Captain's log, stardate 52399.6:
The Dauntless *has been assigned to track and capture a pirate vessel which has been attacking cargo ships re-supplying the war effort in Sector 232. The vessel has been reported as appearing suddenly on sensors and attacking its target before they can raise shields or mount a defense, then disappearing with the supply ship's cargo without a trace as quickly as it appeared.*
Koester, commanding Dauntless, *out.*

Space, the Final Frontier...
These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*!

<p style="text-align:center">Star Trek: Dauntless
A Stan And Olly Adventure</p>

"Another Fine Mess" By PJK

Story by Kevin Fossett & Peter J. Koester
Concept by Kevin Fossett & Nate Johnson

Starfleet Marine Corps Sergeant Christopher Alan O'Laughlin, dressed in his usual 20th century USMC fatigues, chewing on his usual centuries-old yet unlit cigar, slowly made his way down the corridor of deck twenty aboard the new Sovereign-class starship *Dauntless*, stopping at every door and corridor branch to read the signage, then consult the padd he held in his hand.

"Damn engineers," the sergeant muttered around the cigar between his teeth. "Always over-complicatin' everything with their infernal machines. Can't find a thing around here. Can't get anything you ask for. Just try and get real cammo cloth to fix your uniform or a good squee-gee for the shower from this blasted contraption and..." O'Laughlin shuddered again as he recalled what materialized the last time he tried requesting a squee-gee for his quarter's shower stall, only managing to get out the words, "Computer, it's twelve inches of rubber… …dammit!"

"Mack and his great ideas. 'Learn the ship,' he says. 'It'll be good for you to find your way around,' he says. Sure… learn the ship. I can't even find the damn head!" the sergeant complained, still looking closely at the padd, turning it over in his hands, lifting his backward fatigue cap to scratch his thinning blonde hair, then turning the padd over again, his expression looking only more confused.

"Mmmmm mm mmmmm mm mmmmmm?" asked Ensign Stannich, a Picean operations officer who had just recently joined the *Dauntless* crew and had taken the 20th century refugee O'Laughlin under his wing… or rather, under his fin - as Piceans looked much like human-sized goldfish who survived in M-class atmospheres by using a water-filled bowl-like helmet covering their head connected to an oxygenator carried on their back. There were very few Piceans in Starfleet.

"Yeah," grumbled O'Laughlin. "I'm lost again. Where the hell's the damn head on this deck?"

"Mmm mmmmm mm mmmmm," Stannich answered, pointing down the corridor.

"Thanks, Fishboy," O'Laughlin said quickly and disappeared into the indicated door, reappearing a moment later, looking greatly relieved.

"Mmmm mm mmmmmm?" Stannich asked once the now-calm Marine sergeant had returned.

"Yeah, that would be great!" O'Laughlin beamed. "I love to learn new ways to blow things up! Besides, the Lieutenant's always tellin' me I need to join the 24th century. This should be fun."

Stannich lead O'Laughlin further down the corridor to a door marked [20-0101 Weapons Department/FWD Photon Torpedo Control - Authorized Personnel Only]. O'Laughlin grinned broadly as he read the sign, then marked the location on his padd.

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"We've entered Sector 232, Skipper," reported Lt Commander Kevin Fry from the helm. "Slowing to impulse."

Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester, commanding officer of the starship *Dauntless*, nodded his head, then turned his chair to face his chief science officer.

"We've intersected the major sector supply shipping route, Commodore," the human-raised Vulcan officer reported.

"Very well, Jeff. Commence scanning for the pirate vessel," Koester ordered.

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In the forward torpedo control room, Ensign Stannich was familiarizing Sgt 'Olly' O'Laughlin with the 24th century weapons scanners and targeting devices.

"So you're telling me this thingy is the arming device?" O'Laughlin asked, casually pressing the touch-sensitive control pad. In the background a computer voice reported, "Full spread pattern selected."

"Mmm," said Stannich.

"And this doo-hicky?"

"Mmm mmm," answered the Picean.

"The targeting matrix, right...," O'Laughlin noted, again casually pressing the pad. The computer quietly responded with, "Targeting pattern Tango 2 selected." The Marine then moved further down the control console, pointing toward a large red, square button. "And what's this here big button for, Fishboy?" O'Laughlin asked as he too pressed that.

"MMMM!" Stannich started to scream.

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Whoosh!

On the main bridge viewscreen, the orange-red glow of several photon torpedoes flashed away from the *Dauntless*.

"What the...?!?" Koester said, startled from his bored mood.

"Commodore, I have indications we just fired a photon torpedo spread!" announced Lt Ga'gh from his post at tactical.

"I didn't order any weapons fired!" Koester protested.

"What's going on?" Commander Virgil Kane, the starship's first officer demanded to know.

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"MMM MMM MMM!!" yelled Ensign Stannich, feverishly flapping his arm-fins, his already bugged out eyes bugging out even more.

"Awww, come on Fishboy, don't start havin minnows on me. It's just a button," O'Laughlin said with a devilish grin, his finger continuing to stab at the button on the control panel over and over.

"MMMM MMMM MMMM MMMM!!!"

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On the bridge, the crew reacted as quickly as they could while torpedo after torpedo shot from the tubes, exploding harmlessly in space kilometers away. Ga'gh attempted to activate the weapons system override while Chief Pono Kyman, the starship's command master chief, jumped into the seat at his post at mission ops, making sure their misfired weapons did no harm to any vessels that might be passing by, and Commander Kane joined the commodore where he stood between tactical and sciences, watching his bridge crew as they tried to cope with the unexpected situation.

