

STARSIEGE 2845

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**By
Blake Hutchins,
N. David Griffin,
Victor Shekels,
And Eric Lowe**

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1. PURPOSE

To provide a recounting of the major events that occur in the period between the original Starsiege and our own Single Player campaign, as well as to provide 'plot seeds' and foreshadowing for exploitation within the campaign.

2. INTERMEDIATE TIMELINE (2832-2845)

2832

Promethean Cybrids begin to seek out and eradicate Metagen units instead of merely redacting them.

First appearance of Darwin's Forge thinking among human resistance on Mars. The philosophy views the Cybrids as God's whetstone, intended to sharpen humanity. It melds fragments of Nietzschean writing left over from the Devastation with Hunterite creeds drawn from the New Tellurian Bible.

Human "Plague Dog" strategy succeeds in spreading erratic behaviors among Cybrids. Prometheus orders the destruction of all flawed units.

By sheer good fortune, Alliance forces intercept a series of Cybrid military intelligence secrets and high-level access codes. Eventually these reveal the lair of Prometheus. Exemplar Sect communications intercepted during this time include lengthy discussion of an entity named "Null-B."

First fast-cloned BioDerm troopers enter the field as Imperial shock troops. They achieve little success, but their mass-produced presence adds a morale boost to beleaguered human forces on Earth.

Death of Harabec and destruction of Prometheus occurs on Pluto. Massive Cybrid fusion charges destroy Pluto shortly thereafter. Exemplar Sect communications picked up near Titan use a term translated to mean "Godseeds," then fall silent.

Emperor Petresun is killed after elite Cybrid units break through the defenses at Nova Alexandria.

Death of Prometheus throws Cybrid chain of command into utter confusion. Metagens now openly battle Prometheans and seize ships to leave the conflict.

2833

Cybrid ground and naval forces in the outer system fall back to positions around Saturn and Neptune as Alliance troops secure their hold on the Jovian satellites.

Battle for China begins. Entrenched human forces in Siberia and Manchuria initiate a massive counterattack against disorganized Cybrids that meets with limited success.

Absence of Prometheus' guidance takes an increasing toll on the Cybrid chain of command. Infighting among Cybrid units is particularly fierce on Earth and Mars

where Cybrid military effectiveness in many regions falls to less than half of what it had been at the start of the conflict.

Alliance forces using Titan as their primary staging area muster a relief effort for Earth led by Caanon Weathers. A second, smaller task force is arrayed to harass Cybrid units orbiting Saturn and to defend Titan in case of a renewed assault.

Dustrats on Mars begin staging raids to harass their machine oppressors. Veterans of the last 'MarsSiege' are quick to note that the Cybrids do far more damage to themselves than the ill-equipped insurgents. Nevertheless Martian morale is bolstered and attacks on Cybrid command and control facilities continue.

Imperial Knights of the Furious Stars Order strike at already weakened Cybrid lines just outside the Denver metrozone. Led by Knight-Captain Keiren Mace they claim a five-for-one rate of attrition and establish a stable rallying point for surviving TDF forces in the North American Prefecture.

2834

Imperial Navy engineers discover how to use cachetech to effectively reduce the mass of the Alliance ships under Caanon's command. This advance permits immensely greater long-term acceleration with the same reaction mass use and cuts interplanetary transit time by almost 99%. Cachetech modifications are made en route, and strategic timetables are advanced sharply, the entire battlegroup going to high alert as tech crews race around the clock to prepare vehicles for battle.

Passing through the asteroid belt en route to Earth, Alliance forces under the command of Caanon encounter a small contingent of TDF ships in hiding, their crews unaware of the fall of Prometheus. The fleet diverts Long Patrol *gunship ISS Sacajawea* to take on survivors. The ships are in disrepair and are scuttled after being scavenged for parts. Burning hard, *Sacajawea* is able to catch the rest of the fleet within a week and resume her place in formation.

During a reconnaissance patrol near Mercury, cloak-equipped TDF destroyer *Tuareg* detects unusual movement among Cybrid forces on the planetary surface. The *Tuareg* maintains remote surveillance of the activities and reports mass transfer of Cybrid forces to ships in orbit.

Swinging out from behind the shadow of Luna, the Allied Fleet under Caanon stages a daring assault against Cybrid flotillas in station-keeping at L4 and L5. The Cybrid ships are uncharacteristically slow to respond, and the initial sally by TDF interceptor flights sows devastation among them. Fusion torpedoes launched by the 38th Penetration Wing, aka The Silver Wolves, succeed in detonating the reactor core of the Cybrid superdreadnought code-named "GRENDDEL". Most of the Silver Wolves perish in the assault. Cybrid dreadnoughts "TYRANT" and "ASMODEUS" also fall to TDF attacks. The Cybrid carrier "TIAMAT" almost escapes, but the TDF destroyer *Unsung* sacrifices itself in a suicidal collision that leaves the immense Cybrid vessel a flaming hulk. The chaos provides cover for Caanon's dropships to launch a HALO operation over Nova Alexandria. Cybrid naval forces fragment, some ships burning on outsystem vectors, others rallying to defend against the human attackers. While HERCs and Aerospace fighters battle for a planetside foothold on Mother Earth, control of the Lagrange points and low orbit remains contested for three months before the Alliance prevails.

Cybrid forces withdraw from Nova Alexandria and form a perimeter around the city. The Imperial Palace is left in ruins, along with the greater part of the Royal City. A commando team from the Rose Azure Order of Knights slips through Cybrid sentries and examines the charred remnants of the Emperor's wombcoach. Following the team's report, Imperial Command abandons any hope of finding Petresun's remains, and the Emperor is listed among the dead.

Surviving civilian population of Luna taking refuge in the mines report confusion among Cybrid vehicles. Darkside commandoes sabotage Cybrid sensor stations with strain of "Plague Dog" virus. Luna's Cybrid garrison responds with series of erratic forays that ultimately results in destruction of its own sensor network.

