

PLOT: *What Distant Deeps*

In what distant deeps or skies/burned the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?/What the hand dare seize the fire?

CHAPTER 1: *The Bantry Estate, Cinnabar*

1) Daniel is chatting with neighbors and tenants. [Peasant Wedding] A senior tenant jokes about Daniel's womanizing past, but his wife hears and hushes him because Miranda isn't far away with her mother Madeline, in a circle of women who are oohing and aahing over the dresses which the ladies made for themselves.

The Hogg Family Community Hall is being dedicated. Deirdre is keeping away. Hogg is the public face of the event, gorgeous and roaring drunk. Wrestling, drinking, jousting, dancing on curved horns, food.

Discussion of the Truce of Rheims, which has ended the state of war between Cinnabar and the Alliance of Free Stars. Men suggest that the Alliance is beaten and that Cinnabar should never have agreed to the truce. Daniel temporizes, well aware of the strains on the RCN and the riots in major cities because of the number put out of work by the reduction in trade. He comments, 'Never a good war or a bad peace.'

Daniel is dressed more as a countryman than a country gentleman, but he's still a lot more formal than he was before he left home. To begin with, he's wearing shoes. He's drinking with neighbors.

Thomas Sand, the contractor who built the hall, is present. Sand is in a large way of business, but he explains to the neighbors that this was homage to a real hero of the Republic--though he was paid and paid honestly.

A large surface-effect transport arrives with Sissies who have been hauled from Harbor Three. Adele and Tovera are among them.

2) Adele and Tovera are met by Miranda Dorst. Madeline stayed with the group of locals, but Miranda has made her apologies. The Bantries accept that Miranda and Adele are ladies and give them privacy, grabbing back little children--including one little boy who demands to know whether Adele is the Squire's girlfriend. His sister, Susie Maynor, snatches him away with apologies.

Adele assures the boy she is not. Tovera notes that nobody asks her that sort of question.

Miranda mutters that Daniel isn't really the Squire. Adele says that Daniel really *is* the Squire, as the title isn't a matter of law but custom. If Bantry chooses to grant it to him and not his father, then good for the Bantries.

Other officers arriving go to join Daniel and the local gentry. Some officers seem out of place.

Miranda is concerned about how Sissies and Bantries will get along. Adele says there'll be fights but nothing dangerous. The two groups have similar interests, and drafts of Bantries have swelled Daniel's crews.

Miranda takes Adele to the library in the newer part of the house. The wife of the contractor, Bernis Sand, is waiting. Miranda closes the door behind them. Tovera waits outside to ensure privacy.

CHAPTER 2: *The Bantry Estate, Cinnabar*

3) Mistress Sand explains to Adele that Daniel (who's being retained on full pay) will be carrying the new Commissioner to Zenobia in the *Princess Cecile* under Republic charter. A warship would be a violation of courtesy, since Zenobia is a satellite of the Alliance although technically independent.

The real purpose is that Porra's former mistress, Posy Belisande, is an aristocrat of Zenobia and has gone home after the estrangement. Sand hopes that Adele will be able to get electronic information from her.

Adele says that there's a coming Senatorial election and it would be good to get Daniel off planet where the parties can't use him--as they certainly will try to do. Sand notes grimly that she'll be just as pleased to have Adele off-planet also, since there are parties who might try to use Lady Mundy as well.

Discussion of Zenobia, a backwoods sector for both Cinnabar and the Alliance. The major regional player is Palmyra, who's nominally a Cinnabar ally--but not to the extent that you'd want to push it.

There's the sound of pistol shots from outside. Adele decides the discussion is over and goes out.

Miranda is outside with Tovera. She explains that a neighbor, Georg Hofmann's, second wife has brought money and a loutish grown son, Robbie [Clymer]. The boy insists on shooting pistols with young officers, insisting it's a mark of manliness.

4) Daniel, concerned by the drunken youth with his dueling pistols, asks a neighbor. He learns the boy is Robbie Clymer, step-son of Georg Hofmann. Clymer has a pair of mincing, citified servants carrying the pistols and hard liquor for him. Daniel speaks to Hofmann, who says in great embarrassment that he has no control over the boy.

Clymer crudely tries to take away Susie Maynor, the local girl who's been hanging on Cory's arm. Daniel heads for them, but Adele is already there. Adele loudly accuses Clymer of insulting her friend Susie. She demands he apologize.

Clymer starts to bluster angrily. His mother grabs him, shrieking in horror. When he doesn't respond at once, mother slaps him. Hogg and Woetjans grab the boy by the arms.

Hofmann apologizes on behalf of his son--first to the girl, then to Adele; Robbie was drunk but meant no offense, Hofmann is sure.

Daniel pours out the liquor and takes the dueling pistols from the servant, looks them over, and tells Adele that the two large pink 'birds' overhead are introductions and rather a nuisance. Can she perhaps help abate that nuisance?

Adele drops the birds with head shots and returns the pistols to Daniel. Daniel hurls them into salt water and returns the case to the servant.

Daniel apologizes to Hofmann for his clumsiness in losing them and says he'll of course pay Hofmann for the cost. Hofmann says that won't be necessary.

Clymer throws up. Hogg and Woetjans let him drop into his puke.

As Clymer's own servants walk him to the car, Adele quietly notes to Daniel that it'll probably be good for both of them to get off Cinnabar to places where the rules are simpler.

CHAPTER 3: *Xenos on Cinnabar*

5) Daniel (in his best Grays) signing in at Navy House. The place is packed because an awful lot of officers have been released to half-pay due to the truce.

Daniel is scanning for a seat; Pennyroyal waves him over. She's hoping that their mutual friend Vondian's request for her as First Lieutenant on his destroyer on Tattersall will have come through. Tattersall, a minor ally but not a Friend of Cinnabar, is small potatoes, but any berth is welcome with the downsizing of the RCN. Unlike Vondrian, she doesn't have family money; and unlike Daniel, she hasn't gotten rich on prize money. (She's rueful, not bitter.)

Daniel's number is called. The clerk at the gate is irritated that he's coming back--then realizes that this is proper.

A clerk--a quite senior woman--gives Daniel his assignment. She's quite pleased to deal with someone of his stature, which would never happen in wartime.

