
Episode 503 – No, this is Patrick

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.

Christina sat on one of the chairs, wearing a black wig. Jill sat opposite her, wearing a shawl and a grey wig. Matt and Rex looked on, the latter of which was holding a camera. A crudely-made sign hung over them reading "Totally Real Genom HR Department"; most of which had been crossed out to be replaced with the words "Totally Real High School" in marker.

"Let's start with the basics," Jill began in an exaggerated rough voice. "What's your name, toots?"

"Shildy," Christina replied. "Shildy, um... Spaceman."

"And the name of your daughter?"

"Oh no, she's not my daughter," Christina shook her head.

"So you're her step-mother?"

"No."

"Adoptive mother? Some other sort of legal guardian?"

"No."

"So what is your relationship?"

"We live in the same abandoned factory in the lawless wasteland district," Christina nodded. "And we definitely didn't serve on the same spaceship at all."

"Right, well," Jill mimed writing something down. "And her name is?"

"Amy Spaceman," Christina explained. "No relation."

"Uhuh," Jill nodded. "Now Ms Spaceman, what made you chose our school for your... child's education?"

"Well you have a reputation for academic achievement and excellence," Christina explained. "As well as an impressively out of place faux-European campus here in future Cyberpunk dystopia Tokyo. That and it's a chance to get Amy out of our hair for a while."

"And would I be able to get a transcript of her past academic achievements?" Jill asked.

"Well no," Christina admitted. "But that's because, um, she's shy. And not because she's a two million year old ancient astronaut clone soldier at all."

"Of course," Jill noted, pretending to write again. "Now Ms Spaceman, this is an exclusive private school that obviously has a very extensive and more to the point, expensive curriculum. As such, I need to be able to make sure that you'll be able to reliably pay your... child's tuition."

"I understand fully," Christina nodded. "What do you need to know?"

"Well for starters what do you do for a living and how much do you make?" Jill asked. "If you're not going to be able to pay the tuition then there is no point in our enrolling Amy."

"I'm unemployed," Christina noted.

"I see," Jill replied. "And is there a Mister Spaceman or anyone else in the family who provides a source of income?"

"Well one of the other women who lives in the same abandoned factory as us is a pilot for the AD Police," she offered. "And another collects junk."

"Mhm," Jill considered. "Out of curiosity, how many of there are you in this hobo squat?"

"Six, including Amy, myself and the one who is absolutely not a killer robot at all."

"And only one of you has a job."

"Yes."

"An incredibly dangerous job where they could be killed at any time," Jill added. "And since you have no connection to her beyond living in the same squat, you wouldn't be entitled to their minimal benefits."

"That's right, yes," Christina confirmed.

"So you have no job, no income and you want to enrol a girl that you have no legal or biological relationship to into our exclusive high school even though she has no academic record whatsoever," Jill summarised.

"Correct," Christina replied.

"Well this all seems entirely above board," Jill continued. "So I'll get started on the paperwork for getting her enrolled. However, there is one thing you need to know before we sign off on everything."

"And what's that?"

"So if your kid acts up, breaks school rules, goes out after curfew or fails to achieve a certain level of academic standard, then the school gets to take legal custody of her," Jill explained. "It's all there in the paperwork if you want to check."

"That seems fine to me," Christina replied. "Um, can I borrow a pen? I don't have one on me, what with my living in a squat and all."

"And scene," Mark finished. "Great work everyone."

"Thank god for that," Jill added as she pulled off her wig and shawl, then took a swig from her water bottle. "Doing that voice was killing me."

"I think that was a lot of fun," Christina smiled. "And a pretty fair summary of the whole situation."

"That rare subplot that is both nothing at all to do with the rest of the fic and yet the most interesting part of it," Rex considered. "Which is kinda strange in and of itself."

"It is indeed quite the conundrum," Mark nodded. "But at the same time, I think that we could use more strange subplots like that."

"Well aren't you all having so much fun there, kids," the Voice cut into the conversation. "I could watch your little shows forever."

"We could do then rather than the reviews," Rex hopefully offered.

"No," the Voice stated. "Fun, but also no."

"Awww."

"So I am guessing that we have more of Bubblegum Force today," Jill asked.

"We do," the Voice continued. "And while you'll be happy to know that this is the last part of that, I'm of course disappointed that there's not more of it as I have been genuinely enjoying its engrossing narrative."

"Really?" Mark asked, his tone rich with scepticism.

"No," the Voice shot back.

"Thought so."

"But what I am eagerly looking forward to is your reviews when we're done," the Voice continued. "I want to hear just how maddening you found the fic."

"It's been plenty of that so far," Mark offered.

"Fantastic," the Voice nodded. "But in the meantime, you have two more chapters of... well, whatever this is to look forward to. And yes, I think you actually will be surprised at what happens in it."

"Huh," Rex considered. "Well there you go."

"Hopefully that means more of the insanely evil high school," Jill added as she took her place on the couch. "Because that's the thing I've enjoyed the most so far."

"Sadly, I think that's all we're going to see of them," Christina noted as she and the others joined her.

"Probably, but don't take this one little thing from me," Jill added. "Oh, and Christina? Wig?"

"Oh, right," Christina finished, removing her wig as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format.

> Bubblegum Force Episode 6
> Confrontation
> By nebulart@solnoid.nl

> Rabby was more than mildly surprised to find Lufy next to her in bed.

Jill: Could have at least asked first

> Saying nothing about it,

Christina: They will never speak of this again.

> she carefully slipped out of bed, tucked her friend in a little deeper, seeing her smile contently.

Mark: You just know Lufy hogs all the sheets.

> She couldn't remember the last time she'd seen Lufy smile.

Rex: What about last night when she grinned loudly?

> Breaking out in a smile herself, she got dressed, and slipped down to the kitchen to brew
> coffee and make breakfast. One by one, the rest of the group filtered in the kitchen,

Mark: Lufy, Shildy, Amy, Spea, Catty, Patty, Eluza, Rummy, Pony...

> silently having their breakfast, then off to their respective jobs.

Christina: What actual job skills do any of them have anyway?

Jill: I imagine Rabby could get a job as a plumber...

> Rabby was down in the equipment bay when she saw Lufy walk around, kicking against some
> empty paint cans, looking bored.

Mark: Her enclosure is too plain. She needs enrichment.

> "Hey, shouldn't you be in work today ?"

> "No. I called in, told them I didn't feel too well."

Rex: I can't go to the killer robot rampage today, I have a headache

> That was enough reason for Rabby to finish the part she was working on and to climb down.

> "What is wrong with you ?"

> "I keep having nightmares," she replied,

Rex: She's naked in church when she meets a dinosaur. She tries to run, but her feet have been nailed to the floor.

> "it's dead scary.. it seems so real." They spent most of the

> day trying to figure out what was wrong with her.

Jill: Solanoids are not big believers in grief counselling, are they?

> Evening had fallen, the city lights taking the place of the brilliant sunlight over MegaTokyo.

Christina: This just in, lights come on at night

Mark: I am amazed

> Martin Kenderson paced through his small office. His best - and most insolent - pilot had

> called in, sick. Her thick file was still on his desk, mostly filled with damage claims and after-action

> reports.

Rex: I'm beginning to wonder how Lufy has kept her job

Jill: In the ADP? Not dying helps

Rex: True

> He sat down again, rooted through the mass of red property damage forms and blue after-

> action reports,

Mark: It is important to know what colour the folders are.

> and found what he was looking for;

Mark: A kind of primate that hasn't been documented yet.

Rex: Nah, doesn't flow.

Mark: I'll workshop it.

> personalia. He'd read the tiny file many times

> over, finding it curious that such an extrovert person had so little background information available.

Christina: Her entire background was 'citation needed'

> She had told the personnel officer she had combat experience on fighters, yet the airforce

> had never heard of her.

Jill: And since there's only one air force in the whole world he had nothing

> He had rooted through her family records, or at least, tried to locate them,
> but found nothing. Presumably, those records had been lost to the Great Earthquake.

Mark: But to remind you, he did all this after she was hired.

> Sure. Internal Affairs was planning on opening an investigation on her, because of
> the UFO incident, where one officer was killed, two others went KO.

Rex: They were planning an investigation, but they weren't too fussed about it

> Presumably because of a faulty altimeter.

Jill: It's not the casualties they're worried about. It's just that the cause is embarrassing.

> After the wreckage of her chopper had been recovered, the altimeter had been thoroughly
> tested. 100% Okay.

Jill: Ironically the crash had jarred it back into shape

> Pacing, he had to admit there were too much loose ends around her. Way too much. And he
> definitely wanted some of those ends tied together.

Mark: Again I have to wonder how she passed the background check

Christina: Maybe they were just impressed with her hair

Mark: I can see that

> One of those ends was the boarding school incident. The director might not have a big
> political clout,

Rex: She can take legal custody of a child for breaking school rules, but she doesn't have much
political clout

> but she could be a nuisance. Knocks on his door, a young officer stuck his head inside.

Mark: [Officer] I drew the short straw, sir.

> "Sir, we have a confirmed battle boomer sighting in Area 17."

Jill: The dystopian cyberpunk artisan cheese shop district

> Within a few minutes, ADP helicopters scrambled, heavy trucks carrying K-12 troopers moved to the
> last location where the mighty Dragon battle boomer had been sighted.

Rex: It was burninating the countryside

> It took Sylia five minutes to see what Genom was doing;

Christina: She read her shareholder report.

> testing their new boomer in an actual
> combat situation and making a hostile takeover against the city area.

Christina: Fortunately, that chunk of the city was publicly listed.

> She called the team – including the six Solnoids

Rex: Does that include Catty?

Mark: Technically yes.

> - together in Raven's garage.

Mark: Boomers attacking the city? Time for an off-site meeting.

> The situation had grown worrisome, almost out of hand.

Jill: Up until this point it had been a surprisingly polite killer robot rampage

> As the team began making preparations for moving out,

Christina: [Rabby] Sylia?

Jill: [Sylia] Yes?

Christina: [Rabby] You told me to tell you when we were ready to move out.

Jill: [Sylia] So?

Christina: [Rabby] Were ready to move out.

[Pause]

Jill: [Sylia] You're really a Spaceball. You know that, don't you?

Christina: [Rabby] Thank you, ma'am.

> Sylia reflected on the situation. Genom had used a battle boomer in a

> city action once before, to force her to throw her hand, remove Mason.

Rex: I thought that was because they killed Sho's Mother

Mark: Sylia was planning to do it anyway, but she was just a convenient excuse

> But this was different. Back then, the boomer had just flown on and on until it had reached her

> shop.

Christina: It just wanted something that made it feel pretty.

> This boomer reportedly demolished everything in its path, including any K-11 or K-12 suit

> stupid enough to present itself as a target.

Mark: Which, to be fair, is a pretty good description of the ADP

> The six Solnoids made for the shuttle, Amy and Catty moving to the large cockpit of the craft,

Christina: Catty insisted on extra legroom.

> Shildy, Spea and Rabby moving to the rear where their Struggle Suits were stored. Lufy made for

> one of the troopers. "Lufy! Where are you going ?"

Rex: For the troopers. Weren't you reading the narration?

> "If this thing is as big and dangerous as Sylia says, those Struggle Suits will be toast by the time you

> can get a shot at it."

Jill: [Rabby] You're right. Better send Spea in first and see what happens.

Christina: [Spea] Hey!

> "If things get out of hand, we'll call in the cavalry. For now, we have to assume a low profile.

Rex: She says from the cockpit of a space shuttle.

> Get in here."

> Rabby was adamant. Lufy hesitantly made for the shuttle. "Hurry up, we haven't got all night."

Mark: It's fine, take your time. Only a killer robot mowing down innocent bystanders here

> The Knight Sabers deployed first. Complete with motoroids, they challenged the heavy Dragon
> boomer to a fight.

Jill: This month, only on pay-per-view

> Priss narrowly escaped death as the mighty boomer blew a huge hole in the
> street ferrocrete next to her, using the mouth laser cannons. What unsettled her more, however,

Rex: Was the gunk on the base of her shoe

> was the fact her heavy railgun shells from the motoroid simply bounced off its armor.

Rex: Their rubberised coating really paid off.

> "Sylia, we have a problem."

> "Go ahead."

Christina: [Priss] I'm due for a dental check-up and my healthcare has expired.

Jill: [Sylia] I thought this was about the battle.

Christina: [Priss] Yeah, well, that too.

> "My motoroid's weapon can't penetrate the armor on these things."

> She dodged another laser blast. "What do we do now ?"

Mark: Try other weapons?

Rex: Hit its weak point for massive damage.

> "Keep it busy. We'll call in the cavalry."

Mark: Good thing there's a bunch of crossover characters with incredibly advanced weapons here to bail us out

Christina: It's so convenient.

> Linna potshotted the boomer from the rear, chipping an armor plate

Jill: [Linna] Well there you go, obviously Priss is just doing it wrong.

> and inviting a prompt retaliation in the form of two missile flights. Rolling her motoroid

> behind a building, she managed to get out of danger. For now.

Jill: Sucks to be in that building, though.

> Sylia used her heavy plasma rifle on the boomer, only to see even that weapon proved

> ineffective against the boomer's mighty armor.

Mark: At this point, I imagine the boomer's just standing in the middle of the street, flexing.

> Forcing herself calm, she prayed the VTOL shuttle

> would arrive soon - or this would be their last battle.

Jill: Now the fic's not even trying to hide it

> Then, a huge blast of energy ripped one of the boomer's arms off.

Rex: Aaah, boom.

> Swivelling around, ignoring Sylia, the boomer looked up to into the night sky to see the lean, mean
> form of a shuttlecraft screaming in. The shuttle fired its heavy plasma stream batteries again, this
> time the boomer dodged most of the fire, although a glancing hit tore through the armor with
> incredible ease.

Mark [Bored]: Oh my, they are effortlessly defeating the Boomer. I did not see that coming at all.

> In the confusion, the four Struggle Suits deployed.

Christina: Because the shuttle wasn't effective enough, obviously.

> As the four small suits deployed, the
> boomer instantly evaluated them as the main threat, choosing to devote lesser attention to the
> motoroids.

Jill: The fic's actively pointing out how useless the Knight Sabers are

> Rabby fired her flight thrusters to escape a low blast from the heavy lasers, then used
> her own arm laser cannons to return fire. No effect.
> Another blast of laser fire made her duck down behind a rubble building. This was going to
> be hard. Shildy opened up with the heavy blaster on her suit, blowing a hole in the upper right leg
> armor, then quickly used her thrusters to take some respectful distance.

Rex: She apologised for intruding into the Boomer's personal space

> That big claw hand almost grabbed her.

> A Police K-12 appeared from behind a building, lifted it's gun and fired. Shell after shell
> bounced off the boomer, simply doing no damage save scratching the paint.

Mark: I'm helping

> With a roar, the boomer snagged the K-12 off the ground, crushed like a tin can in one hand,

Rex: [Pilot] Ha ha, too late. I'm already dead inside.

> then threw the remains at Lufy's suit which had just rounded a corner, preparing to fire.

Jill: Aren't you glad you called in sick today Lufy?

> Frozen solid at seeing the mangled remains of a K-12, Lufy almost forgot she was facing a
> deadly enemy.

Christina: She forgot about the giant killbot right in front of her

> Almost. Her years of combat training and experience saved her, her heightened
> reflexes and instinct slamming down the thruster control, rocketing her up into the dark night sky
> while a massive laser blast made a massive crater below her. Something inside her snapped.

Rex: Wait, that was just the celery stick she was munching on. Never mind.

> Spea had hung back from the action, preferring to be the backup unit in case things got horribly out
> of hand

Christina: Spea is determined not to contribute to the story

> when suddenly a building came down and two powerful battlemovers stepped into the street.

Mark: You know, this is exciting and all, but does anyone else think this should have happened like
four chapters ago?

> Instantly, she opened fire on these two jet black suits bearing an unknown logo, disabling
> one and damaging the other.

Mark: Hyping up those battlemovers really paid off, huh?

Jill: I am incredibly impressed so far

> Rabby heard Spea's wail for help,

Jill:: And earnestly considered leaving her to it.

> and spurted away from the mighty boomer which was more
> occupied with trying to track and destroy Lufy. Shildy brought up the heavy blaster again, aimed for
> the hole she'd blown earlier in the right leg.

Rex: And Catty's bringing the shuttle around to carpet bomb the whole street.

> Lufy landed her unit on top of a building, aiming the blaster for the boomer's ugly head.
> "So long, sucker." Then she fired, blinding the boomer's primary sensors and destabilizing the AI
> computer mounted in the head.

Rex: Isn't it nice that these killer robots keep their brains in the same place as everyone else?

> The results were just a bit short of spectacular.

Christina: It was an entirely adequate massive explosion

> Explosion after explosion tore through the
> boomer, until finally the heavy energy cells deep in the main body blew out, creating a big crater in
> the street.

Jill: [Sylia] That's coming out of our taxes.

Christina: [Lufy] Joke's on them, I don't pay taxes!

Jill: [Sylia] Oh yeah. Me neither.

> But the Knight Sabers' attention had already shifted away from the doomed boomer.

Mark: The Boomer had bought a Cybertruck

> Three
> more battlemovers joined the carnage, one using its heavy shoulder mounted cannon to bring down
> a building.

Rex: Hey, we killed the boss! Shouldn't we stop getting adds?

> Descending from the building, Lufy charged in on one of the suits, only to experience firsthand that
> they were remarkably maneuverable for their size. Twisting around, she squeezed off a shot, taking
> off a leg on her opponent, who responded by preparing his heat blasters.

