

## DAUNTLESS

By Chaos\_eternus

### PART 3 OF THE THUNDERSDAWN SERIES



#### CHAPTER 1: TRAINING

"New contact! 3 O'clock and closing fast!"

"Shields buckling, aft quarter!"

"They're trying to stay above us! They're getting above the firing arcs of our main weapons!"

"Helm! Roll us 90 degrees to the vertical!"

"Sir?!"

"Roll us 90 degrees to the vertical, ensign!"

"Can't do it sir!"

Captain Dafydd slapped a button on his console, instantly all the readouts and displays froze.

"Why not? Ensign"

"Well, we... ah..."

"This is not an ocean-going cruiser like your last assignment, ensign, this is a spaceship! We can't take on water in the vastness of space, nor will we sink beneath the waves if we try going down! There is nothing to stop us moving in any direction we want!"

"Except the Planet beneath us sir!"

Dafydd held his head in his hands and tried hard not to laugh or cry. Whoever thought it would be a good idea to assign him his son as an assistant obviously had it in for him.

"Correct of course, Cadet Dafydd, but not exactly the point I was trying to make"

He looked around at the faces of his crew, all of whom were trying hard not to laugh once again and decided that a tactical withdrawal might be in order.

"That's enough for today, back here 0900 tomorrow, thank you"

Captain Dafydd left as quickly as decorum allowed, and went swiftly to Thundersdawn's command centre. As he entered command he noticed the main screen blank out, momentarily displaying the simulator he had just left, he glanced around the command centre at all the crew, each and everyone was trying extremely hard not to laugh. Captain Dafydd had a momentary thought that just maybe,

if he was very lucky there faces would freeze that way. No such luck, unfortunately.

"Brilliant grasp of tactics there captain!"

"You mean rolling the ship like that? Well, I..."

"No, I mean your use of a very famous military manoeuvre"

"I didn't notice that, which one?"

"The Hare, Captain"

Muffled chuckles filled the bridge as the crew tried hard not to burst into outright laughter.

"Thank you, Captain Dodge" Dafydd replied, plying the irony on thick "You know you should have been a comedian, with a tattoo like that it would have been easy to get everyone laughing at you"

The crews ears pricked up, *tattoo*? This sounded interesting.

"Of course you did have to brush a Russian sub, and get blind drunk before you got it, but..."

"Alright, point taken"

"Where's Peters?"

"Hoped over to RSS Coalmine for a board of inquiry, left me in charge, so how do you think its going?"

"Well, they're getting there slowly; they know all the procedures off by heart it's just trying to get them to think in three dimensions that's the problem, Helmsman Wallace in particular"

"You'll get there, you do have another month before Dauntless is completed, doing a good job by the way"

"Thanks"

## CHAPTER 2: VISITORS

Thompson quickly led them past the reinforced squads of guards protecting the rebuilt dry-dock 4, and onto the viewing area. They gazed over the form beneath them, being carefully and fastidiously put together by the skilful hands of the dockyard crews. *Dauntless*, the first of a new class of Warships to be built by Tau'ri hands, she lay there tall and proud, her streamlined hull screaming speed and power, from the sharp pointed prow, tapering back to the rectangular main hull, almost perfect, marred by only a few antennae, the weapons themselves recessed until needed, to the tightly packed cylinders of the engine room and the sharp downward rudder of the decoy launcher.

Her hull was complete now, and with only two weeks to go until the official launch, a constant stream of stores could be seen moving through the clear plastic of the access walkways, as well as the occasional baggage laden crewmember, moving into his new home at last.

"She's an impressive looking ship, Admiral." Hammond said.

"That she is, HMS *Dauntless*, *Dauntless* class Light Cruiser, She will outpace, out accelerate and outmanoeuvre the *Prometheus* Class." Thompson said, justifiably proud of the RSS's latest achievement.

"*Dauntless* is indeed a fine achievement."

"Yeah, but in a straight up fight, we would still kick your asses."

Snorts filled the room, most notably coming from Captain Harris of the *Prometheus* class *Iwo Jima*.

"You don't know anything about ship to ship engagements, do you O'Neill?"

Thompson interrupted before O'Neill could reply, "What he means is that while the *Prometheus* class is better armed, they have to be able to hit the *Dauntless*, and hitting a fast moving highly manoeuvrable target is not the easiest of tasks, you yourself have experienced that yourself I believe, when you have tried to use guns on an enemy fighter?"

"Oh, yeah, not fun."

"Plus *Dauntless* mounts a decoy launcher, underneath the hull, an innovation we will be testing before proposing is added to the *Prometheus* class designs, let's go aboard now people."

The group moved swiftly through the corridors to the *Dauntless'* access tube, and onto *Dauntless*.

"As you can see" Thompson spoke, pointing things out as they went, "*Dauntless* is not quite finished yet, while all the systems are onboard and for the most part connected, a lot of systems still need to be calibrated, these include the weapons arrays, shields, sensors and the like. At this point in time, *Dauntless* could launch if needed, but would be combat ineffective."

"You have a most impressive vessel here, Admiral Thompson, however I have a question."

"Go ahead."

"Your missile bays do not appear to be complete, nor do launchers appear to be under construction, why is that?"

"At this point in time we still do not have reliable access to Naquadah. The Asteroid is, surprise surprise, in a high density region of the belt, no doubt the asteroids were attracted by the high density and sheer mass of the Naquadah, this makes it exceedingly difficult to mine safely, as yet we are working on ways around this but it means that our Naquadah supply is limited to chunks broken off the main mass which we have grabbed and moved to RSS *Coalmine*. A permanent mining station for the asteroid is being designed, but construction will be

resource intensive, this thing will need serious shielding. This means the design of the missiles and launch systems has been delayed, now if you will follow me, the Bridge is this way..."

### CHAPTER 3: LAUNCH



To those in dry-dock ones viewing area, seeing *Dauntless* begin to leave through the great clamshell doors was a solemn and moving occasion. To some, it was the final result of years of work since Chocky had revealed herself to Thompson, striving towards this day. To others, it was watching a beautiful new ship being born at last. To many, it was one more vessel ready to hold the line for humanity.

