

Wing Commander:
The Movie

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FADE IN:

2 INT. ASTEROID WORLDLET - CITY BEACH. 2

From above, the beach looks like it could be part of a small sea-side city -- a ten acre expanse of sand and palm trees bordered by crystal blue water.

Waves lazily lap onto the beach. Off-duty SAILORS laugh and shove each other as they walk bare-footed in the sand. By a park bench, a WOMAN rubs oil onto her SAILOR BOYFRIEND's back. A SECOND GROUP OF SAILORS AND THEIR GIRLFRIENDS, all dressed in shorts and tops with tropical designs, play a game of Ultimate Frisbee further up the beach. A TALL SAILOR throws "long"...

We follow his TEAMMATE as he makes an *impossibly high* jump to catch the frisbee, revealing...

The skyline of a twenty-seventh century city, nestled against the far wall of this hollowed out island in space. Higher up, huge fusion powered sunlamps -- the source of our artificial sunlight -- are imbedded in the rough-hewn granite "roof", surrounding an enormous porthole.

SUPERIMPOSE: VEGA SECTOR FLEET HEADQUARTERS - TERRAN CONFEDERATION: ASTEROID WORLD "PEGASUS." MARCH 15TH. EARTH YEAR 2654. 0900 HOURS, ZULU TIME. LOCATION: ULYSSES CORRIDOR. 700 LIGHT YEARS FROM EARTH.

The view through the porthole reveals the blackness of interstellar space with a few faint stars.

RESUME BEACH: The Teammate falls back to "earth", clutching the frisbee triumphantly, but the Tall Sailor isn't watching. He continues to gaze upward at something overhead...

HIS POV through giant porthole: A strange constellation of luminous dots has now appeared in the black oval: not stars...something else.

RESUME BEACH: Air raid sirens begin to wail from the towers of the city. The Sailor Boyfriend, alarmed, jumps up, grabbing his girlfriend.

She, too looks up through the porthole. We follow her gaze as we seem to rise up to meet the luminous dots that are growing bigger and brighter by the second, resolving into SEVERAL MISSILES streaking towards us...

The missiles strike the porthole and a huge explosion briefly blinds us, washing over the reinforced plexiglass and blocking our view of the stars. Several sailors lose their footing as the ground shakes violently. Everyone seems frozen, looking up -- and for a moment it seems as the porthole survived the impact, but...

CLOSE ON PORTHOLE: Small spider line cracks start spreading over the surface of the porthole. They multiply with frightening speed, then...the plexiglass SHATTERS OUTWARDS, sucking the atmosphere from the worldlet...

RESUME BEACH: Everything not bolted down is sucked upwards. The Sailor Boyfriend, hanging onto the park bench, tries desperately to hold onto his girlfriend. His grip gives and she's sucked up towards the cold void, her scream muted by the ear shattering howl of wind...

We too, are caught up in the rush of escaping air and are pulled upwards, through the porthole revealing...

9 EXT. ASTEROID WORLDLET

9

Explosions rock the surface of the asteroid world, which is covered with a lattice work of towers, gun emplacements, antennae and docks. Two monstrosously large ion engines are imbedded in the "rear" of this mobile naval base.

Confederation capital ships--Destroyers, Cruisers, two Battle ships--are caught helplessly in their berths as missiles and laser fire rain down on them from STRANGE, ALIEN FIGHTER CRAFT -- their shapes almost suggesting a TALON or a CLAW.

Cold space erupts with streams of tachyon fire as the desperate CONFED ships and asteroid based gun batteries return fire.

It's a futile effort. For every attacking ship that is destroyed, another takes it's place. What few Confed fighters the worldlet can launch are instantly destroyed. The destruction is awesome, all-encompassing. This is what Pearl Harbor must have been like seven hundred years ago.

An alien bomber pulls up from it's attack run, banks hard, tears past us under full power.

CAMERA pulls back and into the Pegasus station's Command and Control Bridge/NAVCOM Control room.

9A INT. PEGASUS COMMAND AND CONTROL/NAVCOM CONTROL ROOM

9A

Hewn out of solid rock, this is the nerve center of the Pegasus station.

Radar, communications, weapons, and security officers man their stations, bark out orders to subordinates, relay orders and issue on the spot situation reports.

Over the communications links, we hear fighters engaging the enemy, disappearing in screams and static;

capital ship commanders desperately ordering their mooring cut, calling for full power and more aerial support. Mayday calls, prayers, expletives fill the airways.

RADAR TECH

I count one nine zero bogies inbound. Vector three seven four, attack formation.

SECURITY OFFICER

Shields are not responding.

Station shudders as a CONFED capital ship explodes, tears apart. Great pieces of fiery metal spin through space, smash into the station, hurtle into space.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The Iowa's gone. And the Kobi.

ADMIRAL BILL WILSON, grey haired, mid fifties, thick around the middle, enters the room, a CONFED Marine trailing.

WILSON

Status?

RADAR TECH

Forty Kilrathi capital ships coming to bear, Admiral. They are powering weapons.

WILSON

How did they get past our patrols?

Alarms sound. SECURITY OFFICER reacts.

SECURITY OFFICER

We have a station breach. Levels seven, eleven, and thirteen. Kilrathi Marines.

WILSON looks at a bank of black and white security monitors.

9B SECURITY MONITORS --

9B *

We catch glimpses of massive, armored forms moving through shadow enshrouded corridors. Their faces obscured by rebreathers and great flowing plumes, they cut through CONFED security teams, move efficiently and inexorably forward.

A figure steps into view.

FIGURE'S so close his features are distorted. But one thing's for sure: He's human. HE pulls back and we see him clearly: he's dressed in a Confederation uniform, Commander's insignia on his shoulders.

A SILVER CROSS hangs from his neck. It could be a traditional crucifix, except that it ends in a dagger point and is inscribed with astrological signs.

Butt of his weapon comes down on the camera and monitor turns to fuzz.

WILSON

A Pilgrim.

SECURITY OFFICER (CONT'D)

They're headed for Command and Control.

WILSON reacts, turns towards a massive computer system sitting behind a glass partition. At its center is a small black box with NAVCOM stenciled on it.

WILSON

Destroy the NAVCOM A.I. Now!

COMPUTER OFFICER bangs on a keyboard, smashes a glass case to reveal a red handle, pushes it forward. Nothing happens. HE pushes handle a second time. Again, nothing. Off of Wilson's look, COMPUTER OFFICER just shakes his head.

COMPUTER OFFICER

Command codes have been overwritten.

WILSON grabs the Marine's weapon, drops the slide back, lines the weapon, fires on the NAVCOM. Uranium depleted rounds, bounce off the glass. Clip empty, he tries to break the glass with the butt. Stock shatters.

Concussion outside. Heads swing to the massive reinforced doors leading to the center. They're distorting, bending in.

WILSON

Prepare a drone. Get me a coded channel.

COMMUNICATIONS TECH bangs at a keyboard, nods to Wilson who turns towards a video monitor:

WILSON (cont'd)

This is Admiral Bill Wilson, Pegasus station commanding officer. Forty Kilrath capital ships are closing. Station has been breached. They want the NAVCOM. Repeat, they want--

Concussion tears into the room as the exterior doors are blown off their hinges in a wall of toxic smoke. Wilson's head snaps to the doors. He can just see the outline of an armored figure stepping through.

CLOSE ON his eyes. He's a dead man, but there's no fear, just resignation.

He depresses a button by the video monitor.

9C EXT. PEGASUS STATION

9C

A single drone launches from the burning station, fires retro rockets, speeds away towards a distant swirling mass of dying suns called the Charbydis Quasar some forty hours away.

As the drone speeds back, it passes in front of the Kilrathi battle group. CAMERA stays on the ominous alien armada.

9D INT. CONCORDIA - BRIDGE

9D

CLOSE ON a video monitor. On it, we see a playback of Wilson on the Pegasus station. Image shakes as he speaks:

WILSON (cont'd)

This is Admiral Bill Wilson, Pegasus station commanding officer. Forty Kilrath capital ships are closing. Station has been breached. They want the NAVCOM. Repeat, they want--

Concussion and Wilson spins, puts his back to the monitor....transmission ends in fuzz.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Admiral TOLWYN standing on the pristine bridge of the massive battle ship, COMMODORE RICHARD BELLEGARDE behind him.

SUPERIMPOSE: CONCORDIA BATTLE GROUP, MARCH 15TH, 2100 ZULU TIME. 42 HOURS FROM EARTH

BELLEGARDE

The Pegasus NAVCOM? My God, if they have it--

TOLWYN

If they have it, Richard, they have the coordinates to breach the Charbydis Quasar and jump into Earth space in under forty hours.

TOLWYN turns towards an open area.

TOLWYN

Tactical. Give me the Vega and Sol sectors.

A holographic projection of Vega and Sol sectors materializes in front of him. Pegasus, a small blue dot is near the center. Around it are dozens of star systems peppered with red and blue dots, indicating the position of the CONFED and Kilrathi fleets.

Behind Pegasus, we see the Ulysses Corridor funneling towards the massive Charbydis Quasar.

A hundred yellow lines--avenues through space-time--emanate from it, lead into Sol sector. One, thicker than the rest, leads directly to a solar system with nine planets.

TOLWYN walks inside the hologram. As he nears the solar system, a single blue planet, Earth, enlarges, floats there, spinning slowly.

TOLWYN

What is the fleet's position?

BELLE GARDE

We're spread all over the sector. The earliest our advance elements could reach Sol is forty-two hours. And that is piecemeal and taking risks with the jumps, sir.

TOLWYN

...Damn, two hours and Earth could be a distant memory. Signal all ships to mark our course and make full speed for Earth....I need to know what the Kilrathi are up to, Richard. I need eyes and ears, and I need intelligence. Do we have any ships left in Vega?

BELLE GARDE checks the situational display on his monitor:

BELLE GARDE

Just one, sir. The Tiger Claw. But she is out of communications range, and a drone will take two days to reach her.

TOLWYN checks the display, motions to a small red dot in Sol Sector.

TOLWYN

Who's this?

BELLE GARDE bangs on the keyboard, reads:

BELLE GARDE

The Diligent, sir. A requisitioned merchantman captained by one James Taggart. She's currently in route to the Tiger Claw with two replacement pilots: a Todd Marshall and a Christopher Blair.

TOLWYN

Blair?...Open a secure channel to the Diligent. I need to speak to her Captain and this

(MORE)

TOLWYN (cont'd)
 (Peering at the readout)
 1st Lieutenant Blair.

9E EXT. EARTH'S SOLAR SYSTEM

9E

The Diligent, a merchantman, speeds by Jupiter. Behind it, spinning slowly, we can clearly see Earth.

26 INT. DILIGENT - TINY CABIN

26

BLAIR, mid twenties, straight out of the academy, is sprawled out on the tiny bunk, no shirt. He's fingering a silver cross that hangs around his neck. On closer examination, we see that it is inscribed with astrological symbols and ends in a dagger point. It's a PILGRIM CROSS.

A VERY SMALL MAN, about sixteen inches tall, appears to sit on a shelf just above his head, watching. This is, in fact, a HOLOGRAM projected by Blair's portable personal computer (PPC), MERLIN.

MERLIN

I don't like it. A requisitioned merchantman? I know the war's going badly, but this...

(Looking around.)

this is beneath us.

BLAIR

It's what we've been waiting for.

MERLIN

Have you taken a good look around this so called space craft? It should be hauling garbage, not making jumps through warp holes.

BLAIR

Did I program you to be this pessimistic?

MERLIN

It isn't pessimism. It's called being a realist....Lt. Marshall's approaching the hatch.

The hatch opens, revealing TODD 'MANIAC' MARSHALL. Maniac is Blair's age and a fellow pilot, but the resemblance ends there. Where Blair seems closed-off and brooding, Maniac's an open book -- big-boned and with a slightly crazed gleam in his eye.

MANIAC

Up and at 'em, Blair. Captain wants you on the bridge. Top priority.

He glances up at Merlin, who now sits immobile, but with eyes that seem to follow you around the room, like a creepy optical illusion.

MANIAC

What's with your evil twin?

BLAIR

He's pouting.

MANIAC

Weird, man...Do you ever think about the fact that you created his personality algorithm?

MERLIN reactivates.

MERLIN

Have you been putting on weight Lt. Marshall? My sensors seem to indicate...

Blair shuts Merlin down, starts to put on his shirt. Maniac notices the cross.

MANIAC

I thought you weren't going to wear it anymore.

BLAIR

I changed my mind.

Maniac doesn't press it.

MANIAC

We'd beter get on up there.

Blair follows Maniac out, hastily buttoning his shirt.

26A INT. BRIDGE - DILIGENT

26A

A grim, ruggedly handsome man of indeterminate age, looking more like a pirate than a merchant, is charting the Diligent's course on a holographic grid model, projected between the pilot's and copilot's stations. This is James Taggart, better know as PALADIN.

BLAIR arrives, ducking through a small hatch-way. Followed by MANIAC.

BLAIR

Sir?

PALADIN looks up from the navigation station. Blair realizing his cross is still partially visible, tucks it away. Paladin notices but doesn't say anything.

PALADIN

I don't know who you know, Lieutenant,
but we just received a CONFED code one
secure communication. For you.

BLAIR sits at the comm screen, keys a code.

BLAIR

Blair, Christopher, Lieutenant.

...Screen powers up and ADMIRAL TOLWYN appears on the
screen. Reflexively, Blair straightens up.

TOLWYN

Do you know who I am, Lieutenant?

BLAIR

Yes sir, Admiral.

TOLWYN

Good. You are currently outbound for
Vega sector and the Tiger Claw. I need
you to hand deliver an encrypted
communications chip to her captain.
Message is incoming.

BLAIR

Why not send it by drone to the
Pegasus, sir? It would be quicker--

TOLWYN

The Pegasus is gone, son. It was
destroyed by a Kilrathi battle group
twelve and a half hours ago. See that
Captain Sansky gets that chip. And good
luck.

BLAIR

Admiral. Why me?

TOLWYN

(Small smile)

Let's just say I spent some time with
your father, in the Pilgrim Wars. You
have something to prove. Tolwyn out.

Recorder spits a small circular chip out. BLAIR takes it
and the monitor turns to fuzz.

26B INT. CONCORDIA - BRIDGE

26B

TOLWYN steps back from the monitor. BELLEGARDE stands
behind him.

TOLWYN

You don't approve, Richard?

BELLE GARDE

Of using Taggart? No, sir, I do not. You just ordered him to his death, and there was no fear in his eyes, no doubt. I don't trust him.

TOLWYN

Paladin spent five years in a Kilrathi prisoner of war camp. He's the only human to have ever escaped. He's not afraid of dying. He's afraid of living. He's afraid of memories. But if there's any man alive who can pull this off, it's him.

26C INT. DILIGENT'S BRIDGE

26C

PALADIN bangs coordinates into a navigational computer as MANIAC sits idle in the co-pilot's seat. BLAIR looks up from the comm screen.

PALADIN

Things just got a little more interesting, people. We have to get to the Tiger Claw sooner than expected.

MANIAC

How?

PALADIN ignores the question.

PALADIN

Set a course for beacon 147, one quarter impulse.

MANIAC

147's off limit's sir. There's 100,000 kilometer quarantine around it.

PALADIN

You have your orders.

MANIAC shrugs, leans over to the controls, bangs the course in, hits the engage button with his foot.

As PALADIN moves away, we see a black tattoo on his fore arm. It's in a strange, jagged script: Kilrathi.

26D EXT. DILIGENT - SOLAR SYSTEM

26D

Craft streaks by Mercury. Ahead of it, far in the distance, we can just make out a flashing buoy. Behind the buoy, space seems to distort, shimmer ever so slightly.

10 EXT. KILRATHI BATTLE GROUP

10

A ship, a Snakeir, enters the frame. Thing's huge, ominous, deadly.

SUPERIMPOSE: KILRATHI BATTLE GROUP. ULYSSES CORRIDOR, VEGA SECTOR. 40 HOURS FROM THE CHARBYDIS QUASAR.

11 INT. SNAKEIR BRIDGE - ADMIRAL'S FLAGSHIP

11

The interior of the huge space vessel is nearly obscured by a thick, almost viscous green fog: the nutrient atmosphere for the Kilrathi officers and crew. They are a biped, two armed race of beings nearly eight feet tall. But their features are obscured by the thick mist. Only their eyes, gleaming yellow, seem to penetrate the dense atmosphere. There is something vaguely cat-like about their silhouettes as they move lithely about the bridge. It's almost as though they can see clearly...which they can. Their vision is in the infrared spectrum.

A Kilrathi, the ship's CAPTAIN, approaches the battle group commander, a Kilrathi ADMIRAL.

12 CAPTAIN'S POV, INFRARED BAND:

12

Through his eyes, the fog disappears as he comes up behind the shadowy figure peering out into space through a thick window.

The CAPTAIN, head bowed, speaks in a low hiss--the Kilrathi language--which we read in subtitles.

KILRATHI CAPTAIN

(Kilrathi; subtitled)

The Ulysses Corridor is clear. As you predicted, the door to Earth is open.

ADMIRAL turns. It's face is scarred, distorted, one eye missing. His plumes, indicative of rank, clan, and battles fought and won, flow over massive shoulders. Small smile creeps over his visage, exposes yellowed canines.

Human voice cuts through his reverie:

TRAITOR (O.S.)

And you have your prize.

ADMIRAL turns, looks at the Confederation Traitor, still in uniform, standing on the bridge.

TRAITOR (CONT'D)

The NAVCOM A.I. has been reconfigured to your jump drives.

ADMIRAL's one good eye dilates, seems to flash. His voice is tinny and slightly delayed as its filtered through the a translation device.

ADMIRAL

You have betrayed your race on a scale here to for unimaginable, Pilgrim. Yet you show no remorse. You baffle me.

TRAITOR

They are not my race. My race left them five hundred years ago. My conscience is clear. Now, I have lived up to my part of our agreement. Live up to yours. Destroy Earth.

ADMIRAL looks long and hard at the Traitor.

34 INT. DILIGENT - PALADIN'S QUARTERS

34

Paladin's door is open. Blair appears. Paladin is studying An ancient star chart.

PALADIN

Come in, Blair.

Blair steps into the quarters, Spartan at best. A cold meal is scattered over the old star charts.

BLAIR

We're holding steady on the beacon. Maniac has the helm.

He sees the old star charts.

BLAIR

These must be antiques.

PALADIN

They were made by the first explorers in the sector. Pilgrims. Sometimes they noted things that were missed in later surveys. They're antiques...

(with a smile)

Like me.

BLAIR

Sir?

PALADIN

Twenty years at near light speed.

BLAIR

Twenty years...

PALADIN

Close to a hundred and sixty in Earth years. Give or take a couple.

Paladin starts folding the star charts.

BLAIR
I couldn't help noticing the tattoo on
your arm.

A small smile crosses Paladin's face; the type you use to
conceal painful memories.

PALADIN
And I couldn't help noticing the
Pilgrim cross you hide under your vest.

BLAIR reacts.

PALADIN (cont'd)
We all have pasts and secrets, Mr.
Blair. I have two lifetimes worth;
and two wars: Pilgrim and Kilrathi.
Shouldn't we keep them where they
belong: in shadow.

BLAIR
I have nothing to hide, Captain. And I
know who I am.

PALADIN studies Blair, seems to like what he sees.

PALADIN
I believe you do, Lieutenant. May I
see it?

