From the Nexus Publishing House

EDITORIAL

+++ SUBMISSIONS +++

+++ WARP RIFT PUBLICATION TEAM +++

+++ Apocalypse +++

Hello,

Through various issues this issue took a longer waiting then what I intended. But, alas, these things happen and most of all Warp Rift didn't crumble!

As official support might be non-existent the community is still going strong if looking at the fan made material: from full fleet books to poetry and from campaign software to fleet building applications it is all being done.

So a big thumbs up for all of you investing there time in this game called Battlefleet Gothic.

This issue of Warp Rift sees the second and last part of the story started in issue 26.

But before we get there we have an article on expanding the options for our admirals, a quite extensive and heavy rule modification regarding fighter and bonber rules, a review of the Fantasy Flight Games book Rogue Trader and its merits to Battlefleet Gothic.

In the showcase Harkon brings us once more some heavy conversion work for the Tau Empire, with some really large space stations...

After we have read the concluding end to 'The Ship' a neat campaign article is given us in the Void Stalker section.

enjoy,
Horizon

+++ Warp Rift Blog +++

You can check out our blog at the following location:

http://www.players.tacticalwargames.net/tiki-view_blog.php?blogId=10

+++ Warp Rift Forum +++

Check out the Warp Rift forum at:

http://www.tacticalwargames.net/forums/index.cgi?act=SF;f=89

+++ BFG: Fan Supplements +++

The last few months a couple of fan made additions have been released to support Battlefleet Gothic:

• Battlefleet Chronicles: Diasporex Nomads
a development upon the list as presented in a previous issue of Warp Rift with more!

• Starblade
a poem-art book plus narrative scenarios.

Word is that the first supplement to the Art of Command is also being on the brink of release. Soon to be expected an encyclopedia and more from the Chronicles team.

Horizon

Issue twentySeven – Content:

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR ADMIRAL

By Reg Steiner

Introduction

In many one-of games, all of us players have lusted after those upgrades and crew skills we cannot have unless we play a campaign. Most of us find it tough to get a campaign going. Well, now here is a rule to use for getting (at least some) skills and upgrades!

Getting Started

Every one-of game has to start with picking out forces, and a Commander of some kind to 'lead' the fleet. For a "measly" 250 points you can have an Admiral with three re-rolls. Or a cheap commander with one re-roll for 40 points.

Does it seem a real expensive way to get a re-do on a failed check? Maybe a waste of points? Not anymore.

First:

Let's start with that Admiral (or Chieftain, or Warlord, or whatever applies to that race) for 100 points. Then choose all our ships and maybe a special torpedo. Now we have our battle force.

Second

We 'spend' our points we used for a fleet commander personage a second time. Only now we 'purchase' those special 'goodies' from the campaign upgrade lists.

Just like the normal 10% cost paid in a campaign, each of the ship, weapon, and crew upgrades and add-ons cost 10% multiplied to the ship's point cost receiving the upgrade or add-on.

If more than one such add-on is purchased for the same ship, the new total (original point cost +

10% = new total) must be multiplied again by 10%. (first new total + 10% = second new total) And so on a third or fourth time, if so many upgrades can be purchased.

It never hurts to have your battle-buddy check your math. And you look over his. Now many of the upgrades and add-ons are priced as a percentage of the ship that is upgraded. So 10% of a 300 point battleship is certainly more than the 10% cost of a 180 point cruiser.

If you and your battle-opponent for this game are attempting to engineer some surprises for each other, the surprise would be ruined. Just limit any extras to the points costs on the check-sheet you hand your opponent, with the math used, not each item description.

It may be easy to spot some battleship priced vessel got two upgrades, but which ones can remain unknown. The details can be checked into later, if there is some question.

Now, let us look over some of those options.

Your rank determines how many re-rolls or Marks of Chaos you receive in the scenarios that you fight. Now we use those points costs for some 'real' and useful items and skills the Admiral or War-Chief, or other title, brings to the fight!

These rankings come straight from the Campaign section of the core rules.

The costs breakdown is meant to blend the cost of the re-rolls and Admiral's (or other leader's) ability to bring the improvements with him to the fleet he

commands.

The improvements a fleet leader can 'purchase' is limited to the cost of the commander purchased. 100 points of add-ons for the fleet, if you purchased a 100 point leader for your fleet.

If there is a question of an upgrade's cost, when looking at a different race's improvements and upgrades lists - the rule is 10% multiplied by the ship points cost, per item purchased, then the new total is used if a second option is added, multiplied by another 10%.

NOT 5 items each at 18 points for a 180 point ship! (10% of 180 = 18)

IMPERIAL PROMOTION TABLE

Commander	75 points
Leadership 8 1 re-roll	
Battle Group Commander	100 points
Leadership 8 2 re-rolls	
Subsector Commander	150 points
Leadership 9 2 re-rolls	
Admiral	200 points
Leadership 9 3 re-rolls	
Fleet Admiral	250 points
Leadership 10 3 re-rolls	
Solar Admiral	300 points
Leadership 10 4 re-rolls	

Special option: An Admiral and Fleet Admiral may elect to NOT spend the points in the way described above. Instead, each can elect to roll on the "Appeals" chart once. A Solar Admiral may make two attempts at an "Appeal". See below.

CHAOS/RENEGADE PROMOTION TABLE

Chaos Champion_____50 points
  Leadership 8   1 re-roll
Exalted Chaos Champion_____75 points
  Leadership 8   1 re-roll & 1 Mark of Chaos
Tyrant_____100 points
  Leadership 9   1 re-roll & 1 Mark of Chaos
Chaos Lord _____175 points
  Leadership 9   1 re-roll & 2 Marks of Chaos
Overlord_____200 points
  Leadership 10   1 re-roll & 2 Marks of Chaos
Warmaster_____225 points
  Leadership 10   1 re-roll & 3 Marks of Chaos

Special option: A Chaos Overlord and Warmaster may each elect to NOT make the purchases of the upgrades listed above, and make an "Appeal" attempt instead. See below.

ORK PROMOTION TABLE

Nob_____40 points
  +0 Leadership   1 re-roll
Big Nob _____80 points
  +0 Leadership   2 re-rolls
Boss_____125 points
  +1 Leadership   2 re-rolls
Big Boss _____150 points
  +1 Leadership   3 re-rolls
War Boss _____175 points
  +2 Leadership   3 re-rolls
Warlord _____200 points
  +2 Leadership   4 re-rolls

ELDAR PROMOTION TABLE

Captain _____50 points
  +0 Leadership   1 re-roll

Lord _____100 points
  +1 Leadership   1 re-roll
Shadow Lord _____125 points
  +1 Leadership   2 re-rolls
Prince _____175 points
  +2 Leadership   2 re-rolls
Shadow Prince _____200 points
  +2 Leadership   3 re-rolls
King _____275 points
  +2 Leadership   4 re-rolls

TAU PROMOTION TABLE

Tau Kor'el _____50 points
  Leadership 8   1 re-roll
Tau Kor'el & Aun'el _____75 points
  Leadership 8   2 re-rolls
Tau Kor'el & Aun'O _____125 points
  Leadership 8   3 re-rolls
Tau Kor'O _____80 points
  Leadership 9   1 re-roll
Tau Kor'O & Aun'el _____130 points
  Leadership 9   2 re-rolls
Tau Kor'O Aun'O_____155 points
  Leadership 9   3 re-rolls

TYRANIDS AND NECRONS

The Tyranid and Necron fleets have no comparable leader or leader costs to use as a means of getting into any upgrades and add-ons.
A suggestion is to roll a D3 die, each and match the number rolled.
If the non-Tyranid player wins the roll by one point, the Tyranid player may have one less upgrade or add-on than the non-Tyranid player chose to use when his own commander was selected.
If the difference is two points, then two less add-ons. If the Tyranid player wins the D3 roll by one or two points, then the Tyranid player may have one or two more upgrades than the non-Tyranid player. Of course a match means equal numbers of items can be selected. This is the total difference allowed for the entire fleet, not a ship by ship upgrade system.

Special Appeals chart.
Roll for an appeal, where a 2+ is a success (a failure means all those points were wasted in a bribery attempt!). Instead of choosing any available ship, use the below chart.

1. = 1 Light Cruiser , OR an alternative of 1 Escort Squadron of 3 Escorts.
2. = 1 Standard Cruiser type
3. = 2 Light Cruiser types - if unavailable, then a single standard cruiser.
4. = 1 Battleship type (or Grand Cruiser)
5. = 1 Heavy Cruiser type
6. = Escort squadron of 4 Escorts.

Lastly, sometimes it is possible to save the ship's registry to use in additional games. If so, any upgraded ship, gaining upgrades and add-ons in this manner, cannot be upgraded or have additional add-ons, in any future games. The local game group, or the players in later, subsequent games need to agree on keeping the commander selected in this manner. This just may be the 'back door' start of a campaign, after all!

Reg Steiner.

FIGHTER AND BOMBER RULES MOD

BY SOLAR ADMIRAL NATHAN GULL (S.A.N.G)

Here is the second edition of my fighter and bomber rules, this edition is far more comprehensive; covering Assault Boats and torpedo bombers as well as refining the original rules and establishing the various strengths and weaknesses of each race's squadrons, for those of you who have not read my original rules, essentially the main changes to the GW system are that now :

1: There is a limited number of Fighters and Bombers in the fleet, you do not produce any more once you've launched them all, this causes the number of Fighters and Bombers to slowly decrease as the game goes on.

2: In each squadron there is now six Fighters or Bombers represented by a dice, as each is destroyed you change the dice to show how many are left, this is mainly to incorporate a set of rules to elaborate on Fighter versus Fighter and Fighter versus Bomber clashes and dogfights!

3: Now every ship carries some Fighters and Bomberss, the bigger the ship, the more they have, this does not make carriers obsolete as you get additional squadrons for every launch bay.

Now in detail are all the rules I've created for this system. These rules now make you try and conserve Fighters and Bombers and adds a whole new tactical element as you can't afford to just throw them away.

Rule 1: Fighter and Bomber counters now start the game with 6 ships to a squadron (Mantas come in squadrons of 1 in the background story but this would make them very bad in these rules and so also come in 6s, the 6 could represent how many more hits a Manta can take in comparison to ordinary bombers), place a D6 on top of each counter (same coloured dice for one faction if possible) to show how many are left, counters are removed only when all 6 members of the squadron are destroyed, by Weapon Batteries and Lances, by fighters, or by capital ships exploding etc. as detailed below.