Tunnel-running dustrats increase guerrilla assaults on Cybrid bases in Tharsis, Valles, and Xanthe regions. A dust storm of immense proportions prevents significant action in the East and South. Cybrid forces in Arabia, Noachis, and Syrtis-Tyr provinces suffer severe and persistent mechanical problems, as the superfine-grained dust proves a deadly enemy to Cybrid joint mechanisms and optical arrays.

An intense torpedo bombardment from capital ships *ISS Crimson Star*, *ISS Hood*, and *ISS Ancient Glory* in LEO destroys a heavily fortified Cybrid vehicle production facility. Civilian losses are high due to inaccurate reports of human shield numbers the Cybrids have placed in the area.

2835

Imperial Navy regroups in Earth orbit. Surviving ships from across the inner system trickle in as word of Alliance victory over the skies of Terra Mater spreads. Naval engineers refit as much of the fleet as possible with the gravitic drive technology developed by Caanon's cache-tech scientists while en-route to Earth.

The Second Battle of Nova Alexandria: Imperial Knights and colonial forces led by Caanon Weathers succeed in breaking the Cybrid siege of the Imperial seat. HERCs piloted by Blood Eagle veterans distinguish themselves by isolating and destroying the notorious Cybrid hunter-killer group code-named "SCORPIO." Imperial Knight Colossa "Jaguar" Eun Alba leads the final charge.

Insurgent forces in the North American Prefecture make dramatic gains against Cybrid forces all along the Rocky Mountain range and into the Great Plains, though both coasts of the continent remain firmly under Cybrid control.

Emperor Caanon is inaugurated as the Second Emperor of the Great Human Empire amid bittersweet celebrations in Nova Alexandria. He is wounded shortly after the ceremony when one of his surviving sons turns out to be a Trojan Horse.

Given an enormous edge from their new drive technology, small strike forces of the Imperial Navy begin to make tremendous gains against Cybrid vessels. Cybrid ability to reinforce or re-allocate ground forces is hampered throughout the inner system. The Cybrid gunnery programs adapt quickly, however, and the human edge lessens, though it retains a clear superiority over Cybrid capabilities.

A TDF relief effort is dispatched to Mars. Dustrats and Imperial Knights working together break the fortifications of the primary Cybrid bases in Valles and Noachim regions, but at a terrible cost. Renowned Knight-Captain Titus "Hangman" Thau-Yuros is slain, as well as a host of TDF regulars and countless Martian fighters. Eun

Alba gives a curt funeral speech for Thau-Yuros, concluding his rival was one of humanity's great heroes, "...but I wish I had had the pleasure of killing him myself."

The battle for Greater China turns dramatically in humanity's favor as Emperor Caanon dispatches the bulk of Imperial aerospace assets to seize control of the skies over Asia. Imperial domination of the air and the lack of off-world resupply hobbles Cybrid forces throughout the continent. Human shields are redeployed into the Cybrid slave factories to bolster production. Heroic resistance in the factories themselves renders this strategy useless by year's end.

2836

Human factories on Earth begin to produce cachetech weapons in significant numbers. As the new arms are deployed in the Chinese and Indian combat theaters, initial underestimation of their firepower results in unexpectedly high friendly fire casualties.

The Xavier Gravitic Envelope drive revolutionizes humanity's projection of force across interplanetary distances. The TDF launches a food and munitions relief effort for Mars. The ships arrive in Martian orbit mere days after leaving LEO. A salvo of XGE-mounted missiles launched at the mid-point of the journey shreds Cybrid orbital defenses. Though the cost of producing these missiles with the dwindling store of gravitic components is astronomical, the TDF owns Martian space almost immediately.

Alliance sensor boats patrolling the asteroid belt detect a hidden Cybrid ore processing and refinement facility. A taskforce of XGE-equipped destroyers and corvettes is dispatched to destroy this objective. As the ships begin the assault, the Cybrids detonate nearby Asteroid NX-232 with horrifically precise timing. The huge blast causes a meteor tsunami to rip through the taskforce, damaging many ships. In the ensuing confusion, the *ISS Hellfire Rose* reports attack by a Cybrid boarding party. The ship's captain blows his fusion reactors to prevent capture of the *Rose's* XGE drive, and the rest of the taskforce falls back to Mars.

Cybrid forces in South America venture north to suppress human insurgents in the Central plains of North America and the northwestern watershed of the Mississippi River valley. The reinforced Cybrid legions retake Denver and devastate the Furious Stars after a pitched battle. An alarming number of Trojan Horses among the Stars officer corps plays a significant role in making sure almost no one in the Order survives. The Blood Eagle immediately begin counter-insurgency operations to purge their own ranks of Trojan Horse infiltrators.

Their numbers and supplies dwindling under the onslaught of human aerospace domination, Cybrids in Siberia carry out a massive, synchronized self-destruct sequence that releases radioactive fallout into Mongolia, Central Asia, and Western China. When embattled Cybrid defenders in Beijing and Shanghai prepare to follow suit, concentrated volleys of cachetech-enhanced EMP warheads prevent them from succeeding. TDF forces capture a large number of lobotomized Cybrid pilotforms and use them as ashtrays and latrines.

Caanon declares victory in China. Survivors in Eastern and Southern Asia begin to emerge from bunkers and underground tunnel warrens en masse. As celebrations begin in Beijing, TDF shunts its forces to the Mediterranean for an assault on Europe.

The Third Colonial Rangers land in the ruins of Tharsis City and fight a vicious building-to-building battle against entrenched Cybrid forces. Colonel Verity Vargas leads her Redhawk Raiders to intercept a Cybrid Adjudicator force en route to destroy a hidden township of the resistance that harbored the children of Mars. Her desperate victory against superior numbers earns her the Martian Cross and the instant devotion of every "dustrat" in the Solar System.

