

## ISD CHALLENGE – INN – FRONTLINE REPORTING

The sight of the amassed battlegroups is a sight to behold. The flagship Challenge sits proudly at an oblique angle, about 30km out, looking down on the fleet.

Vice-Admiral Silwar Naiilo, in his duty uniform, stands on the bridge, an attentive crew waiting on his word to commence their own operations.

He turns around, and catches the eye of High Admiral Plif. The TCCOM and his aides are eager to test their Commodores against each other, and all of their planning has finally come to this moment; where they let loose their combined military might in their most strategic of wargames.

HA Plif, correspondingly dressed in his own duty uniform, nods to the Challenge COM. “What are your orders, Admiral?”

VA Naiilo turns back to his waiting crew. “Open a channel to my battlegroup commanders.”

“Sir,” says a young Lieutenant. “Commanders Honsou, Stryker, Legion, Pethtel and D’jinn standing by.”

“Gentlemen. This is not a speech. You know the plans. We drew them up together. You know what to do, and we will do it together. Begin.”

The replies start filtering in. “Acknowledged sir” and “Yes sir” ring throughout the Challenge bridge.

“Helm,” says VA Naiilo. “Follow Dorn and Esk please, at a respectable distance.”

One by one, the battlegroups start moving at sublight speed away from their stationary positions. The Codian star is bright in the distance, and bathes the matt grey of the fleet, variously changing the ships’ colours as they pass in front of the Challenge’s bow.

VA Naiilo turns to his number two, Colonel Denys Elara. “The ship is yours, Colonel,” he says.

Delara nods, and her voice trails off as she steps forward and addresses the bridge crew.

VA Naiilo turns to yours truly, intrepid reporter, who has done a very good job of remaining unobserved and unnoticed during the preparations. “Do you have everything you need, Lt. Batou?”

I smile deferentially at the Admiral. Piercing blue eyes look right through me. In all of my reporting I have tried to remain objective and disconnected from the events unfolding in front of me. I can’t help but feel the rush; the raw feeling of power that emanates across the Challenge. I can sense the same from the four or five admirals and senior officers standing not five metres from me. I can see their nervous energy as they shift their weight from one foot to the other; as

they twirl their aiguillettes; or crack their fingers hard into their palms. My attention comes back to the Admiral. I can feel my own weight shifting. I want to be a part of this.

I salute him, my hand actions crisp and precise. "Everything, sir."