Thompson spoke softly, and solemnly, "May luck and hope follow you, *Dauntless*"

"Let Honour and integrity be your watchwords" Peters added.

"May you always stand as a shield against the night" O'Neill added, the rest of SG-1 looking at him in shock.

"Amen" Hammond said, a word that was quickly repeated by all present.

"Amen"

The space around *Thundersdawn* was unusually clear, occupied only by the USS *Iwo Jima*, with a CAP of Lancer fighters orbiting almost out of visual range, for today at least the pattern had been cleared, no craft on approach, no craft leaving the massive, but scarred station. *Dauntless* was launching, and Captain Peters was taking no chances.

Captain Harris watched as the great clamshell doors of the massive dry-dock slowly began to open, releasing the faintest wisp of air loose into the vacuum of space.

"Heads up people, she's coming out" Captain Harris warned his bridge crew.

Slowly, almost hesitantly the RSS *Dauntless* left the dry-dock where she had been built, grown really from plans laid down a year before, almost being born, not into the arms of a waiting mid-wife, but into the cold, unfeeling vastness of space, her natural element.

Harris watched as small jets of flame danced for a moment from *Dauntless's* outsized thrusters, pushing her with a firmer hand into the vastness of space. *Dauntless* crawled away from *Thundersdawn*, away from the beating breast of her creator, moving to a safe distance.

"*Iwo Jima*, this is *Dauntless*. Cleared *Thundersdawn* with no problem, going engines Hot! Ready to play chase?"

Harris looked to his bridge crew, and nodded, satisfied by what he saw.

"*Dauntless*, your chase plane is ready and smokin' the tyres"

Captain Dafydd laughed, "Roger that, *Iwo*"

"Sir, detecting energy emissions consistent with Naquadah generator start-up from *Dauntless*, and... Geez! Hot Start! They are generator HOT sir!"

"Already? I thought only the man-portable generators went hot *that* fast"

"*Dauntless*, this is *Iwo*, we are reading you as generator hot"

"We confirm that, *Iwo*, no problems so far"

"Roger that"

Harris moved over to the sensor plot, gazing at the energy patterns radiating from *Dauntless*. Right now *Dauntless* was radiating energy, almost bleeding it as every generator, main and backup was brought fully online, but without any major systems powered up to use the energy.

"*Iwo*, this is *Dauntless*, all generators hot, power grid stable, energy dissipaters... heating up, but still nominal, you copy?"

"Not reading anything unusual here, *Dauntless*, I'd say you were clear for the full program"

"Concur"

"Reading STL drive start-up and... Geez! Hot start again sir!"

Harris groaned suddenly, "Sons of a bitch!"

"Sir?" Ensign Kilbourne, the sensor analyst asked, confused.

"They're using our next-generation systems, created using the lessons learnt from our current systems. They will go Hyper-Hot PDQ too. All these are things the SGC techs said they could build into the next-generation craft, now they knew how to get it working"

"Son of a bitch!" Kilbourne cursed.

"And we gave it to them, Schematics, test data, the works"

"Hook, line and sinker" he said, grimly.

*Dauntless* come to a jarring crash-stop a mere 10,000 yards from the outer fringes of the asteroid belt, before rolling her hull over to bring the largest asteroid

within range into the firing arcs of their gauss-rifles. *Dauntless* waited, almost expectantly, until at last the *Iwo Jima* came to a far gentler stop at her assigned station.

"*Dauntless*, this is *Iwo*, very funny! You know we are supposed to stay together for your systems tests, left lying in your exhaust hardly counts as 'Staying together' wouldn't you say?"

"Roger that, *Iwo*" Dafydd replied, amused.

"All right", Dafydd turned to his crew, "Last test now people! Tactical, bring all weapons on-line"

"Yes, Sir!" Lieutenant Tomas replied her voice cool, calm and collected, reflecting none of her inner excitement. Tomas was 4<sup>th</sup> generation Navy, and it showed, in even the worst of conditions she had been proven, in combat, to keep her head. This, and a personal interest in astrophysics was the reasoning behind her posting as Tactical officer on *Dauntless*. It was an honour she was determined to prove herself worthy of.

"Pulse Lasers Hot, diagnostics good, training now, good target lock. Gauss rifles hot in 3.2.1... Gauss rifles Hot, diagnostics good, training now, Gauss 3 refuses to train, diagnostics indicate manual lockdown active, all others read diagnostics good, Lock good"

"Dafydd to Engineering, we have a manual lockdown on gauss 3, care to explain why?"

"No idea, sir, we're removing it now, markings indicate it's a dock-yard lock down unit captain"

"Chief Engineer Barlow, may I suggest a thorough search of the entire ship for any more *surprises*" Dafydd bit out the word, he didn't like surprises like this, in combat a one-minute delay in getting a weapon online could prove fatal.

"Yes, sir, alright you heard the man, Davies..." the channel clicked off.

"Captain, all weapons are now hot and ready, and we still have good locks"

"Very well, fire at will"

Captain Harris on the *Iwo Jima* watched critically as HMS *Dauntless* let rip with every single weapon in her arsenal, rolling over so every gun could be brought to bear. Those pulse lasers, he thought, have a minigun like rate of fire, but, noting the damage they caused on the asteroid, have little power behind them. He checked his briefing on his PDA, primarily anti-fighter and CIWS role, well they had power enough for that, and certainly fired fast enough. He moved on, checking the Gauss rifles this time. They were the same gauss rifles as *Iwo Jima* and all the other vessels of the Prometheus class mounted so no real surprises there.

He snorted, *Dauntless* needed more Gauss rifles.

"Helm, move to bring our main weaponry to bear, weapons bring 'em online and prepare to fire"

*Iwo* twisted in space, moving swiftly to close above *Dauntless's* position, where she simultaneously fired everyone of her main weapons at one point on the asteroids surface, the asteroid cracked, and began to break apart.

"*Dauntless* to *Iwo*, have you finished showing off yet?"

Harris laughed, "I think we're done here anyway *Dauntless*, Good luck and Happy Hunting!"