BLAIR pulls his cross off, hands it to Paladin. There's
something in Paladin's eyes as he takes it, something
almost reverential. He runs his fingers over it,
depresses a plate and a seven inch blade telescopes from
the cross. As Paladin runs his finger over the blade:

PALADIN (CONT'D)
I've always had a strange sympathy for
the Pilgrims.
(That easy smile again.)
I can remember when they were at the
forefront of space exploration,
carrying our torch into the stars.
Their loss is ours.

PALADIN retracts the blade, hands the cross back to
Blair, looks at him as the younger man slips the cross
around his neck.

PALADIN (cont'd)
Too long out here and anybody would
lose their humanity.

Just then, the ship lurches with a sudden surge of
acceleration.

PALADIN

The idiot!

And Paladin flies out of the cabin.

36 INT. BRIDGE - DILIGENT

36

Paladin storms onto the bridge, followed by Blair.

PALADIN

Get up!

Maniac vacates the captain's chair. Paladin studies the instruments.

PALADIN

Did you change course?

MANIAC

No, just boosted the power. Why dog it when we can be at that beacon in an hour?

PALADIN

It's not a beacon. It's a gravity well!

BLAIR and MANIAC react as PALADIN punches the navigation computer. Heads up display materializes. A flat grid appears. It begins to fold inward, creating a strange, swirling elliptical spike in the concave surface.

This galvanizes both Blair and Maniac. Merlin self-activates and begins pacing.

MERLIN

I told you this ship wasn't up the job. In point of fact, my sensors indicate that there are a number of structural flaws that--

PALADIN

What the hell is that?

BLAIR

Merlin. My personal portable computer.

PALADIN

Tell it to shut up or I'll jettison it.

Merlin freezes, mute.

Paladin uses a telescopic lens to bring up a dim object on the screen, a blurred image of spinning space, generating a powerful magnetic field! Asteroids and space junk caught in its pull are sucked down, as though into a whirlpool, and disappear.

Paladin begins firing reverse thrusters, throwing the two younger men forward as he slowly alters course.

PALADIN

One cubic inch of that well exerts more gravitational force than the sun!

PALADIN bangs on the navigational computer, inputs coordinates.

PALADIN (cont'd)

Come on! If our entry vector isn't just right, we're not going to make the jump.

MANIAC

What happens if we miss?

PALADIN

We're dead.

The Diligent's skin begins to GROAN and CREAK. A sensor screams out.

BLAIR

Are we past it's gravitational PNR yet?

Paladin feverishly throws switches, makes adjustments, totally concentrated on the task. The spinning gravity well appears closer.

PALADIN

No. She's reaching out for us. Hear that?

The GROANS increase, as the thrusters fight to change course. On the screen the neutron star appears larger and more ominous.

PALADIN

Meet Scylla, bane to sailors, and monster of myth.

MANIAC

What's a Scylla?

BLAIR

Ulysses sailed between the whirlpool Charbydis and the island monster, Scylla. She snatched six of his men and ate them.

PALADIN

This one will eat more than that. Hold on.

Paladin flips a switch, and a bank of thrusters throws the ship sideways.

The Diligent yaws for a few moments, as every seam groans. Maniac and Blair are thrown to the deck. Merlin's holographic image VIBRATES until it's a blur. The ships' afterburners scream.

PALADIN bangs on the navigational computers, keeps putting in coordinates

Diligent seems to steady, line up. On the heads up display, we see a digital glide path.

PALADIN sits at the pilot's chair, steers the Diligent along the glide path. Outside, we see space shimmer, distort, bend.

MANIAC

What the hell is this thing?

PALADIN

This "thing" is a distortion in space-time. Pilgrims were the first to successfully chart it.

MANIAC

So why is it quarantined?

PALADIN

Because it's unstable.

MANIAC

(Mouthing to Blair:)

And we're going to jump it?

PALADIN

(to the screen)

Broken your grip, old girl. Better luck, next time.

Suddenly, a sensor screams out, and the heads up display disappears.

BLAIR

Navigational computers just went off line.

PALADIN

It's the magnetic fields. Blair, take the helm!

BLAIR

I've never made a jump before.

PALADIN

Now would be a good time to learn.

And Paladin's gone.

BLAIR'S POV: The swirling vortex of the gravity well approaches fast.

36A INT. DILGENT - NAV COMPUTER

36A

PALADIN works desperately on the navigation computer, pulls a panel off, considers the intricate wiring, starts pulling chips, rewiring the thing.

36B INT. DILIGENT - BRIDGE

36B

Gravity well's right there. Digital countdown reads 9, 8, 7...

BLAIR
(calling out)
Ah, Mr. Taggart.

PALADIN'S still digging away at the computer.

PALADIN
What?

BLAIR
Five seconds to jump.

PALADIN
So?

BLAIR
So if you don't get the computer back on line, we're going to like be pulled into that singularity's event horizon one molecule at a time.

PALADIN
You want to live forever?

BLAIR
(Mutters to self:)
I'd like to make it through to tomorrow.

PALADIN shoves the last chip into place.

MERLIN appears again.

MERLIN
As I was saying, this antiquated vessel is riddled with structural flaws. In my opinion it cannot survive the jump--

Navigation system comes to life.

Suddenly, on a computer screen, the heads up display and trajectory appear. BLAIR looks at it, doesn't move.

PALADIN
Plot your course, Mr. Blair!

BLAIR snaps out of it, pulls the cross from his vest, squeezed it for luck. He bangs in the coordinates, steers the Diligent on the plotted course. MANIAC starts to scream a crazy, joyous scream.

MERLIN

--in fact, I would calculate our chances of survival as twenty-seven point two percent. I implore you...

36C EXT. DILIGENT

36C

Tiny ship enters the gravity well, veers sharply left, follows the plotted course. It starts to shudder as it pushes against the barrier of time-space.

36D INT. DILIGENT

36D

The nature and content of the environment changes. Stars, planets--everything--disappears. And then everything seems to freeze: PALADIN moving towards the bridge, MANIAC holding on, screaming at the top of his lungs, BLAIR at the flight controls, MERLIN pointing at the approaching singularity.

36E EXT. SPACE - THE DILIGENT

36E

A flash of light and the Diligent appears. There's no sign of the our solar system or the gravity well, only new and unfamiliar stars and distant planets.

36F INT. DILIGENT

36F

BLAIR, PALADIN, a still screaming MANIAC are jolted by the entry. MERLIN picks up where he left off.

MERLIN

...stop this madness. That man is quite probably insane. He will kill us all.

(Realizing where he is.)

...Oh.

BLAIR looks around. They're alive. PALADIN takes the captain's helm.

PALADIN

Congratulations, Mr. Blair, you just negotiated a gravity well.

MANIAC, face flush with the rush of the jump, turns to Blair, impressed.

MANIAC

Not bad for the *second best* pilot at the Academy.

PALADIN turns to Maniac.

PALADIN

Next time you fail to follow my orders,
I'll jettison you with the rest of the
garbage. Plot a course for the Tiger
Claw, Mr. Blair.

BLAIR

Yes, sir.

PALADIN exits the bridge, a pissed off MANIAC staring
after him.

37 EXT. SPACE - VEGA SECTOR, ENYO SYSTEM

37

Two Confederation Rapier fighters streak across the
blackness toward a distant fleck, reflecting light from a
distant sun.

The fleck resolves itself into the Diligent.

39 INT. DILIGENT BRIDGE

39

Blair is at the con. Paladin has been summoned to the
bridge. Maniac joins them.

BLAIR

Fighters from the Tiger Claw. They've
queried us.

PALADIN

Send the countersign.

Blair punches a button. A coded burst crackles over the
intercom. Followed by another burst.

BLAIR

Identification acknowledged. They'll
escort us in.

40 EXT. DILIGENT AND RAPIERS

40

The two star fighters bracket the larger merchantman. The
three craft now head for another distant fleck half
illuminated in the distance. The Tiger Claw.

41 EXT. TIGER CLAW

41

SUPERIMPOSE: UNITED CONFEDERATION SHIP TIGER CLAW - ON
PATROL IN VEGA SECTOR, ENYO SYSTEM.

The three craft slowly approach the carrier class capital
ship. The huge flight deck doors open, catching the
Diligent and the fighters in a broad beam of yellow light.
The Diligent fires its boosters and eases into the flight
deck. The huge doors close. The Rapiers bank sharply in
unison and veer away to continue their patrol.

42 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW

42

Marine guards scan the identity badges and examine the orders of the two new lieutenants, MOS, then step back and salute. Paladin's ID is also electronically scanned.

The three walk towards the elevators, passing the flight deck.

The flight deck is busy, as repair crews struggle to patch combat damage from the last engagement -- we get the sense that the Tiger Claw has seen a lot of action.

PALADIN

Well, gentlemen, don't think I haven't enjoyed your company.

MANIAC

We won't...Sir.

BLAIR

So what about the tattoo?

PALADIN

You know what it is?

BLAIR

It's a Kilrathi marker. You were a prisoner of war.

PALADIN

That's right. I was on the Iason when they took her.

BLAIR

The Iason. That was the first ship to have contact with the Kilrathi. There weren't any survivors.

PALADIN

There was one.

Elevator doors open. PALADIN steps in.

BLAIR

Why don't you have it removed?

PALADIN

Let's just say, it helps me not forget.

BLAIR

Not forget what?

PALADIN

Why I fight.

Doors start to close.

MANIAC

So what exactly do the Kilrathi look like?

PALADIN

...They're ugly.
(directly to Blair)
Good luck.

Doors close. BLAIR and MANIAC look at one another start to walk the huge deck, check out the Rapiers arranged in a neat row along the side of the flight deck. Like the Tiger Claw, the Rapiers have obviously seen a lot of combat.

The same for a group of larger Broadsword medium bombers that occupy another part of the deck. Maniac and Blair tote their kit bags among the star craft.

MANIAC

I don't see the X.O.

He spots a beautiful blond, in grease covered overalls, working on a Broadsword.

MANIAC

Maybe she can help.

He moves off and engages the blond in conversation, MOS. Blair shakes his head, ducks under the Broadswords belly and continues on. He stops and admires a BATTLE WORN Rapier, its cockpit open, allowing himself to daydream.

He finds A CLIPBOARD that shows the Rapier's mission status. He scans it for a moment, then, a kid-like gleam in his eye, climbs into the cockpit.

He gets the feel of the controls...

Then, he's distracted by a feminine voice behind him.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)

You've got two Dralthis on your tail --
one above, one below. What do you do?

He looks down at his inquisitor. JEANETTE (ANGEL) DEVERAUX is brunette, looks about thirty-two, her hair up, wearing an oil-stained disposable plasticine coveralls -- a socket wrench in one hand, and a small x-ray scanner in the other.

She has a streak of carbon lubricant across an otherwise unblemished and beautiful face.

BLAIR

Simple... I go vertical and inverted,
do a 180 at full power, apply breaks
and drop behind them--

DEVERAUX

Wrong...The Dralthis are too fast -- particularly in a climb. They'll put a missile up your ass. You're dead...

BLAIR

OK, I'm dead. Who are you?

Deveraux ignores the question. She puts her tools away.

DEVERAUX

Reverse the situation. You're locked on a Dralthi. It's taking evasive action in an asteroid belt...

She starts removing the disposable coveralls.

BLAIR

If I'm locked on, there's no such thing as evasive--

DEVERAUX

Wrong again. It's one of the Kilrathis' favorite ploys. Lure a chump like you into asteroid belt, hide fighters behind rocks the size of your swelled head, and pounce--a Kilrathi gang-bang--and you're dead again.

Blair's getting pissed.

BLAIR

Who the hell are you?

Deveraux steps out of the coveralls, folding them to the size of a washcloth. She's in uniform, wearing her LIEUTENANT COMMANDER'S INSIGNIA.

DEVERAUX

Lt. Commander Deveraux. Your Wing Commander. Now, if you want to play fighter pilot, find a virtual fun zone. Meanwhile, step down from Lt. Commander Chen's Rapier.

Flustered, Blair climbs down from the Rapier.

DEVERAUX

What's your name?

BLAIR

Lt. Blair, Ma'am....

DEVERAUX

Fresh from the Academy. A nugget.

MANIAC has wandered over. He enjoys the show.

BLAIR

That's right. I apologize, Ma'am. The mission sheet said the Rapier was unassigned.

DEVERAUX

See those burn marks?

The Rapier is scorched along its fuselage. The scorch marks partially obscure the 26 KILRATHI KILLS chalked up on the fuselage.

BLAIR

Yes, Ma'am.?

DEVERAUX

Lt. Commander Chen--Bossman--was ambushed by a pack of Salthis. He died three days ago in sick bay. He had 26 kills...Goddamned near a record...He was my Wing Commander.

Deveraux takes the clipboard from him.

DEVERAUX

See, fighters are at a premium. So we patched it up, mopped up the blood, and got it back out on the flight line. But until it's officially reassigned, it still belongs to Bossman. Understand?

BLAIR

Yes Ma'am.

DEVERAUX

What are you doing on the flight deck, anyway?

BLAIR

Looking for the X.O., Ma'am.

Deveraux nods towards a A TALL OFFICER, COMMANDER PAUL GERALD, at the far end of the flight deck.

DEVERAUX

You found him.

Deveraux turns on her heels and strides off.

44 INT. TIGER CLAW - BRIDGE

44

CAPTAIN SANSKY, the Tiger Claw's commanding officer, stands at the tactical radar board, plots fighter security flights with the Radar officer. Fifty and balding, there's an avuncular quality to the man offset by battle weary eyes.

BLAIR, GERALD trailing, walks up to Sansky, snaps to attention, salutes.

BLAIR
Lieutenant j.g. Christopher Blair,
reporting for duty, sir.

SANSKY turns.

SANSKY
At ease, Lieutenant. Commander Gerald
tells me you have something for me.

BLAIR
Yes sir.

BLAIR holds out the mini-disc.

BLAIR (CONT'D)
An encrypted communication from Admiral
Tolwyn.

SANSKY
(Squinting at disk)
Why didn't the Admiral send a drone via
Pegasus?

BLAIR
Sir, Pegasus was attacked by a Kilrathi
battle group seventeen hours ago.

SANSKY reacts.

SANSKY
Communications, I want this disc
decrypted ASAP.
(To Blair:)
How did it happen, son?

BLAIR
I wouldn't know, sir. Perhaps the
disc?

SANSKY
Of course. You have your quarters
assignment?

BLAIR
Yes, sir.

SANSKY
Then I suggest you stow your gear and
familiarize yourself with the ship.

BLAIR salutes, start to turn.

GERALD
 Lieutenant.
 (Blair stops.)
 You wouldn't be related to Arnold
 Blair, would you?

BLAIR steels himself. He lives in fear of this question.

BLAIR
 My father, sir.

GERALD
 He married a Pilgrim woman, didn't he?

BLAIR
 (Cautious.)
 Yes sir. They live on Earth.

Sansky is interested, observes Blair closely.

GERALD
 Glad to see it worked out. These mixed
 marriages seldom do. Pilgrims don't
 think like us.

BLAIR
 If you say so, sir.

GERALD
 I do.

SANSKY
 (Stepping in.)
 I'm sure the lieutenant's heredity will
 have no bearing on his performance,
 Mister Gerald.

GERALD
 No sir. I'm sure it won't.

SANSKY
 That's all, Lieutenant.

Blair can barely contain his anger as he turns and leaves
 the bridge. GERALD watches after him.

SANSKY (CONT'D)
 You don't trust him?

GERALD
 Computer: what are the odds that a
 Kilrathi battle group could infiltrate
 Confederation space undetected and
 destroy Pegasus station?

TIGER CLAW'S artificial intelligence computer responds:

COMPUTER
One chance in one point two one
million. To the twenty-fifth power.

GERALD
No, sir, I do not.

45A INT. TIGER CLAW - CORRIDOR

45A

BLAIR, still fuming from Gerald's dig, walks the corridor with MANIAC.

BLAIR
It never changes.

MANIAC
So Gerald's another tight-ass X.O.. So what? We are about to meet our fellow pilots. The men and women we are going to fight with, perhaps die with, and perhaps...

BLAIR
Don't worry, I won't let the fact that I'm pissed off keep you from getting laid.
(smiles)
I promise.

Maniac throws an arm around Blair's shoulder.

MANIAC
That's my friend.

They open the hatch to the Pilot's Mess.

45B INT. PILOTS MESS. CONTINUOUS.

45B

Blair and Maniac enter. MESS is an apt adjective for these cramped quarters. Defaced propaganda posters, and pin-ups, *male and female*, line the walls.

PILOTS are spread out all over the mess -- all is banter and bullshit.

TWO PILOTS play chess on a beat up old board -- the anachronism of the game surprising. One of them is POLANSKI, a male pilot with a long scar running down his face. The other is FORBES -- female: brains, beauty, and a warrior's soul.

All of the pilots look up, when Blair and Maniac enter, then go back to whatever they were doing without saying a word -- typical hazing shit. Maniac will have none of it.

MANIAC (CONT'D)
 Lieutenant Todd 'Maniac' Marshall, and
 my close personal friend, Lt.
 Christopher Blair.

Still silence.

MANIAC (CONT'D)
 And my other close personal friend...

Maniac produces a bottle of SCOTCH from beneath his jacket -- good scotch. It seems to be a real rarity and gets everyone's attention. HUNTER, a male pilot, looks towards Forbes -- as if she's the unofficial leader of this bunch.

HUNTER
 Forbes?

FORBES
 We're on stand down. One won't hurt.

MANIAC
 It may even help.

The pilots flock around.

46 INT. CHART ROOM - TIGER CLAW

46

On a monitor, we see Admiral Tolwyn standing in Pegasus Command and Control. Behind him, the battle rages.

TOLWYN
 Jay, I'm going to have to be brief.
 The Kilrathi took Pegasus. They may
 have her NAVCOM A.I.. By the time this
 communication reaches you, they will be
 twenty-three hours from the Charbydis
 jump point and Earth. CONFED capital
 ships are headed home now. The
 Concordia battle group will be able to
 make it in twenty-five hours. I'm
 ordering the Tiger Claw to the
 Charbydis Quasar. You are to use any
 means necessary to gather information
 as to the Kilrathi whereabouts,
 capacity, and plan of attack. I need
 intelligence, old friend. Use Taggart.
 He knows this space better than any man
 alive -- he can get you to Charbydis
 quickly -- and he knows the Kilrathi.
 Tolwyn out.

CAMERA pulls back to reveal SANSKY and GERALD, watching.

GERALD
 I don't like it.

SANSKY

No one asked your opinion, Paul.

GERALD

Sir, the disk came to us on the Diligent, entrusted to a Pilgrim half-breed.

Sansky ponders this, nods.

SANSKY

Send for Paladin.

45B INT. PILOTS MESS. A SHORT WHILE LATER.

45B

The scotch has loosened things up considerably, and Blair and Maniac seemed to have been welcomed into the fold.

MANIAC kibitzes the chess game.

MANIAC

(to Forbes)

Your rook...

FORBES looks up at him -- damn if he isn't right. SHE moves. Polanski groans. She looks Maniac straight in the eye.

FORBES

Maniac, huh?

HE smiles a big, charming smile. SHE gets up, heads towards Blair and the bottle.

BLAIR is talking to another bunch of pilots. HUNTER, a rugged Aussie, sits silent, sips his Scotch.

BLAIR

First day on, not ten minutes into my tour, and I've got Commander Deveraux busting my balls.

FORBES reaches for the bottle, pours, looks Blair up and down.

FORBES

Looks like your balls are pretty intact to me.

BLAIR smiles, glances at Maniac. This may be the first time in history he's doing better than Maniac, and Maniac doesn't like it one bit.

