STAR BLAZERS
THE MAGAZINE OF SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO

ICARUS
Part 3 of 3
FROM THE CAPTAIN’S DESK

Welcome aboard, crewmembers!

This issue features the final chapter of ICARUS, the first STAR BLAZERS’ “side story” that has graced the pages of our proud publication. What is a “side story”? Simply put, it’s a story that exists “outside” a pre-established continuity. In other words, you won’t find it in any of the STAR BLAZERS or YAMATO animated videos. It appears here for the first time anywhere. This does not, however, mean there are no more “side stories” in the future. A saga this big holds many untold tales. We do, in fact, have another one coming right up next issue...but that will be discussed elsewhere.

The main topic of discussion this time is YOU: what do YOU think of the concept of “side stories”? The STAR BLAZERS and YAMATO videos which are available from Voyager Entertainment contain magnificent tales of courage, adventure and romance, and we want to recapture as much of them as is possible in comic book form...but is this what YOU want? Would you prefer for this publication to stay with adaptations of the animated videos, exclusively present new side stories, or continue with a mixture of both? Please share your thoughts with us; we want this to be the best STAR BLAZERS publication it can possibly be, and that means giving the fans what they want!

Speaking of which, this issue contains an article on exactly that subject. Japanese fans of SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO knew exactly what they wanted after the original animated series debuted over 20 years ago—more YAMATO! The result was a genuine entertainment phenomenon, which we recount this issue in “Yamato Fever.” Following that is the penultimate installment of “Twilight,” the story of the real Battleship Yamato, and the final segment of a look at scenes that were animated for the original Japanese TV programs but didn’t make it to American screens.

Lastly, I’d like to call your attention to another publication that should be on the stands with this very issue. It’s called the STAR BLAZERS INTRODUCTORY PACK. We originally announced the release of this product a few months ago, but decided afterward to hold it back for the upcoming holiday season. If there’s someone on your holiday gift-giving list who could do with a little STAR BLAZERS in their life, this is specially-made to fit the bill. It contains not only a special edition of this comic book with all-new material, but also a 65-minute video featuring the beginning of the QUEST FOR ISCANDAR animated series - both for the holiday-friendly price of $12.95! (And at that rate, you may even want one for yourself!)

Until next time,
Barry Winston
Publisher
Chapter Three:
Angel Too Close To The Sun
SAGHA, you may as well go below. Mr. Sash and I will do all we — huh?

Maybe he took another suit... the ones in that locker room were all tagged as nonfunctional...

He wouldn't have used one of them...

SAGHA?

Oh no!

Oh, no!

Oh god! No!

What the —?

My poor uncle...

We... we were fighting. He must have been so upset that he took a red-tagged suit!

My birthday present — and I threw it in his face! Oh, uncle Stephen, what have I done!

Huff! SAGHA — what's gotten into you! Running around like a crazy woman — what happened between you and the chief to make him —?

M — mother?

Mother? I can see your face!
**SASHA!!**

DAMMIT, SANDOR, you can't give up now! If I die, SASHA will blame herself and be poisoned with guilt all her life!

GOTTA FIGURE ANOTHER WAY OUT!

HMM... if I fire the suit's cold-gas jets so that I kill my small outward velocity... head back in Icarus' general direction... the approach radar ignores stationary or outbound objects... but if I can get moving back towards the rock...

I'll stand out on Simony's radar like a fourth-of-July rocket! They'll come get me...

Okay! Vector set! Cold-gas pressure ready! Three... two... one... fire — WHAT?

No power, no jets — and no way to run my air recycler! I can feel the CO2 building up...

Please... I don't want to die this way!

**SIGH** well, that's all, then. Without power, these jets are useless. And I don't want to die in a harness...

Red-tagged...

I took a red-tagged suit outside and never thought to check... stupid, Sandor, stupid...

...in this case, fatally stupid.

It's really not a bad way to go... all I have to do is drift...

**91**

...and drift...

...until I drift away into...