Rule 2: Escorts carry one squadron of Fighterss and one of Bomberss, cruisers carry two of each, Grand cruisers three and battleships four (recommended for campaigns and smaller battles) or alternatively for a battle with less squadrons: escorts carry none as standard, all cruisers (grand, heavy, battlecruisers etc) carry one squadron of Fighters and one of Bombers and battleships carry 2 squadrons of each. Launch bays add on a number of squadrons equal to the total strength of all launch bays on the ship, exactly half are bombers and half are fighters, so an Emperor battleship with launch bays of a total strength of 8 get eight additional squadrons, 4 squads must be fighters and 4 must be bombers (in addition to its base value of squadrons a battleship carries).

Rule 3: Fighters and Bombers can be launched at the start of any movement phase, neither the launching ship nor the launched Fighters or Bombers can move the turn the launching happens. To recover Fighters and Bombers any Fighter or Bomber squadron which comes into contact with the base of a friendly ship may be recovered onto the ship (only up to the maximum squadrons that ship can carry), place the squadron on the data sheet for the ship or somewhere similar to remind you where the squadrons are, they may then be re-launched in the next movement phase if you wish. Any squadrons on a ship which is destroyed are destroyed as well. The only benefit to recovering squadrons is that they can't be harmed inside unless the carrier is destroyed, as explained later torpedo bombers and Assault Boats are re-armed if loaded onto a ship.

Rule 4: Fighters and Bombers now count as ships themselves not ordnance, the movement phase is now adapted so that Fighters and Bombers move first, then Fighters and Bombers fight out any encounters (explained later) then normal ships move (Fighters and Bombers only move on their own sides movement phase rather than in both phases, but encounters are fought out in every Fighter and Bomber phase), so essentially you insert an Fighter and Bomber phase in before special orders, then you move the normal ships after special orders and everything goes as normal (damage is applied from Bombers attacking ships at the end of the Fighter and Bomber phase, before movement and SO etc.)

Rule 5:

Engagements: Engagements have been completely revamped and is one of the largest changes in the rules as I found fighters engaging each other and then disappearing too boring, so here we go!

Encounter: when squadron markers (Bomber or Fighter or any other squadrons) contact they start a dogfight!

The ships engage in a swirling melee as each individual ship attempts to latch onto another's tale and blow him sky high!

When one squadron counter touches another, line up the counters so that there is one line of one faction facing the other, as far as possible with counters touching (it does not matter if the counters are moved from their original places as when they engage each other the fighters will end up in a different area of space anyway after chasing each other).

First roll for initiative, roll a dice and add the initiative rating for the squadron to the dice score to get the total score for each ship on each side, the highest initiative score attacks first, the second highest second etc. roll a dice for any that score the same, whichever is highest goes before the lower one/ones. bombers roll for initiative now rather than automatically going last because they have low initiative meaning they are less likely to attack first, note that every bomber (and by extension Assault Boat and torpedo bombers) has initiative 2 except Tau Mantas with 1 and Thunderhawks and fighta-bommas with 3.

To make attacks nominate what type of enemy you will be attacking (the fighters or the bombers if there are multiple types engaged) roll a D6 for each ship in the squadron that is attacking and consult the "to kill or not to kill" table at the end of these rules to see what score you need, any dice that equal or beat that score destroy one enemy ship

in a random squadron (roll a D6 to randomize) of the type you were attacking. So for instance Chaos fighters with attack 4 attacking Imperial fighters with defence 5 need 5+s, Imperial fighters with attack 3 attacking Chaos fighters with defence 3 need 4+s but this advantage is negated by chaos having higher initiative rendering them relatively equal.

The initiative, attack and defence ratings for each squadron can be found on the attributes table at the end of these rules.

Bomber Vs Capital ship: similar to the original rules, make turret shots against each squadron, on a 4+ destroy a bomber (not a squadron, the old rules for forming waves does not apply any more, you get turret shots against every bomber counter but the turrets are less effective, you cannot form waves of bombers since turrets shoot at every squad), once turret shots have been made, roll a D6 for each bomber in each squadron, any which equals or beats the lowest armour value scores a damage point (bypassing shields), so 4 full squadrons of bombers attack a cruiser with 2 turrets, lowest armour of 5 and 8 hits, the player rolls 2D6 for turrets against every squadron, and say gets a 4+6, 3+5, 1+6 and a 2+2, the bombing player then rolls 24D6 (4 squadrons of 6 Bombers) – the four bombers destroyed= 20D6 and gets say three 5s and two 6s out of those, which equals 5 hits crippling the cruiser.

Bombers may seem tremendously overpowered, but remember there are few of them (two cruisers worth of bombers in the example above to take down a cruiser) and below there are rules that make Weapon Batteries and lances much more deadly to Bombers and Fighters, note that Fighta Bombas make bombing runs in the same way as ordinary bombers except their rolls to hit are all made at minus 1, so a Fighta Bomba attacking a

cruiser with 5+ as its lowest armour need 6s to hit, if the requirement is 7+ then for each dice that scores a 6 roll it again, on a 4+ the ship is damaged (you need a 6 followed by a 4+).

Fighter Vs torpedoes: if a fighter marker touches a torpedo marker then roll a D6 for the squadron, on a 4+ the torpedo salvo is removed, if the roll is failed then the torpedoes and fighters act as normal.

Rule 6: Any ship with launch bays can be upgraded to carry torpedo bombers at an additional cost of +10 pts per strength point of launch bay on the vessel.

For example, a Chaos Styx class heavy cruiser would pay 60 points to carry torpedo bombers, while an Imperial Dictator class cruiser would pay 40 points. Due to the superiority of Eldar, Dark Eldar and Tau ordnance, Eldar or Tau vessels must pay +15 points per launch bay, so an Eldar Eclipse class cruiser carrying torpedo bombers would cost an additional 60 points.

Any ship which can take assault boats does so as normal and the points cost needed for some ships to take Assault Boats is the same as it would be in the official Specialist Games rules.

Elites are a new type of squadron for each race; the best of the best, you can only have elite fighter units (no elite Thunderhawks, fighta- bommas, torp bombers, Assault Boats or bombers) You can purchase 1 elite squadron per 500 pts of your fleet at 10 pts each and they replace one of your fighter squadrons on board one of your ships, they act as fighters and are just a better version as you can see on the attributes table, use a different coloured dice over a fighter marker to represent them.

A ship which carries Assault Boats or torpedo bombers can replace as many of the bomber squadrons the ship carries as the player wants with

Assault Boats or Torpedo bomber squadrons. Assault Boats act the same as the bombers of their race except when they come into contact with an enemy ship's base.

When the Assault Boat attacks an enemy ship make a hit and run attack after turret attacks (which attack Assault Boats as if they were bombers), if there are six ships in the squadron then the hit and run succeeds on a 2+, if there are five left it also succeeds on a 2+, if there are four ships left in a squadron it succeeds in making a hit and run attack on a 3+, if there are three ships left in the squad you need a 4+ to be successful, if there are two ships left you need a 5+ and if there is only one left you need a 6+ to show that with less troops hit and runs are less likely to be successful. If an assault boat succeeds on its hit and run then it cannot make hit and run attacks until it is loaded onto a ship where it is reloaded to show the men having attempted the hit and run replenishing their stock of explosives and weapons, they may then be redeployed to make more runs, if an Assault boat fails a hit and run then the squadron is destroyed. (Squadrons which are loaded on board a ship do not regain any lost ships, if an Assault boat squadron loads onto a cruiser for instance with only three of the ships in their squadron then when they leave the ship there will still be only three ships in the squadron.

Torpedo Bombers: Torpedo bombers have a strength two torpedo salvo placed on top of their marker and underneath the dice on top, if the squadron is reduced to 3 or less bombers then the torpedo marker is reduced to strength 1.

When a torpedo bomber fires (at the start of the shooting phase for capital ships when other torps are fired), place the remaining torps in front of the squadron which move as normal torps fired from a capital ship, the torpedo bombers then must get back to the mother ship and re-arm, when a torpedo bomber has fired its torpedoes it then acts as a bomber except it cannot make bombing runs and has no torpedoes to fire, if it is loaded onto a ship it is reloaded and gains a strength 1 torpedo salvo if there are less than 4 bombers, strength 2 if there are more in the squadron, it can then re-enter the fight with a fresh salvo deploying as usual, note that torpedo bombers CANNOT make bombing runs like ordinary bombers, only fire their torpedoes and engage in dogfights where they act like ordinary bombers.

Rule7: Lances and Weapon Batteries find it much easier to hit and destroy Fighters and Bombers, but destroy less when they hit than they did before, a weapons battery fired against a squadron rolls a D6 for every point of strength the Weapon Battery has, on a 4+ an Fighter or Bomber is destroyed, so a Weapon Battery strength of 10 rolls 10D6, for every 4+ an Fighter or Bomber is destroyed, Lances are now guaranteed to destroy at least some ships, for every point of strength the lance has roll a D3, the result tells you how many Fighters or Bombers are destroyed, so a lance of strength 4 rolls 4D3, then say a 1, 2, 2 and 3 are rolled, so eight Fighters or Bombers are destroyed (roll 2D3 per point of strength for Lances against Fighters or Bombers if a ship is locked on). Also, it is possible to shoot at bombers in the shooting phase if they have made a bombing run and are still in base contact with the ship with all Weapon Batteries and Lances in all arcs (all the weapons blaze at the small bombers swarming the ship), but turrets are only used against bombing runs, although I tend to say that only the ship the Bombers are in contact with can shoot at them, as other ships that miss the bombers will hit the ship, but you may want to put in a rule that if the shots miss from another ship it hits the ship the bombers are attacking, its up to you but I think it makes it too complicated. The effect of a plasma drive overload on Fighters and Bombers was instead of lance shots = half the original hits, do lance shots = quarter the original hits (rounding up), so an 8 damage point cruiser does 2D3 hits on every squadron within range. A warpdrive implosion destroys all Fighters and Bombers within range, or sends them all into the warp or whatever, a tear in realspace might only maul a battleship and slightly alter its course, but it will destroy or suck in every tiny fighter within range. Nova cannons destroy all squadrons completely under the template and D6 ships in a squadron partially covered.