BLAIR

I tell you, she was squeezing.

FORBES shakes her head.

FORBES

Let me tell you a little something
about Lt. Commander Deveraux. If Angel
was really pissed....Well, make a fist.

BLAIR does.

FORBES (cont'd)

In there. Those would be your balls.

Pilots laugh as MANIAC, smiling his big smile at Blair,
pries Blair's fingers open.

MANIAC

Testicle free, Lieutenant
(Looking at Forbes.)
However, some of us are still fully
functional.

FORBES shakes her head, can't help but smile.

FORBES

So tell me, Blair, what did you do to
incur our fine commander's wrath?

BLAIR

I was just checking out Lt. Commander
Chen's fighter.

Nature and quality of the environment changes. Smiles,
save Blair's and Maniac's disappear. Some pilots look
away. HUNTER looks up from his scotch.

HUNTER

Who?

BLAIR

Lt. Commander Chen. Bossman.

HUNTER

Bossman? Anybody here know a Bossman?

Lots of "No"s and "Never heard of him."

BLAIR

Something I'm missing here?

HUNTER downs his Scotch, puts the glass down.

HUNTER

Plenty.

KNIGHT, big, black, friendly face, tries to intervene.

KNIGHT

Leave it alone, Blair.

BLAIR
Leave what alone?

KNIGHT shakes his head.

HUNTER
You're asking after a man who never
existed, nugget.

BLAIR
He was your Wing Commander.

HUNTER'S up in the instant, pushes Blair hard in the
chest, gets right in Blair's face.

HUNTER (CONT'D)
He's dead! He's dead because he wasn't
good enough. Now, I suggest you change
the subject.

MANIAC steps up behind Hunter.

MANIAC
You have a problem with my friend...
Hunter.

HUNTER
Yeah, I do.

MANIAC
Then you have a problem with me.

HUNTER turns to face Maniac, smiles.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
You gentlemen don't stand down, you're
going to have a problem with me.

All heads turn to ANGEL DEVERAUX.

DEVERAUX (CONT'D)
And I promise, you'll loose. All three
of you.

HUNTER looks at Angel, nods, sits back down. SHE looks
at Blair.

DEVERAUX (CONT'D)
Lieutenant?

BLAIR
No problem...ma'am. I was just
leaving.

BLAIR exits. Entertainment over, the talk resumes.

49A INT. CORRIDOR - TIGER CLAW

49A

BLAIR walks down the corridor, pissed.

DEVERAUX

Hey. Lieutenant. Ten-hut!

BLAIR stops, his back to Angel.

DEVERAUX (CONT'D)

You have any idea of the situation you're in, Blair?

BLAIR

I'm a fighter pilot on a capital ship in a war zone, ma'am.

DEVERAUX

No. You're a pawn. A small piece of a very big game. And you don't know the rules.

BLAIR

You're right, I don't know the rules to that game.

DEVERAUX

Then I suggest you stow the attitude, and listen up. This is a war. In war's people die. Friends die. As fighter pilots, we are asked to push the envelope every day.

BLAIR

Ma'am--

DEVERAUX

Listen. Air is very fine up here, Lieutenant. Make a wrong move, and you're dead. As it is, the odds are against us. What we cannot afford is uncertainty, self pity or doubt. We let the deaths of friends and comrades affect us, we're dead, and our wing men are dead. That I will not allow. Out here, when someone's gone, they never existed. Period.

BLAIR

Too cold for me.

DEVERAUX

Get used to it. That's all.

SHE walks away. MERLIN appears by Blair's shoulder:

MERLIN

That went well.

BLAIR looks at the hologram.

BLAIR

Shut up.

50A INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

50A

SANSKY looks at a holographic projection of the Charbydis Quasar sector. On it, we see forty red dots heading for the Quasar. Behind the quasar, a single yellow line leads to a floating Earth. GERALD stands behind him, looks at Paladin.

SANSKY

I know who you are, Paladin, but I'm afraid I don't know you. Yet you come to me with classified orders from Admiral Tolwyn.

PALADIN

And you don't trust me, Blair, or the disc.

SANSKY turns to face Paladin.

SANSKY

Would you?

PALADIN

...No.

SANSKY nods to the hologram.

SANSKY

This tactical schematic outlines a nightmare, Mr. Taggart. It tells me that the Kilrathi may have a NAVCOM, and with it, the capacity to jump into Earth space. Based on that nightmare, it orders me to take radical action that, if it and you are a lie, could compromise this ship and its crew. Both of which are unacceptable. Before I put my command in harms way, I must be certain that you and the orders you bear are legitimate. So I ask you, Mr. Taggart, what proof do you have that this is authentic?

PALADIN reaches into his vest, slowly pulls a ring from his pocket, tosses it to Sansky. SANSKY catches it, reacts.

CLOSE ON: Tolwyn's ring held in Sansky's cupped hand. Inscription on it reads: "Annapolis Naval Academy, 1997." Slowly, Sansky's hand closes around the ring.

TOLWYN
How did you get this?

PALADIN
Tolwyn gave it to me eight months ago.
He thought it might be useful if I ever
had to convince a Captain to follow his
orders.

SANSKY
(ponders, a difficult
decision)
...Con, plot a course for the Charbydis
Quasar, full speed.

OBUTU
Sir, nearest jump point to Charbydis is
four days hard travel from our current
location.

PALADIN
There's a class two pulsar eleven hours
from here. We can jump there.

OBUTU
Not on the charts, sir. NAVCOM does
not have those coordinates.

PALADIN looks at Sansky.

PALADIN
I have the coordinates.

GERALD
No one's jumped a pulsar for forty
years. And even then, they were
Pilgrims.

SANSKY
...I don't believe we have a great deal
of choice, Mr. Gerald.
(To Paladin:)
Plot your course.

PALADIN nods, heads for the navigation station.

GERALD
Sir, that ring means nothing--

SANSKY
That ring has been in Tolwyn's family
for sixteen generations. Any man who
carries it has the Admiral's full
confidence. And we have our orders.
Prepare for the jump.

51A INT. BLAIR'S QUARTERS -- TIGER CLAW

51A

Dark. Door opens and the lights snap on. BLAIR, asleep, sits up. He's shirtless, and we can see the Pilgrim's cross hanging from his neck.

HE squints at MANIAC, in flight gear, standing in the room.

MANIAC

Rise and shine, half breed.

BLAIR

What time is it?

MANIAC

Time to fly, my little friend. At least for me. I pulled security... with one very, very hot Lt. Rosie Forbes.

BLAIR

Impressive.

MANIAC

I'll say. She asked for me.

BLAIR shakes his head, lies back down.

MANIAC (cont'd)

Buddy, a word of advice.

BLAIR

Do I have a choice?

MANIAC

No. Loosen up. Those people out there want to be your friends. Give them the chance.

BLAIR

Why?

(Fingers the cross.)

I'll be one of the crew until they see this.

MANIAC

So take it off....Shit, you even know what it means?

BLAIR

Little bit my mother told me. But all the Pilgrim history's classified. I don't know if anybody really knows what the Pilgrims stood for any more. Wish I did.

MANIAC

They lost the war, Chris. Winners write the history books and make the rules. Do yourself a favor and take it off. All it does is cause trouble. And out here, you need as many people watching your back as you can get. I won't always be there.

BLAIR

Sure you will. You're going to live forever.

MANIAC shakes his head.

MANIAC

...Why do I bother.

BLAIR

Got me.

MANIAC leans forward, knocks Blair's fist with his, heads out.

MANIAC

I'll check in when I land.

Door closes behind Maniac.

CLOSE ON BLAIR, thinking.

BLAIR

Merlin.

MERLIN's hologram appears on the counter across the room.

MERLIN

Lieutenant.

BLAIR

The Pilgrims. What can you tell me about them?

MERLIN

Very little, I'm afraid. Confederation executive order 37495 decreed that "all history and references to the Pilgrim movement be eradicated--

BLAIR

--from all databanks, computer systems, and hard copy texts. Said order also decreed that the transference of material pertaining to said sect and or movement, either oral or written, be strictly prohibited under penalty of death." I know the order. Do you have anything?

MERLIN

Just that in 2572, for reasons unknown to me, a sect of Pilgrims attempted to break off from Earth and the Confederation. The result was a forty year war. Casualties on both sides were in the hundreds of millions. In 2612 Confederation forces won a decisive victory at Charbydis Quasar. The result was the almost complete eradication of Pilgrim influence. Interestingly, as of that point, data indicates that not a single new Quasar has been charted. I'm afraid that that's all I have. Sorry.

MERLIN looks genuinely sad by his lack of information.
BLAIR pops out of bed.

BLAIR

Merlin.

MERLIN

(Looking up.)

Yes, Lieutenant.

BLAIR

You did good. Thanks.

MERLIN brightens and BLAIR'S up, pulls on pants and a shirt, heads for the door.

MERLIN

Where are you going?

BLAIR

To talk to someone who may know a little about the Pilgrims.

MERLIN

Lieutenant, I must caution you against bringing up the subject. It is officially forbidden....

52A INT. PALADIN'S QUARTERS -- TIGER CLAW

52A

PALADIN stands at big windows, looks out at the vastness of space. Buzzer rings.

PALADIN

Come.

Door opens and BLAIR enters.

BLAIR

We need to talk.

PALADIN
About?

BLAIR
You said you fought in the Pilgrim wars.

PALADIN
...That's right.

BLAIR
Then you know why they happened, and who the Pilgrims were.

PALADIN turns to Blair, interested.

PALADIN
Why do you want to know?

BLAIR
All my life I've taken shit about being a Pilgrim. And I've never known why. Now I want to know. Who and what am I?

PALADIN
...You are who you choose to be, Blair. The combination of a thousand decisions and moral stands. What you are is one of the last descendants of a dying race.

BLAIR
Talk to me.

PALADIN smiles.

PALADIN
It's not that simple. That information is classified. So let me ask you a question: would you die for it?

BLAIR
...In a heartbeat.

PALADIN
Good. Pilgrims were descendants of the first human space explorers. For 500 years they defied the odds: they survived. As time passed, they developed the capacity to unerringly navigate the stars. They embraced space--they called it the Void--and she rewarded them with the gift of a flawless sense of direction. No matter where they were, they could always find their way home. No computers, Blair, no compasses, no charts. They just knew.

(MORE)

PALADIN (cont'd)

Then, in a small number, about one in a million, a change started to occur.

BLAIR

What kind of change?

PALADIN

A biological development. One that allowed a small number of Pilgrim offspring--all off-worlders--to negotiate singularities. Somehow, they learned to feel the magnetic fields created by black holes and quasars. They learned to navigate not just the stars, but space-time itself.

BLAIR

They were like a NAVCOM A.I..

PALADIN

No. The NAVCOM A.I. is like them. It's a mathematical model of the psyche of a Pilgrim mind. The billions of calculations a second it makes to lead us through a black hole or quasar are a computer recreation of the mind of a single Pilgrim. Do you understand what I'm saying?

BLAIR

I think so. Why did the war start?

PALADIN turns back to the window. It's as though he's recalling painful memories.

PALADIN

...The Void gave the Pilgrim's a gift. But it wasn't free. You spend enough time out here, alone, you start to lose your humanity. As this small group of Pilgrims continued to develop, they began to lose touch with their heritage, with their humanity. They saw themselves as superior to man, and in their arrogance, they chose to abandon all things human to follow what they called their destiny. Some say they believed they were gods, others, that they were angels. They tried to break off from the Confederation. They lost.

BLAIR

...You believe that they were gods?

PALADIN turns back to Blair.

PALADIN

No. But I do believe they were touched by God. And like it or not, you've got some of that inside of you. The cross you hide under your tunic is a manifestation of a faith you don't understand, and the affirmation of a capacity you may or may not possess. Wear it proudly, boy, and hope.

BLAIR

For what?

PALADIN

That you have the gift. I have a feeling we may all need it before this is done. We have to get to the bridge. We'll be jumping soon.

BLAIR watches Paladin exit. Out the window, we see two patrolling Rapiers streak by in the distance. They're framed by a brilliant, swirling Quasar.

66 INT. RAPIER COCKPIT - FORBES

66

FORBES

(over radio)

We are talking statistical facts here, nugget. Women can outfly and outshoot men.

67 INT. RAPIER COCKPIT - MANIAC

67

MANIAC

(over radio)

Shooting their mouths off, maybe...

FORBES

We do better at multitasking, we can keep track of four enemy fighters, and we don't suffer from the unfortunate male characteristic of ball sweat...

MANIAC

Yeah? Well can you do this?

(to Flight Boss)

This is Delta Two. Permission to land?

FLIGHT BOSS (O.S.)

(over radio)

Delta Two, you are cleared to land.

68 EXT. TIGER CLAW

68

Maniac fires the afterburners on his Rapier, banks hard, pulls into line with the opening flight deck doors.

FORBES
Ooo! That must of been at least three
g's...

Then Maniac rolls his craft UPSIDE DOWN and guns the
throttle...

MANIAC
Try this...

69 INT. FLIGHT CONTROL - TIGER CLAW 69

FLIGHT BOSS
Delta Two, you're coming in too hot.
Abort. I repeat, abort!...Delta Two?
Do you copy? Shit!

70 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW 70

An alarm barks out. Yellow clad deck personnel scramble
to get out of the way of the oncoming Rapier. Which is
still upside down.

FLIGHT BOSS
Delta Two. YOU ARE INVERTED!

As Maniac's ship rockets through the hanger bay doors

71 MANIACS COCKPIT -- 71

MANIAC jerks his flight stick hard right.

72 FLIGHT DECK -- 72

And the Rapier flips over and touches down!

MANIAC
Not any more.

The Rapier fires it's reverse thrusters and brakes. The
Rapier pulls to a halt just feet in front of a fuel truck
and DECKMASTER PETERSON who was desperately trying to get
the truck's driver to get his vehicle out of the Rapier's
path.

FLIGHT BOSS
I'm going to have your wings,
Lieutenant! Just wait until your wing
leader...DELTA ONE!

And Forbes' Rapier is coming in UPSIDE DOWN TOO!

FORBES
(to Maniac)
Now what were you saying?

Forbes' Rapier does A 540 DEGREE ROLL, righting itself at the last possible moment and touching down.

FORBES (CONT'D)

Now, that's how you do it!

Maniac is already out of his cockpit. He walks up to Forbes' ship. The Deck crew keeps their distance -- still traumatized by Maniac's and Forbes' antics.

Forbes' cockpit pops open.

MANIAC

I'm impressed.

They look at each other, sharing the adrenaline buzz. Then, they start giggling like a couple of high school kids who just played a game of chicken. Then...

FORBES

Oh shit.

She's looking past Maniac at DEVERAUX who stands on the flight deck, rigid and fuming.

74 INT. DEVERAUX'S QUARTERS.

74

Deveraux, still upset, paces. The door buzzer sounds. She opens it, and there's Forbes.

DEVERAUX

(scowling)

You don't want to be here right now.

Forbes, smiling, waves Maniac's bottle of Scotch.

FORBES

Single Malt...Just for you, sir.

DEVERAUX

Trying to bribe me?

FORBES

I think I better do something.

DEVERAUX

You're Goddamned right. It was all I could do to keep the Flight Boss from bringing you up on charges. Rosie, what the hell were you thinking?

FORBES

I wasn't thinking. That's the point. Maniac...

DEVERAUX

Maniac?

FORBES

Lt. Marshall -- needed his morning adrenaline rush. And I was right there with him. I admit it.

DEVERAUX

I hope it felt really good.

FORBES

Great...

She pours Deveraux's drink, puts it in her hand.

FORBES () (CONT'D)

Better than sex...

She makes Deveraux take a healthy swig, waits for Deveraux's to savor the scotch, then...

FORBES (CONT'D)

You remember sex?

DEVERAUX

Don't start. You're walking a very thin line.

FORBES

It will never happen again. I swear Commander.

DEVERAUX

Never again?

FORBES

Never.

DEVERAUX drinks. Forbes, forgiven, relaxes.

FORBES

I've noticed you've been giving special attention to Blair...

DEVERAUX

That's just your imagination.

FORBES

He's pretty damned cute, Angel.

DEVERAUX

(Waves her glass.)

You're the seductress, not me. Just shut up and pour.

FORBES

What are you waiting for, honey? End of the war? The victory parade? Do you have any idea how dead we could be by then?

DEVERAUX

Pour.

Forbes pours her a meager drink, and with a lift of the eyebrows Deveraux gestures for her to fill the glass.

75 INT. CHART ROOM - TIGER CLAW

75

CLOSE ON: Thousands of numbers scrolling across the screen.

CAMERA pulls back and we see a huge holographic chart. A single blip, the Tiger Claw, flashes red on the curved grid. In front of the Tiger Claw is a mathematical representation of the pulsar, a pulsating, constantly moving series of circles. Unlike a black hole (a discrete singularity) or Quasar (potentially thousands of discrete singularities), the pulsar is a discrete singularity with an infinite number of constantly changing permutations, each one capable of transporting a vessel to another part of the galaxy. Problem is, most are dead ends. With an emphasis on dead.

Slowly, the grid begins to deform as an icicle shaped spike pulls and distorts the grid. The icicle transforms into a stalagmite, with a thick, wide hole at its neck. The flashing red point is poised in front of this huge gap in the grid.

CAMERA pulls back to reveal SANSKY and DEVERAUX watching the hologram as PALADIN inputs final calculations into the NAVCOM.

SANSKY

I've never seen anything like this.

PALADIN points to the tip of the stalagmite. His hands trace the trajectory across the wide gap in the quadrant.

PALADIN

The Ulysses Corridor...four days of hard travel using three known jump points. By using this warp in the space time continuum, we will be there in...

(Glances at a big digital clock.)

...less than three minutes.

HE glances at the console, pushes a final button.

GERALD (O.S.)

If your calculations are correct.

CAMERA pans to GERALD who's just entered the chart room

PALADIN

They're correct.

GERALD
NAVCOM and the finest minds in the
Confederation couldn't plot this jump.
What makes you so sure your right?

PALADIN
Because they're Pilgrim coordinates,
Mr. Gerald.

GERALD reacts. BLAIR enters. GERALD, already angry,
turns to him.

GERALD
Why aren't you at your station,
Lieutenant?

BLAIR
Sir, I--

PALADIN cuts Blair off.

PALADIN
I asked Lieutenant Blair to be here.

GERALD
Why?

PALADIN ignores the question. To Sansky:

PALADIN
We'll have a lovely view from the
bridge.

PALADIN leaves the chart room. Blair stares at the
gigantic spike in the holographic grid. After the others
have filed out, MERLIN appears, worried.

MERLIN
If the entry trajectory is wrong, we'll
be trapped in a moment outside of time
and space...that is until the ship
plummets into the pulsar and we become
an infinitely small part of a special
singularity. My guess is there's a
fifty seven point one percent chance
that we're doomed.

CLOSE ON BLAIR as he looks at the grid, at the
coordinates, at the fast scrolling read outs.

BLAIR
The coordinates are right.

BLAIR exits. MERLIN, interested, watches him go,
disappears.

76 INT. PILOTS MESS

76

All of the pilots except Blair and Deveraux are gathered by the large portholes, staring out at the gigantic pulsar ahead of them, murmuring in awe.

POLANSKI

This thing is eating suns for breakfast. What the hell are we doing, here?

HUNTER

You know what we're not doing?

FORBES

Turning around.

MANIAC

The ultimate rush!

Most of the pilots stare at Maniac like he's nuts. Forbes just grins.

77 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

77

Sansky, Gerald, Deveraux, Blair and Paladin are on the bridge along with the various officers and noncoms.

