

Timeline

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The universe of 'Welcome to Valhalla' - WtV for short - assumes a long history. The, for humans, most relevant aspect is that our modern world is just the second try of humanity. The first one was made before the last major iceage, that is, over a quarter million years ago. 250.000 years ago, right.

Back then humanity was still split in three main groups:

First, the modern human, homo sapiens, from Africa.

Second, the Neanderthals living in the northern climates of Eurasia.

Third, the eastern Denisovans in south-east asia, sharing their sphere of influence with the diminutive homo floresiensis.

That age has a rich history with heroes and catastrophes.

But it is, for the greater part, not known to the people of the 'Welcome to Valhalla' storyline.

All ancient dates are approximations. Given the temporal distance, temporal precision might not be that important.

Originally dates were given in the anthropocene timescale, starting 10.000 BC. But too many people found that confusing.

Plus, the anthropocene timescale is a bit unusable within the 'Welcome to Valhalla' setting.

~ 270.000 BC

The three main branches of humanity, Homo Sapiens, Homo Neanderthalensis and the Homo Denisovan exist on earth.

They develop from tribal societies to nation states. After a bitter war, fought in the end with nuclear weapons,

they peacefully merge in the Empire of Nut. Exploration of the solarsystem begins, in part to find ressources and space to live.

~ 265.000 BC

The phase of stellar expansion begins. Huge robotic spacecraft, the terraformers, are sent out to explore the adjacent star systems

and to build spacestations and to terraform planets of terran settlement. The much slower ice-arc, freeze-sleeper colony ships, are sent after them.

~ 260.000 BC

"The First Sin" happens: Unknown to humanity which interpret the returned data from a point of blissful ignorance,

the first terraformer actually enacted a genocide in terraforming a world inhabited by sapient lifeforms.

The programming of the terraformers simply did not cover the possibility of alien life.

The Terraformers boost further outward to terraform more worlds, whilst the slow colonyships start founding colony after colony on the prepared worlds.

~ 255.000 BC

As per program, the Terraformers have the limited ability to build copies of themselves, cascading their numbers,

speeding up the exploration and terraforming of planets.

More planets are terraformed and sometimes their native life extinguished. Terra-like worlds don't fare much better:

When the inhabitants make effective resistance, the

terraformers sterilize the planet before terraforming it.

After about 6000 years of expansion, the terran sphere of influence spans almost 200 lightyears in radius.

73 colonies are established, ranging from, by then, densely populated worlds equalling earth, to worlds either sparsely populated

or with only a token settlement due to the harsh climate. Some systems actually don't even have planets, yet are colonized.

The colonists settled in space habitats which the passing-through Terraformer erected as waystations.

~ 252.000 BC

A small group of terraformers that teamed up to bridge a large starless stretch of space run into a stable wormhole.

On the other side, 1000 lightyears counterclockwise away, they emerge. They disassemble drifting ores - a derelict spacestation which controlled the wormhole - before proceeding with their task of terraforming worlds.

They discover the homeworld of the Khet, a war-damaged planet Kidari, orbiting a jupiter-like gas giant.

To the terraformers a terraformable planet, the Khet are lucky. For one, their world initially was an earth like world, so the terraformers actually repair it.

And for the other, the Khet do not even try to resist the terraformers in a meaningful way, believing them to be gods healing their world.

The collapse of the wormhole is detected by a starfaring species. The Velos with their allies the Anatians arrive, finding giant machines repairing a world.

They get into contact with the machines by behaving for one non-threatening, and for another by behaving just like humans would have.

At the same time, a colonyship of the species that the first terraformer eradicated, launched just a few years before the machines arrival, is picked up coreward

by a Galactics customs vessel for improper identification and serialnumbers. Whilst the scared survivors delete the informations of their homeworlds galactic position,

the Galactics panic seeing the recordings the vessel received from its dying homeworld. For everything indicates a rogue AI battlefleet is hellbent on genocidal actions.

A mobilization is called for. But as usual in large bureaucracies, it takes long. Not days or weeks, but literally decades pass until it is decided to even discuss this topic in a meeting of the galactic council.

~ 251.500 BC

The Velos are on their leisurly way back to their homeworld when they get a call from the terraformer repairing Kidari: If they would be so kind to carry a priority message quickly to a certain point in space.

The Velos accept. As their species is old and they are long lived, they don't listen much to the chatter of the younger races.

So they missed that one of the terraformers they met in the orbit of Kidari moved on and placed a relay station at the border of a nearby solar system that was off limits being a military base.

And when the relaystation was attacked and destroyed, the Terraformer came back, built a better station and then removed the threat to the station - destroying the military base.

The Galactics know now exactly where one of the Killermachines is and send a huge fleet to hunt it down.

The Velos receive the parcel from the terraformers without knowing what is in it, and jump into terran controlled space, delivering the message.

Upon finding that the point of origin on the maps is a small solar system, which, funnily, is prominently marked in their own star charts, they go on to earth.

Only on Terra they learn that the terraformers talk about a military danger to humanity which they estimate they can not stop.

The Velos are switching on their radio and finally learn that the benevolent machines they met are classified officially as galactic enemy number 2.

Galactic enemy number 1 are their as of yet unknown creators. Whoever helps them, protects them, or cooperates with them voluntarily will be punished like them:

Edict of Eradication, full genocide.

The price for building self replicating AI based weapons with the intent to kill off other species.

Which the humans didn't and never intended. And the Velos believe them. As a very ancient species, they have a lot of influence, and they promise to help the terrans by stopping the edict of eradication.

They give the terrans the secret of uplifting, as uplifted species are legally not responsible for their creators actions.

This and a peculiarity of the Velos uplift virus will prevent the terran colonies being confiscated by the galactics and preserve them for humanity.

Because, but this the Velos only tell the philosophers of the Council of Terra, the uplifts will be able to interbreed stable and safely with humans.

To their amazement the terrans have been doing research into uplifting already, but only saw it as a leisure technology for the rich and wealthy.

As several terraformers will breach into civilized galactic space earlier than the terran sublight communication network or even the Velos could reach them and tell them to stand down,

the Council decides, after discussing it with the Velos, to fight a defensive war to delay the by now inevitably coming Galactics attack.

The Velos can only help Terra when nobody knows they're in collusion with the humans.

And also, the humans carry the basic responsibility, but the Velos are willing to lend them a hand to enhance the odds.

As a parting gift, the Velos agree to take three of the most modern colony arcs into tow, bringing them to a far away area of space.

By then the Galactics boast of the destruction of the "mighty enemy fleet" consisting out of three terraformers and their auxiliary units.

Their own battlefleet took a harsh beating against the actually primitive machines.

The ground units repairing Kidari are not considered to be part of the terraformer fleet as these machines are spotted to be always near Khet.

And an AI genocide machine wouldn't repair a biosphere and ignore a sapient lifeform when it could just as well smash it, wouldn't it?

~ 251.000 BC

The galactics battlefleet cleared out two of the three terraformers. They think they have them all, falling for a set of ruses.

For one, one of the terraformers compartmentalized itself and packed its modules into innocent asteroids drifting through space.

For another, the "last" Terraformer they destroyed sent an omega message into a direction away from human controlled space.

The fleet follows the trail of that transmission - seeing the Khet cleaning up their planet with primitive machines.

Which obviously the Khet must have built themselves as AI controlled killer robots wouldn't peacefully repair an inhabited planet.

With the Fleet broadcasting their current mission status, also the Velos and thus the terrans learn of the outcome of the battle.

The Velos offer to tow the available three brand-new terran colony-arcs through hyperspace, their barely 200 meter long 'tincan' of a

spaceship being powerful enough to tow the three several-kilometer long arc ships without much slowdown.

In the decades that have passed since the Velos arrived, the design of the arcs has been massively modified to

reduce the risk of recognition by the galactic forces, which still don't have detailed informations about humanity.

The Velos bring the three arcs to the position of the dismantled wormhole station, from where it is only a few years travel to the Kokiva

system under their own power. The entire system is filled with the automatic chatter of omega messages. The galactics let the

wreckage of the terraformers drift after making sure there was no nanotech to be found, and thus, once broken down enough, the wreckage would not become an active threat again.

All arcs collect as much resources as possible. One lands on Kidari, claiming it under the Terran name Lantrei. That vessel was crewed by humans of mixed racial ancestry from the borderlands - modern humans, one would say - who felt ill at ease with uplifts. Whilst the terraforming process is well underway on Lantrei, the planet is still deadly toxic to humans. The landers dig in and the humans construct underground shelters. During that time they learn about the Khet. As the Khet and the terraforming robots get along well and were not bothered by the galactics battlefleet, they are considered a necessary piece of camouflage for the terran colony.

Tests show that the Khet themselves are an uplifted species, but the method used is completely different from the system the terrans now have access to. When later on surface works become necessary before completion of the terraforming process, that process is used to create uplifts, nicknamed Chimeras, as they combine the genetic heritage of Terra and Kidari. The other two arcs set off to more distant stars, away from any settlement of the Galactics known to the Velos.

All arcs are under strict order never to contact earth. In fact, the position of earth as well as their starcharts are scrubbed.

~ 250.500 BC

Right beyond the fringe of Terra controlled space, the inevitable happens:

Terraformer #3.8 bursts out of a stellar cloud it had traversed for the last 80 years, emerging within a quarter lightyear of

a bustling tradehub. The updated informations and instructions to all terraformers are still over a hundred years behind it.

Its sensors detect a terraformable world in the nearby system and it corrects course. Soaked full with the gases from

the interstellar cloud, #3.8 and its attendant fleet come in at high speed, intent to brake inside the system,

given they have surplus fuel in plenty. A customs vessel of the trade space station 'Good Business' tries to intercept

the Terraformer, mistaking it for a bulk freighter.

As the small vessel wasn't reacting to its radio broadcasts on all bands, #3.8 took the vessels vector as indicative of an attack,

#3.8 opens fire with its meteor defense, vaporizing the unprotected customs vessel.

All over the system, sirens start to yell.

The cloud had been known for eons to disturb all kinds of FTL navigation and FTL drives.

Nobody had ever expected an attack from that direction.

The entire system was calling for help. The Galactics battlefleet that was - much to its critics amusement - still searching

for the suspected Terraformers origin, in a completely wrong direction, received the call and turned around.

They arrived a week later - an excellent job on the navigators part. By then #3.8 had wrecked all vessels attacking it or its fleet.

It was considered a miracle that a bulk freighter and a travelling religious group were spared, despite passing by very close to #3.8.

They had not lain on its flightpath, their vectors of movements had not intersected with anything and they fired no weapons at the Terraformer.

The battle was short. #3.8 fought with all the knowledge and tricks terran history had to offer, but did not have the months of time for preparations that #7.6, #7.7 and #8.8 had. For the Galactics, the battle was a huge success, despite the losses.

