

Against the Armada

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After the Tallest tell ZiM that he's just a joke, he is determined to end their amusement-and his life. But Dib, stubborn little big-headed Dib, stops him and convinces the Irken to go and pay the Tallest a little visit...

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1. Lies

Zim stared at the blank screen in disbelief. His mission was a lie? He had been sent to Earth, on the outreaches of the galaxy, just so that he wouldn't mess anything up? They'd been displaying his reports to the rest of the Empire for entertainment? "LIES," he growled angrily. "FILTHY LIES!"

As Gir ran into the room, Zim did not remove his infuriated gaze from the screen. The little robot trotted up to him and, noticing his expression, poked him. "Mastah? Whatcha doing?"

The ruby-eyed Irken looked down at Gir and narrowed his eyes. "Leave me alone, Gir." He stormed into one of the many elevators that led to the main level, and angrily demanded, "Main level, computer."

A faint sigh was heard as the elevator began to rise, slowly gaining speed. The moment it opened, Zim quickly walked over to the front door and out, not bothering with his disguise. It wouldn't matter- it was nighttime, and he would be hitting his self-destruct, anyway.

He passed a human that was leaning against a fence, holding the leash of a dog, and was completely unnoticed. Few others were awake and roaming, and many houses were dark. As Zim stormed through the streets, searching for a good place to hit his self-destruct, he spotted Dib's house. And a short figure, illuminated by the electric fence, stood right in front.

As he drew closer, he could clearly see who it was. "Dib," he hissed angrily.

The small human had recognized Zim by now, and a look of mingled hatred and surprise hung on his face. "Zim, what were your leaders-"

Angrily, Zim stopped in front of the human and cut him off, "If you saw that, you know perfectly well what they were talking about. With that gargantuan head of yours, I'm sure you can figure out where I'm headed. Now get out of my way."

Dib shook his head and stubbornly replied, "No, I don't know what they were talking about."

"Not like you'd care," Zim muttered, shoving the human aside and continuing onwards. As Dib ran ahead to block him once again, the Irken snarled, "You don't give up, do you?"

"Tell me, Zim!"

"No. Move out of my way."

"Just one explanation, Zim. ONE!" Dib yelled, enraged by Zim's stubbornness.

Zim furiously fixed his gaze on Dib and growled firmly, "Don't humans understand the word 'no'? I'm busy trying to self-destruct, now get out of my way."

The human child's eyes widened in shock as he stuttered, "Y-you're going to de-destroy yourself just because of s-something that they s-said?"

The Irken's antenna twitched as he replied, "Yes I am, now get moving!"

Dib, having recovered somewhat from his initial surprise, shook his head. "I won't let you."

Zim, narrowing his eyes until they were almost slits, said, "Why, so you can dissect me? I think not."

"No, it's because you could fight back. You can prove that you're worth something to your leaders," he answered.

Zim was surprised by the reply, but hid it as he replied, "Go up against the entire Irken Empire? That would be foolishness, Dibstink. Every Irken knows that."

"I'm not Irken, Zim. I don't know what you do, but you wouldn't necessarily be alone," Dib replied stiffly.

Zim smirked. "Who would be stupid enough to try and face down the Armada except you?"

"What about Tak?"

"Tak is gone, earthmonkey. Besides, she's loyal to the Tallest, and she hates my guts."
Suddenly, a little green shape appeared, running up to the two. "Mastah, why'd you leave without these?" Gir asked, holding out the Irken's wig and contacts.
Zim looked down at the robot and growled, "Gir, go back to the base."
Tears began forming in Gir's eyes as he looked up at his master sadly. "But why you angry? I didn't break nothing today."
Dib noticed that Zim was distracted, and slowly began inching away towards his house. Very slowly.
The red-eyed male ignored Gir and he looked towards Dib, who was standing, halfway to his house, with a guilty expression. "Where are you going, human filth?"
Dib attempted to smile, which looked more like a grimace than anything else. "Uh... nowhere?"
Zim narrowed his eyes. "You're going somewhere now. Gir, make sure the Dibstink comes," he ordered. Snatching up the wig and contacts, he swiftly put them on before heading towards his base.
The human child looked towards Gir, his eyes wide with shock. But the little green dog smiled and pointed towards Zim, squealing, "C'mon, bighead!"