"Roger, same to you *Iwo*"

The asteroid cracked and split open, spilling debris into space as *Dauntless* and the *Iwo Jima* turned and left, the *Iwo* onto its next mission, and *Dauntless*, onto its first.

#### CHAPTER 4: DAUNTLESS CREW

Captain Dafydd looked over his assembled officers and smiled. This was the first mission briefing ever to be given aboard the *Dauntless*, and it showed in the eager glint in his officers eyes, the excited, tense way they held themselves. He turned around and withdrew a large brown envelope, covered in security warnings and red tape from the safe, and quickly opened it, glancing through the papers within.

"Well people, our first mission looks like being a doozy. No action just a lot of work. We are to proceed to Alpha Centauri, which has been left unexplored until now, and assess its suitability for a major RSS presence, said presence to include a major fleet depot, mining and resource gathering, quite possibly the first Tau'ri colony."

He glanced over at his officers, "Problems?"

Sub-Lieutenant Lloyd, the sensor office spoke first, "That will require a full high-resolution scan of the system, plus any likely looking planets or asteroids. Time consuming and heavy on CPU runtime."

"The computers can handle it with no problems, though I would prefer it if engineering would drop a few degrees c in the computer rooms." Sub-lieutenant Richards, Computers and Systems Officer, drawled, his voice screaming his Scottish ancestry to all within the room.

"Do-able" Commander Barlow, Chief Engineer, said, "What I would be worried about is a snake coming up our ass, while are sensors are concentrated elsewhere."

Lloyd grimaced, "It's a problem, we would have to break off the high-res scan for intermittent 360<sup>0</sup> sweeps, which will cost us time."

Dafydd nodded, and turned to the other officers, we had been quiet until now,

"Comms?"

"Local system, no known anomalies to cause interference, shouldn't interfere with communications, Captain." came the quiet, assured voice Warrant Officer Paterson.

"Tactical?"

"I really don't like High-res scans, Captain, if we are going to do them on a regular basis, a second set of sensors would make me feel a lot safer." Lieutenant Tomas scowled.

"Noted, agreed, and filed, Medical?"

"I'll get back to you once I can control my urge to salivate over the equipment in sickbay, sir"

"Midshipman?"

Owens looked up from his customized PDA, "Course Plotted, Captain, ready to transfer to Helm at your command."

Dafydd nodded, Owens, their Helm and Navigation Officer was as green as grass when he first joined the crew for training at *Thundersdawn*, but he appeared to be coming along nicely, "Okay, if no else has anything to say?"

The officers shook their heads,

"Then let's go, Owens, transfer the course to helm."

"Aye Aye, Captain."

## CHAPTER 5: INITIAL REPORTS

### Command Deck, Thundersdawn.

Captain Peters sipped her tea slowly as she watched the message from *Dauntless* spool quickly off the printer, she could, she supposed just read of the screen, but like many people, she preferred the solid feel of paper in her hands for anything important. A sentence caught her eye, and she moved closer to the printer, reading it as it spooled off. Her eyes widened,

"Bloody Hell!" she exclaimed under her breathe.

"Comms, Signal GC I'm on my way with a priority dispatch, make sure the Rings are online to GC, and inform the admiral he might want an SGC rep there to hear this."

She waited impatiently for the report to finish printing, quietly imploring the laser to hurry up.

"Captain, GC acknowledges."

"Who's on the roster for backup OOTW?"

"I am" Captain Dodge was curious, it was not often that Captain Peters left *Thundersdawn* nowadays, in fact he had a hard time remembering her leaving at all, yet here she was rushing off station, during her shift as Officer Of The Watch (OOTW) even, just because of a report from what was supposed to be a relatively, tame first mission for *Dauntless*, "Your Comm. Officer buzzed me, what's up?"

Peters moved away from the printer, gesturing Dodge in. Curious, Dodge grabbed the printout and began reading it just as the printer finally finished. His eyes widened,

"I have Command, Security; Peters will require an escort to GC."

Peters glared at Dodge as she grabbed the printout, and raced to the ring-room, a pair of Sergeant's in Royal Marine uniforms joining her. She stepped within the ring boundaries, the marines standing either side of her, their guns at the ready, rings could be intercepted, they weren't taking chances, not with *Thundersdawn's* Captain.

Second later they arrived at GC, St Athan, Peters quickly striding through the corridors and security checkpoints to Admiral Thompson's office. She knocked quickly and went in.

"Admiral," she said, noticing the presence of General Hammond in the room, "We just received the initial report from *Dauntless*."

"Most have been a doozy to get you off *Thundersdawn*." Thompson noted.

"Alpha appears to be an abandoned Goa'uld outpost, Admiral."

Thompson motioned Peters to sit down, "Are you serious?"

"According to *Dauntless*, markings indicate Ra owned this particular outpost. It appears to have been abandoned largely intact when he was thrown off Earth."

"Exactly how intact?" Hammond asked.

"Very, sir" she paused, "according to this report, there are five trinium mines on planet, only one of which has been expensively mined, and all of the mines need only minor work to be brought online, also large deposits of other desirable materials, such as iron, copper, aluminium ores, as well as crude oil have been detected."

Thompson turned to Hammond, "How many people do you have ready to set up a crash-mining operation?"

Hammond shook his head, "I don't know for definite, but I think a SG-D3 is available, all other Digger teams are off world."

Thompson looked puzzled, "SG-D3?"

"We have enough teams operational now that dedicated teams need to be clearly identified, SG-M is medical teams, and SG-D are miners, or 'diggers'."

Thompson nodded, and hit his intercom button, "Petty Officer, I'll need a pair of runners here, fully cleared personnel only."

As soon as he was acknowledged, he released the intercom.

"Anything else Peters?"

She glanced at her report, "Oh, you could say that..." she replied slowly.

"Go on Captain" Hammond said, curious.

