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grand theft auto

LCTN: 54-TAURUS-A5 (Hyades cluster)
CORD: SAO-98368.0104 (49pc from SOL)
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Here's an idea...imagine if you could take all those metal and element rich asteroids, planetesimals and nebulous debris spiraling around the red dwarf One-Eighty, way out at U-Turn, and toss it all into complementary orbital tracks around a run of the mill gas giant like GTA5, which is about the size of Uranus, what would happen? In short order all of the smaller-faster objects will ultimately catch up to the slower-bigger objects and sort of start clumping together.

Like with Earth's moon, it happened out here at y-Tauri-A-5.

Gamma, the "y" in y-Tauri, is why the fifth planet orbiting Primus Hyadum, that being the prime-Alpha star of the 54-Taurus binary system, is referred to as GTA5. Its proper name happens to be Corvette, but the legions of workers from Zemlya Dva have shortened it to Vette. It has three planetary sized accretion moons, those being Sloop, Frigate and Schooner but, as with Vette, the labor force has also rebranded them Scow, Frag and Scorch.

About the size of Charon, Luna and Titan, respectively, the three are being aggressively quarried by the Co-op. From space one can see that they're being strip-mined on a planetary scale, but on Scorch they have standing water, breathable air, some clouds, some rain, and an archipelago of four lush-green oasis like industrial zones similar to Arrakis out at 69-Tau.

In sharp contrast to the surface of Scorch being turned over, all over, each of these well-manicured industrial parks is on their own mesa like plateau. Three are about the size of Manhattan, with the main one at over twice that landmass. With no environmental, labor or safety agencies to confound and annoy the over two-thousand manufacturing plants that tinker away here with impunity, the site has

been jokingly dubbed the “Industrial Disneyland” by the Directorate working directly for the Corporation Commission out of New Brisbane.

With no official names for the industrial parks, the crews also adopted this sobriquet and shortened it to simply, Disneyland.

Nowadays when people here say Disneyland they are actually referring to the larger central park facility, and that was after the other three were christened Adventureland, Fantasyland and Tomorrowland! Early on, they did have a Frontierland but it was bulldozed when they found massive deposits of copper and gold underneath it. Then, in line with labor force verbal shorthand, the names of the four parks have since been rebranded into two-syllable praenomina and the popularity of Disney, Advent, Fanta and Tomo kind of stuck.

As it relates to costs, the Directorate was beyond thrilled to get Taiji back! As a non-combatant, the civilian Ngô Văn Giáp handily won the contract for engineering maintenance and mechanical support for all the plants operating here—undercutting a subsidiary of the Wallace-YanZhuGu conglomerate that picked up the slack when Taiji was unceremoniously booted out in the first quarter of 2314.

Now, the maintenance crews from Taiji have no set schedule so they can come and go at their leisure. With commuter flights contracted out through Qantas, they do have regularly scheduled drops coming into Scorch every Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, but the number of workers and Trident-Star Clippers on any given day is all over the place. Today they have three double-decker guppy configurations that landed early this morning, with over 1,200 maintenance engineers to add to the 860 already here, but that didn’t pull Security Services focus one bit. Giáp’s people have made a point to alert the SS on their comings and goings and, with all the PM tickets they now have choking the queue, Security didn’t bat an eye when the three ships with all those workers showed up four hours ago.

To minimize collateral damage, that being civilian deaths, Giáp pushed hard to have this mission put off till today because pretty much the entire workforce for all of the two-thousand production plants are attending the annual Rugby Fest at a stadium built out of a conical Lithium pit-mine in the middle of Disneyland.

Today are the final three knockout matches to select the players on Scorch who will represent them in the Hyades Rugby series that winds its way up to the World Cup playoffs. Over the last three decades the teams from Scorch have won the Hyades Regional Cup five times, and this season they are aiming for it yet again.

