

# **The Manifestation of Destinies**

## **A Superdimensional Fortress Macross/Robotech meta-crossover**

**By Stanley S. Bundy**

**Rights:** Macross belongs to Big West, Robotech to Harmony Gold. Despite swaggers to the contrary, Pete Walker is not their head of continuity. No disrespect to the real owners of the properties are intended.

**Dedications:** this fic is dedicated to my friends on the Robotech Cantina, the Disciples of Zor and the Robotech Message Board, especially FPilot, BrkRedLeg, Macross, Cyclone, Beta and Sgt. Anjay. And you guys thought I was doing weird things with the Freeman clan...

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"You want the truth? YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!"  
-Jack Nicholson as Col. Nathan Jessup, "A Few Good Men" (1992)

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### **2047: Macross 7 Fleet, aboard the resort ship *Riviera 07*.**

Max Jenius was enjoying something he'd not had in two years - a day off, without fear of alien attack, paper pushers, or other interruptions. The reconstruction of Battle 7 was underway, and completely out of his hands, his staff was holding down the fort in the operations center, with word to defer to Myria, and let her handle it if anything came up that required one of the mission leaders. Mylene and her band-mates were on tour, even journeying to Earth; a rare luxury indeed, in this age of expansion, where physical travel methods generally weren't established until a colony ship had set down permanently on a world.

As he rolled over onto his back to continue is tanning, he noticed sand grains dancing, as if from a tremor. Something was definitely out of place, and it soon became apparent as he heard the apologetic voice of his advisor, Exedore, asking people to make room for him to walk down the beach. This was definitely not Exedore's style, seeing as the Zentraedi hadn't been on a beach since his two years as a micron following Space War One. Max sat up, and saw Exedore wearing a very poor attempt at beachwear, that was evidently only worn in a vain attempt to blend in. Something was up, and Max began to worry. If Exedore actually felt he had to come for him personally, it wasn't something small.

"Captain Max, I need to speak with you."

"Ambassador, I assume you wish to do somewhere a little less public than the beach?"

"Yes, Captain. I need to speak to you about one of the discoveries from our study of the ruins on Lux."

"Lux? What could be so important that you saw it necessary to interrupt my day off?"

"In a way, it involves you, Captain. You need to examine this yourself. I have taken the liberty of reserving one of the conference rooms for us to examine the artifact in."

"An artifact, you say?"

"Yes, a very strange one."

Max pulled his jogging suit out of his beach bag, shook out the sand, and followed Exedore to one of the interior conference rooms of the ship; one not normally used by normal business conventions, as it had no windows overlooking the *Riviera's* beach or city areas. Max took a seat, and Exedore extended a manipulator down to him, with an item on it.

"Take this. Can you tell me what it appears to be?"

"It appears to be a standard write-once log recording disk casing, of a type used by UN SPACY and the early colonization fleets."

"And you know this, because?"

"As a pilot aboard the *Macross*, I was trained to recover such disk casings from destroyed vessels' remains, so that they could be studied to determine what led to the ship's destruction. It was fairly standard training. What does this have to do with the Protoculture ruins on Lux?"

"We wondered that ourselves, at first. Originally, we thought that it might have been planted in the laboratory by someone, until our video records of our salvage operations showed that it was put into one of our recovery boxes as part of the dig. It had been covered with gold leaf, and mounted into the mural that told the story of the origin of the Protoculture. After removing the gold foil, we were able to successfully date the item as being older than the ruins themselves, and we were able to get a partial reading of its serial number, which allowed us to trace its origins."

"One second - You say that this is OLDER than the Protoculture, yet you were able to trace this back to its manufacturer? That doesn't make any sense. This type of disk was made on Earth, and only used on ships launched in the first two decades of this century. It has to be a hoax."

"That is what I thought, initially. But, on review of the disk's contents, I'm convinced the disk is a genuine relic."

"Contents? You mean, the disk is still readable?"

"Yes, though with some data loss. It was never intended to last this long."

"You said you traced this? Where did it come from?"

"It was manufactured in the facilities on the Earth's moon, in July of 2011. It was part of a lot set aside for the ships under construction at the time, in the lunar shipyards."

"If you know this already, what do you need me for?"

"For confirmation. I have already had a copy of the information on the disk loaded into the viewer on the far wall. Please start the presentation, and maybe you will understand why we want your opinion of the contents, before sending our report on to Earth."

"Why would my opinion mean anything in such a pursuit? I'm not trained as a scientist."

"But, there are other, more personal reasons for your examination, that will only become apparent when you view the recording."

Max placed the ancient disk on the table, and touched the "Play" button on the controls for the viewing wall. The screen flickered, and the titles came up for the *Einstein's* lab, and the listing of people involved with the data recovery. Then, the subject "Contents of anachronistic artifact found on Planet Lux, Protoculture ruins" and the dates of the dig appeared. This in turn was followed by the standard counters that appeared at the beginning of the log disks, marred by dropouts Max normally associated with magnetic media from before the first Space War, but were instead from a hard-recorded material expected to faithfully record data and survive the destruction of a ship around it by any means short of a Macross cannon attack. The screen flickered again, at the end of the countdown, and an image appeared on the screen, much larger than life.

The face was very familiar to Max, though there were some slight aspects that seemed not quite right, and the man was much older and life-weary in appearance since the last time Max had seen his face. The biggest difference was the uniform, totally unlike anything Max had ever seen before, and apparently old to its wearer, only worn for the recording of the video. Despite the strangeness of the uniform, Max could still tell that it was a cut and style meant for a flag officer - a captain at minimum.

"Hikaru?" Max gasped, in amazed recognition.

The image began to speak, but in a voice and accent Hikaru had never affected. What the man had to say shook Max even worse than his having watched Protodevin survive Macross cannon and nuclear missiles the year before.

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## 2016: Deep Space

Ichijyo Hikaru was not having a good day.

While most of the major fleets of Zentraedi that had survived the downfall of the Protoculture had taken part in the assault on Earth six years before, "most" is not "all" by any stretch of the imagination. Combined with the fact that the number of surviving, operable or repairable ships of Breetai, Bodolza, Laplamiz and Kamujin's fleets in Terran hands at the beginning of the colonization mission was only comparable to the number of ships (of a much more pathetic variety) in the UN SPACY in 2009, even the private fleet of a decorated Zentraedi war leader outclassed anything Earth (or one of its colonization fleets) could handle. On top of all this, the majority of Zentraedi ships in the colony fleet had long ago been retrofitted to civilian logistical uses, and were not warships anymore, except as a last resort.

Now, he and the rest of the defenders of the *Megaroad-01* colony fleet were facing a tenacious force that was double their number, and apparently immune to the Minmay defense tactic. They had been fighting these Zentraedi for several weeks now, and so far, the news was not good; not good at all. The enemy had attacked without warning, and despite attempts to stop the fighting, nothing had worked. It had come down to a last, desperate attempt to destroy their attacker, in a system they'd discovered by accident, that ordinarily they would have immediately classified as perfect for their colonization needs.

"Artemis Control to all fighters," a voice called out over the tactical frequency. "LONGBOW LEFT will commence in twenty-nine seconds. Strike fighters synchronize on twenty-five — MARK."

"Roger, Artemis Control," Hikaru responded, noting the fear in his wife's voice, that she was trying to keep hidden. The *Megaroad* had taken an unlucky hit to its tactical area in the initial attack, resulting in many dead and wounded from the odd-shift bridge personnel. As a result, the quick reassignment of personnel to cover the full range of operations meant that several people were pulling double duty. Workaholic to the end, Misa had chosen to take on the role she had on the *Macross*, directing battle operations, in addition to her ship command duties.