THEIR POV through bridge windows: The pulsar fills the windows, its huge black maw sucking suns and planets into its infinitely dense invisible core.

Suddenly, an alarm sounds. The NAVCOM A.I. voice speaks calmly.

AI VOICE

Attention! Attention. Course error. Adjust course immediately!

PALADIN

Ignore that! Helm, hold steady as she goes.

AI VOICE

Captain, the ship is headed into the PNR zone of an uncharted class two pulsar. One minute before gravitational pull is one hundred per cent.

SANSKY

What about it, Paladin?

PALADIN

The readings are wrong. You're A.I.'s sensors are not calibrated to the pulsar. They've already been warped by the gravitational field.

AI VOICE
I must insist we change course
immediately....Initiating A.I.
override.

There is a slight jerk as some course change appears to
have been made. PALADIN leaps for the helm.

PALADIN
NO!
(Throwing a switch.)
Manual override! Now... Disregard your
artificial intelligence or we're all
dead!

GERALD
Captain, I believe you should
reconsider.

SANSKY
...Steady as she goes, helm.

HELMSMAN
Aye, aye, sir.

The alarm continues to sound throughout the ship!

79 INT. TIGER CLAW - VARIOUS STATIONS - MONTAGE: 79

The alarm has men and women sweating and tense. Sansky's
voice comes over the intercom throughout.

SANSKY (V.O.)
(over intercom)
This is the Captain. Brace for jump
point interphase. Fifteen seconds to
jump point.

80 FLIGHT DECK/HANGAR BAY -- 80

Two members of the arming crew, Specialists JONES and
OLIVIA lock down a rack of missiles.

In two Rapiers, KNIGHT and SPIRIT, strap into their
seats, power engines.

81 TORPEDO ROOM -- 81

Spaceman RODRIGUEZ, 2nd class, a young Latino crosses
himself.

FLIGHT CONTROL --

The Flight Boss drains his coffee and straps himself in.

83 PILOTS MESS --

83

Most of the pilots are holding onto their tables or fastening the seat-belts on their chairs. Except for Forbes and Maniac.

84 ENGINE ROOM --

84

Engineer DAVIES grabs onto a hand-hold and looks at his crew mates as various parts of the ship all begin to VIBRATE, slowly at first, then more and more violently, throwing any loose objects around.

85 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

85

The vibrations grow worse, as people grab onto anything, eyes glued on the windows.

PALADIN

Steady.

BLAIR AND DEVERAUX are thrown together. This startles both of them, then they deliberately grab for a bulkhead.

BLAIR

The ship's trying to tear itself free of the space time fabric.

The vibration grows in pitch, until the sound is almost deafening. Almost on impulse, Deveraux's hand reaches out toward Blair's elbow, as if to have one last physical contact with another human. But it never reaches it!

FREEZE FRAME: The Tiger Claw enters the gap in the space time continuum. All motion and sound on the bridge stop. Nothing moves, either human or inanimate. Time has ceased, as well as any sense of motion or vibration. All is silent.

88 INT. TIGER CLAW - VARIOUS STATIONS - MONTAGE

88

Throughout the ship, men and women are caught, Pompeii-like, with expressions of fear or bewilderment...

A LONG TRAVELING SHOT past all these crew members. Then...

89 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

89

With a terrible shudder, life on the bridge resumes, alarms wail. Officers and crew are tossed about.

DEVERAUX AND BLAIR: Angel's hand continues forward, touching Blair's elbow. He turns to look at her, just as they are both SLAMMED AGAINST THE BULKHEAD. They fall to their knees. The shuddering is intense. It feels like the ship is coming apart.

But Blair reaches for Deveraux's face and tilts her chin up. Her forehead is bleeding from a scalp laceration.

BLAIR
You all right?

She is dizzy, but nods. Then Blair turns to glance out the windows.

DEVERAUX
Where are we?

THROUGH THE BRIDGE WINDOWS: There is no sign of the awesome pulsar, now. The blackness of space, peppered with stars.... A Jovian planet looms in the distance.

BLAIR
We're through the jump point. We made it.

RESUME BRIDGE: Even as the others stare out, the vibrations decrease, then disappear. The alarm ceases.

PALADIN
Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Ulysses Corridor.

OBUTU
Launching Rapiers...Now.

Through the big windows, we see KNIGHT and SPIRIT launch, bank hard, accelerate away on afterburners.

SANSKY
Shields up. Mr. Obutu, stealth mode, please.

OBUTU hits a switch and the bridge controls power down. Red tactical lights kick on.

OBUTU
Going to stealth. Seven percent electronic emissions, zero communications.

SANSKY
Radar, status?

RADAR TECH
Scanners picking up strong electromagnetic signature at 111 mark 43. An asteroid field. I'd say she's a Kilrathi, sir.

BLAIR has fetched a first aid kit, and is using a small laser pen to seal Deveraux's scalp wound.

DEVERAUX
Ouch.

BLAIR

Sorry.

BLAIR tries to check her scalp. As if annoyed by this enforced intimacy with Blair, DEVERAUX pulls away.

DEVERAUX

It's all right.

BLAIR

It's still bleeding. If I--

DEVERAUX

(pulls away)

It's all right.

BLAIR

(irked)

Yes, Ma'am.

SANSKY

(To Angel:)

Lt. Commander, prepare a recon. I want to know what's out there.

DEVERAUX

Yes, sir.

SHE heads out, Blair trailing.

SANSKY

And Deveraux, I don't want them to know we're here. Not yet.

94 INT. TIGER CLAW - VARIOUS STATIONS - MONTAGE

94

As officers, pilots and crew listen to the intercom.

SANSKY (V.O.)

(over intercom)

This is the Captain. As most of you have guessed, we just made one hell of a jump.

Rodriguez kisses his St. Christopher...

SANSKY (CONT'D)

Actually we've just taken a little short cut into the Ulysses Corridor... If you don't already know, that's where the Pegasus Naval Base was attacked and destroyed. The main Kilrathi battle fleet is in the Quadrant and headed for the Charbydis Quasar. In eleven hours, it will be in position to jump into Earth space.

(MORE)

SANSKY (cont'd)
Our mission is to find the Kilrathi,
asses their capacities and plan of
action, and if necessary, stop them.

Maniac and Forbes look at each other. Action!

SANSKY (CONT'D)
We're the only Confed ship in the
sector, people. We can count on no
help and no rescue. We can only count
on each other. That is all.

94A EXT. CONCORDIA BATTLE GROUP - DEEP SPACE

94A

The Concordia, bracketed by other CONFED ships, races
through space.

SUPERIMPOSE: CONCORDIA BATTLE GROUP, MARCH 17TH, 0400
ZULU TIME. 12 HOURS FROM EARTH.

94B INT. CONCORDIA - BRIDGE

94B

TOLWYN looks out the window at fast moving space.
BELLEGARDE approaches from behind.

BELLEGARDE
Message from Earth Command, sir. Their
defenses are on line but--

TOLWYN
But they don't believe they can
withstand a Kilrathi battle group
without the support of the fleet.

BELLEGARDE
No sir. But they will fight. And if
they are over run, they will resist.

TOLWYN
How? The Kilrathi don't take
prisoners, they lay waste to worlds.
They conquer all. All in the name of
their god, Sivar. And if there is any
race impudent enough to stand up to
them... Do you know any prayer's
Richard?

BELLEGARDE
...A few.

TOLWYN
Then I suggest you pray for the souls
of the men and women and children who
are going to die if the Tiger Claw
fails. Eleven billion of them.
(Turns to face Bellegarde.)
Our status?

BELLE GARDE

We're running at 110 percent. We've already lost three ships. Two at jump points, one's reactor core melted down.

TOLWYN

Run at 120.

94C INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW

94C

BLAIR and DEVERAUX, in full flight suits, helmets in hand, walk together down the flight line. In front of them, a fully armed Rapier rises from the hanger bay, joins another.

BLAIR

Any standard operating procedure I should know about?

DEVERAUX

There is no SOP out here, Blair. The Kilrathi have seen to that. And there's only one rule.

BLAIR

Don't get killed?

DEVERAUX

Don't get me killed.

As SHE walks towards her Rapier, we see the markings on the side of the fighter: twenty-six kills.

BLAIR

Twenty-six. Jesus.

DEVERAUX

That puts me ahead of the law of averages, Lieutenant. Well ahead. The curve'll catch up to me sooner or later.

SHE motions to the Rapier next to hers.

DEVERAUX (CONT'D)

Your bird, Blair. Treat her well. She was Chen's. Mount up. We're on the clock, and it's time to rock.

94D INT. DEEP SPACE - CHARBYDIS SECTOR

94D

Two pin points of light pass by a deserted planet, the light from a nearby brown dwarf star throws it into half light, half shadow -- they resolve into the two Rapiers. The Rapiers head for an asteroid field circling the brown dwarf.

As the Rapiers approach the asteroid field, we see, scattered amidst the rocks and ice, pieces of metal.

94E INT. RAPIER COCKPIT - BLAIR

94E

Blair scans his "heads up" display. On it, we see a digitized tactical schematic of the environment. Hanging around his neck, OUTSIDE of his flight suit, is his Pilgrim cross. HE reacts to an odd shaped object spinning towards him.

BLAIR'S POV: A big, twisted and burned piece of metal spins by him. Painted on the side is "CONFEDERATION STATION PEGASUS."

94F INT. RAPIER COCKPIT - BLAIR

94F

Stunned, he watches the piece of metal spin by.

BLAIR

This sucks.

94H INT. RAPIER COCKPIT - DEVERAUX

94H

Shaking her head.

DEVERAUX

Concussion must have blown pieces of the station all over the sector.

Her tactical display chirps. On her radar, we see a blip, another, then they disappear.

DEVERAUX

Pipe down. I'm getting something....

Suddenly, six blips appear on her radar. They're headed for the Rapiers.

DEVERAUX (CONT'D)

Radio silence. And get into the asteroids, now. Low power.

103 EXT. ASTEROID BELT & BROWN DWARF - WIDE SHOT

103

At the edge of the asteroid field and far below, a brown dwarf star glows dimly. A large Kilrathi Communications Ship is cruising up from the surface of the brown dwarf toward the asteroid belt. The two Rapiers, engines off, are shielded behind two large asteroids, a few hundred yards apart.

104 INT. BLAIR'S COCKPIT

104

Blair is sweating, now, scanning his instruments.

BLAIR

My scanners are blind, Merlin. Talk to me.

MERLIN'S voice only:

MERLIN

Crosstalk between a large Kilrathi vessel and the brown dwarf down there. Can't decipher the code.

BLAIR

They know we're here?

MERLIN

Possibly. From the sophistication of the equipment on board, I'd say the vessel is a Command and Communications module.

BLAIR

So what is it commanding?

MERLIN

At least six other ships down near the brown dwarf are communicating with it....Interesting. I'm getting an Ultra Low Frequency signal. The Rapier's scanners aren't equipped to receive or detect it.

BLAIR

But you are?

MERLIN

Yes, and don't be so sarcastic. It's a primitive pulse technology, ultra low frequency. Very slow, but it carries over extreme distances. Sort of like tom toms. Pilgrims used it in the war.

BLAIR

Got a direction?

MERLIN

It appears to be coming from quadrant thirty.

BLAIR

That's near the Tiger Claw? What's it saying?

MERLIN

The code isn't in my vocabulary. They're scanning the rocks.

BLAIR

PPC off.

We can almost feel the pulse of energy passing over Blair as the Kilrathi ship scans the rocks.

105 EXT. KILRATHI COMMUNICATIONS SHIP

105

The ship draws closer to the asteroid ring, its exterior antennae revolving, seeking... The ship fires its retros, and hovers near a group of large asteroids...

WE PULL BACK To REVEAL Angel's Rapier only a few ship length's away, hidden behind the asteroid.

105A INT. DEVERAUX'S COCKPIT

105A

Angel can almost smell them out there. She reaches up and switches off everything in the cockpit she can--an attempt to reduce any electronic "noise" that could be detected by sensitive scanners.

DEVERAUX

(To herself, a whisper.)

Go on. Nothing in this mouse hole. Beat it.

107 INT. BLAIR'S COCKPIT

107

Blair, too, has shut down much of his equipment, and sits in the dark behind a big rock. Tension is palpable.

BLAIR

What do they see, Merlin?

MERLIN

I'm not sure. Switch on your thermal scanner.

On Blair's heads up display: Not much...except a bright red corona coming from behind an asteroid.

BLAIR

They've spotted Angel's heat corona behind the asteroid.

MERLIN

Two more Kilrathi closing fast. Got to be fighters.

Blair switches on his radio and his other electronic gear.

BLAIR

Angel! They've spotted us! Two more bogies, coming in hot, six o'clock!

107A INT. ANGEL'S COCKPIT

107A

DEVERAUX switches everything back on, fear lessening. Excited now.

DEVERAUX

Can't spot them, Blair. Call it.

Blair touches his cross for good luck...

BLAIR

Jack in the Box. On three. One...
two... three!

110 EXT. ASTEROID RING

110

Two Kilrathi Dralathi fighters are closing in fast, bracketing the ComCon ship...

The two Confed Rapiers suddenly spring into view above the asteroids and instantly unleash two missiles...

The missiles streak dead ahead and catch the two Kilrathi fighters before they can blink. ONE EXPLODES. The wreckage of the other one SPIRALS INTO THE ASTEROID ANGEL WAS BEHIND.

Blair and Angel fire two more missiles at the ConCom ship, but invisible deflector shields explode both of them safely away from the ship.

BLAIR

The big one's shielded. I've got two more bogies coming up from the brown dwarf. Engaging.

DEVERAUX

Negative! I count fourteen unfriendlies inbound. Looks like two destroyers. We are out of here!

The two Rapiers turn, kick in their afterburners and disappear in a streak of light.

110A EXT. SNAKEIR - SOMEWHERE IN THE ULYSSES CORRIDOR

110A

The great battle ship, surrounded by several smaller escorts are in orbit around a planet -- The stars in the background look unfamiliar.

SUPERIMPOSE: KILRATHI BATTLE FLEET: SOMEWHERE IN THE ULYSSES CORRIDOR. 10 HOURS FROM THE CHARBYDIS QUASAR.

110B INT. SNAKEIR BRIDGE

110B

The Kilrathi Admiral is on bended knee in front of a multiarmed fearsome beast-like Effigy -- The Kilrathi War God Sivar. Around the idol are the banners of the Admiral's clan - A testimony to their fallen and future glory.

The Kilrathi Captain approaches and waits respectfully. The Admiral raises his head.

KILRATHI CAPTAIN

(subtitled)

Sir, our lead ships have engaged a Confederation reconnaissance flight in sector 7.

ADMIRAL

Do we have a fix on the Tiger Claw signal?

KILRATHI CAPTAIN

Yes, sir.

The Admiral stands and looks into the shadows beyond his command chair.

KILRATHI ADMIRAL

(English: delayed translation)

Your friend is dedicated.

The TRAITOR steps forward.

TRAITOR

He's a Pilgrim. Order the fleet to destroy the Tiger Claw.

ADMIRAL

...In time.

TRAITOR

The existence of that ship is a threat to the success of this mission, and an affront to the memories of forty million Pilgrims.

ADMIRAL

That ship is insignificant. The hate of your race blinds you to that, Pilgrim. All things pass. Let it go.

TRAITOR

I told you, they are not my race. Through forty years of war, they destroyed my race and laid waste to my worlds. And you are wrong, old man. Most things pass: love, passion, anger, life. But one is eternal: hate.

111 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

111

BLAIR and DEVERAUX stand "at ease" before Gerald and Sansky. Paladin stands in the background.

GERALD

You knew what the orders were. No contact with the enemy.

(MORE)

GERALD (cont'd)
Now you've compromised the mission, and
the very existence of this ship.

DEVERAUX
Lt. Blair had no choice, sir.

GERALD
Didn't he? How sure are you that the
Kilrathi really had you targeted,
Jeanette? Given the Lieutenant's
background, are you really that
certain?

BLAIR
Excuse me?

GERALD
It's well documented that Pilgrims have
been responsible for much of the
Confed's compromised communications,
Mr. Blair...

DEVERAUX turns to Blair. The look on her face says
volumes.

DEVERAUX
What's he saying? A Pilgrim?

Before Blair can answer, Sansky cuts in.

SANSKY
This is sterile conjecture. The
Kilrathi are aware that Rapiers don't
fly around in deep space without a
carrier close by. They know we're here.
(To Blair:)
Tell me about this "communication" you
claim to have heard.

BLAIR
(Eyes on Gerald:)
It was a ULF signal emanating from the
vicinity of the Tiger Claw, sir.

SANSKY
(To the Tiger Claw A.I.)
What about it, CONCOM? Were any
communications sent from this ship?

AI VOICE
Negative, Captain. There were no
transmissions sent by the Tiger Claw.

SANSKY turns to Blair.

SANSKY
Thank you Lieutenant. That is all.

BLAIR
Sir, I--

SANSKY
Dismissed, Lieutenant.

BLAIR nods, exits.

SANSKY (CONT'D)
You assessment, Mr. Gerald?

GERALD
That ComCon's running point for the battle group. Their fleet won't be far behind. They know we're here, so I say we send them a message: pain. It's the only thing they understand.

PALADIN
That would be a mistake. Without her fighters, the Tiger Claw's vulnerable.

GERALD
You're a civilian scout, Mr. Taggart, not a naval officer. Tactical operations are our concern, not yours.

PALADIN
There's a great deal more at stake here than you seem to understand, Commander.

SANSKY holds up a hand.

SANSKY
The X.O. is right. These are desperate times and they require desperate measures. Destroying that ConCom and its escorts will slow the Kilrathi. To that end, I will risk the Tiger Claw. Deveraux will lead a strike force. You will accompany her.
(To Obutu:)
Con, plot a course for the rings of planet four fifteen.

112 INT. DEVERAUX'S QUARTERS

112

ANGEL, in her flight suit, is alone, spending a quiet moment before the upcoming battle.

The door buzzer sounds. She hits the pause button. The hologram freezes in place. Deveraux groans and gets off the bunk, assuming it's Forbes.

Then her door slides open. Blair stands there in his flight suit, looking grim. For once, she is caught completely off guard.

BLAIR

Commander, I need to talk to you.

He pushes past her, not waiting to be invited in.

DEVERAUX

You just don't barge into my--

BLAIR

Here.

He tosses his Pilgrim's cross at her. She catches it.

BLAIR (CONT'D)

That answer your question? I'm half-Pilgrim. In Gerald's mind, I started selling out the Tiger Claw the moment I stepped on board. And judging from the look on your face, you think he's right.

DEVERAUX

Sit down, Lieutenant.

He angrily parks himself on her bunk. She turns the cross over in her hands.

DEVERAUX (CONT'D)

Do you know why they call me Angel?

BLAIR gives a quick, curt shake of his head.

DEVERAUX (cont'd)

I grew up in an orphanage. Every night I'd wake up crying, asking for my parents. The sisters told me they were angles. So I just kept calling out for them, hoping that they were there, watching over me. But they weren't. They were just dead. They were killed by Pilgrims.

BLAIR

You were at the Peron massacre.

DEVERAUX

I was in the house. I heard the screams. I saw the blood. And I felt the pure, cold hate of those Pilgrims towards my family because they were judged different. I swore to myself then that I would never hate or judge without reason. So I don't hate you for what you are, Blair. But I will judge you for who you are. Who the hell are you?

BLAIR

...I'm a Confederation officer on a capital ship in a war zone, Ma'am. And I'm a pawn. But pawns can take kings.