The Annex was planning to drop in a battalion or two of Giáp’s people to help out but everybody is already here. With Taiji assigned the priority ‘surgical bombings’ the Annex will be sending in three RRF

flight elements for CAP, SEAD and a double up on CAS. To move things along the Cerberus fighters and Warthog gunships on close air support will be assigned the larger targets not marked for passover.

When the ships from Taiji landed, the people were able to crack open the containers, gear up and stage all inside three hours, and with just a few minutes to go, General Giáp is now waiting at the stadium to chat with the head of the Directorate.

From the executive boxes that lap the entire top edge of the stadium, Richard Blemmings steps out where Giáp gives a genuine smile and calls out, "E'ello, Dick!"

"Oi, matey! Interestin' tool kit you've got on?"

And with an outstretched hand, "It be webgear, mate!"

Blemmings shakes his hand and says, "You gonna pick up the extension we sent ch'ya? If you're going to push back, just let me know what I need ta do to sweeten tha' contract!"

"Well Dickie, after today you may not want us 'round!"

Blemmings huffs, "In what bizzaro world would that happen?"

Giáp's eyebrows rise as he says, "Well...today's bizzaro world to be sure! We need you to keep the people here in the stadium and enjoy the matches and suds. You'll want to ignore what we're gonna do to tha' place. It's gonna get right messy topside."

An aide to Giáp steps up and says, "Thirty seconds, sir."

Giáp nods and asks Blemmings, "You ever play any of the N-2 Grand Theft Auto, fuck-about open worlds as a kid?"

With another aide having pulled a BR1-k out of the floater and handing it to Giáp, who does a press check, Blemmings nods with understanding, "Yea...I played San Andreas."

As a company of ghost droids that flew in with them, uncloak and spread out to surround the stadium, Giáp smiles while asking, "Find the Hot Coffee to your liking?"

"I pathed it endlessly."

"Tha's a right good one, but I'm a Vice City, Tommy Vercetti kinda guy myself!"

Blemmings wonders, "Nail tha Mercedes Bends challenge?"

Giáp laughs saying, "At thirteen? Like ya'll said, endlessly!" He then thumbs towards the droids flying in and goes, "You an' your people will wanna stay put. These things don't play nice. Here'll be the only safe place over the next hour or so, capiche?"

Behind Giáp, we have huge fireballs silently going off over the docks and the BDF airfield that are four miles away, so Blemmings nods, "Loud and clear, General."

"Aye, thank you for seeing it me way!" Giáp motions between them, saying, "I hope this doesn't hurt our personal accord. You're one of the very few I can say has been a good cobber."

"Even though I am a corporate whacka?"

Giáp smiles big, "Da best there is!"

With the shockwave and muffled explosions reaching them, Blemmings returns the smile, "General, I'm not quite sure how the Commission will react to today's proceedings but, be assured, I think I'll get over you trashin' the place."

"Good to know, mate!"

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It's early morning here in the upscale Kai Pai district of Maui, the jungle planet that orbits the small gas giant Taranga, that orbits the star Tū, the primary star of 51 Tau. Except for all the rain forest greenery, Kai Pai is indistinguishable from the West Banes.

Jessica and Samantha are just starting an early brunch with her four sisters that they blundered into last night at the hotel. This week is the Hartcourt sister's annual three-day shopping spree, and every year it is a surprise where they go. This year it happens to be Sheron who planned the outing—and weren't they surprised when they blundered into each other in the hotel lobby.

Samantha bowed out at the last minute, saying something came up but not saying what it was, and with the diversionary attack on the planet Rongo starting just a few minutes ago they only have ninety minutes to get out of Dodge before Jacob and his troops drop on in for the primary targets here on Maui.

With the waitress stepping away, and everyone settling down, Piper Jr. throws out, "Okay, that's enough of the small talk, ladies!" She turns to Samantha and asks with a smile, "So, Samael, curious minds wanna know...who be the beau?"

With the middle sisters Sheron, Aurora and Eden all nodding big, Samantha rears back, "Hu?"

