ADVENTURES
OF THE
GALAXY RANGERS

"The Ax"

by Dan Fiorella

1st draft

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EXT. MINING TOWN

Deserted mining complex on the planet Bardo. It is a barren and lifeless landscape. TWO LONE FIGURES leave the town.

ROY(O.S.)
(sung to the tune of "Clementine")
Oh my darlin', oh my darlin', oh my darlin' X2-9, you went down and purged forever, blessed sorrow, X2-9...

EXT. MINE SHAFT

OLD ROY, grizzled prospector, walks along, carrying his hi-tech version of a divining rod. It gives off a BEEPING SOUND, which INTENSIFIES as they approach the mine's opening. Roy's mechanical beast o'burden, Burr-0 5000, follows. They enter the mine.

ROY
(singing still)
In my program, on my hard disc,
Waitin' to come up on line,
Came a blackout, which did knock out,
My darlin' X2-9.

INT. MINE

Roy takes a lamp from the Burr-0's back. They walk along, still following the rod.

ROY
Lookee here, Burr-0, this dang stick's 'bout ready to jump outta my hands, I declare! Yes, it is. We're onto something here. Yes, we are!

They come to a wall of the mine. Roy puts down his rod, then removes a rock disintegrater ray gun from the Burr-0's pack.

ROY(CONT)
This is gonna be something big, I know that for positive. I can feel it in my bones, and you know my bones never lie. You don't mine these asteroids for as long as I have and not have your bones learn these things, no siree...

Burr-0 BRAYS in agreement.

Roy aims the gun at the wall and begins dissolving away the rock.

ROY
(singing)
It was portable and user friendly,
and its diodes where just fine,
'til a hacker
went and whacked'er
Oh, my darlin' X-2...

Suddenly, Roy stops and stares in disbelief at what he sees. There, waist deep in rock, is the Ax, strange alien robot.

ROY(CONT)
I'll be a son of a sidewinder! What in tarnation is that?

Burr-o starts to go toward it. Roy stops it.

ROY(CONT)
No, no, Burr-0, don't go getting too close to it. Tain't seen nothing like that in all my years. But I bet I know who would. Come on, Burr-0, let's get back to camp. We can call the Rangers. They'll know what to do.

Roy gathers up his supplies and they leave. When they are gone, we hear the faint hum of a robot reactivating itself.

END-PROLOUGE

EXT. SPACE

A Ranger Cruiser glides through space, battle ready.

INT. CRUISER

Doc and Goosman are at the controls.

EXT. SPACE

Suddenly, a Slaver Battle Cruiser comes into sight.

INT. CRUISER

GOOSE
Over there, Doc!

Doc fires a laser.

EXT. SPACE

Ranger's laser hits the ship and it dissolves. Just as suddenly, another Slaver Cruiser appears right in front of them.

INT. CRUISER

GOOSE
Dead ahead, Doc! Evasive action!

DOC
Turbo-thruster, don't fail me now!

He hits some buttons, trying to avoid a collision.

EXT. SPACE

It is too late, the ships collide, but the Ranger Cruiser merely passes through what is a projected image of the Slaver ship.

INT. CRUISER

DOC
Whoops.

GOOSE
Way to go, chief. How was that, Q-Ball?

They look back a Q-Ball who is operating a new control panel on the ship.

Q-BALL
Excellent, it was. Quite a good test, I must say. Quite. We must get back to base.

GOOSE
Take her home, Walt.

INT. BETA STATION BRIEFING ROOM

All the Rangers, except Niko are there with Q-Ball.

WALDO
What is this holgraphic projector supposed to do?

Q-BALL
With these three dimensional images projected into space, we hope to put our pilots through more thorough testing thus sharpening their skills further, don't you see.

ZACHERY
A new twist on the old flight simulators.

Q-BALL
Exactly right, exactly. We can create any situation or opponent while never endangering our craft.

WALDO
Do you really believe this device can improve our fighting ability against the Queen and her forces?

GOOSE
Yeah, it does seem to me that we should be developing new technology to fight them insteading playing "let's pretend."

