
EVAN JACOBS
THE SYMBOL

Epic Battle: Tremont vs. Gan Terra

Tremont	Gan Terra
-Middle school life 	-Ruled by a tyrant 
-Normal weather 	-Missing Natural Resources 
-Some people fear differences 	-Erasing all differences 


HUMANS CAN FLY – NO WINGS REQUIRED.



CHAPTER 1

LOOK UP

As usual, Marina and Scott walked to school together. They were best friends. Marina couldn't wait to give Scott his birthday gift. He turned 14 today. Finally, he was Marina's age again.

Marina reached into her pocket. "Hey! Happy birthday!" She pulled out a gift card for Game Break. That was their favorite gaming store.

Scott grinned. "No way! Thanks, Marina!"

She beamed. "Sure! What are you going to get?"

Scott smirked. “Come on. You know what I’m getting.”

Marina nodded. “Yeah, yeah. The newest *Blockspire* game. It’s your favorite series.” She nudged Scott. “Maybe this means I can be the first to play it with you.”

He laughed. “Of course!”

Marina was relieved to see Scott laugh. He deserved to be happy on his birthday. This was especially true after yesterday.

He and Marina lived in the small town of Tremont. Their families didn’t blend in well with everyone else. Scott and Marina were originally from big cities. Tremont was a quiet and more rustic town. Most people had lived there all their lives. They hadn’t experienced much outside of Tremont. Marina, Scott, and their families dressed differently than others in Tremont. Both families had ways of living that differed from most in town too.

Usually, the differences weren’t an issue.

Only two people at school had a problem with them. They were Justin and Julie. Neither of them liked Marina or Scott. Justin and Julie would tease them. But they were worse toward Scott. The boy wore thick glasses. Scott was small too. He was an easy target for Justin and Julie.

On the other hand, Marina was tall. She had more confidence than Scott. Justin and Julie had trouble intimidating her. Krav maga helped too. The self-defense fighting had built up Marina's self-esteem. Marina had been practicing it since she was eight. It was fun for her. But she hoped to never need it in real life.

Yesterday, that hope was dashed. It was after school. Marina and Scott met by the same school doors every day. Then they would walk home together. That day, Justin and Julie had seen Scott first. The two cornered Scott by the doors. They were hurling insults at him.

Marina arrived. She was furious. "Stop it! Leave him alone!"

Justin and Julie laughed at her.

Julie got close to Marina's face. "What are you going to do about it?"

Justin snickered at Marina. "You're just like Scott. Neither of you weirdos belong here."

Julie pushed Marina. "And we're here to remind you."

Marina backed away. "Don't put your hands on me again."

Julie laughed. "Oh! You think you can tell me what to do?" She raised her fist to punch Marina.

That's when krav maga helped. Marina blocked Julie's punch. Julie tried to hit her again. It didn't work that time either.

Next, Justin got involved. He grabbed Marina. She used her skills to escape. After that, she put both of them on the ground.

Marina was grateful her moves had worked. She never wanted to fight Justin and Julie. But they'd attacked her. Now she just hoped they would stay away.

Scott had needed help. This seemed to embarrass him. He thanked Marina. But he didn't say much after that.

It made Marina wonder if she had done the right thing. Maybe she should've gotten help. She didn't have to handle it herself. *Should I have told a teacher instead?* she wondered.

Marina did not want to make things worse. She had fought for Scott yesterday. That might make the bullies see him as weaker than before. They could pick on him more.

She tried to think more positively. Today was a new day. Marina was just glad Scott seemed happy. "Your gift was almost something else, Scott. I know you like going to the movies. So I thought of a movie theater gift card. But you *love* gaming."

Scott nodded. "Yeah. For gift cards, nothing beats Game Break."

They walked in silence for a moment.

Scott looked at the ground. "My dad brought up moving away again."

"Oh." Marina's heart sank. "Air Force?"

"Yep." Scott glanced at her. His eyes were sad. "I know moving is part of my dad's job. But I was hoping to at least finish middle school first."

Marina hated the thought of Scott going away. Still, she tried not to sound too hurt. "I get it. And I'll miss you. But we'll stay in touch. When is the move?"

Scott shrugged. "My dad isn't sure. He has been talking about it a lot though. With Air Force stuff, that usually means it's going to happen. It could be soon."

"Maybe not this time," Marina countered. "There's no point in being bummed yet." She grinned. "Especially on your birthday!"