Dib sullenly followed Zim down into the Irken's labs, too confused and annoyed to stare at the advanced technology that covered the place. As they stalked through the twisting passageways, the human wondered why in the world Zim had forced him to come. But then, Zim has only let me into his base willingly once, during Tak's invasion. Did I make him angrier than usual? Maybe he has a new weapon that he wants to test on me... should I run?
Suddenly, Dib bumped into a rigid figure. Zim had stopped in front of a door, and, absorbed in his thoughts, he hadn't noticed. The human stumbled backwards for several steps before regaining his balance and glaring at the ruby-eyed male.
Zim ignored the glare and opened the door, revealing a large room, which held his Voot Cruiser. "Hurry up, Earthmonkey," he snarled, entering.
Dib stared at Zim in shock. "You're taking me into space?"
The Irken, who had already reached the Cruiser, smirked. "I'm the only Irken on Earth, remember?"
The human blinked and replied, "But I have Tak's ship!"
As Zim climbed into the Voot, he commanded impatiently, "Get in, human filth. I'll open a connection to Tak's ship and pilot both that and the Cruiser."
Dib, eyes narrowed, walked over and awkwardly climbed in. He sat down in the back and crossed his arms sullenly, refusing to look towards Zim as the Irken opened the connection and let the ship rise into the atmosphere.

An hour passed silently, and Dib was getting both hungry and bored. So, he attempted to make conversation with Zim, who seemed to be focused on piloting both ships at once. "So... where in the world are we going?"
A faint snigger came from the Irken's direction. "We aren't in your world anymore, Dibstink. We left your world behind almost an Earth hour ago."
Dib replied, "Then, where in the galaxy are we going?"
"To Irk, of course."
The human's eyes widened. What's he trying to do, bring me to his homeplanet as a slave? Just then, a pang of hunger struck him. "What about food?"
Dib could see Zim's shoulders move as the Irken shrugged. "Irkens don't need food to sustain life."
"Humans do," he answered irritably. "And I'm hungry, Zim." Somehow, he knew that Zim was

grinning, though he couldn't see the Irken's face.

"Gir, fetch the Earthmonkey a snack."

Dib looked around the Cruiser with surprise. When did Gir get in?

Suddenly, an opening formed in the roof of the ship, and Gir appeared with a bag of tacos. The robot dropped them in front of the human before disappearing back out through the opening, which closed. Dib's mouth fell open as Zim sniggered again.

"I thought you were smart, Dib. If you were, you would have figured out that I'm not piloting Tak's ship at all- Gir is."

The human ignored Zim and grabbed the tacos, trying to make them last as long as possible. But, after about half an hour, he'd finished all three. "Well, we're going to your homeplanet. How long will that take?"

"In Irk or Earth time?"

"Earth."

Zim thought for a moment, doing calculations, before he replied, "Probably about four Earth months, from your planet's atmosphere."

Dib yelped in outrage, "FOUR MONTHS!?! How on Earth will Gaz live alone for that long?! And one bag of tacos won't last that long!"

The Irken sniggered. "In Irk time, it will only be about a day," he replied smugly. "Besides, Gaz doesn't strike me as helpless, and she is not the only one in your family unit, correct?"

The large-headed kid sullenly answered, "Yes." Gazing around, Dib noticed that there wasn't a lot of spare space in the Cruiser. Irritatedly, he asked, "Is this all the room we have?"

"I assume you want to sleep?"

"Eventually, yes."

"Gir, bring the supplies you collected for the Dibstink," Zim commanded.

Remembering the tacos, Dib looked towards the ceiling and watched as several blankets dropped through the roof. He grabbed them and piled them on the floor beside him. Glancing at the Irken warily, the human pulled out his laptop, which had been hidden in his trenchcoat. Dib turned it on and opened a link to Gaz, fervently hoping that they weren't too far away. Come on, work...

A familiar face flashed onto the screen, sleepy and incredibly pissed. "Where are you, Dib?" she hissed.