Q-BALL
Well, gentlemen, yes I believe this invention will be a tremendous aid to our fight and the proper training of our fighters. It's been proved safer and cost effective. Plus it's been approved by Beta for immediate use.

ZACH
We can use something to keep our men on their toes. Training like this can't hurt.

DOC
I don't mind any new system that can keep my hide out of danger.

ZOZO
It all looks like great fun to me.

GOOSE
That's right. It is more like some oversized video game.

Q-BALL
I beg to differ--

DOC
Aw, Q-Ball, don't let it get you down. These guys are just too locked into that macho rap to appreciate these modern wonders.

GOOSE
Am I now?

DOC
But I, being the cultured and sauve guy that I am, openly welcome these advancements in science.

ZOZO
(to Waldo)
What's macho?

WALDO
I beieve it has something to do with breaking the sound barrier.

GOOSE
All I'm saying is that there's no substitute for real hands on experience. You can't know how to react to a situation until your really under the gun.

DOC
Well, until that time comes, you can preplan some kind of reaction.

NIKO enters, carrying a report.

GOOSE
Here, run this by Niko. She be able to see right through this optical intrusion.

NIKO
What have I stumbled into now?

DOC
We're discussing Q-Ball's new gadget.

Q-BALL
Gadget?

DOC
I think it's a perfectly fine way to train us how to respond in any situation before they happen.

GOOSE
It's not enough. How can you teach someone a response?

NIKO
You can teach them to use the response appropriate for the situation. Then hope for the best.

DOC
I'll take that as a yes vote.

ZACHERY
What do you have there, Niko? An assignment?

NIKO
Not exactly. We received this report from the old mining station on Bardo.

ZOZO
In the Pie-san system, no?

NIKO
Yes. Some old prospector radioed that he found some kind of ancient robot imbedded in rock, deep under the surface.

WALDO
How did a robot get itself buried in rock?

NIKO
That's what I want to investigate.

ZACHERY
And?

NIKO
I was hoping one of you would join me.

DOC
Which one?

NIKO
Ranger Hartford, I'm surprised. An ancient cyborg, perfectly preserved, from some previously unknown civilization, just sitting there waiting for some expert computer analyst to study it.

DOC
Yeah, yeah, yea. Where's this place?

NIKO
Bardo, in the Pie-san system.

DOC
Is it very far?

NIKO
We'll be there in the blink of an eye.

DOC
I dunno. I have very fast eyelids.

EXT. SPACE

Ranger Cruiser glides through space, approaching Bardo.

INT. CRUISER

Niko is at controls. Doc is back by the newly installed hologram projector, manning the communicator.

NIKO
I have visual. We're approaching Bardo.

DOC
Gotcha, I mean, affirmative. I'll see if I can raise us a welcome wagon.

(into communicator)
Hello, Bardo. This is the Galaxy Ranger Cruiser calling Bardo. Anyone read me?

ROY(O.S.)
Shoot, yeah, I read you loud and clear. Get on down here. Land her back outside town. I got some vitills on, we can chow down and mosey on over to the mines.

DOC
(uncertain)
Right. Sounds good.

EXT. MINING TOWN

Niko and Doc make their way down the main street, carefully.

DOC
Not too eerie, huh?

NIKO
It is, but I sense something more to it. A great saddness. I can't quite make it out yet.

A BRAY is heard. They look up to see Old Roy and Burr-0 at the door of one of the buildings.

ROY
Rangers, over here.

They go over.

ROY(CONT)
Howdy, I'm old Roy Steel, this is my Burr-0. Might decent of you to come by.

NIKO
Well, it was very hard for me to resist.

DOC
Less so for me.

ROY
Dangest thing I ever did see. Didn't know what to make of it. I figured you'd come to see.

NIKO
I'm a student of archeology and the report was passed on to me. I'm Ranger Niko and this is Ranger Walter Hartford.

ROY
Pleased to meet you, Niko, Wally. Let's eat and then I'll show it to ya.

Burr-0 BRAYS, they go in.

DOC
Don't call me Wally.

ROY
Okay, Wally.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE.

They approach the mine. Niko has a small toolcase. Roy has the lamp.