DEVERAUX

I believe you're starting to understand the rules of the game, Lieutenant. See you on deck.

BLAIR nods, gets up, starts to exit.

DEVERAUX (cont'd)

And Blair. Gerald's a clown.

112A INT. MANIAC'S AND BLAIR'S QUARTERS - TIGER CLAW

112A

Maniac and Forbes are cozied up together. The bravado of both of them seems to be lost to something else -- a connection, understanding and maybe a little trepidation.

MANIAC

Do you know what the odds are that we're going to live through this mission?

FORBES

Slim...

She kisses him deeply.

FORBES

Umm. Very slim.

Maniac starts to unzip the front of Forbes one-piece suit.

FORBES

You know that's why we do the crazy shit we do.

Maniac keeps working on her zipper.

MANIAC

There's nothing crazy about this...

FORBES

Not this, smart ass. I'm talking about pushing the envelope, riding the razors edge. We're so afraid of dying, we keep trying to prove we're invincible.

Maniac leans back, looking at Forbes.

MANIAC

I always tried to tell myself that I just didn't care. But I don't know...

Their eyes hold for a long beat. Suddenly, an alarm rings out. FORBES rolls over.

FORBES

Shit. This war's really starting to piss me off.

112B EXT. TIGER CLAW - FLIGHT DECK

112B

DEVERAUX steps on to the flight line, looks out over the line of pilots scurrying around fighters with flight crews.

DEVERAUX

Alright, people, listen up. We have a ConCom with escorts. That means two, possibly three destroyers, fighters, and support ships. Primary target is the ConCom. Everything else is gravy. Let's make them bleed. Mount up!

Hunter's Rapier is next to Blair's. DEVERAUX approaches.

DEVERAUX

Blair, take Hunter's wing.

HUNTER

Ma'am, I'd just as soon you assign me another wing man.

DEVERAUX turns to Hunter, hard.

DEVERAUX

You have some problem I should be aware of, Hunter?

HUNTER

(Looking at Blair:)
Yes, ma'am, I do. I don't fly with Pilgrims.

DEVERAUX looks at the big Aussie, disgust evident.

DEVERAUX

...Blair, you'll fly my wing.

SHE walks away, leaves Blair and Hunter staring at one another

HUNTER

You put me or my shipmates in danger, half-breed, I'll kill you.

BLAIR

You'll try.

113 EXT. ASTEROID RING - BROWN DWARF

113

Like Indians sneaking up on the settlers, the wing of Rapiers, accompanied by two Broadsword bombers, quietly picks its way through the debris of the asteroid rings around the brown dwarf. We can hear the pilot's radio chatter.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
Picking up any Com traffic, Baker seven?

PALADIN (O.S.)
Nothing.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
They're observing radio silence, except for short range frequencies.

PALADIN (O.S.)
Or they aren't here any more.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
Baker Two, three and four... Anything?

FORBES (O.S.)
Negative, boss.

BLAIR (O.S.)
De nada, chief.

114 INT. MANIAC'S COCKPIT

114

Maniac is watching a cluster of blips on his HUD.

MANIAC
All right you losers, listen up. I've got three confirmed targets at five o'clock, bugging the brown dwarf.

FORBES (O.S.)
Confirm that. Middle one's got a massive electromagnetic signature.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
It's the ConCom. Deploy for attack.

INTERCUT WITH:

115 INT. COCKPIT - BROADSWORD BOMBER - PALADIN

115

Scanning his equipment. Something's wrong.

PALADIN
(To himself:)
That's no ConCom.
(Into his mic:)
Abort!

116 INT. VARIOUS COCKPITS

116

Deveraux is incensed.

DEVERAUX

Baker seven, you have no authority over this mission of its personnel. You will obey my orders.

PALADIN

Negative, Baker One. These are battle group supply ships. They were left behind and out of harms way. The Tiger Claw is at risk. We have to get back.

DEVERAUX

You are a civilian scout--

PALADIN

Commander, I am not a civilian.

(pause; decides)

I hold the rank of Commodore in Confederation Naval Intelligence, reporting directly to Admiral Tolwyn.

Aboard the other Rapiers, there is astonishment.

FORBES

Yeah, right. And I'm Admiral Nelson.

PALADIN

My security verification code is Charlie Six Alpha Zebra Niner....Try it, Commander. Now.

There is a tense moment aboard every fighter in the wing.

Finally, Deveraux gives, punches the numbers into her computer. Her screen blinks for a moment - Then a message flashes on it; "Commodore James Taggart, Fourth Fleet - Security access granted".

DEVERAUX

Lucky guess.

PALADIN

Listen to me, Angel. If I'm wrong, you'll have missed out on taking a couple of freighters. If I'm right, the Tiger Claw could already be under attack.

FORBES

The Claw is already in that radiation belt, boss. They couldn't radio for us if they wanted to.

All the weight is on Deveraux...

117 EXT. TIGER CLAW - NEAR JOVIAN PLANET 117

The Tiger Claw makes its way amidst giant asteroids. Three moons orbit the huge gaseous planet in the background.

118 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 118

OBUTU is the Officer of the Watch as the Tiger Claw cruises between a small moon orbiting the huge Jovian planet in the background. A thick series of rings glow dimly ahead of the ship. Rapiers glint as they maneuver while escorting the carrier through the "pass" between the two barren moons. Panicked voice cuts over the intercom:

PILOT'S VOICE
(over intercom)
Bogies inbound. I say again--
(static)
I'm hit! I'm hit! Mayday!

Gerald bursts onto the bridge.

GERALD
Who's breaking radio silence?

RADAR MAN
(turning from screen)
I read multiple targets inbound!

Obutu turns to look out the huge windows. GERALD follows his gaze.

THEIR POV: Dozens of small glinting dots, and three larger ones, appear from behind the moon.

GERALD
Battle stations! Launch all fighters!

AI VOICE
(relays commands)
Battle stations! Battle stations!

The bridge light switches to an EERIE RED GLOW, as the alarm sounds.

120 INT. FLIGHT DECK 120

Pilots and crew sprint across the deck toward their planes as the huge flight doors open and the force field curtain activates.

AI VOICE
Battle stations! Launch all fighters!

- 121 EXT. BETWEEN JOVIAN PLANET MOONS 121
The Confederation Rapiers fiercely engage the oncoming Kilrathi fighters. The sky is soon full of individual dogfights. The RADIO CHATTER of the various pilots as they engage choke the airwaves. A Rapier is hit, and spirals past, on fire. A Krant fighter disintegrates.
- 122 EXT. TIGER CLAW 122
Rapiers leap from the decks into space and streak toward the distant battle. A Broadsword bomber blasts through the air lock curtain into space.
- 123 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 123
Sansky arrives, out of breath.
OBUTU
All fighters launched, sir.
SANSKY
Shields up!
OBUTU
All shields are engaged.
SANSKY
Torpedo room! Prepare all tubes!
- 124 INT. TORPEDO ROOM - TIGER CLAW 124
Rodriguez loads and locks a torpedo...
- 125 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 125
AI VOICE
All tubes ready to fire.
RADAR MAN
I count three dozen Kilrathi starfighters, two destroyers, and one battle ship, sir!
SANSKY
(to Gerald)
That damned Paladin was right.
GERALD
Maybe he knew something we didn't.
RADAR MAN
Torpedoes incoming!
GERALD
Brace for impact!

- 126 EXT. TIGER CLAW 126
TWO LARGE, STRANGELY CONFIGURED TORPEDOES streak through the blackness and EXPLODE against the invisible force shield with an awesome burst of energy.
- 127 INT. HANGAR BAY 127
The shock wave from the explosions rock the ship, sending men and heavy equipment flying and rolling across the deck.
- 129 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 129
Impacts on the force shield directly in front of them continue to send shock waves through the Tiger Claw.
- GERALD
Give me a target, Mr. Falk!
- RADAR MAN
Target acquisition imminent....We have a lock!
- GERALD
Fire tubes one and two!
- Officers and crew watch as two white traces from the rocket propelled torpedoes streak toward the distant dots.
- 130 EXT. KILRATHI DESTROYER 130
The torpedoes SLAM INTO the weak shields of the destroyer and EXPLODE. The shock wave breaks the destroyer in half, spewing a huge gas bubble and debris into apace.
- WIDER: The Battle ship moves up, parallel with the second Kilrathi destroyer, launches torpedoes.
- 132 EXT. TIGER CLAW 132
The huge torpedoes slam into the force shield, explode!
- 133 INT. BRIDGE TIGER CLAW 133
The shaking and shock waves causes widespread damage on the bridge.
- OBUTU
The force shield is suffering a forty per cent failure. Battery room reports a fire. Torpedo room reporting damage. Unable to fire.
- Sansky picks himself up off the deck. What now?

- 134 EXT. TIGER CLAW 134
Kilrathi fighters -- Dralathi and Krants -- are now just outside the shield, battling Rapiers.
- 135 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 135
The Radar man peers at his screen.
THE RADAR SCREEN: A dozen more points of light now appear on the far edge of the screen, dead ahead.
RADAR MAN
I'm getting a dozen more targets,
behind the battle ship.
GERALD
They're bringing in reinforcements.
SANSKY
We should be flattered.
(over intercom)
Torpedo room report.
- 137 INT. TORPEDO ROOM - TIGER CLAW 137
Amid smoke and general chaos, Rodriguez grabs the com.
RODRIGUEZ
(over intercom)
Tubes three and four damaged.
autoloaders not operational.
SANSKY looks out the big windows, silent, yet not afraid. There's a certain preternatural calmness to him that one might even equate with relief.
RADAR MAN
Captain! I'm getting a coded friend or foe acknowledge from the new starfighters! They're ours, sir!
SANSKY
It's Deveraux's wing!
- 139 EXT. BETWEEN MOONS 139
In attack formation, the Confederation wing of Rapiers and two Broadwords comes in behind the dreadnought and destroyer.
- 140 INT. DEVERAUX'S COCKPIT 140
A half dozen targets present themselves on her heads up display.

DEVERAUX

All right boys and girls. All Rapiers except Maniac and Blair, engage those Dralthi.

FORBES (O.S.)

See you later, fresh bait.

MANIAC (O.S.)

Watch your ass, Rosie.

141 EXT. BETWEEN MOONS

141

The Rapiers peel off two by two and engage the oncoming Dralthi fighters. The sky is alive with spiraling missiles and laser fire as the starfighters begin their deadly dance.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)

Broadswords, follow me in. Maniac, Blair. Cover us!

The two BROADSWORD two fighter bombers head for the larger Kilrathi ships.

142 INT. BROADSWORD COCKPIT

142

Paladin grimly adjusts his course, and throws open several switches.

PALADIN

Roger that. Beginning bomb run.

143 EXT. DREADNOUGHT AND DESTROYER

143

The Kilrathi ships launch a barrage of torpedoes, which streak toward the damaged Tiger Claw.

144 INT. TIGER CLAW - VARIOUS STATIONS

144

The torpedoes slam into the shield and send shockwaves throughout the ship, causing major destruction. Then, below decks, a TORPEDO PENETRATES, and EXPLODES.

ENGINE ROOM: Men and equipment are ENGULFED IN A FIRE BALL. Engineer Davies is sucked out into the void!

146 EXT. TIGER CLAW

146

There is a gaping hole in the side of the ship. Gas, fire and debris spew out, surrounding the ship in a miasmic cloud. The ship begins to yaw and roll.

147 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

147

Several crewmen are injured on the bridge. Sansky is badly wounded and his head is covered with blood. Gerald stoops to help him.

OBUTU

(relaying reports)

The hull has been breached at level three. Steering loss, eighty percent.

GERALD

Sir! Sir. Medic to the bridge!

SANSKY

(weakly)

What's Deveraux doing?

148 EXT. BROADSWORDS & THREE RAPIERS

148

The Broadswords are on a bombing run. Deveraux's Rapier leads them in...

Four Kilrathi fighters -- Salthi -- move to intercept. Deveraux shoots one out of the sky with a missile! Blair gets another with his lasers...

MANIAC

Hey! Save some for me...

Maniac shoots a Salthi's wing off. It spirals into the last Kilrathi fighter, both go up in a fireball!

MANIAC (CONT'D)

Buy one, get one free!

Cannon fire starts reaching up towards the fighters.

DEVERAUX

It's getting hot. It's up to the bombers -- let's get back out there.

The Rapiers veer off. The Broadswords continue on their bomb run.

PALADIN (O.S.)

(over radio)

Thanks for the escort

(to Knight)

Steady on course. Wait for them to launch a torpedo. They'll lower their shield just before.

The sky fills with laser blasts and tachyon cannon fire. The Broadswords countermeasures computer automatically activates a variety of weapons, fireballs, tiny electronically filled missiles, etc. STILL, THE BROADSWORDS ARE TAKING HITS.

149 INT. BROADSWORD COCKPIT - KNIGHT

149

As the target looms closer, the wall of anti-starcraft fire terrifies him.

KNIGHT

They're throwing up too much flack!

The Broadsword is rocked.

KNIGHT (CONT'D)

I'm hit!

PALADIN (O.S.)

(over radio)

Almost there. Steady.

But there is another blast and Knight DISAPPEARS IN A FIREBALL!

150 EXT. NEAR DESTROYER AND DREADNOUGHT.

150

As Knight's Broadsword disintegrates, Paladin veers away from the fireball.

151 INT. DEVERAUX'S COCKPIT

151

Deveraux is engaged with two Krant, weaves hard right, left, pulling six g loops. She fires two missiles. Behind her, one of the Krant explodes.

152 EXT. RAPIERS AND KRANT

152

The second Krant is firing more accurately at Deveraux. Then Blair appears from underneath, and rips the Krant to shreds with tachyon cannon fire. He blasts through the debris.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)

What took you so long?

BLAIR (O.S.)

Got stuck in traffic.

153 INT. BLAIR'S COCKPIT

153

Blair is scanning the sky.

BLAIR

Where's Paladin?

MANIAC (O.S.)

No visual contact. Son-of-a-bitch booked!

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
The battle ship's preparing to launch.
Torpedo tubes opening.

154 EXT. DREADNOUGHT

154

The huge vessels forward tubes do indeed dilate open.

BLAIR (O.S.)
(angry)
They'll have to lower their shield.

The dreadnought passes close to the broken hull of the first destroyer...

Only then does Paladin's Broadsword appear, practically clinging to the wreckage.

155 INT. PALADIN' COCKPIT

155

Paladin, looking very grim, hastily reactivates his electronics, and moves in behind the battle ship.

PALADIN
Baker leader, get your fighter clear of the pulse wave!

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
Roger that. Maniac, Blair. Break contact! Return to ship!

156 EXT. BETWEEN TWO MOONS

156

The Three Rapiers veer off sharply, kick in afterburners, and streak toward the Tiger Claw...

The Broadsword, practically on top of the battle ship ignites its own after burners, and LAUNCHES A TORPEDO...

Then it rockets toward the nearest moon, laser and cannon fire following it.

Torpedo impacts the battle ship. Everything disappears in an INTENSE WHITE LIGHT. Seconds pass, the light dims, and a huge explosion breaks the battle ship in two. Instantly, a shockwave starts to spread out, hits the destroyer. The destroyer is knocked on its side and collides with the bow half of the much larger Battle ship. A fire starts amidships, then the destroyer's ammunition begins to cook off. IT EXPLODES AND BURNS.

157 EXT. PALADIN'S BROADSWORD

157

Shockwave gains on the bomber, catches it!

158 INT. PALADIN'S COCKPIT

158

The pulse wave hits, and all electronics fry and go dead. Paladin begins to spin as if he were in a dryer. His hand reaches the manual eject controls, and jerks the handle.

159 EXT. PALADIN'S BROADSWORD

159

The ejection pod tumbles free of the Broadsword. It slowly rotates away from the stricken bomber, which grows smaller and smaller. Then it impacts on the surface of the airless moon in a cloud of ancient dust.

160 INT. PALADIN'S POD

160

The cockpit section of the Broadsword, encased in the pod, rotates down toward the surface of the meteor-pocked moon. Paladin's head has a gash, and blood streams into his eyes.

PALADIN

Well, it was fun while it lasted.

He tries to reactivate his electronics and fire the boosters, but nothing works. The white surface of the moon draws nearer. Then he accepts it, grins, remembers a few lines from his school days....

PALADIN (CONT'D)

(murmurs; half smile)

"...My mind misgives some consequence,
yet hanging in the stars, shall
bitterly begin his fearful date with
this night's revels...."

A SUDDEN, BRUTAL JERK steadies the pod and stops its rotation. Paladin is astonished. He looks down at the moon, then blinks up at the underbelly of Blair's Rapier, and the faint illumination of a tractor beam. BLAIR PEERS down at him, salutes.

161 EXT. NEAR TIGER CLAW

161

The remaining Kilrathi fighters break off their engagements and high tail it back toward the far side of the twin moons.

162 EXT. MANIAC & FORBES RAPIERS

162

MANIAC

Forbes, let's have some fun.

FORBES

I thought you'd never ask.

Maniac and Forbes gun their two Rapiers after the fleeing ships. Then...

DEVERAUX (O.S.)

Baker One to all Baker pilots. Return to the ship. Repeat, return to the ship!

FORBES

Maniac?

MANIAC

The night's still young. One last dance won't hurt...

163 EXT. FLEEING KILRATHI FIGHTERS

163

Suddenly two Dralthi veer around and head back, on a collision course.

164 INT. FORBES COCKPIT

164

Forbes sees the oncoming Dralthi...

FORBES

They're trying to ram! I guess they're not in a dancing mood. Spoilsports!

...and opens fire with everything she's got. The Dralthi disintegrates right in front of her.

MANIAC'S POV: The second Dralthi coming straight at him...

MANIAC

Watch this Rosie.

And Maniac guns his Rapier right at the Dralthi...

FORBES

Shoot him...MANIAC, OPEN FIRE!

But Maniac continues on a collision course. Forbes brings her Rapier in behind Maniac, trying to get a shot on the Dralthi...

FORBES (CONT'D)

Shoot him, or I will!

MANIAC

It's all in the timing...

The Dralthi and Maniac's fighter are within seconds of colliding...

When Maniac ROLLS his fighter sideways, pulls his nose up and lets loose a volley of cannon fire into the Dralthi's cockpit! The Dralthi critically hit, JUST MISSES Maniac's ship and spirals out of control right into...

166 EXT. FORBES'S RAPIER

166

Maniac realizes, but it's too late!

MANIAC (O.S.)
(shouting)
Rosie, shit! PULL UP!

But Forbes can't react quick enough -- The Dralhti strikes the side of her ship, amid a shower of sparks.

167 EXT. FORBES & MANIAC'S RAPIERS

167

Maniac comes alongside Forbes heavily damaged fighter. One entire side has been nearly shorn away. One engine remains. Still Forbes, injured, is holding her steady. Maniac eases his Rapier in until he can look into her cockpit.

MANIAC
Rosie. Can you hold her?

FORBES
I could fly this thing and cook you breakfast.

But the Rapier wobbles and veers dangerously.

168 INT. FORBES & MANIAC'S COCKPITS

168

Forbes steadies her craft.

MANIAC
Hey, quit showing off.

FORBES
Impressive, huh?

MANIAC
Eject. I'll tractor you in.

FORBES
You'd love that, wouldn't you? The ejection system is fried.

MANIAC
Just stay with me, Rosie. We'll do it together.

The two Rapiers are, in fact, coming in on the open doors to the Tiger Claw's flight deck.

169 FORBES POV - THE TIGER CLAW

169

Forbes fighter continues to shutter and yaw. She fights it and lines up on the flight deck, a yellow beam of light leading the way.

