

Previously in Star Trek: Dauntless...

When informed that his ship is ready for inspection following major repairs, Fleet Captain Peter J. Koester pilots a Workbee to personally examine the exterior of the USS Dauntless while it remains moored inside spacedock at Starbase 719. The view of his starship from afar prompts memories of events with deep emotional meaning to the starship captain to surface.

And now the continuation...

Space, the Final Frontier...

Star Trek: Dauntless

“Recollections – Part 2” By PJK

Koester activated the Workbee’s thrusters and started moving forward. He always enjoyed the rare moments he was able to look at the entirety of his vessel and admire her sleek lines and powerful presence. Something he could not do even from the lounges and recreation rooms of the spacedock hub, because the ship was usually moored too close to the windows to be able to see the entire ship at once. As he neared the bow of his vessel, he thought back to the one time in his life he believed he would probably never see her again...

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Admiral Peter J. Koester reached for the last few items on the shelf behind the desk in his quarters. One was an old book that he had found recently – a puzzling matter since he had lost it aboard the previous Intrepid-class *Dauntless* several years earlier – and a holo-photo of Commander Michelle Petersen – security chief aboard the *USS Christa McAuliffe* with whom he had begun a romantic relationship the previous year. He placed the items in a box, marking the box for transfer to the *USS Sagan* after sealing the top.

“I’ll have this transferred to the transporter room with the rest of your belongings, Admiral,” said the young female ensign that was helping him and his young daughter, Gem, to pack.

“Thank you, Yeoman,” Koester said before wistfully looking around the quarters that were now empty of personal items. He then called into the small bedroom at the far end of the quarters, “Are you all packed, Gem?”

Koester’s seven year old daughter poked her head through the bedroom door and said, “Almost. I just have a few more toys to pick up.”

“I told you to get started on that a few days ago, Gem,” her father scolded. “You knew this move was coming!”

“Don’t worry, sir,” the ensign said, moving toward the girl’s bedroom. “I’ll help her get everything packed up.”

“She really should have...,” Koester started to say.

“It’s no problem, sir. Really,” the ensign insisted as she entered the bedroom.

While he heard several items being tossed into boxes, Koester sadly moved one hand across the edge of his desk. It was hard for him to believe; it had only been two years since he assumed command of the Sovereign-class

starship, shortly after her Intrepid-class predecessor had been destroyed. In that time, he and his crew had fought several battles leading to the end of the Dominion War before returning to Starfleet's primary purpose, the exploration of space and the advancement of Federation knowledge. At the time he believed he still had years – perhaps decades – of command of this ship ahead of him. But life took an unexpected turn when Etep Retseok of Alpha Centauri, a family friend for many years, was elected President of the Federation. Shortly after the election results had been announced, Retseok had contacted Koester – at the time still holding the rank of Commodore – and offered him the position of Presidential Aide de camp with a promotion to the rank of full admiral and administration of the *USS Sagan*, the vessel that would be used by the new President as his official transport during his term of office with the callsign of *Starfleet One*.

Commodore Koester had actually considered turning down the offer. He was, after all, more than happy in his assignment as commanding officer of the *USS Dauntless*, and only the previous year had fought to remain on the bridge of his ship after his promotion to commodore. But as his first officer, Captain Virgil Kane, had said, “How do you turn down the PRESIDENT???” Shortly after that conversation, Koester found himself transmitting his acceptance letter and was soon after pinning on the long rank bar of a Starfleet admiral. Now it was time to leave the *Dauntless* and assume control of the *Sagan* before traveling to Alpha Centauri where they would pick up Retseok and transport him back to Earth for his inauguration.

“All done, Admiral,” the young ensign said as she and Gem carried several more small boxes out of the bedroom and placed them on the anti-grav cart. The ensign then took hold of the cart's handle and activated it. The cart lifted off the carpeted deck and hovered several centimeters above the floor. She then pushed it toward the door as she said, “All your belongings will be aboard the *Sagan* before you get there, Admiral.”

“Thank you again, Yeoman,” Koester said gratefully. He then reached out toward his daughter, taking her hand in his as he led her out the door, pausing at the threshold to gaze back one last time before the pair headed down the corridor.

“Where are we going, Daddy?” Gem asked. “The transporter room is back that way.” She pointed back in the other direction.

“We're not beaming off, Sweetie,” the Admiral said. “I have other plans.” The pair then entered a turbolift and Koester ordered, “Main shuttlebay.”

A few minutes later, Koester and his daughter entered the shuttlebay. Not unexpectedly, many of the senior crew were present, lined up in two ranks leading to the open hatch of a shuttlecraft warmed up and ready to depart.

“It was an honor serving with you,” Captain Virgil Kane, new commanding officer of the *Dauntless*, said as he stepped forward and offered his hand to his former CO. “Good luck, Admiral.”

“Thanks, Exec... I mean, Captain,” Koester replied, quickly correcting himself as he returned the handshake. He then looked at the gathered command staff as he asked, “Where's Kethry? I figured she would be here if anyone was.”