LONGBOW LEFT was a maneuver Hikaru never thought he'd actually have to attempt - or, at least, he'd hoped he'd never have to, for it was a desperation move. The fleet's lone monitor, ironically a ship brought back into service using parts salvaged from the one used to attack the *Macross* in 2012, was charging up to fire its cannon, while the largest ship in the fleet, a former flagship class converted into an agricultural station, did the same with its primary armament. The two weapons would fire at the edges of the enemy fleet, in a manner that standard Zentraedi fleet tactics being followed would result in a temporary closing of the ranks as the ships made their evasions of the blasts. To the Zentraedi, this was not considered too much of a problem, normally, as the recharge times of such guns were well known, and the two ships were the only two with such armament in the colony fleet. However, the LONGBOW attack was not meant to cause its damage from the cannons, but what the cannon fire concealed; that's where the fighters came in.

"Skull One to all Wings. All Lightnings and Invaders are to fire their reaction missiles at their pre-determined targets at zero mark. Valkyries, cover the larger craft during firing and the fallback, but don't forget your own need to fall back; our survival depends on our success."

Hikaru quickly armed all of his RMS-1 "Angel of Death" strategic nuclear missiles, targeting the lead landing ship of the enemy formation. Or the plan to work, the enemy would be distracted by the effort to avoid the large beam weapons, and lose the launch of the hundreds of nukes (the entire fleet's supply) in the energy backwash. By the time their sensors readjusted from the effects of the beam weapons, the missiles (hopefully) would be too close to be stopped.

He hated it having to come to this; nukes were the weapons of last resort, and they hadn't even the opportunity to get clearance for their use from Grobal and Breetai back on Earth, as the enemy had been jamming hyperspace communications the entire time since they first made contact. While conventional communications hadn't been jammed, repeated attempts to try to stop the conflict had fallen on deaf ears. Instead, the enemy leader kept broadcasting his intent not to let up until the colony fleet was destroyed, and that he couldn't understand why the fleet would feign ignorance to why it must be so. The closest Misa's Zentraedi advisor could (or would - Hikaru and others suspected there was more not being said) say is that some Zentraedi would see Microns and Zentran living and working together as positive proof that the fleet was part of the Inspection Army, the Zentraedi's old foe. That the *Megaroad's* non-colony elements were scaled up from the *Macross* design, and the *Macross* being a reconstruction of a monitor design used exclusively by Inspection Army forces, only served to reinforce the paranoia.

A series of folds had kept them alive, so far, but that had only succeeded in cutting losses to two cruisers and a scout, who had fought holding actions to allow the rest to escape. Too many good men, dead. But, it was better than the whole fleet, and bought them the time to set up this last, desperate chance at survival.

Zero moment arrived, and the two weapons lanced from their respective ships, signaling the fighters to launch, turn and burn. Hikaru launched, popped his verniers in the pre-programmed setting to result in a 180 degree rotation along its wing to wing axis, then pushed his throttle to maximum overthrust. The further he was from the mass of explosions, the better. While the reaction weapons based on Protoculture physics were thousands of times cleaner than the best pre-2000 Terran technology, that many nukes that close together were bound to produce high radiation levels. The most dangerous part of the fight was over, he thought to himself, as he slipped into the lee of the *Megaroad*, and into landing formation on the side of the ship away from the enemy.

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Misa, on the other hand, was deeply worried. The Zentraedi war leader, who was claiming as his name the Zentran word for "vengeance", had not stopped shrieking his hysterical claims, from the point his fleet had folded into the system. Misa didn't understand half of it, but something about the madman's words was shaking her Zentraedi advisor severely.

"Advisor?"

"He - He can't be real!"

"Why?"

"His fleet was destroyed by the Protodevlin!"

"The WHO?"

"Uhhh..."

"Advisor, stop being evasive! Our lives are at stake! Who are the Protodevlin?"

"They - they were our devils, Captain. It was they who subverted the Inspection Army, and used it to destroy the Protocultures. The fleet he claims to be was one of the first to fall!"

"Could he be a survivor?"

"Unlikely - those who survived were usually rendered comatose and wasted away, despite the best efforts of our creators' medicine. Those who weren't became mindless slaves of the Protodevlin. Even the creators were not immune, and it was in this manner that the Protodevlin caused the Protoculture to fall, destroying nearly all life in the universe in the process. All that was left in their wake were scattered Zentraedi and mind-controlled fleets roaming the galaxy, clashing whenever they met. We originally thought your world was one of the latter, or their descendants."

"Which is why he would think so, as well."

"Exactly. But this extreme a belief is unexplainable."

Suddenly, the demeanor of the Zentraedi on the screen changed, as he saw too late the incoming missiles.

["NO!!! They must not get the Demon Gate! NO!!! I have failed you, Anima Spiritua!"]

The signal died, as several hundred megatons of reaction weapons vaporized most of the fleet. Misa was confused, though, by the man's dying words.

"'Anima Spiritua'? What is that? If I didn't know any better, I would think he was calling out to his god. But, that's a foreign concept to your people."

"I agree; it is very strange. The only thing I can think of is that, maybe, he WAS a survivor of the Protodevlin war, like he said."

"Why the change of opinion?"

"He mentioned the 'Demon Gate'. Captain, there are two legends concerning the fall of the Protoculture. One is that the Inspection Army, when it was only the weapons research division of one faction of the Protoculture, developed new weapons, greater than Zentraedi, to replace us, and it were these weapons who were the Protodevlin, and turned on their creators and their intended victims, we Zentraedi, equally."

"And, the other?"

"The other is much darker, and much less believed. One of the aspects of research going on at that facility was experimentation with alternate universes; harnessing other dimensions for travel and weapons; Fold travel was one of the first aspects of such work, but it only manipulates crudely a specific type of dimension. The other story about the great war was that something had gone wrong in the research into other dimensions, and that the Protodevlin were truly demons - things that had come from another, alien universe to suck all the life out of our own. You can see why this is much harder to believe than the other, can you not?"

"Yes, I can. So, what does this mention of the 'Demon Gate' mean?"

"As the last lights of life were on the verge of fading from the galaxy, suddenly, the Protodevlin stopped what they were doing, and converged toward an unknown point, near where they first appeared. They were never heard from or seen, ever again, though all Zentraedi who saw them, even in records, will never forget what they look like. It is possible that whatever stopped the Protodevlin might have freed some of their slaves, and charged them with protecting the means by which they could return, to protect the universe from their evil. Most younger generations of Zentraedi know nothing of the real reasons for the fall of the Protoculture; there was no real need to tell them. Only the fleet advisors like myself and Exedore even think of them, anymore, as they still haunt our racial memories."

"Well, any chance of us finding out for sure died with him."

"CAPTAIN!" One of the sensor operators shouted. "We may have a problem. I'm getting strange readings from the location of the detonations."

"What is it?" Misa looked at the area, where space seemed to be rippling like water.

"There seems to be a sphere of gravitational and energy anomalies expanding from the former location of the enemy command vessel. It has already disrupted the nearby habitable moon, and is now affecting the primary planet's rings - both appear to be disintegrating!"

"The dimensional device - could it have caused this?"

"If 'Vengeance' really had it with him, yes, it might be possible. I have no training in dimensional theory, captain. The only ones who would know for sure died very long ago."