Led by the battlecruiser *ISS Hood*, TDF "Q-ships" concealed in the hulls of Cybrid vessels successfully assault the Cybrid refinery facility in the asteroid belt. This time, the taskforce surprises the Cybrid ships defending the operation, firing off a series of magnetically "shaped", wide-angle EMP blasts to disable them. Following a short, sharp battle, the processing facilities are captured intact. They span several large, ore-rich asteroids, all tethered to an immense superstructure construction facility. After the TDF vessels take on as much ore and equipment as they can carry, one of the Cybrid hulks is packed with fusion warheads and remotely detonated in the heart of the base.

Venusian survivor-hermit "Hearken" finally stops transmitting his defiant poems after miraculously evading the Cybrids on Venus for six years. From the context of his last message, he is presumed to have committed suicide as an alternative to starvation or capture. His real name and identity remain a mystery, though historians and literary scholars later write reams of speculative papers on the subject.

2837

Imperial scientist Antonin Ryu develops the first gravitic 'pinch' drive based on research enabled by XGE technology. This breakthrough cuts interplanetary travel time even more dramatically, and makes true extra-solar exploration possible, but production difficulty together with massive energy and space requirements hinder deployment of the technology.

Widespread infighting breaks out among Cybrid units in Europe as they compete with one another for scarce energy and spare parts. Seizing the window of opportunity, TDF forces mustered near the Black Sea launch a massive offensive that succeeds in evicting the machines from Eastern Europe.

The Order of the Blood Eagle and a number of other Alliance units are dispatched to the NorthAm theater as reinforcements for TDF forces struggling to hold the Colorado front. The Knights exhibit a pattern of aberrant, disturbing behavior. Alliance officers report brutal hazing of regular troops and hint at far worse, but the Order's presence makes the difference: the Cybrid counteroffensive is halted.

Imperial Navy Destroyers *ISS Glorious Dragon* and *ISS Spinnaker* are the first ships outfitted with Ryu Pinch drives. Though the new drives' efficiency is greatly reduced within the Solar System's gravity well, the ships gain the capability to reach the outer planets in hours rather than weeks. Carrying both Ryu-pinch and XGE drives, the two destroyers seek out and destroy Cybrid factory ships lurking in the outer orbits that had previously proven impossible to track down.

Submersible carriers ferry TDF's elite "Neptune" division in an attack against deep-sea Cybrid bases in the South Pacific. Using SCARAB technology and the new implosion warheads, Neptune's troops achieve swift initial success. However, the Cybrids deploy a gigantic warform near the islands of Vanuatu that destroys one

carrier and badly damages two others. Shaken TDF naval forces withdraw before the onslaught of this new foe, codenamed "KRAKEN" following reports from awed eyewitnesses.

Colossa Eun Alba suffers horrifying injuries during an assault on a Cybrid stronghold in Xanthe Province on Mars. The damage to his body cannot be regenerated properly; he is confined to a life-support biotank with little hope of full recovery. As a result, Eun Alba uses a VR interface to continue piloting HERCs and commanding forces in the field, against the advice of his physicians, who warn of possible permanent neurological damage.

TDF forces fight a seesaw battle across the Italian Peninsula. Heretofore spared the ravages of the Earthsieges, Rome is devastated as a series of Cybrid retaliatory strikes rips through the historic city center. Caanon reluctantly diverts some of his strength to protect the city of Florence, declaring "our heritage cannot be left unshielded if we are to have a future."

As Mercury's orbit brings the innermost planet around the sun closer to Earth, Cybrid vessels are detected burning on an outsystem vector. Led by Rear-Admiral Hidei Nagashima, XGE-equipped TDF ships of the "Tengu Dog Squadron" intercept the Cybrid formation less than an AU from Mercury. Nagashima places derelict vessels that emit false signals in the Cybrids' path. When the Cybrid ships alter course to intercept the hulks, Nagashima detonates massive EMP warheads to screen an assault by fast gunships, missile boats, and "turncoat" missiles piloted by recompiled Cybrid brains. Over the next two hours, the bulk of the Cybrid force is obliterated. The remnants scatter in all directions.

KRAKEN surfaces and destroys a convoy of food supply ships en route for Tokyo. When the carnage is complete, the Cybrid monster slips back beneath the waves, impervious to the barrage of lasers and torpedo fire directed at it by TDF aerosub escorts.

Emperor Caanon reiterates that Cybrids are "mere objects" under the law, not persons. As such, they do not fall under the ancient standards of the Geneva Convention or any other statute, custom, or constitutional provision that purports to grant rights to prisoners of war. Captured Cybrids are spirited behind the black metaplas walls of the newly established Imperial Security Protectorate in Nova Alexandria, where their neurologics are decompiled line by painstaking line.

After a spring and summer of fierce fighting around the Denver and Greater Omaha metrozones, the NorthAm front bogs down under fierce blizzards. Though HERCs are able to continue normal operations, Cybrids suffer from a lack of replacement parts, and humans from reduced food supplies. Scavenger activity occurs on both sides. Rumors circulate accusing the Blood Eagle of cannibalism, but these are never substantiated.

In a radical departure from previous non-ecocidal strategy, Cybrids maneuver a large meteor to collide with Mother Earth. The sacrifice of *Glorious Dragon* and many heroic TDF fighter pilots diverts the meteor from its intended target of the North American plains and into the Pacific Ocean. Tsunamis devastate the west coast of the NAP and most of Japan, and the shockwave obliterates several undersea colonies. Earth's weather patterns are sharply impacted for years.

2838

In an epic, month-long battle that runs up and down the slopes of Olympus Mons, Colonel Verity Vargas defeats the last major Cybrid force on the red planet. Vargas is killed in the final assault, and is subsequently enshrined as the greatest Martian war hero after Bek Storm, becoming known as the Victor of the Battle of the Long Slope, the Third Battle of Olympus. The surviving Redhawk Raiders paint their HERCs black in her memory.

KRAKEN attacks Tokyo harbor, breaching the partially rebuilt perimeter wall and launching salvos of low-payload, high-radiation warheads into the heart of the city. A furious counterattack by Knights of the Rising Earth Order repels the monstrous warform, despite inflicting only light damage. Virtually the entire civilian populace dies of radiation poisoning over the ensuing two months. Caanon devotes the majority of TDF naval assets to hunt down this Cybrid foe, but the year runs out with KRAKEN still at large.