She hands him the loss report on the *Milton* to initial, then assigns him to a private vessel to carry a new Cinnabar Commissioner to Zenobia. She explains that Zenobia is an Alliance protectorate though officially independent, and it would be an insult to send a warship (which would probably be refused landing rights).

Sending a private vessel with an RCN crew is a nice compromise--and doubtless means money in the pocket of some well connected civilian. Daniel knows that the charter is the *Sissie* and explains that in this case it won't be a civilian's pocket after all. His crew should already be boarding.

Harbor Three, near Xenos on Cinnabar

6) Adele acting as guide, taking Commissioner Pavel Brown (who's alone) over the family's accommodations on the *Princess Cecile*. He, his wife Clothilde, and their four-year-old Hester, will be taking the Captain's cabin. They'll be able to eat in the wardroom--either their own provisions or they can pay their subscription and mess with the officers.

Brown is depressed about the close quarters over a voyage of a month and a half. Adele doubts it will be that long; but interstellar travel isn't comfortable. She'll be bunking with the midshipmen rather than in the Captain's Office as she normally would.

Brown apologizes. He's been an accountant based in Xenos all his career and had never planned to get a foreign posting. He supposes he should be pleased, but he knows his wife won't be--though she was pushing him to transfer from accounts to representation to get ahead.

CHAPTER 4: *Harbor Three, Cinnabar*

7) Daniel in the Power Room with Pasternak, the Chief Engineer, the day of liftoff. RCN inspectors are dribbling over the ship.

Daniel's just looking over things. He and Pasternak use the ambient noise to give themselves privacy over a two-way link.

Pasternak could have a much bigger ship--or could afford to retire on prize money--but he chooses not to. Daniel isn't really sure why he does stick--the engineer never seemed to be an adventurous sort,

Pasternak says he's found he likes to be around people who are good at their jobs and who appreciate that he's good at his own. You don't get that on many ships--and you never bloody get it with civilians.

Daniel thinks about Deirdre--but then thinks about Pasternak in a bank. Almost as bad as imagining himself in a bank. He laughs and goes up to the bridge.

8) Clothilde Brown visits Adele in her quarters before liftoff. The midshipmen are at their posts and Adele is just shaking down. Clothilde notes that Pavel is taking care of their 4-year-old Hester.

She has learned that Adele is Lady Mundy. ('Here I'm Officer Mundy, mistress.')

Clothilde is horrified by the tight quarters. Adele notes that it'll be tighter when the midshipmen are here, but she's slept in flophouses where drunks peed through the barbed wire. It did no good to threaten the drunks--they weren't rational. But she threatened the manager and took his office.

Clothilde is depressed about her husband's career. The previous Commissioner died in his post after fifteen years. She can't imagine spending 15 years in Zenobia.

Adele notes that Commissioner Brassey was a younger son who just wanted a quiet life. He wasn't a professional diplomat at all. Pavel Brown won't be left on Zenobia in that fashion unless he wants to be.

To Clothilde's question, Adele admits that she knew--slightly--Brassey's family. And also the Sales family, Clothilde's house. Clothilde is embarrassed. Adele takes her leave to get to the bridge.

9) Liftoff. Daniel in the midst of his real family--more than Bantry, and certainly more than the Learies.

CHAPTER 5: *En route to Stahl's World*

10) Adele going over material on Zenobia with Cazelet. Cazelet notes that the Councillors of Zenobia claim to be autochthones. The settlement was in fact not long before the Hiatus.

The Founder is elected for life from and by the Council. It's a minor world, though the singing marmosets are popular widely in the Alliance.

Adele notes that the Assembly of the Reaches will be meeting on Stahl's World for the first time in eight years at the time the *Princess Cecile* will arrive. It would normally be biennial, but war between Cinnabar and the Alliance has interrupted them as the ancient regional seat is Stahl's World.

Adele tries to inform Daniel and Commissioner Brown. She learns that they're together on the hull.

11) Daniel on the hull with Pavel Brown, describing the Matrix. Vesey is working up the midshipmen on the hull at the same time.

Brown asks if Daniel is married. It's hard. No, Clothilde doesn't have money; quite the contrary. She may have thought his position was more important than it really is, though he didn't lie. She pushed him to transfer to the external service, but she doesn't seem happy even now.

CHAPTER 6: *Above Stahl's World*

12) Adele is orbiting Stahl's World, the Cinnabar (and RCN) headquarters for the Western Reaches. The region is unimportant though of considerable extent. Neither

Cinnabar nor the Alliance is heavily invested in the region.

The Alliance has besides possessions (which aren't any more significant than those of Cinnabar) a number of protected worlds with independent governments but Alliance control of their foreign policy. Zenobia is one of them.

Adele notes that there's a modern CA and an Alliance DD in the Civil Basin of Raphael Harbor. Checking, she learns that they're the Palmyrene flagship *Piri Reis* carrying Autocrator Irene and the *Z 46*, one of the two DDs of the Zenobia Detachment. *Z 46* has brought Founder Hergo Belisande of Zenobia to the Assembly.

The Founder's sister, Posy Belisande, has accompanied him. Adele isn't sure this is a good thing, because her skills are at electronic espionage rather than human intelligence. She's not in her heart sure that she's human.

Though the *Princess Cecile* is technically a private yacht, Raphael Control brings them down into the Naval Basin.

Raphael Harbor on Stahl's World

13) Daniel wearing Whites in the entry hold, soothing the Browns as the hatch lowers. He's really there for the Commissioner's sake, but a limousine drops to the quay and Adele informs him the vehicle has arrived for him.

Lt Commander Milch, aide to Admiral Mainwaring, the squadron commander, has arrived to bring Daniel to Mainwaring, who is attending an end-of-Assembly gala aboard the *Piri Reis*. Mainwaring mentioned Daniel's presence to the Autocrat, and she asked--demanded--to be introduced to the famous captain.

Daniel passes off command to Vesey. He asks Cory to babysit the Browns until the civil side gets its collective finger out. By what's probably good luck, Cory is wearing Grays rather than fatigues.

Milch is thrilled to meet Daniel, a genuine hero. The war was very quiet in this sector. They're glad that he's been retained in the RCN when so many recent promotions are on half-pay.