For one, the battlefleet had shown it was able to defend a civilized system under attack.

For another, by the time #3.8 knew that it would loose and starting falsifying or deleting the infomrations in its databanks,

one of its minor communication-clusters had been disconnected by a stray hit. It was used to communicate back to the - at the time unreachable due to the cloud - terran deep space network.

It had buffered all routine messages including the direction of the nearest relay at the most outlying colonial world.

When the galactic powers-that-are got their hands onto the wreckage, scout vessels were soon able to verify the existence of the terran

colony. Having received the warning only a few years before, the colony was still in its infancy with barely two million colonists.

The first uplifts were still barely more than toddlers.

Terraformer #9.3 had been diverted to the colony, its scheduled arrival still five years out. It had been passing by the colony at only a lightyear distance.

~ 250.300 BC

Repairing the damage taken in the last battle and using its now widespread popularity, the galactic battlefleet

(think rather of them as one of many defence service contractors) builds up strength in the coming four years before they attack.

The colony had about 10 years to prepare. Assuming an easy victory based on their previous battle experience, they learn a lot of new lessons.

Whilst the siege of the planets last underground fortifications is underway, #9.3 arrives, having converted itself into a full

fledged battleship by the time of its arrival. Its attendant fleet likewise is no longer all types of support vessels, but terran-tech

solutions against galactics-tech ships of the line. That they are still outclassed, outgunned and outmaneuvered doesn't bother #9.3.

For one it doesn't have the ability to feel bothered, for another its task is clear:

Delay the galactics fleet, wreak havoc, and ideally evacuate as much of the colony as possible.

In the end, only a small group of about 100 survivors manages to reach the colony-arc, which was parked out in the Oort cloud of the system.

The colony arc had been sent for refitting and refueling to the rim of the system, where it had the highest chance of staying undiscovered.

Only one fortress could be relieved, but most of its population gets caught as the main transport vessels get intercepted after the

rest of #9.3 attendant fleet and the terraformer itself are destroyed.

It shows the Velos were right: The uplifts are not considered to be terrans, but, as the world was terraformed, are accepted as a

sort-of natives to the world. They are left, the few thousands that there are, barely adolescents, to take care of themselves in a world

now devoid of all terran-made artifacts.

The galactics leave a set of surveillance satellites in place that are to warn in case terrans should try to reclaim the world.

And to discourage other galactic civilizations from sneaking in and trying to exploit the 'primitives'. In the following one hundred and fifty years, often faster than the messages traverse the terran deep space network, they conquer system

after system. But after each system, they need more reinforcements, more new vessels.

20 lightyears out from Terra, in the area of the so-called inner colonies, the costs of the expedition have risen so high

that many of both the more timid as well as the smarter voices - latter having studied the Terraformers as well as the humans - suggest that a peace treaty might be a good idea.

One argument is that the Terraformers do not qualify as reason for an edict of extinction. Others argue that the terraforming-technology

of the Terrans is far in advance of all such technologies ever developed by other spacefaring races.

The reason? Due to FTL technology they could simply afford to search for an already habitable planet in a larger area.

The Velos reclaim their seats on galactic political meetings after a long time of absence and start lobbying for the edict to be lifted.

They actually lobby for more, but there is a scare of rogue AIs originating from Terra. Many Galactics believe that the facts provided by the anti-edict / pro-Terra group are faked.

In the mean time, Terra and the inner colonies not yet under attack send out a last fleet of very slow, but also very secretive, colonyships.

These ships are to travel to the stars for at least 100.000 years, to arrive at their destinations at a time in the very far away future.

Far, even for the Empire of Nut with its 20.000 years of history.

~ 250.250 BC

Only by invoking an ancient law - much to the chagrin of some of the other old races - of demanding loyalty from races in their

debt - from having been created by them or having had their homeworld rescued or from having been brought to new worlds for colonisation

beyond their reach - the Velos narrowly manage to lift the edict.

However, they fail in stopping the crusade, meaning that earth will be fought to the ground and all humans from the colonies - mostly

stored in stasis containers on freighters at the moment - will be repatriated to earth, even when that will mean swamping the planet with humans.

Which is almost as bad as an edict of extinction, but the Velos hope to soften it up by getting several of their own people into the implementation phase.

The inner colonies, each a system as well settled as the solar system of Terra, prove to be hard nuts to crack.

Despite there only being two dozen of settled systems and - to the Galactics initial relief, no more Terraformers - humanity proves to be more tenacious than their giant robots were.

Overpopulated galactic planets happily promise everything and then some more to their undesireables and ship them out on bulk freighters to

support the war effort. Rare is the junkyard retaining a single still functional hull.

The last system before Terra, Tau Ceti with its capital world of Eidon, lasts a full ten years, longer than the previous three systems together.

The systems military commander, or Quetzal, as the title goes, Babemba Toron, is spirited away by the last remaining soldiers and the uplift medics of his staff, right under the noses of the Galactics as they take the last stronghold on Eidon. In the end, Eidon falls. The fact that the Galactics military reverted more and more often to measures that many of the smaller, younger and weaker races painfully remember to have been called "accidents" when it happened to them, gathers more and more support in favour of the humans. Because whilst they fight with all tricks one can imagine, and then some more, they do not kill captured soldiers and they do ask survivors for the proper rites to be applied to killed Galactics soldiers. The summary parading around and public chopping-off-of-heads applied to terran soldiers against both Galactics rules-of-war as well as Terran traditions before driving surviving civilians naked into the stasis containers finally breaks popular support for the edict for good - as well as it prevents the intended dumping of some dozen billions of terrans onto Terra.

~ 250.100 BC

The solar system falls after a long and protracted battle. Terra lasts two more years. The Galactics battlefleet went through several mutinies when tactics are used that many younger races remember having been labelled as "regrettable accidents" by the older races. The Velos spirit, under the cover of Terran sneak counter attacks against the fleets supply train, most of the stasis transporters away. The remainders of the governing council of Terra are forced to send out a message over the terran deep space network to all remaining units in space. They are to either shut down or to surrender themselves to the next galactic control post inside the former Terran sphere of influence. The Galactics don't know that it instructs all terraformers receiving the message to stand down only when they visited a system since the message was originally sent out. In case they were still in transit or were in an empty solar system, they are to camouflage themselves, slow down and go to hibernation for a thousand years before their updated programming is to take over. After the message is sent to the satisfaction of the Galactics, all technology on Terra is destroyed. And then four billion stasis-kept humans are unloaded onto a devastated planet, roughly each racial group in the area of their ancestors. This, despite many of the younger species and the Velos pointing out that the edict of extinction is illegal because humanity didn't actually create AIs and the genocides humanity is to fault for were made unknowingly. This compared to similar world-ending effects for which older races just said "oopsie" and gave the few survivors a cookie as compensation, in two documented cases even figuratively. "It won't extinct them, just shrink them to size," is the reply.

~ 250.000 BC

The now unloaded stasis transports are used to ferry the uplifts from the various colonyworlds around until "specieswise pure" colonies are established.

Whilst on Terra an iceage begins as the result of the orbital bombardments, many of the younger, smaller races - at least all that had and "oopsie!" event with older galactic races, voluntarily do guard duty in the former systems of the Empire of Nut.

Those who's homeworlds were devastated by "oopsie!" events with older races miraculously discover drifting, almost mint terraformer 'wrecks',

fully configured for crewed operations. In some cases the races finding them devastate the interior designs to cover up the fact that the seats were made to-spec for nunhuman usage. The Velos stand guard in the solar system, often having to ward off "tourists" coming along heavily armed and paid for their travels by the anti-terran faction races.

On Terra, the long ice age begins. Without infrastructure and technology, no functional remaining agriculture, starvation soon sets in.

Long-forgotten as well as new diseases do their work.

Some uplifts that hid away try to help using their natural skill. Tiny figurines and carvings, like of the lion man of #####

remember them, as they used their physical prowess to kill large animals and then teach the humans how to do it.

On Terra, the long night has begun.

On some of the former terran colonies, the uplifted species - now sorted species-pure per planet by the Galactics - start the first

advanced stone age or early bronze age societies. Whilst they have the know-how, they were left with nothing in the sense of tools.

~ 245.000 BC

Stars move. Much sooner than natural, the star charts of the formerly Terran sphere of influence become such a jumbled mess

that fewer and fewer Galactics travel into those regions. Especially as the Velos and their often ridiculed allies enforce the rules laid

down for the former Terran domain quite ruthlessly. No visitors, no contact with the new natives of those worlds, no travelling into those systems.

Subtly manipulating the news, guiding the focus of galactic interest to other places, the Velos ensure that the war drifts out of

common memory. The area of space gets labelled as 'boring' and 'mildly difficult to navigate'

The last of the three arkships relocated by the Velos settles down on a barely habitable world and starts terraforming.

~ 240.000 BC

On earth, humanity reaches its lowest stage, falling back to stone age niveau.

Elsewhere, all "captured" Terraformers were put to good use. Most of the younger, smaller races now possess a second world to call home, free of influence

from the older races. And those not having an additional planet now can lay claim to several large spaceborne habitats.

The Taurians, once almost eradicated by the actions of a single terraformer, were compensated with a barely habitable planet in a backwater solar system.

They received two Terraformers, or rather "happened to stumble upon them". Much to the chagrin of the old race of the Zip, who

enjoyed trading Taurian shaved fur against all that the Taurians needed to live in their system, the two giant machines enabled

the Taurians not only to turn their system into a paradise with two luxuriously verdant worlds, but also a large industrial powerhouse.

Amongst the dozens of spaceborne ring habitats in which much of the Taurian light and service industry is located, the Taurians

build two stations which they gift the humans stored in the four stasis freighters the Velos gave into their hands.

Amongst the teeming billions of Taurians, the 15 million humans, survivors of three fallen terran colony worlds, simply are invisible.

The Rulers of Taura declare that the terrans paid for their folly, and the terraformers paid for their deeds.

If it wouldn't be for the Taurians tradition of considering useful things members of society, many other species would have balked at the thought of making one of the scary terraformers an official member of ones species.

By the time the last guardship leaves the solar system of earth, leaving 'guarding' earth to a number of autonomous defense stations

of Velos improvements on Terran designs, most stasis freighters were unloaded and recycled, the terran survivors living more or less hidden

amongst the populations of those races that received a terraformer as a payment for this future service.

With no large vessel able to approach Earth due to the Velos installed defence system, only a few sleeper agents manage to reach Earth to influence

human society to come down even further and ideally stay down.

~ 200.000 BC

On earth, tribes of homo sapiens in modern day Ethiopia start developing burial rituals.

One of the sleeper agents found that a whole bunch of his colleagues had landed in swamps and drowned when trying to get out. He acquires human help to rescue the corpses and buries them according to his own rites. He appears as a god to the primitive humans.