"What about the two ships that survived our attack, but were floating dead in space?" Misa asked the sensor crew leader.

"It appears they were the first to be destroyed by the effect. Initially, we thought they were secondary casualties of the nukes, dying from collateral effects. But now..."

Misa hit the communications override, calling all the spacecraft and fighters in the fleet. "This is the Captain; commence emergency fold operations! The fleet is in danger from a spatial anomaly centered on the fleet that we just destroyed. All fighters, land on the nearest ship, engage surface attachment protocols, and enter the nearest cargo or mecha lock to your position, as quickly as possible. We don't have time for standard recovery operations."

Confirmations began pouring in, as the *Megaroad* began powering up for its fold. While all the fighters had reached ship, and were boarding as quickly as possible, it wasn't quick enough, as the effect was spreading faster than their maneuver drives' top speed, and they couldn't engage their faster sublight engines until clear of the larger planet's orbital garbage. Those who hadn't been recovering fighters were already moving out using their drives, buying time they desperately needed, but at the cost of lengthening the time needed to charge the fold drives. Ironically, the two big guns of the fleet were doomed. Firing their guns had depleted power reserves too far for them to build up even a minimum emergency fold charge. They tried valiantly to outrace it, but failed.

Even for the *Megaroad*, it was going to be very close. 80% power for a fold would be very close to when the wave caught up to it, as the ship too tried to run. Hikaru arrived on the bridge during this run, carrying Miku, as the wave neared. It was against every reg in the book, but if they were going to all die, his family was going to be together when it happened. The anomaly was starting to eat away at the ship's thruster fairings when the fold was engaged, at 83% of standard power.

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### **2035: Same Star System, Different Universe**

The command chair of the SDF-3 chafed at Rick Hunter. Technically, he was commander of the entire REF mission, while his wife Lisa was captain of the SDF-3 itself. But this was her seat, not his, and she should be the one sitting here. Instead, she was in their quarters with their son Roy, making sure that he would not react badly to the disorientation of his first fold. If all went well, she would hand Roy over to Minmei a half-minute or so into the fold, and join the rest of the command crew on the bridge from the rest of the trip back to Earth.

"Admiral, all ships report ready," the head of communications reported. "The pre-positioned forces at Lunar Farside report via hyperspace link that they are on stand-by, waiting for our force to defold before beginning their lift-off schedule, to keep our arrival area clear. As yet, there are no signs that the Invid realize that the scout forces they destroyed over the old Pennsylvania sector came from space, instead of being surface resistance."

"Good. Switch me over to the fleet communications link."



"Done, sir."

"Attention all REF forces... The mission is a go. Begin schedule at Fold minus one minute... MARK. Fold order remains as per operational plan Bravo, with the SDF-4 and Task Force Chixilub folding after the assault force, followed by the SDF-3. Stealth measures are not to be engaged until after our forces and the pre-positioned forces are brought together as per Plan Bravo, at which time zero time for the assault plan will be set. Admiral Hunter out."

Rick then switched over to a private intra-ship circuit, and called his quarters.

"Lisa, we're set to fold; ninety seconds to go. How's Roy?"

"Sleeping, believe it or not. Minmei's lullaby put him right out. I don't know if he can sleep into our folding, so I'll stay here till I know for sure.."

"Whatever you feel is best for him; we're still hours from combat."

"I wish we were heading home under happier circumstances."

"Don't we all?"

"This is unlike anything we have ever had to do before. All the Sentinels worlds' fights were guerilla campaigns, and the Invid always had a place to fall back to, when they were defeated. Now, however..."

"- It's all or nothing; I know. Lisa, I'll get back to you after the fold; the first units are starting to head out. I love you, 'Sourpuss'."

"And I love you, 'Mister Lingerie'," Lisa teased back. We sure have come a long way."

"That we have."

Rick killed the connection, and turned his attention to the waves of folding vehicles. One by one, Ikazuchi class carriers winked out, with their attendant Garfish and Horizons. Last to go before the SDF-3 was the task force containing the SDF-4, and the fleet's weapons of last resort, that they hoped could be used to bluff the Invid into surrender, if nothing else - ship-sized projectiles meant to cause as much damage by their physical hitting the surface, as with the high-radiation detonations that would coincide, designed to kill everything in flower-rich North America, while causing global cooling through the fallout from the impacts to insure the flower would not take root anywhere else on Earth. Unfortunately, actual use of these weapons would not only kill the Invid, but would also kill most of Earth's surviving human population; either directly, or through famine in the decades it would take for the dust to settle. While he had argued against the weapons out of principle, he could see their logic behind their purpose.

As a group, the hulking Neutron-S missiles, their Garfish-based thruster units, and the SDF-4 folded away, leaving only fifteen seconds before the SDF-3's own fold. A person from

flight operations was reading off the numbers, from ten seconds downward - a tradition carried over from the days of Earth's first space launches.

Then, without warning, a voice screamed out, changing everything.

"ADMIRAL! DEFOLD REACTION DETECTED!!" The screamer was a very shocked-looking sensor operator.

"What? Where is it?"

"Right on top of us, sir! Range under a kilometer, on a collision course with us!"

"Abort Fold!" Rick looked, and saw the countdown at Fold - 3 seconds, and realized that wasn't an option.

"Too late to abort!"

In the second before their own fold began, the SDF-3 caught a short glimpse of the other vessel - a colony ship of unknown design, roughly their size, that extended past the edge of where the SDF-3's fold bubble would end.

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"HELM! EVASIVE!!" Misa's voice cried out, as the first thing she saw as they came out of fold was the side of another ship, dead ahead. "Pinpoint barriers to front!" She crossed her fingers; coming out of fold, their speed was reduced significantly. With luck, especially if the other ship was on the ball and made the matching evasive maneuvers, it would be at worst a grazing impact. Relative speed between them seemed to be ten meters per second at fastest, maybe as little as three. Then, to her horror, before the orders could go into effect, the surroundings flashed white, and every alarm on the bridge sounded at once.

"Captain, the other ship folded, using an unfocused fold drive! We have red lights across the board - it appears that everything aft of the main engineering bulkhead is gone!"

"Gone? What do you mean, 'gone'?" Hikaru asked.

Misa answered her husband's question. "Sheared off by the edge of the fold bubble, like Italia Island during the fold that took it with the *Macross* in 2009. Damage Control, what is the status of the damage control shutters along the arc of removal?"

"Minimal environmental loss; 98% functioned normally, with the rest shutting one to three doors back of the shear point, possibly from damage blocking the nearest door or preventing seal. From the readouts, several primary tanks of propellant, atmospheric gasses and hydrogen fuel were caught in the path, but were only barely within the confines of the fold. Danger to us is minimal, but the systems would have been inadequate to seal them on the other end, and the resulting release and mixture of these has a 99-plus percent probability that the aft

engineering section ignited and exploded after we left it behind."

"All those people..." one of the ship's bridge crew whispered.

"- Are going to have company in the afterlife if we don't come up with something quick." Misa finished for her subordinate, redirecting the attention back to the crisis, which wasn't over yet. "What is the status of the reserve power, and the Barrier Systems?"

"We have enough reserve power in the capacitors to operate the barriers for ten seconds, at most. Primary life support will be going down, but without engineering it wasn't going to last, anyway. Luckily the populace is still in the combat shelters from the battle. We should still have inertial compensation and gravity for a half-minute beyond that, but I can't guarantee more."