Daniel mentions the Alliance DD. Despite the truce, the Alliance regional commandant doesn't attend out of courtesy, but Founder Hergo wanted to complain about Palmyrene ambitions and claimed he wouldn't be safe except in an Alliance warship. Hergo is a very small fish and his allegations are nonsense.

Daniel wonders at the strength of Palmyra, obviously the major regional power. (It has expanded into the status of Pergamum.) The locals explain Palmyra was an independent world after the Hiatus and gathered a few dependents. It became a Pleasaunce possession and regional base a century ago. Fifty years ago during the revolution which turned the Pleasaunce Federation into the Alliance of Free Stars, the local governor revolted and captured (really coopted) the regional squadron.

During the considerable disruption during the revolution and the wars that accompanied it, piracy became rife in the Western Reaches. The Autocrat used his squadron against pirates, gaining a great deal of good feeling generally--and turning captured loot into improving his fleet.

Now Palmyra has fifty-odd anti-pirate ships; Daniel views the half dozen in the Basin. They are well built and (Milch says) well crewed, of 3-500 tons; mounting either rockets or (rarely) a small plasma cannon.

The cutters are designed with full controls on the hull so that the captain can conn

it from there in the Matrix. Daniel is thrilled at the thought of doing that, though of course it would be impossible for long voyages. It's a design for anti-pirate work--or piracy.

The flagship is the *Piri Reis*, a modern heavy cruiser of Cinnabar manufacture. In addition (not at the Assembly) there's the *Turgut*, a 30-year-old Pantellarian destroyer.

The heavy ships aren't a real threat (except in the very short term). Palmyra could completely disrupt commerce in the region, however.

CHAPTER 7: *Raphael Harbor on Stahl's World*

14) Adele gets call from Regional HQ, asking if the yacht's Signal Officer can help them with a communications problem. She formally checks with Vesey, then passes the duty to Cazelet since Cory is still with the Browns. She goes to change into her Grays.

Cory would recognize, as Vesey does not, that the request came from the Regional intelligence section, not the communications section.

15) Daniel at the gala. Refreshments are in the boarding hold, but the section of harbor to the quay has been decked over. One portion is being used for dancing to Eastern music.

Lt Ames, whom Daniel knew at the Academy, sees them enter and asks Milch's leave to introduce Daniel to Admiral Mainwaring. Ames is First Lieutenant on a sloop. He discusses the fact that it's not a place for promotion--but with the reductions in force which have come with the Peace of Rheims, the very distance from Cinnabar makes it likely that his commission will continue. Ames very much needs the money.

Mainwaring, like his aides, is pleased to meet Daniel. (This isn't the reaction Daniel has learned to expect.) The Autocrat has vanished.

Fregatten Kapitan Otto Kluge asks for an introduction; he in turn introduces Lady Postuma Belisande--Posy, the Founder's sister. She explains that Hergo refused to attend the gala because he claims he won't be safe in the hands of the Palmyrenes. The two officers talk professionally.

The cruiser's gunnery officer, Commander Bailey, appears to entertain Daniel until the Autocrat gets free. Bailey is a weedy, balding 50-year-old, former RCN destroyer gunner, but born on Kostroma. Kluge and Posy come along at Daniel's invitation.

CHAPTER 8: *Raphael Harbor on Stahl's World*

16) Adele is talking to the RCN intelligence section on Stahl's World, Lt Leonard and Tech 8 Luisa Runkle. They've called Adele because they're worried and they can't get anybody in their own chain of command to take an interest. Adele's reputation has gotten around within the intelligence community. They hope she's here because Mistress Sand shares their concerns.

They believe that Irene is wholly focused on Palmyra. Her late husband (the Autocrat Odin) tended that way, but it now appears that she was the one pulling him toward an independent policy and he was a brake on it.

Nobody at Navy House wants a problem in a quiet sector like the Western Reaches, so there's a tendency to discount the warnings coming from the intelligence shop as Chicken Little. The governor and Admiral Mainwaring both hold the intelligence

people in contempt anyway (for different reasons), so there's no point in trying to get the local hierarchy to back their assessment.

Adele asks if they think Palmyra plans to attack Cinnabar. Leonard (who is young and very earnest) is worried about an attack on Zenobia which will provoke war with the Alliance and certainly draw Cinnabar in.

Palmyra is so distant that the Autocrat and her advisors don't understand just how powerful both major powers are. Irene really does place Palmyra on a level with Cinnabar and the Alliance.

Adele is noncommittal but emphasizes that this is the first she's heard on the subject. She doesn't pretend that she's not in intelligence, but she says that while she'll refer the matter to those in a position to deal with it, the local fears are not a present concern on Xenos.

Adele doesn't discuss why the *Princess Cecile* has arrived in the Western Reaches. When they press, she snaps that she's signals officer for the best fighting captain in the RCN and that it's time for her to get back to work.

17) Bailey shows Daniel and Kluge the Palmyrene flagship, the *Piri Reis*. Specialist officers are foreign (but none from either Cinnabar nor the Alliance core worlds), but the crew is Palmyrene and has a Japanese cohesiveness. Bailey comments on that and says that he's sometimes uncomfortable.

Irene summons Daniel by monitor to the admiral's suite in the stern. She tells him to bring Kluge. The Cinnabar regional governor is just leaving.

Irene, surrounded by her guards, is very proud of the *Piri Reis*; Daniel temporizes. She speaks in fashions that make it appear that she considers Palmyra and Cinnabar to be peers, not a junior ally and a superpower.

She asks to see the *Princess Cecile*. Daniel bows agreement.

She then invites Kluge and Posy--'if your brother will permit it?' Posy sneers a response--along also to check Daniel's claims. Daniel is icy; Kluge is embarrassed but accepts Daniel's invitation.

CHAPTER 9: *Raphael Harbor on Stahl's World*

18) From Adele's viewpoint--Irene with her bodyguards and Admiral Polovitz board the *Sissie*. The Browns are back from an unsatisfactory visit to the governor's residence. Irene is interested to meet the new commissioner to Zenobia.