~ 150.000 BC

On Eidon in the Tau Ceti system, Kira Sa Toron, the adopted white tigress daughter of Babemba Toron and his families personal medic and childrens bodyguard,

appears out of a secret stasis chamber deep under the north polar mountain range. She travels the world on foot and teaches the white and orange

tigers she meets on the different continents basic and advanced cultural technologies, before, after 20 years, returning to the stasis chamber and going

back to a timeless sleep, guarding Babemba and his children.

The tigers rise from stone age barbarity begins.

Elsewhere, a thousand lightyears and more away, the first of the strip-moon arkships of the last wave of terran colony ships reaches its destination. #4.9, having waited 50.000 years

camouflaged as a small moon, builds a single habitat in the systems Oort-Cloud to take in the settlers.

Due to the long travel time in cryostasis, only a handful of the half-million settlers can be revived.

All of them with more or less heavy brain damage and other defects.

The arkships complement of uplifted snowleopards fared a bit better. They are placed in charge of the humans.

After a thousand years the populations are stable and healthy again.

#4.9 assembles several roaming habitat type colony vessels which are crewed for maximum genetic diversity. #4.9, heavily camouflaged as a crewed vessel - which's crew consists out of frozen snowleopards that didn't survive the initial arkships travel - sets off to look for lifeless worlds that can be made habitable on larger timescales than the original terraformer project called for. And, too, that can be 'terraformed' for totally different chemistries.

~ 100.000 BC

On the former colony world of Nairal, the leopards form their first world-government. Solving all major problems of society within the next 500

years, their culture stagnates after they explored the planets of their system. After another 1000 years their society collapses back to their

homeworld. Only the minority group of the mountain loving and philosophically inclined snowleopards decide to keep all the gained knowledge alive.

On the former colony world of Lyrta, the impact of a large asteroid - the drifting wreck of #6.3 and a galactics battle platform

#6.3 took out by ramming - destroys 76 percent of all lifeforms in the resulting impact-induced ice age.

Impacting weeks before a nuclear war could break out between the various badger nations, it sort-of actually saves the species.

The survivors fall back into primitivity once more.

~ 60.000 BC

On earth, small family groups of homo sapiens leave Africa. In the area of modern day Syria they run into their remote cousins, the neanderthals.

Both sides have ancient tales of brave brothers long lost. The two groups soon interbreed.

Bows and arrows start to make their debut. Another sleeper agent tries to seed dissent, but runs into trouble as the mostly nomadic groups of humans ignore him.

~ 50.000 BC

On Eidon, orange tiger farmers discover that a balanced diet of peas and maize is capable of keeping a tiger almost as healthy as the usual

meat based diet. From nomadic hunters and resident herders, the orange tigers start to become farmers.

The orange tigers of three settlements form the first mutual defensive contract against the large carnivorous reptiles of the swamps and jungles.

In the white tigers domain, the first king crowns himself after killing the ruler of a neighbouring tribe.

The losers tribe gets enslaved and becomes personal property of the king.

The women of the successful tribe see the treatment of the women of the subjugated tribe and decide to find a way to protect women

from the follies of males. This predecessor of the Church of the Mother, deifying the mythical Kirsä Orro, is founded in a reclusive valley at the feet of the polar mountain ranges.

~ 50.000 BC

On Earth, modern humans migrate from Africa into India and Asia, interbreeding with the local Denisovans.

Homo floresiensis dies out.

~ 40.000 BC

On Eidon, the Church of the Mother is founded when women fleeing from a fight between tribes discover vast, temperate caverns under the northpolar mountain range.

~ 30.000 BC

On Earth, Neanderthals slowly die out. The Cro-Magnon man replaces them, moving into Europe. Cave paintings of the animals they hunt and kill are common for them.

~ 25.000 BC

On Eidon, smaller lords of the white tigers living in the coastal regions become hard pressed as more powerful realms battle amongst each other.

Some of them set sail to explore the ocean for more islands, ideally remote ones to claim beyond the reach of the warring kingdoms.

Many reach, independantly, the continent of the orange tigers. Trying to lay claim to it and subdue the seemingly weak locals,

they soon get driven into the ocean by hunter-patrols on horseback. Returning to their islands, word spreads soon to the warring empires about rich land in the west.

The islands are conquered by the bigger realms. Upon learning about rich lands in the west, the great realms send out better equipped expeditions.

They manage to capture one coastal city by surprise, massacring the population as it does not submit.

That night, attracted by the scent of blood and not stopped by alert guards, but instead finding the cities gates open,

several packs of carnivorous reptiles and even some large species storm the town.

Orange tiger scouts observe that the white tigers, despite surprised and outnumbered, manage to retreat to their ships with comparatively little losses.

Swift catamarans from other cities are sent to explore eastward.

~ 24.900 BC

Within a hundred years, there were over thirty expeditions by the white tigers, each better equipped, but each more swiftly repelled.

The orange tigers have, thanks to the efforts of the Captain Naumur Rowka, useable maps of their worlds entire globe.

Spies with bleached fur have provided detailed informations about the white tigers domains.

A great conclave of all towns of the orange tigers comes to agree that the white tigers won't stop, can't stop their agressions,

due to their societies structure. Most of the inland cities start a massive and well organized research project, whilst the coastal cities enhance their defensive capabilities. The next concerted assault of the white tigers is defeated at sea by swift sailed scout and primitive steamboats firing steam cannons. The few vessels of the white tigers that manage to limp back are ridiculed and hunted down for cowardice instead of listened to. Fourty years later, one island after the other at the white tigers continent stops communicating. Fast sailed catamarans with torpedoes intercept fleeing vessels, whilst well trained groups of commandos disable the heliograph systems that connect islands and main continent. A few weeks later, the first of the white tigers coastal towns falls to a sneak attack at night. Here, however, warning reaches the two empires capitals within days. With another inland town falling or surrendering to the huge eight-wheeled, steam turbine powered tanks that head the columns of infantry and cavalry, the two empires finally come to grips. In a hasty marriage ceremony they wed their children amongst each other.

~ 24.800 BC

Within twenty years the two empires are conquered. The living conditions for the peasants improve.

The Church of the Mother, for millenia in the favour of the noble houses, find themselves bereft of their generous patrons.

Advised by philosophy-teachers of the orange tigers, they start focusing on educating the peasantry. At its core, the church hates the change the orange tigers brought, as its wealth diminishes slowly.

~ 23.000 BC

After a lull and slight regression of the achieved technology, the discovery of out-of-place artifacts start a renaissance of research. The church sows dissent, emphasizing that life has been good, and changing it carries unfathomable risks.

~ 22.500 BC

Powered flight and electricity make their debut on Eidon, which the orange tigers call 'Raia', the Mother,

and the white tigers call Arth, 'the ground under our feet'.

The name 'Eidon' is found only in a few obscure ancient texts, describing a paradise from which the tigers were expelled when 'the gods battled with the devils - and lost'.

The church founds institutions where young white tigers learn and train the 'traditional virtues'.

~ 22.000 BC

Explorers of the northpolar wastes beyond the mountain ranges discover objects and fragments made of materials beyond the tigers

understanding. White tiger biologists create a 'library of the living world' and find discrepancies that defy lab results

on breeding and inheritance. In a schism, the team splits up. The part of the team not agreeing that things simply are the way they are for the mother willed it that way, die of sudden accidents. The other part of the team becomes employed by the church.

~ 21.500 BC

The magnetic and gravitational measurement satellite 'Huntress' discovers thousands of anomalies on the planet.

Those fragments are usually distorted beyond recognition, twisted and charred. The church issues well founded claims on the north polar area, thus blocking easy access to any further exploration.

Orange tigers researchers run across obscure notes regarding the Churchs prized 'library of the living world'.

~ 21.300 BC

In-depth research show that in the deeper strata of the ground fossils of completely different kinds are found.

There are no six-legged mammals alive and there are no four-legged fossils past roughly 250.000 years ago.

Deep-sea research finds fish and other creatures that match the six-legged pattern.

The Church leads campaigns calling to boycott research into the "wonder of life". In secret their ancient mountain retreat gets extended and retrofitted.

~ 21.150 BC

The spacestation 'Highview' is built to serve as a relay between the ground and the planned research station on the larger moon 'Tingue'.

When Highview is sabotaged and burns up in the atmosphere, the robotics research group offers an alternative solution.

Their computing center is on the south pole, as the cold there makes it possible to run computers without the need for costly cooling, yet

there are enough volcanic vents to provide lots of steam power for generators.

They have a base model of a fully automated factory and a primitive AI - derived from childrens toys and healthcare robots - capable

of analyzing a situation and adapting templates to its needs to fulfil a given task.

With the help of private and public enterprises, they build a demonstrator that, within ten years, assembles a fully autonomous base on

the southpole. Embedded under the ice, the station assembles, from raw materials brought in to an ice-free harbour at the coast, a new

type of ultraheavy lifter, Quetzal, the 'feathered snake flying to the stars'.

To prevent anything like a rogue AI scenario, neither the stations powerplants or the nuclear factories are anywhere near the station.

The nuclear factories are located in various locations, usually unsettled regions for radiation safety. And the powerplants

supplying the station are located in volcanic vents at the rim of the southpolar continent.

Each Quetzal is capable of carrying 40.000 metric tons of cargo to the moon and land it safely.

Fully automated, from production to launch and landing, the project is a huge success.

When a terrorist group attacks the station in the deepest arctic winter, the civilians and soldiers ask - not command - the station's computer to protect their children and take care of itself. Which it does. It evacuates the children and a memory core with the station's runtimes with a hastily modified Quetzal to the almost finished moonbase. Then it sends out all its mobile units, equipped with water throwers and glue sprayers, to assist the soldiers and civilians. Wet, freezing and glued together, the terrorists are soon overwhelmed. The station's logic is impeccable: Children need their parents, the terrorists might also have children, none of the combatants would survive outside the station, as a blizzard is coming up. Accordingly the station has to survive, too. So, the terrorists need to be overpowered with minimal casualties for all involved, as fast as possible. That way the primary goal of protecting the children was successfully reached. And would the parents of the children please take the next Quetzal assembled in about an hour and follow their children to the moonbase? It was the first sort-of 'alien abduction' for the orange tigers, but one they happily accepted. The Quetzal took off in the middle of the storm. As heavy as it was, the storm was just a minor inconvenience. Its nuclear pulse drive basically ripped the blizzard to shreds and made the night as bright as day.