Uncle Stephen! I can't sweep until you kiss me goodnight...

Nothingness...

Huh?

**91**

Oh goof! I've been running on backup power the whole time...?
"Take care of her, Alex!"

"Take care of her, Sandor!"

"Oh, Uncle! Thank you so much!"

"Sasha! What's going on?"

"Sasha!"

"I don't know how, but I knew I'd see your face someday! It's the iscanibarium brooch, isn't it? It's making it so I can see you."

"Yes, daughter. In its substance lies a strength and a linkage to worlds beyond. Our mother world, Iscanibar, was made up of many such crystals. The women of our race always have had the power to brand these crystals to life...and you are of the race of iscanibar, one, just as you are of the race of Earth."

"But heed me, Sasha! Time is short and only you can save your Uncle! I have come to you to give you a choice—the sacred choice of Iscanibar. It is the final test of maturity. If you make the wise choice, your Uncle will live and you will be at last an adult..."

"...But if you make the foolish choice, you will remain a child forever and your Uncle will die.

"Mother...I knew this time would come!"
Listen, Sasha! We are daughters of Aquarius, possessing a great power given to us ages past by our ancestors. It is the power to reach across space and time!

We may glimpse the future, or channel the energies of the cosmos through ourselves in many ways. We are charged to use this power for the preservation of life in all its forms, wherever it may be.

How this power is about to be made manifest in you!

I must leave now. The choice is yours — your life, or the life of another! Choose well!

Mama!

Please don't go, Mama!

...Please... I'm so alone...

Mama...

...I must leave now. The choice is yours — your life, or the life of another! Choose well!

B-but how can I save Uncle Stephen?

I don't understand!

Your choice is between your life and another's! Your choice will determine whether you are worthy to wield the power.

Theiscandarum, Sasha! It is sensitive to the mightiest power in creation — the power of the heart!

The man has willingly chosen to put your life before his own — to love you better than he loves himself.

This man has

The crystal in your hand symbols with the power of the love with which it was made... and with the power of the love in your heart.

By the power of that love, you have the means to save your uncle — and yourself — for the futures you were both meant to have.

What... the hell is going on here, Sasha?

There were lights... a voice speaks from out of nowhere... something holding me back...

Sasha! Are you all right?

Yes, Perke. I'm fine.

I know what I have to do.
I'm going to end this recording now. I'm almost out of battery power.

Don't blame yourself for all this, Sasha. It's my fault for taking a suit without checking the power levels.

The first rule of Star Force Life is that everyone is responsible for his own gear. I broke that rule—never forget that.

And never forget your boring old Uncle Stephen loved you like... like his own child.

"Sigh. That's all. Then, have them bury me beside my sister. Alo, Farewell."

There goes my air recycler. I could just blow the suit's seals and get it over with...

Naaaah. There's probably ten minutes of air left. If I keep still, I can probably stay conscious to the end.

And besides... I like the view.

We've computed! The possible orbits of Chief Gandor could be given the Delta-3 of his jump jets. They indicate a search radius of three hundred Aklarks, well cross-cross this area and hope we get lucky...

No radar? You gotta be kidding! How are we supposed to find the Chief without our scopes?

We'll just have to search visually. You know as well as I the radars on the Tigers aren't calibrated yet.

It's hopeless... they'll never find him without radar. It's now or never...

Okay, that's it! Mount up, Tigers! Launch in three minutes!

Goodbye, Dike. I wish we could have taken that trip together...
EDS SHAUN: ICARUS BASE, PLEASE INFORM SQUADRON COMMANDER WAGENFIELD THAT WE ARE RETURNING TO BASE AND WILL BE JOINING THE SEARCH IN APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR.

SASH: HERE, DID YOU COPY THAT, LIEUTENANT?

ROGER: GIVE CAPTAIN MURRAY MY THANKS, TIGER ONE OUT.

