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Episode 445 – It's less a cast herd as it is an amorphous mass

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It was a nice apartment, well-lit, spacious and well furnished. A pair of nice, plush leather couches set the scene, arranged in a neat L-shape, with a small coffee table between them. What dominated the room, however, was the massive flat-screen against one wall, so big as to loom over all else around it. By comparison, the broad windows with views out over a strangely futuristic metropolis and the other doorways leading away to gods alone knew where seemed like afterthoughts.

“Well my Lego club might be on the verge of breaking up,” Tsuneo admitted as he and Rebecca entered the apartment.

“Really?” She asked. “Can I ask what happened?”

“We hit an impasse that the club couldn’t reach consensus on,” he admitted. “It became a divisive issue, and then suddenly everyone started taking sides. That’s bought all sorts of ugly dirt up and it looks like the group could split.”

“Not pleasant,” she nodded. “What was this issue that caused such a rift? I assume it was something to do with club funding or leadership or the like.”

“Worse,” Tsuneo sighed. “It’s over what defines ‘classic space’, and where you draw the line.”

“That bad huh?”

Tsuneo nodded. “The worst part is that there’s a group of radicals who see everything after the introduction of the Yellow Spaceman as being a hard line. At best anything after that is just ‘space’.”

“Harsh.”

“Oh yeah,” Tsuneo nodded. “They’ve formed a bloc that’s taking control of the club.”

“Plastic spacemen are serious business,” Rick agreed as he and Dan entered. “I can understand the drama.”

“And it’s probably more gripping than any drama we’ll get in today’s fic,” Dan added. “And with higher stakes to boot.”

“Given how things have been going, I’m sure that it’ll be another crossover,” Tsuneo admitted.

“You say it like that’s a bad thing,” Rick commented.

“Well...” Tsuneo admitted, “I’m not saying that a crossover is a bad thing as such. More that the ones we have are bad uses of the crossover.”

“It’s a hard thing to call on,” Rebecca nodded. “The crossover is one of those fanfic genres that offers a lot of potential, but can also be misused.”

“And by that you mean simply being a crossover in name only, like the majority of the crossovers we’ve covered,” Dan noted. “Like Son of Primus which had no business at all being a crossover.”

“That’s not what I was thinking of, but you do have a fair point there,” Rebecca replied. “Honestly, it feels like most of the crossovers we’ve read might as well not have been crossovers for all the difference it made.”

“So then how do you ‘misuse’ a crossover?” Rick asked.

"Well putting aside things like crackfic, there are a few ways," Rebecca explained. "A good example would be the terrible nerd wars of the nineties as fandoms moved online between the Star Wars and Star Trek fandoms. Those produced lots of terrible 'my franchise can beat up your franchise' fics that were little more than exercises in wankery."

"Charming," Tsuneo sighed.

"It's a phenomenon that has continued, albeit with less intensity and people pouring their entire lives into it," she continued. "Marvel Cinematic Universe fanfic is especially bad about this, with authors using it to put down everything from other film franchises to other iterations of Marvel continuity."

"Seems a bit petty to me," Dan agreed. "Well actually, scratch that. A lot petty."

"At worst this falls into the pits of anti-fic or hatefic," Rebecca explained. "Which is all about the characters of Franchise A slaughtering the characters of Franchise B."

"Okay, now that is petty."

"It is," Rebecca nodded. "In many ways, as bad as the crossovers we've had so far have been, they're still relatively mild."

"I suppose we should be thankful for that much," Tsuneo agreed.

"You know what?" Rick spoke up. "The more I think about it, the more I realise that Death's Fixer is the most effective crossover fic that we've ever done."

"That is both an entirely accurate and damning statement in and of itself," Rebecca admitted.

"Good morning everyone," the Voice cut into the conversation.

"And good morning to you too, Phaser," Rick replied.

"You're not giving up on that obscure eighties comics thing, are you?" Tsuneo asked.

"Please, I'm just getting started," Rick dismissively replied.

"So what's in the poop chute for today?" Rebecca asked. "I mean, I know I'll hate it regardless, but it at least helps to have some warning."

"Today I have a fic for you called Robotech the New Age," the Voice continued

"Is it about crystals, meditation and sitar music?" Rick asked.

"Well, no," the Voice admitted.

"Hm, misleading title then," Rick shrugged. "So what is it about then?"

"It's about... some pilots, on a ship," the Voice managed.

"You have no idea, do you?" Tsuneo accused.

"It features an entirely original cast," the Voice continued, clearly ignoring him.

"I'll take that as a no," Tsuneo sighed.

"What can you say about it?" Dan asked.

"It's a single, self-contained chapter," the Voice answered.

"And?"

"It's got Battle Pods," the Voice continued with obviously false confidence.

"I feel afraid," Dan admitted. "But on the other hand, it can't last that long."

"I suppose we'll take that," Tsuneo sighed. "Any positive, no matter how minor or dubious."

"Speaking of, you know what's the best thing about Robotech fic?" Rebecca considered as she took her place on the couch.

"Do tell," Dan replied as he and the others joined her.

"Rick won't ask what continuity it is."

"This is true," Rick agreed as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format.

> ROBOTECH: THE NEW AGE by Kamiazi

> 1.1 Author's notes: I was extremely bored and just wanted to have some fun.

Rebecca: Well I can see no way that could end badly

> I named the char's after real people

Rick: Like Harold Ord and Bob Full Frontal.

> (example: Ruby, named after my bestest best friend.)

Dan: That's a quick way to ruin a friendship.

> and I tried to get their personality as close as possible.

Rebecca: The author spent plenty of time lurking outside their windows and going through their garbage to get things just right

> And at the end: the officers 'pod is Khyron, so don't get real pissed off at it.

Rick: It's a perfectly inoffensive Officer's Pod.

> And the pre-storyline is as follows:

Tsuneo: And here comes the opening infodump

> The time is after the SDF-1 returned to earth with its civilian cargo,

Rick: 'Civilian Cargo' is a good way of describing what it's like to fly coach

> and the earth leaders decided to make a replica of it.

Rebecca: They thought it would look good on the shelf, be a real talking point.

> The Captain has re-named the ship Gancore

Tsuneo: Why?

Dan: They lost a drunken bet

> and is a very cunning strategist,

Rebecca: Just take our word for it.

> if I missed anything majorly email me, Ok?

Dan: So I'm guessing this fic's set on the Gancore, or whatever?

Rebecca: Oh no, the fic's set on a farm in Iowa. That's just the backstory.

> "Promotions are as follows," the female voice on the intercom called out. "All members of the Red  
> Squad, Black Squad, Blue Squad, and Yellow Squad.

Dan: You get a promotion, and you get a promotion...

> Report to Drill Hall D immediately. That is all."

Rick: Everyone except you, Gary. You know what you did.

> "Black Squad!" Corporal Coates shouted, raising his mug of paralyzer.

Tsuneo: That sounds like the sort of thing you shouldn't drink while on duty. Or ever, for that matter.

> "That's us!"

> "Damn right!" Dan chimed in. "Putz!"

Dan: Wait, are they calling a guy a putz, or is that his actual name?

Rebecca: You're one to talk.

Dan: Eh?

> We're gonna be Master Corporals!"

Rick: If you try to think your way through the ranks used in the Robotech series, you'll give yourself an aneurism

> 2 "Yes, and Ruby is gonna be our Sergeant!" Cotrell yelled.

Rick: She'll lead the squad from her run-down drive-in cinema in the swamp

> "All because we kicked some alien ass!

> Chug and go! We have new badges to put on!"

Dan: And that is literally the only perk of your new rank.

> Coates smiled. "And hardcore partying to do."

> "I have to go get in uniform," Dan calmed down a bit.

Dan: Party uniform!

> "I'll talk to you all at the Hall."

Tsuneo: [Dan] Which is presumably a different location to wherever we currently are.

> "Yeah, see ya dumbass,"

Dan: Yeah, you putz. Or possibly my name is Putz. Really, I have no clue.

> Coates calmed a bit as well, finishing his paralyzer in one gulp.

Tsuneo: I suspect this is all the character development these two will ever get. I also suspect that they're our lead characters

> Dan did the same with his beer and turned to run out the door.

Dan: [Dan] Put it on my tab.

Rick: And when are you even going to pay that?

Dan: [Dan] Whoops, look at that, got a mission to fly or something.

> As he reached out to grab it, the door suddenly swung open and smacked him right in the face.

Rick: Death by pratfall

> Ruby ran in and simply jumped over Dan's unconscious form.

Rebecca: Dan had been promoted to 'doorstop'

> She was a little tall, but that didn't make her any less beautiful.

Dan: Coates had a secret midget fetish

> She had

> long purple hair and a body Coates had more than once caught himself staring at openly.

Tsuneo: In short, duh boobs.

> "Ruby!" Coates said to her. "You're our sergeant now!"

> "I know," she said.

Rick: She was hoping the promotions would come with new assignments, but...

> "What's wrong?"

Tsuneo: Where do I even begin?

> "That was only his first flight..." she trailed off.

Rebecca: He even got his junior pilot badge

> 'Oh, yes,' Coates thought. 'Him, her now ex-boyfriend.'

Dan: You know, that guy

> "Well, it could have been you or even Sparky," he tried to comfort her.

Rick: Or Spoiler, Street Heat or even Major Mo

> "Well, yes. And I did get mad and chased after that 'pod," Ruby sighed.

Tsuneo: Stupid Battle Pods! Get off my damn lawn!

> Coates, not being a great comforter, just plain and simple kept his mouth shut.

Rebecca: I'm guessing something happened to her boyfriend. Or it happened to Sparky. Or her boyfriend was Sparky. Or there's a ship called the Gancore involved somehow, somewhere.

> He didn't like that guy at all; he was an ass to everyone, including Ruby.

Dan: Yeah, eat it, That Guy

> He put his hand on her shoulder, took a deep breath and tried to think of something quick.

Rick: [Coates] Do you think we should get Dan to the medical bay?

Dan: Nah, I'm good.

> "Why can't they find him and give him a proper cast off?" her frame shook.

> 'Cause he's in about a million pieces,' Coates thought sourly.

Tsuneo: While watching his spleen slowly float by

> He desperately tried to think of something, and something in the next few seconds.

Dan: [Coates] So am I Putz, or...

> "Well," he began. "They're still fighting out there."

Tsuneo: They are? What the hell are we doing in here then?

Rick: Being promoted? [He shrugs]

> Ruby sat down and snatched Cotrell's drink from him.

Dan: Mmm-hmm, only the best sump oil and runoff.

> "That never stopped the excavation crews before. Why now?" she challenged.

Rick: Because it's very hard to excavate in space

Tsuneo: Wait, are we in space?

Rick: ...I don't know.

> "Some dog fights are to be avoided by the crews.

Rebecca: Other times it's perfectly safe for them to stroll through

> It's all—" Coates was cut short, the alarms were going off.

Tsuneo: Oh yeah. Raging battle outside.

> The catcrewman waved Ruby's black Veritech back into the launching position.

Rick: I dunno, if your name's Ruby, it's almost a waste not to have a hot red giant robot.