Rex: They were manoeuvrable, but not that manoeuvrable

> Lufy was gone by the time they fired.
> Sylia brought up her team, and soon the battle was decided,

Jill: And that there is the exact point where the authour gave up.

> although not before Rabby took
> a shot that took off her suit's arm, and Priss, who underestimated the battlemovers, managed to
> junk her motoroid - again.

Christina: That's basically a given

> In the aftermath,

Jill: Say, wasn't Spea in danger or something?

Rex: Eh, maybe?

> Sylia tore open the cockpit section of a disabled battlesuit.

Mark: Well we finally had an action scene and it was really dull. So well done fic.

> When she saw

> the destroyed 33C boomer inside, she knew enough. Damn Genom, she thought. This time they

> had gone too far.

Jill: Up until this point she was entirely okay with their gross abuses of power

> "WHAT!!??" Quincy was fuming.

Rex: Enough to start shouting at random executives?

Mark: We can but hope

> One battle boomer and five suits destroyed by the Knight Sabers and their

> new, mysterious allies didn't really cheer him up,

Christina: Quincy just doesn't find joy in his work anymore.

> as did the report of the strange assault shuttle that

> reportedly had moved those four heavy powersuits into the battle.

Jill: I imagine that this is what it's like to be a villain in Gotham City

> From datafeeds from the Dragon boomer, he knew that whatever that shuttle mounted for

> weapons, they were incredibly powerful.

Christina: Genom's best technicians had analysed the footage and assured him that it was armed with pew pew lazors

> And then there was that lucky hit one of those suits scored

> on the head of the boomer, which had caused it to blow up.

Mark: The propensity to explode was a marked design flaw

> Calming himself, he reminded himself he hadn't lost anything - yet.

Jill: He could write off the destroyed Boomers as wear on equipment for tax purposes

> Turning his attention to the calm exec in front of him, he nodded. "So

> we did underestimate the Knight Sabers' new allies."

Christina: Being fair, they had basically no idea any of that existed.

> "Most definitely, sir. I must say that shuttle was a most unpleasant and very unexpected surprise."

Mark: [Executive] I mean, the idea of someone building and deploying an advanced space shuttle with unprecedented weapons in the middle of the city without leaving any trace is pretty implausible.

Rex: [Quincy] Don't remind the readers.

> "Did you manage to track it to its landing location ?"

> "No sir. In fact, we didn't track it at all."

> "You... what ??!!"

Rex: [Executive] Eh, we kind of forgot about it.

> "Sir, the craft didn't show up on radar, neither did any listening post notice the craft until it started its
> final attack run. After the attack, it just disappeared."

Rex: Nobody noticed the giant spaceship flying over the city

> "Interesting. I assume our radar sets are being reprogrammed to deal with the problem ?"
> "Indeed, sir. We also have intensified radar coverage over the city."

Mark: Genom has set up listening posts on every street corner

> Quincy nodded. Yes, this exec was the perfect replacement for Mason; ruthless, ambitious
> and not afraid to act on his own initiative.

Christina: All this and he doesn't even have a name

> And those three characteristics also made him a grave danger to his own position.

Rex: Is this going to turn into Largo coming back?

Jill: I mean, it's basically inevitable at this point

> Too bad, he thought. Too bad the sharp ones always are so ambitious.

Mark: He was chosen for his ambition, but it's too bad that he's ambitious.

> "Very well. You are commissioning replacements for the lost equipment ?"
> "Yes sir. As a matter of fact, one of our clandestine weapon plants has already begun production of
> five replacement battlemovers.

Christina: They've got Genom's best woodcarvers on the job

> The boomer will pose a greater challenge; we have no undercover
> factories large enough to build one of those."

Rex: So where did you build the first one? In your shed or something?

> Quincy nodded, then answered. "In the bowels of this Tower, a boomer factory is nested. Use
> it to replace your lost asset."

Mark: Best not to ask why they have a robot factory hidden in the middle of the tower

> The exec bowed from the waist. "Thank you sir."
> "That will be all."

Rex: [Quincy] Aren't... you going to leave, or something?

Mark: [Executive] I just assumed I live here.

> Martin Kenderson walked among the rubble in Area 17, looking for a clue how four small powersuits
> and four motoroids could possibly defeat a heavy battle boomer and five of the most powerful
> troopers he'd ever seen.

Rex: They got them with an overly elaborate Home Alone style setup. One of those battlesuits died to
slipping on soap

> Technical had taken in the remains of the battlemovers, analyzing their
> main systems, testing their capabilities.

Jill: And selling parts of it on eBay. Hey, ADP funding only goes so far.

- > As Martin reached the wreck of a K-11, he saw the result of
- > the Dragon's sheer physical strength. The suit was crushed, its pilot dead.

Jill: Worst part of it was how much paperwork he was going to have to fill out.

- > Murmuring a prayer, Martin wandered on.
- > This was gonna be one hell of an after-action report.

Rex: Enough sci-fi robot fights. Time for administrative processes!

- > Back at the apartment, Lufy dropped in a sofa. "Whatta night."
- > "You sound like you enjoyed it," Spea commented.

Mark: [Lufy] Oh yeah, it was a blast. You think they've got any more boomers I could blow up?

- > "Sure, if you forget that big boomer almost nailed me, I had a good time."

Jill: She had a great time apart from when she almost died

- > Spea was about to give a stinging reply when Shildy intervened. "That's enough, both of you."

Christina: Shildy has realised that she's entirely redundant to the narrative and is trying to fight it
Jill: Spea on the other hand, having had her contractually obligated appearance, is now making a beeline for craft services.

- > Rabby yawned loudly. "Bedtime, girls. It's a long day tomorrow."

Jill: [Amy] Why? None of us are doing anything.

Christina: [Rabby] My suit lost an arm and there's a whole lot of repairs to do.

Jill: [Amy] None of the rest of us are doing anything.

- > Several groans sounded, and everyone broke away for their respective rooms.

Rex: [Spea] Jeez, you're not our mum.

Mark: [Shildy] Yeah, we don't even have a concept of mums.

- > Except Lufy, who kept looking at Rabby. "Okay, for tonight then."

Mark: But she won't sleep tomorrow just out of spite

- > Sunrise over MegaTokyo. One by one, the large solar panels on the rooftops

Rex: Slrpnls?

- > rotated to face the rising sun, gathering warmth and energy, to feed the houses below them.

Jill: It's a bright sunny day, warming towards the afternoon with a 15% chance of boomer rampage.

- > Sylia's alarm clock chirped at her. Getting up, she reminded herself that living two lives at
- > once wasn't as easy as it once seemed.

Mark: Up until this point, she'd been perfectly fine with doubling up as a small business owner and high tech mercenary who dabbles in vigilantism

- > Pulling a newspaper out of the printer,

Christina: News fax! The media of the future!

> she paged to the city news section, wondering if last night's incident had gotten into the paper.

Rex: No, I'm sure nobody noticed the massive killer robot destroying buildings yesterday

> She was surprised to find
> nothing but a five line article describing the incident, just a tiny police message saying that there had
> been a boomer rampage in Area 17, and that it had been destroyed.

Mark: Also this morning's Family Circus was particularly unfunny

> Normally, boomer rampages made headlines, she knew. Paging to the credits section, the
> expression on her face darkened. She put the newspaper aside, hiding the Corporate Genom logo
> in the credits section under the bulk of the newspaper. That explained why last night's boomer
> rampage didn't make the headlines.

Rex: In retrospect she should have expected that out of the Genom Daily

> Loud knocks on her door. Mackie.

Jill: She was sure to fully cover up first

> "Come in."
> "Sis, you gotta see this; there isn't a single mention of last night's rampage in this newspaper."
> "Which paper is that ?"
> "MegaTokyo Times."
> "Strange." The Times had a reputation for unbiased, objective reports. And an excellent coverage of
> the city.

Rex: And was used by badly dubbed Sherlock Holmes to find vital clues

> Looking at the credits section, Sylia saw that accursed logo again. So now they wanted to
> influence public opinion as well.

Jill: A giant evil corporation buying media platforms to push their own agenda? This is unheard of!

> She had better put her people inside Genom at work to see what the current company plans were.

Mark: I'm guessing they're something like 'be evil, make money'

Christina: You may be on to something there

> Lufy had reported for duty, returning to her job. When someone asked why she'd call in sick the
> other day,

Jill: So she could be conveniently available for the battle.

> she told she had slept badly, and wasn't feeling well, which was the truth.

Rex: She even had a note from her mum.

> She was sitting
> in the pilot recroom when another officer walked to her table, a cup of coffee in his hand. "Mind me
> sitting down ?"
> "Go ahead."
> The Internal Affairs officer sat down

Rex: What a twist!

> and studied the woman on the other side of the table closely. "You're new around here, aren't you?"
> "Been around for about two, three months."

Mark: And it feels like we have too.

> "Like your job ?"

> "Sure. Beats being on the ground doing nothing."

Jill: Lufy dreams big

> The Internal Affairs man thought. Take the step ? Yes.

Rex: Ask her out for dinner? Good luck

> "I heard you used to fly fighters before this."

> "Yeah, sorta."

Jill: She's got hundreds of hours in DCS Flight Simulator

> Lufy cautioned herself. Something odd was going on.

Christina: The plot was actually developing.

> Just as the other officer wanted to ask her another question, the scramble alert went off.

Rex: There was a war going on, a Scramble War.

> Thank the stars, Lufy thought. Saved by the bell.

> "Gotta go. Catch you later!" And off she was, to her craft.

Mark: The one upside of killer robot rampages; they get you out of awkward conversations

> After the choppers had scrambled the officer got up and carefully picked up Lufy's coffee cup,
> wearing gloves. Depositing it in a plastic bag,

Mark: He keeps a forensics kit with him at all times, just for these purposes.

> he took it down to forensics. Maybe her fingerprints would come up positive on something.

Rex: You mean they've never fingerprinted her?

Jill: Sure they did, as part of their extensive background check.

Rex: Okay, fair.

> "I'm telling you, she doesn't even have a traffic violation. Nothing. She's as clean as a just
> born baby."

Christina: Which you'd know is a damn lie if you'd ever seen one.

> "That's impossible. Have you cross-referenced her personal data and her fingerprints with the civil
> databases ?"

> The other officer nodded. "Nothing. No family, no relatives, no history. It's just as if she never
> existed. Until, about three or four months ago."

Mark: And again, I have to wonder why nobody checked her background before this point

Jill: It's the ADP. They probably don't care as long as its another warm body

> "Something odd is going on. And I don't like it. Not at all."

Rex: And remember, they're doing this after giving her access to a helicopter gunship.

> "Me neither. to be very honest, I find it scary, such a good and dangerous pilot coming out of the
> blue. I'd almost say she's a boomer."

Rex: Have you tried asking her politely?

Christina: You can't just ask someone if they're a killer robot! That would be so rude.

> "There is a very covert way of finding out about that." Both men nodded. They were using up their
> last resort to find out more about someone on the force.

Rex: Time to start going through her trash

Mark: Good point. That's a great way to find out more about somebody

Rex: Oh, yeah, you could do that too

> The four choppers strong patrol, meanwhile, had arrived on the alert location, where three Bu-
> 55c boomers were busy tearing up a street.

Christina: Its a part of a long-term traffic flow improvement program that can only be achieved through massive traffic disruptions

> Four K-11 troopers deployed, dropping in on them. One boomer noted them,

Rex: The others just didn't care.

> and destroyed one suit's parachute before it reached the ground, causing it to
> make a jarring crash landing, knocking out the pilot.

Mark: I see the ADP are off to a flying start

> Lufy brought her craft around, lined up that boomer in her sight. "So long, bastard."
> Punching the firebuttons, she drilled one boomer full of lead. "Scratch one."
> A second boomer had recognized her piloting style and craft, and signalled for a general
> retreat;

Jill: So they only put in an effort when they're fighting the Knight Sabers.

> as long as that chopper was overhead, they might as well scrub the mission.

Rex: Their hearts really weren't in the killer robot rampage

> When Lufy and the rest of the crew returned,

Rex: So, did you chase down the dangerous rogue robots?

Christina: [Lufy] No, why would we do that?

> they were all in high spirits, having stopped the rampage and forced them to retreat.

Jill [Lufy]: All right! High fives!

Mark: One of our men was gravely wounded

Jill [Lufy]: Don't care!

> Internal Affairs was in lower spirits, however.

Jill: Since she's clearly their best pilot, they're determined to pull her down. [Sighs]

> Even their final

> means of checking a person's background had come up blank, nothing to be found about her.

Christina: She was just this strange blank hole in time and space

> Sylia was pacing through her apartment. The first batch of information from her inside informers had
> come in, and she was worried. Day by day, Genom strengthened its vice-like grip upon the city,
> acquiring more assets,

Mark: They now controlled three laundromats and a discount pottery store

- > being able to command the city more and more the way they wanted. This
- > had to come to a stop, and fast.

Rex: Up until this point they had been perfectly fine with letting Genom take over the city

- > She shivered with the thought that if this went on, boomers might soon openly walk the street.

Mark: Next thing you know there's killer robots everywhere and they've priced regular people out of the market

- > A desperate plan began to form in her head. She shivered at beginning an all-out war against Genom.

Jill: Yes, that seems likely to work with her manpower.

Rex: But she's got infallible super space girls with all-powerful unstoppable mecha on her side.

Jill: Sadly, you're right.

- > That evening, down in the Fault, a fierce argument broke out in an apartment, instigated by
- > Lufy,

Christina: Lufy's main job in the household is instigator.

- > about Genom's actions and what they should do about it.

Rex: We should politely ask them to stop it

- > "I'm telling you; we gotta stop them before it's too late!" Rabby shook her head.
- > "Not without permission from Sylia.

Christina: You need to get permission to wage a personal war

- > And by the way, if what you're saying is true, she's probably making plans to do just that right now."

Mark: Smash cut to Sylia playing online poker in an old dressing gown

- > "What use is a plan when we got to act fast ?"

Rex: Not dying on the first step?

- > "Planning helps sets objectives, divides workload and makes for an overall better use of available
- > resources.

Jill: She said, dictionary in hand

- > Next to that, planning also appoints everyone a task most fitted to their abilities and positions."

Rex: [Lufy] So... leaving Spea out, then.

Mark: [Rabby] Yeah, pretty much.

- > Everyone turned their heads at Catty.

Christina [Catty]: What? None of this is on me for once

- > "And, where did that wisdom come from ?", Lufy half-sneered.

Jill: [Catty] Programmed by a renegade transhumanist intelligence operative.

Mark: [Lufy] Oh yeah, I keep forgetting.

> "It grieves me to hear you have forgotten your education. Have you never been to Tactical Class ?"
> "I skipped it in favor of combat class."

Rex: Her grades ended up suffering so she had to go to Remedial Fight Club

> "Too bad. Otherwise, you would have known what I just told you by heart."
> Shildy came in between. "All of you, arguing is no use. I suggest we wait for Sylia to come up with a
> plan, or for Genom to make their move."

Mark: Yes, wait for them to have more robot rampages.

> The time has not yet come to act out of anger or revenge. Not yet."

Jill: And so the fic once again reminds us that we could be having killer robot fights, but we won't

Rex: I feel rewarded

> But it was close by.

Christina: Demonstrably not true.

> All the time while Sylia was drafting up her plans to stop Genom,

Rex: She's going to send them a strongly-worded note.

> Quincy was busy closing the vice over the city, so it would be in his full control.

Mark: His plan was to build influence to pass new zoning laws that would favour Genom's interests

Jill: The fiend

> He decided to run for mayor, the previous one having met a rather unpleasant and untimely demise.

Rex: There was an accident involving a squirrel, some jumper leads and a bathtub full of Strawberry Quick

> Since he almost controlled the media in the city, he was certain he would be elected.

Christina: His 'vote Quincy if you know what's good for you' platform was polling well

> There
> weren't any newspapers or media stations not under his control that were powerful enough to stop
> him. He thought.

Jill: But he bought a social media platform and drove it into the ground just to be sure

> A few uneventful days later, Lufy, Rabby, Priss and Linna

Rex: The random roll table of friends

> had decided to hit the town for some shopping and fun.

Jill and Christina: [Girlish] Tee hee, tee hee.

> Their joy turned to dismay when they saw election posters plastered all over the
> walls. "Disgusting, isn't it."

Christina [Linna]: You'd think that they could post them straight. But their being slightly off-skew bothers me

> "Yeah, Quincy running for mayor."

Rex: Do you know how much power he'd have to give up to become mayor?

> "He must have something up his sleeve."

> "He has. He wants the City."

Mark: In a shocking twist, Quincy wants the thing we know he wants

> "Then we must stop him, before he's elected."

> "How ?"

Rex: Then next day, Catty's face was on posters all across the city.

Christina: Her platform of 'Social reform, beep boop' excited and confused voters.

Mark: Her campaign manager Shildy described her as 'Less evil than the other guy.'

Jill: Vote space robot for mayor! At least it'll be interesting..

> They all looked at each other, then one answer came. "Sylia."

Rex: We'll get her to organise a letter-writing campaign

> Rabby was at her reception desk, that is, physically. Her mind was light years from Terra,

Mark: In today's exciting chapter of Bubblegum Force, Rabby stares blankly into space.

Jill: Tune in next time, when Rabby files her 401K.

> yet still enroute to it. She was reliving the trip from the Battle

Rex: Featuring Valliant and Action

> to the planet. Linna had come down from her

> work, and saw the sky blue, unfocussed eyes of her friend, and gently shook her by the shoulder.

Christina: [Yelling] Don't go into the light!