Sheron adds, "It was Eden's oldest one who saw on Papa's calendar, right before the notice went private, a post for the tenth that said 'sam wed plan' so—"

Eden cuts her off asking, "So, Sammi, who's the lucky bloke?"

Samantha thinks fast on her feet, "Maybe it was referring to 'Sally And Me?' Seems reasonable, aye?"

Aurora huffs, "Thought you were going to say that! None of the other dozen meeting notices 'bout their wedding are private!"

As all four of the sisters verbally gang up on Samantha for info, Jessica has been keeping an eye on Vince Stiller on the far side of the restaurant. She was supposed to meet him here, stumble into him and his family a half-hour from now, casual like, but she just realizes that he is being tailed by two Co-op agents—and taping into one of the agent's mind she finds out that they have two pair of Maui police staged on both ends of the street, and that they just got orders to pick him and his family up now.

Samantha asks her, "Should we tell them?"

Jessica shrugs and, "Maybe you should stay with your sisters 'cause things suddenly went south. We have to go now."

Aurora asks pointedly, "Are you picking our girls to be your bridesmaids? You know, family! Or, is it the ginger parade?"

Samantha again looks at Jessica, "I am coming with!"

"Suit yourself, it is your choice." Jessica stands as the two agents approach Stiller, so she turns to the sisters, "I'd love to chat, ladies, but it's a workday for me. See you on the tenth!"

As Jessica makes her way towards Stiller, Samantha stands while saying to them, "I'll be using our girls, but she get's the gingers!" With all their jaws suddenly dropping, she adds, "Gotta jet!"

Both agents face-plant into the floor before they reach Stiller, and as diners hop up to attend to them, Jessica appears and says, "Okay, you're being shadowed, so we gotta get outta here now!"

Stiller's oldest grandchild asks, "Who the hell are you?"

Jessica looks at him and snarls, two octaves below her normal voice with curled lips, "Do as I say—when I say it."

Stiller says to him, "This is Jessica, I told you about. I think we need to follow her lead...without question, aye?"

As everyone nods yes, Jessica goes, "We need to move now." Then to Samael she adds, "You're anchor."

Jessica steps outside the entrance to the restaurant, and with her heading out into the street she motions for Stiller and his family to hug the storefronts as they move towards the airfield. It takes just a half minute for the police in front of them to notice Stiller so they put one hand on their weapons as they point with the other, "Mister Stiller, remain where you are! You are under arrest!"

Suddenly, their backs go into spasms and they both shriek as they drop to the ground unconscious. Seeing this, the other two officers have pulled their weapons as they run towards them, shouting, "Nobody move! Stay where you are, you are all under arrest!"

Without turning back, Jessica drops them too.

At full stride both officers dive face first into the ground and slide to a stop, but instead of unconscious these two are now dead.

Rolling her eyes, Jessica is a little more than peeved by overdoing it on the last pair so, summoning a trolley driver with her mind, as it pulls up to her she barks at the passengers, "Get off!"

The passengers offload while Stiller and his family scramble to hop on then speed their way to the airfield, and as they are pulling up to her ship a platoon of Security Services troopers are positioning themselves around it, so she hisses, "God-damn it!"

Samantha asks, "Your droids gonna pew-pew on me peeps?"

As the trolley stops 12 meters short of the SS troops, Jessica says to her, "Only if they pull down on us."

"Then let me be useful and take care of this, love!"

Samantha hops out, and while stepping up to the platoon's Captain and their Major she says, "Top of the mornin', gentlemen!"

Both officers do a double take as Samantha approaches, with the Major saying to her, "Madame Hartcourt?"

"Last time I saw you, Major, was at Times Square, was it? We didn't get a chance to thank you and your troops for squaring away the union hooligans the way you did!"

The Major and Captain both salute Samantha as she stops in front of them, with the Major saying, "It's a surprise to see you here, Sir." As Samantha returns the salute, he gestures towards the trolley, "Would you like us to take the suspects off your hands?"

"These fine people are in my custody, Major." She shrugs, saying, "I was on holiday but now I find myself on the timeclock!"

