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STAR BLAZERS

THE MAGAZINE OF SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO



BE FOREVER
YAMATO

Prelude





STAR BLAZERS

THE MAGAZINE OF SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO

Based on *Space Battleship Yamato*
created by Yoshinobu Nishizaki and Leiji Matsumoto

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FROM THE CAPTAIN'S DESK

Greetings!

Last issue, we discussed the concept of "side stories," tales in the lives of the Star Force that you didn't see in animated form, but which speculate on events that occur between such grand adventures as (for instance) *The New Voyage* and *Be Forever Yamato*. Responses to our question about presenting such tales in this publication were not surprising; everyone seems to prefer a mixture of "side stories" and adaptations of the animated adventures. Starting this issue, we're giving you a little bit of both.

When you finish watching *The New Voyage* feature film (if you haven't yet, you really should) and move into the realm of *Be Forever Yamato*, story details come at you with blinding speed. Quite a lot takes place in the one-year gap between the two films. Much of this time frame was examined in our three-issue *Icarus* storyline...but not all of it. This issue, which features yet another "side story," fills in some additional details and takes us right up to the proverbial 'eve of destruction.' In other words, when you've finished reading this issue, you can cue up your VHS copy of *Be Forever* and start watching. (What's that? You don't have one? Then turn to the back cover immediately—you don't want to be left out!)

But don't forget to come back next month...because our comic book version of *Be Forever Yamato* isn't going to be quite the same as the film. Whole new levels of intrigue will be woven into the plotline, the groundwork for which is laid on the next several pages...so even if you've already seen the film, you haven't gotten the whole story. Please join us on this new experiment and let us know how you like it!

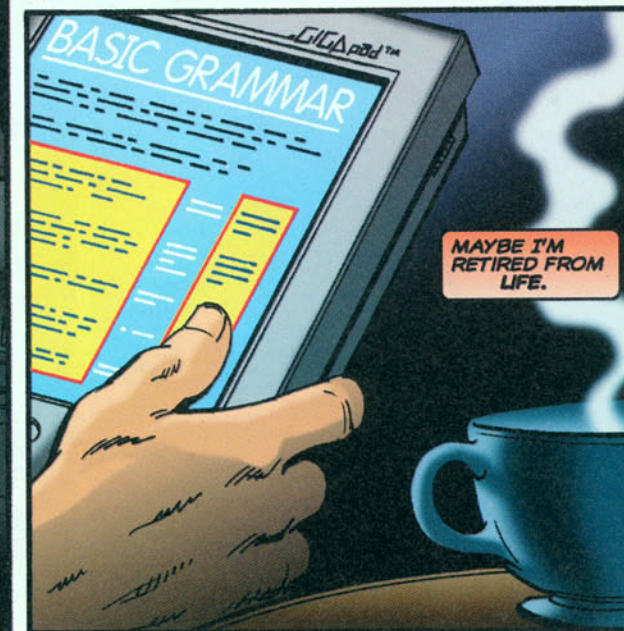
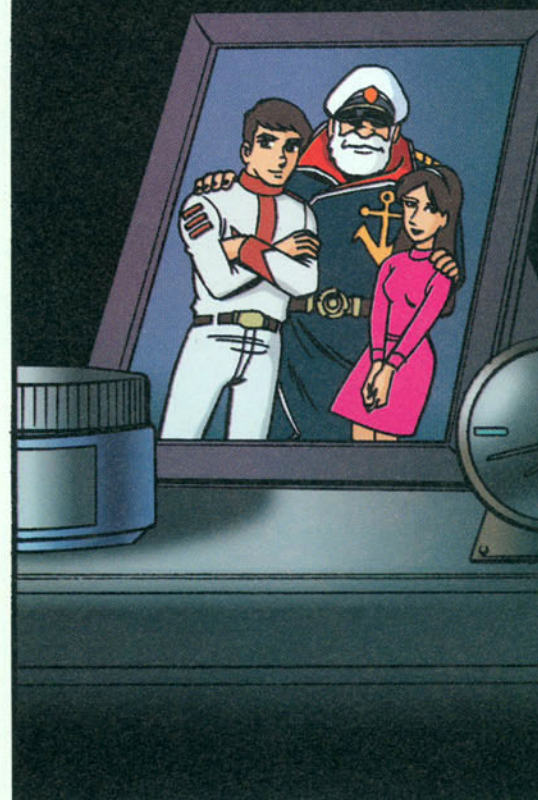
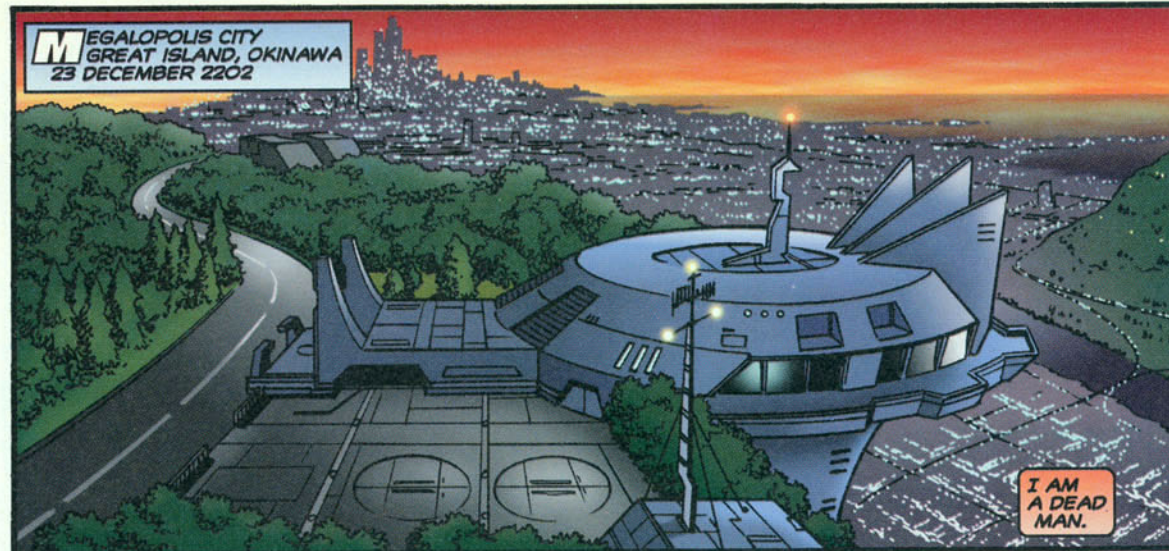
The other big news this issue is about the live-action *Star Blazers* feature film, which is now in the first stages of pre-production. In this month's "Analyzer" section, we hear directly from producer Josh Kline who shares for the first time his vision for this bold new project. Following that is the long-awaited concluding segment of "Twilight, the true story of the Battleship *Yamato*," and an exclusive report on the Japanese "Yamato Party '96."

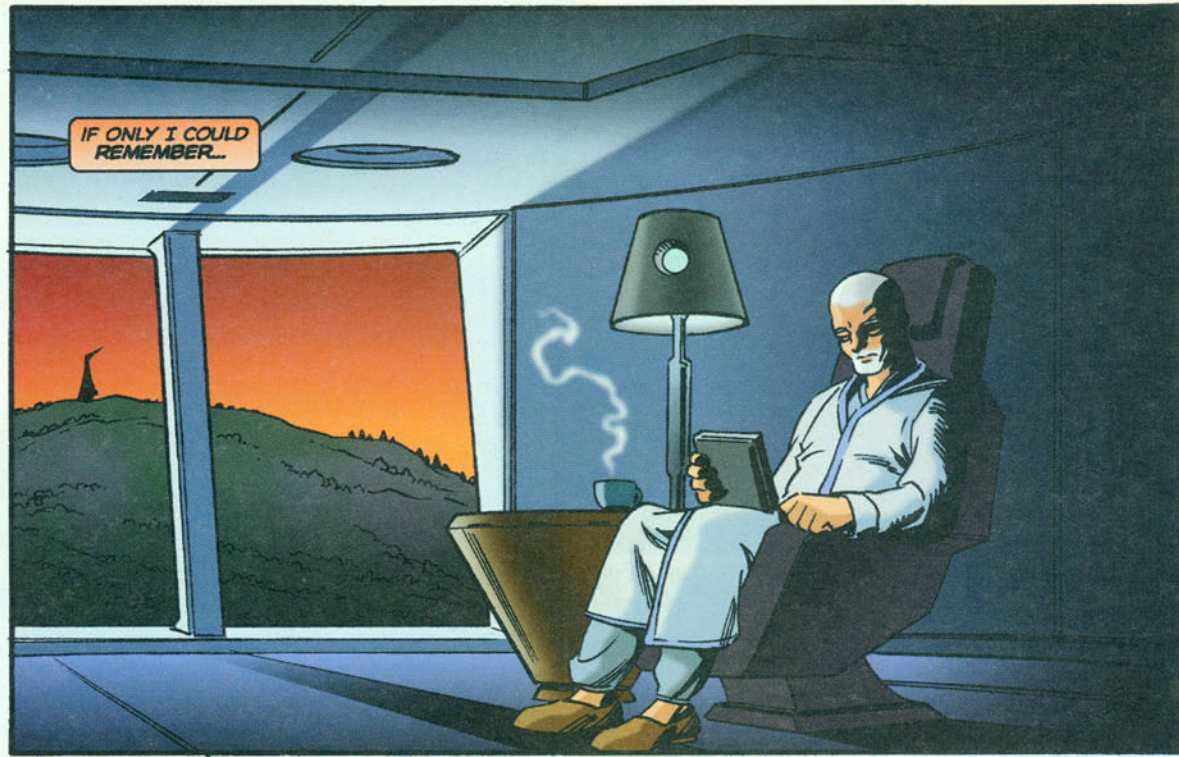
Last but not least, some of you may have noticed something special in your mailbox this past season, namely the inaugural issue of the *Star Blazers Fan Force Bulletin*! A copy was sent to everyone who is currently on our mailing list, which includes those who have signed up for the *Fan Force* and/or have ordered products from us. If this list doesn't happen to include you, this is easily remedied—join the *Fan Force* right now by sending a paltry \$15 to:

Star Blazers/Yamato Fan Force, Voyager Entertainment, Inc.
456 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

Not only will this guarantee you a copy of the next *Fan Force Bulletin*, it also qualifies you for substantial discounts on our wide variety of *Star Blazers/Yamato* products. So don't delay—send it today!

Best wishes,
Barry Winston
Publisher

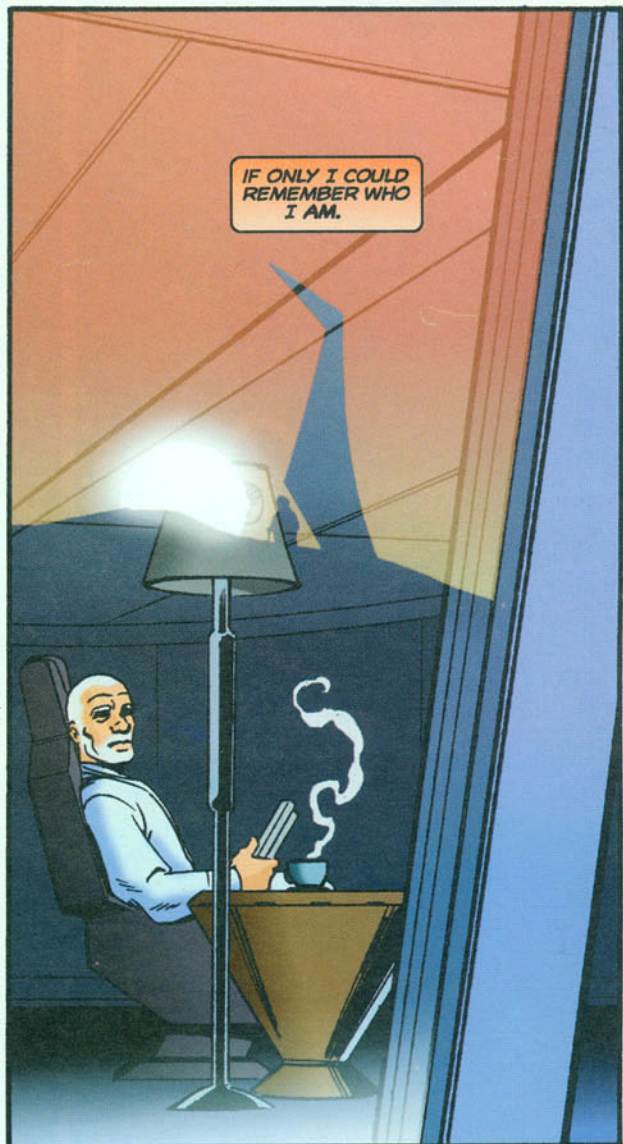




IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER...



IF ONLY I COULD PLACE THESE CLOTHES, THIS CITY, THE PEOPLE IN THAT PICTURE THEY GAVE ME...



IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER WHO I AM.

THE GATHERING STORM



"WITH THE THREAT FROM THE COMET EMPIRE GONE, AND GAMILON NO LONGER AN EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE, EARTH NOW STANDS AT THE BRINK OF AN ERA OF UNPRECEDENTED PEACE AND SECURITY."

"AS THE SOLE REMAINING SUPERPOWER IN THIS AREA OF THE GALAXY, THE TIME HAS COME TO ASK OURSELVES IF IT STILL MAKES SENSE TO PAY FOR A NAVY WE NO LONGER NEED."

THANK YOU, GENERAL STONE.

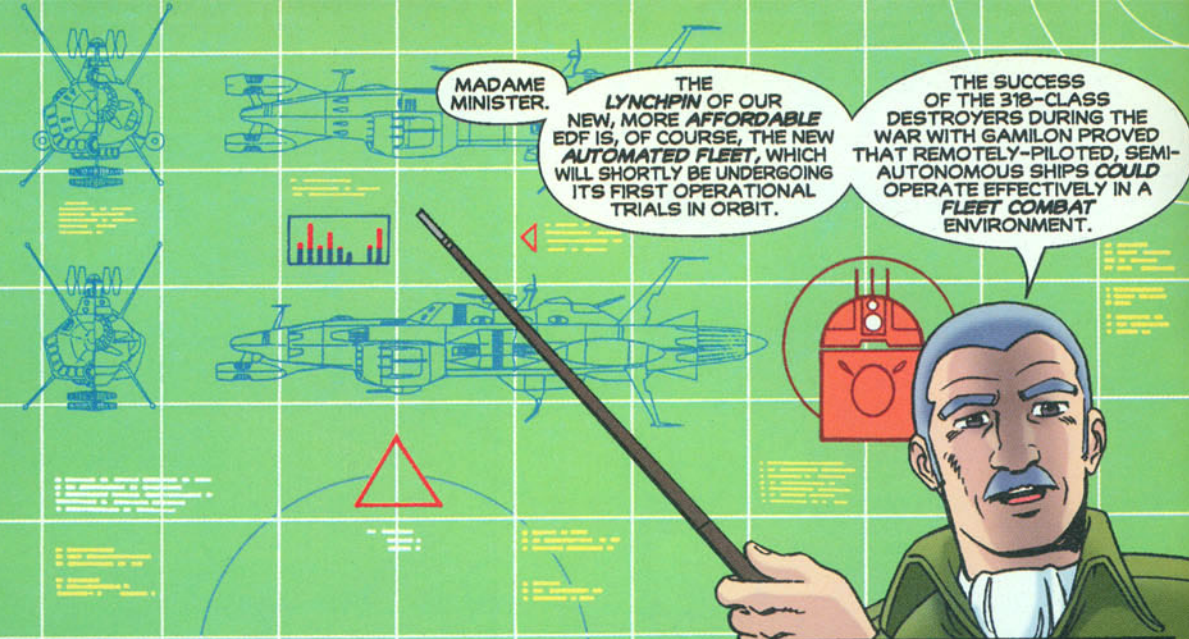
NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE GENERAL WILL OUTLINE WHAT HE AND THE REST OF THE JOINT CHIEFS CONSIDER OUR MOST COST-EFFECTIVE DEFENSE PLAN TO DATE.

EARTH DEFENSE COUNCIL
IN SESSION

"AFTER ALL, SHIPS AND CREWS ARE COSTLY, AND TAKE MONEY AWAY FROM VITAL PROJECTS HERE AT HOME -- INCLUDING THE ARMY'S NEW PLANETARY SECURITY FORCES."



INTERNAL SECURITY MINISTER AZIZ



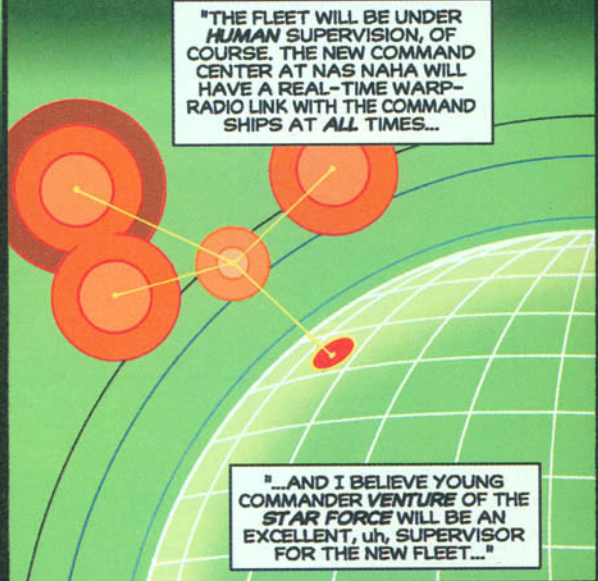
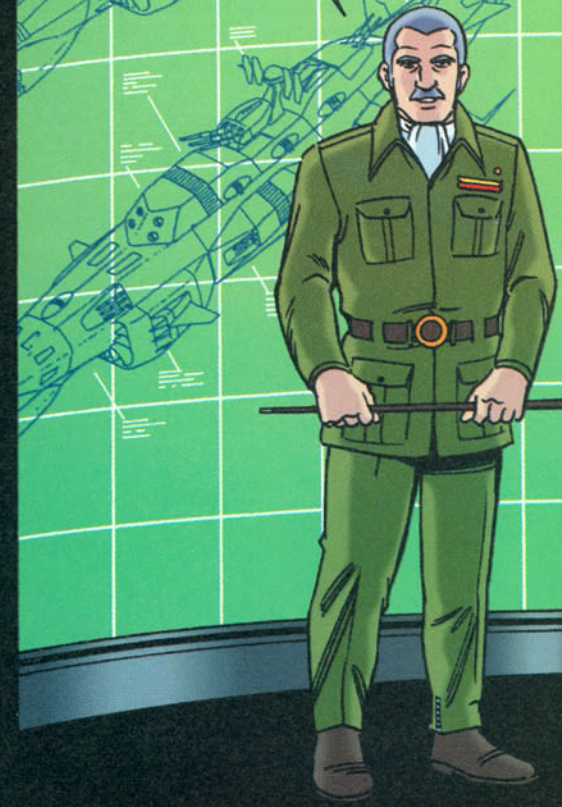
MADAME MINISTER.