Quietly, Dib replied, "Zim's taken me into his ship and is flying for his homeworld. Can you tell Dad that Zim took me to his homeland, if he asks? Dad thinks that Zim's a foreign kid, so it should work."

Angrily, the female opened one eye partially. "What's in it for me?"

He thought quickly. "There's some money in the bottom drawer of my desk. You can have it to buy the GS3 next week."

She closed her eye again, satisfied. "Next time, don't call me up at midnight."

The screen faded to black, and Dib put the laptop away, relieved. Yawning, he folded one of the blankets into a pillow and wrapped the other around himself before falling asleep.

Zim looked towards the human, who was completely unconscious. "Finally, he shuts up," he muttered.

Then Dib started snoring.

2. Suprise

Dib woke to find a plate of waffles in front of his face, and an extremely bored Irken sitting nearby, munching on a waffle and grimacing. He poked them hesitantly, half-expecting them to attack him. But nothing happened.

"They're not poisoned, unlike others that Gir has made."

The human looked towards Zim, who had a half-eaten waffle in his hand. "Huh?"

Zim's antennae twitched agitatedly, and Dib quickly decided to start eating the waffles. They weren't the greatest waffles he'd ever eaten, and there was way too much syrup on top, but at least they were edible.

"Do humans normally sleep for sixteen Earth hours?"

Dib shrugged. "I usually only sleep for ten, but it's not unheard of." He looked at the Irken suspiciously. "Why would you care?"

Zim sneered, "Irkens do not sleep, and you will hold us back if you sleep for so long."

"Us?" The human child was thoroughly suspicious by now.

The rubies narrowed. "You suggested we taken down the Armada, and so that is what we're doing. And besides, where better to start than the Armada's homeplanet?"

Dib nodded, understanding the reasoning, as well as why Zim had brought him. So, he's not enslaving me... yet. But who knows what awaits us on his planet? I don't look anything like he does, and they'll spot me immediately...

"You will need something to occupy your time, correct?"

The large-headed kid shrugged, unable to know what to make of Zim's... less aggressive behavior.

"Well, hurry up, Dibstink. We've got only one Earth day until we arrive at our first stop."

Dib raised an eyebrow. "First stop?"

"We'll be stopping at planet Miiro to get a few things," Zim replied nonchallantly.

The human nodded. "I want to know more about your race. Do they all look like you, Tak, and your leaders?"

"Yes. How about you humans- are you all the same?"

"No... every human is different somehow. What organs do you have?"

Zim smirked. "Quite a few less than you, and they're quite a bit different. Irkens all have a brain, a heart, a squeedly-spooch, and a fourth, which has no known use. Our PAKs could also be considered organs."

"PAKs?"

The Irken narrowed his eyes. "You stole mine, once before. If I hadn't stopped you, you would've been destroyed by it."

"Ohh... I still remember that. What was your question about humans, then?"

Time passed, both enemies trading facts about their respective races, though Zim was careful not to reveal any weaknesses. By the time they stopped, four hours later, both had gotten bored and were running out of questions.

"Is there any way to go faster?" Dib asked, staring at one wall of the ship.

Zim smirked. "Why do you think I'm stopping on Miiro? Some of the best ships in the galaxy were designed by Miirans, or built with Miiran parts. I should have enough monies to buy a hyperspace drive for both ships."

"What do Miirans look like?"

"They're usually about the height of the TALLEst, and look a bit like you humans. They have blue skin and webbed hands and feet, though they're adept at both mechanics and swimming. Unfortunately, despite the fact that they're all amphibious, they can only survive so long out of the water."

"So, this... hyper drive. How long will it take to get to your homeplanet in Earth time?" Dib asked curiously.

"From Miiro, about five of your days. A very short time compared to going without it."

