



Dauntless

Jack Campbell

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The Alliance has been fighting the Syndics for a century--and losing badly. Now its fleet is crippled and stranded in enemy territory. Their only hope is a man who's emerged from a century-long hibernation to find he has been heroically idealized, beyond belief...

Captain John "Black Jack" Geary's legendary exploits are known to every schoolchild. Revered for his heroic "last stand" in the early days of the war, he was presumed dead. But a century later, Geary miraculously returns from survival hibernation and reluctantly takes command of the Alliance fleet as it faces annihilation by the Syndics.

Appalled by the hero-worship around him, Geary is nevertheless a man who will do his duty. And he knows that bringing the stolen Syndic hypernet key safely home is the Alliance's one chance to win the war. But to do that, Geary will have to live up to the impossibly heroic "Black Jack" legend...

Dauntless Details

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From Reader Review Dauntless for online ebook

Llania says

This book inspired a whole new shelf on my goodreads bookcase. You can guess which one. I was intrigued when I saw this on the all time best military sci-fi books list and I wish I hadn't. I started cringing on the first page. The writing alone is awful! Who edited this book? There is SO much telling, no showing, bad stage directions, little detail of people and things, saying the same thing twice and three times in the same paragraph, I could go on.

The MC of this piece does little but mope around and brood. It's like Edward Cullen in space for crying out loud. He's completely unsympathetic in my mind simply because he goes on lamenting his fate through the whole bloody book like a perpetual 13 year old.

The premise sounds interesting, and I'm willing to forgo a lot of the other criticisms about it. Yes, it does seem a little silly that people who do nothing but fight are somehow bad at it and never learn anything new. But I'm okay with that because it's fun to speculate and if it had been well written, I would have liked it.

So, in summation, not worth anyone's time, can't believe it got published, read something else instead.

Markus says

"Sagas wouldn't be interesting if terrible things didn't happen to the people in them."

Captain John "Black Jack" Geary won his accolades after defending a convoy of Alliance transports against an attack from the Syndicate Worlds. Believed killed in action, he was given the rank of honorary admiral, and subsequently declared a war hero and an example for future generations of Alliance sailors to live by. But a hundred years later, Alliance warships pick up an escape pod in outer space, and find a body who's been lying in stasis since the beginning of the conflict.

Geary awakens to see a galaxy that has been torn apart by total war. The Alliance fights an endless struggle against the Syndicate Worlds, until a daring strike at the enemy homeworld is attempted. But the Alliance fleet is led into a trap, all its commanding officers are killed, and slowly all the remaining captains realise that the only man with the rank to take command of the lost fleet is Honorary Admiral Geary...

Inspired by Xenophon's legendary *The Ten Thousand*, this series is a tale of a fleet stranded in enemy territory with no option but to fight its way back. Through book after book, John G. Hemry aka Jack Campbell brings us along on a journey across a whole galaxy, from space battle to space battle, from the viewpoint of a man who according to the author was inspired by George Washington.

I've been reading these books for quite some time now, and there's no hiding that they go under the category mindless entertainment. Despite intricate technical descriptions and a few other things. The plot, the characterisation, the writing and the setting are all very simple. But the books are entertaining to read, and if that's what you're looking for, they're perfect. They even have humour:

*"What are you going to do for fun if you can't devastate planets anymore?"
"I'll have to find another hobby, I guess."*

Despite having a great number of weaknesses, the series also has quite a few important strengths. First of all: space battles. I've never been a fan of military science fiction, but I do enjoy a good space battle every now and then. And the space battles here are both more suspense-filled and much better written than for instance the ones portrayed in the Star Wars Expanded Universe. Campbell brilliantly describes complex tactics and fleet manoeuvring, and gives the reader a great impression of how he imagines these devastating encounters.