BY USING CAPTAIN'S BIG RADAR, WE'RE SURE TO FIND THE CHEF... BUT IT'S A SHAME MURRAY'S PROBABLY GONNA HAVE TO FACE A COURT-MARTIAL FOR IT... ICARUS BASE IS SUPPOSED TO BE COMPLETELY "BLACK" — RADAR SILENT.

STILL, I GUESS IT? DO THE SAME. A STAR FORCE CAREER IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR A MAN'S LIFE...

BUT WHAT A WASTE! ONE MAN'S CAREER OVER — ONE MAN'S LIFE HANGING BY A THREAD — ALL BECAUSE OF A CARELESS MISTAKE.

"TIGER ONE TO ALL TIGERS — SEEK SEARCH PATTERNS NOW! LET'S GO FIND HIM, GUYS!"

COMMANDER MAYES! I'M GETTING A SYSTEM ALERT! SOMEONE IN ARKLOCK SEVEN — AND THE DECOMPRESSION CYCLE IS ACTIVE!

VIDEO ON — IT'S — WILDRSTAR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THERE?

SASH? WHAT THE —?

SASH! THIS IS COMMANDER MAYES! PULL THE RED HANDLE AND ABORT THE ARKLOCK CYCLE NOW! YOU HAVE ONLY A FEW SECONDS BEFORE FULL DECOMPRESSION!

SASH! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

WHAT? I ORDERED NO EVA! ACTIVATE THE VIDEO MONITOR AND TELL ME WHO'S IN THERE!

SASH! I CAN HEAR YOU, SIR... BUT LUCKY STEPHEN IS IN TROUBLE AND I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HELP HIM. I'M SORRY FOR ALL THE TROUBLE... PLEASE DON'T WORRY...

THIS IS MY CHOICE!
Mother! Ancestors of Iscandar! Hear me! I am Sasha, daughter of Starsha, daughter of Iscandar and of the Elder Race! I stand ready to face the sacred choice of our people!

Four...
Three...
Two...
One...

Of my own free will, I choose to offer my life for the life of another! Elders of Iscandar, search my heart, guide my hands, and grant me the power to do what I must for the sake of life! I make my choice—now!

Decompress in 5 seconds.

'Veroooonnnn

'No! Don't do it—'

'Mother!'
"Look—it's the Chief! She's found the Chief!"

"It's you..."

"He was less than a mile away!"

"We could have looked for days and never found him!"

"Mio..."

"Mio... I knew you'd come back for me someday..."

"Yes..."

"I've come to take you home..."

"You've come to take me home..."

"Yeah..."

"I've come to take you home."

"Mio!"

"I knew you'd come back for me someday..."

"Sনি! Get me a link to Captain Murray! Tell him to cancel the radar scan!"

"Done, Sir! A laser transmission is coming in—It's Squadron Commander Wasefield!"

"Tiger Leader to Icarus... I'll have them lower pressure in sixty seconds."

"Main is this going to take some explaining?"

"Got 'em!"
"I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED. I HAVE ONLY THE VAGUEST MEMORY OF THE WHOLE THING... LIKE THE FEVER DREAMS I HAD WHEN I WAS GROWING UP."

"BUT I'M GROWN NOW, AND IT'S TIME TO START TURFING DREAMS INTO REALITY. UNCLE STEPHEN AGREES—HE'S DOING FINE, BY THE WAY, AND HE'S STOPPED TREATING ME LIKE A LITTLE KID."

"AS FOR ME—I GUESS I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO DO. THE FIRST THING I DID WAS QUIT GOOFING OFF, AND REALLY DUG INTO MY WORK. I REALLY ENJOY WORKING WITH ELECTRONICS, NOW..."

"FRIDAY, I TOOK THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAM AND PASSED IT... I HAVE ENOUGH CREDITS NOW, THEY SAY..."

"MY FATHER DOESN'T KNOW YET AND I'M SURE HE'LL BE ANGRY... BUT AS AN ADULT I HAVE TO DO WHAT I KNOW IS RIGHT FOR ME."

