



Mass Effect: Revelation

By Drew Karpyshyn

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On the edge of colonized space, ship commander and Alliance war hero David Anderson investigates the remains of a top secret military research station; smoking ruins littered with bodies and unanswered questions. Who attacked this post and for what purpose? And where is Kahlee Sanders, the young scientist who mysteriously vanished from the base—hours before her colleagues were slaughtered?

Sanders is now the prime suspect, but finding her creates more problems for Anderson than it solves. Partnered with a rogue alien agent he can't trust and pursued by an assassin he can't escape, Anderson battles impossible odds on uncharted worlds to uncover a sinister conspiracy . . . one he won't live to tell about. Or so the enemy thinks.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Drew Karpyshyn is the New York Times bestselling author of *Star Wars: Darth Bane: Path of Destruction*, and several other fantasy and science fiction novels. He is also an award-winning writer/designer for the computer game company BioWare, where he was lead writer on *Mass Effect* and the popular *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* video game. He lives in Canada's hinterlands with his loving wife, Jen, and their cat.

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ONE

Eight Years Later

Staff Lieutenant David Anderson, executive officer on the SSV Hastings, rolled out of his bunk at the first sound of the alarm. His body moved instinctively, conditioned by years of active service aboard Alliance Systems Space Vessels. By the time his feet hit the floor he was already awake and alert, his mind evaluating the situation.

The alarm rang again, echoing off the hull to rebound throughout the ship. Two short blasts, repeating over and over. A general call to stations. At least they weren't under immediate attack.

As he pulled his uniform on, Anderson ran through the possible scenarios. The Hastings was a patrol vessel in the Skyllian Verge, an isolated region on the farthest fringes of Alliance space. Their primary purpose was to protect the dozens of human colonies and research outposts scattered across the sector. A general call to stations probably meant they'd spotted an unauthorized vessel in Alliance territory. Either that or they were responding to a distress call. Anderson hoped it was the former.

It wasn't easy getting dressed in the tight confines of the sleeping quarters he shared with two other crewmen, but he'd had lots of practice. In less than a minute he had his uniform on, his boots secured, and was moving quickly through the narrow corridors toward the bridge, where Captain Belliard would be waiting for him. As the executive officer it fell to Anderson to relay the captain's orders to the enlisted crew . . . and to make sure those orders were properly carried out.

Space was the most precious resource on any military vessel, and Anderson was constantly reminded of this as he encountered other crewmen heading in the opposite direction as they rushed to their assigned posts. Invariably, they would press themselves against the corridor walls in an effort to let Anderson by, snapping off awkward salutes to their superior as he squeezed past them. But despite the cramped conditions, the entire process was carried out with an efficiency and crisp precision that was the hallmark of every crew in the Alliance fleet.

Anderson was almost at his destination. He was passing navigation, where he noticed a pair of junior officers making rapid calculations and applying them to a three-dimensional star chart projected above their consoles. They each gave their XO a curt but respectful nod as he passed, too engrossed in their duties to be encumbered by the formality of a true salute. Anderson responded with a grim tilt of his head. He could see they were plotting a route through the nearest mass relay. That meant the Hastings was responding to a distress call. And the brutal truth was that more often than not their response came too late.

In the years following the First Contact War, humanity had spread out too far and too fast; they didn't have enough ships to properly patrol a region the size of the Verge. Settlers who lived out here knew the threat of attacks and raids was all too real, and too often the Hastings touched down on a world only to find a small but thriving colony reduced to corpses, burned-out buildings, and a handful of shell-shocked survivors.

Anderson still hadn't found a good way to cope with being a firsthand witness to that kind of death and destruction. He'd seen action during the war, but this was different. That had been primarily ship-to-ship warfare, killing enemy combatants from tens of thousands of kilometers away. It wasn't the same as picking through the charred rubble and blackened bodies of civilians.

The First Contact War, despite its name, had been a short and relatively bloodless campaign. It began an Alliance patrol inadvertently trespassed on the territory of the Turian Empire. For humanity it had been their first encounter with another intelligent species; for the turians it was an invasion by an aggressive and previously unknown race. Misunderstanding and overreaction on both sides had led to several intense battles between patrols and scout fleets. But the conflict never erupted into full-scale planetary war. The escalating hostilities and sudden deployment of turian fleets had drawn the attention of the greater galactic community. Luckily for humanity.

