

The Poseidon Project  
Chapter 1

May 6, 1796, the HMS *Daedalus*:

The sea had a particularly menacing look about it in the dull lantern light. Night had fallen about an hour ago, and already the stars were partially obscured by oppressive clouds. A lone member of the Royal Navy paced back and forth above the deck, holding a lantern aloft as he made his way around the great wooden construct. The rest of the crew was probably sound asleep below decks by now. The man envied them. A night watch in the middle of the Atlantic was by no means a calming experience. The *Daedalus* had only been completed a few months prior, and for her maiden voyage she was being sent from England to the West Indies to deliver a contingent of men to a small port town. Hardly the sort of task for a ship of her caliber, but who was he to question the orders of His Majesty King George?

They had passed Spain a few hours ago and had turned south, skirting the Portuguese coast for a few miles before turning back to the open sea as night fell. The wind started to pick up and the man shivered involuntarily. The lantern illuminated the waves off the port side of the ship, which had started getting choppier and larger. The man adjusted his tricorne with his free hand then gave a slight start as he felt something cold drop onto his hand. He shook it off, realizing it was nothing more than a raindrop. A raindrop. That was bad. Almost as if it was waiting for his acknowledgement of the impending situation, a ribbon of lightning arced across the sky, followed shortly afterwards by a deafening peal of thunder. The rain began to come down in full force, and the gentle rocking of the galleon increased in intensity. The man steadied himself on a railing and sent up a quick prayer that the storm would blow over soon. For his efforts, he was rewarded with another flash of lightning even brighter than the first and a blast of thunder that left his ears ringing. The sideways movement of the ship grew violent, and it was all the man could do to keep his grip on the railing. Winds whipped around the ship, and by now men were pouring out from below decks onto the main deck to make a feeble attempt at lashing the sail to the mainmast so it wouldn't be torn away in the gale. The panicked shouts of the sailors were drowned out by the winds that churned around the hull of the *Daedalus*.

The man stared in amazement. It was almost as if the wind was only centered on their ship, forming a tight column that surrounded the vessel. Light flashed again, and the man covered his ears, expecting the inevitable crack of thunder once more, but it never came. Instead the light only intensified, and the sound of the wind was replaced by a gentle droning. "It's almost like music, it is. Am I dead?" thought the man as the *Daedalus* began to slowly rise out of the ocean and then suddenly winked out of existence.

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May 3, 1996, Special Agent Fox Mulder's office:

Agent Dana Scully brushed aside several of the papers on the desk in front of her. Mulder's desk was never organized, but it had been especially messy these past few days. Piles and piles of folders were stacked up on the desk and on the floor near it. One of the walls had several documents pinned to it, with bits of yarn connecting each to the others.

Special Agent Mulder's shirt was crumpled, a five o' clock shadow was draped across his chin, and dull purple bags had formed underneath his eyes. Scully gingerly picked up a half-empty bag of chips and a paper cup containing a meager amount of cold coffee and tossed the pair into the nearest trash can, which was almost full of crumpled papers and similar food-related detritus. After her hands were free, she folded her arms across her chest and stared incredulously at the agent resting his feet on his overly cluttered desk.

"Well, Mulder? Care to explain the sudden fervor regarding this case? Why you haven't told Skinner or me about it until now?" Mulder scooted his chair back slightly and pulled his legs off the desk, sending several folders and papers scattering onto the floor. He reached behind him and lifted a folder from the pile to his left. He handed it wordlessly to Scully, who opened it with a sigh, already able to guess as to the nature of the file. She read the title of the paper within and scoffed, looking back at Mulder.

" 'Train Disappears en Route to Washington'. Mulder, there are plenty of unexplained disappearances contained within the X-files. Why this one?" Mulder sat a little straighter in his chair and adopted his usual self-assured grin.

"Not just that one, Scully. Look at the date and the name of the train." Scully sighed. "Disappeared May 6, 1896. The train was a steam locomotive called the *Orpheus*, I don't see the significance, though."

"May 6, 1796. A British ship of the line called the *Daedalus* that was supposed to arrive in Barbados never shows up. The ship itself has never been found, even with modern equipment." Scully shook her head. "These are two isolated events, Mulder. Coincidentally occurring on the same date a century apart." Mulder's grin grew slightly wider and his tone took in a note of smugness.

