

#6
DEC. 21, 9109

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

Issue 6: Power Tool

Liam Gibbs



In a Galaxy Far, Far AwRy
Book 6: Power Tool

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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 PATHOLOGICAL LIES

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

Three Flash Fictions, available upon request from the author

Misspelled graffiti

CHAPTER ONE

BUYER BEWARE

December 21, 9109. 8:14 a.m. (Galactic Standard Time).

“OKAY, I’M CALLING THIS WREAKING OF CHAOS TO ORDER. Wait, Lieutenant, is this thing on? And is my *All-Tweener Girl Tracks* album playing? Good. OKAY, NOW I’M CALLING THIS WREAKING OF CHAOS TO ORDER.”

Crock, that sounded loud! Luzimoss Grenard’s Trioxidillian pinnas still vibrated under his skin-covered ears. Was that Master Asinine? Luzimoss stumbled off the sidewalk into the wall of a bank and accidentally crushed the bag of oranges cradled in his arm. A shame. They’d looked juicy. They *were* juicy, he guessed by the sticky remains drenched across his shirt. He really should pay closer attention to the precognitive aspect of his “knowledge hivemind,” his inborn hyperability.

“CITIZENS OF WHATEVER THIS PLACE IS, BOW BEFORE MY ALMIGHTY MASTERY OF YOUR ATTENTION FOR TEN OR TWENTY MINUTES, WHICHEVER COMES FIRST.”

That blithering bellowed through a megaphone so clearly and loudly in the Arkanal Marketplace that it sounded as if the heavens had ripped open with the voice of a raving idiot. Must have been the Bad Guys, the largest and most powerful criminal

organization in the galaxy, led by the idiot Master Asinine. “ALSO, MY NEW POWER TIE IS SHINY.” Yes, the Bad Guys.

The screams of market patrons raked the air, and a snarling stampede against pavement frenzied away from the Bad Guys, who marched through an agora. Luzimoss stepped aside to avoid the bystanders that shoved against each other in a melee to escape. One stampeding woman would soon slip and Luzimoss had to be ready. There she went. She slapped against the cobblestone sidewalk. Luzimoss helped her up before the stampede crushed her, and she continued to panic away. Through his hands, he funneled a warning over the growl of the stampede. “Hurry, before he starts making up letters!”

“I AM YOUR DEATH MACHINE, MARKET SUCKERS. BUT DO NOT FEEL CONFUSED MERELY BECAUSE I AM A MAN. I AM HERE SIMPLY TO EXECUTE AN ACTION PLAN TO END YOUR MEAGER LIVES AND GAIN INCREASED MARKET SHARE. FILE ME UNDER THE LETTER *DEATH MACHINE*. Are they bowing yet, Lieutenant?”

“They’re actually fleeing, sir.”

“I hate natural responses to panic.”

“Using intimidating business jargon causes that. And you sow the seeds of panic like a gladiatorial gardener. By the way, ‘death machine’ is not a letter.”

“Then it must be a number. So file me. I go under ‘death machine.’”

“Holy crock.” Multipurpose, the incapable and obese Bad Guy ninja, caressed a *sai* with his index finger. Luzimoss

could picture it without seeing him. “If you keep flapping your spew hole, I’ll file your crocking tenders under ‘things Multipurpose crocking filets.’”

Luzimoss ground his teeth in a hiss. Curse those ridiculous voices. One belonged to Master Asinine, the leader of the vilest criminals known to livingkind. And now he and his Bad Guys were terrorizing this marketplace. Luzimoss’s blood thickened enough to deepen the color of his blue skin. His body heat rose despite the wind in this side street.

He should have anticipated this situation. He anticipated everything...given a margin of error. He’d been caught off guard because his mind had wandered. A 63 percent chance that was the case, according to the multiple voices in his head, his knowledge hivemind. When his mind wandered, he neglected his knowledge hivemind.

