

## The Conversation

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“I hope this thing works.” Commander Flair was standing beside Captain Richards, looking through the main view screen of the bridge. He continued, “I don’t really feel like fighting in another war. Hell, I just got married.”

The Captain turned to his Commander and nodded, “My son’s graduating soon, I want to be able to take some leave and go home for that. I’m sure no one wants war.”

They remained silent and stared out at the stars.

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“Mr. Veloatia, this is the Vasudan Ambassador, Hsai Grathok.” The Master of Ceremonies introduced me to the Vasudan I’d be working with. This was the first time I’d seen a real Vasudan, and I must say that I’m really impressed. They are, or at least this one was, much taller than me. He, if it was a he, had beige leathery skin and large bulbous eye. What was most impressive was his style of dress. He wore a large purple suit, which awkwardly fit against his frame. It was trimmed with gold, which was probably real, and many other valuable minerals, like Copper.

I extended my hand, not sure of what to expect. Hopefully, extending a hand wasn’t an insult. Thankfully, it wasn’t. The Vasudan clasped it and gave it a firm shake. He began to speak, the translator hooked up to my ear took a few seconds to translate, “This is how I do this, yes?”

I quickly nodded and replied, “Yes it is.” It took him a few seconds to understand me. This was frustrating, I had to wait a few seconds before I could respond to anything. I smiled at him and then let the handshake stop.

“That is a nice suit you have on, Hsai Grathok.” I took a chance and hoped that Hsai was just like our “Mr.”. I hit another home run.

“Thanks with much intensity. Your dress style is very well also.” He nodded and patted my shoulder. I smiled and nodded. It seemed that the translators aren’t exactly working, or at least they were just translating literally... I wonder what I would sound like to him!

I pointed to a large table with two ends and said, “Shall we take a seat?”

He turned to a person from his delegation and murmured something I couldn’t hear, or understand. We had a few failsafes as well, just in case we didn’t want them to understand what we were saying. The person he was speaking to seemed to be in a fuss...

Finally, he turned back to me and nodded. He slowly took a seat and his delegation then surrounded him. I took my place at the other end of the table, a few aides stood behind me.

“Would you like anything to drink?” I called one of the waiters over.

He nodded quickly, “A Terran beverage would be... interesting?”

I nodded and whispered to the waiter, “Get him something mild. Give me one of those too.”

The waiter quickly left and returned with a bottle of red wine and two glasses. He poured the wine

into the glasses and handed one to each of us. I took a sip and watched, as he tasted his drink.

I turned to one of my aides and got a datapad from him. I set it down on the table and looked at the Ambassador. He looked extremely happy, playing with his drink and taking small sips. "This tastes delectable!"

I nodded and quickly tapped a few buttons on the datapad. Then I shoved it across the table and towards him. Might as well start, give him something to mull over while he's in a good mood.

However, it seemed as if the entire Vasudan contingent was staring at the datapad in disbelief. They began to murmur between each other. I turned to my own aides and mouthed, "Oh shit."

I turned back and faced the Ambassador. He was standing and glaring down at me. He began shouting at me, but when it was translated, it was in a calm monotonous voice. "How dare you!" I think I understood what he really meant though.

I began making my apologies, hoping to salvage the situation, "I am very sorry, I apologize for what I may have done wrong."

He stared at me for a long while and then sat back down in his seat. He glowered at me but didn't look as angry as he just did a few moments ago.

"Your beverages are very interesting," he calmly began, "In fact, I would like to taste more of them."

I nodded, repressing a sigh. I signaled for the waiter to come back and ordered him to bring back a variety of drinks. I couldn't drink any of course, or at least, not a lot. The Ambassador however... well, I guess he couldn't get drunk... maybe alcohol didn't affect him.

The Ambassador continued on and ended up tasting hundreds of varieties of wines, and he kept complimenting the human race for making such a 'delectable beverage'. It gets annoying if you keep hearing the same thing over and over again for two hundred times.

Finally, when there were just no more drinks I could offer him, I asked him if there was anything else he wanted. I didn't want to push the datapad on him because of what happened last time...

"What kinds of foods do you have?"

Oh goddamn. I called the waiter over again, who was by this time extremely tired. I told him to begin to bring some food and to tell the chefs to warm up.

I ended up waiting through a hundred course meal, which could end up being very... well frankly, boring. The entire conversation was made up of compliments and suggestions. He even shared some of the food with the people in his delegation, and I had to listen to their comments as well.

Well, by this time I was fed up. When the Ambassador finally finished what would be the last meal, I shoved the datapad back at him again. The last thing that I wanted to happen did happen. He stood up angrily and began yelling at me. The translator couldn't pick up every thing that he said, but mixed in it was the word "Conversation".

I wanted to just leave right there! Conversation?! All we had done was talk about how good each and every type of wine and food was. In a few hours he had completely exhausted the food

resources here. Anything else we would have to pull in from the outside. But that wasn't the point! I had never wasted so much time in my life!

I stood up myself, "I am only trying to get something done... there is no harm in looking at a datapad, is there?"

The Ambassador yelled out and one of his personal guards approached, brought out a gun of some sort, and shot at the datapad. After this happened, my own forces drew their weapons and aimed at the Vasudans. I turned around and yelled at them to lower their weapons, but it was too late... the damage was done.

The Vasudans had drawn their own weapons and were aiming at us. I didn't know what to do... in most negotiations I had, we usually ended them in an hour. Propose the deal and strike it. I didn't know what could have set him off... but it was too late.

I didn't know what happened after that. Someone had opened fire. I couldn't tell from who's side it was, or whether or not it was an accident or not, but that had triggered the explosion that was bound to happen.

There was no time to react, both sides had began to open fire. I was already out of the room when the real fighting started and men started to die. I ran for my transport ship.

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The Red Alert sounded. I looked at the Commander and asked, "What's going on?" I was in the middle of getting ready to sleep when the alarm sounded. However, whatever weariness I felt was gone when the battle alert was sounded.

He looked at me and said, "Looks like the negotiations failed. They're fighting down there."

I closed my eyes and sighed, "What about the Vasudan ships out here?"

"They're moving into some sort of formation... looks like they're going to get hot pretty quick. They're launching fighters."

I turned to my tactical officers, "Signal the CAG to launch all fighters, get everything up there, including the new Apollo's. Tell the gunners to get ready too."

The Commander quickly replied for the tactical officer, "Are you sure you want to put the Apollo's out? We haven't really tested them out in combat? What if they all break down?"

"If they all break down, then we lose an entire wing of fighters. They'd outnumber us 2 to 1, and we'd be dead." I moved quickly and sat down on my chair. "I wonder what the hell went on down there that started this goddamned thing."

The fighters were getting closer, some of them had even opened fire. I punched a button that allowed me to speak through the ship's intercom system, "Everyone to battle stations, the Vasudans are hot, we're going to war!"

I watched out the view screen and smiled as I saw the fighters pouring out of the ship. They began engaging the Vasudan fighters efficiently, as if nothing had just happened before.

“I’ve always wanted to be in the history books...” I turned to the Commander, “Tell all ships to come about and engage them. We’re in for the fight of our lives, this is the first battle of this new war, and I’ll be damned if I lose it!”