While battles and war used to be one of my favourite aspects of fantasy and sci-fi when I was a bit younger, that role has now been taken over by political intrigue; and this series has that too. Not nearly everyone accepts Geary's role as admiral and acting commander, and the lost fleet is filled to the brim with plotting and politicking. And not only that, but in secret, the governments of *both* the Alliance and the Syndicate Worlds are crumbling, with ambitious politicians and ruthless military leaders seeing their chances appear in front of them.

The single biggest weakness in this series is its setting. Viewed by itself, it is almost pathetic. Compared to *Star Wars*, *Dune*, *Hyperion*? Don't make me laugh. Neither of the two warring factions have any depth, and none of the planets you read about are fascinating in any way. The series does have potential, and Campbell utilises it more and more as it progresses, but early on the setting is just remarkably uninteresting.

However, even the setting does have one very interesting aspect: religion. It's quite rare to find a military sci-fi series where all the characters are deeply religious, and while not exactly heavily developed, this is by far the best part of Campbell's worldbuilding.

"From the stars we came, and to the stars we return."

The Lost Fleet itself is currently a six-book series, describing Geary's mission to lead the fleet through enemy lines and back home to the Alliance. Those six books definitely make up the best part of the series, but if you read those and find yourself wanting more, Campbell is currently working on a series continuing Geary's adventures, called *The Lost Fleet: Beyond the Frontier*; and also a spin-off series set in the Midway star system, called *The Lost Stars*.

Overall, this is a great series if you're looking for something light and easy that can be great fun to read while not having much depth to it. I don't think there's a book in this series I spent more than a day reading. These are certainly not the best books out there, but they definitely have my recommendation.

Felicia says

Hey! It's a space story with Marines and no vagina plotlines! And I REALLY LOVED IT!

This is the first in a series of a hero brought back from stasis to save the universe. I loved the world, the space fights, the manly commanding of Jack, the idea of a mythical hero that is accidentally discovered and revived in space, and where the myth and reality clash. Dude is a bossy pants, but I enjoyed this a LOT! Good clean military space fun!

Kathleen says

Well, I tried. Listened to 3/4ths of the book and stopped. Many folks love it, but it's just not my kind of space opera. Unlike *The Vorkosigan Series*, by Lois McMaster Bujold, or even *The Liaden Universe*, by Lee and Miller, there is insufficient character or relationship development. Instead, military protocols, jockeying for position, and battles.

Some cool scenes. Some good battle strategy. The author embeds a few navigational and tactical ideas about long-distance, time-relative battle planning, etc.

It started out fine, but I gradually grew weary of Commander Geary. It's all his POV, but IMO, he's not all that interesting. He thinks too much — about every decision, every response, and his thoughts are fully spelled out, redundant, and monotonous. The author needs to leave this reader (me) something to do, interpreting and inferring, wondering and waiting.

When not napping, Geary ponders how the "rules of war" (especially prisoner treatment) have fallen apart over a century of war. When the book begins, all the captains, officers, and enlisted ignore the rules. No saluting. Voting over every command decision. Killing enemies without mercy, taking no prisoners. This problem is provocative, but the author beat me over the head with it, rehashing the topic repeatedly. As one reviewer said, "so much that it forces the reader to consider the improbability of the premise" (the premise being that *everyone* has abandoned proper protocols — everyone except Geary, who has been in stasis for 100 years).

What are the chances that so much military culture, protocol, and battle tactics should be lost, when computers have survived?

I needed to get to know some other characters, but they were all interchangeable, like the image on the front cover. The returning, mythological legend, Black Jack Geary, surrounded by a nimbus of glory, with everyone else largely monochromatic and similar. Whether they are for or against Geary, they are primarily a device to prop up his "reluctant hero" portrayal.

Geary's great-nephew could have been used to develop rich characterization and relationship (but...no dice).

Giant step back for religious diversity. The text implies a fleet-wide ancestor worship. Everyone shares the same belief system, with a crew manning 200 ships -- an intergalactic crew, from a variety of planets?

See reading updates for more specific comments.

Conor says

3.5 Stars

Dauntless was an enjoyable naval adventure in space that ignored depth and challenging complexity in favour of cool tech and massive space battles.