> "Time to wake up; lunchtime."

Mark: Time to vaguely socialise in the lunchroom while somebody microwaves broccoli

> "Uhm, oh, is it really ?"

> Worried, Linna looked at Rabby.

Rex: [Linna] Is this normal for space aliens? I can't tell.

> "Are you okay ?"

> "Well ... yes and no."

Jill: Not helping

> "Want to talk about it ?" With a soft nod, Rabby agreed.

Mark: Aw gee, do we have to?

> When they were sitting in a lunchroom a street or so away from their work, Rabby cast her

> eyes down, and shivered as if with cold. Linna settled down next to her.

> "Are you OK ?"

> "Yes .. uh ... no .. actually not."

Rex: Uh, yeah, we did that.

> "Don't feel well ? Report in sick, go home and have a seat there."

Rex: Say, what does she do for a job anyway?
Jill: She models for bathroom fixture catalogues

> "No, no, I'm physically fine. It's just..." her voice trailed off into the distance.

Christina: No, no, that's okay, fic. Take your time. We'll be here, still. Just, you know. Sitting. Waiting. You do your thing, we'll just... Be here. Again.

> Linna suddenly
> recognized the look in her eyes, the look of someone who has lost dear friends, and was haunted
> by memories of them.

Christina: On one side, Rabby's getting some characterisation. On the other its entirely limited to 'I am sad'

Jill: Meanwhile, Shildy, Spea and Amy are little more than an amorphous mass in the background

> Casting her eyes down, she thought of Irene.

Mark: The closest Linna's ever come to having a character moment

> At last she spoke. "I know how it feels."

Jill: Linna lost her entire civilization as well.

> Rabby nodded slowly, wiped a tear from her eye. "Strange, isn't it ? Time heals all wounds, except
> that terrible scar on the soul."

Rex: The knowledge that you paid to see Madam Web

> "Let it go, Rabby. It all happened long ago. Nothing you do will change it."

Jill: Just suffer in the knowledge that you couldn't do anything.

> Rabby's head came up as if she had been struck by lightning, a very sharp and cynical reply ready
> on her lips.

Jill: Having realised she actually knew nothing about Linna as a person she was going to criticise her fashion sense

> Until she saw Linna's compassionate eyes, and the tears in them. Casting down her
> eyes, she nodded.
> "But still ... I .. I .." her thoughts raced back to Marsus, faster than light, faster than the fastest
> lightspeed drives could carry a ship.

Rex: She'd gone to ludicrous speed

> In her mind's eye she saw the tall city towers, the sweeping
> mountain ranges, the clear blue oceans, the deep green forests with their fragrant flowers.

Mark: Marsus does absolutely not look like stock footage from a travelogue. Why would you even think that?

> Above all, she saw her friends, clearer than ever.

Christina: Say, did she actually have any friends who weren't on the Star Leaf?

Rex: It's not abundantly clear.

> Tears welled up and although she tried her best to keep them in, she couldn't.

Jill [Rabby]: Damn you, Pony! Why did you have to be so stupid?

> Dropping her head in her hands, she cried.

Mark: So what in particular brought this on today?

Christina: Probably needed to fill up an arbitrary page count.

> Linna got up from her chair and put her hands on

> Rabby's shoulders. She was aware people were looking at her, so she slowly guided her friend up

> from the chair, out the door into the fresh air outside.

Rex: Or as fresh as you get in a cyberpunk dystopia

Mark: Mmm, smells of exhaust fumes and ozone

> A short walk down the street brought them to a small city park where they sat down on a bench.

Rex: Upside is there's no pigeons to crap on them. Downside is that it's because they all died out.

> Rabby, unable to contain her tears any longer, broke down.

Jill: And she wasn't even on a toilet this time

> For a while, Linna supported her, then gently wiped the tears from her friend's face with

> her handkerchief. When Rabby looked up, she saw that Linna was crying as well.

Jill: Linna hasn't been this sad since that time when her favourite brand of legwarmer was discontinued

> She smiled to herself. "We are looking like two broken-hearted girls, don't we?", she said with

> a grin. A smile like the sun breaking through clouds appeared on Linna's face.

> "We are. How do you feel ?"

Rex: Adequate!

> "Better. But 'fine' is another word altogether."

> "Well, tell me when you will feel fine."

> Rabby nodded in the direction of the Tower. "When that ugly building

Mark [Deep]: Genom tower here. I have feelings you know, and that's very hurtful

> has been thrown down. I

> can't help but feeling chased and hunted all the time." In that ugly building,

Mark [Deep]: Hey! Watch it

> a very ambitious

> executive was busy weaving a scheme that would make him chairman, dispose of Quincy,

Christina: The former does presume the latter.

> and would push for full legalization of boomers.

Rex: Genom's goal is for a killer robot in every garage

> His 'mercenary band' would help him out perfectly.

Jill: There's no way the Genom branded mercenaries using Genom made equipment could be traced to Genom.

> Yes, if only Quincy had known what he

> was planning. Then he would have been 'taken care of' quite some time ago.

Christina: He would have been promoted sideways to a branch office.

> All he needed to do was keep his tracks covered until it was too late for anyone to stop his plan.

Christina: And then he would build the biggest ball of twine in Minnesota

> That it might involve
> destroying a part of the city where several thousands of families lived didn't hinder or mean
> anything.

Jill: This is a Terry Silver level of subtle and nuanced villainy

> Quincy would become the mayor of MegaTokyo, a strawman for Genom, he would take
> over the company, pulling all the strings. Yes, perfect. Patrick Matthew Mason smiled.

Christina: Wait, is this the executive we've been seeing all along?

Rex: No, this is Patrick

> Uncle Brian would have been proud of him.

Jill: So... Largo didn't return at all

Mark: That's a genuine twist that I didn't see coming. Well done.

> A few days later,

Rex: Written in blocky text on a floral background.

> Sylia gathered everyone in the big storage hall. She began by briefing them on the current situation.

Rex: Time to bring you up to date on all the things you already know

> Lufy got more and more restless, her eyes shot from face to face, her fists clenched.

Jill: She's as sick of this thing as we are.

> A hand on her shoulder almost made her jump. "Take it easy," Rabby whispered. "There'll
> be plenty time to raise hell later." She nodded, tried to relax.

Christina: A minute later, Lufy was sleeping through the meeting.

> At the end of her briefing, Sylia sighed. "Last night I found out who is the driving engine behind all
> this."

Rex: Cobra Commander?

Jill: No. That would be a really, really dumb crossover

Rex: You're right. Nobody would be stupid enough to write that

> "Quincy, no doubt.", Priss remarked.
> Sylia shook her head. "No, not Quincy. In fact, if his plan works out, Quincy will for once become the
> victim of his own scheming."

Jill: [Catty] So we let this guy go through with it, then whack him when he's taken out Quincy.

Christina: [Sylia] His plan will cost thousands of innocent lives.

Jill: [Catty] Yes, and?

> Surprise rocked the group. A few quick strokes on the keyboard brought up the image of an
> executive. Linna gasped for breath. "But that's ..."
> "No, this is not Brian J. Mason. It is his nephew, Patrick M. Mason."

Rex: Evil corporate executive and starfish

> "So certain traits do run in the family," Priss mumbled, recalling a lot of old wounds.

Jill: Sadly, incontinence was one of them.

> "Patrick started in Genom as a lowly executive of a local branch somewhere in the North,

Christina: In Genom's Canada branch where he dealt in questionably sourced maple syrup

> under a false name, of course. From there, his star rose quickly,

Mark: He bulldozed so many orphanages

> and he was noticed by the main office here

> in MegaTokyo. He was transferred here and managed to bully himself in as security executive."

Rex: He kept stealing the other executives' lunch money.

> "Exec of boomer operations, you'd mean." Nodding, Sylia acknowledged that.

Jill: [Sylia] Well la-de-da. Somebody read the briefing.

> Silent as ever, Catty had just listened on. "It seems to me the situation has grown out of hand

> horribly.

Rex: That wasn't silent

Jill [Catty]: Quiet, meatbag

> What are we going to do about it ?"

Christina: More meetings?

Mark: Almost certainly.

> Sylia nodded. "The situation has indeed grown to critical proportions. I fear we have little other

> choice but to fight a covert war against Genom.

Jill: [Sylia] Not that I wasn't doing that already, mind you...

> Although there is one alternative."

Rex: Interpretive dance

> "Remove Mason - again." Priss sighed.

Mark: [Priss] This is like, what – the fourth time, already? Fifth?

> "Yes. Although I fear he's smart enough not to openly challenge the Knight Sabers again.

Christina: [Lufy] Especially now you've got super space aliens with you!

Jill: [Sylia] Yes, Lufy.

Christina: [Lufy] Who are totally awesome and unstoppable and everything!

Jill: [Sylia] Thank you, Lufy.

> We'll have to smoke him out."

> Lufy had dropped down in a chair, hands behind her head. "Where do we start ?", she asked.

> "We start nowhere. We will have to wait."

> "Again ?"

Jill: Yes, again. The one thing that everyone does all the time in this fic, being to sit around on their

arse and twiddle their thumbs

> "Yes, again. As long a Mason doesn't make a move, we cannot react to it. If we force him, only the
> heavens above may know what he's got in store for us."

Mark: Their plan is to literally do nothing

> "Trouble, trouble. Trouble by boomer-loads," Nene sighed.

Christina [Nene]: Also I am still here

> Martin Kenderson was in trouble as well. A three-inch file was on one side of his desk, a seven-inch
> stack of paper on the other side.

Jill: Oh look, it's this scene again.

Mark: If you took out 'chief looks at files,' 'boring meeting' and 'Rabby or Lufy is sad,' what would you
have left in this fic?

Rex: Shouting Quincy?

Christina: At least there's that to be thankful for.

> Inbetween were a computer terminal, a phone and an ash tray.

Rex: All he was missing was the whiskey bottle and the dame who smelled of trouble and he was set

> He

> looked to the file, bearing Lufy's name, then to the stack of paper, all attempts to get to know more
> about here, then to the terminal, which displayed all he knew so far.

Jill: She has amazing hair and a dumb tattoo. That will be five thousand dollars, please

Rex: Money well spent

> The ash tray was getting fuller and fuller, without him ever getting one step closer to his goal;

Rex: The high score on the Q*bert machine down at his local arcade.

> who his best pilot actually was.

Mark: He was pretty sure that she was some sort of mammal

> As another dispatch call came in, he sighed, got up and went out. Damn boomers.

Rex: Damn them and their murderous rampages.

> He had at least four dispatches per week, most of them being 55c's on the

> rampage, all in the same city area, number 17.

Christina: Home to Mega-Tokyo's largest Renaissance Faire

> Seeing Lufy's chopper lifting off, he wondered where she had learned to fly the craft

Christina: Definitely not with the ADP, seeing as how they apparently threw her into active duty without
any training.

> which such skill and menacing grace.

Jill: Settle down there

> He was glad, of course, to have such an ace pilot in his unit. If only

> there weren't so much loose ends about her.

Mark: He's glad to have her, but not so glad that he won't probe into her personal life

> Linna and Spea were driving down one of the main highways when they saw ADP choppers fly
> overhead in the direction of Area 17. "Another rampage, I guess." Linna sighed.

Jill: [Linna] If only there were high-tech vigilantes who could stop them.

> Silently, Spea nodded. She still hadn't forgotten her close brush with death with that massive battle
> boomer.

Christina: I mean, we had.

> They saw explosions in the distance, smoke curling up from between buildings. Blasts
> began heading their way, as did the choppers.

Jill: [Linna] Huh, will you look at that. Maybe I should do something.

> Linna pushed her little citycar to its maximum,

Rex: Reaching speeds of three!

> weaving through the speeding traffic to a ramp close by. She had to get off the highway.

Mark: Get away from that damn Clown gang

> Fast.

Jill: Faster, Linna, faster! Kill, kill!

> A faint smile broke on her concentrated face. Almost there.

Rex: Stay on target...

> She was busy turning down the ramp when an explosion ripped through the highway,
> scattering cars and raining debris of concrete.

Jill: [Linna] Well, at least that wasn't us.

> Several pieces landed on Linna's car, cracking the windshield and denting the body,

Christina [Linna]: Aaah! Not my no-claim bonus!

> and behind them, up on the torn highway, a black battlemover
> appeared. Skidding in bare control, the little car came to a crashing halt at a rail.
> Lufy saw the blast, and saw the battlemover rise out of the explosion. She pressed her lips
> together, slitted her eyes. Then, she went into a steep dive, guns blazing.

Christina: Isn't Linna in the middle of the kill zone?

Jill: Eh, I'm sure she'll be fine.

[Pause]

Jill: Oh, and Spea.

Christina: Yeah, of course. Her too.

> A hail of shells came down on the trooper, which vainly tried to protect its vulnerable head with its
arms.

Rex: Leaving it exposed to a vicious pink belly

> "So long,
> bastard," she sighed under her breath, and pressed a fire button, pulling out of her suicidal dive.
> Two missiles leapt from under the stubby wings,

Rex: Comanche Maximum Overkill!

> screaming down onto the battlemover,
> wrapping it in two massive explosions. When the explosions died down, the charred remains of the
> battlemover crashed onto the wrecked road surface.

Christina: I really feel that Genom's not getting their money's worth here

> "You okay ?" Spea blinked her eyes.
> "Guess so. I mean, I'm not bleeding, am I ?"

Jill: [Spea] I mean... Not too much?

> Linna quickly checked her over. "Everything seems okay. Thank god for safety belts."

Rex: Make sure your seat belt is firmly secured during killer robot rampages

> Pushing open the wrecked doors, they got out of the little car, and surveyed the area around them.

Christina: Well that was thrilling

Mark: Really?

Christina: No

> The sound of engines tore through the tranquil silence at the seaside. Two heavy bikes came to a
> halt and their drivers got off. Removing her helmet, Lufy blinked. The setting sun shone into her
> eyes, no longer protected by the polarization filters in the visor. "Well, we're here again." Priss
> nodded.

Rex: And so the fic loops itself again.

Mark: I feel like this scene needs its own Sonny and Cher soundtrack

> A sputtering sound behind them. Turning around, Lufy broke into a wide smile. Rabby got off
> her scooter. "You two could have waited for me."
> "We could have."

Jill: That quiet point where you're embarrassed to be seen with someone

> Rabby fell silent, admiring the setting sun.

Mark: [Rabby] Our sun was nicer.

Christina: [Priss] You just have to ruin everything, don't you?

> For a few brief moments, she remembered Chaos, its rich woods, blue seas and high mountain
> ranges.

Mark: If only some idiot hadn't gone and blown it up

> All gone. As were most of her friends. Eluza. Pony. Patty.

Christina: Not that Patty, the other Patty.

> Rummy. She missed Eluza.

Jill: Mostly she missed not having to be the responsible one.

> They had been in combat school together, one always trying to outdo the other.

Rex: Then she recalled how Eluza kept pantsing her in public, and the memories soured.

- > When Eluza had left for
- > officer school, she had gone to tactical school, both secretly hoping they'd get assigned together.

Christina: Or at the very least that they'd stay friends on Instagram

- > She remembered their joyous meeting aboard the Starleaf,

Jill: Welcome to your amazing new and totally not doomed at all assignment

- > finding out they had been assigned together. But it was all gone.

Mark: Wangst. This fic's only emotion.

- > Breaking away her eyes away from the blood red sun, she looked at her friends.

Christina: [Flat] We are also here too.

- > Priss, the tough lady. She liked her,

Rex: They've kinda sorta interacted a couple of times. That counts, right?

- > she said what she thought and how she thought it.

Jill: Priss had opinions on Arby's franchises.

- > Luffy, the top ace. And one of her best friends.

Mark: In a purely Witch From Mercury sense of the term

- > Curious to her environment, she began to study buildings nearby.

Rex: Buildings. They're big. [Pause] Sorry, I was hoping for more.

- > "What's that big building
- > over there ?"
- > "GPCC.", Priss answered.
- > "GPCC ?"

Rex: Gaudy Purple Cubic Cactus?

Christina: Can't think of anything else it might be

- > "Genom Production Control Center."
- > Suddenly, the evening lost its beauty, and became a harsh, low light. Worried, Rabby looked
- > at the building. "Let's get out of here."

Rex: [Priss] But we just got here!

Jill: [Rabby] Too late, scene's over.

- > Mason paced through his office, pondering his next move. That police chopper had thoroughly ruined
- > his plans.

Mark: What was his plan? Send a robot out to blow stuff up and hope nobody would notice?

- > Added to that were the reports that Quincy had temporarily postponed his election
- > campaign to check on the company.

Christina: And I suppose they've delayed the mayoral elections for his convenience?

> Thoroughly. If his identity was revealed, he knew his position
> would become incredibly precarious, if not fatal.

Jill: The fact that he looks enough like Brian J. Mason to be mistaken for him doesn't seem to have been a problem otherwise

> He had to make a move. Fast. Looking down to the seaside, he saw some people look out to
> the setting sun.

Rex: No, that's meant to be Squidward watching them having fun.

> How innocent, he thought.

Mark [Mason]: People having fun? I hate it.

> Smiling, a plan formed in his head, a desperate one to
> save his neck. Now to hope Quincy didn't realize who he was dealing with too soon.
> Timing would be everything.

> Catty had decided to go on another shopping spree downtown, asked Linna to come along.

Christina & Jill: [Girlish] Tee hee! Tee hee!

> While shopping, Catty sensed someone, or rather something, was watching them.

Christina: No Patty, it's not the Paranoids. You wiped them out, remember?

> Carefully she glanced
> around, using low power scanning fields to determine who or what was shadowing them.

