

Independence: The Ancient Trap

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Chapter 2

GTD Independence

GTCB Han-Ronald 101A, Vega System

3 May 2371

Commander Almino sat at the controls of his pride and joy. His brand new type 13 Erinyes Fighter. It glided through the emptiness of space as gracefully as an eagle in the air. He skilfully flew in formation with the rest of the wing towards the rear fighter bay of the GTD Independence. He carefully flew his small fighter in-between the support struts and metal framework of the Construction Dock surrounding the Independence until he had the entrance to the Fighter Bay in sight.

As his wing approached the Fighter Bay, he shut down his engines, reached up and tapped a button above his head. A small beep came from the ships onboard micro-speaker, followed by the voice of a female Communications Officer.

“GTD Independence Command Deck, Ensign Bundy here” The voice was young and very feminine. She couldn’t be more than 25 years old.

“This is Commander Almino, Alpha 1 requesting permission to enter the Fighter Bay.” He sat there, waiting for a reply. As he waited, he thought about his new posting. He had always wanted to serve on a front line ship, fighting for the freedom of his people. Leading missions in to enemy territory that could cost him his life. He got a thrill out of risking his life for some reason. However, he never expected to serve on the flagship of the GTVA, certainly not as the senior pilot onboard. A man in command of 220 men and women pilots.

“This is GTD Independence Command Deck. You have permission to enter the Fighter Bay. You and your wing are to dock in Micro-Bays 13 through 16. A Support crew will be waiting for you.” Commander Almino thanked the young officer and powered up his engines. His small ship moved towards the Fighter Bay followed by the three other fighters that make up Alpha Wing. They turned and entered Fighter Bay with engines at only 10% power. The interior of the Fighter Bay was a huge, brightly lit spherical area with dozens of small ships already inside. Along the walls were 250 Micro-Bays, most of which held fighters. He headed towards Micro-Bay 13 as his wing mates moved towards the other three Micro-Bays assigned to his wing.

As his ship moved closer, docking struts extended from the Micro-Bay, ready to grab the ship and hold it in position so its pilot could depart. The struts locked on to the fighter at the ships specially designed Lawless Support Holes and pulled it inside the Repair bay. As it entered, the Blast Doors closed behind it allowing the atmosphere to be restored so the Lt. Almino could get out.

The fighter sat in the middle of a small room, not much bigger than the ship itself, surrounded by a team of engineers dressed in bright red jump suites ready to perform a standard system check on the ship before it was used again. The Transparent Aluminium cockpit of the fighter slid back and the Commander climbed out with ease. He held on to the side of the ship and jumped onto the floor. He had a powerful masculine face with a large scar across his forehead, half covered by his black hair. It was this scar more than anything else that made him look like a fighter, a cold blooded warrior.

As he climbed down on to the floor, he was greeted by Captain Moloch who had just stepped through the only door in the room. “Good morning. I am Captain John Moloch, Commanding

officer of the GTD Independence. I presume that you are Commander Almino.” The two men looked at each other, trying to work out what type of person the other was. Almost immediately, the two men knew they would get along.

“You presume correctly. Hi! I’m very honoured to meet you John. It’s a pleasure to serve on your ship.” The two men shook hands and continued talking. “ Captain, I understand that the first mission we’re to go on is a search mission?” Almino looked at the Captain with a disbelieving look on his face.

“That’s correct.”

“Well, that’s not a very exciting mission for her maiden voyage is it?”

“Yea, I know. Its not what I was hoping for either but orders are orders. You have to follow them don’t you?”

“Yes you do.” Almino paused for a minute, pondering over what to say next “ Anyway, I just want you to -“ a loud crash could be heard behind them as a fuel barrel with the Red Fox squadron logo on the side fell from a loading crane. It hit the metal floor with a thud, rolling along the floor and crashing in to the side of the Erinyes fighter. The Commander turned his head and was shocked by what he saw.

“Be careful with that! Do you want to have pay the GTVA \$35,000 for a new piece of hull plating? I didn’t think so.” The Commander turned back to the Captain, “Let’s talk outside.” He said in an angry voice.

