# Warp Rift
## The Battlefleet Gothic Netzine

# July/Aug 2005
# Issue 08

*This Issue:*
*GothiComp 2005 - The Winners!*
*The Death Guard Fleet*
*Alternative rules for attack craft*
*Flying solo against the Orks*
*New Fiction - Two more short stories*

*From the Nexus Publishing House*

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Warp Rift Publication Team:
Iain (CyberShadow) - Editor, Void Stalker, Poop Deck Scrubber
Ray Bell - New Rules
Chris French - Articles
John Webber - Painting
Space Cadet and CyberShadow - Fiction

Credits:
Title Banner - Nicholas Mariana
Cover Picture - Farseer Draconis T'Sai
Additional Graphics - Warmaster Nice, Lee Eldridge, John Webber,
        Nate Montes, Nick Mariana

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01

I have to be honest, this issue of Warp Rift represents a triumph over adversity! There were times when I thought that we would never another issue. Most of our readers will be aware that this issue was actually scheduled for release in May, and by now you should have been basking in the warm glow of a fabulous issue eight, and eagerly downloading issue nine. I can only apologise for the skipped issue, and do my very best to make sure that we dont miss another. About two months ago I had the difficult decision of whether to release an issue which was light in terms of articles and quality, or signal all stop.

The moral of this is that we really need your contributions. This publication passed its first year smoothly, but the hard working editors here can only produce so much, and eventually we will need to rely on material sent in. So, please send in what you can. Whatever you have an idea for, chances are that there is a section here that it will fit in (and if there is not, then we will create one). For issue nine to be a success, we need interesting and new ideas, fiction, pictures, graphics, rules and scenarios. Your hobby needs you.

While on the subject of submitted articles, I should also apologise to Black Horizon. He responded to a call for fiction, but this issue I simply ran out of time and pages to fit it in. I hope that it will appear soon.

Thanks for reading, and if all goes well I will see you again in two months.                                                          Good hunting,
                                                                    CyberShadow

EDITORIAL

02

# Ork-nanism: Programming the Ork Fleet for Solitaire in BFG

## By Chris French

Let's face facts, folks: Nobody out there plays Orks for any reason besides "comedy relief". With the worst speed, turns, armor, leadership (Orks have Pointy Ears, which is close to Pointy Hair - you figure it out), and weapons in the game, the poor clod playing the Orks is reduced to playing the old "March Of Cambreath strategy" ("How many more can we make die?"), rather than actually trying to win the game. (And don't give me any nonsense about "any time an Ork gets into a fight, he wins" - there's a reason we keep track of points in this game.) In fact, the Orks are so "intellectually leaden", one doesn't even need a human opponent to play them - the Orks can be played solitaire using a few fairly basic rules of thumb.

Therefore, presented for the approval of all save the most die-hard Ork supporters, below is the Solitaire Ork Play rules for BFG. In the interests of 'full disclosure', yes, the following is inspired by the Tyranid Instinctive Behavior rules from BFG Armada, p. 82.

Step 1: Will normal movement take the unit(s) into a dangerous celestial phenomenon or similar hazard (asteroids, mines, edge of board, etc.)?
Yes - Attempt to Burn Retros, maneuver to avoid hazard/phenomenon.
No - Go to Step 2.

Step 2: Does ordnance need reloading? (If ordnance is depleted, skip this step.)
Yes - Attempt to Reload Ordnance.
No - Go to Step 3.

Step 3: Is there an enemy which can be rammed (that is, dead ahead and within All Ahead Full adjusted movement distance)?
Yes - Execute All Ahead Full, and attempt ram.
No - Go to Step 4.

Step 4: Is the nearest enemy in the rear 180° of the unit?
Yes - Attempt Come To New Heading, if hull type allows, otherwise use normal movement to turn towards enemy in question.
No - Go to Step 5.

Step 5: Is the nearest enemy in the front 180° of the unit, but will remain outside weapons range if normal movement is used?
Yes - Close with enemy. Only execute All Ahead Full if doing so does not cause unit to bypass enemy.
No - Go to Step 6.

Step 6: Is the nearest enemy in the front 180° of the unit, and will be within weapons range if normal movement is used?
Yes - Close with enemy; attack with all weapons which can bear. Attempt Hit and Run or boarding if base-to-base contact can be achieved.
No - Go to Step 7.

Step 7: If none of the above conditions apply, do not apply any Special Orders; simply move the unit towards the nearest enemy.

Weapons fire allocation is fairly straightforward. If not otherwise specified, the unit shoots the nearest enemy. (See below for exceptions to this policy.)

Note that there are a couple of differences between the Tyranids and this. Obviously, since these are Orks, the Prime Directive is "find the nearest enemy and attack him in the most brutally straightforward manner possible". For practical reasons, step one remains consistent - Orks cannot fight if they're off the playing area or splashed across a floating rock (Orks are stupid, but not foolish). Getting the ol' ordnance reloaded is the next step, what's the use of closing with the enemy if the Orkspletive-deleted weapons won't shoot?

The next couple of steps are based on Ork 'psychology' - namely, that the nearest enemy is always the Target Du Jour (Orks are not known for thinking long-term; for that matter, they're not known for thinking at all…). Thus an enemy who is behind the Ork, but close, is a 'better' target than a distant opponent forward. (Hint for non-Ork players: Get behind the Ork and stay there.)

The remaining steps simply 'mop up' the remaining tactical options - if the Ork can't ram, well, shooting is always a nice second choice.

Should a 'later' tactical option be superior to an 'earlier' one, the Ork unit in question needs to pass a Leadership check. If successful, the Ork unit may skip directly to the order in question, rather than silly-walking through the entire list. The same goes for fire allocation. Of course, since we're talking about 'Ork Leadership'…. (Evil grin!)

# A Modest Proposal:
# Attack Craft Alterations

## By Chris French

This is going to be a short article, as the focal point of the issue being discussed is simplicity, or the lack thereof. And as brevity is the soul of wit, I shall be brief. (Old reference - look it up.)

On the Yahoo Groups BFG List, and I suspect on other BFG mailing lists, there has been a great deal of bandwidth clotted with complaints concerning the complexity of the combat rules for Attack Craft (fighters, bombers, assault boats, and related). The short description of the complaints is that there are too many rules, exceptions to rules, exceptions to exceptions, and so on ad nauseam. Bombers in particular - attempting to figure out just how many attacks a bomber makes on a run can require a degree in advanced mathematics, and even gamers with Computer Sciences degrees want to get away from that nonsense once in a while.

So, to that end, the dangerous (to himself and others) mind behind this keyboard has been giving deep consideration to ways to simplify the attack craft conundrum. I know there are other 'alternate rules' sets for BFG out there on the web, but they tend to exchange one kind of complication for another ('clunky rules' for 'extra detail'). I have aimed for the same simplicity which is BFG's hallmark, while clarifying the muddle at the same time.

All that said, let's get to the actual rules.

Attack Craft Alterations

Movement Rules are unchanged.

