

Clash Champions Season 2 referees vs. Febreeze and the Yakk Squad

Captain Galacto sat a guest's chair in Ms. James's office and responded to the Corporate Secretary's curious request with incredulity. "You want *me* to fight?"

"We want to know if you would fight," Ms. James clarified.

"I'm not sure that I could," Galacto said. His practice match with Hong the Starman a few weeks ago was the closest thing that he had done to fighting in decades.

Ms. James reminded Galacto of his legal obligations. "It is part of your duties as a Corporate security officer in the contract that you agree to every week, and you are the only person who reads it every week to make sure that nothing has changed, so I am sure you are aware."

"Really? No one else does?" Galacto had thought that some of his co-workers were smarter than that.

"If you want the gossip," Ms. James offered before delivering it, "Casey and Sneaky ignore everything so long as the contract allows them to quit at any time. Ilya accepts that Corporate has the power and can do whatever Corporate wants. Celestia would read it but yesterday skimmed over it so quickly that she certainly did not."

"I hope that Corporate did not hide anything new," Galacto said. "I did not notice any changes."

"I do not believe that they did," said Ms. James. "However, I did not read it either. As for the mission, a trader has offered Corporate the use of a world to fight off an invasion from a team of super-powered aliens from another world in the trader's split."

"He is offering to let us do his work for him," Galacto noticed aloud.

Ms. James reminded him of the business deal built into the contract. "If the footage sells, you will each receive a share of the profits."

"Well, there is a problem," Galacto said. "I do not have super powers. I have a jetpack and a laser gun."

Ms. James told him to use what he had. "Review the threat and see if your jetpack and laser gun are suitable to engage them. Confer with your fellows for advice. They have more experience in these matters."

When the Crash Championship's referees were not judging the bouts, they were Corporate security officers. The seven of them, two full-timers and five temps, met in a conference room to discuss the mission. Highman, as the most senior security officer, gave the briefing. "There are six of them, led by a man who calls himself Febreeze and his lieutenant Commander Yakk." The aliens were bipedal but looked far from human. They were sentient, so to Highman they were men.

Celestia looked around the room and performed a quick head count. Highman, Hong, Sneaky, Casey, Ilya, Galacto, and herself. "We outnumber them by one, but..."

"Two if I bring Kalina," Ilya added.

"You might as well cut it back to one," said the overweight and aged Casey whose only superpower was being very good at baseball. "I cannot keep up with you guys. Not a chance, so I probably shouldn't even be a part of this. These guys are six Highmans? Nuh-uh."

Sneaky gave him a job. "You can do a play-by-play from the ship."

Casey chuckled. "Heh heh heh. Yeah, I can do that."

Captain Galacto unvolunteered himself as well. "I may not be fighting either. I just don't think I can do it."

Highman gave him a task. "We will go into the arena right after this meeting and train you up."

"Right," Galacto said. "I will prove it to you."

Hong gave Galacto a friendly pat on the shoulder, causing the nervous man to flinch. "Don't do that!" Galacto shouted after he turned around and saw who it was.

Hong gave a word of encouragement, as he often does. "Even if you do not fight directly, I am certain that you will find a way to contribute to the team."

Galacto doubted that. "Well, I've never been much of a team player, but--"

"Now is a good time to start," Ilya said.

"As I was saying," Galacto added while failing to suppress his anger at being interrupted and insulted, "I suppose I can learn."

Celestia politely continued from where she had left off. "And as I was saying, each of the targets has different qualities that affect how we should approach them and their team. This is not a set of simple one-on-one duels. We must judge their strengths against our own and form a plan of attack. We must also take into account that they are prepared to fight as a team."

"And we are not," Ilya admitted.

Highman saw that this needed to be addressed. "That is another reason we are all going into the arena after this meeting."

Their plan resulted in the fliers Highman, Celestia, and Galacto hovering in mid-air above the bay of a large coastal city. Flying in circles around them, as they were not able to hover in place, were Starman riding his flying star and the mother-and-daughter team of Ilya and Kalina in their dragon forms.

The city's movements included bird-people and bat-people flying around the heights of the buildings. The locals might have noticed the outsiders floating but not seen it as anything out of the ordinary.

Ilya complained rudely, but it needed to be done. "Could we get moving before I get tired and have to land?"

Sneaky Weasel stood inside the city, looking around. The people behaved normally, but the people were not human. Everyone was an animal of one sort or another. They stopped to give curious glances at Sneaky, having never seen a human before, but they carried on with their business.

Sneaky pulled out a pocket mirror from one of his many pockets to check the appearance of his own face. He was glad to see that he was still human. "I'm kind of surprised this world didn't turn me into an actual weasel."

He received a message from Casey through his earpiece. "Hey, Sneaky, how about telling us what you see down there?"

"Everyone is a college team mascot," Sneaky reported. "I think we made a mistake and beamed me into Disneyland."

Casey guffawed. "You seen any chaos from an alien invasion down there?"

"Not yet," Sneaky said.

"You causin' any?" Casey asked.

"Not yet," Sneaky repeated with a grin. "So I guess we're early?"

"Let me check on that..." Casey paused while he checked on that. "Yeah, okay, the alien invasion is not for another two hours or so. They haven't even landed yet."

"All right," Sneaky acknowledged. "Let me know if you need anything. I'll just take a break until then." He pulled out a cigarette and his lighter, lit up, and took a drag.

"Did you hear that?" Highman asked loudly enough for his companions to hear. Galacto put a hand to his helmet-covered ear, barely hearing Highman over the roar of his own jetpack. "We are very early," Highman continued, "so we are going to land to conserve our energy. Let's go."

Highman leveled out in midair and flew toward the city. Captain Galacto fired his jetpack and followed. Hong flew by Galacto on his shooting star, followed by Ilya and Kalina flapping their wings. Celestia floated behind them, but further and further behind them.

Galacto set down upon the pier where the others in his team were waiting for him. He saw that one of them was missing, then turned his head around to see that Celestia was still far away.

"We should wait for her," Highman said.

"Yes, we should," Galacto agreed.

The several heroes-for-hire stood there, waiting. Kalina looked out at the water to see if she could see any fish. The rest simply waited, giving a respectful nod to their last member when she came close.

"We have a problem," Celestia announced before she had set foot on the pier.