A large Cybrid force is defeated at the foot of the Alps in Northern Italy, effectively breaking Cybrid power in Europe. Amid unconfirmed reports of Cybrid pilotforms attempting to surrender, TDF troops unleash the frustration and grief of years of war in a destructive rampage. A handful of Cybrids are captured. TDF tanks and HERCs liberating Zurich sport offlined Cybrid pilotforms as hood ornaments.

Cloned BioDerms with memory implants become a valuable asset to bolster TDF infantry operations. Though they are less effective at independent tactical thinking, they function reasonably well under close direction of experienced officers. Caanon deploys them en masse to the South American and African theaters, where, absorbing the brunt of Cybrid attempts to break the surging human offensives, they die like flies.

Ex-Colonial Ranger Sergeant Riana Yashida-Jones runs for Mayor of Tharsis City on the Free Mars Party ticket. Despite revelations of a history of disciplinary problems during her service and the use of colorful expressions in her speeches, she wins by a landslide.

Emperor Caanon dedicates a memorial to Solomon Petresun, now widely credited among survivors on Earth as having prepared humanity to survive the Cybrid onslaught. During the dedication speech, Caanon makes an oblique reference to his younger brother being more Petresun's son than a scion of the Weathers. At this moment, subtle cues in Caanon's face and voice tone hint at what puzzled analysts interpret as suppressed outrage. It proves to be the last occasion on which Caanon publicly mentions Petresun's name.

Cybrids in South America, Africa and the Pacific Rim begin to withdraw to strongholds in Antarctica as human forces push southward on both sides of the globe. Reinforced by freshly trained pilots gleaned from survivors in Asia and the Middle East, and enjoying near total global air superiority, TDF regulars and Imperial Knights make dramatic inroads all across the Southern Hemisphere.

Long Patrol sensor buoys detect a Cybrid fleet burning for Titan from a staging area outside the orbit of Neptune. Imperial Naval Command dispatches *ISS Spinnaker* to intercept and harass the Cybrids while XGE-equipped ships rush to reinforce Titan. The Cybrid forces, harried by hit and run attacks by *Spinnaker*, arrive to find Titan well-defended. After a brief, indecisive encounter, the machines break off and

retreat, dumping swarms of remote missiles in their wake, all armed with nuclear warheads. After one of these destroys the corvette *Kali's Seventh Blade*, Imperial Naval Command calls off pursuit.

Emperor Caanon attends a briefing at L4 on the battleship *ISS Royal Eminence*. Alliance admirals report that resources in men and machines run too thin for serious outsystem pursuit of Cybrids. Caanon reluctantly issues instructions for defensive repositioning of fleet assets, but swears there will never be another Earthsiege.

The First Church of the Masters is established amid the reconstruction of Tharsis City. This group believes the cache itself is proof of God's existence. Many other cults spring up as a battle-scarred humanity seeks solace in mysticism.

Imperial Command assembles a small fleet to investigate the situation at Venus. For political reasons, the operation is dubbed a "rescue expedition" even though no reasonable person expects to find a living soul on Venus. Thousands of Venusians transfer to *Operation Mercy's Shore*. NewsNet somberly calls it "The Venusian Homecoming." It departs Earth orbit without fanfare.

Led by the heroics of a previously obscure TDF survivor of the Denver fighting in NorthAm, TDF HERCs break the Cybrids' defenses in Denver and destroy the glitches' command center. Cybrid resistance crumbles, and TDF and Blood Eagle forces pursue and eradicate the remnants of the NorthAm Cybrid presence. The hero of the hour is Michael Church, a heretofore undistinguished veteran of the Alliance. Eyewitnesses describe how he piloted his Emancipator unscathed through withering enemy fire that left the rest of his squad dead and dying. The Blood Eagle offer to elevate Church into their ranks on the spot. His curt refusal, broadcast on NewsNet across human-occupied space, wins him immortality.

The Long Patrol is fully reconstituted as an elite taskforce, with Eskandani Station on Titan serving as its home port. Admiral Hidei "Tengu" Nagashima takes command, infusing the Long Patrol with trickster strategies and relaxing the Imperial Navy's spit-and-polish culture in favor of independent thinking that gets the job done.

"Liberation fever" sets in on Earth and Mars as people begin to glimpse the end of the conflict and the prospects of a peaceful future. TDF is forced to declare martial law in several regions as citizen jubilation threatens to grow wildly out of control. In Sydney, a mob lynches a man wrongfully thought to be a Trojan Horse.

2839

On Earth, Cybrid forces continue to fall back in North America and Antarctica, the only two major Cybrid footholds remaining on Earth. Many Cybrid units fall because of malfunction or lack of proper maintenance rather than human fire.

Deep in the Pacific Ocean, TDF sonar probes detect a large, unidentified mass moving toward the west coast of North America at supercavitating speed. It successfully breaches the naval perimeter near Hawaii and then diverts its course north, toward the Seattle-Vancouver Metrozone. Concluding the bogey is KRAKEN, Imperial Navy deep sea assets scramble to intercept, but fail.

Cybrid forces in the NorthAm theater break through human lines along a 200-mile front in the NAP province of Montana-Columbia, throwing human forces on the

defensive. They surge North and West toward SEAVAM and its reconstructed spaceports.

ISS Spinnaker leads a fleet of Xavier-Ryu drive ships against a Cybrid naval formation detected near Oberon, in what the Imperial Navy classifies as a "defensive operation." The fleet is ultimately victorious, but not before garbled transmissions from *Spinnaker* report a torpedo hit near the main power plant. An instant later, sensor screens pick up a massive explosion from the famed ship's location, and then nothing.