Rex: I mean, obviously. That's just what you do.

> There!
> That big guy in biker leathers. She tugged Linna on her sleeve. "Linna, someone is shadowing us."

Christina: [Linna] Ugh, and I didn't even do my hair.

> "Who ?"
> "That big guy in the black biker leathers."

Jill: Didn't you read the narration?

> Linna pulled Catty into a clothes shop. Their shadower retreated to the other side of the street,

Rex: He's going to lose his tail, but at least he won't be seen in a Forever 21.

> pretending interest in the shop opposite them.

Mark: Yes, the big leather-clad guy is obviously fascinated by the artisanal homewares.

> Thinking, Catty ran a few scenarios.

Jill: A few of which didn't preclude Linna's survival.

> Could just be another punk looking for easy money. No. He had used
> some sort of active scanner field. That could mean only one thing.

Rex: Snorks?

> Boomer,

Rex: That was my second guess

> and most probably a 55c model.

Christina: Um, there are other kinds of boomers, you know.

> She told Linna her suspicions. "Now what then ?"

> "Anything you want from this shop ?"

> "Uh ... no."

Christina [Linna]: Not since they discontinued my favourite brand of leg-warmer

Mark: Nice callback

> "Let's go on. I think he's content with observing us."

> "Maybe. But we can't allow him to track us home."

> "I'll deal with him later."

Jill [Catty]: Time to hide another body, I guess. Beep boop

> They continued their shopping tour.

Christina: Now, if we had any idea why he was following these two random young women...

Mark: Too late, scene's over!

> Martin Kenderson looked in the mirror, not knowing what to expect anymore.

Rex: Rain of frogs, wizard war, failed effort at launching a rebooted franchise... could be anything, really

> He was mildly amazed to see his hair wasn't as grey as he thought it would be by now.

Jill: Since it's been at least 84 years since the fic started.

> Damn Genom, he thought. Damn them to hell.

Rex: Damn them and their angry dolphin

> Over ten dispatches a week, all in Area 17. He had lost another chopper with its

> assault team today. And he had thoroughly scolded Miss Starleaf for an unauthorized modification to

> her chopper, suspended her for two days.

Mark: Hadn't changed the chopper back or anything.

Jill: Oh, of course not.

> Damn regulations. But, he had to play it by the book. Or

> he would be suspended. Permanently.

Christina: I thought he was the chief

Mark: He'll have to call himself into his own office, angrily shout at himself, demand his own badge and gun and then suspend himself for two days

> The phone rang.

> "Kenderson."

> "Dispatch. Area 17. The works."

Rex: With anchovies?

> Dropping the phone, Martin sighed. Damn it all to hell, he thought.

Mark: You blew it up! You maniacs!

> The front door slammed shut. "Hey, we need that door longer than today!"
> "SHUT UP!"

Christina: Did a comedy just happen?

Jill: I... don't care.

Christina: Entirely fair

> Lufy stomped through the living room, angry face, went to her room, slammed the door shut.
> Defeated, Lufy sat down on her bed. Soft knocks on her door.
> "Leave me alone!"
> "It's me, Rabby."
> "Don't care!"

Rex: Why doesn't Lufy care?

> She dropped flat onto the bed.
> The door opened, Rabby came in. Forcing herself calm instead of shouting, Lufy quietly told
> her that she wanted to be left alone. "Something gone wrong today ?"
> "Yes. I got suspended for two days."

Mark: Who'd have thought that lying about your background, engaging in wanton collateral damage, invading a private school, violating private property and being complicit in a kidnapping would have had consequences?

> "Want to talk about it ?"
> "NO!.. sorry... no, not now.. maybe this evening."

Christina: Really?

Jill: No

> "Okay." Rabby shut the door and quietly told everyone to leave Lufy alone.

Mark: [Spea] Hey, we do have our own lives, you know.

Rex: [Rabby] No you don't, Spea.

Mark: [Spea] You're right, we don't..

> They had arrived on the parking lot, talking and laughing. Loading their purchases in Linna's new
> car,

Rex: I'm sure that this one will last

> Linna snapped her fingers. "Forgot! Have to pay the parking machine!"
> "I'll take care of it," Catty offered.

Jill: [Catty] The parking machine and I have an arrangement.

> "Okay. I'll pick you up on the way out." She had just finished paying the parking machine and
> retrieving the exit card

Christina [Catty]: Just doing perfectly normal human things that normal humans do beep boop

> when a large shape filled the doorway. Uh oh. "Well, well, well ... what do we have here."
> Catty turned around, and saw the big guy in biker leathers.

Rex: He has a face only a killer robot could love.

> "Leave me alone."

> The boomer grinnd like a shark about to feed.

Mark: Hello, my name is Bruce

> "Leave you alone, eh ? Maybe after I've broken all the bones in your body and killed your precious
> friend."

Jill: You're a big sweaty leather punk and she's a tiny girl and this is anime. Just give up now and save yourself the bother

> Catty held her rising anger in check. She calmly put the parking lot card in her bag, and set it down.

Christina: Soon to be photographed as 'Exhibit A.'

> "Try me."

> The boomer rushed her. Less than a second later, it exited the small building through the back
> wall, slamming into an empty steel watertank.

Mark: This outcome was inevitable

> Catty calmly walked through the hole in the wall.

Rex: Oh yeah!

> The boomer got up, now approached with more care. He swung out a fist aimed at her chest.
> Catty stopped his fist with her hand.

Rex: [Boomer] Are you going to crush my hand too? Sally said it was really neat when you crushed her hand.

> Shredding its camouflage, the boomer clicked open its
> thermal blasters. Catty jumped, bringing her fist down at maximum speed into its head.

Rex: TOGG!

> The skull of
> the boomer caved in, damaging the control systems, deactivating fire control, shutting down
> sensors, damage control and powerplant monitoring.

Jill: She rolled all the critical hits.

> Landing on her feet, Catty turned to face her opponent.

Christina [Catty]: You are already dead

> Slowly, the skull caved out, and with a roar, the boomer jumped her. Catty dodged the boomer, tore
> off its head and cast its lifeless body aside. Casually throwing the head over her shoulder, she
> returned to the building, picked up her bag and walked to Linna's car. Behind her, the boomer blew
> up.

Mark: Well there you go

> "What were you doing back there ", Linna asked, stunned at the sudden explosion that rocked
> the parking lot.

Christina: Having apparently not noticed the huge explosion

> "Nothing," Catty replied, smiling. "Just taking care of unfinished business."

Mark: You get the feeling she's done this a lot. And not just overall, I mean just since she's been in

Mega-Tokyo

> Rabby slowly sat down next to Lufy, who had her head between her knees. She gently touched her friend's back, and her head came up. The white of her eyes was reddish, a small pool of tears had gathered on the floor between her feet. "Are you feeling alright?"

Jill: Look, this is yet another wangst scene. You'll both say the same things, mention some dead friends, vow vengeance on Genom, and maybe snuggle afterwards. The fic has one beat and is going to repeat it endlessly.

> "Yes, no .. well ... I don't know anymore." Tears ran over her face.
> "This world .. this world .. it's crazy. I mean ..." She unknotted her fists, spread her hands.

Rex: You've had absolutely no problem adapting to it until now.

> "Things are just so different in here ... damn!"

Jill: She's still trying to come to terms with the existence of wangs.

> Getting up, she balled her gloved fist, and solidly punched the wall.

Rex: Take that, stupid structural elements

> Putting her hands on Lufy's shoulders, Rabby gently pushed her down onto the bed, then put her arm around her friend. "You're fed up, right?"

Christina: She must hate that all her friends are alive and everything's gone perfectly for her so far.

> "Damn right I'm fed up. I'm sick and tired of running. And now, this stupid suspension."
> "What happened?"

Mark: A crappy fanfic which is determined to go nowhere.

> Lufy made a face. "Modified my chopper to carry a few missiles, just in case.

Christina: [Rabby] Okay, and where did you get the missiles from?

Jill: [Lufy] That's a whole different problem.

> Killed one of those
> battlemovers with it. I prevent a goddamn disaster and they throw me out because I break their
> stupid rules!"

Jill: Stupid laws about private use of government property

> "I can imagine your point. Feeling any better now?"

Mark: No, it will never be better.

> "Guess so. Need a good night's rest now. I'll tell you how I feel tomorrow."
> "Good idea. Sweet dreams."

Rex: Time for go to bed!

> That night, Rabby had a dream. She felt really warm and comfortable. The whole world
> around her was a garden. Just like Chaos.

Christina: Complete with giant killer bug bots

> She was dancing on the grass with her friends, laughing, making fun and enjoying themselves.

Jill: Utterly pantsless. Its the Solanoid way.

- > Then, builings rose up out of the nothing, one towering over
- > all. A tower. From the tower, things came, things that took her friends away, while one stopped her
- > from doing anything about it. Then everything became black.

Rex: And then she was late for her Algebra test

- > She sat upright in bed, looked outside into the Fault.

Mark: [Rabby] It's your fault!

Jill: Really?

Mark: Sorry.

- > Dawn was breaking. Whirring softly, the solar panels on the roof turned to face the rising sun,

Rex: Slrpnlsl!

- > trying to catch as much power as possible. Her dream disturbed her, though the
- > memory was already fading. She thought it to be an ill omen.

Christina: Or a ham-fisted effort at symbolism.

- > Maybe it just been a bad dream.
- > Getting up, she walked to the kitchen, programming the kitchen machine to brew up some coffee,

Mark: Daily grind ain't gonna start itself

- > then returned to her bedroom to get dressed. It would be a long day today.

Mark: A long day of boring, pointless minutiae.

- > The time had come. Time for payback.
- > Bubblegum Force Episode 7
- > Blowout!
- > By nebulart@solnoid.nl

Jill: Last chapter! Maybe something will happen. Probably not.

- > Lufy was looking out on the balcony

Rex: Duuuuuuhhhhhh

- > when someone moved next to her and put an arm around her
- > middle. Looking aside, she saw it was Rabby.

Jill: What a shock! I never saw that coming! This is so amazing!

Mark: You're bored, aren't you?

Jill: Does it show?

- > For a few minutes they stood there, silent, yet perfectly understanding each other.

Christina: [Rabby] I'm glad I have someone who will be with me, no matter what.

Rex: [Lufy] Why is cheese so expensive?

- > "Something's bothering you ?" Lufy finally ventured.

Jill: [Rabby] Yeah. I'm meant to be the main character, but it's the last chapter and I've barely done anything.

> Rabby nodded, still silent. Her eyes swept the view of the Fault, the city skyline, which was
> dominated by the ugly cone-shaped tower.

Rex: The Darth Vader building

> "What's bothering you, then ?"
> Rabby shrugged. "Can't explain. You'd probably think I'm silly anyway."
> "Well, spill it. Only then can I judge whether you're silly or not."

Mark: Lufy is the judge of all things.

> Sighing, Rabby told her that she was
> worried. She had a feeling the whole situation -and the city too, probably- were about to blow up in
> their faces.

Christina: It turns out that MegaTokyo was built entirely on dynamite foundations. Who knew?

> Patting her friend on the shoulder, smiled. "Don't worry about that too much.

Jill: [Lufy] It's just the fate of the city and everyone who lives in it, nothing to worry about.

> If Sylia is right, Genom will probably have to make a move first so we'll know what's coming at us."

Mark: Stand around! Do nothing! Be reactive not proactive! Repeat!

> "You know,
> that's just what I am so afraid of. I mean, I don't think Genom will be especially cautious next time
> they strike out.

Rex: They sent a giant robot to rampage through the city. How is that cautious?

> Nodding, Lufy agreed. All they could do now was wait.

Christina: Girl, same!

> A gentle tingling feeling in her stomach made her uneasy. She only felt that near Rabby.

Jill: Wait, that's just the coffee

> Quincy restlessly paced his office. Someone in his company was making plans. Plans that would
> make him mayor of the city, but remove him as President of Corporate Genom.

Mark: You would think that would be considered to be a conflict of interest.

Christina: I feel like this is only now occurring to anyone

> He did not like this. He didn't appreciate it either.

Rex: I thought it was his plan in the last chapter?

Mark: Shhh! Ixnay! Ixnay!

> Punching an intercom button, he ordered his security chief up into his
> office. He had arrangements to make.

Mark: Time to shout at some more people?

Rex: I can but help

> Sylia quietly drank her cup of tea as data scrolled over her screen. She did not like what she
> saw.

Jill [Sylia]: This teacup is filthy

> One of her moles inside Genom had dug up an operation plan that looked like it came from a
> movie.

Rex: Ooh, can it be one of those cheap Star Wars knockoffs that reuses footage from Battle Beyond the Stars?

Mark: We can but hope.

> Worst thing was, it could work. It could make P.M. Mason chairman of Genom, make Quincy
> mayor of MegaTokyo, and it could -and undoubtly would- destroy a sizable part of the city.

Mark: Not Genom's plans for redevelopment or anything. Just Quincy's victory party planning

> She shivered at the estimated casualty figures, and at the casual tone on civilian casualties.

Mark: You really get the feeling that the Genom execs laughed at the idea

Rex: They seem like the type

> Going over the plan once more, she tried to determine its faults,

Christina: And quickly lost count.

> tried to find some stage

> where she could interfere and put it out of action. An hour and several cups of tea later, she sighed.

Jill: And really needed to pee

> The plan was watertight. But there was one option to mess it up.

Mark: But it was fraught with danger and required no less than three raccoons.

> A few quick keystrokes sent the full

> plan to a computer. There, she thought. Let's see what happens now.

Rex: She pushed a button on a computer! Action!

Jill: I'm excited!

> Quincy was going over the profits of 2032 when his terminal beeped, notifying its user of the
> presence of a new file.

Rex: His Victoria's Secret catalogue has arrived.

> This system should be secure, he thought. Calling it up, he soon was

> engrossed in the briefing. He made a mental note to thank whoever sent him this.

Mark: The fact that somebody had sent it straight to his personal email didn't seem to bother him

> Sighing, Sylia wondered if she had done the right thing.

Christina: I doubt anyone in this fic has done the right thing.

> Yes, she thought. Better the devil you

> know. Getting up, she made preparations to call the team together for a briefing.

Rex: Ooh! Ooh! Are we going to have another meeting?

Mark: You know it.

> If Mason managed to squeeze off Step One of his plan, they'd be needed. For the good of the city.

Jill: Sylia maintains a team of heavily armed high-tech mercenaries for the good of the city.
Mark: For purely peaceful purposes

> Luffy had decided to help Rabby out on some maintenance on one of the heavy troopers.

Christina: She had nothing better to do.

> Sliding her
> hand along the edge of the cockpit, she wondered how it would feel to pilot this machine once
> again.

Jill: All you need to do is wait for another killer robot rampage, and you'll be set.

> She recalled her fight, so long ago, with that Paranoid battlecruiser.

Rex: And how it had tried to stomp on her tank while Bit buzzed around her

> Yeah, that had been a fight.

Jill: Wow that was a cool fight! Pity we couldn't show you any of it, but trust me, it was amazing

> She had shot its pesky combat drones,

Mark: Stupid laser drones. Think they so cool with their lasers and all.

> blown a big hole in the hull, thundered in and blown
> out its power core. The trip outside had been thrilling.

Jill: She'd forgotten her travel pass and had to jump the gate.

> But the lightspeed trip she'd hitched on that outbound ship had been most satisfying.

Christina: If you took all the recaps of events that happened in Gall Force out of this fic, what would
you
be left with?

Rex: Um, Quincy shouting

Christina: I could live with that

> She had arrived just in time to free the others, and destroy
> the central computer of DAMIA before it had finished its calculations to destroy the star.

Mark: Okay, carry the one, divide by the number you first thought of and... boom

> Shaking her head, she cleared up, and slipped in, checked over all the instruments. Closing
> the cockpit, she powered up the machine, checking if the power levels of the powerplant were high
> enough,

Rex: You forgot to unplug it while you were working on it, didn't you?

> testing the controls for responsiveness. When they all checked out, she powered down and
> opened the cockpit hatch.
> Rabby was standing there. "We've got a meeting.

Rex: A meeting? All right! Just the action I've been craving!

Mark: You okay there?

Rex: No. Not in the slightest.

> You'd better hurry."
> "What's it about this time ?"
> "I don't know. but I guess it's showtime."

> Swinging her legs over the side of the cockpit, Lufy smiled. "Well, what are we waiting for then?"

Jill: That's what I've been wondering all fic

> Mason cursed.

Rex: It came out as dolphin noises.

> Somehow, Quincy had gotten wind of his plan, had used his power as company
> president to move units and resources his plan required out of town or to places where he had no
> access to them.

Mark: Ironically, they moved all his offshore accounts offshore

> Calling up his plan, he thought. Go for the direct approach? Well, that seemed
> reasonable enough. Going over the plan once more, he didn't notice the door opening. His head
> came up when a hand held a gun in front of him, barrel aimed at him.

Jill: It's the little things that you miss

> "Chairman, what can I do for you ?"

Christina: Please, Quincy has people to threaten his executives for him.

> "Start by telling me your real name, mister Matthews."

Rex: Patrick Desmond Star.

> Quincy sat down, relaxed, waiting.
> Two guards flanked him. Bu-55c model, Mason knew. No escape, no way out. "Patrick Morgan
> Matthews."
> "I don't believe you. Not after this."

Mark: Okay, you got me. I'm actually Ted from accounts

> Signalling a guard, who threw a printout of his plan on his desk, together with another file. Quincy
> continued. "I believe your real name is Patrick Matthew Mason."