THE LYNCHPIN OF OUR NEW, MORE AFFORDABLE EDF IS, OF COURSE, THE NEW AUTOMATED FLEET, WHICH WILL SHORTLY BE UNDERGOING ITS FIRST OPERATIONAL TRIALS IN ORBIT.

THE SUCCESS OF THE 31B-CLASS DESTROYERS DURING THE WAR WITH GAMILON PROVED THAT REMOTELY-PILOTED, SEMI-AUTONOMOUS SHIPS COULD OPERATE EFFECTIVELY IN A FLEET COMBAT ENVIRONMENT.

NOW, TECHNOLOGY HAS ADVANCED TO THE POINT WHERE FULLY AUTONOMOUS WARSHIPS ARE PRACTICAL. THE IC-9000 SERIES ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES THAT WILL BE RUNNING THESE VESSELS HAVE NEVER MADE A MISTAKE OR DISTORTED INFORMATION IN ANY OF OUR SIMULATED TRIALS. BY USING THEM TO REPLACE HUMAN CREWS, WE CAN IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND AVOID PUTTING LIVES AT RISK...

...AT A SUBSTANTIAL COST SAVINGS TO THE TAX-PAYER.



"THE FLEET WILL BE UNDER HUMAN SUPERVISION, OF COURSE. THE NEW COMMAND CENTER AT NAS NAHA WILL HAVE A REAL-TIME WARP-RADIO LINK WITH THE COMMAND SHIPS AT ALL TIMES..."

"...AND I BELIEVE YOUNG COMMANDER VENTURE OF THE STAR FORCE WILL BE AN EXCELLENT, uh, SUPERVISOR FOR THE NEW FLEET..."

"SUPERVISOR?" WHAT HAPPENED TO "COMMANDING OFFICER," GENERAL? I'M DAMNED IF I LIKE THE IDEA OF A FLEET WITH THAT KIND OF FIREPOWER SIMPLY BEING "SUPERVISED" BY A HUMAN BEING!

Mr. PRESIDENT, THE "BRAINS" ON THESE SHIPS OPERATE A MILLION TIMES FASTER THAN A HUMAN BRAIN.

WHAT HUMAN BEING IS CAPABLE OF COMMANDING THEM?

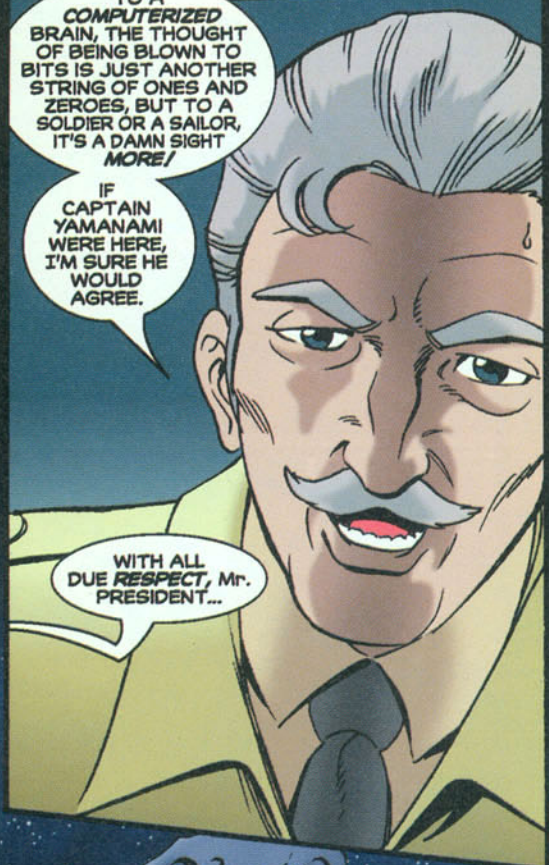


THE WHOLE IDEA BEHIND NAVAL AUTOMATION IS THAT OF INDEPENDANT ACTION -- OF "SMART SHIPS" THAT CAN OUTTHINK AND OUTFIGHT ANY OPPONENT WITHOUT PUTTING HUMAN BEINGS IN HARM'S WAY!

GENERAL, DID YOU AND YOUR FELLOW PLANNERS EVER STOP TO CONSIDER THAT BEING IN HARM'S WAY IS AN EXCELLENT MOTIVATOR FOR FIGHTING MEN?

TO A COMPUTERIZED BRAIN, THE THOUGHT OF BEING BLOWN TO BITS IS JUST ANOTHER STRING OF ONES AND ZEROES, BUT TO A SOLDIER OR A SAILOR, IT'S A DAMN SIGHT MORE!

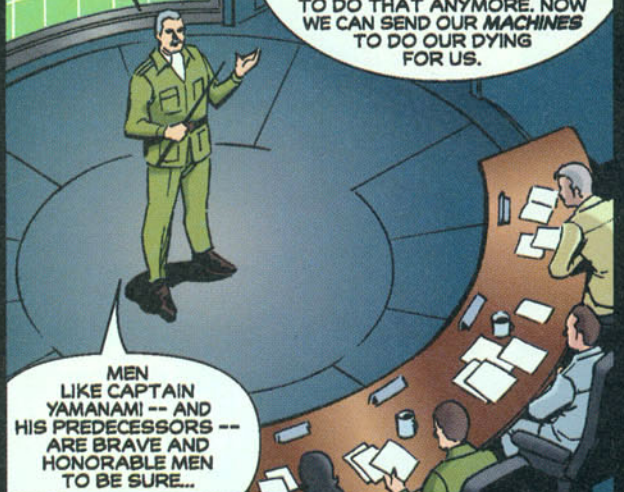
IF CAPTAIN YAMANAMI WERE HERE, I'M SURE HE WOULD AGREE.



WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, Mr. PRESIDENT...

...I DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD WHAT MOTIVATES A SOLDIER.

I'VE BEEN A COMBAT SOLDIER FOR THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS. I'VE SEEN MEN DIE UNDER FIRE, SCARED, ALONE, SCREAMING FOR THEIR MOTHERS AS BLACK DEATH CLOSED IN. NOW, THANK GOD, I DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT ANYMORE. NOW WE CAN SEND OUR MACHINES TO DO OUR DYING FOR US.



MEN LIKE CAPTAIN YAMANAMI -- AND HIS PREDECESSORS -- ARE BRAVE AND HONORABLE MEN TO BE SURE...

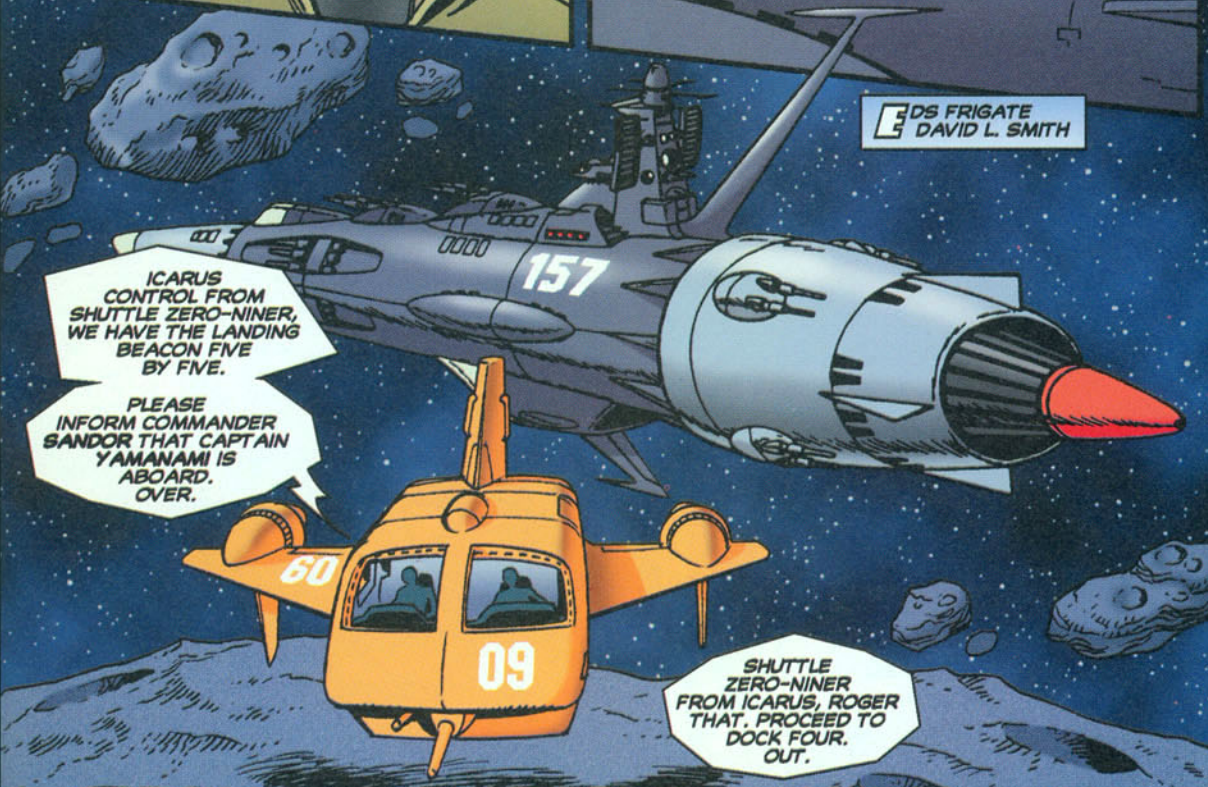
"BUT AS A WARRIOR, HE'S AN ANACHRONISM."



ICARUS FRIGATE DAVID L. SMITH

ICARUS CONTROL FROM SHUTTLE ZERO-NINER, WE HAVE THE LANDING BEACON FIVE BY FIVE.

PLEASE INFORM COMMANDER SANDOR THAT CAPTAIN YAMANAMI IS ABOARD. OVER.



SHUTTLE ZERO-NINER FROM ICARUS, ROGER THAT. PROCEED TO DOCK FOUR. OUT.



US? ASSIGNED TO ICARUS? Oh, NO, SIR!

Mr. KITANO AND I ARE JUST PILOTING SHUTTLES FOR COMMANDER SANDOR UNTIL THE REST OF HIS NEW CREW COMES ABOARD. WE WANTED TO SEE THE OLD SHIP ONE MORE TIME BEFORE HEADING OUT TO OUR NEW POSTINGS.

YOU TWO ARE EX-YAMATO TOO, eh?



NO WONDER THEY'RE POSTING YOU TO GANYMEDE -- CAN'T HAVE TOO MANY REAL SAILORS AROUND THE FLEET SPOILING STONE AND AZIZ'S GLORIOUS NEW AUTOMATED ORDER. THEY'RE SHIPPING YOU STAR FORCE GUYS AS FAR OUT OF THE WAY AS POSSIBLE... JUST LIKE THEY'RE DOING TO ME.

...AND LESS MONEY FOR SHIPS AND CREWS MEANS MORE MONEY FOR NAVY FIGHTER JOCKS LIKE ME, SIR!



AND OF COURSE THEY COST A LOT LESS, SIR...

I'M ALL FOR AUTOMATION IF IT MEANS I GET TO FLY A HOTTER BIRD!

I CAN SEE THE NAVY'S INDOCTRINATED YOU WELL.

ONCE THEY GET THE REST OF YOU ON THEIR SIDE, THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING TO STOP AZIZ AND STONE'S NEW PLANETARY SECURITY GOONS FROM RUNNING THINGS...

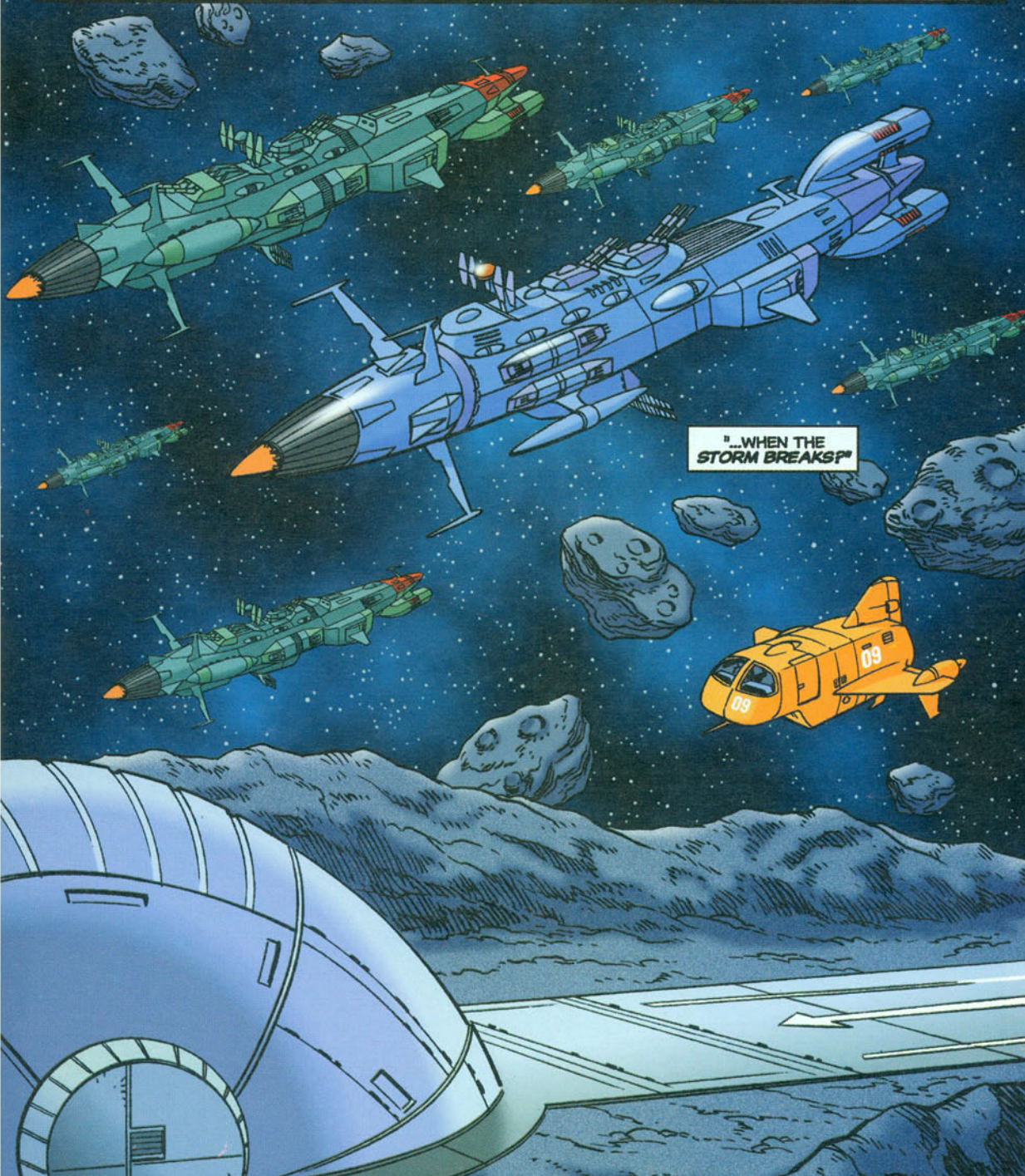
...RIGHT INTO THE GROUND.

BUT, SIR, WON'T THE NEW AUTOMATED SHIPS BE BETTER WARSHIPS THAN THOSE WITH CREWS? THEY SAY THAT THOSE NEW ROBOT BRAINS THINK FASTER, PLUS THEY DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT PROVISIONS OR LIFE-SUPPORT STORES.

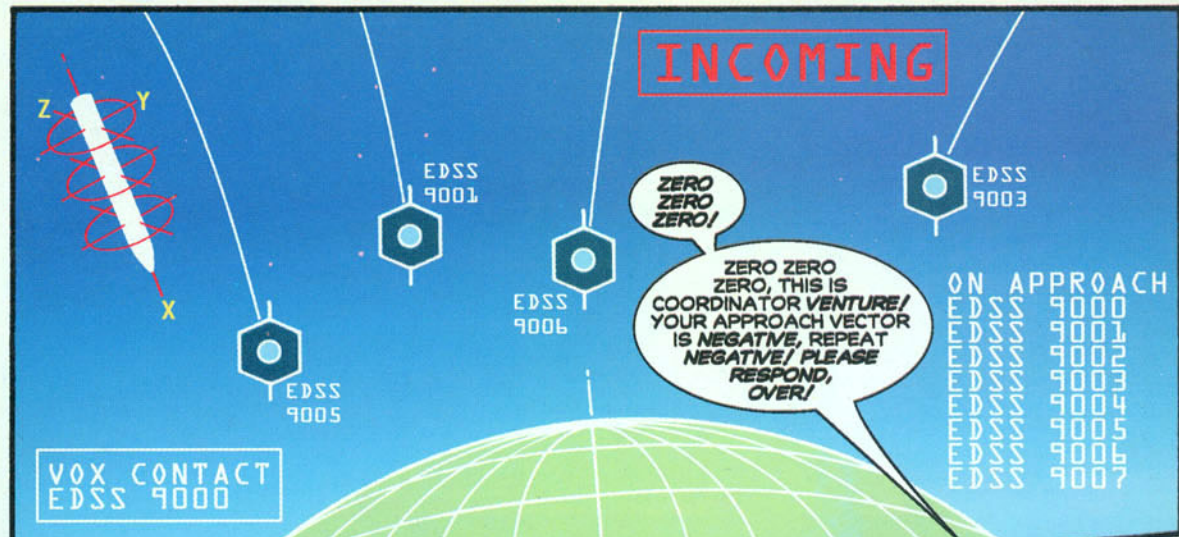


THERE THEY ARE... SO PERFECT... SO EFFICIENT. THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE.

BUT I WONDER IF EFFICIENCY WILL BE ENOUGH... IF PERFECTION WILL BE ENOUGH...



"...WHEN THE STORM BREAKS?"