"Put all reserve power to the barriers, activating them on my order. What is the range to the other ship?"

"Readings are difficult, given we're in a fold, but we're within 400 meters, now, and closing at about eight meters per second. We'll have better readings as we close." A hint of perverse irony seemed to be in the sensor chief's voice.

"Barrier control: activate the barriers when we close to within forty meters, to maximize their effectiveness. Sound collision alarm at eighty meters. Everyone, strap in for impact now; don't wait and forget."

Hikaru grabbed a free station, strapped in, put Miku on his chest under the straps, and swivelled the chair to face away from the impact. Misa fastened her own harness, then continued.

"Did external video get any shots of the other ship before the refold?"

"We should have - yes."

"Is it enough for at least a class identification?"

"It should be; compositing multiple shots to get a complete image. Here it is-" The sensor operator directed the composite up to the screen, then gasped as he got his first clear view, as did nearly everyone else. "Oh my God."

The ship on the screen was roughly their size, but was a fully optimized ship of war. It very closely resembled the pre-retrofit design of their own ship, only with marked Zentraedi influence on the cosmetics of the exterior. It was like staring into the face of a ghost. Misa was the first to shake off the shock.

"Can you make out any fleet markings, or identification numbers? It may be an Inspection Army vessel, in which case we may have gone from the frying pan to the fire."

"Searching - I think the computer has something." The image on the screen centered on a

location just back of the bridge section, and began enlarging that section, until the screen was looking at a 50 meter square of the hull. In subdued colors, on a yellowish area of the otherwise reddish-orange and green vessel, was the UN SPACY shield, and the block characters "SDF-3".

"That's impossible!" Hikaru exclaimed. "There is no SDF-3; the unfinished keel was modified into that of the second *Megaroad* colony vessel - we watched its launch two years ago, when it was broadcast to us from Earth."

"I think I know what happened - look at the image behind the first picture. It's the same system we folded from! We weren't as free from the space-time collapse caused by that Protoculture device as we thought. It must have warped our fold in such a way as we crossed over into an alternate universe, instead of folding to our escape coordinates. That's the SDF-3 of a completely different universe."

"Then, for their sake, I hope they too developed barrier technology, or their blood will be on our hands," the barrier operator piped in. "We'll effectively be hitting them with a variant of the Daedalus attack. And we might be destroyed by their destruction."

"That's not the worse thing that could happen," Misa added in response, "what if we take out their fold system in the process, while we're still in fold? No one's ever discovered what happens as a result of fold collapse in transit - at least, and ever returned to tell the tale; not even Zentraedi ships."

The *Megaroad* bridge went deathly quiet, just as the collision alarms began to sound.

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"Any readings on the other ship?" Rick asked.

"Nothing clear, as yet, Admiral;" Dr. Lang reported. Emil had been in the TIC, monitoring the mission with the other civilian leaders of the old REF mission. "There's too much interference from the fold. It could be that all we have to worry about is the effect of the extra mass on the fold. The other ship extended beyond the radius of the fold bubble, and was definitely cut apart by it. There's a good chance it might have even exploded as a result of being severed, but we haven't got any way of telling, until it comes within 100 meters or so."

"And, if it did survive?"

"Then, at the approximate rate it was traveling, what's left of it will impact us in eighty seconds, give or take three seconds. I suggest we put our pinpoint barriers up in the area of projected impact."

"I agree, though I'm somewhat loathe to do it. The other ship, from its design, appeared to be a colony ship, with buildings visible through the transparent panels. The pinpoints will mutilate that ship, much more than an unprotected collision. But, right now, we're still intact, and we have no guarantee that there are even any survivors in what's left of the other ship."

"Agreed. We have to minimize the effect on the SDF-3, because even I can't predict what the effect of displacing us from the center of the fold bubble will be. The tests investigating this type of accident always failed, even when the Masters tried them."

"Were the test beds destroyed?"

"I can't say whether they were or were not, with any certainty - they were never recovered; in fact, there is no evidence that any of them ever came out of fold space; at least not within a light-year of the test arena."

"Wonderful."

"Admiral, impact in thirty seconds," a sensor tech rang out. "Were starting to pick up the other ship now; it appears to be relatively intact."

"Sound General Quarters, switching to collision alarm at ten seconds before impact. Prayer might not be out of line, either."

"Already doing so, Sir; praying, that is.."

Two seconds after the GQ alarm, Lisa called up to the bridge.

"Rick, what's wrong?"

"Long story - we had something big defold near us as we started to fold, and it got dragged along for the ride. It's on a collision course, but we hope we have things under control."

"A collision during fold? That doesn't sound good."

"It's definitely not a good thing, according to Emil. I'd really like you to get up here after all-clear is sounded. You three brace yourselves; the impact is in twelve seconds. Be careful."

"You, too."

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The impact rocked both ships, as their pinpoint barrier fields collided. The barriers absorbed most of the impact, but not all of it. Both hulls began to buckle, and the *Megaroad's* colony section was the first to actually rupture, decompressing the entire city and killing those few who had refused to go into the shelters.

The next thing to go was the fold system of the SDF-3, which went explosively, taking out most of one deck, and parts of the neighboring two decks. Both ships emerged back into normal space, with a sensory effect on the people aboard 100 times worse than that of normal fold travel, causing shock or nausea to many.

When the power to the *Megaroad's* barriers went out, seconds after this, its front began to crumple, causing it to begin a flip over the SDF-3, keel first, snagging on, then ripping free, both main cannon booms from the warship. Finally, the two ships tore free of each other, the last gasp of the *Megaroad's* inertial and stabilization systems managing to kill its rotation and bring it to a stationary position relative to the SDF-3, before the last reserves of reaction mass were depleted.

Lisa burst onto the SDF-3 bridge, Roy in arms; Minmei was right behind her, to get Roy from Lisa, once Lisa had managed to calm the boy down.

"How bad is it?"

"We're crippled," Rick replied. "The fold system experienced some sort of power overload, that has caused major casualties in its sections, and a neighboring ones; it's definitely gone. Life support is online, as is primary power and backup communications; other than those, every system is either down, destroyed, or running emergency diagnostics. Both of the cannon sections were torn completely free, and are slowly tumbling away from us. We're trying to get one hangar operational to send out shuttles to board them, and look for survivors."

"And the other ship?"

"Much worse off than we are. Other than the shuttles to the guns, and the damage control teams already sent to fight the fires on the fold deck, I'm planning on sending most of our combat personnel over to the other ship to conduct search and rescue ops. It's a miracle they're in one piece, considering they lost the back third of their ship when we folded."

"Have you tried hailing them?"

"We're trying, but between our being on backups, and their having lost their aft section, they might not be able to send or receive our signal."

"What class of ship did you say that is, again?"

"I have no idea. It looks like it is - or was - some sort of colony ship. We only got a second or so to look at it before the fold."

"I keep think that I've seen that design before, somewhere."

"Is it Tyrolean, or Karbarran? They're the only two races with the capability to make such a ship, or at least, used to. Or is it something older, like from the archives of the empire the Robotech Masters had created?"

"No, it looks like something I saw on Earth, when Admiral Gloval and I were discussing the need to spread humanity among the stars, to keep it from being exterminated by future Zentraedi or other alien raids."

"That's impossible. What colonies were set up used RDF and Southern Cross warships and military transports during the Twenties, not SDF-sized purpose-built colony ships."