Weapon effects on squadrons:

Weapons battery: D6 for every point of strength the Weapon Battery has, on a 4+ an F or B is destroyed

Lance: strength of lance battery XD3= ships in the squadron destroyed

Pulsar Lance: strength of lance battery X2D6= ships destroyed in the squadron

Eldar Weapon Battery: D6 for every point of strength the WB has, on a 3+ an F or B is destroyed

Heavy Gunz: 2D6 for every point of strength the HG has, on a 4+ an Fighter or Bomber is destroyed

Bombardment cannons: same as heavy gunz

Phantom Lance: D3+1 ships in the squadron killed.

Impaler: When fighters contact it treat it as a torpedo salvo.

Sepulchres: cannot fire on squadrons

Lightning arcs: Same as heavy gunz.

Particle whips: Same as lances

Portals: cannot use on squadrons

Star pulse generator: any squadron within range loses D6 ships from the squadron

Bio plasma: Same as lances

Feeder tentacles: No effect on squadrons

Massive claws: No effect on squadrons

Pyro-acid batteries: Same as Weapon Batteries

Campaigns: For campaigns fighter conservation can be vital, if you are doing a campaign with these rules then all ships come with the original amount of 1 squad of Fighters and 1 of Bombers on escorts, 2 on cruisers, 3 on grand cruisers and 4 on battleships, but I advise you only use some at a time as you have to get fighters, bombers and their pilots who are killed replaced, if you expend them all at once and don't get replacements, you're left high and dry next time!

At the end of every battle add up the total number of Fighters and Bombers that survived (the winning side count up all of their squadrons but the losing side only counts squadrons inside a ship which disengaged which you must have loaded on as any others would be hunted down and killed by the victors and can't escape unless they were on a ship to transport them) and divide each score by 6, this number gives you the total number of full strength squadrons your fleet has, you may distribute these throughout the fleet however you wish except each ship can have only up to the original number of squadrons they had on board at the start (so escorts without launch bays can only have 1 squad of Fighters and one of Bombers on board at most) this is to show low strength squadrons have been merged together to produce full strength squadrons. if there is a decimal at the end of the number, then you have a part strength squadron left over, take the decimal and multiply it by six, this shows how many fighters are left in the understrengthed squadron, so if you have a total of 33 fighters left after a battle, we divide this by 6 to get 5.5, that means there are five full squadrons for the next battle onboard. We then take the .5 and times it by 6 which gives us 3, so the fleet will have five full squadrons of 6 fighters plus a squadron of 3 fighters for the next battle, do the same thing for the remaining bombers (you can only have a maximum of 1 incomplete squadron of fighters and

1 of bombers in total.) To gain additional Fs and Bs in a campaign; if any appeal is granted, instead of applying the effect you gain a number of Fighter squadrons and a number of Bomber squadrons to distribute throughout your fleet as you want equal to: 2 for each battleship, 1 for each cruiser and 1 for half of your total escorts rounding up. So if you have a battleship, three cruisers and seven escorts

then you gain 2 of each for the BB, 3 for the cruisers and 4 for the escorts equals 9 squadrons of Fs and Bs which you can station on any and all of your ships. The rules for replacing fighters and bombers do not apply to Tyranids in a campaign as they are spawned on their ships so they are automatically replaced, crippled Tyranid ships cannot launch fighters and bombers as usual.

	Attack Rating								
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
2	4+	3+	2+	1+	1+	1+	1+	1+	1+
3	5+	4+	3+	2+	1+	1+	1+	1+	1+
4	6	5+	4+	3+	2+	1+	1+	1+	1+
5	6	6	5+	4+	3+	2+	1+	1+	1+
6	6	6	6	5+	4+	3+	2+	1+	1+
7	6	6	6	6	5+	4+	3+	2+	1+
8	6	6	6	6	6	5+	4+	3+	2+
9	6	6	6	6	6	6	5+	4+	3+
10	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5+	4+

(Left axis label: **Defence Rating**)

Squadron Attributes Table

Type of Squadron	Attack Rating	Def. Rating	Init. Rating	Special Rules
Imperial Fighters	3	5	3	
Imperial Bombers	2	2	2	
Chaos Fighters	4	3	4	
Chaos Bombers	2	2	2	
Eldar Fighters	5	3	6	Lance: D3-1 kills
Eldar Bombers	2	2	2	Lance: D3-1 kills, Turrets hit on 5+ not 4
Dark Eldar Fighters	6	2	6	Lance: D3-1 kills
Dark Eldar Bombers	3	1	2	Lance: D3-1 kills, Turrets hit on 5+ not 4
Tyranid Fighters	4	3	4	
Tyranid Bombers	3	1	2	No bombers just A. boats
Ork Fighta Bommas	4	2	3	Ork Torpedo Bombers have an attack rating of 2
S. Marines thunderhawk	3	4	3	Are treated as Assault Boats
Adept Mech Fighters	Same as Imperial			
Adept Mech Bombers	Same as Imperial			
Tau Fighters	4	4	4	
Tau Bombers	3	6	1	Turrets kill on 6+ not 4

Rogue Traders

By Roy 'Horizon' Amkreutz

A few months ago (by time of reading this) Fantasy Flight Games released their second major Role-playing Game set in the Warhammer 40,000 universe: Rogue Trader. It is being the follow up to Dark Heresy. Fine you may say: "A role-playing game, nice, but what does that have to with Warp Rift, a fanzine about Battlefleet Gothic?"

There are a quite a number of reasons to do so but the most eye catching reasons are the fact that Rogue Trader has a large section on spaceships and spaceship combat. It offers a lot of details on the vessels themselves and brings a role-playing view on space battles. The wealth of information is a real good read for any Battlefleet Gothic fan, especially

of course the ones having or starting a Rogue Trader fleet, but it also extends to the Imperial Navy and Adeptus Mechanicus.

The following article will guide you through the Rogue Trader book and give you ideas on how to use it in "our" Battlefleet Gothic universe. As Warp Rift

is a Battlefleet Gothic ezine I will give more focus upon the more useful chapters to the Battlefleet Gothic players and pay less attention to some other chapters.

Cover

Good scene setter with lots of details: A Rogue Trader with his team on the bridge of his vessel. In the background we see a couple of Imperial vessels.

On the inside a great black & white map, spanning two pages, showing the Koronus Expanse. In the details we can see wrecked Imperial ships, a small Chaos flotilla and Craftworld Eldar ships. Add to these various mysterious celestial phenomena and the interest is raised in a good way.

Inside we can read a letter by Alan Merret in which he gives his blessing to the Rogue Trader RPG. Interestingly enough he mentions the fact that long ago, before Rogue Trader 40k, they had the intention to create a spaceship game. But since there where no spaceship miniatures available at that time they started 40k because of the available Citadel miniatures.

Chapter I - Character Creation

Through various guidelines and tables the book shows us how we can create our characters. It may require a second reading to get the grasp of it all it is not a tedious task. There are many layers and options, yet with a random factor to give your character substance.

For us Battlefleet Gothic players it are mainly the Rogue Trader and the Magos Explorator as these are characters which are directly 'known' in our spaceship game. If you're stuck with backgrounds, motivations and ideas for your fleet admiral/captain this chapter

will certainly give you a few or more ideas to follow.

Chapter II - Career Paths

This chapter goes deeper into the creation of your character. Providing lots of tables and rank advances. Again a suitable chapter to draw ideas from for your Captain. It also provides more background information for any of the characters.

Chapter III - Skills

Straightforward as the title: what are the effects of the basic and advanced skills to your character.

Chapter IV - Talents

Again, same as chapter III, very straightforward but this time detailing the talents available to your characters. It has quite some interesting bits to flavour your character in Battlefleet Gothic, just for fun and motivation.

Chapter V - Armoury

Perhaps a chapter of less interest to sole the Battlefleet Gothic player. The chapter does what it does and gives nice information on various kind of equipment available to your Rogue Trader characters.

Chapter VI - Psychic Powers

Again a chapter that isn't a primary focus for Battlefleet Gothic. But I urge everyone to read it as it gives a great background on psychic powers in Warhammer 40,000 Universe.

Chapter VII - Navigators

This chapter is a must read for us Battlefleet Gothic

players. It shows us how Navigators work how the warp is travelled. It also offers background on the various Navigator Houses.
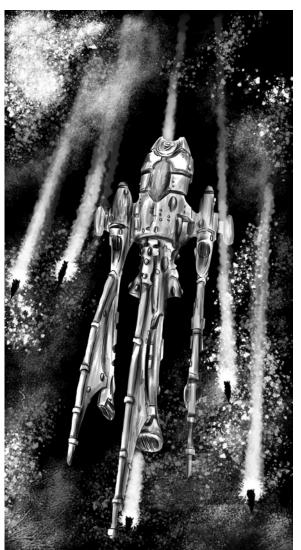
Chapter VIII - Starships

All right then, the chapter we have been waiting for! First of all I would say that a Battlefleet Gothic player should go into this chapter as open minded as possible…

* Starships: the introduction gives a description on life aboard a Starship and how attached crewmembers get to 'their' ships; getting used and recognizing the little differences throughout the ship.

* Characteristics: a few of them are very custom to a Battlefleet Gothic player but some are new to give a space combat more depth: Detection, Power Generation and Components for example. On battle itself Detection has most impact. It is the generated Ship Profit factor of the Rogue Trader that determines what ship type may be afforded and if there is room for upgrades.

Ship types: the game uses Transports, Raiders, Frigates, Light Cruisers and Cruisers. Each described in detail. The book also notes the absence of Battleships: an intentional choice. It also mentions battlecruisers are in most cases off-limits for Rogue Traders (except the real large ones), yet as a Battlefleet Gothic player we now that the major change from cruiser to battle cruiser is the dorsal weaponry. An easy adjustment to the rules & statistics will make them possible with little effort.

Components: It starts with describing the essential components needed for a vessel from the Plasma Drives to Crew Compartments to the Sensors.

Constructing Ships: first of a ship type is selected. The book gives eight basic hull types. Each has its own set of statistics like Speed, Manoeuvrability, Armour and Hull Integrity. The selection ranges from cheap Jericho-class Pilgrim vessels, Havoc-class Merchant Raiders and Dauntless-class Light Cruisers.

