

WARP RIFT

THE BATTLEFLEET GOTHIC NETZINE



ISSUE 23

HORIZON

FROM THE NEXUS PUBLISHING HOUSE

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EDITORIAL

+ THE HERESY STILL RAGES +

Hello,

This month we will call it Warp Rift - The Battlefleet Limante Fanzine.

A large part of this issue has been dedicated to the Limante sector and its battlefleet. It will provide you background, famous ships and captains, a special fleet list and a dedicated scenario. Next issue we will have a focus on the enemies of Limante.

Beside the GothiComp 2009 announcement the Showcase section brings you a lot of Tau. Self made Tau and conversions. Very nifty done by a German BFG player who unfortunately isn't good at writing in English. You can contact me if you wish to help out.

The Officer's Mess takes is into a special operation to destroy the Delivrance, the behemoth we showed in Warp Rift 21's Dry Dock section. Will the Imperial Navy succeed?

And in between we have some answers by the High Admiralty in an unofficial Q&A.

Next issue I'll bring you some info on the fan project Battlefleet Gothic: Chronicles. A large undertaking led by Maverick.

For the Limante Sector,
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>

+++ WARP RIFT WARMASTER +++

“Greetings admirals out there, I am honoured for the opportunity that Roy and Warp Rift staff have given me to contribute at the expansion of this fantastic webzine. First of all, my goals for Warp Rift are to create a new Battle Report section, where you can read of adventures and wars of others in our magnificent Battlefleet Gothic Universe. Then, we are going to expand the Tactical Center with some *Masterclass* from the brave admirals out there and with deep analysis of manoeuvres. I am glad to serve in the ranks of Warp Rift, and hope that you and the Emperor (or other deity) gonna love my works. See you in Immaterium. Class Dismissed “

Davide ‘Kratz’ Ferrari

Send your battle reports at:

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BATTLEFLEET LIMANTE

BY BRYAN MCMAHON

Located at the very edge of the Ultima segmentum the Battlefleet Limante is last on the list for nearly every request/refit you can imagine. They do the jobs most normal fleet commands do, pirate hunting, xenos purging, trade lane protecting. But without all the extra equipment the others readily enjoy... Any one who volunteers to serve in this Sector of Emperor forsaken space can expect no glory or recognition except from those with whom they serve. The lack of regular support and control from any higher commands means discipline and rigid adherence to orders is less than common. In fact they encourage their ship commanders to use their own initiative to decide how to proceed in a battle. This can produce spectacular results (Both good and bad!).

The Limante Sector

The whole sector is divided up into 7 non equal sub sectors. The largest is called Prime. The smallest is called Omega. With Trian, Oilia, Riame, Polia, and Wedgm falling in between. Each is named for a planetary system or local Hero of days long past, and have changed several times since the formation of the Imperium.

Something the Inquisition would like to keep quite however, is the local commanders are still under the belief that the Emperor and the rest of the Imperium are still fighting against Horus and the Traitor legions all this time later. And the execute any who would tell them differently as heretics attempting to sow dissent among the populace during a time of war.

As such the main colour scheme of the Sector is Gold, with Blood red prow and Blue lighting for the observation decks. Grey and Black as trims are not uncommon but Green and Blue are almost unheard of for colours. Any who enter this Sector rarely leave and those who enter leave their past behind them and embrace the train of thought for this area of space with a reckless abandon. Lest they be branded as heretics and shot. Why Guliman and the Inquisition deigned to keep them in the dark about events form so long ago, none can fathom...

The training regimens last a varying time depending on the applicants skill and ability to learn. There is no predominant naval families in this area of space. It is a by ability command that weeds out the weak and puts only the most skilful into positions of authority. The Sector command has some control over who is in charge where, but usually by the time they find out, changes have already been implemented.

Recently sightings of Orks have increased along the boarders of the Riame cluster (5 habitable systems all within 10 Light years of each other or less.) and monthly raids are not uncommon. But because of the lack of Cruiser sized salvage most of the Ork ships follow the same doctrine of choice that the local Imperial Navy follows. Why they would be extending to the rim of the galaxy instead of the core, none can imagine just yet. But some whisper of a ravenous all consuming race of xenos. That can strip bare a world in weeks of all it once was, leaving a dried husk behind it. Such rumours are squashed immediately and with extreme prejudice.

Only time will tell the truth or falsity of these rumours, and the fate of this entire Sector of space rests upon the actions of those brave few patrolling this distant area of the Imperium, alone and without support...



History of the Limante Sector

M29.89765411. Sector incorporated into the growing expanse of space under the dominion of Humanity. Regular trade routes with outlying Eldar exodite worlds and stout humanoid colonies.

M30.11873114. Segmentum command orders cessation of all trade routes with outlying xenos species. Boarder disputes soon erupt into open conflict.

M30.13659817. Space Marines from the Ultramarines Legion arrive and help thwart xenos incursions against Human occupied worlds. News of the Heresy brought to light to the populace. Martial law instituted on all worlds within jurisdiction of Sector fleet command.

M31.56403411. No news as to the outcome of the Heresy so it is assumed the battle still rages. No new ships or supplies from Segmentum command reinforced this idea and the local Sector command instituted flexible combat doctrines to allow for more rapid response to imminent threats but at the expense of being able to muster larger capital ship fleets.

M33.98120031. Inquisitor Fregh returns with fervent pleas for the sector's populace to contribute to the Imperium's continued survival against the arch enemy and his traitor legions. Fully half of the Sector's capitol and escort ships are pulled into service for Segmentum command. The remaining ships coordinate for overlapping areas of responsibility.

M36.56190811. Sector command receives the go ahead for a plan to institute open selections for officer positions and do away with the Class

selection system prevalent previously in place. Several wide spread riots occur but are quickly quieted by local forces.

M36.87314900. Candidate positions are overflowing with likely captains but due to a lack of vessels to command many are assigned training ships as their own vessels and are encouraged to become inventive in renovating them back into active service.

M38.41973601. Inquisitor Tiuo arrives and gives more impassioned pleas to help their fellow man against the arch enemy, fleet command surrenders their last two remaining battleships the Tia's Fury, and Guilimans Eye, to Segmentum control along with all active grand cruiser analogy and redraws battle strategy to cover for their loss.

M39.11091101. Ultramarines Captain Manerius Calgar arrives and helps to crush a growing rebel insurrection and gives renewed praises to their support of the Imperium and its fight against the traitor and his defective legions.

M40.55917091. First Sector encounter with xenos species classified as Ork's by Segmentum command. Full retreat initialised on 5 worlds. Defensive tactics ineffective against tough and rugged capital ships. Ground forces fail to halt enemy advance or even slow it down. Ultramarines under command of Chaplain Finius arrives to crush the xenos incursion and repel them from the Sector.

M40.87918211. Ork forces sighted within local Nebula after they raid a listening post and fail to disable all surveillance monitors. Sector command issues new orders for patrolling fleets to concentrate their routes into that area of space to route out any potential resurgence of invasion.

M40.89192751. Ork forces defeated at the battle of Hipieros IIX. Wreckage of large vessel of unknown configuration burns up in atmosphere only slightly before impacting and wiping out all life on world. After radiation levels dropped to acceptable limits investigation teams discovered the vessel was actually several salvaged vessels put together within a large rock formation that allowed them all to function in concert with one another. The Battleship Tia's Fury was discovered to be apart of the wreckage but beyond all attempts to salvage it.

M41.0010115. Ork forces routed on planet Femel II when intrepid band of soldiers snuck past enemy lines and reactivated several defence laser weapons and destroyed several capitol ships before their shields could be raised. Ork counter attack wiped out the brave soldiers but the damage was done, this morale boost to the defenders was enough to inspire a counter attack strong enough to overwhelm the resilient enemy forces.

Present day: Ork raiding parties sighted fighting ancient Elder trading partners from exodite world Khanes garden. Orks shown to be no match against the superior mobility of the Eldar escort fleet and were quickly routed. Sector command made secret arrangements with all known Exodite worlds to assist in protection in exchange for upgraded propulsion designs. Implementation of schematics due to be incorporated into next wave of escort vessels starting in 2 standard years. Expected increase in propulsion near to 17%. Estimated 3month extended construction times added to current wave. Expected increase in next wave 2 months due to familiarity with new construction techniques.

Anchor Point

Tia: M Class planet.
 Fifth planetoid from star:XF572AI
 Sattelites: None recorded.
 Biosphere, secondary: 42km.
 Biosphere, primary: 14km.
 Gravitational category: Delta (0.8 Terran standard)

History: Colonized before the Dark age of technology by famous Explorer Limante and his crew when their ships finally gave out to the stress's put upon them by the rigors of exploring so far from their ancestral launch point. Coming to rest on what is now known as the Northern continent, though at the time it was a simple chain of islands, they set about making a home worthy of his legend.

From this small beginning humanity spread through the entirety of the world and made several colonies on the other planetoids within the system to procure minerals not able to be sustained within the gravity well of this world. The first recorded use of the name Tia was shortly after they set up a comms relay upon the world and sent back information pertaining their discoveries while traveling the starts looking for a home. Named for his first child who later went on to explore most of the uncharted portions of the Sector after he passed on.

Planetary Capitol: Tia's Favor.

Named for the famous summer home where Tia Limante spent her rare down time relaxing and being a normal person again. She was not present often but when she was it was recorded to be a hive of activity organizing for the next excursion or spreading information gathered from the last one. She was to eventually settle down long enough

for several children to be born and to continue the exploration of even more of the outward rim of the Galaxy. Their names are not recorded officially, though much speculation surrounds whether she really had children at all since no blood relatives survive to this day to support the claim.

Defensive instillations: A score of ground based defensive silo's give complete coverage to orbital defenses against bombarding hostiles. Half a dozen ground air strips provide air support to suppress any invaders already on planet and to sally against any incoming drop ships.

14 defensive platforms hover watchfully around the world as it plays host to the Sector Command station and its subsequent orbital dock yards. Nearly two dozen insitlations litter the area around the planet not including those stationed around the other planetoids in the system.

Military presense: Alpha

Hosting the only full streangth cruiser squadron within the entire sector, and training instillations for crews to new such vessles as well. This system is the most heavily guarded in the entire region. Any enemy who dared to tred here would soon regret that decision.

