

#5
DEC. 19, 9109

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

Issue 5: The Genetic Equation

Liam Gibbs



When the Bad Guys attack Station One while Good Guy liaison Patton visits, can the Good Guys repel them and their new genetic modifiers? Scapegoat, get your finger out of there!

In a Galaxy Far, Far AwRy
Book 5: The Genetic Equation

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THE STORY SO FAR...

Book 1: *Serial Fiction Sideshow*, available in the hearts of one and all.

Book 2: *Home Sweet Home Invasion*, available in the hearts of one and all.

Book 3: *Technophobia*, available in the h—you're starting to see a pattern here, aren't you?

Book 4: *Armageddon Trigger Finger*, available in...hey... your heart. And one and all's too.

Book 5: *The Genetic Equation*, available blah blah blah.

Book 6: *Power Tool*, not available. Just kidding. Totally available.

Book 7: *The Lesser of Two Egos*, coming sometime.

Book 0: *The Story So Far*, you know the drill.

Please visit www.inagalaxyfarfarawRy.com for more info.

OTHER MATTERS OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE

Not So Superpowered, available at <http://tiny.cc/nssuperpowered>

Three Flash Fictions, available upon request from the author
Emergency broadcast warnings available from your local television network. The annoying ones that whine really loud.
Ha.

CHAPTER ONE

CRAPPING THE TERRAN GENOME

December 19, 9109, 6:25 a.m. (Galactic Standard Time).

The Produce Soldier lab. Prof. Professor approached the latent-technology double doors located at the end of the hall. The I-tech doors vanished, saved in computer memory for later retrieval, and he entered the lab. He greeted his colleague Prof. Scientist with a flapping wave, a gesture with which they'd replaced their secret handshake. That old handshake served only as an excuse for Prof. Scientist to show off his Vulcan nerve pinch skills anyway.

Terrans Prof. Professor and Prof. Scientist researched genetic weapons at Intergalactic Protection's warfare laboratories on one of planet Vesta's satellite stations. Creating a weapon that genetically transformed produce into military grunts was their current project. These new fruit soldiers would both massacre enemy troops and provide a healthful alternative to high-calorie rations. However, the five-year project had so far culminated in wasted effort, squandered funds, and rotten papayas. Maybe they should switch to strawberries...or pineapples. Imagine getting punched by a pineapple fist.

Prof. Professor sighed. Their efforts had succeeded in transforming volunteers into various things, but their goal, the reverse—giving sentience to these produce platoons—eluded their efforts. History's first citrus commando would have to wait. It didn't help their research that they snacked on the raw materials. Or dipped them in chocolate fondue.

“Welcome, Prof. Professor. You have two new messages.”

Prof. Professor leaped with his pulse. Oh, his stars and garters, those voice-control interfaces were abrupt. Called haunt controls, they *did* make objects act possessed by automating those objects wherever installed. Creepy.

Prof. Professor. What had seized hold of him to choose that absurd title? In university, he and Prof. Scientist thought legally changing their names would be hilarious. What a primordial, single-celled organism he was. He now had to endure sideways glances and that bizarre red underscoring on the second *professor* in his word processor. He at least wasn't the fool who'd called dibs on Prof. Mad Geneticist. His university roommate must have regretted cutting in line. Ah, and who could forget Head of the Physics Department Generalized Helmholtz Theorem?

“How went your progression on the samples since I departed for my repast?” he asked Prof. Scientist. He dusted his hands of his midday meal's crumbs, still lamenting the cafeteria's faulty thumbprint readers. Only the sandwich machine's reader worked, so his options were few, and he still tasted cafeteria cheese on his tongue.

He approached the counter on which lay the genetic transformer, a tabletop box sporting an activation button and a specimen tray. The sample pressed in its tray looked the same as when he'd left, except now it wore more fruit flies.

Prof. Scientist's despondency revealed more than his

words. “I fear not well. We still have yet to successfully combine the DNAs of a Virillian and a banana.”

“Curses.” Prof. Professor smacked the countertop and pulled away from the genetic transformer. “Now Intergalactic Protection will never have its Virillianana. How else will we determine which holds more resilience to shell shock, a tropical fruit warrior or its melon cousin?”

“As thought I as well. Technological limitations are forever the burdensome troglodytic stepbrothers of science.” Prof. Scientist sighed. “The melon counterparts are tastier, though.”

“Indubitably, my good colleague. Indubitably.”

