

#4
NOV. 12, 9109

IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

Issue 4: Armageddon Trigger Finger

Liam Gibbs



Oh, crap.

In a Galaxy Far, Far AwRy
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THE STORY SO FAR...

Issue 1: *Serial Fiction Sideshow*, available at <http://tiny.cc/iagffa1>, on inagalaxyfarfarawRy.com, and in the hearts of one and all

Issue 2: *Home Sweet Home Invasion*, available at <http://tiny.cc/iagffa2>, on inagalaxyfarfarawRy.com, and also in the hearts of one and all

Issue 3: *Technophobia*, available at <http://tiny.cc/iagffa3>, on inagalaxyfarfarawRy.com, an—you're starting to see a pattern here, aren't you?

Issue 4: *Armageddon Trigger Finger*, available at <http://tiny.cc/iagffa4>, on inagalaxyfarfarawRy.com, and... hey...your heart. And everyone else's.

FANTASTIC OTHER USES OF YOUR TIME

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

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

CHAPTER ONE

THE PAJAMA PARTY FOR YOUR PREAPOCALYPSE WARMUP

November 12, 9109. 7:42 p.m. (Galactic Standard Time).

Hidden in anonymity, Number A wrung his metal hands together with a cackle and anticipated glorious tomorrow—the day this galaxy, Stratus Cloud, would die.

Packed like hungry flies on a dog dump and thickening the surrounding air to the murky consistency of peanut butter, he and the cloaked doom troopers—a hodgepodge of the Terran, Haralsian, and Trioxidillian species—congregated in and around Number CA's farmhouse, which was no more than a gigantic shed. Rather, not a shed but their home base. Their shedquarters. And why? For the sinister purpose of genocide.

Number A discerned only the blurred outlines of the other figures who dwelled in the nebulous abyss beyond his hand in front of his face. The crowd was remarkably quiet in the darkness. Not a shifting foot or billowing robe ruffled the silence, and the infrequent voice that rose from the depths quickly sank back into the tarry beyond.

He couldn't see the crowd, though he knew at least Number CS stood close by because he kept playing with the

glow light on his new watch. That annoyed Number A less than smelling Number BB's eggy "gas giants" peep out every two or three minutes.

"Someone please light some candles," Number A said. "Not the Roman ones."

Flickering matches dotted the darkness and descended on candles that littered the shelves. The resulting light revealed the shedquarters in a mysterious bronze glow.

Hidden in cloaks similar to but darker than Number A's, the Numbers teemed about on both the ground floor and the splinter-infested mezzanine, pressed together like grubs crawling around one another. Those who didn't fit in the farmhouse mingled outside around the barbecue, the NO COOTIES ALLOWED sign pegged to the door, and Number CA's old farming equipment. Beers in hands, he and the other...uhm, like...four hundred or s—Crock, whose bright idea was it to hire so many cloaked figures? His?

Yeah. Probably.

The Numbers met to discuss this galaxy's destruction, their greatest task. Nothing could prepare them except this, their biweekly Cajun-style barbecue cookout. If only they'd gathered fewer forces, maybe they could have afforded a hideout that wasn't laser-painted indigo. Indigo looked hideous, especially in this light. But, man, repainting hideouts was as expensive as buying them.

And perhaps if a computer error hadn't converted their serial designations into letter codes, they could have saved

themselves some embarrassment. But Number 1 had turned to Number A, and no matter how much Number A insisted otherwise, the others still called their collective the Numbers. That was the last time he trusted Letchtech's Spreadsheet Calculoso Virtuoso.

Number A swept the hood of his chestnut-brown cloak out of his eyes and assessed the gathering. These cloaks were thick and stifling. The farmhouse's radiator didn't help either, since it was broken and couldn't be shut off. He disliked the blasting heat. And every few seconds, the rattle of something caught inside the radiator barked like a gunshot.

Guns. Number A hated guns. *Abhorred* them. They were ineffective garbage. He rubbed his metal hands together, and a pang of loss filled him. Guns. So destructive.

And indigo wasn't exactly a manly color for a farmhouse.