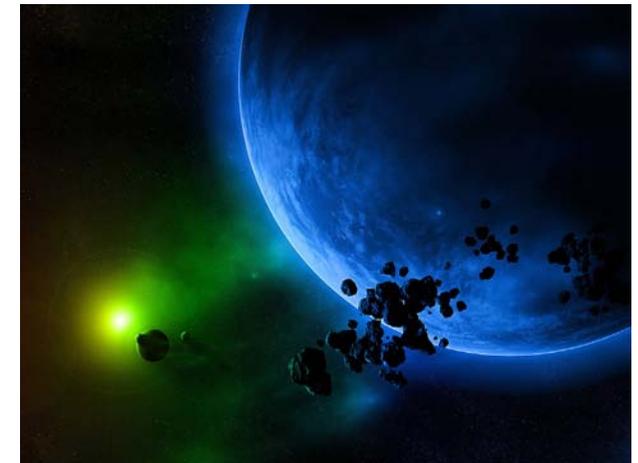
Also playing host to the training grounds of the 4th Escort Carrier Battle group, there is no shortage of attack craft to help repel invaders either. Count in the ordinance factories planet side and you have yet more reasons to avoid this system at all costs if your intentions are other then peaceful.

Culture:

It is a good thing the Tau dont exist any where near this sector of space, as the two share similar belief

systems regarding how to live ones life. Due to the choices of the Inquisition and later Primarch Guiliman, deciding to leave the Heresy a mystery to these people, any overt exposure to xenos races usually end with peaceful cooperation and often open trade routes. Though at one time this was not the case, early on the people were encouraged to fear these races and openly do battle against them, they soon corrected this way of thinking back to their normal habits without Escilsiarcy guidance.

*Thought of the day:
 Blessed be the mind too small for doubt.*



Famous vessels of the Limante Sector

Escort Carrier Groups:

Tia's Rangers - Small 3 ship group of escort carriers that made them selves famous after sending out the boarding parties that ended the threat of the massive Ork ship above Hipieros IIX. Upon rediscovery of the Battleship Tia's Fury among the wreckage the group's captains immediately abandoned their former name and took up this one in honour of their fallen sister.

Ragnarok's Renegades - With a reputation for wild and dangerously close encounters with enemy ships this escort carrier group has never been short of ship captains willing to volunteer their vessels for duty within its ranks. While the make up of the group remains constantly in flux due to mission demands and volunteers leaving to return to home ports at rather inconvenient times, two ships remain at its centre. The Terminous Diablos, and the Rear End. These escort carriers have been modified to carry a larger compliment of attack craft and a larger booster set for faster engagement with the enemy, but at the expense of weapons batteries and close support fire weapons.

Cobra Class Destroyers:

Far Reach Patrol - Credited with the first kill against the Ork menace in its opening advances. Cruiser analogy WAAAAAAGGGGHHH Of doom based on wreckage collected after sweep of battle zone discovered the side plate painted in glaringly harsh red.

Group 319A - A group of standard training ships that were ambushed on a routine patrol of the academy's space lanes. Having only a minimal torpedo compliment and no weapons batteries, having been switched out in favour of higher

sensor equipment to record more data, they chose to take the fight in close and come upon their foe's rear where their torpedo's stood the best chance of inflicting damage to their engines allowing for escape. The Traitor Vessels of Murder and Carnage classifications Nurgle's Blessing and Ill Fates catastrophically imploded upon impact of torpedo volley. Loss of training vessels Rear Most and Centre Pawn in resulting blast waves. Remaining 3 vessels guarded salvage and commenced with rescue operations until relieved.

Transports:

Gamblers luck - This large contingent of trading vessels is famous for having refused to pull orbit in the face of Ork invasion to their home world of TIA. Stubbornly they refused to abandon their position as the Orks took up position to drop Rok's onto the planet to facilitate an invasion. But with the transports in their positioning, the invasion could no proceed due to their blocking all paths down from the approach angle. So the Ork vessels drew in closer and began a punishing barrage hoping to cause them to flee and open the corridor. Instead the transports maintained formation and burned full ahead and engaged the Ork vessels in close quarters boarding actions crippling two cruiser analogy and sending their attendant vessels into flight. Subsequent engagements by Naval forces brought the two cruisers down and reduced them to hulks in the later weeks.

Lunar Class Cruisers:

Limante's Pride - Named for the Famous Explorator ship that discovered this sector's rich mineral deposits that lead to its colonization and ultimate inclusion within the Imperium of man's domain. It has acquitted its self well in all engagements and has never been crippled by enemy fire. Kill record of 5 Cruiser Analogy and a score of escort vessels.

Decommission date set for early M42 due to lack of replacement Lance arrays.

Gothic Class Cruisers:

Yearning Justice - Due to a lack of replacement Lance arrays, the captains of this vessel have become increasingly ingenious in their ad-hoc repairs of broken system components. At one time they used giant polished mirrors to focus the radiation into a concentrated enough area to bring down an opposing Cruiser of Slaughter configuration and allow for boarding parties to cripple it before it fled the system. Currently they are using captured Eldar array's to supplement their own dwindling reserve components.

Dominator Class Cruisers:

Egad - This vessel was named for a famous saying recorded by the Explorator Limante when he discovered the planet Tia. It has acquitted its self well against all opponents and has not been damaged by hostile fire yet, but has been crippled due to Ork boarding actions. Its Nova cannon has made it famous thought the entire sector for never having missed once since it was released from its trials in M 38.

Dictator Class Cruisers:

Flambé - Due to the lack of attack craft parts and manufacturing abilities, this ship is of a rare breed these days. Used only in major actions that affect the entire fate of the Sector it has always been covetously guarded by the best Sector command has to offer. Even still its captains have disdained orders to remain removed from the action and nearly all have bloodied their hull against opposing capital ships by ramming them broadside and ripping them in two on more then one occasion. This has caused many in Sector command to consider decommissioning the ship and scraping it for parts

that other cruiser's can use and distributing crew and attack craft to escort carrier flotillas.

Inquisition black ships:

Thons Suspicion - This ship has made routine appearances where ever an Ork fleet has appeared and been driven back. Claiming to be assisting in sweeps for any remaining Ork vessels, this ships motives remain unknown.

Famous Persona's and their ships

Grand Admiral Firana Shae.

First female to gain the title of Captain and went on to gain the highest naval rank within the Sector. Famous for instituting the recruiting of commoners into officer positions within her command and gaining unexpectedly higher success rates when compared to similar achievements by her fellows. This system was then introduced sector wide with some resistance to it at first. But overall it was widely accepted and has proven to be the right choice for the fleet so far out and cut off from regular re-supply and support via Segmentum command.

Upon attaining this position she mandated that the succession of the title was to go to the most capable persona within the fleet, not necessarily the one with the highest rank and status. This has lead to a score of Grand Admiral's fresh out of their first command due to their brilliant knack for unconventional thinking and the ability to get others to obey their left field tactics and trains of thought.

Flag Captain Marus.

No one alive knows this mans last name. He only tells it to some one he intends to kill, luckily he has yet to tell any one loyal to the Imperium his last name. His reasoning behind this is said to be

that if his enemies knew that part about him they could piece the whole together and his element of surprise would vanish. But this is unsubstantiated. He has sat second to now 4 captains rotating through the Timno's command and has repeatedly refused the position him self or any other for that matter. His publicly stated reasoning, he is in love with the ship and she would be deeply hurt if their current relationship advanced too quickly for her. After all when your a being that measures time in millennia even after his serving for near to 60 years any change now would be seen as far too fast for her.

This is assumed to be a poor attempt at humour on his own part.

Character ship: Limante's Justice

Due to supply shortages and a slew of sabotage attempts by pirate forces on the dockyards assembling her, she was changed from a Dictator configuration to something completely original. Having a launch deck on each side rather than the original two, and only three batteries of weapons on each side the remaining space was taken up with a rather unconventional array of weaponry. The remaining space was used for torpedo launchers and the targeting equipment to make them more accurate. The price was that the guidance systems in the torpedoes used up much of the fuel space and therefore they have a tendency to burn out before reaching their target.

Ship Profile:

Type:	cruiser /	Hits:	8
Shields:	2 /	Speed:	20cm
Turns:	45* /	Armour:	6+/5+
Turrets:	3		

Prow Torpedo's:	30cm / Str: 6
Port Weapons Batteries:	30cm / Str: 3
Starboard Weapons Batteries:	30cm / Str: 3
Port Torpedo Battery:	30cm / Str: 3
Starboard Torpedo Battery:	30cm / Str: 3
Port Launch Bay:	30/20/30cm /Str: 1
Starboard Launch Bay:	30/20/30cm /Str: 1

This unusual configuration has lead to an absurd consumption of Torpedo reserves and it has been used rarely as a result. In its only major action to date it acquitted its self well however despite its stigma. It crippled 4 enemy vessels when they came along side to deliver their main weapons mass upon her. The surprise volley of torpedo's combined with the launch of assault boats right after overwhelmed their initial defences and sent each of them fleeing the field allowing the mostly escort force to rout the remainders and destroy nearly 60% in the ensuing running engagements.

The Tia's Fury was a Desolator class BB and a heavy sigh of relief was given at Segmentum command when it was discovered to be beyond salvage. As no doubt the Sector's command staff would spare no expense to bring it back into service other wise. Weather or not they will ever suspect sabotage as the reason it can no longer be used is debatable, but for now the situation remains calm surrounding the subject.

Reginald Tanis, Group leader for the 451st Escort Carrier Squadron:

Made famous by leading several raiding strikes against hardened pirate hideouts and capturing no less than 15 orbital installations and half a dozen escorts while their crews were caught in airlock lifts attempting to board. He ordered his fighter wings to target the umbilical tubes connecting the station and its outlying vessels and static defences,

he succeeded by mere moments.

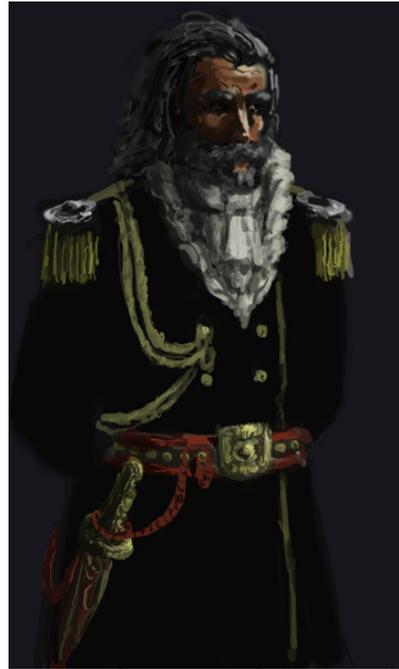
He happens to also be an outspoken critic of Segementum's lack of support for their efforts and the constant need to use increasingly dangerous tactics just to survive, never mind win. He is gathering support for appealing above Segementum to Earth and the Emperor him self in an attempt to get additional men and material where it is needed in the fight.