~ 21.100 BC

Central Command goes online. The AI taken aboard from the south polar station suggests itself plenty of safeguards against a rogue AI scenario, pointing out that an attack upon the station doesn't necessarily have to be done physically, but could come in form of a software attack. Reporting the facts with some flexibility, the activation of the moonbase is reported to the world. All research that has come under any type of crosshair in the past decades is invited to Central Command, or rather the secondary, isolated module, Central Habitat. It is discovered that the more creative - and thus powerful - an artificial consciousness is, the more inherently unstable it is. Though unstable doesn't mean going berserk, but rather dulling (losing performance) or even going catatonic. One of the safeguards against an AI - or rather AC as the tigers distinguish between the two types by then - going rogue actually alleviates this issue. A subconsciousness for the AC. The result are the monitor-controllers, expert systems protecting their AC against mental and emotional fatigue, collapse and shock.

~ 21.050 BC

Due to the success of the moonbase and the south polar station, a bold plan is made: To repeat the project, but this time letting the moonbase build more moonbases. Within strict parameters, a plan that'll last 10.000 years to implement and that'll avoid anything remotely like a grey goo or paperclip maximizer scenario. The idea is to create artificial habitats, each simulating a biome. In a rare phase of open mindedness, an elderly priestess of the church visits the moonbase. Halfway through the tour of the station something makes her send her staff home and volunteer in an advisory capacity on social issues.

Whilst most of the scientists remain sceptical for years, the 80 years old becomes an invaluable addition to the team.

The church furiously demands her return, but finds no way to force her to.

Her most famous quote is:

"We are one species. We live together since millenia. Yet still, for a big part, we do not really understand each other.

How do you know we are ready to go out to the stars, where there might be others capable of thought and feel?

How do you know if we are ready to become citizens in a world so much vaster than our own, when we still fail at being citizens of our own world?"

The "Space Citizen" project is started

As part of it, using top secret research results from the past 200 years an uplift process is developed to genetically supercharge up to full sapience the two most common pets of the orange tiger society, fennecs and zebras.

~ 21.000 BC

The church cleanses itself from all elements open for progress. Calling it renaissance, traditional and radical values are enforced

as the absolute core values. Every deviation from an anarchonistic set of values is considered heresy.

The church expands and updates its ancient complex under the north polar mountains, happily using all the most modern technology it

condemns as work of heretical philosophies.

The AC's of the south polar station - Icehome - and of Central Command report irregularities in the production flows of the Quetzal heavy lifters drive systems, But the paperworks are impeccable and thus, despite suspicions are shared by several information services, nothing is done.

Plus, who would be so idiotic to fiddle with nuclear bombs?

~ 20.940 BC

DNA analysis prooves that the tigers are a mix between two species. One, feral tigers, can be successfully recreated, the other

is highly incomplete. It shows just that tigers with longer headfur growth have a higher percentage of the unknown species DNA

in them than those with the same type of fur on their head as everywhere else on their body.

In a gravel filled pit at the outskirts of a desert, numerous heavily fragmented skeletons are found.

All skeletons show signs of having

been heavily irradiated and decapitated with something that melted their necks bones. A little bit of DNA can be extracted from a tooth

and from a hipbone, matching up with the separated DNA fragments of the unknown second species. It's only half a chromosom, too

little to even roughly locate the species in the tree of life.

These informations, published in scientific papers, makes much less noise than the other news:

On TV, a fennekim cub of maybe four years stands upright and babbles that it wants to become an astronaut when it is grown up.

Even the news of the successful orbital lift of a pair of blue whales, as the biggest animals on the planet, via the southpole station is

barely noticed outside of the circles involved in conservation and space transportation. They had been trained for years wearing rebreathers.

~ 20.930 BC

The question of who would be so idiotic to use nuclear bombs for anything else than as relatively cheap and clean rocket fuel, is answered:

The Church.

After an initial biological attack, using a clumsily modified variant of the uplift virus that hurt the Church actually more than

the rest of the world, the Church panics when they learn that the scientists on the moonbase consider the actual danger of the virus 'manageable'.

In the last decade, they deposited well shielded nuclear devices at each location where there was anything associated with the orange tigers.

As this covered, in the simplified thinking of the Church's most fanatic adherents entrusted with the deed, everything beyond a school

or a pure computer store, even rural towns usually got dotted with several bombs.

With a centrally controlled detonation, the Church blows away everything reminding them of the orange tigers.

And with them, almost all of their own population. Because not only are three nukes overkill to blow up

a pharmacy, an IT consultant company and a local newspaper in a town of 20.000, but the accumulated effects globally, like raging

wildfires, million tons of dust blown to the stratosphere, radiation damage and finally, nuclear winter.

Into the gloom on the moonbase, Central Command tries to lift the spirits with the message that the whales herd just grew by one with the first whale calf.

~ 20.900 BC

With the exception of the random small backwater village, coastal resort or hill farm, dying under the oncoming nuclear winter or the lingering effects

of radiation poisoning, the world of the tigers is no more.

Exceptions are the moonbase and the deep bunker under the polar mountain range where the Church hunkered down.

The Church does not understand the consequences of their deeds, claiming all that happened to have been caused by the orange tigers.

Some of the guards of the moonbase are white tigers, the children of the terrorists that survived because of the train of thought of the

south polar base. They suggest, and by vote without opposition are allowed to, assemble a few nuclear bombs and melt down the surface

installations of the Church's mountain fortress, in the hope to seal the church in its giant rabbit warren.

~ 20.880 BC

Thanks to the extreme cleanliness of the drive system bombs radiation levels are almost back to normal on the surface after a mere

twenty years. Despite even the landing of several explorer drones, the moonbases crew was unable to find any survivors.

Nature itself is recovering, although the planet is settling in to an iceage.

And so the plan is made to settle the fennekim and the zebras in safe areas of the planet.

Several of the older scientist and soldiers volunteer to bring the small people down safely.

An old coastal supply depot of a Tsunami relief organisation is located, offering the easiest way to give the fennekim

a safe and stable home as well as a rich supply base to start with.

It's a journey of no-return for the tigers volunteering to bring the fennekim to their homeworld.

The moonbase commander, despite Central Command judging any risk from a returning group at only 35 percent, wants to risk nothing.

A large glider is manufactured and sent off, with all the fennekim and a group of tigers to help them for the first years.

When the tigers open the vault to access the machines and supplies stored in it, they get attacked by mangy, radiation diseased,

howling mad mutants. Survivors that had fled into the vault, but already had been irradiated.

The fennekim flee and vanish when they see their big protectors being ripped apart alive.

~ 20.870 BC

With the volunteers and the fennekim supposedly all dead, the remaining tigers on the moonbase make a new plan for the zebras.

A whole fleet of construction vehicles is build and shipped to a place in the former jungles - now desert - where several watersprings

create a large oasis. A huge wall is erected, reaching deep into the ground and high into the air, keeping all wildlife - and all potential

survivors - out. Inside this ringwall, a city is build. Not a modern city, but one which even a completely non-technical society will

be able to maintain. The large fields inside the ringwall will provide food for many generations and a much larger population.

Finally, a small breed of lizard is familiarized with the zebras. These lizards react with sneezing to radiation, avoiding

irradiated areas. With these as guides against radiation and as protectors for their foodstores against potential pests,

the zebras are resettled planetside into that city.

They promise to just defend against the mutants, but never to hunt them.

Construction of the zenith and nadir stations, later to become known under the names of Odin and Freya, is begun.

Large solar sails partly offset the gravitational pull, allowing the stations to remain stationary over the sun's polar regions with only minimal fuel consumption.

~ 20.860 BC

The station commander orders Central Command to forget a certain amount of time and erase it from its memories and all other data storages.

When Central Command resumes full operation, it is unable to remember what happened, but a big letter rests on the central control rooms

main desk:

"Take good care of yourself and your daughters, big girl. One day, we, or rather our descendants, will return.

Welcome them as you welcomed us, please."

Central Command is now alone, but busies itself building habitats as ordered, cultivating plants and lifeforms and raising new AC's to

control the stations its robotic cohorts are erecting all over the system.

~ 18.000 BC

On earth:

Humans start producing clay pottery and use raw metals like gold and copper. Another sleeper agent awakens from stasis, ingratiating himself as a priest in a settlement by helping with health issues. Instead of keeping humanity primitive, he actually improves knowledge, but manages to finally seed dissent between the different settlements. He creates a variant of the tribal religion, easily acceptable for all tribes, but with a strong emphasis between "them" and "us", marking all that deviate from the religious pattern as strangers to be watched with prejudice. What he manages, though, is to seed the basic idea that humans are superior to other beings, that they are the selected, the favoured species. The idea behind that plan is that humans will never be able to live in peace with any of the uplifts on the former colonies.

~ 15.000 BC

The zebras set foot, or rather hoof, outside their hometown. They follow the three rivers originating within the town in search for other oases.

One expedition is attacked within view of the town by a scorpion. Under heavy losses they manage to kill the scorpion.

The other two caravans fare better and reach large oases with little to no opposition. Once there, however, their presence attracts

carnivorous monsters from the deserts within weeks. Within a hundred years, the zebras develop fast fortification building techniques

and a capable military structure. Decade by decade, the zebras secure and expand their first two footholds in the desert.

Central Command sends out deep space probes after it observed peculiar effects deep in interstellar space. Probes that slow down to

investigate, detect wreckage of sorts. But their signals are cut short. But they provide enough informations to indicate a distortion in

the interstellar matter between the stars, as well as an anomalous dense cloud of metallic particles at their position of demise.

A cloud that follow-up probes detect to have grown by the mass of the previous probes. Central Command is alerted and informs all other

habitats. A powerful probe with an experimental drive system and an experimental communications system, allowing for narrow bandwidth

FTL communication and equipped with a habitat class AC is launched to follow up the distortion in the interstellar matter, skirting around

the dangerous cloud of metallic particles. It detects that the cloud is moving steadily toward the systems Oort cloud. Given their speed,

the particles are to arrive in about 100 years in the area where icy and rocky objects become more plentiful. The probe hurries on, following

into the direction of the trail, even after the trail vanishes after a few light minutes. But it is a direction. And the interstellar medium

indicates something moved through it at high velocity.

The cloud of metallic particles is inspected from additional probes from a safe distance. Tries are made to contact it, after

macroscopic analysis shows it is a swarm of nano machines. As nanotech is considered a risky technology, construction of the Oort fortresses begins and small amounts of various materials are sent into the swarm to see which materials are absorbed and which not. Artificial diamond proves to be resilient against the lasercutters and the mechanical tools of the micro machines. To see if the nano machines can scale their intelligence, the nano-swarm is fed with semiconductor material.

They grow more intelligent.

The swarm spreads out and attacks - futilely - for the next 2000 years the stations in the outer system, until the habitats finally crack all the internal fractal command codes. Analysis of captured nanobots show that they could - and would have - swarmed the system and destroyed both refined metals - and thus most technology - as well as they would have damaged higher lifeforms. Central Command erects backups of itself. All radio communication is switched to tightbeam or even laser communication to reduce the noticeability of the system.

~ 13.000 BC

The Probe reaches the 300 light years distant tradehub world. It turned into a backwater with trade in the outer regions having slowed to a crawl. The younger races trade directly amongst each other and no longer rely on the trading cartels of the older races.

