

“Sic Kend’hara i’ michlus’t vi yu gerecht. Sic Kend’erus vi vey inacht. Frecas sol vey gerecht. Oc’flieme, sepra, fliecht ste’gats frecasse. Ic nule vey carus. Ic Kend’hara fi erust.”

“With open arms for to welcome, we greet you. With arms closed, we lay ourselves down. Only darkness greets us. One light, distant, shining upon darkness’ gate. And nothingness surrounds us. And open arms forever close.”

—final transmission of the starship Kend’hara,
Terran year 2360 A.D.

Positively Pornographic. One of the most obscene books we've ever read. I liked the nude mud wrestling in a vat of chocolate syrup, though.

—New Pork Thymes

Funny, except for that part where Adam kicks Eve's ass in a fist fight. That went a bit too far.

—Boston Probe

Guaranteed to make your penis three inches longer or your money back!

—Chelsea Clinton's ex-boyfriend's
former roommate

Quite possibly the worst piece of excrement we've ever read. It should be burned, you fool.

—My Editor

Quite possibly the best piece of excellence you've ever read? And you think it should be learned in school?

—Author's Response

What cat coughed up this hairball?

—San Francisco Chronic Cold

Ten thousand monkeys? No, it's... better than that in certain parts.... Maybe twelve thousand?

—Nashville Banana

Never before in the history of books has something like this been published. It truly shows what sort of a writer Mr. Gatwood is. In all our years, we have never had this sort of reaction to a book before.

—The American Society for the Study of
Subclinical Allergies

Patriots: Traitors in Waiting

Preview Edition

A novel by
David A. Gatwood

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Published by Gatwood Publishing.

Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: Preview edition

For Amanda... our only hope.

A Word from the Author:

This book is the first in a series of three. To tell the truth, I just woke up one morning and had the urge to write a novel. As I started thinking about it, the ideas just sort of fell into place at a high level, and I wrote the first few chapters in my spare time near the end of my graduate studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

As with any project during graduate school, though, in the end, with so many things competing for my time, my thesis won, and the book sat on a shelf (or more accurately, on a hard drive) for more than a year before I had time to work on it again.

Once things had settled down with my job at a giant fruit company, I had more free time, as well as a new inspiration for the book—one that would change its scope entirely. In the end, this single book turned into a series of three books.

The first book in the Patriots series, “Traitors in Waiting”, explores the great colonial war from the perspective of military officers born and raised in a loyalist Earth colony.

The second book, “Enemies From Within”, treats the story from the perspective of the colonists.

The third book, “Beyond the Veil”, tells the truth behind the war.

After the book, be sure to read “Behind the Book”, where I tell more about the thinking that went into various parts of the book. A word of warning, though: it’s full of spoilers. Don’t read it first. (Yeah, I know you’re thinking about flipping to it right now. Go ahead. Spoil the book. See if I care.)

Special Thanks:

to my family and friends
for always believing in me,

to the UCSC Wind Ensemble
for a reprieve from the
drudgery of certain classes
(and life in general),

to Douglas Adams
for making me laugh and
thus inspiring this novel,

to Arthur C. Clarke,
the butt of at least
half a dozen jokes,

to all those who
employed me while I
wrote this novel,

and to my fellow writers for
their comments and critiques.

As usual, I'm still waiting
to get them....

Chapter

One

May 5, 2363

THE musty air stung their noses as they walked through the abandoned ship, its uninviting halls dark and cold, but there was air. There was definitely air, and that alone was an improvement.

James Kurtz had seen many such ships in his day, but none more unique than the Kend'hara. She was a thing of beauty, her sleek lines swept back like your true love's hair, entrancing at first sight. Yes, he'd seen many ships adrift in his day, most not worth repairing.

But this one—yes, this one is different. She'll be a great ship again, he thought—just the right ship for my grandson, Joseph. Sure, he's only a boy, but someday, he'll thank his old granddad for fixing up this junker.