"Hey!" shouted a male voice from the nearby outdoor diner. "This is a no-smoking area!"

Sneaky Weasel turned his head to see that the complaint came from a grotesquely overweight pink porcupine whose quills pierced through the many gaps in the ornamentally designed metal outdoor chair that he sat in. The quills on his head were bunched together into thicker spikes that were held together by rubber bands. It was apparently a popular hair style for porcupines.

A second black porcupine questioned his dining companion. "I don't know if you want to cause trouble, Pokey. He's not bothering us."

"He's bothering me, Murk!" said the pink porcupine, who coughed for emphasis.

"I am sorry about that." Sneaky extinguished his cigarette on the fence that separated them. "Could you direct me to an area that is a smoking area?"

"Sorry," said Pokey the porcupine. "The whole city's a no-smoking area."

"Well, to hell with your city then." Sneaky said with a smile.

Pokey guffawed, while Murk shivered fearfully. "You don't really mean that, do you?" asked the dark porcupine.

"That was a joke, Murk!" said his large pink companion.

"Well..." the dark porcupine was still afraid. "I overheard him talking about an alien invasion, and he doesn't look like he's from here..."

Sneaky teased the fearful porcupine. "Oh, the alien invasion? That's me." He said it with a smile. The smile vanished when he saw an object falling from the sky. "That's them!" He ran away, shouting to his controller. "Casey, give me intel! Tell me what I need to do!"

The fat porcupine turned to his companion. "Murk, get the bill."

"We paid upfront," Murk reminded him.

"Then leave a good tip." Pokey pushed himself out of his chair and waddled toward the fence where his and Murk's hover-scooters were parked. The chair stuck to his back. He paid it no mind while putting on his boxing gloves.

"What are you doing Pokey?" asked Murk. "Are you expecting us fight an alien invasion?"

"I don't see anyone else fighting them," Pokey said.

"I do." Murk pointed up to the sky where Highman's squadron flew overhead.

Pokey did not change his mind. "Let's give 'em a hand. Two hands, a one and a two." He threw a pair of punches into the air. His ample gut jiggled and jostled with the movement. "Put your gloves on and let's go join the party. Wait. Before you do that, can you help get this thing off me?"

The alien overlord Febreeze, his lieutenant Yakk, and Yakk's four subordinates stood in front of their dented spaceship which had left a rut in the earth while landing well enough for them to survive.

Febreeze raised a fist and grinned wider than a human's mouth could grin. "This world would make an excellent addition to my empire. Everyone on this planet will be servants of Febreeze!"

"Why are you telling that to an empty field?" Yakk asked, gesturing toward the pasture. "There's nobody here to hear it."

"I am practicing my lines for when we tell it to the people in that city over there!" Febreeze gestured toward the sky-scraping buildings of the distant city. "They will fall and bend their knees to my might."

"Once we get there," Yakk added. He looked at the cars on the road about a mile away. "We'll probably have to catch a ride by hitchhiking or something."

Febreeze turned back to his subordinate. "Our ship could get us there if you hadn't crashed it!"

"I only crashed it a little," Yakk said.

"A little is all it takes!" Febreeze shouted. "Now it doesn't move anymore unless we pick it up and throw it!"

Watching from above, Highman carried Celestia. The blonde swordspell suggested a very simple battle plan. "I believe that I can destroy them all from here."

That would win the battle quickly, but Highman denied her request. "While that would work, it would defeat the purpose of capturing footage of a battle worth watching."

"So we are compelled to follow a more difficult path," Celestia said.

Highman turned his head. "Everyone remember your assignments. Febreeze is the strongest. I will take him."

"It looks like we have company," Yakk told Febreeze.

Febreeze looked up and saw a team of super-powered flying heroes landing in front of his own team. "What do we have here?" Febreeze asked with glee.

The team's leader, a muscular man with long curly black hair, landed in front of him and Yakk with no sign of fear. A shorter bald man hopped off of a flying star and landed ahead of his blue-skinned, red-

necked ki-throwing martial artist. A man in a jetpack floated in front of his thin and limber green-skinned speedster. A spear-holding armored dragon transformed into a spear-holding armored woman and landed in front of his tall muscleman whose head was shaped like the letter T. A smaller dragon transformed into a spear-holding girl to back her up. A woman with a sword and armor floated down ahead of his yellow-skinned, frog-headed mage.

Highman always attempted diplomacy before throwing punches. It rarely worked, but he did it because it was the right thing to do. "Emperor Febreeze, we are here to tell you that you will not be allowed to conquer this world, so you can get back onto your ship and go home."

An embarrassed Yakk rubbed the back of his head. "Uh, yeah, about that..."

Febreeze spoke to Highman in a demeaning tone. "So you are the supposed heroes of this world who are going to try to stop me to save your planet."

"Actually, we are not from this world," Highman replied.

"We are being paid for this," Galacto added.

"Well it never works!" Febreeze shouted. "Every group of heroes thinks they can stop me, and every group of heroes fails! I have defeated them all, and I will defeat you too!"

Highman smiled. "You are welcome to try. I will even let you throw the first punch." He set his hands on his hips, puffed out his chest, and waited.

Febreeze grinned. "You have no idea what you are asking for, but I will give it to you happily!" He drew his arm back and formed a fist. His arm bulged with power and he shouted the name of the attack as he swung it forward. "NUCLEAR POWER FIST!" Febreeze's fist struck Highman in the chest and did not move him at all, to the space emperor's great surprise.

"Maybe you should upgrade to antimatter power," Yakk suggested.

"That's not the problem!" said a flustered Febreeze. "He must have absorbed it or something. I'll just have to hit him harder!" Febreeze launched an infinite flurry of rapid punches moving faster than the eye could see, mixing it up with some kicks to Highman's legs to attempt to move him that way.

Yakk wondered whether his boss had the right idea. "If he can absorb it, maybe you shouldn't be hitting him."

Highman turned his head to Yakk and calmly answered the open question about his powers. "Actually, I am very strong."

With the fight started, the speedster ran forward and punched Galacto in the chest. Galacto tried to fly away but could not move in time. He barely regained control of the jetpack to stop himself from looping backwards into the ground.