Irene and Polovitz discuss how useful the yacht would be as a midpoint between the cutters and the *Piri Reis*. The *Turgut* has consistent problems with her antimatter converters (typical in Pantellarian ships).

Irene tries to buy the *Sissie*. Daniel refuses with increasing sharpness. Irene leaves in a cold dudgeon, claiming that money will always find a way. Some people may not be bought, but a *result* can always be bought.

19) Daniel deciding to lift that night. He informs the Browns, who aren't sorry to leave. The warrant officers will quietly gather up the personnel carousing. One benefit of a crack crew is that nobody will argue the decision--and no matter how drunk they are, they'll be able to lift ship.

Daniel, by being civilian, is able to lift without getting naval authorization--which

might raise flags.

Adele notes that the Autocrat is very clear about her place in the universe. It remains to be seen whether the universe shares that opinion.

CHAPTER 10: *Calvary Harbor, Zenobia*

20) From Adele's viewpoint as the *Princess Cecile* lands on Zenobia at Calvary, the port and capital. She's called the various parties on the ground and is observing those arriving as well as the planet as a whole. Cazelet and Cory are helping her.

She's particularly interested in the Founder's Residence, where Posy lives with her brother (though neither has returned). The electronic security is no better than she expects, but Posy doesn't appear to have any electronic files.

Physical security is better. The building is guarded by members of the Founder's Company, a body of 500 troops. Many of them are foreign veterans, and the overall training and morale appear quite good. They are paid regularly.

The only people to meet the new Commissioner are somebody fairly minor from the government (not unreasonable, since the Founder hasn't returned from Stahl's World yet), and the (former) acting Commissioner, originally assistant commissioner, Lt Comm Renold Gibbs in an ex-Land Forces aircar that's older than he is.

A flashy new aircar lands and a slender and perfectly garbed fellow, balding with a thin moustache, gets out and with his guards approaches the Browns. Adele recognizes Count von Schleicher, the Resident.

21) Daniel (in civilian clothes) with the Browns when Schleicher and his security team arrive. Schleicher says he hopes that Brown knows his place. Brown is flustered--he's an accountant, not an experienced diplomat, and this sort of in-your-face insult would take even someone experienced aback--but he responds with adequate politeness.

Schleicher then notices Clothilde. He reaches out to turn her face into profile. She jerks back and calls Schleicher a boor. Daniel steps into the way, his back to Schleicher. The bow turret squeals as its guns train on the Alliance security people. A crew of Sissies under Woetjans muscles out the Browns' baggage.

Schleicher snarls that perhaps when Brown has time to reflect, he'll be more forthcoming. Alternatively, he may find that import charges on Cinnabar private venture have increased considerably. He stalks to the car and flies away.

Brown murmurs that there shouldn't be any private ventures here on Zenobia. He tells Gibbs that he'll want to go over Brassey's accounts the first thing tomorrow.

Gibbs explains (to the commissioner's surprise at having an RCN officer as an assistant) that he was seconded from the RCN. Daniel remembers the story: Gibbs got involved with an admiral's daughter but turned out to have a wife already; he couldn't divorce her because he couldn't pay the jointure which he'd mortgaged fraudulently. This blighted his career thoroughly; but rather than being cashiered, he was dumped in the sticks and out of the RCN hierarchy. He had literally nowhere to go. Daniel assumes he simply abandoned his wife.

Clothilde asks if Gibbs served with Captain Leary. Gibbs, with a degree of offense, says that he is RCN, not a civilian. Daniel, with a touch of asperity of his own, retorts that he *is* RCN though under the circumstances he chose to wear civilian garb.

The Browns' little girl blurts that Captain Leary is a great hero and has killed *ever*

so many Alliance soldiers. Gibbs realizes that Daniel is *that* Captain Leary. He's dumbfounded and stammers, "Why?" and similar things. Daniel explains that he's been lucky not to be on half-pay, as junior as he is.

The Browns go off in the aircar which Gibbs himself drives. There's room enough inside for a squad in combat gear, so it's no problem holding the family and their gear.

CHAPTER 11: *Calvary on Zenobia*

22) Adele in civilian clothes (invited as Lady Mundy) attending tea at the Commission with Clothilde. Adele has been completely unable to find anything useful electronically, so she figures she may as well go. Her assumption is that Posy doesn't have any electronic files, not that they're so well concealed that Adele can't find them.

[Describe Cinnabar House. Probably the gardens. Overgrown. *Live Oak 30?*]

Posy Belisande is present with her maid, Woods. Posy's presence is a surprise, but Adele has checked her background. Posy left Zenobia five years ago at 18 with the captain of a heavy cruiser in the squadron sent when Palmyra was threatening during the war. On Pleasaunce she came to the Guarantor's eye; the captain got a promotion to a battleship and Porra took up with Posy. (This may have been the captain's intent.)

Posy explains that Clothilde told her that Adele is actually Lady Mundy, and she's been so used to Pleasaunce society that she's beginning to fear that she'll go mad in Calvary, though she'd been looking forward to getting home. Brassey was an old batchlor with no society, so Posy was delighted to learn that the new Commissioner's wife was of good family.

There's a considerable colony of Alliance citizens on Zenobia and particularly in Calvary, but they're businessfolk and disliked for their arrogance. She despised them when she was growing up on Zenobia and now she has even better reason for her feelings.

Adele says she'll be leaving as soon as the repairs to the *Princess Cecile's* cables are complete. She isn't a very gregarious person, so the lack of elite society during her RCN career isn't a problem. Spacers are in fact better companions than the neighbors she was thrown together with during her years of poverty.

Clothilde says Pavel will be happy so long as he has accounts to go over, but she's going to go nuts herself. She asks about the Resident.

Posy is sneering about von Schleicher. He's a reptile from Pinnacle, an Alliance core world but very backward. Schleicher uses threats of Alliance power to force Councillors to give him their wives and daughters. He's widely hated among the better class on Zenobia--the only people who are in contact with him. (His servants are from Pinnacle.)

Von Schleicher made a play for Posy--if that isn't too clean a description of his behavior, but the combination of her connection with the Guarantor and the presence of Commander Kluge made him back off. Otto is a dear and of a good family (his brother is Marquis of Ausserbecht). Otto makes life bearable, but he won't be stationed on Zenobia forever.

