

TERRA NOVA – ARCS AND MYTHOLOGY

At its core, TERRA NOVA is a family adventure show in the tradition of classic entertainment like *LOST IN SPACE*, but with a decidedly sharper edge and much higher stakes, reflecting the world we live in now (and the shows we like to watch).

In the same way that the original *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA* sought to bring the big screen excitement of *STAR WARS* to television, TERRA NOVA is ready to be your “*AVATAR for TV*” – bringing you to a wondrous world you’ve never seen before, and exploring themes of action and adventure, love, loyalty, survival, and environment awareness.

Also? Fucking DINOSAURS.

Terra Nova is a land of unlimited beauty, mystery, and terror, but in this document we’re only going to focus on the mystery, beauty, and terror of SEASON ONE.

As we get into the seasonal and character arcs, please note that this show is NOT strictly serialized a la *LOST*, and was designed with strong stand-alone storytelling in mind. Each episode should have a strong self-contained A-Story that explores a different facet of life in Terra Nova, which intersects with a B-Story that advances the plot of the underground resistance against Commander Taylor, which the Shannon family finds themselves drawn to the center of.

COMMANDER FRANK TAYLOR

The best way to articulate the season one arc is through the character of Frank Taylor, since he is the main threat our heroes face. So we’ll talk about Frank first, a bit of his backstory (which also traces the mythology of Terra Nova) and what his ultimate plan is, and then we’ll get to how Jim Shannon and his family come into conflict with him and ultimately lead to his undoing.

Frank is a cross between Herman Cortes, Colonel Kurtz from *Hearts of Darkness*, and Daniel Plainview from *There Will Be Blood*. He was one of many volunteers to be the first human to traverse the wormhole, the first *Chrononaut*. He was chosen because of his Special Forces training, specifically his extreme wilderness survival skills. He was also without family, ambitious, good looking, well spoken. A heroic figure, a good role model. Frank always felt he had a special destiny, and that he was chosen for greatness. He withheld mentioning this on his psych profile.

Legend tells us that Taylor’s first act, upon stepping foot onto Terra Nova, was to take off his re-breather, inhale deeply the air of the new world, and then fall to the ground and pray. “Thank you, God. Forgive us, God.”

The truth was a little different.

His first recorded statement of, “Fuck! (gunshots) Fucker...” being redacted by the UEG (United Earth Government) press office. His first action was in fact to raise his rifle and discharge two five round bursts into a living creature, some primeval marsupial that he had startled 30 yards away. So man’s first action in the new world was to kill something in it. His second was to say grace.

The first human matter translation was a success, but powering the portal up for a second translation would take longer than expected. For 112 days, almost FOUR MONTHS, Taylor would be the sole human being on the surface of the (new) Earth. This had a profound effect on him, surrounded by all that nature and noise and silence (no people, no tech). It was exhilarating for Frank. His instinctive fear fueled his will to survive, his sense of destiny and his desire to conquer.

So when Commander David Rathier, the second man on Terra Nova, arrived four months later, there was a bit of a problem. Rathier’s mission, aside from being Chrononaut #2 and aiding Taylor, was to report back on Taylor’s health and state of mind. Taylor had missed some scheduled tightbeam communications, having wandered a bit from the portal encampment.

At some point we will experience a scene from Taylor’s memory, where he tells Rathier about his dreams and philosophy. His enlightenment gained from his time in Terra Nova. “What are we here for? To claim this land in the name of God? God didn’t deliver us here. We did this. Earth belongs to God, this place belongs to us.”

The gist is that he’d gone slightly Kurtz and Rathier was going to report that and Frank up and killed him. Four months into the new world and we’ve already played out Cain and Abel. Frank reported through the tightbeam frequency that Rathier was killed by a velociraptor and dragged off. Lying about Rathier’s death gave Frank an unexpected rush of power and control. He realized: The future will believe what I tell them.

He also realized how out of hand he had gotten, and pulled way back on it. Stowed that crazy talk when General Hyatt arrived with a full platoon of Marines.