"I BELIEVE WE ALL HAVE A DESTINY TO FULFILL, AND SINCE I SAW MY MOTHER'S FACE I KNOW WHAT MINE IS—TO PROTECT AND DEFEND THE PEOPLE I LOVE. I KNOW WHAT THAT DESTINY MEANS..."

"...I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO.

"LET'S CHANGE OUR AUTOPILOT TO THE NEXT STATION. I'M ON A MISSION NOW, AND I'M NOT COMING BACK."

"AND SO I DID."

"UNCLE STEPHEN RECOMMENDED ME, AND DEKE VOLUNTEERED TO BE MY TUTOR... EARTH APPROVED AND SO TONIGHT, ON THE FIRST OF DECEMBER, I WILL TAKE THE OATH AND BEGIN FOLLOWING MY DREAM—AS A MIDSHIPMAN IN THE EARTH DEFENSE FORCE."

"HERE, ENLISTED MAN."
22 DECEMBER 2202

IS THE ... UK, COLONEL -- STILL DOING WELL, GENERAL SKELETON?

MR. LAZARUS ISN'T A CLONE, SIR, IT -- HE -- IS A LIVING PERSON, WITH THE SAME PHYSICAL BODY AS HE HAD BEFORE HIS DEATH ...

UNBELIEVABLE! SIMPLY UNBELIEVABLE! A MAN COMING BACK FROM THE GRAVE, HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?

WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY, MR. PRESIDENT. DR. PROBE AND KYSTER AT THE SCIENCE INSTITUTE ARE STUDYING HIM RIGHT NOW. WE SUSPECT IT'S RELATED TO THE COSMO DNA, BUT WITHOUT FURTHER PROOF ...
"A dead man. I'm a dead man. And the worst thing is that I don't know if I'm in heaven or hell."

"I only could remember how I got here -- how I died..."

"The General -- the young woman -- they tell me this house is mine. These clothes are mine -- but I don't remember owning them."

"I don't remember my loved ones -- my childhood -- nothing! Why can't I remember --?"

"--Why?"

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**ANALYZER**

News and feature articles from the world of Yamato/Star Blazers

The mid to late-1970s was not only the most prosperous era for the *YAMATO* saga, it virtually laid the groundwork for the Japanese animation fandom. In "YAMATO FEVER" we examine those "boom years" and the way they shaped things to come. Also this issue, we have the next installment of "Twilight" and the first part of a new feature on footage edited from STAR BLAZERS' Onward and upward!

Edited by TIM ELDRED
Over the last several issues of this magazine, we have recounted the development of the first SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO animated series (also called THE QUEST FOR ISCANDAR) at its various stages. This period of development concluded in mid-1974, when actual production began. Leiji Matsumoto and Noboru Ishiguro previously recounted for us part of this nightmarish process; the working day was a 24-hour affair, those of the day shift sleeping only a few feet away from those on the night shift.

Voice actors were often called upon to record lines before a scene was animated—the reverse of normal procedure in Japan. Entire half-hour episodes often remained in production right up to the day they were broadcast. Despite the maelstrom, unique experiments by the YAMATO team forged new paths for the anime artform. All-new color theories emerged that established unique palettes for space adventure, some still used today by modern animators. On-screen motion was enhanced by splitting images up onto multiple animation cells that moved at different rates—at times nearly doubling the cel count of a normal 30-minute program. Even the music was revolutionary, with the opening theme starting off with vocals rather than instrumental fanfare. The ending theme was a slow ballad, "The Scarlet Sash," which also broke with the usual tradition of adventure programs.

Then came the reruns! Fans passed the word to their friends to check out the show. Viewership improved dramatically, easily surpassing earlier poor ratings. Soon, the fans began to ask for more, and the natural next step was a movie. At the time, most anime films were geared only for the elementary school level, but YAMATO was appreciated by older fans in junior high as well as high school—fans who could buy their own movie tickets.

