

Legend of McCloud

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What really happened to James McCloud?

This piece gives a possible scenario and sets up and explains many of the events after Assault, leading to Command.

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StarFox:
Legend of McCloud

A nurse tucks in the covers of her patients bed. Finishing, she trots out of the room, her shift ended.

Peppy: General, weve done our part. The strife is over.

From the corner of the room, a hare walks forward, anthropomorphic in form, upright. Peppy approaches the bed, where lies an old bloodhound.

Peppy: The threat from Venom is finally at a rest. We pray that it lasts this time.

The hound in the bed raises his eyes to meet the hares gaze. His voice came, slow and pained.

Gen. Pepper: The people of Lylat are again in your debt. You will be compensated by the stores of Cornerias wealth, as much as we have to offer.

Peppy: Given the circumstances, sir, you can keep your money. This system is going to need Cornerias wealth to restore the Republic of Lylat. Reconstruction in the wake of the Aparoid threat will be steep indeed.

Gen. Pepper: I offer you my thanks on behalf of our people. I understand the cost has been high for you to pay as well.

Peppy lowers his head and sighs.

Peppy: The team has taken the loss of Great Fox hard. That ship was more than a base of attack. It was our home. Fox is strong, and he leads the team well, just like his father. But I fear being grounded as they are has bred a spirit of unrest in them.

Gen. Pepper: And of your role in StarFox?

Peppy: Im gettin too old for that kind of flyin. When Krystal joined the team, I became more of a veteran and took the role of a coach, an advisor of sort. I think retirement from StarFox is in my better interests.

Gen. Pepper: I have a proposition for you then. I need someone to lead the Army in my absence. I will most likely never leave this bed again. Peppy, old friend, would you take my mantle?

The hare lowers his head again, closing his eyes. He moves his head.

Peppy: I would accept it with great honor, sir.

Gen. Pepper: Thank you, friend.

Peppy: Id better go give the team the news.

Gen. Pepper: General Hare, where is the StarFox team presently?

A gaggle of young academy students crowd the billiard tables, pinball machines, and arcade games at the Academy Recreation Center.

Two tall individuals, a fox and a falcon, lean against the bar counter at the rear of the room, the only individuals to patronize that service.

The falcon downs a large mug of some brown, frothy beverage and slams the mug on the counter behind him. A small hover-droid quickly moves in to refill the glass.

Falco: I tell ya, Fox. That tagroot brew is good stuff. Not quite as hittin as Id like, but sure satisfying after a few.

Fox: I think you should lay off a few rounds. How many of glasses have you had?

Falco grabs the mug behind him and downs it in one gulp.

Falco: Fourteen. Countin this one.

Fox: I am impressed. Impressed that you havent erupted yet.

Falco: Hey, Im a bird, remember? Fast metabolism and all that. And if youll excuse me, I think I feel that metabolism catching up with me.

The bird sets the mug back down on the counter. He leaves the bar and walks toward a passage in the back marked restrooms. Fox stifles a quick laugh. The hover-droid returns to fill the glass. Fox waves it off.

Fox: Wait just a minute. Hell be back.

The droid chirps in satisfaction. Fox makes a quick sweep of the room. He finds the new recruits promising. One particularly young-looking one breaks away from the arcade machines.

Fox watches this young one, a white-haired monkey nearly half his size, walk along the edge of room, eyeing Fox with glee.

Falco rejoins Foxs side at the bar.

Falco: Hey waiter!

The bird snaps one of his feathered fingers. The hover-droid returns to fill the glass again.

Falco: Thats more like it. Any action, Fox?

Fox: Falco, what do you make of that?

Falco: Little monkey-dude? Dont know. Say, why ya checkin the chimp? Ida thought youd be lookin more in that direction?

Falco points to the billiard table, where a purple-furred vixen leans over the table, cueing her shot.

Fox: Oh, dont get me wrong, Falc. She and I are. . .a great couple. But theres something on my mind recently.

Falco: Oh say it aint so! Trouble in paradise.

Fox: Keep your voice down. I have an issue that I need to resolve. That is all you need to know.

Falco: All right. Hey, buddy. You need any advice, you know where to go. Your pal Falco is here for you, man!

Fox: Right. Ill take advice from a hotshot, whose only female interest is a feline he finds personally annoying.

Falco downs the mug in his hand and slams it back on the counter.

Falco: You bet your furry butt! Waiter! Brew!

Fox sighs, shaking his head. A loud crash and an apes wail draws his attention elsewhere. A hulking anthropomorphic rhinoceros, sporting the uniform of the Cornerian Military Academy, struggles to his feet. The small, white-haired monkey hangs from a rafter in the ceiling.

The monkey drops, and with some difficulty, the rhino makes his footing.

Rhino: All right, Bowman! I told you twice this week to watch your step. Were gonna throw down this time for sure.

Monkey: Oh, please. I didnt mean to. I was a little

Rhino: Distracted! Youre always distracted, Bowman! How does a runt as small as you manage to trip up the biggest cadet in the Academy three times in one week!

The small figure shrinks away as the rhino scoops him up in his hand. He is interrupted by a tap on his arm. He turns and finds Fox and Falco standing by him.

Rhino: Im kinda busy here, guys.

Fox: Mac, well take care of this one.

Falco: Just cool your jets, big guy.

With a sneer, the Rhino sets the chimp down.

Rhino: Im goin outside. Send for me when this twerp goes home.

The beast storms outside, shaking the entire room with his gait. Fox and Falco help the small monkey to his feet.

Fox: Got a thing for rhinos, kid?

Monkey: Oh, uh, no. I just

Falco: Little jittery, man. Calm down.

Monkey: Oh, yes. But its justIm sorry. My name is Dash Bowman, and Im probably your biggest fan here.

Fox: A fan of StarFox? Great to hear it.

Dash: Well, yes. But you see, you and Falco are my heroes. Im learning to pilot, hoping to be as good as you one day. Maybe Ill have a StarFox of my own.

Fox: Not a bad idea in todays Lylat.

Falco: Kid, you look awfully familiar. Have we met before?

The small creature becomes silent. He stares at his feet.

Dash: No. But you are acquainted with my family. My grandfather was the great Andross, and Andrew Oikonny was my cousin.

The other two draw back, surprised.

Falco: Oh, uh. Well. Theres something you dont hear everyday. Fox?

Fox: A heritage doesnt prove destiny. The apple can fall pretty far from the tree sometimes. Dash, your future is your own. You dont have to follow their steps.

Dash: Oh, I know. The sad truth is that Andross was a very brilliant man. He had great innovations in science and technology, and the ambition to purify the planet Venom was truly noble. But it was his pride that destroyed him. I do wish to be like him, intellectually, but not in any other way.

The door bursts open with a flurry of flailing arms and legs. A green toad comes running up to the small group, excitedly waving a blueprint around.

Slippy: Guys! Ive got it! Ive got it!

Slippy leads them back the bar where he slaps the paper on the surface.

The small group, including Dash, stares at the design on the document.

Fox: Okay, Slip. What is it?

Dash: A transport of sort, more of a modified cargo ship. No wait. Those are ion jets. Its a suped-up cargo ship.

Slippy: Very astute. This is the new Great Fox!

Falc: Slip, that looks nothing like a fox.

Slippy: Yeah. I know its not what folks have come to expect. But I have a ship available for use right now. If I just make these modifications, we can take to the stars next week! Well remodel it later.

Fox: Gee, Slip. You got it covered. Great job.

Slippy: Aw, thanks guys. Whos the kid?

Dash: Bowman, Dash.

Slippy: Androsss grandson. I saw your bio at the Tech Center.

A small badge on Slippys white jacket blares. He presses the badge with one of his amphiboid fingers.

Slippy: Hey, Pop.

Beltino: Son, you need to get to the Tech Center, and bring your StarFox friends. I have something they need to see.

Slippy looks up from his badge. Fox and Falco both hold grave expressions on their faces.

Falco: Something else from Venom?

Fox: Please no.

Slippy: Weve got to go. When Dad says something like this, he means it.

Falco: All right. Get Krystal.

The StarFox members leave Dash at the counter. The young ape lowers his head. In a moment, he lights up with some brilliant idea of sorts. A mischievous smile crosses his face.

Wolf: And you are completely sure of this find?

In the dark enclosure of what looks an abandoned warehouse somewhere on the outskirts of the city, an equally dark figure strides forward, commanding the other figure to cower in the shadows.

Wolf O'Donnell, once proud leader of StarWolf, flaunts his air of command and pride. He walks fully erect with a fist on his breast and his head with its dark grey fur and canine snout aimed at the stars.

