

PLOT: *The Far Side of Heaven*

1) Adele is leaving for Cmdr Stacey Bergen's funeral, discussing with Tovera/internally the situation of the townhouse. Lt Mon comes rushing in, desperate to talk with Daniel. He explains that the *Princess Cecile* has just landed and is to be sold out of service now that Cinnabar and the Alliance are at peace.

Adele explains that Daniel's uncle has died. He's already at the church, and she's heading there. Mon rushes off to get his dress uniform to attend.

Adele is dismayed that the *Princess Cecile* is being sold off, though she understands that the vessel is foreign built and (though repaired) was very badly damaged in battle in the Strymon system.

2) Daniel is greeting attendees at the church where the service will be held, handing out remembrance rings. There are many senior officers present, men who respected Bergen and his contribution to the rediscovery of the universe following the Hiatus.

One admiral says that Stacey was a damned troublesome officer, but the best astrogator he ever had.

An Alliance officer, one of the current mission, attends. He says he was aide to Frigate-Captain Lorenz, the great Alliance explorer, when he and Stacey met somewhere in the far reaches. Daniel thanks him for his praise and adds that Lorenz was great--if not the unique talent of Uncle Stacey.

Admiral Anston attends, to Daniel's amazement. Anston is doubtful about the Alliance officer noting that this interval of peace can't last--whatever the politicians mouth. They're afraid of the cost of war, so they pretend there's no need. This is nonsense--the Alliance is just as greedy as ever. Daniel is the sort of young officer the RCN needs; he doesn't have to worry about being put on half pay.

Adele arrives. She's willing to sit in the back, but Hogg takes her down to the front row with the admirals and captains.

CHAPTER

3) The procession to the grave site, with an actor personating Stacey and joking with the crowd, while other actors wear the masks of famous ancestors. Deirdre Leary falls in step with Adele. She asks what Daniel's intentions are now that Cinnabar is at peace and he's fallen heir to Uncle Stacey's shipyard. Adele says she doesn't see Daniel staying on Cinnabar as a businessman. Deirdre says that the yard can't just be left to the workmen--and Corder Leary, as partner in the operation, will demand a suitable manager be appointed or the operation be sold up.

4) Funeral breaks up. Actors are chatting. As Mon comes up to Daniel, the head of the troupe congratulates Daniel on a very fine turn-out. Adele takes her leave; Daniel will be back later.

CHAPTER

5) Mon goes with Daniel to a local bar, but Mon has sworn off drinking (Daniel tries--and hates--a soft drink in sympathy). Mon simply can't afford half pay--he's got a

fifth child, and he doesn't have any savings. While he was on Tanais a very wealthy couple from Novy Sverdlovsk arrived, seeking passage to Cinnabar where they intended to buy a yacht to explore the Galactic North. They paid their way and were much taken by the *Princess Cecile*. When they learned she was to be sold, they determined to buy her and asked Mon to be her captain at a Lt Commander's salary.

Daniel is pleased for him--Mon will lose seniority day for day, but it won't prevent him from rejoining the RCN on active service and he understands the money problem--and can't see why Mon's so worried.

Mon explains that there were repeated breakdowns on the voyage home, inevitable after the high-speed run to Tanais and the battering the *Princess Cecile* took there. The problem is that the crew thinks he's a hard-luck officer. They'll leave--they've got their pockets full of money, after all--and to go to the Galactic North he'll wind up with barrel scrapings--to fix any further problems. Would Daniel talk to the crew and urge them to stay? Mon desperately needs to make good at this job.

Daniel says he'll think about it.

The major domo calls him to Chatsworth Minor immediately.

6) Adele gets off the tram with Tovera and the four footmen accompanying her. The latter are discussing a football match. Lt Wilsing meets them with an invitation from Captain Carnolets and a card from Mistress Sand.

As they walk toward the house, four toughs close either end of the street. The pair loitering near the steps cosh the footman on the steps.

The leader of either party has a gun. One tells the footmen to keep out of it and they won't be hurt; their mistress is going to learn not to steal houses from her betters. Tovera mutters she has the ones behind; Adele kills the man who's spoken; Tovera kills the rest.

CHAPTER

7) Daniel and Hogg arrive at the scene of the shooting. There are various security people present, from Mistress Sand but also Corder Leary's people. The Militia--the national police--are present, looking frustrated and very much frozen out.