Cybrids approaching SEAVAM encircle an outnumbered Alliance force of patchwork colonial units, mostly battle-fatigued Martian veterans. The Alliance captain is an ex-rebel named Hunter Otobe. Despite harsh weather conditions, Otobe rallies his soldiers and holds off the Cybrids long enough for the TDF to regroup and counterattack. As a result, Cybrid momentum is broken in North America.

KRAKEN breaks through the sea-wall and enters Puget Sound, attacking the Seattle-Vancouver Greater Metroplex from within. Knights led by Artemis "Deathwish" Chenliu counterattack with cache weaponry and an experimental gravitic "implosion torpedo." Casualties are high. Chenliu pilots the craft carrying the torpedo straight into KRAKEN, sacrificing herself and causing a fatal breach in its armor. Imperial Knights and Imperial Navy aerosubs savage the monstrous warform in a running three-day pursuit before it finally perishes in a massive explosion.

On Venus, *Operation Mercy's Shore* succeeds in clearing the planet of its few remaining Cybrids. A heartbreaking reconstruction begins as Scarab-suited laborers excavate the ruins of arcologies, outposts, and caravans. Venusian poets come to call this time 'The Grieving.' Their devastating holofilms and commentaries quickly spread the tragedy of Venus throughout human space.

Hysteria borne of liberation fever paralyzes TDF operations throughout the North American Prefecture. Guerilla resistance survivors begin to emerge from their hidden bunkers and bases. Slaves are freed from Cybrid factories. Recognizing the need to maintain order, Caanon reestablishes the Imperial Police by transferring selected TDF units to new duty.

The Alliance begins to permit Colonial troops to muster out and return to their homes. Victory celebrations are frequently cut short in order to facilitate leavetaking. Many "interplanetary marriages" take place. One such is Imperial Knight Oliphant "Rajah" Praldar-Singh, who marries a Venusian woman.

Artemis Chenliu's final haiku, calmly delivered over the radio during her famous last run against KRAKEN, is adopted as the catchphrase for Imperial heroism. In the years to come, she is enshrined as a Buddhist saint.

Martian pilots still serving with TDF forces on Earth return home to fanfare and celebration. The first Martian planetary defense forces are established under the command of decorated war hero Hunter Otobe. General Otobe reluctantly takes up the charge and founds the First Tharsis Dragoons from survivors of the "MarsSiege" and returning Martian veterans.

Rioting breaks out in Hong Kong and New Rotterdam over distribution of food rations. Hundreds perish as Imperial Police rein in the chaos. Autopsies later reveal

the presence of Trojan Horse units among the dead. Fear and suspicion set in throughout the Empire. Authorities enact rigorous biometric identification procedures as humanity attempts to weed out remaining infiltration units on Earth.

TDF transfers its forces from mop-up operations in Africa, Europe and South America to the NorthAm theater. Alliance "hunting" missions outside Denver, Gierling District, and along the Eastern Seaboard yield huge successes. This overwhelming application of force following the year's earlier victories in Seattle-Vancouver crushes the Cybrid presence in the North American Prefecture.

Caanon declares the renewal of the Empire and victory in the Third Earthsiege. In later speeches, he drops the use of "Earthsiege" for the term "Starsiege," desiring to encompass the joint struggle of all human colonies alongside Earth.

2840

Final enclaves of Cybrid forces on Earth are eradicated. Cybrid forces in Antarctica make no attempts to flee the planet, but fight to the very last, employing self-destruct tactics whenever possible, reaping carnage among the enemy. Directed by Sword-General Letha Fairchild, waves of BioDerm attackers supported by Imperial Knights overwhelm the last Cybrids in a massive frontal assault. Mother Earth is free once more.

Long Patrol vessels lurking outside the orbit of Saturn report signs of substantial Cybrid fleet movement near Uranus. The numbers indicate a far greater number of ships than Imperial Intelligence estimates had provided for. Alarmed, the Imperial Navy dispatches a task force to Titan to guard against a possible offensive.

Deeply moved by the devastation wrought on Venus, Imperial Knight Oliphant Praldar Singh resigns his commission and takes up permanent residence on the devastated colony. His Venusian wife at his side, he devotes himself to reconstruction efforts with what observers call 'religious fervor.'

Imperial Navy establishes a new orbital shipyard dubbed '*Phoenix Station*' at Earth-Luna L5. In a moving speech that takes on the cadence of prayer, Caanon dedicates it to all the ships and spacers lost in the Starsiege, ending with the simple phrase, "May we rise again."

Mop-up operations continue to eradicate the remaining pockets of Cybrid presence on Earth and Mars. As the full import of victory sinks in, liberation fever sparks riotous celebrations across human space, notable for their spontaneous violence and complete lack of restraint. Imperial Police trying to regain control are swept up in the hysteria. Within the next year, a huge number of pregnancies strains obstetrics facilities and food supply capacity.

Long Patrol deepscout *ISS Ranger* reports signs of a massive naval engagement occurring beyond the ghost-orbit of Pluto. Imperial Naval Command reports no vessels operating in that region and orders *Ranger* to investigate. The next day, Eskandani Station receives what turns out to be the last message from *Ranger*. Badly garbled, the only intelligible portion is "...enough. This is critica****back to****coming arou****no way! Punch the-(END TRANSMISSION)"

Venusians lay foundations of new arcology dubbed "L'Esperanza."

In addition to enacting strict measures to try to gain control over liberation fever, the Imperial government puts policies in place to encourage the emerging baby boom; military planners quietly incorporate the skyrocketing birth rate into future troop strength projections.

Verity and Bek become the most popular baby names on Mars.

Fierce winter storms sweep across NorthAm. Thousands die of starvation and exposure, as a parts shortage grounds many airships. Aerospace drops bring relief to several groups of refugees, but for others, the supplies come too little, too late.

Departing from the defensive doctrine established in recent years, Caanon orders construction of a "pursuit armada" to hunt down Cybrids beyond the solar system. In a major speech transmitted throughout human space, he declares, "Like the ancient gods and spirits of the hunt, we will pursue our foe without mercy, without hesitation, without fear. To the ends of the universe we shall go. Fly though it may, the Cybrid cannot escape our justice."