Combat Rules are entirely ditched. Replace with the following:

*Fighters* have one (1) attack chance (that is, a fighter may only attack once, then it must return to a carrier). This attack chance may be used to perform ONE of the following actions:

1) Attack one enemy attack craft unit. Roll 1d6; the target is destroyed on a roll of 4 or higher. If target is a fighter, it may attempt its own 4+

attack to attempt to destroy its attacker; bombers and assault boats may not attempt to counterattack. Units which are allowed saving rolls may use them to avoid the effects of attacking or being attacked (eg an Eldar fighter may attack a unit, then attempt its roll to remain on the board).

2) Destroy between one (1) and six (6) points inclusive of a torpedo salvo (for example, a Retribution's torpedo salvo would require two fighters to destroy it completely). The torpedoes do not have any defense against this, the attacker simply declares his attack and eliminates the torpedoes.

3) Suppress one (1) ship turret for one (1) ordnance phase. The fighter attempting the suppression rolls against the weakest armor value of the ship in question (for example, against an Ork Krooza, the roll would be 4+); if successful, that ship is counted as having one fewer turrets for that ordnance phase. While a single fighter may only suppress one turret, suppressions are cumulative (for example, if three successful suppression attacks are made on a Styx, the ship is considered to have zero turrets for that ordnance phase). Once that specific ordnance phase is completed, all suppressions are removed. (The fighters aren't necessarily destroying the turrets - they're just distracting them while the bombers and a-boats do their business.)

*Bombers* have one (1) attack chance (that is, a bomber may only attack once, then it must return to a carrier). This attack chance may be used to perform the following:

1) Attack one (1) enemy Ship. Roll one (1) attack against the ship's weakest armor value, if the roll succeeds, the ship takes one hit.

*Assault boats* act like bombers; however the attack chance is expressed as a hit-and-run attack on the target Ship. Assault boats do not need to roll to attempt a hit-and-run, the player simply declares that it is attacking, and the result is calculated.

A few clarifications are in order for these rules:

1) As should be evident, different classes of attack craft do not combine. The attack craft may move en masse to a target, but the attacks are figured one at a time. (Tactical note: fighters always lead, clearing a path for the other attack craft.)

2) The 'correct' order for determining attacks on ships is: fighters attempt to destroy enemy fighters flying CAP, fighters attempt turret suppression, other attack craft/torpedoes attempt attacks (non-suppressed turrets defending as usual).

3) Ship turrets which remain un-suppressed affect all attacking attack craft/torpedoes that ordnance phase (the turrets simply throw out a curtain of fire - suppressed turrets are
'distracted' by enemy fire).

4) An attack craft which may serve in more than one role (for example, Ork Fighter-Bombers) must specify which role it is serving when it attacks.

5) An attack craft which receives a saving roll to avoid having to leave to board once it performs its attack may not attack twice in one ordnance phase.

Well, that's that. Give these rules a try, and let the editor of this august periodical know what you think of them.

# Death Guard

## By Ray Bell

Unlike most Traitor Legions, the Death Guard didn't fracture after the defeat of Horus. The Death Guard slowly withdrew across the Imperium, spreading pain and despair on their journey to the Eye of Terror.

The Death Guard were split into seven companies that were much larger than any other Space Marine company. Commanding one of these companies is Typus, Herald of Nurgle. Typhus was ultimately responsible for the Damnation of his Legion; persuading his Primarch, Mortarion, that all their Navigators were still loyal to the Emperor and to have them all killed. Typhus was to guide the Death Guard fleet through the warp to Terra, but through his design stranded the fleet in the warp ready for Nurgle to corrupt the Legion.

Although the Death Guard escaped it into the Eye as a whole, part of the legion fragmented into smaller warbands. However these warbands are often pulled back into a great fighting force whenever Typhus Travels out of the Eye onboard the Terminus Est.

The Death Guard have access to The Terminus Est (0-1), Typhus Herald of Nurgle, Blackstone Fortresses (0-2), Blight of Nurgle, Plague ships, Toxin Torpedoes as well as alternate Space Marine Crews (Plague Marines), Warmasters and Lords.

Death Guard Escort squadrons

Death Guard escort squadrons number between 3-7 instead of 2-6 this is due to their organisational method. Escorts 'squadrons' can carry Toxin Torpedoes for the additional cost shown (Up to 6 torpedoes in total=20pts, 7 torpedoes in total or more=30pts).

Plague Marines

*Plague Marines (replacing Chaos Space Marines)* *35pts*

Gifted with supreme resilience and a terrifying visage of decay, Plague Marines have given their entire existence to spreading Nurgle's Rot amongst the living. Death is no release for Plague Marines as they find themselves reborn into the services of Grandfather Nurgle, to whom

their cries for relief from the ever-present plague are like the clamouring of loving children. All Death Guard are Plague Marines!

Plague Marines give a +1 Boarding Modifier and then a -1 modifier to the enemy when boarded (this is only when the Plague Bearers ship is boarded, this will only happen if there is a 'draw' and the Nurgle ship is retaliated against or you are using the experimental Mark of Nurgle rules). Plague Marines give +1 to the vessels leadership and increase it's maximum leadership to 10.

Plague Bearers (these rules are also used by Plague ships): +1 to the results of Hit and Run attacks (including ordnance), when rolling to determine Hit and Run attacks, roll 2D6 and take the lowest result, however if a double is rolled the ship suffers a Fire critical as well (this would mean a double six will most likely cause 2 Fire criticals!), in the event that Terminators are being used their rules supersede those of Plague bearers, if a double is rolled the additional Fire critical is still caused. Enemy conducting Hit and Run attacks against the ship suffer a -1 to the result, scores two Assault points every turn in Planetary assault instead of one, scores double assault points if landed on the planets surface (Note: it will be impossible for a Plague Marine capital ship to land on a planets surface, this is included to complete the Plague Bearers special rules).

Temple of Summoners

A Temple of Summoners allows you to use a Daemonship in your fleet (using the rules in Warp Rift 2), it must have a mark of Nurgle.

Typhus Herald of Nurgle

You may include Typhus in a Death Guard Fleet if it is worth 1500pts or more. He must captain the most expensive capital ship.

*Typhus Herald of Nurgle (Ld 10, 2 re-rolls)*                    *200pts*

Special rules: Destroyer Hive (wrath of Nurgle); upgrades the Mark of Nurgle so that each enemy vessel in base contact suffers a Fire Critical on a roll of a 5+ instead of a 6+ in the end phase (this is in both players end phases). (If not using the experimental Mark of Nurgle rules you should still use the Destroyer Hive rules).

Typhus also has the following upgrades: Mark of Nurgle and Plague Marines.

*0-1    Warmaster of Nurgle (replacing Chaos Warmaster)*

You may include one Warmaster of Nurgle in your fleet to command the most expensive capital ship. If Typhus is commanding the fleet you may not have a Warmaster of Nurgle.

The Warmaster of Nurgle (+2 Ld, max of 9, one re-roll)        135pts
The Warmaster of Nurgle has the Mark of Nurgle and may have either a Temple of Summoners or the Plague Marine upgrade.

The Warmaster of Nurgle may be given an extra re-roll for +25pts.

*Lords of Nurgle (replacing Chaos Lord)*

Any capital ship, apart from that of a Warmasterof Nurgle (or Typhus), may be captained by a Lord of Nurgle.