"We have a pretty good idea why the system was abandoned for a start, No gate present, and the shattered remains of several Goa'uld ships, seem to indicate there was a major battle there, as well as interestingly enough, an derelict Asgard hull. Dafydd seems to think the Asgard vessel engaged the Goa'uld, reason unknown, and managed to destroy them, but not before being destroyed themselves. Without ships or a gate, the Jaffa couldn't leave the planet, and Asgard interest in this area stopped any of the other Goa'ulds from stumbling on this world." She looked up at the eager gleam in Thompson and Hammonds eyes "The Goa'uld have probably forgotten about Alpha now."

"Exactly how much equipment has been left behind?" Hammond asked.

"Quote: Equipment recovered: Not transmitting for Security Reasons, request Reinforcements PDQ."

Thompson and Hammond sat back as they contemplated this, for *Dauntless* to refuse to tell them, and demand reinforcements meant a significant haul.

A knock sounded at the door, and the two runners came in, making Thompson smile as he realised whom his secretary had called on. Hammond closed his eyes, trying to clear them of the double image he was seeing, no such luck. Obviously Twins he thought as he gazed at the trim fit looking brunettes in Royal Navy Petty Officers uniforms.

"Petty Officer *Joan Williams*, you will run for Hammond, Petty Officer *Sarah Williams*, have 633 Squadron brought to readiness, and have basic supplies for deployment loaded onto 1-6 series hulls, my authority."

"Yes, Sir!" Sarah snapped a salute, and left the room at a dogtrot.

Joan turned to the slightly dazed General Hammond, and said "Just call me Petty Officer Joan sir, only way to know which one of us you are talking to"

"I can see that" Hammond grabbed his notebook and a pen and quickly wrote a message down, sealing it into an

envelope he handed it to Joan and asked her to courier it by Ring to SGC.

As soon as Joan left, Hammond turned to Thompson and asked "How in the hell are you supposed to tell those two apart?"

Thompson replied, totally serious "Easy, Joan's gold tooth is front left, Sarah's is Lower right."

Peters struggled to keep a straight face; Thompson chuckled for a moment, and then said "Alright, back to business."

"633 Squadron are the only squadron of fully Hyper capable *Lancers* we have at the moment, I'll brief them to reinforce *Dauntless* shortly, and they should be able to arrive at Alpha sometime this afternoon."

"As soon as Joan arrives back with the status report I requested, we can..."

## CHAPTER 6: LANCER INTERSTELLARS

### GC, St Athan



Wing commander Liana Ross walked slowly around the small craft that would be her home for the next few hours, checking everything, from the pulse lasers on the wingtips, the bulky rear-mounted drives, to the bulge underneath the craft where the Naquadah reactor was stored, and the lone Naquadah enhanced Sparrow missile on the starboard (Right) wing. She frowned as she looked at it, only one missile, that didn't help make her feel safe, especially when they were going to be flying into an unknown situation at Alpha Centauri.

Ross turned and climbed into the *Lancers* state of the art cockpit, and quickly strapped herself in,

"Okay, people check in by the numbers."

"Mosquito 2, go"

"Mosquito 3, go"

"Mossie 4, go"

"Mosquito 5, go"

"Mosquito 6, no-go, reactor refuses to start."

"Mossie 7, go"

"Mosquito 8, go"

"Mossie 9, no go, CPU thinks I'm at 3000 feet already."

"Ach, don't you just love prototypes, Mossie 10, go"

"Mossie 11, go"

"Mosquito 12, go"

"Alright, 5 and 10 pair up, 6 and 9 get your arses into gear and join us as soon as your lancers are checked out."

Ross flicked her transmitter over to the tower frequency, "Tower, this is Mosquito flight, 10 birds requesting permission to taxi."

"Roger Mosquito 1, be advised your flight plan shows 12 birds."

"6 and 9 failed pre-flight."

"Roger, you are clear to taxi, and to take-off, the pattern is empty."

The *Lancers* burst out of their hangers, moving quickly to the runway, where they rushed into the sky, rising quickly into the red glow of the setting sun.

The *Lancers* flashed out of Hyperspace into the Alpha Centauri system, and instantly collision alarms blared through the cockpits, Liana Ross looked up from her displays, and slammed on the brakes, the other *Lancers* quickly following her lead.

She looked carefully forward, blinked, looked again, and then carefully pinched herself.

"1, this is 8, is that what I think it is?"

"Well, if you think you see a..."

Mosquito 1, Liana Ross was surprised to hear a voice cut 3 off, tersely shouting, "Comm. discipline, people!"

She was even more surprised to realise it was she who had spoken.

"Not A Word! First one who mentions *this* over the airwaves, I will *Kill* them myself" She meant every word of it.

The other squadron members responded with a respectful, "Yes Sir", the enormity of this find finally sinking into their shell-shocked minds.

"3, 4 CAP over the North Pole, 5,10 CAP over the South Pole, 7,8 CAP here, Me and 2 will be checking in with Dauntless, 11 and 12, come with us, but rig for Hyper, You'll be couriering a report to GC and SGC, understood?"

## CHAPTER 7: MOTHER LODE

Thompson took one look at the report the *Lancers* had couriered in, and ran from his office, hurrying through the corridors to the ring room, keeping a firm hold on the printout of the report.

"Operator, SGC, Now!" the Admiral barked at the Air Force Flight Sergeant who stood at the rings control panel.

He reappeared in almost instantly within the SGC, surrounded by armed guards; he quickly showed them his ID and was escorted to the Briefing room. Thompson strode straight into the room, interrupting what appeared to be a debriefing of SG-1, or rather of Teal'c, Carter and a battered looking Daniel, O'Neill was no where to be seen.

"Admiral Thompson" Hammond said, surprised, "What can I do for you?"

"You read the report the *Lancers* couriered yet, General?"

"No, I was planning to, *after* this debriefing."

Thompson quirked an eyebrow at that rather pointed comment, and slapped the report printout in front of Hammond, pointing a finger at one line in particular.

Hammond's eyes widened, "Are they *serious*?"

Carter glanced over at the report curiously, she caught sight of the line Thompson had pointed out to Hammond and read it upside down,

"Holy Hannah!"