Adele says she needs to get back to her duties. She's not sure what she's learned, but Mistress Sand will be interested in the disaffection which the Resident has raised. There'd be no gain in destabilizing a world so distant during peacetime, though she knows some officers would do it. She considers that simply grit in the gears of

civilization.

23) Pavel Brown comes to Daniel on the hull but says he doesn't want to intrude. The crew is changing out all the cables.

Daniel says he doesn't think he's critical; he takes Brown into the BDC, ousting the ratings there. The work is completely unnecessary, justified by Daniel's false claim that they'd had several cables snap on the run to Stahl's World--where they'd requisitioned cable--so that he was convinced that the whole rig was flawed. (This cannot be disproved, and the ship is safe to lift at any moment.)

Brown says that he's gone over Commissioner Brassey's accounts; they're in order, making allowances for sloppiness--and Brown has seen worse. Brassey hasn't been fiddling the secret accounts. Brown would certainly know if he had.

Cinnabar House was full of empty wine bottles of what Clothilde informs him were decent local vintages. That appears to have been Brassey's only vice, and his outgo precisely balanced his salary and the remittance from his family. He didn't have any outside interests, and he couldn't have serviced them if he had. From the records, he was barely able to get out of bed in the morning. Gibbs did such Commission work as was necessary.

Gibbs says he knows nothing about any private ventures that Brassey may have had, though he claims Brassey wasn't as out of it as Brown believes. Gibbs says Brassey had private meetings away from Cinnabar House, but it wasn't his business to inquire. None of this makes sense to Brown.

The one odd fact is the notation in the Secret Account: PN425-9901SJ. Requisitioned Regional Stores 9-13-45. Delivered Calvary Harbor 12-07-45. No charge. Installed 12-09/12-10-45 at 4PP10418653. Truck rental 100 florins. Casual labor (off-duty spacers) 100 florins plus 30 florins alcohol bonus.

Daniel says that the item is a portable RCN landing beacon and the other figure is probably a map reference. He checks it and determines it's a point in the Green Ocean, some 600 miles from Calvary. He tells Brown he'll make some inquiries.

CHAPTER 12: *Calvary on Zenobia*

24) Adele arrives. Daniel asks her what she can tell him about a particular grid reference. There are no full-surface maps of Zenobia that he can find.

Adele integrates the *Sissie's* excellent orbital imagery with a grid, locating Diamond Cay, 600 miles from Calvary Harbor. The island has the ruins of a pre-Hiatus building which showed up from orbit. Nobody's sure of what it was for. It's rarely visited because there isn't really much save ruins of rock crystal (not diamond). Some commentators claim that it's a natural formation. The 8-digit designator is a point in the ruins themselves.

Daniel says there's supposed to be a landing beacon there. Adele expands imagery which the *Sissie* made in the course of landing; the site is clearly visible, but there's no sign of life. She checks other vessels in the harbor; none of their imagery shows any activity at the site either. Zenobia doesn't have a network of surveillance satellites, but what amounts to twenty random checks is a good basis for confidence: if there's an installation, it must be unmanned.

25) Daniel as Adele's zoological database cross-indexes automatically. Diamond Cay has a unique biota, with pin crabs and the seadragons that prey on them.

Pin crabs are spherical and hard-shelled, with jointless legs and a mass of spines in the front which spear food and transfer it to the mouth without bending. Seadragons are lizardlike and primarily aquatic, running to 30 feet in length. They have four paddle-like legs which allow them to make good speed on soft ground, and two grasping forelimbs. They're quite dangerous but limited to Diamond Cay because their prey can't cross open water (the seadragons probably could) and the crabs live nowhere else on the planet.

Daniel calls Brown to borrow the Commission aircar, asking for Tovera to drive. Adele says it's more in her line. They decide both to go in, with Hogg and Tovera. The island appears to be too marshy for the *Sissie* or even a cutter.

Daniel is more than a little interested in the building as well as the lizards. Pre-Hiatus leaves open the question of how much before the Hiatus; and no other vertebrate on Zenobia has six limbs. That implies they came from some unspecified other place.

Besides which, there's the question of the beacon and what it might be doing in such an unlikely location.

CHAPTER 13: *Over the Green Ocean, Zenobia*

26) Daniel in back of the aircar with Adele. Tovera is driving and Hogg grumpily with her--but keeping his hands off the dual controls. They're moving at near 200 mph with the sides open and helmets on.

Daniel is viewing the sea life, noticing the changes as they near the island. The water is a different color, and the grasses are different also. He can't pick out the pin crabs, but he does see one of the sea dragons which snarls at them.

Diamond Cay is really a mudbank covered with vegetation that has the same purplish undertone as the local seaweed. A bigger dragon rises from the swamp and again challenges. There are many pools among the reedbeds.

The crystal ruins are in sight. One tower is fifty feet high and has a steep internal ramp (visible because part of the wall has been burned away) instead of stairs. It can't possibly be a natural formation.

Daniel tells Tovera to circle at low speed--it's easier than hovering, which her skills aren't really up to. As she does so, he keys the test frequency (common to all RCN units) for the beacon's transponder.

The aircar's transceiver and three of the four fans short out.

27) Adele puts her PDU away as Hogg grabs the controls and shuts down the remaining fan, screaming to them all to lean right. She realizes that he's used to this kind of flying since he's never more than at the edge of control.

They pancake in on a hummock. Daniel jumps clear and Adele is flung out. Hogg and Tovera both cling to their control yokes. Tovera's wrists are seriously injured, but the others are all right.

Tovera's case flew out and can't be seen from the crash site. The case would be visible from the tower, so they head for it.

A large dragon lifts its head from the top of the tower and watches them.

CHAPTER 14: *Diamond Cay, Zenobia*

28) From Adele's viewpoint. Crab shells inside the tower indicate the lair above. They still have to go up.

When the dragon comes down for them, Adele shoots its eyes out. Hogg loops its neck from the opposite side of the tower and with Daniel's help pulls the dragon off the ramp to crash into the floor.

29) From the top they see the case floating in the middle of a pond. It's a nursery area and there are several 5-foot dragons swimming in it but staying under water: they have feathery external gills. Tovera will stay on the tower to guide them. Hogg and Daniel will fetch the case.