NIKO
I don't understand why you're here, Roy. If the mining company pulled out, what could be left?

ROY
Oh, sure, there ain't enough here to keep some big cosmic mining concern going, but a lone miner like me can scratch out a decent living. Here, this way.

They enter mine.

INT. MINE SHAFT

They walk along the shaft.

ROY
Me and Burr-O were coming down just like this and I start clearing away the stone, and pow, there's this daggone machine in there.

They reach the Ax and stop in amazement.

NIKO
My word!

DOC
Look at that sucker.

ROY
Not a dent in it. Not from the rock or from my rock-ray.

Niko studies the surrounding rock, scratching it with a pick.

NIKO
The rock bed here leads to this formation. Solidified lava. This thing must have fallen in a molten lava pit and gotten itself trapped.

DOC
(examing Ax)
I can't believe this hardware. The surface is some alloy new to me. Must be super protective. And all these compartments. Must have dozens of retractable probes. Like some hi-tech Swiss Army knife.

Niko looks at her radiation/rock dating device.

NIKO
This bedrock is at least 15 to 20 million years old.

DOC
Incredible. This is a fierce looking contraption.

NIKO
Odd you should say that.

ROY
Why's that, missy?

NIKO
I'm picking up those sensations again. Very sad. Violent too. Danger.

ROY
Sensations?

DOC
She's getting bad vibes.

NIKO
In a word, yes.

Niko moves in to touch the Ax. She enters a trance.

NIKO
Behold, the Ax.

She pulls away.

DOC
The Ax?

NIKO
Did I say that?

DOC
Go on, Nike.

She touches it again.

NIKO
So long ago. So very long ago...

She concentrates to better sense the past, as we flashback:

EXT. BATTLEGROUND

Victorious army overlooking the burning city of their defeated enemies. The WAILING and FLAMES can be HEARD.

NIKO(O.S.)
The last great war. The Run-dos have finally defeated the Vaspirs for control of Bardo.

The KING of the Run-dos watches the city burn. An AIDE steps up and speaks the words we hear Niko say:

AIDE/NIKO
But the Vaspirs always rebuild to plague us time and time again.

The King smiles, slyly.

NIKO(O.S.)
The king is not worried. He has a secret weapon.

EXT. RUN-DO BUILDING.

Large buidling. Doors open. The Ax is wheeled out, bathed in overhead lights. The King looks down from his balcony.

NIKO(O.S.)
Behold, the Ax.

INT. MINE SHAFT

Niko pulls away from the Ax.

DOC
Niko, why'd you stop? What is it?

NIKO
I'm sorry, but it's just that, it, well, it scares me.

DOC
Niko, I'm surprised. This artifact's been left standing here for the longest time, what's to fear?

NIKO
I don't know. You didn't hear anything, did you?

DOC
Like what?

NIKO
Someone saying, "Oil can, oil can."

ROY
Oil can what?

NIKO
Never mind.

ROY
Come on, Missy, do it again. That was some rip-snorting tale you was spinning there.

DOC
What he said.

NIKO
Very well. It is intriguing.

She touches the Ax again.

EXT. VASPIR'S KINGDOM

Various scenes of the Ax patrolling the ruins, destroying refugee camps, gutted buildings, escaping Vaspirians, until it is left patrolling a barren wasteland. Final scene shows it stepping on a few small flowers trying to break through the dirt.

NIKO(O.S.)
It's sole purpose was to prevent the Vaspirs from ever rising again, by destroying everything in its path.

The Ax leaves the now barren Vaspir territory.

NIKO(O.S.)
Eventually, the Vaspirs were no more. With nothing left to destroy, it moved on.

EXT. RUN-DO'S CITY.

A walled city. The Ax comes bursting through. Panic reigns.

NIKO(O.S.)
It wasn't long before the Run-do's fell victim to their creation.

King looks on from balconey. Ax shoots him an energy bolt and the structure collapses.

EXT. BARDO

The Ax now patrols a barren planet surface.

DOC(O.S.)
This Ax thing turned a planet with two thriving cultures into this barren asteroid?

