

**Plot Treatment  
for  
Wing Commander V**

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2/15/96**

## Wing Commander V: The Eye of Sivar

Lieutenant Christopher Blair tries to shut out the radio chatter as he guides his Saber fighter closer to the target. The cruiser's turrets rain fire towards him, but the attempt is feeble as he dodges the bolts effortlessly. His own cannons respond, raking the cruiser with particle blasts. The shots rake across the name emblazoned on its bow, TCS *Gettysburg*, shredding plastisteel like paper.

As the cruiser explodes, Blair can somehow hear the screams of four hundred crewmen as their bodies are consumed by fire and vented into the icyness of space. Humans this time. Not the cat-like aliens he has come to hate, but his own brothers and sisters.

A huge piece of burning hull tumbles burning from the conflagration, and Blair jinks of avoid it. But this time he is not fast enough. Instruments explode in the cockpit as the plastisteel breaks through shields and grinds into the fuselage. The Rapier spins uncontrollably, and now the screams of dying men are accompanied by a different sound: laughter, deep and rumbling, like the roar of a great beast.

Blair turns, and finds he is somehow not alone in the cockpit. A massive, shaggy shape hunkers behind his seat, the laughter roaring through its fangs. The jewelry affixed to his forehead identifies him: Prince Thrakhath, first in line to the throne of Kilrah. Blair's mortal enemy.

A strange, strident beeping can be heard in the cockpit as it fills with smoke, the stars pinwheeling by. The Lieutenant feels a jolt of pain, and looks down just as huge, clawed fingers break through his chest. Thrakhath laughs.

General Christopher Blair jolts awake to the sound of the communication console's strident chiming. The dream again. He shakes the cobwebs from his head and absent-mindedly rubs at his chest, then stumbles across the well-furnished bedroom to the console.

A Kilrathi face greets him, not Thrakhath this time, but Rohas, his executive assistant. The alien apologizes for waking him at so late an hour, but there has been another Sivarist bombing on the frontier, and he knew the General would want to know.

The General tells him it's all right, he wasn't getting much sleep anyway. He'll be in the council room in fifteen minutes, see that everyone who can joins him. The console goes dark, and Blair sighs. These days Terran Administrator of Occupied Kilrath gets little rest, for more reasons than one.

TCS *Eagle* is hardly the most spectacular vessel in the Confed fleet, and at barely the displacement of a cruiser, is certainly not the largest. But the patrol carrier is one of the newest, and at the pinnacle of human engineering, one of the most advanced. Highly automated, she effectively runs herself, requiring a crew half the size of what previously would have been necessary. And her speed, maneuverability, and new Swordbreaker integrated defensive turret system make her more as autonomous as any ship in the Confed fleet, free to operate without escort.

1st Lieutenant Connor White is less enthusiastic about his first training cruise than his squadron mates. While most can hardly wait to get behind the stick of the ship's Bearcat multi-role fighters and even more exciting, brand-new Wasp interceptors, he is one of the few who have actually seen combat before. And when you're sixteen, fighting against invading hordes simply to survive, your family and all you love already dead in the holocaust behind you, you never truly buy into the myth of glory in battle.

In fact, you don't buy into much. You certainly don't buy into the notion that there's value to be found in friends: they die far too easily. You buy into yourself, and you don't waste much time with other things. At first, that attitude interfered with his success at the academy. Administrators saw him as being too independent. His fellow students saw his introversion as an

affront, and mocked him for it. But once the combat training began, that attitude changed. They still didn't like him--if anything, the attempts to befriended him became less frequent. But when they saw the way he could bend a fighter through its envelope, their scorn was run through with respect. And when they saw the ruthless efficiency with which he could prosecute a kill, maybe they feared him. Either way, from then on the hushed whispers which used to call him insulting names stopped. Instead, when they spoke of him, they simply called him "Frosty."

The destination of this orientation cruise is Hralith, the new Kilrathi administrative seat, where *Eagle* will participate in a joint Confed/Kilrathi Defense Force counter-insurgency exercise. But first they will be visited by none other than General Christopher Blair, chief military counselor to the Kilrathi Federation and Heart of the Tiger, himself.

En route, though, there will be other exercises. White is familiar with the Bearcat, but the CAG, Colonel Hanssen has decreed that before anyone touches one of *her* fighters, they are going to re-qualify on the ship's sim where *she* can watch them. Hanssen is easily the most frighteningly serious woman he has ever encountered: speaking with her is like walking on eggs, and even the slightest breach in protocol can bring a searing reprimand.

So White goes through the sim program for the Bearcat, which takes him step-by-step through the operations of the ship's weapons systems over a series of missions. In the meantime, his hours are spent getting to know his new squadron mates.

It doesn't take long to develop some rivalry between himself and another recruit, a woman by the name of Katya Popov. Katya is both beautiful and arrogant, but she's also reputed to be the best pilot on the ship. Still, her extraverted, competitive style is directly at odds with White's self-motivated introversion. How White handles his relationship with Katya can determine whether they become friends, or remain bitter rivals.