Mark [Mason]: That's a lie

Rex [Quincy]: Its on the nametags sewn onto your underwear

Mark [Mason]: Okay, you got me there

> Seeing there was no way out of the situation, he nodded. "Very well. What did you want to achieve
> with this?

Jill: That's what I've been wondering about this fic all along

> Revenge?"

> "Power."

Christina: He wanted to go from deputy vice executive chair to senior deputy vice executive chair.

> "Just like your uncle. But he got careless. So did you."
> "I assume my funeral has already been arranged ?"

Mark: [Quincy] Oh yes. We've found you a lovely plot on a hill overlooking the countryside. You'll like it.

Rex: [Patrick] I'll be dead!

Mark: [Quincy] But think of the view!

> "That depends on you." Mason looked puzzled. "Let's put it this way; you and I are going to switch positions in this plan."

Rex: Freaky Friday, Genom edition

> You are going to run for mayor in my place, and I will continue on my job as company president."

Christina: And not the front for a transhumanist conspiracy at all, no sir

> "In short, you are giving me another chance."

Jill: By making you the fall guy if this all goes wrong, but yes.

> "Yes. We will forget this plan ever existed, including your real name."

> "I sense there's a condition to this all."

Christina: [Quincy] Yes, I want to talk to you about zoning regulations.

> "Yes. Once you are in power, get rid of the Knight Sabers. Once and for all."

> "Consider them dead and forgotten."

Rex [Quincy]: You've been saying that for the last four chapters now

Mark [Mason]: Well, um, more so.

> The meeting opened with a briefing from Sylia.

Christina: So this is the last chapter, right?

Jill: Apparently.

Christina: And our action-packed climax?

Jill: You're looking at it.

> Mason's plan to replace Genom had failed - how, she would not tell

Mark: Mason had tried his Christopher Walken impression at a board meeting and it had all gone downhill from there

> - but two other disturbing developments had arisen. First, Quincy had pushed

> forward a replacement candidate to run for mayor, claiming he had a company to run that took all

> his time, and second, her mole in Genom had reported this candidate would have to get rid of them

> before being allowed to ascend to that position. The mole had paid for these bits of information with

> his life,

Rex: Taken out by Tarantula and his Web Masters

Jill: What are you going on about?

Rex: ...I have no idea

> including the information that Mason's original plan was being reworked to accommodate the

> new situation. But the most disturbing thing was the ename of the replacement candidate.

> Patrick Morgan Matthews, also known as Patrick Matthew Mason.

Rex: Oh no, not... that guy!

Jill: Are you even paying attention?

> Luffy was back at her patrol job, lazily flying over the city with two K-11 troopers in the cargo bay in

> her craft. The patrols had become routine, her checkpoints easily identified.

Mark: They're as bored of this fic as we are.

> She noted she was slacking off

Christina: Flying a helicopter is probably one of those things you want to give your full attention to

> when explosions on a highway below her drew her attention.

Rex: No, that's pretty much every day around here.

> "ADP Control, Helios 7 here."

> "Go ahead, Helios 7."

> "Firefight on Central Highway, upper deck."

> "Helios 7, investigate."

> "Roger. Over and out."

Rex: These two nameless radio voices are my new favourite characters

> Back at base, the lieutenant had followed the transmission. "Was that wise ?", he asked.

Christina: I mean, it's our job and all. You know, the reason this division exists.

> "Sir, she's the goddamn best pilot I've ever seen. She can drill a boomer full

> of lead before it can react."

Christina: It sounds like that's a Boomer problem, not her

> "Yes, but why does she have to destroy her surroundings as well ?"

> "Call it 'style', sir." Martin Kenderson sighed. Here came some more red Property Damage forms.

Mark: It's funny because she inflicts needless collateral damage!

Rex: Waah-wah

> Diving down towards the highway, yet keeping her distance, Lufy observed the situation.

> "Control, looks like a Bu-12b hunting down a truck."

Jill: It cut the Boomer off at the lights and it got so mad

> "Helios 7, get the hell out of there."

> "Control, I can take him down."

> "Helios 7, that's an order."

> "Stuff it, bastard" she mumbled, and flicked her radio switch to OFF.

Mark: Not even trying the "you're breaking up" trick? For shame.

> Keying her intercom mike, she called her K-11 pilots. "You ready to get kicked out ?"

> "What's the target."

> "Nothing fancy. Bu-12b."

Rex: Your common or garden murderbot

> One of the pilots whistled.

Rex: Tell my wife I love her very much.

> "Hey, you don't have to kill it. Just distract it."

> "Yeah right, we don't have to kill it, but it will kill us."

Jill: You don't need to kill it

Christina: Right, we won't kill it

Jill: Good, because you don't need to kill it

Christina: That's good, because I'm not going to kill it

Mark: And so on and so forth

> "Keep your range, potshot a bit. If you're pressed, disengage. I'll get this crate turned around to drill
> him full."

Rex: We're going to drill him and then use that to put up shelves

> "Roger. Why was it again nobody likes flying with you ?"

Christina: [Lufy] Well for starters, nobody comes back alive...

> "Haven't got the foggiest.

Jill: Maybe nobody likes him

> Prepare for deployment."

> "Prepared."

Mark: Nothing makes a riveting action scene more than people talking about what they're going to do next

Rex: I'm gripped

> Flicking the switch for the aft cargo door, she waited until the chopper had shifted upwards

> twice, then closed the door, then turned and watched her K-11 troopers descend on their chutes.

Jill: Well, nice knowing you guys.

Christina: Really?

Jill: No

> Martin Kenderson thumped his fist on the table. "That does it!! If she gets back in here, she's

> fired!"

Mark: She's done this a dozen times so far, but this is just too much

> "But lieutenant ..."

> "No buts this time. Let's just hope those pilots survive this. Or I'll be pushing a murder claim on her."

Rex: He wants her badge helicopter armour on his desk immediately.

> "Aren't you overreacting ?"

> Furious, Martin stomped out of the control room to his office. Damn her, he thought. That you

> try so hard to get yourself killed is worry enough, but please don't take anyone with you. When he

> opened the door to his office, he found his chair occupied.

Rex: It had been invaded by a neighbouring state who had annexed it into their territory

> "Who the hell are you ? And what are you doing in my office ?"

Christina: Uhhh... The cleaner?

> Fingertips pressed together, Patrick Matthew Mason turned around.

Mark [Deep]: Mister Bond

> "Mr. Kenderson, you and I have something important to discuss. A resignation."

> "Whose ?"

> "Well, that depends on you, actually."

> "Oh ?"

> Patrick smiled. "Shall we get to business ?"

Jill: Shall we continue to pussyfoot around without saying anything?

Mark: Lets

> Both K-11 troopers had taken cover behind some car wrecks and were busy sniping at the
> massive Bu-12b when suddenly the chopper popped from behind the highway and blasted the
> boomer into scrap metal with its miniguns.

Christina: Making you wonder why they didn't to that to start with?

> "One well done job, boys.

Mark: Hooray, we're helping.

> Better get back in here."

> "We going home ?"

> "Think so. Patrol's over."

Rex: Boomers exploded and nobody died, so I suppose so

> "Miss Starleaf, pleasure flying with you. But I think the people upstairs will want to have your head
> for this."

> Lufy laughed. "They can try."

Mark: I'm sorry, Lufy but I can't hear you over the sound of your hubris

> And they did.

Rex: And so they did

> She had put down her chopper when two men approached the craft, one in
> police uniform, the other in civilian clothes.

Christina: Lacking any further specification, I'm going to assume he's in a clown costume.

> Hopping off the chopper, she started for the pilot's mess. "You're going the wrong way, Miss
Starleaf."

Mark: A pretty fair summary of the fic so far

> She looked at the men, curiously. The lieutenant pointed to the locker room.

Rex: That's the men's room

Jill [Lufy]: I did wonder why I got all the funny looks

> "You can go change, pick up your personal belongings and go home." Shrugging, Lufy complied.

Rex: [Lufy] Sure, no way this could have any consequences.

> Next morning, a letter dropped in her mailbox. Curious, she opened it, and read it through.

Christina [Lufy]: You may have already won ten thousand dollars...

Mark: Old joke for an old fic

> Halfway, her hands started crumpling the paper, three quarters the letter was showing several rips.
> When she was done reading it, she tore the letter apart,

Rex: Hey! You pick that up and dispose of it possibly, miss!

> fled down to the garage to take her bike, roaring off.

> Priss found her on the shoreside, can of cola in one hand, hamburger in the other. She was staring

> out over the water, eyes glazed over.

Jill: This. More of this is good.

> "Something bad happen ?"

Christina: [Lufy] Yeah, chipped a nail. On the upside, I got fired.

> Lufy curtly nodded, downed the last bit of cola, munched on her 'burger. When she was done with
> the burger, she crumpled the can with some effort and threw it as far as she could manage.

Rex: I'll get the strength table

> When she spoke, her voice was hoarse. "I've been fired. And my last paycheck will be withheld to
fix

> up the damage claims from my last patrol. Also, I've been blacklisted."

Mark: Who could have thought that being an irresponsible, trigger-happy hotshot who constantly
disobeys orders, runs off on their own and is doing all this with military hardware could have ended
badly?

Jill: I feel called out

> She spat out the last word with disgust.

> "Which means ?"

Christina: James Spader is going to send the FBI after you?

> "I won't get hired anywhere anymore."

Rex: Can't she just get Sylia to fake her up another ludicrous backstory? I mean, the first one worked
pretty well

> "In short, you've been dumped."

Jill: It took a while for the thought to register

> Lufy nodded. Dropping her head, tears fell onto the ground.

> Sputtering sounds behind them. Both heads turned. They saw a very worried Rabby on her
> scooter.

Rex: Her scooter is really killing the mood

> "Been looking everywhere for you two. Especially you."

Jill: It's not like they ever go anywhere else

> She indicated Lufy.

Mark: So get lost, Priss.

> Getting off her

> scooter, she walked over to the other two. Lufy filled her in on the situation. It was not good.

> When she told her about the civilian, and described him,

Rex: Kind of a hairless, stubby pink guy in board shorts.

> two heads turned. Priss spoke her thoughts first.

Christina [Priss]: I like guns and cheese

> "You know who that was ?"

Rex: Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros Boutros-Ghali?

> "No idea. But the bastard was smiling broadly."

> "I can imagine."

> "Why ?"

> "That was the man we need to take out."

> "You mean Mason ..."

Christina: You mean the man we already knew about and talked up as a threat and put in our sights?

Rex: Who now?

> "Stood right in front of you, yes."

Christina: Oh my. What an... utterly meaningless coincidence.

> Lufy uttered several Solnoid curses, punched the drinks vending machine.

> A can fell into the dropoff area.

Rex: Downside, you lost your job. Upside, free soft drink

> Mason paced through his office, worried. That pilot, or rather, ex-pilot was too familiar.

Mark [Mason]: Did we go to the same high school? Maybe have the same Social Studies teacher?

> He'd seen that face somewhere before. But where?

Jill: Genom's internal information flow is a nightmare

Rex: Siloing is a curse

> Sitting down, he tried to recall every file he'd handled over the last few days. No, no, no and no.

Christina: Turns out she wasn't a requisition form for paperclips.

> Finally, he got up and walked over to the Archive section. "I need some information."

> "Go ahead."

Mark [Mason]: What's the capitol of Bolivia? I feel like I should know this.

> Mason described the pilot, the tech entered the data in his terminal. "Sir, I've found something. Do

> you want to view it here or in your office ?"

> "Pipe it to my office. If anyone asks...."

Christina: Yes sir, just your regular 3 o'clock Pokemon Go session.

> "I understand sir, I don't know and you haven't been here."

Rex: Plausible deniability is Genom office policy

> Sitting down, he called up the records. First her police file came up: 143 damage claims in

> three months time. Two evaluations filled with comments about her skill and lack of discipline.

Mark: And multiple citations for unwarranted swirlies.

> An overview of her actions, at which Mason blinked. She had destroyed more boomers with an ADP

> chopper in two months time than all of ADP usually did in a year.

Jill: That's not actually an accomplishment

> That was worrisome. Then came a
> short report from her superior, Lt. Kenderson, noting the loose ends around her personality.

Christina: Her personality is frayed and needs treatment.

> Finally,
> there was the police report of the shuttle crash. Then the Genom files on her came up, and Mason
> almost fell out of his chair. That had been one of the girls Dr. Shikato had revived!

Rex: Cryogenics lady! Yay!

Jill: Have you been hanging out for her since chapter one?

Rex: Like would you never believe

> Eagerly, he
> scrolled through the data, passing her combat record. 326 fighters, 6 battlecruisers and a battleship.

Mark: She fought at the battle of that place at that time

> This was a goddamn combat ace. Added to that her aggressiveness and temper from her police
> record, and Mason realized she was a very dangerous enemy.

Christina: It took a while for the thought to settle in

> One that had to be eliminated as fast
> as possible. At the end of the file, there was an address, cross-referenced with civil records and ADP
> records.

Mark: And remember folks, Sylia included their real address in their fake IDs.

> Mason picked up the phone. "I want some people taken care of."

Rex [Mason]: Four teenagers and a talking dog. They ruined my bootleg record business

> That evening, Sylia came in. Rabby greeted her, asking if this was a social call or work.

Mark: And where they're actually meant to be, anyway.

> "Work, I am afraid."
> "What's going on."

Rex: [Sylia] Cat stuck in a tree.

Mark: [Rabby] We're on it!

> "Genom is preparing a new factory to produce those powersuits you've dealt with earlier on an
> assembly line. It must be taken out."

Jill: Any reason why they're doing it now after talking seven chapters of picking their noses?

Christina: Because it's the last chapter

Jill: Makes sense to me

> Calling everyone together in the dock, Sylia told the plan. The Knight Sabers would take their
> Motoroids and come in through the front door, using the big truck to run the gate down.

Rex: What if Genom has installed a toll booth?

Mark: Cunning

> The
> Solnoids would insert on the other side of the factory at that moment, destroy the main and
> secondary power convertors, and then move on to smash the computer and control center.

Christina: Cool. So what are the Knight Sabers doing after their entrance?
Jill: Stewing in their inadequacy.

> Sylia looked up.
> "Questions ?"

Christina: Why don't we use our giant spaceship and just bombard it from the air with lasers? It's not like we haven't done that before

Mark: That's a good question. I suggest we put a pin in it and circle back later.

> "What's the expected defense ?", Shildy asked.

Rex: Bored guard with a clip-on tie.

Mark: Hmm. Tricky.

> "Mostly Bu-55c, maybe a few 33C boomers. No Dragons, maybe a few powersuits." Lufy nodded.
> "Cakewalk."

Jill: It's like the fic is acknowledging how overpowered they are

> "Don't brush this off. The thermal blasters on a 55c van still heavily damage your powersuit and
> roast you in your cockpit. Be careful. That's all ?"

Mark: Don't be shot, right.

> Spea raised her hand, rubbed her stomach. "I'm feeling miserable.

Christina: She's going to call in sick for the raid.

> Probably ate something I couldn't handle. am I be missed ?"

Jill: It's like Spea is actively trying to avoid contributing

> Lufy grinned. "I'll fight for two. And another half."

Rex: [Lufy] Like... two and three quarters of you.

> When the shuttle took off on its gravs, only three suits had pilots.
> The insertion went as planned, with the shuttle screaming low over the water of Tokyo Bay,
> popping up at the last moment to unload its three suits.

Christina: Armani, Tom Ford and Louis Vuitton.

> At that moment, Mackie steered the heavily armored truck through the front gate,

Rex [Mackie]: Witness me!

> dropping off the four Knight Sabers with their motoroids.

Rex: Gate, Evelyn, Eagle and Simmons

Jill: I have literally no idea what you just said

> The fight that followed was quick and fierce. Three Genom powersuits went down with
> concentrated fire from the Solnoids, while the four Knight Sabers took down their fair share of
> boomers.

Jill [Bored]: Thrilling

> Lufy used her heavy blaster to shoot several Bu-55c boomers into atoms. Rabby had
> pressed her lips together, made for the power convertors,

Rex: Heading on down to Toshley's Station

> leaving a trail of destruction behind.

Mark: Shildy did stuff, I guess.

> Vectoring to a halt at the entry of the power section, she hosed the equipment in front of her with
> fire. Explosion after explosion tore through the hall, forcing her to make a quick retreat.

Christina: This sounds like a really exciting scene. Maybe somebody should try actually writing it

> Catty had gotten her own problems.

Jill: It's not easy being an android spy for a transhumanist conspiracy

> Three unmarked fighters had appeared out of nowhere, fired missiles at her.

Mark: And certainly not the writer pulling them out of their arse

> Pulling up the heavy shuttle, she flicked open the hatches on the anti-missiles,
> and let go with a salvo. Staccato explosions echoed, the missiles disintegrated.

Jill: For her part, I imagine Amy screamed a lot.

> A sharp hooked turn brought her behind the fighters. Her plasma stream batteries killed two,
> the third slipped away into the night.

Rex: Screw this, I'm off

> She prepared the shuttle for recovery of the suits. The trip back had been satisfactory,

Mark: It was an entirely adequate assault

> experiences being exchanged and actions reviewed.

Jill: Did you see the way that guy's head exploded? It was rad!

> Homecoming proved to be a shock.

Rex: Spea had thrown a massive house party while they were away

> The front door was hanging outward on one hinge, riddled with bullet holes, as was the interior.

Christina: [Lufy] I swear, this is how I left it.

