**Escalation 4.4**

**Endbringer**

*The Empyreal Abomination calling itself the Blood God is not without cunning, and like everything coming from the darkness, it is a grave mistake to underestimate the danger represented by its plans.*

 *Fortunately, the same can’t be said for the majority of its champions, slaves and other entities shackled to its will. The red abominations screaming battle-cries before charging are without contest the least subtle of their brethren. Their range of tactics is incredibly slim. They are constantly at war, either with each other or against the living species of this galaxy.*

*Some inexperienced recruits might say after this explanation the forces showing the mark of their bloody master on their standards are weak, justifying their reasoning by the combination of lack of intelligence and inability to adapt. These recruits are in general the first to die. The lesser entities in service of the Blood Empyreal Abomination are formidable at close-quarters, and their unnatural aptitudes ensure they survive the seconds necessary to engage the enemy at their distance of predilection. A lesser daemon can and will cut down even the armour of a Space Marine if it is given the opportunity. Lesser red-skinned hordes are largely sufficient to exterminate armies on their own, without support.*

*Unfortunately for the races which inhabit this galaxy, the lesser entities are led by bigger and more dangerous enemies. And when it comes to the forces of Blood and War, the martial abilities are everything. The higher these abominations are in the hierarchy of their murderous master, the more their war-fighting abilities are impressive.*

*At the top of the mountain are the Greater Abominations. Wrathful, eternally in quest of war, carnage, slaughter and blood, the Bloodthirster is an entity built for one thing: kill until the stars are no more. All are beyond mortal comprehension. The smallest and least powerful of these specimens is strongest than the most redoubtable sword-master of the Adeptus Astartes. Entire regiments have been wiped out in less time it takes to say it by these abominations.*

*And yet, even among these hosts of murder and ruin, there are eminent names.*

*The Angel’s Bane, Second Endbringer, is one of those.*

*Strong enough to duel the Primarch Sanguinius before the Eternity Gate, uncountable generations of Inquisitors prayed the Siege of Terra would be the last instance humanity would have to fight this horror.*

*It was not to be.*

*The abomination returned in 050M34, eager to avenge in blood its defeat at the hands of the Primarch. Twenty worlds burned, the death toll was in the billions, and it took the sacrifice of thousands unsung heroes to banish once more the daemon.*

*And for over a thousand years, the galaxy was spared the cruelty of this killing machine.*

*But nothing is eternal.*

*The daemon returned in 290M35, fighting the Imperial forces in the Battle of the* Death Star*, its hatred for Sanguinius and its sons greater than ever.*

*It was thus on a damaged warship fleeing a dying artificial ork moon that the Angel’s Bane would met a woman it* *would grow to hate more than the Great Angel Himself*...

Extract from Inquisitorial file VV88-45217RMAD, dictated on the orders of Inquisitor [REDACTED], 047M36.

“*You are not my brother anymore. And I will never join you in this folly. Do you hear me Horus? I will never be Chaos’ slave*!” words attributed to the Primarch Sanguinius, 014M31.

**Ultima Segmentum**

**Nyx Sector**

**Smilodon Trench Sub-Sector**

**S-4697X5T4 System**

**7.623.289M35**

Thought for the day: Let faith protect your mind and metal your flesh.

**Magos Desmerius Lankovar**

“I want a general status report,” Desmerius Lankovar croaked after decapitating the latest abomination to come through the wall with a power axe.

One by one, the other Tech-Priests assessed their sections and reported in a flow of binaric.

“The defences of the noosphere are holding under the scrap-code assault, but the Warp-taint is exerting massive pressure. The vox communications were not cancelled in time and must be considered compromised.”

“Chaos troops are assaulting our forces on the three lower decks. The hangar bays are a battlefield. The Alpha Legion and Acting-Colonel Hebert are already fighting for their lives in U-45. Skitarii units are engaging Warp entities on sixteen different points.”

“There are two massive breaches in our outer hull and three compartments are now sealed. Integrity compromised. Void shields at 45%. Engines pushed at 102%.The Gellar Fields are crippled. Tech-Priest Ju-Nu-54 is trying to assess the damage but it looks the initial Chaos strike involved many heretical grenades.”

“Tech-Priest Dragon Richter is fighting a Heldrake with her flying armour in Section L-9.”

“The new wave of Drop Pods will strike the *Magos Laurentis* in about one minute and five seconds.”

“The *Certamen Ferale* is accelerating. We will enter its effective range in eight minutes.”

This was a disaster, by the cog of the Omnissiah. Without the Gellar Fields, they were unable to prevent the demons from storming his ship, and they couldn’t flee through the Warp.