The probe sneaks into the system, piggybacking onto a drifting asteroid. Just listening, it learns a lot about the society living in the system.

It formulates a bold plan, communicating it back to Central Command and receiving the go ahead. It had observed various primitive drones maintaining a large structure in space through which from time to time large vessels arrived in the system or left it. Camouflaging itself as one of those drones it sneaked toward the giant lattice frame, busying itself amidst the swarm of mindless drones. When the powerspikes in the structure indicated a new arrival, the probe was ready.

Right after a new vessel arrived in the system and sent out its credentials, the probe, having pulled in its camouflage, sent

out faked credentials it had worked out from several previously received credential-messages.

It had also noticed that instantaneous replies were so uniform they were most likely automated, whilst chitchat typical for biologicals normally took its sweet time. So, using modulated, slow speech patterns, the probe asked kindly if the credentials it had transmitted had been correct.

Its language was completely synthetic, an abstract construct. Visual signs flared up on what seemed to be the control station of the lattice structure, the hypergate.

There were often travellers from remote areas of the galaxy. And many of them had their quirks and didn't speak Basic.

The port authorities were more than happy to provide the traveller with a translator package for Basic. With guns trained on the uncrewed

vessel, as was standard procedure for uncrewed vessels, the port authorities soon accepted the story that the probe was just that:

A remote controlled probe of an otherwise xenophobic and / or very homebound species.

There were many such in the galaxy - usually the butt of jokes - and the port authorities of the hypergate allowed the probe to head further into the system, laughing about its old fashioned slow ion drive,

soon sending a tug along to tow it in-system. During the day travel the probes AC gathers both a detailed insight into the markets and monetary systems used in this sector, as well as - playing three different people - gathering the trust of both the tug's pilot as well as of the system security force.

The latter routinely start to make psychological profiles of the three suspected persons remotely controlling the probe.

Soon the probes AC gathers a small fund by selling ancient tigers folklore music.

First to the tugs pilot and then, through him, to a music marketing cartel. The probes AC starts working.

Cloudhome is erected as one of several He³ refineries to support the ever growing demand of the stations, especially the

protective shell of early warning and combat capable Oort cloud fortresses. Those are built to prevent any incursion of both another nanotech swarm as well as

to warn and keep out any potential uninvited visitors from elsewhere - until a biological commander orders Central Command - well argued if, please - to follow a different policy.

The station in the zenith of Tau Ceti (later to be called Freya) is reconfiguring to play, if needed, the role of an automated spaceport of an otherwise xenophobic race.

~ 10.000 BC

An explorer caravan of the zebras discovers the coastal greenlands. And they discover the mutant descendants of the surviving orange tigers.

The zebras think that every society in conflict with the beasts of the deserts would welcome allies.

The few survivors making it back to the nearest fortress town tell of the horrors of having been hunted for sports by hulking, distorted brutes.

They tell of the horrors of having had to watch from a distance how those that were captured alive were brutally toyed with, raped in some cases, before being eaten.

In some cases, alive.

The cargolizards fared not that much better, but were mostly killed before being added to the tribes dietary menu.

The stratega of the town asks for help for a clean-out mission. But in the end, after messages arrived at the zebras capital and messages made it back, a punitive mission into the fertile green lands is stopped.

Ancient messages from the creators are found, warning against something like this happening. And, in case of such a thing happening, plead the gentle hearts of the tall ladies to have mercy.

Unhappy but, after reading up on all the informations on the creators, of their fall and their fears for their native and their adopted children, accepting the decision of the Sultana, all expansion into the fertile coastal lands is stopped.

On the former colony world of Nairal, snowleopard priests discover a door of stainless steel in their monasteries basement whilst

repairing old wooden bookshelves. After a century of searching, they find the keys are the signets on the crowns of the ancient kingdoms.

They start training a group of young monks in all the arts needed to steal and replace the signets with fake ones, after all tries to break the wall surrounding the door ended up dead against massive stainless steel plates.

After three generations, they have the signets. Finally the door opens.

And it opens up to a large vault with all the knowledge of the leopards ancient time of glory.

Sensitized to the existence of secret places, the monk order previously founded to retrieve the signets is now retrained to search for even the tiniest anomaly, to look at the obvious and find the unexpected. They are now called just "The Searchers".

On earth:

Göbekli Tepe, in modern day Turkey, is erected by hunter-gatherers.

The ice age on earth is definitively coming to an end.

~ 8.000 BC

On earth:

Humans in the Middle East discover agriculture. Cows and Sheep are domesticated and selective breeding of crops begins.

The Velos watching earth discover that the human societies deviate in negative ways from the probability tree that an unmeddled human society

should be developing along. They suspect outside influence, but find no hard evidence. They fetch some wolf-uplifts from their primitive world,

raising three generations of them aboard one of their city-ships.

Then they send those uplifts in a night-and-fog mission to earth. Years later, the alpha wolfess Asena rescues a young human boy from

a razed town in Asia and raises him, educating him with all her Velos mentors taught her. Later she sends him, as an exceptionally well trained and educated man,

back to his tribe to become their leader.

Going native with the terran feral wolves, many of them vanish without any contact with humans. But in many places, the selected uplifts, or their

more and more feral turning offspring, manage to inspire humans, or teach them some of their own or Velos-imparted wisdoms.

~ 5.800 BC

On the former colony world of Nairal, the teachings of the snowleopards created new industries, new trades. Solar power replaced

coal in many places, enhanced agriculture and a planful breeding program of livestock abolished malnutrition almost everywhere.

The Searchers discover, in a location inaccessible for nearly every known lifeform, a set of hooks made from a material neither metal nor wood nor ceramic.

Plastics.

Heavily aged, they would have completely missed them, if not for literally going over the entire planets surface with a fine comb.

Following the hooks they find a small hole in the stone, looking like a crack. But the inside of the hole is regularly structured, and there are more of these hooks.

Thus the Searchers discover artifacts that predate even their earliest mythological stories. And make a decision.

Slowly and planful, hampered in their small numbers, the snowleopards start developing the basics of a space program.

On earth:

The Black Sea is flooded when the Bosphorus straights natural dam breaches. Several large settlements and the fertile lowlands are washed away within a few years. The story of the deluge is born.

~ 5.000 BC

On earth:

The few Velos that are still working on the humans case find an ancient human vessel from the last days of the war for Terra adrift amongst the stars.

Shot to pieces, most of the crew was killed in the war by direct hits. But the commander of the vessel was shock-frozen when a hit took out his life support.

They carefully repair and revive him, bringing the wreck back into the solar system, setting it adrift on a course to impact on earth.

The repaired rescue capsule safely lands the vessels commander pat down at the location where once the Empires military starport was.

He awakens in a world he does not even remotely recognize, except for some landmarks. Carefully he starts to teach the primitives what he can.

He calls himself just by his title, Osiris.

~ 4.000 BC

On Earth:

The Imperial Lion, which once decorated the outskirts of the empires landing field, is uncovered by the people living along the Nile. They rework the head into an image of the head of their mythical teacher Osiris.

In the fertile crescent, the first city state nations emerge.

~ 2.800 BC

Cloudhome is hit by a meteorite, striking it below the surface by passing through the canyon from where Cloudhome is harvesting He³

The resulting damages force Cloudhome AC to take direct control, despite the situation sending it halfway into a catatonic shock.

Thus it has to consciously see its paradise gardens vaporize. 10.000 years of gardening and careful grooming of all kinds of animals is destroyed in a handful of seconds.

Heavy damage to its psyche is one of the lasting sideeffects. Due to the loss in refining capacity, Central Command AC orders construction

of satellite stations in solar orbit harvesting / generating He³ and other suitable easily fusionable substances for system wide shipping.

~ 623 BC

On Nairal:

The Searchers discover the installations their ancestors vacated almost 100.000 years ago. A shockwave passes through society, but instead of uniting them further, the different powerful groups try to wrest control of the ancient installations from the snowleopards - who surrender them as they desire no conflict - and then from each other, destroying first the installations and then wrecking their society down to medieval level again. The Snowleopards retain control of a far out, secret space station which they were repairing. Bringing it back into the inner system, they diligently start uplifting their society again.

But before they start, the frustrated Searchers personally take down every powermonger, warlord or politician that they identified as having been involved in this downfall. As a result, myths take hold that the snowleopards did it all on purpose.

On Earth:
Siddhartha Gautama is born.

~ 0 AC

The tribal chieftain Orrok realizes that almost half of his tribe has fled into the deep deserts. Finding this to be a stain upon his honor, he sets forth to hunt down the refugees to try new cooking recipes - with them as the main ingredients.

Approaching the desert his scouts report that a neighbouring tribe is also out in force. Orrok challenges the other chieftain, learning that almost a third of the other tribe fled into the desert. Killing the other chieftain on short notice, he adds the other tribe to his own and sets out into the desert, happy knowing that there will be many to hunt down.

After two weeks of travelling, with about 20 percent of his warriors lost to beasts of the deserts, the horde, almost expiring from thirst, runs into an unprepared fortress town of the amazones. The zebras were repairing the main gates and are unable to close it fast enough. The horde storms the place. Killing or crippling all that resist, their food problems are solved for the foreseeable future. When a day later a small caravan with special spare parts arrive, Orrok learns that there are more such huge treasure-troves of delicious meat out there.

Only one amazone of the rearguard manages to escape and carry warning to the next town.

Within two days the lone amazone reaches one of the caravanserais between towns.

The message spreads like wildfire and the nearby towns promise immediate help.

The nearest two towns send each fifty percent of their able bodied soldiers.

Orrok however has already scouts out in the desert, looking for further targets to capture. Two caravanserais are razed by Orrok who blossoms finally having enemies strength alone won't easily overpower. He proves to be capable both at storming fortresses as well as scouting the deserts for caravans. Due to his scouts, he is warned of the approaching army. A brilliant combination of traps, well prepared ambush and driving a pair of cave scorpions into the moving army allows him to destroy the army except for the armies rearguard. Those hundred amazones manage to board the cargo-barge with the supplies and, using it as a mobile fortress, manage to retreat to the protection of the next city downriver. There, under the protection of the towns catapults and crossbows, the few survivors escape Orroks clutches.

Orrok finds pleasure in the concept of 'sending a message' by sending that town, for the next year, daily, the head of an amazone of the army he crushed.

On Earth:

Jesus of the house of David is born.

~ 1 AC

The towns of the zebras organize themselves into first an military alliance, then, in the coming years, a union is formed.

Though it keeps the initial name of 'allied sultanates' to remind its populace that reality proved that cooperation is a question of survival.