Febreeze's mage tried to cast a mental disruption spell against the whole party of heroes but found his efforts disrupted by Celestia's countermagic. He raised his hands and threw a lightning bolt that was collected by Celestia's magic-absorbing sword. The mage grunted his disappointment and reached for

his gun. Celestia reached for her photonic pistol and they exchanged shots, both missing. Celestia floated an inch off of the ground as she dodged to the side and continued firing, giving herself the options of going back to the ground or up into the air.

The alien martial artist engaged the human one in a barrage of kicks and punches that neither could land on the other. Neither could either grip or trip the other. It was a stalemate. The alien was slightly faster than Hong, but Hong expertly dodged everything that the alien threw at him.

While Ilya held the off the extremely muscular strong man with her crystal-tipped spear, the speedster took the opportunity to attack her daughter. Kalina skillfully tripped the speeder with her weapon, and his own momentum threw him painfully to the ground. She brought down his spear upon his back before he could get up, releasing a discharge of holy magic that stunned her opponent.

The alien martial artist tried to surprise Hong with a burst of ki energy. Hong struck the alien with his own magic before the alien could deliver, sending a burst of magical stars from his palm that were a mere annoyance to the alien. The alien threw his ki in a blast of white flame that Hong dodged while throwing a punch. The alien twisted his body to dodge the punch and strike Hong with an uppercut in one fluid motion. It was not a strong hit, but it was enough to knock the Starman on his back. The alien stood proudly for a moment, which was enough time for Celestia strike him in the upper arm with her photonic pistol. "Ow!" the alien exclaimed as he flinched from the hit.

Febreeze continued throwing punch after punch after punch into the solid, unmoving Highman. He headbutted Highman in the chest three times, then drew back to complain to Yakk. "You could help out!"

"I am commanding my forces," Yakk said.

"What commanding?" Febreeze asked. "You're just standing there. You're not even saying anything!"

"I don't need to," Yakk said. "They are good enough not to need orders."

Febreeze gestured toward the speedster. "Well, one of them is down! Maybe you should go out and give him some help!"

"Maybe I should." Yakk thoughtfully put a hand to his bearded chin.

Febreeze screamed at him. "That is an order, you lazy goat!"

"Oh, all right." Yakk stepped forward.

Febreeze turned back to Highman. "And as for you..." He saw that Highman had drawn back his arm and was now throwing a punch at him. Febreeze caught the punch and threw Highman over his shoulder, then jumped and kicked him on the ground. Highman slid back in the dirt, creating a furrow. Febreeze gloated. "You are getting weaker! I really did only need to hit you a lot."

From the ground, Highman grinned. "You are also getting weaker. Throwing all of those punches used up a lot of your energy."

Febreeze denied that. "No, it didn't. I'm doing fine."

Highman frowned. "Oh."

Febreeze grinned. "In fact, I can go a lot longer. Take this!" He ran ahead and threw a punch at Highman who was starting to stand up. Highman launched himself up into the air to escape. Febreeze swung through the air and threw himself face-first into the dirt.

Ilya held off the T-headed strongman's body with her spear, preventing his massive fists from reaching her. So the strongman grabbed her spear. "What can you do without this?" he gloated. A dragon's jaws clamped down over his head. "Oh."

Yakk frowned at the small size of his opponent. "He's sending me out to beat up a little girl."

"Holy strike!" shouted the little girl as she brought the spear down upon Yakk's upper leg.

"Owww!" Yakk shouted and rubbed the bruised area while hopping away.

Kalina had foolishly turned her back on the the green-skinned speedster. He lifted his head from the ground to see her undefended. He began to stand up, but fell to the painful beam of a laser pistol.

"Did you forget about me?" asked a smiling Captain Galacto.

The green speedster leaped to his feet and hopped from side to side to dodge Galacto's laser beam, then dashed toward him.

Galacto leaped back and let his jetpack carry him away, staying close to the ground but taking care not to land upon it. "I doubt you are fast enough to catch me," Galacto lied in a taunting tone of voice.

"We'll see about that!" The speedster shouted. He sped up and quickly closed the distance between them, even while sidestepping to dodge Galacto's later pistol. He was getting closer, and then the laser beam clipped him, slowing him down. The speedster's next step was onto one of Sneaky Weasel's land mines. He heard the click and knew that something had happened, but could not tell what until it exploded.

Captain Galacto floated down toward the injured speedster who lay on the ground. "You are wounded and need medical attention. I suggest surrendering." The speedster was in too much shock and pain to respond. "Casey, could you send me a first-aid kit?"

The fight and the crashed spaceship were visible from a road to the city, and several cars had parked while their occupants stepped out to watch the action from about a mile away. They were joined by a pickup truck that carried two hover-scooters in the back. Pokey stepped out from the driver's seat. Murk stepped out from the passenger's side. Moving much faster than Pokey could, Murk ran to the back of the truck, leaped in, untied the two scooters, and threw them over the side.

"It looks like the action's already started," Pokey noted.

"Are we going to join in or could we just watch from here where it's safe?" Murk asked before throwing over the first of the scooters.

"Of course we're going to join in," Pokey said. The first hover-scooter did not land but began to float forward until Pokey grabbed it and pulled it back toward the truck. "If alien invaders take over anything, then nowhere is going to be safe."

Hong stopped fighting to listen to a report from Casey. "Hey guys, you had better take out the minions quickly."

"What?" Hong asked just before he was flattened by a punch from the alien martial artist. The martial artist looked to his left to see Kalina chasing Yakk, then turned to his right to go after Celestia.

Casey gave the report to a dazed Hong. "Highman is losing." Hong's eyes widened and he rose to his unsteady feet as quickly as he could.

Febreeze raised Highman over his head and threw the powerful human to the side. Highman righted himself and floated before he hit the ground, but Febreeze hit him with a flying kick that knocked him down. Febreeze landed on Highman's stomach, grabbed his curly black hair with one hand, and punched him in the head with the other. He released Highman's hair while punching him again, then rapidly struck him in the forehead with both fists.

Highman pushed off the ground, and he and his assailant slowly floated into the air. While still taking a barrage of hits to the face, Highman rotated the two fighters into an upright position and then pushed Febreeze away until his punches no longer landed. Highman smirked at the surprised space emperor as he reeled back for his own punch. Febreeze easily dodged it, struck Highman's elbow, lifted himself up into the air, and struck the back of Highman's neck. Highman was sent tumbling down to the ground.