As ships are almost considering 'living' each ships gains a random (or pre-set) complication with regards the Machine-Spirit and the shadow of past History. It isn't all bad but it certainly makes them 'lively'.

Essential Components: For each essential component there are various types available, for example for a plasma drive one may choose from various Jovian patterns or a Lathe Pattern. Having a cruiser or escort sized vessel limits the choices somewhat. In the weapon part it is nice to see how varied Weapon Batteries really are.

Supplemental Components: Again there are various types available for specific components.
Weapon Battery variants (Thunderstrike, Mars, Sunsear and Ryza patterns) and Lances (Starbreaker, Titanforge patterns) each with its own statistics and cost value.
Other essential components are Cargo and Passenger Compartments and Augments and Enhancements. Next we can add additional facilities as Crew Reclamation Facilities, Temple-Shrines, Observation Domes and others.
More expensive and rare upgrades fall in the Aerotech (eg Bridge of Antiquity) and Xeno-Tech (eg Ghost Field) components.

NPC Vessels: Gives us two pre-generated vessels with all their statistics that our Rogue Trader may encounter during his voyages. Last we are shown an example Wayfarer station. Each entry details which essential and supplemental components are used.

Example Rogue Trader Vessel: A pre generated vessel which starting players may use as they start playing. An easy way to get into the game if you are not fond of or lack time to create your own spaceship. The Sabre, a modified Firestorm Class vessel, a quick and manoeuvrable asset to any Rogue Trader.

Starship Combat: As Battlefleet Gothic players we know how space combat works in 'our' game; Rogue Trader starship combat has a lot of comparisons with Battlefleet Gothic but has added some additional details, which are better for role-playing, yet did not include some things we Battlefleet Gothic players are quite used to.

Perhaps the biggest difference is the fact that in Battlefleet Gothic we are used to a massive fleets and now in Rogue Trader it is quite common, more like normal, to have one escort fighting another escort. You won't see a large fleet action here anytime soon.

The first thing that makes a difference is the use of the rules surprise and initiative. Two factors which determine the start and order of the combat.

Through the skills of the players' statistics a lot of actions are determined and rolled for.

Moving and manoeuvring is quite similar with maximum movement, half movement and the fact escorts can turn 90 degrees and capital ships 45 degrees once per turn. But instead of just having the speed you want (moving as far as you want) you need to do a skill test to adjust speed accordingly. It applies to turning.

And yes, Rogue Trader also has Come to New Heading. But the book also details Role Playing rules like Aid the Machine Spirit (better manoeuvrability), disinformation (better morale), Flank speed, focused augury and more. Some of these extras could find a place in Battlefleet Gothic as well. But I will cover this in the conclusion later in this article.
A Special Order like Brace for Impact is split into several options (through skill tests) like: Hold Fast!, Put your backs into it! and Prepare to Repel Boarders.

Shootings can be done in the arcs, as we know it from Battlefleet Gothic. Gunnery is resolved using the ballistic skill that is modified by range. The result of this means first a hit on the Void shield that absorbs the first hit automatically. Then the gunner needs to roll if the shot has penetrated the armour of the enemy vessel by using the battery strength value versus the armour.

Lances do no have to make that roll versus armour.

The degree of success a hit has means the shot has a higher chance of inflicting critical hits. So no extra roll but woven into the attack itself. Critical Hits do all the nasty things they do in Battlefleet Gothic as well but a bit changed (Sensors damaged, Internal Damage) and normal ones (Fire!, Bridge Smashed under a different name, etc).

In the battle boarding is also an option, this can be resolved through skill tests but the more daring Rogue Traders may even attempt to play this out as an adventure itself!

A very important aspect on your ship is the crew. And in Battlefleet Gothic this isn't an issue but in Rogue Trader we are supposed to keep them happy. A bad morale among the crew may lead to mutiny! It is also important to keep the crew level high enough to run your ship.

The chapter ends with detailing sailing the void outside of combat and how celestial phenomena influences the ship. When making deep void runs it is also noteworthy to know that you carry enough food and supplies on board.

Chapter IX - Playing the Game

In essence it describes how to play the game but as the chapter continues a whole bunch of tables and rules are introduced 'on the way'.

Chapter X - The Game Master

This chapter is not an introduction guide to become a game master (I would've appreciated that…) but a guide to be a good game master in the Rogue Trader setting. Again some rules are introduced as the chapter progresses.

Chapter XI - The Imperium

The beginning of the background Treasure Cove. It starts of with giving brief backgrounds on institutions like the Adeptus Terra, The Administratum and The Adeptus Custodus. In between a two page spanning map with the Imperium and the location of the Koronus Expanse. Then it continues with some important zones in the Imperium of Man. Planetary Governance and Planets of the Imperium give a great insight on how large everything really is. The planet description is neat. The language and culture parts again useful. Then it flows into detailing Communication in those vastnesses. Another large part is reserved for The Warp: travel, Astronomican, Navigation, Warpspace channels, Gates, Portals and the creatures…

The following section covers the 'rules' for crossing the Void and how illegal shipping and unregistred ships are taken care of; from Pirate to Alien.

The chapter then introduces an important read: The Stellar Fleets. Starting off with detailing the registration of ships we learn of the Merchant Fleets, which represents 90 percent of the Stellar Spacecraft in the Imperium. This is rounded with a description on the Civil Fleets.

The section on the Imperial Navy Battlefleets gives us how the command structure within the Navy works from the Lord High Admiral to the Captain of his ship.

The last part may seem odd, Enemies of the Imperium, but it is important in that it notes that a single capital ship going renegade will be able to carve their own little Empires. This to show the enormous potential of a single vessel.

Chapter XII - Rogue Traders

A detailed read on the background of the most important personage in this very book. If there is one thing you will learn from this chapter it is that Rogue Traders are powerful beyond measure. Upon receiving their mighty Warrant of Trade and perhaps a Grand Mission in name of the Holy Emperor himself a Rogue Trader is given a mighty fleet and army to explore the stars and bring forth the Light of Mankind.

This chapter provides another great source for creating your character and perhaps fleet in Battlefleet Gothic. In small boxes we can read brief exploits of legendary, infamous or forgotten Rogue Traders; perhaps giving ideas for future Battlefleet Gothic battles and or scenarios.

Chapter XIII - The Koronus Expanse

Great full coloured map: a more detailed version of the black and white version inside the hard cover. Great background. Great setting. Many planets. Many ideas. Plain simple: an excellent setting! A chapter that will see many re-reads on my part.

The second half of this chapter is just as great with its information on the denizens of the Koronus Expanse. Most importantly these are the Orks, Slaves of Darkness: Chaos Pirates and Renegades and the infamous Eldar. But also two newer races going by the names of The Stryxis, a trading race, the alien Rak´Gol Marauders, an evil corsair race and more.

All of them offer great backgrounds to create your alien and/or mercenary fleets in Battlefleet Gothic. In my opinion a real cool starting point is the Whisper of Anaris…

Chapter XIV - Adversaries & Aliens

A thought out chapter on breathing life into the enemies, trade partners, friends and other non-playing characters. With pre generated profiles for the quick starters.

Chapter XV - Into the Maw

A very cool starting adventure for a Rogue Trader and Company. It guides the game master from start to finish an entertaining story into the Koronus Expanse.

The book is ended with a large and handy index.

Concluding

What can I say? The book in itself is a great read. Anyone who is interested in role-playing should certainly get it. The book provides a very rich setting but the 40,000 universe is large and Rogue Traders travel everywhere and anywhere so there is no stopping you in playing your games in another area of the universe. To mind comes the Eastern Fringe with Kar Duniash and the Tau Empire. A large operating ground for Rogue Traders and Merchants.

Bu what if you are not interested in role-playing? What if you rather stick to Battlefleet Gothic and space battles? If you have to money to spare it is still a great buy even if you never go on and play the role-playing game. The background given in this book, on all the various levels and issues, is great as an inspiration. If you have trouble creating a character to command your fleet this book contains a wealth of material to work with.

An aspect that intrigues me most is the fact that Rogue Trader lays focus on small battles, an escort versus another escort. The details in the rules give enough options to create a lot of variants in the outcome of that vessel. Re-creating these small battles in Battlefleet Gothic would be quite possible. Stripping out the role-play elements and mixing rules into BFG would work pretty well. It could lead to fast and quick battles played under an hour which still provide an interesting game play.
And it is written in the Battlefleet Gothic rulebook that the most common engagements are small sized. The large fleets we usually see are not common.

So all in all I am very positive about this book. A good expansion to anyone who is into the background of the 40,000 universe and Rogue Traders in general.

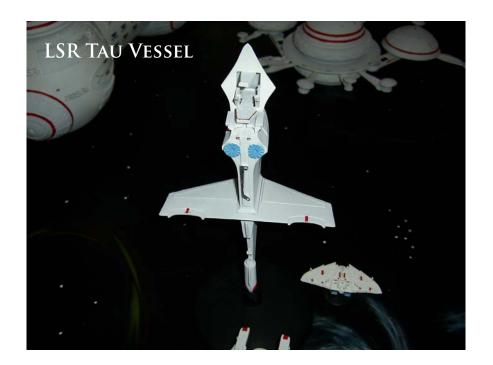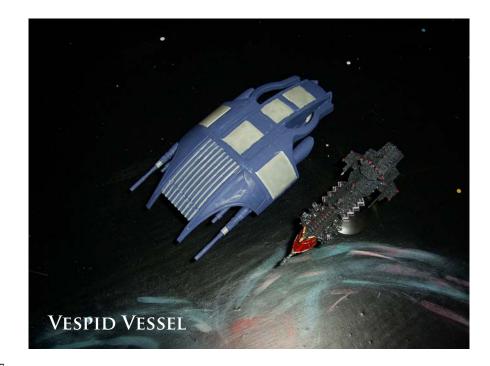Horizon

Tau Space Stations & Vessels

by Harkon

SHOWCASE

LSR Tau Vessel

LSR Tau Vessel

Vespid Vessel

Vespid Vessel

WAAAAAGH

The Ship

By Dominic Amlôt

Chapter Six

The time was 2.30. They had just come from the briefing, it had basically been about telling them how victory was assured and that the God Emperor would not let them fall. Suddenly klaxons started to sound, people were running to and fro, commanding officers shouting orders, a steady scream of jets grew closer and closer, the banshee like noise of their guns penetrated the wail of the klaxons.