Ever since James had retired from the Allied Earth Force, he'd dreamed of rebuilding just such a ship. He came from a long line of engineers going back for generations—his father, Joe, his uncle, Tom, and his grandfather, Paul—and his only son, James, Jr., had been an engineer until he was killed in the battle at Kensington 7.

He only hoped that his grandson would carry on his legacy... but he'd never admit that it mattered to him. "It's

not my life,” he’d tell them. Of course it did, but he’d never admit it.

Yes, he had been a ship’s engineer once, but that was before — when humanity was still new, that youthful optimism still glowing in its eyes — when nations banded together to leave the planet and explore space. They colonized star systems, made new discoveries, developed new technologies, realized that no one else lived within walking distance, and went back to what they did best: fighting amongst themselves.

These days, it seemed like every day’s news was filled with stories about the Colonial Earth Alliance (CEA) slaughtering innocent civilians on planets siding with the Terrestrial Earth Reciprocal Retaliatory Alliance (TERRA). Of course, TERRA owned the local media, he realized, and he wondered what the CEA media had to say...

There he was, though, living at the heart of TERRA, Earth, with his daughter, her husband, and their nephew, his grandson.

It all began innocently enough — one colony demanding freedom from the home world. The transition of power seemed to be going well at first, but then things went terribly wrong.

Chapter

Two

It seemed so simple; a new government was to be formed. Elections were held, and the day of inauguration was upon them.

The newly elected leaders of the Colonial Earth Alliance stood at the podium and thanked the people for choosing them. They pledged to support trade relations with the Terrans and to work together for the common good.

Yes, all of the newly elected leaders were there, save one. Robert Dumas, representing Lenora Prime, promised tough sanctions against Earth.

“Their government’s tyranny can be tolerated no longer. We must rise up—rise up and tear down that government, and build a new one where it once stood—a government founded on the principle of equality for ALL of humanity;” he had said.

Indeed, his absence was no surprise—he was to be sworn in privately at his home on Lenora Prime—so it was with some shock that the media greeted him as he pushed his way towards the platform. As Dumas neared the stage, though, his pace slowed....

That’s when the bombs exploded—carefully planted explosives, designed to level the platform.

Three weeks later, in a prerecorded announcement, Dumas announced his succession to President of the Colonial Earth Alliance according to colonial law. During his term, he delivered on his promise of tough sanctions... but they hurt his people far more than they hurt Earth.

The colonies were in ruins now. Shortages of supplies led seemingly normal citizens to take up arms and fight for their very survival. While these men and women were labeled “rebels” and “terrorists” by the colonial government, they found favor at its highest levels. Through various laundering schemes, the CEA supplied them with weapons, ships, and financial backing.

After a few months of horrible atrocities against Earth and its allies, the Terran Alliance began organizing counterstrikes against CEA worlds. This quickly escalated into an all-out war—a war that James Kurtz would have no part of. He only hoped that the fighting would never reach Earth itself.

So far, they had been lucky—some terrorist attacks, lost shipments to the outer colonies, that sort of thing. Compared to the devastation below him on the surface of Lenora Prime, though, they had been very lucky, indeed.

But those were the galaxy’s problems. There were more pressing problems now, like this ship—three years adrift in space, and she still had air.

“They sure don’t make ’em like they used to,” he said. In his arms, his sole companion just looked up at him and smiled.

Chapter

Three

Twenty-seven years later (November 10, 2390)

W^{HERE} do we go from here? Joseph thought as he stumbled out of the shuttle into shuttle bay three on Terran Command Station.

“He is remarkably strong for his age, mature, and intelligent—prime officer material,” they said. Officer material indeed, he thought. He’d gladly give up this lousy job for a warm burger and a drink.

Joseph Kurtz was his patriarchal progeny, which is to say, his father’s son—headstrong and sure of himself... and always hungry.

It was entirely coincidental that at that very moment, his grandfather was fixing dinner on Earth, but that’s not important. What *is* important is that Joseph caught the scent of pizza in the mess hall and broke into a fast clip.