Back home in our world, Frank Taylor was a major hero and global celebrity. It was an image encouraged by UEG. Each of Taylor’s officially released audio reports from Terra Nova was intently listened to by billions. Movies were made about him, his poster hanging on the walls of young girls like 12 year old (at the time) Maddy Shannon.

Taylor didn’t know any of this back in Terra Nova. He bided his time, now under command of a ranking officer. The compound was built and the settlement carefully erected under the watchful eye of General Hyatt.

Back home, panels of experts organized the mass migration, plans for how to resettle Terra Nova, etc. Coordinating with the science experts, they began to determine the 1,000 settlers-per-trip number, and come up with the policy of the lottery slots (in order to bely fears of class prejudice/give hope to everybody).

With patience, everyone will get through eventually. Hope was the watchword, reflected in media and commerce, reality shows featured select lottery winners and followed them on their training and everything leading up to their crossing over.

In Terra Nova, meanwhile, the motto was still survival. Two years in saw the big population boom (when they figured out how to get a thousand people through) and the “town” began to take shape.

Frank Taylor’s star diminished a little bit with each new batch of settlers that came through. Back home, the public was clamoring for updates on their favorite reality stars, the average folks whose stories they followed thus far. Taylor was still respected but didn’t feel like the leader he believed himself to be. He couldn’t forget the feeling of those first few months when it was just the world and him. All of these PEOPLE were ruining it. With millions and billions more to come...

His star spiked again when he volunteered to be on the first expedition out to establish the outpost at Triple Junction. He was hailed as the next Neil Armstrong, Lewis and Clark, etc. The comparison insulted him. Those were employees. He saw himself more like Charlemagne, like Alexander the Great. An explorer who owned what he discovered. Forget being an employee. He wanted to be the boss.

At Triple Junction he got the chance to be, and it all went to hell.

FRANK’S SECRET

There are three human outpost settlements in Terra Nova. They are all smaller and more primitive than Fort Taylor. TRIPLE JUNCTION is a three month journey away, the quarry based enclave of IRONSTONE is fifty miles to the east of it, and HYPERION is a small fishing community near the monster-filled Panthalassa Ocean – they keep to themselves and rumor was they were building a ship to sail up the Eastern Coast and establish a port. New Settlers to Terra Nova are expected to live and work in Taylor for a year before a certain number are selected to caravan to the outer settlements, building up our presence there and making way for another wave of 1,000 immigrants to come through the portal (which happens every six months). The outer settlements are like trade colonies, sending iron and other materials back to Fort Taylor, and receiving supplies in return. The people in the outer settlements are tougher and more experienced because they need to be.

Frank truly went “Kurtz” up at Triple Junction. He turned the place into a commune, and became a sort of cult leader, recruiting first a bunch of soldiers who worshipped him as a hero and then bought into his ideology. He preached the gospel of Frank – his belief was that this land is pure and good, and that it should not be polluted by dead ideas from Old Earth. He believes God, religion, all of that, had doomed Earth, and “they will not doom Terra Nova.” Frank saw to remake this world in *his* image. Some of the people out there resisted “King Frank,” and a fight that started over a farmer who refused to give up her bible grew into a revolt against Frank, which led to a massacre. Frank Taylor and his men slaughtered everyone at Triple Junction.

Frank's first attempt at Godhood failed, but he was determined that his second attempt would not. He and his men returned to Ft. Taylor with a lie that Dinosaurs had destroyed Triple Junction. One thing he learned from his mistake: rule people with fear, but not with fear of you – rather, rule them with fear of what will happen if you are gone. He staged a coup and took control from General Hyatt. He is holding Hyatt's wife and son hostage in the central compound, forcing the General to keep reporting to Future Earth that everything is fine on Terra Nova, while he desperately tries to complete his plan.

FRANK'S PLAN

Frank's end-game is simple and horrific: he wants to destroy the portal and claim Terra Nova for himself. Frank wants to be king – he sees a chance to re-make this world in his own image. He knows that the Earth Government will never allow him the freedom to do this – even if he heads out into the wild and starts up a colony, they will eventually shut him down and show him who's boss. Right now this is a land of opportunity – a virgin land with a human population around six thousand people. Every six months, another thousand settlers will come through - another thousand problems for Frank. Eventually he won't be able to control them all. If he can destroy the gate then they will have no choice – there will be no more help coming from Earth and the people will have to depend on Frank and swear loyalty to him. He will promise to protect and lead them, like Abraham, starting a new tribe on a new world. Frank truly believes he's doing the right thing – that the Earth government and its old policies will just pollute and destroy this place all over again. Only under his guidance can the human race have a chance to do this the right way. He's willing to sacrifice 15 billion lives back on a dying Earth in order to make his vision come true.