A hundred years ago the Syndicate worlds launched a deadly surprise attack on a small convoy of Alliance ships, igniting a terrible war. In command of the small Alliance convoy was Captain 'Black' Jack Geary. Under his inspired leadership the majority of the convoy was saved, however Captain Geary was lost with his ship. Remembered in the Alliance as the Paragon of bravery and heroism, in the hundred years that followed his death it was whispered that the great captain would return to lead the Alliance to vengeance and to victory. And now he has. But how can a man live up to a legend that has built for a hundred years? And

what does he do when he has no choice but to try to be that legend to save the fleet he is responsible for from destruction?

This was a really interesting premise and I thought it was delivered on reasonably well. Many aspects of the plot were predictable but there were also some interesting features such as Captain Geary's attempts to deal with his legendary reputation and the massive space battles. While I occasionally wasn't able to understand what was going on (beyond imagining scenes from star wars, complete with *pew pew* and *whoosh* noises) for the most part the basic course of the battles were easy enough to follow and made for compelling scenes. My favourite part of this book was the exploration of naval warfare doctrine and how it had developed over a hundred years. I really liked seeing how Geary adapted the fleets tactics and organisation to try and trump the opposition. His interaction with his crew was also nicely done and I liked seeing how he earned their loyalty and boosted moral. The author is a former naval officer and his knowledge and experience really shine through in these sections.

The worldbuilding in this first book of the series however was pretty pitiful. The Alliance and The Syndicate are both incredibly unremarkable organisations/nations/planets/whatever. Neither has any distinct culture or value system on its own or in contrast to the other one. We're shown that the Syndicates are evil because they pull a double cross at the start but we're never given any context for their actions. On a kind of related note I found Captain Geary's frequent moralising about how far the Alliance had fallen very annoying. Geary took a hundred year nap with a complimentary tax dodge and when he woke up started fixing the morality of a nation that had been fighting a war for a hundred years. There were also hints that aliens are somehow responsible for the otherwise inexplicable war. This was kind of weird because Geary and a number of military scientists became convinced of the presence of aliens in the galaxy (and their apparently important role in geo-politics) based on evidence that wouldn't even qualify for a history channel programme.

Overall this was an enjoyable trip through space and while it lacked depth in world-building or plot it had plenty of likeable characters, interesting naval strategy and cool battle scenes. In space!

David Sven says

No. Can't do it. Shelving this as unfinished after 25%.

The audio narration by Christian Rummel was bland. The dialogue was bland. And Captain John Geary didn't grab me.

The writing style reminded me a little of C J Cherryh's *Downbelow Station*. If you like her writing style and you like military sci fi then this may appeal to you.

I didn't care that much for *Downbelow Station* either but I persisted with it and ended up enjoying it well enough. But that was in another time - before I listened to my inner rabbit, donned the hood, and went all *Donnie Darko* on my TBR.

HMS Dauntless, meet *HMS Ruthless*. There's no room for bland in the Bunnies Creed.

????? stars.

Mike (the Paladin) says

Originally reviewed in 2011
updated in 2014

I like having an audio book on when I'm doing things that require little or no thought...of course I listen when I'm working on leather crafts. Could that explain the number of unfinished mistakes in that lower drawer??? Oh well, back to the subject at hand.

I recently finished the 6th Honor Harrington book and thought it somewhat of a "come-down" from the earlier ones...really. She seemed to be closing in on Super-Woman status. When I read the synopsis of the next it was just more than I could bear. Maybe...in a few months, after I've recovered a bit from the last... Anyway, in the meantime I wanted a different audio book and Audible had an add for one of Jack Campbell's (a pen name of John G. Henry) Lost Fleet books. So, being "me" I went to Audible and found the FIRST of the series.

Great book...especially considering the last space opera I listened to was long winded, converted it's protagonist to into a "Mary Sue", and devolved in places into a treatise on the love life of "tree-cats". I enjoyed this book and plan to get the next (from Audible) as soon as I finish the book I'm listening to now.