Barely had they made it into one of the bunkers before explosions started to rip through the compound quickly followed by the tracers of the anti-air guns. The crudely made Ork fighta-bommerz were shredded by the defensive fire but not before they had unloaded the full force of their weapons' loads on the outer-compound wall, creating a breach almost a kilometre wide. The smoke plumes reached high into the sky. The light on the door of the bunker went from red to green as the last explosions went off.

"That was different," Vinx whispered to Trina, not wanting to break the ghost-like silence only broken by the occasional stutter of the vox caster as a new wave of orders came in.

A powerful voice came from one of the men standing next to the vox caster, the stars on his shoulder marked him out as a colonel, "Men, the outer sentries have spotted dust plumes, we have no reinforcements due and cannot make radio contact this means that they are Orks. Their ETA is five minutes. It looks like the bomber attack was meant to coincide with their ground assault. Get to your stations, we will not lose this base!"

Troops rushed out to their stations. Soon Vinx Trina and Williams were the only ones left.

"What is it soldiers!!! Get out there; this is the day you will fight for your Emperor."

"Umm… we just got here, what are we supposed to do?" Williams spoke, but having once been a officer himself he knew what sort of fuse they had for ignorance.

"How dare you! Get out there now! Where you fight does not matter as long as you fight," he practically screamed at them. Running out without a backward glance they shouldered the weapons that they had been issued. It looked like they had come out just at the worst moment. Ork speed freaks were kicking up dust outside the walls, giving supporting fire to the forces that had already charged in through the breach. Guardsmen fought and mostly died in hand to hand combat with creatures twice their size. Unnatural moans of pain filtered through the noise of combat.

"Well what are we waiting for?" asked Trina sarcastically.

"The Space Marines?" answered William tensely.

"Funny! Let's get going, wouldn't want to miss the party," Vinx said caustically.

They ran to the massed guardsmen on the walls, giving the fight in the breach a wide berth. A massive greenskin brute detached himself from the raging battle, hacking a guardsman in two all the while screaming and firing his pistol. He saw them. He charged, bringing his choppa down in a killing blow. Vinx dived out of the way, the blade missing him by scant centimetres. As he was skidding away he put a pinpoint bullet dead centre in the beast's head. Undaunted by the massive head trauma, the Ork turned, aiming his gun at Vinx. Then Trina and William impaled him in the torso with their bayonets, letting rip with their guns as they

slashed away.

"Takes more than one bullet to kill those tough bastards," said Trina offering her hand to Vinx. Ignoring her he pulled himself up. Annoyed with her sarcasm at his brush with death he pretended he hadn't heard her over the roar of battle.

"Let's go people, we can argue when the greenskins are dead," said Williams

Nodding their assent they restarted their climb to the walls, all the while ducking as wild, inaccurate Ork slugs ricocheted around them. After climbing to the top of the walls and looking down at the wasteland in front of them, they wished they hadn't.

To their left was a hive city; just below that was the equilateral jungle even if it wasn't so bad that the hive was on fire, what really scared them was out front. Across the defensive trench lines infested with Orks and their vehicles were three huge Gargants, lumbering metal beasts dedicated to the Ork gods Gork and Mork. Firing massive shells, breaking up any formation of guard that tried to form together they unleashed a hail of fire, all the while getting slowly closer and closer. When they got in range of the Imperial gun line it would all be over.

The scream of jet engines thundered closer. Looking up, Williams could just see four squadrons of Lightings intercepting the Orks' air force, allowing a squadron of Marauder bombers a clear shot at the target. They released a massive pay load. It crippled one of the Gargants but the other two turned several of their monstrous guns up at the sky, ripping into the aerial formation. Barely any of the jets, Marauder and Lighting alike would be returning to base.

Despite the loss of one of their massive war machines, the Orks continued undaunted, and now the trio could see why: barely visible but still there in the distance, coming down from the sky a bare hundred or so miles away to the right was a massive Ork rok. It was a huge asteroid, filled with every imaginable type of weaponry. Massive thrusters fired, slowing its descent. It smashed into the ground, shaking the earth. Although they were at least a hundred miles away, it doesn't take long for a teleport to work, soon waves of Orks were pouring out of the Gargant's feet. Almost as soon as this thought had registered, devotional Hymns started playing out of the speakers around the base, nicely covering the roar of jets as a transport shuttle and an escort of two Thunderbolts took off, no doubt carrying the commanding officers of the installation.

"Isn't that a little pre-emptive, almost makes you think they expect us to lose," Trina muttered to her comrades in the brief lull in the fighting that the descent of the rok had created.

"We need to get out of here, were no use to anybody dead," Williams said.

"Cool, let's do that. Oh wait, we're surrounded on all sides," Vinx mentioned as if this little fact wasn't very important.

"There are still plenty of jets," Trina said.

"Yeah, and unless you haven't noticed, none of us are pilots," Vinx snapped.

"Well, I trained as a commercial pilot before I joined the Imperial navy, how much different can a shuttle be from a plane?" asked Williams.

Vinx and Trina shared an 'if we let him fly it I hope it has an ejector button' look. Their conversation finished just as the fighting started again in full swing. No-one noticed them slip away into the shadows. As soon as they were out of sight and out of mind they headed for the hangers. As predicted there were several obsolete looking fighter jets ready fuelled, they went to the one that looked like it had been in service for the least time and hopped in.

Something jumped out of the shadows, raising their guns to fire all they saw was a cowering man in the robes of an Adeptus Mechanicus initiate.

"Please take me with you!" he cried out as they lowered their weapons "There wasn't enough room on the first flight out of here. They said they would come back for me but they didn't."

Williams looked into the cockpit, there were three seats. Anyone who didn't have a seat would be tossed around like a rag doll until their neck was broken. He would have to leave one of his people behind if he was to take this snivelling wretch with him.

Seeing the look that passed across their faces the initiate realised that they weren't going to take him with them. "I have records that say you were conscripted, an order to have you executed on sight will be passed to all Imperial planets within 20 light-years of this system; you can't go anywhere. If you take me with you I won't do it!"

"The lives of my friends are worth more to me than you are," said Williams coldly, raising his las-pistol.

"NO PLEASE DON'T…AHHHHH," William put a bullet into the initiate's foot.

"We can let the Orks finish him."

They left the bleeding man of the floor, taxiing the aircraft onto the runway. They took off as the final elements of the outpost's defenders broke and ran, the Orks' crude vehicles scant seconds behind them. They watched as the guardsmen were encircled and wiped out to a man. They saw the victorious Orks celebrating their victory, and throughout these events they felt no pity, maybe the war was getting to them but they had changed since they had started fighting.

William turned the nose of the aircraft towards the far distant hive, having barely enough fuel to reach it. They flew across open wastelands covered with corpses and burnt out shells of vehicles now only useful to the circling vultures. As they reached the hive city they saw the heavy fighting and death pervading the landscape.

Spotting a clear patch of ground they set the aircraft down and continued on foot to the hive's walls, it was a patchwork of broken masonry and plastic. It didn't take them long to crawl through a sizable gap in the wall. They found themselves in a dimly lit room filled with rubbish and five men pointing guns at them.

"So do you want to explain exactly what you doing here?"

"Umm…."

Chapter Seven

There was a rustling noise in the walls. Gun quickly walked over and placed his ear against the crack in the wall. He quickly made a flurry of symbols with his hands. Understanding what he wanted, Ayden woke sir, snipe and hack, gesturing to the noise emanating from the wall. Nodding, they picked up their weapons and prepared to face whatever sort of Ork came through.

What they saw was something completely different. Three people wearing an assortment of rags crawled through the wall. Surprised, they were all momentarily silent: why would anyone try to sneak in to this doomed hive? Then sir stepped forward, "So do you want to explain exactly what you doing here?"

"Umm… " One of them replied stupidly. The standoff continued.

"You look like you have been through hell, so why did you come here? It's just gonna get ugly. You must have seen the amount of Orks that are arrayed outside?"

"Well why are you here? This place is completely uninhabited; this section of the underhive is nearly inaccessible, the only reason you would be here is if you expected an attack and if that was the case there would be more than five people. The only other reason is that you wanted to escape for whatever reason." Vinx had put two and two together much more quickly that the others.

"Perhaps you are right and that we do want to escape or perhaps we should just shoot you now?"

"If you want to escape we have a plane outside. It's out of fuel but you look like the type of people that could help us get some."

"We thought we heard a plane coming in, but by the sound of the engine it isn't very big, not nearly big enough for all of us," sir said in an accusatory tone.

"There must be an air base round here somewhere, if there's an air base all we need to do is steal a shuttle," William spoke tiredly.

"Oh 'only' steal a shuttle, is that it? Because the only airfield I see round here is on top of the spire and that has at least 100 guardsmen on high alert guarding it day and night," snipe said annoyed.

"The only reason we couldn't steal one of their aircraft isn't because they're guarding the airfield it's because they're guarding the only way up except for the skies. If a registered aircraft were to land nobody would care, it could take us all as long as you didn't go above a certain speed," Trina mused.

"This could work, but we need the ID code or they'd just shoot us down," Vinx said, instantly spotting the problem in the plan.

"Don't worry about the ID there isn't a computer alive that my man couldn't hack," sir said.

"Well then it looks like we've got a plan, but we still need the fuel," Williams said.

"The fuel shouldn't be a problem. I've got an idea… "

"That's your plan, you're crazy!" They were looking down at a massive pipe. It ran all the way from hive to hive supplying them with fuel. Because of the importance of this objective it was heavily guarded. At least twenty guards patrolled the giant 'filling station'. All they need to do was get one of the supply trucks, fill it with fuel and drive out to where they had come in, feed the pipe through the wall and then just start pumping.

The problem was the twenty high-alert guards that were patrolling the pipeline. If just one got the word out that they were under attack, they would be up to their butts in storm-troopers in a couple of minutes. So they had devised a plan that was filled with loop holes and unthought-of problems.

Snipe, Trina and Vinx would go down the pipeline for about ten miles and shut off the gas by blowing a small hole in the pipe; while the guards were running down there, they would leave. Then sir, hack and Williams would head down to the controls and start siphoning off the fuel while Ayden and gun would start shooting up the storm-trooper compound in an attempt to delay them. If it all went according to plan, the three groups would meet up back were they began, pump the fuel into the plane, fly up to the top of the hive city, fight through the soldiers guarding the airfield, find and try to steal a shuttle while being shot at and hope that it was fuelled and serviced and then fly out of there with no trained pilot to an unknown destination. Simple, right?