To accomplish this, Frank has enlisted DR. PADMA GREWAL, a beautiful physicist. At first he was forcing her to comply, but soon something like Stockholm syndrome set in and Dr. Padma now has a twisted sort of infatuation with Frank. She stays with him in the central compound, working on a device that will destroy the portal when it next is opened from the other side.

This is why Frank needs that uranium. This is why he had General Hyatt request it from the future, under cover of some benign experiment. He did not get enough in this shipment. During season one, Frank will be forced to arrange a few dangerous missions into the wild in order to get the uranium he need. He may even have to send a secret group to the settlement of Ironstone, which he has cut off, but which still exists. (Josh Shannon will participate in that mission.)

Of course, Frank's plan is top, top secret. Not even all of his closest men know what he intends. If his plan is exposed before he has a chance to destroy the portal, if the majority of the people found out about it, there would be an instant revolt. The pressure is building for Frank as he finds himself with more and more secrets to keep...

THE OUTER SETTLEMENTS a.k.a. WHAT'S UP WITH THAT CROSS THING?

Frank has told everyone inside Fort Taylor that the Outer Settlements have been wiped out by aggressive dinosaurs. In order to “protect his people,” he has sealed the town. No one is allowed to wander out into the wilderness unless they are cleared to do so by Frank. Hunter Clans are cleared to hunt for bush meat in the outer boundary (which extends for two miles outside the walls). And of course there are the unlucky citizens who get stuck with “perimeter duty” – planting mines and helping cut down trees and clear land so that the center can expand outward, and Fort Taylor can grow stronger and hold more people.

These measures are all a smokescreen. They're in place until Frank can destroy the portal. In the meantime, his soldiers and some of the Hunter Clans are under strict orders to shoot anyone on sight who is unauthorized to be there.

This is because the Outer Settlements are still alive. Even a few surviving souls from Triple Junction. They have been cut off by Frank. He will deal with them later. Right now, he can't afford for them to make contact with the people inside Taylor. If someone were to learn the truth, Frank would make sure they get silenced but quick.

THE CROSS is just that – it's a piece of jewelry. It's not mystical or anything. The Raptor Hunter brags to Josh in the pilot that he killed the Coleosaurus. That's not true. He found the dead dinosaur out in the wild, and claimed it as his own kill. In reality, it was killed by one of the Outlanders, and the cross was placed inside it to smuggle a message of hope to those inside – we are out here.

Question: Are we suggesting at the end that there are human settlers living in Terra Nova who are somehow riding Dinosaurs or have domesticated them in some way?

Answer: Possibly. One of the mysteries we want to explore in this world comes from the fact that scientists actually know very little about what lived on Earth back then. The debate over whether dinosaurs were warm blooded or cold blooded still rages on today. Just this year, a new study came out that suggests Dinosaurs were not covered in scales as we have commonly imagined them to be, but instead were covered in feathers like the birds they eventually evolved into.

We have only discovered 5% of the fossils of creatures that walked the earth back in the late Jurassic. That leaves 95% up in the air. That leaves us with a great deal of latitude. Whole species may have lived and died and left no trace. Possibly intelligent, sentient species. Without getting too out there into the realm of pure fantasy, we will also begin to suggest that dinosaurs were more intelligent than we gave them credit for – not that they have a civilization like Dinotopia, but that there is a social order at play we have not suspected yet.

These mysteries are ones that will be teased in season one, but are meant to unravel over the course of the series.

The Outlanders (survivors of Triple Junction) have begun to learn and embrace a few of these mysteries, and will share them with our heroes when contact is made.

In the climactic battle at the end of season one, the Outlanders will aid our heroes in the fight against Frank Taylor.