This book takes its inspiration from a couple of places. The general or main idea (the author says) came to him inspired by Anabasis (The Long Retreat) of Xenophon. Thus we get the "overall" plot. A fleet of ships from the "Alliance" falls into a trap. They are in the midst of enemy space, out numbered and in disarray.

Now we come to the other "key" plot inspiration. The "sleeping hero". What Campbell asks would happen if a great sleeping hero really did awaken in a time of trial, as when his people need him, (as in King Arthur, waiting on Avalon etc.)

The fleet is pretty much doomed and it's the bulk of the Alliance's entire fleet. Discipline has broken down (long ago)...things look dark. EXCEPT THAT, the fleet found in suspended animation, floating in space in an escape pod John "Black Jack" Geary. When the Syndicate Worlds had made their first "unprovoked" attack on the Alliance it was "Black Jack" Geary who fought a heroic last stand and "died" in defense of that Alliance. He's the hero every boy on every Alliance World looks up to, he's the model for all space navy officers...but he didn't die.

It seems also that Geary was promoted to captain (posthumously) and awarded the highest military award in the service...and that was over a hundred standard years ago. Now with the admiral dead, having left Geary (the hero) in charge of his fleet and with his "time in grade" (over 100 years as mentioned) Geary has the job of getting the fleet back home. They have to get back home through the huge enemy fleet and since they can't use the "Hypernet" (as the enemy controls it and would be waiting at each gate) they have to go the long way with light speed jumps. With the commanders under him divided into basically 2 camps (those who see him as the mythical hero out of legend and trust him almost implicitly and those who hate and distrust him) and with an annoying (to me anyway) politician watching over his shoulder constantly threatening to withdraw the ships of her people from his command, Geary sets out to get them home, alive, intact and possibly to the good a bit.

I like it. I find it better than most of the space opera I've read lately and plan to follow it up. I hope I continue to like them...4 stars +.

Erik Fazekas says

5* lebo:

- konežne kniha, pri ktorej som neposudzoval ale užíval si čítanie
 - kniha, kvôli ktorej som pravidelne zabúdal vystupovať z električiek
 - som sa zamyslel nad "pomalosťou" sveta (myslím rýchlosť svetla, ale kto nečítal asi nepochopí)
 - som odkladal prečítanie posledných stránok, nechcel som, aby to skončilo
 - milujem sci-fi, je to proste tak!
-

D.G. says

Imagine if you spent 100 years in suspended animation and when you woke up, you find out that you had become a mythical hero to your people. That the discipline in the military you had known was lost and they justified all sort of terrible tactics in your name. And now a twist of fate left you in charge of a whole fleet with the responsibility to take them home.

That's the situation that our hero, John "Black Jack" Geary finds himself in. After his survival pod is found 100-years later, Geary learns that everybody he knows is dead and that the Alliance is still fighting the same war in which he supposedly died. After the enemy kill the people in charge, he has to assume command even though that's the last thing he wants.

If there's something you learn in this book is that is that being a hero is a very lonely business. Everybody has a warped view of who he is, and they either worship him, think he's a relic or a danger to the Alliance. Nobody thinks of him as a human being.

That said, he has some people at his side. Co-President Rione, the only civilian in the fleet, is very wary of Geary, but has the potential as a future love interest. I really liked Captains Duellos, Tulev & Carabali, as they are the only ones that seem not to think of him as Black Jack. Capt. Desjani is on his side now but as one of the worshippers, you're afraid that she'll turn on a dime when he makes a mistake.

I'm not a Physics expert by any stretch of the imagination, but it seems Mr. Campbell has incorporated the constraints of traveling at the speed of light in this series. Incredible as it seems, this slows the action as there isn't instant communication (if a ship is 10 minutes away at the speed of light, it takes 10 minutes to get a message to them). This takes some time to get used to, but you understand later on that this makes Geary even more pivotal to Alliance victory, as he's the only one who knows how to fight taking into account relativistic distortions, instead of going pell-mell as it seems they've been fighting recently.