The Inquisition and Ultramarines are keeping a close watch on his popularity and are currently planning an *accident* to ensure his support does not gain too much momentum. Lest the tense peace kept in place by the populace not being aware of the Heresy's end by it becoming common knowledge via the new Ships/Crews that would inevitably be ferried in to help relieve several besieged worlds from Ork incursions. Inquisitors from the Witch Hunters along with a pair of Deathwatch Kill teams are prepared to move when his position threatens stability.

Commander Scott Tiniade, Captain of the space station orbiting Reain III.

He is famous for having scrounged enough salvaged parts from captured enemy vessels to refit an entire flotilla in under a month. His quick turn around times for repairs has lead many patrol fleets to detour long away from their paths to make port under his watchful and learned eyes. Despite having trained several attaché's and having full confidence in their abilities, all any one wants to talk to is him.

On two rare occasions he was requested to service a mysterious stunted human like race. They identified them selves as the Demiurg and made it known they had no political or territorial conflicts with



the Imperium and were simply passing through on a trade mission. And again on their way back from it. Each time apparently there were set upon by those attempting to procure their goods and each time he had his hand full trying to repair systems he didn't understand with components that didn't make much sense.

Brushing off comments he had become a xenos lover, his reply was simple and eloquent all at once. "If you witnessed a beautiful painting and you were an artist, who or what painted it would matter less to you then the quality of its appearance and skill used to make it. I am the same with machines, I pay attention to the slightest details in every part of one. The quality and integrity of the systems matter more to me then the appearance of the race that built them. Any one who should argue with me on this point can find a new port of call." Needless to say, no one raised any more concerns about this aloud after this address.

Battlefleet Limante Fleet List

Special rules:

Due to the lack of supplies and the general complexity required to build capital ships, you may include 1 Cruiser per 500 pts of any Battlefleet Limante list. Also you may include instead of the single cruiser, up to 2 Light Cruisers of any design, rules limiting the types do not apply to this special rule. You may never include any Battleships or Grand cruisers in Battlefleet Limante fleet roster.

When making a Special Orders check with Capital ships in Battlefleet Limante you roll for each ship/squadron each turn. If you fail keep on rolling but use the following chart instead. (Yes some times a captain does something you wouldn't do when under his own initiative... that's why he isn't in command yet!)

Dice Roll:

- 2-4 Failed as normal
- 5-7 Subtract 5cm to the next turn's speed profile.
- 8 Halve your Weapons Battery Strength and Lance Strength but Double your Torpedo value. (If no Torpedo's on ship, disregard.)
- 9 Halve your Launch Bay's for a turn and add the original number of bays, to your Weapons Batteries total.
- 10 May not use Brace for Impact on your opponents turn, instead gain +2 LD on reload ordnance checks your next turn.
- 11 Gain a Re-roll on a single Weapons Battery or Lance dice for a single ship in this squadron for this turn only.
- 12 Repair one damaged system without a repair roll necessary, and deny your opponent the bonus for being on Special Orders.

Escorts are King!: With so little help from any real ship yards, you must make due with the motley collection of vessels capable of being gathered in a rather short period of time. Any Admiral you purchase can be put into an Escort Squadron without penalty. Also due to the intense lack of crew transfers to larger ships, experience within Escort and Cruiser crew's are of a better standard than many other fleet's to date. When rolling for Leadership Values roll on the following table for all ships.

Dice roll:

1 :	7
2-3 :	8
4-5 :	9
6 :	10

There aren't many *Free Merchants, or Rouge Traders* out this way any more having been press ganged into regular military cargo runs. So instead roll on the normal table for any transports and simply do not subtract 1 from their Leadership roll.

Desperate times: As ammunition and attack craft become increasingly hard to come by rationing and great care are taken when expending these precious resources against the foe, lest the fleet runs out at a pivotal time because they chose to stock every one with full ammunition with each patrol run. When reloading Ordinance subtract 1 from each subsequent roll you make from your Leadership value for the purposes of Reloading Ordinance only.

Home Field advantage: Due to the ad hoc nature of most other well supplied and trained fleets patrol routes under normal circumstances, most fleet commanders find them selves in new territory

almost every sortie. However in Battlefleet Limante most ships stay relatively near to their home bases and set out to only those area's within their patrol space. This prevents a larger gathering of Cruisers for large clashes, but it facilitates the necessity of local space familiarization. Battlefleet Limante players may move 1 piece of terrain after both fleets have been set up but before the first turn has commenced. The object can not be moved within 15cm of another terrain piece already on the table, and no you can not *move* a solar flare to a certain turn, it stays random.

Campaigns: Due to the fact that most ships/squadrons of Cruisers and Escorts stay close to home rather than range out and gather for war in this part of deep space, Campaigns with Battlefleet Limante are limited to being a Raiding fleet without the use of the Space Marine appeals chart.

Re-Rolls: Due to the lack of general continuity and prevalence of independent thought chains, re-rolls are purchased at the modified price below:

1 re-roll	: 50pts
2 re-rolls	: 100pts
3 re-rolls	: 150pts

Also the above reason directly affects the training and skill of fleet commanders, thus their price and benefits are modified below:

Veteran Captain	: 25pts (Ld 8)
Fleet-Admiral	: 50pts (Ld 9)
Admiral	: 75pts (Ld 10, 1 Re-Roll)

Add the following ship entry to the fleet roster:

Escort Carrier: Points: 45

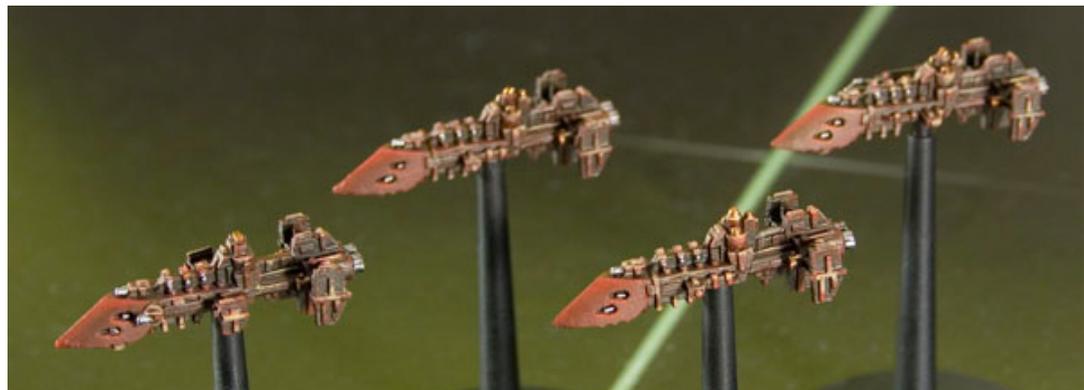
Using the ruined and modified hulls of existing Escort class ships, this ingenious design bore fruit within the few patrol fleets active in the Sector. It allows access to the much needed and scarce Attack craft launch bays for almost all of the sectors sorely outgunned fleets.

Ship Profile:

Type:	escort /	Hits:	1
Shields:	1 /	Speed:	25cm
Turns:	90* /	Armour:	5+
Turrets:	2		

Prow Weapons Batteries:	30cm / Str: 3
Ventral Launch Bay:	30/20/30cm /Str: 1

Only 1 squadron per 500 points, squadron can not exceed 4 Escort Carrier ships.



A Story to the Limante Sector

Recently returned to port after exterminating a local pirate cartel's hidden base and its attendant escorts, the XIXV Cobra flotilla returned to a hero's welcome. Medals and celebrations were passed around as freely as the wine. And this led to the state of things to come in the following weeks, as the entire watch post save 1 man were down enjoying the festivities... And the one man was asleep at the console.

Thus the Ork picket lines were able to get passed the outer and inner sensors without detection, and launch their Rok's towards the systems 4th planet. The System of Rienea, and the Planet Timiothy were about to receive a rude awakening to a new threat to their homes, the hard way. Once the Rok's were launched the claxons inside the stations dotting the system blared and all crews raced to their ships, the Mechanicus beseeched their vessels to awaken for war with all haste, and the planetary guard mobilized to defend its citizenry without compromising their only star port.

None within this Sector had ever encountered Orks before, so when the first ground combat ended without a single enemy casualty, morale was near a breaking point already. The soldiers fearing their attackers were invincible instruments of some unknown powers wrath they had awakened during their celebrations. Realizing the tenuous situation at the onset of the attack the space born defenders sallied from their docks and attempted to thwart the continued reinforcements via Teleporta's to the surface.

Julima Gregacy, Flag Captain of the combined XIXV and VIKM destroyer groups, ordered that no torpedo's be fired before closing to within just

100,000 kilometres for fear of them being dragged into the atmosphere and causing more damage to their homes than the enemy was inflicting already. He planned on the initial salvo baiting the rest into leaving the atmosphere and give chase. Where his faster vessels would lead just ahead of the enemy and lure them to the now gathering picket line that had failed to detect their approach. The Frigates, Truths Light and Golden Pillar, were awaiting in power down along side the escort carriers, Random Fate and Long Arms. The carriers would pose as harmless transports on any one's sensors and would register as barely any threat at all. While the destroyer group would move past this trap and hit both flanks simultaneously.

A fair plan, but as the age old adage goes. No plan survives contact with the enemy...

"Come about to heading 5489 mark 3982 and prepare a full salvo." The ships captain barked into his comm's unit.

A strangled metallic reply came back moments later, "Course adjusted sir, awaiting fire order on your command."

The next few tedious seconds ticked by with a pace so slowly only the seconds ticking by on his watch reminded him time was still going forwards. The captain removed his cap and wiped his brow on his sleeve as he waited for the given firing point to be reached. These invaders what ever they were, could be defeated. You simply had to use more ordinance than normal against them.

