

## Quantity and Quality

“Still getting the same fault, says here that the databank is at full capacity. I doubt we can add a single file to it without the damn thing crashing completely.” The comms technician shuffled his feet nervously as he provided his report, not entirely sure why he had been ordered to give the same report to an ever-increasing array of ever more senior officers. In this case a full Colonel.

“You’re telling me that the databank is full, the ca-“ the Colonel glanced at the technical readout on his datapad, attempting to understand the figures showing on the screen and promptly gave up trying – “-capacity of our entire task force archive for a 6 month period has, in 4 days, somehow been filled? By what exactly???”

“I’ll check the parameters, but it could take an hour or two.” Receiving a glare in response he assumed that was an order of sorts. By the time the search had completed the officer on the other side of the briefing had turned into a General, the Colonel having clearly decided that rank had its privilege but also its limits of patience.

“Sir, the report seems to show that capacity in the system is a little... unevenly split.”

“An interesting choice of words. Explain.” The General, like most of her rank, clearly had other things to do and places to be.

“The Challenge, Intrepid, Relentless and Colossus are showing as much as you’d expect, standard bandwidth use on hyperwave comms and the usual admin. The Immortal is a lot lower, but she’s in refit so that’s to be expected as everything is going through the station she’s docked with. The Hammer is busy, I mean really busy – there’s about 3 times as much data flowing out of her as any of the other ISDs in the task force, more than the task force escorts combined.”

“As you might expect from a lead ISD on operations, however I notice an omission from that little list of front line units currently in area. I think we both know where this little paper trail leads.” The General smiled, inflexible scar tissue on one side of her mouth giving the grin a lopsided appearance.

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Read Admiral Len Eode, Commodore of the ISD Warrior, mused for a moment over the communique he had just received from the operations centre on Aurora. It was unusual for the communications division to have much to say beyond routine code changes, policy decisions or long missives on comms etiquette that the task force generally deleted on receipt. This one posed slightly more of a problem.

“So, Wing II and the Warrior has filed approximately... 5,635, correction 5,638 reports in the last 4 days. Of which I appear to have originated 3. I note that 800 of those are disciplinary infractions attached to two squadrons alone, 132 more are timestamped for the middle of the night and seem to consist of increasingly strict regulations to be imposed on... privately brewed beverages? There appear to be no fewer than 542 suggested improvements to the ops and flight policy manuals, as well as at least 68 requests to dismiss or transfer pilots. What do you think these all have in common, General?”

The figure opposite Len, back stiff and hands resting palm down on his heavily starched uniform trousers, blinked in apparent surprise.

“They’re all written by me. I’m pleased you noticed my output – I hear that quantity has a quality of its own, but I stand by every single one of those reports. Particularly the improvements, you’d be

horrified by the slack standards at work in this fleet. The Colossus has appointed a Captain as Wing Commander, would you believe it – he even permits his technicians to enter the hangar in soiled overalls on an afternoon, he doesn't force them to present for inspection in clean uniform! That's how the rot sets in you see, starts with the overalls, then its demands for better working hours to avoid "safety breaches", next stop mutiny and open rebellion." General Frown continued in this vein for a few more minutes, less than succinctly linking the erosion of uniform regulations and fashionable beards to the moral degradation of the TIE Corps and the founding principles of the Rebellion. After a few seconds Len had glazed over completely, retreating to the happy place where Frown's words were little more than background noise.

"Lieutenant, clear my outer office and shut the hatch behind you." Len used his intercom to direct his staff officer in the adjacent compartment, while Frown paused for breath.

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The Lieutenant paused in the broad corridor beyond the Commodore's offices, looking nonchalant for a moment until he heard the shouting start. A crowd soon gathered, nodding vigorously or simply smiling as the Commodore's salient points were transmitted clearly despite the intervening hatches and bulkheads. General Frown's responses were less audible and seemed to consist of ever higher pitched intakes of breath, followed by what sounded like... crying?

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The TCCOM took a moment to celebrate a personal triumph, enjoying for its own sake the act of reporting on the task force. He'd commanded squadrons and ships in the line of battle, hundreds of thousands of men and women of a dozen species, but now enjoyed wielding a stylus as much as he had, once, a TIE. Odd, he supposed, that this had proved to be a far more powerful weapon than his fighter or flagship.

His latest report represented a personal landmark, one he hoped to celebrate and had taken particular care to craft. Never had he produced a finer report or more uplifting and all encompassing piece of work. Reading it for the last time he smiled, hitting send and waiting for the file to upload for the attention of the whole force. The display stuttered for a second before dying completely, an error flashing up and informing him that his file had been deleted due to a lack of storage. The words that followed took his own outer office by surprise, as much for their inventiveness as for their volume.

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The comms technician was sweating now, a rivulet running down his back as delivered the same brief for what he hoped was the last time. Bearing in mind he'd been summoned to the TCCOM's presence he was pretty confident that it would be, unless a Sector or Grand Admiral suddenly took an interest.

"Sir, let me explain it like this..."