INT. MINE SHAFT

Niko is still touching the Ax.

ROY
That was some story, wasn't it, Wally?

DOC
Don't call me Wally.

NIKO
This is an amazing find.

DOC
Maybe so, but I wouldn't want it moving into my neighborhood.

ROY
What do we do now?

NIKO
Get the rest of my equipment from the ship, take some readings, see what happens.

Suddenly, the Ax reaches out and grabs Niko. Everyone is startled.

AX
You are trespassing.

END, ACT I

INT. MINE SHAFT

The Ax grabs Niko and picks her up.

AX
You are trespassing. You will be destroyed.

Doc, Roy and the Burr-0 fall and scatter. As the Ax frees itself from the rock, Doc pulls his weapon and fires. The Ax throws up a force field and deflects the shot. The Ax shoots a laser back, just missing Doc. The Burr-0 BRAYS. This attracts the Ax's attention, it drops Niko and grabs the Burr-0, examining it. Niko runs to Doc and Roy. Doc fires again, but to no avail. Roy starts to go after Burr-0, but Niko stops him.

ROY
It's got my Burr-0!

NIKO
Don't Roy, you'll get yourself killed.

ROY
That's my Burr-0. I built it from scratch! Do something, Wally!

DOC
I see it I can override its system.

Doc concentrates to use his powers to disrupt the Ax's programing. He is physically thrown back when the advances are repelled.

NIKO
What happened, Walter?

DOC
It's too strong. I can't get to it.

The Ax has the Burr-0 partly disassembled.

NIKO
Let's get out into the open, where we stand half a chance.

They escape.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE

Roy is connecting wires to a de tonator. Doc is aiming a neutron bazooka at the entrance.

DOC
Do you always keep a neutron bazooka around, Roy?

ROY
You're darn tootin'. A man's gotta protect his claim.

NIKO
You have enough explosives to seal the mine?

ROY
You just make sure Wally hits the target and I'll see it gets sealed in for good. I'm sure gonna miss my Burr-O, though.

NIKO
I think I see it.

The Ax steps to the entrance of the mine.

ROY
Fire!

Doc shoots the bazooka, and scores a direct hit. Roy plunges the detonator and the shaft explodes. The dust clears. The mine is sealed shut.

ROY
Eureka! We did it!

Suddenly, a high pitched WHINE is HEARD. They see a giant drill bit poke through. The Ax burst through and the drill bit retracts back into it's chest.

AX
You are trespassing.

DOC
How are we supposed to stop that thing?

NIKO
We better get back to the ship. We can call for help.

ROY
My camp's closer. We can radio from there.

NIKO
Let's hurry!

They scurry off.

EXT. MINING TOWN

The Ax is happily destroying an abandoned building on the outskirts of town.

INT. ROY'S ROOM

Roy's camp inside one abandoned building. They are at the radio. Roy is trying to get it to work.

ROY
Breaker, breaker, anyone out there read me?

NIKO
Do you want me to try?

ROY
No, you got to know just how to handle this piece of equipment.

Roy starts hitting the top of the radio with his boot. Suddenly, the radio comes to life.

ROY(CONT)
There you go. Breaker, breaker, anyone out there read me?

EXT. MINING TOWN

The Ax suddenly stops wrecking the building. A small radar antenna comes out of its head. The Ax starts moving.

INT. ROY'S ROOM

Roy is still on the radio.

ROY
Anybody out there?

NIKO
Try to contact the Beta station.

DOC
Can he get on the emergency wave length? Maybe we can contact a patrol in the area.

NIKO
I doubt there would be anyone else around.

The radio starts playing static.

ROY
Dag-nabit! I'm getting some kind of interference.

NIKO
What kind of interference?

From outside, they hear the approaching Ax.

AX(O.S.)
Who enter's the Ax's domain?

Doc goes to see.

DOC
It's homing in on our radio signals!
We better get moving.

NIKO
Do you have a back way out?

ROY
Wouldn't be caught dead without one.

They head to the back, Roy stopping to get some of his supplies. The Ax comes bursting through the front of the building.

AX
Interlopers.