None of them wants to talk, but a footman says that Adele is fine. A security man tells him to shut up; Hogg objects; the security people threaten, and Speaker Leary's people come in on Hogg's side.

The head of the security detachment calms things down and tells Daniel Adele and Tovera are fine. Adele was called away on business that has nothing to do with what happened here.

Hogg has been talking to a footman and says that the problem was apparently with the former owners, the Rolfes. He's going to go take care of some business of his own if the young master will please take care of himself. Daniel says he's not in a mood for sleep so he'll go off to the *Princess Cecile* in Harbor One himself.

8) Lt Wilsing flies Adele and Tovera in an aircar to Portsmouth Gardens and the home of Captain Carnolets. Guns, antennas, cables, and similar memorabilia of battle and exploration are displayed in the central park. Wilsing points out the truck from which Commander Stacey Bergen conned the *Excellence* to Alexandreios.

A discrete servant leads Adele into the library where Mistress Sand waits. Sand (who's borrowed the house) explains that the Alliance has serious designs in the Galactic North. The Commonwealth of God has been more or less friendly to Cinnabar, in a neutral, disorganized way. Should the Commonwealth openly side with the Alliance, it would have more than merchantile effects on the network of smaller states trading to the North, and which are now openly or tacitly in the Cinnabar camp.

Adele recalls hearing that after the Three Circles Conspiracy, an RCN battleship, the *Aristoxenos*, under Admiral O'Quinn, who was linked to the losing side--her father's side--fled to the Commonwealth.

Sand explains that the Commonwealth isn't monolithic like Cinnabar or the Alliance. Some local leaders have achieved effective independence. One of these was Governor Sakami of the Ten Star Cluster, who was well on the way to separating even before Admiral O'Quinn arrived with the *Aristoxenos*, defecting from Cinnabar after the suppression of the Three Circles Conspiracy. They tore apart a Commonwealth fleet shortly after arriving, and since then the Ten Stars have been beyond Commonwealth interference.

The Alliance is certainly building a base on Night, the huge moon of Radiance, the capital of the Commonwealth. The Cinnabar government doesn't believe it's far advanced; Mistress Sand suspects otherwise. She wants hard evidence to convince the Senate that Cinnabar has to act.

RCN ships won't be allowed near the Radiance system. Count Klimov and his wife, Novy Sverdlovsk aristocrats, plan to buy the *Princess Cecile* to explore the North, hiring Mon as their captain. (This explains to Adele why Mon was in such a lather.)

The Klimovs are quite real and will almost certainly visit Radiance. Sand wants Adele and her sensor suite aboard when they do. Further, Cinnabar's ambassador to the Commonwealth, Train of Lakeside, believes it's practicable to bribe enough of the Convention of the Commonwealth to get the Alliance advisors kicked out. Adele is to assess that likelihood.

Adele says she's very doubtful about the business, but she'll sleep on it. Sand asks if Daniel were captain, would her decision be easier? Adele says it would, but that Daniel would never do a fellow officer out of a job he obviously needs.

CHAPTER

9) Daniel at the *Princess Cecile* in an annex of Harbor Three. Woetjans is aboard with a few of the other old-timers as anchor watch. They're among the sailors who captured the *Princess Cecile* and they plan to see her off instead of going out drinking on her last night in the RCN.

The men trust Mon but they don't trust his luck. They're skilled sailors; they don't need to go off into the back of beyond--the Galactic North--to find work. Count Georgi Klimov and his wife Valentina (who has money of her own) will probably pay better than the going wages--they're doing so for Mon--but wages aren't terribly important to a sailor. Most of the crew are out partying on advances from the crimps right now.

Besides, the Klimovs are decent enough folk, but when the count gets drunk he's apt to forget he's not back on his estate with the house slaves. He threw a tray at the sailor doing for him and the man decked him. (Barnes, shame-faced: "That was me, sir.") That was all right--but if it happened when Klimov was captain, it'd have been mutiny.

Daniel notes RCN officers have done worse. Woetjans agrees--she had a captain who occasionally shot when he got angry--but they were RCN officers, not wogs.

Daniel nods understanding and says he'll head home. When asked, he says he'll be at the paying off tomorrow.

10) Adele talks with Daniel after he arrives. (Tovera is off with Hogg.) She wants his opinion on going to the Galactic North under Mon.