He untied the drawstrings that dangled around his cloak's neck. "Can everyone hear me in the back?" Hands rose in confirmation. One accidentally jabbed against the low ceiling. "Good. Before I start tonight's meeting, I'd like to remind everyone that our suicide mission wouldn't be possible without Kitchen Gear, whose knives were responsible for seventeen percent of last year's bloodiest stab wounds.

"Now, let's start our first order of business. Everyone, please thank Number FD for booking our guest speaker, Colonel Chaos, for last week's meeting. His lesson on preapocalyptic tax deductions was tremendously valuable. A big round of applause for Colonel Chaos, who wanted to return

next week except there won't be one." Applause crackled from the crowd like light rain on a windowpane, but it dwindled quickly. Not having a next week was a downer.

With the pleasantries of the opening speech set aside, Number A's tone darkened. He heaved air through his stuffed nose and accidentally sprayed out specks of snot. And there was no facial tissue handy. That was why he wore such a baggy cloak: wiping material. "And now, my fellow Numbers, our time has come. Gentlemen—"

"Hey!" came a voice from inside the thick of the mezzanine throng.

"And lady—"

"Hey!"

"And talking dinosaur-monkey-llama, the eve of this galaxy's destruction, the precursor to its deliverance from oppression, the penultimate moment to its liberation is upon us.

"For far too long, this galaxy's supposed authorities and their enemies have ravaged the stars. They have ripped across planets, wreaking destruction. And they have made it practically impossible to go one week without preempting *Dromedary Medical Team*. That is the last time I will tolerate missing the final five minutes of the emergency-chainsaw-amputation episode. That was a good one."

"Hear, hear!" attacked a voice from the rear wall. Number BC, the fictional-tracheotomy enthusiast.

"But now the galaxy's destruction has come." He'd already covered that. Way to under-rehearse his speech. "The

powers that be and—”

“C is for cookie!”

“Yes, Number C. We know. Please refrain from commenting until my pep presentation concludes. Anyway, the powers that be and the criminal empires they fight must stop. We are *sick*...and *tired*...and *really, really fed up* with the subjugation that those authorities and criminal empires impose, with the wars they wage, with the property destroyed in combat, with the stuff blowing up, with networks preempting our favorite shows. Actually, the stuff blowing up is pretty neat. But the rest is still fed-uppable.”

“C is for—”

“*Number C, stuff it.* To the rest of you, we are well equipped. We have our starship. We have our weapons. We have our stactics. We have—”

“Excuse me.” Number EE filed forward from the midst of the mob. He cleared his throat. “Maybe I missed something—I dozed off there for a second—but what’s a stactic?”

Number A paused. “I said ‘stactic?’” He replayed his words in his mind. “I guess I was trying to say *strategy* and *tactic* at the same time. So, uh, a stactic is a strategy-slash-tactic. And we have our stactics. Lots of them. Good work getting those stactics together, guys. Really, really good work.

“As I was saying, we have our weapons. We have our stactics. We have our Farsdale-brand force fields. We have our cloaks. And, finally, no longer on back order, we have our adult

diapers with matching buttock designs. Tomorrow morning, with no unnecessary bathroom breaks, we will initiate our operation. We will descend upon this so-called Intergalactic Peace Symposium with deadly flatulence and crush all those who oppose us. We will use their Blast-o-Matic explosive against them. The superpowers of this galaxy will no longer oppress everyone in the name of ‘protection,’ because we will nuke the galaxy itself!” Pause for effect. “Number F, you have studied the facilities that currently hold the Blast-o-Matic. Please detail our method of infiltration. And Number BB, release the silent-but-deadlies outside. That one smelled like a rotten fish taco.”

“Number F is out with his bowling league,” someone from the back said.

Oh, right. Bowling night was tonight. Number A flicked his hood out of his eyes again, though that proved useless since that stupid backlight on Number CS’s watch pointed right in his vision. Would he just—“Number CS, if you keep playing with your watch, I’m going to rip it off, and your wrist is coming along for the ride. Got that? Thank you. Fine. No, I don’t need to check out the fantastic dual alarm or the holographic display. Okay, can *anybody* explain the final details for our method of infiltration? No? How many times must I tell you to build some redundancy into the system? Is that too much to ask? Have we learned nothing from our mission at the roller rink?”