CHAPTER 15: *Diamond Cay, Zenobia*

30) Daniel (the better swimmer) goes in with Hogg's knife. The dragon whose portion of the lagoon this is goes for him (as a rival, not food) and is killed. Four-winged birds with clawed forelegs fight over the carcasses.

31) Adele calls the *Princess Cecile*. Vesey is already bringing her in. Cazelet checked Adele's most recently viewed sites when they couldn't raise the aircar and brought the corvette in, loaded for bear.

CHAPTER 16: *Calvary on Zenobia*

32) Daniel in a cylco with Hogg and six husky Sissies in Calvary, being guided to the private townhouse where Gibbs lives by Adele in the *Princess Cecile*. She marvels to Daniel that Gibbs apparently recorded all his conversations regarding the plot.

Adele shuts off the camera over the door. Daniel gives the password used by Gibbs' Palmyrene handler. Gibbs opens the door, blurting, "What are you doing here? Has something gone wrong?"

They grab and bag Gibbs, then bundle him into the cyclo. It wobbles back toward the quay with its heavy load.

33) Adele aboard the *Princess Cecile* explains to Gibbs that he will either be turned over to the authorities on Stahl's World or released--at a thousand feet. He agrees to cooperate.

Gibbs has developed the Farm under cover of Brassey's name as a base for the raiders. It has antiship missile emplacements and barracks in the form of barns and warehouses. The plan is to give the invasion force time to get back in shape from the voyage packed like sardines and to set up their APCs and heavy weapons. There's nothing on the ground that can stop them, and there'll be a real rebellion against the Resident (more than the Founder) besides. The original plan was that Founder Hergo would be coopted, but he's been so hostile that he'll probably be shot and replaced.

The Commission aircar has been wrecked. According to Hogg, though there are other aircars on Zenobia, but the only ones that you could trust on a 300-mile trip are those belonging to the government and clearly marked.

CHAPTER 17: *Calvary on Zenobia*

34) Daniel visits (doesn't dare call) Kluge. "I need a trustworthy, unmarked aircar for a business that means peace or war for our peoples. Will you take the word of an RCN officer and a Leary of Bantry?"

The Resident's car would be obvious to a Zenobian, but the staff at the Farm won't know it.

Daniel can't tell an Alliance officer what's going on, because Kluge would be honor-bound to act on it if he knew. If things work out, there'll be nothing to know about. If things don't work out, Daniel won't be around to worry about it.

Kluge says he'll have an aircar alongside the *Princess Cecile* in an hour. And he thinks he'll call an drill for the crews of both his destroyers. Just to keep the crews on their toes.

35) Adele as the Resident's aircar bounces to a landing. She remembers when Barnes drove for the Sissies.

The car has five tough spacers under a bearded warrant officer who looks like a troll and carries a rigger's maul. He says that there was no trouble to speak of--and anyway, the Old Man says he'll fix it and he's straight.

The Alliance spacers say they need to get back to their ship, so they can't stay for refreshments. They drive off in the jitney.

Adele, Daniel, Tovera, and Sun load into the aircar with Gibbs. It's got to look real, and Sun points out that he's a bloody good shot. Tovera drives.

CHAPTER 18: *The Farm, Southwest of Calvary*

36) Daniel and his team in the aircar with Gibbs as it lands at the Farm. Guard notes that it's a different vehicle. Daniel agrees, saying that the previous one is buried in a swamp; they're welcome to it if they want to go dredge it out.

CO (a Palmyrene officer) demands to know who Daniel and crew are. Daniel explains that he's Captain Daniel Leary. He's been detailed as RCN escort for the convoy and he wants to make sure everything is in order. The CO is puzzled but not particularly concerned.

Daniel is pointedly insulting. Admiral Mainwaring ordered him to make this inspection when they reviewed the plan with the Autocrat on Stahl's World last week. The transport captains are Cinnabar and were refusing to make the run even at war rates when they learned they were expected to land in at a base in the boondocks with local forces manning the missile batteries.

The CO becomes thoroughly pissed, but Daniel coolly tells him that it happens Admiral Mainwaring's way or it doesn't happen. The CO mutters that he wants to hear that directly from the Autocrat. Daniel tells him to send a message if he likes--but it won't go by the *Princess Cecile*, because Daniel will be on the way back to Stahl's World to tell the admiral that the operation has been cancelled.

The CO grudgingly tells Daniel to get it over with.

37) Adele is copying codes from the fire control center. Sun is working with the Palmyrene fire control officer and visiting the four missile pits.

Sun returns, saying that he'll vouch for the officer, but can't say as much for the site crews. He wants all the pits locked onto director fire.

Daniel orders Adele to enter the system and do so. The CO protests. Daniel gives him another 'my way or the highway' sneer. The CO authorizes the change.

Daniel says they'll return now; the *Princess Cecile* has to meet the convoy. When the aircar has lifted, Adele says that they can do just that: she has the convoy's course and ETA.

CHAPTER 19: *The Matrix, between Zenobia and Palmyra*

38) Daniel on the hull of the *Princess Cecile* in the Matrix with Cory. Pointing out the tracks of the convoy they're after. Ordering through the semaphore keypad the acting captain (Vesey) to drop out of the Matrix immediately. He starts in, knowing that the corvette will transition before he can reach the bridge.

39) Adele (as Vesey requests) calling the convoy before Daniel returns. The five transports are escorted by two largish Palmyrene cutters and an RCN cruising yacht, the *Philante* of 1600 tons, detailed from Palmyra Station because of the pirate threat and the fact that the transports have Cinnabar registry.

It's normal for the Palmyrenes to escort argosies, so the composite force isn't a surprise. Irene has arranged it this way to implicate Cinnabar in her grab for Zenobia.

Adele directs the Palmyrene cutters to leave--the convoy is under sole RCN protection now. The cutters object: Sun notes that one is rotating its rocket pods toward the *Princess Cecile*. Adele, thinking of the riggers and Daniel on the hull, orders Sun to take it out without worrying about chain of command. Sun doesn't worry either--and the rocket pods explode.

Rocker fires at the other cutter, but it's too distant to be damaged. It flees.

