

An Authorial Note

Many readers will notice that some of the earlier chapters in this book retell, or fill in between, events which occurred in *At All Costs*. The retold material constitutes a very small portion of the entire book, and there is a definite method to my madness in taking this approach.

Once upon a time, in the simpler days of yore when I first began the Honor Harrington series, I hadn't quite visualized the scale of the project upon which I'd embarked. I always knew the story that I wanted to tell, and I'd always intended to arrive at the portion of the story line of which this book is a part. What I *hadn't* really counted on was the degree of detail, the number of characters, and the sheer size of the canvas I was going to end up with.

It isn't often that a writer is blessed with the response the Honor Harrington books have generated. When it happened to me, I was deeply gratified, and that's still true today. I also think that when readers are kind enough to support a series as strongly as these books have been supported, the writer has not only a special relationship with his readers, but also a special responsibility to them. At the same time, when a series extends through as many novels (thirteen, including *Shadow of Saganami* and *Crown of Slaves*) and anthologies, the writer sometimes finds himself forced to consider taking the storyline and directions of which not all of his readers are likely to approve. There's a fine balance between going where you know you *have* to go with a book and worrying about how you meet that special responsibility to your readership. And, to be honest, the Honor books reached that point about two novels ago.

Some of my readers who have spoken to me at conventions know that Honor was supposed to be killed in *At All Costs* under my version of what Mentor of Arisia used to refer to as his "visualization of the cosmic

all.” I always knew that killing Honor would have been a high-risk move, and that many readers of the series would have been very angry with me, but at the time I’d organized the timeline of Honor’s life -- that is, before I’d even begun *On Basilisk Station* -- I hadn’t really anticipated the fierce loyalty of the readership she was going to generate. Nor, for that matter, had I fully realized just how fond *I* was going to become of the character. Nonetheless, I remained steadfastly determined (my wife Sharon will tell you that I can sometimes be just a tad stubborn) to hew to my original plan. The fact that I’d always visualized Honor as being based on Horatio Nelson only reinforced my determination, since the Battle of Manticore was supposed to be the equivalent of his Battle of Trafalgar. Like Nelson, Honor had been supposed to fall in battle at the moment of victory in the climactic battle which saved the Star Kingdom of Manticore and ratified her as the Royal Manticoran Navy’s greatest heroine.

At the same time, however, I had always intended to continue writing books in the “Honorverse.” The great challenge of the later books was supposed to emerge about twenty-five or thirty years after Honor’s death, and the primary viewpoint characters would have been her children, Raoul and Katherine. Unfortunately -- or fortunately, depending upon your viewpoint -- Eric Flint screwed up my original timetable when he introduced the character of Victor Cachat and asked me for an enemy which Manticoran and Havenite secret agents could agree to fight as allies, despite the fact that their star nations were at war. I suggested Manpower, which worked very well for Eric’s story. But, especially when I incorporated Eric’s characters into the mainstream novels, and when Eric and I decided to do *Crown of Slaves*, it also pulled the entire storyline forward by two or three decades. Which meant I wasn’t going to have time to kill Honor off and get her children grown up before the Manpower challenge hit Manticore.

I wasn't precisely heartbroken when I realized I no longer had any choice about granting Honor a reprieve. Not only did I think her fans would be less likely to come looking for me with pitchforks and ropes, but the closer I'd come to actually killing her, the less and less I'd liked the thought myself.

This still left me with something of a problem, however, since Honor had grown too senior to be sent on any more "death rides." I needed some additional, less senior officers who could become the fresh viewpoint figures on the front lines that Raoul and Katherine had originally been supposed to provide. So, I wrote *Shadow of Saganami*, and it and *Crown of Slaves* were supposed to be the lead books in two separate, subsidiary series. They were supposed to proceed separately from but in parallel with the "main stem" novels in which Honor would continue to be a primary viewpoint character. I actually intended for one of her kids to take the lead in the military portion of the storyline and for the other to become the "spymaster," which would have permitted a logical division of the Honorverse into two separate but related storylines. And these two new series were also supposed to be a device which would allow me to cut down on the amount of "back story" which had to be included in each of those "main stem" books.

To some extent, that original plan continues to hold good, but I've found myself forced to modify it. What I've discovered over the last two or three novels is that incorporating those two subsidiary series much more closely into the main series permits me to advance the story line on a broader front and focus on specific *areas* of the *same* story in separate novels. Thus, *Shadow of Saganami* and *Storm from the Shadows* both focus primarily on the events in and around the Talbott Cluster, and *Crown of Slaves* and *Crown of Slaves II* [insert the correct title when we get it] focus on the "covert war" between the two sides and on the moral

issues of genetic slavery. And *Mission of Honor*, the next “main stem” book, will weave events from both of those areas together and advance the general storyline towards its final destination. (Which does not now necessarily include the demise of Honor Alexander-Harrington.)

Both *Crown of Slaves II* and *Mission of Honor* have been delivered and are currently in the production pipeline, so hopefully readers won't be left too long between books.

One aspect of this new master scheme of mine, however, is that scenes which have appeared in one book may very well appear -- usually from another character's point of view -- in another book. This is not an effort simply to increase word count. It is intended to serve the function of more fully developing additional characters, giving different perspectives on the events they observe and participate in, filling in missing details, and -- perhaps most importantly of all -- nailing down exactly *when* these books' events occur relative to one another.

So far, this seems to be working out fairly well. That doesn't necessarily mean it will continue to do so, or that something won't come along to send me off in yet another direction, but at this moment, I don't expect that to happen. So for the foreseeable future, at least, expect this pattern to continue.

And I suppose I should also warn you that the ride is going to get a lot rougher for the good guys over the next few books.

Take care,
David Weber