As he entered the mess hall, the smell of pepperoni was unmistakable—a far cry from the smell of burnt wiring that marked his arrival on the station—but as he turned to look for the source of the smell, he ran into a wall.

“Ow, that must have hurt,” he heard someone say. He tried to turn to see who it was, but that only made him dizzy, and he fell to the ground.

When he came around, Joseph thought he must be dreaming.

“Hi. I’m Amanda.”

It wasn’t what she said that got his attention; it was the way that she said it. She could have said, “Hi, I’m Amanda and you look like crap,” and he still would have found it beautiful.

More than that, though, *she* was beautiful—not beautiful in a Hollywood movie star sort of way, but beautiful in a “My stomach just jumped up into my throat and kept going and now resides three decks up in its own quarters” kind of way.

And so it was with great pain that he slipped into unconsciousness once again.

Chapter

FOUR

November 26, 2390

MORE than two weeks passed before Joseph saw Amanda again. Then, one day at lunch, he was sitting there in the mess hall minding his own business when he heard a small commotion behind him. There she was—the girl of his dreams—her long brown hair flowing around her shoulders like a robe, her blue eyes glistening in the light like a distant star. And there he was—Mark Mitchell—every girl’s dream and every guy’s nightmare... and he was hitting on Amanda.

Joseph shook that thought off. *It shouldn’t matter that he’s hitting on her. After all, she wouldn’t even know that I exist save for the dent in the wall.* As far as he could tell, there was only one way she would ever notice him.

He walked into a wall. Not just any wall, though. This time, he picked a short wall that would catch him just a little above the knees. What he didn’t count on was the table on the other side slamming him in the chin, but somehow, he managed to maintain consciousness.

“Wow. What’s that, twice in a row?” he heard her say.

And there she was again, standing over him, helping him to his feet. “Amanda, right?” he asked.

“Yeah, that’s right. Amanda Jenkins. You?”

“I’m Joseph. Joseph Kurtz,” he stuttered. “Would you care to join me for dinner?”

“Don’t tell me you tripped over the planter on my account,” she mused.

“I’d be lying if I said I noticed it was a planter,” he replied. “A wall’s a wall to me.”

She laughed. “Sure, I’d love to.”

With that, Mark’s eyes narrowed to a slit, the whites barely visible from across the room. Suddenly, the room grew eerily quiet, not like the calm before a storm so much as like house pets before an earthquake.... Joseph only hoped the date he was going on tonight was worth the pummeling he would likely get tomorrow.

Chapter

Five

Later that evening (November 26, 2390)

THE hour had arrived—the fated moment awaited—the kiss that would end their newfound friendship forever and leave something different in its place.

That was the thought running through Joseph’s head when he sat down beside Amanda at a table in the “Crew’s Quarter” (that was what everyone called this section of the main concourse full of shops and restaurants), waiting for their meal. A heavysset, older gentleman eyed them from across the room, but they paid him no heed. They were in love, and that was all that mattered.

With a crash, their food arrived on their table in somewhat poorer condition than when it had left the kitchen, but it arrived, and that alone was an improvement, as it meant they could begin eating.

“My sincerest apologies, sir,” the waiter said. “I’ll get that cleaned up for you and get you a new drink.”

“Thank you,” Joseph replied.

The waiter left with a flourish. While it may not be entirely clear how a waiter can leave with a flourish, this one did.

So there they were—two longing hearts, each waiting to see into the other’s soul—two young fools staring into each other’s eyes over a burnt steak, a greasy cheeseburger, and a puddle of water and grape soda.

Suddenly, the commotion on the other side of the room grabbed their attention.

“This is mad!” a strange Frenchman shouted. “I demand to be heard. The Alliance is corrupt!”

The man passed within inches of Amanda as he ran out into the hall. The elite forces quickly surrounded him, and he screamed, “They’re killing us! They’re killing us! Their own people!”

As the security team wrestled him to the ground, he continued to struggle to speak. “You have to believe me! There are traitors in waiting!” And then he became suddenly *silent*.