PLEASE, COMMANDER VENTURE, THERE'S REALLY NO NEED TO YELL. I CAN HEAR YOU QUITE PLAINLY. AND I'M WELL AWARE THAT OUR APPROACH VECTOR CUTS ACROSS MAJOR ORBITAL TRAFFIC ZONES.

I PROMISE I WON'T HIT ANYTHING.

ONE HUNDRED SECONDS TO EARTH ORBITAL INSERTION, ZERO ZERO ZERO, OVER.

WHAT THE -- DON'T TELL ME NOT TO YELL, YOU -- YOU PIECE OF SKY JUNK! I'M YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER!

NOW REVERSE THRUST AND CHANGE YOUR APPROACH TO A STANDARD HYPERBOLIC--



COMMANDER, I MUST ONCE AGAIN REMIND YOU THAT ACCORDING TO REGULATIONS YOU ARE NOT OUR COMMANDING OFFICER IN THE STRICT LEGAL SENSE OF THE WORD; RATHER, YOUR TITLE IS 'COORDINATOR', A TECHNICAL POSITION RATHER THAN ONE OF AUTHORITY.

BESIDES, WE'RE ALL GENIUSES AND RESPOND MUCH BETTER TO PRAISE THAN TO SCOLDING.

WHY YOU --

FORTY SECONDS TO EARTH ORBITAL INSERTION.

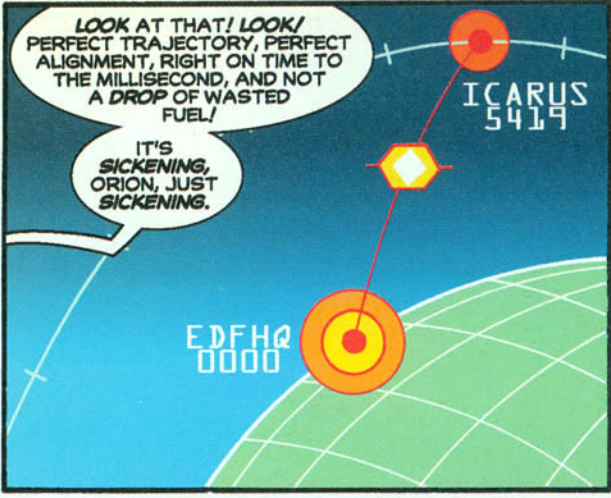
ALL SMARTSHIPS, THIS IS SMARTSHIP 000. STAND BY FOR DECELERATION AND ORBITAL INSERTION. REVERSE GRAVITATIONAL DRIVE FLUX AND MANEUVER ON MY MARK.



ZERO ZERO ONE, BEGINNING DECELERATION MANEUVER. OVER.



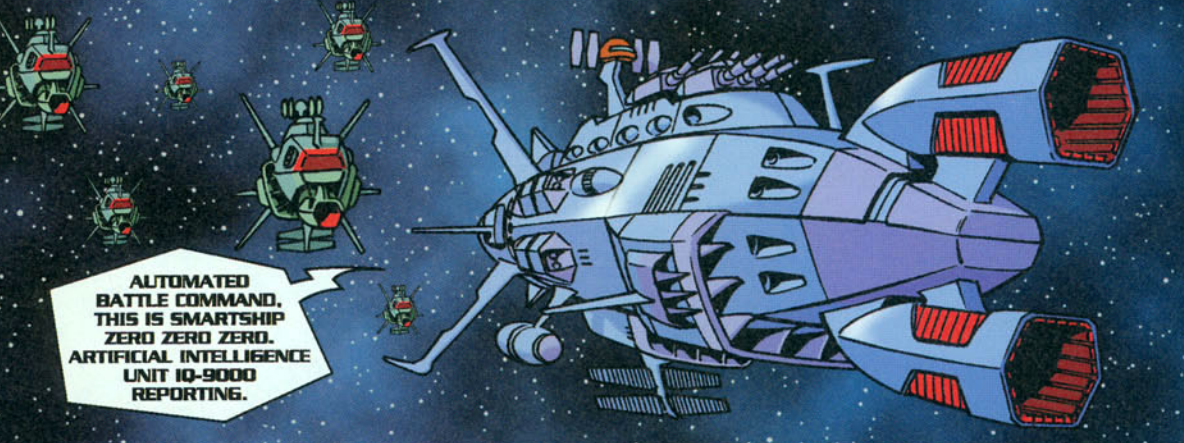
SMARTSHIPS ENTERING ORBIT NOW, COMMANDER. IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE RIGHT ON TIME AS USUAL, SIR



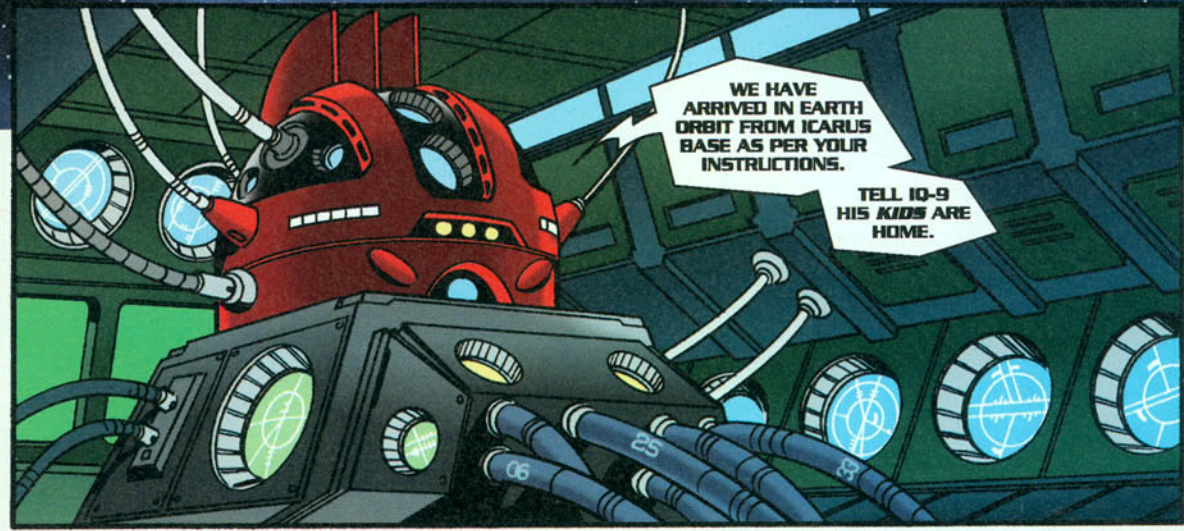
I DON'T THINK SO, SIR. TO ME IT'S AMAZING -- MIRACULOUS, ALMOST.

MAYBE THIS IS THE ENGINEER IN ME TALKING, BUT WATCHING IQ-9000 THINK AND NAVIGATE FOR ITSELF IS... WELL, IT'S ALMOST HOLY SOMEHOW.

IT'S LIKE WATCHING A BABY WALKING FOR THE FIRST TIME...



AUTOMATED BATTLE COMMAND, THIS IS SMARTSHIP ZERO ZERO ZERO. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT IQ-9000 REPORTING.



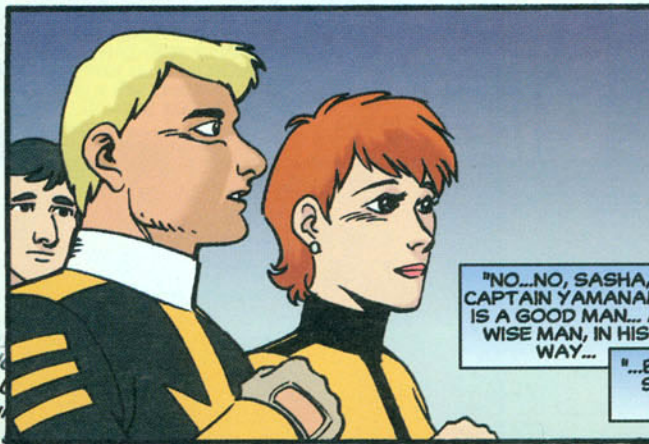
WE HAVE ARRIVED IN EARTH ORBIT FROM ICARUS BASE AS PER YOUR INSTRUCTIONS.

TELL IQ-9 HIS KIDS ARE HOME.



AT-TEN... HUT!
CAPTAIN ON STATION!

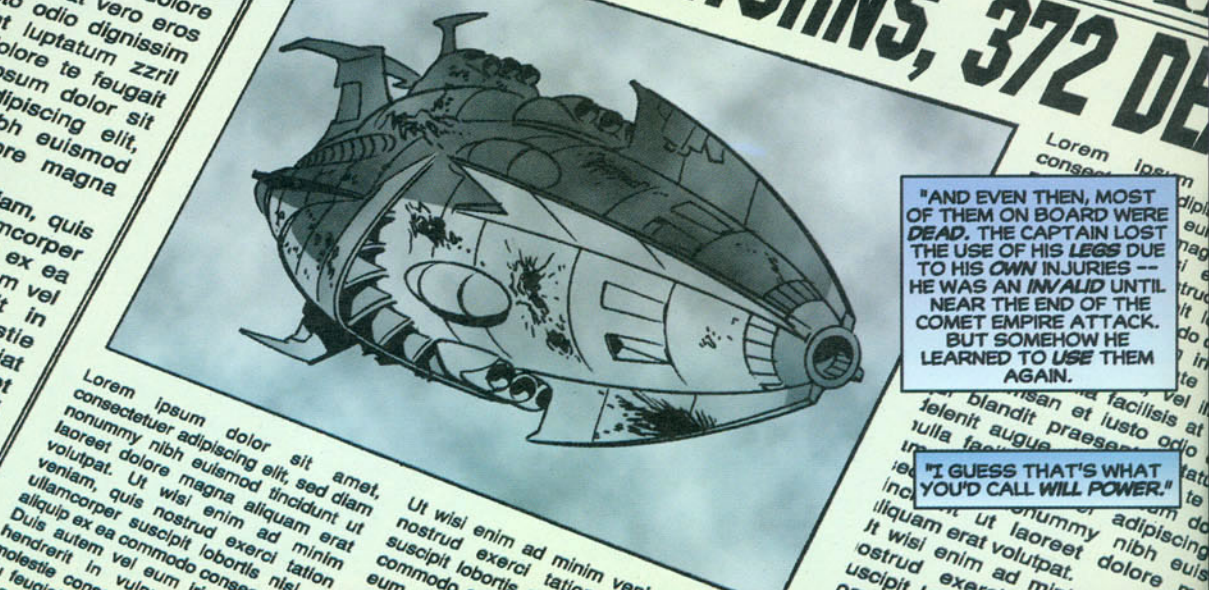
"UNCLE STEPHEN, IS THE NEW CAPTAIN A NICE MAN?"



"NO...NO, SASHA, CAPTAIN YAMANAMI IS A GOOD MAN... A WISE MAN, IN HIS WAY..."

"...BUT I WOULDN'T SAY HE WAS A NICE MAN."

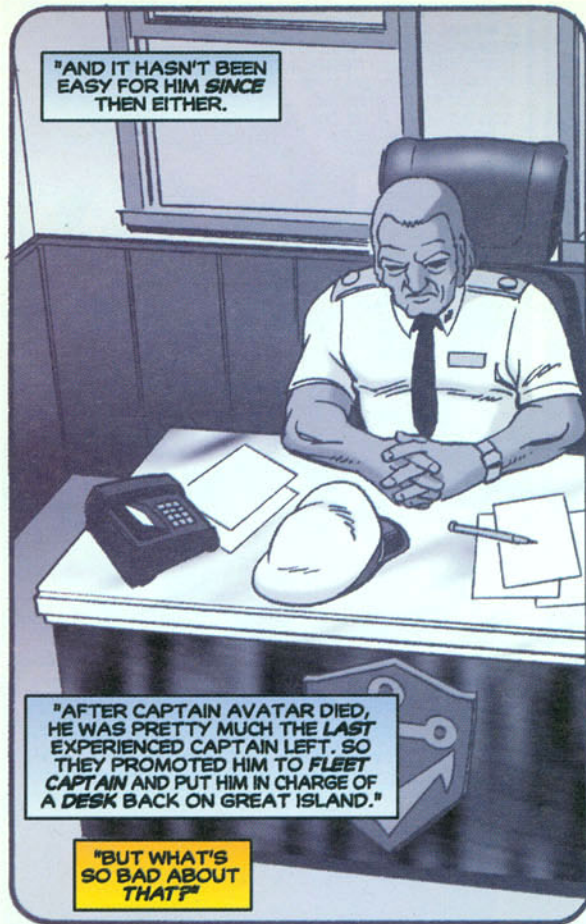
"HE WAS HURT DURING THE GAMILON WAR. AN ENEMY SQUADRON JUMPED HIS SHIPS ON THE WAY BACK FROM A MISSION AND SHOT THEM UP PRETTY BADLY. ONLY CAPTAIN YAMANAMI'S SHIP MADE IT BACK TO EARTH."



STAR TITANUS 233 RETURNS, 372 DEATHS

"AND EVEN THEN, MOST OF THEM ON BOARD WERE DEAD. THE CAPTAIN LOST THE USE OF HIS LEGS DUE TO HIS OWN INJURIES -- HE WAS AN INVALID UNTIL NEAR THE END OF THE COMET EMPIRE ATTACK. BUT SOMEHOW HE LEARNED TO USE THEM AGAIN."

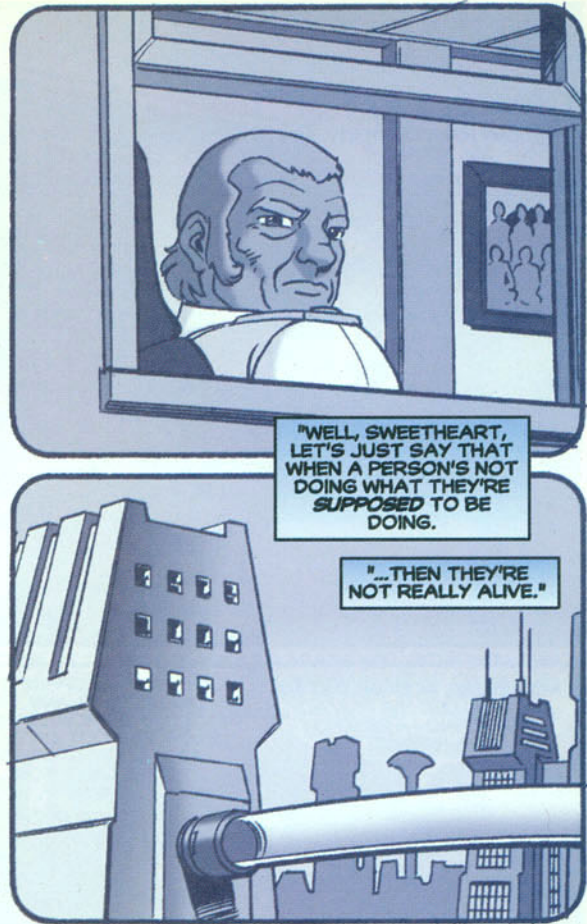
"I GUESS THAT'S WHAT YOU'D CALL WILL POWER."



"AND IT HASN'T BEEN EASY FOR HIM SINCE THEN EITHER."

"AFTER CAPTAIN AVATAR DIED, HE WAS PRETTY MUCH THE LAST EXPERIENCED CAPTAIN LEFT. SO THEY PROMOTED HIM TO FLEET CAPTAIN AND PUT HIM IN CHARGE OF A DESK BACK ON GREAT ISLAND."

"BUT WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT THAT?"



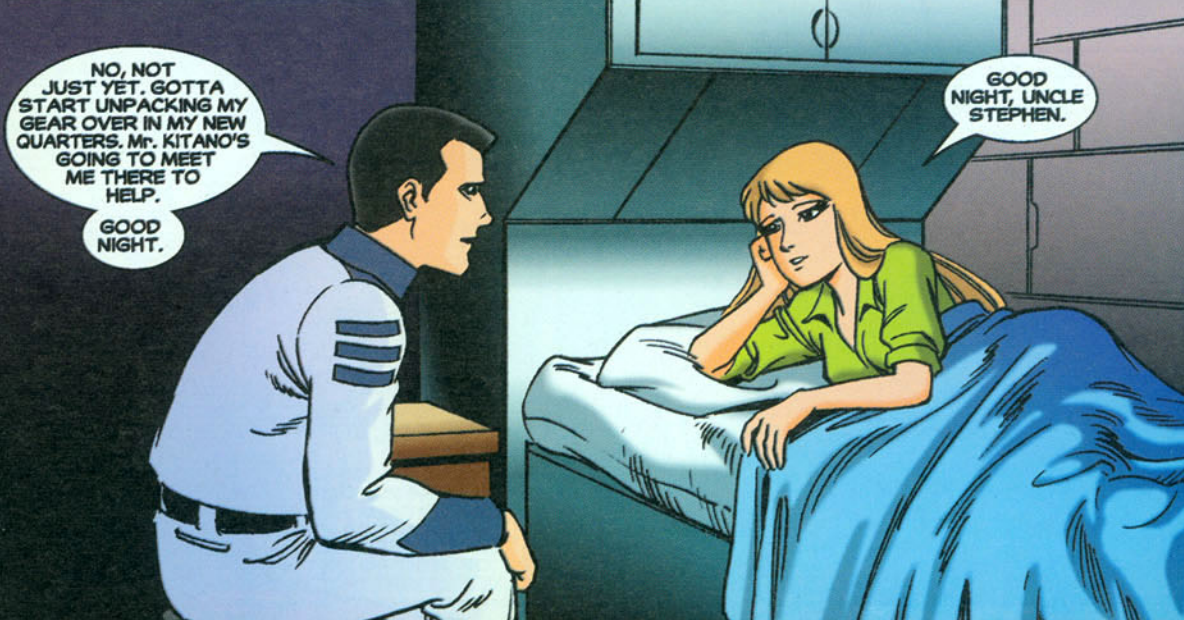
"WELL, SWEETHEART, LET'S JUST SAY THAT WHEN A PERSON'S NOT DOING WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING."

"...THEN THEY'RE NOT REALLY ALIVE."



"SIGH... WELL, SASHA. PROBATIONARY CADETS' MUSTER IS AT 0500, AND THAT'S GOING TO FEEL MIGHTY EARLY IF YOU DON'T GET SOME SLEEP NOW..."