“Uh...” That ape-toned word sounded like Number KZ. The shuffling of cloak rubbing coarsely against unshaven legs

grated through the crowd. Number KZ pushed through the thick. “Number F called me earlier. Explained things to me but...I dunno. Way too complicated. He said we can just wing it.”

“Wing it.” Number A rubbed his chin. Sure. Okay. Why not? Their mysterious and shadowy benefactor Lord Number—now called Lord Alpha due to the naming mishap—had said anything would work as long as they met their two goals: First, locate the Blast-o-Matic to destroy everything. Second, thwart any opposition. Lord Alpha had assured Number A of the inevitability of opposition after ordering him to make one of the symposium speakers fall “ill,” which guaranteed Matross Legion a spot. And that opposition would need to be thwarted. Number A couldn’t understand why Alpha wanted the leader of the Good Guys to attend, though. He would only obstruct things.

And who was Lord Alpha? Number A had never met him, had never communicated face-to-face with the enigmatic chief of Numbers. But if Lord Alpha said anything would work, they’d make it work.

“After two or three seconds of careful deliberation, I have decided we shall wing it.” Ha. He’d like his wife to call him nonspontaneous and anal-retentive *now*. Number A had never been nonspontaneous, at least not without incredible scrutiny and forethought. And he’d learned from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Anarchists* that winging it stopped anyone who had stolen your plans from anticipating your next move.

And, despite the naysayers, *anal-retentive* was so spelled with a hyphen.

“Yes, wing it. We shall wing it...*to freedom!*”

The crowd exploded in a cheer that drove Number A against the back wall. He threw his fist into the air and watched a calamity of shadows shift, fists rising with his. The unanimous roar stirred the masses of the Numbers, of...the Evil, Atrocious, Harmful, Spiteful, Villainous, Brutish, Evildoing Guys Who Do Evil!

Yes, he found thesauruses handy. Or thesauri. Or...crock, where was his dictionary when he needed to check a pluralization?

The cheering overflowed, and a second thrust of fists challenged the air. Though the Numbers would perish meaningfully in the impending destruction, the mysterious Lord Alpha would perish *and* be pleased. And freedom itself would reign, triumphant forever. Freedom—

Knock, knock against the door. The cheering hushed, making way for a nasal voice. “Honey, please ask your guests to keep it down. Katey’s trying to finish her geography homework.”

To be continued...

Ho boy, was that not enough in the absolute slightest! But
it'll be all yours soon. Keep watching
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greatest.

For updates and the latest news on your celebrity crushes,
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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.

To see more of the stuff that rages around inside my
head, please review this book at tiny.cc/iagffa4. The more
reviews people write, the better this book's ranking does,
the more exposure this series gets, the more you help an
independent author, and the more we can nod awkwardly
at each other for the rude things you type about me.

What's a guy gotta do...

Legion is invited to speak at the Intergalactic Peace Symposium, a conference based around military response, as a last-minute presenter, to showcase the accomplishments of the Good Guys.


...to get a break...

Much to Legion's irritation, work follows him wherever he goes when Master Asinine and his typical enclave of idiots make an appearance in the hopes of capturing and cloning the Good Guy leader. For some stupid reason.

...around here?

But when Legion and Asinine are joined by a mysterious third faction hell-bent on destroying the universe, the two must put aside their differences to stop the shadowy cloaked figures. And just who is this Lord Alpha who sent them anyway?

Absolute hijinks ensue—or at least percolate—in this newest installment of the In a Galaxy Far, Far AwRy series! So get reading! But take a break around lunch.



"And how many people live at this residence?"

— A CENSUS TAKER.

[gibberish]

—THIS GUY WHO LIVES IN MY BUILDING. HE'S STRAIGHT-UP CRAZY.

"Wacka-wacka-bwing-wacka-doop.

— AN 80S VIDEO GAME.

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