As the ship touched down on the landing pad, Dib stared outside the Cruiser in awe. For as far as the eye could see, there was light purple water. No wonder Zim seemed so uncomfortable. The moment the canopy opened, the large-headed human jumped out and watched as Gir landed Tak's ship. Zim followed suit slowly, shuddering slightly. While the robot climbed out, a tall blue creature jumped out of the water and onto the landing pad. Judging by the rings in its long, pointed ears and its sleek silver hair, Dib guessed that it was female. She walked over to them and stared at the human suspiciously before smiling at Zim. She spoke in a strange language, which, to Dib, sounded like gurgles and murmurs. Zim replied in the same language before telling the kid, "She said, 'It is nice to see you again. What are you looking for?'"

Dib nodded, as the Miiran female dug a small box out of a pocket in her slim dress. She then spoke into it and replaced it.

"She was summoning another Miiran to bring the hyperspace drives," the Irken explained, as she headed back for the water. "Because they can only survive so long out of water, they take turns dealing with customers."

Moments later, another Miiran appeared, much like the other, but taller and more masculine. This one held two small plates, which he then handed to Zim. The Irken handed him several gold coins and thanked the Miiran in its native tongue, before returning to the ships.

As Dib followed, Zim tossed one plate to him. "See if you can install that in Tak's ship."

The human raised his eyebrows at the Irken, who had disappeared into the cockpit of the Voot Cruiser, before heading into Tak's ship. As he searched around, looking for someplace he could try to install it, Dib heard a familiar voice say something in a weird language that he had heard Zim use once before. Then it repeated itself in English.

"Who are you, and why do you have my ship?"

Dib poked his head out of the ship, and looked at where the voice had come from. A purple-eyed Irken stood there, arms crossed and one foot tapping the ground. Taken aback, he stuttered, "T-Tak?"

She recognized him after several moments, and her eyes widened. "You!" she exclaimed, fury burning in her eyes.

3. Old Friends

Zim climbed out of the Cruiser, first noting that Dib was staring at the back of Tak's ship. Then he spotted Tak herself, standing between the ships with a furious expression. He stalked over and hissed, "What are you doing here?"

Glaring at him, she retorted sarcastically, "Having a party."

As Dib began walking over cautiously, Zim smirked. "Then where are the balloons?"

Tak clenched her fists as she replied, "You moron, stranded Irkens don't throw parties!"

"Stranded?" Dib had finally reached the other two. "Doesn't that mean that you can't leave?"

"How stupid can you get? Of course stranded means that I can't leave!"

Zim's mouth curved into a sneer as he said, "If you're just going to get in the way, then back off. We've got things to do."

She smirked. "And why should I do that? It's my ship, so hand it over."

"I beat you in combat, therefore all objects surrendered belong to me. Unless you've forgotten the Code?" the ruby-eyed Irken replied.

Tak grinned- an unnerving sight. "No Irken can forget the Code, because it's programmed into our PAKs. So then, fine, you win this time." Then she fully realized who she was talking to, and her grin faded into a snarl. "But you're supposed to be invading Earth, not bringing humans on tours around the galaxy."

Dib, indignant, spoke up, "I'm not going on a tour around the galaxy!"

Zim smirked. "And, apparently, I'm not invading Earth."

"So, you've finally figured out that your mission is a lie, have you?" she sneered. "Took you long enough."

Dib sighed impatiently and said, "If you're just going to talk, then have Tak join our expedition and let's go."

Always the impatient one, Zim thought irritably. Aloud, he growled, "Like the earthmonkey said, we've got places to go. If you're incapable of hitching a ride off the planet, Tak, then that's too bad." He turned to Dib and roughly grabbed the hyper drive out of the human's hands. The Irken stalked over to Tak's ship and climbed in to install it.

Dib looked to the female and said, "If you want to come, Tak, feel free."

She laughed and responded, "Ride in a ship with Zim? You have got to be kidding, Dib. Not even you could convince me to."

He narrowed his eyes. "If you hate Zim so much, ride with Gir in your ship."

She snorted, on the edge of more laughter. "His insane 'bot is just as stupid, though... with MiMi's influence, he shouldn't be too annoying."

The makings of a smile formed on Dib's face as he answered, "Where exactly is MiMi? Gaz said that Gir nearly destroyed her."

Her expression darkened. "He did." As a communication device extended from her PAK, she barked into it, "MiMi, come over to Landing Pad Three."