In fact, at first it went off with out a hitch. The guards left to check out the explosion down the pipeline. Although they took most of the vehicles with them they left one that was capable of carrying the fuel. Williams started to siphon of the fuel and everything was fine. Trina, snipe and Vinx were almost back at the meeting point, their tanker was almost full. But it all started to fall apart at the storm-trooper base. At the right moment Ayden and gun started to fire into the base, but it was all for nought they did no damage and only succeeded in being almost encircled. They had two choices: stay and be killed or run like hell towards the only place that seemingly wasn't filled with troops, their base.

Running, las-blasts scorching the ground around them, they skidded through the open gates. Heading down a passageway, they emerged into the middle of a vehicle park. They figured that if they were going to get out they would need some transport, so clambering into a solid-looking armoured personnel carrier they fired up the engine and ploughed through buildings and fences alike. A smattering of bullets pattered the side of the hull harmlessly. Even when a heavy bolter started to churn out rounds at them all it did was put harmless dents in the side of the armour. Ten minutes later they arrived to find the others, pipe in hand, feeding it through the wall. Jumping out of the carrier, they headed over to the group.

"Nice wheels, hope you weren't followed, I've been listening in on the voxcaster in the truck, hearing all about the theft of an armoured troop carrier. They say they've been getting a tracking signal from it and they had a clear bead on its location."

"Oh crap."

"Exactly."

Just then, as if someone had heard them, autoguns and lasguns started firing. All it would take was a single shot to hit the half empty tanker and the whole place would go up in smoke. Returning fire, they ran for the small room they had come through in.

Williams turned to hack and Vinx, "How much fuel does it need exactly, we're not going to space?"

"Well what we've got in it should do it at a stretch," Vinx replied.

"What about the codes?" sir shouted over to hack.

"I've been working on them, I'm certain that I've cracked them," hack answered.

"Good! In that case let's get the hell out of here; I take it the others are already on the outside?"

They nodded assent to both questions, squeezing through the hole in the wall. They had barely made it to the other side before an over zealous storm-trooper

threw a grenade in their direction, taking a portion of the hive down behind them.

Looking at the caved-in area as the dust settled, Trina turned to others, "Wasn't this meant to be covert, as in not telling everyone we're here sort of thing?"

Shaking his head William climbed into the aircraft. "We'll be able to take off in a sec."

"Wait, you're flying us? Do you have any experience? I think I should take care of it," hack said.

"Well if you say so, but when we get shot down, it's your fault."

"Whatever."

They took the aircraft up slowly, turning the nose skywards. The engines screamed briefly as they fought inertia. As they reached altitude, a flurry of questions erupted from the comms equipment. If hack got even a single question wrong then they would just be a bright explosion in the sky. But hack knew his work and, luckily, no-one actually cared to ask where they had come from.

Reaching the top of the hive spire, they came into land. Hack begun to power the flier down and Williams, Vinx and Trina opened the hatch. A phalanx of guardsmen was standing in front of them, guns levelled.

"Uh-oh."

Chapter Eight

A familiar looking man stepped forward, he had crutches and it looked like his foot was had been shot. Suddenly, recognition grew in their eyes. This was the bureaucrat they had shot back at the battle at the outpost before they had stolen the aircraft.

"Thought you'd seen the last of me? What you didn't know was that there was a secret tunnel. Myself and several guardsmen managed to escape to the underground intercity railway. We got here shortly before you," he smiled a sickly smile. "Shoot them, you won't trouble us any more."

Just as the troopers were raising their guns, hack increased the flier's power, swung the aircraft round and went to full afterburn still on the ground. This quick thinking blasted red-hot jet wash over the guardsmen, incinerating and obliterating those directly behind the engines. They were the lucky ones. Outside the immediate blast radius, agonising screams of pain filled the air, as effective as any kind of alarm. Williams saw the half incinerated body of the cleric they had shot, there wasn't much left, he had been standing right below one of the engines.

"And this time stay dead," William spat at the body. "We have to get moving, find a shuttle, hotwire the engine and let's get going."

They fanned out across the landing pads, checking the various shuttles on stand-by. Hack shouted, "This one," sticking his head out of one shuttle's hatch. Ducking back inside he climbed into the pilot's seat and began checking the controls, muttering to himself as he hacked into the systems.

As the others ran towards the shuttle hack had chosen, across the airfield one of the cargo elevators rose to the surface, there was a squad of guardsmen on it. Without a second's thought Vinx dropped to one knee and fired a volley into the men, dropping them like stones. Then another squad appeared from a second elevator platform. Snipe and gun took care of them, but more guards kept coming.

As another group stepped out from a hanger, Vinx, snipe and gun ran, firing over their backs as they dashed to the landing pad that the others had made for . Hack was almost done, hacking into the navigational system. Williams was starting the engine, it roared to life, the whine of the engines grew in intensity; the last three dove headfirst into the hatch as the others laid down a stream of fire on any guardsmen that poked their heads up.

"Wait a sec, how are we going to get past the aerial defences? We can't use any codes like we did last time. Won't they know this is a stolen shuttle; they'll just shoot us down… " panted snipe

"Really, really good flying?" Vinx suggested, answering the first of snipe's questions with one of his own.

"Right…" sir said.

The engines flared briefly. A few bullets dented the hull but the ship was designed to take much sterner punishment than the guardsmen's guns could dish out. Taxiing from their pad to the runway they started to gain speed. Hack fed more power to the engines and the shuttle rose into the sky. But as they gained height they came under almost immediate attack from the anti-air guns. Hack only saw one way around this problem. Without even telling the others to get ready he cut the engine. The shuttle plummeted, shouts filled the compartment as they fell, every one pinned to their seats. As the ground filled the viewports, at about 800 feet, the engines roared back to life and they sped away out of range of the AA guns – unable to depress their barrels to fire at targets below their own height.

"Never ever do that again!" sir shouted.

"We're alive aren't we," snapped hack, "which reminds me: how are we going to stay alive? All we did was delay the inevitable."

"We could go into space," Trina murmured.

"In this crate, we wouldn't last five minutes, and unless you have a nice destroyer in your back pocket we're stuck here," hack said, angry at her stupidity.

"What about the space port on Phoenix Island?" Williams asked.

"Even if we found a ship small enough to get undetected into space but big enough to hold us all, then we would just be trapped in orbit."

"But what about the empty merchant vessels?"

"I'm sorry, what empty merchant vessels?"

"At each spaceport there are always a few Caravel class transports. They're just about warp capable and are usually used as tugs. Flat out in-system, they're as fast as a Nova class destroyer and they even have a few weapons," Trina was talking to hack like he was a idiot, which was brave of her since he was probably the smartest person any of them knew.

"Well then, it looks like we have a heading: Phoenix Island," gun said simply.

"That's gonna be a problem, the Orks completely own the skies between there and here, the only way through is if we circle round through the equitorial jungles and come at it from the west," Vinx stated.

"Do we have enough fuel?" Trina asked

"Fuel's not the problem. The greenskins have massed in the forest, if we were to be shot down we would be surrounded on all sides by feral Orks," William answered.

"Let's get going, wouldn't want to waste any time," hack said annoyed.

The aircraft went to afterburner, the wail of its engines reaching a crescendo until it exploded into the sound barrier, shaking the ground. They climbed to 5,000 feet and started to speed for the jungles.

Chapter Nine

They had been flying for nearly an hour before they saw it; they were getting ready to start curving away, ready for the flight across water. It was a huge monolith. It gleamed, sending out a ungodly black light. They all watched, somehow transfixed. As hack banked their shuttle they spotted something move on the pyramid-like structure. It glowed a ghostly green then shot out. It hit the rear engines in a perfect shot, they plummeted from 5,000 feet to 500 in about 20 seconds. Hack managed to flare the aircraft's wings, slowing their descent but not enough. They ploughed into the ground leaving a massive trail. Luckily nobody was seriously hurt. But that didn't really matter; they were deep inside Ork territory surround by feral Orks and some metallic structure that really didn't like them.

They climbed out of the wrecked shuttle, grabbing what supplies they could and started to walk towards what was apparently a Imperial base. Then, a flash in the undergrowth, something metal, a familiar green flash shot out. It missed Trina by scant centimetres, blowing a hole in the dirt by her feet. She rolled to the ground scanning the undergrowth for any sign of her attacker. Then all hell broke loose, a skeletal figure broke from cover marching towards them, followed by about ten more. They opened fire, the humans started running, jumping over fallen logs and wading through streams they made their way to the Imperial base.

It was in a clearing, little more than a shanty town. They ran through the gates

and were met by a man even bigger than sir. He was painted green and for a second they actually thought he was an Ork. Then he spoke. "You must have been in that aircraft," he smiled grimly, "Looks like you're stuck here with the rest of us now. We need new bodies for the grinder as it is." With that he walked away.

Moving around the camp they got a few suspicious looks but nobody openly challenged them. That's when they spotted a way out, a clear path that looked like it led to the eastern wasteland. They were just starting to walk down the path when someone wearing a battered Cadian uniform stepped out of the jungle, from a hitherto unknown position amongst the trees.

"You wouldn't be trying to leave now would you?" His lasgun was raised pointing at them.

Backing away, Williams spoke cautiously, "No of course not... Sir."

"Good, why are you still standing here? Back to your post soldiers."

"Where are we gonna go now?" sir muttered under his breath.

"Well, all we need is a distraction. The next time the feral Orks attack we should be able to leave," William spoke in the same quiet tones.

"Oh we just wait for that do we, because it'll be easier to leave when we're surrounded by Orks than just shoot the lone guard." sir said sarcastically.

"Trust me," Williams said smiling.

"I've know you for all of half a day. How am I meant to trust you," sir said angry at Williams. "All I know is that you're being hunted by just about everyone, including the Imperial guard who we're supposed to be helping, and that you need a ride of this rock."

"It's not like you're any different, you're being hunted for god knows what and without us you'd still be stuck in that hive surrounded on all sides by Imperials and Orks!"

"Fine, we'll use your plan."