Commander of his Triumphant and its sister ship Regin's Pride, both Cobra class destroyers, he knew the deadly effect of a torpedo volley at close range from several past experiences. This time it should

work as well. Reaching down to the comm's unit he flicks the key and gives a low growl into it. It was reasoned that since the enemy was unknown any activation keywords could be intercepted and reused against the fleet at a later time. So only sounds were issued, with the Regin's Pride using a small bird call as its order to launch.

"Order received and carried out Captain." Came the strangled metallic reply. His Flag Captain had been with him for nearly 20 years on this vessel, and they both knew its character flaws and quirks like no one else on board. Not even the Mechanicus priests could tell them anything about the ship they didn't already know. Looking out his view port he watched with joy as the torpedo volley was sent on its way. His cybernetic hand twitching again, he looked down at it for just a moment reflexively before his ship shuddered under a sudden and large impact.

Having fallen from his feet he scrambled to regain his footing when the comm's crackled to life. "Sir return fire from the enemy ships! Fires on multiple decks and shields down! Weapons systems are minimal and we have incoming attack craft, what are your orders?"

Keying the unit again his voice came steady and calm, "Return fire as best you can, prepare defensive turrets to repel their assault and what is the status of the Regin?" Un-keying the comm's unit he seated him self back into his command chair and strapped him self down so that didn't happen again.

"Sir they are undamaged and moving to support us against the incoming ordinance wave. Our torpedo spread has been neutralized. Sir, multiple new unknowns moving in on our location mark, 4879 by 9012. They were hiding behind our satellite sir."

The worry in his voice came through loud and clear despite the machinations twisting of his words.

“Understood, order the Regin to pull off and make for the rendezvous point as ordered, we will draw enemy fire and assist in their escape. Ignore any reply from the Regin and reload the tubes. What is the status of the other wings?” His own voice continued to remain calm, despite his thoughts running wild in near panic. His survival instinct was kicking in fully now and wanted to recind his order and to tell the Regin to remain where it was as he withdrew, but he couldn't bring him self to say it. To damn a pristine ship and crew to suicide when it was now obvious that even a surprise attack was unable to catch them off guard, was sheer idiocy.

“Sir the other wings have meet with the same resistance we have, but some have obtained some minor success. Count of 5 enemy vessels apparently crippled and a dozen minor damaged. Capitol ships moving from far side of the Satellite to cut off our own escape route, but they are allowing the Regin to escape unmolested.” The Flag captains own relief mirrored his own. At least some one would survive this debacle to continue to struggle against this invader.

His hairs stood on end and his every nerve tingled, having used a teleporter on several occasions, he knew the signs well. He quickly un-strapped him self and slammed his hand down on his command override button. The boarding warnings went off all through the ship, and he upholstered his pistols to prepare to meet the attack on his vessel personally. The first wave appeared right in front of him. 3 brutishly large humanoids with ramshackle armour scraps attached at random places, one wearing a mop bucket on his head, if it could be

defined as a he within its own species.

His twin bolt pistols boomed off of the inner sanctums walls and behind him the hissing of hatch releases told him the astropath was coming to join him shortly. His rounds impacted the back of the closest one and sent him sprawling across the deck and into the wall, he didn't move. The other two turned and with a loud yell ran at him with giant cleavers raised. He split his aim and fired again, both stumbled back from the hits to their torso's but resumed their charge at him again. His third shots hit the left attacker in his waist while the right was struck on the shoulder. Both continued coming.

Behind the attackers the command deck's lift was rising and he could hear the shouts of support from his command staff, but paid them no heed. He re aimed both shots at the right one this time and caught him in the middle of his abdomen and

where its heart should have been if it were human. This one tumbled back to the wall as well, but the last one swung its cleaver for his left shoulder and bit deeply into his side. The captain let out a strangled yell of pain as the clever finally stopped below his rib cage just above his kidney. He struggled to raise his right arm and its bolt pistol to exact retribution but a large leather boot sent him sprawling and wrenched the weapon from his side.

He raised his head feebly and couldn't comprehend the sounds from bellow, they were shouts and screams. Surely his men could beat back this foe, he had killed two him self. Looking up he could see the other two limping back towards him, not dead after all. The last one grinned at him wickedly with a gaping mouth and large rows of fanged teeth. “Death to da Umies!” It roared and his last sight in his life for this brave captain, was a large metal cleaver as it hit his skull and didn't slow down.



Surprise attack scenario.

Ork Forces historical:

Kill Kroozer: WAAAAAAGGGGHHH Of doom
Warboss: Dagooztuffs, Mega armoured Boarding
Nobz, Leadership 7

Terror ship: 'ERE WE GO! Warboss: Movitmagots,
Looted torpedo's, Maniac Gunners, Leadership 8

Brute Squadron: SMASH! : 3 vessels, Ld 7

Brute Squadron: KILL! : 3 vessels, Ld 6

Brute Squadron: What? : 2 vessels, Ld 8

Brute Squadron: Where? : 2 vessels, Ld 7

Ravager Squadron: Squeee! : 5 vessels, Ld 7

Imperial Forces Historical:

No Overall commander present.

Lunar Cruiser - *Divine Judgement* - Ld 10
Nova cannon

Dauntless Cruiser - *Aarwa's Bane* - Ld 8
Torpedo variant

4 Heavy Transports - *Red 5* - Ld 6

2 Cobra Destroyers - *Tac Patrol* - Ld 8

3 Cobra Destroyers - *Scrubbers* - Ld 9
sensor array upgrade 'Widowmaker'

3 Escort Carriers - *Detio* - Ld 8

This is the first recorded action against the Ork menace. It ended in a full retreat without the loss of a single enemy xenos vessel. But at the loss of both cruisers and nearly all of the attending fleet as they covered the escape of the transports.

Battlefield: Designed for a 6x4 board. Divided up into 6 parts, Top left has a 6"x3" asteroid field, Top right has no obstacles, Middle left has the abandoned planet Imego V, Middle right has the planets only satellite and the dock from which all of the transports start attached to, Bottom left has a 5"x4" gas cloud, Bottom right has no obstacles. There is a random solar flare possible that the Orks

used to mask their approach as possible echo's returning from the flare inbound.

Special Rules: In order for the transports to leave the dock they must pass a LD 6 test as the skeleton crew's are attempting to control the massive vessels with only half of the required minimum work force. All defending ships start on stand down status except for the transports who can make rolls right away. The rest of the fleet must make its LD test to come to battle stations and load weapons. While on stand down status the ships may Brace and make a single 45° turn. They count as defenses while on stand down and do not move.

The Divine Judgement suffered a Reactor Leak just prior to the engagement and it had yet to be repaired. Every time the ship moves more than 10cm in a turn it places a blast marker every 5cm of that move and one on its base at the end of its move. This illustrates the shielding being unable to compensate for the leak at higher stress levels and posing a danger to the integrity of the vessel, thus using up shielding capacity to keep the radiation away. Successful repair ends effect.

Ork ships enter from the planet's edge and the Top Right corner from behind the asteroids. Historically the Terror ship lead the Planetary assault and was first to close with the enemy while the Brutes' were used to flank them and corral them towards the closing Kill Kroozer. While the Ravagers moved to cut off the escape point in the Lower right hand corner and trap them within the killing zone.

Resilient: Due to the lack of encountering the Orks in the past within this Sector of space, the Imperial weapons fail to find purchase when by all rights it should be a killing blow on a normal vessel. All Ork ships receive a 5+ saving throw to all non boarding damage, that includes attack craft and torpedo's.

Remember to discount 1 from your LD every turn you reload ordinance on both sides. Torpedo's and Attack craft are hard to come by for every one in this Sector.

The Orks used the incoming Solar Flare as their cover to sneak past the outer defenses and to disable the orbiting weapons platforms above the planet. They then moved upon the sleeping Imperial fleet quickly and savagely. Slow to awaken the Divine Judgement was caught completely unaware and crippled before it could come to full alert. The other ships managed to awaken before they were caught in the enemy fire and made a good account for themselves all things considered.

The transports made good time breaking away from their dockyard and made with all haste towards the jump point. The training squadron Scrubbers made to clear the way but their path was blocked by the enemy's own torpedo ships. Soon the Scrubbers were out of ammunition and dangerously close to being wiped out, forced to flee or die, they chose to ram their opponents to no effect but their own doom. Seeing this waste of resources and manpower the captain of the Aarwa's Bane flanked the opposition forces exposing his own rear to the enemy Terrorship, but managed to eliminate the blocking forces from impeding the remaining two damaged transports.

The Orks managed to wipe out almost all of the defenders save the two transports and a single Cobra that managed to fake being dead. After the fight it then boosted away to rejoin the transports and hopefully come back with some larger ships to deal with the problem. Sadly the system they ran to was next on the list of targets and they failed to survive the subsequent assault while trying to convince the worlds defenders that a threat was inbound.

A QUICK UNAUTHORIZED Q&A

Throughout the last months some rule questions have been point of debate at one or another forum. In the cases below I took the liberty of emailing the High Admiralty, the Battlefleet Gothic Rules Committee, and answer-mod Sigoroth. Here are their answers.

Q: Is the following a legal fleet for Chaos:

Desolator class battleship
Repulsive class grand cruiser
Styx class heavy cruiser
Carnage class cruiser
Carnage class cruiser

A: Yes, that's a perfectly legal fleet list. Each section says "for every three" in essence, meaning that you total up the number of CAs & CBs, divide by 3 and round down. If the number of CGs is less than or equal to this number, you've satisfied the composition requirements for CGs. Also, if we were to take the other stance to its logical conclusion then it would not be legal to have 1 CG, 1 CB and 2CA in a single fleet. You'd need an extra 2 CA, since it takes 2 CA to take a CB (so you'd need 2 for it, and then the CB and 2 more CA to take the CG). To take a BB as well you'd need 3 more CAs, and if you wanted to include a CB in that you'd need another 2 CAs. So to get a battleship, grand cruiser and 2 battlecruisers you'd need a whopping 8 cruisers. It's a bit much expecting to have to take 8 cruisers and 2 battlecruisers (or just 6 cruisers and no battlecruisers) to get a single grand cruiser and a single battleship.

- Answer-mod Sigoroth

A Chaos fleet can have a BB (Battleship), a GC (Grand Cruiser) and only have to have 3 bog standard cruisers, where one could be a HC (Heavy Cruiser) and still be legal.

