

Raise the Flag 2017 - Introduction and Epilogue

(written by HA Elwood the Brave, FA Pellaeon and VA Silvius)

Orbiting Sif in the Phare System, aboard the ISDII Challenge

It was a silent night on the Challenge. Pell looked out of the window of his office as the long, hard day faded out. Supervision of Imperial facilities was no fun at all, especially over the former Imperial Weapons and Tactics School orbiting the planet Ullyr. Now it is the home of the Imperial University. Pell had gotten tennis elbow from returning all the salutes of the cadets. Years ago as a young man, he was stationed on the Daedalus too. He started his career as a simple TIE pilot and now he was a part of the TIE Corps Command Staff. He missed the feeling of piloting his own fighter in a battle against Rebels and other enemy vessels. Pell looked at the blue-violet sphere of Sif, the fifth planet of the Phare system. Ullyr was a beautiful planet too with its vast and various levels of forests, but Pell decided to wait for the TCCOM over Sif. He had looked out over Ullyr for several years, so the change of view was nice. High Admiral Elwood the Brave was still in a conference with the Commander of the Imperial University, Fleet Admiral Tomaas Montte, and his Training Office Assistant, Vice Admiral Silvius, planning future training maneuvers to keep and increase the skills of the TIE Corps' pilots, which meant that Pell was in command of the TIE Corps at the moment. He opened a communication channel.

"Captain Nolex, any news from the Conference?"

"The High Admiral's shuttle just started from the Daedalus, sir! He should arrive on the Challenge soon."

"Excellent, I'll see him in the meeting room."

"I'll inform him at once, sir."

Pell closed the channel, curious about the news Woody would have for him.

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Phare System

Woody sat in the cockpit of his personal TIE Defender, the ISDII Challenge surrounded by its support fleet about 30 km ahead, a flight of TIE Defenders right behind him and a shuttle together with another 2 flights of TIE Defenders following them.

As if he needed an escort this deep in Emperor's Hammer territory, but Pell had been quite stubborn about that lately.

It had taken some time to talk one of the pilots of his escort to use Woody's shuttle and let the TIE Corps Commander fly in his TIE Defender without notifying the

Challenge. But it had been really worth the time and effort it had taken him. There was nothing like that feeling of ultimate freedom one had while flying alone in a fighter with its own hyperdrive. Nothing else could free Woody's mind that much. If only he could spend more time in his TIE Defender again and less at his desk with all this boring paperwork. Especially after meetings like the one he had for the past six hours with Admiral Tomaas Montte and Vice Admiral Silvius, Woody felt a bit tired from commanding the TIE Corps, tired from all the responsibilities his position brought. More and more often he thought that it might soon be time for a change, a change in command.

"But not yet. Now we have some business at hand and we'll get it done," Woody reminded himself, preventing him from sliding onto a depressed mood. "I'm sure it's gonna be a lot of fun, at least for me." He was sure Pell would start cursing again if he heard about the plans Montte and Silvius had worked out with him. But that was part of the fun for Woody.

The last thought brought an evil smile to his face while Woody was entering the hangar of the Challenge.

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"Admiral! The TCCOM's TIE Def... ehm... shuttle just arrived."

"TIE what?!"

"You better ask him yourself, sir!" Captain Nolex answered.

The door opened and High Admiral Elwood the Brave entered the briefing room in an exhilarated mood.

"You're late, Woody." Pellaeon said.

"I know, buddy, but you know that the Training Officer is known as talking and discussing a lot. Six hours of a hard conference and even the caf stopped being able to keep us awake."

"Okay, and what was this TIE Defender thing CPT Nolex blabbed accidentally?"

"Pell, you know I love piloting my own fighter. We are deep in Emperor's Hammer territory. You were a fighter pilot too in the past. And my survival chances are better in a Defender than in a shuttle.

"Okay, I'll not discuss that with you now. I'm tired. So what was the result of your six hour marathon?"

"First, we need a Rebel capital ship and some of their fighters."

"Gosh! Well, let's order some on Impazon.com, 24 hour delivery, nothing's easier than that!"

"Pell..."

"Give me some time, I got an idea. I'll wake up some old friends. I hope I have good news for you at tomorrow's breakfast."

"Excellent, I know why I have you as my Strategic Operations Officer. I'll send out a few last communiques and then I urgently need some sleep."

"Good night, Woody."

"Night, Pell."

Rebel ships. This would be a short night for the old Fleet Admiral...

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Phare System, aboard the ISDII Challenge

It had been a stressful week. With Pell away to check in with his 'contacts', Woody had been working double shifts to finish the whole administrative workload of the SOO's office and his own paperwork. If only Pell had told him what he was doing. The only thing Pell had said was that he needed some time on his own to get the things organized for the mission they were planning. That he needed a couple of days off from his office or it wouldn't work.