They could fight. They could move. For all the good it was going to make them. If the *Magos Laurentis* had been brand-new, it would have exactly zero chance to survive against the monstrosity represented by a heretic Goliath-class heavy battleship. And his ship was definitely not in its prime youth. It had hardly been intact or undamaged before the Traitors emerged from the Warp and began to assault them.

“The *Opera Exitium* is going to engage the *Certamen Ferale*. And the Loyalist Astartes are sending their own boarding parties,” his second in command pointed out.

“This is insufficient. The Traitors have already sent over four hundred Chaos Marines against our ship, and the Brothers of the Red can’t have more than three hundred in their attack force.”

“We can’t even open our compartments to the void.”

“Yes. Except the Astartes, none of our forces in the lower compartments have void protections. With the hangar bays fought over, we can’t even transfer the archeotech to another ship and escape.”

Lankovar sent a burst of mockery as some of the Tech-Priests manifested their surprise.

“Of course if I we had an option to escape, I would try it. It would not be a glorious event in the data-libraries of the Adeptus Mechanicus. But the prizes at stake justify any course in favour of our survival.” Desmerius Lankovar shrugged. “Since the possibilities of this scenario are null and void, tell me what our options are.”

“Magos, I don’t see who we can prevail against the *Certamen Ferale* and its corrupted troops. The forces we have sent in the hangars and the lower bridges are good, but whether they are flesh or metal, they are exhausted by the battles we fought on the Attack Moon. We can’t prevail against several assault waves of Chaos Astartes, and fight our way to safety.”

“There are also the green xenos to take into account,” Wismer added. “The size of the *Certamen Ferale* has attracted their attention, and while all augurs show they are disunited by the death of their leader, they are going to attack us on their way to the heavy battleship. The Imperial Navy is too far to intervene in time.”

“But the fleet from Ryza can,” Lankovar answered, studying the flow of data and the relative positions. “The *Lance of Logic* and its escorts can support the Astartes Battle-barge and fight the *Certamen Ferale* with sixty-two percent chance of victory.”

“Perhaps,” chipped a Tech-Priest. “But we are speaking about an Archmagos of Ryza. Their fleet won’t be committed in the heart of battle if their profit margins aren’t there.”

Lankovar exchanged a long glance with Alena Wismer before turning towards the Tech-Priest in charge of the external communications.

“Can we contact the *Lance of Logic* on a six-layered encrypted communication?”

“No, Magos. Several of our specialised communication equipment is damaged and we have no established communication protocol with Ryza warships. If I send a message, it will be with minimal encryption. The energy we will have to pour to protect the content from the scrap-code is already going to be a problem in the next eighty seconds.”

This meant that save the orks, every fleet in this system would be able to read his message if they listened in this ship’s direction. But one look at the hololith told him the alternative was simply annihilation, and Desmerius Lankovar was sure the Omnissiah would have a few unpleasant words for him if he died and let the STC in the centre of his bridge be destroyed.

“Do it. The message is: ‘I have a STC database on my ship. I request assistance’.”

“Message sent, Magos.”

The *Magos Laurentis* shook under the weight of several more impacts. More Traitor troops, more Heretics coming to defile the Holy STC.

“Wismer, take command on the bridge and protect the STC. Under no circumstances Chaos is to take possession of it.”

“Yes, Magos!” the Questor shouted.

“Commit the Skitarii reserves to the help of the lower bridges. Rouse all the war engines we have left. And order the Guardsmen between the hangars and the engines to hold their positions at all costs.”

If the corrupted entities managed to cripple his propulsion, the Magos Laurentis would die in mere seconds. In a battlefield where they were orks, immobility was a death sentence and an invitation for a ramming attempt.

“The rest of the Skitarii and Guard are to rally on U-5! We have enemies of the Omnissiah to kill!”

**Tech-Priest Dragon Richter**

Dragon was furious.

It was bad enough that this galaxy had the orks crawling on hundreds of planets. The green aliens were war-like and made a mockery of technology with each action they took. By all rights, none of their guns, vehicles, starships and equipment should function. The fact that it did was an aberration.

But she had gritted her metaphorical teeth and continued to work. The orks were an idiotic race and even if she hammered how repulsing they were deep into their skulls, she was sure they wouldn’t understand.

These ‘Ruinous Powers’, however, truly deserved her hate.

They had dared defiling the noble appearance of a dragon for one of their horrifying machines. It was an unforgivable sin and they were going to beg her forgiveness before this battle ended.