THE SHANNON FAMILY

JIM SHANNON

Jim is the kind of guy that the old school Harrison Ford would play – an everyman who is about to embark on a classic hero's journey. On Earth, he was a worker bee, used to following orders. On Terra Nova, in order to protect his family, Jim will eventually become leader of the underground resistance against Commander Taylor.

Jim served in the military for a couple years right out of high school. That's how he knows his way around a gun. He left to get a safe job in a factory when Liz became pregnant with their second child, Maddy. It was only a couple of months after mustering out that Jim went to jail for killing another man.

The Moses Incident: As the population grew and resources diminished, riots and unrest became commonplace all over the world. Young parents Jim and Elizabeth Shannon were strolling through a city park when they passed a group of protestors being harassed by a corporate paramilitary force. Things got out of hand and two of the soldiers started beating down one of the protestors. People (including Jim and Liz) were yelling at them to stop but the soldiers wouldn't. Jim went in to drag the bloodied protestor to safety. One of the soldiers decided to start pounding on him with a baton. Jim tried to defend himself. The soldier went too far, and before Jim knew it, he had killed the guy with his bare hands. Later, at his trial, the witnesses were split down the middle – soldiers claiming it was murder, protestors swearing Jim acted in self-defense. He got four years for manslaughter. Josh was without a Dad for that time, and Jim wasn't there to see Maddy born. In prison, he swore to himself, and to Liz, that he would never stick his neck out again. He saw injustice and couldn't help but react to it in the moment, but it almost cost him his family, and he wouldn't let that happen again.

But that instinct to do the right thing, and the impulsive behavior that causes one to act on it, is still burning way way down in Jim's heart. And as much as he's tried to prevent passing it onto his kids – the righteous gene is alive and well in Maddy, and Josh is as impulsive as hell.

Season One Arc: Before she got injured, Myra passed the torch of responsibility and the call to adventure over to Jim – he is now the only person besides her who knows about the concealed transmitter which is broken down into three pieces that must be re-assembled in order to send a warning back to Future Earth and request that they send troops through the portal as soon as possible, in order to help overthrow Frank.

While Myra recuperates from her injuries in the medical bay, Jim tries to resist taking on her mission, but another run-in with Frank, and some persuasion by Myra, will push Jim into hunting down the pieces.

Jim keeps his risk-taking a secret from Liz, who begins to worry about the bond he is forming with Myra, the woman he rescued from the forest and keeps visiting to check in on.

One of the pieces has been picked up by an Outlander, another has been sold and re-sold on the black market and Jim must track it down. The third has been claimed by one of Frank's men as a souvenir (he doesn't know about the concealed transmitter part inside it).

Through his daughter, Jim is targeted as a recruit for the underground resistance, and the secret of the transmitter begins to spread. This leads to a twist right as all the pieces are finally assembled, where the resistance is betrayed by a spy and the transmitter is destroyed. Jim narrowly escapes suspicion, but the setback will cement his desire to stop Frank.

Jim's goal then becomes even more dangerous to achieve, as he seeks to gain access to the only transmitter remaining in Terra Nova – the one in Frank Taylor's office. When he discovers Frank's true plan to destroy the portal, he will lead an uprising against him.

ELIZABETH SHANNON

Liz was a Digital Librarian back on Mother Earth, used to never drawing attention to herself. Terra Nova brings out the lioness in Elizabeth and she will show extraordinary courage when it comes to protecting her family. Her greatest challenge will be keeping them together as each pulls their own separate way. She sees the dangerous side of her husband coming back and worries that it might tear them apart again. Among her older children, we play the drama of "a house divided" - activist Maddy seeking out the resistance and adventure-seeking Josh seeking out approval from the Raptors and also Commander Taylor. Liz must become the glue that holds them together, while also making sure Clementine finds her way in this strange new world. Liz's Terra Nova skill is Medicine and Herbology and she soon finds a job in the science lab – much of the scientific wonder of this place is processed for us through her eyes.

MADDY SHANNON

Maddy will seek out the resistance before the resistance will seek out her Dad. The resistance is many-tiered and very secretive.

