

Independence: The Ancient Trap

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Chapter 8

GTD Pinecone

Unknown

13th May 2371

The airlock opened with a rumble. The stagnant air of the Pinecone rushed into the GTT Dice. Calma reached down under his chair and recovered 12 Type 7B Hand Guns. They were quite large but not anywhere near as bulky as the Type 3A design used in the first Great War. He picked each one up, pushed a button on the side to activate it and gave it to one of the Ground Troops. The Guns whined as the energy crystals charged up, making them ready for use. Calma picked up the last gun. His own, and put it over his shoulder. He checked each member to make sure they were ready. He didn't want to lose any one on this mission. When he was happy, he stepped through the door.

"Lets go."

They stepped through the air lock one by one and assembled on the other side. They looked both ways down the corridor. Nothing. Not a thing in either direction.

"It smells like hell in here!" one of the younger officers said. Calma was annoyed.

"Cut the chatter damn it. They'll hear us!"

"Sorry Sir" Calma turned to face his troops.

"Carver, take James and Peter and hold position here. Don't talk unless you have to. The rest of us are going to get us a computer disk." They turned and walked down the corridor with their weapons ready, constantly checking for danger. Carver, John and Peter stayed behind to cover their escape when it came.

Calma walked down the corridor towards the Computer Core Room. The corridor was littered with bodies. Killed by the Shivans that inhabited this place. Their guts thrown across the room. Suddenly, Andrew stopped dead. The rest of team A spun around to see why he had stopped.

"W-W-What's that n-n-noise?" He looked around, trying to figure out for himself what he had heard. Calma also looked around.

"There's nothing there Andy. Now lets get going" Calma continued to the Computer Core Room followed by the rest of Team A. Andrew reluctantly followed them. They had hardly gone two steps when Calma stopped.

"See! You heard it too!"

"I heard something" Calma looked up to a plate of metal which was rattling. It was the sound of that rattle that Andrew and Calma had heard just a few seconds before.

"What's that?" Lucy asked in a puzzled voice.

"That Lucy. That is a rattling deck plate." Replied Calma sarcastically.

"Yes, I know that but what's causing it?"

"No. From the schematics I looked at, the only thing above us is a corridor. No electrical wiring or anything. There is no reason why that plate should be shaking." Carver gulped. "I think

we should get going now.” He looked up. The nuts holding the plate to the ceiling slowly worked their way loose and the plate peeled off like skin from an apple.

“I agree. Lets go” Calma and the rest of the team left the deck plate to itself. Andrew brought up the rear. Suddenly, the plate fell from the ceiling and landed on the floor with a thud. A much louder thud than it should have. Calma turned around just in time to hear Andrew scream. A massive Shivan had landed on top of him and was currently ripping him apart.

“Arghhhhhhhh! Help me! Help me!” His heart was thrown against a bulk head and the screaming had stopped. Without being ordered to, the team opened fire. Their bullets flew through the air impacting the Shivan several times. After intense firing, the Shivan exploded. Bits of it flew all over the corridor, knocking down the two men closest to the explosion. For a few seconds, there was quiet but that quiet was soon broken by the Shivan's friend. He leaped through the hole in the ceiling mere seconds after the first had been killed. He was soon joined by a second. The first leaped on top of one of the Ground Troops and started devouring her while the head of the second opened up to reveal a bright light. The light intensified and a beam of white gas shot out from it, freezing Ensign Ross. His cold, dead body fell to the ground. The two Shivans then turned on Ensign Joan.

“Run! Run for your lives!” Calma shouted in horror. The entire team spun around and ran as fast as they could towards the Computer Core Room but it was too late for Joan. The Shivan leaped on to her head, snapping her neck and crushing her spine. She screamed as her life force was sucked out of her and then fell to the floor dead.

Calma rounded the corner to the Computer Core Room and waited for the rest of the team to enter before sealing the door and locking it shut. He jumped back as the Shivan tried to punch through the door, putting a large dent in it. Calma pointed to the cabinet containing the computer disks, Ensign Kron went to get them, and tapped his wrist radio.