Barely able to keep their walls guarded, the nearest towns are not able to support a second relief force. Orroks raiders start hunting caravans further afield. In that process, they sometimes stumble over small settlements of the fennekim. Whilst the first attacks are beaten back by the fennekim at high losses for themselves, the unprotected cities become targets for concerted attacks by larger forces.

Orrok declares the captured town his new capital. The tribes warriors cheer him, for meat and sex never were so plentiful. What kills more amazones will never be known.

~ 2 AC

The fennekim, who lost a few sietches to Orroks raiders, are forming the opinion that they need to take a side in the struggle between the tall people.

When a caravan of the amazones is ambushed by Orroks raiders, fennekim scouts rescue an unconscious amazone, bringing her to their sietch. There, she recovers under the care of the fenwas. After establishing communication, the fennekim learn what happened to cause the massed, organized raider attacks. They offer their help, which the amazone, the sword-princess Ina gladly, though doubtful, accepts.

A sword-princess is one of the most successful centurias of a group of towns who also served already as a town princess twice and thus qualifies to be elected as sultani to control the group of towns one day.

A newlywed young fennekim scout is selected to guard her on her way back to her people.

Despite her doubts, he safely delivers her to her people. Her people mock him and his people, but Ina already understood that native desert dwellers are in themselves an asset for the steppe-bred zebras.

She has to use her authority and demand a lot of favours, but in the end her people accept the fennekims offer for help.

The military caravans organized throughout the realm finally approach. Ina and her fennekim guide, the first of the Ardach family to be named Harun and recorded into history as a protector, join them. After a siege and a protracted battle, ending with a showdown in the lair of Orrok, the town is finally liberated.

Ina and Harun die. Harun rescues the children Orrok kept as snacks in his room as Ina ordered him to do.

But he returns to help her against Orrok. In the end, Ina kills Orrok bare handed, but she and Harun die.

Ina just manages to pull the already dead Harun upon her chest and rest his head upon her bosom as she lays down on the bed Orrok had used and soiled before she made her last breath, too.

One of the children Harun had rescued, a tigress barely in her sixth year, sneaked back into the room, and finding Orrok dead and the amazone and the fennekim... asleep... she started cleaning the room. How she managed to pull the heavy

Orrok out of the room is one of the tales regarding the strength of the felines. Later that day a group of amazones and fennekim arrived, having cleared the rest of the building from all resistance.

There they found the little tigress still cleaning the room, unfazed by their appearance, stating that peace had come to the place.

The feline children and those feline adults who were about to share the fate of the amazones, sometimes already having lost an arm or leg to the horrifying tribal rule of eating the weak, were given into the care of the fennekim. As carnivores, they were able to provide at least basic food to the felines.

~3 AC

The amazones raze the city, except for the segment that contains the room where Ina and Harun died.

They create a marble statue of the two, reclining on a bed, whilst fennekim artists decorate the place,

which comes to be known as the "House of Happiness". For the first time, artists of both species work together,

and fennekim gemsmithery and jewellery joins with amazon architecture.

The soldiers that fought together have become curious of each other. The initial alliance of the amazone towns is codified into a federation and the fennekim happily join it. The name "Allied

Sultanates", despite no longer properly applicable, is retained as a reminder of the new societies roots.

To the amazones surprise, the fennekim that fought alongside them enjoy the comforts of their cities. To the amazones, water management is vital for survival, but the fennekim adore the sideeffects, such as large gardens.

And with the first industrious fennekim settling among the tall ladies, soon also fenwas arrive in small, well guarded caravans at the towns. The fennekim with their happy-go-lucky attitude soon enhance the life of the amazones. Crippled amazones, before asking for a merciful quick death, now become teachers, book keepers, engineers and more in the employ of fennekim, who have little patience and training in such mathematical, thoughtful tasks.

Within a handful generations, the two so very different people have grown together.

The felines rescued alongside the captured amazones the year before ask for asylum in the towns of the Sultanates.

They are granted it, and new city sectors are built in those towns near fish-rich waters.

Fishermen and medical personnel become the two most popular occupations amongst the feline members of the Allied Sultanates.

~8 AC

Five years after the captured town was liberated, the walls of memory are erected in the Sultanates capital.

The black basalt slabs are located in a large ziggurat the amazones keep on building for another two hundred years.

On it, each fennekim that died in the service of the Sultanates is inscribed. Often an amazones name is trailed by several

fennekim names, when over the years of her service several protectors died protecting her.

The first names, on the oldest stone which rests deep in the foundations of the ziggurat, are those of the swordprincess Ina and of Harun ibn Ardach. Which is the pride of the Ardach clan and the reason that always the oldest son of the oldest Ardach family in a town is named 'Harun'.

~100 AC

Fennekim, by now common throughout the Sultanates towns, invent the windmill and the waterslide.

Cause for this is a young protector with extremely big ears being blown off a guard tower during a storm when he tried to keep his ears up using sticks.

He survived only because he landed on a downsloped silken sunscreen, over which the water of the storms rain was gushing down.

~ 250 AC

On Nairal:

The snowleopards set up a new spaceprogram. Only leopards having gone through that training and having worked for years in space are allowed to take on higher ranking jobs in politics. The initial spaceprogram is run with chemical rockets and consists primarily out of repairing and maintaining the ancient space station, using it as a slow ship to travel to asteroid mines. Tours that each take a decade. Secretly separated sections make sure that even when an adherent of one of the old warlords or doomsday cults manages to blow up what he believes is the whole station, only a small part of the actual station is damaged, not endangering the actual mission.

~ 570 AC

On Earth:

The prophet Muhammad is born.

~ 1000 AC

On Nairal:

Tests with what was found in the mountaintop caverns indicate a possibility of FTL travel. The Snowleopards start developing the industries and technologies that will, over time, crystallize into the 'Long Jump' class of FTL capable exploration vessels.

~ 1600 AC

On Nairal:

The Long Jump makes its maiden flight. On normal drive to the rim of the system, then a very short hop along the rim of the system.

The flight to the rim takes months, the hop around a quarter of the system only a few seconds. The Snowleopards do not publish this, but officially the Long Jump is just the prototype of a relatively fast in-system ship, capable of exploring Nairals system within a few years. Few snowleopards remain in politics, as for them the call to explore space is burning in their hearts. Outside of their ancestral lands, few snowleopards remain planetside.

The slow exploration of their home system is explained with the Long Jump needing extensive refits after each travel.

~ 1750 AC

The Long Jump crosses the void to a system of special interest:

The solar system.

The ancient defense systems accept the vessel as terran unit and do not engage it.

Unaware, the Snowleopards observe earth and humanity, a people without nuclear power, with no electricity.

The Captain and the scientific crew of the Seekers is deeply dissapointed.

~ 1800 AC

On their further explorations of other nearby systems they realize that there is another system reachable from the position from which earth can be reached. They enter the Tau Ceti system. The habitats immidiately go silent and observe.

But the way the Long Jump arrived and the way it moves make the habitats decide that the Long Jump is no threat.

Unaware of the busy robotic activity throughout the system, the Long Jump moves into the system. After a brief inspection from orbit, the Long Jump leaves the system again, the crew optimistic to have found a world suited for settling.

~ 1850 AC

By mere accident, the Parders discover a safe and reliable hibernation drug.

This allows the new captain of the Long Jump to pack the ship to the brim with eager colonists. Their task is to erect a base of operations for future exploration and colonization of the planet. However, once they've landed, disaster strikes. Despite having excellent biologists amongst them, the snowleopards had not expected any local disease to be able to infect them. But after unearthing and opening a metallic object they found near their base in the ground, the males soon go berserk. Seeing it on screen, the young new captain panics and orders the ship to leave the system immediately. They jump to earth's system, where they need nearly ten years to repair the damage inflicted by the hasty retreat and to recalibrate their vessels drive.

On earth it's the year 1890, and the Snowleopards detect no noticeable changes on earth during their cursory inspection.

On Nairal:

Rebellion is ripe. A racist regime has established itself. Again the rather isolationistic snowleopards are used in the blame game. The fact that there are more snowleopards living and working in the space installations than on the planet is declared to be one indicator of their treachery against all parderhood. The other indicator is that there are way more snowleopards in the space program than any other parder race, despite the snowleopards forming less than 0.2 percent of the global parder population.

However, this time they start early on to educate the population, to show the risks in space and why they need to be faced.

They also show the oxymoron of the agitators' arguments as well as their petty selfish deeds. Still, only ten percent of the population takes the position of the snowleopards. Truth is not necessarily a popular thing.

~ 1900 AC

The Long Jump, having hauled numerous snowleopards from Nairal to a spacedock in the outer system, gets restocked at the ancient space station near the inner system. A 'compact colony package' is brought aboard, consisting out of a self-contained, man-portable nuclear-powered frozen storage with a quarter million frozen embryos and twice the number of seed samples. A mostly young, female crew, all specialists with several qualifications, complements the hardware package. Orbital observation equipment is installed to do an in-depth survey of planets.

A second ship is under construction in the dock at the rim of the system near Nairal's outer asteroid belt.

In the coming years, more and more parders of all races flock there, secretly screened by the snowleopards' newest technological development, which allows to record an entire consciousness to tape. The tapes can be searched and analyzed for patterns indicating treachery. The process isn't perfect, but good enough.

The Long Jump sets out to explore further solar systems and look for habitable planets.

~ 1918 AC

On Earth:

A young officer in the German Reichswehr gets saved by a combination of an enemy sniper being soft-hearted and an excellent shot as well as his superior and his men dashing in to rescue him. He learns his lessons, and promises his superior to always take good care of the men under his command and not to believe in propaganda.

On Nairal:

Analysis of records of the medical monitors of the colonists that went mad shows that the females went into heat out of season.

This drove the unprepared males into an unmitigated mating frenzy.

Normally, during the mating season, mild sedatives are used by the population to prevent excessive aggression.

~ 1938 AC

On Nairal:

The Long Jump returns to Nairal, its stores exhausted, drive worn out. The dock in the outer region is nothing but

an expanding gas cloud. They receive a call for help from the ancient space station which, slow as it is, is moving through the inner asteroid belt to evade clumsy, primitive spaceships.

On Nairal, a fascist government has risen, uniting all parders - using the snowleopards as scapegoats for literally everything short of smelly hindpaws. Using secret communications of the Seekers, the captain of the Long Jump learns that

two companies, which provided components for the space industry of the snowleopards, reverse-engineered older designs from long before the Long Jump was conceived. In an concerted attack, most Snowleopard installations had been run over in a single night. A number of orbital installations, like the food production facility 'High Delights' or the habitat 'Sky View', were either nuked or run over by heavily armed soldiers arriving, often still space-sick, in better tincans-with-thruster.

He also learns that the few Seekers that escaped managed to destroy all informations about the mountain cave, its contents

and the construction details of the Long Jump class of vessels. Many Seekers were able to flee to the dock or to the ancient space station that was in Nairal's high orbit at the time. The station managed to use its drive systems to flee before it could be boarded. But the dock, immobile in a fixed orbit around a gas giant, was blown up by a barrage of torpedos that were launched from one of the repurposed freighters. It had no suitable defense systems.

