. Especially when the party is illegal. Fifth Law of Thermodynamics, or something.

We stared at the colonizers for a few moments.

"No one's doing anything," I said.

"Probably none of them can start the colonization process while another empire is present," Rex said. "Same as our survey bots."

"I guess no one's armed or they'd be shooting at each other."

"Nice to know our fearless leader thinks just as much of his colonizers as he does his scout ships."

Our communicator pinged. "*Colonizer 4 to Scout 1.*"

Rex and I looked at each other in horror. Each of us raced through our memories to figure out A) what we had done, B) what they might know, and C) how they might know it.

Rex cleared his throat and replied as professionally as he could. "This is *Scout 1.*"

"Dock to starboard."

We were silent for a moment. Then Rex managed a polite, "Copy."

I sighed. "Oh, we're in for it."

"There's no way they could know we had contact with the enemy."

I knew he was right. Yet, here we were. My heart pounded.

Then I suddenly realized – what the hell did I have to be afraid of? The whole galaxy is at war and there's nowhere to run, so why worry? Our chance of survival was pretty much the same no matter where we went or what happened to us.

To lighten the mood, I said, "What are they gonna do, anyway? Threaten to send us to deep space in an unarmed scout ship?"

"They might read your journal."

I was silent for a moment, then sighed.  
“Trust you to make things worse.”

He grinned. Then he stopped grinning.  
“When they say, ‘Dock to starboard,’ do they mean their starboard or our starboard?”

“Ask ‘em.”

“I’m not gonna ask ‘em! I’d never hear the end of it!”

“They probably mean their starboard.”

He sighed. “We’ll find out.”

Apparently, that was the right guess. (Get it? *Starboard? Right* guess? Oh, please yourselves.) We docked with our colonizer, and an ensign escorted us to the bridge, where a commander sat surrounded by a support crew at various stations.

We stood at attention and saluted. The commander looked us up and down, taking in our slovenly appearance. He did not hide his disgust at the sorry excuses for privates he saw before him.

“I have orders to bring you two back to the homeworld,” he said. “You have ten minutes to collect your belongings. Dismissed.”

“What about our ship, sir?” I asked.

“Your replacements are standing by,” he said. “It’s no longer *your* ship, private! Now get out of my sight!”

We saluted and left. We got all of our belongings off the ship in 9 minutes 53 seconds. Our replacements – a couple of ensigns who stood perfectly at ease, staring straight ahead, their uniforms crisp – stood waiting. As we stepped off our scout ship, they walked past us as if we weren’t there and shut the hatch.

Rex and I trudged to our new quarters and settled in.

I lay down on my bunk and said, “I betcha they’re bringing us back so I can be the new emperor. They finally realized what an awesome gift I am to-”

Rex slammed a pillow onto my face.