Tharsis mayor Riana Yashida-Jones gives birth to a son. The father is unknown. Severely brain-damaged, the child is diagnosed with irreparable genetic damage and given no more than a year to live.

As a symbol of Imperial-Colonial cooperation, two new flagships are commissioned for the pursuit armada. One is christened the *ISS Ambrose Gierling*, and the other the *FCV Verity Vargas*.

2841

Liberation fever diminishes in scale and frequency as the peace settles across human space. Industry begins to shift from war production toward consumer goods. A thriving black market interferes with the economic recovery, however, and illegal narcotics flood the cities.

Unprecedented amity exists between Earth and her Colonies. On Mars, the Imperial presence is quietly withdrawn, but the Alliance Headquarters remains with a small inter-world garrison, situated on the old battleground of Carter Flats. The leader of the Martian contingent is the grizzled commander Joakim "Sax" Saxon, one-time right-hand man to the legendary Bek Storm. His aide-de-camp is the son of his old friend Hunter Otobe.

Fueled by the testimony of TDF survivors, highly publicized court-martials begin, focusing on accusations of atrocities committed by Blood Eagle Knights during the Battle of Denver. Though many Knights are acquitted, some are not, and the trials leave a bad taste with the public. Caanon himself is said to have washed his hands of the controversial Order.

Bulk food shipments become one of the most sought-after underground commodities. Major agricultural shipments require heavily armored and escorted convoys.

Record numbers of births include record numbers of severe birth defects as the legacy of the Starsiege reaches the next generation. Imperial doctors begin to focus research efforts on teratogen detection and genetic therapy. Suicide rates spike as devastated parents try to cope with the continuing presence of the Cybrid horror.

War hero Colossa Eun Alba gives a stern but stirring speech to the reconstituted Imperial Senate, appearing by virtual projection, as his ruined body is still confined to a biotank. He calls for renewal of humanity's warrior spirit and demands "that our hands not stray far from the sword."

People traumatized by years of apocalyptic war demonstrate a range of psychological scars ranging from severe PTSD to "running amok." Suicide rates remain abnormally high.

At the height of the Blood Eagle trials, TDF veteran Michael Church, the hero of Denver, provides testimony that convicts three senior officers of the infamous Order. One is Knight-Captain Ruby Hokanson-Li, aka "Razorfire." After the verdicts, Church goes into seclusion.

On Venus, Oliphant Praldar Singh is elected First Citizen of the Reconstruction. He commissions the Oberwind Irregulars as the first official sovereign defense force of Venus. Rumors begin to circulate among reactionary elements on Earth that another conflict with the colonies may be inevitable.

Ethan Yashida-Jones dies in a Tharsis hospital, his tissues devoured by fast-growing systemic tumors. Riana falls into severe depression. By the end of the year, it becomes obvious she has developed a substantial drinking problem.

First Church of the Masters takes hold on Earth as well as Mars. Caanon expresses his personal disapproval, but takes no steps to hinder the spread of the new religion.

624 Hektor, a Trojan planetoid at Jupiter's L4 point, explodes in a massive conflagration visible from Earth. The explosion scatters a cloud of asteroids and debris across the Jovian orbital path. Across human space, fears are awakened of another ecocidal attack by the Cybrids. The Long Patrol dispatches the *ISS Crimson Inquisitor* to investigate.

Caanon assigns two newly-formed Imperial Knight Orders to the pursuit armada: The Fireborn and Adamant Storm. The TDF attaches its First Imperial Starborne Division, and the Colonials offer the Third Colonial Rangers, the most decorated unit of the Starsiege after the Blood Eagle and the recently formed Tharsis Dragoons.

Michael Church's body is discovered in a garbage-strewn alley in Bangkok.

2842

ISS Crimson Inquisitor arrives within sensor range of Jupiter-L4 and reports a large Cybrid salvage operation underway. She continues to monitor the Cybrid activity while the Imperial Navy musters a taskforce.

Long Patrol deepscout *ISS Vainamoinen* detects unusual gravitic signature outside the orbital path of Neptune. Caanon puts the Imperial Navy on Red-6, TDF's highest alert status, after analysis of the gravitic readings shows a pattern consistent with manifested XGE drive fields. The limitations of gravitic detection capability mean only generalized location of XGE vessels can be determined, not vector or acceleration readings.

General Letha Fairchild assumes command of TDF and the Orbital Guard. She makes her base of operations on *Phoenix Station*.

Fast-draft initiated to cycle all able-bodied people into war effort.

Third Lieutenant Orlanda Konovalov of the TDF pilots an interceptor on a spontaneous sortie against a suspected Cybrid incursion near L4. The intruder turns out to be a Cybrid spy probe, easily destroyed. Konovalov's cool professionalism during her approach marks her to TDF superiors.

Long Patrol scrambles all available ships to establish a sensor picket line between the Cybrid XGE coordinates and insystem vectors. Priority channels on GLORIA cleared for high-level response to the threat. Rumors on the Omni-Web describe an exceptional volume of encrypted transmissions between Imperial Command on Earth and Titan.

Antolin Mirador, a clerk at the Rio Luz Bank of Madrid Metroplex, arrested for a horrific murder spree. He claims to be a Trojan Horse acting on behalf of the Great Machine God. Tests confirm he suffers from mental illness. He receives a humane execution after judicial inquiry concludes he committed the murders of which he was accused.

Taskforce Black Denial departs *Phoenix Station* and vectors for Jupiter at maximum speed. The Cybrid salvage operation departs using what the *Crimson Inquisitor's* crew concludes is XGE technology. *Crimson Inquisitor* attempts to follow, but a pair of Cybrid destroyers peel off to intercept. Outgunned, she falls back and evades, losing the Cybrid quarry in the process.

Nanophage alarm triggered in Sector 4, Block 7 of Dallas Metrozone. Blood Eagle strike teams arrive and raze the block within an hour, killing anyone who tries to escape and hunting down those few who exited the building before the red knights arrived.