“Transferred,” Kane replied. “Fleet Captain Kale requested her specifically for a special assignment at the Antares Shipyard. She and the Fleet Captain departed early this morning.”

“She didn't even say goodbye,” Koester remarked as he started moving down the line of officers and crew, offering his farewell to each, including K'danz, Dar, Kevin Fry, Alasdair Wallace, Nate Johnson, Jeff Bloom, Alan High, and finally the starship's Chief of the Boat, Pono Kyman.

“It's been an honor, COB,” Koester said, shaking the El-Aurian man's hand. “For the last five years you've been my right hand. I'm sure Captain Kane will learn to depend on you as much as I have.”

“I appreciate the confidence, Skipper,” Kyman replied as he returned Koester's handshake. “And I'll do my best for however long I'll still be here.”

“What do you mean, COB? You're not planning on transferring too, are you?”

“Things have changed a great deal in the last five years, Skipper. As another famous Starfleet captain once said, galloping around the cosmos is a game for the young. I'm starting to feel my age. I guess you might say I need a vacation. And my mother, Morra, is just starting to recover from her assimilation by the Borg Collective. I

should be there with her, instead of her being surrounded by a bunch of scientists and doctors back in San Francisco like some lab experiment.”

“So you’re going to leave Starfleet?” Koester asked in disbelief.

“I don’t know. Maybe. Maybe not. I haven’t made up my mind one way or the other yet.”

“Where would you go if you did?”

“Who knows? The galaxy’s a big place, Skipper,” Kyman replied. “I heard about a little planet tucked away in the Briar Patch Nebula. Mild climate. Friendly people living a non-technical, non-regulated way of life. Maybe they would let Morra and I settle down on their planet for a spell?”

“Well, whatever you decide, COB, I wish you luck.”

“Thanks, Skipper. Good luck to you too.” Kyman then turned his attention on the young girl standing next to her father and said, “And that goes for you as well, Miss Koester. You take care of your old man, you hear?”

“I will, Chief,” Gem replied, looking up proudly at her dad.

“Come on, Gem,” Koester said, and the pair stepped up the ramp to the shuttlecraft. Koester paused at the top of the ramp, turning to face his crew... his former crew, he reminded himself, fighting a tear that was trying to form in the corner of his eye.

As he stood there silently, the sound of a ship’s bell filled the shuttlebay, ringing four times. Lieutenant Nate Johnson, the ship’s chief engineer, stepped forward from his rank, tapped his combadge so what he would say would be heard throughout the starship, and said loudly, “Admiral Peter J. Koester, former commanding officer, starship *USS Dauntless*, departing.”

Immediately the entire crew present snapped to attention. Still fighting back his emotions, Koester said, “Thank you all. The honor was mine serving with you.” He then turned on his heel and entered the shuttlecraft before he lost control completely, the ramp slowly rising back up behind him. Seconds later the shuttle lifted off the deck and passed out through the atmosphere retaining field.

“Where to, Admiral?” the pilot of the shuttle asked, looking over at the man in the co-pilot’s seat.

“Starfleet Command,” Koester replied. “The *Sagan* isn’t due to arrive in orbit until tomorrow. I have to check in with a few of the other Admirals in the meantime, including the Commander-Starfleet, Admiral Arrh. But I was hoping perhaps you could do me a favor, Lieutenant?”

“Anything for you, Admiral,” the pilot responded.

“Would you make an inspection pass of the *Dauntless*. I want to...” Koester paused for a second, as if unsure how to word what he wanted to say. Finally he said, “I want to say good-bye.”

“Of course, Admiral.” The pilot then activated the shuttle’s communications and said, “Shuttlecraft *Khitomer* to *Dauntless* flight operations.”

“Flight ops. Go ahead, *Khitomer*,” came the quick reply.

“Flight ops, I have received a request to perform an inspection pass of the ship. Request permission to perform such a close-in maneuver.”

“Permission granted, *Khitomer*. Don’t scratch the paint. *Dauntless*, out.”

Koester smiled sadly as the shuttlecraft turned around and slowed, approaching the immense Sovereign-class starship from the rear. The shuttle passed over the aft hanger bay used by the embarked Marine air wing and between the enormous twin warp nacelles before gliding smoothly below the primary hull, past the main deflector dish and the docked captain’s yacht *Trafalgar* before moving beyond the windows of the 10-Forward lounge.

“Good-bye, old friend. Keep Virg and his crew as safe in the future as you kept us all for the past two years,” Koester implored before adding, “Thank you, Lieutenant.”

“My pleasure, Admiral.”

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Fleet Captain Koester looked at the windows of the 10-Forward lounge as the Workbee moved closer to the hull of the *Dauntless*. Unlike some areas of the ship that remained dark following the completion of the repairs, awaiting either Koester or his first officer's inspections, the main crew lounge was brightly lit and inviting, crew members visible through the large windows. Koester reminded himself he needed to make an appearance in 10-Forward soon. It would be a signal to the crew that all was right aboard his starship once again.

To Be Continued...