The room slowly returned to its usual din, but Amanda remained quiet.

“Amanda? What’s wrong?” Joseph asked after a few moments, his concern clearly showing.

“Nothing important.... No, I think someone just walked over my grave.”

As Joseph walked Amanda back to her quarters, they passed an information monitor.

“In Terran Alliance News,” the female anchor said, “there was more scattered fighting along the borders as three unmarked ships claiming to represent the Colonial Alliance attacked and boarded the freighter Garden of Eden near the no-man’s land. The crew was jettisoned out of an airlock. No survivors were reported.”

“Cast out of paradise?” Amanda quipped.

“Mmm-hmm,” Joseph replied, smiling.

“In other news,” the male anchor next to her said, “Secretary of State Tracey Armstrong is scheduled to appear at Terran Command Station tomorrow to make an announcement about her progress in the peace process. Reporter Milt Stevenson has details....”

“Do we care?” Joseph asked.

“Nope,” Amanda replied, grimacing.

A few moments later, they arrived at Amanda’s quarters.

“I’ll see you tomorrow?” Joseph asked.

She smiled. “Count on it.”

Chapter

Six

Later that night (November 26, 2390)

JOSEPH awoke suddenly to the sound of alarm klaxons blaring in his ear.

Time to wake up already? Joseph looked over at the clock. It read 11:48. *That's P.M.*, Joseph thought. *Not the alarm clock. Damn. That means....*

Thinking quickly, he threw on his black jumpsuit, sprang for the door, and then stepped cautiously out into the hall.

Joseph coughed as the acrid air burned his lungs. Even with his emergency light, he could barely see the end of the corridor through the smoky blackness, yet he knew it was just a mere two or three meters away.

And through the din, one name rang in his head. Amanda! Her quarters were on the outer ring—an easy target for any invading space fleet.

Just then, his communicator sounded its chime. “Kurtz here,” he shouted.

“Joseph, it’s Amanda. What’s going on down there? The security board is lit up like a Christmas tree.”

That's when he remembered that she was filling in for someone on the night shift, had started work several hours ago, and was in C&C some eighteen levels above him.

"I... I don't know. I just woke up. There's a lot of smoke. Fire suppression doesn't seem to be activated."

"Joe, according to the heat sensors, the fires are all in crawl spaces. The smoke is coming from the secondary ventilation system."

He looked around. Sure enough, the vents in the hall were billowing smoke like a Michigan chimney in February. He quickly closed off the problem vents, and the air began to clear as the local area filtration system kicked in. Then, he pulled out his data pad and began a diagnostic.

"Amanda?" he asked after a few moments.

"Hello, Joe. Whaddaya know?"

"You've been watching my movie collection, haven't you...."

"Like I'd tell you if I had," she replied playfully.

He smiled, shook it off, and continued. "It looks like something burned through the hull plating. Half this deck is depressurized down the length of the arm. My cabin and the empty cabin across the hall from me are the only ones on this side of the pressure doors."

"That would explain why no one else answered my status request.... Can you get off the level?"

"No way. I can't get out into the arm because of a depressurized section, and I can't go inside the nexus towards the engineering arm for the same reason. And in the other direction, the hall ends in a docking port.... The lifts are on the other side of one set of pressure doors, and the nearest access ladder is behind another set. And the access ladder wouldn't help anyway because the levels above and below me are depressurized."

"Listen, get yourself to a pressure pod at evac station 19-dash-3 Alpha. We'll send a team in EV suits to clean up the mess."

“I can’t do that. Those pressure pods are down for maintenance... and on the other side of the doors.”

“Then we’ll bring you an EV suit,” Amanda offered.

“No time. The EV suits are only designed to handle a few hundred degrees. The ceiling above my head is... starting to melt. It’s going to get hot in here pretty quickly.”

Amanda paused for a moment before speaking. “Melting? Are you sure?”