"...including a Goa'uld spaceyard, significant damage in only one quarter. This facility has four bays, 3 capable of building up to *Ha'tak* class in size, bay four was largely wiped out by what appears to have been a comet, but would have been able to construct ships up to Mothership class. Intact and largely complete hulls are present in bays 1 and 3, these craft appear to be outdated, and would need refitting before use, bay 2 is empty."

Planet side, a number of Gliders were captured, with varying damage from the elements, approximately 45 appear to be usable, and another 67 are good only for parts and materials. Several munitions stores were discovered at the following locations..."

"Holy Hannah!"

"I believe the expression is Mother Lode, is it not General Hammond?"

## CHAPTER 8: MOVEMENTS

Thompson slowly eased his aching body into the hot water of his bath, and sighed with pleasure. 'Finally' he thought, 'A chance to relax'.

As the water began to soothe his aching and abused body, he thought over the events of the past few days, events since that report had arrived brought whole new meaning to the word hectic. First off, both SGC and the RSS began scrambling, desperately searching for qualified and more importantly, cleared personnel to move to the

trinary Alpha Centauri system, everyone from construction workers, experienced ship-wrights, and scientists to clerks, medical personnel and a massive guard detachment, all of which had to be moved by the only craft available, the five 1-6 *Paladin* class craft, which could only carry 20 people at a time and weren't designed for cargo. *Thundersdawn* had started crash-priority construction of more, but they wouldn't be available for at least another week. If *Dauntless* was available it would have greatly speeded up the time taken to shift all the personnel and especially the equipment, but strangely enough when Hammond had suggested *Dauntless* remain on over watch in the Alpha Centauri system, Thompson hadn't argued, this horde was too valuable to leave unguarded.

Thompson smiled, even the MTB boys had suddenly gained priority status, the politicians had tried to scupper that project from the start, believing it to be a waste of resources. The MTB designers had gone and started building the thing anyway, with the assistance of off-duty SGC and RSS personnel at the old earth side *Prometheus* construction facility. Both Thompson and Hammond had turned their backs and carefully not asked too many questions when equipment and resources had disappeared in that direction, hoping to present the politicians and bean counters with a fait-accompli. Now, it wasn't necessary, the Motor Torpedo Boat was almost complete, and the politicians had bowed as soon as *the report*, as it had come to be known had come in, they wanted every craft possible to protect the Alpha Centauri system, the MTB design would get a chance to prove itself.

Thompson signed, it would be very helpful if Alpha had a gate, but for whatever reason Ra had never moved a gate to Alpha, probably for the same reasons the RSS and SGC had decided not to move a gate there, Security. A gate while it would make shifting personnel quicker and easier, was another way for Alpha to be discovered, and with as yet unconfirmed rumours coming through from the Tok'ra that Anubis was randomly dialling address's searching for worlds the system lords didn't know about, adding a gate to Alpha was decided to be too much of a security risk.

Right now, Alpha's defences consisted of RSS *Dauntless*, USS *Iwo Jima*, who once again had been recalled before they could get too far away, 633 Squadron RSS, and the Black Nights, USMC who had just quietly converted to F-302 class fighters, plus about a regiment of mismatched infantry from various units.

At least, Thompson thought, *Dauntless* now had her Torpedo launchers, and a supply of Naquadah enhanced Sparrow missiles aboard, even if fitting the Launcher

would be difficult, considering the *Dauntless* and *Iwo Jima* were running watch and watch, one craft a full alert for 12 hours then swap over.

Worse thing was, they still had a lot more personnel and equipment mounting up to shift, but it would continue to mount up for the moment. The *Paladins* were down for some very hasty maintenance; otherwise the constant overuse they were suffering at the moment could cause an accident.

The *Prometheus* class *Eisenhower*, the first *Prometheus* to be completed at Thundersdawn had also been recalled, but was now worryingly overdue. Worse, two scheduled check-ins had been missed, and the last message received had been abruptly cut-off.

Thompson closed his eyes, and slipped under the water, 'enough worrying about work' he thought, 'time to relax'

## CHAPTER 9: ALARUMS

### Lagrange Point L3

The tug slowly pushed the small self contained satellite into its orbit, the crew of the *Shunter* were not rushing this. If they did they might have to come back later. None of them liked the long trip around the Sun from Earth to this point, which the astrophysicists insisted was the perfect location for this combined Early Warning / Radio Relay Satellite. They were the only craft on this side of the Sol system and that they didn't like. Still they saw the point, this was a great big blind spot that needed covering, the sun blocked earth based sensors from scanning this part of space making it the perfect route for a surprise Goa'uld attack.

Finally, the guidance computers were satisfied that the satellite was in the correct orbit, and the *Shunter* crew powered up its ZPE generator.

"Finished here boss, better tell GC."

The bulky Midshipman in charge of the *Shunter* snorted, "Would love to, but L4 and L5 aren't up yet, must be behind schedule, so we can't get a message to Earth."

"Shit! What if we'd had an accident?"

"We'll take that up with GC when we get back, jobs done, not as if anything is gonna happen now..."

The Satellite's sensors dutifully recorded a microburst transmission coming in from deep space, the computers quickly stripping down the headers, Critique Flash. For SGC, noting the Critique flash header the computer immediately diverted all of its attention to

getting this message to the SGC, quickly querying the L4 and L5 satellites, neither responded, the satellite searched for other routes to get the message to earth, a passing ship in the right place to bounce the message perhaps. It found nothing. If the satellite had been human, it would have been feeling a touch of despair at this point, as it was it repeatedly and dutifully tried all the tricks it was programmed with to get the USS *Eisenhower's* transmission to Earth, failing every time.

(Authors note: For an explanation of Lagrange Points, see: <http://www.physics.montana.edu/faculty/cornish/lagrange.html> )

## CHAPTER 10: ALERT!

A full 14 hours after the L3 satellite first received the Microburst transmission from the USS *Eisenhower*; it found a relay to Earth, the L5 satellite having finally come online. The satellite didn't know the chaos its message would cause, the kicked-anthill effect of its electrifying words, and it didn't care. What passed for the satellites brain was concentrating on its passive sensors, and the extremely faint signals they were receiving.