At Eskadani Chasm, Admiral Nagashima orders the evacuation of non-essential base personnel into the new bunkers hidden beneath the ethane lakes and frozen oceans of the immediate region. The Long Patrol deploys a host of orbital defense drones over the main base and braces itself for the worst. Imperial Command orders a pair of freshly-minted Interdictor Class Battleships, the *ISS Damocles* and the *ISS Radiant Shield*, both equipped with Ryu Pinch drives, to reinforce Titan.

Cybrid threat never materializes. After weeks of tension, Caanon orders Imperial Navy to stand down to Red-1. A month later, he downgrades the alert status to Amber-6. Fast-draft halted. Crowds on Earth and Mars spill into the city streets, evincing relief and resentment.

Riana Yashida-Jones wins re-election as mayor of Tharsis, campaigning on the Free Mars Party platform and advocating complete independence from Imperial regulations. She takes her old Emancipator in campaign stops from settlement to settlement, using the video-ops it affords her. Despite allegations of raucous behavior in her personal life, she wins by a landslide.

Protests erupt over "Imperial False Alarm." Caanon is portrayed as Chicken Little in demonstrator placards. Fearing another outbreak of Liberation Fever, Imperial Police

overreact. Hundreds of protestors are injured, scores killed in cities across the world.

Duke Colossa Eun Alba is summoned to a private audience with the Emperor, at which he appears in person, his biotank floated into Caanon's presence on a gravitic sled derived at great expense from Predator technology. What the two discuss is not recorded, but Eun Alba's virtual presence thereafter becomes a constant at meetings of the Imperial High Command and TDF's Strategic Planning Directorate. Observers note he also enjoys an unprecedented level of security clearance.

Amid the cramped foundations of L'Esperanza Arcology on Venus, Remara Chandler begins writing The Solitude Canticles, a poetic meditation on grief and remembrance. In the years to come, she will be renowned as the first Venusian Poet-Saint.

Vargas Military Institute established on Mars.

Long Patrol deepscout *Walkabout* vanishes during investigation of one of Pluto's larger fragments. The planetary shard was on an outsystem trajectory. Cybrids are presumed responsible for the ship's disappearance.

Protest leaders on Earth detained indefinitely. Civil libertarians agitate for their release.

Decorated BioDerm veteran Delta Six lobbies Imperial government for BioDerm clemency, citing Derm casualty rates under command of Letha Fairchild in the Antarctica campaign as "punishment enough." He is arrested, but released within the month.

Imperial Alert Status downgraded to Amber-2. Caanon makes speech decrying turmoil and berating "those who would embrace the enemy by forgetting what they are. Our history is writ in blood and fire – we do not have the luxury to be soft."

Shortly after the Emperor's speech, Riana Yashida-Jones gives a speech attacking "...those who would sacrifice their liberty out of fear, who would sell themselves to dictators for security. That is the greatest disrespect to our dead comrades, to forget why we fought."

Martian runs amok at Imperial consulate, killing three before he is brought down. The tragedy elevates tensions between Imperials and Colonists. Generation-old memories resurface. Dusters mutter the name of Navarre.

Riana Yashida-Jones shot by Imperial sympathizer at a rally in Tharsis.

2843

Martians hold a candlelight vigil for Riana Yashida-Jones as she clings to life in a Tharsis City hospital. To their surprise, they are joined by a silent contingent of Imperial citizens bearing flowers in the name of the Emperor. Within days, most of Yashida-Jones's old squadmates have rallied to her. NewsNet reports downplay her turbulent personal life. Colonial-Imperial tensions ease.

Imperial security forces on Titan uncover a Trojan Horse cell operating at Eskadani Station. The cell includes a network of smugglers, Long Patrol communications

officers, and SCARAB-laborers. Security is tightened across the moon as an atmosphere of paranoia infuses the outer colonies.

A pale but steady Riana Yashida-Jones gives a press conference thanking all her well-wishers and the Emperor. She reiterates the need to avoid the mistakes of the past, saying that "to be human means embracing the risks that go with freedom. We are not cogs in a machine."

Knight-Captain Sunder Cain of the Blood Eagle leads an inquisition team to Titan to secure the outer colony against further Trojan Horse infestation. The team's presence is controversial among the icegrubs, and Cain's methods are uncompromising. Admiral Nagashima transmits a strongly worded protest to Imperial Command.

Imperial Census shows human population burgeoning, with record numbers of children being born across the system despite fears of genetic damage from the Starsiege.

Fleet shipyards at *Phoenix Station* begin construction on five new 'Liberation' class colonial frigates. Imperial Command refuses to allow weapons or firing control systems to be installed on location, citing Trojan Horse concerns. On Mars, agitators in the Martian Parliament call for independent naval installations to construct and service colonial vessels.

Earth's ecosystems show signs of recovery after the years of devastating war. Emperor Caanon dedicates the monument to the Battle of Denver amid a field of wildflowers.

Elections are held for the Martian Parliament. The Free Mars Party, headed by Riana Yashida-Jones, prevails, and Yashida-Jones takes office as the first Speaker of Mars.

NewsNet posts a story linking Michael Church's death to the Blood Eagle. Though well-documented, the evidence cited consists of oral testimony from unidentified witnesses. The scandal gets attention, but falls into the vast sea of conspiracy theory already surrounding the Blood Eagle.

Escorted by bodyguards, Francisco Navarre, son of former Imperial Governor Ernesto Navarre, enrolls in the Vargas Military Institute on Mars. Despite suffering persecution from his classmates, his scores place him at the top of his class.

Riots break out on Titan following widespread circulation of incendiary rumors that the Long Patrol is infested with Trojan Horses. Some stories accuse Admiral Nagashima himself of being a hidden Cybrid.

Riana Yashida-Jones proposes full independence of Colonial forces from the Imperial command structure. The Martian Parliament passes the bill before the end of the year.

Caanon bans the Church of the Masters from Nova Alexandria.