“Just the plastic bits,” Joseph replied, “but they’re dripping in spots, so yes it really is that hot. My best guess is that someone torpedoed us with something that’s catalyzing the oxidization of the hull plating itself. It won’t stop burning until it runs out of oxygen. You’re going to have to vent the deck.”

“But you’ll die. There isn’t an EV suit nearby.”

“I can reach docking port 19C from here,” he replied, glancing down at the end of the hallway.

“There’s no airlock at that port.”

“I know, Amanda. Look, it’s simple. Evacuate all the air on this section of the deck, then blow the hatch. I should remain conscious just long enough to jump free.”

“And this will help you how?”

“Since I’m so close to the central hub, I won’t have to overcome much momentum to remain stationary and get away from the crew quarters arm. Forty-two seconds later, the station’s operations arm will fly by. Have someone tethered to it in an EV suit to pull me inside the nearest airlock.”

“Are you crazy?”

“We don’t have a choice. This stuff is burning through into my deck. Air or no air, I’m probably about to die. At least this way there’s a chance.”

A moment later, he felt a rush of cool air. Knowing that the pressure was about to plummet, he quickly took gasping breaths to oxygenate his tissues, waited as the air grew thin, then shut his eyes and exhaled quickly, his breaths becoming steadily more shallow, then stopping altogether.

Chapter

Seven

COLD. Silent. Those were the first thoughts in Joseph's mind as he stared down the outer hall of the central nexus. Port 19C was just ahead, a largely useless relic left over from when the station was under construction.

For a fleeting moment, he wondered why the designers had chosen not to put stairs, ladders, or lifts inside the nexus near the crew quarters, then dismissed it as being a case of 20/20 hindsight. Somebody probably said, "Hey, I can build it for fifty million less if I put all the lifts in only two places and run them up the outside."

Just then, through the faint air, he heard a muffled explosion. He opened his eyes and blinked away the blood only to see the ceiling burst into flame. Suddenly, he realized in horror why the ceiling was hot. *The fusion reactor! It's right above me!*

Well, there's not much I can do about it now, he thought as he visually scanned the area around the docking port. He had to find the manual release handle and pull it.

It's a curious thing, he thought. *The light bulbs have a near total vacuum inside, yet they hold together under Earth's air pres-*

sure. Strange that they all blew out in a vacuum. Must have been the shock wave. Or the temperature change.

Then he began to wonder if the sky might really be green, and why they can't raise cattle on Mars, and *whatever happened to that green sweater I like so much, anyway?* He shook his mind clear. He had to concentrate.

It seemed like an eternity passed as the release handle slowly disengaged the lock mechanisms that held the door shut. The motors were no doubt whirring noisily, he thought, which made it all the more creepy to feel their vibrations on the soles of his feet, yet be unable to hear them.

The door swung slowly towards him. After a few moments, he pulled himself through it and shoved off against its frame.

It's truly a peculiar feeling to realize that you are alone in space with no air, no ground beneath you, no sound, and very little light—just the cold blackness and vacuum of space. And so, as he flew across the empty void towards the ship's operations arm and slowly slipped into unconsciousness, Joseph's final thought was wondering if he would ever see his Amanda again.

Chapter

Eight

November 27, 2390

A bright light in the distance.... Joseph wondered if this was heaven. An angel's voice, a whisper in the silence... saying... what? He could not be sure.

The light slowly faded until he could see clearly. Amanda stood over his bedside in the infirmary.

"Joseph, you're awake," she said.

"You're here," he answered.

"Of course, I'm here," Amanda told him. "I'll always be here for you. I promise."

Joseph smiled. "How long was I out?" he asked wearily.

"Just a couple of hours," she replied.

"The reactor!" he exclaimed, suddenly struggling to sit up.

"Relax," she said, shoving him back down onto the medical bed. "Jonathan scrubbed it in time. If he hadn't, you'd be a cinder already."

Joseph was visibly shaken. "What happened?"

"Everything went as planned," she told him.

But something hadn't gone as planned....

“EVERYTHING went as planned,” he said gleefully.