They didn't have to wait long. They had arrived at about midday, it was dark when the Orks attacked, none of them had slept for at least 20 hours. Exhausted they stood in the centre of the compound. Floodlights lit the base, just outside range the Orks were shouting in their guttural language. Klaxons wailed, the occasion bullet flew overhead matched by the occasional explosion of mines in the jungle, and then the attack really got underway.

Feral Orks ran screaming at the walls, leaping on top of their fallen brethren to get at the defenders. Every time one Ork leapt over the walls he was filled with bullets, but then the gates blew as a crude Ork device detonated from one of the greenskin bodies lying by the gatehouse. The Orks came charging through. Desperately, the humans fought, their faces lit up with a ghostly glow from the burning gate as they were embroiled in a vast melee.

"I told you this was a bad plan," sir yelled.

"Well it looks like it's all going to plan. All we need to do is regroup with the others and get the hell out of here," Williams shouted back above the din of battle. They were fighting back to back in the courtyard.

Then the Orks unveiled their masterpiece, a stroke of greenskin genius. While the dazed guardsmen in the gatehouse who should have been watching the jungle paths with their heavy lascannon and autocannon were battling their immediate attackers, several ramshackle, red-painted vehicles belonging to the Ork speed freak clan sped up the path, pouring automatic fire into the defenders. But luckily not every one was so embroiled in the combat as to not see them coming, Trina was standing on the walls next to gun, she shouted a warning to him. He looked out at the approaching vehicles horrified but then nodded. Standing on the wall he started to hose the Ork vehicles with bullets, enough for them to concentrate on him.

Without warning Trina jumped off the wall landing neatly on the back of an Ork trukk where an Ork was firing a massive shoota at the melee around the gate. He turned with an almost comical look of surprise on his face at the fact that a human had just fallen out of the sky but it didn't take him long to reach for his choppa. Trina kicked his legs doing absolutely no damage. Shouting she leapt to her feet and gutted the Ork with her bayonet just as he was about to slice her in two. Turning she but a bullet square in the back of the driver's head. Pushing the body to one side, she slid into the driving seat, grabbing the wheel. There were just two pedals, accelerator and turbo-boost – no brake. Who would have thought it was an automatic? She slewed the vehicle round and headed for gun

who had climbed down from the wall. He jumped in, grabbed the shoota and started mowing down Orks in scores. She drove in through the wrecked gate heading to wherethe others were fighting, ramming Ork mobs as she went.

She had picked up the rest of their motley crew but hadn't yet seen sir and Williams. Then she spotted them, backed into a gap between two buildings where the Orks could only get at them one at a time. But the two men were weakening.

"Down," yelled gun and the two men dropped to the earth. The Orks trying to get at them turned at the voice to see gun grinning behind his shoota. He let rip and the greenskins died.

Williams and sir clambered to their feet. "Figures...she...would...leave...us...last," sir said slowly, tired.

"Yeah...whatever."

The stolen Ork trukk ploughed its way towards them, its occupants firing out into the masses of Orks now pouring in through the gate. Trina slewed sideways, squashing Orks as the truck slammed into the wall by the alleyway. The two men jumped in.

William turned to sir, "So what sort of plan was it again?" Having not yet caught his breath sir just mumbled something abusive.

The trukk wobbled dangerously as it bounced and jolted over the path, each rock making it seem like another part of the vehicle had come adrift. They could see that the shoddily-made parts were falling off it. All of Vinx's expertise in engineering wouldn't help them if they had nothing left to repair. They had made a clean break from the camp. As Williams had predicted, the Orks and the Imperials were too busy trying to rip each other's throats out than try to stop them leaving with their escaped vehicle. One of the other Ork trukks had tried to follow them but a burst of fire from the shoota soon put paid to any attempts to stop them. They gave the location of the monolith a wide berth, they didn't want a repeat of what happened to them the first time.

Chapter Ten

They left the equitorial jungle close to Death Mire. Since they now had no aircraft and no other way across the seas they would have to try to board one of the gigatankers at the harbour city. However, this could be a problem, feral Orks poured out of the forests day and night. The harbour defenders had been almost wiped out even though bands of Ork hunters were in the process of destroying the feral Ork nests.

But with Ork speed freaks now roaming the area, staying where they were wasn't an option either. Kicking up a dust plume, they sped towards the sound of battle at the harbour. The Ork trukk was becoming almost impossible to drive, the front and back sections were coming apart and three of the six wheels were completely flat meaning that Trina had to keep making course corrections or risk drifting off. Even though they would have to ditch it soon, they had made good progress in the trukk. They were barely a mile away from Death Mire harbour when the engine finally sputtered and died on them. They jumped out and started to walk away, but not before sir ripped the massive shoota of the back of the car.

"Very imposing," snipe muttered to Vinx.

"I could take him," said Vinx sniggering.

It didn't take them long to reach the ruined harbour city. The smoke plumes were high, the sounds of battle were clear and it looked like the city was perpetually on fire. Stepping warily through craters and ruined buildings, they moved cautiously closer to the battle. Then they saw it, Space Marines and hive militia stood side by side against insurmountable odds. Orks rampaged through the lines. They could even see a squiggoth in the distance. Ork submersibles and ships littered the bay, the tide was out and they looked like a giant's playthings.

They had no choice. To run away they had to fight. They quickly made their presence known. Sir started letting rip with his massive shoota. The others opened up, using their various procured weapons. Ayden ran to a group of Orks, toasting them with his flamer.

And then they saw their chance. The squiggoth had a rope ladder rolled up and locked to the top carriage; a quick shot from snipe blew the lock off, letting the ladder unwind. The squiggoth was standing by a platform. All they needed to do was jump the metre or so gap and grab the ladder, and then they could climb up. Dealing with the Orks would be a simple matter of a grenade and a burst of bullets. No-one would stop a squiggoth; it was just a short ride to the beached ships, as it was they could already see the tide turning. They started to run. They

jumped, they grabbed. One of them missed the jump. Sir tumbled to the ground, impaling himself on the waiting greenskin choppas. Gun cried out. The others all felt affection for the bear of a man that had been through so much in his life. But if one thing being in the army and living your life as a bounty hunter, living with death told you, it was how to prepare for it. A few tears were shed but they could grieve later.

Snipe tossed a grenade into the swarm of Orks at the squiggoth's feet while the others cleared the platform on the animal's back. Before the Orks could react they were dead. Anger for their fallen comrade had fuelled their hatred of the greenskins, lending them speed. Soon the cabin that sat atop the squiggoth was empty of all Orks. There was a simple switchboard on one of the walls, it controlled the beast. There were little electrical devices attached to the brain of the creature and its limbs.

Amongst the wreckage of the carriage there were several artillery pieces. Most looked like simple mortars but others appeared to be relatively complicated energy weapons. Suddenly the squiggoth bucked violently.

"Sorry," Vinx and hack muttered, they hadn't quite got the hang of the control panel. They understood what most of the buttons were but it looked like they had been testing to see what others did.

It didn't take long for the Orks on the ground to realise that the squiggoth was no longer on their side; they started to climb up the rope ladder, all the while hammering the beast with their shootas. The squiggoth roared in pain and surged forward towards the harbour. Gun leaned over and sprayed those Orks still clinging to the ladder with bullets and they fell away. On the swaying platform they felt the beast stagger and go into its death throes. It had, however, already served its purpose; it had carried them across the Ork lines and to the ships that were already half submerged with water. But there was one thing they hadn't though about: what were they to do about the half-dead beast when they got off the platform? Left to its own devices the crazed and dying creature would probably try to stomp them.

Williams turned to hack and Vinx, "How can we stop this… thing… following us?"

"Well I think that if we press this button for long enough it should make it go into cardiac arrest," Vinx answered while hack nodded.

"Good let's do that. Come-on we don't have all day." They started to climb down the rope ladder. They had barely made it to the shoreline when the beast bucked once then died.

They boarded a slightly damaged Imperial submarine. Trina asked an obvious question, "Won't the Orks just shoot us with their air force?"

"It's a sub; they'll never see us," hack put in.

"Well if you say so…" Trina said not completely convinced.

"I do, now if you've finished bickering we should leave," Vinx said.

Chapter Eleven

The trip was uneventful, a blessed respite. The sub had been slightly damaged. This slowed them down, but not significantly as they sailed on just below the surface. Ork fighters patrolled the skies but they didn't spot the sub's track. But despite this and the need to avoid the occasional Ork stolen Gigatanker, nothing much happened. It was the quiet before the storm.

They beached the submarine happy to leave it; but the second they left they had to restrain themselves from climbing back in. Stretched before them, like some twisted landscape, was Phoenix Island. It was a wasteland littered with carcasses, stripped clean of their flesh by the toxic fumes and shells of exploded vehicles. In the distance they could see thousands of raving Orks pouring across a damaged bridge to the island spaceport, what was worse there were Orks already on their side of the island.

"There in that hangar over there," Trina said, gesticulating at a distant shadow-covered object wreathed in smoke. The fight for the island was already underway. Space Marines stood in knee high acid, the corpses of Imperial guardsmen already dissolving around them.

The heroes of the Imperium put up an impressive showing but the fight was not going the way of the Space Marines. The Orks were boxing them in, herding them together. As they watched, a squad of Marines was obliterated by an Ork rokkit. The thin line was breaking, and then the remnants of the Imperium's

finest ran for the safety of their Thunderhawk gunships. A vile shout started to pulsate through the numberless greenskin horde as the Thunderhawks took off, heading for orbit.

"They'll be back," Trina said hopefully for to herself than anyone else.

"Yeah, but only after a lengthy bombardment," said Vinx, as always cynical.

"We'd be completely exposed," hack said depressed.
"
So die now or die later, which to choose," snipe said, annoyance showing on his pale features.

"There has to be a way, I refuse to die after coming all this way," gun muttered.

"A way? Against that? We are lost!" Williams said his face twisted with anger and guilt.

"Well… " Ayden started.

"Well what? We don't have long,"

"Those Gargants over..."

"Are you insane? We can't steal a Gargant," Williams said.

"Why not? It's not like we've got any choice. At least this way even if we are caught then we can go down with a real fight," Ayden said, irritated at Williams' lack of a survival instinct.

"What have we got to lose, we stay here we die, we try to sneak to the hangar we'll probably be caught. We go over there like that, as flame said, even if we get caught we can give them a run for their money," Trina said a light in her previously dark eyes, a flare of hope.

"Fine, we wait till nightfall then we attack."