One thing that bothers me is that there are no descriptions whatsoever. I don't know how old Geary (or anybody) is and what they look like. I know the author probably does this so the reader can imagine the characters however she wants to, but it's still annoying. There's a lot to try to figure out in this world and I wish the appearance of the characters wasn't one of them.

Overall though, awesome start of a series and I'm definitely reading the next book.

Anthony Ryan says

As near-perfect an example of military science fiction as it's possible to find. Campbell mixes real-world physics and far future tech to provide a convincing picture of what fleets of huge spaceships fighting a battle at relativistic speeds might actually look like. In the character of Captain 'Black Jack' Geary, a resurrected military genius burdened by unasked for legendary status, this series makes a welcome addition to the ranks of great SF heroes.

Neal Asher says

There's a whiff of antiquity about this book that reminds me of E.E. Doc Smith and other books I read at about the same time I read the Skylark series. This feels like WWII but with space ships and could easily have been written in the 50s. I felt momentary cringes at the name of the character 'Black Jack Geary' at the use of 'hell lances' and 'grape shot' and at crewmen being called 'sailors'. The technology felt daft, as if the electronics aboard the ships might have employed thermionic valves, as if the corridors were full of steam pipes and the gunners were hand-loading shells. I half expected someone to pull out a slide rule at some point to calculate vectors.

However...

Why shouldn't a beam weapon be called a 'hell-lance' and why shouldn't 'grape shot' fired at relativistic speeds be perfectly acceptable? How different is the former to a maser or particle beam, and how different is the latter to rail-gun missiles? And why shouldn't the kind of command structures seen in our navies be used? Such arguments I tried on myself as I devoured this book. What retired naval officer John G Henry (his real name) has done here is combine his experience of military service with an obvious (and probably dated) love of science fiction.

To sum up: all of the above is true, but in reviewing a book I have to ask some very simple questions. Did I care about the characters? Did I want to know what happened next? Did I enjoy reading this book? Was it a good read? Will I buy the next book in the series?

The answer to all these questions is 'yes', and this book must be included in that long list called 'guilty pleasures'.

Carmen says

Until I came back, like some ancient general who remembers ways of fighting that the barbarians forgot long ago.

I rarely pick up military sci-fi, but when I do I end up enjoying it immensely. As long as it doesn't involve rape (either as a rape-fellow-soldiers-because-they-are-female or rape-as-a-weapon-of-war). This book chose not to have any rape in it, and as a result I enjoyed it thoroughly, just as I'd hoped I would.

Captain John "Black Jack" Geary has just been awakened from cryosleep after 100 years, only to find that he has become legend. Awe-inspiring and held up as an ideal of courage and strength, the vessel that picked him up - the *Dauntless* - is ecstatic to have him on board.

The war Geary was fighting for the Alliance against the Syndic is still going on, 100 years later. Seemingly it will never end. Everyone he ever knew is dead. And the Alliance he once knew, loved, and fought proudly

for has devolved into a force that will kill POWs, kill people who have surrendered, etc. etc.

It's up to Geary to whip this Navy back in shape and teach them about honor, mercy, and compassion.

"I could say that sometimes it's good for the soul to show mercy when none is required or expected."

But Geary doesn't feel like the hero he's made out to be - he feels like a tired, sad, old man.

...

I liked this book. The Alliance is like the U.S.A. (or some other strong, democratic country - I just picked U.S.A. because I'm an American) and the Syndic is presented more or less as a strong North Korea. But after a hundred years of endless fighting, the Alliance has become not much better than the Syndic - dishonorable and without mercy and not abiding by the rules of war.

I liked Geary. He is worshiped as a great leader, but he just feels like a tired man who wants to go home. He's smart, compassionate, and shows mercy on people. Highly attractive qualities in a man, for sure. ;)

Can he fight against the Syndic and win and lead his ship to safety? Can he teach the prideful and misguided crew about honor and mercy? Can he live up to people's unrealistic expectations of him?