- Ray Bell

Q: The Void Stalker has the restriction of 1 for every full 1000 points, thus you may not field 1 at 0-999 points.

Now if you play a 1000 point battle and your fleet ends at 980 points you cannot field the Void Stalker, but if you managed an exact 1000 point fleet you could take one.

Or is playing a 1000 point battle is enough warrant for a Void Stalker to be taken, even of your Eldar fleet ends up being 980 points.

A: Well a 1000pt game 'should' allow a Voidstalker (which is what I would allow). But if you're going by the letter of the law you'll have to make sure there is a full 1000pts.

- Ray Bell

I agree with Ray. Way back in the dark ages when the game first game out, it was clarified that they really did mean 0-999 you could not take one, 1000 and up, you could.

I don't recall this ever hitting a FAQ but it did make one of the very early clarifications/questions with Andy.

That said, I don't think going with a deployment requirement equal to say the Battlebarge, that if you are going to have one, the fleet must total 1,000 or more points at a minimum, any real harm to the spirit of the rules or competitiveness would result.

Personally, if anyone that wants to tie up that many points against the risk of a lucky hit, let them go for it.

- Bob Henderson

Q: how does Necron BFI work?

It does change armour to 4+ ; It changes the shield save to 2+. All clear...but do Necrons gain the standard 4+ BFI save as well? Some say they do, others don't.

A: After re-reading the Necron Rules it **doesn't** say that Necrons don't get the 4+ BFI save. Which is something I'm shocked by! I would say they only get thier reactive hull save.

- Ray Bell

I would say that the Necron BFI happens as you list (drops armour/ups save) and they do not get the standard 4+ BFI on top of that.

To do so would be double dipping.

- Bob Henderson

+++ The Emperor Protects +++

I hope to do more of these quick Q&A answers in the future. They may be not be clarified official by any means but I think many players will appreciate these answers published in a central place like Warp Rift instead of somewhere hidden in a sub forum.

Thus if you notice a bugging rule issue which cannot be clarified or players simply not agree upon the explanation of a rule you can mail Warp Rift at Horizon@epic40k.co.uk and we will try to catch you an almost official answer.

TAU O'SHOVAH

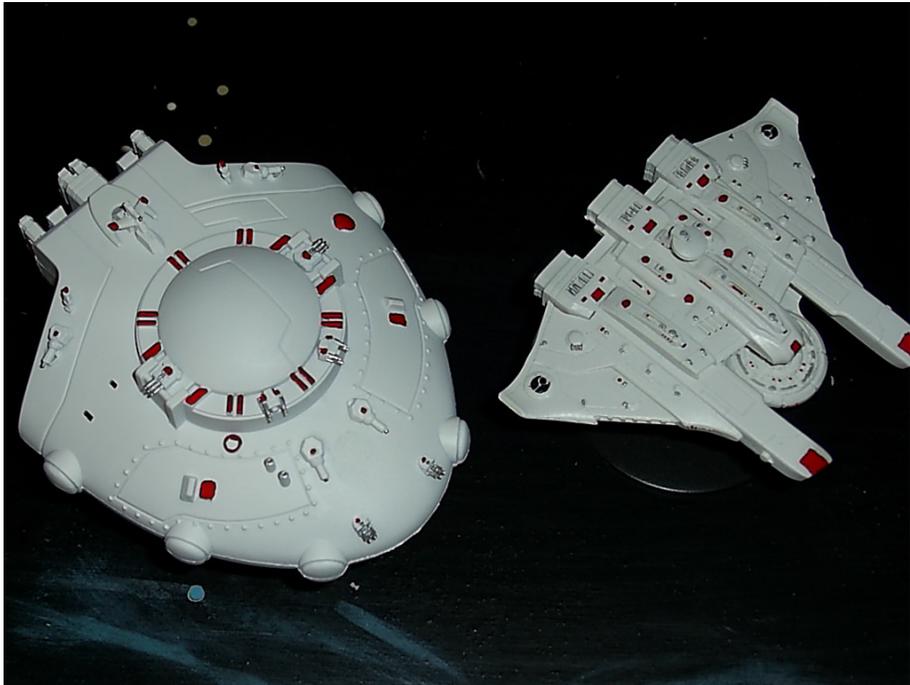
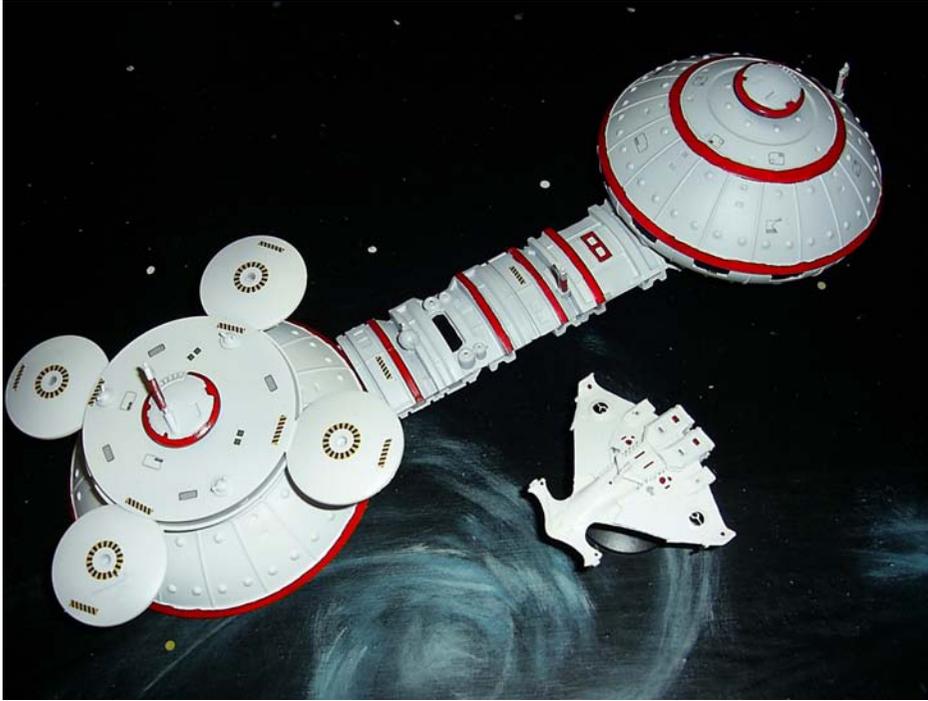
A COLLECTION OF TAU VESSELS BY HARKON

In this showcase Warp Rift brings you a collection of Tau ships and bases build and converted by Harkon. On his site there are guides available but they are in German. Thus if anyone has some good skill in German and English language: feel free to translate. Contact us if you like to do so.

SHOWCASE



SHOWCASE



SHOWCASE



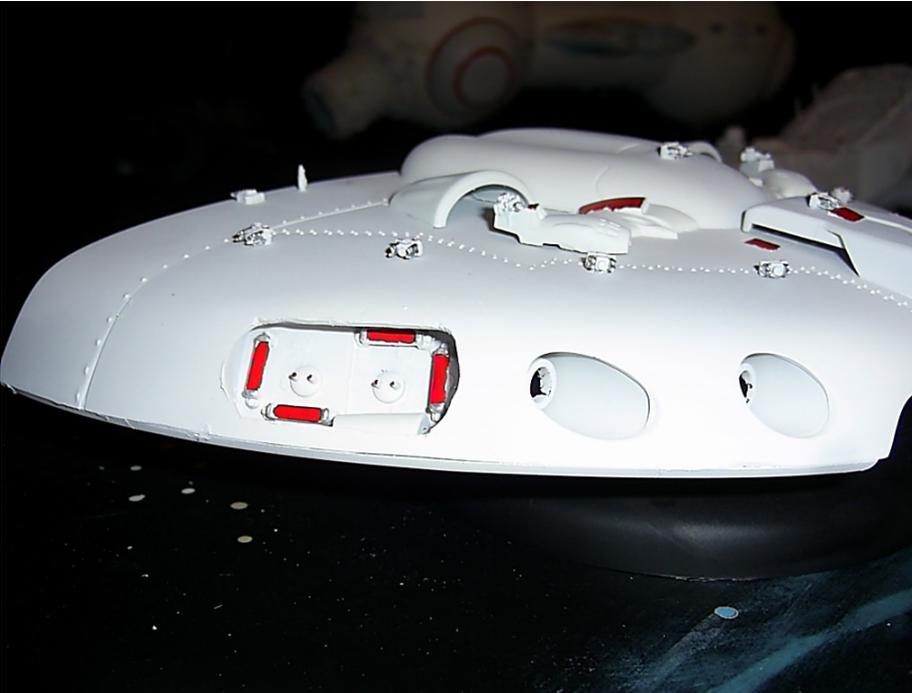
SHOWCASE



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SHOWCASE



GOTHICOMP 2009

THE BATTLEFLEET PAINTING COMPETITION STRIKES AGAIN

Following are the rules for GothiComp 2009.

This is the fifth annual GothiComp, and will be run in a somewhat similar way to last years event. The main change is the way entries are submitted.

The Goal

The general aim of this competition is simply to encourage players to get painting and show off what they can do. I encourage people to enter no matter how good or bad their painting and converting skills are.

The Deadline

This competition will open may 1, 2009, and the deadline for submissions is Thursday 31st July 2009, 4pm (UK time).

The Categories



The Single Ship/Squadron entry

Each separate entry should consist of a single miniature to be used for Battlefleet Gothic (however, note that conversions, scratch builds and even vessels from outside manufacturers are welcome). The only exception to this is:

- If the vessel is a light cruiser or equivalent, one or two vessels may be submitted as a single entry in the same photograph. Space Marine Strike Cruisers can be treated as light cruisers.
- If the vessel is an escort or equivalent, then the submission must consist of between two and four vessels in a single picture.

Aside from this stipulation, the entry is largely down to the participant.

The community will vote on the entries as usual.

In addition, there will be a 'conversion prize'. This will be a token prize for one entry based on the skill and style of any conversion work which has gone into



the vessel, in an effort to encourage creativity in modelling as well as painting. This will be judged by a select panel. All entries are automatically submitted into both competitions simultaneously. The judges for the conversion prize are myself, Warmaster Nice and Cybershadow.

The fleet category

This year we introduce a new category: the fleet. For this participants submit a single picture of a fleet worth between 1000 and 1500 points in game terms. The fleet must follow the standard fleet restrictions. Fleet lists published in Warp Rift are also allowed. If you have a fleet based on a non-published list it is advised to contact me about it.