Lords of Nurgle (+1 Ld, max of 9)                                    60pts
Lords of Nurgle have the Mark of Nurgle and may have either a Temple of Summoners or the Plague Marines upgrade.

A Lord of Nurgle may be given a 'ship-wide' re-roll for +25pts (may only be used on the ship or squadron commanded by the Lord).

Experimental rules: Mark of Nurgle

A Mark of Nurgle adds +1 damage point to the ship and a -1 modifier to the enemy when boarded (this can be in addition to the -1 caused by Plague Marines). In order to board a ship possessing a Mark of Nurgle the boarding ship must first pass a leadership check with a -1 modifier if the Nurgle ship has a higher boarding value (Tyranids, Grey Knights and other Nurgle ships automatically pass this leadership check), this leadership check is taken at the start of the movement phase. In addition, roll a D6 for each enemy vessel in base contact with a Nurgle ship in the end phase on a roll of a 6 the enemy ship suffers a Fire Critical (this is in both players end phases).

Any Capital ship may have a Mark of Nurgle for +35pts each.

Nurgle Blight

Nurgle Blight is a weaker and more debilitating (for the 'gifted' vessel) form of a Mark of Nurgle and adds +1 damage point to the ship and a -1 modifier to the enemy when boarded. In order to board a ship possessing a Mark of Nurgle the boarding ship must first pass a leadership check with a -1 modifier if the Nurgle ship has a higher boarding value (Tyranids, Grey Knights and other Nurgle ships automatically pass this leadership check), this leadership check is taken at the start of the movement phase.

Reduces ships speed by 5cm and halves the number of D6 for All Ahead Full (rounded down, e.g. 2D6 for Slaughters).

Any Capital ship may have Nurgle Blight for +15pts each (you may not have Nurgle Blight and a Mark of Nurgle on the same ship).
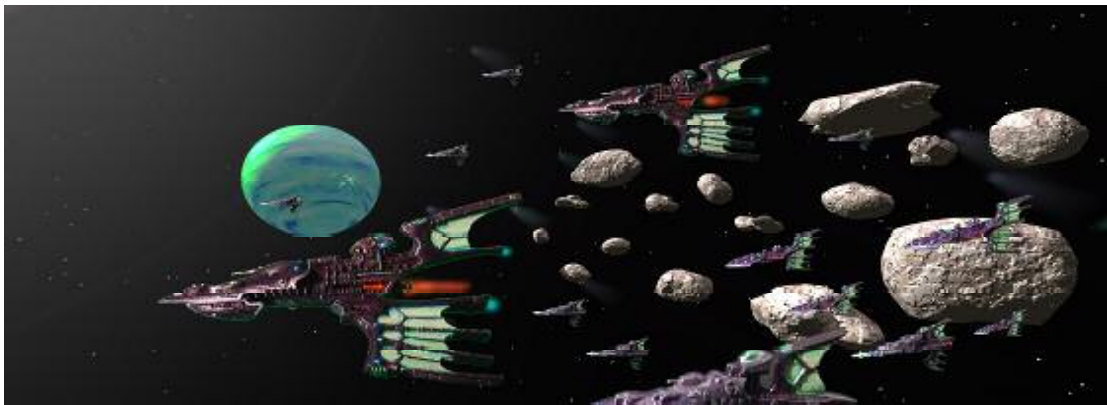
Terminus Est

The Terminus Est is one of the grandest Battleships ever to be made by human hands. Rumoured to be a very early prototype of the Despoiler Class, the Terminus Est retains the Despoilers launch bay capacity and broadside firepower but boasts an extra dorsal lance and a stronger torpedo salvo. Although the numerous millennia have been unkind to the overall appearance of the battleship (and it's crew no doubt!), it's bloated hull is not without purpose; adding swollen flesh to absorb massive amounts of damage but in turn slowing the vessel to speeds which the lumbering planet killer can easily out match.

A horrific growth has gestated on the Terminus Est's prow, known only as 'The Fountain of the Undying Plague'. Not thought to be any form of technology or artificially made construct, the fountain of the undying plague causes all within it's cascade of death and decay to suffer Grandfather Nurgle's wrath, crews suffer from accelerated aging, bizarre genetic mutations and all diseases and blights known to exist and many that aren't. Ships within it's reach suffer just as their crews do, hulls and internal structures warping as if strained by a million wars and never seeing a shipyard or orbital dock. Emperor, help any world that is lain in her path, as the undying plague consumes every living man or rotting dead corpse.

The Terminus Est carries a mark of Nurgle and scores triple points in the planetary assault scenario and may be an Exterminator for no loss of prow weaponry (this does not incur a special limit to the number of Exterminators you may have).

| Terminus Est | | | | | 490 Points |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TYPE/HITS | SPEED | TURNS | SHIELDS | ARMOUR | TURRETS |
| Battleship/14 (15) | 15cm | 45° | 4 | 5+ | 4 (5) |
| ARMAMENT | | RANGE/SPEED | | FIREPOWER | FIRE ARC |
| Prow Torpedoes | | 30cm | | 10 | Front |
| Dorsal Lance Battery | | 60cm | | 4 | L/F/R |
| Port Weapons Battery | | 60cm | | 7 | Left |
| Starboard Weapons Battery | | 60cm | | 7 | Right |
| Port Launch Bays | | Varies | | 4 Squadrons | - |
| Starboard Launch Bays | | Varies | | 4 Squadrons | - |
| Fountain of the Undying Plague | | All vessels within 3D6 excluding vessels with Mark of Nurgle | | D3 fire criticals through shields | All |

Fountain of the Undying Plague: Unaffected by special orders and being crippled, still fires when hulked!)

Notes: Can't use Come To New Heading. 15 hits due to Mark of Nurgle, 5 turrets due to the Fountain of the Undying Plague (If hulked the ship will count as having one turret). Carries Toxin Torpedoes. Terminator Teleport Assault

## Plague Ships

The Death Guard have access to Plague ships. Plague ships are mortally damaged vessels (hulks), which have been repaired to a level that allows them to move and 'crash' into planets to infect them with Plague Zombies. Plague ships replace normal transports for all scenarios that use them.

| Chaos Plague Ship | | | | | Points - Special |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TYPE/HITS | SPEED | TURNS | SHIELDS | ARMOUR | TURRETS |
| Cruiser/2 (3) | 15cm | 45° | 0 | 5+ | 1 |

Notes: 3 hits due to Blight of Nurgle. Plague Bearer.

## Toxin Torpedoes

The Death Guard have access to special Toxin Torpedoes on ships that carry Torpedo tubes and have a Mark of Nurgle or Blight of Nurgle. Toxin Torpedoes act in most respects as Melta Torpedoes (cause fire critcials instead of damage), except they don't explode if a prow critical is caused (or wherever the torpedoes are carried) and are supplied in enough quantities for an entire battle (unless you run out of ordnance of course). In addition, roll a D6 at the start of each ordnance phase, for each point of strength each Toxin Torpedo marker has, any rolls of 1 reduce the maker's strength by 1 (this represents the toxins actually disintegrating the torpedoes!).