It turned out the turians were only one species among a dozen, each independent but voluntarily united beneath the rule of a governing body known as the Citadel Council. Eager to prevent interstellar war with the newly emerged humans, the Council had intervened, revealing itself to the Alliance and brokering a peaceful resolution between them and the turians. Less than two months after it had begun, the First Contact War was officially over.

Six hundred and twenty-three human lives had been lost. Most of the casualties were sustained in the first encounter and during the turian attack on Shanxi. Turian losses were slightly higher; the Alliance fleet sent to liberate the captured outpost had been ruthless, brutal, and very thorough. But on a galactic scale, the losses to both sides were minor. Humanity had been pulled back from the brink of a potentially devastating war, and instead became the newest member of a vast interstellar, pan-species society.

Anderson climbed the three steps separating the forward deck of the bridge from the main level of the ship. Captain Belliard was hunched over a small viewscreen, studying a stream of incoming transmissions. He stood up straight as Anderson approached, and returned his executive officer's salute with one of his own.

"We've got trouble, Lieutenant. We picked up a distress call when we linked up to the com relays," the captain explained by way of greeting.

"I was afraid of that, sir."

"It came from Sidon."

"Sidon?" Anderson recognized the name. "Don't we have a research base there?"

Belliard nodded. "A small one. Fifteen security personnel, twelve researchers, six support staff."

Anderson frowned. This was no ordinary attack. Raiders preferred to hit defenseless settlements and bug out before Alliance reinforcements arrived on the scene. A well-defended base like Sidon wasn't their typical target. It felt more like an act of war.

The turians were allies of the Human Systems Alliance now, at least officially. And the Skyllian Verge was too far removed from turian territory for them to get involved in any conflicts out here. But there were other species vying with humanity for control of the region. The Alliance was in direct competition with the batarian government to establish a presence in the Verge, but so far the two rival species had managed to avoid any real violence in their confrontations. Anderson doubted they'd start with something like this.

Still, there were plenty of other groups out there with the means and motive to hit an Alliance stronghold. Some of them were even made up of humans: nonaffiliated terrorist organizations and multispecies guerrilla factions eager to strike a blow against the powers-that-be; illegal paramilitary troops looking to stock up on high-grade weapons; independent mercenary bands hoping for one big score.

“Might be helpful to know what Sidon was working on, Captain,” Anderson suggested.

“They’re a top-security-clearance facility,” the captain replied with a shake of his head. “I can’t even get schematics for the base, never mind get anyone to tell me what they were working on.”

Anderson frowned. Without schematics his team would be going in blind, giving up any tactical advantage they might have had from knowing the layout of the battleground. This mission just kept getting better and better.

“What’s our ETA, sir?”

“Forty-six minutes.”

Finally some good news. The Hastings followed random patrol routes; it was pure chance they happened to be this close to the source of the distress call. With luck they could still get there in time.

“I’ll have the ground team ready, Captain.”

“You always do, Lieutenant.”

Anderson turned to go, acknowledging his commanding officer’s compliment with a simple, “Aye-aye, sir!”

In the black void of space the Hastings was all but invisible to the naked eye. Surrounded by a self-generated mass effect field and traveling nearly fifty times faster than the speed of light, it was little more than a flickering blur, a slight wavering in the fabric of the space-time continuum.

The vessel altered its flight path as the helmsman made a quick course correction, a minor adjustment to the trajectory that sent the ship hurtling toward the nearest mass relay, nearly five billion kilometers away. At a speed of nearly fifteen million kilometers per second it didn’t take long before their destination was in range.

Ten thousand kilometers out from their target, the helmsman took the element-zero drive core off-line, disengaging the mass effect fields. Blue-shifted energy waves radiated off the ship as it dropped out of FTL, igniting the darkness of space like a flare. The illumination of the blazing ship reflected off the mass relay growing steadily larger on the horizon. Although completely alien in design, the construction closely resembled an enormous gyroscope. At its center was a sphere made up of two concentric rings spinning around a single axis. Each ring was nearly five kilometers across, and two fifteen-kilometer arms protruded out from one end of the constantly rotating middle. The entire structure sparkled and flashed with white bursts of crackling energy.

Users Review

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