The Prizes

tba - we are still accepting donations to be given as a prize for any of the categories.

The Pictures

You should submit a single picture per entry, no more. Each photograph should be no more than 3 megabytes large. They may be of any pixel size as long as the file size is not exceeded.

The Submission

To submit a picture of your vessel to this competition, you simply mail it at:

comps@tacticalwargames.net

Make sure the header of the email contains the following: ship name / class name

Note that you do not have to be a member of the www.tacticalwargames.net boards to enter this competition but in order to vote you will have to sign up.

We will compile a gallery of the entrants which will be available online. This gallery will remain as a permanent fixture to the site, and so you will be able to browse the pictures in the future. Please note, I am sure that there will be a rush in the last 24 hours before the end of this competition, therefore please don't wait until the last few hours if you can avoid it.

The Voting

Voting will take place here on these boards. Entries will be split into heats of up to ten entries each (this depends on the number of entries). The winner of each heat will go through to the next round until a winner is determined. Please note that entries will be placed into heats in the order in which they are submitted here.

Note that this year only the ship and/or class name will be shown, not who submitted it.

Additional Rules

All decisions are final, any prizes are non-negotiable and the competition organizers reserve the right to remove competition entries or request that they are resubmitted or altered. We will hopefully never need this stuff, but just in case...

That is it. Feel free to email me with any questions that you may have. Now, what are you doing still reading this? Get painting and have fun!



TARGET PRIORITY

BY ADMIRAL ROBERT DE BERTEL

... and it was Admiral Townsends brilliant maneuver at Syracuse, a result of his new, innovative tactics, that finally drove this scourge of the stars from the Styrgis Sector...

from: *A History of the Styrgis Sector – Great Naval Battles*

19:00 TST, 116/076M41

Imperial Class Battleship *Blinding Light*

Battlegroup Styrgis, Taskforce Sword

In transit

He reached the sanctuary just before his appointment. Most of the glow globes in this sector of the flight decks had worn out, leaving him to the warm, smelly darkness that is the hallmark of every great warship. The bottom of the old freight elevator had been the sanctuary for generations of flight crews and mechanics – one of the secret places where they could come to chat, gossip – and smoke.

In the half darkness of the old elevator shaft the large man rummaged through the pockets of his flight suit, finally extracting a package of loh-sticks from his right elbow pocket. He struck a match and lit the stick – and the glow of the stick lit the face of the man, as he inhaled deeply – finally able to satisfy his addiction.

Captain Raymond McAlister of the 355th. Bomber Squadron did not come here often, as his duties did not allow it, but when he could find the time he made the effort. The sanctuary had been the secret hiding place for generations of addicts on an otherwise smoke free ship – thanks to the courtesy of the *Departamento Medicae* – and McAlister had to smile. He flipped the black, skull marked loh packet over to read the *Departamento Medicae* warning label – *Smoking Kills!*

Right, snorted the old pilot, when ever did a member of an imperial bomber crew die of lung cancer? Flack, yes, interceptors - definitely, or one day the cold vacuum of space, but lung cancer? Not likely.

McAlister took another deep breath and leaned his back against the old elevator wall – marked with a giant No Smoking sign – and mused about life and death

in the Imperial Navy. As far as he was concerned, smoking was as safe a pastime as any other.

Generations of other addicts must have felt likewise – the floor was covered ankle deep in loh-butts. As there was nothing here with which to extinguish a glowing butt, some joker from the *Departamento Munitiorum* had planted a 5k-ton plasma bomb right in the middle of the elevator shaft – and it was black from scorch marks. According to legend, the bomb was a live one and the detonator had never been defused. Obviously no one had ever tried his luck – the fuse at the tip of the bomb was as shiny and bright as on the day it was installed.

The hard staccato of polished boots on metal rigging swept McAlister out of his thoughts – someone approached. Through the half light of the few remaining glow globes a figure in the green tress of the *Tactica Imperialis* made his way to the hidden room. The figure suddenly stepped into the light – and McAlister froze. Then he slowly took one last breath from his stick and extinguished it against the bomb, before the butt joined the other millions on the floor. His bear hug nearly crushed the life from the interloper.

“By the Emperor – is it really you Mike?”

The other man managed to get back on his feet and coughed a greeting. “Yes its me. By the Emperor Raymond – its been a long time.”

“I never thought you would find this place...”

The tactician had to grin. “Well, I did have to ask a couple of times – and show off a pack of lohs to convince the guys that I am not with the *Commissariat!*”

McAlister burst into laughter and hugged his old buddy again.

“Twenty six years since we left the academy – and look what’s become of us. Look at you – a senior tactician and oh...” McAlister traced one finger along the gold tresses of his childhood friends uniform “...you’ve been promoted again. I am sorry Commodore if I was a bit disrespectful.”

Michael Burns had to smile “Yes – but rank or no rank I am only a staff officer – but you – you are a legend among the pilots of the fleet”.

McAlister shrugged. “I’m just still alive, and that alone makes me something special. I’ve cheated the statistic for so long that it must have forgotten me – nearly

500 sorties and only a couple of scratches. But let's not talk about me – how did you transfer aboard?"

Burns dusted off his uniform. "I am now a member of Admiral Townsends personal staff. I transferred on board with him as he came here to take command of the task force two weeks ago."

"Yes. And we have been doing warp jumps ever since. Tell me – I know something is up. What is the old geezer after?"

Burns locked his arms and gave his friend a critical look. "Are you cleared for Magenta level Information?"

McAlister snorted. "Pah. You know damn well I am not. What pilot would be?"

Burns sighted. "Oh well, you'll be briefed in a couple of hours anyways." Fire caught the tacticians eyes and he fixated his old buddy. "We found her. Damn all the primachs but we finally located her. – with lot's of luck, too."

"Found who?"

Burns could no longer control himself. "*The Deliverance*, damn it !! That Chaos Imbecile that has plagued this sector for the past two centuries! That Emperor forsaken bitch that slipped the gauntlet at Hannover! That loathsome renegade that destroyed Admiral Palins Flagship at New Syrtis! But mark my words – we have got her now;" Burns waved his finger at his friends nose, "we have got her this time. Absolute priority target!!"

"*The Deliverance*, huh? Heard about her. One tough mother to crack."

Burns regained his composure. "You are right - many have tried and all have failed. But Admiral Townsend had developed some innovative tactics that will allow us to get a shot at her."

"They say she is as big as a Hulk – and just as mean, too."

"Don't put your faith into the mumblings of the rankings – we have analyzed loads of data for months on end – but what am I telling you – the admiral will make it clear in your next briefing."

McAlister was not convinced. Deep in thought he traced a finger along the fuse of the plasma bomb. "They say she has loads of interceptors and a defensive fire that rivals a space station – we must be nuts if we are to make a standard run."

"Well, that is exactly the point. But I am getting ahead of myself. Wait and all will be explained to you, o.k.?"

Raymond gave his friend a critical look. "This is not like you. Since when have you become such a hard prick?" Michaels demeanor was unmoved. "I grew up. Maybe a bit late, but I grew up non the less. We are no longer on the farm, Raymond. This is the Emperors Navy. We belong to him – heart, body and soul. You should do well no to forget that."

Bitterness crept into Raymonds voice. "As if I could. So in the Emperors Name, let's do his holy work."

"Amen."

20:15 TST, 116/076M41

Imperial Class Battleship *Blinding Light*
Forward Briefing Room

The hall like, spherical briefing room could easily hold a thousand members of the fleet and Raymond and his co-pilot had picked a backseat where they had a good view on everything. In his experience a briefing was less an occasion for issuing orders, as those could easily be uploaded into every pilots palm cogitator, but more a method for measuring and boosting moral. It was always good to know how the pilots felt about any given mission – it made their behavior so much more predictable.

Raymond looked around, caught the eye of a couple of other grizzled veterans like him and made a mental note. The pilots of all six bomber squadrons of the *Blinding Light* seemed to be present, all 144 of them – but not one fighter pilot. And Flight-Commodore Taylor was also absent. The commander of all the carriers fighter and bomber wings had never missed a briefing. Now that was strange – something was definitely up.

Admiral Townsend stormed into the briefing room as only a small, obese character can. Followed by his entire staff he ran to the central dais, stepped onto the box placed there especially for him so he could reach the microphone and signaled for silence.

Then he began to speak in a high, pitched voice. "You all know me and I am here for one reason – and for one reason only:" The lights dimmed and a large hololith appeared in front of the podium in the center of the theatre. The admiral pointed at the gigantic, rotating Super-Battleship than hung in the air: "*The Deliverance* has plagued this sector for longer than anyone can remember. Now evidence was unearthed that let's us believe she and her escorting fleet are currently here in the Syracuse System. This was validated just hours ago. An attack plan has been formulated that will finally wipe this smear of chaos from the stars. Commodore Burns."

The admiral stepped away from the podium and Michael Burns stepped up towards the microphone.

"Gentlemen, the target for tonight is the *Deliverance*. According to our information she currently orbits the third moon of the gas giant Syracuse Secundus. Some background information:

The Ship known as the *Deliverance* is estimated to be at least 5000 years old.

Battle reports log her appearance as early as the 36th millennium. She has always served the Archenemy of Mankind and has been reported destroyed on at least six occasions.

Her first appearance in the Styrgis Sector is logged for 887/M40, almost 200 years ago. Since that time she has plagued this sectors shipping lanes and has successfully avoided destruction on a number of occasions.

During the past 3 decades the sector fleet had four encounters with the renegade fleet led by the ship and managed to bring her to battle twice. On both occasions she avoided destruction. In 054/M41 Admiral Palin managed to launch a full attack at New Syrtis – this disaster however ended in the destruction of Admiral Palins Retribution Class Flagship *Holy Revenge*, as his ship traded broadsides with the *Deliverance* at close range.

In 061/M41 Admiral Caruso managed to surprise the *Deliverance* near the asteroid fields of Hannover. Although many of her escorting cruisers were destroyed, the ship itself evaded the trap and successfully ran the gauntlet.

The ship has proven to be extremely resilient and packs firepower that no imperial ship can match. A direct confrontation with capital ships is not estimated to be successful and her escorting cruisers shield her from any long range bombardment. The only viable option seems to be an ordinance strike. Yes Lt. Yamaner?”