Daniel says that Mon is as good an XO and engineer as any in the RCN, but he personally wouldn't advise sailors to make the voyage against their misgivings. Daniel owes a great deal to Mon, but he owes a great deal to the crew also.

Adele says that's her judgment too, but that she's afraid it's her duty to go. She's well aware that her family's involvement with the Three Circles Conspiracy leaves her under rather more of an obligation to the Republic than that of an ordinary citizen.

CHAPTER

11) From Adele's viewpoint. Daniel in full dress uniform with medals meets with Mon in sight (but out of hearing) of the crew and the Klimovs (accompanied by a number of shipyard and RCN officials). Daniel offers Mon the job of yard manager of Bergen and Associates. The manager will have profit participation. The details are in the hands of Deirdre, but Daniel has told her that initially the manager should be paid at the level of a commander in the RCN, so to set the percentages accordingly.

Mon gasps agreement.

12) Mon introduces Daniel to the Klimovs. They've heard of him and Lt Wilsing--a stranger to Daniel--and the yard personnel have been telling them about Daniel's war record. Wilsing adds that he's an even better astrogator--trained by his uncle, who opened the route to the Galactic North forty years earlier.

He and Klimov take one another aside. Klimov offers him the job in Mon's place. Daniel says Mon won't be coming, and that because Daniel hired him away Daniel is willing under certain circumstances to replace him.

Klimov offers more money. Daniel refuses, asking instead that he be hired as captain and contractor supplying the crew, the total amount that of the normal payroll for officers and crew. The Count laughs and cheerfully agrees, assuming Daniel will be skimming a large portion.

13) From Adele's viewpoint again, standing with Woetjans who explains about the crimps accompanying the sailors to whom they've given advances.

Daniel explains the deal: they'd become his retainers, not RCN sailors and not covered by the laws of Novy Sverdlovsk--though Daniel himself would be. There's no likelihood of booty but a certainty of great risk. Anybody who signs on with him will be almost as great a fool as Daniel himself is.

With near unanimity, they sign on.

An overage midshipman, Chewing, asks to join as sailing master (but effectively second officer). He's an excellent astrogator but lackluster in other fashions--gangling, clumsy, and sloppy--and has no influence. Daniel hires him.

CHAPTER

14) Later the same day. Adele is overseeing the reinstallation of the surveillance equipment which she'd removed from the *Princess Cecile* when she and Daniel left the corvette in dock on Tanais. A trio of technicians is doing the work under Lt Wilsing.

She wanders out and with Sun, the gunner's mate, watches half the missiles being removed. That leaves room in the magazine space for the collections the owners intend to make. They'll still be able to see off pirates, but the *Princess Cecile* is no longer a warship.

Hogg and Tovera return. They're both smoke-stained. There was a fire in the Rolfe's new townhouse. The wife would've burned--trying to get her jewels out--if Tovera hadn't gone back for her. Hogg had to fetch them both the last of the way. It wouldn't have bothered him if the bitch fried to a crisp, but Tovera said it'd be bad thing. (He's copped some of the jewels.)

The Klimovs arrive with the yard supervisor and closet themselves with Daniel, who's been going over mast hoists with Woetjans.

15) The Klimovs explain that they wish to explore the North, little known on Novy Sverdlovsk and for that matter not *well* known anywhere else. Valentina's focus is ethnology; his interest is in exotic plants and doing some hunting.

Both Klimovs are particularly interested in tracing if possible John Tsetzes, a one-time mercenary who 80 years ago made himself the Emperor Ivan of Novy Sverdlovsk, then twenty years later fled into the North with the national collection including the Earth Diamond: a head-sized diamond sphere, hollowed and engraved internally with a map of Earth before the Hiatus. They will go where whim takes them, but they look to Daniel for expert guidance.

CHAPTER

15-2) *Princess Cecile* lifts off with the Klimovs on the bridge. From Daniel's viewpoint. Adele asks for course and cruising range, to plot potential landfalls.

16) Adele finding a planet 18 days out, Cuvier Catalog 4795-C. It's unnamed and uncolonized, a dim sun and generally dank bogs and fog. The major landmass has something over a thousand quartz pyramids sited on high ground. They may have been tombs, but there's no way to tell who built them or when.

The tombs are now the lairs of the dragon-like dominant predator. These range to 35 feet long and fly on chitinous fins down both sides of the body which move like the legs of a millipede. They have two strong clawed legs at the point of balance, short gripping arms, and a killing beak.