Luzimoss didn’t need to look to know what was happening—he knew—but he looked anyway. Asinine’s garish fashion would take his mind off the juice covering his shirt. And possibly Asinine’s paddleball thwacking.

Luzimoss’s knowledge hivemind supplied the situation’s details, and he imagined the scene in his mind’s eye. Master Asinine stood behind the robot-suited Mechanism and announced buildings he wanted the armored cohort to destroy. And stand behind Mechanism he must: the mouthpiece of his loudspeaker snaked out the back of the armored goon’s helmet. Hadn’t he heard about wireless technology yet?

Asinine’s fashion nonsense today topped that of any

previous outfit, which told Luzimoss that the idiot desperately needed a wife, a tailor, or a gaping head wound. He dressed as if he were on his way to a business meeting for jesters. His self-made Proclaim Your Love for Cultural Icons T-shirt Day was today, and so his outfit included a white Junkyard Dog shirt. He wore purple suit pants with green suspenders over that and... Oh, in the name of dignity, white complemented most things, yes, but not a tie with carnation pink dots. Or mime makeup.

Okay, back to reality. Asinine would soon return to his public outcry. And was that a fanfare trumpeting from the speakers in Mechanism's bodysuit? At Asinine's behest, of course. One more polka fan Luzimoss could do without meeting.

"LISTEN UP, PEOPLE OF THIS STREET. Lieutenant, what's this street? We don't know? Okay, we'll name it. LISTEN UP, PEOPLE OF AVENUE INSANE-O-MATICULA. MY ASSOCIATES AND I ARE SEARCHING FOR AN OBJECT OF MUCH INTEREST. WE HAVE TRACKED ITS ENERGY OUTPUT TO THIS MARKET. YOU MAY NOT KNOW WHERE IT IS, BUT IF YOU REFUSE TO TELL US WHERE, I WILL INVITE YOUR MOTHER-IN-LAW TO YOUR HOUSE THIS WEEKEND. SO THERE."

Mechanism grumbled. "That is appealing to their sense of reason."

"And their sense of common."

Master Asinine's sycophantic second-in-command, Lieutenant IQ 23, stood beside Asinine. He accidentally smacked his leader's face with the question marks attached to

his helmet's temples. The ugliest goons to ever disgrace the news, Plaster and the fatter-than-fat Multipurpose, stood behind Mechanism and Asinine's bodyguard, Braindead. Multipurpose nursed an ache, a result of too much walking.

These weren't the prettiest bunch in the galaxy. Plaster was a skull-faced bruiser, the result of an experiment that left him with perpetually-oozing-and-replenishing skin the consistency of candlewax. Mechanism, whose face was never publicly seen, was an egomaniac wrapped in weaponized metal armor. The scaly Braindead was of the mute and reptilian Virillian race, and he played the role of Master Asinine's bodyguard. And Multipurpose...sigh...that sweaty, pasty Bulbosoid could eat an entire buffet spread but couldn't walk three feet without pulling a muscle.

The Bad Guys advanced, scaring bystanders out from underneath produce tables and transports. More screams littered the commotion, and the screamers clambered for escape. The oozing Plaster grabbed a melon table. He upended it and sent those underneath scurrying away. The brainless thug needed to do *something* for entertainment.

Asinine jibber-jabbered, "Mechanism, to show how serious this latest free-for-all is, enact the destruction of that parking garage over there with rockets o' plenty. Enact it in a free-for-all fashion, too. I don't do free-for-nones."

Luzimoss stepped forward. He needed to stop this before Asinine killed someone, an 82 percent likelihood if no one intervened.

Asinine checked a storefront. “Ooh. Mechanism, forgo the garage. Point and click a missile at that ice cream parlor. And blow me up a double scoop of rocky road. Who’s ready to find the crock out of stuff? Me, that’s who.”

In his full-body armor, Mechanism planted his robot-gloved hands on his hips. “I doubt this ‘coolness source of powerful proportions’ hides behind a drum of tutti-frutti. However, this will prevent us from clinging to any remaining shred of dignity. And destroying this store will perhaps deflect a cone into my forehead and kill me before the ridicule can.”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself. I’m sure you’ll last until the ridicule phase.”

