

## The Marauder

Originally Posted on July 4th, 2008  
Author: groundcontroltomajortom

GTD Galatea Internal Communicae, Date withheld

From: Admiral Wolf, Ship Commander

To: Captain James

I enclose some entries from Dr. Jenkins' personal log. I hope that they will be of use to you.

Regards,

Wolf

Thursday 8th January 2335

Captain James approached me today with a briefly worded proposition:- namely that I should expect a visit soon from a new pilot, one Ensign Scott and that when I do seem him I should put him 'out of commission'. I have not been informed of the reason for this request and am frankly discomforted by the prospect of it. Nonetheless, an order remains an order as I have continued to remind myself during these 3 months with the GTA.

Switching from a position of respect (as a doctor on Earth) to a position of necessity (as chief medical officer on a destroyer-class ship) has taught me more than ever of the cheapness of life in our war. On earth I had one veteran whose burnt hands troubled him occasionally. Up here it is far more common for me to take up the role of Ships Psychiatrist given that the line in which medicine can do anything is very thin indeed.

An example from today troubles me, from the moment he arrived he was largely incapacitated. His ships' oxygen supply had been badly damaged and he had run out five minutes before arrival. I did everything I could to prevent further brain damage but such an intricate procedure was almost impossible to carry out at such short notice. He ceased to respond at 02.17 and by 02.20 he was gone.

I hear that Admiral Wolf will be returning tomorrow from a brief sojourn in Ross 128. Needless to say rumour has hit a swift-footed stride in his absence. One notable pilot who will remain unnamed has informed me that the Admiral has gone to investigate the possible appearance of a new sentient species. Given the mistakes we made last time with the Vasudans, the appearance of these unknown beings strikes me instinctively as a threat. It may of course be that the Admiral temporarily leaving his command had nothing to do with these wild rumours but I personally remain unconvinced.

In the meantime, I am happy to report that there have been no major engagements recently and that to the best of my knowledge there are no immediate plans for an offensive. The war has reached a stalemate, making The Galatea a relatively permanent fixture here in Antares. My hope is that this will remain the case for a while longer as I have five weeks until my first shore-leave. Four months is far too long for a man to be parted from his family, Lisa is constantly in my thoughts and I cannot help my sadness over our parting words.

On a lighter note, I am now in possession of a bottle simply marked as 'Red Wine'. It may or may not be a fine Bordeaux but there is only one way of finding out! I will depart these pages to drink to the health of my son in the hope that he will never have to repeat what I have done in leaving my

family. Active service awaits me on the other side of this weekend, until then I will be as inactive as possible. Good health to you Mr or Mrs Censor!

Monday 12th January 2335

My first day in active service was somewhat more eventful than I had anticipated. A last-minute change to our medical rota meant that I was re-assigned for the next two weeks from The GTS Virginia to the GTS Marauder. At face value, to someone uninitiated with the use of support ships, this would seem like a routine change of staff as it is regular practise to have a medic on board. However, The Marauder is no ordinary ship, it is known by every man, woman and child on board The Galatea as the luckiest and hardest ship we possess.

It is said that the ship's commander Lt. Tom Johnstone once flew past two Vasudan wings and out of sight of a nearby destroyer to rearm three disabled ships. Such is the reputation of the ship that I now serve on. I, of course, am nowhere near this level of experience and I could only watch in horror as my skills counted for nought.

What had started as a routine escort mission as Alpha wing protected a group of Omega transports quickly descended into chaos when it emerged that Alpha 1 had defected to the Vasudans. He chose his moment well with the transports three clicks from the jump node to Deneb. His friends appeared a matter of seconds later. It undoubtedly caught his colleagues by surprise and they were outnumbered by five to three.

By these circumstances I was introduced first hand to a real life melee. Nothing had prepared me for what I saw or heard, not even the so-called 'simulation'. The panic-stricken Apollo fighters turned on their traitorous former leader with a furious hail of blue ML-16 Laser fire. The engines of the craft blew as if they were candlelit but all the time the Vasudans were closing within range. Their yellow teth class fire intermingled with the blue to create an impressionists nightmare. For the pilots involved in this deadly art, the nightmare was very real and immediate. One horror of the battle is the dreaded final blow, when a craft explodes and there is an immediate loss of life. Witnessing it for the first time when Alpha finally disposed of their leader was both moving and disturbing. There really is no escape after destruction.

