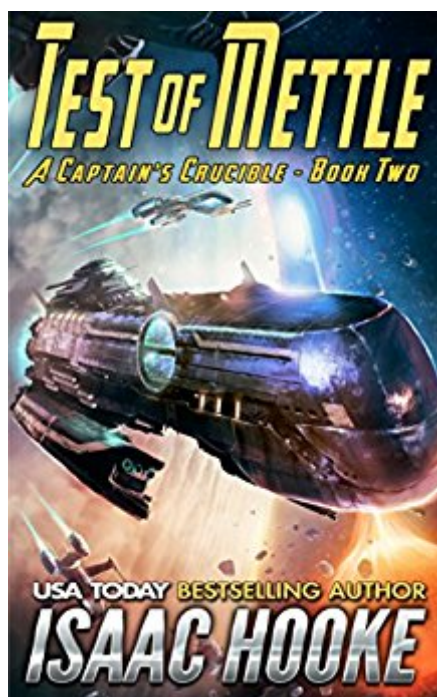


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Test Of Mettle (A Captain's Crucible Book 2)



Synopsis

The survivors of Battle Group 72 are stranded on the fringes of known space. Cut off from Central Command, with time and resources running out, the fleet struggles to build a Gate home before enemy reinforcements arrive. They finish with not a moment to spare: heat signatures matching the assailants are spotted sunward. Too many heat signatures. Hopelessly outnumbered, Captain Jonathan Dallas, commander of the flagship, chooses to escape through the newly completed Gate. But what the task group finds on the other side changes everything... The brave men and women under Jonathan's command have already proven themselves in the heat of battle, but now he must further test their resolve, not to mention his own. With enemies at every turn, it seems combat against overwhelming odds is inevitable. The path Jonathan chooses is laden with danger. One small mistake can lead to the ruin of the entire fleet. Will he steer his intrepid battle group through the stormy waters of the current crisis? Or will he fail, dooming them all to cold deaths in the void, captains and crews going down with their ships? It is a trial like no other. A crucible that cannot be won with strength alone. It is his greatest test of mettle yet.

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Customer Reviews

This is the second book of the Captain's Crucible series and it's just as good as the first. Here we continue with Captain Jonathan Dallas commanding the USS (United Systems Ship) Gallaway through a slipstream gate. They are being pursued vigorously by a fleet of thirty aliens bent on the USS Gallaway's destruction. The Gallaway is now the flag ship of a small remaining fleet that hopes to flee this current system and return back to Earth. They must alert Earth to this new alien enemy so it can prepare to meet this new threat. As the aliens have destroyed the original gate through which the USS Gallaway and other ships entered this system, they must build another gate. This takes about six months! With the builder ship fully capable of doing the task and a harvester ship dispatched to collect the necessary resources, the gate build is begun. So far the aliens have not come back into this system in force. Now six months later and most of the ships in Captain Dallas's fleet have made all the repairs they can. The gate has been reported ready so Jonathan orders a drone to be sent through as a standard test of a new gate. It's supposed to return about 20 seconds later and report what is on the other side. Slipstreams don't move so the drone should report that it has returned from Primus-3 which is where the fleet originally came from. But, for some unknown reason, the drone never returns. If the gate on the other side had been destroyed, then it couldn't return, but Captain Dallas has no reason to believe that it has been destroyed. Now with alien reinforcements appearing from a distant gate in the same system he is in, he has no choice but to order the fleet through the new gate. Now they find themselves in a total unfamiliar system.

This is a strong followup on a previous novel. As often is the case, you'll get a good deal more out of it if you read the first in the series before this entry. While on the surface this looks like a naval space combat book, it's a good deal deeper. Yes, there are space battles but they don't take up the majority of the book or even come close. Instead we get a good deal of mystery, some truly alien aliens and a great deal of character development including some philosophical musings. The added complexity and texture brought by these added factors made the book much more engaging than if it were one fight after another modeled on marine naval tactics (point defenses down, Captain!). There are too many weaknesses in the book's structure for me to award five stars. Here are a few. The aliens all are, as far as weapons and defenses, roughly at the same level as each other and the humans. This is fantastically unlikely and existed the same in the previous volume which also caused me pause. They do vary quite a bit in non-military tech, however so there's that. The central figure is the captain of the largest vessel and commander of the little human fleet. He spends a good deal of time mauling on about the deaths of people he didn't kill nor was he

able to prevent being killed but he whinges on and on about that. After about the 20th mander, I wanted to yell at him, "Shut up. Stop whining and grow up. These incidents weren't your fault." Another example of why I found this captain more than tedious is that when a guy who may be good or bad but seems to do acts averse to the human side says he's working to save the humans.

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