

## A New Doom, Part III

Zim toiled away on the engines, trying to make them more efficient. He should have thought of it before – how surprised the Tallest would have been when he enslaved his target before he was supposed to have arrived there! And then he would have been able to prevent its destruction at the hands of those moronic humans. He could always conquer another planet, but it wouldn't be the same. The Tallest had told him that he had been sent on a special mission to a special, secret planet, but he had let them down.

He would avenge the destruction of the world he had been sent to invade by bringing this so-called “Galactic Empire” to its feeble human knees. “Filthy humans!” he cried aloud. “Irkens have no need for these ‘knees’ you speak of!”

It was hard for him to differentiate between spoken words and mere thoughts. More often than not, he'd just blurt what he was thinking without regard of who might hear. This human worm cow who claimed to be of high social standing should have been grateful to be honored with Zim's presence, but instead had proved to be more trouble than she was worth. He couldn't wait to get to her precious rebel base, so that the Voot Cruiser's controls would no longer be slaved to the course she had programmed into it. Until then, he would continue to try to bring the engines up to the standard of the Empire's “hyperdrive.”

The human had tried to object to his working on the engines while they were operating at full capacity. He had responded with the usual threats, delivered with his preferred mix of screaming, shouting, and still more screaming. As if she understood Irken technology. As a mere smeeet, Zim had been able to assemble a fully operational battle mech out of spare parts. If only the Tallest hadn't taken it away, he might have been able to refine the prototype into something even more destructive. Still, he at least had fond memories of the carnage he had wreaked.

Now, he had the chance to do the same on a much grander scale. “Pull that lever, GIR,” Zim said as he put away the equipment he had been using. “It's time to test the modifications I made.”

“You gonna make biscuits?” GIR asked.

“NO! Now pull that lever! Pull it, I say!”

GIR sat on the Voot Cruiser's floor, his eyes humming a light blue. Finally, he responded to the order. “You gonna make biscuits?”

“Fine, I'll do it myself!” Zim said as he seized the lever. He pulled hard, and the Cruiser lurched forward. He'd done it! He'd-

A high-pitched grinding noise interrupted his moment of triumph, gradually shifting into a nearly inaudible squeal as the Cruiser spun out of control. The human berated him and GIR waved his arms with delight as Zim fought to bring the situation under control. With a loud, reverberating crunching sound, the Cruiser stopped.

“You just had to ignore me, didn’t you?” the human said angrily. “Are you completely insane?”

“Silence, you disgusting human!” Zim screeched. “You disgust me!” Yes, they were stranded without engines in some remote part of space. But he would think of something, provided he could get a moment of peace. Between GIR and his unasked-for passenger, that was highly unlikely.

Luke ran along the detention block hallway until he reached the princess’ cell. He could hear the sounds of combat behind him, where Han and Chewbacca were holding off the stormtroopers sent to stop them. The cell door slid open, revealing...

Nothing.

“Han! We have a situation here...”

“Gee, really? I hadn’t noticed!” Han shouted back.

Luke began to check nearby cells, with no luck. He’d started to wonder why he’d let himself get caught up in some old hermit’s mission to fight the Empire when Han came running down the corridor, firing wildly at the advancing stormtroopers.

“We don’t have time for sightseeing. Now let’s get out of here, kid.”