Doc is rushing Roy out.

DOC
Get a move on, man.

ROY
Gotta get my stuff!

Roy leaves, Doc stops to fire a shot. No good. The Ax responds by launching a small rocket at him. The rocket blows away the rear of the building. Doc's leg is trapped by some of the rubble. The Ax comes at him.

EXT. BACK ALLEY

Niko and Roy are at a corner. She sees Doc. She begins to concentrate. Suddenly, Doc is lifted psychically out of the rubble and carried toward them. The Ax stops and watches the floating Doc, doing nothing. Doc is lower by the Roy and Niko and they duck behind a building. The Ax finally reacts.

AX
You can not escape the Ax.

It fires a energy bolt, but they are gone. As they watch from a safe place, the Ax reveals a rocket pack and blasts off.

NIKO
Are you all right, Doc?

DOC
Just super.

ROY
Where do you think it's going?

DOC
Maybe it got bored.

NIKO
What if that rocket pack is powerful enough for space flight? It could destroy a whole solar system.

DOC
We'll have to stop it here, then.

ROY
We can't even radio for help, it'll track us down before we could get anyone.

DOC
Niko, did you notice the Ax when you pulled me out of there?

NIKO
Yes, it stopped and watched you.

ROY
Why didn't it just blast you out of the sky, Wally?

DOC
I felt something. There was a brief halt in its circuitry. It couldn't compute a response to the fact that I was floating in air. It wasn't programed for it.

ROY
So?

DOC
I think I know its Achille's Heel, and we just might be able to stop it. Come on, we have to go to the ship.

INT. CRUISER

Niko is at a radar monitor, tracking the Ax's movements.

NIKO
It's still in the center of town.

Doc is at work on the holographic projector.

ROY
I don't get what you're leading to, Wally.

DOC
Don't call me Wally. Look, the Ax was programed for only one purpose. It can only react to a finite range of stimuli with but one reaction.

ROY
Huh?

DOC
It only knows how to destroy everything it sees. It's a specialized machine, which can easily be mislead. In technical terms, we say the Ax is "stupid." Very stupid.

NIKO
But you wouldn't want to be the one to tell it to its face.

DOC
Exactly. Which is why you are.

NIKO
I beg your pardon?

DOC
Trust me.

EXT. MINING TOWN

The Ax is buzzsawing away at a building. From around a corner steps Niko.

NIKO
Yoo-hoo, Ax!

The Ax turns to see Niko.

AX
You are trespassing.

NIKO
What are you going to do about it?

AX
You will be destroyed.

The Ax fires a laser blast. It hits Niko. Suddenly, there are two Nikos standing there.

NIKO
Try again, Ax.

INT. CRUISER

Doc is at the controls of the projector. Niko is standing in front of a camera hooked into the projector. Roy is watching the monitor.

ROY
He's just standing there.

DOC
Sure, destruction it understand. But creating something with his actions rubs him the wrong way. His program won't be able to handle it.

ROY
How long can you keep this up?

DOC
This is a jerry-rigged system, but I should be able to project dozens of Niko holograms if I need to.

EXT. MINING TOWN

The Ax is still computing a response.

NIKO 1
Ax, over here.

NIKO 2
No, here Ax!

The Ax fires a rocket at Niko 1 and shoots an energy bolt at Niko 2. They both hit and now there are four Nikos. The Ax approaches Niko 1 with its axe and splits it into two Nikos. It buzzsaws another Niko doubling it. It shoots a flame at another Niko, splitting that one.

INT. CRUISER

Doc is frantically trying to keep the projector going. An occasional spark jumps out as Doc holds it together. Roy watches that monitor.

DOC
Come on baby, stay together.

ROY
He's whacking away at them like crazy.

NIKO
(into camera)
This way, Ax. What about me? You forgot this one.
(to Doc)
How am I doing?

DOC
You're fine. This thing's gonna blow before the Ax. We're going to have to do something extra. Roy, come over here!

Roy goes over.

DOC(CONT)
Keep your hands on this button and if it gets to this level, cut it. I have to go out there.

ROY
Are you loco?