> The launching

> procedure changed ever since the beginning of the Robotech war. Now it was build up power and  
> release the brake, which was not nearly as confusing as the older way was.

Rick: The old system required a lemur and a frost-free fridge [Ding!]

> The catcrewman waved

> her to launch, and she gunned her reflex engine to full power and then released the brake.

Tsuneo: She did what she was supposed to do

Dan: Brilliant

> She felt the gee's of force as it hit her and then she vaulted into space.

Rick: There you go. We are in space

Tsuneo: I did wonder.

> She was not even a minute's flight from a minor skirmish between two members of the Blue  
> Squadron and several 'pods.

Dan: She would help, but she's got money on the pods.

> She flew right into it and then opened up with a set of rockets. Three  
> unlucky 'pods got blasted by them.

Rick: None of them passed their Anti-Missile check.

> The other three VTs had dealt with the other 'pods

Tsuneo: They, I don't know, audited their taxes or something.

> and she swung down to another set of 'pods that were closing in on the Gancore.

Rebecca: In short, Pods

Dan: Pods it is

> Coates pulled up to her right and Dan to her left.

Rick: Having recovered from his door-induced head trauma

> "Let's blast 'em!" Coates shouted over the tacnet.

> He changed to Battloid: a huge human-shaped mecha that was capable of almost anything a  
> person could do,

Rick: It could scratch its butt, build Lego sets and write disturbing My Little Pony fic, just like a person

> at 7 times the scale!

Dan: Which meant it could flick huge boogers

> In his mech's right hand was his weapon of choice:

Tsuneo: A dancing Christopher Walken

> The gattling gun. It had rounds capable of blowing the leg off a battloid,

Rick: But only a leg. Useless against any other extremities.

> and Coates had mastered it to be able to remove an entire battlepod in one shot.

Rebecca: But where did he remove it too? Or is he just cluttering up his mom's attic with unwanted  
Battle Pods?

> Dan on the other hand, shifted to Guardian mode. It was the cross between Battloid and Fighter,  
> and looked like a bird of prey.

Rick: Just think, we had Simon Furman writing Robotech comics. Which means that it would have  
been like some vast, predatory bird

> Dan had all of his ballistics visible,

Dan: Put your pants back on, man

> and Ruby knew that he wouldn't hesitate to use them.

Tsuneo: Almost like they were meant to be fighting, or something.

> He got close enough to the 'pods to let loose a salvo of heatseekers.

> Ruby shifted to battloid and pulled up next to Coates, who was giving everything he had to all of

> 'pods with his gattling gun and rockets.

Dan: Is she actually going to join in?

Rick: Technically, since she's received a promotion but hasn't accepted it, she's between pay grades and is officially a noncombatant.

Dan: Huh, weird. What about the rest of her crew?

Rick: Oh, they just have no clue.

> Ruby noticed that he never did use his heatseekers, and now she wondered why.

Rebecca: Probably because he was a moron

Tsuneo: I'm beginning to suspect that is the case

> She opened up with everything she had as well, but she fired her heatseekers.

Rebecca: Everything \*and\* the heatseekers.

> The lone 'pod that was left stood there was an officers 'pod,

Tsuneo: Is that the Officer's Pod you called out in the opening, or just a general Officer's Pod?

> and Coates gunned his engines towards it.

> "Come on! Lets go alien jackass!"

Rick: He was fighting a space donkey

> He cried out. "I have a rocket with your name on it!"

Dan: But what if their name is unpronounceable in your language?

> He unleashed another set of rockets, but the 'pod just dodged it effortlessly.

Rick: So he'd fired three or less missiles.

> Coates just veered to the right and released a salvo of heatseekers.

Rebecca: The heatseekers he never used.

Tsuneo: I was beginning to think he'd just forgotten them back at base.

> The officer didn't have a chance as it was hit almost instantly.

Rebecca: Well that was a gripping fight

> "Ok," he was breathing deeply. "That was a rush and a half."

Rick: Was it, though?

> "I'd think so too," Ruby replied. "No more. You could have gotten killed."

Tsuneo: Which would be such a tragedy, given how well developed a character he is.

> "We all could have," Coates replied. "It's just a matter if you let them or not."

Rick: So in short, try not to die

> "Where did Dan go?" she asked almost unconsciously.

> "Right there," he replied.

[Dan raises his hand]

> His mecha pointed towards the black guardian

Rick: Black Guardian sounds like the name of an obscure seventies Superhero

> moving as fast as it can from a trio of 'pods. Coates

> shifted to fighter and took pursuit, with Ruby in his wake.

> "Hey, Ruby! Bet I can get two out of three of those 'pods before you can!"

> Ruby just smiled and gunned her engines and transformed to fighter. She unleashed a volley of  
> heatseekers and Coates fired his gattling gun. His rounds tore through the torso of a 'pod, sending  
> the "bubble" of it spinning wildly. The heatseekers found the other two before he could turn and  
> blast another one.

Tsuneo: Super Action!

> "Damn, you win," he said grudgingly.

> "I always do," she laughed.

> "So you do, so you do."

Rebecca: [Ruby] Yes I do.

Tsuneo: [Coates] Most certainly.

Rebecca: [Ruby] That is indeed what happens.

Tsuneo: [Coates] We are in agreement.

> "Black Three!" Came the bridge. "A blockage has occurred,

Rick: I'll get the plunger

> use docking four instead of three."

> "Roger!" Ruby acknowledged.

> "Docking Four? Why?" Coates asked.

Dan: Aren't we still in the middle of this furball?

Rebecca: Truth is, I have no clue.

> "There is some blockage in three,

Rebecca: Are you even paying attention?

> we have to park in with white until they clear it I guess," she answered.

> "Whatever you say," he said.

> "Putz!"

Dan: You schmuck.

> Ruby! I'm in trouble! There is more 'pods headed this way!" Dan cried over the tacnet.

Tsuneo: So Coates is Putz, then?

Dan: I think they're all Putz, really.

> "On my way!" Coates and Ruby both said at the same time.

> They both gunned their reflex engines and ran up and down the Gancore.

Rick: Gotta get your daily steps in

> Finally, they spotted him dodging a 'pod who wouldn't let up.

Dan: The Pod was very persistent, and wouldn't take no for an answer

> Coates swung in behind it and blasted it to smithereens. Dan  
> swung down and landed on the SDFs surface.

> "Dammit," he yelled. "My engines are not responding anymore!"

Dan: [Dan] Well, guess I'll go die in the void of space or something.

Rebecca: [Ruby] You're perfectly fine.

Dan: [Dan] Tell Sandra Bullock I love her.

Rebecca: [Ruby] Seriously, you're standing on the ship's hull.

> "Don't go solo unless you know what you're doing,

Rick: But what if I want to just drink Lemon Squash in a manly way?

> numbnuts!" Coates scolded.

> Ruby just silently listened to their casual insults.

Rebecca: It was like the less racist version of a Twitch stream

> "Shut up, you show off all the time, no nuts!"

> "That's because I know what I'm doing, ya dumb shit!"

Tsuneo: So what do we know about Dan and Coates so far?

Rebecca: They are very dumb

Tsuneo: I thought so

> Ruby began counting back from ten. The insult war went on until she got to zero. And that is when  
> the bridge had to cut in:

Rick: The bridge had to give them a time out and send them to separate corners.

> "Black One and Black Two!" the ship's Captain Havaa yelled. "What do you two think you're  
> doing!?"

Dan: Shtick

> Both Dan and Coates shut up.

> "Dock, both of you!" the Captain shouted.

Rebecca: You are both going to be in so much trouble when your father gets home.

> "Yes sir!" Coates replied and flew off.

> "I can't, sir!" Dan smiled.

Tsuneo: It's a jovial round of insubordination.

> Ruby docked in the White squad's hangar as she was told. But Coates stayed out, refusing to dock

> in the White hangar.

Rebecca: [Ruby] Master-Corporal Coates, or whatever the hell you are right now, get in here this instant!

Rick: [Coates] No! Don't wanna!

> She walked around to the Black hangar to see what was going on,

Tsuneo: And if you find out, let us know.

> and when she got there, she gasped.

> A Black VT was a pile of wreckage in the launching zone.

Dan: Oh Brick Hactar. Why did it have to end like this?

> She ran to a clean up crewman and demanded to know what happened.

Tsuneo: Didn't use the proper launching procedure. It was bound to happen.

> "An alien laser came through after another Black launched.

Rick: He said with an entirely straight face

> I think it was Black Two. But that pilot

> didn't even have a hope, the Black behind him just went back and parked," the tall man explained.

Dan: Took it as a good excuse to get a stiff drink.

> "Who was it?" she asked.

Tsuneo: You're their leader. You should probably know these things.

> It was either Cotrell or Sparky.

Rebeca: Not Cotrell or Sparky!

> "Black Five I think. Ask the catcrewman in the corner, he'll tell ya."

Tsuneo: I mean, you could do a roll call, I assume you're on comms...

> "Thank you." Ruby began to walk off.

Tsuneo: Or no, yep, this is good too.

> "Which Black are you?" the man shouted after her.

Rebecca: Well that's a very awkwardly phrased question

> She stopped and looked over her shoulder. "Black Three, why?"

Rick: If she's their leader, why is she Three and they are One and Two?

> "Oh, we were told to hold Black One and Two here until Captain Havaa can harp on them."

> She just laughed and walked to the far corner of the hangar.

Tsuneo: The death of one of her subordinates already forgotten about

> Meanwhile, Coates was taking a grand tour of the Gancore in his now lightly armed VT.

Rick: He was cruising along the Mediterranean coast and heading to his hotel in a converted luxury villa

> He was just  
> flying past other patrols, flying in and out of formations, and more than once had the squad leaders  
> chase him out.

Dan: He knows as soon as he lands that he'll have his arse busted back to janitor, so he's enjoying what time he has left.

> It was this type of thing that made him the delinquent he was.

Tsuneo: The pompadour and baseball bat are just assumed at this point

> After a while, he sent back a message towards the Black hangar.

> "Black Hangar, this is Black One. Is the wreckage cleaned up yet?"

> "Black One, this is Black Hangar. No, not yet. Just hang tight."

Rick: Or maybe land in White hangar, like you were ordered to.

> "Copy that, Black One out."

> Coates flew off in a huff. This was irritating him.

Rebecca: They have to properly handle the dead body of one of his wingmen. It's such a drag.

> And evac-ship came down and picked Dan up, but  
> Coates could not get permission to dock with them. So in order to kill some time, he just flew around  
> and made a nuisance of himself.

Rick: He flew into restricted airspace and triggered numerous alarms for laughs.

> He made his way to the back of the Gancore

Dan: Parked on the ship's butt.

> and just watched the virtual city through the glass.

Tsuneo: I'm sure there's a perfectly good reason why this brand new ship has a city built inside it.

Rebecca: Do you think we'll ever find out?

Tsuneo: Heck, I still don't know who the cast is.

> He could see the people just looking up and wondering why a VT was  
> back here. He started to laugh when his scanners beeped.