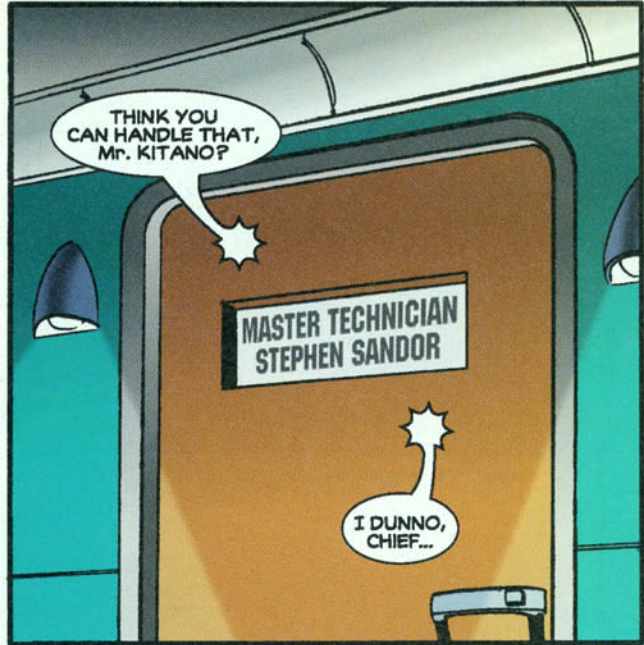
OKAY, UNCLE STEPHEN. AREN'T YOU GOING TO BED, TOO?"



NO, NOT JUST YET. GOTTA START UNPACKING MY GEAR OVER IN MY NEW QUARTERS. MR. KITANO'S GOING TO MEET ME THERE TO HELP.

GOOD NIGHT.

GOOD NIGHT, UNCLE STEPHEN.



THINK YOU CAN HANDLE THAT, MR. KITANO?

I DUNNO, CHIEF...



I MEAN, I'LL TRY, BUT REAR ADMIRAL WILDSTAR ISN'T AN EASY PERSON TO SEE. THEY SAY HE SHOOTS AT ANYONE TRYING TO LAND ON THAT ISLAND OF HIS...



NONSENSE. ALEX WILDSTAR JUST VALUES HIS PRIVACY, MR. KITANO -- HE'S NOT A HERMIT.

JUST CALL HIS OFFICE OVER AT HEADQUARTERS AND TELL HIM I SENT YOU. I PROMISE HE WON'T BLOW YOU OUT OF THE SKY JUST TO KEEP WILDSTAR ISLAND TO HIMSELF.

SURE THING, CHIEF. WHAT'S IN THE BOX, ANYWAY? GOTTA BE IMPORTANT IF YOU'RE SENDING IT BY KITANO EXPRESS...



COOKIES. MISTER. COOKIES HIS DAUGHTER BAKED FOR HIM.

NOW CUT THE CHITCHAT AND LEND A HAND -- YOU CAN START BY UNPACKING MY SPORTS CARD COLLECTION. THE STEEL BOXES, OVER IN THE CORNER...

SPORTS CARDS? YOU?

Heh. WHO KNEW?



GIDEON FIELD EDF KADENA BASE GREAT ISLAND

MADAM MINISTER, GENTLEMEN, IF YOU DON'T MIND -- THE AUTOMATED FLEET WARGAME IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.

THE SHIPS ARE IN HIGH EARTH ORBIT, WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED THE AGGRESSOR FORCE. THEIR MISSION IN THIS SCENARIO IS TO DESCEND, FIGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH THE ORBITAL BATTLE SATELLITE SCREEN, AND CARRY OUT A SIMULATED ATTACK ON GIDEON FIELD AND THE REST OF KADENA BASE.



A DIRECT ATTACK? WHY NOT JUST STAND OFF FROM EARTH AND RAKE US WITH THEIR WAVE-MOTION GUNS, GENERAL?

REMEMBER, MA'AM, THESE SHIPS ARE ASSUMING THE ROLE OF AN ALIEN FLEET WHICH -- THANK GOD -- WILL NOT BE EQUIPPED WITH OUR WAVE-MOTION WEAPONRY.

THEY'LL HAVE TO FIGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH TO EARTH USING SHOCK CANNON AND MISSILES ONLY.

AND IT WON'T BE EASY.

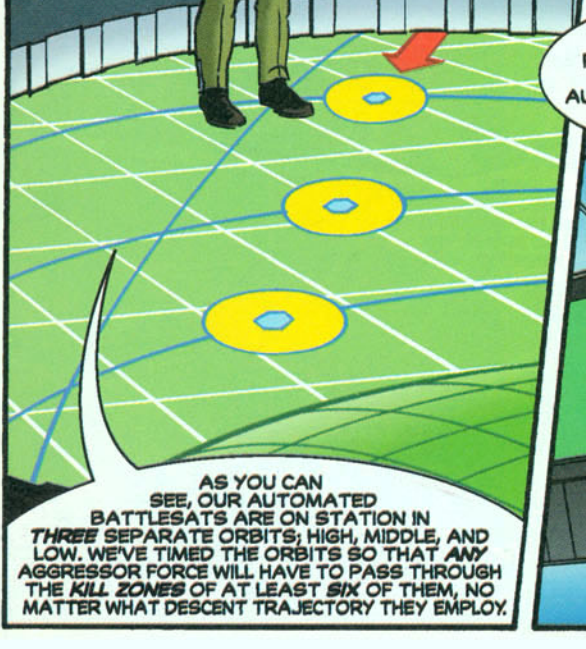
OF COURSE, THE BATTLESATS WILL BE USING LOW-POWERED SIGNALING LASERS INSTEAD OF SHOCK CANNON FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS EXERCISE, AS WILL THE AUTOMATED FLEET, BUT THE RESULTS OF SUCCESSFUL TARGETING WILL BE THE SAME.

IF EVERYONE IS READY, THEN...

COMMANDER VENTURE, AS CHAIRMAN OF THE EDF JOINT MILITARY STAFF, I HEREBY AUTHORIZE YOU TO CARRY OUT YOUR ORDERS.

10-9000 REPORTING: ALL SHIPS IN POSITION AND ONLINE. READY TO INITIATE EXERCISE.

HEADQUARTERS, THIS IS AUTOMATED FLEET CONTROL. ORDERS ACKNOWLEDGED. ALL AUTOMATED SHIPS, INITIATE EXERCISE PINNOCHIO STORM.



AS YOU CAN SEE, OUR AUTOMATED BATTLESATS ARE ON STATION IN THREE SEPARATE ORBITS; HIGH, MIDDLE, AND LOW. WE'VE TIMED THE ORBITS SO THAT ANY AGGRESSOR FORCE WILL HAVE TO PASS THROUGH THE KILL ZONES OF AT LEAST SIX OF THEM, NO MATTER WHAT DESCENT TRAJECTORY THEY EMPLOY.



"AS YOU CAN SEE, MADAM CHAIRMAN, THE SEVEN ROBOT SHIPS OF THE AGGRESSOR FORCE ARE BEGINNING THEIR ATTACKS BY DECELERATING AND DROPPING INTO A FAST HYPERBOLIC DESCENT. LEFT UNCHECKED, THEY'D BE OVER OUR HEADS IN LESS THAN TEN MINUTES.

"OUR BATTLESATS ARE IN CRISSCROSSING POLAR ORBITS, WHICH MEANS THAT THESE SIX WILL BE IN RANGE OF THE AGGRESSORS THE WHOLE TIME. AS THE ATTACKING FORCE APPROACHES US, THEY'LL BE CONVERGED UPON FROM SIX DIRECTIONS AT ONCE!"

"Ah, THERE WE GO. THE ROBOT SHIPS ARE TAKING HITS FROM ALL SIX BATTLESATS NOW. IF THOSE WERE SHOCK CANNON INSTEAD OF COMM LASERS, MADAM, THOSE SHIPS WOULD BE RIPPED APART!"

"THAT CONCERNS ME, GENERAL. IF THE IQ-9000s ARE SO INTELLIGENT, WHY ARE THEY FLYING RIGHT INTO CONCENTRATED ENEMY FIRE?"

"I'M NOT SURE, MADAM MINISTER... I DON'T THINK --"

"WAIT -- SOMETHING'S HAPPENING..."

ZERO ZERO ZERO TO ALL SMARTSHIPS. EXECUTE MANEUVER ROSETTE.

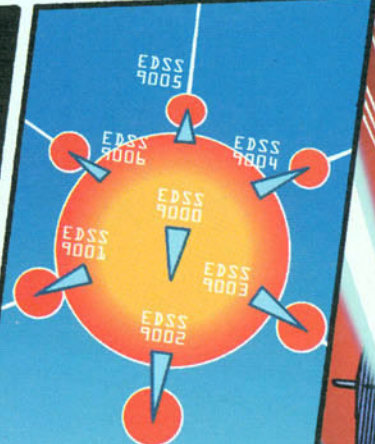
"IT'S NOT A TACTIC I'D HAVE EXPECTED RIGHT AWAY, BUT NO MATTER -- IT'S ONE WE ANTICIPATED AND HAVE PLANNED FOR.

"WHAT IN -- THEY'RE ALL PITCHING UP NINETY DEGREES? WHY?"

FIRE AND CONTINUE DESCENT.

BUT THE DAMAGE... THE STRESS OF TURNING AT THAT SPEED! SURELY THEY CAN'T ENDURE IT!

THEY CAN, MADAM MINISTER.

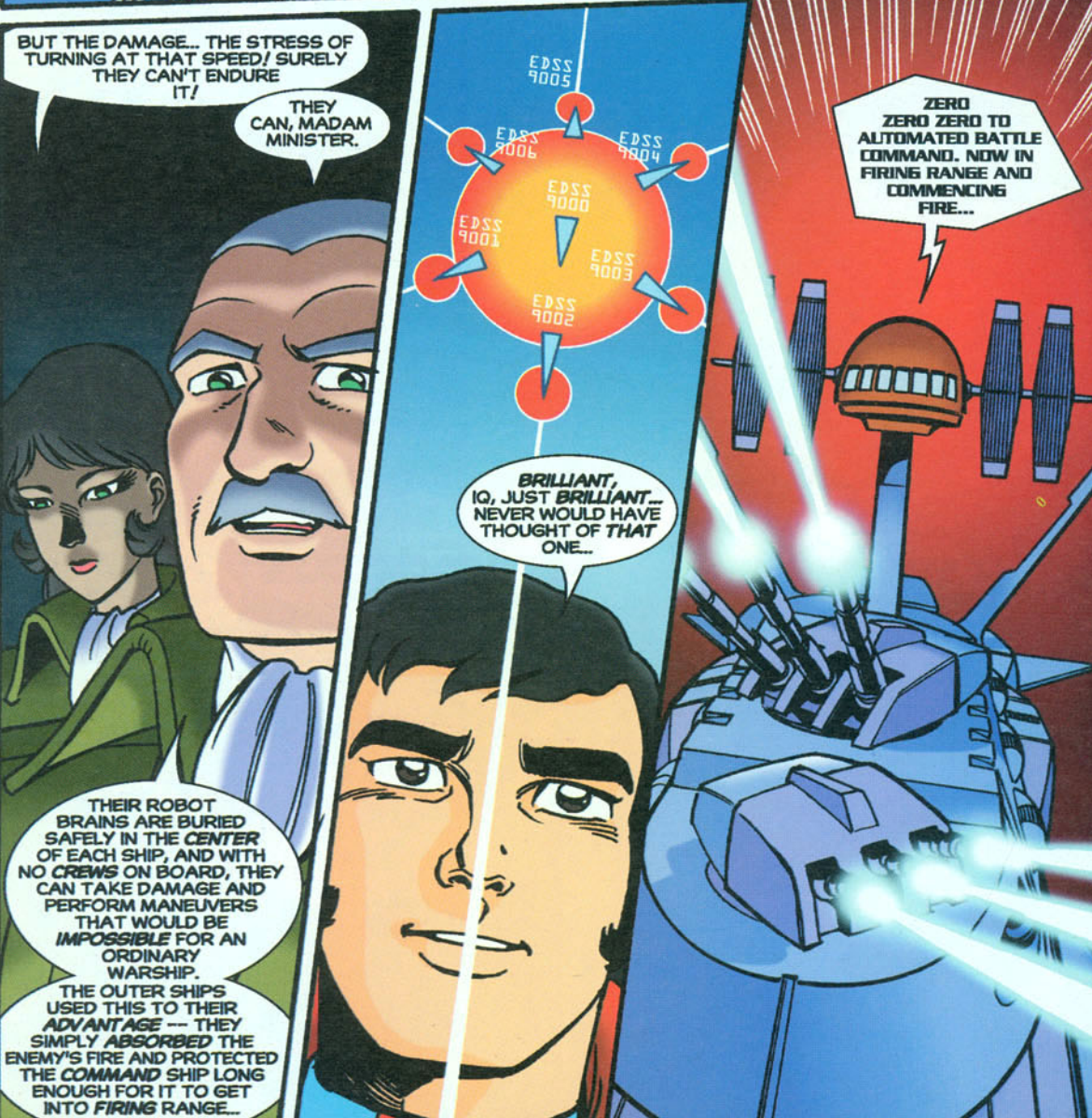
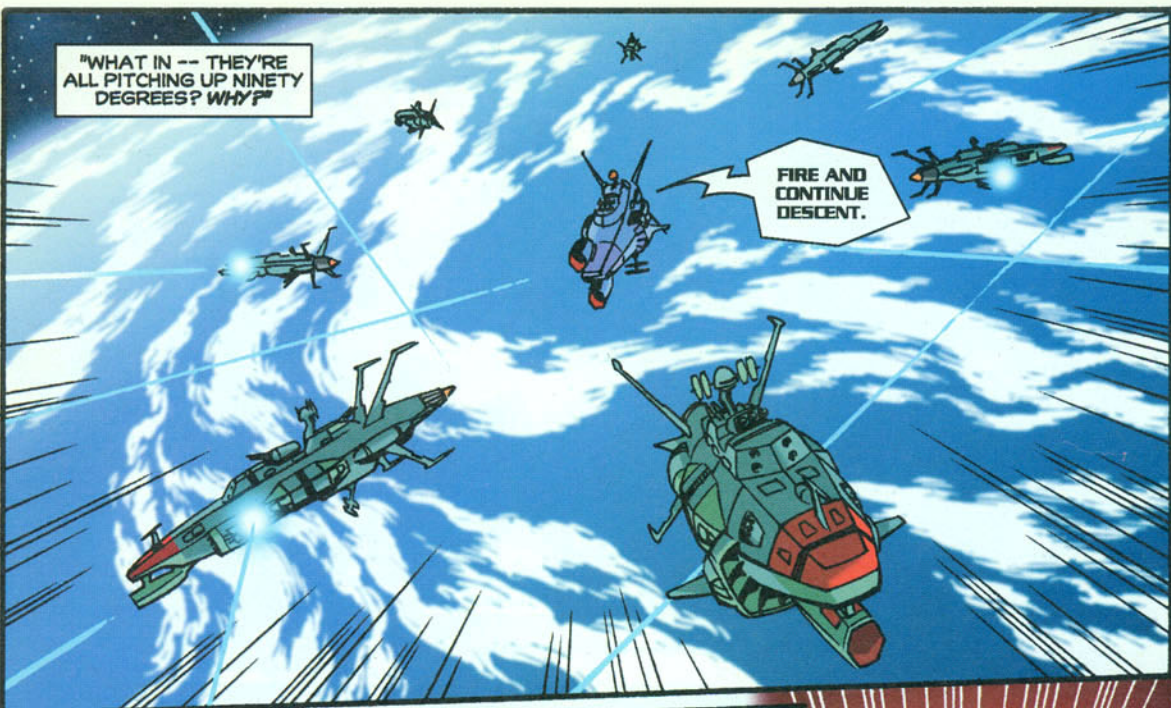
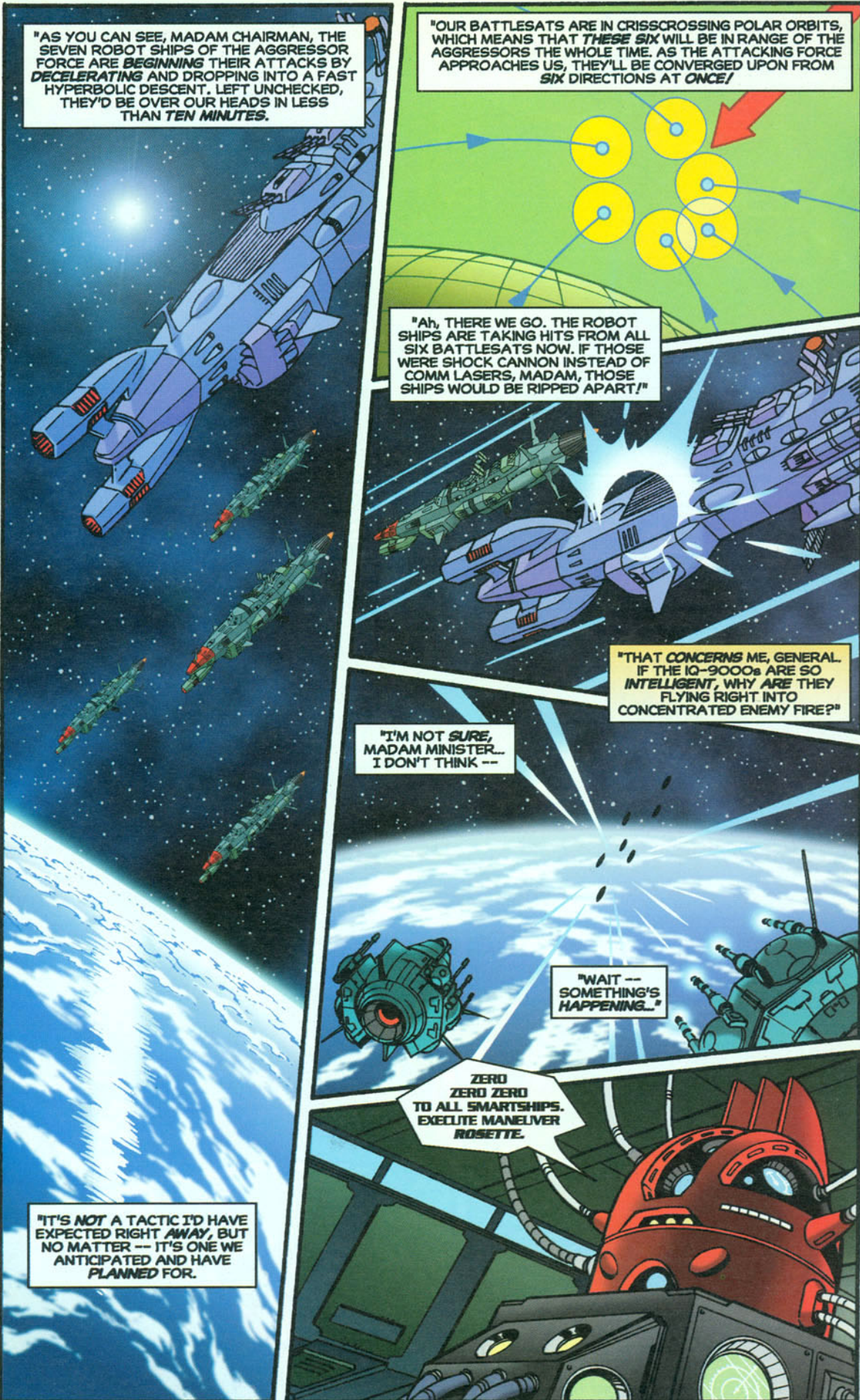


BRILLIANT, IQ, JUST BRILLIANT... NEVER WOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT ONE...