The lesser animals are chitinous, mostly hoppers. Some are of considerable size and waddle.

The Klimovs think this is great, both for the tombs and the hunting. Daniel is happy with it, though he'd been planning to have a shorter stage the first time out.

CHAPTER

17) Adele observing the landing, which is tricky because it's on land. There are marshes but Daniel doesn't trust them not to suck the ship in.

View of the surroundings as the party prepares to go off in an aircar to the tomb a klick away. Daniel is doubtful about the aircar, but the Klimovs are unwilling to walk.

18) Hogg and Daniel in the light aircar which Klimovna flies. They circle the opening, trying to entice out the dragon; it doesn't appear to be home. They enter the pyramid--maybe tomb, but no way to tell. No debris at the entrance, which means the dragon is a male.

As they rise, they see a dragon feeding in a marsh not far away. Klimovna swings toward it. The dragon lifts off, circling. Klimovna sets down to give her husband a clean shot. A bush jams a fan and flips the vehicle. The dragon arrows in. Daniel blocks its jaws with a weapon full of mud. The Klimovs spray shots till Hogg (trapped beneath the car), kills the dragon with a thrown knife.

CHAPTER

19-20) To orbit above Todos Santos where the Cluster officials board for a bribe. The berth assigned at San Juan is well out. Klimov doubles the bribe for a close one that's already been assigned to an Alliance freighter, the *Goldenfels*.

Captain Bertram of the *Goldenfels* protests and goes down anyway. Daniel takes the *Princess Cecile* in at battle stations, using the warship's stiffer structure to get below the freighter and ready to take out some of the freighter's offside thrusters with plasma cannon if necessary. The *Goldenfels* shears off.

CHAPTER

21) Sightseeing in San Juan. Adele visits her cousin Adrian Purvis in the Cluster service, a former captain living in oriental state. O'Quinn himself arrives with a retinue. They want to know about their chances of going back. Perhaps, but the amnesty may not apply to serving officers who took fleet elements... and they wouldn't be happy back in the Republic after they've been living as princes on Todos Santos.

22) Daniel is summoned to Governor Sakami Hideki. [USE STEPHENS] The Governor is angling for Cinnabar support against the Commonwealth central government. Daniel isn't in any position to respond.

CHAPTER

23) Klimovna has taken a suite in the city. She sounds out Adele as to her relationship with Daniel. Adele assures her there is none, but makes implicit that Daniel likes them young. Klimovna is petulant about the foolishness of that.

24) Hogg finds Daniel and warns him that the Count and Captain Bertram of the *Goldenfels* are playing cards for very high stakes--and both are cheating. Klimov has an escort of six sailors, but the *Goldenfels* has a crew of some 350--she's an auxiliary cruiser, not a simple freighter.

Daniel takes 20 men, recalls the liberty men, and heads off to where the game's being played. Adele offers Tovera; Daniel says that doing it with guns will bring the Governor down on them.

CHAPTER

25) Adele tries to get O'Quinn; he and her cousin Adrian are drunk and incapable. She taps into the Cinnabar alert system--she knows there has to be one--and herself summons the entire complement of the *Aristoxenos* to aid Lt. Leary who's being attacked by Alliance sailors.

26) Daniel enters the game room by the back. Captain Bertram and the Count are surprised to see him. There are the six sailors in the taproom, along with a dozen Alliance sailors.

The Count wins a large pot. Bertram calls him a cheater and draws a gun, which Daniel takes from him. Matters descend. Daniel's twenty additional crewmen clear the room.

They hold out against the large numbers coming from the *Goldenfels* until O'Quinn's personnel arrive. They're old and out of shape, but they've got their servants along. They march Daniel and his entourage back to the *Princess Cecile* in triumph.

Daniel comments that they need to get off Todos Santos as soon as everybody's back on board.

CHAPTER

37) The *Princess Cecile* is boarded by a picket boat above Tegeli, a planet with broad, shallow seas and low-lying islands. There's almost no vulcanism, and the solar tides are mild.

Cities are scattered. Fishing and marine products are the main exports. Society is very stratified and, like the planet itself, languid.

The Klimovs don't have a guest-friendship with any of the Great Houses, so the picket officer directs *Princess Cecile* to the Pansuelas of Lusa City. Distinguished visitors are a valuable commodity, and there's a rota--one of the few functions of the central government.