It's exciting.

...

The only drawbacks:

1.) It's military sci-fi and I understand that many people can't get into this sub-genre. But if you CAN, this book is a winner.

2.) It's obviously the first book in a series. You are going to have to read the other books and continue with the series if you want to find out what happens.

However, I consider these to be very minor drawbacks in the grand scheme of things.

Tl;dr - Strong military sci-fi that is fun, engaging, and exciting.

But if neither side can win and neither side will negotiate, that dooms everyone, good or bad, to endless war.

Kat Hooper says

3.5 stars

Originally posted at FanLit: <http://www.fantasyliterature.com/revi...>

John "Black Jack" Geary's escape pod has just been rescued from deep space. He's been in cold-sleep for a century after he single-handedly held off enemy spaceships while letting the rest of the Alliance fleet escape. Everyone thought he was dead, but his brave sacrifice went down in the history books and many people still whisper that Black Jack Geary will come back to save the Alliance in a time of great need. And so he has... or at least that's what many soldiers of the Alliance believe. Geary himself is bewildered to learn that not only is he alive, but that his one famous deed was exaggerated and now he's a hero of legend. All he really

feels like doing is grieving over the loved ones he left behind a century ago. But duty calls.

Now Geary finds himself again trying to save the Alliance fleet. They're still fighting the Syndicate Worlds — the same enemies they've been fighting since Geary's time — and they're stuck in enemy territory with damaged ships. They're also carrying a stolen key to one of the Syndics' hypernets — a tool which could help them finally win the war. Can Geary get the fleet and the key back home safely?

Well, that's a hard enough task for any fleet commander. What makes it even harder for John Geary is that this modern Alliance fleet is far different from the one he knew before. The technology has advanced enormously (Geary doesn't even know what a hypernet is!), but what has changed even more is the structure of the military. Geary lived in a time when the military was well-trained and the leaders gave orders which their subordinates obeyed. But because of the devastating losses the Alliance has suffered over the past several decades, younger commanders have had to step up. They lack skills and experience and the military is now run more like a democracy than a hierarchy, with commanders discussing and voting during meetings instead of receiving and following orders from superiors. Black Jack Geary's own legendary exploit is also a factor in this decline — his heroic status has caused many ship commanders to try to seek their own glory. Geary recognizes that all of this is bad for the Alliance Worlds, but changing an entire military organization may be too much for one man. Unless that man is a legendary hero who has returned to set his people free...

Dauntless, the first book in Jack Campbell's LOST FLEET series is highly entertaining space opera. Black Jack Geary makes a great reluctant hero. He's smart and experienced, but 100 years behind in his understanding of technology. He has a disadvantage when he has to rely on others to help him understand and navigate his controls, but his old battle tactics, which rely on careful fleet coordination rather than personal glory-seeking, are an advantage. Not only are they better for the fleet as a whole, but they confound the enemy who is now unable to predict what the Alliance forces will do.

I didn't much care for the other characters in Dauntless, but I enjoyed the story enough that I didn't mind. One thing that sets this series apart from other space opera is Campbell's attempt to deal with the problem of relativity in a war that spans so much space. For example, if your computer is reporting the location of an enemy that's lightminutes away from you, they are no longer in that location when you get the report. This distortion has a lot of implications, especially when you're trying to shoot the enemy and the enemy is trying to shoot you. Campbell's constant reminders about this get tedious, but I appreciated that he tried to deal with this problem that's too often ignored.

I listened to Audible Frontier's production of Dauntless. Christian Rummel was a perfect narrator and I thought the voice and tone he used for Black Jack was a perfect reflection of Geary's humble but confident personality. After listening to Dauntless, I immediately downloaded book 2, Fearless. THE LOST FLEET looks like it's going to be a good series.

Jack Campbell is a pseudonym for author John G. Hemry who writes other military science fiction under his real name. He's a retired Navy officer.