FORBES
Jeez, the ship looks worse than I do
after a three day shore pass.

INTERCUT WITH:

170 INT. MANIAC'S COCKPIT

170

He glances over at Forbes cockpit, only yards away.

MANIAC
(over radio)
Baker three and four to Con. We're
coming in. Clear away everything that
isn't bolted down.

FLIGHT BOSS
(responds; radio)
Roger that, Baker three and four. Clear
to land.

MANIAC
(worried, now)
We're coming in too hot.

FORBES
Sorry, but my brakes are in the shop.

MANIAC
Line it up. That's it.

FORBES
Piece of cake. Just like before.

MANIAC
Except that you're right side up.

FORBES
(almost chuckles)
I knew something was wrong!

MANIAC
Almost there.

Through the canopy, Maniac can see the doors widening
like a giant mouth. They're moving too fast. He glances
over. Forbes Rapier is shuttering and yawing.

MANIAC
Okay... Easy. Just ease it in.

Forbes is fighting the controls with all her might.

FORBES
(tension in her voice)
I love it when you talk dirty.

MANIAC
Pull up! Pull up!

172 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW

172

The two Rapiers appear in the door. Maniac's Rapier manages to land, but Forbes catches a wing and FLIPS ONTO ITS BACK, slides to a stop outside the air lock force field.

Maniac's craft nearly crashes before he can stop. He pops the canopy and leaps out, running toward the crash.

BLAIR runs after him. In the background we can see Blair's Rapier and Paladin, being tended by a Medic.

BLAIR
She's outside the air lock! You go through the force field and you're jello!

MANIAC
(Out of control)
Get me a suit! Get me a suit!

He runs toward the force field, staring through it at the wreckage of Forbes Rapier.

MANIAC (CONT'D)
(Screams)
Rosie! Rosie!

173 EXT. TIGER CLAW

173

A dozen Rapiers are still hovering outside the flight deck doors in formation.

174 INT. DEVERAUX'S COCKPIT

174

Deveraux looks out through her canopy, sees the wreckage of Forbes' Rapier.

DEVERAUX
Forbes? Rosie? Can you hear me? Rosie?
Answer. Just key your mike, if you can.
Come on girl. Just one little click.

174A INT. FORBES COCKPIT.

174A

She mortally wounded and knows it. She won't break radio silence and risk the rest of her comrades in a vain attempt to save her. She ignores Deveraux's pleas.

174B INT. DEVERAUX'S COCKPIT

174B

None of the other pilots breaks the long silence.
Until...

HUNTER

I've got approximately ninety seconds
of fuel left, Commander.

PILOT'S VOICE

Ditto, for me.

Deveraux studies the wreckage. Could anyone have
survived? Finally....

DEVERAUX

Rosie....?

(silence)

Baker Leader to Con. Push that wreckage
off the deck!

Deveraux can't take her eyes off the wreckage.

175 INT. FLIGHT DECK

175

An AUTOMATED BULLDOZER-LIKE VEHICLE with a big blade in
front, built expressly for this purpose, trundles toward
the air lock curtain and the Rapier wreckage. The noise
makes Maniac turn.

MANIAC

Hey...? What are you doing? Hey!

Maniac runs past the heavy vehicle and looks up at the
Con Tower windows, in the wall above him. He can see the
grim faced Flight Boss there. He begins waving his arms.

MANIAC (CONT'D)

Hey! You can't do this! You can't do
this. Stop! Stop! Please!

The bulldozer goes through the force field. Maniac runs
after it. Last second, BLAIR tackles him!

BLAIR

There's nothing you can do!

MANIAC

Get off me you Pilgrim son-of-a-bitch!

He hits Blair hard in the mouth. Blood spurts, and
Blair's grip on Maniac breaks. Maniac runs towards the
bulldozer. But Blair manages to wrestle him to the
ground.

BLAIR

(angry)

Are you going to kill yourself too?

Held by Blair, Maniac watches in silent horror as the
bulldozer PUSHES THE RAPIER WRECKAGE OFF THE DECK.

177 INT. DEVERAUX'S COCKPIT

177

HER POV: The wreckage of Forbes' Rapier tumbling away. The cockpit has been cracked. It's surface reflects light into Deveraux's eyes once, then it floats clear of her line of sight. A moment passes. Then....

DEVERAUX

Baker Leader to Con. Request permission to land.

178 INT. FLIGHT DECK

178

The waiting Rapiers land. Deveraux's Rapier is the last one in...

179 INT. BRIDGE TIGER CLAW

179

Sansky is nowhere to be seen. The remaining officers look haggard and exhausted. Gerald is looking at a panel of scanners.

180 ON SCANNER SCREEN --

180

A deep crater, half in shadow.

GERALD

There. Put her down there!

181 EXT. TIGER CLAW - MOON SURFACE

181

The big, crippled ship eases into black shadow of the crater, until only its lights are visible. Then, it kills its lights, becomes nearly invisible.

A moment later, A LARGE DRONE, first seen from its fiery exhaust, hoves into view, gets its bearings and streaks into space. It has several strange antennae and domes on its hull.

182 INT. BRIDGE TIGER CLAW

182

The bridge is in near darkness, except for the moonglow and the monitors. Deveraux and Paladin arrive on the bridge. They look at each other -- where is Sansky?

OBUTU

Decoy away, Commander. She has a bigger electronic signature than the Concordia. I think she'll fool them, sir.

GERALD

I hope you're right. Secure all active scanners. Passive systems only.

Gerald turns his attention to the bank of visual scanners. Everyone else also stops what they are doing...

High above them, they can see a series of bright dots in formation.

OBUTU

There. The Kilrathi battle group.

No one speaks, transfixed by the image on the little screen. The seconds feel more like years. Then...

RADAR MAN

They've missed us. They're following the decoy.

There is a moment of wild cheering. But Paladin hears something.

PALADIN

Quiet!

This startles everyone into silence. Then they hear it... the steady beep-beeping of a radar detector.

PALADIN (CONT'D)

A destroyer...hunting for us.

The passive radar detector increases in frequency.

RADAR MAN

They've spotted us!

PALADIN

No. We're in a dense radiation belt. Gamma rays are clouding their screens. If they don't see us... they won't find us.

This is cold comfort as the steady beeping of the radar detector grows more insistent.

183 EXT. ABOVE MOON - KILRATHI DESTROYER 183

The Destroyer LAUNCHES A MISSILE into a crater. A mushroom cloud rises from the surface of the moon.

184 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 184

The ship vibrates as a seismic tremor passes under it.

GERALD

They're nuking every crater. Methodical bastards.

The pinging sounds come closer and closer together.

185 EXT. ABOVE THE CRATER

185

The Kilrathi destroyer launches another missile. It streaks into the far side of the crater, the half in sunlight. The Destroyer moves on, a mushroom cloud rising behind it.

186 INT. VARIOUS STATIONS - TIGER CLAW

186

The ship is rocked by a POWERFUL SHOCK WAVE.

HANGER BAY: Men and equipment are thrown about. Olivia and Jones are CRUSHED as a damaged Rapier tears free of it's moorings! Fire erupts.

TORPEDO ROOM: The shock CRACKS OPEN A TUBE, sucking the atmosphere out of the room. Men are LIFTED INTO THE AIR and pulled screaming into the fractured tube. Others try to reach the far hatchway. Spaceman RODRIGUEZ punches the emergency button. The hatch door slides shut, trapping Rodriguez and the remaining men inside. RODRIGUEZ'S face appears in the porthole.

REVERSE ANGLE: On the faces of the crewmen safe on the other aide of the door, as they watch Rodriguez die horribly inside.

190 INT. FLIGHT DECK

190

Blair picks himself off the deck, reacts to a sudden whistling sound....Then others hear it, look around, fear evident.

BLAIR

What's that sound?

PETERSON

The doors are failing!

The outer bay doors begin to groan and warp slightly. Light objects nearby fly up and stick to a crack in the seal between the doors.

PETERSON (CONT'D)

(shouting to his crew)

Grab anything that will seal it! Now!

MANIAC squats at the edge of the flight deck, watches with a blank expression as plots and crewmen race into action.

BLAIR is running for the crack when he sees a composite wing of a Rapier next to a damaged fighter that was being repaired.

BLAIR

Someone help me!

The wing is too heavy for Blair alone. Peterson hurries over to help. It can barely be lifted by both of them. The whistling grows more ominous. Debris is flying around the flight deck, being sucked toward the crack in the doors

BLAIR (CONT'D)

Come on. We can do it.

They haul the wing close to the doors. The suction from the crack is so strong that the only thing keeping Blair and Peterson anchored to the floor is the weight of the wing.

MANIAC sees BLAIR trip over a piece of debris on the deck. He stumbles, losing his grip on the wing.

HE'S sucked towards the crack--a dead man--until he manages to grab on to a hook bolted to the deck.

The other pilots and crew members hang back, not willing to risk their lives to save Blair.

MANIAC stands. BLAIR clings to the hook but his grip is slipping. The crew members watch, frozen in inaction, HUNTER prominent. He's not going to risk his neck for a Pilgrim.

MANIAC

You sons of bitches just going to watch him die?

Maniac grabs a cable that was ripped loose from it's moorings, wraps it around his waist.

MANIAC (CONT'D)

Secure this.

He tosses the loop of cable over to the other pilots and starts towards Blair.

THE CRACK splits open even wider and the increased suction pulls Maniac off his feet. He flies towards the crack, then the cable PULLS TIGHT. It stops him from being sucked through, but cinches so tightly around his waist that it seems to almost cut him in two.

He swallows a scream, clutches the cable with one hand, and like a rock climber skipping across a cliff face, makes his way to Blair.

MANIAC (CONT'D)

(choked)

Grab on!

BLAIR releases his grip on the hook and clings to Maniac.

MANIAC (CONT'D)
 (screaming at the crew)
 Come on!

Crew members pull Maniac and Blair away from the crack.

Meanwhile Peterson and several other crew members have HOISTED THE RAPIER WING UPRIGHT. Anchoring themselves to the deck, they release it -- the tremendous force of the vacuum outside SUCKS the heavy metal wing up against the crack LIKE IT WERE A LEGO TOY. The shrieking howl becomes a slight tea kettle.

A REPAIR CREW arrives in a cart carrying two large metal bottles. They blast around the wing with a thick, viscous containment foam that hardens instantly into a solid mass, seals the leak.

BLAIR AND MANIAC huddle together for a moment, and BLAIR helps Maniac un-cinch the cable from around his waist. As the cable falls away, we see A RING OF BLOOD around Maniac's waist, where the cable has cut into him.

MANIAC (CONT'D)
 Space age liposuction, huh Pilgrim?

He falls to his knees, nearly passing out. Blair supports him.

BLAIR
 Let's get you to sick bay, buddy.

He struggles to lift Maniac.

MANIAC
 I'm sorry, man. I didn't mean it....I killed her. I pushed it too far.

And he passes out.

197 EXT. TIGER CLAW - MOON CRATER 197

The stricken ship bleeds air and debris into the void.

198 INT. SANSKY'S QUARTERS - TIGER CLAW 198

Sansky is propped up, very weak. IV tubes are sticking out of his arm. A grim GERALD stands over him.

GERALD
 Sir, they have known our every move before we make it. And all since Paladin...Commodore Taggart, Marshall, and Blair have come aboard. Then the ULF signals. There is a traitor on board the Tiger Claw--

PALADIN (O.S.)
Make your point, Mr. Gerald.

GERALD and SANSKY look at the door, see PALADIN standing there.

GERALD
The boy's a Pilgrim.

PALADIN
And in your eyes, that makes him guilty of treason?

GERALD
...Yes, sir, it does.

PALADIN
(Shakes his head, disgusted.)
Lt. Blair risked his life to save mine today. He's as good they get. And I've fought with the best. He can fly on my wing any mission, any time. Now I urge you to get over that damned war, Commander. We have another to fight.

GERALD
(Spits the word out.)
Commodore. Sir. With all due respect to your apparent rank. You are a Naval Intelligence officer. You don't know a damned thing about space combat, strategy, or war.

PALADIN
I knew enough not to send Deveraux's wing on a wild goose chase while the Tiger Claw was attacked.

GERALD
And if we had been destroyed, you would have been safely out of harms way.

SANSKY
(Breaking in.)
None of this matters now. What does, is our survival and our mission....
Welcome aboard, Commodore. Do you have any orders for me?

PALADIN
Sir, this is your ship. I offer you every assistance in the current crisis.

SANSKY looks at Paladin, nods.

SANSKY
As matters stand we need all the help we can get.
(MORE)

SANSKY (cont'd)

The ship has suffered massive damage,
and we have almost no operational
fighters left.

PALADIN

The Kilrathi will be at the jump point
in three hours and we still don't know
their capabilities or plan of attack.

(Touching the bulkhead)

I think this old lady's got a little
fight left in her yet.

GERALD

...Engineering took a direct hit. Our
fuel cells are ninety percent gone. We
don't have enough power to keep up with
the air pumps, let alone get under way.
Barring a miracle, we've failed.

PALADIN

Failure is not an option, Commander.
And if it's a miracle we need, I
suggest we find a way to make one.
Understood?

GERALD

...Yes, sir!

198A EXT. KILRATHI BATTLE GROUP

198A

The massive ships head through space, the Charbydis
Quasar a distant swirl of color.

SUPERIMPOSE: KILRATHI BATTLE GROUP. 2 HOURS FROM THE
CHARBYDIS JUMP POINT.

198B INT. SNAKEIR - BRIDGE

198B

Admiral looks out the windows at the distant Charbydis
Quasar. TRAITOR stands behind him.

TRAITOR

You should have sent more ships. The
Tiger Claw is alive, and still a
threat.

ADMIRAL looks at the traitor, contempt and hate evident.

ADMIRAL

Go to the ConCom. Prepare the jump
coordinates and transmit them to the
fleet.

199 INT. TIGER CLAW - FLIGHT DECK

199

The deck looks better. Each surviving pilot heads up his
own maintenance team, trying to refurbish the remaining
Rapier.

Other crewmen try to repair the sprung door seals in the background as Blair comes out on the deck, sees Deveraux hunched under her own fighter. He approaches her.

BLAIR
Commander. Can I talk to you?

DEVERAUX emerges from under her plane. She still looks shaken from Forbes' death, but she can't let go of her stiffness towards Blair.

DEVERAUX
Sure, I've got a minute.

BLAIR
Can we stop the bullshit, please.

DEVERAUX'S shocked to hear Blair talk so bluntly.

BLAIR (CONT'D)
I just came to tell you I'm sorry about Forbes.

DEVERAUX
...Who?

BLAIR
(Shakes his head.)
It's a shitty game, Angel. And you know it. You don't just forget the people you loved. They deserve more than that. Rosie deserves more than that....It was a stupid way for her to die.

DEVERAUX
...What do you want, Blair?

BLAIR
Help.

DEVERAUX
I'm all out.

Turns back to the Rapier.

BLAIR
Maniac loved her.

DEVERAUX stiffens.

BLAIR (cont'd)
He blames himself for what happened. You don't talk to him, he's going to do something stupid. He's going to get dead.

DEVERAUX
I'll think about it.

BLAIR
...If there's anything--.

DEVERAUX
I know...

BLAIR turns to go.

DEVERAUX (cont'd)
Chris. Thanks.

201 EXT. TIGER CLAW - LATER 201

Work crews in space suits continue to repair the hull. Then, a sound is superimposed, the STEADY BEEP-BEEPING of a locator beacon.

202 INT. GERALD'S OFFICE - TIGER CLAW 202

Small and cramped, Gerald sits at his desk reviewing damage reports. Several holos of Gerald at the Naval Academy sit on his desk. He picks one up, reflecting.

Intercom buzzes and Obutu's voice comes over the channel:

OBUTU (VO)
Sir. You better come to the bridge. We have trouble. Kilrathi ship!

GERALD
On my way.

Gerald drops the holo-pic, exits fast....

CLOSE ON HOLO-PIC: A younger Gerald stands proudly next to his fellow graduating class...and standing right next to him is the Traitor.

204 INT. BRIDGE TIGER CLAW 204

PALADIN is already there, wearing a space suit, minus helmet. GERALD AND DEVERAUX arrive. They hear the telltale sound of an incoming ship.

DEVERAUX
What is she? Another destroyer?

GERALD
It doesn't matter. We can't take another round of bombardment.

DEVERAUX
We'll go down fighting -- the air lock isn't functioning, but we managed to get the flight deck doors operational. We have four Rapiers ready to go.

PALADIN
We'll do better than that, Deveraux.
That ship up there is going to save our
ass.

205 INT. MANIAC'S QUARTERS

205

Klaxon bells announce the upcoming mission but Maniac, bandage wrapped around his bare chest, seems oblivious. HE just lies there. Door open with a hiss.

DEVERAUX (O.S.)
What the hell are you doing,
Lieutenant? Get off your sorry ass and
suit up!

MANIAC
(expressionless)
Ma'am?

DEVERAUX
I need my best pilots out there.

SHE strides away, but her act of forgiveness has worked. MANIAC grabs his flight suit, his expression half way between that crazed smile of his and tears.

206 INT. FIGHT DECK.

206

The Diligent, and two Rapiers are being readied for a launch. A squad of Marines marches into the Diligent in space suits. GERALD, in a space-suit, is among them.

207 INT. DILIGENT - HATCH

207

PALADIN and BLAIR are supervising the boarding from inside the Diligent's hatch. They are not happy to see Gerald marching up the gangplank.

PALADIN
I think you're on the wrong ship,
Commander.

GERALD
I still have a responsibility to this
crew, Commodore. And, excuse my
bluntness, but if you think I'm going
to let my men be flown into combat by a
rogue and a half-breed you are sadly
mistaken.

With that GERALD pushes past them. PALADIN looks at Blair. With a wink:

PALADIN
I believe I'm starting to genuinely
like that man.

209 EXT. ABOVE MOON ASTEROID BELT

209

The Diligent lurks behind an asteroid, its form folded into its ragged ridge line. A shadow passes over her, and a large Kilrathi ship--the ConCom ship seen earlier--passes directly over her. Two Dralhti escorting.

210 INT. BRIDGE - DILIGENT

210

GERALD, PALADIN, DEVERAUX and BLAIR, all in full space suits, listen to the searching radar signal. Behind them, we see THE MARINES checking equipment dropping clips into weapons.

THEIR POV, through the Diligent windows: The ConCom ship.

DEVERAUX

That's no destroyer.

BLAIR

It's the Communication ship we came up against.

GERALD

They'll spot our heat corona, soon.

PALADIN

They won't have the chance. Blair, man the ion gun.

(pushes radio button)

Hit it.

211 EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

211

The two Rapiers streak from behind meteorites and engage the Dralhti. The Kilrathi ComCon ship begins to veer away, but as it passes the asteroid, the Diligent leaves its cover and heads for it. Maniac's Rapier DESTROYS THE FIRST DRALTHI.

MANIAC (O.S.)

(over radio)

Yeah!

The second Rapier is engaged in a winding, twisting dogfight. Maniac veers his fighter to engage the second Kilrathi.

TWO MORE DRALTHI suddenly appear from around the moon, on full afterburner.

215 INT. DILIGENT - BLAIR'S GUN POSITION

215

From his dome, he can see the Dralhti coming right at them!

BLAIR

Two more Bogies at six o'clock!

Blair opens fire at one of the attackers, who return fire, then veers off.

216 INT. BRIDGE - DILIGENT

216

Paladin is piloting the Diligent up toward the larger Kilrathi ship.