"I have discovered your secret!" Febreeze shouted before landing on the downed Highman with both feet. "You can take anything, but you don't actually know how to fight!" He grabbed Highman's hair, lifted his head, and shoved his face into the ground. "You have never needed to!"

At the southern edge of the battle, the two archmages were in a pistol duel since both of them could cancel out the other's magic. The frog-like alien was struck by a third pistol from above as Captain Galacto joined the fight. With the frog stunned, Celestia was able to land a hit with her own pistol. The frog fell, but Celestia knew that he was not finished. She would need additional help to put him down quickly.

"Hong, switch up!" Celestia turned to the side to see if Hong could switch up. Instead she saw the blue-skinned martial artist about to land a surprise hit on her. Celestia kicked backwards and dropped to the ground to dodge it. The powerful blow glanced off of her forehead. This was almost enough to knock her out.

The martial artist slid on the ground to stop his motion. He turned and took one step toward Celestia before his feet lifted off the ground, and not under his control.

Having dropped her weapons, Celestia held out one hand to focus her casting of a floating spell while tending to her injured forehead with her other hand. The soft green glow of a healing spell appeared under her hand as she found that she was hurt worse than she thought she had been. "I should wear a helm again," she muttered.

Floating in midair out of arm's reach, the alien was not defeated. He cupped his hands together and began forming a growing ball of magic energy. After several seconds, he began to worry that his mage target had made no attempt to disrupt the spell. He continued to power up his blast.

Celestia had a short time to develop a plan to repel the incoming attack before it became too powerful for her to repel. She ended the floating spell and reached for her sword. As the alien was momentarily surprised by his fall to the ground, she reached out with her other hand and quickly cast a countermeasure. Energy split away from the ball in four directions just before the alien threw it. The remaining energy was absorbed by Celestia's sword, and she immediately threw it back towards him.

The magic in the air turned into a mist that sparkled as it became colder and ice crystals formed. Another mist formed ahead of the alien as he tried to step forward out of the spell. Three icicles shot into his chest, causing him to stumble back into it. The ice solidified around him. Celestia dropped her sword, using both hands to focus her energy. The ice thickened until she was satisfied. Celestia retrieved her sword and pistol and looked for her earlier opponent.

The frog-mage had returned to magic attacks against the defenseless Galacto. "This isn't good!" Galacto said as lightning began to crackle around him. "Somebody help me!"

Help came quickly as Starman flew in on his shooting star, throwing a punch that flattened the alien mage and knocked him out of the fight for good. The impact also knocked Hong off of his star by stopping his momentum. He dropped to the ground, then reached down to retrieve the mage's weapons.

Casey was not alone on the ship. There was a team of engineers, but he was the only fighter who had not deployed. He chose to change that now. "Hey, land me behind that big guy. Then bring me right back."

He spoke as the T-headed alien brute pushed the dragon-form Ilya off of him, then kicked her away. Seeing the dragon lie still on the ground, the muscular alien grinned for a moment before flinching in pain as Casey broke a Louisville Slugger against his knee. He tossed the broken weapon aside. "Gimme one of them new metal bats," Casey said with his open hand held out. The engineers beamed one onto the ground next to him. Grumbling, he knelt down to pick it up because bending over was out of the question.

The tall muscular alien turned around to address his new opponent. Casey smacked the second bat against the alien's knee with all of his strength. The bat folded over. Casey looked up to see the alien grinning down at him. "Get me out of here!" Casey shouted to the engineers. The alien threw a punch that Casey deflected with the twisted metal bat, which was knocked out of his hands. "I said--" Casey was interrupted as a transporter beam removed him from the fight.

The alien swung a hand through the area to make sure the human was gone and not merely invisible, then turned around to see that Ilya had reverted to human form and was standing up to fight him again. He stepped toward her, eager to finish the fight. Kalina flew up behind him in dragon form, reverted to human for a better grip on her weapon, and brought it down on his head. As he fell forward, Ilya struck him from the front.

Starman, Celestia, and Galacto teamed up against Yakk who did all that he could to avoid their attacks. Seeing the two dragon paladins take down the big guy, Starman decided to give Highman a hand

against the leader. "If you believe you can handle him, I will help Samuel." Celestia nodded, so Starman ran away.

Celestia held off Yakk with her sword and magic icicles, not allowing him to come close enough to hit her. With a great thwak, Febreeze sent Starman flying back in their direction. Galacto caught him in midair and set him down gently.

Febreeze threw Highman into the ground. Highman got up, so Febreeze grabbed him and threw him into the ground again. "I can do this all day!" Febreeze gloated.

Pokey and Murk arrived on the scene late. Murk said as much as they stepped down from their hover-scooters to approach the fight. "It looks like the fight's almost over, Pokey. There's only two guys left."

"I count eight," Pokey said.

"What, you don't mean the others?" Murk asked with disbelief. "Aren't they fighting the alien invaders?"

"They are all alien invaders," said Pokey. "They are fighting over who gets to rule the planet when the fight is over."

Captain Galacto corrected him while flying by. "Actually, we are only here to stop Febreeze and we plan to leave when we are done." He flew away.

"Do you trust him, Pokey?" Murk asked anxiously. "I dunno..."

"We'll take our chances for now," Pokey said. "Let's go."

Pokey and Murk curled up into balls and rolled away. Murk quickly rolled back and stood up to push the much slower Pokey who left a furrow in the ground as he rolled along.

The tall and heavily muscled alien lifted his T-shaped head off the ground. Kalina had been standing guard over him to watch for this. She turned her head to alert Ilya. "Mom! He's getting up!"

Another of the aliens returned to the fight as the blue-and-red-skinned martial artist punched out of his ice prison. A wave of cold fog appeared, and he was frozen again. His fists glowed white with ki energy to melt the nearby ice enough for him to lift his middle finger.

The muscled alien threw powerful punches at Kalina who slashed his arms with the bladed tail of her spear. She was nimble enough to dodge him, but her strikes were not powerful enough to stop him. He tried to smack her aside with the back of his hand. She hopped up, transformed into a small dragon, and flew above his arms. He tried to grab her, but she poked her spear into his wrist, flapped forward, and struck his right eye from below with the spear's crystal tip. The alien stepped back in pain while Kalina dropped to the ground in front of him and returned to human form. He was not as stunned as she thought he was. The alien brought his foot forward and kicked Kalina off of her feet, sending her through the air. Then he looked down as Pokey the Porcupine waddled into view.