Ken T says

Black Jack Geary, famed commander from the beginning of the Syndic/Alliance war is back from the dead only to find that a hundred years of war have left his beloved fleet a shadow of its former self. Thrust into command of the bulk of the Alliance fleet, cut off behind enemy lines, he sets out trying to live up to his legend and to bring the fleet home alive.

I started out pretty excited to read this book. It had received some decent reviews and appeared on a few Goodreads lists. Sadly, it did not live up to the hype. The premise is forced - a long lost hero thrust into command of a trapped fleet - but I found that I could actually accept that part of the story. It was the premise, unlikely but once you got past it everything should have been fine. But it wasn't. Campbell continues to build up Geary's reputation as a famed commander throughout the book and that is a problem. Geary fought in the first engagement, a relatively minor one at that, of the war and distinguished himself. Why should such a figure stand out so much that he became a totem for the fleet a hundred years later? Did no other heroic figures emerge in the many, many subsequent battles that followed? Granted, this is a quibble, but having accepted the forced premise I found the constant references to Geary's heroic status as a bit too much to ask the reader to accept.

I tried to put these concerns aside to enjoy what I expected to be some nice military scifi, but I was a bit disappointed there as well. The amount of action is rather low and described in a cursory manner. Descriptions in general in the book are rather bland, so much so that I cannot recall any particular physical characteristics of the characters even though I just finished the book ten minutes ago! The ships - a key in military scifi - are given similarly short treatment. They are described by their classifications (heavy cruiser) in simple terms like "big" or "slow," nothing more.

Instead of devoting time to space battles or description, Campbell devotes a great deal of time to discussions of how a century of war have changed a Fleet full of honorable sailors and marines into a bit of a rabble. This discussion is actually the book's strength, but Campbell spends so much time on it (returning to the topic repeatedly) that it forces the reader to consider the problems of the improbability of the premise and Geary's insanely heroic status.

Campbell is trying to do something worthwhile here. He considers questions of honor, how war can affect a society and/or military, and even basic humanity. But the premise and structure that he uses to address these questions are so patently forced as to make them artificial, academic exercises than part of a thriving narrative.

Mr. Matt says

Dauntless was just what the doctor ordered. The last couple of books that I read were slow, plodding things - all about immersion and realism. All of that was great, but sometimes I want a book to reach out of the cover and slap me in the face with bigger than life action. Rest assured, Dauntless delivered.

Black Jack Geary is picked up by a passing Alliance warships. Frozen for a hundred years in deep-freeze hibernation, he was lost and presumed dead. He awakes to find the Alliance still locked in a desperate struggle against the Syndicate and himself as a kind of iconic war hero archetype. Black Jack finds himself abruptly thrust into a leadership position and forced to deal with a severe case of hero worship. Fortunately, Black Jack is more than up to the challenge and he promptly whips his fleet into shape, first escaping the Syndicate trap and then defeating a pursuit force.

Dauntless does what it does very well. The action is quick and well crafted. I love the fact that these star fleet books are basically ships-of-the-line in space. I love big ship to ship battles where grapeshot fills the air along with smoke, guns and cutlasses. My college physics is a little rusty, but I felt like he did a good job of handling starship battles at relativistic speeds - yet the story kept the flavor of the ships-of-the-line. I also liked Black Jack's emphasis on the rule of law and playing by the rules of civilization - not barbarians. Good for all of us to ponder in this day and age.

A couple of odd things about the story. First, the religion felt very generic and sterilized. The alliance fleet pretty much exercised a form of ancestor worship. That combined with sayings like "the living stars" kind of fell flat with me. I felt like the author wanted to have some sort of belief system in the story but didn't want to show favoritism to anyone faith. Not a big deal, but it felt artificial to me. Next, some of the story line felt very formulaic. I can't say that I was surprised about anything that happened (except for one revelation towards the end of the book). That predictable story line isn't all bad. The book is good enough on its own merits. It was a very fun read.

Four broadsides out of five.