38) Description of Lusa City (Manila). Enrique is tall, distinguished, and drug-sodden. Flora is a little overripe and (though younger than her husband) 40, but very much a woman. Lots of servants, humidity, and interesting wildlife flitting around the courtyard house.

When Daniel goes over the curio cabinet in the library, he finds an article of John Tsetzes. Enrique thinks there may be an entry in the guest book. He tells Adele where the guest books are in the library.

Dinner with lots of the elite of Lusa City. Flora makes a play for the Count, who reciprocates. The chaplain, Father Rosario, glowers. Enrique (and Klimovna) are complaisant.

CHAPTER

39) Adele is cataloguing the Pansuela library in the middle of the night. She finds what's almost certainly John Tsetzes, but under a pseudonym--from 60 standard years back.

Enrique comes in and discusses with her how his life might have been different. He's straight, for a change.

There's shouting down the corridor, then screams and a burst of shots. The stark naked Count runs into the library, followed by more shots.

40) Daniel is in bed with one of the dinner guests--somebody's daughter as best he could tell. He hears the shouting and, though bleary with drink, jumps into trousers and boots. Klimov's door down the hall thumps, then a shot.

Daniel steps out. Father Rosario shoots at him. As he does so, Klimov runs out in the other direction. Rosario turns, shooting as he runs. Daniel tries to tackle Rosario but get tangled up with Flora who's run out of Klimov's room, also naked.

The Count dives into the library. Daniel brings down the priest in time to save him from Adele's shot.

Klimov insists on leaving at once. Daniel ties Rosario, then unloads the pistol and tosses it out the window. He calls the watch officer to sound the recall klaxon.

One of the high shelves has been shot down. On it was a stone plaque with human figures and unknown writing, half covered with lava. The only volcano on Tegeli is at the South Pole and it's been long cold. Enrique doesn't know which of his ancestors collected it. He gives it to Daniel to make up for the trouble.

CHAPTER

27-8) To Morzangi, a planet not on the normal route, because Uncle Stacey's charts indicate there's a ship wrecked there of a size to be the armed yacht which carried John Tsetzes near the point Stacey's vessel watered. It's practically a cul-de-sac because though it looks like a passage the gradients become very steep except via a rift in the Matrix. They locate the watering place and set the *Princess Cecile* down, but there's no sign of the wreck.

The locals explain that the First Lieutenant of the community has just died and will be buried the next day, after a feast. The ship is now covered by forest, but the Captain will guide them to it.

They go by aircar, thrilling the Captain beyond words. He invites them to the funeral feast, which pleases Klimovna.

The wrecked ship, however, is a typical Commonwealth trader/pirate. It's been destroyed by short-range plasma bolts while here on the ground. Daniel speculates that John Tsetzes may have blasted it for safety, but there's no way to tell for sure.

CHAPTER

29-30) The dead man is present, sitting with his back to a tree and brightly painted, at the funeral feast. He's draped in strings of money made from the seeds of fruit defended by dangerous antlike insectoids.

Feast/funeral as per Quinton. The dead man's hair is woven over what appears to be the Earth Diamond. In fact it's a copy made of quartz, but it proves John Tsetzes did set down here.

CHAPTER

31-2) The *Goldenfels* appears in orbit. The likelihood is that she'll destroy the *Princess Cecile* from space as soon as Bertram is sure who it is below. Adele, pretending to be the Klimovs' secretary and an Alliance aristocrat (not difficult for her), contacts

Bertram and informs him that the Klimovs have found the uniquely-valuable Earth Diamond. It isn't right that this pre-Hiatus artifact should go back to Novy Sverdlovsk.

She tells Bertram to set down and invite the owners of the *Princess Cecile* for dinner. She'll accompany the Klimovs. While aboard the *Goldenfels*, she'll download the security codes from the *Princess Cecile* into the *Goldenfels'* computer. That night, the *Goldenfels* will send a signal that'll shut down the *Princess Cecile's* main and auxiliary power supplies. The crew of the *Goldenfels* can swarm aboard the smaller corvette without any real danger.

CHAPTER

33) Fancy dinner party with lots to drink aboard the *Goldenfels*. There's no question but that the *Goldenfels* is a warship: she's got a full military crew.

Bertram didn't realize that Daniel was related to Commander Bergen. Bertram is interested to hear that Daniel has his uncle's charts.