A young flight captain in the front row stood to ask his question. “Sir, the *Deliverance* is rumored to harbor extensive ordinance of her own. How shall we pass through her fighter cover?”

“Good question Lt. We estimate that she harbors anywhere from eight to twelve fighter squadrons and has two squadrons permanently on station.” The briefing room exploded into subdued mumbling and occasional outbursts >> Impossible!<< , >>No way!<< , >>Suicide!<<.

“Please, please, this has been taken into account.” Commodore Burns did his best to subdue the agitated crowd. “In fact, we count on it.” That caused immediate silence and attention.

“We are lucky to possess extensive information on her and are thus able to predict her behavior. Which leads us to your current mission.”

The Commodore signaled with his hand and the hololith was replaced by a tactical map of Syracuse Secundus and the surrounding space. Little red icons indicated a renegade fleet orbiting one of the moons of the gas giant. Green icons depicting the imperial fleet were located on the far side of the gas giant, still a long way off.

“The current situation here in the system. Thanks to detailed recon we know the positions of the fleets to be accurate. We have entered the system on the far side of the gas giant and can assume to be still undetected by their picket ships. The constellation in this system as well as the known behavior of the renegade

fleet present us with a unique opportunity.” Upon a further signal from the commodore the planets and icons started to move.

“As you can see our primary approach is covered by the gas giant. The bomber squadrons of the *Blinding Light*, codenamed Strike Force *Scorpion*, will launch within the hour and accelerate to a position in space marked as Alpha. Here you will make a 90° turn and continue to accelerate towards the renegade fleet. As you can see from the hololith this maneuver will mask your approach in the initial phase by the gas giant, and in the second stage by the moon that the renegades orbit. Mark position Bravo, just before *Scorpion* exits the shade of the moon and enters the renegades auspex range. Here *Scorpion* will cut all power except for minimal life support and simply coast along in space. Note further that our Taskforce *Sword* will not be masked by the moon and thus be detected once it leaves the shade of the gas giant. This will be about thirty minutes prior to *Scorpion* reaching Bravo. We expect the following reaction from the renegade fleet: Once Taskforce *Sword* is detected, the renegades will send all Fighters on station towards *Sword*, and will launch immediately the emergency interceptor squadrons. These too will accelerate towards *Sword*, intending to intercept any ordinance launched from our side. Then their decks will be filled with bombers preparing for their own strike. Timing on this mission is critical. As you can see from the hololith, the alternate, masked approach vector from *Scorpion* results in the enemy interceptors passing by *Scorpion* after you have cut power at Bravo. You will simply coast past the fighter screen. Fifteen minutes later you will have reached the enemy fleet. We expect that *Scorpion* will be able to coast within 10.000 clicks before being detected. That means that their interceptors have been drawn off and their decks are filled with bombers preparing to launch – *Scorpion* will be able to strike with impunity.”

Extensive mumbling filled the hall and even McAlister was impressed. *This might actually work*, he mused, *all the way better than having to fight your way past their fighter screen first.*

Commodore Burns signaled again for silence. “Although you will reach the fleet without having to worry about enemy fighters, the *Deliverance* still sports enormous defenses. Size is her biggest advantage. An uncoordinated strike will just leave her with scorch marks. Therefore specific target information will be uploaded into the cogitators of your bombers. All off *Scorpion* will have to strike the same region of the ship in order to have any effect at all. Your bombers are being fitted with special, deep penetration warheads as we speak. If the strike is executed as planned, we calculated a 75% chance of crippling the beast – enough to prevent her from escaping. And that will be the end of her. Admiral?”

Admiral Townsend again took the podium. “Thank you Commodore. Gentlemen, I do not have to remind you of what is at stake. We have this single opportunity,

so do not waste it. The *Deliverance* has absolute priority. Ignore any other targets of opportunity, no matter how tempting or effective a deviation from the attack plan might be. This is it Gentlemen, this is what we have been waiting for. Good hunting.”

Nice prep-talk mused McAlister as the lights returned and everybody left for their respective destinations – the pilots for the launch bays and the admiral for the captain’s state room.

21:30 TST, 116/076M41

Strike Force *Scorpion*

Marauder Bomber *Black Betty*

Approaching Alpha

“Approaching Alpha, Captain, prepare for 90° starboard turn,” voxed Grissom, *Black Betty*’s navigator, through the internal com net. McAlister again checked the instruments of his cockpit and read the data from the nav-slate. “Counting... three... two... one... turning...” McAlister felt the slight trembling of the controls as he put the bomber into the turn. Around him, the 71 other bombers of *Scorpion* did likewise. “What do you think, boss – will we really avoid their fighters?” James, McAlister’s co-pilot, had only been with him for a couple of missions, and still felt squeamish beside the old veteran. “Tactics says so. And the fact that we have no fighter cover of our own supports that.” “I just hope so. Otherwise they will cut us to pieces.” The moon that masked their approach to Bravo was already large in the windshield. “Cut the grumbling, James – we do not need your heretical thoughts here. Just do your job!” McAlister had to smile in his breathing-mask. Rear gunner Brown was almost as long in the fleet as he himself and had already scored an impressive amount of kills. Very devout to the God-Emperor, not too bright but an expert shot, Brown had converted his gunnery capsule into something like an imperial shrine, covered with hololiths of imperial martyrs, Aquila and other devotional paraphernalia. Crazy but an expert shot. His twin bolter sported over thirty kill markings. According to Brown, any mission without enemy interceptors to kill was a wasted mission. “The Emperor protects, Brown, even those of less faith than yourself,” McAlister had to reprimand his second gunner, as it was not good that the authority of his co-pilot was undermined. “Just everybody stay focused and we will make it – as always.” That of course was not the complete truth. McAlister had served with 6 different flight crews during his career – Brown was an old residue from #2 and Grissom was with him since #4. Everybody else had been killed along the way

– *Black Betty* was the ninth bomber by that name that McAlister piloted.

“That slick guy from tactics – isn’t that an old buddy of yours Mc?” Williamson was the central cupola gunner and the man that McAlister respected least – not only for his disrespectful nature, but also because he was a lazy bum. *Which means that you will be cleaning all the guns when we get back*, he mused. “Yes, Commodore Burns is an old acquaintance of mine. And do not call him slick, he does his job the best way he can – unlike some others I know.” Williams cursed under his breath and McAlister traded a knowing glance with his co-pilot. “Ok. I know you guys will not rest until I’ve spilled all the beans. I met with the Commodore after the briefing and he explained a couple of things to me. Rest assured that this plan of attack has been well prepared and tactics has played this scenario through dozens of times. On all occasions interceptors never made it into our flight path, at least not on the way in, and the way back will be covered by fighter support from our other cruisers. So relax.” “No interceptors – damn!” There was real regret in Brown’s voice. “I’m not sorry. Just let us get in, throw the payload and then get the hell out of here!” Although still laced with anxiety, at least the fear had left James’ voice – *And that is a good thing. The ride is far from over and we need to keep our wits about us if we want to make it.* Those were thoughts that no pilot shared with his crew. There were just some things that he had to keep to himself – things that Michael had told him. It was enough when he was worried.

20:20 TST, 116/076M41

Imperial Class Battleship *Blinding Light*

Captain’s State Room

“A joylique, Commodore?” “No, thank you Admiral, I do not drink on the eve of battle.” Commodore Burns had joined Admiral Townsend upon his request in Captain Pitt’s State Rooms, which the Admiral had commandeered upon his arrival on the ship. “A pity, Commodore. Captain Pitt certainly keeps an extensive and well selected bar.” Admiral Townsend shrugged and refilled his glass from a crystal carafe. “It steadies my nerves. Mind you, I have to admit that I am excited. You know that I have been hunting the *Deliverance* for more than ten years. Finally a chance to blast that renegade. And that I get the chance to do it – we are truly blessed by the Emperor.” Burns did not move. “As you say sir.” Townsend dropped into a plush armchair and eyed Burns critically. “Why do I hear a however, in your voice Commodore? – It was you who formulated the attack plan.”

"And we spend lots of time doing it, too. You know that I am at least as determined to kill that bitch as you are, sir."

"Ah yes, the Marienburg incident. That convoy that was slaughtered five years back – your wife was on that, wasn't she?" Burns' demeanor stiffened and hate flooded into his eyes. "As you say sir, we all have our reasons, and sometimes they surpass our duties."

"Is that why you lied to the flight crews in the briefing room?"

"Lied, sir?"

"Come now, Commodore. That was hardly the whole truth. The chances of crippling the beast are 50/50 at best – do not stare like that, I do read all the memos that my staff prepares – why do you think that I work 16 hours a day?" Burns was taken aback and lost for words.

"And to top it, your analysis that the rebel fleet will send all their fighters our way is shaky at best. I know the crews needed a reason why we would not supply them with fighter cover, but the truth would have done just as well. Our fighters just do not have the life support reserves to cut power for such a long period of time."

"There would have been resistance to the plan..."

"They are crews of the Imperial Navy damn it!" thundered Townsend as he catapulted from the armchair. "If anyone has a problem performing his duty or following orders, I can arrange a discussion of priorities with the Commissariat!" Burns regained his composure and again faced his superior with an icy demeanor.

"I just thought that we would have less trouble this way. It makes it easier on them that they do not know how risky the mission really is."

"Life is not meant to be easy, at least not in the Navy! We all have our duty to perform in the Light of the Emperor, and those who fail in their duty are weeded out. That is a basic principle we all adhere to, Commodore. Do not forget it. By the way – I saw you talking to one of the pilots after the briefing. What did you tell him?"

"Nothing important. I just eased his fears."

"Again not telling the whole truth. – as far as I gather he is an old acquaintance of yours. Tell me about him."

Burns managed to hide his surprise. *Now how did the old fart find that one out?*

"Yes Sir. Captain McAlister and I go way back – we both grew up in a farming collective on Ulsha Prime. We both joined the Navy at age 17 – it seems we were just not cut out to be Grox farmers like our fathers."

"You keep in touch?"

A slight smile hushed across Burns' face. "As you know the Imperium is big, sir. We manage to exchange messages every couple of years. And if we can manage we attend the academy reunions at sector HQ. The last time I saw him was at the 20 year reunion six years ago." Admiral Townsend stared into space. It was

obvious that he remembered his own academy days ages ago.

"Those were the days. So how did your paths' separate?"