Wolf: You are aware of the consequences if we jump the gun on a false assumption.

The other figure, a wiry green lizard, seems to love his dark corner of a wall fragment, hiding from the very face of the world.

Wolf: I ask you again, Leon. Are you entirely sure of this find?

The lizard speaks calmly, no hint of fear.

Leon: No mistake of it. The transmission, though heavily degraded from the vast subspace distance, was quite undeniable. It was clearly a voice, specifically a canine voice.

Wolf: There are many canines in our galaxy. Foxes, vixens, weasels, fennecs, coyotes, and wolves to rule them.

Leon: But only foxes produce a wavelength of this modulation. And it directly addresses a certain Fox McCloud.

Wolf: A distant subspace transmission, fox in origin, Fox in destination. Perhaps it is clear. Well, Leon. Prepare the prototypes, and make for certain that phase-cloak is operational!

Slippys father, a still youthful-looking toad in a white lab coat and horn-rimmed spectacles, sits at a computer panel with the StarFox team assembled around him. Only the robotic assistant ROB is absent.

Beltino: It came through the bands two nights ago. I've spent my time isolating the data stream, trying to determine what it is exactly. I determined that it was not a string of computer commands, or a series of space coordinates, or some satellite transmission distorted by solar radiation. It's a recorded message, kind of a subspace phone call.

Beltino Toad enters a command into the computer. The screen displays a wavelength spectrometer, and the speakers crackle with audio feed.

Feed: Far side of the universe black hole passage in space itself Fox, can you hear me? Fox?

Fox: It's asking for me?

Beltino: Listen.

Feed: Fox, hear me. I am here, my son. I am here Son, I'm here. Come.

The feed crackles and dies.

Beltino: So you see why I asked you all to come here?

Fox staggers back.

Fox: That voice. Could it really be my father?

Falco: That doesn't make much sense. We know Pigma betrayed him and Peppy when they first went to Venom. Only Peppy escaped. He confessed to hearing James's screams over the arwing channel as he flew away from Venom.

Fox: There's more to it.

Falco: Excuse me?

Fox: Do you remember when I flew out of the bunker entrance as it exploded? Did you notice anything unusual?

Slippy: You seemed distracted, but functioning at top efficiency.

Falco: What happened in there, Fox?

Fox: When I dealt the final blow to Andross's brain case, he activated the core explosion. He was trying to trap me inside and take me with him. The caverns filled with light. I could have escaped, had I seen my way.

Slippy: That light would've rendered visage impossible.

Fox: Well, my instrument panels lit up all of a sudden. Another arwing was guiding me. Then I heard a voice. I remember it as clear as day.

James: Don't ever give up, my son.

Fox: Father?

Fox sits in the cockpit of his arwing, the entire environment ablaze with light. The heat rises exponentially with each second. Fox finds his instrument panels fully active, the navigational controls beckoning him forward. At the sound of the voice, he returns his hands to the joysticks and follows his nav-com.

As his vessel moves, the light steadily decreases. A normal cavern comes back into plain sight. In the distance, a faint light weaves back and forth in front of him: another arwing's engine signature.

James: Follow me, Fox.

The other arwing boosts into a long corridor. Fox sits in his vessel dumbfounded. So much to say, so

much to ask. Only his instincts guide him forward, sticking close to Dad.

James leads through twists and turns. Finally, Fox recognizes the last stretch of the tunnels, the entrance looming in the horizon.

At that moment, when he feels the notion, the strength to press his comm-transmitter and speak with his father, the receiver of his ship picks up James's last words to his son.

James: You've become so strong, Fox.

Both arwings shoot out the mouth of the tunnel. Fox watches his father's ship vanish into the night sky like a passing vapor.

Falco: Whoa, big gun! You never told us any of this?

Fox: I didn't think you'd believe me. I wasn't sure that it had even happened myself. It vanished, disappeared. And Great Fox never detected anything unusual on the surface. Was it even real?

Slippy: You think you could have hallucinated?

Krystal: It is possible that the spirit of your father was truly there, to guide you through.

Fox: I had brushed it aside. I choose not to think about it too much. It makes my head hurt. But it seemed so real. Now this. It's a little too much for me to take in. I hope you'll understand; I need to be excused.

Fox turns and leaves the room.

Slippy: Pop, you have traced the origin of this transmission?

Beltino: Not precisely. You see, it came from within sector IG-4 in the Typhon cluster.

Slippy: No.

Falco: What's that?

Slippy: Sector IG-4 is the site of a massive black hole.

Beltino: And this transmission beamed from the center of the mass.

Falco: Cripes! A black hole. That makes investigating the source, or even traveling near it very hard.

Beltino: Actually, there is a way.

While the others drone on about gravitational theoretics, Krystal breaks away from them. She exits the room, her extra-sensory perceptions leading her. She searches the building telepathically, scouring the

minds for a specific signature.

Fox stares at the heavens at the edge of a viewing balcony. The city lies below, its sprawl half a mangled mass of steel and cable.

His left ear hears a faint noise and turns to the left.

Fox: Shouldve known youd find me.

Fox keeps his gaze skyward, knowing his visitors identity.

Fox: Its harder to hide from telepaths, I guess.

Krystal: Is that why you came here? To hide?

Fox: No. Of course not.

Krystal: Darling, you are troubled.

The female steps closer and sidles up next to him. Fox lowers his head.

Fox: My father taught me the value of personal sacrifice for the greater good. He showed me what responsibility meant. He made me see that potential is strongest in the face of adversity. Hehe is responsible for everything I have become.

Krystal wraps her arms around his shoulders.

Fox: Ive lived most of my years believing he was dead, that he was a martyr in this cause. Even the past few Ive told myself that the Venom incident was just a vision, or something else. My father is dead: I was so sure of that.

Krystal: Your father is proud of you, Fox McCloud, either in death or in life.

Fox: I believe that. I do. And I intend never to forsake that. But could he really be alive?

Krystal: You need to know, if not for any reason but personal closure.

Fox: I have to know.

The female nudges his neck with her snout. He turns toward her and embraces her, drawing her fully into him.

Fox: You are too good to me, Krystal. But we have things to discuss.

Krystal: What things?

Fox: The future, and our place within it, StarFox, and the future of the team.

Krystal: Fox, what are you saying?

Fox: Im saying we have a lot to work out.

Krystal: All right. But lets concentrate on the matter at hand, at least for now.

Krystal rests her head on his chest, and the two stand their in the light of moon like a slow-dancing couple.

Wolf smiles that sinister smirk of his as he walks the perimeter of a rebuilt Wolfen II. The black and red color scheme remains, every feature identical to the previous models.

Wolf: I am pleased that the design is the same.

Leon pokes his head out from underneath the vessel.

Leon: Of course. Why change it if it works perfectly fine? An old adage says that if an object is not broken, why fix it?

Wolf: Some would consider what were doing now fixing it. I prefer to think of it as a subtle augmentation.

The lizard crawls out from under the ship and stands to his feet beside Wolf. He waves a tiny remote control in his hand.

Leon: Subtle is certainly accurate.

Leon presses a single button on the remote. The ship warps and shimmers, eventually vanishing into the atmosphere.

Wolf: Excellent, Leon. And the other ship is retrofitted as well?

Leon: Done, sir. We can sustain phase-cloak for twelve hours.

Wolf: We wont need nearly that much time. As long as we can follow them through the Hole.

Slippy presses a play button on a viewscreen. The screen displays four arwings flying in a diamond formation.

Slippy: Traveling through a black hole is difficult due to intense gravity. We have to generate enough thrust to overcome the intense pull toward the center.

Beltino: The average personal aircraft is incapable of such thrust. Even Great Fox herself never had the power. But we have a solution.

The four ships in the video reposition themselves, rotating and drawing in to each other to form a tight box shape. The arwing formation spins on a common horizontal axis, building speed with each revolution.

A well of energy builds up within the center of the formation. Eventually, the formation shoots forward at blinding speed.

Falco: Geez Louise!

Fox: Incredible.

Slippy: As you can see, these vessels are cooperating to produce a burst of collective energy. This does two things for us: it creates a gravity well, a focal point of pull that will keep the team from separating in the black holes mass, and it provides a thrust collectively that no one ship could achieve on its own.

Peppy: This is transwarp technology. Boys, youre both way too smart!

Beltino: Thank you, General Hare.

Falco: And might I say that Cornerian Red is definitely your color.

Peppy: Yeah, I rather like the snappy look of it.