"What the hell is he doing?" Woody was unable to concentrate on the report on his desk. He stood up and starting walking up and down in his office. "And who are those contacts?"

After a while, a disturbance in the Force made him stop and reach out with his senses. He felt a strong mind, a mind trained in the dark side, approaching. A mind he knew all too well. The COO was on his way for a meeting with him. A meeting he had almost forgotten due to his fading concentration lately.

"I need to have a serious talk with Pell when all this is over." Woody sat down in his chair again to wait for Silvius. "I'll end up as a wreckage if he does this to me one more time." An evil grin stole its way onto his lips. "Or I'll simply throw him out of an airlock, if he does it again."

Woody activated the opening mechanism of his office door when Silvius entered the hallway to his office.

"I hope you bring good news." Woody looked at the young Vice Admiral, slight Force sparks in his eyes showing his anger about the situation.

With a nonchalant smile Silvius replied, "Nothing new, Woody." Showing no fear of the growing anger that rapidly appeared on Woody's face, he continued while taking place in the chair right in front of Woody's desk. "But I know Pell will have something for you as soon as he arrives, and he should be here any moment."

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Pell walked through the long corridors of the Challenge along with his command assistant CPT Nolex carrying a pile of datapads. Woody wanted Rebel ships, Pell organized Rebel ships. Now it was time to inform him and the COO about the details.

"Sir, I hope the High Admiral will be pleased with our work," his SOOA said.

"He will be, Captain," Pell replied in a confident way. "Okay, here we are."

The heavy durasteel door opened. The TCCOM and the COO already waited inside. Pellaeon saluted.

"Woody. Junior."

Silvius squirmed up his face. He doesn't like the nickname given by the senior flag officers but it was true, he was the youngest member of the Command Staff.

"Pell! I hope you have good news for us." Woody said.

"I have. Captain? The datapads."

CPT Nolex gave everybody a pad.

Pell started his briefing. "Okay gentlemen, my task was to organize a Rebel capital ship and some fighters. It's fortunate that we're in the Phare system, where the Infiltrator Wing had launched a lot of their missions. My hope was to find one of their decommissioned ships. After a long discussion with the Logistics Officer about the costs of reactivating it, my next step was to find someone with the access codes. I convinced Colonel Rau Aznable to join our project. He was the Commodore of the last operating IW capital ship in the EH. And here she is..."

Pell pointed to the briefing room's window. With the typical flash, an MC80B Mon Calamari Cruiser dropped out of hyperspace.

"Gentlemen, here is my baby. The Redemption!"

"Pell, you surprise me every day. Great work! Now we need a crew for it."

"I've got that covered. For the fighters, I recruited COL Aznable as Wing Commander. Nobody knows the ship better, except myself. I also was able to recruit General Dunta Polo, General Dax Corrin, General Exar Kit, General Jarek La'an, General Pickled Yoda, General Gilad Pelleaon, Colonel Den Darkhill and Colonel Astin. All of these guys served on the ship in the past and are very experienced pilots. Only the Wing Commander knows some of the details, the rest of the pilots are on my list as candidates for the operation. The Redemption is also equipped with its full four squadrons. Woody, here are your ships. Now it is time to tell me what the plan is."

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Phare System, in the TCCOM's office aboard the ISDII Challenge

Woody looked deep into the eyes of the two men sitting on the other side of his desk. These were the two men he trusted the most. One had accompanied him during his whole tour of duty as TCCOM, the other one had joined them mid-way. These were the only officers that knew at least the basics of what he intended to do now. In a couple of minutes they'd know the rest of his plans, because they were the ones that would work out the details and make sure that the plan worked as Woody had intended.

"Gentlemen, admirals, friends." Woody paused and took a sip of water from the cup on his desk. "You know I intend to check the readiness of the fleet. It's been a couple of months since we faced the biggest attack on our security in years." Pell coughed and Woody saw the anger in Pell's and Silvius' faces. "We've heavily increased all security systems, doubled, partially even tripled the manpower in sensitive areas, and double-checked everyone with high level security access."

"I know, I did oversee most of these 'solutions' for our security issues," Pell said with noticeable irritation.

"Yes, and you did it, because it had to be done. You know that!" Woody reminded him, and he saw that Pell understood and calmed down a bit.

"So what's your plan?" Silvius interrupted the two elder admirals.

Woody handed each of them a pad with detailed information about the upcoming events.

"Here's all information you need. I want you to work out all the mission details and a fixed timeplan to make this happen." He focused each of the two men for a couple of seconds. "As this falls within your areas of responsibility, I need you to work together on this. Make sure neither of you disappoints me." Woody's lips formed an evil smile while a deadly brilliance grew in his eyes. "Dismissed!"

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Pell was sitting at his desk. He worked on the last subtleties of the training mission. While the TCCOM and the SOO would take an active part in it, the COO would oversee the entire maneuver and evaluate the pilots' skills.