“Independence, this is Calma. We've lost 4 people! We need backup!” There was no reply. Nothing at all. Perhaps the Shivans were interfering with communications. After a few seconds, a reply came but it was not the Independence.

“Calma, this is Commander Almino, Alpha 1. We are engaged in an intense battle with the Shivans. The Independence has been hit by a CommBlock. She can't communicate until the effect wears off. Can I help?”

“Almino, thank God! I thought you were dead!”

“Not quite. What's your status?” Ensign Kron returned with a dark blue disk labelled ‘GTD Pinecone Logbook Disk 13’. Kron gave it to Calma who walked over to the main console with it.

“We have the disk” Another thump at the door told them that the Shivans would soon break through. “I'm checking it now for the correct Beam Cannon frequency.” Lt. Davis got a portable power generator from his engineering kit and walked over to the dead, lifeless console with it. He opened an access panel and attached the device to a loose, green wire. Suddenly the console lit up and started to whine.

“We have around 7 minutes of power left until the generator goes off sir” Davis told Calma. Calma walked over to the console and slid the disk into the drive. The console whined as it read the data on the disk.

“LOADING DISK DATA. ETC 30 SECONDS” Damn these old machines! By the time the machine was active, the Shivans would have broken through. Even now, he could hear them outside.

“Commander, it will take about 30 seconds to get the information. Can we last that long?”

“We’ll have to Calma” Static temporarily filled the speakers as Almino’s Comm Array was hit by a Shivan Laser. “By the time you have the data, the CommBlock missile should have worn off. Alpha 1 out!”

Calma looked around for an escape route that would not bring them into contact with any Shivans. He found the answer in a ventilation shaft. Calma pointed to it.

“Davis, take the rest of the team back to the Dice through that air vent. You’re in charge”

“Yes sir” Davis and the rest of the team helped each other into the air shaft and began to crawl towards the Dice. Calma remained in the Computer Core Room with his gun ready to shoot the first thin that walked through that door. He looked at the display. 10 seconds. He ran to the console just as the door fell to the ground. His gun fire quickly dispatched the first Shivan. He fell in front of the door, blocking the other Shivans.

“DISK LOADED” Hearing the computer’s voice was like being in Heaven. He scrolled through the data contained on the disk as the Shivans struggle to get through the door. “Crew Deaths, System Failures, Headaches ? Headaches!” There was some pretty weird stuff on this disk but where the weapon details. He continued to search. “Alien Contact, Births, Weapons! I’ve got it!” He opened the file and tried as hard as he could to remember its contents. Finally, the Shivan got through the door, taking most of the surrounding wall with it, and grabbed at Calma. The Shivans claw sliced in to his leg, spilling blood everywhere.

“Arghhhhhh!” Calma’s shout could be heard all over the ship. He fell to the floor in pain. “Help me!” he shouted but there was nobody there to hear him. He was going to die alone ? but not before saving the Independence. He reached for his wrist radio and switched it on.

“Independence. This is Calma.” He passed in and out of consciousness surrounded by a puddle of his own blood. “ The frequency for the weapon is 123.42352112578886552 AU’s. Adjust the Main Beam Cannon Now and fire it.”

“What about you?” Lisa asked in a distressed voice.

“Forget me! Get out of here. Get out of here now!”

“I won’t forget you”

Calma stared in horror as the Shivans approached but was even more surprised when they walked away. Why were they doing that? His leg throbbed with more than pain as he lay alone in the darkness of the GTD Pinecones' Computer Core Room. Abandoned by the rest of the world and left alone to die.

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Davis dropped from the air vent and landed in front of the airlock. He picked up a piece of scrap metal and placed it in his pocket. Carver’s and Peters body was lying next to the air lock. They had been mutilated in the same way as the officer they had seen on their last visit but James was nowhere to be seen.

“Let’s go!” The remaining men leaped down from the air vent and entered the Transport ship. Fortunately, they had not been able to get inside. Davis opened the door and stepped inside followed by the others. He sat at the main console that had once been Calma’s and powered up the engines. Kron was the last to get in so he closed the airlock. The ship rattled as it departed this ship of horrors. This place of nightmares. This was one mission they were all pleased to have put behind them.