Fox: So how long will it take to program our arwings?

Slippy: Well, thats the problem. Our arwingss engines are incompatible with the ion drives we need. Plus, our weapons systems interfere with the wiring necessary to set up the drives. It would take a month to gut out our current arwings and refit them. Then, if we need them in combat another time, were stuck.

Fox: That is unacceptable.

Beltino: We know. But we do have a solution.

The older toad motions them toward a door in the back. They step through the door and find themselves in a vast hangar. Four arwing-like ships sit on the floor, each smooth and rigid, with fixed wings and diffusers.

Fox: These look familiar.

Falco: Yeah. I think Ive seen these in a 16-bit video game once.

Beltino: Jokes aside, these things will get through the Hole. These are the early prototypes for the arwings you fly today. These are C-30 Slip Arwings. They have minimal practicality in todays world, but they are the ideal candidates for this mission.

Peppy: So youre giving the kids our old wings. Belly, youre a genius!

Fox: What do you mean our old wings?

Peppy: These were StarFox's original models, shortly after we all graduated from Academy and refused the Army's offer. We took these puppies to the stars to carve a place of our own.

Falco: But there's four here. Only three of you went to Venom. Are you saying there four original members of StarFox?

Peppy: You better believe it. And you'll never guess who that fourth wing was. While everyone stares in disbelief, Dr. Toad waves his hand.

Beltino: Yep. Fox number 4 here. But I never cared for flying. I stayed behind during the Venom assignment and lent my talents here. I monitored the rebuilding efforts and strengthened the city's defense systems. But I was there at StarFox's birth.

Slippy: You see, Fox. You're not the only second generation StarFox member.

The general waves Fox to a single arwing.

Peppy: Of course, you realize what this means.

Peppy points to a small section of the arwing's fuselage near the front. Fox finds the word James etched in red to the ship's exterior.

Fox chokes back, but allows a stream of tears to escape his eyes.

Peppy: It's only right that you fly your father's ship. I knew him well, son. He would be very proud of you. And he might get the chance to say that to you in person very soon.

The canine nods his head solemnly.

A tall fox, very much like Fox, yet older, stands proudly on a platform overlooking Corneria City.

James: Son, it's finally come to that.

The figure turns to a younger fox, a mid-teenage fox, standing behind him.

James: We can't secure victory here unless we strike at Venom.

Fox: Will that be dangerous?

James: More than likely. Venoms named for its toxic atmosphere and surface. It is believed that no life could naturally survive there. It was the ideal base for Andross, overlooked, impenetrable. But that all has to end.

The younger figure bows his head. A tall, quite rotund, pig steps into the frame of the door, filling the entire frame with his girth.

Pigma: James, weve got to boost. The wings are pumped and ready.

James: Im right behind you, Pigma.

With a nod, the pig turns and ambles away. James leans closer to his son.

James: Fox, you and your mother need to prepare yourselves. My team may very well not return. If that happens, I want you to be strong, for your mother, and for yourself. StarFox will need a new leader. Lylat will need hope. You are that hope, Fox. If we do not succeed

Fox: Father!

The young fox looks into his fathers eyes with tears streaming down his face. James places a hand on his sons shoulder.

James: Dont ever give up, my son.

Fox: Father.

Krystal: Im sorry, darling. What was that? I did not follow.

Fox: Oh. I was daydreaming, I guess. Never mind.

The four arwings race through the expanse of space, the stars ever smiling at them. In the cockpit of his C-30, Fox rubs his eyes. The memory still seems like only yesterday.

The voices of his friends come through the ships speakers.

Slippy: Were approaching the boundary of the Lylat System.

Krystal: Theres Sauria.

Fox directs his attention to an orb hanging in space to his left. Given the distance, Sauria appears so small, like a ripe pomegranate, that one could almost pluck it from space.

Krystal: My, shes beautiful!

Slippy: Everything is holding steady here. Well be nearing the Hole in thirty minutes.

A routine inspection of the fleet, General Peppy Hare strides through Corneria Citys main hangar. Nearly a hundred Cornerian Army flight assault vessels rest along the walls of the chamber, the pilots standing at full attention beside them.

Peppy: It really does make a man proud.

A tall, grey hound walks beside him, clutching a flight helmet with his left hand.

Peppy: Commander Grey, I hope I get to know you and the rest of these fine men in the years to come.

Bill: Sure thing, sir!

Peppy: Bill, Fox has always spoken quite highly of you. You served well during the Battle of Katina.

Bill: Oh, sir. Any friend of Fox is a friend of mine. Im just doing my part.

Peppy: Well, Bill. Unfortunately, my piloting skills are limited to StarFoxs arwings. Tell me a bit about these wings.

Bill: All right. They were engineered to many of the same specifications as the arwings, with of course a few stylistic difference for appearance. The engines are identical, speed variance is the same. Most of them can only support a single laser and carry a single smart bomb. I made an upgrade to my fighter.

The two approach one of the ships, at the end of the hangar. Bill pats this vessel on the nose.

Bill: Mine has a twin laser. You can see the nodes beneath the wing there and there, near the central shaft. Theyre a little larger than the arwings, and a bit more bulky. But theyre beautiful nonetheless. Some of us have taken to calling them greentips because of the green paint on the wing tips and crest. I added these smaller, yellow devices just to set mine apart.

Peppy: You sound very proud of your ship.

Bill: Sir, shes my lady. I love my ship.

Peppy: Good, son. How do they fly? Whats the response time?

Bills eyebrows rise. His tongue lags out of his mouth in excitement.

Bill: Climb on board! Ill give you a spin!

The hum of the engine creates a mellow din to the confines of the arwing cockpits. Fox sits quietly in his ship, his hands resting on his lap, the ships autopilot carrying him to the destination.

Slippy: There it is, guys.

Falco: Geez Louise!

The four ships, flying in diamond formation, spot a vortex of blue gas amassing about a black disk.

At the distance, the black hole appears as just a tiny eddy in space. The arwings halt their movement, but find themselves pulled forward just slightly by the holes gravity.

Fox: Well, this is it. How do we do this, Slip?

Slippy: Its very simple. The blue button at the top of your console will do it all.

Falco: Blue button? What happened to standard red?

Slippy: I didnt want to confuse it with the eject.

Falco: Smart plannin!

Each member depresses the said button. A special harness rises over their seats and locks each one of them into place, securely yet comfortably.

Falco: Uh, a little creepy here, Slip.

Slippy: Its necessary. Trust me.

The arwings move into their position. Foxs ship stays put. Falcos rises above and rotates until his cockpit stares down at Fox. The other two move outward, rotate, and draw back in until they too face the others.

Krystal: Not too close for comfort, are we?

Slippy: Hang on. This is where it gets wild.

The formation rotates along a horizontal axis. The spin cycle builds its strength, a bright white energy forming within the circle of ships.

Falco: Slippy!

Slippy: Im gonna be sick!

Fox keeps his eyes shut. The vessels continue to spin until the formation surges forward.

The other three members yell at the top of their voices as they plunge into the dark maw of the abyss.

Fox opens his eyes.

Just whiteness. Light, everywhere with tiny bubbles floating about, pervades the entire scene. He floats about, then realizes he is floating. No arwing, no StarFox, no Black Hole.

Fox: What the mess?

A single bubble stops in front of him. It inflates itself and chirps. Confused, Fox reaches for it. He touches the object, but the act makes a ripple in the air itself, as if the scenery were projected onto a white screen.

Krystal: Its a wonderful act.

Fox: Darling?

Fox finds Krystal beside him.

Krystal: Sacrificing everything for the sake of civilization. Even yourself.

Fox: Where are we? What is this?

Krystal: This?

The female motions at the expanse of white and bubbles.

Krystal: This is the beginning or maybe the end. This place is the sum of your being, Fox McCloud. It is the epicenter, the very essence of you.

Fox: My. . .consciousness?

Krystal: In a way, but it is so much more. What you see before is how you imagine tranquility. Perfection within yourself and the universe around you.

Fox: Then things are not quite right here.

Krystal gives him a stern look. She shakes her head, and her body transforms. She becomes a male fox, taller than Fox, but identical, except for black sunglasses.

James: Now why would you say that?

Fox: Father! But youKrystal?

James: This is your essence, son. I am what you wish to see. But there are things you do not wish to see, or you are not ready to see them.

Fox bows his head and nods.

James: Son, you have a long way to go. Even when you reach your goal, you will find the way before leading into the horizon. Do not let yourself become discouraged. The team needs you. Lylat needs you. And you need yourself.

