

Wing Commander V: The Blood of Sivar

by

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a) Prologue

This section of the game is intended to introduce the player to his new protagonist, squadron mates, superior officers, and spaceflight environment.

The protagonist is a 2nd Lieutenant, fresh out of the academy with plenty of talent, but no real experience. He is stationed on a light carrier with other graduates, and gets to know not only them but his CAG and other superiors. Via on-line tutorials available at the simulator, as well as in the conduct of several training missions, he will be familiarized with some of the new fighters and weapon systems at the core of the game. During a final training cruise into occupied Kilrathi space, the protagonist is also introduced to Admiral Christopher Blair, who is now military governor of the Kilrathi Worlds.

At some point, mention is made that the Border Worlds has requested assistance regarding a missing research vessel. The ship had transmitted home its intentions to enter a system at the fringe of Kilrathi space, but gave no explanation as to why. Due to natural relay delays (there is no faster-than-light communications technology, save jump-gate relay buoys), it is believed that the message was transmitted over a month before being received, and a second month has passed since then. The ship has gone missing. While they're in the area, why don't they swing a couple days out of the way and check it out?

b) Opening Game

The intention of this section is to establish the environmental conditions for the central conflict of the game.

Arriving in Kilrathi space, the player and his group are surprise-attacked by forces of the Cult of Sivar, who fly fighters and starships apparently resurrected from the wreckage of those lost in the Great War. It is revealed that they are apparently led by a "resurrected" Prince Thrakhath, who has proclaimed himself the Blood of Sivar: prophesied savior risen from the spilled blood of the Kilrathi people and empowered by God to crush the enemies of the devout.

It is also revealed that the Sivarists' main target is the planet Hralith, seat of government for the Kilrathi Worlds, where they have launched a massive surprise ground assault aimed at seizing the Capitol. The protagonist and other Confed forces must battle their way to the planet in order to intervene against them. But first friendly forces must battle against unexpectedly heavy Sivarist naval opposition to achieve space superiority around the planet.

c) Middle Game

This is the core of the game, in which the majority of plot and character developments will unfold, integrated with a wide variety of combat missions.

Having achieved space superiority, Confed forces must defend friendly supply lines as well as incoming Marine assault forces against Sivarist attack. There is much speculation as to the veracity of the apparent "Thraxhath Reborn," as well as his potential deific nature. It is learned that he first appeared on the world which serves as Mecca for the Cult of Sivar, somehow bearing with him the reconstituted fleet the Confederation now faces. The fundamentalist people of the world (many of them disillusioned war veterans) flocked to him with predictable zealotry, and now man his starships with the temerity one would expect from those serving God personified. This all seems appropriately miraculous, and adheres closely to ancient Kilrathi religious prophecies. As word of it spreads, it is also apparently winning Thraxhath widespread support throughout the Kilrathi Worlds.

From Blair, the Confed personnel are brought up to speed on the recent resurgence of the Cult of Sivar. After the war, the most ardent followers of their faith--mostly ex-military personnel--congregated at a world on the frontier of Kilrathi space. It is noted in passing that this world is only a few systems away from the place where the Border Worlds believes its research vessel went missing.

As the battle continues, evidence of further prophetic Thraxhath "miracles" emerge: for instance, the discovery of warships which, somehow, appear to lack crews and fight of their own free will. It is speculated that these may be technological marvels, but what technology might lay behind them and how the Sivarists came to possess it, remains unexplained.

In the course of one mission, a Confed pilot is abducted by a mysterious alien spacecraft (which players of *Privateer* may recognize as Steltek in origin). His whereabouts remain an ongoing mystery, as does the relevance of this alien presence to the events at hand. Meanwhile, there is continuing amazement over the size and depth of the Sivarist forces: truly the assembly of such a fleet from scattered wreckage is a miracle in its own right.

As there is weak suspicion that there may be a connection between the disappearance of the Border Worlds research vessel and the Sivarist uprising, a very limited, multi-jump, long-range reconnaissance mission to that system is planned. There is minimal Sivarist resistance along the way, and surface scans locate the Border Worlds ship on the surface. It is discovered that the crew is dead, apparently slaughtered on the surface by a contingent Kilrathi after landing. More interesting is the site of the landing. A deep hole leads into the surface of the planet, apparently excavated recently. When the Confed pilots fly into it, guided only by the searchlights of their fighters, they find themselves in an enormous chamber at the bottom of which lay the remains of an ancient, highly advanced city. It appears abandoned.

The pilots return to their carrier. The battle for Hralith rages over the course of several series, in which advantages are won and lost by both sides, both in space and in the air of the planet below. After some time, the Confed efforts are complicated by the unexpected appearance of very powerful Kilrathi "superfighters" of a type never before encountered. While Kilrathi fighters to this point have been largely obsolete, these machines are markedly superior in performance and armament to their Confed counterparts. Their origin is inexplicable, but they seem to fit perfectly into the Sivarist prophecy that the Blood of Sivar will wield invincible "Talons of God" while laying waste his enemies.

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As reconnaissance operations elsewhere in Kilrathi space begin to bear fruit, some longer-ranged offensive operations against Sivarist bases and staging areas begin. But the very powerful superfighters (manned by members of the wartime *Drakhai* elite corps) remain a problem. The Confed pilot who had disappeared earlier mysteriously reappears, claiming no recollection of where he's been. Shortly thereafter information regarding significant weapon upgrades as well as details as to the locations of secret Sivarist bases and staging areas begin to appear in the ship's computers. Their origins are unknown.