“Back to the drawing fridge.” Prof. Scientist pushed his horn-rimmed glasses up his beak-shaped nose. Prof. Professor would have suggested purchasing newer eyes, but—

“You have three new visitors, Professors,” the haunt control said. Who was entering the lab?

The l-doors faded with a squeal, deconstructed into their inactive states and stored in computer memory. Holographic outlines replaced them to indicate their positions—

An atomic war exploded into the room! The doorframe and its wall blew apart in spewed rubble and belched dust. Duck! Prof. Professor rolled aside to avoid a shard of debris no smaller than a pouncing lion cub.

Laser blasts lit the area, crimson-tinged the clouds of soot. Prof. Scientist dived behind an atom manipulator. In a chaotic swarm, the blasts slid through equipment, the ceiling,

Prof. Scientist's seventeen-tier abacus.

"Lieutenant." A new voice announced itself like a light-bullet, carrying an unspoken harrumph of disdain. "Must I remind you? Time your explosions to totally demolish stuff when we burst through the wall and no earlier. And look at this smoke and debris. Awful. This is one of our worst entrances ever. It flies in the face of basic villainy."

"I'll consider that the next time we steal a DNA manipulator, sir."

"You mean 'gene doohickey.'"

Oh, no! *Those* voices. Prof. Professor had watched the speakers on news broadcasts. These interlopers assaulted innocents for their own gain, played cosmic chance with lives, boasted about their mastery at landmine dancing. And now these cads dared barge into this facility? No names could Prof. Professor attach to the voices, but they seared the surface of his brain like a cow brander.

Shadows shuffled in the hallway where a brilliant beam shot forth. Prof. Professor took cover behind the burning husk of the abacus. And if those fiends blasted it, well, Prof. Scientist could thrust his accuracy to the thirteenth decimal place where the electromagnetic spectrum didn't shine.

A pistol at his side, the intruders' silhouetted commander tensed, ready for action. His smile sparkled with an evil glint even in the darkness. "Lieutenant, where are the smoke pellets? Achieve the effect."

"Yes, sir. Would you like Morning Melody or Soothing

Pond?”

“I’m in a Soothing Pond mood. We *did* eat koi for breakfast.”

The follower’s shadow reached into a pouch, grabbed two small orbs, and threw them to the travertine floor. They hissed into smoke and misted the ruined doorway with charcoal dust.

“Behold, science geeks, for I have come to do stuff to your stuff!” The bellowing buffoon stepped through the wall of smoke and emerged from anonymous darkness. And the media names of the interlopers struck Prof. Professor’s memory as abruptly as a punch to the face. The most feared, the most hated, the most irritating—Master Asinine and Lieutenant IQ 23.

Master Asinine’s tongue wagged. “We have arrived.”

His hand clasped the air, his eyebrows perked up, his mouth readied an unspent cackle. Like a glittering waterfall, his swishing suit dazzled in the light upon his entrance. A vanilla-colored leisure suit? In this fashion market?

Prof. Professor grabbed a saline tube and double-squeezed its bulbous end to squirt streams of saltwater at Asinine. These deviants would come nowhere near whatever their malevolent purposes required. “Stay back, or face my salty spray, wrongdoers!”

“Wrongdoers?” Asinine snapped his fingers. “Plaster, wrongdo them before they gobbledygook me up some more. And grab that spray thingy. I’m thirsty.”

A third interloper, a Terran whose skin fell off his body in coagulated clumps, thundered out of the hallway's shadows. "Finally, someone to beat up. Nothin' else happenin' since ya got rid o' the table tennis in the starship." He passed Prof. Professor. "Hi-de-ho, nerd."

The one called Plaster swatted the saline tube from Prof. Professor's hand and belted him aside. Prof. Professor skidded across the floor and crashed into a cupboard, rattling its shelves.

The golemlike Terran tramped further into the lab. Prof. Professor's heart thump-thumped at a hyperactive one hundred sixty—no, *one hundred sixty-three*—beats per minute, threatening to tear loose his pulmonary artery and aortic arch and rupture the superior vena cava and possibly—dear, he needed a Dramamine.

Prof. Professor scraped up acidic adrenaline from within the pits of his stomach. "How dare you accost this place of knowledge? This is a civilized—"

"Do you even know what a one-syllable word is?" Asinine stuffed his hand over Prof. Professor's mouth. Had he scooped his fingers into the jelly jar a few times? "Lieutenant, smash things that look expensive or that offend my sense of smell. Plaster, grab that thingamabob we came here for."