"If that's what I think it might be, it's not one of ours. Sensors, can you get me a camera working good enough to focus on that dorsal structure just forward of the sever line?"

"Can do, Admiral."

"What do you mean, not one of ours? Was there a secret fleet built, or something?"

"No. I'm probably crazy, but call it woman's intuition if I'm right." The image popped up onto the screen. "Now, what does THAT look like to you?"

"It can't be; it looks like the bridge of the SDF-1."

"Actually, it more closely resembles that of the SDF-2. Where I saw this design, twenty-two years ago, was a set of ship architectural plans drawn up to modify the SDF-2 class vessel into a long-range colony ship. A thought experiment, if you will."

"A thought experiment? Then, how did it get into reality, in the here and now?"

"We'll find that out if we can find survivors to talk to."

"Admirals! I've managed to contact the other ship. I-I think you two need to handle this personally - possibly privately."

"Privately? Why would we want to do that?" Rick replied. "Put it on main screen."

"Okay... Don't say I didn't warn you..."

The circuit completed, Rick and Lisa Hunter found themselves looking Hikaru and Misa Ichijyo in the face; a twisted mirror of realities.

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Lisa was the first to recover from the shock.

"I am Admiral Lisa Hayes Hunter, captain of the Robotech Expeditionary Force flagship, the SDF-3. Our damage is under control, and we are preparing to assist your vessel. What assistance do you request to be the top priority?"

"I am Rear Admiral Misa Hayase Ichijyo, captain of the *Megaroad 01* colony fleet. We have lost our propulsion and engineering sections, and life support is failing. Our civilian passengers are in combat shelters, and are relatively safe for the moment, but the shelters need to be evacuated as quickly as possible."

"Are the shelters extractable from the ship, or do we need to help you fabricate means of personnel transfer from them?"

"They are removable, yes. However, some are in the heavily damaged forward areas, and may need repair crews to free."

"We are sending over our mecha teams to assist. Do you have mecha of your own to help in the recovery?"

"Yes. We will order them to launch, and have your mecha join in teams with ours. Each mixed team will choose an operating frequency at that point. We will supervise the process from here, using the bridge's independent backup systems."

"Do you want to transfer your non-essential personnel here? I see what I assume to be your husband and daughter with you, and he can help us coordinate on this end."

"Hikaru, I'll leave this up to you."

"Yes, I'll go over. Join us as quickly as you can."

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Hikaru flew over to the SDF-3 in his VF-4, daughter in lap. He was met in the hangar by Rick, who had Roy with him.

"Captain Hikaru Ichijyo, reporting as requested, sir."

"Admiral Rick Hunter. Hikaru, is it? Well, I don't think we need to bother with our ranks and formalities; especially around the children."

"If that's what you wish, Rick."

"Good. It's strange, seeing you. One of my grandmothers was Japanese, but you appear to be full Japanese, and we resemble each other so much, other than age."

"I know; it is bothering me, too. Does your Lisa have Japanese ancestry as well?"

"I think so; dating from either the US occupation of Japan after the second world war, or from the Korean conflict. Misa doesn't look Japanese either, despite her name."

"I believe at least one her parents might have been part-Caucasian, as well. It added a whole other dimension to the troubles we went through, getting together."

"Would one of those troubles happened to be a young Chinese singer from Yokohama named Minmei?"



"As a matter of fact, yes. I saved her life, when the Zentraedi invaded Italia Island, then we got trapped in the unused area of the *Macross* for two weeks."

"Well, change the name of the island to Macross, and leave the ship effectively unnamed, and that's pretty much my story, too. Come with me, and I'll take you to my quarters, where we can leave our children with Minmei. She's remained a loyal friend to the two of us, despite losing me to Lisa. Did you have a mentor named Roy, possible last name Fokker?"

"Yes, I did - same last name, though people kept mispronouncing and spelling it "Folker" for some reason. Roy died in 2010, after we returned to Earth. I was in the hospital at the time, from Misa nearly killing me with a Daedalus attack gone bad."

"Same thing happened to me. By the way, your daughter's name is?"

"Miku."

"My son's named for Roy. Unlike you and Misa, Lisa and I waited almost a decade before getting married, preparing for the journey to the home world of the Robotech Masters."

"Who are they?"

"They were the creators of the Zentraedi. The irony was, that the Masters were traveling to Earth, and we arrived to find their home world under siege from the alien Invid, whom the Zentraedi fleet was created to fight."

"That's odd. In my universe, the Zentraedi were created almost half-million years ago by a race called the Protoculture, to serve as proxy warriors in a civil war. That war ended with the collapse of both sides, leaving the Zentraedi to roam the universe, masterless."

"Protoculture was a civilization in your universe? In our history, Protoculture is the name of a power generation method, that used a food plant of the Invid's to create a cold fusion reaction. It was discovered only a few centuries ago by a Tyrolean scientist named Zor."

"This is really strange; so many similarities, yet so many differences."

"When things calm down a bit, and Misa comes over, we should all sit down together for dinner, and talk about both."

"That sounds like a good idea."

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The dinner happened ten hours later, and served to release tensions, as well as to let the Ichijyo adults unwind a bit after being awake for over 36 hours. Both Minmei and Minmay joined them, having prepared the meal, and discussion ranged from the differences in their pasts, to the fate of friends, some of which had died in the Hunters' universe, but were alive and well on

the Ichijyos' Earth. Another parallel discussed was that of their current situation, with that of their past, on that dark day in 2009, when the Zentraedi arrived. Once again, a warship was having to take on 60,000 civilian passengers through space evacuation, in the wake of having those civilians' homes accidentally destroyed by the ship.

When dinner was done, Minmay went to stay with Minmei, while Rick & Lisa brought Roy into their room, and gave the Ichijyo family Roy's room for the night. More permanent living arrangements would need to be made after the evacuation of the civilians from the *Megaroad* was complete; but for now, this was the best option. Sleep came fitfully, through fatigue more than design, and Dr. Lang wisely ordered that the two families be allowed to oversleep, to better prepare for the long day ahead, and personally ordered the override of the suite's chronometers, to ensure it. The last thing either couple needed was to try to work on the ugly mess that was their situation on anything less than a full night's sleep.

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"First of all, Emil, where are we?" Lisa asked, as Dr. Lang brought the meeting to order. She was a little upset about the subterfuge involving the chronometers, but relented when she found out it was a unanimous decision of both ships' bridge crews to go along with it.

"I've done a thorough scan of the surrounding space, for one hundred parsecs, mapping all the star systems picked up by our sensors. On comparing it to the star charts in our records, along with those salvaged from the *Megaroad*, I can safely say that we are somewhere beyond charted space. Our charts were limited to the areas between Earth and Tyrol, and what we were able to recover of the Tyrolean Empire's charts, after the Invid ransacked them, looking for the destination of the SDF-1. The *Megaroad's* charts were limited to a wedge heading from Earth centered on their intended flight path, made by figuring stellar movement effects on old Protoculture charts, which overlaps our own charts to about a fifty percent extent. If we folded out of the scope of those charts, then we are effectively lost. While the Protoculture did have much more comprehensive charts than the ones we used, they were stored in the memory banks of the Nupetiet-Vernitzs class vessel that assigned to the *Megaroad* fleet, as there was no real need, given the fleet's course, to ever transfer the data to the colony ship, when that ship's data would normally be at immediate disposal to the rest of the fleet."

"Oh, great; we're lost in-"

"Don't say it, Rick," Lisa interrupted, seeing the bad joke coming a mile away.