Dib looked around curiously, and spotted a gray-black shape appearing from another landing pad. The SIR didn't look much different, but was slightly taller and looked much worse for wear.

Suddenly, Zim reappeared. Seeing MiMi, he scowled at Tak. "I'm not here to fight you, Tak. I've got an Armada to take down."

A shocked expression covered her face. "I don't think I ever realized you were stupid enough to try and bring down the Irken Empire." Then her expression was replaced by a grin. "I'll be coming along. I'm taking my ship, though."

The Irken male narrowed his eyes, his accusing gaze focused on Dib. Then he abruptly turned around and siletly returned to his Cruiser. Dib shrugged and followed, as Tak climbed into her ship.

"How much longer?"

Zim gritted his zipper-like teeth and snarled, "We left Miiro's atmosphere only five freaking minutes ago. Shut your noise tube and be quiet."

Dib refused to be silenced and repeated himself.

"Five days at the most. Now shut your noise tube, before I do it myself."

The human smirked, as a voice emitted from the screen that was previously showing Tak's hand.

"Five days with the hyper drives could bring us to Irk's system. Is that-"

Zim cut her off, "Yes, we're headed for Irk."

The hand reappeared on the screen and the sound of Gir squealing began. Dib rolled his eyes and muttered, "At least Gir's not sitting on my head."

4. The Annoying and the Annoyed

Two days passed in the same fashion. Dib would continually pester Zim with questions to the point that Zim would threaten to throw him into space. Tak would keep screeching at Gir to get off her head, and Zim would try to ignore everything. But, eventually, Tak lost her patience.

Fury clear in her voice, the Irken female yelled, "ZIM! Get your filthy robot out of my ship!"

He snickered. "Would you rather have Dib pestering you nonstop?"

In reply, she snarled, "In the name of Irk, get your 'bot OFF MY SHIP!"

He shrugged and turned to look at Dib. "Saying as you don't have a PAK, you'll have to hold your breath while you cross over."

Dib stared at Zim in shock. "Cross over?! I can't fly in space!"

The Irken smirked. "You don't have to. Now get moving."

As the ceiling opened, Dib grabbed the blankets he'd been using and pulled himself out of the Cruiser. The human spotted Tak's ship instantly- it was right beside Zim's. Quickly, Dib climbed across, careful not to lose hold of the ships. Entering, he spotted MiMi sitting in the back, Tak up front, and Gir on Tak's head. He walked over and pulled Gir away from the Irken female.

"Hey," he said, "go join Zim in his ship."

"Okay!" Gir squealed, before jumping up and leaving the ship.

The ship was silent for a moment, until Tak sighed with relief. "Finally, that little menace is gone."

Glancing at MiMi, Dib spotted what looked like the SIR's interpretation of a smile on its face. He turned back towards the front of the ship, and observed the vast emptiness that is space.

"Why did you join Zim and me?"

Tak leaned back in her seat, propping her feet up on the control panel. "Did I ever tell you why I came to Earth, intent on taking Zim's mission?"

Dib shook his head. "No."

"To cut a long story short, I was on the Irken military training planet, Devastis. As I was about to take the final test to become an Invader, Zim used a Maimbot to get a snack out of a vending machine. He blew out the power on half the planet, and my door was blocked by debris. The Control Brains refused to let me take the final test once I got out, and I was sent to planet Dirt. I built a ship and robot out of scrap parts there, and left to hunt Zim down. It wasn't hard, mostly because the Tallest began broadcasting his reports all over the galaxy. You know what happened after that, apart from the fact that my escape pod landed on Miiro."

He nodded. Grinning, Dib replied, "It's still a long story."

She glared at him. "Be quiet, Dib."

He raised an eyebrow.

"What do you want?" she asked resignedly.

Dib grinned wickedly and answered, "Admit it."

"Admit what?"

"Admit that you still like me."

Tak fell off her seat, and, getting back up, asked incredulously, "Like?! That's a human thing! Irkens are devoid of any emotions save for anger, hate, and pride."

He smirked, as they both heard a faint snicker coming from the screen with Zim on it. "Zim seems to have a pretty wide range of emotions, and so do you."