### SGC

O'Neill shot to his feet with a start as the blaring sirens of a full alert echoed through the base,

"Colonel O'Neill to the Control Room!"

He rubbed the sleep sand from his eyes, and threw his uniform on, quickly rushing to the control room, with General Hammond in Washington for a round of meetings he was in charge of the base, natural, he thought, something would choose *now* to happen.

His clattering feet on the stairs alerted the duty airman just as he was about to issue another call for the colonel, he quickly turned to the colonel, tensely he said;

"Sir, we just received a Critique flash from USS *Eisenhower*, Sir"

"Peachy, they mention anything about why they missed so many check-ins?"

"I think they covered that sir, *Eisenhower* reported by microburst transmission, they are tailing 5 Hatak's heading in our direction, ETA roughly 32 hours Sir"

As soon as O'Neill heard the word microburst transmission, he got very worried, microburst were *not* normal procedure, basically it meant that whatever information was contained in the message was compressed to the maximum possible so as to be completely

transmitted in roughly a microsecond, unfortunately such messages could easily be mistaken for static, and so were avoided, unless you needed information getting out under duress, or whilst remaining stealthy.

By the time the airman had finished, O'Neill was rapidly going through every swear word he knew in his head, this was *not* going to be pleasant.

"Recall Hammond, and copy this transmission to Admiral Thompson, Critique priority"

O'Neill rushed from the control room, and into General Hammond's office where he grabbed the red phone, the presidential hotline.

"This is Colonel O'Neill at Blue Book, Get me the President!"

"*I don't care*; tell him we have a Code 1 situation here!"

"Yes sir, we just received word from the USS *Eisenhower* that 5 Hatak's appear to be heading in our direction, sir"

"NoDuff, Sir"

"Yes, Sir"

(NoDuff: Not Duff, genuine information, generally used to bring exercises to a screeching halt in the event of casualties or a shift to a war footing)

### GC, St Athan

Thompson was about to drink his tea when the message came in, as the message sank in the cup slowly dropped lower and lower until it hit the table with a dull clink, slopping some of the tea over his paperwork. Thompson didn't notice, even if he had he wouldn't have cared, he was too busy barking orders into his phone.

"Recall *Dauntless*, Priority One, sound a general alert, prep all *Lancer* squadrons for imminent combat, and make sure they get full load outs of the enhanced sparrows, signal *Thundersdawn*, *Coalmine* and *Minehead*, we have inbound!"

### CHAPTER 11: RECALL

#### Alpha Centauri, RSS Dauntless

"All hear this! All hear this! We are now at condition 2! All armourers to stations! We are moving to engage 5 *ha'tak's* heading for the Sol System, Captain to the Bridge!"

Captain Dafydd jumped out of his bed with a curse, and ran to the bridge.

"Captain Has the Bridge! Lloyd, report!"

"Sir, we just received word from GC that Earth is about to come under heavy attack, 5 *Ha'tak's* are reported to be inbound, we have been recalled along with half of 633 Squadron"

"Helm, make best speed for earth, Engineering, make sure all weapons batteries and shields are fully operational, someone warn medical too, Lloyd, are they just leaving 6 birds to defend Alpha?"

"Negative sir, *Iwo* has also been recalled, but a ship identified only as MTB01 has been sent to reinforce the fighters"

Dafydd looked puzzled, "MTB01?"

"No file is listed in the database sir, the only reference appears to be to a cancelled prototype that Hammond in particular felt had promise"

"Captain! Incoming signal from the *Iwo Jima*, Sir!"

"Put it through, Paterson"

"Harris, I assume you've heard?"

"We're just about to jump out, you?"

"Won't be far behind you, Good luck Captain"

"You too, Captain"

The channel closed, and with a flash the *Iwo Jima* vanished into hyper, *Dauntless* came swiftly about, before following *Iwo* home, and into the history books.

## CHAPTER 12: BATTLE PLANS

### GC, St Athan

Muted alarms echoed in the background, unnoticed by the figures crowding over the plotting table, the table flickered, and the 5 'hostile' markers shifted as new information was downloaded into the computer.

"Well, that's it then, they're bypassing *Thundersdawn* and heading straight here" Thompson said, quietly.

"We'll have to order *Iwo* and *Dauntless* closer to Earth" Hammond indicated a location on the plot, Thompson looked at it and smiled;

"You thinking Hammer and Anvil?"

Hammond looked puzzled for a second then nodded, "Of course, *Eisenhower* is right behind the *Hatak's*, so when they run into the Anvil of the main fleet, *Eisenhower* comes in from behind and hammers, could work"

"Yes, but we still need to reinforce the main fleet, *Dauntless*, *Iwo*, two and a half *Lancer* squadrons and 4 302 squadrons are not going to cut it"

"*Prometheus* and *Persephone* have been recalled, but won't arrive for another five hours"

"By which time this will all be over"

"Do you have any other armed craft?"

"1-6 *Paladin* class passenger transports, just a pair of weak pulse lasers, as well as a Sparrow mount which was just fitted onto the hull, they setting up as a final line of defence along here" the area Thompson pointed out was well within the moons orbit, and any Hatak that got that far would be able to fire on earth with little difficulty.

"Hows the gate?"

"Sealed," Hammond replied, "and staying that way. Though they haven't as yet tried that, must have decided that the iris is too much of a barrier"

"Well, gives thanks for small mercies, and hope big ones start showing up, Allies?"

"Either not responding, or up to their eyebrows"

"Figures"

Thompson frowned, "Looks like our best bet is to hurt them as much as possible, slowing them down even more, and hope *Prometheus* and *Persephone* arrive before they do to much damage"

"That's not a good plan"

"It's the only one we've got"

### CHAPTER 13: CONTACT

First Prime Ba'aca of Ba'al was, for a Jaffa, happy. His god had honoured him with the task of bringing the Tau'ri to their knees so his god and the other system lords could concentrate on defeating Anubis, a task he felt he could handle, after all, only pairs or single *Ha'tak's* had attacked Earth before, and they had only marginally been defeated. Five *Ha'tak's* should be overkill, allowing him to return to his god all the sooner with news of his inevitable success.

