

## Chapter Ten

### Second Blood

"Every Battle, no matter how small, counts towards winning the War."

- attrib Julius Caesar.

"What are we going to do now?" the pale techno asked the other two. "Thomas and Vera are dead and the Merchant is badly injured. Old Doc Haig is not very optimistic."

"We need to elect another Chairman as soon as possible," replied the Mathematician.

"What about the alien ship?" retorted the Shopkeeper.

"If we have a new Chairman, then we can decide if we have to use the old weapons to defend ourselves."

"If they still work!" grunted the techno, "Stuck up in the old Fort, hidden away in that musty old dungeon. If it wasn't for the positive computer checks I'd have expected them to rot away ages ago."

"They worked on the Pegasus."

"And wrecked it. It's useless to anyone now. No subtlety. Those needle beams on the invader; now there is a precise weapon," the techno paused wistfully.

"I doubt if they could have much effect on it. The records from the Pegasus show a ship similar to the one in the valley. If you can believe them, that thing is a Navy battle cruiser of the Hercules class. A century and a half ago it was the latest idea. What's more, they must have improved the design since then."

"Let's have a look." The techno called up the specification, gently sucked his teeth, then let out a low whistle. "Oh, hell."

"See what I mean?"