In August 1977, hot on the heels of STAR WARS, the YAMATO movie brought huge crowds to the box offices of Toei theater chains. Die hard fans were among the first in line, many waiting overnight, deep in non-stop discussions with other fans. Their ages varied between elementary students and adults, with the core being in the junior high and high school range. It was the first time a film animated in Japan demonstrated such wide appeal.

The movie reused much of the footage from the TV series, but new original scenes enhanced the experience and aided its success in the theaters. A comprehensive merchandising campaign followed. LP records and 8mm film clips were released, increasing the number of fans tenfold. Over 800 YAMATO fan clubs emerged with an estimated total of 150,000 members throughout the country. By the end of 1977, Office Academy (then the name of Yoshinobu Nishizaki's production company) created YAMATO Fan Club HQ, which published newsletters and offered special promotions. Some suspect that the "YAMATO boom" created anime fandom itself, as well as its many subgenres, including fan clubs dedicated exclusively to voice actors.

The movie finished its run, but the fans demanded more. So in November of 1977, Nishizaki announced that there would be a sequel. "Next year," he said, "we'll be making a new YAMATO." And the crowd, as the saying goes, went wild.

"Yamato Part 2" would be another theatrical effort by Office Academy, made in conjunction with Toei Doga. The title was "Arrivederci Space Battleship Yamato: Soldiers of Love." (Released on video in America as "Farewell to Yamato: In The Name Of Love.") Nishizaki and his production staff met for planning sessions in Hawaii. Fans mobbed the Fan Club HQ, frantic for data on the new film. The staff room at Toei Doga was closed to the public, with signs posted on the doors saying, "Employees Only, Do Not Enter!" The production staff included Noboru Ishiguro and Leiji Matsumoto (who was already hard at work on his own new animated series, SPACE PIRATE CAPTAIN HARLOCK). Other well-known talents also signed on, laboring under ever-increasing pressure to keep their work secret.

On the evening of August 4th, 1978, long lines of fans again stood outside Toei theaters. Record numbers of filmgoers flocked to Shibuya, Shinjuku and the west side of Yokohama to join the crowds. Many who couldn't get into the premiere nevertheless camped outside for days waiting for a seat. All this went on despite the fact that ARRIVEDERCI YAMATO brought virtually every popular characters' life to an end, and the Yamato itself was sacrificed against the Comet Empire! Some fans watched it over and over again, creating new fan clubs dedicated to this movie. Many fans thought nothing could top the previous adventure, but ARRIVEDERCI managed to deliver on all counts, and some said it was appropriate for this film to bring the series to a close—it just couldn't get any better! Finally, Animage, an animation magazine, put a name to this phenomenon when they declared that Japan had been taken over by "Yamato Fever!"

Numerous concerts were held over the following year. The now-iconic "Yamato Symphonic Concert," lead by Conductor Hiroshi Miyagawa in July 1979, became an instant hit. College students began reciting the music on their own instruments, and the Yamato theme received constant airplay. This caught the attention of the music world, and in 1980, a new YAMATO radio drama series was announced. The popularity of the series continued to grow, with the release of several new films and TV series. Over the years, YAMATO has become a cultural icon in Japan, inspiring numerous spin-offs and adaptations. Today, YAMATO remains a beloved franchise, with fans around the world still eagerly anticipating new releases.
attention of "All Night Nippon," an infotainment program dedicated to popular media. YAMATO captured an unprecedented four hour time slot from 1 AM to 5 AM, with both movies showing back to back. "All Night Nippon" even created a "Yamato Corner" on the show where Nishizaki answered questions from fans. The concerts played on to packed houses, and Miyagawa announced he would take them to wherever the fans asked. They even went to department stores, and Nishizaki was right there answering fans' questions. (When was the last time George Lucas or Steven Spielberg did that??)

Yamato Fever ultimately invaded the world of fashion. Nishizaki hired fashion designer Sachiko Hanai to create the "Yamato Style." She designed futuristic clothes that could be worn by the average boy or girl, and soon this had an impact on how things were marketed, from Yamato bags for children to more trendy outfits for college students. Even office ladies knew, "If you don't know Yamato, then you're out of touch!"