Fox: Huh?

James: You do not always realize the light you burn, or the energy you expend. Many times, you are not

aware of your own influence. Youve become so strong, Fox. Stay strong. Trust your instincts.

The image of his father begins to blur. The entire scene begins pull away from him. The light fades, the entire scene fading with. Just before darkness consumes the area, Fox hears his fathers voice again.

James: Dont ever give up, my son.

Fox opens his eyes, or comes to, as the arwings shoot forward into another universe of stars and planets. The spinning ceases once the black hole lies far behind them. Then the ships assume their normal diamond formation.

Slippy: We have escaped the black holes event horizon.

Krystal: Tell me we dont have to do that again for a long time.

Falco: You said it! I gotta clean off my console when we get out. And you dont want to know about the blisters on my buttokis!

Krystal: Youre right. We dont.

Fox: Slip, where are we?

Slip: Astronomical location sensors have no listing for this galaxy, or this planetary system. Our sensor measurements put us approximately 13,000 light years from Corneria.

Falco: Dang!

Krystal: How did we come so far?

Slippy: We still dont know very much about black holes and how they work. We know the gravity is so strong that even light is pulled inward, toward some center. Where the matter goes next is anybodys guess. Based on what we have experienced, we can say that our black hole acts as a wormhole.

Fox: A rift in the fabric of space?

Slippy: A gateway from one side of the universe to another.

Krystal: Well, were here. What next?

Slippy: One second. It looks like there are only eight major planets in this star system with several smaller planetoids and asteroid particles. Four of these planets are just gas giants. But our sensors only detect life on one planet, the third from this sun.

Fox: Civilization details?

Slippy: It looks very much like our own, with a few more primitive measures. Possible deep space

capabilities. Oh wait, guys. Sociopolitical climate volatile in many locations. Well need to keep our distance and exercise cautions.

Fox: The life-forms, what do they look like?

Slippy: Im sending over a holo-image.

An image of a man and woman, human beings, materializes on the console in front of Fox, as well as the other StarFox members.

Falco: Well, theyre bipedal, like us.

Slippy: Circulatory systems bespeak an endothermic existence. Digestion relatively simple. Creatures exhibit lymphatic systems, sebaceous gland, mucous membranes

Fox: Im sure its fascinating, Slip, but lets look for something unsure. Something, or someone, Lylatian in origin.

Slippy: Right. I do detect an energy signature, something like a the ion trail an arwing leaves. It leads to the third planet, but I detect nothing further.

Fox: Well have to search, then.

Dash swings from an extended steel girder. He drops and catches another halfway between the first and the ground beneath.

The area once was a school of sorts; now its just a mangled mass of girders and pipes. A monkeys playground.

Dash enjoys the exercise, playful squealing to himself. He flips over a pipe, grabs it with his feet, and bound off of it. He slides to a stop in front of a large cat-man. The figure holds a red rose in one hand.

Panther: Hello, little chimp.

Dash: Panther, how did you find me?

Panther: My kind is born for the hunt. Now, little chimp, I need your services.

Dash: What makes you think Ill help you?

Panther: Youre the grandson of Andross. Conquering is in your blood.

Dash: I am not my grandfather!

Panther: You will do for StarWolf what we require!

The cat reaches forward quickly and snatches the chimp by the scruff of the neck.

The arwings fly past the largest planet in the system, a towering gas giant of oranges, and reds.

They immediately find themselves in a dense asteroid belt, but escape it with little difficulty.

Slippy: Im narrowing in on the signature. Instrumentation places the signatures end on a small island in the Northwest section of the planets largest ocean. Its near a place the inhabitants call Ja-pan.

Falco: Not much for names if you ask me.

Fox: All right, team. Head out!

The arwings pass the red planet of Mars, with the blue planet coming into view. Foxs ship releases an energy boost from its G-diffusers, those blue prongs extending away from the ship both upward and downward of the ships wings.

The other ships boost forward as well, racing toward Earth with fervor.

Peppy: I dont believe it, Bill. This thing handles like its a part of me!

Peppy pivots the greentip fighter on its vertical axis as it zooms through the Cornerian sky. The ship enters a corkscrew turn which lasts for several aerial miles.

Bill: The things pretty hot, huh?

Bill sets in the back seat of the cockpit, the chairs back fused with the pilots chair.

Peppy: I could really get used to one of these.

Bill: Oh, you havent seen it in space, sir.

Peppy: Doggone! This is fun. I wonder if it wouldnt be too much to ask the boys at Tech to give me one of these.

Bill: Oh no, sir. Youre the General. Youre entitled to something like this if you so choose.

Peppy: Great! Ill ask Belly about one. I will want special markings to denote the Generals flagship.

Bill: Of course.

Peppy turns the ship in a tight 360, bringing back to view the mostly wasted below. The ship moves steadily toward the Academy, back home.

Away in the distance, a black object rises to the sky. It vanishes into the cloud cover and is gone.

Peppy: Hey. Did you see that?

Bill: See what?

Peppy: Something like a ship of some sort just went skyward out that a-way.

Bill: Did you catch the size or position?

Peppy: It was black and red, much like those Wolfens that StarWolf had. But it was noticeably different.

Bill: No, I didnt see anything like that. Well have to keep our eyes open for anything unusual in the next few days.

A tall, Japanese man sits at the computer screen in his small hut-like chamber. His head rests propped up by one arm, dozing off while reading the monotonous data on screen.

The screen displays information from deep space, collected by the elaborate telescope adjacent to his property. Suddenly, the screen lights up, flashing warning of incoming objects.

Inari falls out of his chair. He jumps to his feet and enters commands into the computer. The screen displays an image of four airplane-like objects descending from the sky above.

The young man screams in Japanese and runs outside to see the four planes softlanding on the runway in front of his hut.

The ships engines die and their cockpits open. Four animalstwo foxes, a frog, and a falconall walking upright and speaking, exit the ships and approach him.

The male fox raises his right hand and speaks slowly.

Fox: Hello. We have come from the Lylat system seeking one of our own. We come peacefully. We mean no harm.

The Japanese man blinks and sways. He catches himself before he collapses and frantically waves the creatures inside.

StarFox looks at his actions rather puzzled.

Inari: Inside! Inside! Quickly!

The creatures do as he beckons. Once the last one enters, he shuts the door and sets about hiding their ships in an adjacent hangar.

He enters his hut afterward. The four creatures occupy various seats around his room. He stares at them for a moment before answering.

Inari: Inari. Inari. Thats my name.

Fox: Okay. Im Fox McCloud, leader of the StarFox team. These are my wingmen, Slippy Toad, Falco Lombardi, and Krystal.

Inari: Fascinating! But I have to warn you. The people of this world are sensitive to the subject of extraterrestrial life. If you are found, you will be captured and taken to labs for dissection.

Falco: What? Do you they not have movies on this world? They got to cut up folks for fun?

Inari: You do not understand. Some believe aliens have come to this planet before to capture humans for experimentation. The climate toward aliens is volatile, even if the stories are somewhat suspect.

Fox: Humans? Is that your species?

Inari: Yes. We are human beings. What are you exactly?

Slippy: Its a little complicated. Our solar system, Lylat, is composed of several planets and several races of bipedal, a few quadrupedal, and rare unipedal creatures of varying levels of intelligence.

Inari: You resemble creatures from this world. But your kinds here are just animals who possess bare instincts. No problem-solving intelligence.

Slippy: Perhaps our worlds are not too different, then.

Inari: How did evolution occur in galaxy?

Slippy: Evolution?

Inari: You know. The change from one species into another. How did you descend and which of you came first?

Slippy: Good night! Our fossil records indicate that all our species emerged rapidly, appearing on the scene with no intermediaries. I dont know how I can answer your question. We dont seem to have evolved in your sense of the word.

Krystal: We have several stories and legends explaining our creation. All of them point to a deity of sorts weaving the worlds from a Great Cosmic Loom. Some worlds are spun for life, some for riches, some for sheer decoration, and others to bring life.

Inari: All your cultures tell of special creation and the fossil record does not deny it? Maybe the stories of our religious groups tell here are truer than we think.

Fox: Well, none of it can be essentially proven. None of us were there to see it. I hate to change the subject, Inari. But have you seen anyone of our kind here, recently or farther back?

Inari: Now that you mention it. There was a visitor to this island some years ago. He was a fox, just like you. For the life of me, I'd swear he was you! But he wore black sunglasses. I think he said his name was James.

Fox: James McCloud?! That's my father! We're looking for him. He sent us a transmission, telling us to come here.