ZERO ZERO ZERO TO AUTOMATED BATTLE COMMAND. NOW IN FIRING RANGE AND COMMENCING FIRE...

THEIR ROBOT BRAINS ARE BURIED SAFELY IN THE CENTER OF EACH SHIP, AND WITH NO CREWS ON BOARD, THEY CAN TAKE DAMAGE AND PERFORM MANEUVERS THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR AN ORDINARY WARSHIP.

THE OUTER SHIPS USED THIS TO THEIR ADVANTAGE -- THEY SIMPLY ABSORBED THE ENEMY'S FIRE AND PROTECTED THE COMMAND SHIP LONG ENOUGH FOR IT TO GET INTO FIRING RANGE...





"THERE THEY GO... THE LEAD SHIP IS PICKING THE LAST THREE OFF NOW..."

"...AT POINT BLANK RANGE..."

"...AND WITH ONE PERFECT SHOT EACH!"



"GENERAL/ RADAR REPORTS SEVEN SHIPS DESCENDING DIRECTLY TOWARD GREAT ISLAND AT HIGH SPEED! THEY'RE COMING IN RIGHT OVER GIDEON FIELD!"



SIMULATED DAMAGE REPORTS FROM THE SHIELD SHIPS INDICATE THEY'RE PRETTY BANGED UP, BUT STILL ABLE TO FIGHT! THEY DID IT, VENTURE!

IT WAS A SMART MOVE, I HAVE TO ADMIT. IT REALLY TAKES A LOT OF DAMAGE TO WRECK A SHIP WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A CREW TO WORRY ABOUT!

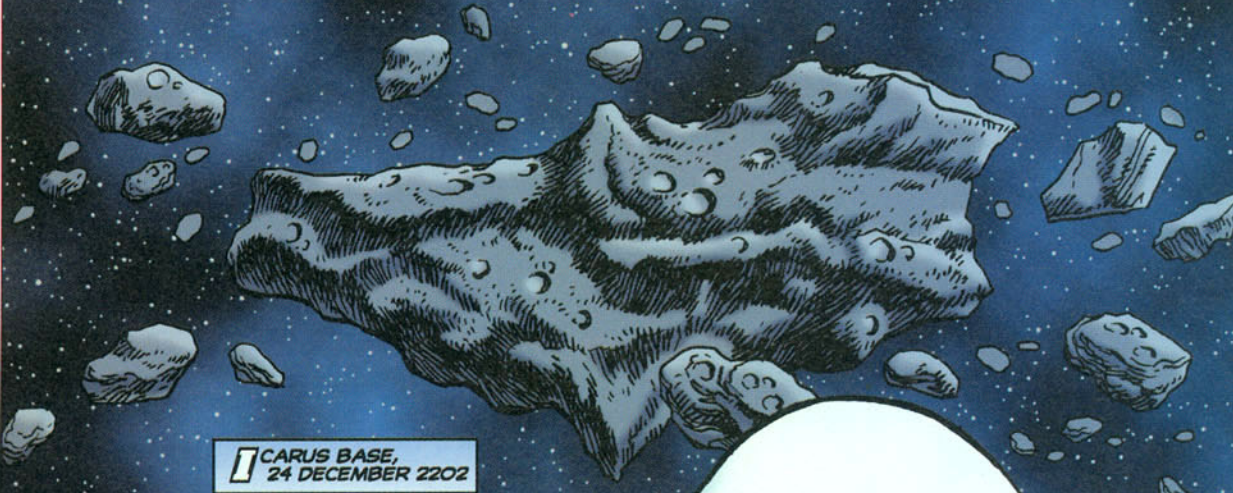
IQ-9000 MADE USE OF THAT FACT TO GET HIMSELF THROUGH THE ENEMY'S LONGER-RANGE FIRE, THEN ONCE THEY WERE INSIDE HIS GUNS' RANGE... POW! ONE SHOT EACH!



A VERY IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE, GENERAL. THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES ON THOSE SHIPS MADE USE OF THEIR ABILITY TO TAKE HITS AND KEEP FIGHTING, AND NOT A SINGLE HUMAN LIFE WAS RISKED IN THE PROCESS.

MY REPORT TO THE COUNCIL WILL BE FAVORABLE. CONSIDER THE NEXT PHASE OF AUTOMATED WARSHIP APPROPRIATIONS APPROVED.

GOOD DAY, SIR.



CARUS BASE, 24 DECEMBER 2202



THEY WALKED RIGHT THROUGH OUR DEFENSES LIKE THEY WEREN'T EVEN THERE...

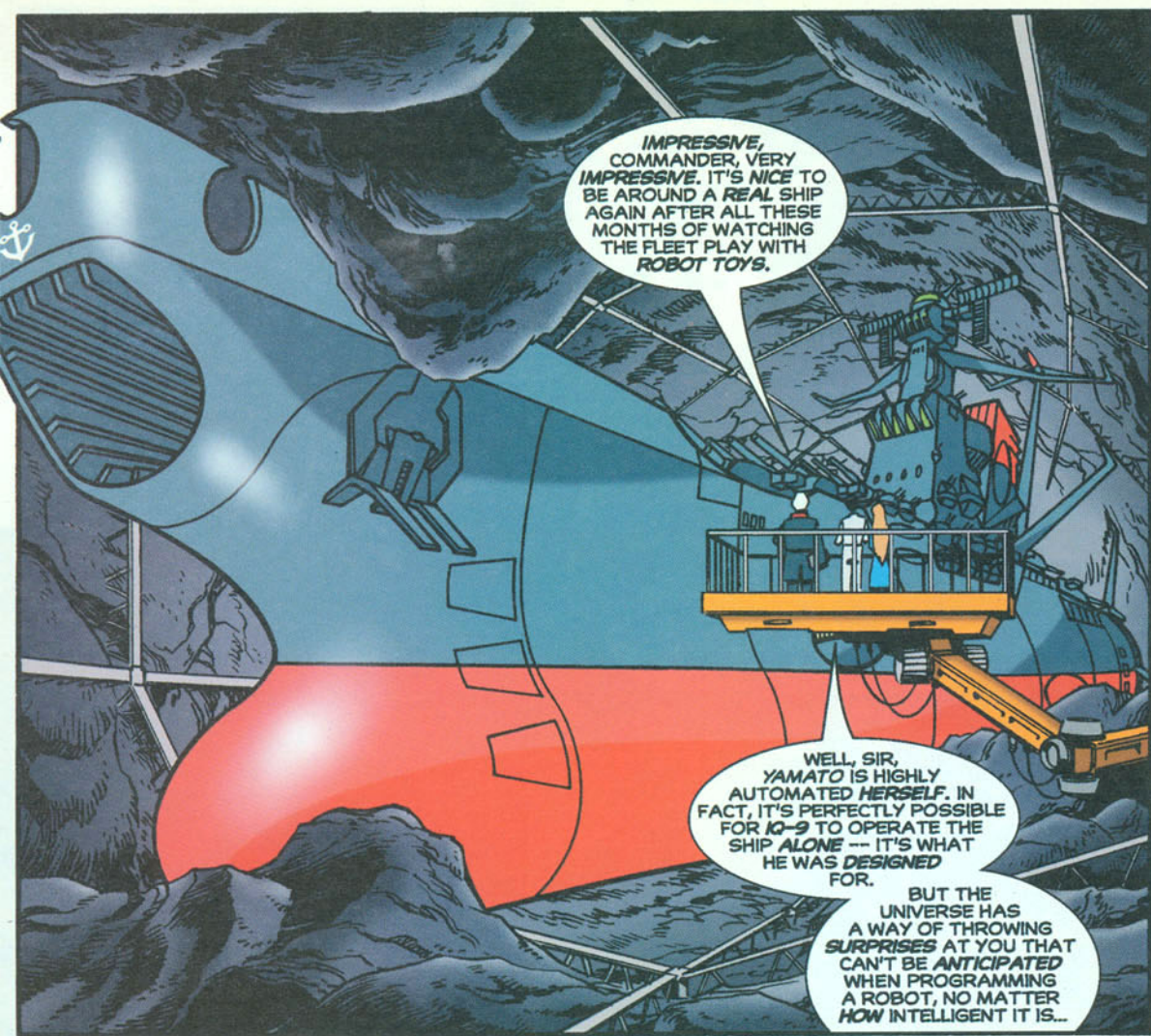


AGGRESSOR FLEET TO TARGET. YOUR DEFENSES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED AND WE DEMAND YOUR IMMEDIATE SURRENDER.

THAT'S ONE IN THE "WIN" COLUMN FOR THE TINWITS!



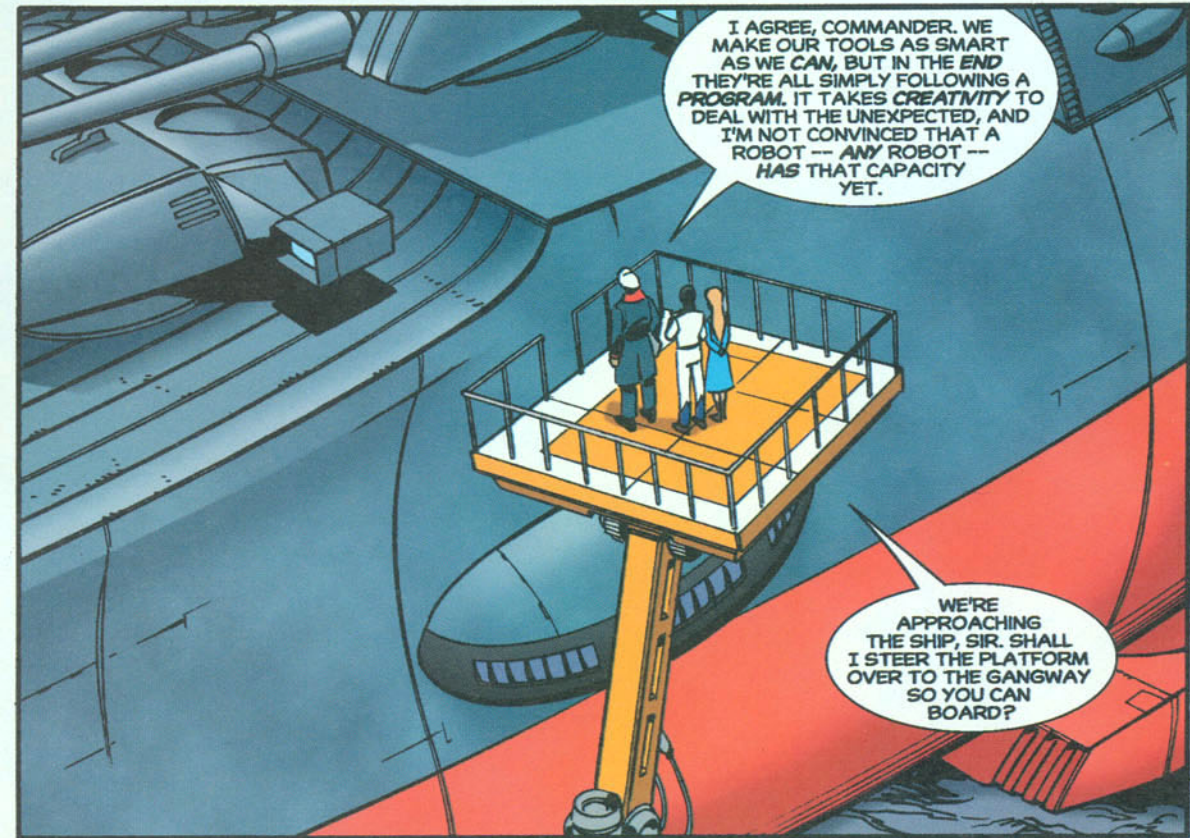
THERE SHE IS, CAPTAIN -- THE OLD BOAT HERSELF. WHAT DO YOU THINK?



IMPRESSIVE, COMMANDER, VERY IMPRESSIVE. IT'S NICE TO BE AROUND A REAL SHIP AGAIN AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS OF WATCHING THE FLEET PLAY WITH ROBOT TOYS.

WELL, SIR, YAMATO IS HIGHLY AUTOMATED HERSELF. IN FACT, IT'S PERFECTLY POSSIBLE FOR *IQ-9* TO OPERATE THE SHIP ALONE -- IT'S WHAT HE WAS DESIGNED FOR.

BUT THE UNIVERSE HAS A WAY OF THROWING SURPRISES AT YOU THAT CAN'T BE ANTICIPATED WHEN PROGRAMMING A ROBOT, NO MATTER HOW INTELLIGENT IT IS...



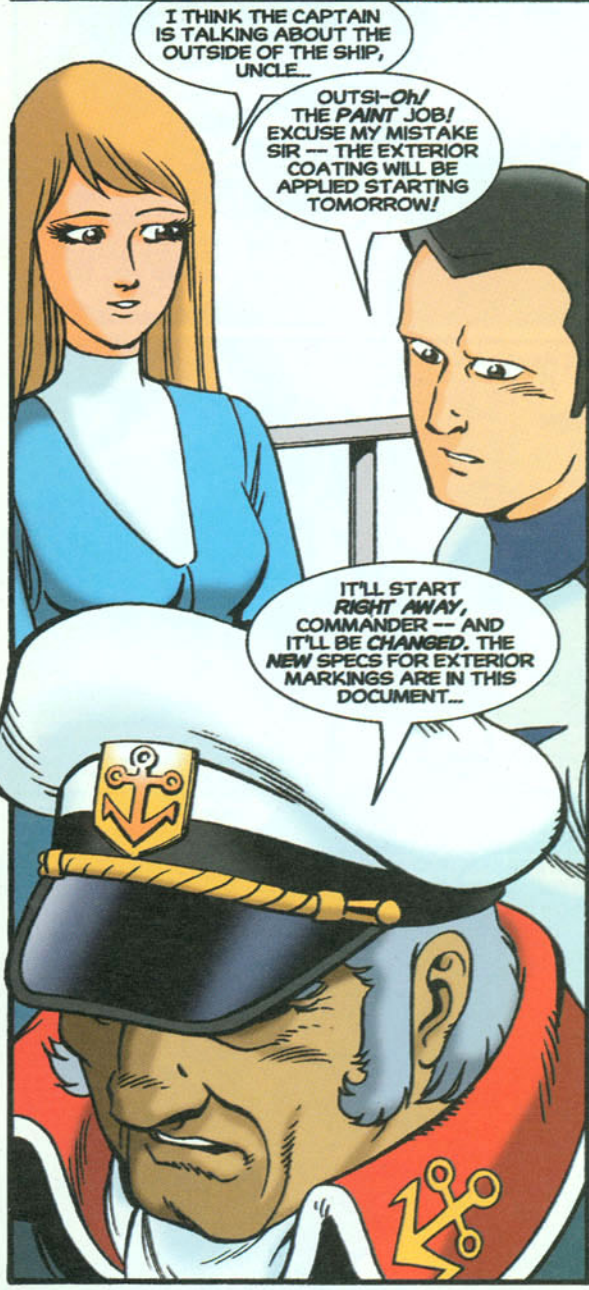
I AGREE, COMMANDER. WE MAKE OUR TOOLS AS SMART AS WE CAN, BUT IN THE END THEY'RE ALL SIMPLY FOLLOWING A PROGRAM. IT TAKES CREATIVITY TO DEAL WITH THE UNEXPECTED, AND I'M NOT CONVINCED THAT A ROBOT -- ANY ROBOT -- HAS THAT CAPACITY YET.

WE'RE APPROACHING THE SHIP, SIR. SHALL I STEER THE PLATFORM OVER TO THE GANGWAY SO YOU CAN BOARD?



NO, I DON'T WANT TO BOARD HER UNTIL SHE'S COMPLETED.

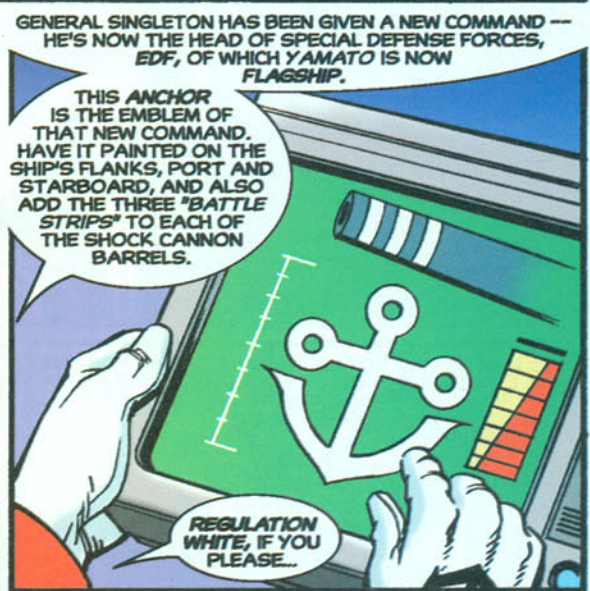
BUT, SIR, YAMATO IS COMPLETED. I SIGNED OFF ON THE LAST FIELD INTEGRATION TESTS LAST WEEK. I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND, CAPTAIN...



I THINK THE CAPTAIN IS TALKING ABOUT THE OUTSIDE OF THE SHIP, UNCLE...

OUTSI-OH! THE PAINT JOB! EXCUSE MY MISTAKE SIR -- THE EXTERIOR COATING WILL BE APPLIED STARTING TOMORROW!