"Doctor, in terms of viable star systems, what are we near?" Misa asked.

"We are lucky, in that regard, in that there is a star system with a viable, life-sustaining planet no more than four months away, using the main sublight drives of the SDF-3. However, to reach it means leaving behind the ship's two weapon booms, and the remains of the *Megaroad*. In addition, we must take into consideration that we have at best six months' food for all of the people now aboard ship, and that arriving there in four months would not give us the time needed to start producing more food, before mass starvation sets in."

"What about salvaging the *Megaroad's* stores?"

"It can be done, but would only buy a few more weeks in addition to what would be consumed during the salvage process."

"Emil, we have a Garfish down in our main hold; it's as fast as the SDF-3," Rick pointed out. "If we sent it loaded with teams to jump-start the food production on the planet, while conducting salvage out here with our mecha and the two Horizont drop shuttles, would that buy us the time we need?"

"It would, yes."

"Then that would appear to be our best option," Hikaru added.

"Be warned, however, that there really isn't a completely satisfactory best option."

"What do you mean by that, Doctor?"

"While the additional food will get us through the first winter, it is highly unlikely, especially given the general lack of agronomy training in our surviving personnel, that we will be able to produce enough food to last until the second harvest, after the recovered stores run out. In other words, expect food shortages by the end of our first year on the planet, and probably though the first decade, at minimum."

"The first decade?" Rick asked.

"Surely, Admiral, it has not escaped you that we are in uncharted space, without a working fold drive, and no idea as yet of a return course to Tyrol, let alone one for Earth? Unless we can construct a fold drive suitable for mounting in the Garfish, and manage to reconstruct a return course to Tyrol for it, we have effectively become a new, independent colony world, with no hope of finding home in our lifetimes, or home finding us. In other words, we have become by default what the *Megaroad* started out with as its mission objective."

"So, in a way, the *Megaroad's* original mission is not yet dead," Hikaru noted.

"Essentially," Lisa confirmed. "The real question is how many of our subordinate personnel need to be told of each aspect, as well as the full scope, of our situation. Our surviving engineering section personnel are a must, of course, but who else?"

"Our next priority would seem to be finding any personnel, military or civilian, with experience in agriculture, aquaculture, or commercial fishing," Misa suggested. "Biologists as well, to see just what we may be able to eat of the indigenous flora and fauna. If we find enough, the potential for starvation beyond the first year might be eliminated. With the loss of our agriculture ship, the best bets would appear to be REF scientific personnel, as well as the groundskeeper and zoo personnel from the *Megaroad's* public works department."

"And what do we do about the rest?" Rick asked. "We just tell them that lean times are ahead, and hope they don't look too closely for a rescue?"

"That won't be too much problem for my ship's people, Rick," Hikaru countered. "Unlike you, we were on our own and too far from help, even when in the fight that led to us being here."

"I guess we'll have to take the rest as it comes, then," Lisa sighed.

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Within three days, they had assembled the team for the scouting and food-securing mission, and the group was sent off with as much fanfare as could be spared. The rest of the survivors took to the recovery and sorting of the *Megaroad* salvage with a new sense of urgency, exceeding expectations in terms of amount of recovery per day. Most of the stuff targeted for recovery were essentials, such as colony supplies, medical equipment, and food. Meanwhile, Lang's engineers and scientists were studying the telemetry from the disastrous last fold, trying to compute a reverse course, while also trying to build a new, smaller fold device from the remains of the SDF-3's.

Six weeks later, the food outlook had brightened somewhat, as an additional four months of food had been recovered from the wreck. This was twice the expected amount, but only a third of what would have been needed to prevent famine in the colony's second year. Satisfied that everything of immediate value was retrieved from the *Megaroad*, the SDF-3 began its long trip into the nearby star system, at last.

The location chosen for the SDF-3 landing was a fjord found unfit for fishing by the survey team, about a dozen kilometers from the primary colony site, where the crops had been planted. A second colony site was set up a hundred kilometers down the coast, on a bay that was perfect for fishing and sea farming. The first order of business of the new colonies, of course, was teaching as many people as possible the tools of survival, from fishing to hoeing. Even the civilian colonists were not fully prepared for this low-tech a lifestyle, and there were several instances of people cracking from the additional stress.

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## Arrival + Eight Months:

The stored food was beginning to run low, despite augmentation from the initial harvest, fishing, and hunting parties, when Lang announced that the fold drive was done. The device was powerful enough to take the Garfish, and the two Horizons with it, but those ships could only hold about one in fifty. Not surprisingly, half the population volunteered for the mission, to try to escape the slow degradation of the colony to a level more closely resembling the 1800s American West. Lots were drawn for the positions open in the mission, with families sharing one lot.

Knowing the full scale of the approaching famine, Rick and Lisa made a tough choice, that was mirrored by Hikaru and Misa. The latter couple's friend Minmay had drawn passage on the Garfish, and had the opportunity to take up to two people with her. The two families made the only choice they could, and gave Roy and Miku to her. Hopefully, the rescue mission would not take long, and the families be reunited, but they definitely didn't want the children to remain at the colony, in the face of the coming famine.

Lang personally led the mission from the Garfish, both from his position as the REF civilian mission leader, as well as being the most qualified to operate the untested fold drive. Harry Penn was along as well, supervising the stasis berths installed in the former fighter hangars. Installing the emergency medical stasis berths from the SDF-3 there had meant being able to increase the number of passengers by a gross, and that meant increasing the amount of food for those that remained behind.

On reaching orbit, the ships first folded to the point where the two larger vessels had arrived, in order to better match the reversal of course. From there, they radioed back their success, and announced their departure.

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Days turned to weeks, then months. With the famine, came disease and death. During the worst of the food shortages, a plague of unknown origins swept through the colonies, possibly from some animal the hunters had killed for food. Several thousand people died, including Lisa and Hikaru. Devastated by that loss, Rick and Minmei turned to one another, and were happy for a while. But that happiness came crashing down, a year later, when the 40ish Minmei died in childbirth, leaving Rick a single father of a daughter, named Elizabeth Lynn for both Lisa and Minmei. After two years, with no sign of rescue, and food production finally nearing self-sufficiency, it became generally accepted that the ships sent out were lost, either through drive failure, or the reverse course being incorrect.

By this time, a substantial portion of the *Megaroad* colonists had drifted toward the sea colony, as many of them were Italia Island survivors, that had chosen to go with the *Megaroad* instead of living in the landlocked Macross City. On the other hand, the REF personnel, who generally grew up in the interior heartlands of the Americas during the decade between Dolza and the REF launch, tended to prefer the farm and wilderness lifestyle. All the while, less and less technology worked, and the colonies were quickly sliding back to pre-industrial levels.

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### **Destination Unknown:**

The Garfish and Horizons had barely survived the trip; it was the roughest fold any of their occupants had ever experienced, including the one of the crash. When the fold ended, they found themselves in the rings of a giant planet. Lang might have been able to identify it as Fantoma, had he not died almost instantly from the Garfish being peppered by large ring particles, one of which took out the bridge. The more maneuverable Horizons fared better, clearing the rings without damage, and they helped the half-blind Garfish (being flown from the engineering section) make it out without further damage. The surviving Garfish crew set a course toward Tiresia's Gloval Field, and put the ship on automatic piloting and landing protocols.