The Major then points back towards the ship, "We have orders to seize this ship so I...I suspect you'll want to take this too?"

"There's a good chap!" She grins big, "You read me mind."

The Captain points out, "We don't control the air, Sir."

While Samantha motions for Jessica and the rest to board the ship, she asks, "What's the exception altitude, captain?"

"A thousand feet, Sir, but they've ordered everyone to land."

The Major adds, "The Annex has dropped on Rongo."

Samantha gives them a smile, "Oh, well, no surprise there!"

"The BDF believes Rongo is a diversionary attack to draw off the fighters from the airfields here. Local air command is sending only ten-percent of their CAP resources to intervene."

With Jessica stepping up, Samantha adds, "Then let's hope we don't have to shoot our way out! Do what you can for us."

The Major says to Samantha, "We can protect you, Madame."

Samantha sighs, "Only for a short while but thank you, Major. We're going to take our chances in the air."

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When the definitive and final version of the neuronet came into being all of the patents for cyber mapping and the neuro interface have long since lapsed, but where the N2 standard is now open source the security protocols, encryption and all the anti-hacking components are zealously guarded. To pick the lock to the one and only backdoor into a user's real-time immersion requires both a court order and special access to an encryption key vault maintained secretly by the United States Department of Defense. Few entities have real time access to this vault—where the Annex has a mirror instance of it.

Let's just say that deCap, their workaround to the biometrics and firewalls, piqued both DOD and DARPA's curiosity in the extreme.

Anyway, none of the myriad of VR gaming experiences that have been collecting dust for over a century could be ported into the neuronet however, instead of rebuilding everything from the ground up they ended up building off of one template. DOOM for the N2 was the first interactive to take the market by storm and, with open-source in mind, everyone else has since built from that kernel and the ever so critical interface crosswalk. It was a stupidly inelegant cross-reference table that greatly streamlined everything that followed, and because all the N2 components were 'open source' the developers of doomN2 were unable to patent the core application. The follow on effort to copyright that table didn't hold up in court because all of the foreign keys were actually hooked into from the PBDi side of the interface.

The point is, DOOM retained all of the schlocky elements that made it a blast to play, and that experience carried over to most of the properties that cloned the kernel, but it was the CoD and GTA mods that brought the hyper-realism optional settings to neuronet games. That is, the normal challenge in "Hurt Me Plenty" with reloading and realistic loadout made the player's experience nightmarishly difficult

when compared to the ever so popular “Nightmare” mode.

Realistic mods in DOOM never did take off but on Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto the settings shot off like a rocket! Not so much for the casual gamer, who recoiled at the effort needed to plan ahead, but it’s the niche hard-core players who wanted that challenge. Then there’s the military SPECOP groups who train on customized mods of GTA with detailed modeling of their kit, loadout and objective.

Working out missions on GTA feels like the real thing!

Which brings us here today where, over the last two years, Giáp and his people have been running-an’-gunning it again and again on a customized “fun house” mod of GTA with a detailed 3D wireframe map of Scorch that they pulled in from their ticket and workflow system. Sure, the kludgy destruction physics sucks ass, but with this tool they’ve been able to divvy up 1,810 targets between 330 six-man teams, each team assigned between five or six targets, and this is so that the average speed-run in game ran anywhere from about 42 to 45 minutes. Of the plants not in their queue, 186 have been assigned to the Close Air Support guys from Peña’s RRF, with only 114 plants out of 2,110 total getting the passover for today.

The conex containers the Annex stashed in the graveyards were overstocked to the gills so when the troops cracked them open they stripped out extra tubes of grenades for their romp today. The bulk of the railguns were the older BR1-C3 models in 4.75mm but five percent of them were the newer BR1-k in 6.8mm. The k-models were grabbed up by their team leaders as well as the six command squads for anti-air work—the webgear stocked only with Micropede missiles. Everything in the containers the troops didn’t take will vanish inside a week and percolate through the black market, ultimately dropping into the hands of the kOri, but that’s a story for another day...