Dan: He was high as a kite

> There was a few hundred dots on the screen and all of them registered as enemy 'pods!'

Tsuneo: Don't you hate it when an alien armada sneaks up on you?

> "Bridge, this is Black One! There is an alien attack force on its way to the rear of the SDF!"

Rick: [Coates] Or maybe the Gancore, I really don't know.

> Scramble

> all VTs! I say again! There is an alien attack force on its way to the rear of the SDF! Scramble all

> VTs!" Coates screamed into the tacnet.

Rebecca: Yes, I'm sure a something-corporal has the authority to scramble all points.

> "Confirmed Black One! Help is on the way!" The Bridge called back.

Rick: We're sending a little owl guy who has a box full of potions

> Coates held back with the turrets on the rear of the Gancore. He was too lightly armed to take them  
> on in a dogfight,

Dan: Bet you wished you'd saved your heatseekers now, huh?

Rebecca: Why is the use of a particular kind of missile such a big thing in this fic?

Dan: I wish I could tell you.

> and there was just too many of them. He changed to Battloid and raised his gattling  
> gun towards the incoming 'pods.

> White Squad made a fly by in fighter mode,

Tsuneo: Just to remind everyone that they're better than Black Squadron.

Rebecca: Based on what?

Tsuneo: Not being Black Squadron.

> then rushed towards the 'pods. Ruby's VT was right behind them,

Rick: [Ruby] Now see, if you'd landed in White's hangar...

Rebecca: [Coates] Okay, okay!

> but she didn't go with them. Instead, she shifted to Battloid and landed next to Coates.

Tsuneo: Which means we know exactly where they are and have no idea whatsoever at the same time. Well done, fic.

> "Captain Havaa's pissed," she said as if she didn't care. "He wants to have a little chat with you  
> when they clear the mess."

Rebecca: She said, pointedly ignoring the massive approaching enemy fleet.

> "I gathered that," he sounded happy with himself. "And what is blocking the docking area anyways?"

> "Cotrell was whacked before he even made it out of the hangar," she said,

Dan: It was Cotrell, not Sparky. Pay up.

Rick: Darn it.

> lowering her head.

> "Cotrell? Oh, man. Who's gonna tell his fiancée?"

Tsuneo: I can only assume he was three days from retirement as well

> "The bad news bearers, or one of us. Either one,"

Rebecca [Ruby]: Bags not me

> Ruby wasn't sure of either.

Dan: The one time she doesn't want to pull rank.

> The 'pods that White Squad couldn't keep back were now beginning to make shots at them. Coates  
> swore and he opened fire.

Rick: [Coates] Do you mind, we're having a moment here.

> "Heartless jackass!" he yelled. "Earth is full, go home!"

Rebecca: There's not enough space on Earth to maintain social distancing

> "Black One and Three! Go and help clear the attackers from the launching areas!"

Dan: Shoo them out if you need to, but it is past closing time

> Docking Five and Docking Two need cleared. The turrets can only hold them back.

Tsuneo: Stupid tower defence minigame

> Black Four is already out. He needs assistance!"

Dan: So Coates and Dan are one and two, Ruby is three for some reason, four must be...

Tsuneo: Sparky? I guess? Is there anyone else?

Dan: Man, I need a chart to manage this cast.

> "Roger that, Bridge. Coates, let's go!" Ruby cried out as she took off and transformed to fighter.

> "I have your wings, Sergeant!" Coates acknowledged.

Dan: And you have my axe

Rick: And my bow

> "I'm not a sergeant yet, corporal," she shot back.

Rebecca: [Ruby] Not even your CO yet. Don't know why you're following me.

Rick: [Coates] Personal responsibility is way overrated.

> "Well, sor-ry," he said sarcastically, lifting off and shifting to fighter as well.

> They got to Sparky just as he used his last salvo of heatseekers.

Dan: Again with the heatseekers! Why is it always the heatseekers with you people!

> He began to take evasive actions

> just as Coates joined the fray in Battloid, firing his gattling gun. Several 'pods exploded as he went  
> by, and several 'pods also went after him as well.

Dan: For those of you who don't like Battle Pods, here are some Battle Pods

> Ruby came in from behind them and decimated

> most of them, but the three that remained started to open fire on Coates.

> "Dammit!" He cried. "I evade them forever!"

Rick: That will happen if you don't have an auto-dodge

> Ruby! Sparky! Do something!"

> "On my way," Sparky acknowledged.

Tsuneo: Thanks Sparky. It's good to know that we can rely on you to be an entity that exists in some  
point in time and space

> He transformed to gaurdian and let loose his final set of rockets.

Rebecca: Sparky is out of rockets. Everyone take notes.

> Two out of the three 'pods went

> down, but one managed to get a good shot on Coates' VT. He transformed to Gaurdian and  
> slammed on the brakes. The 'pod flew past him just to turn sharply and receive a set of  
> heatseekers.

[Dan throws up his hands in dismay]

> It went up in a small fireworks-like explosion.

Rick: It's a very festive alien invasion

> "Stupid alien," Coates smirked. "Haven't you heard the quote: Mess with the best, Die like the rest?"

Dan: And if you find any of 'the best' around here, please let us know

> "Ha, ha! Or Screw with me and die mutha f\*cka?" Sparky tried to joke.

> "Sparky," both Ruby and Coates said at the same time.

Tsuneo: Did the fic just try to do a comedy?

> "What damage is done to your VT, Coates?" Ruby asked.

> "I have a damaged ass. The stupid thing shot me in the ass!"

Dan: The fic said it, not me

> Coates replied.

Tsuneo: Ah, Coates. He certainly is somebody who is in this fic.

> "Here comes Green Squad. We can dock on Black now," Sparky said.

Rebecca: Quit padding your part, Sparky

> Captain Havaa was waiting for the pilots of Black One and Black Three in the Black hangar.

Rebecca: Wooden ruler in hand.

> He was originally here to yell at Black One for disobeying his direct orders,

Tsuneo: But thought he might as well yell at them all to save time.

> but since he had both warned

> them about a rear attack, and helping Black Three and Five, he was in for an award.

Rick: He'd screwed up in a useful way.

> A damaged VT was wheeled in from the evac-bay, and he knew it wasn't the delinquent.

Tsuneo: Delinquent Veritechs are the worst. Staying out past curfew, stealing drinks and smokes...

> After about another ten minutes, three Blacks requested permission to dock.

Rick: Black Knight, Black Lightning and Black Dynamite.

> The first one to come in was Black Five, then Black Three, and finally Black One.

Tsuneo: Black squadron has no respect for numerical order.

> Black Five's nerd pilot saluted as he walked past.

Rebecca: I think Sparky now has more character than Dan or Coates, and I'm not sure how I feel about that

> Then a woman came out of the other ship and a pissed looking man from the other ship.

> "Pilots Beth and Coates! Report to Captain Havaa immediately!" the CO of the hangar yelled above the roar of the reflex engines.

Dan: Beth?

Rebecca: I'm assuming that's Ruby.

Dan: Based on?

Rebecca: Being the only woman in this thing.

> The woman approached him first, standing at rigid attention and saluting. Havaa returned the salute. Then the delinquent walked up,

Rick: I'm just going to assume he's a fifties greaser from here on in

> stopped and stood at rigid attention and saluted as well. This time Havaa didn't return the salute.

Tsuneo: But instead flicked him in the eye with a rubber band.

> "Coates! As you well know, you deliberately disobeyed my orders to dock! And then you create a disturbance amongst our patrols!

Dan: And then you left a bag of flaming dog poo on the doorstep

> But, you did warn up on an attack at the rear. That is the only area we can't scan with our radar,

Tsuneo: That sounds like a bit of a design flaw

> but is heavily manned and guarded with turrets and artillery of every kind.

Rebecca: But with no way to aim or control them

> You will be let off the hook this time, but next time I'll have you court-martialed! Do you get me?!"

Rick: [Coates] Can we just assume I'm going to be a troublemaker and skip to the court-martial?

> "I get you, sir!" he yelled, obviously relieved.

Dan: Coates' death wish is yet to be fulfilled.

> "And you, Beth," Havaa continued. "Keep a shorter leash on him from now on. You're now Black Squad leader. Dismissed."

> Ruby's mouth went slack. Squad leader?

Rebecca: Wasn't she the squad leader already?

Tsuneo: I guess she is more so now or something

> How can she live with that? But with people like Dan and

> Coates on her side, how can she refuse?

Rick: Very easily

> They all can be smacked around easily, especially Coates.

Dan: Who actually enjoyed it

> She began to wonder why, but was interrupted by an explosion.

Rebeca: Or that could happen, I suppose

> Coates was running towards a fire in the middle of the hangar.

Tsuneo: Coates, demonstrating his survival instinct.

> She began to run as well, but

> stopped as soon as she saw what happened. A rocket was dropped while rearming Sparky's ship.

Dan: Military precision.

> Coates was now helping them carry out three men, killed in the blast.

Tsuneo: This had all happened while her back was turned.

> He was not looking too well

> himself, he was pale in the face, and was openly staring at the man he was carrying.

Rebecca: Also the hangar was on fire for the second time this morning.

> After the three men were out everyone formed up for roll call, since the bodies were too charred to  
> identify them.

Tsuneo: So if you're burnt beyond recognition, raise your hand.

> Coates walked up to Ruby with a grim face, and looking even worse.

Dan: [Coates] I've just been exploded, may I be excused?

> 'Are his lips blue?' she thought.

Rick: So he's actually a Mentat

> "Come on, Ruby, I need to go home and get some sleep. I f-feel tired."

Dan: [Coates] When explosion hit head, not feel good. Think caught a concussion. Maybe go lie now.  
Down.

> She looked at him, then looked into the corner where the infirmary for the Black hangar.

Rebecca: Then looked at the airlock, considering her options.

> She grabbed him by the ear and hauled him into the infirmary.

Rebecca: The respect she has for them is amazing

Tsuneo: And yet, also entirely justified

> "You just came down with a common case of the black bends,"

Rick: A lesser form of Space Madness

> the on-duty doctor had said. "Just get some fluids in your system

Rebecca: The doctor had to specify non-alcoholic three times.

> and about twelve hours of sleep and you should be fine."

> "Yes, sir. Thank you, with none to Ruby here," he said quietly so she wouldn't hear him.

Tsuneo: The idea of thanking anyone did not sit well with him.

> He walked out and hit Ruby in the shoulder to get her attention. She looked up from her thoughts.

Dan: And slugged him back.

> "Let's go," he said impatiently. "I want to stop by the bar before I go home

Rebecca: He has a medical condition, so naturally his plan is to get drunk. Genius that man.

> and sleep away my duty time."

> She got up and put her arm around his. He immediately broke out in a sweat.

Rick: It was the first time a girl had touched him

> "How about some dinner first, then you can go home and sleep," she smiled.

Tsuneo: How about we ignore all the medical advice?

> "Ah, how about I pay for it then? Since you did save my ass back there," he countered, not trusting  
> his answers at the moment.

Dan: [Ruby] If we're counting it that way, you owe me dinner for the next three months.