“I think that would be a good idea.” The two men walked towards the door, pushed the button to open it and passed through. In front of them was a long, brightly lit corridor that seemed to go on forever. It was very wide and full of people moving around, preparing the ship for launch.

“As I was saying, I just want you to know that you can always count on me.”

“Thank you Commander. That means a lot to me.”

“So, when do we launch?” Commander Almino asked.

“Well, we’ve still got to perform the final check on the weapons systems and were waiting for a supply convoy to arrive in half an hour but other than that were ready. I’d say we will launch at around 3:30 p.m.” Almino looked at the Captain and continued to walk.

“Really! Well, I will have to make sure I’m on the command deck at that time then.”

“You better. Were going to get a video-com link with Gamma 2, an old Vasudan Seth class fighter that has been launched specially to film the launch. The pictures should be amazing!”

“I’m sure they will be. Now, it you will excuse me, I think I am going to inspect my quarters. Where are they?” The Commander looked at John, waiting for an answer.

“Um, let me think. You’re a Commander so that puts you somewhere on Deck 37. Fighter Pilots are stationed in section 547B so you should be somewhere on Deck 37 section 547B. I can’t be more exact than that off the top of my head. If you want to know exactly where you’re living, you can consult the Computer. There’s a public access panel back that way. You will need your level 2 security access code.” He pointed back the way they came.

“Thank you Captain. I’ll see you at half three.”

“Goodbye!” Commander Almino turned back and headed towards the access panel he had been directed to by the Captain. He walked down the corridor for what seemed like ages and, just when he was about to turn back and try to find his way to his quarters alone, he saw the small computer panel imbedded in to the bulk head a few metres in front of him. He walked over to it and

pushed a large button next to the screen.

“GTD Independence Main Computer Online. Please state desired function.” The computers voice sounded very artificial.

“This is Commander Almino, GTD Independence requesting the location of Commander Almino’s quarters. Security access code AL1208012B.” The computer paused for a second.

“Level 2 access code confirmed. The quarters of Commander Almino are located on Deck 37, Section 547B, Door 13. Please follow the flashing green lights to your destination.” I like this ship! It even leads you to your quarters! After following the flashing lights for a few minutes, he found himself in front of door 13, his quarters.

“Door 13. Just my luck!” He opened the door and stepped inside.

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On the Command Deck, Lieutenant Peterson, the senior officer on the bridge at the time, looked over the shoulder of Communications officer Lisa Mayhem. The looks on their faces were those of very worried people. Just quarter of an hour until the launch and something like this happens.

“Try routing power from your reactor core to the engines” The Lieutenant was thinking as hard as he could to save the ship. The GTFr Nelson, part of the convoy of freighters had run into trouble some 15 minutes from the Independence. Nobody knew exactly what was wrong but evidently, there was a problem with the ships Power Distribution Network.

“No effect! It’s not working! We still cannot get power to Life Support” Then Lisa came up with a suggestion.

“Try to couple your PDN Amplifiers with the Reactor Release Valve. That should boost the power levels enough to circumvent the damaged section.” For a few seconds, there was silence, then an unwelcome reply came.

“Nope. It didn’t work. We now have only 7 minutes of breathable air left. We need assistance!” A door on the far side of the bridge slid open and the Captain stepped through. He looked around at his staff and then sat in the command chair.

“God, this is going to be fun!” He whispered to himself. When he heard the commotion at the Communications Station, he called out to the Lieutenant.

“What’s wrong, Lieutenant?” Peterson turned his head, surprised at the Captains presence. He was not due on the bridge for another quarter of an hour.

“The Nelson’s suffering a power loss sir. All her subsystems are off line and she has 6 minutes of air left.” The Captain turned to Muhammad who had just walked in.

“Hey, Muhammad, think you can fix this problem?”

“Ah, let me see.” He looked at a display showing the damaged freighters status. “Well, it looks like her PDN has been damaged but without knowing the extent or location of the damage, I can not suggest a way to repair or circumvent it. My best advice is to launch a rescue mission to recover the ship and its crew.” The Captain looked concerned and was wondering what to do.

“And that’s the only way?”

“Yes, it is”

“Very well then. Com ? Get the GTT Knife on the line.”