The phenomenon showed no sign of dying, and Leiji Matsumoto suggested that the crew of YAMATO should live on in answer to it. As a result, ARRIVEDERCI gave way to a new TV series, YAMATO 2. The story was altered so that almost every character survived, and was greatly expanded upon to fill 26 half-hours. Long gone were the days when TV ratings lay in doubt. The first episode of YAMATO 2 debuted in October 1978 to ready-made audiences, and both television series finally reached American screens almost two years later as STAR BLAZERS.

The path to the future was clear from there; more YAMATO productions already had an enthusiastic stamp of approval. THE NEW VOYAGE was launched as a made-for-TV movie in July 1979, and an entirely new wave of popularity followed. "Yamato Fever" had run its course...and now it was a way of life.

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**In April of 1945, the largest battleship ever built left Japan on a last-ditch suicide mission. Her enemy: The most powerful naval armada ever assembled. This is the story of that ship—and of one man who sailed in her.**

**BY BRUCE LEWIS**

No light. No sound. No bomb, bullet, or shell disturbed Yoshida. The young ensign floated blood-warm and motionless in a world of silence, his nightmare finally at an end. The last three hours of his life were wound together now into a blu of blood, shrapnel, and the stink of young men dead before their time. Visions of their ending floated before Yoshida's unseeing eyes: tattered survivors all in a row, cheering the Emperor from what surely could not have been the ship's keel; the Captain, forcing the younger bridge officers overboard with fists and kicks to prevent them from joining him in his final duty—going down with the ship; and the heartbreakingly young and tear-stained face of an anonymous sailor, clinging with determination to Yamato's battle-flag mast as it dipped into the sea around him. The horror, the suffering were all now over, thought Yoshida, floating senseless in the silent blackness; now, painlessly, it was time to die.

Suddenly, light—a wall of silver, bearing down in front of him with frightening speed! With a shock, Yoshida realized that the rippling wall of bubbles and brilliance before him was the side of an enormous cone, a cone of water opening into the sea in which he'd floated helplessly only seconds before! Frantically, he began scrabbling up, up, pulling against the relentless force that tore at him as the immense bulk of YAMATO herself created an underwater tornado as she sank. Bodies whipped past him as he struggled, bodies embedded in the walls of the funnel by its tremendous power. The whirlpool approached, grew, touched him, pulling him down to die with the rest.

Then, without warning, the pull vanished, to be replaced almost at once by an overwhelming blast of force. Somewhere in the black below, YAMATO's ammunition was exploding, shredding the ship and sending tremendous waves of pressure through the surrounding sea. Yoshida felt himself tossed like a rag, completely helpless, thrown tumbling through a universe of water and foam by explosion after explosion after explosion.

Then, silence; blackness; and, at a great distance, a green and unearthly light. It was 1423 hours, 7 April 1945, and battleship Yamato, the flagship of the Imperial Japanese Navy, was no more.

"Torpedo and sink Hiryū—then, let us enjoy the beauty of the moon."

—Admiral Taman Yamaguchi JIN, ordering the destruction of his own sinking ship, Midway, 4 June 1942

The morning sun burned hot over Midway, bathing the decks of the two carrier fleets in blood-red light. Since early morning, waves of American torpedo bombers from carriers Enterprise, Hornet, and Yorktown had thrown themselves valiantly but fruitlessly into the clouds of Zeros surrounding Japanese carriers Hiryū, Soryu, Akagi, and Kaga. Out of the forty-some American attackers, only seven had managed to actually launch torpedoes against Admiral Nagumo's Midway attack fleet, but they all missed, and of the Yankee pilots only a few still survived.
But even as the Japanese commander turned flagship Akagi into the wind to launch his counterstrike, the Japanese Empire's fate was being sealed.