Another pilot is a bit of a problem. Like White, Greg Lipsky is a quiet introvert who's made it through the pressures of training. However, he suffers from not sharing White's confidence in the cockpit. He certainly flies well enough: he just doesn't know it. Worse, he seems to have gotten on Hanssen's worse side from the start: at least once, White's seen the Colonel tear Lipsky apart. If White can build his confidence up, the wing could have a great asset (of course, dressing him down could win White some points in Drake's eyes). But confidence building isn't White's style. How he handles Lipsky can make all the difference in the world.

Yet another issue is Gordon Drake, who's not as handsome as he is level-headed and competent. He's also a smartass. Sometimes even more than Katya, he's a thorn in White's side. He's been around, and he's good at reading people. He sees through psychological walls as if they weren't even there, and White's don't impress him. Drake seems to be making it his mission to whittle away at his detachment, questioning who he is, and his jabs are getting old. White must find a way to deal with him; but while showing some cracks his armor might score points with Drake and win him over to White's side, such signs of weakness won't impress Katya, who's too macho in her own way for that. What can't win the loyalty of both. If Drake going to be his friend--let alone anything else--it's going to be because his actions have earned his respect.

In general, it becomes clear that there are two major "factions" amongst the pilots: a cocky, swaggering, hot-tempered "jock" group led by Popov, and a much more business-like, reasoned, but less aggressive group headed up by Drake. Which camp White falls into is determined solely by the character of his personal decisions.

It's finally time to fly some real training missions, and White is paired with various wingmen as they navigate asteroid fields, attack target drones, and mock dog-fight with one another. Attacks on *Eagle* are simulated, with pilots trading roles between defenders and attackers. Towards the end of the program, complex, multi-pilot simulator missions integrating multi-role strike packages in attacks on heavily defended targets are flown. The pilots also qualify in the simulator on the operation of the new Wasp interceptors and their specialized, bomber-killing weapons systems, and fly some orientation missions.

At one point, White is given a difficult choice. During a training mission, Lipsky, flying on White's wing, makes a crucial mistake which results in the destruction of his Bearcat. Lipsky is recovered, but Hanssen is infuriated. She promises that Lipsky will never see the inside of a cockpit again. White has the choice of remaining silent, and allowing Lipsky to be removed from

the squadron. Alternatively, he can assume responsibility for the mistake himself, saving Lipsky but bringing Hanssen's ire down on himself, forcing him to fly some of the less glamorous missions and positions for a while. Also, such an act does little to impress Drake, who thinks a Mama's boy like Lipsky doesn't deserve to fly. But it could have two good effects, as well: first, it keeps Lipsky around. Second, it raises him considerably in the judgmental eyes of Katya.

During the course of the training flights, Hanssen calls White to her office. She's found something in his personnel file which disturbs her a great deal. She did not know from his name that his father was Gregory Thompson, chief engineer of the TCS *Gettysburgh*: the treasonous starship half of whose mutinous crew was killed over a decade ago by now-General Christopher Blair. White explains that after his father's death, he took his mother's name. Hanssen is concerned that, with Blair coming on board, White is a security risk. It couldn't be he holds a grudge, could it?

He is a professional soldier, he snaps back. Blair was only doing his duty, and White does not feel there is a problem. But it is clear that something seethes just beneath the surface. Still, he convinces Hanssen to keep him on the flight line--but just barely.

Later (perhaps much later), he reveals to either Katya or Drake (depending on whose better side he's on at that juncture) that there is a reason he adopted his mother's name. His family was betrayed, all right: but not by Christopher Blair. Rather, it was by his treasonous father. While his mother and sister were butchered in their own home by advancing Kilrathi, leaving White to flee from system to system as an orphan, his father patrolled the far side of space in his cruiser. While White was forced to take the controls of a fighter as a teenager simply to keep himself and the isolated band of survivors who kept him fed alive, his father turned against Confed, the only force in the universe which could possibly save him. He doesn't resent Blair: in fact, he is of the opinion that his father actually deserved to die.

At last *Eagle* arrives in Kilrathi space, where it meets up with TCS *Krakatoa*, flagship of the Terran/Kilrathi Patrol Fleet. From it, General Blair transfers over to inspect the new *Eagle*--designed by his old friend, Admiral Eisen, to take over routine patrol jobs like those now needed in the conquered Kilrathi space.

Depending on White's mission performance up to this point, Blair will have been told by Hanssen that either White or Popov seems to be the hot pilot of the batch. Blair will give the appropriate pilot the congratulations he or she deserves, much to the chagrin of the other. Either way, White's reaction to his presence is uncomfortable. Even though he believes his father got what he deserved, it is still Blair who has driven his father's betrayal home and, in a way, made permanent his shame. If there will ever be peace between them, it will be a delicate one.

As Blair leaves the receiving deck, he mentions to the ship's Captain that he would like access to a communication console: It seems there has been a recent rash of Sivarist terrorist bombings, and he wants to check in with home base to see if there have been any new developments.