She bit her lip and said, "So I picked up a bit more than I thought from you humans. Big deal."

"So you like me."

"Perhaps. Now SHUT YOUR NOISE TUBE!"

5. Holograms

The group had finally reached Irk, after another few days. As they landed, Dib noticed with shock just how barren and lifeless the planet seemed. "What happened to everything?" he asked curiously.

Tak shrugged. "Irk has been like this for eons. Most smeets never see actual plant life unless they become Invaders or are lucky enough to travel to other planets."

His eyes widened in surprise as Zim joined them in front of the ships. "What about other life forms? There's nothing here but dirt."

Zim smirked, as he planted a hologram square around the ships. "We wiped out all of the inferior life forms a long time ago."

"Why?"

"They were inferior, obviously," the red-eyed Irken answered. Then he muttered to himself, looking around, "Where'd I leave my stash?"

As an 'oh, really?' expression crossed her face, Tak asked, "You're got a stash in this sector?"

Confused, Dib wondered aloud, "What on Earth is a stash?"

Tak sniggered. "It's a collection of one's favorite beers that are hidden for future use."

The human child gasped. "Beer?"

"I may be too young to drink Irken beer, but I've tried yours. Ours is probably ten times more lethal," she responded, as Zim scanned the rocky landscape. Moments later, a spider leg extended from his PAK and triumphantly zapped a rock into oblivion. The Irken then walked over and grabbed the handle of a small metal crate, easily carrying it back over to them.

"Well, then, let's go," Zim announced, oblivious to Tak's cold gaze and Dib's 'Zim's a moron' expression. "I can't go prancing around looking like a human, Zim," the large-headed kid pointed out. "And what about Gir and MiMi?"

As he shrugged, the little silver robot ran full-speed out of the hologram square and his dark gray companion followed slowly. "Don't care," Zim replied.

Glaring at Zim, Tak hissed, "I know an Irken in this sector that makes holograms. It shouldn't be too hard to convince her to make one."

Zim, dropping the crate, crossed his arms and retorted, "I don't have any monies to waste on a hologram for the Dibstink."

The purple-eyed Irken lifted her fist and punched Zim full in the face, knocking him over. "You don't buy holograms, moron. You do a favor, and they make you a hologram in return. Morana already owes me a hologram, because I repaired her ship a while back."

Getting up almost immediately, the short male scowled at Tak and growled, "Take us there, then."

She shrugged, and after a moment's thought, headed to the right.

They eventually came to a dilapidated, old shack, after about four miles of walking. Neither Irken seemed tired in any way, but Dib wasn't used to walking so much at once, and desperately wanted a drink. Unfortunately, Zim's fear of water and Tak's lack of knowledge about it left Dib with nothing to drink.

As they approached, a cable extended from Tak's PAK and inserted itself into a hole in the blank wall. Moments later, a voice crackled, seemingly from nowhere, "So, you're back, Tak? Come on in."

A door appeared, revealing a tiny room. Tak stepped in, and her four companions quickly

followed. As if second nature, both Irkens stepped in front of Dib as the room lowered itself, deeper and deeper into the earth. When it finally stopped, they were greeted by a green-eyed female Irken dressed rather eccentricly. Dib guessed that this must be Morana.

"So, Tak, who's your friend?" she asked.

"Actually, he's NOT my friend, but the human behind us is."

"The what?"

Dib, already sick of being hidden, pushed through Zim and Tak, and Morana gasped.

"That's no creature I've ever seen!" she exclaimed. "It doesn't belong on Irk!"

Tak sighed. "Morana, please. I need a hologram to disguise him as Irken."

"No." She crossed her arms, to accentuate her reply. "I could be severely punished or killed if the Control Brains knew I was dealing with Irkens bringing other races to our homeplanet."

Zim, sick of the conversation, sneered, "We're defectives, you. Heck, I've been on trial before and we probably both will before this is over. Though... the Control Brains did let me pilot the Massive..."

"THEY DID WHAT?!" Tak screeched. "YOU FLEW THE MASSIVE?"