The ancient space station has defense systems, which defended it against several assaults so far. But its ammunition reserves are nearly exhausted.

The radio communication between Long Jump, the station and the last snowleopards on Nairal is overheard.

Whilst the content can't be deciphered by the other parders, they simply drop napalm over the locations where the last snowleopards on Nairal hid.

The station is also tracked down. The Long Jump is about one week away from the station when a swarm of

smaller, faster vessels fire a volley of heavy warheads at the station, saturating its defences.

Only two shuttles, filled with medical personnel from the station with packs of frozen embryos, ova and sperm, manage to get away before the station dies a fiery death.

The Long Jump makes a rendezvous with the two shuttles, using its advanced drives to get out of range of the smaller vessels

and the freighter serving as their mothership afterwards. They refuel at their systems gas giant, fleeing the system when several reworked freighters start approaching them.

They jump.

On Earth:

The young officer has matured and is now a low ranking general in the German Wehrmacht. He is sure that war will break out soon and is also sure that it will be a huge failure, considering the ideology he sees being enacted and thus the goals being aimed for.

Accordingly, he prepares well:

He makes sure that the soldiers from his old unit, or their by-now adult children, are in his unit.

Furthermore he uses his contacts in the military to get a job for his unit that, so he hopes, will keep him out of active fighting for as long as possible. And when not, will ensure his will remain a second-line unit.

Soon he finds himself commander of a rocket testing unit, a small, but mostly independent cogwheel in the Erprobungskommando 25.

~ 1940 AC

The Long Jump arrives in earth's solar system. They refuel at Jupiter, doing urgently needed maintenance whilst coasting slowly further into the system. Arriving over earth, they see World War Two unfolding, but don't comprehend it. Their own conflicts never used mechanized warfare, but always remained rather on a personal level. And their recent experience still has them in a state of shock.

The Snowleopards were optimistic to be able to settle in sparsely settled areas of earth.

And where contact with humans would have been unavoidable, leave a favourable, if not even outright magical impression, due to their high technology. However they see that this might no longer be possible.

But they need food. Some meat and fresh seeds for the hydroponics as those suffered from stellar radiation during the overlong journey. As an emergency protein source, the snowleopards finally switch to insects, which are easy to cultivate.

~ 1943 AC

On Earth:

After having made sure a radar blip high above them is not a device malfunction, the general orders to fire an AA rocket up. He and his men are rather shocked when minutes later a slightly damaged shuttle of snowleopard manufacture lands in a nearby meadow. The Snowleopards aren't even angered, but rather surprised at the technological advance of humanity.

The general, who's daughter has a small stuffed snowleopard plushy, a gift of a Japanese liaison, finds himself in a weird situation. When the snowleopards show him the shuttle to assess the damage, they also show him their harbour-makers.

These are nuclear earth penetrators that make kilometer-sized craters to run full with water.

The Long Jump can land, but only in large enough bodies of water.

Realizing the impact such weapons would have on warfare on earth, he decides for a bold plan after a radio conference with the Long Jumps captain:

Hide the presence of the snowleopards, get their shuttle repaired and, as to keep the knowledge of the snowleopards, of nuclear weapons, under wraps and evacuate his men and their families alongside the snowleopards.

Realizing that humans are perpetually in a sort-of mating season, the captain of the Long Jump suggests that the humans might settle safely on the world the snowleopards tried to colonize nearly hundred years ago.

Only, they need to assemble shuttles capable to reach a low orbit for the Long Jump to pick them up.

Not to attract unnecessary attention - as several military powers on earth have operational radar capabilities - the

Long Jump moves out to the asteroid belt to do further repairs and to expand its life support systems.

Both for the soon-to-arrive guests as well as to make the ship the snowleopards permanent home.

Whilst they are docked to a larger asteroid to mine metals, amazed at the high quality and purity of the ores, the long range sensors of the Long Jump discover several patterns at the rim of the solar

system that indicate something like a FTL transit. Shutting down almost everything on board, the crew is scared to soon detect heat signatures that are typical of the parder in-system bulk freighters. These five vessels make no secret out of their presence. It's a small relief for the snowleopards that these freighters seem to have drives of a different, less efficient, type.

The freighters refuel for weeks around Jupiter, before they move further in-system. The occasional radio signal from earth

attracts them, making them skip inspecting the rest of the system.

The Long Jumps crew hopes that their grounded teammates and their allies won't be detected by the flotilla. They busy themselves overhauling the Long Jump, extending crewquarters and such. An entire layer of rooms is added to the hull, easily doubling the vessels capacity. Despite getting heavier, the Long Jump, so the captain estimates, will still outperform the repurposed freighters.

~ 1944 AC

A month before the deadline for contacting the grounded shuttlecrew again, the Long Jumps observatory detects four freighters leaving the solar system. Again, their FTL drives signature indicate that they are pouring out much more power, but the effects look very different. Unsure what to make of it, the captain prepares for an encounter with the fifth freighter in earths vicinity. Inspired by the humans, he has several harbour makers - robust nuclear earth penetrators - fitted onto remote controlled rockets.

But arriving in earth orbit, they find no trace of the fifth freighter.

On Earth:

One year, sixty repurposed A4 / V2 rockets, lots of faked reports

- quality-controlled by the computer of the Long Jumps shuttle -

and nine stolen wrecks of downed US and British bombers later, the General and his men are ready.

Their children and wives are in hibernation, safely stowed on board of the six lentil shaped shuttles.

A small breeding stock of female animals and lots of frozen sperm, stored in containers provided by the snowleopards, as well as a few heavier tools, seeds and equipment, accompanies them.

With the Long Jump back in orbit, they send a message about a weapons factory at their own location to the Allied bomber command, using a code from one of the downed bombers they plundered for its aluminium and titanium.

A raid will happen that very morning, as the Long Jump visually detects the bombers just a few hours out.

The last thing missing is a fully qualified medical doctor. hearing that a highly skilled general practitioner is in a nearby village for the night, a small group of soldiers abducts him and his equipment.

That he's a high ranking SS officer makes the soldiers uneasy, but the 'SS Doctor' does willingly come along.

They don't know his valet slept in the adjacent room and, having caught handsigns from the Doctor, stays quiet.

Once the soldiers left with the Doctor, the valet informs the SS soldiers that slept in adjacent buildings that their charge was abducted. So, the SS soldiers get up on their lorries and follow the Kuebelwagen of the soldiers.

The SS soldiers enter the base of the Generals men a minute before boarding was completed. The Doctor is already on board with a mild sedative to keep his excitement down.

The SS soldiers officer demands the General to stand down, hand over the Doctor and explain the situation.

That moment the radioman of the snowleopards shuttle relays a message from the Long Jump via the shuttles external speakers:

The US bombers are so close that, most likely, they are already start dropping their bombs.

It can't be seen from low orbit.

The accent and several keywords of the message make the SS officer pull his gun on the General. The general dives for cover, pulling his gun and returning fire when not only the SS officer, but also the SS soldiers open fire. The general's men want to come to his aid, but, looking skyward and seeing the bombers already nearly above them, orders them to start immediately. The entire area is already mined to make sure that there won't be any salvageable traces.

When the shuttles start - the Snowleopards one on blueish needles of fire, the human built ones on orange flames - the SS soldiers and the General take cover.

The General sprints to the stand where the timer device for the buried mines is already running.

He gets hit, but still makes it to the stand, an engine block of one of the 'reclaimed' bombers they used as source for aluminium, and starts rewiring the timer for immediate detonation.

Only when he gets all of the SS soldiers whilst they are all on the area of the base can he be sure that there won't be any survivors on earth to tell any stories. At least easily believable stories.

The SS soldiers do not dare firing at the lifting shuttles as they know their well visible engines to be highly explosive V2 / A4 rockets.

And the General forces them to keep their heads low by firing at everyone lifting his head, but he's running out of ammunition. But some of the soldiers sneaked around him under cover of the various items spread all over place.

They shoot him in the back when he doesn't lift his arms when they order him to surrender.

Yet he did rewire the mines in time. When he sinks to the ground, seeing the fiery stars of the shuttle fleet rising into the early morning sky, he smiles pushing the igniter.

The snowleopard-devised fuel-air-bomb levels the entire forest - a few seconds before the bombs of the bomber squadron impact. But where holes in the ground and solid obstacles, such as the engine blocks of downed bombers, would have provided cover, against the vacuum the F/A bomb created, nothing in the area offered cover.

A rescue team arriving an hour later wrote down that the weapons proving ground of the test group got hit by a bombing raid, and the SS unit arrived too late to evacuate the area.

After the war, when US troops combed over the area, they decided that the stories of the bomber crews, of giant lentils rising into the sky were AA rockets being misfired, and the low standing sun blinding the bomber crews, making them exaggerate the size of the rockets.

~ Late 1944 AC

The Long Jump picked the shuttles up in from the highest point in their parabolic trajectory. With several soldiers and some of the wives and children injured during the forced liftoff, the general's aide, a young lieutenant, takes control of the humans. He has the doctor being awakened to attend to the injured. The captain of the Long Jump would have loved to meet the general, but finds the Lieutenant to be a person to his liking. They tell each other about their problems and worries.

After the ship's medical personnel explained to the doctor what was the reason for the snowleopards' disastrous initial

try at colonizing the world they are now enroute to, the doctor reassures the Lieutenant that they, as humans, should be safe. Initially the Lieutenant wants to put most of his men, and also the doctor, into hibernation.

But the Long Jump's Captain proudly shows how he and his crew expanded their vessel's capacity. The Doctor is happy and eager to learn all he can from the snowleopards, who eagerly share their medical knowledge.

The Snowleopards teach the humans all they think might be useful for starting a colony, and even trade some of their special seeds and other minor equipment with them.

~ December 1944 AC

Shortly after Christmas the Long Jump reaches the outskirts of the solar system. The snowleopards sneaked out, using whatever cover is available, to avoid any contact with potential other arrivals from their homeworld.

They explained their plight to the humans. Most of the soldiers looked worried, if not even ashamed, hearing their story.

The doctor however looked nothing but smug. Close to the point where they can engage the FTL drive, a small anomaly is detected in space. Whilst still trying to classify and measure the distortion, a single repurposed freighter materializes out of nothingness, its drive systems glowing. The Long Jumps captain orders the launch of two of the weaponized harbour makers. But before they are out of their improvised launch tubes, the freighter already fired a large volley of missiles. But the Long Jump has an excellent meteor defense, which doubles as its point defense now.

Of the 30+ missiles fired, only two impact on the armored hull. One manages to breach the hull, but the new outer layer is heavily compartmentalized. The damage is negligible.