Alpha 4 left its formation in a fury, reigning everything it had on its opposite number in Virgo wing. The Vasudan did not last long under the close range assault of a fury missile. I spoke briefly to Alpha 4 about her condition and mused internally at what had caused her to risk the mission so recklessly. She did not respond to my probing on this subject and after fifteen seconds she cut me off.

By this point the Vasudans had been reduced to an ungainly band of three ships given a battering not just by Alpha, but also by Epsilon, who had arrived in the last two minutes. The Vasudans left in just five minutes after this. The whole battle had lasted a total of fifteen minutes. Without this education, my first day in the support ship may have seemed a little dull, but I would have preferred that to what I had just witnessed. Perhaps I am not a man who can dwell on personal Tragedy; perhaps I am in the wrong profession.

That is all I have to write today, my spirits are not up to it.

Wednesday 14th January 2335

I have done as Captain James required of me. Ensign Scott now has a broken foot thanks to an unfortunate accident with a beaker. Still, there was no better place to have him screaming in agony

as I removed the shards of glass from his now useless foot. It is not often than I am required to make someone's condition worse and I write these words with a heavy heart.

Nonetheless I understood from the moment he spoke why I was required to do what I did. He is quite mad, a manic-depressive pilot who claims to have been captured and tortured by this new sentient species everyone is talking about. He claims that these extraordinary creatures had as many as 6 or 7 different accoutrements (he wasn't able to describe them exactly though). It may be that this may have been a simple delusion and all manic-depressives are prone to at times, but it seems somewhat odd that this once healthy pilot should suddenly change so rapidly into someone who cannot be trusted.

It has otherwise been a relatively quiet week so far. I have little else to add.

Friday 16th January 2335

A momentous and terrible day, the worst of my life thus far. What should have been a relatively easy day on The Marauder ended with the sort of anarchy and destruction a man should never have to witness, let alone partake in. The events of today have left no doubt in my mind that we are on the brink of an even greater war than the one in which we are now involved. I am not party to the higher echelons of the Intelligence services but what I have seen leaves me in no doubt that there are people on board the Galatea who have too many secrets.

We were escorting the GTSC Oppenheimer, ironically enough carrying relief supplies to the colonies of Beta Aquilae. Gamma and Beta wings were providing escort and soon enough, as expected, The Vasudans set an attack force on us. The battle was evenly matched, exactly eight fighters each. It provided us observers with a tense spectacle. The Oppenheimer remained largely unmolested as it continued its slow progress out of the system.

The crew of The Marauder watched the battle with their usual calm and composure. I was becoming used to the buzz on the main deck as communications were relayed from high command, tactical advice given and received and all the usual refinements being carried out at a distance. My station remained relatively inactive as all of the pilots were still in perfect physical condition. For just a moment my concentration wandered to my colleagues position in Tactical and with a mixture of horror and wonder I beheld a view that will stay with me for the rest of my life. On one of the viewing screens I noticed four jet black fighters jumping in against the sheer white background of subspace.

I swore loudly and attracted a rebuke from Lt. Johnstone within seconds of me explaining what I had seen. The tactical officer confirmed he was reading the unknown fighters. All our eyes were now fixated on the main screen which displayed these strange ships.

Two of them broke off to join the main battle, choosing seemingly to attack both sides indiscriminately. The third fighter went for The Oppenheimer and inexplicably the fourth headed straight for us. Under normal battle conditions attacking a support ship is outlawed but I severely doubted these things knew or cared about this. It seemed to have a strange energy shielding which none of our weapons were any use against. We were taking a pounding, with our weapons and communications rapidly failing.

In the meantime, our main concern, the battle, was being won not by Terran or Vasudan but by these strange ships that were destroying everything. The Oppenheimer itself was also in severe danger. It had effectively become a sitting duck because its engines had been disabled. At this moment, an emergency transmission filtered through the loudspeakers 'Marauder, you are to dock with The

Oppenheimer, gather the supplies and get out. Do not engage the unknowns, repeat, do not engage the unknowns.' A panicky exchange followed between Admiral Wolf and Lieutenant Johnstone as all power was diverted to the engines.