As for the passengers on the Garfish, panic was widespread. Two whole sections had died, including those in the jury-rigged stasis berths in the old fighter decks. Minmay, a child in each arm, fought her way through the panicking crowds to the medical bay. From there, she could reach all the survivors, and try to use her music to calm them down, as she had done on the *Macross*, years ago.

When she got there, things weren't much better. She got access to one of the communications stations, had someone set it to broadcast internally, and to the Horizons, and began to sing. The crowd began to settle down, as she sang from the heart, a song she'd originally written in despair over losing Hikaru to Misa. She'd never recorded it herself, and had ordered its sheet music sealed by her record company until after her death or Hikaru's. Now was the time, it seemed.

"Again I hear her words exactly as said  
That she'll give, love so true, she loves you.

I keep on hearing you swear on your hearts  
how you two, will be one, evermore.

It's then when my heart skips a beat-  
Am I only your friend?  
Long, long lost out of view  
Though I sit next to you..."

Other than her music, and required communications that almost instinctively dropped to a whisper as a result of her singing, all fell quiet on the three vessels. Witness would later swear that it almost seemed that she glowed with a light of her own, on the monitor, as she poured her heart out. But, that must have been a trick of the lighting in the cubicle she was singing from, of course.

As they neared the atmosphere of Tyrol, their calls for assistance went unanswered. They made the only choice they could, to divert to land near the rich farmlands hundreds of miles from Tiresia, as the city failing to respond could only mean one thing - the REF fleet had lost, and the Invid had destroyed Tiresia in response. And, without the city, they would have no way to replenish their supplies, as they had only brought enough food for the trip, to maximize the survival chances of those left behind. The ships began preparing for the course corrections, as Minmay went in the last chorus of her song.

"Don't you hear things I can't say?  
Oh, please just open your eyes and see me,  
Much closer than you've known.

I guess it's better unsaid  
My question should be alone  
Oh, how my heart longs to know

All through these tears held inside  
I finally see her face deep in your eyes  
As I looked there for your soul.

Someday like never before  
With courage I hardly know  
You will hear me, I'll call out

I'll always love you..."

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"Major Baker, the autolander on the *Copernicus* has gone off-line!"

"Any way to restart it?" Jack asked the technician.

"Only from onboard, and Engineering there has stopped responding to hails."

"Keep trying; they still appear to be on Tiresia approach." Jack squeezed his wife's hand. Karen had been beside him the entire flight, as much to support him, as for his support. They'd already lost so many, both in the accident, and then Emil and her father, in the arrival here. Now, all they could do is watch as the ship carrying their godson Roy descended out of control toward the planet's surface.

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As Minmay finished singing, the Garfish-class escort *Copernicus Base* was rocked by another explosion, in the engineering area. The lights flickered, then were replaced by red emergency lights. A badly burned ensign stumbled into the medical bay, struggling for breath.

"We're going down," he gasped. "Emergency systems failing... save who you can..." He then collapsed, dead, at the feet of the medic nearest the door.

Before that order could be relayed to the passengers, it was already apparent to them. Perhaps buoyed by Minmay's song, little panic had occurred, and the life pods were being packed beyond official capacity (but within testing limits) by as many people as possible. Others were suiting up in Cyclones, planning on trying to use the exoskeletons' thrusters as jet packs for landing, once they got into the lower atmosphere. With all the pods gone long before Minmay could get to them, and the Cyclone stunt not an option for someone with two children in tow, she made her way back to the medical bay.

Her one hope, and the children's, were the three emergency stasis berths in the bay itself, which for preparedness reasons had not been filled with refugees, the way the ones transferred from the SDF-3 and *Megaroad* had. She turned on the chambers, switched them to their emergency power supplies, then put a child in each one, before entering the last herself. Chances were slim that the medical bay, one of the most protected parts of the vessel, would survive the crash, but a slim chance was better than none at all.

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The *Copernicus* crashed into a marshy area, that was slowly drying out from a geologically recent change in climate. The wreck was torn apart by the impact and additional secondary explosions. The remnants were scattered too far and too deeply buried to be worth salvaging. Still, half the people on board that were alive at the time of reentry had managed to eject, one way or another.

Leading the rescue teams personally, Jack Baker couldn't believe what he saw. The crash site, from its surrounding geology, HAD to be Tiresia, but there had never been a city there, nor had the area they had landed the Horizons at ever been cultivated. Something had gone horribly wrong, in Lang's calculations for the return journey.

After discussion among the survivors, few of which were scientists, but many were science fiction fans at one time or another, a probable hypothesis had gained acceptance. The *Megaroad* had misfolded across dimensions, and it was probable that the collision and misfold that resulted had knocked both ships into a third. It was this third universe's Tyrol they were now on, and were on their own, unless there were other space-faring races to contact. And, depending on how closely related this universe was to either if the other two, that might be centuries, as the Protodevlin & Inspection Army forces had killed all the races even close to sentience in this sector in the *Megaroad's* universe, and those races which lived in the area in the SDF-3's universe, were all pre-sentient races uplifted by Haydon, or transplanted there. And, the apparent lack of Tyrolean natives indicated that Haydon never existed here.

The colony grew around the fertile area, which had plentiful game and edible local plant life, more than the world they had left, and enough to where there was no chance of starvation for the small colony of just over a thousand people. Though they managed to stretch out the Protoculture power cells to last a little over a generation, they still slid to Iron Age level



technology within three, as they were having to reinvent everything from scratch, without the help of most of their science and technical personnel, who had died on the *Copernicus*. But, with the rich, untapped, and fully mapped resources (which they had the foresight to print off from the Horizons' computers in multiple copies, as part of the colony setup) of their new home, they would rise again, much more quickly than those they left behind.

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## **2047: Riviera 07, Macross 07 Fleet**

The doppelganger of Hikaru was finishing up his report across a half-million years to Max, who was at once both fascinated and horrified by the tale the man was relating.

"It's been ten long years since Lang's party left, and even I'm no longer able to hold out hope of rescue," Rick Hunter said, finishing a recap of the important events of his previous decade. "All of our Protoculture stores were depleted in the stripping of the SDF-3 for materials, as were the small supply of repair parts for the nuclear power plants we salvaged from the *Megaroad* and its valkyries. I'm recording this message using solar panels for power, and even they are starting to degrade from overuse and exposure.

"I leave this message to our descendants, or to their rescuers. If help does not come, I still feel that eventually humanity will rise from the ashes again, and be able to recover what was lost. Hopefully, enough of our works will still be around to inspire them to their recovery, but one could never know. The future is, as always, uncertain.

"And while we still feel the loss of Roy and Miku, Hikaru, Minmei and Lisa, Misa and I have started over together. She saved me from the depression I had fallen into after Minmei's death, and nursed me back to health. Besides Beth, we have three children of our own, now. Each night, we tell them stories of what was, and what can be again, but more and more I doubt if my grandchildren will think of those stories as more than fairy tales. If you're seeing this, and understanding it, maybe then it all wasn't for naught.

"Well, the power's starting to drop off, so I better end this now. Do not forget us, children, and make us proud. This is Rick Hunter, former Admiral of the Robotech Expeditionary Force, signing off." The last image from the disk was a still portrait of Rick, Misa and the four children, apparently added as an afterthought.

Max was stunned by what he'd seen. Such a horrific end to the *Megaroad-01*, and their dimensional counterparts - or was it a beginning? A hollow feeling started creeping into his gut.

"Ambassador, what was it that the mural in the Protoculture building said about their origins?"