The carrier group is now on its way to Hralith, where it's to be met by an escort of Kilrathi Self Defense Force light fighters and destroyers. White, Drake, Katya, and their fellow pilots are to fly in formation ahead of the battle group and meet the Kilrathi ships, then escort them back to the formation. It seems like a milk run.

But as they draw near, things aren't right. Blair has reached Hralith, but the transmission is broken. But the Kilrathi on the other end seems agitated. On the bridge of *Eagle*, General Blair peers through the window in consternation at the approaching Kilrathi. Something doesn't seem right; then it hits him. "Those aren't Defense Force ships!" he exclaims.

In space, all hell breaks loose. The Kilrathi ships aren't the destroyers they'd expected, but war-era heavy cruisers, and they are accompanied by Dralith fighters, not the expected Darkets. Suddenly, White and his wingmen are fighting to stay alive.

The cruisers are driving aggressively towards *Krakatoa*. The pilots are told over com that they have to hold the fighters until the supercarrier can get its own birds into space. The scene is pandemonium, at best.

Bombers and space superiority fighters stream out of *Krakatoa*, but are too late. One cruiser is destroyed, but the supercarrier is annihilated in the combined onslaught.

Back on the bridge of *Eagle*, a transmission is received from the surviving cruiser. Blair can't believe his eyes. It is his old foe, Prince Thrakhath, taunting him from the opposing bridge. The old days are over, he says. He has returned, come to reclaim the Kilrah's glory for his people. He suggests his old rival prepare to die.

White receives word over his com that the cruiser must be stopped. There are four Devastator torpedo bombers from *Krakatoa* still armed and in space, and he and his wingmen must help them reach the cruiser. The dead carrier's space superiority fighters will cover the bombers from the few Dralthis still in the air, but White's Bearcats must fly ahead and suppress the enemy turrets so the bombers can get into firing range.

If White fails, *Eagle* and all in the area will die. If he succeeds, one torpedo succeeds in striking the cruiser, badly damaging it. Thrakhath announces over the com that Blair has proven hard to kill once again, but the war has only just begun. As his ship retreats at flank, the surviving pilots are ordered to return to base.

*Eagle's* flight deck is pandemonium as it recovers not only the carrier's own survivors, but the many survivors from *Krakatoa* in their various heavier fighter types. As White climbs out of the cockpit, he's told that Colonel Hanssen wants to see both him and Katya (the de fact leaders of the young pilots) immediately on the bridge.

They get there just as the communications officer burns through the jamming keeping them out of touch with Hralith. A Kilrathi High Council member speaks with Blair on a com screen. There is fighting in the streets and skies of the Capital, he says. He doesn't know where these rebels were hiding, but it seems they were well-equipped and well-prepared, apparently having received help from the inside in order to sneak considerable quantities of war-era weapons out of storage facilities where they were mothballed. Worse, raids two days ago seized several industrial facilities, power stations, and probably--for reason unknown--the Neutron Star research station. The battle is far too young to predict its outcome it certainly seems Thrakhath, wherever and however he came to be here, has brilliantly used surprise to seize the initiative. The Kilrathi Worlds are at civil war.

Blair's reaction seems unbalanced. He doesn't understand precisely what is happening, he says, but whoever is out there, it is *not* Thrakhath. He killed Thrakhath himself, and the suggestion that he is still alive is insane. It is not a balanced reaction: he obviously has a great deal of emotion invested in the proposition. He goes on to assure the council member that *Eagle* has already radioed back to Confed space for help, and that they will be back in contact soon.

Hanssen tells White and Katya that *Eagle* is now the only Confed carrier within a week's time of Kilrathi space, and that they will be making for Hralith at full speed. It will be up to the new pilots and the handful of *Krakatoa* survivors to do the fighting until reinforcements arrive. Hanssen wants these two to assume the roles of leaders amongst the younger pilots.

Blair says that while they've recovered about twelve a piece of *Krakatoa's* Vampire space superiority fighters and Devastator torpedo bombers, and all are being restored to operational capacity, they're going to need more crews capable of flying them to keep them available around-the-clock. He suggests that the trainees begin immediate simulator instruction in the operation of space superiority fighters, which will be those most sorely needed in the short term.

Over the course of the brief training regiment, White engages in a conversation with Drake, Popov, and several other pilots. Transmissions have been received from Hralith, showing Thrakhath presiding over the brutal execution of human prisoners, replete with polemic on the human infestation, and the need to purge them from the Empire of Kilrah. There is debate amongst the pilots as to whether or not this can truly be Thrakhath. Katya and White were present when Blair voiced his opinion that it cannot. While many remain unsure, Katya believes Blair is wrong; he has slipped over the edge, and is simply in denial.

White must voice his own opinion. There are two choices--that Blair is right, or that Blair is wrong--but there are four potential outcomes. By this stage White's decisions have painted him as either a level-headed professional in the camp of Drake, or a cocky fighter-jock type in Katya's image. The four potential outcomes are: A) White is conservative, and trusts Blair's estimation that Thrakhath is dead. This wins him the respect of some more conservative pilots, like Drake, but leads Katya and some of the more reactionary types to accuse him of kissing up