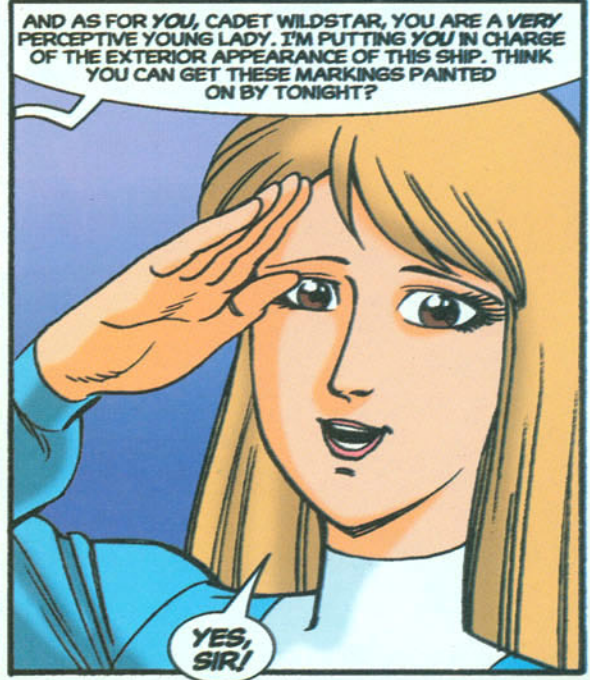
IT'LL START RIGHT AWAY, COMMANDER -- AND IT'LL BE CHANGED. THE NEW SPECS FOR EXTERIOR MARKINGS ARE IN THIS DOCUMENT...



GENERAL SINGLETON HAS BEEN GIVEN A NEW COMMAND -- HE'S NOW THE HEAD OF SPECIAL DEFENSE FORCES, EDF, OF WHICH YAMATO IS NOW FLAGSHIP.

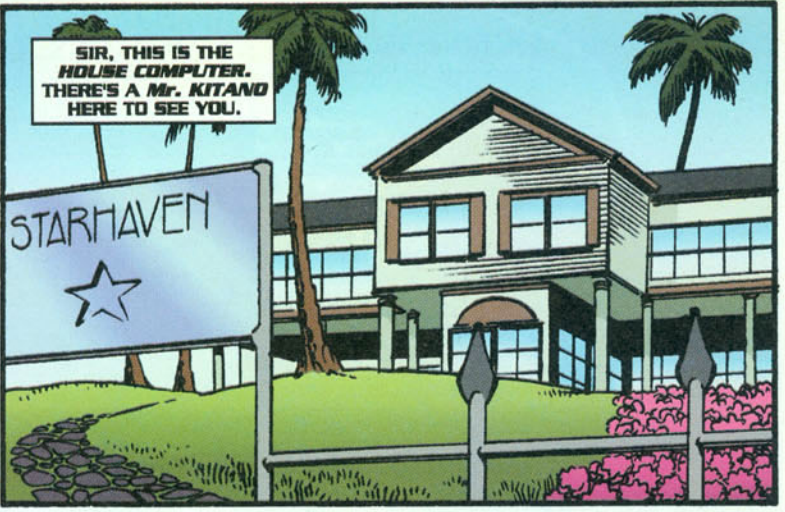
THIS ANCHOR IS THE EMBLEM OF THAT NEW COMMAND. HAVE IT PAINTED ON THE SHIP'S FLANKS, PORT AND STARBOARD, AND ALSO ADD THE THREE 'BATTLE STRIPS' TO EACH OF THE SHOCK CANNON BARRELS.

REGULATION WHITE, IF YOU PLEASE...

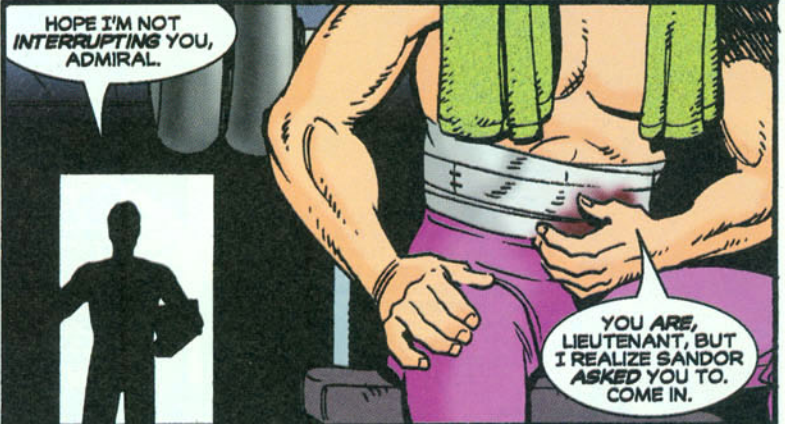


AND AS FOR YOU, CADET WILDSTAR, YOU ARE A VERY PERCEPTIVE YOUNG LADY. I'M PUTTING YOU IN CHARGE OF THE EXTERIOR APPEARANCE OF THIS SHIP. THINK YOU CAN GET THESE MARKINGS PAINTED ON BY TONIGHT?

YES, SIR!

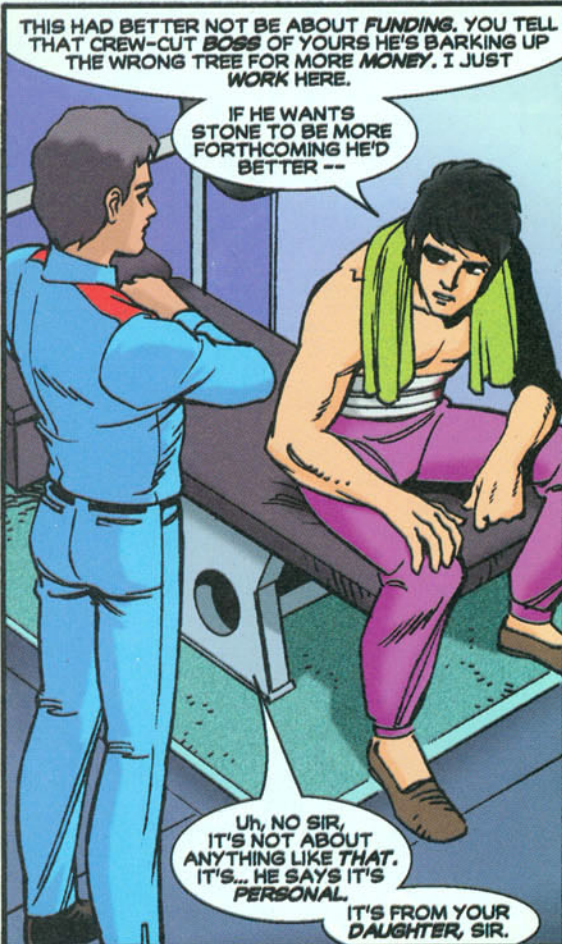


SIR, THIS IS THE HOUSE COMPUTER. THERE'S A MR. KITANO HERE TO SEE YOU.



HOPE I'M NOT INTERRUPTING YOU, ADMIRAL.

YOU ARE, LIEUTENANT, BUT I REALIZE SANDOR ASKED YOU TO COME IN.



THIS HAD BETTER NOT BE ABOUT FUNDING. YOU TELL THAT CREW-CUT BOSS OF YOURS HE'S BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE FOR MORE MONEY. I JUST WORK HERE.

IF HE WANTS STONE TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING HE'D BETTER --

Uh, NO SIR, IT'S NOT ABOUT ANYTHING LIKE THAT. IT'S... HE SAYS IT'S PERSONAL.

IT'S FROM YOUR DAUGHTER, SIR.



HE ASKED ME TO DELIVER IT TO YOUR HANDS PERSONALLY, SIR.

SASHA... A BOX FROM SASHA...



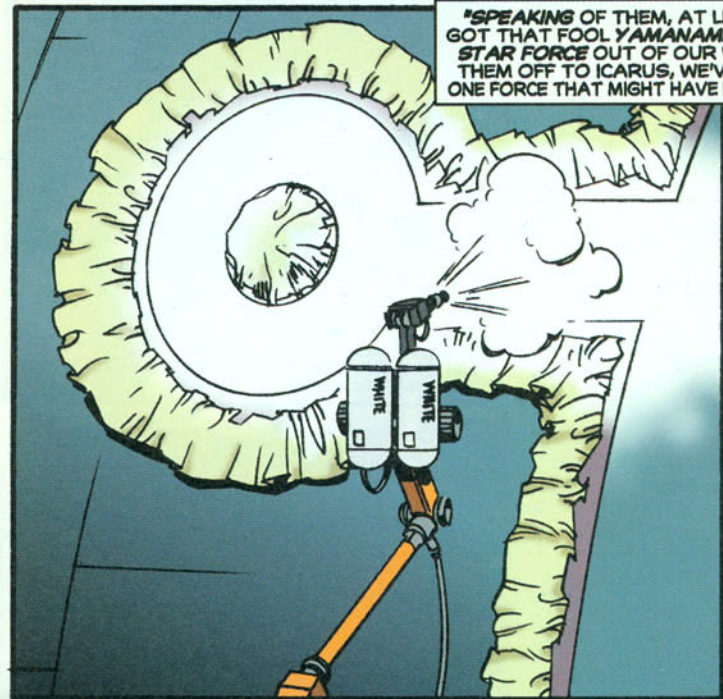
YES, SIR. HERE IT IS.



"ACTIVITY REPORT 24 DECEMBER, 2202. THE ROBOT SHIP EXERCISE WENT PERFECTLY. GENERAL STONE IS ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED THAT UNMANNED SHIPS ARE THE WAY TO GO.



"PERSONALLY, THE IDEA OF A ROBOT WITH ITS FINGER ON THE TRIGGER GIVES ME THE CREEPS, BUT THEN AGAIN, ROBOTS ARE PREDICTABLE, CONTROLLABLE. IT'S THE UNPREDICTABLE, UNCONTROLLABLE HUMANS WITH THE GUNS IN THEIR HANDS THAT WE HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT.



"SPEAKING OF THEM, AT LEAST WE FINALLY GOT THAT FOOL YAMANAMI AND HIS BELOVED STAR FORCE OUT OF OUR WAY. BY PACKING THEM OFF TO ICARUS, WE'VE EXORCISED THE ONE FORCE THAT MIGHT HAVE RISEN TO STOP US...

"AND IF ANY ALIENS EVER DO COME, THE STAR FORCE WILL BE HAPPY TO SERVE AS OUR SACRIFICIAL LAMBS.

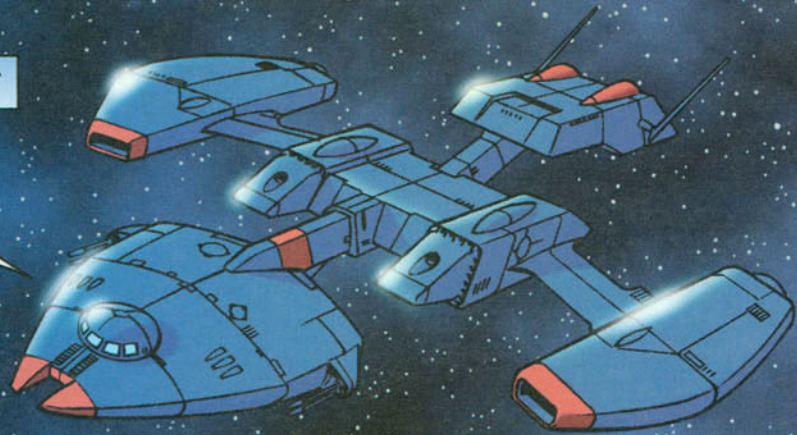


"AS OF NOW, HOWEVER, THE ONLY THING LEFT IS TO ACTUALLY DO IT -- TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND SEIZE POWER. THE NEW LANDS ARE OPENING UP, AND, AS THE POPULATION EXPANDS INTO THEM, A FIRM HAND WILL BE NEEDED TO MAKE SURE THINGS GO OUR WAY.

"WE WILL BE THAT FIRM HAND, AND THE PLANETARY DEFENSE FORCE WILL BE OUR MAILED FIST."



WHAT IS IT, NANA?



I-I'M NOT SURE, SIR...

...I THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING OUT THERE, SIR... SOMETHING BLACK, AND SHINY.

WELL, WE ARE AT L5, LIEUTENANT. THE GRAVITATIONAL STABILITY OF THIS PLACE TENDS TO ATTRACT A LOT OF SPACE JUNK.



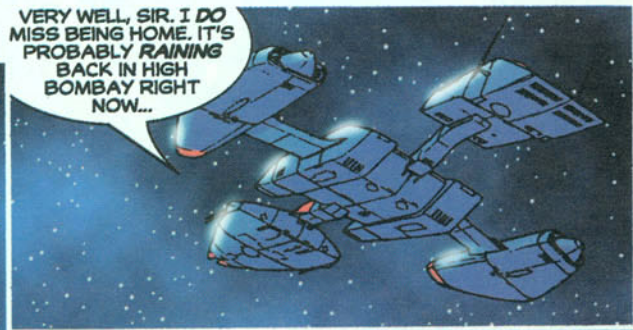
PROBABLY JUST AN OLD SOLAR PANEL, THEY'RE DARK AND SHINY.

SIGH I SUPPOSE SO, SIR. I'M PROBABLY JUST IMAGINING IT...



MAYBE, LIEUTENANT, BUT I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WE'RE ALL A LITTLE JUMPY AND HOMESICK THESE DAYS. IT'S BEEN A LONG SIX MONTHS OUT HERE.

VERY WELL, SIR. I DO MISS BEING HOME. IT'S PROBABLY RAINING BACK IN HIGH BOMBAY RIGHT NOW...



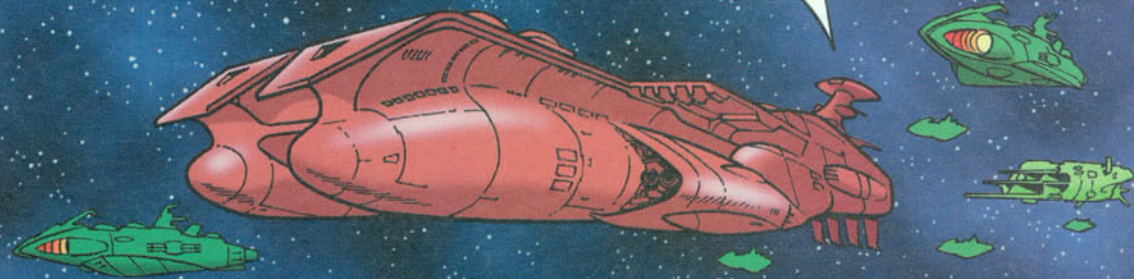
I KNOW, LIEUTENANT... I MISS THE RAIN, TOO...



DEEP SPACE, NEAR THE MILKY WAY CORE.

TALAN?

YES, LEADER DESSLOK. THE EARTH INTELLIGENCE REPORT IS IN.



AND --?

IT'S... AS WE FEARED, MY LORD.



THE DATA FROM OUR PROBES IS CONCLUSIVE. GRAVITY WAVE READINGS CONFIRM THAT THE DARK NEBULANS HAVE WARPED AN ADVANCE LOGISTICS BASE INTO AN ORBIT JUST INSIDE EARTH'S SOLAR SYSTEM. WE DETECTED A STRIKE FLEET LEAVING THERE TODAY HEADED TOWARDS EARTH, BUT OUR AGENTS' INSIDE EDF REPORT NO INDICATION THAT THE EARTHINGS EVEN KNOW IT'S THERE.

ORDERS, LEADER DESSLOK?

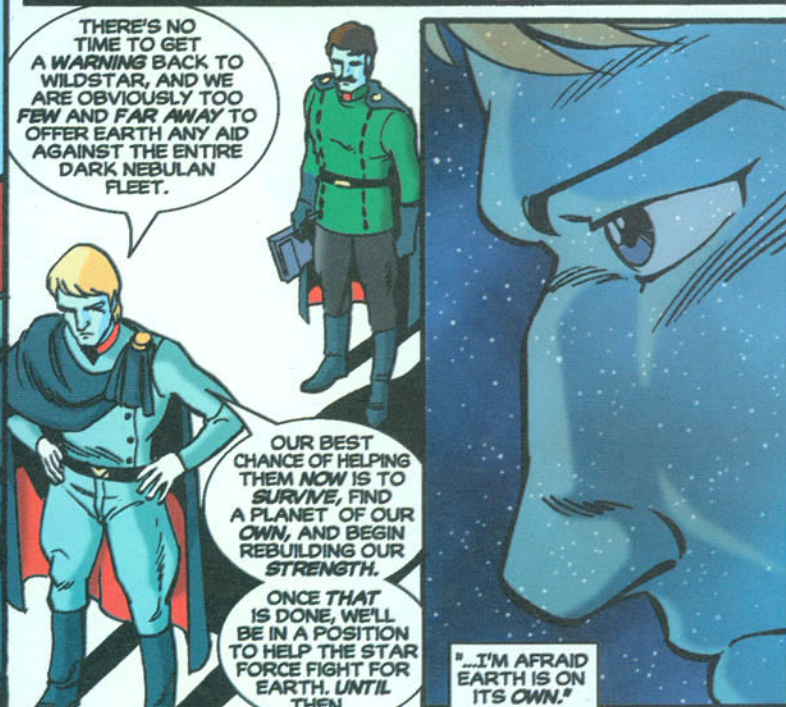
NONE.

THERE'S NO TIME TO GET A WARNING BACK TO WILDSTAR, AND WE ARE OBVIOUSLY TOO FEW AND FAR AWAY TO OFFER EARTH ANY AID AGAINST THE ENTIRE DARK NEBULAN FLEET.

OUR BEST CHANCE OF HELPING THEM NOW IS TO SURVIVE, FIND A PLANET OF OUR OWN, AND BEGIN REBUILDING OUR STRENGTH.

ONCE THAT IS DONE, WE'LL BE IN A POSITION TO HELP THE STAR FORCE FIGHT FOR EARTH. UNTIL THEN...

"...I'M AFRAID EARTH IS ON ITS OWN."



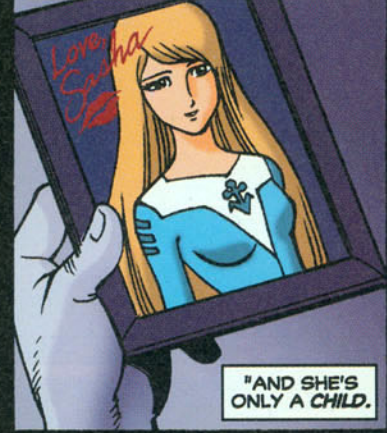
WILDSTAR ISLAND
24 DECEMBER 2202

"IT'S ALL OVER NOW. I CAN NO MORE STOP WHAT'S COMING THAN I CAN HOLD BACK A HURRICANE WITH MY BARE HANDS. SO I WON'T TRY."