She is brought nearer to the resistance by ROBBIE, the handsome young man she meets in the pilot. Maddy begins to develop strong feelings for Robbie, but the relationship is complicated when it becomes clear that she has also caught the eye of Frank Taylor. He begins to pursue her affections and is surprisingly charming and

gentlemanly in the way he goes about it. This puts Maddy into a key position to gather information for the resistance against Frank, who she is ultimately planning to betray.

Her time spent with Frank begins to put a strain on Maddy's relationship with the rest of her family, and also with Robbie. This will make it even more shocking when we reveal that Robbie is a spy for Frank!

Frank knows there will be citizens who aren't happy with how he's taken over the town, so he has sent a few spies in among them to ferret out the resistance so he can crush it. In a dramatic turn of events, Robbie betrays Maddy, tells Frank that Maddy is using him for the resistance. Maddy is able to save herself Queen Esther-style by whipping Frank into a jealous rage – he knows Maddy and Robbie were together early on, and she convinces him that Robbie is lying in order to get her back. Frank kills Robbie, who Maddy truly had feelings for before she was betrayed. Ironically, it is Robbie's death that gives her the courage and determination to fully seduce Frank in order to bring him down.

JOSH SHANNON

Josh's arc takes him onto the side of the bad guys, and then back onto the side of his family just in the nick of time. Josh finds himself trapped between two role models – his Dad, and Commander Taylor. Josh has a lot of repressed anger toward his Dad because Jim was absent in his early childhood (during his prison sentence). Josh works those issues out by overtaking his Dad as the main breadwinner in the family, his position with the Raptor Clan earning him respect in the town, even if he has to occasionally act like a bully to maintain his status. Like many young men back on Earth, Josh has been conditioned to believe that Frank Taylor is a hero. Frank's rough qualities are excused by Josh as necessary qualities for a harsh land. We don't need politicians in Terra Nova, we need warriors. Because Frank Taylor is outwardly charming and because we begin the season suspecting but not fully knowing the extent of his evil, we'll be able to track Josh and understand why he goes the way he does at first.

Josh's turn begins when he encounters one of the mysterious OUTLANDERS while on a hunt outside the perimeter. The man saves his life. Eventually, Josh will be the one who learns the truth about the Outer Settlements, and Frank Taylor's massacre at Triple Junction.

CLEMENTINE SHANNON

Clementine is a quiet kid because she was constantly being reminded that her existence was a secret. She knew her parents and her siblings, but for most days of the week back on Earth, Clem had to live with her Aunt, Jim's sister. There has always been a strained relationship between sisters Clem and Maddy. Partly because Maddy believes her Mom shouldn't have broken the third child laws (she agrees with the principle behind them), and partly because she hasn't spent quality time with Clem. Liz is hoping to change that on Terra Nova.

For someone who barely speaks Clementine Shannon has an unusual learning ability, she has a photographic memory and picks up new languages with amazing speed. She will help her Mom communicate and make allies with some of the non-English speakers who live in Taylor. Clem is a total tomboy and loves the freedom of newfound solitary in Pangaea – on future Earth people lived six to a compartment. She wanders a lot, and finds a secret passage through the outer wall and into the wilderness.

Her frequent wanderings are going to take her into dangerous territory, but they'll also net her a prize – a Dinosaur Egg which she smuggles into her home, defying quarantine. Eventually the egg will hatch all sorts of trouble for the Shannon family.

SEASON ONE tracks the Shannon Family as they experience the hope, wonder, and danger of Terra Nova while also coming together to rise up against the tyranny of Commander Taylor. A natural ticking clock counting down the six months until the Eleventh Pilgrimage will provide a deadline for both Jim and the resistance's plan to warn Earth, and Frank's plot to destroy the portal. The season will climax with a full-on revolt in and around Fort Taylor as the portal is opened and reinforcements from the future stream through, guns blazing. Frank is forced to retreat into the wilderness with just a few loyal men. They will become outlaws in the next season. In a surprise turn, Frank's plan to destroy the portal is completed by Dr. Grewal, and the wormhole is utterly sealed, sealing future Earth's fate and stranding the citizens of Terra Nova (and some of the recent new arrivals) here on Pangaea to fend for themselves.