First Citizen Oliphant Praldar-Singh calls on Venusian legislators to strike down a bill authorizing cooperation with Martian forces in the construction of a Free Colonial

Shipyard to be established at a secret location. After lengthy and heated debate, the bill passes the Venusian Senate despite his opposition.

Venusian composer Owain Li-Kant produces the first of his controversial Promethean Symphonies, music inspired by algorithmic fragments salvaged from Cybrid brains.

To quell the rumors about his humanity, Admiral Hidei Nagashima submits to interrogation by the Blood Eagle investigation team. After the questioning is over, he resigns his commission and leaves Titan. Imperial Naval Command makes no move to stop him.

Akim Maatiu, a former naval intelligence officer who infiltrated a rebel smuggling operation during the Starsiege under the alias Maatiu Akimbo, is elevated to the rank of Vice-Admiral and given provisional command of the reconstituted Third Imperial Fleet.

The Imperial Ministry of Health publishes findings of a "disturbing" correlation between widespread post-traumatic stress disorder and cases of child abuse. Citing fears of a "traumatized population," the Ministry suggests mandatory medication and therapy for all parents of children under 12.

Sporadic food riots break out after a fungus blights a portion of the NAP wheat crop. Fears spread that "Cybrid taint" in the food supply will be another long-running legacy of the Starsiege.

2844

Amidst much pomp and ceremony at the Palace in Nova Alexandria, Duke Colossa Eun Alba is graced with the honorary title of Knight-Exemplar, the most prestigious award an Imperial Knight can receive.

Hidei Nagashima takes up residence on Venus and becomes moderately involved in local politics. He has the vocal support of First-Citizen Singh but is the source of much controversy among the native populace.

Imperial Police stage a three-month long crackdown on black-market trade throughout Earth and the Inner Colonies. Their tactics and behavior are particularly brutal, evoking outrage from civil-liberties advocates across the Inner System. Underground food and supplies trade is sharply impacted while narcotics shipments remain curiously unaffected.

NewsNet reports Duke Eun Alba's appointment as General of Imperial Forces attached to the Artemis Pursuit Armada. General Hunter Otobe will command the Colonial contingent.

The Blood Eagle inquisition team on Titan stages a surprise raid on a mining facility deep in the Eskadani Chasm. The facility, its workers, and most of the strike team are consumed in a massive explosion that is felt as far away as Huygens Station. Knight-Captain Sunder Cain, after reviewing data of the incident, declares the Blood Eagle mission on Titan complete and returns to Earth without further public explanation.

Martian scholar Orestes Bale publishes his landmark biography of Solomon Petresun. The work, entitled Circuits, Flesh, and Steel, sparks controversy on Earth due to its highly critical analysis of the former Emperor's life.

Vice-Admiral Akim Maatiu is advanced to the rank of Admiral and offered command of the Imperial fleet assigned to the Artemis armada. He graciously accepts and transfers to the *ISS Gierling* to oversee the final stages of the naval muster.

Venusian First-Citizen Oliphant Praldar-Singh travels to Mars on a diplomatic embassy to meet with Rianna Yashida-Jones. The two discuss colonial economics, agricultural and industrial trade, and military cooperation among other subjects. The visit dominates the NewsNet feeds for weeks as hired analysts and other talking heads speculate on the future of Colonial-Imperial relations and the establishment of the controversial Free Colonial Forces.

A Cybrid strike force assaults and captures *Kuiper Defense Platform Four*, one of seven newly constructed naval outposts scattered throughout the outer system. Imperial Command orders the Long Patrol to keep tight surveillance of the platform and its companions but orders no further response.

Thau-Yuros family stock plummets in value after yearly profit and loss reports show a drastic decrease in their portfolio value, caused in large part by the collapse of several industrial manufacturing firms in which they are heavily invested. Hoping to staunch the sudden outflow of capital from the family's holdings, Julius Thau-Yuros resigns his position on the Austin-Yugari board of directors and re-invests a large portion of his funds into a handful of burgeoning cache-tech development corporations.

An obscure religious cult claiming to worship 'The Immortal Emperor' makes the newsfeeds when one of its members assaults Orestes Bale during a book signing in Capri Station on Mars.

At the behest of General Otobe, and with the support of First Citizen Singh, Allied Command offers the Admiralty of the First Colonial Expeditionary Unit to Hidei Nagashima. Outraged members of the Martian Parliament call on Rianna Yashida-Jones to condemn the choice. She refuses to do so, and with her tacit approval Nagashima accepts the appointment.

Completing the 28-month Vargas Institute program in less than 18 months, Francisco Navarre becomes the highest rated graduate in the military academy's short history. He is immediately assigned to the Third Colonial Rangers and placed under the command of Captain Dawo Otobe.

The Imperial Naval muster is completed at *Phoenix Station*. Led by *flagship ISS Gierling*, *Task Force Ravenous Shield* is composed of fifty-six naval vessels, including eight freshly minted *Interdictor* class Battleships.

Tharsis-Valles Technologies becomes the first colonial corporation to ever be listed in the Census Conlegium Imperium, the Empire's annual list of top-performing companies. Trade volume on the Colonial markets skyrockets as speculators shop for other potential success stories.

The Gierling and her task force leave *Phoenix Station* with a host of public vessels carrying reporters and dignitaries in tow. The civilian ships are ordered back to port but a few smaller vessels shadow the fleet for several days before breaking off.

Emperor Caanon's eldest son and heir, Knight-Commander Hector Weathers, is killed in action during a mop-up operation on Triton.

The First Colonial Expeditionary Unit departs Mars orbit. The battle group is scheduled to rendezvous with *Task Force Ravenous Shield* somewhere in the outer system, at which time the Artemis Armada will be complete.

2845

Emperor Caanon delivers an historic address marking the launch of the Artemis Pursuit Armada. The speech is capped by his dramatic declaration that "the Chase is on! Not some mean spectacle for renown or glory, but THE Chase, the great effort of our generation that will at last put an end to abomination, and purchase our freedom from fear."

THE CHASE BEGINS