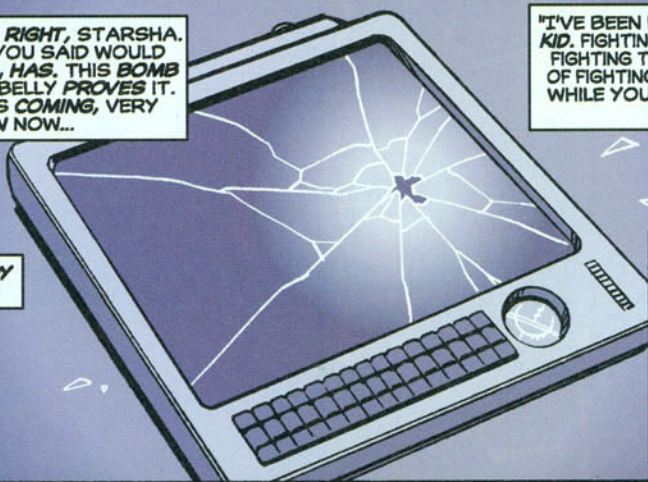
"SANDOR SHOWED ME THE FUTILITY OF TRYING. I SENT SASHA TO HIM TO KEEP HER SAFE, AWAY FROM EARTH."

"INSTEAD, SHE TELLS ME SHE'S JOINED THE STAR FORCE... AND WHEN THE ENEMY COMES SHE'LL JOIN THE REST OF THEM AND RIDE THAT SHIP STRAIGHT TO HER GRAVE."



"AND SHE'S ONLY A CHILD."

"BUT YOU WERE RIGHT, STARSHA. EVERYTHING YOU SAID WOULD COME TO PASS, HAS. THIS BOMB I CARRY IN MY BELLY PROVES IT. THE STORM IS COMING, VERY SOON NOW..."



"...AND NOBODY CAN STOP IT."

"I'VE BEEN FIGHTING EVER SINCE I WAS A KID. FIGHTING DAD, FIGHTING THE GAMILONS, FIGHTING TO SURVIVE, BUT NOW I'M TIRED OF FIGHTING, AND I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH WHILE YOUR DYING WORDS COME TRUE BEFORE MY EYES."

"EARTH WILL BE HUMBLER, MY HUSBAND, AND YOUR LIFE FORFEITED TO SAVE YAMATO. AND ONLY THE PRICE OF YOUR DAUGHTER'S LIFE WILL BUY EARTH'S FREEDOM AGAIN. I DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU THEN, BUT NOW I SEE THE TRUTH IN WHAT YOU SAID, AND I ACCEPT IT. I'M TIRED OF FIGHTING."

YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG, MY DARLING...
...YOU WERE RIGHT.



next issue
**INVASION:
EARTH!**

ANALYZER

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

As we prepare to embark on the incredible voyage that is BE FOREVER YAMATO, another kind of voyage is also beginning; the adventure of bringing STAR BLAZERS to movie screens across the country and around the world. For the first time anywhere, producer Josh Kline of TAE productions shares his views on this exciting project. Also on the next few pages, you will find Bruce Lewis' dramatic account of the sinking of the original Battleship Yamato, and Keith Johannsen's fascinating report on a YAMATO convention in Japan! It's all waiting for you on the next few pages!



edited by
TIM ELDRED

Illustration by Shinya Takahashi

VOYAGE TO THE SILVER SCREEN



This Fall, I had the opportunity to speak with Josh Kline, who is at the forefront of the effort to create a cinematic version of *Star Blazers*. Movie producers are almost always overwhelmed with work, so I didn't expect much more than a status report. Instead, I got an open, honest, generous, and encouraging conversation, presented here for everyone's enjoyment. My thanks and good wishes go to Mr. Kline as he takes *Star Blazers* on perhaps its greatest voyage ever!

-Tim Eldred

Let's start by talking about TAE Productions. What have you done in the past, and what are you currently working on?

TAE is a production company that my father started over 20 years ago. TAE's first domestic feature was Oliver Stone's *Heaven and Earth*. We've also produced eighteen foreign features, twelve filmed in Australia, and six in Europe. We're currently in pre-production on a remake of *Ivanhoe*, which is going to be shot in Ireland, and we're also developing a story based on the founding of Greenpeace, called *Warriors of the Rainbow*.

How did you first become aware of *Star Blazers*?

I grew up in Dallas, and it was on afternoon TV when I was in grade school. I would run home every day to watch it, I just couldn't miss it. Nothing else came close to it for me. Not much happened for several years after that, but then a little over a year ago I was in a toy store in Santa Monica that had a lot of models and sci-fi stuff, and there on one of the shelves was a fully worked-up model of the *Yamato*. I hadn't seen it in fifteen years, but it all came back to me right away. I ran back to my office, hopped on the internet, and dug around for a while until I found that Voyager Entertainment was the rights-holder, and I called them that day. We started a dialog in July of '95 and signed our contracts to work with one another in December.

What will be your position on *Star Blazers* once it goes into production?

I'll be the producer. Right now my role is to supervise the writer. We're working on a storyline that takes the best parts of "The Quest for Iscandar," and condenses it in a way that works for the big screen. I'm supervising that every step of the way.

What is the status of the project right now (October 1996)?

Disney has hired a writer, Melinda Snodgrass, who worked on *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and the pilot for *The Outer Limits*. I interface with the production executives at Disney; Matt Bierman who's a creative executive, and Bernie Goldman who's a senior VP of production. We're working with Melinda to fashion a 5-page treatment that encompasses all the major points of the story, and once we're satisfied that the treatment reflects the movie we want to see, we'll turn her loose to write the first draft script, which typically takes about 12 weeks.

Tell us, in your opinion, why we need a live-action *Star Blazers* movie when all the *Star Blazers* and *Yamato* videos are readily available.

Well, I guess the easiest way for me to put it is that I'm a huge *Star Blazers* fan, and I'm in the business of making live action movies! I think the story translates very naturally to live action. At the time *Yamato* was created in Japan, making it as a live action feature would have been prohibitively expensive. Today, with a lot of the new computer technologies in special effects, we're at a stage where the cost is no longer prohibitive. Clearly, it's still not a cheap movie to make, but it's doable. And for Disney to step up to it shows that they know how valuable the property is—they don't usually start projects this expensive. They've also just

purchased a special effects company called Dreamquest, so I think they're going to want to flex their muscles and see what they've got.

How exactly did *Star Blazers* end up with Disney? It seems unusual that Disney would go out and buy something rather than create it themselves.

It was a shocker to me, too! Of all the studios I thought this property would end up with, Disney was nowhere on my list. I really thought *Star Blazers* would be a natural for Sony Entertainment, a vertically-integrated, Japanese-based corporation. They could really take advantage of all the different ancillary opportunities with *Star Blazers*, and they were actually the first group to "bite" into it. But the funny thing was, the first guy that called me up after I'd sent some material over to him said, "we're really interested in this. We've got *Starship Troopers* going, we've got *Godzilla*, we're not afraid

to make movies like this." I said "great." I went in and had a couple of meetings with them, and then the same guy called a couple weeks later when they passed on it, and said, "I think we've just got a lot on our hands right now with *Starship Troopers* and *Godzilla*!" (laughter)

After that, I showed *Star Blazers* to many different studios, but not to Disney. And while several other people were considering it, Matt Bierman called me. *Daily Variety* had announced that I'd optioned the rights to the material, and it turned out Matt grew up in Florida watching *Star Blazers*—it was his favorite cartoon, too! He apparently had been tracking the rights, came across the article and asked if I would send the material to him at Disney as well. Surprisingly enough, they mobilized very quickly. Several other studios were very interested, but Disney was the one that moved the quickest, and it was clear that they really wanted to make this. Mentally, it made no sense to me, because, as you say, they usually create things in-house. But as we talked, it started to make a lot of sense. They had just acquired Dreamquest. Everyone else was doing something in live action sci-fi and they didn't have a property of their own. The stakes were going up in live action sci-fi, so it made more sense for them to acquire something with a global fan base than to create it in-house and generate all of their own publicity for it.

When do you anticipate production will begin?

If we have a workable script by next spring we'll be in good shape. If we can be filming by the summer of next year, it could be a holiday '97 or summer '98 release.

Have you thought yet about casting? Have you picked out any actors you'd like to have in certain roles?

Oh, sure. It's easy for me as the producer to do that. Disney wouldn't comment at this stage, but I've got a dream cast that I'd love to see fill some of these roles. Right now, two people stand out. For Captain Avatar, the main image I have is Captain Ramius from *The Hunt for Red October*—I think it's Sean Connery all the way! An actor that would bring a lot to the role of Desslok would be Alan Rickman from *Die Hard* and *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*.

How about Jon Malkovich?

Sure! He can be wildly evil, he'd be great, certainly very confident. But this is all far in the future. We can't go out and cast until the script is in good shape, because that's what actors respond to.

When the first announcement was made about *Star Blazers* becoming a live action movie, the fans sort of divided themselves into two camps, one camp saying "wow that's great", and the other saying "no way, it's going to be a disaster". What can you say to reassure the other camp that it won't be a disaster?

This is my favorite cartoon, too. I don't look at this purely as a business venture. It's important to me on several levels. It was my favorite cartoon growing up, and I'm thrilled with the opportunity to work on it as an adult. It's something that

I have an emotional attachment to. As such, I consider it my job to protect the integrity of the material when I'm bringing it to the big screen. So I would never want to destroy this or butcher it into something *Star Blazers* fans would not be proud to go and see. I want this to be something that I can be proud of as well.



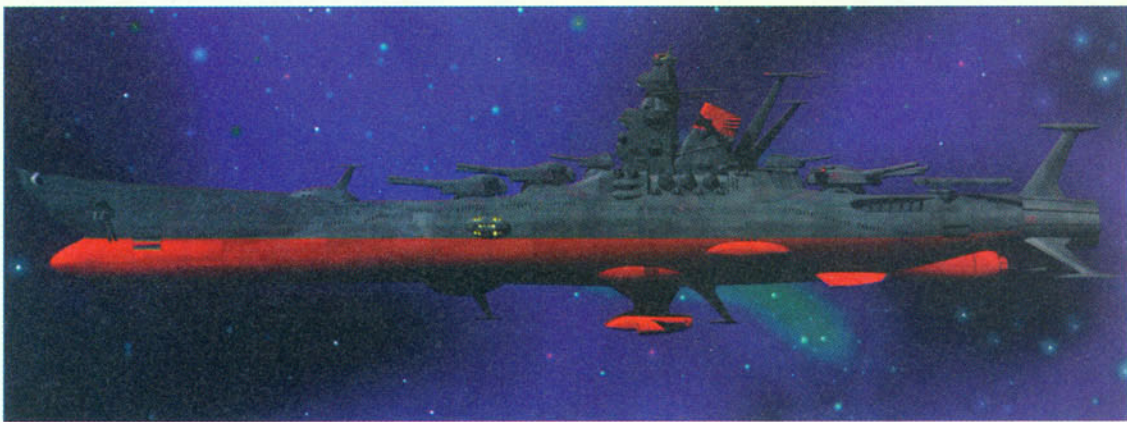
Former Secret Agent as Captain of the *Yamato*?
Keep your fingers crossed, folks!

That being said, there are certain differences that are inevitable simply because you're taking something that exists in one form and translating it into another form. So, just so that we can all prepare ourselves, is there anything we should just let go of right now that will definitely not make it to the big screen version?

At this point, I don't know. We're not going to have as many characters, that's pretty safe to say. Clearly, we need Captain Avatar and Desslok, and I'm a big fan of the General Lysis character, he's almost certainly going to make the transition. Wildstar is still going to be our main protagonist. There's a ship full of characters, but we're not going to be able to focus on as many of them as you can in 26 episodes. I don't think people who go to see this movie will be shocked by that. All of the major elements will be there; Gamilon, Iscandar, and Earth. We're probably going to rename the ship after it's been built, which shouldn't upset too many people because it was renamed in the American version. *Argo* was never a Japanese name. I'm thinking "Phoenix" for the symbolism. What do you think of that?

Well, thematically, the name "Phoenix" is certainly appropriate, but the ship is such a powerful icon, I think that to tamper with even its nomenclature could disrupt the whole presentation. For example, when *Speed Racer* was remade in the early 90s, the animation designers changed the Mach 5, the primary symbol of the series, which was completely unnecessary. It was an example of tampering with core elements to the point where it may as well be a whole different show.

I agree completely. I'll take it under advisement. I take all of this under advisement. I read the newsgroups on the internet all the time. There's an important voice there, and I pay a lot of attention to it. I really do.



A live-action *Star Blazers* film would almost certainly be replete with computer-generated special effects. This image of the *Yamato* (reproduced from the 1996 *Yamato CG Calendar*) gives us an idea of what the cinematic version of our favorite Space Battleship might look like.

Can you comment on how much Japanese involvement there may be in the film, such as Nishizaki or Matsumoto making a contribution?

I don't know at this point. Geographically, it won't be very easy, but their rights of consultation will certainly be respected. Disney knows this property didn't spring up out of nowhere, that there was a creative driving force behind it. Disney is such a large company that when you talk about what controls there are in terms of guiding a project, it really comes down to rights of consultation. You've just got to hope they'll respect those rights, and up to this point, we're quite pleased with the creative consultation we have with them.

One of the particular advantages I think you have with a project like this is that so much groundwork has already been laid, particularly in the area of design. Practically everything you need is already there. I'm curious to know if those designs will be kept, perhaps enhanced a bit for the live action version, or will you be going back to square one and redesigning everything?

One of the things everyone says about *Star Blazers*, even those who are not already familiar with it, is that the imagery is so captivating. Whether we stick to it exactly as is, I'm not sure, but we're not going back to square one. We like the look of the property, so we're going to work within that. Fans aren't going to go to this movie and say, "I don't recognize any of this."

Then, for example, since the ship already has a bridge design, I assume that design will be used directly, or at least the set will be similar to it.

I hope so. I don't want this to look like *Star Trek*, all slick and super-modern. This is not 500 years in the future, it's 200 years in the future. And this is a ship put together in an emergency. I really like the hard military look that it has. I love the bridge design. There's not a lot of luxury on that bridge, nor should there be; it's a battleship.

Some of the designs are also a bit dated. For example, the look of the Gamilon ships and bases are very 1970s.

Very organic looking.

Right, and yet they have an identity of their own that is still unique even today. Do you think that will also be kept?

I think it will be updated, but it's unique in that the Gamilon hardware is so obviously different from the Earth hardware. Whomever we hire as a production designer on this is going to have a wealth of material to draw from. Let's look at the Pluto base. We're going to see that, and there's going to be a battle there, so we'll use all the best elements from the cartoon while also making it look very modern.

How about music? Do you anticipate that any of the original music might be used in the film?

Probably not. There may be updated versions of it, but the rights issues with the old music, which is still being actively published, make it tough to incorporate into new material. I don't think the original music will be used.

Not even the main theme?

You know, I can't get the main theme out of my head. I know it tune-wise as well as anybody. But we're going to have to think very hard about it. It depends on who our music coordinator is, and who our composer is, and the sort of work we want done. I really like the main theme, but realistically, I just don't think it could be used as is for a brand new feature. Sorry about that!

Well then, the last question is probably the biggest. Knowing the push and pull of Hollywood, and how projects are on one day and off again the next, can you forecast the chances of this project actually going through as we all hope it will?

If it were up to me, 110%. I think it's got a very good chance. I can't quantify it percentage-wise, but I know the direction Disney's headed in. They're going to be making fewer but more substantial movies, and this certainly fits into that category. I'm familiar with their development slate and they don't currently have a more "serious" live action sci-fi project. This IS their entry into that market and it makes sense on many levels for them to go ahead with it.

I'm sure a lot of fans will be happy to hear that. Thanks!

You bet!

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

1423 hours, 7 April 1945: twilight had come at last.

Overhead, the buzzing of Hellcats and Avengers, a few late birds of prey; all around, the lopping and gurgle of seawater, its surface coated with a taffy-like skin of oil. The late afternoon air was calm, the sounds of battle now distant and muffled despite their proximity. With a desperate strength, Yoshida lunged forward in the freezing water, breaking the surface. As the oil dripped from his bloody eyes, he saw it: an immense black mushroom cloud, rearing directly overhead into infinity, a billowing tombstone of smoke eighteen thousand feet high. Through the haze of shock that surrounded him, Yoshida realized that the cloud was all that remained of his former ship—the Imperial Japanese Battleship *Yamato*.

Yamato was gone. Even now, the great battleship's remains were plummeting into the black nameless depths beneath Yoshida's feet. But others besides himself had survived. Even now, Yoshida could hear their cries, cries for water and for help. Then one cry rose above all the rest, a voice that the young Ensign recognized as that of the assistant gunnery officer. "Officers!" he exclaimed, "gather together any men you can find around you!" Yoshida's heart began to burn with a faint flame of hope. If one of *Yamato's* destroyer escorts had survived, there was a chance that he and the other survivors might be rescued—that he might see Japan again! With a new strength, Yoshida began calling hoarsely to the sailors nearby. "Don't stop swimming! Don't give up yet!" As a few faint

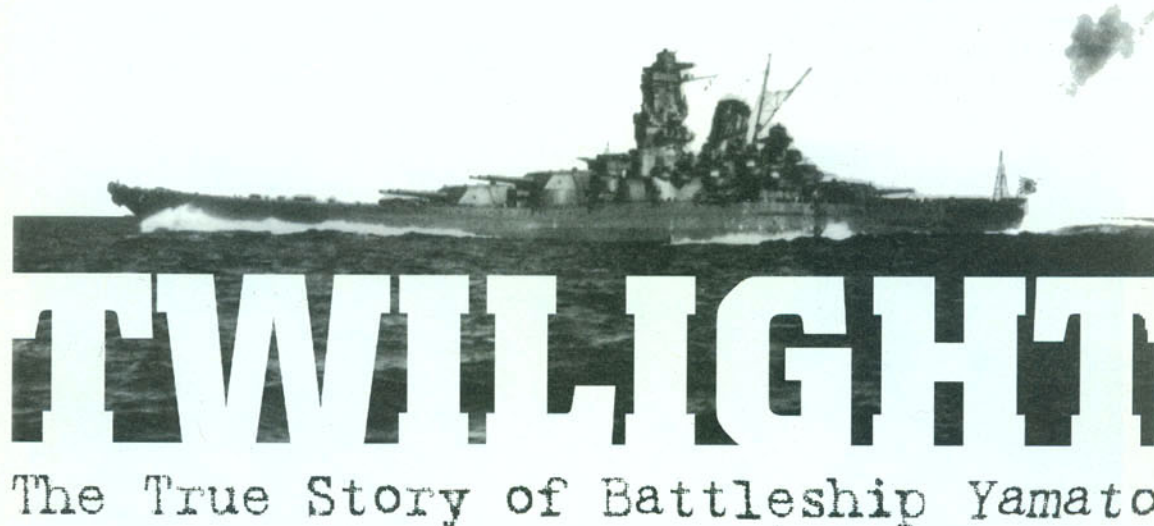
replies came back, Yoshida began swimming vigorously toward the noise.

