

# The Harrisburg

*by* H.L. Pauff

"Gliese Base Twelve, come in. Gliese Base Twelve, this is the *Harrisburg*. We have a level five emergency. Requesting immediate assistance."

A wave of static blasted through the speakers.

"Negative *Harrisburg*. No ships in ... available. Upload data packet."

Decker grabbed the railing as the ship rocked violently.

"Negative, Gliese Base. Antennas damaged. Warp core critical. We need help."

Miles appeared at the door. "No luck, captain. We can't jettison the core and we're running out of time."

Decker turned to the console. "Gliese Base, we need help."

Another wave of static. "Jettison computer cores. The ... top priority."

"What about us?" Miles screamed.

The computer console sparked and a monitor screen came unhinged. Decker knelt and ripped open a panel and worked to remove the hard drives.

When he stood, he held two silver rectangles. "Take these, Miles, and get into the escape pod. Saving the data is the priority. You heard them. Go on." He offered them to Miles.

"Captain, there's only one functioning escape pod. I won't get in it without you."

"Go. That's an order, Miles. There isn't room for two. You're out of time."

"Computers be damned," Miles said. "Our ship is going and all they care about are solar readings. I won't go."

"You stubborn fool. You'll die."

"This is my ship, too, captain."

The captain walked to the cockpit door and pressed the hard drives into Miles's chest. "At least stick the hard drives in the escape pod and launch it. If we are going out, let's at least go out doing our jobs."

Miles nodded and hugged the hard drives. He raced through the ship towards the tail, dodging sparking wires and avoiding falling machinery. The pod's hatch was open. Miles placed the two hard drives on the cushioned seat and felt a push in the back.

He fell forward. A mask and air tank clanked next to him and the door sealed. Decker heard his muffled protests as he pulled the release valve.