[When it next re-opens, hopefully halfway through a future season when we've forgotten all about it, the people that come through the portal will be survivors of a cataclysmic world war – and they will not be friendly.]

SAMPLE EPISODES

In the beginning, our A-stories explore the primal conflict that arises when characters from an advanced society have to survive in a harsh land.

THE HUNT

Josh earns his stripes when he rides out with the Raptor Clan in order to bring down a troublesome Tyrannosaurus who is slaughtering cattle in the heavily protected grazing land east of the enclave. This is our version of "Jaws," more about suspense and men on a mission than actual battle with a CGI Dinosaur. The twist is that Josh learns Frank and his men are keeping a secret – and that *something else* is out there killing the cattle, something that begins taking out members of the hunting party. It soon becomes clear that they are the ones being hunted. Paranoia sets in and they begin to turn against each other as they try to survive and make it back to safety.

THE ARENA

Maddy takes a job serving drinks in the town bar. When one of Frank's soldiers begins to grab at her, Jim tries to pull him off and ends up in a brawl with the Marine, punches the guy's lights out and soon finds himself before the court of Frank. The penalty for assaulting one of Frank's men is death, but since Jim is beginning to be respected around Taylor, and because Frank has already taken a liking to Maddy, he decides to give her Dad a chance at a fair trial. This turns out to be a trial of combat in the ARENA. This is our gladiator story – the arena is a cross between UFC and Fight Club, with rules based on Thunderdome – two men enter, one man leave. We use this story to explore the violence in Jim's past, which he has tried to put behind him. Jim wins the fight and is forced to take his first life, much to Frank's chagrin, and much to the interest of the secret resistance who identifies Jim as a candidate ripe for recruiting.

THE FLOWER

While overseeing his expansion efforts, Frank Taylor is bitten by a giant prehistoric snake in the field. An infection sets in, but the medical supplies have been depleted because Frank and his men haven't been paying attention to the rationing guidelines. Elizabeth, working in the science lab, knows that there's a natural antibiotic that can be extracted and synthesized from local flora. Problem is the healing flower is in dangerous out of bounds territory, miles away and near the place they fear the most – the ocean. Frank doesn't care - he sends out a team made up of soldiers, hunters (including Josh), and some farmers (including Jim) to find the flower at all costs. It's a race against time to get the cure, with the twist being it's a cure for the guy we most want to kill. To that end, the resistance pressures Maddy into getting her Mom to synthesize a poison instead of a cure, and end Frank forever. Of course, Maddy knows this will put Liz at risk as well. Everyone's courage and loyalty to each other will be put to the test.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

Is about how a murder investigation would go down in Terra Nova. Someone is killing young women, a precious commodity in Taylor. Again – a modern problem in a primeval world - a serial killer is loose in paradise. Even Frank is forced to deal with the disruption of work and growing fear among the citizens. When Josh is suspected of the crime because he was dating one of the victims, Jim turns to a drunk in the town bar who used to be a homicide detective back on Earth. They partner up to find the killer, who turns out to be a young inherited billionaire who bribed his way onto the Terra Nova lottery, and who has snapped here after being rejected by women he used to be able to buy back in his old life. This story explores the theme of people in Terra Nova having to adapt to their new lives here, dealing with the blessing and the curse of having to re-invent who they are.

A word about Dinosaurs:

The basic rule is we hear them more than we see them (this is a TV show that should have sounds like no other), and when we see them, we're smart about it. Consider the dino-presence in the pilot (which will be slightly more than a typical episode).

1. A rush of leathery wing that blasts through the frame.
2. We see pterodons high in the sky from a distance (a shot not requiring great detail)
3. The velociraptor in the forest (mainly glimpsed as a blobby thermal signature, and then as a hissing shadow in the woods – again, we're protecting ourselves)
4. The dead dinosaur Josh must dissect is a prosthetic style build.

Once in a while (say, every six episodes) we will deliver a good look at one, and we'll save our money for this kind of shot, and do it right. As long as the expectation is not Dinotopia, and the characters in this show have a vested interest in avoiding these beats, we can deliver a convincing world in which they exist alongside us.