Krystal: Where is he? Can you take us to him?

Inari: He I do not know. He stayed with me for some time. I had to nurse some injuries of his. It was nearly a year before he fully recovered. I took to the Island to see some of our sites. I took him to the shrine at Itsukushima. We were the only visitors at that hour, and what happened after that, I do not remember.

Fox: You have no idea where he is?

Inari: I am sorry, friends. But please stay here. I am sure I will remember something. I could take you to the shrine. Perhaps he is somewhere near.

Fox: Yeah. That will have to do.

Inari: I am sorry, friends. But do stay here with me until I think of something.

A small clanging brings Beltino Toad to the Engineering Bay. Once there, he hears it multiple times, from various locations.

The toad's slippery feet normally make such sloppy sounds when walking. Beltino has put on fuzzy slippers to both absorb the moisture and dampen the sound. The appearance of pink bunnies makes him feel clumsy and somewhat embarrassed, notwithstanding.

A guttural ribbit escapes his throat. He clutches himself, cursing for not controlling his instincts. Instantly, the clanging stops.

He hears soft footsteps along the floor, then the ceiling. Beltino nods, smiling, knowing what has intruded his Engineering Bay.

A small tuft of white fur peeks out from behind the east bulkhead of a massive cargo carrier, a lobe of an ear. Beltino takes a few steps forward; the fur doesn't move.

Beltino takes a deep breath. He opens his mouth, his tongue shoots forward and wraps around a small creature's neck. The creature wails like a chimpanzee as the toad reels him in.

Beltino deposits the small white-haired monkey in front of him.

Beltino: Cadet Bowman? What are you doing in my lab?

Dash: Im sorry for intruding, Dr. Toad. But Im afraid I am keeping a terrible secret.

Beltino: Whats going on, Dash?

Dash: Dr. Toad, StarWolf has been communicating with me. Just because I am Androsss grandson, they think I am him reincarnated. They consulted me for concepts that theyve implemented on their ships, even to modeling a new ship for Panther.

Beltino: Dash, why didnt you tell one of us?

Dash: Would any one of you have believed me?

The older toad stops for a moment.

Dash: Anyway, they tricked me. I thought we were simply discussing particle physics and astromech theory. I had no idea they were pursuing StarFox, even to the far reaches of the galaxy.

Beltino: Whoa! Theyve pursued StarFox? Through the Hole?

Dash: Not all of them. Just Wolf and Leon. Panther stayed behind to organize a fleet.

Beltino: But weve detected no fleet massing in Lylat.

Dash: Long-range scanners are still recovering from recent destruction. And I have helped them evade it.

Beltino: Theyre going to sandwich StarFox between their fleet and the Black Hole. Weve got to tell General Hare. But Dash, what were you doing in here?

Dash: Sir! I saw Slippys plan for StarFocs next Great Fox when the team was at the Youth Center. I know this is the ship. I was working to make it operational, a little ahead of schedule. Plus, Ive added a few weapons to its infrastructure.

The toads eyes bulged.

Beltino: Is it ready?

Dash: Just needs to be turned on, sir.

Beltino: Well done, Dash. Now lets get to the General.

Three quick knocks on the door disrupts the peace of the small hut. Inari springs from his bed; the StarFox team rises from their sleeping nooks wearily.

The Japanese man stares out the doors small peephole.

Inari: Oh, great! What to do? What to do?

Falco: What going on, dude?

Inari: Its Shigeru! He probably saw your ships. What am I going to do? How will explain all of you? Youve got to hide. But where? Were using all the room we have here.

Slippy: Wait! Do the people of this world have toys and memorabilia?

Inari: Yes. Why?

The mans eyebrows rise. He smiles and nods excitedly.

Outside, another tall Japanese man in a black business suit stands staring out toward sea. He checks his watch and turns his head back to the door.

The door opens and Inari greets him.

Inari: Shigeru! Old friend! It is a surprise to see you again.

Shigeru: It hasnt been that long, has it? I recall playing chess with you right here just last week.

Inari: Well, you know. Staring at the sky for long periods of time gets very boring. Time seems a lot longer than it actually is. Oh, come in. Come in.

The two men step inside.

Shigeru: What have you done with the place? What are these?

The visitor points to a set of animals standing upright in the rooms various nooks.

Inari: Those are plush toys I ordered from America. Interesting, arent they?

Shigeru: Ill say. They look so lifelike, so real. Whats this badge say? StarFox?

Inari: Oh, that was my touch. I thought they looked a deep-space team that might just drop out of the sky. So I had it made and sent as well.

Shigeru: Inari, you never cease to amaze me! May I use this sometime?

Inari: Of course. Im kept here all day, and I make good money. Ill never use it.

Inari hands his guest a cup of hot tea.

Inari: Tell me what brings you here.

Shigeru: Well, I told the developers about my ideas, the ones you helped me with. About the great ape

who wanted to take over a solar system, and a small assault team stopped him. They liked the idea, Inari! They want to see more of it. Im working on the story, and the structure of the game. I need characters, and I think youve already delivered.

Inari: Well, be my guest.

The two men exchange a few college stories and laughs. Fox and Falco exchange subtle glances.

Cornerian Army pilots stand at attention beside their greentip fighters as General Hare, Bill, and the young Dash Bowman walk down the main aisle in the hangar.

Peppy: Actually, its quite exciting, Bill. Ive only been General for three days, and now I have to mobilize the entire fleet.

Bill: Its exciting to be part of that fleet, sir. Fewer things thrill me more than flying my greentip.

The trio reaches the end of the hangar. They turn to face the assembly of pilots.

Peppy: Honored pilots of the Cornerian Army, I stand here today and make my first address as your General. The people of Lylat have suffered numerous threats in recent years, and we are tired of it! In the absence of StarFox, the nefarious StarWolf has hatched another plot that threatens the people of Lylat. Thanks to Cadet Bowman, we have learned that StarWolf has amassed a fleet rival to that of the great Andross. Well, boys. We know their plan, and were going to amass a fleet of our own. Cadet Bowman has provided us with some necessary augmentations. We will discuss the nature of these on our trek. To wings, men!

The Army salutes General Hare. One by one, the men climb into their ships, the cockpits sealing shut behind them. Peppy turns to Bill and places a hand on his shoulder.

Peppy: Thanks for letting me join you on this missive, Commander Grey.

Bill: Oh, no sweat, sir. It wouldnt be right to deny you your first flight as General. Im honored to have a veteran ace as my wingman.

Peppy: See ya among the stars. Dash, hold things down for us here. You and Belly keep your eyes open for anything unusual.

General Hare turns toward a greentip fighter, this one with red stripes down the front of its fuselage.

With both his prior companions gone, Dash watches the fighters leave the hangar. He nods his head and smiles, privy to knowledge unknown by any of them.

Inari leads the assortment of animals down a short wooden pier. A small raft of sorts rests tied to the piers end. They board the raft and push off, into the large, sparkling lake of blue.

The animals breathe in the fresh air, Falco especially enraptured at the environment.

Falco: This is fabulous! Makes me feel like I can fly without my ship.

Krystal: You are a bird.

Falco: Oh, dont be ignorant. The bird-men of Lylat have never been able to fly. Were not nest-builders like many worlds.

Krystal: I was only jesting.

Falco: I know. But this lake is absolutely gorgeous.

Inari pushes the raft forward with a long pole. He shakes his head, fighting some old memories trying to resurface. Fox and Krystal sit in the front with the tips of their toes in the water.

A red archway of sort looms in the center of the lake, eventually overcoming them. The raft passes underneath the ornamental gateway, the shrines torii, smoothly.

The raft comes to a stop in front of a large, ornamental house. Inari ties the raft to one of the bars holding up a rail as the creatures disembark.

Inari: Now remember. Should anyone ask, you are children dressed in costumes. Its one month from Halloween, so it shouldnt be too awkward.

Krystal grabs Foxs arm as the rest of the party enters the building.

Krystal: He knows more than he is telling us.

Fox: I know. Those statements he made to his friend. Theres something going on here.

Krystal: Fox, theres something about him thats different. His mind, its like its not his own. The persona of Inari and the persona of his mind are two distinct entities.

Fox: That does sound odd.

As Inari and his party enter the shrine, they find a long table with boxes of charms occupying the space to their right. A tall, teenage girl with long, black hair in temple garments, white robe with long red skirt, sweeps the floor behind the table.

Inari: Ohayou, Rei-san.

Rei: Inari-san, it is good to see you again. And who are these?

Inari: Oh, uh. These are my younger cousins. Theyre getting a head-start on Halloween.