Scott smiled slightly. "You're right. I'll just enjoy today." His smile grew. He did a quick dance move.

Marina cracked up. Scott did too. Suddenly, something caught Marina's eye. She looked at the sky.

A circular shape had appeared near a cloud. The shape was a whitish gray color. It looked nothing like a cloud. Marina wasn't even sure if it was an object. It looked more like a symbol for something.

She pointed at it. "What's that?"

Scott looked to where Marina was pointing. "What's what?"

"That thing in the sky. It's kind of like a symbol."

"Symbol?" Scott asked. "I only see clouds."

"It's definitely not a cloud."

"Well, I can't see it."

"Seriously?" Marina pointed again. "It's right there!"

THE SYMBOL

DIVERSITY, NICE ALIENS, SAVING EARTH

BEING BULLIED, DESTRUCTION, TOO MUCH POWER

BULLIES, BAD WEATHER, AND HER BEST FRIEND POSSIBLY MOVING AWAY HAVE ALREADY COMPLICATED MARINA'S LIFE. THEN A GLOWING SYMBOL APPEARS IN THE SKY, AND MARINA LEARNS THAT IT'S THE START OF SOMETHING BIG ENOUGH TO REACH FAR BEYOND HER TOWN. NOW SHE WILL HAVE TO DIG DEEP, STAND TALL, AND DISCOVER JUST HOW POWERFUL BEING DIFFERENT REALLY CAN BE.

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EVAN JACOBS
THE PIE THAT WOULDN'T DIE

One Mean Pie

Recipe

Some of the ingredients:
flour, sugar, butter, blueberries

Instructions:

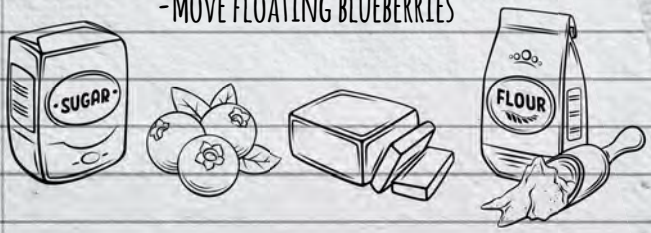
1. Make the crust
2. Add what you love
3. Bake at 325° only
4. Say the chant

In case of unexpected results . . .
Do not:

- Panic
- Run without a plan
- Forget Lady Grazelda's words

Do:

- Work together
- Think fast
- Move floating blueberries









No slacking off – especially when food fights back!





CHAPTER 1

STICKY SITUATION

Isa, Michael, and Doug were in home economics class at Poe High School. Most schools no longer offered the class. It was a mystery as to why Poe High still did. The three friends thought the class was old-fashioned and boring. In fact, they thought all classes were dull. School was their least favorite place to be.

Their classmates were busy making lasagna at their stations. The aroma of beef, cheese, and pasta sauce permeated the room.

Mrs. Doogie was their teacher. She slowly walked past students, checking their progress. The teacher was always brimming with joy. Her grin showed it. "Five minutes left, everyone!"

Most students liked Poe High. They were motivated to do well. This was especially true in Mrs. Doogie's class. She was one of the nicest teachers there. Isa, Doug, and Michael thought so too. But they avoided anything that was like work. None of them were making lasagna. The three just sat at their station.

Michael and Doug were on their tablets. They browsed through short videos on a popular social media site. It was called ClipClap. Isa was scrolling on the site from her phone.

The three had been friends since elementary school. Back then, they didn't do much schoolwork. Nothing had changed with time. Each of them did the minimum to earn passing grades.

Mrs. Doogie continued observing students. She was taller than any other teacher. But her

height intimidated no one. Her kindness was overwhelming. Most figured Mrs. Doogie didn't even know how to get angry.

She brushed away her gray hair and smiled. "Don't forget to clean up your tables!"

Mrs. Doogie would often look at Isa, Michael, and Doug. She commented to them at times.

Once, she passed Isa and chuckled at her. "You can't cook on your phone."

Isa had grinned. "Not yet."

That made Mrs. Doogie chuckle again. "Well, try putting it down sometime. I'd love to see what you'd cook up then."

Mrs. Doogie always laughed at what Isa, Michael, and Doug said to her. Then she would say something that made them think about their behavior. The three liked their teacher. They appreciated how she gently pressured them. Her words often made them want to try harder. But that desire never lasted long. Something else would always distract them.

Doug turned his tablet toward Michael. "Look at this! Imagine being that guy."