Toxin Torpedoes cost exactly the same amount as Special Torpedoes (Up to 6=20pts, 7 or more=30pts).
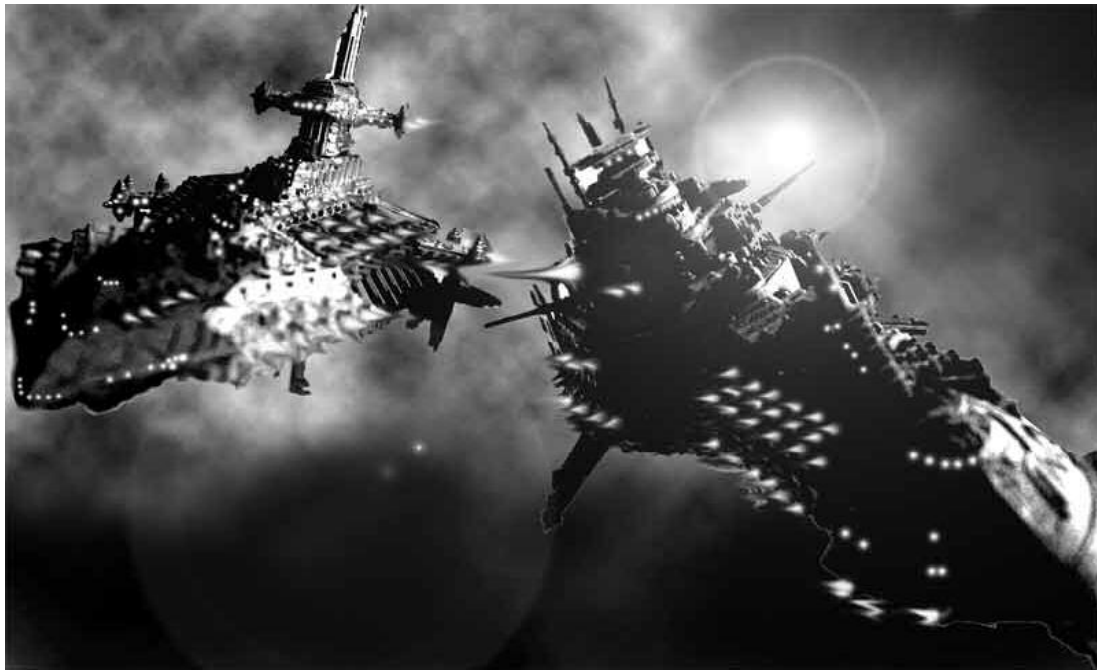
# GothiComp 2005

## The winners of the individual heats of the GothiComp 2005 Battlefleet Gothic Painting Competition



Above: The GothiComp 2005 grand winner Righteous Fury a Space Marine Venerable Battle Barge.

Below: An Imperial Dreadnought from Warmaster Nice. This came very close to taking first place, getting an equal number of votes but scored just a couple less votes in its individual heat. This entry also placed well in the conversion category.

I.M.S Spear of Voss

I.M.S. Sword of Voss

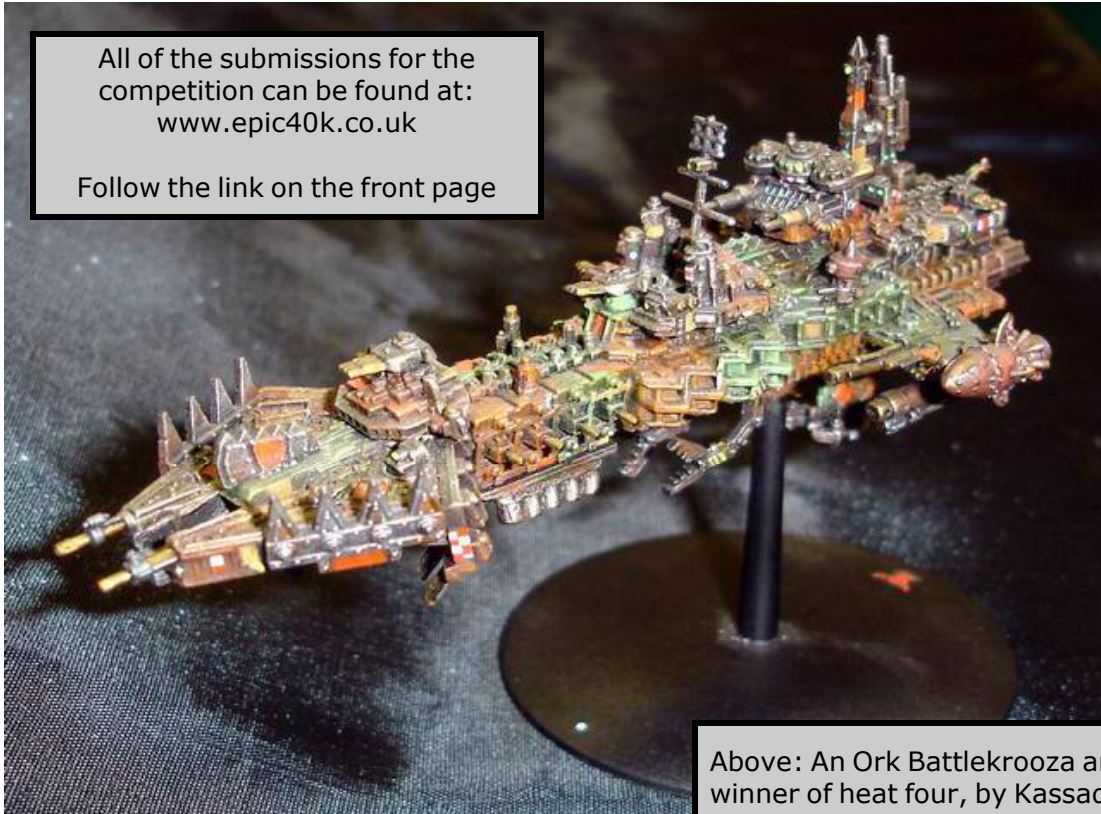Above: Heat seven winner, by Roderigo Barbera, and winner of the conversion category