Dib sniggered.

"Twice, actually. The time after my trial, and a while before that, when I took control of its power core," Zim replied.

Dib laughed outright. "That was insane, considering you sent an itty-bitty little ship to destroy me."

Zim scowled, his amused expression gone. "You weren't supposed to be a part of that."

Morana had still not lost her shocked & angered expression, though she was faintly amused by the whole thing. "I still won't do it. And... is the creature why you're not speaking Irken?"

Tak shrugged, still glaring at Zim. "Just do it, Morana. I'm sure you don't want me to set MiMi on you again."

The green-eyed female gasped. "You wouldn't."

She grinned evilly. "I would. MiMi, battle mode!"

As the SIR's eyes flashed and MiMi withdrew her battle claw, Morana scowled darkly and stalked over to a dark area and out of sight.

"Now we wait," Tak said, sitting down on the floor and pulling a tiny computer from her PAK.

Dib walked over and sat down next to her, observing the screen. Covered in Irken letters, it was unreadable to him, but he guessed that it was a story of sorts. As she typed, he watched, noting that their writing often went left to right, and sometimes top to bottom.

"Tak, bring your creature over here," came a call from a nearby area.

The violet-eyed Irken stood and put the computer back in her PAK before looking to Dib. "You heard what she said. C'mon."

As she pulled him up, Dib brushed the dirt off the back of his trenchcoat. He followed her around several tables, a huge monitor, and through a dim passageway, into another dimly-lit room. A dusty glass mirror hung on a wall, smudged and dirty. The green-eyed Irken stood by a lone table, holding up a tiny square covered in circuitry. "You're lucky that I owe you, Tak, or else I'd never do this."

Tak narrowed her eyes slightly and asked evenly, "What type of hologram is it?"

"Just the circuitboard, saying as your creature doesn't have a PAK. You'll have to toy with it yourself so that it can turn the hologram on and off."

Tak nodded, thinking for several moments. Then, more to herself than anyone else, she muttered, "What does Dib have that we can remove and wear whenever?"

Listening, Dib suggested, "What about my glasses?"

"Do you have a second pair?" she asked, a curious glint in her eyes.

He shrugged. "I've got a spare. Most people-humans," he corrected himself, "do." He burrowed in his trenchcoat for a moment, then triumphantly pulled out a pair of glasses identical to the ones he wore.

Grabbing the glasses with one hand and the hologram chip with the other, Tak compared the sizes. Moving the chip around and holding it against various pieces of Dib's glasses, she mumbled, "Can't put it in the glass... that's too thin... not wide enough... there. That'll do, with a bit of modification..."

Morana, leaning on the table, asked sullenly, "You'll be using my tools, I presume?"

Breaking free of her thoughts, Tak replied coldly, "I have some in my PAK, specifically for holograms."

The green-eyed Irken nodded briskly and said, "Then I will go work on one of my... more tasteful projects." With that, she turned and walked through what seemed to be a wall. A flickering hologram proved otherwise.

Tak snorted as she sat down and pulled several tools from her PAK. "Now, let's see what I can do with this."

Half an hour later, the purple-eyed Irken held up the glasses. "Try it on, Dib."

As time had passed, Zim had joined them, and he now sniggered at Dib, who was somewhat bewildered.

The large-headed kid took the offered glasses and switched them with his normal pair, before walking over to the mirror and brushing it off with his sleeve.

Facing him in the mirror was a green-skinned Irken, with crooked antennae, deep chocolate brown eyes, his glasses, and clothing that looked like a mix of his and Zim's.

"What about a PAK?" Zim pointed out, rather smugly.

Tak glared at him. "You know how holograms work, Zim. I can't make something that is not part of the object being hidden or a copy of a real object. Besides, even if I could add a PAK, he would get weird looks when he can't use it."

Dib shrugged and asked, "Would anyone really notice if I don't have a PAK-thing?"

"Not really," the violet-eyed female replied. "Irkens are not very observant, though we're still going to notice if there are humans among us."

Zim yawned, and grinned at Tak, clearly to annoy her. "Can we go yet? I've got an Empire to bring down!"