At that moment, directly overhead, two squadrons of United States Navy Dauntless dive-bombers from the carrier Enterprise burst from the sky. The four Japanese carriers were helpless to stop them; their protective fighter squadrons were "on the deck" and nearly out of ammunition after fighting off repeated American attacks, and their flight decks were stacked with bombs and fuel for the counterstrike. Tipping straight over from 14,000 feet altitude, the 37 planes of Lieutenant Commander Clarence McClusky's Enterprise air group steeped at the circling Japanese flattops below. There could be no escape; Akagi shudder ed as the first two bombs ripped into her guts.

The first pierced her hangar deck and exploded amid the piles of ordnance stored there, instantly turning the ship into a hellish inferno from stem to stern. The second bomb exploded in the center of the fuel, ordinance, and aircraft on the flight deck: wrecking it and killing many. Carrier Kaga absorbed three bomb hits at almost the same instant, yet even as Enterprise's planes broke away from their attack, the 17 Dauntlesses of Commander Maxwell Leslie's Yorktown carrier air group began one of their own, bearing down on carrier Soryu as she turned into the wind to launch. Seconds later, the Japanese ship was engulfed in flames, shattered by three half-ton American bombs; less than a half hour after that, the U.S. submarine Nautilus fired three tor pedoes into Soryu's gasolines bunkers and sent her crew screaming into the depths. A counterstrike from Nagumo's surviving carrier Hiryu succeeded in sinking Yorktown after a furious and bravely-fought battle, but before nightfall the remaining Japanese carrier had been sunk as well, while the two remaining U.S. carriers continued to rain bombs on the fleeing remnants of the Midway task force. In six crucial minutes, the U.S. carrier aviators had destroyed the heart of Japan's sea power and avenged the attack on Pearl Harbor; at 10:26 hours, 4 June 1942, Japan had lost the Pacific War.

Word of the defeat soon reached Admiral Yamamoto in his teak-lined quarters aboard flagship Yamato several hundred miles to the west. Tearfully, the Admiral ordered Yamato and his remaining surface forces to press on and attack the Americans with naval cannon and ship-launched torpedoes. Soon, however, even he was forced to admit the battle was over. Finally, at five minutes to three on a black Pacific morning, the Admiral ordered a general retreat. Slowly, the great battleship swung east, leading her fleet home in defeat; Yamato had returned from her first mission without ever having fired her guns in anger.

From Midway on, the more mobile U.S. and Allied forces were able to begin turning back the Japanese tide that had washed across the islands of the Pacific. First came the Battle of Guadalcanal, where U.S. amphibious and naval forces fought the Japanese on an equal footing for the first time and came away bloodied but victorious. (Yamato, sent to Tokyo by support a Japanese attempt to recapture the island, made it as far as the Imperial Naval Base at Truk but did not take part in the fighting.) By the spring of 1943, the Empire was at last forced into retreat at Guadalcanal; from then on, Japan was to be on the defensive.

Then, the counterattack began, an island-hopping campaign in which air and naval power were combined to destroy Japan's mobile forces while bypassing and cutting off her island garrisons. U.S. submarines began a campaign of unrestricted warfare, targeting the merchant ships that kept the Empire's forces supplied with food, fuel, and the means to fight, while the U.S. surface fleet took on and defeated Japan's remaining combatants. By now, the great machine of America's war industries was running at full speed; from its foundries, shipyards, and factories poured a flood of weapons and materiel the likes of which the world had never before seen. In 1943, for example, the shipbuilders of the United States produced 66 submarines, 205 destroyer escorts, 92 destroyers, 11 cruisers, 3 battleships, and 37 aircraft carriers of all types (in 1996 the U.S. Navy possesses some 15 carriers at any given time). This avalanche of war produc tion made the United States forces the best-equipped and most mobile fighting force in history. Grünly, Admiral Nimitz put them to work.