"My Lord, sensors have picked up a *Prometheus* and an unknown warship in system, as well as a large orbital facility over the fourth planet."

Ba'aca nodded, signalling the Jaffa to leave; this might just be a challenge after all.

He left the room and headed for the control room, this he wanted to see for himself. Ba'aca quickly glanced over the sensor readings and frowned, this orbital facility was constructing more ships of war, this would not do.

"Order the ships to shift course, and target that station, for the glory of Ba'al!"

Ba'aca watched the sensors closely; the Tau'ri would respond to this, he was certain, but how?

He grunted, satisfied as the weak Tau'ri fleet shifted course, moving to defend the station. So be it, he would crush the station quickly, and that would put the Tau'ri right where he wanted them.

"Fire all weapons on that station, in the name of Ba'al we must destroy it quickly."

The *Hatak's* fired, bright lances of energy flaring across space, only to be blocked by the shimmering glare of a shield.

Ba'aca looked closer at the sensors, and cursed inwardly. Asgard shields, not only that but Asgard shields that appeared to have been combined with some other, unknown form of technology, to give a most capable hybrid.

"Launch the gliders and the *Al-kesh*, have them engage the Tau-ri fleet, continue firing on that station."

Ba'aca cursed as the ship lurched, what were those weapons firing?

"My lord, the gliders are taking heavy losses, the Tau'ri are using a new type of fighter and they are outmanoeuvring the gliders."

"Then they die for their god."

"My lord."

#### CHAPTER 14: ENGAGEMENT

##### Thundersdawn

The constant rocking of the station was getting on Captain Peters nerves, 'it was a several thousand tonne space station, so why do I need to regain my sea-legs?' she thought, irrelevantly.

"Captain, we can't take much more of this!"

"Where is the fleet?" Peters screamed to be heard over the din of weapons fire, shield impacts, tortured metal and incessant reports.

"*Dauntless*, the 302's and *Lancers* have engaged the gliders and *Al-kesh*, *Iwo Jima* has broken through and is now engaging the *Ha'tak's*"

"New Contact! *Prometheus* class, just dropped stealth mode and is moving to engage, IFF says USS *Eisenhower*, Captain."

"Nice timing, really, now tell them to get their arses in gear..." Peters paused as she grabbed hold of the nearest console to anchor herself as the station gave a particularly massive lurch "...before our shields give way!"

"Captain! The gliders have been destroyed; the remaining *Lancers* are regrouping and moving to assist the 302's"

*Dauntless* rumbled and shook as the *Al-kesh* fired salvo after salvo into her hull, *Dauntless* and the 302's had destroyed many of the *Al-kesh* but they were

relentless, fanatical in their attempts to destroy the *Dauntless*. Something had to give, and with a mighty flash of energy it did, *Dauntless'* shield generator blew. Victorious, the *Al-kesh* moved to deal with the 302's as a last salvo impacted on *Dauntless'* hull.

"Captain!"

Peters followed the pointed finger to the tactical display on the main viewer, as the icon representing *Dauntless* flickered and turned black, a 15 appearing next to the icon. IFF frequency 15, Ship crippled, unable to abandon.

A wave of horror passed through Peters, but she suppressed it, and turned to the task at hand, her eyes filling with tears.

"Signal the *Lancers*, forget the *Al-kesh*, the 302's can handle it, we need them here!"

"All right people! You heard Peters, lets get tone on the nearest target, *Ha'tak* 4." Wing Commander Ross commanded over the airwaves at her mixed bag of surviving *Lancers* from 633, 649, and 598 squadrons.

"Mossie 1, good tone."

The *Lancers* launched their Naquada enhanced sparrows across the gulf of space at the *Ha'tak*. Of the 15 missiles launched, one misfired and went wild, disappearing into space, 2 were destroyed by weapons fire, still 12 Sparrows got through, impacting near simultaneously on the *Ha'tak's* already weakened shields, they gave. With a flash of escaping energy, the *Ha'tak* vanished, debris spinning out across space.

"That's it for the Sparrows; let's sort those *Al-kesh* out."

Peters smiled, relieved as the *Ha'tak* vanished from the tactical display, soon followed by another as *Thundersdawn*, *Iwo Jima* and *Eisenhower* caught another *Hatak* in a lethal cross-fire.

Her smile quickly disappeared as *Iwo Jima* disengaged, air bursting from her shattered bridge, bodies spilling into space.

She glanced at the status displays and cursed, every shield was lit a blood red colour, most were flashing. Blood red meant heavily damaged, flashing, failure imminent. This did not look good, and all they had left was *Eisenhower*, *Thundersdawn*, she glanced at the fighter controller's panel, 8 *Lancers* without Sparrows, and 15 302's. No, this did not look good at all.

She cried out as *Thundersdawn* shook once more, the last thing she noticed before hitting her head on a

control panel was the lights flickering off on every panel in the command centre.

#### CHAPTER 15: SACRIFICE OF ANGELS

The *Ha'taks* moved away from *Thundersdawn*, without power the station was unable to fight and so was not a threat. *Eisenhower* and the remaining fighters were however. Ba'aca momentarily considered recalling the *Al-kesh*, to destroy *Thundersdawn* while the *Ha'tak's* cleaned up the remaining resistance, but stopped when he noticed there were no *Al-kesh* left. He frowned, unfortunate. This mission had already cost him enough that he wondered about Ba'al's displeasure, he dismissed the thought, if he succeeded, Ba'al would forgive much.

Dafydd looked over the shattered remains of the bridge and a wave of despair passed through him, this was a new ship for god's sake! They hadn't even had a chance to prove her worth, and now they probably never would.

Coughing and cursing in the smoke filled air; Lieutenant Tomas made her way over to her Captain.

"Sir, as far as I can tell from what remains of the sensors, We're losing sir, *Iwo Jima* has disengaged, *Thundersdawn* is off-line, most of the fighters are gone, and there are still three *Hatak's* around"

Dafydd cursed, then said quietly, "Whats our status?"