Right: Heat three winner, a space station from Warmaster Nice

Left: The winner of heat five, a Tyranid Hiveship from Kr00zA

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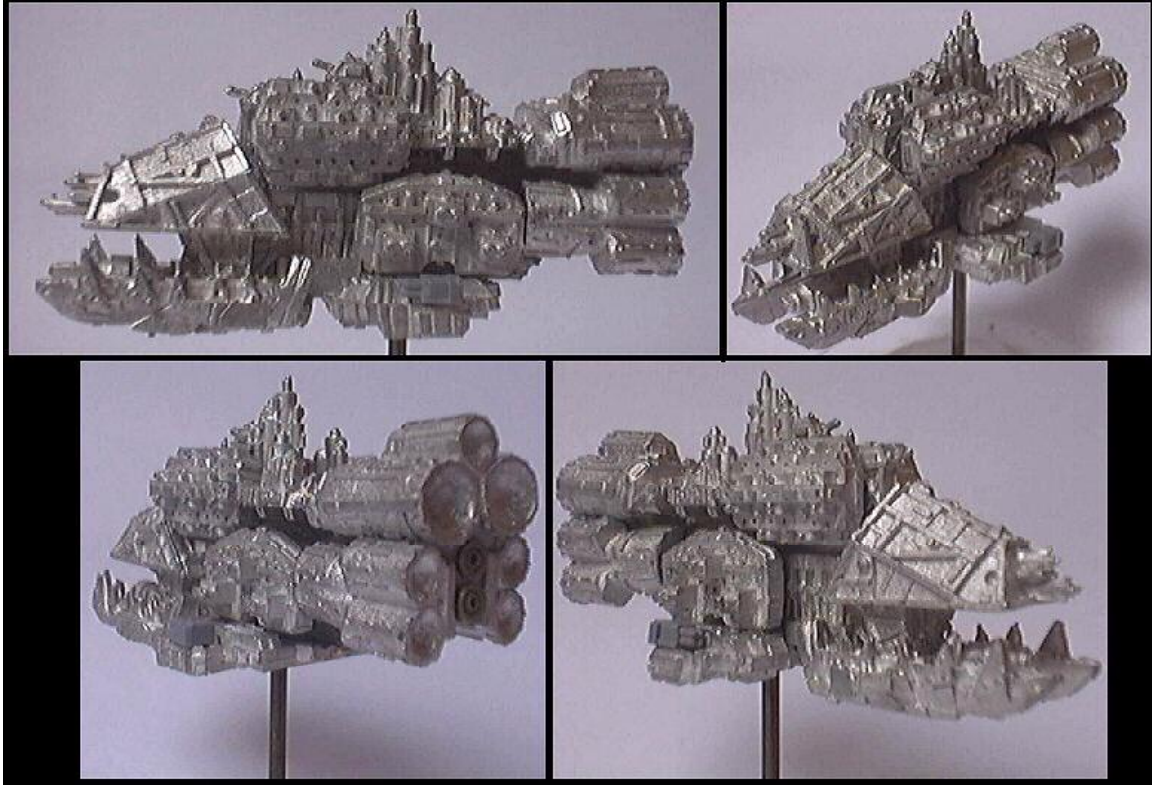All of the submissions for the competition can be found at: www.epic40k.co.uk

Above: An Ork Battlekrooza and winner of heat four, by Kassad

Below: The winner of heat six, an Eldar Corsair Eclipse from Farseer Draconis T'Sai
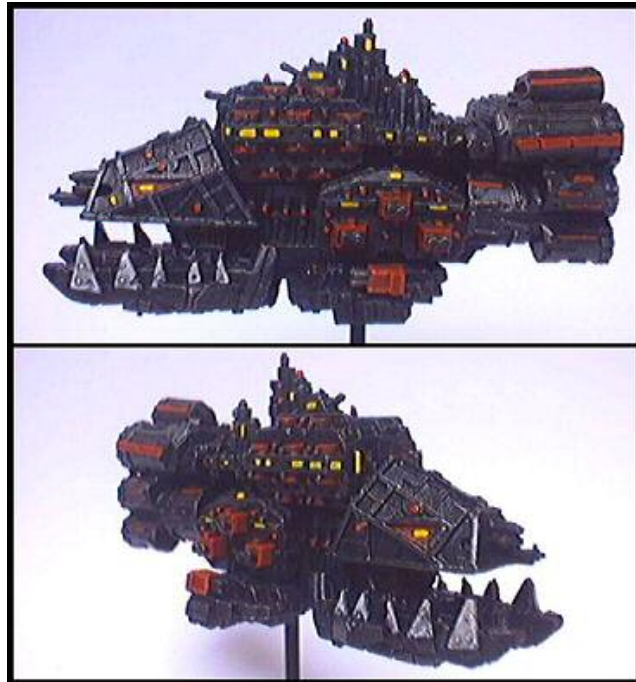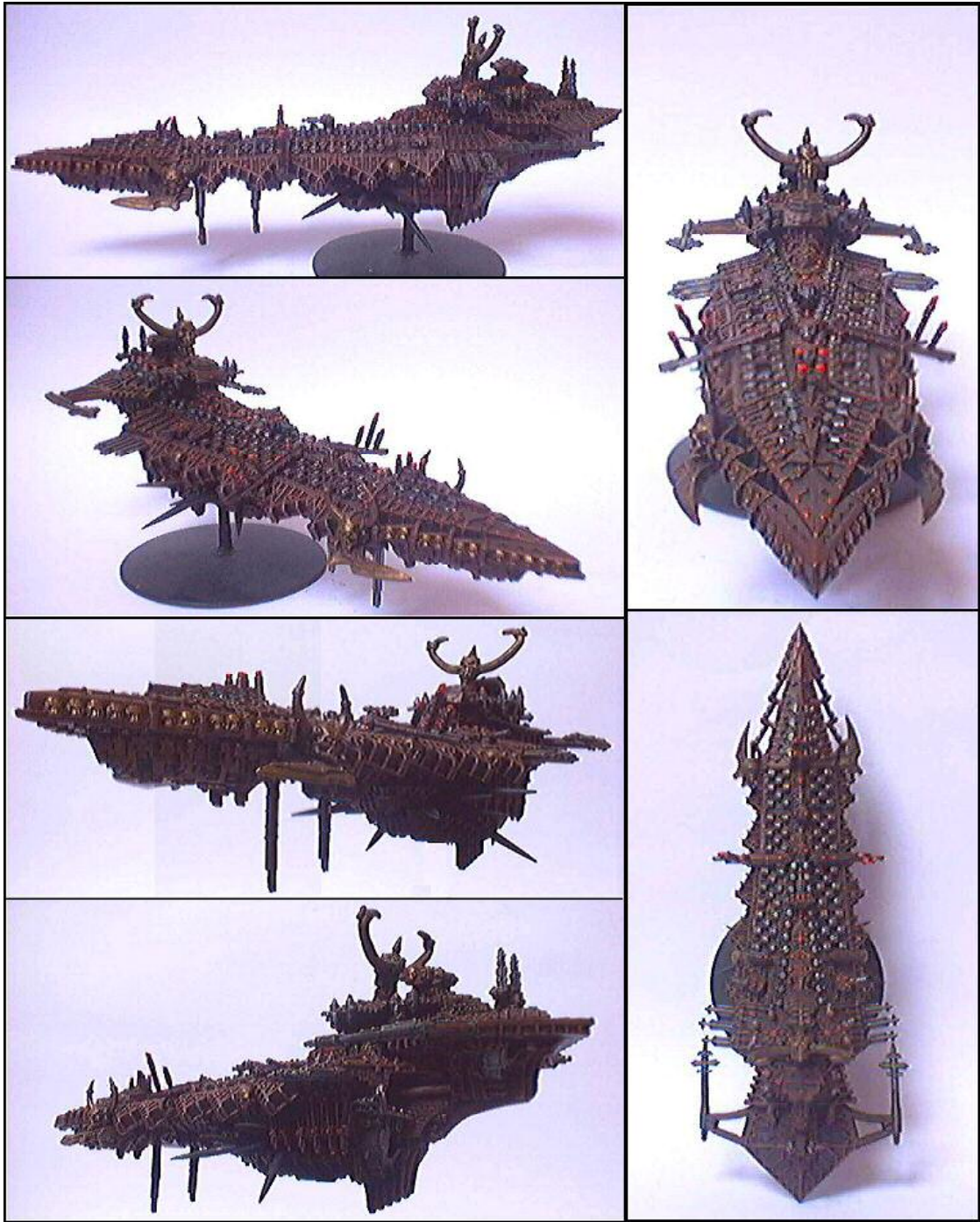
# Big Guns

Once more, we are treated to a show from the dockyards of Kr00zA.



