

Previously in Star Trek: Dauntless:

While on his way to a vacation on Risa, Dauntless commanding officer Peter Koester is abducted by an alien race never before encountered and subjected to a made-up environment projected directly into his mind in an attempt to obtain strategic information about Starfleet.

The captain managed to escape his captors and flee in the shuttlecraft Khitomer. But as his recapture and probably torture for further information seem inevitable, the starship Dauntless arrives and rescues Captain Koester.

And now the conclusion...

The red-alert lights were flashing and alarms screeched as Captain Peter J. Koester stepped out of the turbolift and onto his bridge. Immediately Commander K'danz, the first officer of the starship *Dauntless* vacated the command chair and took her own seat to Koester's right.

"Status?" the captain asked.

"We had just retrieved your shuttlecraft and were beginning to withdraw from the system when the alien vessel turned and attacked. I don't know how, but their energy weapons penetrated our shields."

"Damage report?"

"Hull breach on decks 11 and 12. Emergency shields have sealed the openings and damage control crews have responded," replied Lt Alan High from the engineering station.

After nodding to himself, Koester looked over his shoulder at tactical.

"Lt Mendez, arm all torpedo banks and lock onto their weapons arrays."

"All torpedo banks armed and locked," the Marine 1st Lieutenant replied.

"Return fire! We need to figure out how their weapons penetrated our shields so easily. Mister Winters..."

The captain looked at the ops console almost directly in front of his chair. Surprisingly, it was empty.

Space, the Final Frontier...

These are the voyages of the starship *Dauntless*!

Star Trek: Dauntless

"Prelude" By PJK

"Where the hell is Commander Winters?" Koester asked, now looking around the bridge frantically as the starship shook once again and another hull-breach alarm sounded. "Chief Zubatka, man ops!"

"Da!" the Russian-born Chief of the Boat responded, quickly jumping up from the Mission Ops station near the back of the bridge and leaping almost directly into the empty ops chair. "New hull breech, deck 8. Reconfiguring shield harmonics, Keptin."

"Damage to the alien vessel's port weapons array," Mendez reported.

Koester watched the viewer where the Kairn vessel maneuvered to bring its starboard weapons to bear on the Federation starship. As he watched he noticed a small hatch on the enemy vessel open and a projectile emerged from it at a high rate of speed.

"Sensors have detected the launch of a drive-plasma seeking missile," Lt Jorruss, the Deltan science officer reported. "I'm also detecting a fission warhead!"

"Shields full forward!" Commander K'danz ordered without hesitation.

"Mister Fry, get us out of here!" Koester added.

The entire starship rocked to starboard as the nuclear warhead exploded against the strengthened shields, throwing members of the crew to the deck.

"Minor damage to the port nacelle strut and radiation levels are elevated in the primary hull, decks 7 through 14, sections 28 through 33!" Lt High stated. "Shields down by 27%."

"Casualty reports are pouring in from all forward sections," Mendez added.

"Captain, I have completed my analysis of the alien vessel's energy weapons," said Jorruss. "The beams are similar to Klingon disruptors, but each beam runs the entire frequency range. It's rather ingenious, really. No matter what the shield frequency, at least a small part of the destructive energy will pass through the shields and reach its intended target."

As if to emphasize the point the science officer had just made, another alarm screeched in the background.
"Anoder hull breech on deck 11, sair," Zubatka reported.

"Captain, sensors are detecting another vessel, same configuration as the attacking alien ship, coming out of warp at 350 mark 9!" informed 1stLt Mendez.

"We're in over our heads, Captain," K'danz said as she assessed the damage on the monitor screen mounted near her seat.

"I agree," Koester replied. "Mister Fry...?"

"Course plotted and laid in, sir," the chief helmsman responded.

"Warp speed, now!"

Battle-damaged and weary, the *Dauntless* turned on its axis away from the newly arriving Kairn vessel, and narrowly avoiding the destructive beams of its weapons, escaped into warp by a hairs-breadth.

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Captain's log, stardate 57909.7:

After determining we were not being pursued, the crew is now attempting to make repairs to the main systems damaged in the battle with the alien vessel in sector 549 before we put into Deep Space 5 for hull repairs. Casualties were, thankfully, light. Mostly minor radiation poisoning and a few broken bones or contusions. Our main concern was escaping. We have to let Starfleet and the Federation know about this new enemy on our doorstep. An enemy intent on defeating an already war-weary population with weapons we have little to no defense against.

Our new enemy, the Kairn.

"Status?" Koester asked as he momentarily watched a repair crew tending to the damage at one of the bridge consoles before looking back at the man sitting in the command chair.

"We will arrive at *Deep Space 5* in twenty-one hours, thirty-five minutes, present speed," Lt Commander Kevin Fry, the Gamma Shift's officer of the deck responded. It had been four hours since the *Dauntless* had escaped the Kairn vessels and the crew had just begun to return to their normal routine. "We expect to have most of the major systems back up and running before the end of this shift. Lt Dar has his engineering staff working double shifts."

"Make sure they get extra time off once we reach *DS5*," the captain ordered. "And speaking of time off..."

Koester glanced over at the ops console, where a cat-like Caitian female presently manned the station. "I've known Commander Winters to disappear from his post on occasion before, and I've tried to overlook it, but never during a battle. This time he's gone too far."

Koester looked up toward the ceiling of the bridge and said, "Computer, what is the location of Lt Commander Phillip Winters?"

"Lt Commander Winters is not currently aboard the *Dauntless*," the computer voice answered. Koester looked at Fry in confusion, then turned toward 1stLt Mendez at tactical.

"How did he...?"

The captain's inquiry was interrupted by the computer making an additional announcement.

"Lt Commander Winters is now located in his quarters on deck 8," the computer's familiar female voice said.

The captain looked back at Fry, his expression turning angry. "I've had enough," he said "I really hate to have to do this. Especially since I've known Phillip for so many years..." He tapped his combadge and added, "Captain to Major McIntyre."

"McIntyre here," came the reply.

"Major, have two of your men meet me on deck 8, crews quarters. We have to place a possible spy under arrest."

There was a pause for a moment before the Marine major's voice, sounding slightly surprised, replied, "Aye, sir."

Koester shook his head sadly, then started toward the turbolift. Fry watched the captain until the turbolift doors swished shut, then shook his own head sadly, upset at how events were turning out. First the Kairn, now Winters. Today was not becoming a good day.

To Be Concluded...