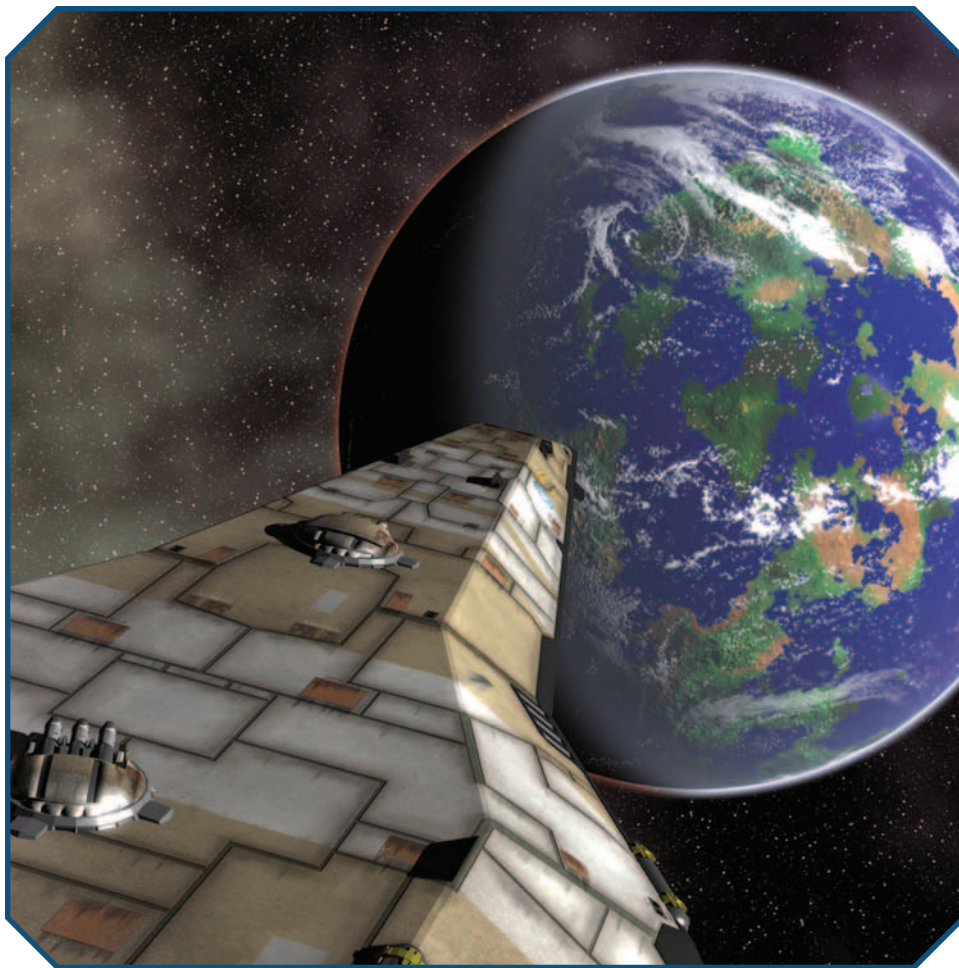


# CHAPTER ELEVEN

# CAMPAIGNS



April 15, 2174 – Nusku star system, in the war zone:

Shimannii reached the bridge in time to see the jump-emergence tumble begin. A flash of blue-white light washed the hull cameras, and then stars wheeled all around **Cutty Sark**.

“Emergence confirmed,” said the navigator, watching her instruments. “We are in Nusku space, on the 100-diameter stellar limit as expected.”

“Well done,” Shimannii replied. “Comms, find Orbital Control for me, please.”

“Done,” reported the little alien at the communications console.

“Nusku Orbital Control, this is **Cutty Sark**, Nusku registry, arriving

from the Apishal jump point at 1935 standard time, 15 April 2174. Request transponder code assignment and flight plan to Nusku Down starport along minimum-time trajectory.”

Almost four minutes before Nusku starport would reply. Shimannii used the time to review the voyage. Four years away from Terran space. The Captain and a third of the crew lost. The ship nearly crippled, then repaired, then damaged once more. Trade links forged, and then most likely lost with the renewed outbreak of war. No freight in the hold, no passengers in the state-rooms, the ship frankly running for home through the war zone. On the other hand, the ship carried a priceless

cargo of experience – friends won, contacts made, knowledge gathered from dozens of Imperial worlds.

Shimannii and **Cutty Sark** were coming home, to Nusku rather than to the Terran homeworld that neither had ever seen.

“**Cutty Sark**, this is Nusku Orbital Control. Your arrival recorded and accepted. You are cleared for a minimum-time trajectory for Nusku, squawk 2771, maintain contact on channel 5. Welcome home.”

Shimannii nodded. “Thank you, Control. Transponder set to 2771, contact on channel 5. See you soon.” He tapped at his controls, setting the ship moving along the course that the navigator had already plotted.

“Sir?” It was young Alexia Dergan, a technician promoted to Sensor Officer after the position’s former occupant had been killed.

“Yes, Officer Dergan?” Shimannii prompted.

“Do you think we’ll go out again?”

Shimannii stifled a smile. Terrans! Drag them through fire and death, and the ones who survived still continued to think ahead to the next venture. They were nothing like Vilani, and Shimannii realized that was just how he liked them. “That’s up to the Consortium, Officer Dergan,” he said, and turned to look at the stars. “Still, I imagine we will.”

This chapter provides the GM with some suggestions as to how to get started with the **Interstellar Wars** setting.