Mechanism unleashed a tiny missile at Asinine’s desired target. The explosion snarled through the Arkanal Market and chewed apart the ice cream parlor. Luzimoss didn’t mind. He’d never before seen it, but his knowledge hivemind told him that parlor charged way too much for a waffle cone.

A lagging market patron limped between two buildings to escape the parlor’s bursting debris. Before shrapnel could decapitate him—a 94 percent chance if he kept on his current path—Luzimoss grabbed him and yanked him behind a billboard for Meat Paste Hotdogs.

“Neutronium Bonding Glue could have prevented this parlor’s destruction,” a public address speaker on the parlor’s wall said. “Like us on Facebook.” The parlor leaned forward with bricks crumbling off. It teetered...teetered...collapsed. A billboard advertisement on its side, one promoting military

organization Intergalactic Protection's new narcotics squad, dropped, slicing the air above Luzimoss. The building's upper floors loomed down. Luzimoss didn't bother moving since the ad had only a 2 percent chance of halving him. It cut the asphalt inches away, where the parlor crunched against the building next door. The area quaked with thunder billowing from the debris. Dust trickled into Luzimoss's nostrils.

Master Asinine spread his hands. "Fan out, everyone. Since these worthless fools would rather panic than help me achieve my misguided goal, you'll have to actually lift a finger. Multipurpose, that means you, too, no matter how out of shape that finger is."

"Shut the crock up!" Multipurpose stamped forward. Then the inevitable wince.

Master Asinine pointed his pistol at another building across the street. "The coolness source must be inside that shop. It's sinister. Mechanism, reengineer the front entrance so it looks blown up."

Mechanism slouched, his armor clanking. He looked displeased. He always looked displeased. Asinine's needless business lingo displeased him most this time. "Must you act this insipidly whenever we leave our headquarters? And whenever we are *at* our headquarters? This sinister shop is a joke store. You purchase our ammunition there."

"Not all of it. The exploding cigars come through the mail." Master Asinine aimed his pistol and popped two shots into the shop's latent-technology window. The l-tech window

fragmented into static nothingness. He popped another shot through the gap left by the l-window and hit nothing. He turned and fired at a furniture store, pecking apart a bunk bed and a dresser. “Okay, whoever finds me the source of unimaginable coolness may receive a plundering bonus for outstanding data-work projections. That coolness source is around here somewhere. I smell it. Smells like a wet dog.”

The last market patron scrambled around an advertisement hologram and out of the battleground, so Luzimoss approached Master Asinine. He knew this “source of unimaginable coolness.” His knowledge hivemind rated his chances of being correct at 97 percent.

Luzimoss stepped forward. “You there, with the fashion nonsense and the guy in the toy robot suit.”

Mechanism looked taken aback. “Toy robot suit? I’ll have you know—”

Luzimoss whipped up a hand: Mechanism, shut up.

The onrush of thrusters blew through the pulverized market square. Two yellow lights emerged behind a thick cloud that swelled from several chimneys. The cloud split to reveal a Fireball starship. Ugh. Not *them*. So intently had Luzimoss concentrated on the Bad Guys, he’d not noticed his knowledge hivemind’s warning. His blood heated. He’d had this handled! He slammed a fist against a civilian transport. The civ-tran bleeped in annoyance. The Good Guys had arrived, a team that their parent organization, Intergalactic Protection, had assembled as a specific response to the Bad Guys. And...huh?

On their starship's wing...Asinine's greedy smile in a yellow circle with a thumbs-up wedged in. The Bad Guy logo. How did IP allow that? Oh. His knowledge hivemind said it was due to some botched sponsorship deal Power Plant had signed the Good Guys up for. Now the logo made sense.

