

Knight Sky

The Battle for Sector Z7 Ultimately
Becomes a Battle for
Earth

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ
and to my darling wife, Faith,
without whom this book could never have
been conceived and written.

Author's note:

This book is written with the concept that space travel was developed very quickly – when the discovery and experimentation with the element kilzanine progresses. If this were discovered today, people could be exploring nearby solar systems within 15 to 20 years. Look at how fast the Internet has so effectively and so vastly changed our society.

Much of the technology used in this book is barely ahead of today's technology. Twenty or 25 years from now, even if we are in space, there will be gasoline-powered automobiles on our roads. Electrical energy and other energy systems will work their way into our transportation needs, but the transformation to non-gasoline vehicles, for example, will not be complete.

I see a bright future for technology and for society, but a poor future for humanity, as bias will become more and more prevalent against Christians, against God and against anyone who stands up for Christianity. As society continues to degrade in this way, there will be a further increase in violence and crime.

As humankind moves into space, crime and criminal organizations will follow. But in the end, the Earth will remain as the center for all activity, both legal and criminal.

In the early exploration of space, there will be sectors of space divided for reference and governance. But criminals will take advantage of this, crossing over sector lines as easily as they cross state, territorial and national borders today.

In this, the early exploration of space will escalate much more quickly than governments' ability to maintain some form of law and order in space. In this book, the struggle to preserve peace on Earth ultimately depends on the leadership, courage, strength and moral fiber of those who take on the job of policing space.

The Battle for Sector Z7

Chapter 1

Marine Sergeant Serah Beria had just finished a shift of guard duty on Sector Z7's hub, typically a dull routine.

Relaxing in her bunk in the Marine Center, a big cement dome attached to the hub, she could see her friend Sgt. Talia Mitchell across the aisle in her bunk. Suddenly a loud rumble and then a huge crash thundered over them. Beria watched helplessly, seemingly in slow motion, as a huge chunk of concrete slammed down on the skull of Mitchell. Three people were screaming in horror as more huge chunks fell from the ceiling, revealing the darkness of space. As alarms sounded, Beria reached for a breathing unit and blankets to protect her and others from the planet's noxious -50 degree atmosphere. She looked around at the horror of dozens of people crushed by falling cement chunks, or exposed to the planet's egregious atmosphere...

...

Lt. Steve Boone was dreaming about a simpler time when his family had a horse farm in Wisconsin, and he used to ride his horse Flakey up and down the winding hills that surrounded his home.

That was a long time ago, before he joined the Space Knights and wanted to explore space, rather than the neighboring countryside.

But his dream was interrupted. Suddenly excruciating pain seared through his body, as though every nerve ending he had was on fire, all at once.

Then it stopped. He realized the stasis field that kept him alive had suddenly collapsed, causing his momentary intense pain. His ship, Knightship 209, was no longer traveling dozens of light years an hour through the interspatial slip stream.

Everyone on his seven-man ship had awoken to the realization that they were not at their destination, Kemuel 6, the hub of Sector Z9.

“Where are we?” he asked, almost in unison with his shipmates. “We’ve fallen out of the slipstream.”

“Is everyone alright?” Commander John Tirzah said, speaking it with more emphasis than a casual greeting.

“I think so.” and “yes, sir” were the responses from his six crewmates.

Tirzah went into the bridge, and the instrument panel lit up like a Christmas tree. “We are... just 55.7 megameters away from Kislon 3,” he reported. “The six Knight ships behind us in the stream are here too. The other eight in front of us must be still headed for Kemuel.”

Emerging from the bridge, he directed Lt. Jackson Nebo to man the communications panel. “I suspect we will be getting an urgent message to go to Kislon,” Tirzah said. “Boone, check out our furry friends. I suspect they’re loose. Their stasis field was interrupted at the same time ours were.”

Boone went back to check and sure enough, cockroaches were scurrying for the corners of the ship. Although their stasis field had been interrupted, only five of the critters were lying dead on the floor. The other 30 of this special cargo destined for the potential farm planet of Mizpah 8 were scurrying for the dark places of the ship.

“Houston, we have a problem,” Boone half-joked.

“OK crew, let’s hunt down those pests,” Tirzah said in all seriousness.

The crew searched though and around the multiple cargo boxes, but 13 of the critters escaped detection. Nebo received a message from Capt. Eli Shiloh of Knight 211 directing all seven ships to Kislon at maximum speed.

The bridge crew immediately took their stations, and ignored the cockroach problem.

“Any word as to why our orders changed?” Crewman Lackey asked.

“Shiloh never got a response from Kision,” Nebo said. “The fact that we’re here at all – and not headed to Kemuel – along with the lack of response from the hub, is reason enough. I suppose it’s possible that the ships fell out of the slipstream at precisely the closest place of our path to Kision, but I doubt it.”

Lt. David Zophar, the ship’s navigator, piped up: “It’s only about a 3 quadrillion-to-one coincidence.”

“Why were we carrying cockroaches anyway?” asked Lackey.

“Some farmer wanna-to-be on Mizpah 8 thought they’d make good pets,” joked Zophar.

“Actually, he was hoping the roaches would eat some of the weird alien vegetation on the planet, and allow him to grow Earth-type crops,” Nebo said.

“Well, he’s not getting these for a while,” Boone said, holding up a glass jar filled with the critters.

As he said it, the hub at Kision became visible on the front viewscreen, and he nearly dropped the jar as he heard several gasps and saw an image of destruction.