> "Are you asking me out?" she teased. She knew he couldn't handle women well.

Rebecca: As evidenced by his many Reddit posts

> "Eep! No!"

> "Just bugging you! Ha, ha, ha! Relax!" she laughed.

Dan: This is what happens when aliens try to write banter

> "Please don't do that to me!" he breathed deep breaths he was so relieved.

Tsuneo: Also, I think he's meant to be sick or something...

Dan: Boy, howdy.

> Coates walked into his little home in the pilots' barracks. His little pug greeted him at the door,

Rick: His pug is less jumpy then he is

> licking his hand furiously. He batted the dog down gently, and stumbled into the kitchen

Tsuneo: And landed face first on the kitchen floor.

Rebecca: The pug helped immensely by licking his face.

> and raided his fridge for a beer. He cracked one open and took a big drink.

Tsuneo: When 'get plenty of fluids' means 'actively dehydrate'  
Dan: He is very dumb

> He then went into his living room and turned on his stereo. AC/DC was playing on the CD player,  
> and he sat down in his over-sized chair.

Rick: Purchased second hand from Doctor Claw

> 'Why did that just go pang?' he thought to himself. 'She said to relax, but I just felt real bad. What  
> the-'

Tsuneo: [Coates] Oh yeah! Debilitating space sickness!

> His golden pug jumped into his lap and began to wash his face.

Dan: Pug is now my favourite character in this fic.

> He picked up the overweight dog

Dan: Pug is now the best described character in this fic.

> and placed him next to him in the chair and began to stroke him.

> 'What the hell is going on? Maybe my mind finally registered that I love her? Or just- dammit! I love  
> her.' He concluded.

Dan: Nothing for it but to stalk her on social media

Rebecca: He strikes me as the type

> "Right Rolly Polly? I must love her, don't I?"

> The dog just looked at him as if he were an idiot

Tsuneo: The pug speaks the truth

> and Coates just scratched the dog behind the ears.

> Ruby stood outside Coates' home, debating if she should bother him.

Dan: It's better than writing a letter to Cotrell's next of kin, but only just.

> She ran through this a few minutes before, just say hi, may I come in,

Tsuneo: Borrow a cup of protoculture, that sort of thing.

> that good stuff. But, for some reason, she couldn't bring himself to ring the buzzer. Why?

Rick: Because she knew he had a novelty musical doorbell

> She took a deep breath and pressed the button. Coates' dog went wild barking, and she could hear  
> Coates tell him to shut up.

Dan: As well as several loud crashing noises and a smoke alarm.

> He opened the door and stood back with a surprised look on his face. He  
> looked at her with a look of utter disbelief, and then quickly composed himself.

Rebecca: [Coates] Gurl...

Rick: [Ruby] I'm your commanding officer, we see each other every day.

Rebecca: [Coates] GURL!

> "Uh, hi, Ruby. Um, what brings you here?" he stammered.

Tsuneo: A forced romantic subplot

> "Well, I just wanted to know if you wanted to, um, talk for a while. Is that Ok?" she was having a little  
> trouble herself.

Rick: She's having trouble recognising Coates as a human being, that is.

> "Uh, sure. Come in, come in," he wasn't sure what she wanted exactly,

Dan: O negative.

> but he was going to find out.

> Ruby walked into his house in a huff. It was in its usual state:

Tsuneo: Old newspapers stacked head-high.

> messy but smelling good, and Ruby wanted to know how he did it.

Rebecca: He burns through a fortune in air fresheners

> His dog was crawling up and down her leg, smothering her hand in wet dog slobber.

Rick: [Ruby] Mostly I came to visit pupper here. You can go now.

> She knelt down a moment and patted him on the head as Coates hurriedly  
> cleaned up, with the occasional crash here and there.

Dan: Ruby asked herself why she was doing this. Repeatedly.

> After a few minutes, Coates finally invited her in proper.

Rebecca: Ruby was deep in discussion with the pug about the effects of space war on social progress.

> The next day, Coates was feeling great about himself, even though Ruby didn't leave until six in the  
> morning and he was supposed to get about twelve hours of sleep.

Tsuneo: His plan was to simply die instead

> But with the EVE (Enhanced

> Video Emulation) in effect now, he had little hope of getting to sleep anytime soon.

Rick: Any reason?

Rebecca: EVE set his alarm clock and will not be dissuaded.

> He had just crawled into bed when his phone rang.

> "Hello?" he drawled.

Dan: [Coates] No ma'am, I am not Cuts the butcher.

> "You son-of-a-bitch! You slept with my daughter didn't you!?" came an angry mans voice.

Rebecca: [Coates] Come on, be fair. I think we both know how unlikely that is.

Dan: You're right, of course. No way that could happen.

Rebecca: [Coates] Hey, what's that supposed to mean?

> 'Ruby's father,' Coates thought. 'Crap, now I have to deal with him too.'

Rick: And how did he know your number anyway?

> "Well!?" the man flared. "Did you!?"

> "Ya know, now is not a great time. I just came down with the black bends,

Dan: [Coates] You know how that is, been on the can all night.

> and I need to get some

> sleep myself. I did not touch your daughter. All we did is talk about this and that."

Rebecca [Ruby]: So.

Rick [Coates]: Um.

Rebecca [Ruby]: Yeah.

[Pause]

Rick [Coates]: I like Zabanya

Rebecca [Ruby]: That's it, I'm leaving

> The man yelled something unintelligible.

Tsuneo: The fic's best dialogue thus far.

> "Yeah, whatever. Good bye now."

> He hung up and yanked the cord from the wall.

Tsuneo: And there's absolutely no way that will come back to bite him later.

> "Mr. P, you coming up?"

Dan: Very, very noooooooooooooo

> he patted the side of the bed.

> The dog jumped next to him as he wound down and fell asleep.

> Two days after that, Coates was back on active duty,

Tsuneo: Presuming that he'd gotten over the black bends.

Rick: Say, what are the black bends anyway?

Rebecca: Well, I imagine it's a sort of space sickness that makes you run around like an idiot, shout random things at people and generally be tiresome in a predictable way.

Rick: My god, the whole cast is infected.

> and so was Dan, since his VT had gotten repaired.

Tsuneo: Sparky is on his own.

> Ruby had profusely apologized to Coates the day they both met in the hangar,

Rebecca: She's sorry she came by to visit. Really, deeply sorry.

> and Coates said it was no bother, just as long as it didn't happen again.

Rick: Besides which, his hair would grow back eventually

> "It won't happen again! I promise!" she said quickly.

Rebecca: In case you missed the last passage, here it is again

> "I bet," was all he said.

> "Squad leader Beth! Message for you from the bridge!" a catcrewman called.

Rick: [Crewman] Captain wants to know when you're going to dump that loser.

> "Be right there!" She yelled as she turned to Coates. "I'll be back in a minute. Don't suit up until I'm  
> done, ok?"

Dan: Pantsless it is

> "Alright. But make it quick. I want to fly here!" he yelled after her.

Rebecca: His court-martial for insubordination was quick and brutal.

> Ruby ran to the other side of the hangar and smiled to the catcrewman who was holding the phone.

Dan: [Crewman] Hurry up, you're burning long distance minutes.

> She grabbed it from his hands and nodded for him to leave.

Rebecca: I can see his master's degree in electrical engineering is being put to good use here

> "This is Beth," she said.

Rick: Or possibly Ruby, we can't decide.

> "Sergeant Beth," Captain Havaa was on the other line. "You are being sent out to patrol with White  
> squad today."

Dan: Why they didn't tell her this beforehand is another matter

> Keep Black One quiet until we can give other orders, got it?"

Rick: I forsee hijinks

> "Yes, sir!" she acknowledged.

> "That is all," he hung up.

Tsuneo: This is not so much military light, as it's military nonexistent.

> Ruby did the same and walked back over to Coates. She smiled sweetly

Rebecca: And decked him.

> as she began to give him a speech.

> "Captain Havaa said that we are going on patrol with White squad today. If you make so much as a  
> minor gesture to them, I'll tear your balls off." She lost her smile. "Got it?!"

Dan: Coates was strangely okay with this

> "Yessir, er, ma'am!" he stammered, cowering.

> "Good, now gear up and go. I'll meet you out there."

Rick: Ruby neglected to mention she'll be stopping for a coffee and bagel first.

> Coates was the first to launch this time. It's usually Ruby who goes first, but ever since she got  
> Squad leader, things just haven't been the same.

Rebecca: The rise in global temperatures over the last decade was entirely due to her promotion

> First it was the launch order: now they all go  
> according to their number. And since he was Black One, he had to launch first.

Tsuneo: Part of me wants to know why Ruby isn't Black One, as she's the squad leader. But the better part of me understands the futility of shouting into the void of reason that is this fic.

> And now that she  
> had given him that little speech, he wasn't about to disobey her. God! She knew where he lived!

Dan: He had a sudden urge to move to South America

> He followed the catcrewman's signals

Rick: And stole home.

> and taxied his way to the launch area. The air seal opened up  
> and he gunned his engines to full power, then released the brakes.

Tsuneo: As is the proper launching procedure, of course.

Dan: Of course.

> He shot out into space just as the air seal closed.

> And what he saw amazed him.

Dan: Two dogs doing it

> There it was, the alien battle cruiser, looking bigger than the Gancore.

Rick: [Coates] Huh. You think they would have mentioned this in the briefing. [Pause] You know, if we'd had one.

> It had to be about five miles long, and really tall.

Tsuneo: There was a guy painting the ship's name on the side.

> It looked almost like a cucumber, only it had lots of things around it,

Rick: You know, like stuff

> like 'pods that were coming for the rear of the SDF.

Rebecca: They really need to fix that

> "Bridge! This is Black One! There is an alien battle ship headed for the rear of the SDF!"

Dan: The giant alien armada had apparently snuck up on them while they weren't looking

> SCRAMBLE ALL VALKYRIES!"

Rebecca: You're not the flight leader, Coates. Do we have to talk about this again?

> "Copy that Black One. Catseye recon ships have visual confirmation on that.

Tsuneo: You probably want to verify that before you send all your fighters after it.  
Rick: Details

> Sounding general alert!" the Commander replied.

> Dan and Ruby came up and joined him in his course to the rear of the ship, with Sparky pulling up  
> the rear.

Tsuneo: Woo-hoo! Sparky!

Dan: He's back! Yeah!

Tsuneo: Why are we cheering?

Dan: I have no idea!

> They got to the rear and changed to battloid, then raised their rifles. They were now  
> realizing that they were as good as dead.

Rick: They were surrounded by the Bolivian Army

> "That's a lot of 'pods," Dan gawked.

Dan: Battle Pods. It's what the fic does when it can't think of anything else.

Tsuneo: I'm surprised there's anything else in this then.

> "I see," Coates was rapt.

Rebecca: He was really excited about the prospect of death

> "COATES!" Ruby yelled through the tacnet. "That speech I gave you in the hangar applies to this  
> situation as well!"

Rebecca: [Coates] But I'm already wearing clean – oops, not anymore.

> "Eek! Yes, sir- er, ma'am!"