"The launch command is coming from forward weapons control, deck twenty," reported Ga'gh over his shoulder.

"Who's in weapons control?" Kane quickly asked. "Any indication of unauthorized intruders aboard?"

"No sir," responded security chief Lt Commander K'danz from tactical II. After a brief hesitation she added, "I'm reading two life-signs in weapons control…one is Picean, the other is human." Koester was beginning to seethe. He slowly and deliberately tapped his combadge.

"McIntyrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrre!"

*   *   *   *

Gunny O'Laughlin pressed the launcher button a few more times just to spite Stannich, still unaware of what he had done and grinning at the ensign, who knew exactly what had happened and had now stopped screaming and simply stood quietly, looking rather depressed for an aquatic being, in the corner of the room.

"There? How's that?" the Marine asked his mentor.

Before Stannich could answer, the control room doors suddenly slammed open and three Marines, compression rifles aimed at O'Laughlin's chest, stormed into the room, followed quickly but calmly by the Special Contingent Commander, 1st Lt Sean McIntyre. Stannich's eyes bugged out again and O'Laughlin lost his cocky grin.

"Hey there, sir," O'Laughlin said around the butt of his cigar to his commanding officer, snapping to attention and giving the Starfleet Marine 1st Lieutenant an unofficial salute. "I was just takin' yer advice and learnin' a little more about this newfangled contraption we're stuck on."

McIntyre looked at the two occupants of the weapons control room and slowly shook his head as his three Marines relaxed and lowered their weapons.

"Gentlemen," McIntyre ordered the Marines under his command. "Would you escort the Sergeant and Ensign to the bridge." McIntyre stepped out from the door to let the two mischief-makers through then departed for the bridge.

Shoulders slumped, the Picean blowing bubbles of despair into his helmet, O'Laughlin and Stannich began to move toward the nearest turbolift, the sergeant consulting his padd once again to figure out which way down the corridor to turn before looking at Stannich.

"This is another fine mess you've gotten us into," he grumbled.

The Ensign simply looked at O'Laughlin, his expression one of shock.

*   *   *   *

The turbolift opened onto the bridge, and Stannich and O'Laughlin stepped out, followed closely by Lt McIntyre.

"It was just like you suspected, sir," the Marine Special Contingent Commander explained to Koester. "We found them both in forward weapons control."

"Care to explain yourself, Sergeant?" Koester asked firmly, totally ignoring the Picean and taking a step toward O'Laughlin.

"Well, you see, sir, it was like this...," O'Laughlin started to say, flicking a quick, mischievous glance toward Stannich, who took a fin-step back in fear before the sergeant was interrupted.

"Skipper, we have a ship decloaking off the port bow!" reported Ga'gh. "Alien vessel is hailing us."

Koester turned toward Bloom, manning the science console next to Ga'gh.

"I'm registering severe damage to the vessel's warp core, weapons matrix, and environmental systems, Commodore," the emotional Vulcan reported.

"Skipper, that's the Pirate vessel we've been hunting for!" determined Chief Kyman as he consulted one of his computer monitors.

"Open hailing frequencies," Kane ordered.

"Hailing frequencies open," responded chief of ops Phillip Winters.

The speakers crackled with static for a moment, then a terrified voice said, "We give up! We give up! Call off your attack! There's no need for such excessive force or to blow us out of space unprovoked! We give up!!"

Wide-eyed with disbelief, it took Koester a moment to recover and order, "Uh... Exec, lock a tractor beam on that... uh... vessel and take it under tow. Mister Fry, plot a course back to *Starbase 375*."

Both Kane and Fry acknowledged their orders while Koester, his temper most definitely cooled off, turned back to O'Laughlin.

"Now, Sergeant," the Skipper said. "How in the world did you... (ahem...) accidentally fire off thirty-seven photon torpedoes?"

"Well, uh, sir, y'see, Fishboy here... I mean, the Ensign here was showin' me the weapons systems and stuff on deck twenty, y'know, to kinda familiarize myself with this newfangled stuff...."

Koester glanced at the faces around him, starting at McIntyre - who perhaps seemed to understand the crusty old sergeant best - on to Bloom, Ga'gh, and Kane. All their expressions were almost as uncomprehending as the Skipper's own while O'Laughlin moved closer to the tactical console to demonstrate to everyone what he had done in the weapons control room.

"...And we were, like, going over the various controls and all when I pressed one of the buttons like this."

Before anyone could stop him, O'Laughlin pressed a control button on the tactical console, which had been reconfigured since Stannich and the sergeant had had their adventure on deck twenty to control all the ship's offensive weapons and lock out the forward control room. Almost immediately a volley of quantum torpedoes flashed from the tube under the center of the saucer-hull. Stannich, his arm fins flapping, began bugging out again.

"MMMMM MMMMM MMMMM MMMMM MMMMM!!!!"

"McIntyre!!!" Koester started screaming as Ga'gh pushed O'Laughlin away from the tactical post and regained control of his station. "Get him off my bridge!! Get him off my bridge and keep him off or I swear to God I'll keel-haul him the old-fashioned way!!"

"Come on, Olly," McIntyre said, leading the still perplexed sergeant toward the turbolift. "After we discuss the ramifications of today's little escapade on your rank bandwidth and free time, I'm sure I can find something to keep you occupied. Once we get that settled we'll go down to the *W*Rec*K* Deck and see if we can program in something for you to beat up, shoot, or blow apart down there that will keep us both from getting keel-hauled." And the turbolift doors swished shut behind them.

The End