"I think I've found the first guy I'm gonna beat up," said Pokey. "Whether you're an alien or not, it's not really nice to beat up on a little girl."

"She was beating up on me!" said the alien, who still covered his wounded eye with his hand.

Murk added his opinion. "Th... that's another reason we're going to beat you up. If a little girl can do it, so can we."

The alien gritted his teeth. "You have no idea who I am! I am--"

"No, and I don't care." Pokey ended the conversation by throwing a heavy punch into the alien's gut that blew the wind out of him. The alien responded with a punch that Pokey blocked with his gloves. His body jiggled as his hands were pushed back into his fat belly. Murk leaped up and struck the alien in the head to give him a second black eye. Pokey leaped up higher than he should have been able to and struck the top of the alien's head with a downward blow. The alien fell to the ground as Pokey landed and his feet sank into the earth. "Stay down this time," Pokey told him. Then he noticed that he could not move. "Uh, Murk, the ground is soft. Could you help me out?" Murk grabbed one of Pokey's legs and tried to lift it.

Yakk was not landing any hits on his opponents, but he performed a spectacular dance as he dodged Ilya's spear and Celestia's sword. Celestia cast icicles, then pointed a finger and threw a thin bolt of green lightning into Yakk. Casting the spells disrupted Celestia's motions more than getting hit disrupted Yakk, so she returned to using her sword.

Hong sat on the ground, still dazed, touching his tender chest where he had been hit by Febreeze.

"Hey Starman, are you alright?" asked Captain Galacto. "Are you still deciding?" Galacto asked before Hong could answer.

"I could use another minute or two," Hong admitted. He stood up and leaned off-balance a little. Galacto held the Starman's shoulders to steady him.

"There is the answer," Galacto said, "you are not." Galacto glanced back over his shoulder to see the alien martial artist encased in ice. "You are guarding that guy. I am going to see if I can help anybody."

"Wait," Hong said. "Do not help Highman."

Galacto and Hong looked in Highman's direction to see Febreeze holding their flying brick by the arm and slamming him into the ground.

"It looks like he can use the help," Galacto noted.

"Febreeze can fly. Faster than you," Hong said.

"Ahhh." Galacto nodded in understanding. A fight with Febreeze would end with his quick death.

The yellow frog-headed alien mage blinked his eyelids as he returned to consciousness. He tried to stand up, but could barely move. Someone had bound his arms and legs. He cast fire magic to burn through the ropes. The ropes did not burn. They were made of plastic and metal. He cast the spell hotter

and hotter until it set the back of his clothes on fire. The alien screamed in more surprise than pain, but burning himself did hurt quite a lot.

Eventually his bindings were defeated, and the frog-alien stood up. The back of his robe had completely burned off, revealing his underwear. The mage looked for a target and raised his hands to cast a spell. A rifle fired and a bullet shattered his right knee. The frog fell to the ground yelping in pain.

From the ship, Casey warned the team. "Celestia, their frog guy is up again. And he's down again, but he can probably still cast magic so you'd better deal with him."

Celestia left, leaving Ilya alone with Yakk. Now fighting one-on-one, Yakk could dominate. His athletic nimbleness gave him a great advantage over the slow-moving Ilya, allowing him to dodge her spear. His long arms and legs allowed him to strike her before she could defend. After hitting her with several swift punches and kicks, Yakk was confident enough to throw his whole body into one strong punch that knocked Ilya down to the ground. Yakk had thrown himself off-balance and put his other hand on the ground to keep himself from falling over. Kalina leaped up over him and brought her crystal-tipped spear down between Yakk's tall horns, imparting a magical shock. Yakk performed a handplant on her mother and kicked his feet backward, catching Kalina as she dropped to the ground.

Yakk rose to his feet, and a laser beam burned a small mark on his upper arm. "Ouch!" He flinched, and looked up to see Captain Galacto aiming at him. He grinned maliciously. "You don't really want to fight the great Yakk, do you?"

"No," Galacto answered honestly. He looked to see that Ilya and Kalina were both down. "... but I don't see anyone else doing it."

"A-HEM," shouted Pokey the fat porcupine. "If you want to conquer this planet, you will have to go through me."

"Okay," Yakk said. He swiftly kicked Pokey in the gut, causing the porcupine's eyes to bulge.

"I... just... ate..." Pokey complained.

"Y... you'll have to go through me too!" added Murk. "Just please don't hit me too hard, or I will hit you harder."

"Like this!" Pokey threw a fist. Yakk deflected it. He threw his other fist. Yakk blocked it. Murk leaped forward and hit Yakk in the chest, then landed and scrambled away before Yakk could hit him.

Yakk was once again fighting two people at once. He could handle it. He dodged or blocked nearly everything that Pokey and Murk threw at him. He could take the few hits that landed. He was also landing solid hits on the slow-moving Pokey, but Pokey was able to absorb it all and keep swinging.

Yakk stepped backwards, giving up ground until his butt ran into the tip of the waiting Celestia's sword. Surprised by the sudden pain, he dropped his guard for a moment. That moment was all that Pokey needed to land a hard punch. Yakk was too stunned to resist as Pokey and Murk hit him with punch after punch until he dropped to his knees. A few more hits took him to the ground.

The blue-skinned alien martial artist flexed his muscles and broke out of his ice prison. Starman jump-kicked him in the head and knocked him out before he could do anything.

Febreeze threw Highman to the ground and stepped on his neck. "Is there anyone else?" Febreeze shouted.

Highman rose up on one arm, lifting Febreeze up with him. "I'm not done yet."

Febreeze pushed Highman back to the ground with his foot. "Anyone else?" he repeated.

Highman rose up on one arm again. "Really, I'm not done yet." Febreeze pushed him into the ground again.

Celestia stepped forward with her sword. "I suppose that the task falls to me." She waved her free hand and cast an ice spell that produced mist near Febreeze's face.

An icicle shot from the mist. Febreeze raised his hand and caught it in midair. He gloated. "An ice spell?" He grinned. "Don't you know that ice magic makes me more powerful?" He squeezed the icicle, which broke into fragments that dissolved into mist.