> Coates was still terrified, but more so of Ruby than of the alien 'pods

Tsuneo: Their relationship is a complicated one

> that were headed his way.

Dan: The worst they can do is kill him.

> He

> steeled himself as the first rush of 'pods came into range. All of Black squad's gatling guns and  
> rockets were out in minutes.

Dan: But what about their heatseekers?

Rebecca: No doubt we will be told in excruciating detail.

> The 'pods were so thick that no shot missed.

Rick: Battle Pods fly bumper to bumper

> White squad was working in from the sides in fighter mode, but wasn't making it very far.

Dan: White Squad, the 'I'm helping' of this fic

> A turret next to Coates went up by a crashed 'pod and his battloid flew a few feet.

> "Ah! Crap!" he yelled as his gattling gun flew from his battloid's hand.

Rick: And so Coates picked up the nickname 'butterfingers.'

Tsuneo: For the final seconds of his life.

Rick: Oh, of course.

> He scrambled to up to get his gun back but three 'pods were bearing down on him.

Dan: [Coates] What am I supposed to use, harsh language?

> Another turret went up as he flew past it and three more 'pods saw his plight and took chase.

Tsuneo: Battle pods can smell fear.

> He finally got to his

> gattling gun just as Sparky opened fire on the 'pods that were right behind him.

> "Thanks, Sparky!"

Rebecca: [Coates] I'm glad that you still exist somewhere.

> I owe you one," he breathed deeply.

> "Any time. You would have done the same for me,"

Dan [Coates]: You know that's a dirty lie

Rick [Sparky]: It is

> he responded and then turned to open up on some more 'pods.

Dan: Battle pods.

Rebecca: For those times when you don't have battle pods; battle pods.

> Coates opened fire on some more 'pods. Not one of them turned against him.

Tsuneo: They had a very short attention span

> It seems that the turrets were the primary targets, and the VTs were just the icing on the cake,

Rick: Dan was an elaborate marzipan arrangement.

> above and beyond the objective.

Rebecca: They're going for bonus points

> "Coates! I need help here!" Dan called. "Too many 'pods! I'm out of ballistics!"

Dan: He had neither Ecks or Sever

> "Hang tight Dan! I'm coming!"

> Coates flew through the mass murder site,

Tsuneo: Tiptoeing around crime scene investigations, trying not to disturb any evidence.

> and into a heated melee where there was about twenty 'pods against Dan's lightly armed VT.

Tsuneo [Dan]: Well, since it seems we're both doomed, I might as well tell you that serving with you

has been-

Rick [Coates]: My Pug's name is Mister P.

Tsuneo [Dan]: Forget it.

> Coates came in from behind and released his final dozen heatseekers.

Rebecca: Ah, see? Heatseekers.

Dan: Took their time to get to the good stuff.

> Now only seven 'pods remained and those were dealt with easily by Dan's and

> Coates' gattling guns.

Rebecca: Well that was an effortlessly resolved situation

> Both of them flew off to see even more 'pods coming out of the battle ship.

Rebecca: And in case you'd run out of battle pods, there's battle pods.

Dan: Battle pods, won't you?

> "This is hopeless!" Sparky yelled.

Tsuneo: And there's my review of the fic.

> "I only have three strings of gattling rounds left!"

> "I know!" Coates chimed in. "I'm not one to give up that easily,

Rick: Sparky on the other hand gave up hours ago.

> but I know a hopeless situation when I see one!"

> "Black squad! Dock and re-arm!" bridge called. "Blue and Green squads are on their way!"

Rick: With support from Lilac, Gamboge and Burlywood.

> "Thank you, sir!" Dan said gratefully.

> Coates didn't hear that though, he was too busy dealing with an officer's 'pod to notice.

Dan: The officer's pod was demanding a return, even against store policy.

> He had no ballistics and next to no gattling rounds.

Tsuneo: Which were presumably not ballistics

> The only other way he knew how to deal with this thing was to tear it apart with his battloid's hands,

Rick: 1d6 MD it is

> but the thing wouldn't let up on it's firing long enough to get close to it.

Tsuneo: So, charge blindly into enemy fire?

Rebecca: Sounds like a plan!

> Ruby saved the day when she came in from behind it and thrust her hand through the  
> "bubble" of the 'pod and created a gaping hole in the side.

Rick: Really burst his bubble there – Oh, and he's dead.

> Then the alien's blood flew out the hole as Ruby squeezed the life from it.

Dan: Coates now has a really confused boner

> "Coates!" She said. "Let's go and dock!"

> "Yes, ma'am!" he yelled and flew off.

> Ruby landed and taxied to the emergency re-loading station. It was only five minutes and she was  
> completely re-armed!

Rebecca: Formula one pit stop crews shake their heads in disgust.

> This robotechnology was some impressive stuff!

Rick: So much so that the Narrator needed a cold shower

> It was about another two minutes to assure the catcrewman that she was ok to fly,

Rebecca: And that his mother really loved him

> that all her VT's systems were ok.

Dan: And they didn't drop any ordinance this time.

> Coates was already back outside with Dan, and were waiting around the SDF for herself and  
> Sparky to launch. She was then given the go to make her way out towards the main launching area,  
> and then told to launch. Her reflex engines made a humming noise through her "thinking cap"

Rick: But was she thinking in Russian?

> as she power them up to full and released the brakes.

Tsuneo: Now that's what this fic's really about.

Dan: Proper take-off procedures?

Tsuneo: You know it.

> She blasted out into space and fell in with the other two.

Rick: Wait, other two?

> Sparky was right behind her, as he had launched out the other launching bay.

Rick: Oh yeah, Sparky. Kind of forgot you existed for a second.

> None of them said a thing as they flew back into the melee,  
> this time fully reloaded and ready to kill all the other aliens.

Dan: Kill six billion Zentraedi

> Coates broke off and opened fire with his gatling gun in fighter mode. He made a few strafing runs  
> and knocked off a few 'pods, but wasn't killing them fast enough to make a difference.

Tsuneo: Typical. One guy kills the adds while everyone else tunnels the boss

> Sparky and

> Dan were giving the 'pods everything they had and were knocking out a lot of 'pods as well, but still  
> there was too many.

Rick: Stupid reinforcement mechanics. You need to kill the Officer's Pod to stop it

> Ruby, on the other hand, worked on finding the other squads.

Tsuneo: She'd had enough of these losers and was going to hang out with the cool kids.

> "Green Leader, this is Black Leader! Can you hear me?!" she almost screamed into the tacnet.

Dan: Dial it down, Black Leader. Jeez!

> A lot of static came through as a reply. Her VT could find all of the Green's IFF's, but could not get a > tacnet signal. There was just too many 'pods, the signal couldn't get through.

Rebecca: She was more crowded then a woman at Comicon

> "Coates!" Sparky yelled. "I need you to get these things away from me!"

> "Coming Sparky!" Coates acknowledged.

> His VT came down and launched all of his rockets at the 'pods right behind Sparky's VT trying to get > a clean shot on him.

Rebecca: He's tired of this and has found an easy way out.

Tsuneo: I think it meant he shot the pods, not Sparky.

Rebecca: And I don't care.

> All seven 'pods went down

Dan: At this point they could kill them by just looking at them funny

> and then Ruby came down to join them in the main fray.

Rick: She won't get play of the game unless she gets in there.

> She had just realized she was just spectating.

Rebecca: The truth is that she didn't care

> "About time, Ruby!" Coates yelled. "I need help here. I think there is a thin spot over this way, I saw > a green VT through this mess."

Rick: Fortunately, they are colour coded for your convenience

> Coates and Ruby flew over the entire battle

Dan: Just casually skipped over the battle.

Rebecca: Nobody was stopping them, right?

> to where Coates was talking about, and he was right.

> There it was, all five of the green VT's were there, blasting 'pods this way and that.

Tsuneo: They killed some Battle Pods. Then they killed some more Battle Pods. Then they went to somewhere else and killed even more Battle Pods.

Dan: This fic in a nutshell.

> Coates fired a set of heatseekers at a 'pods who was about to blast a green VT.

Dan: Coates had to carefully weigh the value of his heatseekers against a colleague's life. It was close.

> "I don't know who you are, but thanks," the pilot said.

Rebecca: [Pilot] Literally, we have no idea who any of you people are.

> "Just make sure you do the same for me one of these days," Coates replied.

Rebecca: [Ruby] Not really. Feel free to leave him to die.

> Coates swooped down with Ruby at his side and cleared out more 'pods with just the gattling gun.

Tsuneo: The rich variety in this fic is that sometimes they're blowing up masses of battle pods with their gattling guns, and at other times they're blowing up masses of battle pods with their missiles.

> They finally had gained some ground,

Dan: Well, space.

> and all the VT's confidence began to rise.

Rick: They had improved their self-esteem and body image, and felt good for a change

> The VT's that were

> in battloid lifted off and switched to fighter, and joined the two Blacks in clearing out more and more 'pods.

Dan: They got out the big broom

> Finally, Coates' ammo gave out and had to resort to his dozen and a half heatseekers.

Rebecca: He ran out of ammo except he had more

> "I have to head in! I'm fresh out of gattling gunnery!" he called to Ruby. "Call Dan and Sparky in and > help you. I have to go reload!"

Rick: Wait, is he forgetting who's in charge here?

Dan: No, I'm pretty sure he knows it's him.

> With that he took off out of the fray with the green VT that he had saved earlier escorting him > despite the Green leader's orders.

Tsuneo: This ship loses more pilots to disciplinary actions than it does to combat losses.

> Coates flew out and over the entire mass of 'pods

Dan: And straight back over the battle again.

Rebecca: No worries. Massive space furball will be there when they get back.

> with the other VT dealing with all any 'pods that detached to attack the lone black Veritech.

Rebecca: The unarmed black fighter in the inky void of space somehow drew more attention than the heavily armed green one.

> He came down next to Dan and Sparky, who were holding off a nasty amount of 'pods.

Rick: Them Pods is nasty

> "Yo! Green VT, can you go down and help those two Blacks down there?"

Rick: Excuse me?

Dan: Well that didn't sound awkward at all

> I'll be back in about ten minutes!" Coates asked.

Tsuneo: We gotta work on our turnaround time.

> "No problem," the Green replied.

Dan: Green guy doesn't get a name.

Rebecca: Probably for the best, all things considered.

> Coates flew away from all the 'pods, and docked in the Black hangar.

Tsuneo: Hangar bays colour coded for your convenience

> He jumped out of his VT to stretch, and came face to face with Captain Havaa.

> "Master Corporal Coates," the Captain said as Coates snapped to attention. "I have been watching  
> the catseye transmissions and I must say I'm quite impressed."

Rebecca: You impressed the captain with your mediocrity

> Your little strategy has enabled all

> the VT's to smash most of the alien forces into oblivion, all because you had found out how to get  
> past the alien wall.

Tsuneo: His strategy?

Dan: He shot battle pods.

Tsuneo: And what did that do, exactly?

Dan: It blew up battle pods.

Tsuneo: And how's that different from anyone else?

Dan: 'cause it's Coates.