Michael glanced over. He started cracking up.

Mrs. Doogie didn't hear them. Her class was loud. Food preparation was noisy. There were sounds of banging pans. Cooking utensils and bakeware were always hitting counters and stovetops. Students talked constantly too. That was essential for preparing food in groups. Most had to speak loudly to be heard over the noise.

Isa kept her eyes on her phone. She flipped her brown hair. "What are you two looking at?"

Doug laughed hard. "It's a guy getting pied in the face!"

"Yeah," Michael said, laughing. "The video caption says, 'No, I don't want any coffee!'"

Isa rolled her eyes. "Sounds amazing." Then she mumbled. "Makes no sense at all."

The boys continued replaying the video and laughing. Eventually, they noticed everyone cleaning up.

Doug smiled. “Almost lunchtime! What are you two going to eat?”

Isa sighed. “That’s the only bad thing about not doing the work in here. Everyone else takes what they make to lunch. But we never make anything. So we’ve only got the cafeteria.”

“I’m not hungry anyway,” Michael said.

Isa laughed. “Oh yeah! You ate those three huge donuts this morning.” She paused. Then she dug in her backpack. Half of an apple fritter was still there. It would suffice for lunch.

Doug grinned at Michael. “You ate all *three*? Dude, I know Pete’s Donuts are the best. I got my fill this morning too. But now I know why you’re not hungry.”

Michael shook his head. “I couldn’t help it. Those things are delicious. Why can’t we make food like that in this class?”

The lunch bell rang. Students started grabbing their stuff.

“Now don’t forget!” Mrs. Doogie called to

the class. "Your pies are due tomorrow! We're having our pie potluck. Come to class hungry!" She grinned.

Isa, Michael, and Doug looked at one another. They had forgotten about the pies. This was a major group assignment. It was needed to pass the class.

Michael whispered to Isa and Doug. "We'll just pick one up. Sugar's Bakery should work."

"Remember," Mrs. Doogie continued. "No premade pies of any kind! You must make everything. Crust to filling!" She patted her tummy. "I plan to taste *all* of your pies. If you bring one that you didn't make, I'll find out. What would you get then?"

"An F!" most students said. They were almost in unison. Many were smiling too.

Isa looked at her classmates. They baffled her sometimes. It was like everyone was under a spell. She couldn't believe how much the students loved the work.

Her puzzled gaze shifted to Michael and

Doug. They shrugged at her and laughed before heading to lunch. Isa followed them.

Doug stopped. "Oh, wait! This is really bad."

Michael shook his head. "What are you talking about?"

Doug looked sick with worry. He slowly walked into the cafeteria. "You heard Mrs. Doogie. We have to *make* a pie."

Isa removed an earbud. She was streaming a show on her phone. "Duh. We're going to pick one up. Let's be sure it's in one of those foil pans. It'll look homemade. Mrs. Doogie says she'll be able to tell. But I doubt it."

Doug grabbed a plate of chicken tenders. "You don't know that, Isa. I bet Mrs. Doogie has been to all the bakeries. She'll figure out our pie is from one. My life will be over."

Michael plopped a plate of pizza on his tray. He eyed Doug. "Okay, man. Be honest. What's really going on?"

Doug sighed. "My parents saw my last progress report. They freaked out. I got all Fs."

Michael sat down at a table. He shrugged. "So did I. My parents were really mad."

Isa pulled out her fritter. "I think I got a couple of Ds."

"Neither of you get it." Doug stared at his food. Then he picked up a tender. But he didn't eat it. "My dad is tired of my grades. He and my mom want them to change. I brushed it off until they threatened me. Now I have to do better. If I don't, they're sending me to military school." He finally stuffed the chicken in his mouth.

THE PIE THAT WOULDN'T DIE

SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEOS, MRS. DOOGIE, TASTY FOOD

LADY GRAZELDA, WEIRD CHANTS, FIGHTING A PIE

ISA, MICHAEL, AND DOUG USUALLY DO THE BARE MINIMUM AT SCHOOL. BUT WHEN A PROJECT SPIRALS INTO CHAOS, THE THREE FRIENDS REALIZE THAT THEY CAN'T FALL BACK ON THEIR OLD WAYS. HANDLING A SHOCKING TURN OF EVENTS MIGHT BE THE HARDEST THING THEY'VE EVER DONE. WILL THEY LEARN THAT TEAMWORK AND TRYING CAN TAKE THEM FARTHER THAN GOOFING OFF EVER DID?



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