> They found their rooms had been searched, many treasured belongings had been broken or
damaged

Mark: They were indeed in their rooms and they did indeed touch their stuff

> and no sign of Spea, until Lufy heard
> soft crying and a whispering voice calling for help. Diving under the staircase, she found Spea, all
> curled up, head buried between her knees.

Christina: Yeah, I get that way with some of these reviews, too.

> When they pulled her out, they found she was bleeding
> from several shot wounds; her condition was bad.

Jill: Oh no! Not the one character who has barely contributed to the fic!

- > Her eyes were locked onto infinity, her voice only
- > whispered for help. An inferno of galaxy spanning proportion flamed up in Lufy's eyes.

Rex: Lufy spontaneously combusted.

- > Clenching her fists, she swore revenge against the perpetrators. Revenge against Genom.

Mark: It's Bubblegum Crisis. This was basically inevitable

- > Sylia ushered the others out of the bedroom. "She needs rest now. Lots of it."
- > "She's stable?"
- > Sylia nodded. She had been busy removing bullets and stopping bleedings for the last two hours.

Christina: I'm sure that this dingy warehouse is well suited to delicate surgery

- > "She's in critical condition, but stable, for now."
- > "What do you mean, 'for now'", Lufy informed.
- > "It might turn for good, it might turn for worse. She has a terrible shock."

Rex: Being shot will do that

- > Nods from the rest.
- > "But what now? We can't go home."

Rex: Yeah, your planet blew up.

Christina: She meant to the apartment.

Rex: That too.

- > Amy's eyes showed fear, darting from side to side.
- > "True. Go get your belongings and move on in here. Mackie will help you."

Jill: I'm sure Sylia has the space to house five young women at a moment's notice.

Rex: Well, they can save room and prop Catty up in the closet.

- > They cleared out the apartment and the truck dock, moving to Sylia's place.

Jill: So where are they going to park the space shuttle?

Mark: As long as its got a fully functional industrial plant, Rabby's good

- > Mason paced his office. The strike team had busted into the apartment, fired several shots. One
- > scream had been heard, and it was generally assumed their target had been eliminated.

Rex: You guys really aren't good at this, are you?

- > A search of
- > the apartment had not yielded a body, but the team leader was pretty sure of his case.

Mark: Of course, they monitored the location after the attack to make sure that – I'm kidding, they immediately forgot about it.

- > Well, there'd
- > be a police report of this, and his contacts were keeping an eye out in the hospitals for women with
- > shot wounds. What disturbed him was the fact the team leader had commented the apartment
- > housed five or six persons, not just one. Well, maybe another raid would turn up her housemates.

Mark: They're not here. Should we wait for them?

Rex [Mason]: No, better come back to base

Mark: But we only had one probable and it's clear that there are more people present and we didn't

find either of the people we were after...

Rex [Mason]: Who's in charge here?

Mark: You are, sir

Rex [Mason]: Who's the fic's major villain?

Mark: You are, sir

Rex [Mason]: Who's surprisingly not Largo?

Mark: You are, sir

Rex [Mason]: So belt up

> He picked up his phone. "Mason here. Search that adress. Thoroughly."

Jill: So do what you should have just done. Got it.

> They found an abandoned apartment by the time they got there.

Rex: And the rent had tripled.

> Mason cursed. someone

> was pulling strings there. Someone was actively protecting his target. Or rather, targets. But who ?

Christina: Could it be that after their home was attacked and one of them wounded that they relocated elsewhere out of fear for their safety?

Mark: I imagine the thought never crossed his mind

> Lufy was standing at the window overlooking the city, fists clenched, a smouldering fire burning in

> her eyes.

Jill: She is full of burning justice. Or maybe she's just got irritated eyes

> When Priss came up to her, the fire in her eyes died, replaced by the look of someone

> whose mind is flooded by memories long forgotten.

Christina: Priss totally killed the mood.

> "Destiny. Is this destiny ?",

Rex: Or one of the Destiny 2 add-ons?

> she mumbled, unclenching her fists, flexing her fingers. "What ?"

> Lufy looked up, the fire in her eyes flaring up. "Is this our destiny ? Having to look over our shoulder

> every time to see if there isn't somone following us, trying to kill us, or hurt the ones we care for?

Jill: On the upside, no more genocidal space war. I'd take that.

> Do have to keep on living like this?"

Mark: I thought you abandoned the old warehouse

> She balled her fist, getting ready to punch the window. Then

> she opened her hand, and traced her outstretched fingers down the window. She cried.

> "Are you ... are you okay ?, Priss asked.

Christina: [Lufy] Oh yeah. Obviously. Just peachy.

> She shook her head.

> "Two million years.. two million years ago,

Rex: The mining ship, Red Dwarf. It's crew, Dave Lister, the last human being alive...

> I felt like this. Just before the two races destroyed each

> other. And now another life is being wasted."

Jill: I mean, it's Spea. She wasn't really doing much with it anyway.

> She pulled herself up, the massive inferno in her look flaming up.

Mark: I'm guessing she's not a hunka hunka burning love

> She had given herself a mission.

Jill: Go to the shop and get milk. It sounded more impressive in her head

> She spoke slowly and softly. "I don't care anymore.", she said.

Christina: [Priss] Uh, do you need here me for this? Because I've got a thing...

> "I don't care if I'm going to survive what I'm going to do. And if I die, I hope I will have set all of
> you free from that terrible shadow."

Rex: Parasite Dolls?

> She pointed to Genom Tower.

Rex: Oh. That would have been my second choice

> "NO!"

Mark: Right on, Mister Pe

> Rabby stood behind her, tears in her eyes, fists clenched. She had put all her strength, emotion and
> volume she could find in that word.

Jill: Talking is hard, man

> "If you go, I will go as well."

> "Rabby ..."

Christina: [Priss] Because if you guys have got this, I might...

> "We promised each other we never wanted to lose each other again, remember?"

Mark: During generic wangst scene fifty-six. Or was it fifty-seven?

> Rabby was on the verge of either breaking down, crying

Jill: And she wasn't even on the toilet this time

> or punching Luffy KO.

Jill: I vote for the second option.

Rex: It would be more action than that action scene.

> Luffy cast down her eyes, the fire in her red eyes dying slowly.

> "Maybe you are right," she said softly. "But if we don't do something, what will come of us then ?

> What is our destiny ?"

Christina: [Priss] So, I'm just going to go...

> Rabby fell silent. Walking forwards, she embraced Luffy.

> "Let's not worry about that now," she said.

Mark: Let's continue to sit here and do nothing
Rex: Sounds good to me

> "We have enough other worries." Behind them, the door
> slowly opened, a very downcast Sylia slowly walking in.

Christina: I am guessing this will be positive and uplifting

> "I have bad news. Very bad news." The other girls turned to her.
> "Spea just died of wound-shock, infection and blood loss."

Jill: True to form for this fic, Spea died off-screen.

> To the amazement and surprise of everyone, they saw Sylia cried.

Christina: [Sylia] I'm human too, you know. [Pause] Questionably.

> Shildy, Rabby and Lufy looked at
> each other. Amidst the tears, one word was left unspoken but perfectly clear.

Rex: Lunch

> Revenge.

Rex: Again, my second guess

> Lt. Kenderson was pacing through his office.

Rex: Wondering why he was still in this fic.

> He was second-guessing his instant decision of
> discharging Ms. Starleaf, especially after several of the detectives and trooper pilots had been
> asking for her.

Mark: He had to tell them that Lufy had been transferred to a farm where she could run around and be happy

> But there was no way he could give her an official pardon and allow her back in the
> force. That damn civilian, what was his name again?

Rex: Brian J. Totally Not Largo

> Matthews. He had made perfectly clear that if she ever got a law enforcement job he would lose his.

Jill: And he already knew his pension was meaningless.

> And this Matthews fellow was the favorite son of the City with the upcoming mayor elections.

Christina: All of Mega Tokyo was eagerly getting behind this one guy they had never heard of before

> Damn, damn and damn. Well, maybe taking an early
> retirement wasn't so bad. And ADP could definitely use a good pilot.

Jill: Like literally, they needed one single good pilot.

> Punching in the phone number, he was surprised to hear a disconnected tone. He rechecked the
> number, dialled it again. Disconnected. Switching to the internal line, he punched in a number.

Rex: [Kenderson] I'll take a Double Triple Bossy Deluxe on a raft, four by four, animal style, extra

Shingles with a shimmy and a squeeze, light axle grease, make it cry, burn it and let it swim.

> "Kenderson here. I need you to track down someone. Ex ADP pilot. She has probably moved to
> another adress, and I need her phone number. Her name is Starleaf, Lufy."

Christina: [Kenderson] Yes, seriously. Stop laughing.

> The other side went silent. Moments later an answer returned.

Mark: We serve food here, sir.

> "You're sure ? Have you checked civil records ?

Jill: Civil records? No, why didn't I think of that?

> Strange. Well, keep looking. If you run into it, let me know. Thanks."

> Hanging up, he was amazed. She had vanished. No computer records, no civil database
> entries, nothing.

Mark: Kind of making him wonder how they'd been paying her all along

> Lufy let the water stream over her body. Closing her eyes, her mind raced away, to times and places
> long past and long forgotten. To Sigma Narse. to DAMIA. But mostly, to her

Rex: - short career as a hand model. It was a weird point in her life

> too short time aboard the Starleaf.

Christina: Far less than she spent on the Lorilei

> She couldn't get the encounter with Rabby, the one where she had torn her High Battle
> Medal loose and cast it on the floor out of her head. Every time she took a shower and let her mind
> wander, the scene played in her head over and over again.

Jill: Norman Bates pulling back the curtain...

> "...nobody who goes out and fight with
> you ever returns..." Sighing, she pushed the shower curtain aside, stepping out of the shower and
> quickly toweled herself dry. Slinging the towel over her shoulder, she opened the door to the hallway
> and prepared to walk to her room to get dressed.

Jill: Fic, replaying an iconic scene is not an excuse for lazy writing

Mark: Gal Force New Era in a nutshell

> Mackie, who had been walking through the house a bit bored, flushed red, then paled when
> he saw Lufy walking from the shower. Lufy saw him, winked at him. "Something wrong ?"
> "Well.. uh.. no...I mean ... really...eh ... well..."

Mark: Mackie's never actually seen a naked woman before. Give him some time

> He couldn't keep his eyes off her, then fled to his room, face flushed red. She shrugged again,
> walked to her room.

> Linna felt uneasy.

Jill: Spea felt uneasy too. Look what happened to her.

> That empty spot in the front row where Spea used to be bothered her. Well,
> bother was the wrong word. It saddened her.

Mark: Because they had spent so much time interacting and getting to know each other, apparently

- > She went up in her memories. Of Irene. So much in
- > fact, that she went off-balance and fell face-first on the exercise floor.

Rex: And then got to watch as the whole class repeated the move

- > Sitting up, she shook her
- > head, trying to remove the stars in front of her, while her class laughed at her. "OK crew, let's get on
- > with it," she recovered.
- > "What I just did isn't the correct thing to do." She moved her students up a bit to fill the empty slot in
- > the front row.
- > Lufy was sitting on the sofa in the living room, head down. She had closed her eyes, trying to
- > recall every minute detail she remembered of Spea. Memories of DAMIA flashed by.

Jill: We just did this for Christ's sake!

Christina: Its okay, Jill, you can settle down

Jill: No, god damn it! I am sick to death of this damn fic looping itself with the same damn notes like its trying to pad out time!

Christina: It's the last chapter. It'll be over soon.

Jill: You know what? That just makes it worse. We're wasting time on this crap which means that the actual conclusion will be rushed and-

[A small robot wheels out from the kitchen and bops Jill on the head with a wooden stick]

Robot: Cleanse yourself of worldly passions. Worldly passions bad.

[The robot vanishes back into the kitchen]

Jill: ...what just happened?

Christina: I have no idea

- > Of the Sardine.

Rex: Mmm, sardines

- > Of the Stardust.

Christina: Of the destruction and the Eternal War.

- > She was so caught up she didn't notice Rabby sitting down next to her and
- > embracing her. When she came up, she found Rabby's head in her lap. She was crying. Trying to
- > stop it, Lufy felt tears welling up. No, she thought. This is not the time for tears. But she couldn't stop
- > it. They hugged close, crying out on each others shoulders.
- > Priss opened the door to the living room, wanted to ask Lufy if she wanted to go for a drive

Rex: Priss does nothing else in this fic.

- > when she saw them sitting, both crying. Closing the door, she correctly assumed they wanted to be
- > left alone.

Mark: Priss is in the situation where it someone else's friend who was killed and she's not sure how she feels about it

- > Amy was looking out over the city from the roof balcony, letting her thoughts wander. When she felt
- > a hand on her shoulder, she almost jumped. Shildy stood next to her. "It's a beautiful view, not ?"

Jill: I mean, sure, if you're into urban decay

- > Amy nodded shyly. "What's bothering you ?", Shildy asked.

Rex: The collapse of the 2020s tech boom and the resultant generation of young skilled workers that have been squeezed out of a market that they have never had a chance at?

Christina: Besides that, I mean

> Amy cast down her eyes. "Do you need to ask ?"

Jill: [Shildy] Right, no, of course. Naturally. Its about... um...

Christina: [Amy] Spea!

Jill: [Shildy] It was on the tip of my tongue!

> "Sorry."

> The little girl moved as close as she could to Shildy.

> "Please, Shildy, she pleaded. "Promise me we don't end up like ... Spea..." Shildy knelt down and

> sighed.

Jill [Shildy]: Look, we're still in this fic even though the old hag stoyline went nowhere. Sorry.

> "I can't."

> "What do you mean ?"

> "Soon, Amy, soon we will be confronting Genom head on. No subtlety. No tactics.

Mark: Your utter refusal to plan and prepare.

> Just an all-out war. And in war, nothing is certain."

Christina: Except for sweaty nerds talking about different types of ordinance

> "I do not like your prediction", Sylia commented. Both girls turned around.

> "Is there another solution to this problem then ?"

> "At this stage ? I am afraid not. But that doesn't mean I have to like it."

Jill: Neither do we.

> Shildy nodded. Yes, this was going to be a very ugly and destructive engagement.

Mark: They that sounds great. So why don't you stop talking about it and actually do something?

> That evening, Lufy and Rabby made a plan. A last, desperate plan to get rid of Mason.

Rex: So, we dig a pit, cover if in leaves and twigs...

> Election day.

> Millions went to the voting stations, casting their all-important vote who would become the new city

> mayor. Well, there had been only one well-publicized candidate for the post.

Jill: Catty's platform of 'species integration' didn't resonate with the voters.

> The elections went smooth and fair, even when the votes were counted.

Mark: Remarkably few legs were broken.

> Patrick Morgan Matthews had gotten 78% of

> all votes. The remaining three candidates about evenly split the other 22% among them.

Rex: Don't blame me. I voted for Kodos

> That evening, the newly-elected mayor would hold a traditional speech in the city park, from a

> raised stand. Lufy and Rabby hoped Mason wouldn't deviate from that tradition.

Jill: This is a cyberpunk dystopia. I'd be giving my speech from a hermetically sealed bunker.

> "Are you sure you want to go through with this ?" Mackie was worried.

Rex: Mackie believes firmly in the democratic process.

> If his sister found out

> he had been helping them on an unauthorized mission, she'd have his head planted on a wooden

> stake.

Jill: He was strangely okay with this idea

> Rabby nodded. "Look, nothing can go wrong.

Mark: Look, Luffy, everyone around you dies. Just take that into account, okay?

> Just stick to the plan. Make sure you are ready for recovery in time. That's all."

> "I mean, if sis finds out ..."

Rex: [Mackie] She'll take away my Yu-Gi-Oh! cards, and then what am I going to do?

> "Hey, we had to take this bastard Mason out, didn't we ?", Luffy commented.

Jill: [Luffy] Now hand me that nuclear detonator.

> Mackie fell silent. There was no use arguing with either of them.

Rex [Mackie]: Oh well, I tried. Nothing for it but to be an accessory to an act of terror.

> "Okay, Stage Two. Mackie, get to the truck.

Christina: Stage three involves a soft-serve machine. It's a complicated plan.

> It's time. Luffy, let's go." They split up.

> Entering an abandoned building slated for demolition, Luffy and Rabby made for their

> powersuits hidden in the parking garage at ground floor. They had carefully repainted their suits in

> Corporate Genom colors,

Rex: They were limited time skins in the asset store.

> thus giving anyone who might spot them a target to point a finger at.

Christina: Genom is really big on branded murderbots

> "You ready ?"

> Rabby nodded. "You ready ?"

> Grinning, Luffy got in her control seat. "I'm always ready."

Mark: But are they ready?

> "Okay then, let's go!"

> The plan was very simple.

Rex: Fake left. Shildy on pickup. Long pass to Catty and run for the endzone.

> They would follow the initial part of the speech via the television

> network, and when Mason would be engrossed in playing the audience,

Christina: Charming them with his finger bunnies routine

- > they would thunder out of
- > the building, into the park, blast Mason and any vehicles in the area, and get out of there.

Jill: Sure there would be hundreds of innocent bystanders present, but you know...

- > Mackie was standing by with a recovery truck at the other side of the park, in an alley.
- > Mason started his speech.

Mark: It quickly degenerated into a ramble about magnets

- > Five minutes into it, Rabby nodded. Time. Powering up, she
- > checked her suit. All green. When she got the thumbs-up from Lufy, they moved out. They roared
- > from the parking garage into the street, crossing into the park at approximately 70 miles an hour.