Adele asks permission to synch her personal unit on the *Goldenfels'* computer--she hasn't been able to manage it with the *Princess Cecile's* system, perhaps because it was Cinnabar built but modified to Kostroman standards, while her unit is Alliance.

On the bridge with the Communications Officer--reconnaissance officer--Lt Greiner, Adele links. She announces that the task is complete and that Greiner should test it by sending a short pulse to the *Princess Cecile*. He does so--exterior lights shut down and come back up. A moment later, Daniel gets a call from the watch officer, saying there's been an unexplained shutdown. Daniel feigns concern but says he'll continue to party.

34) Middle of the night. The *Princess Cecile* is open as usual. At pulsed command from the *Goldenfels*, visible lights go out. Over a hundred crewmen pour out of the *Goldenfels* and rush the *Princess Cecile*.

Daniel lifts the *Princess Cecile*, closing up while under weigh and keeping very low over the river. The *Goldenfels* can't shoot with so many of its own crew in the way. The thrusters raise a curtain of steam besides, which would largely dissipate plasma bolts.

After ten minutes, Bertram lights the *Goldenfels'* thrusters. Instead, the controls that Adele swapped start the anti-matter High Drive. In a full atmosphere the motors all fail instantly, leaving the *Goldenfels* a helpless wreck.

CHAPTER

35-6) Rather than go out through the easier gradients the way they came--other Alliance ships, or Commonwealth pirates in Alliance pay may be lurking--Daniel conns the *Princess Cecile* through a rift that Uncle Stacey found. Simply knowing it's there wouldn't be enough: he stays on the hull throughout the 34 hours of transit.

CHAPTER

41) To New Delphi, where an huge ancient tree has been an oracle since well before the Hiatus. The monastery is in the center while the tree grows out from that dead portion. The planet itself is generally desolate.

The monastery has never been sacked because there's nothing of value present save for the library. The forty-odd Acolytes live an ascetic existence, though their

considerable fees funds good works on many worlds.

The querent sleeps in the central chamber. His dreams genuinely give answers.

The *Princess Cecile* lands and Acolytes--one an attractive young female novice, Margarida--guide the officers into the monastery. They get a guided tour.

The Count arranges for incubation. The Prior tells him it'll be a day or two before they can accommodate him. The Prior brushes away Klimov's demand for an explanation.

Adele asks if she can stay and go through the library. The Prior offers her a cot if she's not fussy. It's clean--and she hasn't often been able to afford to be even *that* fussy.

42) Daniel returns at night with the note Margarida gave him, indicating she's not as unworldly as she ought to be. For her reputation, however, he must keep her invitation utterly secret.

He enters the maze of the tree according to the map with her note. Waiting Acolytes paralyze his muscles like a wasp sting and carry him down a tunnel.

CHAPTER

43) Daniel being plugged into the tree.

44) Searching the monastery for Daniel. No sign. Adele searches the database and determines that there's nothing about the pre-Hiatus layout of the monastery in electronic form.

The Prior says the Count will be allowed into the Incubation Chamber after all.

CHAPTER

45) Daniel becoming one with the universe.

46) The Count coming out of his incubation. He's asked how to find the Earth Diamond and been told Book 10, Caput iii, of *The Institutions*. The Prior denies access to *The Institutions* as they're only for Senior Acolytes. Adele takes over and orders all the Acolytes held.

The Institutions aren't hidden, save as a needle among needles. The chapter describes digging the tunnel to the heart of the Tree and creating the chamber for the Intercessor. The Prior refuses to discuss the Intercessor. Hogg offers torture, but Adele says it isn't necessary.

They locate the tunnel and enter it. The Prior explains how to release Daniel by washing the rootlets with saline to prevent Hogg from going in with a cutting bar. Nobody's ever been released before, so the Acolytes honestly don't know what the result will be.

Daniel comes out and announces that they don't need to go to Radiance--the Alliance fleet is already there.

CHAPTER

47) Klimov complains that he was searching for the Earth Diamond, not Daniel. Adele steps between Klimov and Hogg in time. Daniel doesn't seem concerned. He offers to trade Klimov the diamond for the *Princess Cecile*.

For Cinnabar's sake Daniel needs to get to Todos Santos and alert O'Quinn and the Cluster fleet for a pre-emptive strike. The Klimovs aren't affected one way or another by the Alliance fleet (two battleships optimized for range, a heavy cruiser, and eight destroyers), but they can easily take passage to anywhere (or buy another ship) on Todos Santos.