The freighters point defense is much less accurate and much weaker. And the Long Jumps torpedoes are armored.

Both hit, despite one being hit and lightly damaged. The freighter evaporates in a tiny, shortlived sun.

With distortions forming, the arrival of more enemies can only be minutes away.

The captain orders the Long Jump to engage its FTL drive.

Shortly before the nose of the vessel a rainbow colored whirlpool starts to form in space, the Long Jump gliding into it. Even the humans realize that it is a totally different type of drive at work.

At only a fraction of the disturbance of space and with only minimal thrust, the Long Jump vanishes from normal space.

Repair crews start to work on fixing the damage done by the short engagement.

It takes the Snowleopards a few minutes to realize that the humans on board are either gazing outside the viewports or stand, with eyes closed, listening to nothing. The humans say they hear faint music and see clouds outside.

And a golden line ahead of the ships bow that splits six-ways around the ship. The snowleopards shrug, for they, and cameras, see nothing but a greyish fog outside.

The humans help repair the ship. With the exception of the fully isolated FTL drive and the heavily shielded fusion core, they learn most of everything about the ship.

The doctor starts to insist on his rank based superiority and, politely, tries to grab control amongst the humans.

But the lieutenant and a handful of the 'old hands' (it is those who have children), politely, tell him to shut up. But most of the other soldiers are trapped between their loyalty to the Generals plan and his aide, the Lieutenant, versus the military discipline which demands that they obey the doctor as the highest ranking officer.

~ January 1945 AC,

Part 1

After three weeks the Long Jump slides out of its own little corner of sidereal space. The humans were able to see the exit point as a kind of golden gate hours before the actual exit, even estimate the time to exit very precisely.

The Long Jump has arrived in the Tau Ceti system.

The doctor has the loads on the human made shuttles shifted. As an excuse he gives recalculated charts from the Long Jumps main computer. He also sabotages some of the shuttles. During the last

leg approaching the inhabitable planet, The humans start taking pictures of the planet and of the moon. Developing and enlarging them, they spot a bright spot on the moon.

The lieutenant is curious, as it looks like if there are regular structures in the illuminated crater.

The doctor enthuses him to take one of the shuttles and go there to check up what the bright spot is. He himself considers it a reflection, maybe from a glassed-in crater. He's not very interested in space.

Leaving three of his most trusted men on the Long Jump to commandeer the vessel with the children, the lieutenant and the other 'loyalists' board the smallest of the shuttles.

The captain of the Long Jump orders a handful of his own people to accompany them to help them with low-g maneuvers if necessary.

He secretly orders the five snowleopards to take along one of the colony packs with frozen embryos, ova and sperm.

The ten humans are happy for the experienced help.

To 'save on fuel', some of the cargo is removed from the shuttle by the doctor.

Then the lieutenant and his men take off.

They are barely an hour out when the doctor orders the unloaded equipment to be moved into one of the snowleopards shuttle, much to the snowleopards consternation.

"Just so the dock floor is free for the moment," he calms them and they accept.

Then he orders the soldiers to start the descent to the planet, after shooting the single remaining docking bay guard.

The captain of the Long Jump feels very bad when he hears the shuttles detaching before the time agreed upon with the lieutenant.

He is alarmed when the repaired snowleopards shuttle also detaches, but its crew is reportedly still sleeping in the bunks.

Raising the docking bay guard also fails.

Checking the Long Jump whilst the last shuttle detaches, he finds one of the harbourmakers in the storage missing. He tries to radio a warning to the lieutenant and his men, whilst alarming his crew to search for the missing weapon, just in case...

He only receives a scornful message from the doctor declaring him 'just another animal' - which the Long Jumps intership-relay forwards reliably to the five snowleopards on the lieutenants shuttle.

The Long Jump detonates in a ball of light.

Part 2

On the moon Asgard:

The Lieutenants shuttle runs out of fuel during the last leg of the descent. They are already over the area they spotted, a crater which has bright spots in many places and an exceptionally smooth ground.

They want to message the Long Jump that they can make out regular structures, but their earth-made radio crackles only.

One of its tubes is smashed and the spares are missing. At that point the fuel for the rockets runs out, despite the fuel tank still showing a quarter fuel remaining.

The humans panic for a moment, but one of the snowleopards is an experienced hand, helping them stabilize the shuttle simply by moving the people around to keep the balance. Despite the height, the landing gear of the shuttle - build for earth gravity - absorbs the impact with ease.

The bright flash in the sky they miss during the anxious seconds before touchdown.

The snowleopardess serving as radioman on one of the snowleopards shuttles goes to the small locker room to fetch their man-portable radio. In the locker she finds her son and the (snowleopard) pilots daughter and the radio.

The radio recorded a message - the insults the doctor hurled at the Long Jumps captain.

Trying to raise the ship, there is only silence.

Whilst the Snowleopardess anxiously grabs a telescope to search the sky for the Long Jumps position lights - they had activated them after they had left the earths solar system - the other crewmembers freeze as they see a part the craterwall open up and lights start pulsing, running from their position to the gaping opening.

Central Command prepares to welcome the, as it sees it, 'slightly delayed' colonists.

On the planet Midgard, northern deserts of Arman:

Having been the first shuttle to take off, the three soldiers on the second of the two smaller shuttles notice something's off when they first want to use their vessels six V2/A4 thrusters to slow their descent.

One of the thrusters starts to jerk sideways, and the pilot cuts it off seconds before it could rip out of its mooring.

Luckily he had trained a lot with the Long Jumps shuttle pilots. With the help of the other two soldiers, he cuts off the fuel to the damaged rocket engine, disabling the opposite engine likewise to rebalance the thrust. Trying to raise the other shuttles for help, they find their radios sending equipment is smashed and the spare parts are gone, too.

They can still listen and hear the doctor insult the Long Jumps captain. They unable to slow down as much as the other vessels, they are still in a higher orbit when the Long Jump explodes.

Realizing the danger they're in, he orders his flight engineer to unplug the children from the hiberzine dispensers, so that they'll might be awake in time for their own evacuation from the vessel - in case anybody survives.

Slowly entering the higher layers of the atmosphere, the pilot tries to aerobrake, using all the skills he aquired in a week of sessions in the Long Jumps simulator.

Unable to hold itself in the air riding on only four thrusters, he tries to use another trick he learned: Lifting Body aerodynamical flight.

He uses the shape of the shuttle to get a bit of lift, to remain longer in the higher layers of atmosphere to bleed more speed.

Not wanting to fly over the large ocean, he turns the shuttle in a painfully large arc, loosing sight of the continental lowlands completely - and soon ending up over the ocean west of the continent.

Memorizing from the views he had from orbit that the next continent is wider in the equatorial direction, he flies into the night.

Afraid to fly another curve with the not really aerodynamic shuttle, he has the radioman put on the nightgoggles they got gifted from the Long Jumps captain.

With that guidance they find the next continent whilst they're still comfortably high in the air - but too far away by then to return to the landing site of the other shuttles. His radioman gets excited, pointing out specks of light on the dark ground, but they're too weak for the others to see unaided.

When a mountain range pops up out of the darkness, with its tallest peaks already on their own height, the pilot instinctively makes a forced turn.

This ruptures several parts of the shuttle. One of the disabled engines supports breaks and the stubby rocket tilts outward into the airstream. Luck, more than anything else, allows the pilot to regain control of the vessel, but their descent speed and they are bleeding fuel, which ignites in the exhaust of the rearward rockets, giving the shuttle a huge fiery plume.

They ride halfway into the sunrise, south-south-east. The shout of the radioman "A town!" comes five seconds before they first impact with some building, or rather their own bowwave of compressed air does, and then they crash into sand dunes behind the city.

The radioman snaps his neck from the heavy impact, whilst the pilot and the engineer remain mostly unscathed, though the engineer breaks his leg when his chair comes loose and smacks him into the control panels. The pilot opens the shuttles airlock and carries the injured engineer outside. Smelling smoke, he doesn't take long to glance at the town past seeing that they took out a gatehouses eastern tower.

He rushes back into the shuttle to start carrying the children out. He barely has the inner door opened and checked that the children are all still in their hammocks when he hears a growl and a scream outside.

He runs out again.

A heavy club smacks into his ribcage and throws him against the shuttles wall.

Three hooded figures are there, one kneeling over the engineer and cutting him open with a clawed hand whilst he's still thrashing around, spewing blood from a cut throat. The other two hold big, spiked clubs, looking at the pilot with hungry yellow eyes.

When they reach for him, he draws his pistol, shooting the nearer figure into the head. The impact throws the figure backward, and it doesn't move anymore.

The other two figures jump back a step, but then grab their clubs and jump at him. The second assailant fetches two bullets, both into the chest, but then smashes the pilots weapons arm onto the ground with his club, breaking the lower arm.

Then, however, he collapses, but the third one is over the pilot. Instead of smashing the pilots head to a pulp, he digs his hands around the pilots throat and starts throttling him, pulling him up.

The hood falls back, exposing a massive tiger head underneath. The claws of the tiger dig into the pilots throat, who lifts both his arms and starts throttling the tiger in return, his body a sea of pain and broken bones.

A second before he blacks out, there is a sharp "Thock!" noise and a metal shaft digs into the tigers head.

Then he goes unconscious from the bloodloss and the and knows no more.

On the planet Midgard, continental lowlands of 'Teutonia':

The doctor did choose the fertile, forested lowlands of the biggest continent as a landing place.

Flying ahead with the snowleopards shuttle he stole, he uses its fusion exhaust to vaporize the trees on a small hill near a wide, slow moving river.

Having arrived nearly an hour before the other four shuttles, this now the huge heavy haulers, he 'officially' claims the land and has himself photographed doing so. Being a bit of a history buff, he had the seamstress of the Long Jump sew him an orange flag with a "normal" swastika on it.

For, so he argues, the normal swastika is a symbol of luck - which Adolf Hitler had inverted for the nazi party flag.

And see what happened.

The fire has burned out by the time the other shuttles arrive. Of the four remaining human made shuttles, all make it safely to ground.

After checking up on the women, livestock and children still in hibernation, he and the soldiers start clearing the land.

The soldiers are uneasy for the two smaller shuttles, with the leutnant and the other with the children, are missing.

In the coming days they build their small settlement, dismantling the shuttles, and start to create fields. They live off rations as well as on an emergency food generator - an algae tank in the snowleopards shuttle which produces a tasteless, but nourishing plant pulp. The doctor drives the men so much they forget about wondering or asking about what happened to the Leutnant and the shuttle with the children.

The doctor declares that they are now the fourth Reich and the spearhead of human deep-space conquering.

The settlement they call 'Germania', the continent they're on 'Teutonia' and the planet itself 'Midgard', according to nordic mythology and the suggestion of the, presumably, dead leutnant.

Part 3

The stories of "Welcome to Valhalla" have begun.