Rei: Oh. Welcome to Itsukushima shrine. Please keep your voices down, and do not run in the shrine.

This is a holy site. Please respect the rights of others who worship here.

Inari: Are there any others here?

Rei: No, sorry. Grandfather left this morning to return to the shrine in Tokyo. He was not too pleased with my decision to remain here.

Inari: I am sorry to hear that. It is good to see you again, but you'll have to excuse me.

Rei nods. Inari directs the children into the haiden, the worship area. The team finds a relatively empty room with small mats on the floor, possibly for kneeling. Here and there, long, vertical banners hang from the ceiling, bearing kanji characters.

Inari: This is the place of worship and meditation. Be calm in spirit. Clear your mind and pray to a deity. I pray to fox god.

Fox: Fox god?

Inari: Yes. That troubles you?

Fox: Okay. Now I need some answers. You spoke of the Lylat Wars to your friend last night, and now you mention a fox god. What is your explanation, Inari?

The man bows his head. Krystal gasps. Falco catches her before she passes out. Inari shakes his head as he steps forward.

A small breath of wind troubles the banners that hang.

Inari: I had exchanged words with Shigeru. They were given me by your father, Fox. I had no memory of the events that took place here so long ago. But returning has made me remember.

As the man walks about on the opposite side of the room, the banners often hide him from view.

Inari: I understand now, Fox. Now you must.

A banner flies in front of the StarFox team, again obscuring the view. When it clears, Inari has vanished. In his place stands James McCloud, clothed in his StarFox uniform complete with shades.

Fox: Father!

Father and son embrace in the place of worship. Krystal comes to in time to see the display, expressing her sentiment with tears.

James: I have waited so long for you, my son.

Fox: It was you all along?

James: The kind man who treated me, Inari, passed away after restoring me. This culture believes in a god of fertility and agriculture, and this deity is associated with foxes. The name of this god is also Inari. My healer was a man of science, but he also believed me to be a Kitsune, a symbol of the god Inari. He brought me here in the final moments of his life and prayed to the deity. The man Inari passed away, and I assumed his form through a miracle within this place.

Fox: For ten years, father. Ten years I have wondered what became of you.

James: It has only been three years in this worlds reckoning.

Slippy: This solar system must have a different method of counting time.

Fox: But how, father? I must know how it came to be. How did you wind up here?

James: Yes. That is an interesting story. I will tell all, but we must get back to the island.

Fox: Of course.

James leads the team out of the room and past Reis charm table. The teenage girl, a Shinto priestess herself, spots James in the group. Their eyes meet, and they both smile widely.

Once again within Inaris small hut, James McCloud takes off his sunglasses. He pours a cup of hot tea for himself, then four others for the rest of the group. Fox and the team take seats on Inaris cot.

James: Ultimately, it was a confrontation with Andross that led to this. General Pepper, fine old hound, how is he?

Falco: Hes deadly ill. He may not be alive by the time we return.

James: Such terrible news. And the Cornerian Army?

Slippy: Actually, he relinquished control to Peppy.

James: Ha! No way! General Peppy Hare. I like the idea. Ill have to congratulate the General when we return. Peppy was my best friend. Well, he and Beltino. Pigma was the one who sold us for that ape. Thats where it begins, really. Peppy was able to escape. I tried, but Androsss ultimate weapon literally grabbed me. I was in some form of electrostasis, Arwing and all, until you came to fight Andross. Destroying his master-brain freed me, and in turn I helped you escape.

Fox: Then it was real. All of it was real.

James: Oh yes, son.

Fox: But why didnt come back to Great Fox? Why not return to us and Lylat?

James: Im afraid thats a little complicated. Andross had tampered with my Arwings guidance system. In

the event that he died, or I escaped, I could pilot my ship to the edge of the planets atmosphere, then my auto-pilot would take over. He had it programmed to send me to the far side of the galaxy, through that massive black hole. Somehow, I made it through safely, and ended up in this solar system. I limped here, hoping to find a place to recover until I could send a message. I sent the transmission about a year ago.

Fox: You knew I would come. You knew wed find a way here.

James: And I know you have the resources to go back.

Slippy: Oh, yeah. As soon as the ships solar cells recharge, we can perform the transwarp again.

Falco: Um, small problem. The C-30s can only hold one pilot apiece. We have no room for Daddy Fox.

James: Actually, thats not as much of a problem as you think.

Two black and red airplane-like ships hover above the moon, hiding from Earth-sight.

Leon: How long must we wait here, Wolf?

Wolf: Hold your tongue, worm! Well wait as long as possible.

Leon: Theyve been there for three days. Perhaps they were killed by the natives.

Wolf: Dont be ridiculous! StarFox is strong. Just keep your long-range scanners on, and keep gathering information on this solar system.

A large cloth bolts away from its covering object, revealing an arwing starfighter beneath.

The StarFox team stands around in awe. Slippy steps forward to look the ship over.

Slippy: This is the model we used when we were first assembled.

James: Yep. Beltino produced it for the Venomian mission. We were wanting to retire the C-30 prototypes, but we needed a replacement.

Slippy: This was a good one. It had the deep-space versatility, upgradeable weapons, and atmospheric G-diffuser systems. This thing had it all, for the time being that was.

Fox: Can we reconfigure it for transwarp.

Slippy: Im looking. The engine seems to have undergone an ion drive remodification. Weapons and other nonessential systems shut down with the engine fully powers up. Fox, this thing could well make transwarp on its own.

James: Inari was a mad of advanced science. He looked at my ship as I was healing. He wanted me to have a way to leave, if I needed to.

Fox: Well, lets not waste any more time than we need. Get some rest team. We have an important day ahead of us.

Wolf: Aha! Here they come.

Five arwing fighters shoot past the moon, behind which hides Leon and Wolf.

Leon: Wait a second! Whos driving that fifth ship?

Wolf: Who else? Its old man McCloud himself.

Leon: Of course. Well then. Let us make pursuit.

Wolf: Back to Lylat subtly, Leon.

Both Wolfens appear to shimmer in the air before vanishing from plain view.

The arwings zoom past the eight major planets and enter a dense asteroid field beyond the planet Neptune.

They emerge from the other side, where they find an enormous black hole in the distance.

Fox: There is it, dad.

James: After three years, it still gives me chills.

Slippy: Ion drives are charged. We know the charge.

Fox: Engage!

The arwings assume the same basic position, but forming a pentagon with Jamess ship. The spin cycle begins just like before, the energy well building up. The burst of speed occurs just like before, and the ships disappear into the Black Hole.

The five ships emerge from the Black Hole and slow. They assume an arrow formation and zoom toward the edge of the Typhon cluster.

Falco: Whoo-hoo! Thats a wild ride.

Slippy: Im surprised you didnt lose your oats.

Falco: Hey! Im used to it, and I was born for the sky.

Fox: How are you doing, dad?

James: All fine, here.

Fox breathes a sigh of relief. He closes his eyes and focuses on the soothing hum of his ship's engine. His comm-system flairs up, sending through a transmission.

Wolf: A touching reunion, really!

Fox: Wolf?

A screen on his instrument panel gives the position: two ships behind them, where previously was just space.

The two Wolfen fighters decloak to the team's rear.

Slippy: Inconceivable! They've got cloaking technology.

Leon: You are correct, little frog.

Wolf: And now, StarFox, you will taste our revenge.

The Wolfens fly apart from each other and begin circling the ships.

Fox: Slip, tell me these things have weapons.

Slippy: Sorry. We couldn't afford the necessity with this deep-space flight.

James: I'm afraid my weapons have no store of energy for operation, either.

Fox: Great!

The two Wolfens break away from the Arwings. They fly to a point in the distance and turn about.

Wolf: Now, StarFox, behold the mass of might!

Another Wolfen decloaks to the right of the other two. Two large attack carriers decloak behind them, along with a fleet of nearly a hundred smaller ships.

Fox: We've been had!

The ships scatter, a swarm rushing toward the StarFox team.

Fox: Evasive maneuvers!

The ships turn to leave when a laser blast destroys a small ship on the forefront of the swarm.

The comm-system activates again, and a familiar voice breaks the air.

Peppy: Sorry to get here so late, boys. But were all here to help.

Another fleet, of some forty or so greentip fighters, decloaks between StarFox and the swarm. A large cargo ship decloaks along with them.

ROB: Great Fox reporting.

Slippy: No way!

ROB: Location confirmed. Sending supplies.

The cargo ship launches five small boxes that each dismantle as soon as they touch an arwing.