Through it all, Yamato fought on, despite the fact that the age of the great battleships was all but over. The enormous 18" guns she and her sister ship Mutsu mounted remained without equal in size or power; with the advent of naval air warfare, however, the efficacy of such cannons was soon reduced to near nil, and Japanese surface units were sent to the bottom one after another by Allied airpower, regardless of size or number of naval cannon they bore. And on 18 April, 1943, not long after shifting his flag to Mutsu, Admiral Yamamoto himself fell victim to American airpower, shot down by an U.S. Army Air Force fighter as he flew over Bougainville. With Yamato and other ships sailing by her side, Mutsu bore his ashes home to the fleet anchorage in Tokyo Bay not long after. There, the two super dreadnoughts were inspected for the first and only time by the Emperor himself before going into refit. After refit, Yamato set sail once more in May 1943.

But if the great ship's size was imposing, it also made her an irresistible target. On Christmas Day 1943, the U.S. submarine Skate put a torpedo into Yamato's starboard side as she patrolled near Truk. Her armor belt cracked, Yamato returned to Kure for repairs, where her two 155 mm side turrets were replaced with six 127 mm mounts. Several months later, in March of 1944, it was Mutsu's turn; as Yamato's sister ship was sent into drydock by yet another American torpedo. After repair, the two warships once again went to sea, from Singapore to Saipan, where Yamato fired her big guns in anger for the first time in the Battle of the Mariana Sea (June 1944). After another refit and a high-speed crossing from Brunei to the Philippines, Yamato (now the flagship of Combined Fleet Admiral Tōgō Kurita) and Mutsu threw themselves into battle in the Sibuyan Sea. There, on 24 October 1944, Mutsu's luck ran out, twenty torpedoes and seven enemy bombs combined to put her on the bottom. Yamato herself took three bombs, but lived to fight the next day—at the Battle of Samar Gulf (25 October 1944), where Yamato drew her first blood. Her big guns blasted 104 rounds into the U.S. fleet there, sinking an escort carrier and a destroyer, but to no avail. Soon the Philippines were lost as well. It was Yamato's first and last battle with surface forces. Soon after, American aircraft drove her from her refuge at Brunei, and in November she was ordered to return to Japan.

A few days later on 29 November, Yamato's only remaining sister ship, the hybrid battleship-carryer Shinano, was sunk by U.S. torpedoes minutes after leaving her berth at Yokosuka. The great wave had crested; as 1945 began, Yamato stood alone.

Next: The Final Battle
Star Blazers Extra:
THE REAL ICARUS

While there is no Icarus Base for astronauts to go to today, Icarus itself is a real place! Icarus (15066 Icarus) is a large rocky planetoid, or asteroid, some 1.4 kilometers (.87 miles) across and massing about a billion metric tons. A so-called "Earth-crosser", Icarus orbits the sun in a highly eccentric (+.827) orbit that intersects the orbit of Earth from time to time. Some scientists believe that an object similar to Icarus hit the Earth millions of years ago, causing the extinction of the dinosaurs. Fortunately, Icarus' orbit is tilted 23 degrees with respect to our planet's orbit, making a collision between the two unlikely. Icarus takes about thirteen months (1.12 years) to orbit the Sun, which means that on average the asteroid orbits at about the same distance as Earth does around the Sun. (The distance between the Earth and Sun, some 93 million miles, is called an Astronomical Unit, or AU; Icarus orbits at a distance of 1.07 AU.)

Because of its proximity to Earth's orbit, Icarus and some other planetoids are well within reach of spacecraft we can build today; in the near future, space probes will visit some of these to examine them and bring back samples of the materials from which they are made. Many scientists think that planetoids like Icarus are comprised of valuable metals and ices that will be useful as humanity expands into the Solar System. If so, it's possible that you yourself may someday be part of a mission to Icarus!

Above: 951 Gaspria, an asteroid similar to Icarus. [JPL]
Below: Icarus' orbit crosses that of Earth.

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NEXT ISSUE

As the EDF puts the new mechanized fleet through its trial run, Captain Yamamoto takes command of the Yamato, but seems less than pleased with his new post. Sandor finally takes steps to make Sasha an official member of the Star Force, and the Dark Nebula gathers for the final countdown...to invasion!

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