The hub on the planet Kision 3 was a base with two globes and a lower, flat structure between them, a typical setup for a hub. One globe contained the command and control center for the sector and the other was the Marine barracks, which housed 100 Marines, the security force for the base. The structure between them contained various shops, the medical center, the Knight station with three ship ports, five cargo ship ports, and other support functions.

But this hub was different; the right globe on the screen was completely dark and destroyed. It was as though the globe was cracked on top and caved in, like an eggshell.

“Was that the Marine base or the C and C?” Boone asked, as the joking was gone. He suddenly realized he nearly dropped the container in his hand, and tightened his grip on it.

“No way to tell without going down there,” Nebo said. Then he changed his mind. “Wait. The sensor array is still there. It was the Marine base that was wiped out.”

“That means the C and C is still intact. Why are they not answering our hails?”

No ships were docked at the hub. The Knight docking stations – three of them on the north side of the bay area – were unused, and apparently undamaged.

Nebo noticed a flashing light on his panel and called Commander Tirzah over. “Sir,” he whispered. “A coded message is coming in, for your eyes only.”

“I’ll take it at my station, Tirzah said, matter-of-factly.

He went to his station, and enabled his decoder. The message came through, but after the address to Tirzah, it merely had two words and a signature:

“Knight Sky. Shiloh.”

He sent a simple acknowledgement, in the same code.

The code was hardly unexpected. After all, C&C was compromised in this sector.

Those two words, Knight Sky, directed that no radio communication giving away plans could be given out. It also directed action, especially for the first ship in line. Their ship.

“Lieutenant, take us down and dock us at the Knight docking station,” Tirzah told his intrepid pilot, Gideon Johnson.

“Now everyone, listen up. We are going down to dock at the Knight station. Five of us will be suiting up and armed with the laser rifles. Our first job will be to secure the large multi-purpose room connected to the docks. We’ll get more orders there. Suit up.”

He turned to Lt. Zophar, his closest friend and confidant on the ship and pulled him aside. “Zoph, you and Johnson are to remain on this ship. Keep an eye on the screens. If any new vessels emerge, contact us immediately.”

The trip down to the station was uneventful and quick. Laser-assisted navigation tools lined up the ship with the airlock, and the two connected.

Boone and Lackey knelt down in front of the airlock door, and took a deep breath from inside their combination deflector/self-contained breathing apparatus suits. Nebo and Tirzah stood behind them, ready for anything. Tirzah nodded to the fifth member of the assault team, Ensign Josh Mauer, a communications technician. Mauer, at his nod, entered the code to open the airlock. After

checking to see the the airlock was intact and empty, all five men crowded into the space; the door behind them closed. Tirzah nodded to Mauer again. This time the airlock's opposite doors opened.

An eerie silence fell over the group as they slowly entered the large and apparently vacant multi-purpose room. It was used for unloading supplies, as a meeting room, a dining room, and general congregating area.

"Clear... Clear... Clear," was recited as each man focused on a different part of the room. As they entered further into the room, lights came on automatically. The room was empty.

Using his extremely short range radio, Tirzah sent the message to Zophar and Johnson. Clear.

Zophar pushed a button on his console, and while no one on the ground could see it, lights on K-209's outer wings changed color, from red to green. The six other ships, two by two, came down, docked, dispatched many of their crew members into the large room through the other two airlocks, and headed back into orbit.

Tirzah quickly determined that the oxygen level was normal, and there were no hazardous gasses in the room.

Squadron Commander Capt. Eli Shiloh was the first to emerge from K-211. In his hand was a small device. He turned the device on and waited. Crewman Lackey started to say something, but was immediately hushed by the others.

Shiloh's device eventually emitted a green light. The room was not bugged. It was safe to talk in there.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have a serious situation on our hands," Shiloh started, after all the ships had left, except for K-209.

"This hub, which is the central source for communication, trade, supplies and security for this entire sector of space, has been compromised. We don't know by whom. We don't know what the conditions are out there. All we know for sure is that whoever did this may have left people behind, alive, dead or dying. There may be spies in this base. They may have left scavengers, soldiers, a cleanup crew or traps for us.

“One thing is clear. The 39 people in this room, and the 14 people – two each – on our ships, are all that stands between this sector remaining in the Earth Space Federation, and pirates or whatever assassins did this from wreaking havoc on the 35 different Earth colonies in this sector.

“We need to retake this base, or the results could be disastrous for years to come.”

Then he started giving orders to crews from each ship. “K-213: head to the medical section and secure it. Then start sweeping the mall area for survivors and for bodies. Establish a morgue room, perhaps in one of the bars on the strip, closest to the medical center, and bring the dead there.”

“K-214: Go immediately to the Marine Center, with breathers, and look for survivors. After that, assist 213.”

“K-215: We need to secure quarters for us. This Knight station should have adequate facilities for at least most of us. Make sure if there are any personal belongings of others, that they are stowed away safely. Then assist 213.”

“K209, 210, 211 and 212, you’re with me. We’re heading up to C&C.”

“Now, three things everyone. Use only short-range radio on Theta frequency. Use it as little as possible. Second, your ID beacons should be set to aqua. Don’t shoot anyone who’s aqua. Thirdly, remember we can’t completely trust anyone who’s not in this room right now.”

Shiloh held up his hand as though to halt everyone, and went into a small room. No one could see him put in special codes into a computer. It showed the status of the base. It showed infrequent life signs, but normal atmosphere.

“You probably won’t need your breathing systems, but keep them handy. Indications are that the atmosphere controls have not been affected.”

K-215 crew members began a brief search of the Knight section, and the others followed Shiloh as he prepared to open the door to the mall area.

The door opened. Silence filled the area. He tapped the commander of K-213 and pointed to where the medical section was.