Now, what they couldn’t plan for was, 1.) How many fighters the BDF would have airborne on CAP when the airfield went up in smoke and, 2.) What will those pilots do to Giáp and his demolition teams running wild on the ground?

The answers are 460 and not much...

As for running wild, with Peña and the RRF forces a quarter hour away from the surface of Scorch, having easily bypassed the 1,200 spider missiles in low orbit, and the lone Epée cruiser sitting in a high reconnaissance orbit, the 330 ground teams are hitting their targets right on schedule. With explosions reverberating from all directions, they are leaving smoldering wreckage behind as they race from one target to the next on open-bed floaters. Even five of the six command squads assigned themselves at least one target, but it was Command-Six who took up a dedicated anti-air posture on top of a

factory half way between the stadium and Toon Town.

Toon Town being the massive container management facility next to the airfield, currently assigned to Peña's CAS.

Sally Rand, Major General of Security Services, is in command of Command-Six, deployed on the roof of the one Lego manufacturing plant not on Earth. From this high vantage point she has a clear view of Disneyland from past the stadium and back out towards Toon Town and the smoldering ash heap of what used to be an airfield. Noticing two Djinn circling the perimeter of the industrial park, obviously looking for a demo-team carelessly running between targets out in the open, she locks on the leader with a Micropede. Between the trees and columns of smoke rising up from the destroyed buildings, spotting targets for the Djinn is real hard to do at the speed they must maintain to evade Micropede missiles fired at them.

Like the one Rand just launched at the flight leader!

With the missile turning hard-left towards an interception point with that fighter, Rand now fires at the Djinn with her railgun. The 6.8mm railgun bolts slam into the rear fuselage and this makes the pilot push the throttle to full thrust. Banking right and pitching up in a coordinated turn away from Disney unfortunately extends the convergence point farther out and makes it easier for the missile to roll back and lock on. The missile flies into his tail pipe where the warhead goes off and the back half of the Djinn vaporizes—leaving the cockpit tumbling away from the debris, and the pilot punching out.

With Command-Six celebrating her third kill, and her corporal doing the same to the wingman, which the team also applaud and pat him on the back for, Rand ties into the tacnet via the AuX application on her PBDi to get a look at the tactical big picture.

Inside the first five-minutes their teams have destroyed half of the fifty-four anti-air mechs the BDF staged around the industrial parks. Advent, Fanta and Tomo had twelve each, the larger Disney was assigned eighteen, but with no ground forces to protect them from ground action it's obvious that they did not expect today to ever happen. Thinking what Giáp and his people are now doing here as impossible—the Co-op made it inevitable.

As Rand scans the sky for fighters she notices that Giáp's Command-One squad just ripped past the Lego factory, so she radios, "Blimey, Zipper! These fickle cunts are clueless on what ta do!"

Giáp laughs over the com-connection, ["Waddy sayn', Pogo? You be takin' 'em down like a bloody turkey shoot!"]

The missile Rand just loaded up, has already started to growl with a lock on, "Peña is on his way down, mate!"

["Right, copy! You got the airfield count?"]

Noticing four Djinn coming in from three different directions, Rand motions for the others to launch on them as she puts the bead on the one in front of her, "Prelim count at four-forty."

["That's good to hear!"]

"They still 'ave 'bout four-sixty in the air." Rand launches that Micropede and pulls her BR1 up to her eye to sight in the next fighter, "But, we've splashed twenty-three Djinn so far!"

Three of those fighters are blown from the sky but one gets through, and as if flies overhead ten railguns hammer away at it and shear it's wings off, so Rand adds, "Make that twenty-seven, babe!"

["Great shootin' love! I be heading to Gerber-Fiskars to drop a Disney Swish or two on thar two-timing ass!"]

With her team scanning the sky, Rand glances down at her feet and laughs, "Hey, dumb question, why not bomb the Lego plant? Weren't they subcontracting parts?"

["Sporks for their rat-kits! We 'ad to let that one pass."]

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