Tsuneo: But that doesn't –

[Dan shrugs expressively]

Tsuneo: [Muttered] Fine.

> For that alone, you and your squad is getting some time off.

Rebecca: Keep disobeying orders, keep getting rewarded. This is a pretty sweet racket he's got going here.

> I think you deserve it, but you can't start until this mess is cleared, do you get me!?"

Dan: [Coates] Not to question your judgement or anything, sir, but shouldn't you be on the bridge? I mean, there is a massive battle going on...

Rick: [Havaa] Eh, it'll take care of itself.

> "I get you, sir!"

Dan: And I got you, babe

> "Get out there!"

> Coates saluted and hastily got back in his VT. He had been reloaded all the little holes in his VT  
> were patched up.

Dan: They had covered them with duct tape and figured that was good enough

> He taxied towards the launch area, and was given the signal to launch. He put all  
> the juice he could in the engines and then released the brake.

Rick: Even Coates isn't foolhardy enough to mess with proper take-off procedures.

> He flew out into the great void of space and made his way back to the melee.

Rick: The pub brawl at the end of the universe

> The Numbered squads were now in the fray, helping out the Colored squads

Rebecca: Segregation still exists in space

> deal all the death they could to the aliens.

Dan: We come in peace, shoot to kill

> Almost all the VTs on the Gancore were out here now,

Tsuneo: You have to wonder what took them so long.

Rebecca: Probably weren't sure if it was going to be a major thing, just kind of holding back and waiting to see.

> and maintenance crews were going over time trying to get the turrets operational.

Rick: Does anyone have the Home Defence or Contractor perks?

> Coates flew down and unleashed a dozen rockets at a bunch of 'pods who were  
> bearing down on a White VT. He didn't even wait for the VT to answer;

Tsuneo: Boring conversation anyway

> he just kept on going.

Dan: The dine and dash of space battles.

> "Coates!" he heard Ruby's voice. "About time! You need to fill in!"

Rick: [Ruby] Sparky's been benched, we're on the twenty yard line and there's two minutes left in the quarter.

> All three of the other Blacks are out of ammo themselves. Hold out until we come back!"

Rick: Six months later, they were still waiting

> "Copy that," he acknowledged. "Be prepared for a surprise when you get in there though."

Rebecca: He made them a cake

> He saw three Black VTs fly out of the fray and go towards the front of the left side of the ship.  
> Coates then saw what the Captain had meant about his strategy,

Tsuneo: Remember, he's a cunning strategist

> the VT's were now blasting the 'pods at an extraordinary rate,

Rick: It's not just that he's shooting the battle pods, but he's shooting the battle pods more. [He nods sagely]

> and soon the aliens will either retreat or get killed. But soon enough, the remaining 'pods retreated,

Rebecca: Well that was an easily resolved situation

> and Coates was called by the bridge.

> "Black Squad, you have permission to dock. You've earned a break,"

Rick: Take a timeout from the space war

> the bridge commander said to him.

> "No problem, I'm going!" he said excitedly.

> He flew around the left wing of the Gancore and almost ran head-on with Ruby's ship.

Dan: The vastness of space and yet he still found something to crash in to

> "Hey, Coates," Ruby called. "Where are you going?"

Rick: [Coates] Docking bay.

Rebecca: [Ruby] What are you doing there?

Rick: [Coates] Landing.

Rebecca: [Ruby; slowly] I mean, why are you going there?

> "We just permission from the bridge to head in and rest up. God knows how much we need it!"

Rebecca: Any reason they communicated this to him and not his leader?

Tsuneo: At this point, I think I'm beyond caring

Rebecca: Smart move

> "Alright then," Ruby said. "Black Squad, re-dock!"

Dan: [Sparky] But I just launched. Can't I like, stretch my legs or something?

> Coates didn't say anything. He was too tired to care right now,

Rick: The alien invasion was too much to be bothered with

> and chances are good that they were

> as well. He docked first, along with Ruby in the other station, then Sparky and Dan.

Dan: I'm sure their parking order will be very important in future.

> Coates climbed out of the VT and walked down the steps that were provided for him.

Tsuneo: The others have to awkwardly vault out of their cockpits.

> He walked towards Ruby's ship next to his and waited for her to get out as well.

> "Hey! How was it while we were gone?" she asked.

Dan: [Coates] Oh, not much. Just a raging battle to the death.

> "Great! Almost all of the VTs on the SDF were out there," he was half-asleep.

Rick: It was huge. You should have been there.

> "Cool. Hey, want to go out and do something after a nap?" she offered.

Rebecca: Maybe go antiquing or try out a new dog-friendly cafe?

> "Or how about maybe two or three naps. God I'm tired!"

Rebecca: Romance is well and truly dead

> "I know that, you are almost asleep standing there. Just let me one thing before you go:

Tsuneo: [Ruby] I know you're about to fall asleep, but let me keep you here so you do fall asleep.

> would you mind if I came to your place as well."

> Coates was raised an eyebrow, and looked at her with a confused look on his face.

> "You live closer to the hangar than I do.

Rebecca: And that is all you mean to her, Coates. Treasure it.

> I just want to get some shut eye without my father going ballistic," she explained.

Dan: Her father hates people who sleep

> Coates woke up on his couch with his dog on the floor next to him.

Rick: Better than the other way around

> He looked around bleary-eyed for a moment,

Tsuneo: Pug took the opportunity to sit on his chest and lick his face.

> then his eyes adjusted to the sight of Ruby making toast and eggs.

Dan: She was making them the American way and not the French way

Rick: Deep cut

> He got up and stumbled into the kitchen.

Tsuneo: Given how he's handled things so far, I'm amazed he managed that much without dying

> "Well it's about time sleepy head," she said with out even turning around. "There was no eggs so I  
> called up that corner store and had the man there bring me some.

Rebecca [Ruby]: Also I charged them to your card.

> He asked me if I was some maid that you had hired to clean up his house or something.

Dan: [Ruby] Mentioned how desperately you needed it. Basically was surprised you'd managed to live  
on your own this long.

> What's that all about?"

Rick: Something about your being a hoarder and having a front yard filled with trash

> "I was thinking of hiring a maid at one point to help keep this place clean,"

Rebecca: But on his pilot's salary, the best he could afford is a second-hand Roomba.

> he said slowly and very groggily.

Dan: Well, actually a hazmat crew. But close enough.

> "Well, now that I'm here, I'll do it for you. How can you live in this mess?" she went on.

Rebecca: Simple. He's a bachelor.

> "How long have you been up?" he asked.

Rick: [Ruby] Bold of you to assume I managed to sleep in this pit.

> "Almost an hour. Why?"

> "And why are you doing this for me?" he asked.

Rebecca: [Ruby] I'm not. Bacon's all mine, buster.

> "Well, to make a long story short, my dad called and I answered it, now I'm slightly homeless.

Tsuneo: Despite being a military officer she's not assigned to a barracks or anything.

> Do you mind if I stay with you?"

> "W-what?" he was shocked.

> "Can I stay with you, please?" she batted her eyes at him.

> "You know damn well you're welcome here anytime you want," he almost yelled.

Rick: [Coates; yelling] Especially if there's bacon involved!

> "Just as long as you don't completely ruin the whole house."

Rebecca: Coates is terrified that she might make it liveable

> "I won't, I won't. I promise I won't!" she turned and hugged him.

> Something snapped inside Coates

Tsuneo: Next thing you know he's digging a shallow grave in the park.

> that made him wonder if this was going to be anything like he first thought.

Rick: He thought it might be like what he thought it might be like

> He stepped back looked her in the eye, then turned to go shower.

> Ruby stood there for quite a while after Coates had left. Something had snapped inside her as well,

Rebecca: And she knew that Coates would be the first to die

> and it was a good thing her father had cut her off.

Rick: Since she was a... career soldier?

> 'This will be a little awkward, but I think I can manage,'

Tsuneo: Also my review of the fic so far

> she thought.

> Coates came out of his shower with just a towel wrapped around him,

Dan: [Ruby] Well, if we're going to be living together, there's going to be some ground rules. And that there is number one.

> he ran to his bedroom to get changed, while she finished making a nine- course breakfast.

Tsuneo: She had decided to keep things low-key for the moment

> She had set the table with what clean dishes he had left

Rick: Okay, so she wound up serving the hash browns on a Lifeless Graphite Planet vinyl record, but you get the picture.

> and then turned to go get in the shower herself.

> She showered and changed into the spare clothes she had here just in case from a long time ago.

Rebecca: After first fumigating them

> When she walked into the kitchen, Coates was standing over the sink, washing the five tons of > dishes that were dirty from sometime last month.

Dan: That he was wearing a gasmask while he did such was not a good sign

> She smiled then hip checked him out of the way and took over.

Rick: [Ruby] Seriously, you're scratching the finish. Have you ever done this before?

> She finished them in half the time Coates had taken to do the silverware.

Rebecca: Remind me. What does she actually see in him?

Tsuneo: He's the protagonist

Rebecca: Is he? Is he really?

Tsuneo: Um... now that I think about it...

> "Uh, Ruby. What about clothes and stuff like that? Should I go and get your stuff, or should I send > Dan or Sparky to do it?"

Rick: Dan's official position in the squadron is 'gopher.'

> "That's no problem. I have to get new one's anyways," she smiled.

> Coates had a look on his face that said: 'Oh, god. There goes my next half of a years paycheck!'

Dan: Wah-wah.

> They had spent their first day off in the Gancity Mall.

Rebecca: Gancity. Because Gancore is such a stupid name that we have to run with it.

> Choosing new clothes for Ruby. Since Ruby had no money on her,

Tsuneo: Convenient that.

> Coates had to go and get an advance on his next paycheck in order to pay for it all.

Dan: He had to ask his commanding officer, which did not get awkward at all.

> Coates was now walking into another clothing store with about seven tons of clothes in his > arms.

Rebecca: Ah, outdated sexist clichés. Where would lazy writing be without you?

> "Ruby, you have enough clothes to last for the next year!"

Tsuneo: [Ruby] Oh, don't be silly. Most of this will be out of fashion long before then.

> Can we please just leave? I don't have  
> that much money left, and I need to get some supper for tonight!" he wined.

Dan: And by that he means he's going to eat beef stew straight from the can

> "Oh relax, you baby," she told him. "I need some clothes for when I'm just out walking around now."

> He moaned.

Rick: Just assume that a comedy is happening and move on

> "Just this one last store, then we can go home, ok?"

> The pile of clothes bounced up and down as he nodded.

Tsuneo: This is the view of Coates she likes best.

Rick: Doing her bidding?

Tsuneo: Obscured.

> "Good, now get your plastic ready."

Dan: Coates decided to just go with it and learn to enjoy being findommed.

> She went through the store's inventory and picked out the three most expensive suits she could find,  
> then added them to the pile.

Rick: [Ruby] And now something for the Met Gala...

> Coates' knees threatened to give out soon.

> "That comes to \$589.76," the clerk announced.

Tsuneo: You know what really makes an unfunny joke pop?

Rebecca: Dragging it out as long as possible?

