

The Brief – RtF Fiction Submission#8 – GN La’an (#10540)

The tense mood wasn't helped by the tone of the Wing Commander's voice, never mind the actual condescending words he had chosen to employ. The muted coughing of the Commodore had seemingly not broken into his tirade, as La'an tuned back in for a moment he realised that Theta was being lambasted for non-standard approach vectors and over-use of munitions. The colour on Schueler's face, sat in the front row of the wing briefing room, was best described as crimson while the knuckles on his hands looked to be turning white as they gripped the padded arms of the chair. It looked like the only thing keeping him from an outburst of his own was recognition that this wasn't the time or place for commanders to wade in to their superiors. Looking for an opportunity to save his blushes La'an stuck a hand into the air, waiting patiently from his position in the back row. General Frown attempted to carry on, but as soon as he noticed La'an's hand he unwittingly made eye contact and struggled to break his stare. With a dramatic throwing down of his datapad and crossing of his arms from behind the lectern he stopped talking.

"Point A – the regs state that standard approach vectors are recommended during flight operations, particularly for less experienced pilots, but can be relaxed at the discretion of the fighter controller on duty, in line with their own standing orders. Theta has never to my knowledge diverted from these orders and will always comply with control orders issued by duty officers. I think the Colonel can back me on that?" An answering nod from the senior flight controller, down in the front row alongside the squadron commanders, was matched by a bustle of noise from his juniors, as well as the rest of Theta and a majority of the wing. The new faces in Rho looked frozen in a mixture of fear and confusion, unused to the atmosphere of honesty and occasional hostility that Wing II operated under.

"That is not... that... None the less... what was your other point?" Frown stuttered as he attempted to think on the spot, singularly failing as he realised the room was against him and the Commodore had, despite himself, smiled at La'an's intervention.

"Overuse of munitions – point B... You are aware that we are operating in an exercise area and firing simulated weapons? Our stocks are not depleting and our usage is equivalent to what we would ACTUALLY use in an ACTUAL war. Not the peacetime testing and training figures you're using. Figures that you have applied equally to every squadron... Kappa has 8 missile boats and you're expecting them to use 3.1 warheads per mission???" La'an allowed himself to get a little carried away, the usual steel in his voice giving way to a glimmer of anger.

"Good points all, I'm sure the Wing Commander will make a point of double checking his figures General La'an. This would appear to be a good point to break proceedings. I think some fresh air and a stretch of the legs will be of benefit – Wing, back here in 15 for the mission brief. Dismissed!" The Wing stiffened to attention in response, relaxing and breaking into a noisy discussion as several groups broke off and headed for the hatch.

"La'an, my off..." Frown's shrill tone cut through the noise, causing an immediate silence. Admiral Plif's conciliatory tone disappeared immediately.

“General Frown – my office, now.” Plif turned and stalked from the room, Frown hot on his heels. The room stayed quiet, counting the seconds and hearing the footsteps fade away... when Plif started shouting a second after that, his words unclear but tone angrily clear, a ragged cheer broke out in the briefing room and the previous joviality returned.

“I was going to reach out of my chair and bloody strangle him, General or not” Schueler seethed, bounding to the back of the room. “Thanks for the intervention.”

“My pleasure, the man’s been an insufferable tit since his promotion. There’s something wrong with this navy when a man like him can get in a position of power like that.” La’an’s retort was honest but cutting.

“Anyway... this has already gone on an hour, hopefully the actual brief is too the point – feeling less secure knowing the CAP isn’t any of our mob.” Torres smiled as he spoke, heading to the back row with the rest of Theta in tow.

“It’s worth it, trust me – I got a short look at the mission brief alongside my fellow commanders. This one’s going to be lively but I won’t steal the Commodore’s thunder.” Schueler smiled, enjoying the information superiority for a moment.

“He means we’ve got a lead on the Hammer and we’re planning a recon in force, followed by a task group engagement.” La’an added quietly, enjoying Schueler’s frown.

“Spoiler alert La’an, I should have known you’d be in the loop.”

“Not your fault, I’ve just learned to read briefing slates upside down – the draft was on Plif’s desk when I saw him this morning for the debrief on our last recon mission. I’m looking out for that frigate by the way, feel like I’ve got a score to settle and I’m not running away from him a 3rd time.” La’an reflected on the last few brushes with the Nebulon as he spoke.

“I’m sure we can lend a hand, 3.1 missiles might struggle by themselves” Yoda added to the conversation, slouched in a neighbouring chair.

“If he wants to take on the frigate himself I say we watch and take bets, I’ll get some odds worked up and run the book” Gilad added from his own chair, happily causing trouble.

“I’m no Corellian, but I was never one for odds – I’ll feel better with the rest of the task group behind me so don’t worry. I’m too old to be stupid, although I’ve been lucky more than anything so far.” La’an added the last comment with a smile, knowing they all felt much the same way and knowing none of them was old, truly, although years of combat had worn them down in many ways.

“Right – enough of this, 5 minutes to get moving and comfortable. Try and look surprised when Plif’s secret plan is briefed. After he finishes we should have 4-5 hours, so get your admin sorted and rest up. It’s going to be messy.” Schueler took his own advice, standing again to walk back

to the front row and engage the young and nervy looking Rho commander. Sigma and Sin's had already grabbed Psi, another fairly junior Captain new to Wing II and were giving her the same support. Kappa's lead was out of sight, but the raucous tone from the far end of the room amidst a laughing scrum of pilots suggested Drachen was in there somewhere – no doubt recalling the many tales of Frown that the newer pilots had probably never heard. Checking his chron, La'an headed down to join them – he had a few tales of his own to add...