The Confed communication officer has been mulling over some of the data brought back from the recon mission to the Kilrathi archeological excavation site. She's been curious as to what attracted the Border Worlds vessel to the place in the first place, and thinks she may have an answer--although the data seems so strange she would suspect its faulty. There is evidence in the recon fighter's passive sensor log of some sort of radio-like transmission emanating from the ruins in the subterranean chamber. However, it looks like it's being conveyed by a type of particle she's never seen before. If she's reading it right, these quanta are actually warping time such that they travel gradually *backwards* as they move away from the planet, producing the illusion that they're travelling faster than light. *Much* faster than light: in fact, it would take them less than a month from the moment of transmission to reach the far side of the galaxy. It *could* be a natural phenomena, but the pattern looks to her like some sort of beacon.

Back at the war, it is unknown just how the Sivarist forces on the ground are receiving supplies, as all lines into the system seem to have been cut. But further inexplicable computer files reveal the existence of cloaked Sivarist super-transports, which are conducting a constant airlift of men and materiel to the surface below. Additional files also explain how Confed fighter systems can be modified to detect these vessels, and the supply line is attacked.

Cut off from support, the rebels on the ground have little chance in a war of attrition, even though massive, desperate naval assaults attempt to once again break the Confed lock on surrounding space. As the battle for Hralith draws to a close, Thrakhath miraculously escapes, borne away by a powerful starship whose configuration is entirely unknown.

Investigations into the mysterious computer files that have been popping up on the Confed carrier end in a confrontation which reveals the Confed pilot abducted by the strange alien craft is not what he seems. In fact, he is a Steltek in disguise, member of a super-advanced race who can apparently use their biological technologies to "download" their minds into genetically-engineered bodies (in this case, a clone of the missing pilot). He reveals that he was sent to the carrier to aid the Confederation by providing plans and information to help their struggle against Thrakhath, who is himself a renegade Steltek.

He is known to the Steltek as a member of the N'Zarai, a group of criminal Steltek (led by the tyrannical criminal N'Zar) who thousands of years ago sparked a great civil war regarding the morality of Steltek interference in the evolution of other species. During the battle, four of the most insidious captured N'Zarai were placed in stasis and imprisoned within the wreckage of one of the worlds they destroyed--apparently, the one discovered by the Sivarists in their quest for new colonial space. It would appear that the Kilrathi freed the Steltek, who are now aiding them in their attempt to seize control of the old Empire.

d) Endgame

In this stage of the story, the plot is twisted and the player learns that what he thought was the menace, isn't. He is then acquainted in very harsh and certain terms with the true enemy. The story is then drawn to closure in victory, but with fore-shadowing that many more battles are yet to come.

Confed forces pursue the fleeing N'Zarai to the archeological site, intent on capturing him and crushing the rebellion at its roots. They are opposed by the last of the Drakhai elite guard, as well as the reconstituted, planet-killing dreadnought *Sivar*. Finally, the Confed forces are confronted by the N'Zarai himself. The alien admits his plan to subvert the Kilrathi, but says that despite their success in thwarting him, the Confederation is too late to save themselves. His three comrades already run freely amidst the civilized worlds, laying plans the nature of which the humans and Stelteks cannot yet begin to fathom. And his beacon, activated upon his awakening, has been active long enough that reinforcements are arriving.

The "Confed" Stelteks explain that not all the N'Zarai were captured. Some—including N'Zar himself—fled to whereabouts unknown. It is feared by his people that the exiles have used their time to build an empire of their own. This beacon could be calling them for help.

And at transmission rates faster than light, it may well have already been received.

A jump gate opens, and the Confederation forces are attacked by extremely advanced, extremely brutal aliens. These are creatures of a kind never seen before, and they are deadly in ways which far exceed the Kilrathi. It is only through the exhibition of miraculous courage and skill that the protagonist and his forces can survive their initial onslaught.

The Confed forces are driven into a retreating action in which it becomes apparent that the N'Zarai forces, now streaming into Kilrathi space, are focusing their thrust towards the Confed Starbase at the edge of Kilrathi space. This is a classic maneuver warfare tactic, in which the immediately contested region (in this case Kilrathi space) is "leapfrogged" in favor of hitting the opposition at its center of gravity, removing it from the fray long enough that the contested region may be occupied at leisure. This gambit must be stopped at all costs, or Kilrathi space will certainly fall to the aliens.

It also becomes apparent that the Confederation is facing more than one type of alien, but rather two or three species with different ships and capabilities working together towards a common objective. This makes the tactical environment all the more complicated.

A final stand must be made at the Starbase, an epic battle against overwhelming odds which ends either with the N'Zarai retreating or the destruction of all humans in the system. Many ships are involved in this multi-group battle, which occurs along several axes of attack. Each fighter pilot must fly sortie after sortie as his skills and endurance are pushed to the limit.

With victory, the N'Zarai forces, having sustained heavy casualties to its central units (the classic "capital ships," or core pieces of the Naval strategy), must withdraw. But in the aftermath of the battle, the Thrakhath N'Zarai contacts the humans to promise that what the Confederation experienced that day was only a taste: that of all the races the N'Zarai have subjugated, these were far from the worst. The stage has been set, he assures them, and a war the likes of which they can scarcely conceive is about to begin. Humanity and the Stelteks should prepare themselves, for soon they will all bow before N'Zarai masters.