PALADIN

(over intercom)

Marines, to your stations!

217 INT. BAY DILIGENT

217

The Marines, in pressure suits, lock and load their weapons, gather around the bay door.

PALADIN (O.S.)

(over intercom)

As soon as you get in, go straight for the bridge. We've got to get control of that ship before they scuttle her.

218 INT. DILIGENT - BLAIR'S GUN

218

A second Dralhti makes its attack run, cannons blazing. Blair tracks him and blasts him to fragments.

BLAIR

Yes!

219 EXT. KILRATHI COMMUNICATIONS SHIP

219

The Diligent is alongside, inching closer to the upper deck. The Diligent's docking umbilical extends...

220 INT. BRIDGE - DILIGENT

220

DEVERAUX

They can't use missiles, now. We're too close.

THEIR POV, through the window: A Dralhti fighter appears, heads straight for them.

GERALD

He's going to ram us!

222 INT. DRALTHI COCKPIT

222

The Kilrathi, in an opaque space helmet, streaks in, the image of the Diligent reflected on his face plate.

222A INT. COCKPIT - MANIAC

222A

Maniac depresses his joystick.

MANIAC
Heads up, asshole!

222B INT. DRALTHI COCKPIT

222B

The Kilrathi turns his head, sees Maniac's Rapier bearing down on him. HE can clearly see Maniac giving him the finger.

222C EXT. NEAR KILRATHI COMCON SHIP

222C

Maniac's Rapier collides with the Dralathi cockpit, SHEERING IT OFF NEATLY. The Dralathi spins wildly out of control and crashes into the Communications ship!

222D INT. COCKPIT - MANIAC

222D

Maniac's damaged Rapier shakes, rattle and rolls.

MANIAC
That's for you, Rosie.

227 EXT. KILRATHI COMCON SHIP

227

The Diligent's umbilical latches onto the Kilrathi ship.

228 INT. CORRIDOR - KILRATHI SHIP

228

A section of wall glows white hot, exploding inwards! Revealing the Diligent's airlock -- which depressurizes and opens. Spacesuited Confed Marines come towards us in a surreal zero-g grace, and leading the charge...Deveraux!

229 INT. DILIGENT -- BLAIR'S GUNNERY STATION

229

BLAIR can hear radio crosstalk and sounds of battle as he scans his radar screen. MERLIN'S voice comes out of nowhere.

MANIAC
I'm picking up some strange
electromagnetic emissions from the
Kilrathi ship.

BLAIR
So?

MANIAC
They're Pilgrim. The same ULF
frequency I picked up earlier.

This gets Blair's attention.

BLAIR
Where?

MERLIN
Deck two, aft section. The bridge.

BLAIR looks at the radar, considers, pulls out his Pilgrim cross, kisses it, places it on the outside of his suit. He attaches his helmet and grabs a weapon. As he exits the Diligent, he can see PALADIN and GERALD in the cockpit, their backs to him.

230 INT. CORRIDOR - KILRATHI SHIP

230

Blair comes through the hole, weapon ready, swings into the corridor, and right into a Kilrathi! It's dead, floating gruesomely in the airless corridor.

MERLIN
I believe there's another way. To the right.

BLAIR, looks left, can just make out the signs of battle, weighs his options, goes right.

Inside of the Kilrathi ship is alien, hard, grotesque. Sharp angles and exposed tubes give it almost a predatory feel, like the lair of some jungle animal. He comes to an airlock. Hitting the pressure plate he steps inside.

The green fog-like atmosphere that the Kilrathi breathe makes it difficult to see, makes the alien architecture creepy, gruesome. Blair switches his suit to thermal imaging.

BLAIR'S POV (THROUGH THERMAL IMAGER): Similar to normal vision except that forms are more defined, details less so. Anything "hot" is enhanced.

230A INT. CORRIDOR - KILRATHI SHIP

230A

MARINES push forward hard towards a heavily defended hatch way. Air is alive with laser fire, the stink of cordite, and the oppressive feeling of death. Bodies, both Kilrathi and human, litter the deck. A Marine's hit, and DEVERAUX pulls him out of the line of fire.

234 INT. BRIDGE - KILRATHI SHIP

234

Two Kilrathi warriors stand at the door, weapons ready. Behind them, a KILRATHI OFFICER prowls nervously, watches a bank of monitors which show the battle raging in the ship's corridors. He keys a code into the main console and glances at the big, RED BUTTON set in the center of the console.

233 INT. BRIDGE - DILIGENT

233

PALADIN
(over intercom)
Blair! Blair? Answer your station...

No answer. Gerald turns, looks down the long corridor to the gunnery station. Empty. To Paladin:

GERALD
You should have never brought that half-breed on this mission. His orders were to stay on this ship. Stay here. I'll find him.

GERALD locks his helmet in position, cocks his gun and heads for the air-lock. Paladin looks worried.

233A INT. UNFAMILIAR CORRIDOR - KILRATHI SHIP

233A

BLAIR's head appears from a lower deck. Cautious, he pans the area, climbs up to the deck. In front of him is a hatchway. HE looks through the small window.

HIS POV: The Bridge. THE KILRATHI OFFICER'S fixated on the monitor. Slowly, he turns to an effigy of the god, Sivar, kneels before it. Then HE stands, walks towards the red button, hand raised.

BLAIR drops an explosive round into the grenade launcher section of his weapon, lines it on the door.

233B INT. BRIDGE -- KILRATHI SHIP

233B

The KILRATHI OFFICER utters a ritual phrase in Kilrathi. Subtitle's read: "I am honored to die for the glory of Kilrah, the Emperor, and the Empire."

Three Kilrathi react as the door's blown off its hinges! Thing spins into the room in an explosion of smoke steel.

KILRATHI OFFICER recovers, brings a clawed hand down on the self-destruct button. He's blown back by a laser blast as BLAIR, weapon lined and firing, rolls in.

KILRATHI WARRIORS return fire! BLAIR has to dive away as the wall behind him is torn up. HE ends up on the other side of console.

WARRIORS close on him, weapons firing, slugs tearing into the console, ripping it to pieces.

BLAIR'S POV: Massive, armored feet closing on his position from both sides, flanking him.

Last second, he rolls under the console, pops up, fires point blank into the back of a Warrior's head. Blast spatters tissue and crimson fluid on the wall.

BLAIR snaps around, tries to line his weapon on the second Kilrathi. Too late. Thing's right there. An armored fist knocks Blair's weapon away. Backhand sends him spinning back. HE lands hard on the floor.

WARRIOR looms over him, picks him up by his vest, lifts him off the floor, holds him up.

Four inch serrated claws appear in the thing's right hand. It cocks its arm, ready to strike...stops, lets Blair go, stumbles back.

Lodged in its chest is Blair's Pilgrim cross. BLAIR watches the thing fall to the floor.

MERLIN

Nicely done.

BLAIR pulls the cross from dead Kilrathi, wipes the blade, puts it around his neck.

BLAIR

Thanks for the help.

MERLIN

I'm a hologram. Don't touch the red button.

BLAIR looks around the room. On the counter he dove behind, he sees a black box with a score of cables emanating from it, some leading to a monitor that is scrolling numbers. A piece of the door lies on top of the box, partially obscures it. He can see the letters "NAV."

BLAIR

What the hell?

BLAIR pulls the piece of door away, sees the words PEGASUS NAVCOM A.I. stenciled on them.

BLAIR (cont'd)

They have the Charbydis jump coordinates, Merlin.

MERLIN

They have more than that. I'm picking up strong electromagnetic emissions from the panel to the right. It's a ULF signal. They're the Tiger Claw's coordinates.

BLAIR moves to the big communications panel, ponders the strange script and numerical readouts.

BLAIR

What's the source?

MERLIN
...The Tiger Claw.

BLAIR
A traitor on the Claw?

MERLIN
It gets worse. It's encrypted with an executive level code.

BLAIR
Who has access to those codes?

MERLIN
Only Sansky and Gerald.

Panel flashes, and suddenly, the code numbers and letters start to scroll by at increasing speed.

MERLIN (CONT'D)
It just went from ULF to Ultra High Frequency. The Tiger Claw just became a beacon. Every Kilrathi ship in the sector will be able to find her.

BLAIR reacts to a sound, spins around, sees GERALD standing behind him, weapon lined.

GERALD
"Every Kilrathi ship in the sector will be able to find her." You treacherous piece of Pilgrim garbage. I'd should feed you to these things.

BLAIR
Looks like you'll get your chance. They owe you a few favors, don't they Mr. Gerald.

GERALD crosses the deck in several long deliberate strides.

GERALD
Mr. Blair...

He smashes Blair across the side of the head with the butt of his weapons, sends Blair sprawling to the deck.

GERALD (CONT'D)
I believe you just called me traitor.

GERALD lines the weapon on Blair's head, pulls the slide back, motions to the panel with a nod.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Turn it off.

BLAIR looks at Gerald. If it's not him, then its....

A hallow, very human laugh cuts through the tension. Both men snap around, react at the sight of the Traitor, weapon lined.

TRAITOR (O.S.)
Human fools. To think we came from you.

GERALD
Jake? But the Pegasus? You're dead.

TRAITOR
No....But you are. You all are.

His finger tenses on the trigger.

BLAIR
Wait!

BLAIR lifts the cross from his chest, holds it high.

TRAITOR
Where did you get that cross, boy?

BLAIR stands, cross held in front of him.

BLAIR
It was my mother's. I'm one of you, friend....A Pilgrim. The same blood runs through our veins.

TRAITOR studies Blair for a long moment, motions to Gerald.

TRAITOR
When you look at that...thing, what do you feel?

BLAIR looks at Gerald with a dead and deadly expression.

BLAIR
...Hate.

TRAITOR
...If you're a Pilgrim, prove it. Kill it.

BLAIR nods, reaches for his weapon.

TRAITOR (CONT'D)
With the blade, boy.

Slowly, Blair's hand moves away from the weapon. HE pulls the cross from his neck. A whooshing sound as the blade periscopes out. GERALD pulls an ugly looking fighting knife from his vest, assumes a fighting stance.

GERALD
Come on, Pilgrim, pass your test.

BLAIR and GERALD circle one another, blades moving in slow, almost hypnotic patters. BLAIR feints left and Gerald tries to cut him. Blades spark. GERALD kicks Blair. Blow knocks Blair off balance, gives Gerald the advantage. HE swings, cuts Blair in the arm. Two men circle. Then GERALD makes a mistake: with a head fake, he stabs at Blair. BLAIR catches Gerald's arm, steps in, and in a classic jujitsu move, sweeps his legs out. GERALD lands hard on his back, BLAIR standing over him, blade held high.

TRAITOR
Finish him!

BLAIR brings the down. But instead of digging it into Gerald, he throws it.

Cross flies through the air, catches the Traitor in the arm, pins it to the wall.

With a scream, TRAITOR pulls his arm off the wall, blade still in it, tries to line the weapon. Too late. BLAIR and GERALD both have weapons. Together, they fire. Laser blasts hit the traitor in the chest, send him spinning back.

GERALD looks at BLAIR, nods. Together, they walk to the dying traitor. TRAITOR holds Blair's bloody cross up.

TRAITOR (CONT'D)
But the cross?

BLAIR
Keep it.
(Turning to Gerald.)
Now do you want to know who your traitor is?

Suddenly, the doors open and DEVERAUX and Marines enter.

DEVERAUX
You alright in here?

GERALD
Secure the fuel cells. Blair and I have some business to take care of.

245 INT. SANSKY'S QUARTERS

245

Paladin and Gerald rush in, weapons drawn. Sansky is propped up in his bed, In his hand he holds SOMETHING.

GERALD
You betrayed us...and me. Why?

SANSKY
Because, Paul, the stars are our
destiny. And you tried to stand in the
way of that destiny.

GERALD
Your only destiny, old man, is death.
You failed.

SANSKY
(Smiling ironically.)
Have I?

And his hands fall lifelessly to his side. PALADIN
stoops over to pick it up.

CLOSE ON THE HOLO-PIC: It's the same graduation scene
that we saw on Gerald's desk. But this time, we see
Sansky standing at the Podium.

GERALD, staring at the dead Sansky, reacts to the
intercom. Obutu's voice comes over:

OBUTU (V.O.)
Engineering reports that the Kilrathi
fuel cells have been adapted. We have
60 percent power.

GERALD
Very well. Take us out of the crater.

251 EXT. TIGER CLAW NEAR MOON 251

The Tiger Claw, firing on one ion engine, moves away from
the moon crater.

250 INT. TIGER CLAW - BRIDGE 250

GERALD and PALADIN stand, watch as the massive ship lifts
up. BLAIR works on a shattered console.

GERALD
Prepare a drone. Input the Kilrathi
jump coordinates and send it through
the Charbydis Quasar to Admiral Tolwyn.
(To Paladin:)
With these, he'll be able to target the
exact location of the Kilrathi jump
entry. He'll smash them before they
can get their weapons on line.

PALADIN
If he's there, Mr. Gerald. If he's
there.

BLAIR
Sir, we have a problem. Drones are off
line.

GERALD
 (To Paladin.)
 We'll have to take the Tiger Claw
 through the jump point.
 (To Obutu:)
 Plot your course, Mr. Obutu.

OBUTU bangs at his navigational computer. Nothing happens.

OBUTU
 Sir, the NAVCOM A.I. is down.
 Executive over ride.

GERALD
 Sansky. Without those coordinates,
 Tolwyn doesn't have a chance. They've
 got too much firepower.

PALADIN
 We'll have to send a fighter through.

GERALD
 Impossible. There are over a thousand
 singularities in that Quasar. To jump
 it would be suicide without NAVCOM
 coordinates.

Looking at Blair.

PALADIN
 We don't need a NAVCOM, Mr. Gerald. We
 have a Pilgrim with the gift. Mr.
 Blair, you will navigate the Quasar.
 Deveraux will accompany you.

BLAIR looks at Paladin.

BLAIR
 Paladin, it's one in a million who can
 jump a Quasar.

PALADIN
 Looks like you just won the lottery.

GERALD
 You can't know he has the capacity.

PALADIN
 I know!

BLAIR fingers for his cross. Except it's not there. HE
 shakes his head.

BLAIR
 ...He's right. I don't have the faith.

PALADIN

It's not about faith, Blair. It's about genetics. A single marker attached to a single gene. It's the capacity to feel magnetic fields. And you do have it. But if you believe you need faith...

PALADIN reaches into his tunic, pulls a cross from under his vest--a Pilgrim Cross. GERALD reacts.

PALADIN (CONT'D)

Take mine.

HE tosses the cross to Blair. BLAIR looks at it.

BLAIR

Why didn't you tell me?

PALADIN

You didn't ask.

Two men's eyes hold for a long time.

OBUTU

Long range scanners are picking up Kilrathi ships, sir. Looks like a destroyer and a cruiser.

PALADIN

We'll create the diversion, son. Get those coordinates to Tolwyn.

252 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW

252

DEVERAUX'S climbing into her Rapier as BLAIR moves down the flight line. He stops when he hears a familiar voice: Hunter's:

HUNTER

Pilgrim.

BLAIR turns to Hunter, ready for a confrontation.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

I heard what you did on that Kilrathi ship. We all heard. You can fly my wing any time.

HUNTER extends a hand. BLAIR nods, takes it. As BLAIR walks down the flight line, each surviving member of the wing nods to him, shakes his hand. BLAIR stops by Maniac. MANIAC smiles. BLAIR'S about to speak when Maniac holds up a hand.

MANIAC

Don't say anything. I want to remember
your pretty face just like this. See
you on the other side, bro.

He bangs fists with Blair, and BLAIR swings into his
cockpit. Canopy lowers. Both fighters are firing their
engines up. Sound is deafening. Both salute the deck
officer...

253 EXT. TIGER CLAW

253

Blair and Deveraux's fighters launch into the void, swing
left towards the asteroid fields, the Tiger Claw turning
to the right.

Further out: Empty space... Then a long, large missile
with a warhead materializes as if from nowhere. It
adjusts course, AIMS AT THE TIGER CLAW in the distance,
vanishes.

255 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

255

A loud klaxon goes off.

GERALD

Report!

OBUTU

I have a bogie, vector 197 mark
3....Now it's gone.

PALADIN

It's a Skipper missile. We only pick
it up when it de-cloaks to take a radar
fix. Estimated time till impact?

RADAR MAN

Nine minutes, sir.

256 INT. COCKPITS - BLAIR & DEVERAUX

256

The two pilots streak into the blackness of space.

BLAIR

I've got a strong signal, at ten
o'clock. Now it's vanished.

DEVERAUX

It's a Skipper missile. Shit. The only
thing that can kill it is a star
fighter in visual contact. And that's
me!

And with that Deveraux banks hard right.

BLAIR

Hey, what are you doing?

DEVERAUX
Stay on course, Blair. Get through that
jump point!

BLAIR
What about our orders? Angel? Angel?

257 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

257

RADAR MAN
Six minutes...

OBUTU
Our shields are too weak to take a
direct hit.

PALADIN
It's in Blair and Deveraux's hands now.

258 EXT. SPACE - SKIPPER MISSILE

258

The Skipper missile "cloaks" in, re-adjusts it's course one more time and then disappears... A moment later, Deveraux's Rapier appears, afterburners kicking in, and streaking after the now invisible missile.

259 INT. COCKPIT - DEVERAUX

259

Her HEADS UP DISPLAY shows nothing.

DEVERAUX
(mutters)
Come on...

260 THROUGH COCKPIT PLEXIGLAS --

260

The Skipper missile de-cloaks and reappears, slightly off to her right. She veers, FIRING HER LASER CANNONS. The Skipper once again "CLOAKS" AND VANISHES, but Deveraux continues to lead it, FIRING ALONG ITS TRAJECTORY.

BLAIR (O.S.)
Angel! You're too close! Back off!

Suddenly, there is a FLASH OF FIRE, and the Skipper de-cloaks and reappears, SPINNING LIKE A CORKSCREW, BREAKING UP. Deveraux banks hard and veers away.

261 EXT. SPACE - SKIPPER MISSILE

261

Moments later, the Skipper missile EXPLODES, throwing an eerie, visible shock wave that CATCHES DEVERAUX'S RAPIER.

262 INT. COCKPIT - DEVERAUX

262

The Rapier begins coming apart. Deveraux EJECTS!

263 EXT. SPACE - BLAIR'S RAPIER

263

...slowly approaches the debris of the destroyed Rapier, and FIRES RETRO JETS, as it pulls alongside the tumbling ejection pod. Retros fire on the pod, stabilizing it.

Blair's cockpit is only yards from Deveraux in the pod. They look at each other across the void.

BLAIR

You okay?

DEVERAUX

Nothing broken.

264 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR

264

He looks out over the empty space between them and the tiny point of light that is the Tiger Claw.

BLAIR

You got it.

265 INTERCUT BETWEEN BLAIR AND DEVERAUX'S COCKPITS.

265

She shakes her head.

DEVERAUX

It got me.

BLAIR

Hang on. I'm going to tractor you back to the ship.

DEVERAUX

No! Go on. We can't both disobey orders.

BLAIR

You'll be out of air in an hour. You're going back to the ship.

DEVERAUX

You disobey my direct order and I'll have you court-martialed, Blair.

BLAIR

Like I care, Angel.

DEVERAUX

Then care about the billions of men and women and children who are going to die if the fleet doesn't get the Kilrathi jump coordinates.

Blair falls silent. She knows she's won. Their faces are only feet apart, separated by the cockpits.

DEVERAUX
You've gotta go. You know that.

