

Independence: The Ancient Trap

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Chapter 5

GTD Pinecone

Unknown

13 May 2371

The Transport Ship Dice slowly moved through the emptiness of nothing towards the GTD Pinecone. As they moved closer, they could clearly make out the damage she had sustained after 44 years in this place. Most of the ship had been burnt and several small. Isolated fires could still be seen deep inside her hull. On the outside, there were numerous hull breaches caused by the impacts of other ships in here. These impacts had turned her hull from beautiful silver to a charred black. Most of the ship was uninhabitable because the damage caused the air to go. The reactor was obviously off-line. That's why she had been able to take so much damage without exploding. As the ship moved in to dock, everyone on the GTT Dice felt the pain those men and women must have gone through.

"Move us in to dock" Commander Almino ordered, "Not too fast though ? I don't know how much more she can take"

"Sir, most of the docking bays have been destroyed. I don't know if ? no, wait a second. I've found one on the starboard side. It's got no power but its mechanism is still intact. We should be able to open it."

"Very good Ensign Calma. Just don't crash in to anything!"

"I wouldn't event think of it" Calma careful moved the Transport across the hull of the great ship to the starboard docking port. Small bits of debris fell off as she docked but not enough to put either ship in danger. The transport ship groaned as contact was made. Commander Almino called back to the rest of the people on the transport.

"Okay everybody, lets put on our spacesuits and get to work." The ten standard crew members also onboard reached for their spacesuits which were held in a compartment above each crewmembers head. Calma reached across the console and tapped the communication button followed by the number 1 to form a communications like with the Independence.

"GTD Independence, this is GTT Dice. We have docked with the Pinecone and are moving inside now" The Captain who was on the Independence replied.

"Very good Dice. Carry on" Commander Almino slowly opened the air lock assisted by two other crew men and stepped inside the Pinecone. In front of Boarding Party Alpha was a long, charred corridor with no lighting. Every thing was dark. The team turned on their torches too see better. They walked down the corridor a few feet and stopped to get their orders from the Commander.

Overhead ran a large, blue conduit that ran the whole length of the corridor. It was being held on the ceiling by a series of strong titanium straps. It was obviously a recent addition as anything installed when the ship was built would be stored behind the hull plates. It was not as badly damage which suggested that it was installed after the damage to the rest of the corridor was sustained. It was however, off-line.

"That looks like a plasma conduit. Kinda like the ones used in Anti-Capital Ship Beam Cannons." One of the boarding party commented.

"Are you saying that these people were trying to build a Beam Cannon? Why would they

want to do that, and how. The GTVA didn't discover Beam Cannon Technology until 13 years ago! How come these guys knew about it?" Almino asked.

"I'm not sure"

"Well, we have more important things to do right now than study a Plasma Conduit"

"Agreed"

"Ok. Let's split up. Miller and Joyce. I want you to inspect the Engine Room. Peter and Johnny, I want you two to pay a visit to the Fighter Bay as well as the port Docking Bay. Find out if any one escaped." The entire crew turned when they heard a strange and un-human sound coming from the corridor directly above them. It sounded like something was walking around up there. "Don't worry. It's just the ship creaking" Almino knew it was more than the old ship but there was no need to worry the others. "Carver, you and May check out the Computer Core. See if you can download any useful information on to these disks. The Computer Core is just around the corner." Almino passed Carver 7 type 13 Beta recording disks. Similar to old 21st century DVDs but with much greater storage capacity.

"Carver. You're with me. Were going to the Command Deck. The rest of you are to search the entire ship for anything you would consider strange." The party split up and went there separate ways but Almino and Carver had hardly gone five steps when someone screamed.

Almino and Carver charged around to corner and found May throwing up next to the corpse of a young male officer. His clothes had been pulled around his chest and his intestines had been pulled out by a giant claw of some kind. His heart and lungs, though no longer bloody, had been thrown at the wall and his head had been sliced open by some kind of very sharp blade allowing his brain to seep out. The floor was stained by the blood that had once been there. The dead mans rotten face was one of pure terror. Whatever had killed him had scared him out of his wits first. Almino looked down the corridor and turned away as his face turned green. A dozen or so bodies of men, women ? even children mutilated in just the same way as the other ? if not worse littered the corridor. The walls had been turned red with the blood of them. Carver returned with a Computer Disk.

"I managed to download onto one disk before I heard the scream".

"Well done Carver. He pulled at Carver to stop him seeing the massacre." Almino took the disk from Carver and placed it in his pocket.

"Are you all right May?" May looked at Carver.

"Yes. Yes, I'll be fine. I was just a little shocked, that's all." She turned and ran around the corner so she didn't have to look at the body again. Still she threw up.

Almino was very, very disturbed by what he saw. He turned and walked, nearly ran back to the Transport. He wanted to get out of there fast.

"Come on, We're getting out of here!" The rest of the party ran back to the Transport with him but Johnny wanted to carry on.

"Why are we going back? That was probably just an accident of some kind. We should go back" Almino was about to reply when Peter butted in.

"I don't think a dozen mutilated men and women with their body parts thrown all over the place could ever be an accident!" They rounded the corner and Peter opened the air lock. It slowly opened. From far away, the sound of something crawling through the ship could be heard.

"That's right!" Jane shouted. Now it was Almino's turn to say something.

“The reason I ?“ The Transport ship vibrated as it detached it self from the shuttle and speed away towards the Independence. They looked out of the window and saw small bits of metal break away from the Pinecones docking ring. The ship was so badly damage that even the slightest impact could send tones of debris flying from it. Almino turned back to the crew who was sitting in the rear compartment. “The reason I pulled the team out so quickly is because I have heard of that kind of injury before.”

“Where from?” Johnny asked. Almino took a deep breath in before he tolled his story.

“My Grandfather was a pilot during the First Great War and he often told me stories of battles he had been involved in.” The entire crew listened in silence. “ He once told me that he had seen a man mutilated in just the same way as that poor fellow back there was during what became know as the Tombagh Incident. The first sighting of the Lucifer.” The entire crew was silent. They had heard of the Tombagh incident but never the mutilations. “He was found by my father floating in space near a captured Shivan Freighter. He had been part of the boarding party sent to examine her but the entire party was ripped apart except one. Lt.Crimar was found, frozen in the debris of the SD Eva a month or so later.” Almino stared wide eyed at his audience. ”That man, back on the Pinecone was killed by a Shivan. Of that I have no doubt.”