NIKO
Are you sure, Doc?

DOC
If we had gotten charged before we left, I could try it from here. As it is, I think I'm running on empty. I have to get close to it.

NIKO
But, it's dangerous.

DOC
It should be weakened enough. Besides, it's the appropriate response to this situation.

EXT. MINING TOWN

The Ax is surrounded by a dozen Nikos. The Ax begins to faulter.

AX
You are destroyed. You will be trespassed.

Its moves are jerky. Smoke comes out its ears. Doc steps out from an alley, down the street from the Ax. Suddenly, all the Nikos disppear. It is a showdown between the Ax and Doc. The unsteady Ax displays it's ray gun. Doc, his gun at the ready, begins to concentrate on the Ax. The Ax goes to shot. Suddenly, its gun jerks skyward and the ray goes harmlessly into space. It tries to launch a rocket, but Doc diverts it into an empty building. Summoning up all his reserves, Doc hits the Ax with his thought waves, and the Ax grinds to a halt.

AX
You...are...trespassing....

It goes dark.

DOC
Well, forgive us our trespasses.

Niko and Roy come running out to join him.

NIKO
Walter, are you all right?

DOC
Fine, just drained.

ROY
Hot dang! That was some high-falootin' trick, Wally. It was great.

DOC
Don't call me Wally.

NIKO
Let's get back to the ship and contact home. They must be wondering what happened to us.

With Doc leaning on them, they head back to the ship.

DOC
Shane was right. You really don't know how you'll act until the time comes.

NIKO
Shane would have been impressed.

DOC
Yeah. That was something. I must have been crazed to do something stupid like that.

EXT. MINING TOWN

It is later now, dusk is descending on the town. Doc is standing looking at the Ax. Niko comes up to him.

NIKO
Have you seen Roy?

DOC
He ran off saying he had something he had to do.

NIKO
Incredible, isn't it? An amazing and rare archeological find. It's priceless. The very last remnant of two lost civilizations.

DOC
That's what's been bothering me. The fact that this thing is the reason those civilizations are lost. Vengence can be an ugly force that can turn on you.

NIKO
The Run-dos learned that the hard way. That's why this must be preserved and studied. Future generations can learn something from an awful event like this.

DOC
I don't believe that, Niko. As much as I am intrigued by a device like this, I think we have to get rid of it. It's evil. Designed and programed for destruction. It has no redeeming qualities what so ever.

NIKO
Doc, you're a man of science. Think of it.

DOC
I have. That's why I have to do this.

Doc begins concentrating on the Ax. Suddenly, its rocket pack appears. It flames on, and launches it into space.

NIKO
Doc, what did you do?

DOC
If my calculations are correct, I've just launched the Ax into the heart of this planet's sun. That should dull the Ax abit. Let's go home.

They start to walk. Roy runs out.

ROY
Hey, Wally, Niko, where you goin' to?

NIKO
We were going to prepare to return to BETA. Do you need a lift?

ROY
Nope, old Roy still has a job to do here.

DOC
All by yourself?

ROY
Not anymore. That's what I had to work on.
(calling off-screen)
Come along now!

Burr-O 5000 comes walking around a corner.

NIKO
Oh, Roy, you saved him.

ROY
Had to. Couldn't very well leave him all apart like that.

NIKO
Well, that's everything then and we'll be leaving. Good-by, Roy. And good luck. If you ever need anything, just call the Rangers. We'll be there.

They shake hands all around.

DOC
That goes double for me, Roy.

ROY
Well, I'm plum glad to hear you say that, Wally. You seem to be a whiz with machines. I was wondering if you might do me a favor?

DOC
If I can. What is it?

ROY
Hey, Burr-0, speak up.

Burr-0 goes to bray, but a dog's BARK is HEARD.

ROY(CONT)
I can't seem to work out a few bugs.

DOC
Sounds more like a few fleas. Okay, I'll do it, but on one condition.

ROY
Anything.

DOC
Don't call me Wally.

They shake hands on it.

ROY
You got it, Wally.

Niko giggles, Burr-0 BARKS and Doc grimaces as they head back to the ship.

THE END