"Dead loss, sir, She's broke her back, the Gauss rifles, hyper drive and the shuttlebay are gone, and air is leaking from every compartment we can contact."

Dafydd stiffened, "In-system drive?"

"Only thing that's good captain, we get about 75%, would have more but not enough power"

"Tomas, target the most undamaged *Ha'tak*"

"What with, Captain we have no weapons left"

"Take Helm, Tomas."

"Helm sir?" Her eyes widened, and she gulped, tears springing to her eyes, she understood, "Helm eye, Captain"

"My Lord, the unidentified *Tau'ri* vessel has just brought its in-system drive back online, they mean to ram!"

"Move us out of here, quickly!"

"My Lord, they move to fast."

Ba'aca turned and looked with widened eyes as the crippled hull of the *Dauntless* hit his command ships shields. The shields gave, and *Dauntless* ran unmanned into the *Ha'tak's* hull, her crew killed by the force of the impact on the shields. The structural integrity of

both ships failed utterly, and the debris rained across space, large chunks hitting the shields of the remaining *Ha'tak's*, the remaining Tau'ri fighters manoeuvring frantically to avoid being hit.

*Eisenhower* moved decisively, unloading a full broadside into a *Ha'tak's* hull as they were still reeling from the death of their leader, and the impacts on their shields, volley after volley was fired, *Eisenhower* receiving only sporadic fire in return. Just as the *Ha'tak's* got their act together, and began to attack, *Eisenhower* fired a volley that passed through the *Ha'tak's* shields, the Naquadah tips of the gauss rifle rounds blowing chunks of the hull, fire quickly bursting through the hull as the *Ha'tak* died, spinning away uncontrolled.

*Iwo Jima*, having repaired as much of their damage as they could, reengaged, their movements sluggish, *Eisenhower* and *Iwo Jima* moving quickly to tag-team the surviving *Ha'tak*.

The *Ha'tak* broke off, attempting to disengage, before quickly coming to a complete stop, its shields switched off, its weapons powering down and the drives off-line.

It was over.

#### CHAPTER 16: DAMAGE & MOURNING

Admiral Thompson sat down quietly at his desk, his heart heavy with sorrow. All day long all he had heard was casualty reports, each one grimmer than the one before, he was tired of it, but he knew it wasn't over, not by a long shot.

He signed, rubbing his face with his hands as he turned to face the newly promoted Lieutenant General Hammond, a promotion he knew Hammond did not feel comfortable with, he knew he wouldn't either, being promoted over the bodies of some many loyal officers and crew.

"Its actually not the number of dead that will cause us problems, not meaning to sound callous Hammond, but rather the people who died. They were all our rising stars, our best brains, meant to gain experience on *Dauntless* and in the first squadrons before moving to high rank in ships and squadrons of their own. With the loss of *Dauntless*, we lost everyone we had who was experienced in spaceship operations, except the small handful on MTB01 and most of our experienced Lancer pilots too. It will take quite some time to rebuild; the ships will be ready before the crews are, to be honest."

"What do you intend to do?"

"Nothing else we can do, the schedule is going to have to be moved up, Canada already has a pretty good idea about the StarGate, so they will be informed first, and hopefully brought into the RSS, and then Australia."

"What about other commonwealth members?"

"Not yet, there are 53 commonwealth members, but not all are what I would call stable, or trustworthy, not with something of this magnitude, and not all will be able to provide a significant amount of help either."

"I'll warn the president."

A knock came on the door just as Hammond was about to leave, and Petty Officer Williams, which one Thompson couldn't tell, walked into the Admirals office.

"Signal from Alpha Centauri, sir, an *Al-kesh* patrol was engaged by the *Lancers* and MTB01 several hours ago, the *Lancers* are gone and MTB01 is crippled. They are requesting backup."

Thompson turned to Hammond, "It'll have to be a *Prometheus*, we have nothing to send"

"Agreed, I'll arrange it as soon as I get back to the SGC."

The mournful sound of buglers playing Last Post filled the air in this sheltered corner of St Athan as a new memorial was unveiled, proudly bearing the legend in solid bronze, "To the Fallen, who died to keep this World free."

It seemed almost obscene to Thompson that despite the solemn nature of this occasion, birds were singing, the sun was shining and the laughter of children could be heard in the distance. He listened quietly as Captain Peters, who was the only person sitting for this unveiling, sang softly along to the last post through the bandages wrapped around her forehead;

*"Come home! Come home! The last post is sounding  
for you to hear. All good soldiers know very well there  
is nothing to fear while they do what is right, and  
forget  
all the worries they have met in their duties through the  
year. A soldier cannot always be great, but he can be a  
gentleman and he can be a right good pal to his comrades  
in  
his squad. So all you soldiers listen to this - Deal fair  
by all  
and you'll never be amiss.  
Be Brave! Be Just! Be Honest and True Men!"*

Last post finished and the riflemen came forward, shattering the air with their ceremonial volleys.

Thompson stepped forward, he voice calm, proud and commanding;

"RSS *Dauntless*, Lost with all Hands,  
598 Squadron, Lost with all Hands,  
633 Squadron, 8 Casualties and 1 who will never walk  
again,

649 Squadron, 6 Casualties,  
USS *Iwo Jima*, 49 Casualties,  
USS *Eisenhower*, 32 Casualties,  
1<sup>st</sup> SFW, 9 Casualties,  
2<sup>nd</sup> SFW, 7 Casualties,  
3<sup>rd</sup> SFW, 7 Casualties,  
RSS *Thundersdawn*, 112 Casualties  
MTB01, 3 Casualties"

He looked down for a moment, and then looked up at the assembled dignitaries, personnel and families.

"Most of us know why, and how they died, for those of us here who do not, there will come a time when their sacrifice is known by the entire world. Now is not that time, but that time will come. For now, we can only find comfort in the fact that they died for us all, they died to keep this world safe, and if you asked them if they would do it again, they would to a man step forward and say yes. For they believed in what they were doing, so mourn them, for a while, and remember them forever, but always remember what they died for. They died to keep us all free, so honour their memory by living free, Thank you.

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