Slippy: Weve got weapons.

Fox: Id say weve got ourselves a dogfight!

Bill: Right you are on that one!

A single greentip fighter passes overhead.

Fox: Bill!

Bill: Great to see you again, Fox. Glad to have you in the fight.

StarFox disperses, each arwing venturing into the swarm of ships. The Cornerian army helps whittle down the swarm. Eventually, only a few fighters remain.

The large attack carriers respond by releasing another swarm of fighters.

Wolf: We have underestimated them yet again. Carriers, report!

Caiman: Caiman here. Production up by 400%. Turnaround time: minutes.

Wolf: Keep them coming. Leon, we have to deal with StarFox.

Wolfs Wolfen fighter tracks a single arwing and separates it from the fight. Leon tracks another and does the same. Both arwing pilots, Fox and Falco respectively, sway and somersault to break from pursuit. Neither meet with success.

Foxs cockpit jars with repeated laser blasts.

Fox: Structural integrity is decreasing rapidly. Im gonna have to eject!

A volley of laserfire forces Wolfs fighter away from Foxs ship. A unique ship begins to trail the Wolfen.

Fox: What in the world?

The comm-system springs to life again, patching through the sound of a chimpanzees wail.

Fox: Dash? Thanks for the help, man!

Dash: Dont sweat it! Anything I can do is its own reward.

Fox: Well, I can take care of Wolf from here. You and a squadron of fighters need to take out those attack carriers.

Dash: Sure thing, Fox!

The Monkey Arrow breaks away. Dash pilots his ship to the edge of the battle and scans the carriers.

Dash: Simply destroy the core. No problem here.

He presses a button and activates the comm-system.

Dash: This is Bowman. I am requesting a volunteer to assist me in destroying the attack cruisers. The mission is simple. I only need a wingman to take out one carrier while I destroy the other.

Dash sits in silent for a few minutes. Finally, a thick, hearty voice answers.

Mac: This is Mac Horn. Dont worry, little buddy. Ill help you out!

Dash: Thanks, Mac. Im sending over the schematics that my scans have revealed.

Mac: All right, Bowman. Ive got em. Lets take em out.

A Cornerian fighter breaks from assault to join the Monkey Arrow. The two barrel toward the attack carriers, parting ways to target the carriers individually.

Dash takes his ship into an opening in the large ships hull. The corridor before him stretches deep into the belly of the ship, but contains little adornments.

A series of obstacles make him veer left, then right. He scowls when two upright support columns come into view.

Monkey Arrow crashes through both of these, never slowing or showing any significant damage. Dash instantly finds himself in a cavern of polished metal. A pillar of white light inhabits the center of the room, stretching from floor to ceiling.

The comm-system activates.

Mac: Dash, Im at the reactor core. But I have no clue what to do here.

Dash: Im there, too Mac. Im scanning the chamber now. Hold on. Wait! Theres a tiny node near the ceiling that perpetuates the energy stasis.

Mac: Say what?

Dash: It keeps the energy flowing in a single loop. If we destroy the nodes, the energy will overwhelm the entire cruiser.

Mac: Heck, ya dont have to tell me twice!

Dash smiles as he forces the ship upward. His instrument panel directs him to the node, but he never sees it. With hands on the triggers, he loads the Monkey Arrows dual-laser canons.

The instrument panel finally chirps, its target locked. Dash presses the trigger buttons; twin bursts of blue light fire from the ship. The node surrenders in a small burst.

Dash brings the ship around as the room seethes. The energy pillar becomes a dancing snake. He makes it to the corridor as the chamber erupts in flame. Tongues of fire lap around Monkey Arrow.

The ship finally crosses the threshold into deep space. Dash wails in triumph.

Caiman: Attack cruisers down! Abandoning ship!

The crocodilians voice segues into static within Wolfs fighter

Wolf: What the heck? Weve underestimated them yet again.

The Wolfen pulls out of the fray and turns about to examine the scene. Of his armada, only a few dozen fighters remain, and the combined force of StarFox and Cornerian Army give swift chase to the rest.

Wolf: The fleet is doomed.

Two other Wolfens pull up alongside him.

Leon: But this was not entirely surprising.

Panther: We still have a small cloaked squadron awaiting orders.

Wolf: Yes, its time. Ready the assault force and plot course for the Hole!

Fox sees a squadron of twelve fighters decloak near the three Wolfens from over his shoulder. He turns his arwing to keep the ships in view.

The ships launch toward the Black Hole with blazing speed, transwarp speed.

Fox: They had a plan B.

Fox says this under his breath before he punches the comm-systems button.

Fox: StarFox, break assault and regroup on my mark!

Slippy: Fox, whats wrong?

The other four arwings break from the dogfight and follow Foxs ship to clean space. The Black Hole looms in the distance.

Fox: Did any of you see it?

Falco: See what, Fox? Did you sustain a barrel roll for too long?

Fox: Listen, guys! StarWolf and a squadron of fighters just went through the Hole.

Falco: Well, thats dumb. That place leads. . .

James: We have to go after them. Theyll conquer the Earth system in less than a week.

Slippy: Theyll build an empire there and launch a deep-space attack on Lylat. Our ion engines have charged during combat. Theyre ready.

Fox: I think its a little more than that, guys. We have to collapse the Black Hole.

Slippy: But its a black hole. Its already collapsed.

Fox: Then we need to destabilize the wormhole. We cant risk harming that system, or having it harm us.

Slippy: Well, a dark matter burst at the Holes epicenter may cause a small white hole. The reversal within would destroy the wormhole. But I only know one thing can detonate a dark matter burst: an Interplanetary Ballistic Missile.

The comm-system chimes again.

ROB: Thanks to Cadet Bowman, Great Fox has a store of IPBMs. I will load two now.

Fox: Thanks, ROB. Wait for our signal to launch. All right, StarFox. Were fighting for two worlds now. Prepare for transwarp. Engage!

The three Wolfens and their contingent amass at the edge of the Asteroid Belt, planning their course of action.

Leon: I do believe it would be best to establish a base for production here on one of the larger asteroids. Then we should move toward the blue planets moon. With two bases, the planet wont know what overcame them!

Wolf: Good, Leon. Take the squadron and begin at once. Panther and I will make visits to the blue planets capital cities. We will prepare them for the domination of this system.

Panther: Wait! Long-range scanners tell me something has come through the Hole. Five ships closing on our position. Its StarFox!

The ships turn about. Wolf smirks when the arwings come into view.

Wolf: Ah, Fox. Good to see you again.

Fox: We wont let you do this, Wolf. This fight is for Lylatians only.

Wolf: Soon this system will be controlled by Lylatians. Namely, us!

Wolfs ship shoots forward, twin lasers blazing. StarFox disperses, along with the squadron of fighters around the Wolfens.

Falco and Slippy make relatively short work of the fighters. The small Venomian vessels cannot match the superior speed and firepower of two arwing fighters.

Fox and Wolf chase each other for a while, at times both threatening the other. Leon turns a U-turn to avoid Falcos pursuit.

Leon: Annoying bird! I am the great Leon.

Falco: Not today, buddy!

Falcos ship wheels around tightly and launches a small red particle, a smart bomb. Leon sways but cannot turn away in time.

The bomb shatters the Wolfens wings and send the ship deep into the asteroid belt, trailing a stream of fire and smoke all the way.

Panther: Come, babe. Dont make me chase you all day.

Krystal: Some men are all talk and no action.

Krystals arwing somersaults to fall in behind Panthers Wolfen. Two well-placed shots from her laser take out his engine. The Wolfen crashes headlong into a large asteroid directly beneath them.

Fox and Wolf turn multiple somersaults, trying to tail each other.

Fox: Confound it! I cant shake him!

The wolf laughs maniacally within his cockpit. His instrument locks on to the arwing fighter. He depresses the triggers and launches a red heat-seeking projectile, a smart bomb.

Fox: Aaagh!

Frantically, Fox hits his booster control. His vessel surges forward in response, putting distance between him and the projectile. The arwing flies close to asteroids, veering away quickly, hoping to lose the bomb on some space rock. Nothing works.

Fox: Dang it!

James: Take control, Fox.

Fox: Dad! A little help here.

James: Trust your instincts, son.

Fox: Dad, come on

Fox: Dont ever give up! Trust your instincts!

Fox sighs, forcing himself to relax. He wracks his brain thinking of some plan.

Fox: Yes! Thats it!

Wolf sits idly in his arwing watching the wild arwing saunter to and fro.