Jill: Just within the speed limit

- > Both of them had already acquired the pedestal on which Mason stood as target.
- > Just as he was about to raise the public opinion against the "diabolic Knight Sabers"

Rex: Please, Sylia is Aberrant at worst

- > and their mysterious allies,

Mark: It had already derailed into a screed about lizard people

- > Mason thought he heard jet engines. A few seconds later, he saw two powersuits
- > in Genom colors burst into the open area at the middle of the park. But Genom did not have suits of
- > that design.

Christina: He had personally taken inventory of every single suit Genom owned before his speech

- > In fact, they looked like Half a second later he, the pedestal and a chunk of the
- > podium on which he stood ceased to exist.

Mark: Then, Mason explode

Rex: Aaah, boom

- > Screaming past the cameras, they blew up several empty vehicles before moving off to
- > recovery.

Rex: [Lufy] Hooray! We saved the city!

- > Sylia had gotten up abruptly, staring in absolute disbelief at the television. There was no way she
- > could believe what she had seen.

Christina: You and me both, sister.

- > Instantly recalling the images, she slowly went through them, one
- > by one. No doubt about it. Those were two of the Solnoid powersuits.

Mark: Sylia had just realised that she was now an accessory to the crime

- > Neatly painted in Genom colors maybe, but definitely two Solnoid powersuits.

Jill: A minor issue that maybe someone should have thought about before enacting this so-called plan.

- > Linna, Priss, Catty and Nene had fallen silent.
- > Shildy and Amy sat stunned. Finally, Priss commented. "Well, that's the shortest term a mayor in

> MegaTokyo has ever had."

Rex: Even shorter than the run of Panstless Joe

> Sylia spun. "This is not funny."

> "I know, I know. But you got to give them this; they got guts."

Jill: [Sylia] If they're going to go on an unauthorised blood-soaked rampage, at least they could hit hard targets. It's better PR.

> "Stupidity would be a better word. Don't they realize Genom will retaliate heavily for this ?"

> Catty sighed, shaking her head, busy recalling the scene herself.

Jill [Catty]: Time to flee the country and establish myself under a new identity

> "I don't think they have even

> thought of any consequences. This has all the looks of a desperate plan. A last-ditch attempt."

Mark: From people who shouldn't be allowed near heavy weapons.

> "Definitely. I think I know where my little brother is as well."

Christina: He's face down in the laundry hamper again, isn't he?

> Priss dropped backwards on the sofa. "In a little truck busy recovering two powersuits."

> "Dead on," Linna commented.

Jill: I imagine that's about the last those two will contribute.

> Sylia angrily paced out of the room. Uh oh.

Rex: He's a part of a conspiracy to assassinate a government official. Waah-wah

> Quincy sat silent in front of the television for two minutes.

Rex [Quincy]: They interrupted NCIS for this?

> Then he picked up a phone. "I want an

> immediate inventory of all our powersuits and their location. Now."

Jill: [Quincy] What? Guam? What are they doing there?

> The screen went blank and designations and locations scrolled up.

Christina: Well that was fast

Mark: I'll say. I was expecting more of Quincy shouting at people first

> "Find out which two of our suits were involved in this.", he

> growled. Putting the phone in its cradle he sat back and reflected on what he had seen. A very high

> profile, flashy and very effective assassination.

Jill: [Quincy] But you got to admit, they did it with flair.

> Definitely not his style.

Rex: Quincy would have just thrown him in a shark tank

> But it had removed a thorn – and an invaluable asset-from his side.

Mark: He's going to call it a win and get back to playing solitaire.

> Pondering proper retaliation measures, he put the news program back on.

Christina: They've dropped the story and are now reporting on a suburban knitting circle who make wool caps for puppies in the winter.

> "... following the assassination of the newly-elected mayor of MegaTokyo tonight, the government
> has declared a state of emergency over the city area, with a full scale investigation in Corporate
> Genom, in whose colors the two powersuits who brutally murdered mayor Matthews were seen.

Jill: Genom's PR team were going to get so much hell over this

> Further, the government has stated that all powersuit, boomer and artificial intelligence development
> and production work must cease for the duration of the state of emergency

Mark: The government has politely asked them to suspend murderbot production

> to get a better picture of ..." Disgusted, Quincy shut off the screen.

Rex: What has boomer production got to do with this? Sure, they're giant killer robots, but it was humans in giant killer robots that did this. Totally different.

> He would call a board meeting soon. There was a lot to be decided.

Mark: Woo-hoo! Meetings!

> When the truck pulled into the equipment dock, Mackie saw his sister standing. "You two back there
> better prepare for the worst."
> "Why that ?"

Christina: Something something terrorist action something?

> "Judging by how my sister is standing there, there'll be hell." And hell they got.
> "What the hell did the three of you think you were doing ?"

Jill: Moving the plot along?

Mark: Can't have that

> "Well, you said the key was to remove Mason and .."
> Sylia cut Lufy off with a gesture of her hand. "That would have worked a few weeks back. Right
> now, it did more harm than good. Have you any idea what you have done by killing Mason?"

Christina: Triggered a run-off election?

> Lufy's eyes flamed for a moment.
> "Revenge."
> "Nonsense. You have given Genom an unlimited hunting license.

Mark: Duck season!

Rex: Rabby season!

Mark: Oh, well played

> Your so-called revenge was all Quincy required to start a full-scale urban war."
> Rabby looked confused. "What do you mean ?"
> "The government has declared State of Emergency.

Jill: They want all giant killer robots off the street immediately.

> They have launched a full scale investigation in Genom, who undoubtedly will resist.

Mark: Having been framed as the guilty party, Genom will do everything in their power to make it worse

> That means they will send the Army in. And only the heavens above can know what happens then."

Christina: Or Genom could just pay everyone off and go back to business as usual.

> Mackie had already bolted for his room. Lufy was doubting.

> Rabby had paled.

> "I .. I had no idea ...", she mumbled.

Jill: Who could have thought that using killer robots to engage in a high-profile assassination in the middle of a city would have had consequences

Mark: I am shocked, I say. Shocked.

> Sylia nodded. "I already thought so. Yet not all might be lost." Confused looks.

> "By removing Mason like this, the public opinion is swinging against Genom,

Rex: Genom has deflected the swing in public opinion by coming out in support of Mason's bereaved family, the subverted democratic process, kittens, rainbows and butterflies.

> and some strategically

> placed information could hurt them. Provided we can cripple them before they get their act

> together."

Jill: Apparently Genom's strategy at the moment is to wring their hands.

> "How ?"

Christina: Well you have an army of giant robots...

> They had gone upstairs to the briefing room, where Sylia updated everyone on the current
> situation.

Mark: No fair. They had a meeting and we missed it.

> Finally she sighed. "There is only one way out of this.

Rex: Dig an escape tunnel using kitchen utensils

> Give Genom a bloody nose. Something that will keep them busy until this all blows over." Lufy smiled.

Mark: Um.... Leaflet campaign? TikTok videos? How about a sit-in at a branch office?

> "Does blowing that big tower of theirs into scrap qualify ?"

Jill: Just think of all that newly available real estate. You'd be doing the market a favour

> Sylia shook her head. "Not good enough.

Christina: [Sylia] Senseless destruction got us into this mess, but it will take even more senseless destruction to get us out of it.

> There is a way to slow them down, maybe even grind them to a halt for at least a couple of years."

Mark: Tie them up in product liability lawsuits

> A cross section of the Tower appeared on the screen.

> Sylia tapped on a section. "These are Genom's main memory cores. If we can destroy, or at

> least purge these, they will be busy for months rebuilding and recovering their data,

Mark: Life before the cloud was so much easier

> as well as destroying a large number of their files permanently.

Rex: Just assume that Genom doesn't have any sort of off-site backup

> Since the high-speed data lines to GPCC are

> not finished yet, they will not be able to backup their data."

Jill: They only have a 28.8k modem. This was written in the mid-90s after all

> Priss looked at the plans. "That's pretty deep in the Tower.

Mark: Several dungeon levels down.

> I've never been down that deep."

Rex: Genom isn't big on spelunkers

> "None of us has. And we must count on the worst.

Jill: Like when they stumble onto Quincy's secret doujin stash

> Doberman, Bu-12b, probably several Dragon boomers and lots of 33C and Bu-55c boomers."

Christina: The company that makes killbots has lots of killbots. Who knew?

> "Bronz-X," Lufy commented. "That's about the only thing that can do this."

> Sylia nodded gravely. "I am afraid I must share your assessment."

> "What do we do after this is over ?", Linna inquired.

Rex: I dunno. Write a sequel fic?

Christina: That would be a terrible idea

> Sylia looked at the team assembled in the room. "I think we don't need to worry about that now.

Jill: Planning is stupid, after all.

> Let's just try and survive this mission first."

> The ops plan was prepared, and everyone was needed in it. Catty and Amy would fly the

> shuttle,

Christina: [Catty] Oh no, I have been spotted and must withdraw.

Jill: [Sylia] Come back here, Catty!

Christina: [Catty] Good luck, meat units.

> with Shildy, Priss, Linna, Nene and Sylia aboard. They would make a diversionary attack on

> a boomer factory at the Northside of the city,

Mark: Located between the propane storage and the aerosol factory. It's a planned community

> while Rabby and Lufy attacked the Tower with the

> heavy troopers. The plan was far from perfect,

Rex [Thumbs up]: It stinks!

> but Sylia hoped Genom would see the attack on the boomer factory as the main strike.

Mark: It's where they're wasting most of their assets, after all.

> Maybe keeping the troopers secret up to now hadn't been such a bad idea after all.

Jill: The secretive vigilante made the smart move of keeping things secret

> Morning rose. In the east, the first rays of the rising sun were visible. But today, the sun had a blood
> red color, as if nature felt today was going to be decisive.

Mark: Overly dramatic weather is a nice touch

> Genom employees found Army
> checkpoints at their gates, sullenly passing them, showing their work passes and ID cards as they
> were asked from them.

Rex: Bob Executive here. Which way is business?

> Soldiers patrolled the corporate zones; the Genom guards had been
> relieved of their deputy status. Government orders.

Jill: I'm sure that the minimum wage security guards are really broken up about this

> Evening fell, and with blood red rays, the sun sank down behind the mountains.

Mark: Sun here. You should probably be concerned about the atmospheric conditions that caused this. Good luck with that. Sun out.

> Rabby and Lufy walked into the equipment bay, looking up at the big troopers in front of them.

Rex: Isn't it impressive what you can do with household goods?

> As
> they stood on the boarding platform, Rabby turned to her friend. "Lufy, please hold me." Both in
> combat attire, they hugged close. Rabby felt a warmth she'd only once before felt,

Mark: That time she ate some really bad tacos

> the night Lufy had crept in her bed and snuggled in beside her.

Jill: With the accompanying massive Dutch Oven

> It was strange, a kind of desire she didn't fully understand. Yet.

Christina: Solely because they hadn't found Mackie's stash.

> "Lufy, if ... if either of us doesn't come back then ..."

Jill: There's always Priss as a backup option.

Mark: That's been her this whole fic.

> "We'll both come back."
> > "I .. I .. don't know anymore. I mean ..."
> Lufy pulled her closer. A searing hot flame spread through her body, beginning at her toes,

Mark: No, wait, that was her athlete's foot.

> setting her ablaze.

Rex: Aaah! Fire!

> It was like a fire, but one burning with an intensity she'd never felt before. Finally, Rabby
> managed to bite back her tears, assembled her courage, found a word to express her burning
> feelings inside her.

Mark [Lufy]: You're standing on my foot

> "I love you. Please don't die", she whispered.

Jill: That is the most romantic thing anyone's ever said to me

> Lufy's eyes went wide. Suddenly, all her feelings for Rabby were explained. The blaze inside her
> flamed up even harder. She gulped back a block in her throat, trying not to choke. Finally she
> managed some words. "Love you too. Come back alive."
> Looking at each other, they smiled, and intensely kissed each other.

Christina: This is an unexpected development if you had slept through the last seven chapters

Jill: Sure did. What did I miss?

> They broke off, getting in their mecha. Payback time.

Mark: Now make the giant robots kiss!

> Taking off, they lined up in formation. They would fly down one of the city canals, up to about half a
> kilometer of the Tower, where they would pop up and go for their respective targets.

Rex: Assuming that nobody had seen the giant space shuttle taking off, of course

Mark: The little things that trip you up

> Sylia had
> chosen Rabby to destroy the memory cores, had given Lufy the task of creating as much diversion
> and noise as she could.

Rex: Lufy is the post-diversion diversion.

Jill: There is such a thing as over-planning.

> Popping into the empty canal proved no problem, and soon they raced forwards at speeds
> exceeding 200 miles an hour. Rabby was fully concentrated on her controls, calmly eyeing her
> navigation waypoints. Banking sharply at one corner, he felt some of the G-forces drag her down in
> her chair. Booming forwards, guns in their hands, shoulder cannons in inactive position, both heavy
> Bronz-X troopers made for their Exit Point.

Mark: Good thing that the giant evil megacroproation properly signposted its evil lab

> Meanwhile, the Assault shuttle had made its initial drop run over the factory, meeting only
> medium resistance. One Bu-12b with AA guns fired off a few rounds,

Christina: But his heart wasn't in it and he gave up.

> but under Catty's steady hand,
> it disintegrated under the fire of the two plasma stream batteries. Dropping her load,

Jill: I thought that was Rabby's job

> she quickly pulled out, extending her scanner range. She had to keep any unfriendly aircraft at bay.

Rex: [Catty] Must keep fleshy one casualties within acceptable levels. Beep, boop.

> "Chairman, we have an attack on our Northside boomer factory."
> "How heavy?"
> "Three motoroids,

Mark: Priss' is still in the shop.

- > one powersuit and that shuttle."
- > "Only one powersuit ?"

Rex: They had to make cutbacks

- > "Yes sir."
- > "Strange. Take any appropriate measures to prevent damage."

Christina: Pack everything in bubble wrap and seal for shipping

- > "Yes sir. Anything else ?"

Rex: [Quincy] I don't know... Do you have a hot chocolate? Could you get that? With marshmallows? How about marshmallows. I'd like that.

- > "No, that will be all."
- > Quincy paced his office. Something was out of place here.

Rex: He had rearranged the furniture in his office and he didn't like it

- > Something wasn't right.
- > Never before had the Knight Sabers directly attacked one of his factories. Not without some good reason, at least.

Mark: They had never attacked one of his factories except for the times that they had

- > There were no experimental boomers there, no research was going on and nobody
- > there was so important it would warrant a strike.

Rex: And then he remembered that was where he kept his pog collection

- > There had to be another reason. But what ?

Jill: Maybe they're just blowing things up for the fun of it

- > "Exit point approaching." Rabby steeled herself. All hell was about to break loose. She keyed
- > her mike. "You okay ?"
- > It took Lufy some time to respond. "Yeah, I'm fine. Where do I start ?"

Mark: In this fic? Never.

- > "Pick off the storehouses."

Rex: [Lufy] What's that going to do?

Jill: [Rabby] I don't know, push up their insurance premiums?

- > "Got that."
- > "Okay. Showtime!"
- > Both troopers popped over the edge, thundered ten feet above a highway towards the Tower.

Mark: Maverick!

- > The distance to target zoomed down.

Jill: Stay on target.

- > They lined up, next to each other.

Jill: Stay on target.

- > When the numbers turned green, they lifted their handheld energy rifles and blasted away.
- > A thunderous explosion pulled Quincy out of his thoughts.

Rex: [Quincy] I paid extra for the soundproofing in this place!

- > "What's going on ?"

Mark: Could it be the previously reported attack?

- > "We're trying to find out, sir."

Rex: They sent an interdepartmental memo. But given the situation, they marked it 'urgent'

- > Another explosion, followed by a chain reaction. The ammunition storehouses had been hit.

Mark: In retrospect, keeping a massive ammunition stockpile in the head office was probably a bad idea.

- > The
- > Tower trembled as the blasts echoed outwards into the City. "Sir, we're under attack by two
- > extremely large powered suits."
- > "Size ?"

Rex: Extremely large, sir

Mark: At this point, the shouting Quincy is just assumed

- > "About twelve meters tall."
- > Quincy fell silent.
- > "Sound red alerts. Deploy Dragon and Bu-12b boomers, AFV's and tanks."

Christina: I thought he fell silent

Jill: I dunno. Maybe he passed orders through baseball hand signs

- > "Yes sir."
- > Rabby spotted tanks rolling out of the Tower. Bringing up the massive shoulder mounted
- > cannons, she blasted huge chunks out of pavement, tower, tanks and finally the entrance, sealing it.

Rex: Turns out there was only a single entrance to the massive tower

Mark: Their architect did a really lousy job

- > "Lufy, I gotta get outta here. Can you hold them off ?"
- > "No sweat." Another storehouse went sky high.

Christina: Oh no! Not their fireworks and glass unicorn collection!

- > Aiming all her weapons at one part of the Tower, Rabby blew a hole in it, used her thruster
- > units to get up there and in. Flying down a hallway, she saw two Dragon boomers blocking the way.
- > Skidding to a halt, she jerked up the gun, snapped off a few quick shots. Both boomers fell
- > backwards, a massive hole in their chests. Power unit dead. She went on.

Mark: Building up the threat of those Dragon boomers really paid off

- > Lufy had rotated her main guns backwards, fighting off two squadrons of battle boomers at
- > once, blasting a group of Bu-12b boomers coming up ahead and a unit of Dobermans coming up
- > behind. She was surrounded by the wreckage of boomers and armored vehicles.

Jill: At this point Genom's security might as well lie down and give up for all the good they're doing

> Then it became quiet. Too quiet.