BLAIR
(choking with emotion)
You're all right, Angel. I guess you
know that...

She smiles ruefully, then pulls her glove off and puts a
hand up on the Plexiglas.

DEVERAUX
You, too, Pilgrim.

There is a last moment... then Blair fires his retros and
eases slowly away from her as she watches. A last look,
and Blair ignites his engines. The Rapier streaks away.
The back wash rocks Deveraux's pod. She's already cold,
and begins to shiver.

266 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

266

The Radar Man looks up from his scope.

RADAR MAN
No sign of the Skipper missile. One of
the Rapiers must have shot it down.

PALADIN
Where are they now?

RADAR MAN
One continuing on course... and one
beacon signal from an ejection pod....
(sees something)
Kilrathi ships are closing.

GERALD
So what now?

PALADIN
What now, Mister Gerald? Now we make
the Kilrathi on those ships sorry they
were ever born!
(roars)
Battle stations!

The klaxons sound, and people jump to their stations on
the bridge.

267 INT. COCKPIT BLAIR

267

Blair eases around a large asteroid.

Through the canopy, he can just see the Kilrathi cruiser
and a destroyer moving slowly through the asteroid field.
When they pass, he ignites his engines, and blasts away,
weaving around asteroids as he goes.

269 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW 269

Maniac sits in his Rapier, salutes the deck control officer, and blasts into space.

270 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 270

GERALD
All fighters away.

RADAR MAN
Kilrathi cruiser and destroyer are in missile range. They're launching.

PALADIN
Open fire, Mister Gerald.

GERALD
Aye, aye, sir.
(into intercom)
All batteries, fire as she bears!

They watch as missiles flair out into space.

271 INT. EJECTION POD - DEVERAUX 271

The reflection of the great battle flashes on the Plexiglas as Deveraux watches.

REVERSE ANGLE: The great ships are like tiny toys, the fighters specks of light as they corkscrew and plunge. The blackness is illuminated with lasers and torpedoes exploding against the shields. The Kilrathi destroyer TAKES A TORPEDO IN ITS STERN, catches fire, begins to drift.

DEVERAUX shivers in the cold, her breath condensing on the Plexiglas. She wipes the mist away, breathing with difficulty, and continues to watch.

274 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 274

Blair is watching his heads up display intently. Behind it, is the swirling, angry mass of the Charbydis Quasar.

BLAIR
Merlin, check my coordinates.

MERLIN
(voice only)
Coordinates A-okay, boss. Three minutes to jump.

BLAIR
Firing jump drive.

He flicks a switch. There is an enormous six g jolt.

- 275 EXT. BLAIR'S RAPIER 275
The fighter transforms into a streak of light.
- 276 EXT. TIGER CLAW & KILRATHI CRUISER 276
The two ships are in close proximity, now, firing weapons, trying to batter down each others shields.
- 277 INT. BRIDGE TIGER CLAW 277
The Kilrathi cruiser is clearly visible coming head on.
- GERALD
What tac, sir?
- PALADIN
Steady on, Mister Gerald. Make them be the first to blink.
- Through the bridge windows, The Kilrathi cruiser appears larger and larger.
- 279 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 279
The Rapier begins to shimmy and shake.
- MERLIN
(voice only)
Ninety seconds to Jump point. But you're drifting off course.
- BLAIR
The quasar's gravity is affecting you. Shut up, or I'll shut you off.
- The Rapier begins to shake like it's going to come apart.
- 280 EXT. BEHIND JOVIAN PLANET MOON 280
The Kilrathi admiral's flagship, the Snakeir, fires its massive ion engines and drifts from behind the shadow of the moon.
- 281 INT. BRIDGE - SNAKEIR 281
The murky green atmosphere allows only silhouettes as Kilrathi move about. The Kilrathi Captain approaches the Admiral's chair.
- KILRATHI CAPTAIN
(subtitled)
A manned Confederation fighter is approaching the quasar jump point, Admiral. We're not in position to intercept.

KILRATHI ADMIRAL

He's going to warn the Confed fleet of our jump coordinates. Follow him. Instruct all ships to mark our course and follow us through. Sixty second intervals.

283 EXT. SNAKEIR

283

The giant ship turns, and accelerates, following a distant speck of light... Blair's Rapier.

284 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW

284

To the relief of everyone on the bridge, the Kilrathi cruiser veers right.

RADAR MAN

She's changing course!

PALADIN

(roaring)

Mister Gerald, prepare to lower our shield. Starboard missile battery, prepare to fire!

GERALD

Sir, the missile guidance systems won't activate at this range.

PALADIN

They won't need to. Arm warheads!

285 INT. MISSILE ROOM - TIGER CLAW

285

Men and women lock and load missiles, preparing to fire.

286 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW

286

Peterson and his crew brace themselves.

287 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR

287

The shaking is infernal.

MERLIN

(voice only)

Light speed mach point eight two. Twenty seconds to jump. Can you do it?

BLAIR

(Distorted by the shaking.)

Only one way to find out.

(Closes his eyes.)

Coordinates: 1 7 2 9 4 mark 3 3 4 8
vector 4 4 2 7 1 angle of attack 6 3 9
5 6 1 by 3 2 4 9....

HE closes his eyes.

288 EXT. TIGER CLAW & KILRATHI CRUISER 288

The Kilrathi pour cannon fire onto the Tiger Claw's shield as the two great ships come abreast of each other.

289 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 289

The ship is rocking with shock waves.

PALADIN

Lower shields. Give 'em a broadside,
Mister Gerald!

290 INT. MISSILE ROOM - TIGER CLAW 290

The missile room crew, fire their salvo, even as they are rocked by explosions from the cannon fire.

291 EXT. MANIAC'S RAPIER 291

Maniac blows a last Krant escort out of the air and turns upside down to avoid the fireball. Then he stares at the sight below him.

MANIAC

And they say I'm crazy.

292 TIGER CLAW AND KILRATHI CRUISER 292

A DOZEN GUIDED MISSILES streak from the Tiger Claw's battery as they bear on the cruiser, each striking the cruiser, piercing the shield, and EXPLODING AGAINST THE HULL!

A missile finds the Kilrathi bridge and destroys it. The cruiser rolls over and "capsizes" as its stern clears the devastating field of fire...

The Tiger Claw pulls clear as the Kilrathi ship is SHATTERED BY A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS, finally disintegrating in the void.

293 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 293

The vibration is accompanied by a strange noise. BLAIR continues to spout numbers: 4,7,5,5,3,9,9...as MERLIN counts down the seconds to jump.

MERLIN

Five seconds to jump. Four, three, two.

Suddenly, time and motion stop. All is silence.

294 INT. TIGER CLAW - BRIDGE & VARIOUS STATIONS 294

As one, officers and crew of the Tiger Claw scream, cheer, hug one another.

294A EXT. EARTH'S SOLAR SYSTEM 294A

Placid, calm. We can clearly see our system's nine planets, with Earth, blue, lush, alive...vulnerable, spinning in the distance.

Suddenly, a blinding flash of light, and Blair's Rapier appears, blasts past us, jump drive engines glowing.

296 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 296

Blair is ecstatic.

BLAIR

We did it! We did it! I love this baby!
She held together.

MERLIN

(voice only)
I'm not sure I did.

Blair flicks his radio switch.

BLAIR

Lieutenant Christopher Blair of the Tiger Claw calling any Confed Ship. A Kilrathi battle group has the Charbydis jump coordinates. They will breach at 167 mark 889, Sol system. Repeat, 167 mark 889, Sol system. Do you read?

BLAIR

Check your frequencies for any sign of the Confed fleet.

MERLIN

Nothing. Wait a minute. Check behind us.

BLAIR

Behind us?

Space, where Blair had been a moment before: A second, bigger, flash of light and the gigantic Snakeir appears through the warp in the time space continuum.

MERLIN (O.S.)

Kilrathi capital ship... Snakeir class.
They came through the jump point.

298 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 298

Blair pounds the instrument panel in frustration.

BLAIR
Shit! We're too late!

299 EXT. CONCORDIA - BEHIND PLUTO

299

The giant carrier gleams in the dull reflection from the planet. In the distance, other fleet ships hover silently.

300 INT. BRIDGE - CONCORDIA

300

Bellegarde approaches Tolwyn.

BELLEGARDE
Com. room reports faint message in clear from a Lieutenant Blair. He's broadcasting the Kilrathi jump coordinates.

TOLWYN
Blair? Like father, like son.

BELLEGARDE
Should we respond, sir?

RADAR MAN
(calling out)
Identifying Confed Rapier, heading toward Earth at LSM point nine. He's being followed by something massive, Admiral. Looks like a Snakeir.

BELLEGARDE
Permission to intercept it, Admiral?

TOLWYN
No. We wait.

BELLEGARDE
The Snakeir will overtake Blair's fighter.
(concerned)
Sir, if we don't intercept, the Snakeir will reach earth orbit before us. The casualties could be significant.

TOLWYN
(angry)
I'm bloody well aware of that, Richard. All ships are to hold their positions, and target those jump coordinates.

BELLEGARDE
(gets it)
If we jump him, we'd be out of position when the Kilrathi fleet comes through...

TOLWYN

We're after bigger game than the Snakeir. We need a resounding victory, or this war is over...

(reflects)

For that, I have to risk the lives of innocent civilians and one very brave young lieutenant...

301 EXT. BLAIR'S RAPIER

301

The Rapier streaks past. Well behind it, a large object is following, the Kilrathi Snakeir.

303 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR

303

Blair keeps trying to raise someone on the radio.

BLAIR

Blair to Confed Fleet. Do you read me? Kilrathi capital ship has penetrated the quasar jump point and is in Earth space. Copy!

Finally, he gives up.

BLAIR

They aren't in radio range. Earth will never see the Kilrathi coming.

MERLIN

(voice only)

I knew this was all going to end horribly... Did I mention we'll be in range of the Snakeir guns in ten minutes.

BLAIR

At least they can't launch torpedoes at this speed.

There is a LOUD RHYTHMIC BEEPING. Blair sits up, scans his heads up display.

BLAIR

There! Dead ahead. It's the fleet signaling. They've heard us!

(into radio)

Blair to Confed fleet. Kilrathi capital ship on my course, aft of my position! Confed fleet, do you read me?

But the beeping continues, louder. Blair stares at the screen.

BLAIR

Only one ship. But it's huge.

MERLIN

It isn't a ship. Check your scanners.

Blair turns on his telescopic scanner. Space shimmers, then he sees the warning beacon marking Scylla, the gravity well the Diligent negotiated on its way to the Tiger Claw. Behind it, space seems to shimmer.

MERLIN

All we need, Scylla. "Bane to sailors and monster of myth."

304 EXT. TIGER CLAW - ULYSSES CORRIDOR 304

Amidst the debris of the battle, the Tiger Claw with its meager fighter escort changes course.

305 INT. BRIDGE - TIGER CLAW 305

Obutu reports to Paladin.

OBUTU

We're hove to for repair inspection, sir.

PALADIN

What about that locator beacon from the Rapier pod?

RADAR MAN

Nothing sir. Lost contact during the battle.

PALADIN

We've lost too many good pilots today. Have the Diligent prepared for launch. I'm going to look for that pod.

OBUTU

Aye, aye, sir.

Paladin grimly walks from the bridge.

306 EXT. BLAIR'S RAPIER 306

The Rapier, seen from behind, is still on course toward Scylla. Not very far behind it, the immense Snakeir.

307 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 307

Blair sweats over the controls. There is an urgent alarm jangling his nerves further.

MERLIN

In case the alarms didn't cue you -- you'll be past the Point of No Return of Scylla in ninety seconds.

(MORE)

MERLIN (cont'd)
It's gravitational field will tear us
to pieces.

BLAIR
Solutions, Merlin! Not more problems.

Blair blinks hard at the scanner scope and the large,
swirling whirlpool of distorted space-time ahead. Then it
dawns on him.

BLAIR
How much does a Snakeir weigh?

MERLIN
Two hundred thousand tons, give or take
a few thousand.

Blair does a quick calculation, then flips on the
afterburners. Another flashing WARNING LIGHT immediately
illuminates on his heads up screen, as he is thrown back
in his seat.

MERLIN
(alarmed)
What are you doing? The after burners
will use up our last fuel. And we're
still headed for that thing...

308 INT. BRIDGE - SNAKEIR

308

The Kilrathi Captain reports to the Admiral.

KILRATHI CAPTAIN
Planetary torpedoes online. We will be
in range in forty minutes. There is no
response to the Rapier's transmissions.
Sivar smiles on us. The surprise is
total.

An alarm goes off. Through the dense green atmosphere, A
KILRATHI RADAR TECH growls his report.

KILRATHI TECH
The Rapier is homing in on a beacon
signal. It could be a Confederation
guidance buoy.

KILRATHI ADMIRAL
Or a capital ship. Identify and report.
Full battle stations.

Other alarms go off in the Kilrathi ship. On the Admiral's
INFRARED MONITOR, he watches the Rapier--a tiny speck--
head for the beacon.

309 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR

309

It seems like half the alarm systems in the cockpit are buzzing or flashing. Blair's concentration is total, his face dripping with sweat.

MERLIN

Kilrathi radar locked on. Ten seconds to the Point of No Return... and you're almost out of fuel. You won't be able to turn.

BLAIR

Give me a count.

MERLIN

Four... three....

BLAIR

Holy shit!

MERLIN

Two...

Blair jerks the joystick hard right.

310 EXT. BLAIR'S RAPIER

310

Banks hard, afterburners glowing and roaring, and veers away from Scylla.

311 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR

311

BLAIR

We're not going to break free of the gravity well! We don't have enough fuel!

MERLIN

Actually, I lied.

BLAIR

What?

MERLIN

You've got ten more seconds of thrust.

The Rapier shimmies like a tuning fork, engines roaring. Then, with a last jerk, she hurtles free of the gravity well's gravitational pull.

BLAIR

We're free!

- 312 EXT. BLAIR'S RAPIER 312
The fighter rockets away at a ninety degree angle from Scylla.
- 313 INT. BRIDGE - SNAKEIR 313
The Admiral continues to peer at his scanners.
KILRATHI CAPTAIN
The Rapier has veered away.
Confederation ship, dead ahead.
KILRATHI ADMIRAL
That isn't a ship! Hard to port!
Reverse all thrusters!
- 314 EXT. SNAKEIR 314
The long ship tries to turn, but she has far too much inertia TO VEER AWAY FROM SCYLLA, as the tiny Rapier has done.
- 315 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR 315
Blair's engines sputter and die.
MERLIN
We're out of fuel.
He looks back at the Snakeir.
BLAIR
The Kilrathi's too heavy. Scylla's got her.
- 316 INT. BRIDGE SNAKEIR 316
The bridge, still shrouded in its murky atmosphere, is listing. Scylla, her great shimmering maw glistening in space, appears on the starboard side.
KILRATHI ADMIRAL
All engines full!
The engine noise raises to a deafening roar, but the great ship continues to drift toward Scylla. The Admiral realizes all is lost.
KILRATHI ADMIRAL
But Sivar chose us...
Every object in the Kilrathi bridge begins to warp and distort. The Kilrathi, mere silhouettes in the murk, are themselves stretched, and pulled, screeching in pain and horror.

317 EXT. SNAKEIR AND SCYLLA

317

The Kilrathi ship is pulled completely around, then seems to STRETCH, THEN CRACK, AND PULL APART, forming A LONG DEBRIS TRAIL that extends toward the gravity well.

318 EXT. EARTH'S SOLAR SYSTEM - JUMP POINT

318

From nowhere, a huge Fralthi appears. But several moments later, it receives DIRECT HITS from a dozen cannon blasts.

REVERSE ANGLE: The Confed fleet, in attack formation, launches A HALF- DOZEN TORPEDOES. The powerful cannon fire pummels the Kilrathi ship before it can react.

RESUME JUMP POINT: The Kilrathi carrier breaks apart, and explodes. A second, smaller ship appears. It too is destroyed in the ambush.

321 EXT. CONCORDIA - SOLAR SYSTEM / JUMP POINT

321

The great ship seems surrounded by a fireworks display as it fires torpedoes and missiles, and uses its massive cannon array.

322 INT. BRIDGE - CONCORDIA

322

Bellegarde approaches Tolwyn, who watches grimly.

BELLEGARDE

The Kilrathi fleet is coming through the jump point one ship at a time, Admiral. They have no chance to defend themselves or warn the ships behind.

TOLWYN

And the Snakeir?

BELLEGARDE

She's disappeared from our scanners.

TOLWYN

Launch two Rapier wings and a squadron of Broadwords. We've got to find her.

BELLEGARDE

Aye, aye, sir.

323 EXT. BLAIR'S RAPIER

323

The darkened fighter tumbles slowly through space. Off, way in the distance we can see Earth. Safe, at least for now.

324 INT. COCKPIT - BLAIR

324

All the instruments are dark. Blair trembles violently.

BLAIR
Hey, you were right all along.

Merlin appears in hologram.

MERLIN
I was?

BLAIR
We're doomed.

Merlin has a change of character -- a sudden burst compassion in his circuitry.

MERLIN
Don't say that. You're a fighter. So fight! We're going to make it.

BLAIR
Cold got to you Merlin? You sound downright optimistic.

MERLIN
Let's just call it intuition...

Suddenly, the Rapier is jolted.

BLAIR
What the hell...?

325 EXT. RAPIER & BROADSWORD

325

A Broadsword bomber has captured the drifting Rapier in its tractor beam.

MERLIN (O.S.)
Or a working array of scanners.

A strong spotlight illuminates Blair inside the cockpit. As Blair looks up, the bomber pilot salutes him. With badly trembling hand, Blair grins and returns the salute.

DISSOLVE TO:

325A EXT. TIGER CLAW - EARTH SPACE

325A

The battered old lady sits in low earth orbit, the blue planet spinning gracefully below her.

329 INT. FLIGHT DECK - TIGER CLAW

329

Force field is up and we can see Earth.

All available Tiger Claw officers and crew are at attention. BLAIR, in full dress whites, stands by a podium, a Marine honor guard flanking him. Admiral's gig is to the left.

TOLWYN, PALADIN next to him with a small white box, stands in front of Blair; GERALD to the right.

TOLWYN

I have been an officer in the Confederation Navy for twenty-seven years and I have never been prouder of a ship, its crew, or of an officer. Thank you.

TOLWYN takes full Lieutenant's bars from Paladin's box, pins them on Blair's shoulders. Both senior officers salute Blair. BLAIR returns the salute.

PALADIN

(With a big grin.)

Lieutenant, you may join your unit.

BLAIR

Aye, aye, sir.

Blair walks down the line of white clad officers, toward the ranks of pilots. Maniac, still at attention, smirks at him. Then... Blair stops. Deveraux stands before him in her dress whites, eyes straight ahead, but nervous. Blair goes up to her, salutes stiffly, fighting tears. She salutes him.

Blair falls in among the remaining pilots.

PALADIN

Mister Gerald, I'm returning the command of this ship to you. You may dismiss the officers and crew.

GERALD

(smiling)

Aye, aye, Commodore.

Paladin and Tolwyn begin walking slowly up the ramp to the Admiral's gig.

MANIAC, unable to contain himself, takes off his hat and bellows:

MANIAC

Three cheers for the Commodore!

WIDER: As one voice, the ships entire complement enter into a rousing three "hip-hip, hurrahs". Then, hundreds of white hats sail high into the air and the cheering becomes general. And so it is only Paladin, who turns and notices, lost in the general jubilation, BLAIR AND DEVERAUX locked in a hug that becomes an embrace, that becomes a kiss.

FADE OUT.