Above: Work in progress shots of a Hammer class Battle Kroozer.

Right: The Hammer, fully painted and ready for battle.

Above: A Chaos Oppressor class Dreadnought

# The Wanderer

## By Chris French

"Your Highness, I have multiple small signatures in the Warp; they appear to be heading for this system."

The trim, elegant figure in the command chair made a single graceful move of standing and crossing the room to where the speaker sat. Peering over the speaker's shoulder, His Highness noted the ripples trundling towards his vessel's location. "Perhaps twenty ships, in loose formation. A civilian convoy, maybe?" he mused.

"It would appear so, Your Highness. Drive signatures suggest they belong to the God-Emperor."

His Highness looked over his shoulder to another seated figure, and asked, "How do our mining operations proceed?"

The reply came quickly. "This asteroid is played out, Your Highness. We are recovering our personnel and vessels now. Movement-ready in three marks."

His Highness smiled, a flash of pride in his crew and their abilities swelling in him.

"Excellent." To the figure he stood behind, he said, "Sensors, continue monitoring the inbounds; let me know what they do. Everyone else, remain clear of mind. If that isn't just a convoy, I'd as like not be attached to a great rock when they arrive."

A light rumble of "Yes, Your Highness" rippled around the room; some apparently had to be forced through suppressed laughter.

His Highness returned to his chair, and seated himself with the grace inherent to his kind. He thought, They're in excellent spirits, for being seven cycles out from home, and five more ahead. If that's an attack force out there, I would not want to be them when they open the dance.

The display screen on the bridge of TA-116749 flared, then dropped to a view of a star system in normal space.

Francis Storall heaved a sigh of relief. Having to stare at The Warp for as long as these missions required was bad enough; consciously looking away was even worse. It was a choice between seeing things one did not wish to see; and not seeing them, but knowing they lurked just out of view.

The electromechanical buzz of his ship's Astropath cut into his relief. "We have arrived at our waypoint, Captain. All ships accounted for. Course across system calculated." A line on the display screen showed the path the convoy would take.

"Very good, Sieben. Helm, follow the course plotted. Comms, have TA-673051 take lead; tell them we shall take the rear. And for His sake, tell these damned fools to stay together this time!" Captain Storall shook his head, marveling at how, despite the facts staring them in the face, merchant captains could not figure out that a Convoy was there to protect them, and that straying from same led inevitably to a Chaotic end.

Or worse, a Dark Eldar end….
"Messages sent, Captain," replied the Communications Officer. "All ships acknowledging."

"Ship are in position, Captain," the Navigator said, after an interval.
"Move out," ordered Storall.

"My Lord, the convoy has dropped out of the Warp."
"Just as was predicted, of course," replied Uriah Flamberge, Follower of Tzeentch, Lord Captain of Azrael's Sword, and commander of Raider Force Flamberge. "They need to fix their position, and when better to do so than avoiding a rough section of the Warp. Rather clever for Blind Followers of the False Emperor - I should report this to His Lordship." Sarcasm dripped from this last statement; a few chuckles echoed about the bridge.

Flamberge waited for the laughter to subside - what about it if they enjoyed acting as though he cared about them? - then looked to his Astrogator. "Take us out. Get us as close as possible. I want their last memories of this life to be as - memorable - as possible."

The chuckles that resounded around the bridge as His Lordship's instructions were followed had no humor to them at all.

"Your Highness, I have located three more signatures in the Warp. One cruiser-sized, two frigate-sized. They're…." The sensor operator's voice turned cold, as had his whole person. "Chaotics, Your Highness."

No one on the bridge needed to look to see what His Highness's facial expression had turned to upon hearing the word "Chaotics"; His Highness had made himself somewhat infamous for his position on dealings with the followers of the eight-pointed arrow - that position being his "my knee on his chest, my knife in his heart". That most of those in the Control Room with him shared this opinion was less well-known.

"You think they're after the convoy?" His Highness said to the younger man seated to his right.

"It doesn't take a Far-Seer to figure that out, Your Highness," replied the younger man. "They'll be dropping to normal space any moment."

His Highness nodded. "Set us to Defense State One. Stand by for… possible combat." Almost forgot the qualifier, he thought. Doing that again could cost me my staff. "Are the transports in sensor range?"

The sensor operator piped up immediately, "Not yet, Your Highness. Estimate six ticks before they get the range." He paused, then continued, with an icy edge to his voice. "The Chaotics are dropping out of Warp, Your Highness."

To be heard over the alarm klaxons, Storall had to place his mouth next to his sensor operator's ear and shout at the top of his lungs. "WHAT IN HIS NAME IS GOING ON!?"

The operator turned, and shouted back, "A CHAOS RAIDING FORCE JUST DROPPED OUT OF THE WARP BEHIND US! LOOKS LIKE A MURDER, AND TWO INFIDELS, CAPTAIN!"

Storall was never known to panic, and he didn't panic now. The situation was painfully clear. The enemy had a cruiser and a pair of escorts. He had twenty transports, of which only two - his included - carried any substantial firepower. The result of battle was foreordained. Coupled to the proximity to the edge of the warp storm that had forced them into normal space, only one path lay open to Storall's convoy.

Storall dashed to the Communications station, then leaned down and shouted into the ear of the officer there, "TELL ALL SHIPS TO GO TO FLANK SPEED, NOW!"

The Comm officer flashed a hand-gesture confirming his understanding of the order, already relaying the order to the convoy.

Storall then straightened, and in his best Command Voice, shouted, "AND TURNED THAT DAMNED HORN OFF!"

His Highness watched over the sensor operator's shoulder as the Human convoy suddenly accelerated - and continued closing the gap between them.

"If I didn't know better, I'd think they noticed they were being followed," he mused.
"I fear it won't do them any good, Your Highness," the younger man said; he stood behind the sensor operator's other shoulder, also watching the massacre in the making. "The Chaotics are faster,

"Fear is a crude way of obtaining obdience, but it is cheap, plentiful and efficient."
- Admiral Lucian Kore
Battlefleet Ar'Kanis
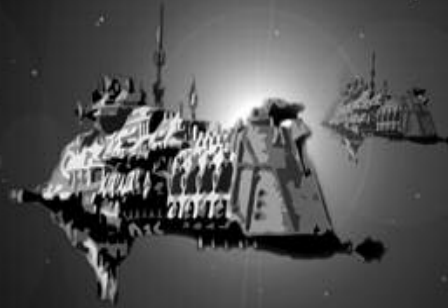
and have longer arms-reach." He paused, then almost as an afterthought, said, "Though they won't reach engagement range before passing our position."

"I see," His Highness mumbled. He looked to the Helm station, and asked, "Are we stationary?" He knew very well that their mining operations would require them to be so.

The response came with no hint of feigned innocence. "As it happens, Your Highness, we are drifting slightly." One of the Control Room display screens changed from its normal external view to that of a schematic showing the various tracks of the convoy, the raiders, and themselves.