Tsuneo: You know it

> Coates almost dropped the pile of clothes! 'I'm gonna go in debt soon! Just hope she don't  
> remember the 'extras'! God help me then!' he thought.

Rick: Coates was beginning to wonder if Ruby didn't have some ulterior motive

> Coates managed to get the clothes back to his place without dropping them or getting them dirty,  
> which earned him a hug.

Dan: He managed to be passably competent

Tsuneo: It's a high mark for him

> To him, that was payment enough, but to her, that wasn't enough. She  
> made him his favorite treats: Chocolate-covered Rice Crispy Squares,

Tsuneo: This is a grown man, folks. A seasoned fighter pilot.

> and then a five-course meal for him alone.

Rebecca: She made him party snacks. Oh, and also a five-course banquet

> Then a grand time out in the nighttime EVE in the park.

Tsuneo: You can just say 'night time.'  
Dan: But they've got to stretch their foot pedes.  
Tsuneo: Go so to hell.

> They talked about this and that,

Rebecca: Informed dialogue is the best dialogue. [Pause] I actually mean that in this fic.

> what they wanted when they finished with the RDF

Rick: So which one of them do you think was planning to buy a boat and move to the country?

> and what kind of person they would like to marry.

Rebecca [Ruby]: I'm looking for a man who can keep a clean house  
Dan [Coates]: I was hoping for an anime robot maid myself

> All in all, Coates was completely missing what she was hinting at, and she was missing at what he  
> was hinting at.

Tsuneo: This has been two idiots conversing

> The briefing room was full as all the colored squadrons were in there.

Rick: Including Periwinkle, Amaranth, Coquelicot and Gamboge

> Coates and Ruby walked into

> the room and spotted Dan and Sparky, who had saved a pair of seats for them.

Rick: Which meant they had to sit there and pretend to be thankful

> Ruby sat down and motioned Coates to sit next to her.

Dan: In deference to protocol, he did not try and sit in her lap.

> "So, what do you think we're in here for?" she asked.

> "I haven't got a clue.

Tsuneo: Something to do with the space war, maybe?

Rick: You might be on to something there

> Here comes the Commander now, so I guess we're about to find out."

> Ruby looked towards the door and a fat man in a RDF uniform walked in.

Rick: Oh, Anatole Leonard.

Dan: What?

Rick: Leonard's a Macross character. Just like TR Edwards.

> She was utterly disgusted by his sheer fatness!

Rick: She was a fat shamer and didn't try to hide it

> "I assume roll call was taken,

Tsuneo: Yeah, they had to identify more casualties.

> so I will just get to the point so you people can get on with your lives,"

Dan: [Dan] But we don't have lives!

> his cheeks jiggled as he spoke.

Dan: But did he shake like a bowlful of jelly?

> "All the colored squads are going on an offensive movement as of  
> tomorrow at 0900 hours.

Rick: [Commander] The Anglo squads will back them up from the officers' lounge.

> We have finally located the damn aliens are going to make a move to kill  
> them all. You all have twenty hours to do whatever you want,

Tsuneo: Like, say, resting so you're mentally and physically refreshed for this dangerous mission?

Rebecca: I think you're asking a bit much there

> then we have to saddle up and kick some ass.

Tsuneo: This is an actual military briefing, right?

Rick: I don't know, I think the janitor found a spare uniform and wanted to do some improv.

> You will be given some money to get you through the night as a moral booster.

Dan: Coates had realised the solution to all his problems, and took to volunteering for every dangerous mission he could.

> All mission details will be given to you as we see fit.

Tsuneo: [Commander] We'll be briefing squad 2ICs at random intervals. They can tell their commanders whenever they feel like it.

> Any questions?"

> No one said anything or moved.

> "Dismissed!"

> "Yo, putz! I'm going home to see my wife! Talk to you later!" Dan called over his shoulder.

Rick: [Sparky] But I thought you were Putz...

> "Yeah, see ya, dumbass," he retorted.

Rick: Yeah, how stupid of him to have a loving and supportive relationship

> Coates stood around the corner of the doorway waiting for Ruby.

Dan: 'Scuse me. 'Scuse me. Outta my way, man. Move!

> She was one of the last ones out  
> of the room, since all the squad leaders were to stay behind for additional orders.

Tsuneo: ...and make sure that Coates doesn't make it back alive. Any questions?

> She walked past him with out even noticing him,

Dan: Coates' life, folks.

> at least until she realized that he was right behind her, imitating her stiff walk.

Rick: Ruby's run cycle needs work

> She got a pissed look and he just laughed really hard.

Rebecca: Let's just pretend this is funny and move on

> "Heh, heh. I just wanted to have some fun," he wiped a tear from his eye. "So, what was so important all the squad leaders had to stay back?"

> "A bunch of us are going to be armed with a special type of bomb.

Dan: A copy of Matrix Resurrection.

Rick: Yeah, that is a pretty special bomb

> We have to plant it on the battle cruiser and get out before they all go off," she explained.

Rick: Good thing we're keeping this from the squads.

Rebecca: Oh yes, I'd hate for them to be able to properly support their commanders.

> "He said that more instructions will be given tomorrow." She took a deep breath, steeling herself. "So what are you going to do tonight?"

Tsuneo [Coates]: Talk to my pug and then fall asleep in a pile of refuse as always

> "I have to get in contact with someone," he said. "And you know who that someone is?" he smiled.

Rick: Oscar the Grouch. It's complicated

> "And who is that person," she whispered.

Tsuneo: [Coates] Cottler. Me and the boys are holding a séance.

> He brushed her lips. "You."

Rebecca: So while he was standing in front of her, he tried to call her up. She didn't answer.

> The next day in the Black hangar, everything was in turmoil. Catcrewman were doing this and that,

Tsuneo: Army guys did army stuff

> Sparky was checking everything on his VT to make sure it would work on this flight,

Rick: Sparky didn't trust his flightcrew to do their jobs.

> and Dan was trying desperately to calm his wailing wife.

Dan: His wife, Mrs Dan.

> Sparky looked out of the cockpit of his VT when Coates

> and Ruby walked in with their arms around each other, and almost choked on his gum!

Rick: The idea that two people might hold hands was staggering to him

> Dan looked up to see the two of them part and head for each other's VTs.

Tsuneo: Then turn around and head for their own fighters, of course.

> Coates climbed up the ladder and looked inside to make sure Dan didn't pull anything stupid,

Dan: And then realised he was wearing a hot dog costume

> then climbed in. He began the start-up sequence when Ruby popped her head over the edge.

Tsuneo: [Ruby] I just want to tell you good luck, and we're all counting on you.

> He sat there for a minute, then smiled, leaning forward and kissing her.

> "Good luck," she said then climbed down and walked off to her VT.

> Ruby watched as Coates taxied his way in front of her. She was concerned about this mission;  
> something just didn't feel right.

Rick: The fact that they were getting close to the end of the fic made her worried.

> The catcrewman waved him to launch and the roar of the VT's

> engines got louder, then was gone as he launched. The catcrewman waved her forward and  
> prepare to launch. In the neighboring launch/docking area, Dan had just launched,

Rick: You know what time it is?

Rebecca: Oh yeah.

> and Sparky was now following up in.

Tsuneo: At this point, the Kenny Loggins is just assumed.

> They both got the launching wave at the same time.

Rick: Oh, here it comes!

Rebecca: Get ready...

> She juiced up her engines until they were going at full, the released the brakes, and the force hit her  
> as she blasted into space.

Rick: Proper launch procedure, baby!

Rebecca: Oh yeah!

> Coates had kept it slow so her and Sparky could catch up.

> "Attention all VTs: There is a special bomb on each of the following VT's and must be protected at  
> all costs until the bomb that persons bomb is launched," the fat commander

Rick: All the while trying to deal with Thomas the Tank Engine and the Troublesome Trucks

> called from the SDF. "Those VT's are: Yellow One, Black Three and One, and White Two and Four.

Dan: [Commander] We could have told you earlier, but didn't.

> I say again, these VT's must be protected at all costs..."

Tsuneo: So if I read this right, Coates was unaware that he was carrying the bomb

Dan: Sounds about right for him

> He went through the list again.

> Coates had the same bad feeling about this whole mission as well,

Rick: As did his Wookie co-pilot

> but he didn't have time to think about it right now.

Rebecca: Thinking takes time for Coates.

> The entire Green squad took up defensive positions around him and Ruby.

Dan: Ready to punch out any paparazzi they came across

> The Green VT that he had saved a few days ago pulled up next to him.

Tsuneo: [Pilot] I still don't have a name.

> "I repay that debt I owe you today," he called. "And then we're even."

> "Just make sure you do it before I launch the bomb, alright?"

> "No problem," the VT pilot said as he joined formation.

Rebecca: Because after that you're on your own

> Coates was now feeling worse about this, but he still couldn't explain it. He looked to his side and  
> saw Ruby with a dark look on her face.

> "Hey, Ruby!" Coates called out. "What's wrong?"

Rebecca: Her new living arrangements.

> "Nothing. It's just this mission is giving me this bad-" the fat commander cut her off.

> "Black! You are to maintain radio silence!"

> "These are tacnets, sir," Coates yelled back.

Dan: [Commander] Well if you're going to split hairs, I'm going to piss off.

> "We don't know if the enemy can listen to them or not yet!"

> Coates didn't say anything to that.

Tsuneo: Damn you and your logical reasoning

> The rest of the flight to the designated coordinates was unnerving.

Rebecca: Coates was left alone with his thoughts, and realised he didn't have any.

> He had never thought that he

> would ever think that neither. It wasn't until the first warning came in from the catseye recon ship  
> that he was so bored of flying.

Dan: He'd tried installing Candy Crush in his Veritech, but it didn't go down well.

> "Black and Green! There is an estimated 500 'pods headed your way!"

Dan: Just a couple of them, huh?

> "Green, break and hunt!" Green leader called.

> "Black, stay on present course," Ruby said.

> Then other warnings came in from other recon ships, and then the target came into eyesight.

Rick: Giant space cucumber at twelve high.

> Coates was just as rapt as he was the first time he had seen it, only now he knew why he had a bad  
> feeling about this. The only reason the aliens had never been successful is because the humans  
> were on the defensive. And that's when you're allowed to fight dirty. Now it was their turn to deal  
> some death to the humans.

Tsuneo: So far they'd just been playing at space war

> "Bogy," Sparky said. "Looks like an officers 'pod. Should I go and blast it?"

> "No, hold your present course!" Ruby snapped.

> Coates wasn't all too fond of having other people defending him when he couldn't help, and now he  
> felt he should disobey orders.

Rick: Why should today be any different?

> "Ruby, let's dump the package soon so we can help a little."

Dan: You should have gone to the bathroom before taking off.

> "I know where you are coming from," she paused. "Let's do it."

Rebecca: I mean, you had a crucial mission to fulfil and all but, no, go chase the random pod. That's fine.

> The entire Black squad swung down and the two unleashed their special bombs.

Tsuneo: Just assume they did something and move on

Rick: Was it something special?