"The san'wich oven?"

"No, we have the Toasterizationizer for ovening things. I mean, get the gene doohickey. That's the thing we're bringing to Brick so he can replicate the techno-cool."

Lieutenant IQ 23 smashed a plastic hydrogen molecule

model to the floor. He ground it under his heel and then grabbed a UV lamp. The head-sized question marks attached to his helmet's temples bobbed.

Against orders, Plaster scooped up the gamma ray sandwich oven, leaving a slimy hand free to snatch the genetic transformer.

"No!" Prof. Scientist lunged from behind the atom manipulator. He clutched at the genetic transformer and hugged it to his chest. "Intergalactic Protection has need of its banana army." He shoved Plaster back.

Plaster swatted Prof. Scientist away with a waxy arm. A viscous stripe splattered the professor's cheek. "No touchy-touch, brainiac. Ya can find some other way of gettin' your fruity banana snack attack." He stomped toward the ruined door. His face like a skull covered in melting flesh, he grunted. "I'll be in the starship. Don't wake me up when you get in, 'cause I ain't carin' when *Cosmonaut Chimp* gets back from them commercial messages."

As if he'd stepped on a tack, Asinine jolted. "Ooh, right. We're on a tight schedule. Lieutenant, finish your wanton destruction."

Lieutenant IQ 23 pulverized a radioscope against a wall. He held up an atom box. "Should I smash this, sir? I'm not sure it's expensive enough."

"I trust your judgment."

Lieutenant IQ 23 shrugged and hurled the atom box against a shelf. It ricocheted hollowly, bounced against his

forehead, and tap-danced its way toward the l-door.

Asinine and IQ 23 proceeded to the exit. Asinine's heel fumbled against the atom box, and he tripped forward. "Gah, who left their toys lying around?"

"The theft of our only genetic transformer will put our research back *years*." Still curled against the cupboard and rubbing his achy neck, Prof. Professor watched the two exit. He clutched Prof. Scientist's sleeve. "What shall we tell Intergalactic Protection?"

Asinine ducked back into the lab. "Tell them the truth. Tell them who stole their gene doohickey. Tell them it was... the Bad Guys." A wicked smile shaped his lips and remained ingrained in the moment before he reexited.

But he returned. "I mean, not all the Bad Guys. Only three of us. And Scapegoat's manning the getaway jalopy." He tilted his head in thought. "Well, when you get down to it, we all had a hand in this heist, so you *could* say it was all the Bad Guys. Except Appetite. All he did was eat the datasheet we wrote our plans on. So—"

From the shadows, IQ 23 said, "Sir, someone will trip the silent alarm if we wait any longer."

"Ooh, I hate those things. The way they give you the silent treatment. But you know they're judging you. Always judging." He turned back to the scientists. "You know what? Just tell them it was the Bad Guys and leave it at that. Oh, and remember to mention my stylish leisure suit. Shiny, huh?" His chest swanked forward to boast the leisure suit's most hideous

feature: the leisure suit. He winked. “Because I’m leisure and I’m suited.”

Asinine raised his pistol to shoulder height. “The Bad Guys came here to kick crock and chew bubblegum. And we’re all outta gum.” He padded a pocket. “Oh, wait. Here’s some.”

To be continued...

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What else should you expect...

Master Asinine has come up with a new scheme to rid himself of his friend-turned-nemesis, Legion: to combine the Face Blitzkrieg with gene-altering technology and make a dangerous weapon he hopes Schizophrenic won't ridicule him for. Nice try. Schizophrenic's on the ball.

...when you give your address...

But when Master Asinine and his gang of goons show up on the Good Guys' home turf, Station One, with their new genetic weapons, they threaten to turn their enemies into nothing more than organic soup. Now the Good Guys have to ward off the Bad Guys, keep out of the line of fire, and protect a protestor who has shown up to speak against the lack of females in an all-male military.

...to your enemies?

Can Legion simultaneously fend off the Bad Guys, impress visiting Good Guy overseer Brigadier General Patton, and keep his sanity? It's not even Monday!

"It's better than a trip to the dentist. Is that what you want to hear?"

— SOMEONE WHO WASN'T ANNOYED AT ALL.

"Such amazing talent in such a young lad."

— AN ELDERLY WOMAN IN THE FOOD COURT WHO THOUGHT I WAS HER GRANDSON.

"Honk-honk, screeeeeeeee, hrrrrraaaaaaaaggggg!"

— RUSH-HOUR TRAFFIC.

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