His Highness noted the tracks, and smiled. Perfect....

Storall was watching the echo of the sensor display on his own station's screen when the symbol ahead of them appeared. He managed to stifle his own gasp of shock better than the sensor operator did.

"Captain, we have a unknown ahead! Mass rating in the Basilica range!"
The Captain blinked. This system is supposed to be uninhabited; no life-sustaining planets, and a marginal-at-best asteroid belt. "How soon until we can make a positive identification?"

"It should be coming u…", the operator said, his voice tailing off as his equipment provided a refined view of the intruder ahead. Storall took one look at the screen, and his heart sank.

Like every starfarer, he knew all too well the meaning of that vessel with twelve projeting arms, and pyramids projecting from the dorsal and ventral locations. He knew it meant doom for his men, and himself.

A Blackstone Fortress....

"The Humans continue to progress towards us?" His Highness asked, a hint of humor in his voice.

"Yes, Your Highness. They should have picked us up by now," replied the sensor operator. "The Chaotics should have us shortly."

His Highness rubbed the tip of a pointed ear. "Very well. Light us up." And hope the Chaotics make the same mistake in judgment as the Imperials.

Lord Flamberge's grin made him look even less human than usual. "A Blackstone before, and us behind," he chortled. "Let's hope they decide we're the lesser threat." Looting convoys was a cheap path to Warmaster status, and did not require risking one's neck against adamantium ram-prows with aquilae attached.

Then the massive battlefortress on the screen lit up, illuminated by its banks of running lights.

Lord Flamberge's smile vanished.

Storall's jaw dangled; his eyes bulged. The Fortress before him had changed - but for better or worse, he did not know.

Everyone knew of Abbadon's Blackstone Fortresses, and the sight of them meant doom to the Imperial who looked upon them.

But this, this was no more than a rumor, a tale told to scare gullible ratings into obedience to the Throne.

No - not a rumor anymore. Not for me, at any rate.

The lights showed that the great construct ahead had the form of one of Abbadon's dread fortresses; but where Abbadon's were as black as night, this one was the purest, shining white. Just as the rumors has stated.

The Wanderer….

The helmsman's voice snapped Storall from his reverie. "Sir, what should we do?"
Storall held up a hand, indicating a reply was forthcoming. His mind turned over everything he had ever heard concerning this apparition.

After a few seconds, Storall replied, "At current speed, can we get past it before it gets directly ahead of us?"
"Hold one, sir," said the helmsman, fingers flying across his console. "Yes, sir! Just barely, but we can!"

Storall turned to his communications officer. "Then tell the convoy to maintain course and speed. We'll see if we can put that thing between our pursuers and ourselves."

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"My Lord, the convoy is still running! We can catch them, but with - that - out there, it'll be close!" The voice of Flamberge's sensor operator quavered a bit; the inclusion of The Wanderer made the situation much more complicated.

Flamberge managed to keep a matching quaver out of his own voice as he replied, "Continue pursuit!" To his communications officer: "Inform our escorts to fire as soon as they can! I don't want this convoy slipping my grasp!"

"Do you think they'll be foolish enough to try a long-range shot?" the younger man asked His Highness.

"They're Chaotics - what do you think?" His Highness responded casually, trying desperately to not say what was actually on his mind. Such favoritism was frowned upon by his superiors.

"It would explain why we're readied for combat," mused the younger man. "The Followers of the Emperor are many things, but Homicidally Foolish is not one of them."

"Your Highness, the Human transports are now abeam of us," the sensor operator said.
"One way or another, we shall see. True?" His Highness asked, almost rhetorically.
"Oh, definitely true, Your Highness."

"My Lord, Flamberge Alpha reports that they can fire torpedoes now, but that the interloper could be in the way."
"Never mind that!" Flamberge roared. "Open fire!"

"Your Highness, the smaller Chaotics have fired torpedoes. Chance of our intercepting them is high," the sensor operator said, a hint of glee in his voice.

His Highness turned to the younger man, and smiled. "Well, that answers that question."

Storall heaved a sigh of relief. The convoy's tail end - his own vessel - had just passed abeam of The Wanderer, and the thing hadn't taken any notice of them.

His relief was short-lived, as the display screen and his sensor operator simultanoeusly blared the same warning: "Torpedoes incoming!"

A countdown clock appeared on the display screen: TIME TO IMPACT, followed by a rapidly-decreasing number to its right. The screen also showed The Wanderer sliding across the convoy's track like a glacier, slow yet inexorable.

Storall's feelings were mixed. I wish no ill upon them, for the kindness they showed us; but if those torpedoes hit them rather than us, so much the better!

"Time to impact, twenty ticks, Highness," the sensor operator noted.

"On us, or them?" His Highness replied.

"Them, Your Highness, to us, now seventeen." A pause. "Fifteen."

"My Lord, the interloper is within the torpedoes' range! Do we abort?"

Flamberge snarled. "No! Ready a second volley!"

The sensor operator almost said, "But," then realized the folly of questioning his superior. He simply watched the intersecting symbols on his screen, and prayed quietly.

"Ten ticks."

His Highness watched the display, trying to keep his face impassive. Come on, come on, aim for the big target. Give me a reason.

Storall watched the torpedo symbols close on The Wanderer, waiting for the last-moment vector changes that signalled a torpedo on its final run.

In His name, let those torpedoes be fooled. Let us out of this alive. In the name of the Emperor, let us live….

"Five ticks. The Chaotics have entered weapons range."

Flamberge's sensor operator saw the colors on the torpedo symbols change, and knew he was doomed.

"Your Highness, the torpedoes have acquired us! Impact in three… two… one…."

A series of rumbles sounded across the room. Then a brief silence. Finally, a new voice echoed from speakers set into the ceiling.

"Command, Engineering. Torpedoes impacted - no damage inflicted."

His Highness turned to the younger man. "I do believe those Chaotics attacked us," he said, his face and voice as neutral as he could make them.

The younger man could barely suppress the smile on his face as he said, "I concur with your judgment."

His Highness stood, and he turned to face the Weapons station. His voice was, for the benefit of the recorders, flat.

"Engage and destroy the Chaotics."

"Captain, their weapons have activated!"

Storall turned cold. He looked at the display, which now showed the view aft towards the oncoming Chaos ships, and The Wanderer; then he looked at his console, where the great fortress was now showing the signs of impending violence. "Are we being targeted?" he said to the sensor operator.

The sensor operator began to reply, but was cut off by The Wanderer's actions.

"My Lord - that thing has us locked on!"

Flamberge had just enough time to sit up in his chair and get a good look at the display screen before the first volley arrived.

In an instant, ultraviolet tones of pure Warp energy focused and turned into beams of lethal force connected the weapons arrays of The Wanderer to the hull of Azrael's Sword. The Chaos ship's hull buckled like an aluminum can under pressure. Secondary explosions rippled across the gun decks; the bridge tower's windows blew out, sending bodies hurtling into the void.

There was a momentary pause, then another set of purple arcs connected the two ships. More secondary explosions on Azrael's Sword, and in an instant what had once been a powerful Chaos-flagged cruiser was now no more than drifting detritus.