The afterburners kicked in after ten seconds and we were now spicalling rapidly, almost without control towards the dock of The Oppenheimer. The unknowns had reduced it to a hulk. We had a matter of seconds. Our docking attachment seemed to take forever and for some reason the cargo was encrypted, unheard of for relief supplies. In our thirty seconds of attachment we were almost destroyed ourselves. The computerised voice over the Intercom confirmed 'supplies received' and our ship bolted off into subspace. As we left the system, the wreckage of both Terran and Vasudan wings bore a harrowing testament to the destructive power of these things. The last moment we witnessed was The Oppenheimer splitting in two, its end was a moment after by which time we were gone.

These creatures who or whatever they are do not seem to have any motivation other than the destruction of all that stands in their way. I dearly hope that it is the last I will ever see of them.

Thursday 22nd January 2335

I notice that it has been some time since my last entry. Given the events of the day and the chaos of the weeks that have since followed, that is no surprise to me. The unknowns mentioned in my last entry have now been designated 'The Shivans'. A somewhat fitting name for a race that seems bent on destruction. The GTA is attempting to establish communications with them but having encountered them I do not see any point.

We have at least found a way of fighting them. The new Avenger weapon has been adapted and is said to be far more effective than the standard ML-16 against their shielding. Indeed, such has been the success of the weapon that Alpha wing has captured and disabled a Shivan Freighter. The Marauder has been tasked with investigating and if possible, capturing a live Shivan to see what we're up against. It just so happens that I am on shift tomorrow. Who knows what I would be required to do if we actually captured one. I simply cannot imagine what this mission will involve.

These faceless destroyers are threatening every living thing in the Galaxy and tomorrow I may very well be facing one myself. An order, remains an order.

Internal GTA Communicae – Highest Priority 23rd January 2335

From: Admiral Wolf, Commanding officer, GTD Galatea

To: Commissioner Anil Singh, Galactic Terran Alliance Command Council

Commissioner,

In response to your request for a transcript of the flight log for Operation Tarquin, I attach the communications issued and received by the GTS Marauder:-

GTD Galatea: Ok Marauder, you are cleared for docking.

GTS Marauder: Confirmed, Marines ready?

Lt. Tom Johnstone (ship commander): Ready

Lt. (JG) Alex Pinder (tactical officer): Aye

Dr. William Jenkins (medical officer): Ready

GTSM: Commencing docking sequence

30 seconds radio silence

TJ: Ok, we're inside.

WJ: No immediate signs of life.

AP: Lasers ready, set to disabling setting.

TJ: Attempting to establish contact

Grav boots attaching

TJ: There are no signs of artificial gravity or atmosphere

WJ: And there don't seem to be any ground level exits or entrances.

60 seconds radio silence

AP: Wait, just a second.

TJ: What?

AP: I thought I saw one.

TJ: What did it look like?

AP: I... I can't really describe it.

WJ: Contact, 30 metres ahead, 10'o'clock

TJ: Duck and cover, fire pattern 14.

AP: Its approaching, what in Gods name?

WJ: I've got the readouts, but, oh Christ.

Transmission ends

I can send you an audio version, but I would warn you against listening to it. We also have some visual footage which will be with you in two weeks. I hope you are less distressed and mystified by it than we are.

It is important to acknowledge the loss of these three men. Lt. Johnstone in particular was an excellent leader who will be much missed. I recommend that they all receive a posthumous commendation. No member of the GTA deserves to die in such hideous circumstances. Their actions will undoubtedly up the pace of talks with the Vasudans and it is possible that in death they

may have created hope against a seemingly invulnerable enemy. Now that we know how these creatures live, we can hopefully work out how to make them die.

The rest of the crew of The Marauder have been granted two weeks compassionate leave. I have realised too late that they were all overdue. In light of both the Oppenheimer incident and the recent loss, they themselves are to be awarded the medal of The Vasudan Alliance, which will hopefully be more easily established in the aftermath.

In relation to the cargo retrieved from The Oppenheimer all I can say is that The Project has since been executed with great success. I only hope the surviving crew of The Marauder never work out the true intention behind Operation Tarquin. Whilst their actions have proved useful in the aftermath, it is for the best that Jenkins and Johnstone are dead. Brave men though they were, they suspected too much. Captain James has been informed.

Regards,

Admiral Wolf