"Same date, 1696. A fishing vessel, the *Icarus*, disappears from the Mediterranean. 1596. Five years after the sinking of the galleon *Revenge* the British launched the *Echo* as a replacement. A day out of the harbor she disappears. 1496. The *Sisyphus*. All the way back to the 13th century, on May 6 a transport of some kind vanishes mysteriously. The 1896 incident was the first time it hasn't been a maritime vessel."

Scully nodded, but the expression on her face betrayed a healthy dose of skepticism. "Judging by the names of the previous cases, would it be safe to assume that the earlier ships were also all named after mythological figures?" Mulder nodded.

"The *Odysseus* and the *Prometheus*."

Scully arched a brow. "So, would it also be correct to assume that you're expecting another of these paranormal events in three days? Even if you were right, how would you be able to determine which of the several thousand ships in the ocean would be affected? I'm sure that there's more than one ship out there with a Greek name." Mulder said nothing, but instead pointed to an unmarked envelope meticulously kept separate from all the other clutter on his desk. Scully picked it up and opened it, pulling out the two small rectangular pieces of paper within it. Her face contorted with barely restrained anger.

"The cruise liner *Nereid*. Mulder, I cannot even begin to outline how rash this was. First off, you haven't even determined whether or not the event will occur again. Second, you have no idea of knowing which ship, if any, the event will target, and third, you just spent over 700 dollars on cruise ship tickets!"

Mulder chuckled, making Scully even more agitated. "You're wrong on several counts, Scully. Look at the list of names and tell me if you see a pattern." He pointed towards the wall with the string-linked documents. Scully sighed and walked over, reading the title of each.

"Prometheus, Odysseus, Sisyphus, Echo, Icarus, Daedalus, Orpheus, and Nereid. What's so special about them, other than the obvious allusion to Greek mythology?"

"Take a look at the first letter of each and you'll see it." Scully read each of the letters in turn, slowing down near the end as the realization of their significance dawned on her. "P-O-S-E-I-D-O-N. Poseidon." Mulder smiled. "I triple-checked shipping records, train departures, and flights for May the 6th. The only transport with a Greek allusion in its name that started with an N..."

"Was the Nereid," Scully finished. "Mulder, brilliant deductions aside, you still haven't told me what's happened to all these disappeared transports."

Mulder got up out of his chair and walked to a filing cabinet, opening one of the drawers and withdrawing a beaten leather journal. The black leather was cracked in several places, and from what Scully could see the pages had yellowed with age. Mulder passed it to her. "The night that the HMS *Daedalus* disappeared, there was a Portuguese fisherman in the same waters. He was bringing his ship in for the night when he saw what looked like a larger ship farther out to sea. He couldn't really tell because a storm was brewing and the wind wasn't exactly conducive to his desire to remain out in the water. He saw what appeared to be a beam of bright light illuminate the ship, but it's the next part that gets interesting. This fisherman's diary suggests that he's not the sort of person prone to making up wild claims, but he says he saw the ship lift into the air. The light pulled it about ten feet above the water's surface, and then it just vanished. Poof. Nothing where it had been. The light disappears and the sky immediately becomes clear. It's as if the storm never happened."

Scully scoffed. "Mulder, if you're suggesting that for the past several hundred years ships have been getting abducted by aliens, maybe you need a cruise far more than I thought." Mulder picked up the two tickets from the desk and smiled, moving for the door. "Worst case scenario, we enjoy a boring cruise with good entertainment and a 24-hour buffet. Best case..."

"We vanish off the face of the Earth, according to your theory. Are you sure you don't have the worst and best cases mixed around in this instance?"

"Trust me on this. I'm sure my amazing knowledge of the paranormal will come in handy somehow." Scully chuckled and moved to the door with him, opening it and heading out into the hallway.

"Mulder, your amazing knowledge of the paranormal is what gets us into these sorts of things in the first place." She started down the hall towards the elevator and called from over her shoulder.

"Do me a favor. If we're going on a cruise, have the decency to shave first and put on a better shirt." Mulder laughed and followed her to the elevator, tickets to the *Nereid* clutched in his hand.