"I had heard that," Celestia admitted.

A greater mist formed around Febreeze. "Let me show you some real ice magic!" The mist congealed into a multitude of greater icicles a meter long that threw themselves in a barrage.

Celestia raised a hand to counter this magic, and the icicles shattered halfway to her. They left behind a blue mist of ambient magic that floated into her sword whose runes glowed bright blue with energy. From this collected power Celestia cast a wave of green energy that formed a large circle on the ground below Febreeze and Highman. "I am fairly certain that Highman can survive this," Celestia said.

"I'll get out of the way just in case." Highman pushed himself up from under the alien overlord's foot and flew away.

Febreeze began to think that might be a good idea. "Wait. I should do that too!" It was too late. Green magic flashed in a dome over him just before the ground under his feet exploded. Chunks of earth flew into the air as another green dome of solid energy slowly rose up from the ground until it reached the limit that the first dome had demarcated. Then the spell ended and the chunks of dirt fell back down into a smoking crater.

"This is odd," Celestia remarked on the thick smoke. "Usually, the spell does not produce such a great volume of smoke." She raised her hand to cast a scan spell, and was surprised by the result. "He is alive!"

She was more surprised when Febreeze flew out from the smoke faster than the eye could see and threw a punch that would have taken her head off if she had not known he was coming and had already started to move out of the way. Celestia deflected Febreeze's flying body with her sword. Strengthened by Febreeze's momentum and the release of its accumulated magic power, the sword cut off Febreeze's hand below the wrist.

Febreeze landed and looked at the stump. He grew a new hand, and smiled at the swordspell.

Celestia looked at Febreeze's severed hand on the ground and the one that he had just regrown. "This may be a difficult fight," she concluded.

"Ya think?" Febreeze exclaimed. He zoomed ahead and fainted toward Celestia's undefended head. Celestia reflexively defended her face while Febreeze punched her armor hard enough to cause a new dent and send her flying into the air.

Celestia recovered enough of her senses to cast a floating spell to slow herself down and a shield spell that surrounded her in a small green sphere. Febreeze leapt forward and kicked her through the shield, knocking her senseless again.

Highman caught Celestia and gently lowered her to the ground. He heard someone jogging toward him. He looked up and saw it was one of the aliens, so he stood up and prepared to fight.

The frog-alien had other intentions. "Is she all right?" he asked Highman. "She healed me earlier, so I owe her one. Also, your sniper has a bead on me."

Highman accepted that the frog-alien's words were honest, so he left Celestia in the frog's care. He lifted into the air and flew back into the fight.

"Who is next?" Febreeze shouted. "Is there anyb--"

Highman cold-clocked Febreeze with a hard punch to the head, knocking the alien overlord to the ground. He reached down and grabbed the alien's arm to capture him.

Febreeze rose to his feet and leaped into the air, taking Highman with him. He somersaulted in midair to swing Highman in front of him and kicked out his feet. Highman flew to avoid the kick and return behind Febreeze. Febreeze somersaulted again, Highman flew, and they spun faster and faster. And faster.

"Aren't you getting dizzy?" Febreeze asked as their motion became a blur.

"No, not really," Highman said.

"Are you sure you're not getting dizzy?" Febreeze asked as they went even faster.

"Maybe a little," Highman admitted.

Febreeze grabbed Highman and threw him downward, turning the rotational force into forward momentum. Highman held onto Febreeze and threw him. They both fell together and hit the ground with enough force to create another crater.

Febreeze leapt up from the crater and floated in the air. He looked down to see Highman at the bottom, curled up into a fetal position as if sleeping.

Highman groaned and rolled onto his back. "Now I am dizzy." He closed his eyes and put a hand to his head.

"So am I!" Febreeze said in a gloating tone. His eyes rolled in different directions. He closed his eyes for a moment and shook his head, then looked down at his opponents. Most of them were down, either unconscious or too exhausted to fight. "Who is next!?"

Pokey the Porcupine stepped forward. "I would fight you... if I could get up there to reach you. I don't fly."

Febreeze accepted the challenge. "Then I'll just have to come down to you!" He became a blur as he dashed downward toward his land-constrained opponent. Pokey sidestepped the punch and threw a jab into Febreeze's face that stopped his motion. With an "oof", Febreeze fell down the last few inches to the ground.

Febreeze got up immediately. "That hurt." Pokey hit him with a left hook before he had fully stood up. "That hurt too, and so will this!" Febreeze threw two quick jabs that Pokey deflected before attempting to counterattack. This opened Pokey to the real attack, a gut punch followed by another and another as Febreeze's fists moved with superhuman speed. Pokey's gut rippled rapidly with the hits.

Murk ended the barrage by leaping over his friend and kicking Febreeze in the face. Febreeze kicked Murk as he landed, launching him into the air.

"Thanks, Murk," said Pokey.

"Dooooon't meeentiooon iiiit..." called back Murk as he flew off into the distance.

Flying on his jetpack, Captain Galacto caught the black porcupine. "I got-- OW!" Captain Galacto dropped the black porcupine and rubbed the arm that caught the worst from the porcupine's quills. Murk wrapped his arms around one of Galacto's legs and held on tightly. "All right, I'll let you down," Galacto told him.

"My turn," Pokey said as he thrust a fist into Febreeze's gut.

Febreeze's eyes widened with surprise at how powerful the porcupine's punch was. "You're stronger than you look."

"Yeah." Pokey punched Febreeze again. "You see, all of this is muscle."

"Are you sure?" Febreeze asked while throwing a punch. He missed and took another hit from the porcupine. "It looks like most of it is fat."

"Maybe some of it is fat," Pokey admitted while throwing punches.

"No, I'm pretty sure that most of it is," Febreeze continued while trading blows.

"Well, this," Pokey said as he struck Febreeze with another hard blow, "is all muscle." Pokey and Febreeze threw jabs that were both deflected by the other's arm, and Pokey struck Febreeze with an uppercut that lifted the alien overlord off of his feet.

Being able to float, the alien overlord stayed off of his feet and threw a sweeping kick into Pokey's face. Pokey lunged forward and caught another foot to the head. On the next kick, Pokey actually caught Febreeze's foot and pulled him down to the ground. Febreeze swung his fist down on Pokey's forehead, dropping the porcupine flat to the ground, then kicked him in the face while he was getting up. Ironically, the force of the kick helped Pokey back to his feet. He hopped forward and stomped down on Febreeze's other foot.