Daniel enters the bridge, still suited up. The *Philante* is concerned. It leaves also, presumably heading for Palmyra or more likely Stahl's World.

Daniel sends the transports new course data, making the run to Zenobia in one stage instead of two. He tells the captains that they'll obey his orders or they will infallibly be hunted down and hanged as traitors to the Republic. (The transports are all Cinnabar flag and the officers aren't going to argue him.)

He explains that he's not sure how Irene plans to coordinate her fleet with the transports; he suspects that she'll wait off-system and approach Zenobia only after the transports are on the ground, because the transports won't be able to land safely if the planetary defenses are up. Still, Daniel wants as much extra time as he can get.

CHAPTER 20: *Above Zenobia*

40) Daniel arrives above Zenobia with the convoy. Both Alliance DDs are up. Daniel clears the situation with Kluge, then directs the transports to land one at a time on Diamond Cay. Adele has forwarded the plan to Kluge.

41) Adele watching as the transports land. Cory comments on the pre-Hiatus buildings. Adele notes that 'pre-' in this case may mean from 40K years ago. The unique biota isn't natural to the planet, and her check of databases hasn't found a source for it as yet, but it's just going to have to take its chances.

While Adele is really interested in information, at the moment she's an RCN officer and her captain is dealing intelligently with a difficult situation. Cinnabar is

already capable of constructing buildings of rock crystal, so nothing of practical use will be lost even if one of the transports crashes on the structure. There isn't time to worry about raw knowledge.

The Palmyrene fleet begins to appear. Kluge challenges them.

CHAPTER 21: *Above Zenobia*

42) Adele contacts the DDs, using last month's Alliance code. She explains that the Palmyrenes may well have the RCN codes from their close contact with Cinnabar forces, but this 'obsolete' Alliance code should be proof against their easy decryption.

In fact the code (though superseded) is probably presumed to be still good. Using an older version prevents too much speculation by the Alliance officers on what Adele may know.

The Palmyrene fleet is a heavy cruiser and a destroyer. Only ten cutters (of 3-500 tons) have arrived with the heavy ships, but more are appearing. Adele doesn't see the cutter which escaped when Daniel captured the convoy.

Adele begins sending the location and details of the Farm to the Zenobian authorities. Founder Hergo has a small guard (the Founder's Company) but a considerable militia if there's time to raise them. There are fewer than a hundred Palmyrene troops at the Farm.

Adele also has full data on the Palmyrene (and Zenobian traitor) forces in Calvary. They should be the initial target for the Founder's Company. She knows how it's done. It happened to her family, after all.

43) Daniel realizing that it will take a while for the force to assemble, because the cutters don't have much in the way of navigation equipment. The crews are good, but they tend to eyeball their way through the Matrix rather than follow set courses.

Daniel informs Kluge that he intends to take the *Princess Cecile* close to temporize with Irene. Kluge is readying his ships for action--minimum sail plan--and accepts the plan. The two commanders are on very cautious terms.

44) From Adele's viewpoint as the *Princess Cecile* extracts a light second from the *Piri Reis*. She determines that the Autocrat is aboard the flagship (as expected). She had "There's still time to have this not happen. The troops will be repatriated with no one the wiser."

The *Piri Reis* launches on the *Sissie*. Daniel orders insertion.

CHAPTER 22

45) Daniel relieved that there was no damage from the light weapons which the cutters fired when they saw the CA launching. He didn't respond in part for diplomatic reasons--but mainly to preserve his mere 20 missiles.

He takes the *Sissie* back to Zenobia.

46) Adele as Daniel puts the *Princess Cecile* under Kluge's command. Daniel is senior to Kluge, but they're in Alliance space.

Kluge orders the force to withdraw to one light minute from Zenobia to observe.

CHAPTER 23

47) Adele explains the situation on the ground on Zenobia and says that the Palmyrenes can't possibly take the planet without the help of their heavy ships.

The Farm can easily be captured by the planetary forces after they've cleared up the plotters in Calvary, and the Palmyrene infantry on Diamond Cay is harmless. (Their APCs can't cross open water while loaded.)

Even if the transports do lift, they have nowhere to go if the Farm is captured: the troops are packed far too tightly to make a combat assault.

The Palmyrenes can still pull this off if they get the heavy ships into the atmosphere to support the ground forces, however.

48) Kluge prepares for a head-on attack on the *Piri Reis*, figuring that if he can destroy her the attack will fail even if Irene survives. He assumes that Daniel will approve, as this is what the RCN would do.

Daniel appreciates the compliment but points out that as soon as the ships dip into the atmosphere, they can't maneuver. They're at risk to missiles launched even from a distance.

Kluge orders a hit and run attack if either of the heavy ships attempts to enter the atmosphere. He sets randomly chosen rally positions, each a light-minute from Zenobia.

The DD starts to descend. Kluge attacks.

CHAPTER 24

49) From Daniel's viewpoint as he brings the *Princess Cecile* in at a considerable distance from the bulk of the cutters. The Alliance ships have gone in much closer.

He launches on pre-planned courses. Sun and his junior are hammering with the 4" guns, particularly the cutter which appeared unpredictably almost on top of them.

Daniel withdraws undamaged as soon as the missiles are away.

50) Adele at a light-minute out. The *Z 42* arrives promptly but Kluge's *Z 46* does not.

The missiles don't actually hit the *Turgut*, but the Palmyrene DD cuts in its High Drive while too deep in the atmosphere for safety and is disabled by the explosion. It spirals in.

Kluge arrives, its rigging badly hammered by the cutters' rockets.

The *Piri Reis* has launched but all three defenders are back in the Matrix well in time. A force of thirty cutters comes after them.

CHAPTER 25: *Zenobia System*

51) From Daniel: Kluge orders shift a light minute in the other direction. Daniel realizes that the *Z 46* won't be able to maneuver with the *42* and *Sissie*.

Instead of saying that, he points out that the Palmyrenes won't be delayed significantly. They're skilled at tracking much smaller vessels in the Matrix. Force Posy will do a better job of holding where they are in mutually supportive positions. (This is true also.)

Kluge agrees.