The Count agrees. Daniel explains that an artifact from each Intercessor is given to the Tree at the same time the Intercessor is, to ease his or her merger. He releases his own clock/communicator with saline, but the Earth Diamond is encysted and therefore best cut away like a callus. He borrows Hogg's knife and does so, splitting the complex grain perfectly.

48) Daniel assembles the forty-odd Acolytes in the monastery courtyard. He's scattered and a little woozy, but utterly in control.

The Acolytes are reasonably concerned, as most of the crew would be willing to follow Hogg in the plan of hanging the Acolytes and blowing up the monastery. The Acolytes plead that they're disinterested ascetics whose charities do enormous good across the galaxy, and that their oracles are honest as well.

Daniel agrees about the benefits, but notes that this doesn't justify kidnapping and life imprisonment. To the Prior, who says, "What happens to one man is of little account when balanced against the good of all humanity," Daniel says, "Does that apply to yourself? Will you replace John Tsetzes, now that I've proven unsuitable?" The Prior agrees.

CHAPTER

49-50) The Prior becomes Intercessor. *The Institutions* has been copied but the original volume goes in with him. The *Princess Cecile's* folk will spread word of what the oracle really is.

During the bustle of preparing the *Princess Cecile* to lift off, Margarida talks to Adele. Would it really have been so awful if she'd surrendered to her urges? She's only 27 and human. Adele says she doesn't have an opinion on the subject.

CHAPTER

51-2) Back to San Juan, where Adele gets Daniel access to Admiral O'Quinn and his aides. O'Quinn flatly refuses to commit suicide against a modern squadron whose ships are worked up.

Adele loses her temper, calling her cousin Adrian Purvis a disgrace to the family. He blabbers a challenge. Adele says the only regret she has about the *Princess Cecile* attacking Night alone is that she probably won't survive to shoot Adrian for the family's honor.

To Daniel: "We are going to attack, aren't we?" "Yes, I rather think we will."

CHAPTER

53-4) Back to Mozangi. The *Princess Cecile* from orbit warns all Alliance personnel to disarm and wait at a chosen location for internment by an RCN squadron under Admiral Plumly, now that war has been declared. The *Goldenfels* will be destroyed along with anybody near her.

Some Alliance personnel do surrender; most scatter for the woods. The *Princess Cecile* lands near the *Goldenfels*, tipped on her side, and captures the handful of crew and locals aboard her without a fight.

Daniel then replaces the *Goldenfels'* damaged High Drive with units from the pirate vessel wrecked nearby, rights the *Goldenfels* using the *Princess Cecile*, and lifts off with a partial crew. The *Princess Cecile* follows under the sailing master, Chewning.

CHAPTER

55-6) *Goldenfels* as *Atlantis*, HSK2, is boarded above Night by a picket boat of Commonwealth spacers and a young Alliance officer. Daniel is prepared to capture the boarding party if necessary (the *Goldenfels'* cryptography software can get the code through the fiber-optic flex if needs be), but the boarders actually don't notice the fact that the ship is under RCN control (the *Goldenfels'* crew would've been in mufti and pretty rough-edged besides).

The *Goldenfels* then slips through the mine-field and eyes the new base.

CHAPTER

57-8) The *Goldenfels* blasts the base with her heavy armament and escapes.

They are pursued by the heavy cruiser *Bluecher* which was working up when the attack occurred. The *Bluecher's* CO is Oliver Semmes, the brother of the Raphael Semmes Daniel met at Uncle Stacey's funeral and also trained by Lorenz.

CHAPTER

59-60) *Goldenfels* transfers her crew to the *Princess Cecile* in space. Daniel refuses to leave the *Goldenfels* until all the other personnel are clear, though as a result the Alliance cruiser gets dangerously close.

CHAPTER

61-2) *Princess Cecile* tries to avoid the cruiser. The cruiser is very ably conned by Admiral, former Frigate-Captain, Lorenz, the great Alliance explorer who was in command of Night Base.

O'Quinn's flagship *Aristoxenus* lumbers up in the nick of time. Her hardware is ill-maintained. Not all the missiles launch nor do all the dual motors work, and many of the projectiles fail to separate. Regardless, she's a battleship and overwhelms the cruiser in a suicidal headlong rush.

The *Princess Cecile* picks up the few survivors.

CONCLUSION: Back in Xenos. Cinnabar is again at war with the Alliance.