"OWW!" Febreeze shouted in pain. "You're heavier than you look! And you already looked very heavy."

"You're lucky I'm not a girl," Pokey said before striking Febreeze with an uppercut, "or else I would be offended!" Pokey struck Febreeze with another punch, knocking him a few steps back.

Febreeze grinned and pointed a finger at Pokey. "Are you sure you're not a girl? You're pink." Pokey punched him in the face. "I earned that," said the alien overlord. Pokey punched him again. "That was a freebie. Now it's my turn!" Febreeze assaulted the pink porcupine with two quick punches that he blocked, but Pokey failed to block the kick that followed them or the subsequent punches that knocked him onto his back. Febreeze raised his fist to deliver a powerful punch. Pokey rolled over and raised his quills. Febreeze brought his fist down and the quills pierced his hand with the power of his own punch.

"OWWW OW OW OW OW!" Febreeze pulled back his hand and tried to pull out the quills that were deeply embedded in it. "I think that hurt me more than it hurt you!"

"That's what they're there for," Pokey said as he rolled up onto his feet. He raised his gloved fists to attack.

Febreeze had not finished pulling out the quills. "Wait, I'm not ready yet." Pokey did not wait and punched him in the gut. "Is that how it is?" Febreeze deflected the next attack and kicked Pokey hard, sending the porcupine stumbling back. "Well, I can fight you one-handed! And also win!" Febreeze did just that, carefully deflecting Pokey's attacks and kicking him to the ground again.

Febreeze pulled out the last of the quills from his hand. He examined it and grinned. "So you like spikes, do you?" Febreeze tossed the quill aside and smiled as his body began to change. His face became wider, his skin got thinner, and then spikes of bone shot out from his limbs, his ribs, the sides of his face, everywhere he had bones near the skin. "I have spikes too! Try attacking me now!"

Pokey punched Febreeze in his un-spiky gut, bending him over, then punched him in a spike-free part of the face.

Febreeze stumbled backwards until he was steady. "Maybe I should not have told you to, but I won't let you do that again!" He lunged forward to counterattack, but he was no longer as swift or nimble. His spiky form reduced his mobility, so Pokey was able to predict and block Febreeze's attacks.

After taking one too many punches to the gut, Febreeze decided it was time to give up on this body. He leapt into the air and floated out of Pokey's reach.

"Are you giving up?" Pokey asked.

"No!" Febreeze said with a grin. "I am just getting started!" The spikes withdrew into his body as his transformation began. His skin thickened, producing purple plates of armor over his shoulders, shins, and gut. He dropped to the ground with a victorious smile on his face, then let out a shout as he attacked.

Febreeze's armored form was relatively slow like his last form, but his thick skin was able to absorb the power of Pokey's punches. He was now clearly winning the fight that had gone back-and-forth before. Unexpected help for Pokey arrived on a flying star as the recovered Hong the Starman flew his magical ride into Febreeze's side while leaping up and jump-kicking him in the head.

Febreeze was now outmatched and was taking blows from both opponents. His skin nullified most of the pain but he was getting knocked around and losing the fight, so he escaped into the air. Pokey could not chase after him, but this was only a minor obstacle for Hong who waved his hands in a large circle to summon another flying star.

Hong rode up into the air on the star, holding onto its edge with one hand as he fired magic stars from the other hand. One of the stars hit Febreeze in the shoulder and did not hurt him at all.

"Pfft," Febreeze exhaled dismissively. "My turn." He summoned his ice magic and shot numerous large icicles. Hong dodged, but one of them struck the flying star and it vanished from under his feet.

The falling Hong began to wave his hands to summon another flying star, but he was interrupted by Febreeze stomping on his back with both feet. Febreeze grinned as he watched Hong fall toward one of the craters that was created during this long battle. "And now you die."

At the bottom of the crater, Highman looked up to see Starman falling. He immediately leapt and flew up into the air.

Starman looked down and saw Highman flying up toward him. He smiled and reached out his hand. "Thank you, Samuel." To his surprise, Highman flew up and passed him. Starman looked down at the approaching ground and screamed.

A large ball of orange energy floated in the air above Febreeze's right index finger. Febreeze pointed his finger down at Starman, and the energy fired out as a powerful thin beam. Highman quickly flew between Febreeze and Starman to catch the beam with his chest. It burned a hole through his clothes, but the skin underneath was unharmed.

Starman fell face-first into the soft dirt at the bottom of the crater, embedding himself an inch into it. He moaned, tried to get up, and fell back down.

"You!" Febreeze shouted at Highman.

"Yes," Highman said calmly.

Febreeze smiled. He had a plan. "To defeat you, I will have to be stronger!" Febreeze's skin shifted again, and his muscles grew throughout his body. In many places his skin was absorbed into his muscles, becoming the thick top layer of an external musculature.

"There is also the option of not fighting," Highman reminded him.

"Are you serious?" Febreeze asked incredulously.

"Yes, I am," Highman said.

Febreeze laughed. "Well, I am seriously strong, and I will show you!" He zoomed forward and engaged Highman in aerial fisticuffs. As before, Highman was seemingly unharmed by every strike while Febreeze easily dodged and countered everything that Highman threw at him. Febreeze's new power was enough to knock Highman around with every hit.

Febreeze kicked Highman back and forth, then grabbed Highman's cape and swung him around in circles before throwing him like a shot put. Highman quickly righted himself, but immediately caught a flying punch from Febreeze. Highman tried to punch him back but Febreeze ducked under it and hit Highman with an uppercut that launched him upward. Febreeze quickly flew up above Highman and hit him with a downercut that launched him downward. Febreeze then threw his whole body into a downward flying kick.

Highman floated to the side to dodge the kick. Febreeze continued to the ground which rippled outward and broke from the force of the impact, creating a new small crater. Febreeze leaped up into the air to face Highman again, and the ground rippled again at the force of his launch.

Febreeze feinted a punch and flew forward under Highman's overcommitted response, reaching around to his back. Febreeze lifted Highman's cape over his head and tied the ends in a knot around the back of his neck. He then pushed the blinded Highman downward at great speed. "You can stay down there with your friend!" Febreeze threw Highman face-first into the bottom of the crater, then leaped away.