52) Adele as the cutters arrive in scatters. The *Princess Cecile* is actually more effective than the more heavily armed DDs because Sun and Rocker are used to such targets while most gunners practice hosing incoming missiles with long bursts.

The *Sissie* is hit several times, but the DDs are showered.

Daniel takes the *Sissie* back into the Matrix. It's pretty obvious that the *Piri Reis* will finish off the cripples. He needs to forestall that; he announces that the *Sissie* is inserting.

As the *Princess Cecile* slips into the Matrix, both Alliance DDs launch full salvos.

CHAPTER 26: *Zenobia System*

53) Daniel on the bridge takes the *Princess Cecile* toward the *Piri Reis*. His riggers are clearing damaged rigging on the way but he brings them in before he extracts.

Daniel imagines what the cutters will see while they're being conned from their hulls.

Daniel begins to insert but keeps the charges balanced to hold the *Sissie* in the transitional state for 20 seconds. As he passes out, he realizes that the corvette is dropping into sidereal space instead of returning to the Matrix as he intended.

54) Adele in a reverie is able to see everything. She wonders if she's died and gone to heaven. The thought makes her smile.

Cutters are extracting from the Matrix very close to the *Piri Reis*. The cruiser blasts the first three, then merely tracks the several more. The cruiser's bridge is alive with recriminations between Admiral Polowitz on the one hand (claiming necessity) and Irene with her aides on the other furious that Polowitz is shooting their own people.

The *Princess Cecile* drops into normal space. Adele's displays are live again, but she finds she misses her recent omniscience

CHAPTER 27: *Zenobia System*

55) Daniel as the *Princess Cecile* drifts. Almost the entire crew is dizzy, half blind, or unconscious. His own eyes focus intermittently.

The *Piri Reis* is within 400K miles. The range is long enough that the *Sissie* might be able to dodge even a CA's salvo, and there's plenty of time to drop back into the Matrix, but Daniel can't make his fingers move.

56) Adele is feeling alert and refreshed, a unique experience for her after extracting from the Matrix. She's puzzled at the terrible condition others are in; even Tovera slumps drooling against the restraints.

The *Piri Reis* has launched at them. Daniel isn't responding to the incoming missiles.

Three sloops of the Western Reaches Squadron arrive. Adele requests help against Palmyrene attack. Irene begins to bluster: the *Piri Reis* considerably outweighs the sloops, and they're not configured for fleet actions.

Adele fumbles at the command console, trying to drop them into the Matrix. She calls up a menu. That brings Daniel around laughing; he gets them out of trouble.

As the *Princess Cecile* enters the Matrix, missiles which the destroyers launched as the *Sissie* left Force Posy arrive. They hit and destroy the *Piri Reis*.

CHAPTER 28: *Calvary on Zenobia*

57) From Adele. Everybody but one Alliance DD (on guard in orbit) has landed in Calvary Harbor. Admiral Mainwaring, Founder Hergo, and Kluge with Posy are meeting Daniel and Adele on an esplanade or in a garden overlooking the harbor. [Perhaps water garden. Perhaps Rome.]

Commissioner Brown is present but very quiet. Gibbs has resigned and has been sent to Diamond Cay, where he remains.

The *Sissie's* crew is carrying out repairs--there'll be no liberty until she's fit to fight again.

Hergo explains that the fighting in the city is over. Traitors have been rooted out. Unfortunately, the Alliance Resident, von Schleicher, was assassinated by a Palmyrene agent.

Adele glances toward Posy's maid Wood, whom Tovera has said is 5th Bureau bodyguard and minder. Wood glances back with no expression.

The temporary Resident will be Kluge, the ranking Alliance official on the planet. He's resigning his Fleet rank and will settle on Zenobia, marrying a member of the better class of Zenobian society: Posy.

Posy says that she expects the appointment of the Honorable Otto Kluge (using his civilian rank) will be made permanent. Adele realizes that not only does Kluge have sufficient birth, he's a lot less dangerous to Porra out in the sticks than he would be (as a major hero) back in Pleasaunce. He would probably have to be assassinated (or executed) if he returned to the home worlds.

58) Daniel as Mainwaring calls him to account for his own actions. Daniel is publicly blunt: he had no ulterior motive in opposing the Palmyrene coup. There would inevitably be rumors that Cinnabar had been involved in the coup, and he didn't want the present truce to end because of perceived Cinnabar treachery.

Mainwaring isn't pleased with the business ("This was a quiet region....") and wishes that the Autocrat hadn't been killed. Adele points out that Palmyra has been a stabilizing factor in the region for the past several centuries, and that with Irene out of the picture, one can reasonably expect the next Autocrat of Palmyra to return to that positive role.

There's a discussion, rising toward an argument, regarding the Palmyrene troops under General Osman on Diamond Cay. Kluge and Lt Com Milch, Mainwaring's aide, both see potential value to their respective sides in using the Palmyrenes as auxiliary troops in distant sectors.

Adele suggests that they be repatriated, to general surprise. (The parties probably would've divided them.)

Adele points out that these are the best Palmyrene ground forces and Osman, the general in command, has shown himself to be intelligent and biddable. If the troops are returned to Palmyra under joint RCN/Fleet escort, the general is in a good way to becoming the new Autocrat. Quite apart from anything else, he'll have his hands full at home and is unlikely to be fomenting foreign adventures. The fact that his background is in ground forces is also helpful.

The discussion turns to technical issues--repair and supplies for the vessels. The

RCN sloops lifted in a hurry, and the others have battle damage. Posy gets up and motions Adele to join her on a railing.

CHAPTER 29: *Calvary on Zenobia*

59) Adele, as Posy's minder seems to be going to join them; Tovera takes her aside "to talk about old times."

Posy asks if Daniel is straight? "Yes, he did what he thought was honorable and right for Cinnabar. It really is that simple with him."

Posy tells Adele that Porra is planning a similar grab of Tattersall, a Cinnabar protectorate.

60) Daniel as the meeting breaks up. Posy is walking away, so Daniel joins Adele. Adele explains the situation. Time is obviously of the essence.

Daniel grins and points out that--as Adele knows--there's no courier in the RCN whose time the *Sissie* can't beat. They'll lift in six hours and complete the repairs on the way.