The two raiders with Azrael's Sword turned away from The

Wanderer, but too late; the tendrils of Warp energy reached out, touched each ship - and left nothing but vapor behind.

"The Chaotics have been eliminated, Your Highness," the Weapons Officer stated matter-of-factly.

"Excellent. Well done, all," His Highness said, not trying to mask his pleasure. And hoping his superiors would interpret it in the manner he wanted them to.

"Highness," said the Communications Officer, "the Humans are sending a wide-band broadcast."
"Onscreen, then, if your would," His Highness replied.

The display screen shifted from the shattered Chaotic cruiser to a Human of late-middle-age, somewhat overweight, and suffering the hair loss common to the species. He lacked the scars and mechanincal appliances so many of his kind wore, so his facial expression was quite easily read; he was obviously relieved.

"To the - to the unidentified vessel which - aided us,", the figure stated, between deep breaths, and with a stammer that bespoke tension, "our - thanks - to you." He paused, as if pondering whether to say more. Then, "Many, many thanks."

His Highness tried not to smile at this. If the poor fool only knew…. "Weapons salute, if you please."

Storall's face fell as he watched the fortress's weapons power up again. Had he done offense, or was this the Emperor's punishment for speaking to Xenos?

On the display, the lights on The Wanderer flicked off - and a moment later, the great vessel was silhouetted by the ultraviolet glare of Warp energy, a royal-purple halo surrounding the fortress.

Then the arcs vanished, and an instant later, the display showed The Wanderer vanishing itself, slipping away into the Warp.

For several seconds, no one moved or spoke. Then the Helmsman coughed lightly, and asked, "Captain, shouldn't we secure from flank speed?"

Storall looked at him, then snapped back to reality. "Oh, yes, of course, Comm, tell the convoy to return to cruising speed, and head for our re-entry point."

He looked back at the display, where The Wanderer had been, and settled into his command chair, heaving a great sigh of relief. He would live to see another day.

But, very likely, never again a sight such as that.

# Chaos Rising

## By Warmaster Ancaris

At the edge of the Belis Corona System…

Here a massive fleet of vessels sailed through the void, heading further in system.  The attack on the Belis Corona system by the League was imminent.  Soon a battle that rivaled any within the last ten thousand years would happen in this very system.

Ancaris sat brooding on his command throne.  There was still much to prepare for, variables to take into account.  It was of course impossible to see and prepare for every variable, but the more accounted for the better their odds.  With the stakes of this campaign so high, the more prepared for, so much the better.

He paused in his thoughts and took a minute to examine the huge bridge of the Unholy Terror.  She was a massive vessel, far larger than all others that were in his substantial fleet…  Indeed far larger than nearly all other vessels that sailed the stars.  Her size though made her much slower than the majority of his fleet.  It was a necessary sacrifice however, as her firepower would prove invaluable, especially for this upcoming battle.

Despite the power of the Unholy Terror, Ancaris did not relish transferring his flag from the Emperor's Bane, even if it was just for one battle.  She had been his first battleship command all those long millennia ago, and had never failed him.  For the time though, she was left in command of her very capable hands of her Captain.  Marcus had been her captain all these long millennia and was as dependable as the Emperor's Bane herself… if a bit of a party animal at times.  Only Tzeentch knew how he could put away so much blood wine and still remain upright.

Ancaris shook himself from his reverie.  Now was not the time for such things.  There was a battle to prepare for.  He had divided his fleet into 3 main task forces, one commanded by himself aboard the Unholy Terror, one commanded by Marcus aboard the Emperor's Bane and the 3rd commanded by Jaerakis aboard the Ravenous.  Ancaris was a bit weary to use carrier ships in command rolls.  Hell, he didn't really like carriers in general though he could not deny their usefulness.  Here Jaerakis's penchant for aggression (even by Chaos standards) would prove

valuable.  He also had a knack for making sure the Attack Craft pilots under his command were trained and drilled to perfection, leading to a 7% increase in their performance when compared to most … a remarkable feat considering what he had to work with.

Each task force was a formidable fleet in it's own right… but when combined with the rest of the League's forces here… the followers of the False Emperor were going to be in for the fight of the millennia.

Suddenly, something in the back of Ancaris's mind triggered the alarm.  Something here was not right.     He rose from his throne, Solara his bodyguard shadowing his every movement.  He strode along the long instrument panels necessary for monitoring the massive vessels many sections at a pace that was nearly a sprint.  There in the corner, trying to not be noticed, a robed figured worked furiously at their station even as the Warmaster approached.  They seemed just about to finish what they were doing when Ancaris grabbed them by the shoulder and threw them across the bridge, sending them flying only to slam hard into the metal deck plating."

"Oh how bold we are, little Imperial!  To think that you can infiltrate the crew of my command vessel's bridge and then reveal my plans and those of the League to your superiors!  Most brazen of you indeed!" Ancaris bellowed at the spy keeled over on the deck plating.  They seemed to reach for something in their robe and Solara prepared to strike swiftly but she was stopped by a wave of Ancaris's hand.  "I will deal with this fool personally."

The spy rose to his feet, revealing a dagger that had been concealed beneath his robes. "You Chaos worshipping scum cannot be allowed to taint His Divine Imperial Majesty's realm any further!  If I have to die to stop you than so be it!"

Ancaris merely smirked.  "Bold words, for a dead man."  He proceeded to approach the spy, his limp apparent.  "Strike me down if you can then.  I am merely an aging man with many war wounds.  Surely you shouldn't find me a difficult target." He continued to walk forward, arms raised in mock surrender.

The spy did not waste any time and quickly struck with his dagger right at Ancaris's chest.  The blade hit it's mark, but it was as if he had stabbed at a bulkhead as the blade actually bent.  As the man stared in disbelief, Ancaris reached down and grabbed him by the throat, lifting him off the deck one handed.  "You pathetic fool!  Did you really think

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you could harm me!? You might as well try to harm a tank with that little toy of yours! I could crush you with my bare hands, but I have a better fate in store for you!

Ancaris unsheathed his massive broadsword, the daemonic blade known as Cannibal. Its normally placid mirror-like surface writhed and changed like liquid metal, many faces flowing across its surface in anticipation. It knew it was time to feed. He plunged it into the spies chest, who screamed in agony as the blade slice clean through him and penetrated out his back. A red mist enveloped the sword and the spy, concealing them from view. The cries of the spy quickly died and the only sound that remained was the hissing and laughter of the daemonic sword. Within moments, Ancaris let the body drop to the deck. All that remained of the spy was the virtually empty skin, and the dry bones contained within it, his life force and soul having been devoured by the aptly named Cannibal. Ancaris re-sheathed his weapon and turned around to face the command crew of the Unholy Terror.

"FIND OUT WHAT THAT SPY WAS ABOUT TO SEND!!! AND I WANT ANY OTHER SPIES ABOARD THIS SHIP OR ANY OTHERS UNDER MY COMMAND ROUTED OUT NOW! I WILL TERMINATE ANYONE I FEEL HAS FAILED IN THIS MATTER!" The Command crew quickly went into action following the Warmaster's order.

Just then Ancaris heard a voice in his head. "Khyron, before you say anything I recommend you scour your fleet for spies, immediately!"



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