"Essentially, the same as what this 'Admiral Hunter' said," Exedore confirmed, "But much more simply, and without reference to origins in a higher technology. I wondered myself why the

Protoculture used their word for 'settlements' for their first cities; even more than your languages on Earth, Captain, the word implies coming from somewhere else. A seeming contradiction, based on the legends passed down to the Zentraedi. Now, we know why they did so, for their first cities were closer to being colonies, than communities that grew up from their surroundings."

"But, how did they end up back in this universe, from the other?"

"The best guess I could venture would be that the boundaries between the two were weakened by the misfold, and the second fold followed the path of least resistance. The time vector, however, is the most disturbing element of the matter."

"Where do you think their attempt to go for help went, then?"

"If the time and dimensional vectors weren't factored in, then they would have ended up somewhere near the position that the target system held in our era, but in the same time frame as the record we witnessed. But, having met our analogue of the man they called Dr. Lang, I feel he would have tried to reverse the course as exactly as possible, using the telemetry data. Most likely, the smaller vessels attempted to return to the universe of their origin. By the time of their attempt, however, the dimensional and temporal borders would have been mostly recovered, making such a trip much more difficult, if not impossible. Most likely, the smaller ships were destroyed in the attempt, or misfolded yet again, with only a small chance of actually reaching their intended destination."

"By any chance, could they have gone to Earth, had they stayed in this universe?"

"Unlikely. More and more, it appears that humanity did indeed evolve on Earth; this disk provides the link we knew existed between Earth and the Protoculture. Only, instead of Earth's humans being manipulated by the Protoculture, the way we originally thought, modern Earth and its dimensional analogue were the ancestors of the Protoculture, and the few differences that did exist between the Protoculture genome and the Earth one, were probably introduced from genetics of the people from the other dimension."

"I wish we could completely put this to rest, though. And we can't do that without discovering the fate of their rescue party."

"We may never know, since dimensional research has been suspended in light of the revelations concerning the origins of the Protoculture. It's been judged too high a risk."

"Who knows? If this disk ever becomes public, better judgement might be overridden. Minmay was with those missing ships, after all. And, we all know from experience how much people want to know about their idols." Max thought back to the huge tabloid fiasco the year before, involving Basara, accusing him of being everything from Hikaru and Minmay's love child to having an affair with Mylene's other quasi-boyfriend, Gamlin.

"Indeed. But, let's leave the dimensional research to those without a colony to protect."

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## **Aeon Lanack, Tiresia.**

The city was ablaze with the new of "new" machinery found underneath the city. This machinery, often called "the boon of Haydon" after the star wanderer who first showed them how to recover it, had made the Tyrolean Republic an economic power in the local worlds. Those with the ability and the fortitude to attempt to recover such technology were treated with respect and accolades.

Maybe that's why Zol, only son in a long line of politicians, and his friends of similar heritage found artifact hunting so thrilling. Besides the dangers of excavating the relatively unstable ground under the city (generally, having to make reinforced tunnels along the way, to where the city had an unmapped set of catacombs with almost more milage than the surface city), it gave them a way to be recognized outside the shadows of their families. Besides, what else did they have to spend their stipends on, being too intelligent and educated for the type of debauchery others of their class went for?

But, Zol was not prepared for what they had found in the latest cache. For one thing, it appeared to be an intact, sealed section of a building or craft, though lying at a sixth-arc tilt from vertical. Second, there were still faint power readings from the inside of it. Rezad, the group's sole married member and discoverer of the magnetic anomaly that led them here, was given the honor of opening the door, but the more scientifically trained Zol, and their team science advisor Cabell, were the first to enter. What they found was much more than they dared expect.

The room was filled with medical equipment, most of it high tech and of varying states of disrepair. The mummified remains of three bodies, two of which were likely patients, as they were strapped to tables, made the scene even more macabre. But, the real prize were the three chambers in the back of the room, still powered, but only barely so. One held the most beautiful woman Zol had ever seen; the other two held children. An archaic version of Tiresian script was below an alien one, both apparently saying the same thing, giving the instructions on how to open the pods. Zol began to open the woman's pod.

"Zol, what are you doing? You could be killing her," Cabell warned.

"Leaving her won't help her any, friend. Look at the display. These 'sleep tubes' are at less than one percent power, according to the readouts. Do we want to really take a chance that the tubes will run out of power, or have what little power they have will be cut in the recovery attempt? Removing them here and now might be their only chance. Besides, are you afraid your doctoring skills are insufficient for someone who appears to be an actual, living 'boon of Haydon'?"

"Let me get my medical kit, then. The equipment in here is a bit on the unusable side."

"You have time; the instructions say the tube opening procedure takes several minutes."

Cabell hustled for the case carrying the party's emergency medical supplies, while Rezad came in to assist Zol. The outer shell of the pod slid open as Cabell dragged the case into the room, and the woman collapsed into Zol's waiting arms. She was alive, but barely. She had evidently been in the tube so long, that even with a nearly-stilled metabolism, she was severely in need of nourishment and liquids, which Cabell supplied in the form of a glucose drip. Satisfied that she would survive, Cabell sent one of their support team as a runner, to bring back a full medical evacuation team from the local hospital, and helped Zol and Rezad awaken the children, who were in slightly better condition than the woman, perhaps better fed even before they entered the tubes.

Leaving the dig in the capable hands of Cabell, the two younger men stayed by the side of the three they had found, and were joined at the hospital by Rezad's wife, Muselle. There they stayed, as the three patients finally regained consciousness. Attempts to communicate with the patients were difficult, as they only knew small amounts of Tiresian, but the children adapted more quickly than the woman, who claimed to be their foster mother. Though, much more than that, she could not remember, either from memory loss brought on by the long hibernation, or through repressing of memories she did not want or could not begin to cope with. Throughout it all, Zol stayed by her side, and the two fell in love.

A year after their recovery, the three were released from observation at the hospital, having been studied, observed and tested till they were sick of it, in addition to being taught the Tiresian language. The woman, having chosen the name Lina during her time in the hospital, announced her intention to marry Zol at this time, and the intent to adopt the boy found with her. Meanwhile, Rezad and Muselle adopted the girl child, naming her Musica, after the adoptive mother, as per tradition. After spending a year at Lina's bedside, Zol had lost interest in the pursuit of relics, and entered politics, as his father had always wanted. However, he insisted that his new son, who took the name Zor when adopted, study science, and brought up to idolize the near-mythical Haydon, who indirectly had led to his rescue.

The next few years Zol considered to be the best of his life. While his wife occasionally got far-away looks in her eyes, as if remembering something both happy and sad to her, especially concerning Zor, she loved him dearly, and had her own interests to pursue, once she rediscovered her innate musical talent. She would spend her afternoons singing to Zor (and anyone else who would listen, though few understood the language some of her songs were in), and giving Musica lessons.

This idyllic life came crashing down ten years later, starting with Lina's prolonged illness, and death. During her last few days, she began remembering parts of her past, that she told Zor & Musica, in the language that only they understood. What she told them was what little she could remember of their real parents, and stories of a far-away blue-green planet, where she and their parents had been born, and to where they had hoped to return. More than ever before, Zor set into his heart the desire to become an explorer, to go beyond the reach of known space. If not for himself, then for Lina and his parents' sacrifice to get him home, to not be in vain.

The Beginning of the Circle.....

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"And so it begins..." - Ambassador Kosh, Babylon 5  
(voiced by Ardwright Chamberlain, Robotech voice actor and script editor).