“Yes sir” The Captain looked very worried and anxious for the GTT Knife to reply. The ship

was so far away that the only way the ship could survive is if the rescue ship was launched within 2 minutes.

“Captain, this is Commander Linch of the GTT Knife. Did you ask for me?” The Captain sighed with relief and almost jumped out of the chair.

“Yes, I did. We have a problem up here. The GTFr Nelson is in trouble and we need you to pick up the crew and, if possible, tow the ship back to the Independence.”

“Fine Captain. Just let me run a few system checks and we’ll be off. We should be on our way in 5 minutes.” The Captain stared at nothing with a shocked expression on his face.

“No! We need you to launch now. The Nelson has only 5 minutes left!”

“Very well sir. Launching now. ETA 3 minutes.” The Captain looked at the monitor which showed the GTT Knife launching. A large rumble could be heard through the speakers as the medium sized Ensylum Class Transport ship separated from the Independence and moved towards the Nelson.

“Sir” Lisa said “The other 6 freighters have docked and their cargo is being moved to the supply rooms. Also, Admiral James of GTVA command is asking why we have delayed the launch. What shall I tell him?” The Captain looked embarrassed. He had never run behind time before.

“Tell them that an incident has arisen concerning one of the freighters and that we should launch soon”

“Aye Sir”

The Captain turned back to the monitor. The Transport ship was just about to dock with the freighter.

“Independence, this is the GTT Knife. We have docked with the Nelson and are towing it back to the Independence. We should be back in 5 minutes.”

“What’s the status of the crew?” The captain anxiously asked.

“The crew is fine. No casualties and only minor injuries. They will not need medical treatment.” The Captain sighed with relief.

“Good work Commander” The captain turned to the Communications officer. “Contact GTVA Command. Tell them we will launch in 3 minutes and get the PVD Amuna to launch the Seth.” The Captain looked at the clock on the wall. The time was 3:37. They were seven minutes behind time. By the time the Knife got back, that would have increased to 12 minutes. The captain tapped a button on the armrest of his chair to activate the broadcast system. His next words would be heard all over the ship.

“This is Captain John Moloch to all crew. We launch in 2 minutes. Repeat, we launch in 2 minutes. Begin final preparations for departure.” For the next two minutes, the Command Deck was silent. That silence was broken by the voice of Lisa.

“Sir, the GTT Knife has docked. We’re ready to go.”

“Good!. Is the Seth in position?”

“The Seth is holding position 7000 km from us. Its cameras are active and its pointing our way.”

“Fine. Tell the Seth to start filming. Comm, get the GTC D Han-Ronald 101A on the line and request position to leave.” The entire Command Deck crew was excited.

“Very well sir. This is GTD Independence requesting position to leave the area.”

“Independence, this is the GTC D Han-Ronald 101A. You have permission to leave. Initiating ship launch sequence...now!” From the depths of space the video camera of the Seth recorded as a bottle of Champaign fell through space and smashed into the side of the Independence. The entire system cheered with joy as what was possibly the greatest ship in history was launched. The video pictures were being broadcast to every GTVA ship, station and colony in the galaxy and everybody was watching them! The docking arms detached from the sides of the Independence and the support struts and bulk heads of Han-Ronald 101B slowly moved up and away from the ship. If there was air in space, the sound of the machinery lifting the massive structure would have been unbearable. After a few minutes, they had risen so far that they were in line with the main part of the station above the Independence. A large thud indicated that the launch sequence was complete and the Independence’s running lights activated and her massive engines powered up with a roar and pushed the ship away from the complex. Once the ship had cleared the Construction Docks, she began to turn towards the Vega-Beta Aquilae Jump Node so that it could begin its journey to Dubbe to search for the missing GTD Pinecone.

On the Command Deck, the Champaign was flowing as the crew celebrated the launch of another one of the GTVA’s most powerful battle ships.

“Well done everyone. You have all done your jobs well” The Captain picked up a glass of Champaign offered to him by Commander Almino who had not broken his promise about being on the Command Deck for the Launch. He had arrived just after the GTT Knife docked. “Today is a good day! It will be remembered for years to come!”

“That it will! That it will.” Commander Almino said with joy as the ship sailed through space toward the jump node and a date with destiny.