Vladimir Rejndorv was a burly man—five foot seven, 280 pounds—the kind of guy you really wouldn’t want to make mad. He spoke with a cotton-ball voice like you might hear in an old gangster film. This, coupled with his “cheery” demeanor, had earned him the nickname Vlad the Unintelligible.

Across the desk sat Svetlana Rusakova. Her chiseled features reflected the light of the single lamp that hung overhead, in stark contrast with the dark, foreboding blackness that lay beyond. He thought he saw a gleam of... was it anger in her eyes? Then it was gone again, so he could not be certain.

“The station....” She paused, grinning gleefully.

Rejndorv chuckled.

“Was it destroyed?” she asked with a gleam in her eye.

There it was again—that bitterness that he had seen a moment earlier—and, much as before, it disappeared as quickly as it had come.

“No. Sadly, the reactor core was disabled before it could go critical,” he replied, “but they have major structural damage and only emergency power. They won’t pose much of a threat.”

“Excellent,” she replied coldly.

Chapter

Nine

“LET’S get away,” Joseph said.
Amanda just sat there in the Crew’s Quarter, jaw agape.

“We both have some shore leave built up,” he continued.

“Why not take a weekend for us?”

“Are you crazy?” she asked.

“Yeah,” he replied. “Crazy about you.”

Corny like a bad fruit cocktail, but still sweet.

As she reached across the table to take his hand, someone stirred behind her.

“Say, you two lookin’ for adventure?” the man drawled.

Amanda and Joseph stared.

“Oh, sorry. I’m Jim. Jim Bowers. And you two are?”

“Joseph Kurtz.”

“Amanda Jenkins.”

Amanda stared at the newcomer with a mixture of concern and disgust. The anachronistic-looking cadet with brown, gel-slicked hair and cowboy boots exuded an air of smugness that she couldn’t forgive, and definitely didn’t trust.

“A bunch of us are gonna take a day’s leave and go to Iridia Prime to explore the ice caves,” he said. “I thought you might like to join us, since you wanted to get away for a bit.”

“I’d have to talk it over with my supervisor, but it sounds like fun,” Joseph said. “Amanda?”

“Uh... sure. Count me in,” she replied skeptically.

“Okay,” Jim told them. “We leave at 0800 hours on Saturday—shuttle bay 12. Don’t be late.”

“We’ll see you then,” Joseph replied.

Well, at least Joseph will be there, Amanda thought, so it can’t be all bad, right?

Jim stood and left, leaving his empty tray precariously balanced at the edge of the table.

As the tray crashed to the ground, Joseph scratched his head, puzzled.

“Why do I think this could get interesting?” he asked.

Amanda smiled awkwardly.

Right?

A moment later, the viewscreen across the room flickered to life, a news anchor’s face filling the screen.

“This just handed to me,” the anchor said, “Terran Command officials confirm CEA attacks on New Argentina colony. More than three hundred people were killed and thousands more were injured yesterday when a stryker missile plowed through downtown Cirrus, New Argentina’s capital.”

“In a related story, the CEA has claimed responsibility for yesterday’s attack on Terran Command Station. About sixty military and civilian personnel were killed and two hundred more left homeless when a magnetic mine attached itself

to the outer hull and exploded. The resulting explosion depressurized parts of three decks and caused an estimated five hundred million dollars in damage.”

“We’ll have continuing updates on the latest escalations in border fighting and terrorist attacks as more information becomes available.”

“You’re watching TANN, the Terran Alliance News Network, with news updates every hour on the hour.”

About the Author:

David is an avid musician, writer, photographer, videographer, musical composer, and hard-core geek with a Master's degree in computer science and a Bachelor's degree in communications (broadcasting) and computer science.



In addition to writing this book, David also created various workflow tools used in its production, did all of the content production and design, redesigned many of the fonts, and drew the cover art.

His choral music has been performed by the Diocesan Choir of Monterey, California and the contemporary choir at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Santa Cruz, CA. He spends much of his spare time performing with musical ensembles in the greater Santa Cruz area.

For a complete copy of this book, visit:

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