Tsuneo: I'd hope so

> Then Coates

> turned and ran headlong into the middle of a heated melee with a bunch of 'pods versus a few  
> Whites.

Dan: [Pilot] Actually, we're good here.

Rebecca: [Pilot] Yeah, we got this.

Tsuneo: [Pilot] Really, you blew the mission for no reason.

> He swooped down and unleashed a volley of gatling rounds at any 'pod that came near.  
> The 'pods then turned on him and took chase,

Rebecca: Battle Pods are apparently like small, yappy dogs

> leaving the Whites to lift off and blast the 'pods from behind.

> Coates shifted to battloid and unleashed another string of rounds on another rush of 'pods that were  
> swarming out of the cucumber-ship.

Rick: At least it's not a zucchini ship

Dan: Oh yeah. Those are the worst

> Although he nailed most of them, the few that did get out just  
> went beyond him and into another melee in the distance.

Rebecca: Nobody cares about you Coates, not even the bad guys.

> He chased after them while he transformed to fighter and began to pick them off with his rockets.

Rick: The other squadrons are retreating, given the mission's been scrubbed already. But hey, you get your kills in.

> After wiping the last one he  
> turned and joined the melee. What he didn't know was an officers 'pods was following him.

Tsuneo: Sneaking up on him like a cartoon cat

> Ruby was in the heated melee that Coates was now joining. She had wasted all of her heatseekers

Rick: She blew them at the dog track

> and was now about to launch her last set of rockets

Tsuneo: Well maybe you need to rearm. Head back to base. Maybe get another special bomb while you're there, since you flushed the last one.

> when Coates blasted past and knocked out her  
> target. She turned and re-targeted on another 'pods when she noticed that the officers 'pod was  
> following him.

Dan: It held a paddle-arm up to its cockpit and went 'sshhh.'

> She gave chase to the thing and shot her final set of rockets but missed, only  
> knocking out a few other 'pods.

Rick: Stupid damage splitting mechanic.

> Cursing, she flew over top of it and changed to battloid, then fell on  
> top of it and smashed an arm off of it with her gatling gun.

> The 'pod slid out of her grasp with ease and then turned and tried to fire at her, but Coates came  
> down behind it and blasted off the turret thing on its head.

Dan: You know, that thing that it has there?

Rick: Yeah, yeah, that turret thing there.

Dan: That thing!

> Now the VT's were clearing out the 'pods with ease, and the alien defensive looked futile.

Tsuneo: Wow, that looked easy. Almost like we didn't have to flush the entire mission for it.

> After the last 'pod exploded, Coates and Ruby were standing off with this one 'pod.

Tsuneo: And where were the rest of the squad?

Rebecca: Probably being distracted by shiny things

Tsuneo: Makes sense

> It turned its last arm and fired at Coates, who never expected the shot and got hit head on in the  
> cockpit. His VT exploded, killing him.

Rick: His last words were 'aaah, boom.'

> Ruby saw this and got real pissed off with the alien and rushed it.

Dan: [Ruby] You killed my meal ticket!

> At that same moment, more 'pods  
> came out from behind the derbies and renewed the assault, the only few pilots did survive the initial

> attack didn't have a chance in combat,

Tsuneo: So what happened to 'clearing out the pods with ease?'

> but fought on anyways. All of those who fought went down in  
> no time flat, including both Dan and Sparky.

Rebecca: They died as they lived; as footnotes

> Ruby was the only VT left, and she realized this as the  
> 'pods gathered around to watch the officers 'pod take on the lone VT.

Rick: Twenty klatoons on the newcomer.

> She didn't even have a chance to look up, the 'pod just shot her once with an alien ballistic.

Dan: So I wrote you into my fic.

Rebecca: Oh? What do I do in it?

Dan: Well a creepy guy leers at you then you die

Rebecca: Um, thanks?

> From the bridge, Captain Havaa watched the final VT explode.

> "All charges are on the alien ship sir," a member of the crew announced.

Rebecca: [Crew] Except those two who dumped them early. Everyone died for nothing.

> "Blast them," he ordered...

Dan: And the ship exploded so hard it ended the fic. Good night everyone!

With that final comment, the big screen turned off, converting the world back to prose format. "And that was the sum total of Robotech the New Age," Tsuneo considered, "A technically complete fic by the broadest definitions of the term."

"Wait, that was it?" Dan asked. "It was only just getting started."

"Well, it's over," Rebecca shrugged. "I mean, I should be happy that we got an actually completed fic, but I'm not sure if this one even counts."

"I mean, I suppose you could call it an ending," Rick shrugged. "Everyone dies and presumably the alien ship was destroyed."

"This is true," Tsuneo agreed. "By the loosest possible terms this fic was indeed complete"

"Not that it had any sort of introduction," Rebecca considered, "Something that it direfully needed."

"I'll agree there," Dan nodded. "I mean, it just threw us in at the deep end with no idea who these characters were or why we should care about them."

"Honestly from the intro I thought the captain was meant to be a major part of the cast," Rick admitted. "Given that the fic had to mention that they're a tactical genius and all."

"And didn't that amount to a lot of nothing?" Dan noted. "The captain was barely in the fic."

"Not like they displayed any tactical genius anyway," Rebecca agreed. "Or tactical skill at all. Or any sort of personality at all, really."

"It kind of makes you wonder why the author bothered mentioning them in the first place," Tsuneo added.

"Unrelated to that, but what the hell was with the sudden round of fat shaming with the officer?"  
Rebecca asked. "It's not like any other character is described, but the fic felt the need to point out this one guy and how repulsed everyone was by his appearance."

"Truly, I have nothing," Rick admitted.

"Well I can tell you have a lot to say about the fic," the Voice spoke up.

"Which is remarkable, given how little fic there was," Dan shot back.

"So then I'm eager to hear your reviews," the Voice continued.

"I'm going to talk about the characters here as a whole," Rebecca began. "There's no real reason to cover them individually because they really lack any actual individuality. They're less a cast as they are an amorphous mass with very little to distinguish any single character from any other one. They shout, they drink, they berate each other and they engage in unfunny comedy antics, but any given line could be delivered by any given member of the cast. It's hard to care about them at all when it's hard to tell who is speaking."

"Ruby is the only one who really gets any individual characterisation, but that's not necessarily a good thing," Rebecca continued. "Her personality is largely defined by two things. The first is some outdated female stereotypes; she likes cooking for her man, cleaning and shopping for clothes. The second is that she loves Coates for no apparent reason. I mean that too; her attraction to him is never explained, and it's not like he's shown any desirable traits at all."

"It's honestly amazing that you could get that much out of the characters," Tsuneo mentioned. "You have to basically infer everything from the fic in progress, since they're not really introduced to us at all. Normally I wouldn't be bothered by this, preferring an organic development to the characters; we should be learning about them and their relationships as the fic progresses. But instead, we're just launched into the squad's arguments and never really get a chance to get to know them."

"It's a problem with the fic's setting as a whole. While yes, we can make assumptions what things like battlepods and veritechs are, it's still an original setting within Robotech, so as much as we don't know who these people are, we don't know where they are, what they're fighting for and why. And again, nothing is presented to us as the fic goes on. I can appreciate that they want to call each other names; just do it once we know what their actual names are."

Dan frowned for a moment before he started. "Um, I want to talk about the fic's story, but I'm not sure there really is one. There's... I mean, you've got a basic 'we're pilots and we fight bad guys,' but it doesn't really seem to develop. I mean, a lot of that comes down to the lack of setup or anything, but at the same time there's no real progression for it. A lot of the romantic... Uh, I want to say subplot, but I'm not sure there's a main plot for it to sub to?" He paused for a moment, confused, before pressing on. "I mean, it just sort of happens. There's no real setup, since we don't know their relationship beforehand. There's no real explanation, especially about how Ruby's dad is involved. But it doesn't really relate to the rest of the piece. It's just there, then we go back to the fighting."

"The main story is the same. They win their battles, but we don't know the stakes. Are they protecting Earth? Their ship? Just themselves? What does the victory mean? They lose a squad member early on, but it has no impact on them. It just happens, they move on, and it doesn't matter. In a way, that ending kind of feels appropriate. It's abrupt, it doesn't relate to the rest of the fic, and it doesn't really matter. That's the whole thing."

"I feel that we need to talk about the fight scenes in this fic for two reasons," Rick spoke up. "First of all, they constitute a not inconsiderable portion of the fic's meagre run. The second is that they are badly written and repetitive throughout."

"Each one of them is basically the same," he explained. "They fly out there and fight Pods. People fire rockets, guns and heatseekers. They shout at each other. They mention how they're outnumbered by the pods. And then the fight ends on an arbitrary point where everyone goes home and talks about

how tough the fight was. And that's it. There's no greater plan, no indication of what the enemy goals or objectives are or anything else. Just 'they fight pods' repeated."

"It also needs to be said that my very clipped description of the fight scenes also covers their writing. There's little actual effort put into them, which merely adds to their repetitive nature. They're not gripping or exciting or anything, just the same few stock bits being repeated each time around."

"So in short the fic was shallow, repetitive, poorly realised and had weak characters," Tsuneo concluded. "On the other hand, it had a Pug called Mister P, so I suppose we can take that as a positive."

"Thank you for that," the Voice finally replied. "As always, your reviews are appreciated."

"Well at least it was quick and painless," Rebecca admitted. "I'll take that."

"Same time next week, Voice?" Rick asked.

"Of course," The Voice confirmed. "I look forward to it."

"You and you alone," Dan sighed.

"So since your club is in the process of self-destructing, mind If I throw a question your way?" Dan asked.

"Sure, why not?" Tsuneo sighed. "I suspect that by the next meeting people will be barricading the doors."

"What's Lego fanfic like?" Dan continued. "Simply because I live in fear that we might get some one of these days."

Tsuneo tilted his head in thought for a moment. "Truth is, most Lego fanfic is based around the more story and setting heavy themes, like Ninjago or Chima. Since they've got actual characters and the like they also offer the most potential for fanfic authors."

"And how does that go?"

"Well it's fanfic of children's media being written by adults," Tsuneo sighed.

"So... find the two whitest men in the cast, assume that they're a couple and then send death threats to anyone who disagrees," Rebecca concluded.

"Very much so," he finished.

"But no Yellow Spacemen?" Rick asked.

"...don't get me started."

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Author's notes:

What was this fic? Really, I have no idea at all, and I'm not entirely sure the author did either.

I've often said that I like the idea of an entirely OC-based story in an existing setting. However, it does take a lot of work on the part of the author to make it work. They need to introduce the characters and build them up and most importantly, give the audience a reason to get invested in them. I only say this because this fic did none of that at all.

Next time, you don't know Jack. So here's his extensive inventory.

Robotech is copyright Harmony Gold

Robotech: The New Age written by Kamiazi

Rebecca Bartley and Rick R. Mortis created by Rick R. (natch)  
Tsuneo Tateo and Dan created by Zogster

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Magical wasteland lunatics? Email us at elmerstudios00 (at) gmail.com and register your Jeff.

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> "I have a damaged ass. The stupid thing shot me in the ass!"