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***FIELD MANUAL:
CRUSADER CLANS***
1998

**THE CALL OF
GLORY**

Loren L. Coleman

Electric white-blue discharges from particle projection cannons lanced across the battlefield, lighting up the night in false twilight. The coruscating beams and staccato pulses of laser fire—ruby, emerald, sapphire-ionized the air and added color to a world of grays. Almost invisible but just as deadly were the missiles, backlit for a few seconds by their own exhaust, and the Gauss and autocannon slugs that tore into each side's machines without warning,

Star Commander Valerie Sender of the Wolf Clan Fourth Striker Cluster broke from her Trinary's formation and walked her *Warhawk* forward into the no-man's-land that separated the forces of Clan Wolf and Clan Goliath Scorpion, alternating the firing of her PPCs and large pulse lasers. The Wolves enjoyed an advantage in this Harvest Trial, fielding superior machines and elite warriors. They were meant to win, accepting the "tribute" of Clan Goliath Scorpion, which had bid possession of its Trinary to the victor. The honor came in being selected by Khan Ward to bring in the new warriors, thereby increasing the strength of the Wolf Clan.

But for Valerie, that was no longer enough.

After seven years of constraint under the Truce of Tukayyid, Valerie's Crusader blood boiled for action against the Inner Sphere. Not even the Refusal War, though it had come close to destroying the Wolves, had quelled her desire. She knew it was vital to rebuild Clan Wolf, but she also wanted personal honor and glory. Such desires were bred into her; they would not be stilled. When the invasion began again, she would face it with her own command or die in the attempt to gain it. To her, there were no other options.

She advanced on the Goliath Scorpion line. Her opponent, in a *Gargoyle*, stepped forward as he became aware of her attack. His mistake. Sporting missiles and a single Gauss rifle, the *Gargoyle* was ill-configured for such close-range fighting. And in moving forward, the other MechWarrior had abandoned the grove of trees that had offered slight protection. Valerie Sender thrust both of her 'Mech's arms forward and triggered all of the massive machine's weapons, targeting the *Gargoyle's* already-damaged torso. Her PPCs flayed away the last of the *Gargoyle's* armor and carved fissures in its internal structure. The scarlet pulses of the *Warhawk's* large lasers ate away at the rest, destroying the gyro required to hold the eighty tons of metal upright. The *Gargoyle* fell backward into the trees, crippled and out of the battle.

Howling a wolf-call in victory, Valerie Sender realized that she stood unopposed in the middle of the Goliath Scorpion line, Calling her Star forward into the breach she had created, the Star Commander flung her 'Mech's arms wide and sighted down both sides- To the left, the silhouette of an enemy *Summoner* appeared under her targeting reticule. She unleashed a barrage of PPC fire that cored into its side. Then, scanning quickly to the right, she located the Scorpion Trinary commander's *Dire Wolf* and fired both large pulse lasers at it. Her targeting computer showed the Summoner fallen, but still active. She left the *Summoner* and the Scorpions' right flank to her Starmates while she rounded on the *Dire Wolf*.

Too late, the Scorpions spotted the Wolf among them. Valerie Sender drove forward to pointblank range, targeting the *Dire Wolf*. Ignoring her 'Mech's dangerous heat levels, she triggered her entire weapons array for the third time, relying on her targeting computer to strike the *Dire Wolf's* right leg. Three of the large energy weapons hit, boiling away armor and laying bare the leg's internal skeleton. The *Dire Wolf's* backlash of missiles and lasers shook Valerie's *Warhawk* and nearly threw it to the ground, but she managed to keep her machine upright and slapped the override a split second before losing her engine to a heat-induced shutdown. As the Scorpion commander attempted to back away from the ferocious onslaught, the Wolf Star Commander held her place and took advantage of her enemy's delay, firing large pulse lasers at the *Dire Wolf's* vulnerable right leg. The leg snapped in two places where the lasers burned through it, sending the huge machine crashing to the ground.

As swiftly as that, the battle was over. Sender's Star had broken the right flank of the Goliath Scorpion line and the Star Captain of her Trinary, sensing the shift in battle, had pressed forward against the Scorpion left flank until it, too, gave way. Star Commander Sender accepted the Star Captain's praise graciously, then claimed the downed *Dire Wolf* as her *isorla*. With the adrenaline rush of combat still surging through her veins and the cockpit's residual heat flushing her skin, Valerie felt nearly invincible. Soon she would see battle against the Inner Sphere. When the invasion resumed, she would lead the way. The Inner Sphere belonged to the Clans. To the Wolves.

To her.