A British voice blared through a public address speaker. "GEORGE LOWENSLAND, MEDIA-NAMED MASTER ASININE, THIS IS HARRIER OF THE GOOD GUYS. FOR TRANSGRESSIONS AGAINST THE PLANETARY UNION OF RENOVODOMUS, WE HAVE COME TO PLACE YOU UNDER ARREST. PLEASE TURN YOURSELF AND YOUR FOLLOWERS IN."

"Turn myself in? How—" Master Asinine stopped and yanked at the mike dangling from Mechanism's head. Mechanism's head wrenched aside with it. "TURN MYSELF IN? HOW MANY TIMES MUST I TELL YOU I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG?"

A shuffle whispered out of the Good Guy starship's speaker. A perky voice trilled through the marketplace. "NINE MORE TIME. MEBBE MORE. MEBBE SIX."

"Jeffrey, I can bloody well manage the authoritative yelling. Thank you. Continue your cutting and pasting," Harrier said. Then, into the microphone, "DONE NOTHING WRONG? ASININE, YOU ARE RIGHT BARMY. EXAMINE THIS STREET. YOU'VE DEMOLISHED THIS ENTIRE BLOCK, YOU'VE MURDERED THREE INNOCENTS, AND—Yes, Jeffrey, it is a nice turtle drawing. You may put it on your fridge doojigger. No, we need not hear the happy-hobby art siren."

“A hostile takeover. I hate corporate raiders.” Asinine snapped his fingers. “Everyone, prepare for round one of atomic horseplay. Multipurpose, prepare for coat one of applied muscle ointment.”

Lieutenant IQ 23 scurried to Asinine, Braindead close behind. Plaster and Multipurpose laughed. Then only Plaster laughed. Multipurpose nursed an ache in his rolling gut.

Harrier’s voice turned away from the speaker. “Franchise, land the craft. Franchise? Franchise, stop shaking. You need not engage in combat. Just...” He growled. “Blimey. Very well. Everyone, just fly out.”

Luzimoss watched from his position behind a building. Several Good Guys shot from the starship: their fliers. Kamikaze’s landing proved too steep. He smacked into the ground, rolled across the street, hopped up, checked himself, looked disappointed, dropped down, and kept rolling into a fruit stand. Power Plant, Burnout, and Harrier faced the Bad Guys. Power Plant stuck out his tongue.

Luzimoss winced at them. The other half of the brawlers in this revolting war had arrived. Today’s contestants here comprised immature upstart and laser-shooter Power Plant, his older and angrier fire-wielding brother Burnout, the autoresurrecting Kamikaze, and the birdlike Harrier. Franchise, their pilot, remained aboard the starship.

Harrier, dressed in his yellow-blue impact suit, slid a hand over Power Plant’s shoulder. “Delay your tongue lashing until after the punches, Jeffrey. It may come in handy later.” He

flapped his feathery wings.

Master Asinine threw Mechanism's head mike at Harrier. Still attached to its wire, it snapped back into Mechanism's mouth plate. "Are you trying to stop me from gaining more market percentage by seizing the coolness source of powerful human goiter from us?"

"Humungaloidness, sir," Lieutenant IQ 23 said.

"My toy collection won't be complete without this coolness. It is the key to controlling the universe." Asinine snapped his fingers in recollection. "Lieutenant, remind me to pick up buttermilk pancake mix while we're here."

"Your favorite buttermilk-and-pancake foodstuff, sir."

"Uniting the two was pure brilliance."

To find a way out of this situation, Luzimoss scanned the breadth of his knowledge hivemind. Harrier clutched his head as if bracing against an abrupt migraine. And Luzimoss knew it *was* a migraine. Master Asinine, Plaster, Power Plant, everyone stopped and buckled to their knees. They all deserved this agony, but it soon stopped. Luzimoss finished scanning, having inflicted only a mild dose on them.

Still stunned, Harrier dropped to his knees, favoring a braced kneecap he'd injured during an attack on the Good Guys' headquarters last Friday. "We are here to arrest you for yesterday's hostage taking, Asinine, though I am unsure if mistaking cardboard cutouts for living people constitutes a crime."