Rex: Then she was attacked by a monster movie cliché

> Quincy looked out of his window at the single unit lighted by the fires burning in his warehouses. He
> had followed the battle, had seen the pilot's obvious superiority.

Jill: Have we mentioned how good Lufy is lately.

Mark: Uhuh, that's swell. Say, how are the Knight Sabers doing?

Jill: Who cares?

> Whoever that was, he, or more probably, she, was good. Very good. Inhumanly good.

Mark: Are we talking cosplay wig and giant foam dog levels of inhuman here?

> The Tower trembled with yet another explosion.

> "What was that ?"

> "One of those units has penetrated the Tower."

Jill: Ooh baby

> Quincy cursed.

> "Show me its progress."

> On the screen, a three dimensional model of the Tower had a thick red line running from the surface

> inwards. Quincy cursed.

Rex: Again.

> "Triple the guard at the computer section. Begin diverting data to the GPCC computers

> immediately."

> "Sir ?"

Rex: [Quincy] Oh, for – Will you get me someone better to shout at?

> "That unit is obviously heading for our main memory cores!"

> "Sir, GPCC computer control hasn't been finished yet, we cannot transfer any files there except by

> physical data transport."

Christina: As a part of a cost saving drive, Genom had opted to use donkey carts to transport its data backups

> "Then stop that unit! Use any force you see fit!!"

Mark: Smash cut to two Genom troopers putting up a Wet Floor sign

> Rabby dived into a side gallery. Up ahead, five Dragon boomers were filling the hallway with

> thermal blasts.

Rex: We have like, all of these things now.

> No way she could get through. Moving her sensor cameras around she smiled.

> Using the Bronz-X's physical strength to remove a safety door,

Rex: You know, this is a really big hallway

Mark: Genom really overbuilt on this place

> she dropped her unit down into an

> elevator shaft. Three levels lower, she punched out the doors, thundered into the hallway.

Mark: I assume the Dragon boomers did nothing?

Christina: Not their hallway, not their problem.

> Hooking around several corners, she reached the position of the memory core two levels above her.

Christina: I wonder what's in those two intervening floors?

Jill: The people in the Genom cancer research division are in for a real surprise

> Making

> room, she had her targeting computers make fire estimates. Once she was satisfied, she swung up
> the shoulder guns and her handheld.

> She fired. The Tower went dark. All screens went down, the main control room deactivated,
> security systems failed, safety locks stopped working.

Mark: And the coffee machine in the breakroom shut down while someone was trying to use it

> Lufy saw it happen. She scanned her

> environment, looking for hostiles. She threw her unit sideways as two Dragons appeared from the
> entry hole Rabby had made,

Rex: I mean, at some point they've got to run out of those things.

> and started firing at her. Then Rabby's voice came through. "Lufy ? Lufy, can you hear me ? I'm
stuck."

Jill: [Lufy] Wow, too bad. Say, can I have your stuff?

> "Rabby! What happened ?"

> "I'm being shut in. Some Dragon boomers followed me down. I can't get out."

Christina: So? Those things seem to be made of oily rags wrapped around dynamite.

> Something deep inside her snapped. Slamming down the thruster control, her Bronz-X
> jumped off the ground. As she passed the Dragons, she blasted at them with the shoulder cannons.

Rex: Did she kill them?

Mark: Do we really care?

Rex: Probably not, no

> Up and up she went, until she was level with the chairman's office. Bullying her way in, she aimed
> all her weapons at Quincy. The external speakers came to life.

Christina: [Lufy] Wait, no, sorry. That's my workout mix.

> Lufy's voice spoke. "Okay bastard. You're done for!" Quincy smiled. Behind her the office
> doors swung open, two Dragon boomers appeared, weapons ready.

Jill: Oh no, not the things that they've effortlessly trashed so far!

> "Now, who was done for ?"

> With a shout of defiance, Lufy swung the shoulder guns up, backwards, blowing the boomers away,
> snapfiring at Quincy as he dived for cover. Blowing huge chunks out of the office, she continued
> until she saw no more movement.

Rex: Wow. Turns out wiping out Genom was not only easy, but they could have done it at any time.
Who knew?

> Anger flared in Rabby. Anger at her own weakness. Anger at the boomers pinning her down.
> Anger at having been chased, anger at having been a victim of circumstance for so long.

Jill: Anger at the animation director responsible for that one scene. You know the one I'm talking about

- > She
- > exploded forwards, outreaching the boomers by a wide margin, blowing straight through them,
- > disintegrating one in the process,

Rex: WA-TAK!

- > punching another one square through the chest with the massive fists of the trooper.

Rex: Like it was made out of some sort of soft dessert

- > She tore through the seven Dragons blocking her way, sustaining light damage in the process,

Jill: They're not even trying any more

- > ripping her way outwards, to freedom. Free. She wanted to be free. And freedom
- > was beyond the boomers blocking the exit. She shouted, slammed the throttles full forward,
- > thundered up and out.

Mark: Past the boomers who weren't really blocking the exit after all.

- > Lufy heard a voice in her headset. "Lufy ? Lufy! Where are you. I got out!"

Christina [Lufy]: Oh yeah, Rabby. I probably should have done something about her as well

- > She smiled. Thundering out the window, she left. Heading home. Free, free at last.

- > Epilogue

- > Two battered Bronz-X troopers and a shuttlecraft touched down on a deserted beach several miles
- > from the City. All getting out, they watched the first shine of morning appear. Lufy and Rabby walked
- > away from the rest, arm in arm.

Christina: [Rabby] Do you think we should have picked up the others?

Jill: [Lufy] Who the what now?

- > Sitting down on a patch of grass not far from the beach, they saw
- > the City in front of them, a big pillar of smoke blotting out the Tower.

Mark: Well there's an image that won't age badly at all

Jill: God no

- > Rabby hugged Lufy. "We've won." Lufy stared ahead.
- > "No", she finally said. "We haven't won. But they have lost." Rabby nodded.

Christina: [Rabby] Wow, no need to be such a buzzkill.

- > "You're right. But at the very least, we are free."
- > "Free to go wherever we want to. Free to do whatever we want."

Rex: Barring the fact that Genom knows your identities and you've just committed a grievous act of terror...

- > Lufy gently kissed Rabby on the cheek. They fondled.

- > Sylia saw the two girls sitting, close together. She smiled.

Jill: [Sylia] Putting that in the spank bank for later.

> There was definitely something growing between those two.

Mark: Sylia was not good at grasping the obvious

> "Sylia ?" She turned around. Priss looked worried. She had taken her battle-
> scarred hardsuit off, was standing there in her undersuit, shivering with cold.

Rex: Didn't anyone think to bring a sweater?

> "Sylia, what will become of us now ?"

Jill: A 2000s reboot and a failed effort at launching a franchise.

> She shook her head. "I don't know, Priss. I honestly don't know. But I don't think we will be out
> of business with Genom out of the picture."

> Coughing, Quincy crawled from under some fallen masonry and observed his battered office.

Christina: Well, his robot duplicate did. Really lifelike.

> Great
> rents had been torn in the walls, the armorglass window was gone and the two wreckages of the
> once mighty Dragon boomers reminded him of the sheer strength of his enemy.

Rex: And the worst part? They broke his 'World's Greatest Boss' coffee mug

> The blank computer
> screens were a mute witness of the data core destruction. He nodded. It would take time. Lots of
> time.

Mark: A whole lot of precious time. To do it right, child.

> But then, then the Knight Sabers and their mysterious allies would feel the full power of his wrath.

Mark: But first there would be hell to pay at the annual shareholder meeting

> They all stood around a simple nameless grave, decorated with fresh flowers.

Jill: Here lies, um, whatshername. She didn't really do much and then she died. Yeah.

Christina: That was touching

> All eyes were cast
> down. Finally, Sylia kneeled and placed one more bouquet of flowers on it. "That she may rest in
> peace." All offered one final greeting, and left.

> THE END ?

Rex: Or is it?

Christina: Did we need that?

Rex: Just saying that Catty's still out there...

> - Cpt. C. Nebulart <nebulart@solnoid.nl>

> Da Page

> -----v-----
> | * Lufy * Catty * Rabby * Shildy * Priss * | Fanfic author |
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On that final comment, the big screen switched off, reverting the world back to prose format. "And that was the collection of discarded b-roll footage that made up the final portion of Bubblegum Force," Mark considered. "A fic that asks 'what if you crammed the entire plot into the final chapter' and dares to make it happen."

"Look, I'm actually going to admit that I didn't see Patrick J. Starfish coming," Rex spoke up. "Like I am really surprised that the fic had an actual story."

"One that it basically blew off almost immediately," Jill added. "Damn, my head's still hurting."

"The whole Mason plot was definitely undercooked," Christina agreed. "It should have been introduced earlier and given far more time to develop rather than being thrown in right at the end."

"It's almost like the author was making the fic up as they went along," Jill offered. "Just saying."

"On one side, I am glad that the whole Patrick Mason storyline was there," Mark considered. "On the other hand, Christina's right. It was something that needed to be introduced from the start and given time to build up. It doesn't help that for most of the fics run Mason was just an anonymous generic executive with no development whatsoever."

"Quincy shouted at him," Jill offered. "We had that much. Or maybe I just like shouting Quincy."

"You know what actually surprised me?" Rex commented. "That it wasn't Largo. The fic didn't go for the single most cheap, obvious and most over-used plot in BGC fanfic."

"It's a small win, but we'll take it," Christina admitted. "And it's not like there was much else going on with the fic."

"There was not," Mark agreed. "And not only was the plot very, very rushed, but the end basically amounted to Lufy and Rabby effortlessly stomping over everything in an unexciting, one-sided fight."

"Yeah, thrilling," Jill sighed. "I'm not sure if this is the worst fic we've ever done but I think it might be the most boring."

"Which is pretty telling," Christina finished. "It really was a complete waste of a premise."

"A premise that wasn't any good to begin with," Rex finished. "So yeah."

"So I can tell the fic's weaved its magic," the Voice crashed into the conversation. "And that you're all nice and frustrated by it. Which means that I would love to hear your thoughts on it and just how annoying it really was."

"Well, my problem was the cast," Mark began. "It was way too full. It started off kind of okay, with just Rabby and Lufy hanging around. They were mucking around with the Knight Sabers, and sure it meant Linna and Nene weren't really doing much, but that's not entirely usual. We had a decent focus and some interactions between them and Sylia and Priss, and it seemed to be moving fine from there."

"But then the Destruction cast drops in out of nowhere, and it really fills up. The problem is that between them, Shildy, Amy and Spea really don't add anything to the fic. They're mostly just there, filling up space and getting the occasional line in a meeting to let someone exposit more. Catty provides an interesting perspective and her own subplot, but even she feels underutilised."

"In a way, I have to wonder why they were added. The fic was doing fine without them. I can see the use of Catty to the storyline, so maybe the others were included as a package deal – the author couldn't think of a good way to separate them from Catty, so just threw them in without any real plans for them. As such, they just make up a sort of herd, following around the main cast and not really contributing."

"I think it's at its worst in the ending, where Rabby and Lufy are really the only ones to do anything. They're the duo that blow up Patrick and they're the pair that do all the work at Genom Tower. Catty's

there to drop them off and pick them up, but the other characters barely rate a mention. The cast is just overstuffed, without any real roles for most of them, which means there's no real reason to include them."

"Related to the cast," Jill continued, "One of the things that got me about this fic was that for all the characters supposedly in it, none of them were actually in character. Instead, what the fic gave us was a collection of talking heads that had the names of Bubblegum Crisis or Gall Force characters but weren't actually them. At the best you have Lufy and Priss who are generically hot-headed with no real motivation beyond a general-purpose dislike of Genom or Sylia and Catty being generically mysterious, but that's about it."

"Rabby is probably the worst offender here," she explained. "She spends the entire fic alternating between wangsting and building robots in her basement. Now while she's not the deepest of characters in Gall Force, in the fic she displays none of the traits she had there. She should be a decisive action girl driven by the desire to keep her crew alive and with a chronic allergy to pants, not this whiny emo who is also apparently a mechanical genius. Also, her and Lufy getting it on comes out of nowhere given that Lufy had far more totally platonic lesbian chemistry with Shildy."

"Speaking of, Shildy is a part of the broader morass that is everyone else. A bunch of talking heads with no personalities to speak of who don't do anything or contribute in any meaningful way to the story. If anything, the only one of them who stands out is Spea simply for being fridged in a cheap way to provide motivation and actually get the damned plot moving."

Christina gave a broad stretch before she began. "I've got to admit, I nearly fell asleep a few times reading this. It was just such a dull fic. So much of it felt like it was marking time, filling out page count before something could happen. The action was sparse and broadly spread out, and so many of the scenes between them were repeated with very little variation. Quincy shouts, Rabby or Lufy angst, the chief yells. Rinse, repeat."

"In a way, it was worse when the fic tried to include character related subplots. There were two main ones, and none of them accomplished anything or really went anywhere. Catty retrieved her capsule and made a reader for it, but it didn't change anything. Amy was abducted by her school and abducted back, but that was barely mentioned again. And as soon as Amy's rescued, she fades right into the background."

"It honestly feels like the author didn't have a plan for the fic but felt compelled to write it anyway. As if they needed to put out chapters to meet some imagined deadline but didn't have ideas for those chapters. So they were just filled up with whatever idea came along, no matter how little relevance it had. The result is a disjointed story that goes nowhere until it suddenly ends."

"I started out by thinking about how the fic failed to use the crossover," Rex considered, "Like how quickly the Solanoids as a whole adjusted to their new lives and all that junk without any real issues. And I thought about how you could use a Bubblegum Crisis/Gall Force crossover that did something meaningful with the idea. And then I realised that there was actually no reason at all for this to be a crossover to begin with."

"So going off the prior review, once you strip away all the pointless subplots you're left with a pretty basic cyberpunk story about an evil corporation trying to expand its power to do bad stuff," Rex explained. "And that's like, sure, it's kinda what Bubblegum Crisis is all about. However, it's got nothing at all to do with the Solnoids or anything at all that they do or their interactions with the world or anything like that. You could entirely strip them out of the fic and you'd still be left with the same functional story, only it'd be a pure BGC fic and also it'd be a lot, lot shorter."

"So there you go, Voice," Mark finished. "There really wasn't anything going on with the fic but it spent a lot of time doing it as well. It had too many characters and didn't use them, it didn't need to be a crossover and the villain was a non-entity who barely managed to achieve anything in the small amount of airtime he had."

"And I have a headache," Jill added. "So thanks a heap there, Voice."

"Well I can tell you all had a bunch of fun with this mess," the Voice replied. "And I know that you'll be excited for whatever little treasure I dig up for you next time."

"So we're done for now?" Rex asked, somewhat hopefully.

"We are, yes," the Voice replied. "You're free to go back to your crazy little lives and do whatever it is you do. I'll be lurking in the background waiting until then. Toodles!"

"She's always so upbeat and cheerful," Jill sighed. "On the other side, at least this time she's being honest about it."

"I'm not entirely sure if I like it though," Christina added. "She really seems to be just plain mean about it now."

"It's almost like there's something going on there," Mark considered.

"What are you saying?" Rex asked.

"I'm not sure," Mark replied. "But I think that it might be worth looking into this further," he finished a moment before the image collapsed into a mass of digital noise.

Rebecca shut off the screen, turning back to the room as she did. "Ironically it was the fic that did it; or rather, the sourcing behind it. Gall Force's themes of reincarnation and rebirth, with the same character being reborn into the same roles over the course of centuries and the like. That's what made it all click for me."

She indicated back to her whiteboard. "I came to realise that what we had been seeing in all these different casts was a deliberate choice on the part of the Voice." She nodded. "They have been specifically choosing the roles for the reviews based on a desire to recreate something that had existed before. These specific roles; Pilot, Pilot, Pilot and Spy, were best fulfilled by our main team. The other cast iterations have been efforts to create that specific combination and find what will best suit that specific combination."

There was a slight pause. "Look, I know it sounds crazy, but I think there's something here. And finding what it is the Voice is trying to recreate, that one original source, will be key to finding the truth behind everything that's going on." She nodded. "Which is why I asked you to join me here because of our mutual shared interest."

"No, I have to agree with you. I think you may be onto something here," replied Shion Nys.

Author's notes:

It's pretty telling that the most surprising thing about this fic is that Patrick Mason wasn't Largo. As much as we joke about it, back in the period in which this fic was written, Largo coming back to life as the villain of a Bubblegum Crisis fic (especially the crossovers) was a stock plot. It was overused to the point where it almost seemed like satire, but no, it was entirely sincere. It probably doesn't help that at that point Bubblegum Crash was basically fresh with its implied 'Largo will return' ending was the final piece of BGC media with little to no chance of their being anything else. Ironically Parasite Dolls, which (may) be in the original BGC timeline doesn't have any Largo in it either.

On the other hand, Gall Force New Era had Nova as its villain; a lavender haired man who is connected to a genocidal artificial intelligence. And it was the last bit of Gall Force media before its own continuity reboot. So yeah.

Next time, get in, loser.

Bubblegum Crisis created by Artmic/Youmex

Gall Force created by Artmic

Bubblegum Force written by Cpt. C. Nebulart

Rex Brandtiger and Jill Vader created by Rick R.
Mark Grayson and Christina McCade created by Zogster

Shion Nys created by Mike Surbrook

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Frozen astronauts? Email us at [elmerstudios00 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com)
and register your Jeff.

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<http://www.heavens-feel.com/elmer/>
All of Elmer Studios' MSTings, random DELTA Invasion Episode Generator and other stuff in one spot

> "Mind me sitting down ?"
> "Go ahead."
> The Internal Affairs officer sat down