Williams didn't really know the meaning of nightfall having spent most of his adult life on a ship that was always lit. They tried to move stealthily, difficult since they could only see the Gargants by the sentry's torches.

They had almost made it though, all they needed to do was to kill one group Orks silently and they would have a clear run at the metal monstrosity - still easier said than done.

Near the feet of the nearest Gargant there was a small group of Orks roaring and cheering. They looked like they were betting on a contest between two grots. It wouldn't last forever but it provided vital distraction for them. They all drew knives. Taking on Orks in close combat is always ill-advised, but they had no choice. Their guns would have lit the place up. They needed to do this as silently as possible and quickly. There were three Orks and the two grots. Each of them picked a target.

They went for the Orks, ignoring the grots, this was their mistake. They struck, leaping out of shadows plunging their combat knives into the bodies of the Orks. Two were dead before they hit the ground, the other one lay there gurgling quietly, his throat slit.

But they had given the two grots a chance to run. Trina threw her knife, it embedded itself in the head of one of the grots. The other one ran off into the darkness.

"Crap," Trina retrieved her knife but it was too late to get the other grot.

"He'll light up all the alarms in this place in seconds," Ayden said, barely audible.

"Well we better hurry then," gun spoke equally quietly.

They moved forward hurriedly though still stealthily but it was all for nought; they entered the control cabin, it was empty. No guards. The controls were simple, just some levers. The problem was the Gargant's engine, it used some old combustible fuel to drive it, Vinx warned them, the engine needed to warm up first or it could explode. It would take time to do this, time they didn't have.

Orks, alerted to their whereabouts had run to the Gargant and were starting to climb up the ladder to the metal monster's cabin access hatch. Williams and gun shot each one as they came up. Other Orks, deciding that they didn't want to add their names to those of the recently deceased, started to bombard the hatchway forcing Williams and gun to duck inside. They continued to pin them down even

as more greenskins started to climb up the ladder again.

Williams and gun fought a running battle as they retreated back to the command room. As they reached it the huge metal beast lumbered into action, the engine roared. As if in answer to this, the Gargant's cannons opened up. Suddenly, the Orks on the ground were in disarray but the Orks that had already boarded ran into the cabin, yelling their guttural warcries. They charged into the room. Each of the humans faced up to a greenskin warrior. The Gargant came to a halt as Vinx turned from the controls, ducking a choppa swipe. Its cannons also fell silent as gun also joined the fray. Now they were surely doomed; since the vehicle had stopped it wouldn't take long for more Orks to start climbing into the Gargant and when that happened they would be destroyed by weight of numbers. They did the only thing that they could in the situation. They ran.

Williams yelled, "Grenades!" As they pelted through the hatch in the bulkhead they each threw a grenade behind them. "Help me!" Williams threw his weight against the massive Ork designed hatch. The others joined him and pushed it shut as the grenades went off together.

There was a moment of silence. They reopened the hatch. The room looked like some debauched ritual had gone on. Bits of Ork were hanging from almost everywhere. Amazingly the controls still worked. Ork devices are crude and badly made, but they are resilient.

They resumed their insane charge towards the hangar and the one thing that might save them. But now the Orks were prepared. The steady thump of artillery pieces battered the sides of the Gargant. Usually small arms fire isn't very effective against this sort of lumbering giant, but with literally thousands of guns firing at the Gargant, some bullets found targets in the hydraulics around its feet. Smoke started to emanate out of the machine every time the engine chugged but gradually they outdistanced the Orks on foot. And then they were there; through everything they had reached their final destination on this planet.

The Gargant halted, they quickly climbed down from the great metal animal that had taken them the last leg of their journey. They opened the hangar's side door. Inside was a ship. It was tiny, a bare 300 or so metres long.

"You're sure that this can travel through the warp?" hack asked sceptically.

"Of course," Trina answered.

"Right, well we don't have long. Let's get this bird in the air," Williams spoke impatiently. As if to underline this point the first of the Orks that had chased the Gargant appeared at the hangar door, firing. No further persuasion was needed. They slammed the ship's hatch shut and secured it.

As Williams and hack strapped themselves into the two pilots' seats Vinx ran in, "We're ready to go."

"What, just like that? No death defying wait? Things are getting easier!"

"The ship is quite new, it's been kept in good condition and the Orks haven't had time to defile it." The ship also had weapons, two small lances to deal with asteroids and fighters.

"Wait, how are we going to get out of here. The main doors are closed and the roof doesn't open," gun asked stupidly.

"The roof does open," Vinx said smiling. He pushed a button, an arc of fire leapt from the ship's lances making a new, massive, skylight. "These ships just levitate right out of here."

The ship started to rise. A flash of blue around the ship notified the 'crew' that its shields were raised. And only just in time, nearly out of range but still capable of hurting them, the second Gargant raised its massive arms and started to fire. Vinx responded with the lances, shredding the beast. They left the atmosphere seconds later, gathering speed they fled into space..

Epilogue

Williams looked down at the planet below; as they had entered orbit, an accusatory voice on the ship's voxcaster had told them that if they left they would be treated as cowards. They didn't stop. Their death warrants had already been spread amongst the remaining Imperial planets in the sector. The ship was preparing to jump, he turned away. There was nothing left for them here any more. The ship made the jump; they headed into the unknown, they plotted no course, the ship would leave warp space on its own time. They would go wherever the Emperor took them.

THE END

BATTLE FOR THE STYGIES SYSTEM

By Max Porter Zasada a.k.a. Moox

This is a tree campaign, where winning or losing a battle determines the next scenario to be played, and the ultimate fate of a massive war! This one is designed for three players, and is set in the Stygies solar system.

Note: It works best with fleets of about 1500-2000 points, though this is easily adjustable. Also, not everything about this campaign is one hundred percent "fair." War rarely is! Fun is the primary objective here.

Rules

The attacking forces are a Chaos fleet which has infiltrated the Stygies system. The defending forces are an Imperial Navy fleet surprised into action by a sudden attack! The neutral player will play a series of different races, depending on the scenario.

Before each game begins, the Neutral player will have to declare whether he/she is fighting on behalf of the attackers or the defenders. The Neutral player will take their turn at the same time as that player, moving and shooting, and will consider them an ally for the length of the game. A quick glance at the Campaign Tree should determine the choice, except for the first game!

The Ship Experience rules, from the Battlefleet Gothic rulebook page 154, apply to the attackers and defenders. Therefore, each of these players will have to draw up a Master Roster of ships, and keep track of ships destroyed and so forth. However, except for destroyed ships, all damage is considered repaired between battles.

The Neutral player will determine Leadership values randomly at the beginning of each game. However, as his ships come from all over the place and represent fleets which are cobbled together from vastly disparate parts of the galaxy, some of his ships will have refits which the other players do not. While the other two players are drawing up Master Rosters, the Neutral player should roll on the Refits tables six times, and write down the results in secret. When building a fleet for each game, he MUST choose one ship and apply ONE of the refits to it, then strike that refit from his list. This will change the points cost of the ship as normal.

Well, on to the dramatic stuff! Take the location into consideration when placing terrain, but don't feel too tied down by the suggestion!

The Scenarios

Surprise Attack: *Chaos forces have infiltrated the Stygies solar system, and are trying to rip the heart out of Imperial forces in one fell strike. Meanwhile, Ork raiders are poised to salvage whatever they can from the carnage.*
        Location: Mersk. Attacker/Defender: Chaos/Imperial. Neutral: Orks with 500 points.

Convoy: *With their devious plan successful, all the Chaos fleet has to do now is starve the Imperial Navy out by stopping the shipment of supplies. Orks find this to be a great opportunity not to prey on the convoys as they usually would, but to take on a foe lying in wait for the convoys!*
        Location: The Bricabrac. Attacker/Defender: Chaos/Imperial. Neutral: Orks with 800 points.

Blockade Run: *What hope did the followers of the False Emperor have? Let the mighty ships of Chaos crush them in their feeble attempt to flee the system! Hopefully that strange alien Necron ship won't interfere.*
        Location: Curtain Cloud Nebula. Attacker/Defender: Chaos/Imperial. Neutral: Necron Tomb Ship.

The Bait: *Having snatched swift victory from the traitor fleet, the Navy initiates a clever ruse to deplete the forces of Chaos. The only thing is, a Necron ship seems to be lurking…*
        Location: Anomaly. Attacker/Defender: Chaos/Imperial. Neutral: Necron Tomb Ship.

Planetary Assault: *With the invasion crushed, the time has come to free the system from the chaotic taint. Time to reconquer the heart of the system! However, it may be difficult as the Eldar arrive to try and retake a lost Maiden world.*

Location: Stygies Major. Attacker/Defender: Imperial/Chaos. Neutral: Eldar with 600 points.

Special addition: the marginal wins aren't going to cut it. To win the campaign, the Imperial Navy needs a full 10 assault points!

Exterminatus: *Chaos and Imperial forces find themselves working toward the same goal as the Eldar decide to cleanse their long-lost world of the filthy mon-keigh, and indeed of all life!*

Location: Stygies Major. Attacker/Defender: Eldar/Chaos and Imperial. Neutral: None.

Special addition: Chaos and Imperial forces are competing for points in this battle. Should the Eldar lose, the Chaos or Imperial player with more points directs the campaign toward the result that favors him/her. If the Neutral player wins, move along the path directly down, to Major Neutral Victory!

And that's it! If you want to change the tree around, use different forces, or change the map, it shouldn't be too difficult. I also apologize for any heresies I've committed by placing this in the Stygies system!

Campaign Tree

Attackers win   Defenders win

Chaos forces have infiltrated the Stygies solar system, and are trying to rip the heart out of Imperial forces in one fell strike.

Meanwhile, Ork raiders are poised to salvage whatever they can from the carnage.

Surprise Attack

With their devious plan successful, all Chaos has to do now is starve the Imperial Navy out by stopping the shipment of supplies.

Having snatched swift victory from the traitor fleet, the Navy initiates a clever ruse to deplete the forces of Chaos.

Orks find this to be a great opportunity!

The only thing is, a Necron ship seems to be lurking...

Convoy

The Bait

Blockade Run

Exterminatus

Planetary Assault

Major Attacker Victory

Minor Attacker and Neutral Victory

Major Neutral Victory

Minor Defender and Neutral Victory

Major Defender Victory