"The intent was present, though the thought, as always,

stayed home,” Mechanism said. If he were holding a teacup, his pinky would have been poised.

“And I’s goin’ to ninja fantasy camp, so’s give in now a’fore I ninjas up you.” Power Plant stamped forward with the foot not wrapped in bandages and healing putty, injuries also from last Friday’s attack.

“Enough wit’ the openin’ remarks.” Plaster thrust forward and squared a stony punch into Harrier’s jaw. Harrier retaliated by slicing Plaster’s cheek with the talons of his fingers. The two slapped hands together, and their palms wrestled for dominance above their heads. Plaster slammed Harrier’s ribs with a mammoth boot to separate them.

Power Plant ducked Lieutenant IQ 23’s wild punch. Behind him, Braindead dropped on all fours. Lieutenant IQ 23 leaped forward and shoved Power Plant over Braindead. Studying from the grade-school playbook again?

Kamikaze darted around Mechanism, grabbed a trash ionizer, and battered it against the metal-clad figure. Mechanism held out an arm and watched Kamikaze slam into it. Just as Luzimoss had expected. Probably just as Kamikaze had expected, too.

Time to end this, Luzimoss decided, before anything but random shops and, with any luck, some Good Guy and Bad Guy skulls were destroyed. He marched into the center of battle, both arms outstretched, battle-fire zipping around him. His knowledge hivemind warned him to dodge everything before he caught a light-bullet in the shoulder.

In seconds, he was on Harrier. Approaching from the left gave him a 78 percent chance of moving unnoticed. He reached Harrier and twisted the kneecap Plaster had cracked two days ago. The wingman blacked out. Kamikaze fell next: Luzimoss dodged a punch that tickled the air beside him and stabbed a finger into a pressure point that made Kamikaze's eyes bulge. Luzimoss soon bested the other Good Guys, then followed up with the Bad Guys. Mechanism proved difficult to defeat, but a hidden chink in his oil-scented armor helped. All thanks to Luzimoss's knowledge hivemind.

The combatants squirmed, so Luzimoss lowered his arms. Humph. He stomped to Master Asinine, whose eyes clamped shut in tearful agony. "Looking for a powerful source? You tracked my brainwaves here. That source is me." He slammed a boot into Asinine's ribs and thundered off, leaving these warmongers to kill each other. Alas, they wouldn't, since the Bad Guys would recover first and escape.

"Quick! The key to our market strategy is escaping!" Master Asinine writhed with a hoarse cough. "The coolness source of great humu—Lieutenant, what was that word again?"

To be continued...

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Or have nothing to do with it. That is, if you feed off the
quiet sounds of my soul weeping in self-pity.

The greatest power in the galaxy...

Master Asinine and his alliance of imbeciles, the Bad Guys, have located a source of great power, one they plan to use in their war against the Good Guys. Because Asinine has a one-track mind, and he loves his wars. And sausages.

But when that source of great power turns out to be a living person—a reclusive Trioxidillian—things get uglier. Also snarkier.

...can see across timelines...

So now the Good Guys must make their move to stop the Bad Guys from acquiring this source of power and getting one step closer to total galactic domination. Not easy when Mechanism commences schemes of his own to wrest this power for his own evil deeds.

Meanwhile, left alone at home, Legion falls victim when a mysterious figure from his past captures him for who knows what. Owie.

...and he's really cranky.

Can Reef lead his team into the heart of the Bad Guys' own headquarters to rescue this Trioxidillian from both Master Asinine and Mechanism? Can Legion survive his captor's murderous plans? Will I shut up and let you read the book? Fine!

"Nice choice of typeface."

— SOEMBODY WHO KINDA SORTA MISSED THE POINT.

"In today's literary climate, one thing stays constant: Liam Gibbs's blithering nonsense."

— A CELEBRITY BOOK REVIEWER. BECAUSE THAT'S A REAL THING.

"Can I start you with some drinks?"

— FLO.

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