"You know how the academy works, sir. I had good grades in history and fleet theory while his natural aptitude is more in the physical sector. Good reflexes and determination under pressure placed him with the Marauders, and I left for tactics. And that was it."

"That I understand fully. You are close?"

"As close as members of the fleet can be that serve on different ships."

"Close enough to tell him anything that might jeopardize this mission?"

Burns was now fully on the defensive. "What do you mean, sir?"

The admiral eyes had taken on a hard, unyielding expression.

"I mean that I need this victory to advance to sector command. I will do anything to achieve it and I will ruthlessly eliminate anyone who is in my way. So you better get your priorities straight, Commodore. If you do, you can advance in my shadow, but if you don't then I will have your head on a pike! Do we understand each other?"

Burns was as rigid as a statue. He knew fully well that that was no empty threat.

"Perfectly, sir."

The silence between the two officers continued until it became unbearable.

Burns gave up first. "Sir, we are about to enter detection range. I am needed on the bridge."

Admiral Townsend did not flinch. "Do that. I will join you shortly."

Burns snapped a sharp salute and turned around to leave. Just before he reached the door, the admirals voice, now again warm and cheerful, made him turn around once more.

"Commodore. Captain Pitts joylique is truly excellent. Are you sure you do not want one?"

23:45 TST, 116/076M41

Strike Force *Scorpion*

Marauder Bomber *Black Betty*

On final approach

They had passed Bravo at just a quarter past ten and subsequently cut all power. With only minimal life support, the engines in idle and all electronics turned off, the bomber started to freeze over in the cold vacuum of space. McAlister was thankful for his padded and specially insulated flight suit and the extra thick muttons he had brought along. The cockpit thermometer showed 30 below

0 and thin sheets of ice had started to form on all surfaces. Half an hour ago a large number of contacts had passed by them just off starboard – obviously enemy fighters en route to the imperial fleet. Those minutes had been intense as detection would have meant a massacre. But the auspex, the only instrument left online, had remained silent. The moon that they approached now covered about ¾ of their entire field of vision.

“I can see them.” James’ voice cut through the internal vox that McAlister nearly jumped out of his flight suit. He had not noticed how anxious and tense he really was. “Not possible, two. We are still too far away.”

“But I see them boss. At about 11:00 o’ clock high - just above the horizon. You can see little reflections of light.”

McAlister squeezed his eyes to look sharper – and really, if you looked long enough you could glimpse tiny specs against the blackness of space.

“Confirm. Sharp eyes, two. Nav. – projections?”

Grissom’s voice cut in. “We are still about 50k clicks out. Given current speed and heading we should enter their passive scanner range in about 15 minutes.”

“Brown, Williamson. Anything?”

“As quiet as a grave. Nothing out there but us.”

“Williamson? Williamson!”

“...häh?”

By the Emperor the friggin bloke just woke up. “If I catch you again sleeping on mission, then I will throw you out of the next air lock! By the Emperor get a grip! – Everybody stay sharp! I do not trust the quiet.”

The next couple of minutes were filled with intense anxiety and continuous scanning of the space around them – but no interceptors showed up.

“Grissom – arm the warheads. We should be...”

BEEP... BEEP... BEEP

“Auspex in the red! They have us – holy shit here we go!”

“Recharging engines... mark... engines online!”

“Full thrust! Grissom – lock in target data! Two, initiate evasive maneuvers!”

“Cogitator on line! Target locked! Warheads armed!”

One by one the bombers of *Scorpion* came alive. Trailing fire 72 Bombers accelerated in tight formation against the target. 12k clicks out the formation started to spread out and the bombers began their evasive dance – cogitator against cogitator the target acquisition sensors of the rebel fleet tried to project

flight paths where as the bombers tried to be as erratic as possible in order to prevent target acquisition. It was a battle of calculating power – bits vs. bytes with the lives of men at stake.

“Brown! Anything?!”

“Still no interceptors, nothing out there!”

“By the Holy Emperor of Mankind! We got them! We caught them with their pants down!”

“Entering outer flack range! They are opening up!”

“By holy Terra – that flack is intense!”

“Boss – enemy is maneuvering! Cruisers and escorts on intercept course! They try to shield their flag ship!”

“Everybody stay sharp! Ignore all targets except the primary one! We are on the way in!”

00:05 TST, 117/076M41

Imperial Class Battleship *Blinding Light*

Main Battle Bridge

The vox chatter from *Scorpion* was monitored closely on the imperial battleship. Admiral Townsend had joined Captain Pitt and his own staff on the bridge and was now standing on the primary command dais overlooking the command bridge. Hundreds of officers, servitors and adjutants were busy performing a myriad of tasks, but never before had Commodore Burns ever felt so helpless. There was nothing they could do. Only listen – and pray.

>>*Flack is intense!*<<

>>*I’m hit, I’m hit!*<<

>>*We just lost Blue 4 and Green 6!*<<

>>*That cruiser is heading right for us!*<<

“Astrometrics, Admiral. Enemy fleet maneuvering. Cruisers on intercept.”

“Gunnery, Admiral. The enemy has opened up their formation. We have long range target acquisition on Primary Target.”

The surprise on the admirals face was evident.

“What! Repeat, Gunnery – you have target acquisition?”

“Gunnery, Admiral. Confirm target acquisition. No more intervening secondary targets.”

“Tactics, Admiral. Confirm Gunnery. We must have surprised the enemy big-time. They are maneuvering to intercept *Scorpion* and have thus exposed the *Deliverance*.”

Commodore Taylor stormed up to the Admiral. “Admiral, you are not considering a lance strike?! *Scorpion* is on final approach and right in the middle of the fire corridor!”

Admiral Townsend looked as if he had not heard the last comment.

“Tactics, estimated casualties with *Scorpion* and current probability of crippling Primary Target.”

“Tactics, Admiral. Calculating... .. Casualties estimated at 55%. Probability of crippling Primary Target 45%”

“Tactics, estimated casualties with *Scorpion* if we fire now and probability of crippling Primary Target.”

“Tactics, Admiral. Calculating... .. Casualties estimated at 95%. Probability of crippling Primary Target 70%.”

Commodore Taylor's face was red with anxiety and worry for his flight boys.

“Admiral you can not do that! They are our boys!” The icy stare of Admiral Townsend silenced him immediately.

“Do not dare to tell me what I can and can not do!”

The entire attention of the command bridge was focused on the small group of staff officers surrounding the admiral. You could have heard a pin drop.

“Astrometrics, Admiral. Enemy fleet re-maneuvering.”

“Tactics, Admiral. The enemy has realized his mistake and is maneuvering to close the gap.”

“Gunnery, Admiral. Continued target lock. Estimated loss of lock at 8 minutes.”

Captain Pitts face was ash-colored. He knew what was coming and what it would mean for his bomber wings. “Your decision, Admiral.”

Admiral Townsend exchanged a knowing glance with his senior tactician.

Commodore Burns nodded slightly. “Mr. Pitt, signal the fleet. Full lance strike.”

00:11 TST, 117/076M41

Strike Force *Scorpion*

Marauder Bomber *Black Betty*

Attack Run – Final Stage

“Coming up. Target just behind that Murder Cruiser!”

“Target Locked! Warheads armed! Ready to release!”

“Ready to release. Passing the cruiser.”

“Holy mother of Terra – look at the size of that thing!”

“Shove it Williamson! Prepare to release! Five... four... three... ..”

Blinding light, brighter than any star exploded through the windshield and burned McAlister's retinas from the backs of his eyes. He felt the controls go limp, smelled the intense stink of melting metal, felt his flight suit smolder, felt pain. Intense heat and intense pain, like he had never felt before. He gagged on his screams and the next few minutes all he could hear was first James' screaming, then moaning, then silence. Aside from the pain in his head he felt the heat as the cockpit deteriorated around him.

The heat passed away, leaving behind the pain of the burns on the exposed parts of his face. The heat passed away to be replaced by a bitter biting cold, the murderous cold of space, creeping into the nearly breached cockpit. The pain of the burns was compounded by the pain of the cold as live support slowly dwindled. Somewhere along the way, Captain McAlister slipped into darkness.

15:25 TST, 120/076M41

Imperial Class Battleship *Blinding Light*

Medicae Ward IX

“Is he awake?” Commodore Burns stepped up to the white clad medical orderly.

“Pumped full with pain killers, but awake. Intensive care ward seven, just behind the door at the end of the hall.”

Michael Burns had put off visiting his old friend as long as he had dared, but now his conscience forced him to place one foot ahead of the next. He passed into the intensive care ward and stepped behind the white screen that separated station seven from the others. What he saw confirmed the bad reports and his worst fears. His freshly starched uniform creaked as he sat on the chair beside the bed. The completely bandaged face that showed only the remains of a nose and cracked lips did not move as McAlister croaked his words. “... .. Is ... someone ... there..?”

“It's me, Raymond. Michael.”

“...what... happened...?”

“Victory, Raymond. Of a sort. We obliterated the chaos fleet and crippled the *Deliverance* to the extent that she fled the field of battle. Cruisers are hot on her tail. Astrometrics projected her leaving the sector. Victory, Raymond.”

"...it...does not...feel...like victory..."

"We were lucky to find the *Betty*, drifting amid the wreckage. You were very lucky Raymond. The lance beam only cut off the tail of the *Betty* and left the cockpit relatively intact. Smoldered but intact. A miracle that the warheads did not detonate. I am sorry, but you are the only survivor of the *Betty*."

"...Lance...beam...?...What happened?... What happened... to me?... I feel... funny..."

"Life support was almost gone when we found you. You had extreme frostbite and they had to amputate your extremities to stop the gangrene. I am sorry Raymond."

"...My...eyes...?"

"Burned away from the lance beam. There is not much left of you."

"...What...lance beam?!"

"Full lance strike, Raymond. Eighteen Ships, over 50 beams. Scorpion forced the enemy to maneuver and the *Deliverance* exposed herself. That was a chance we had to take."

"...So.. it was...friendly...fire..."

"The *Deliverance* was the priority target."

Michael could almost taste the bitterness in his friends voice.

"...Yes... ..priorities... .."

Commodore Burns sighted and then stood up. He wanted to turn away, but then stopped as an afterthought. He took out the pack of lohs, placed one stick between the cracked lips of his former comrade and, to the absolute horror of the surrounding medical orderlies, lit the loh.