Wolf: Watch carefully, StarFox. Lylat and this system will be mine, once that bomb takes your leaders ship.

Foxs arwing slows and the bomb nearly closes in on it. One second from impact, Fox activates his booster, shoots straight up, turns a U-turn and barrels toward Wolfs ship. The arwing rolls on its side and snaps left only for a moment to skirt the other ship.

The red projectile strikes its own source, biting the hand of its master. A sphere of red fire engulfs the immediate region of space. Triumphant, Foxs arwing veers away from the site, rejoining the team.

James: Excellent work, son.

Fox: Thanks, Dad.

Falco: Yeah. Not bad. One of these days, Im gonna catch up to you.

Krystal: Now for the last part.

Slippy: Back to Black Hole.

Bill hollers in the cockpit of his greentip fighter as General Hares fighter destroys the last of the Venomian fleet.

Bill: Sectors clear, sir.

Peppy: Good work, boys. Clear space for Great Fox.

ROB: Transmitting message to StarFox. Great Fox ready. Targeting matrix experiencing difficulties.

A combined formation of five arwings escapes the Black Hole in the typhoon cluster. The ships break from pentagon formation and assume normal arrow position.

Fox: Whats that mean, Slip?

Slippy: Well, the cargo ship can carry and launch missiles, but its not designed for that purpose. I hadnt quite planned that far ahead, and Dash probably worked off my notes when he retrofitted the ship.

Falco: So whats the jive, man?

Slippy: Great Fox cannot target the missiles effectively. The guidance systems are designed to drop shipments to specified locations, not fixed points in empty space. It has nothing solid within the Hole to lock on to. Thus, the missiles would pass cleanly through the vortex and be part of the singularity.

Falco: Slip, you need lessons in laymans English.

Fox: Great! Now what can we do?

James: Can Great Fox target one of our vessels?

Slippy: Of course. If ROB pegs us here, Great Fox can keep us pegged into the Holes event horizon.

Fox: Dad, are you suggesting we sacrifice ourselves?

Krystal: No, Fox. Hes not.

Fox: Dad?

James: Fox, this isnt going to be easy. But the answer here is right before us. You and StarFox are the future of Lylat. I have served my term, and you have filled my shoes well. Lylat no longer needs me as it needs you. I must do this.

Fox: Dad! No! I cant let you offer yourself. Maybe we program a greentip or a space droid.

James: Theres no time. Fox, the people of Earth have a saying. The needs of the many outweigh the

needs of the few, or the one. I am the few; I am the one. Lylat is the many.

James's ship breaks formation and turns about.

James: This isn't easy for me either, Fox. I had waited so long to see you again. You have waited longer. I hate to part in this manner, but if I could go back in time to do it over again, I would only change one thing. I would have died fighting Andross. But I do count giving my life to keep a beautiful, yet more primitive, world safe a death worthy of a martyr.

Fox: Father. . .

James: Remember what I taught you, Fox. Trust your instincts. Don't ever give up. The people of Lylat can be great if they choose to be. But greed can corrupt a great mind and enslave an entire galaxy. Great Fox, do you have me?

ROB: Location confirmed. Arwing locked. Awaiting launch signal.

James nods. His arwing pulls forward.

James: Take care, son. Lylat is yours. Keep it well.

Fox leans forward, tears pouring from his shut eyes.

Falco: Come on, folks. Let's get back to Corneria.

Fox sobs within his cockpit. He raises a paw to the glass separating him from the void of space.

Fox: Father. . .

James's arwing boosts forward, narrowing the space between the ship and the Black Hole. The pilot cranes his neck to catch one last view of the fleet behind him.

James: Good-bye, my son.

James's lower lip quivers as a stream of tears pours down his face.

ROB: Signal confirmed. Missiles launched.

James sits in the cockpit of his arwing in a sea of pure light.

He opens his eyes as his instrument panel blares an incoming projectile warning. He sights two large cylindrical objects hurtling toward his ship.

Instinctively, he turns his ship away. The missiles collide at the rear of his ship, more with each other than with the fighter. The force of the blast sends the arwing hurtling away from the blast zone.

The explosion releases a cloud of black gas which hangs in the air for a few seconds. The gas draws in on itself, forming a tiny black spot. The spot spins for a bit before exploding, releasing the gas again.

A tiny white spot appears in the night sky. General Hare hangs his head and turns to the group of people on the Tech Centers balcony.

The StarFox team, plus Beltino Toad, Dash, Mac, and Bill, stand around a silver casket emblazoned with the StarFox emblem.

Peppy: Show me a hero, and I'll show you a tragedy. That's what a great philosopher once said. Friends, the life of James McCloud was no tragedy. A visionary, pioneer mercenary, friend of freedom, agent of liberty. We could talk forever naming the accomplishments of our beloved friend. He's gone now. As much as we all hate to face it, face it we must. James has slipped the surly bonds, not just of this world, but of this entire galaxy. He once wished to see the stars from above and beside. Now, he sees everything from above. We do not have his body here, for he committed himself to the wilderness of space. His death saved two worlds. James, we will never forget what we learned from you, or what you did here. Good-bye, old friend. May space everlasting open before you.

Finishing the eulogy, Peppy lays a hand on the smooth silver. After a moment of silence, he leaves the balcony. All but the StarFox team follow him. Fox dries his eyes and moves from the side of the casket to the forward rail of the balcony.

Falco and Slippy lay flowers on the casket. Krystal lays hers then leaves to join Fox.

Krystal: I will not tell you not to cry, darling. Not all tears are evil.

Fox: Krystal, I

Krystal: No words.

The female embraces him. He breaks down for a while, sobbing in her arms. Eventually, he composes himself and pulls away from her slightly.

Fox: Krystal, this whole even has set me thinking. The price we pay to defend Lylat is very great. Those we love can be taken from us in the blink of an eye. If anything were to happen to you because you were in love with the leader of StarFox, I would never forgive myself.

Krystal: Darling, what is this that you speak?

Fox: I think it would be best if we were no longer a couple. You should probably leave StarFox.

The vixen pulls away, shaking her head.

Krystal: Whoa! What? Leave StarFox? I can't. StarFox has given me the family I never had, a home I never knew. I can't leave StarFox. I'm sorry, but I don't

Fox: This isn't easy for either of us, but it is best. I can't let you get hurt because of me. You should go now.

The female stands dumfounded for a moment before turning to flee, wiping her eyes with each step.

Fox leans against the rail to support himself. He turns to the rest of the team, finding both the falcon and the toad standing there indignant.

Falco: That was, shall we say, unexpected, chief.

Slippy: You've got a lot of nerve, Fox!

Fox: Guys, I

Falco: You had to give her the boot, didn't ya? You couldn't just break up smoothly. You tore her away from everything good she's ever had in recent years.

Slippy: Falco, we don't have to stand for this.

Falco: You got that right, Slip. You want to play hardball, Fox? We'll do it without a team, now. StarFox is dissolved.

The two leave the balcony in a huff. Fox falls to his knees. He buries his face in his hands.

Fox: Father. What should I do now? I only want what's best for StarFox. Now there is no StarFox.

Fox looks up at the night sky.

Fox: What should I do, father?

Wolf O'Donnell snorts as he holds up a piece of sheet metal. Leon moves behind him to apply rivets. The rivets hold, fastening the sheet metal to an artificial edifice constructed at the lip of a crevasse in the asteroid's surface.

Wolf and Leon skip about, their spacesuits taking advantage of the asteroid's low gravity.

Leon: Well, another twenty more walls should form enough of a perimeter. Then we can activate our life-support systems.

Wolf: Good. I'll be glad when we know how to leave this rock.

Leon: Panther is down below modifying our ships as we speak. Of course, with the Black Hole destroyed, we'll have to find some way to create a wormhole of our own. That in itself is difficult. Plus, we don't know how to plot the wormhole's destination from here.

Wolf: Well find a way to return to Lylat. Well find a way if it takes us a lifetime.

On a small island in the Northwest Pacific Ocean, a young Japanese man sits at the edge of a paved runway.

He sighs as he looks up to the sky, admiring a bright new patch of white amid the stars.

Another approaches him from behind, dressed in a business suit and a briefcase.

Shigeru: Inari?

Inari: What now, Shigeru?

Shigeru: Its a go. The developers want the game. I gave them the designs for characters, vehicles, and the structure of the game. But we need to work on the story.

Inari takes a deep breath. Some part of him cries out mentally to someone far away, on the distant side of the Black Hole.

Inari: Come have a seat, Shigeru. Ill tell what Ive seen in my dreams.

THE END