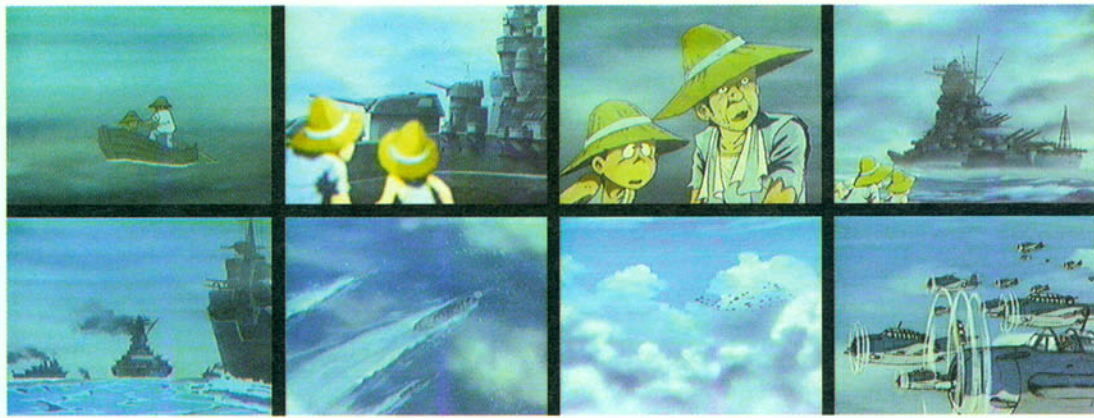
Minutes later, a bloodied, battered, and oil-dripping Yoshida was dragged aboard the destroyer *Fuyutsuki*, where he lay gasping amidst the piles of corpses that littered the gore-slick deck of the ship's sickbay. The stench of death and the screams of the dying surrounded him. Outside, the clatter and roar of battle raged on as the destroyer's crew fought off the last few American attackers. "Enough," thought the young ensign as he closed his eyes against the hell around him. "Enough." With a sigh, he sank back and lay still. For Ensign Mitsuru Yoshida, former crewman of the battleship *Yamato*, the war was over at last.

But life went on. The next morning, 8 April 1945, was sunny and clear. Yoshida stood on the deck of the battered destroyer, staring along with others as the mountains of Japan rolled slowly into view over the horizon. As he looked, his eyes stung with tears.

28 March 1945: Japan was a ghost of her former self, her sources of materiel cut off, her supply lines severed, her fighting forces unable to defend the nation. Eighteen days earlier, on the night of 10 March 1945, American B-29s had struck Tokyo in a low-level incendiary attack, killing more than 80,000 people. The Imperial Navy was equally ruined, her ships mostly sunk, her aircraft few in number and dwindling

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE





as the kamikaze raids took their toll. Battleship *Yamato* sat alone at her berth in Kure, an aging giant. The harbor around her was crowded with rafts of one-man midget suicide submarines, where cruisers and carriers had once bobbed at anchor. And now *Yamato* was being readied for a suicide mission of her own.

It was called Operation *Ten-Ichigo* ("Heaven #1"). The plan was to sail *Yamato* and her destroyer escorts into the teeth of the biggest armada in history: the U.S. Navy's Task Force 58 off the island of Okinawa, some 200 miles south of Japan. Once there, the great battleship would blast her way through the enemy fleet and attack the troopships as they steamed towards the western coast of the island. After sending the invading troops to the bottom, *Yamato* would turn back toward the remaining American ships and beach herself on the shoals surrounding the landing zone. Then, her mighty eighteen-inch guns would blast the enemy to shreds. Demoralized and defeated, the Americans would be forced to postpone any further attacks on Japan, giving the Empire time to rearm and eventually win the war.

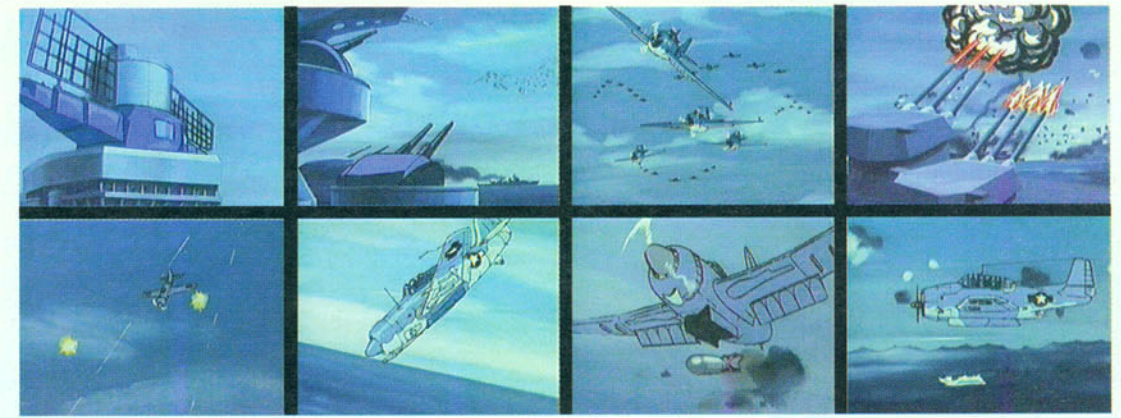
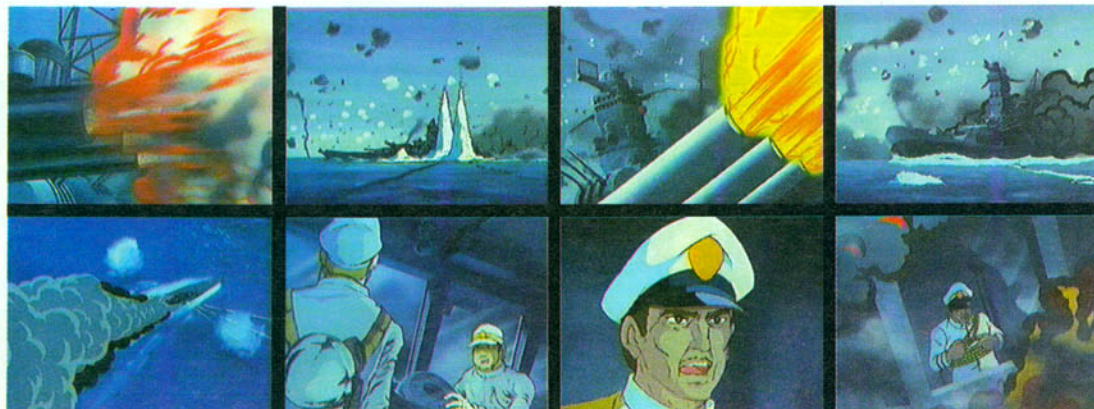
Of course, it was all fantasy. Without air cover, *Yamato* and her escorts would be naked before the air power of an entire U.S. task force. A kamikaze attack on the American carriers was planned to coincide with *Yamato's* death-dash toward Okinawa, but the Tokko (suicide attack) squadrons from the airbase at Kanoya could only hope to knock out one or two carriers at best...and the Americans had fifteen. Task force commander Vice Admiral Seiichi Ito and *Yamato* CO Rear Admiral Kosaku Ariga both knew the battleship would never make it to Okinawa. As the ship's sailing date

approached, *Yamato* was fully loaded with ammunition and provisions for a full voyage...but only enough fuel for a one-way trip.

On April Fool's Day, 1945, the first wave of American attackers hit the beach at Okinawa. Soon, the bloody fighting began. Five days later, as the Kamikaze attacks on the U.S. fleet commenced, *Yamato* and the *Ten-Ichigo* fleet pulled out of the harbor at Kure and set a course southward. A few hours later, as they left Japan's home waters and entered the South China Sea, American submarines and patrol planes began to track their progress.

The Tokko attack had failed. The Kamikaze flyers had, for some reason, concentrated their fury on TF58's smaller ships, and while the damage and loss of life had been severe, the fleet's carrier force was, for the most part, unharmed. At 0820 on 7 April, aircraft from USS *Essex* sighted *Yamato* as she turned southeast toward Okinawa. By 1000, the first strike group began launching from Admiral Mitscher's carriers. *San Jacinto*, *Bennington*, *Hornet*, and *Bellau Wood*. One by one, the flattops sent their Avengers and Hellcats into the air, followed by more aircraft from *Essex*, *Bataan*, *Bunker Hill*, *Cabot*, and *Hancock*, then still more from *Intrepid*, *Langley*, and *Yorktown*. By 1045, 280 American aircraft were in the air and on course toward *Yamato* and her escorts.

At 1220, they found her. As the battleship swerved crazily beneath them, Avengers from USS *Bennington's* VT-82 squadron began pumping torpedoes into the water, dodging the curtain of lead hoisted into their path by *Yamato's* AA artillery. Three torpedoes immediately found their mark, blasting *Yamato's* sides open even as the first 500-pound



bombs smashed into her from above. Minutes later the ship was listing and in flames, coming about rapidly in an attempt to escape as the other squadrons piled on. At 1300, the second wave of attack aircraft began raining death onto the *Yamato* and her task force. From then on, it was sheer slaughter. Bomb followed bomb into the great ship's guts. Torpedo after torpedo split and shattered her hull. The crew of the doomed fleet fought back bravely, but to no avail. By 1400 hours, *Yamato* was afire from stem to stern and lying on her beam ends.

The end came quickly. As the battleship rolled over, something in the stern magazine broke free or caught fire. An instant later, *Yamato* exploded in a shattering fireball, blasting white-hot fragments into the sky and sea around her with the force of artillery shells. Another explosion followed seconds later. Then *Yamato* disappeared...and in her place, a billowing black mushroom cloud shot six thousand meters into the sky. Attacker and survivor alike watched as the shattered hulk of the largest battleship ever built rolled completely over and slid hissing into the black depths of the sea, taking 2,498 men with her into oblivion.

Yamato was no more.

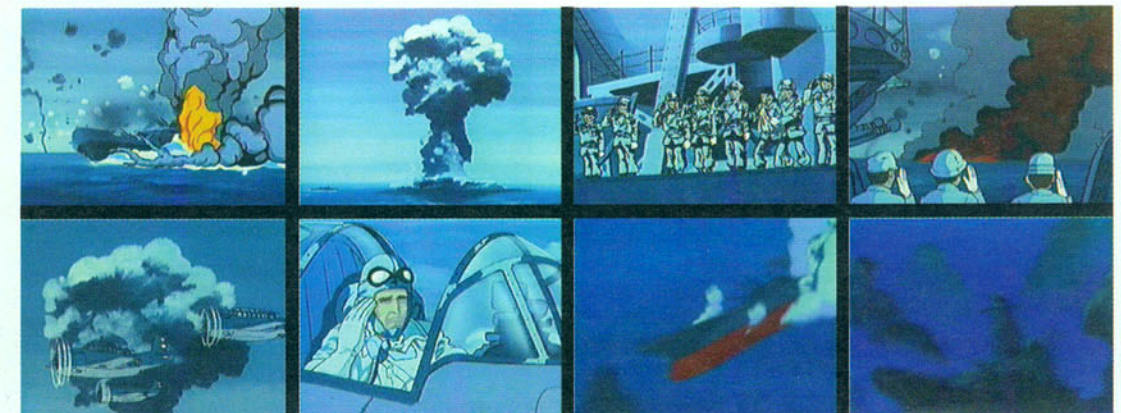
The Second World War ended on 2 September 1945. Japan's quest for empire was over at last. Instead of a bringing a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" to the East, the Pacific War had brought untold ruin and misery to millions of Asians. Instead of elevating Japan to the status of a global power, the military junta that had seized her legally-elected government had reduced their proud and industrious nation

to a smouldering wasteland. Now Japan lay at the mercy of her conquerors, dependent on their good will for sustenance and survival itself.

But Japan did survive. In the five decades since the last sortie of battleship *Yamato*, the country that once dedicated itself to *hakko ichiu*, (to "bringing the eight corners of the world under one roof") has instead risen to the first rank of the nations of the world strictly through peaceful pursuits. Instead of conquest, Japan turned toward commerce. Instead of trading bullets and bombs, the youth of each country now trade cartoons and comic books...and thrill to the stories of a new *Yamato*, a *Yamato* dedicated to love and coexistence instead of hatred and war.

She lies there to this day, a crumbling heap of rusted iron, sinking slowly into the muck of the sea floor eleven hundred feet beneath the surface of the South China Sea. Of the men who once sailed her, no trace remains. But the great guns are still there, and her anchor, and her bow, with the kikusui crest of the Emperor still visible on the prow. Quietly she sleeps, a mute testament to the beauty and power of an idea gone horribly wrong, a silent reminder of the tragic mistakes of a bygone era where bravery was wasted in the cause of aggression, and good men were sent to a meaningless death in the name of empire.

The pictures used to illustrate this final segment of "Twilight" are reproduced from scenes edited from the 2nd episode of *Star Blazers: The Quest for Iscandar*. These scenes comprised a flashback to the sinking of *Yamato*, and can also be seen in the *Yamato* feature film.



SPECIAL REPORT:

YAMATO PARTY '96



Left to right:

1. Cover art from the 1996 program book
2. Costumed fans keep Earth (and the convention center) safe from alien attack
3. Dojinshi bonanza!
4. Black Tigress Asuka Yamashita emcees the Yamato trivia contest

by Keith A. Johannsen

On September 15 and 16 of this year, I had the pleasure of attending the Japanese *Yamato* Fan Club Party held in Wakko (pron. WAH-ko), a suburb of Tokyo. It was my second visit to this convention, now a high point of my trips to Japan.

American fans who have attended anime conventions here in the U. S. may have found the format of "Yamato Party '96" surprising, mainly for the lack of vendors' booths selling mass-market *Yamato* products. In their place were the tables of various fan groups, or "circles," as they are referred to in Japan. These circles displayed their group's products, mostly dojinshi (fan produced comics) and other forms of artwork devoted to the *Yamato* saga. All of the material available for sale was of very high quality and represented each group's personal devotion and interest in the *Yamato* stories and characters. I also operated a table, and was overwhelmed by the interest in the forthcoming *Star Blazers* Fleet Battle System Game. (Note: plans are proceeding to release the game in the U.S. in early 1997. Watch this space for more information!)

Video monitors were placed around the hall to provide a constant view of video clips which were shown throughout the two day affair, as well as certain special events. Attendees could request to see specific scenes from the films or TV episodes provided by the staff's well-organized video library.

This year, the special guest speaker was Asagami Yoko, the voice artist who supplied the voice of Mori Yuki (renamed "Nova" in *Star Blazers*). Ms. Yoko spoke about her career and the many roles she has played in such animated productions as *Lupin III*, *City Hunter*, and *Galaxy Express 999*, created by Leiji Matsumoto. She is presently supplying the voice of Ensign Ameshisu in *Yamato 2520*. Her lecture was, of course, received with great enthusiasm and applause.

The other events of the convention included quizzes, bingo games, auctions, special video presentations, and a costume

contest. An interesting aspect of the Japanese *Yamato* fan movement is that roughly 50% of the attendees are female. The romance between Kodai (Wildstar) and Yuki (Nova) has a strong following among the female fans of the series, while many males prefer the mechanical and military aspects.

The closing ceremonies at the end of each day were highlighted by the group-singing of *Yamato* theme songs, including *The Scarlet Scarf*. The sight and sound of all the convention attendees standing, singing, and waving red scarfs leaves me emotionally moved, and satisfied that the *Yamato* spirit is still alive and doing well.

Attending a "Yamato Party" is a must for any devoted fan. I am very grateful to the organizers for allowing me to participate, and I hope to return in '97. They want me to practice singing the English *Star Blazers* songs for next year. Wish me luck!

NEXT ISSUE



BE FOREVER YAMATO begins in earnest! The army of the Dark Nebula Empire launches a full-scale invasion of Earth, bringing with them a superweapon that can exterminate all of humankind! But they have not fully reckoned with the resourcefulness of the Star Force...or the power of *Yamato*!

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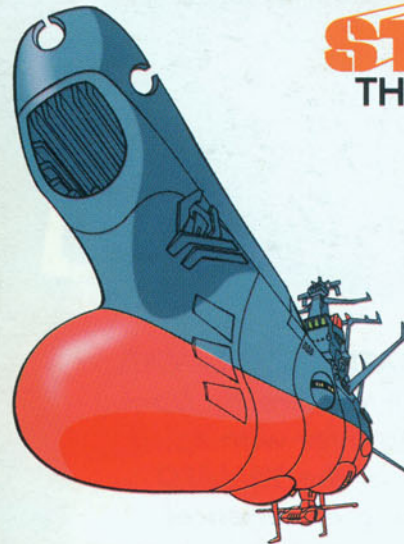


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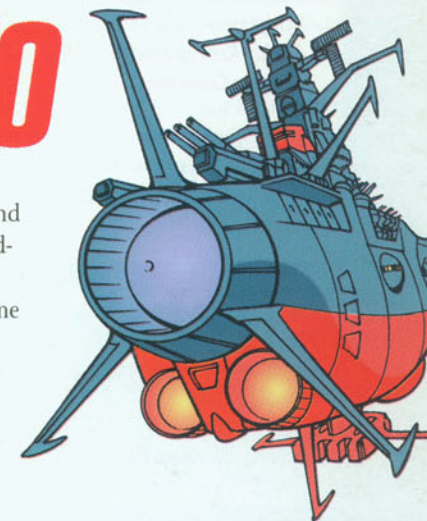
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* "Farewell to Yamato" is also available as a dubbed version.