"Okay, that should do it," Pell mumbled to himself. He'd present his workout to Woody and Silvius the next day. For now, he needed some sleep.

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It was 7 a.m. when Pell arrived the briefing room. He was the first one today, so he had some time to prepare his presentation and enjoy his hot Corellian caf. Meanwhile, his assistant had a briefing with the designated training crew of the Redemption. CPT Nolex had been more than a competent SOOA over the past few months. He kept Pell on track when the old man became forgetful. But not today. All the details had been worked out.

"Good morning, Pell!"

"Good morning Woody, good morning Junior!" Pell replied.

"I hope you both finished the final plans for our operation."

"We have, Woody. Silvius, would you be so kind and start with your part?"

"Sure. The VSD Aggressor under my command will oversee the whole operation. We will orbit the moon Akrin'al of Sahara at a suitable distance and evaluate the performance of the participants, nothing extraordinary."

"That brings us to our part, Woody."

"Our?" Woody asked confused.

"After you showed me that you love to fly fighters, I've got a present for you. We will fly both in Rebel fighters against our pilots. You mentioned to me before that you've only had the chance to fly in one once. Now you have the chance again."

For a moment, the TIE Corps Commander was speechless. "And what craft have you selected for me?"

"You'll have your choice between the A-Wing, X-Wing, B-Wing and the Shadow Class Y-Wing."

"Okay, I accept the challenge. But remember the protocol."

"Just don't tell anybody. No witnesses, no trouble. And hope that Silvius doesn't shoot us, that'd make him the next TCCOM," Pell joked.

"Don't tempt me, Pell," Silvius added.

"A VSD is no opponent for me, Junior," Pell taunted.

"Okay gentlemen, I see we're almost done with the preparations. Is the Redemption's crew ready?"

"CPT Nolex is at the briefing to instruct them. COL Rau Aznabel will have the command over the Redemption as Wing Commander. There is no need for a Commodore."

"Excellent. I'll leave the final details up to you. Dismissed."

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Phare system

A small group of alphabet fighters hanging in space next to an old MC80. Woody had the lead of the fighter formation in an X-Wing.

Darkness, I always knew these X-Wings were damn slow, but I never knew they were that bad compared to my good old Defender, Woody thought. How did the Rebels

defeat us with these? His thoughts were interrupted by several loud beeps coming from the R3 unit behind his cockpit. "Shut up, Arthree. I already told you to just give me a signal on the HUD when we're all ready to jump. If you disturb me one more time with your incessant noise, I'll make sure you'll end up cleaning the Challenge's refreshers for the rest of your existence!"

The beeping ended suddenly and a small sign in the HUD showed that the other fighters were ready for the jump.

"Woody to all fighters, you know the timeline, coordinates and all the other details of our little mission. Jump on my mark." While reaching out to activate his fighter's hyperdrive, Woody ordered, "Mark!"

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As Woody deactivated the hyperdrive, the whirling colors of hyperspace turned into the blackness of the normal space again with the stars in the background. A short distance away was the triangular shape of an ISD with its support vessels. Woody knew it was the Hammer.

Next to him, half the squadron of alphabet fighters had fallen out of hyperspace in perfect formation with his fighter. Woody knew that Pell would be in another X-Wing, leading a similar attack on the Warrior a few light years away.

"Gentlemen, continue as planned. You know your tasks. Good luck!"

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Silvius was in his Office on the Aggressor. The young Admiral was waiting for Woody and Pell. The fake Rebel attack was over and the last fighters had returned to the hangars. It was a complete success. The pilots of the TIE Corps had proven their skills and everyone had shown their best.

"Hey Junior! Kleiner!" Pell and Woody entered his office.

"Gentlemen, it's nice to see that you're alive and well. Please have a seat, drinks are on me." Silvius gestured to his personal bar.

"So, you oversaw the whole exercise. What was the result? Any severe problems or injuries?" Woody asked.

"The exercise was a success. The Warrior and the Hammer have beaten the fake Rebels, each ship overcoming our little plan in their own way. No big problems occurred during the test, only Rear Admiral Mitchell is in the medicentre from dehydration. He should take better care of himself."

Silvius continued. "Now to the results: The Warrior won this exercise with 7433 points to the Hammer's 3160. The top 3 squadrons were Theta with 2595 points, Kappa with 1698 points and Beta with 1537 points. The top 3 pilots were myself with 2577 points, Rear Admiral Pete Mitchell with 2140 points and General Coranel Both with 1204 points."

"How is it possible that you were the top pilot? You're an admiral and not a member of the Hammer or Warrior!" Pell exclaimed, astonished.

"Well, being in the middle of the fight is the best way to evaluate the combat skills of the other pilots!" Silvius answered cheekily.

"Well, so our young admiral here, will be the next TCCOM's Wingman? My wingman?" Woody asked.