Highman waved his arms behind his back, trying to reach the knot from the wrong direction. "Hong, could you help me with this?"

"Give me a minute," Starman replied without moving.

Febreeze returned to face Pokey. "And as for you, you spikey spiked thing..."

Pokey punched his gloves together. "It's my turn."

"Yes it--" Febreeze started, but he stopped talking when Pokey attacked by leaping into the air with his right fist held high, ready to bring it down on Febreeze's head. Febreeze threw a left jab to get him first, but his fist deflected off of Pokey's chest as the fighting porcupine twisted his whole body to strike with a left hook. Pokey returned to the the ground and followed up that hit with a gut punch that sent Febreeze stumbling back.

Febreeze deflected the next strike and punched Pokey back. "You are strong," Febreeze said as they exchanged blows again, "but I am stronger!"

"Don't be so sure about that!" Pokey said as he blocked a kick and responded with a punch to Febreeze's jaw.

Febreeze stepped back and smiled. His already large muscles grew another size, bulging outward, and he grew several inches in height.

"You're changing again?" Pokey asked, even though Febreeze obviously was so it did not need to be said.

"Did you think that was my strongest body?" Febreeze asked sarcastically. "This is not even my final form!"

"It's not?" Pokey asked.

"No," Febreeze answered. "I have one other form that is not any good so I don't use it. Now let me show you what this one can do!" Febreeze lunged forward and struck Pokey with a heavy punch across the face.

Pokey stumbled backwards and returned the favor. "I can do that too!"

Febreeze reeled back from the hit to the face. "Let me show you real power!" He threw a punch that Pokey blocked, but the punch was so strong that it sent Pokey stumbling backwards.

"Let me show you this!" Pokey wound his arm in a circle several times before throwing a powerful uppercut. "Hurricane fist!"

Febreeze stepped back and out of the way as Pokey missed him. "Did you really expect me to stay still for that?"

"Uh, yeah," Pokey said.

"Well, let me show you this!" Febreeze drew his right arm backward, and the already muscular muscles bulged out into even bigger muscles. "NUCLEAR..."

Pokey punched Febreeze in the face.

"POWER--"

Pokey punched Febreeze in the face again.

Febreeze opened his mouth to speak, then deflected the incoming punch and returned a quick left jab to Pokey's face before delivering the stronger attack. "FIST!" Febreeze punched Pokey in the gut with enough force to launch the quills off of his back. Pokey's eyes bulged and his tongue stuck out.

Febreeze withdrew his fist that was deeply embedded in Pokey's gut. The porcupine closed his eyes and fell forward onto the ground.

Febreeze gloated over his fallen opponent. "How do you like that? Ha ha ha ha ha! So now I guess you're going to get up and tell me 'oh, even that is not going to stop me' and we'll start round 2. Right?" He eagerly punched his open hand, but he looked down and saw that the porcupine did not move. "No, you're pretty much out of it. So I guess I won? Even I was not expecting that."

A gunshot rang out. "Ow!" Febreeze reached up to the side of his head and pulled off the flattened bullet that had been fired at him. He turned his head and raised his hand toward the direction it had come from.

An upturned cardboard box sat in the middle of the field with the label This End Up pointed downwards and a sniper rifle poking out from under one end. "Uh, beam me out of here," Sneaky Weasel said from inside. There was the sound of a transporter beam as the rifle shimmered and disappeared, and the box settled down. A blast of magic energy destroyed the box whose broken and charred remnants floated down into the burning crater below.

"Is there anybody else?" Febreeze shouted out to the field of fallen fighters.

"Uh..." Captain Galacto looked around to his left and right at the field of fallen fighters, and then straight ahead to see Febreeze staring at him. Febreeze lifted up off the ground and zoomed in his direction at a fast speed.

Galacto nervously tried to return his gun to its holster so that he would not appear threatening, but he accidentally dropped it. After looking down to see it falling away from him, he looked up to Febreeze's grinning face in front of his. Galacto tried to delay the unwinnable battle for as long as possible. "Uh, Emperor Febreeze, before we... fight or anything, can I ask you a question?"

Febreeze shrugged. "I don't see why not."

"Alright." Galacto quickly came up with a question to ask. "Why are you trying to conquer this world?"

"Why?" Febreeze was incredulous that the question could be asked. "Don't you see? It is my destiny!"

"Why is it your destiny?" Galacto asked.

"You don't understand!" Febreeze exclaimed. "I have to conquer this world so that I can use its industrial resources to build a new spaceship! The old one isn't really working anymore."

"Do you mind if I have a look at it?" Galacto offered.

"HA!" Febreeze shouted. "Do you think that you can... wait... what did you say?"

Captain Galacto repeated the question. "Would you like me to have a look at your spaceship and see if I might be able to fix it?"

Febreeze's jaw hung open as he considered the offer.

A few minutes later Captain Galacto stepped away from the maintenance panel of Febreeze's crashed spaceship to give a report to the space emperor and his bandaged crewmen. "Yeah, everything is jarred out of alignment from the crash, so we will fab you new parts to replace everything."

"You can do that?" Febreeze asked.

"We can do that," Highman confirmed proudly. He then spoke to the ship through his earpiece. "We can do that, right?"

Galacto held up a spray can of sealant. "I will seal the hull breaches that I can see. You will find the ones I cannot see when you get into space, and you can seal them then."

The two guests' chairs had been removed from the Corporate Secretary's office so that the returning squad could all fit in there. With half of them bearing scratches and bruises, they stood quietly while Ms. James gave a disappointed sigh and a report. "While the mission was a success, Corporate has chosen not to bring the footage to market."

"I can't say that I blame them," Highman mumbled.

"There is one more thing that I would like to say before you leave," Ms. James added. "Captain Galacto, excellent work in producing a resolution."

"Really?" Galacto had thought he was winging it in a panic.

"Yes," Ms. James said with a nod. "Not every victory needs to be won through fighting."

Casey chuckled. "Yer tellin' that to a bunch o' fighters who judge fights in a fightin' tournament."

"Yes," Ms. James agreed. "With that said, you are free to leave. I recommend that you get some rest before you have to come back to work."

Sneaky was the closet to the door and the first to leave as the team left the office one at a time.