“This was your last mistake, demon!” The Tinker announced as her Dragon Armour Saphira Mark One delivered an energetic punch in the metallic torso, sending it slamming against a wall.

It was not sufficient to pulverise the demonic machine but Dragon had expected it. The moment the hellish black dragon tried to open its maw to disgorge whatever unnatural fire it had in its belly, it ate the lasers of the ventral armament, and as fangs and spikes exploded, it seemed her enemy did not like at all being on the receiving end of a lascannon.

Too bad for this monstrous thing, it was just the first step of the beating she had planned for it. The parody of dragon tried to close the distance, only to realise a second later that perhaps the Lightning Claws she had fixed on the paws of her creation weren’t just for show.

Sensing its imminent doom, the abomination attempted to send once more virus in the Mechanicus noosphere and the local circuits, but this trick was not going to function after she had seen the monsters do it once. Her firewalls had been multiplied by ten in the last minutes and she rebuffed the attack in two seconds.

The claws of the Saphira Armour seized the black-demon dragon by the throat and tore it apart, before a new burst of her lascannon tore it apart.

In many cases, she would have stopped it, but this time she was willing to make an exception. This insult to all dragons was thrashed until its very form was unrecognisable and cleansed in blue fire.

“Leet, stop hiding behind these crates!” She ordered as she examined her surroundings. The walls were filled with many, many holes and due to this damn unnatural ‘Chaos’ phenomenon, some parts looked like they were bleeding. The floor was littered with damaged weapons and crippled corpses, many belonging to the monsters but there were also several Tech-Priests and Guards among them.

“I said stop hiding!” She barked. “The enemy here is no longer a threat!”

At last, the costumed parahuman left the hideout where had waited the battle. By the way the video game-themed supervillain was shaking and the colour of his costume, it looked he had soiled him.

“What the hell are those things? What the hell is wrong with this damn ship?”

It was clear the parahuman was in full panic mode, and unfortunately Dragon had not the time to deal with him. So she applied psychology 1.0 and she just slapped him.

“Hey!”

Dragon slapped him again. Just for science and help her fellow Tinker get out of this depression. At least that’s what she would write in her after-action report.

“Hey, stop that!” something like combativeness returned in the man’s eyes.

“Focus!” she commanded. “Yes, these things look like demons. No, I don’t know where they come from. No, I don’t know how many there are aboard the ship right now.

What I am certain is that they want to kill us and prevent the important items we recovered on the moon to arrive in security. And I want them to fail. I don’t know any demon-banishing technology. Do you?”

To his credit, the man in the costume of Mario appeared to think seriously about it.

“Maybe? I mean it’s not like bio-tinkering, holograms and robots. I never tried to build something like that in Earth Bet, after all the Endbringers don’t register as demons...”

The Tinker froze for a seconds in a Tinker crisis.

“Yeah, I can try to build a general banisher but...it will have a high chance of exploding. The power source alone is going to be a bitch, and my powers have a high chance of failure so don’t expect more than one good shot...”

The hangar-warehouse near them exploded in flames and Dragon’s anger returned, as not one but two black-demonic dragons attacked everything in sight.

“Do it, and quickly. Make sure a Tech-Priest stop you from seizing any demonic component when you are building your device. I am going to deal with these things.”

She could have made her dragon armour roar to announce a challenge, but she settled for one Storm Eagle missile right in the head of the leading demon-machine. The second enemy of course froze in stupefaction before roaring in anger.

“What are you still doing here?” She shouted to the other parahuman standing there and watching the fight. “GO!”

Then the world was plunged in black and blue flames, demons began to arrive in waves and she had not the time to babysit Leet.

**Corporal Wei Cao**

They had been locking the eldar in their cells when the walls began to scream and several Wuhan troopers began to mutate.

Despite everything they had lived in recent days, this had shocked everyone. Orks were creatures which loved to fight, but at least they came to kill you with weapons you could recognise.

This...this witchery, they hadn’t fought it before, and they couldn’t stab it with their bayonets. The Commissar shot two of the men, but the third transformed in a second into something twice the size of a human with a red-skin and a black blade made of bones and tortured faces was raised in a parody of challenge.

“KILL THE MUTANT! FOR THE EMPEROR!”

“BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD! SKULL FOR HIS SKULL THRONE!”

As strong as the creature was, it was alone and unsupported and in three seconds they had pierced it with a dozen bayonets. Nobody protested as the Commissar decapitated it with his chainsword.

“Well, that’s one thing the Imperial Uplifting Primer forgot to mention,” a Fay Sergeant spat before crushing a sort of blood tendril with his boot.

“They have a paragraph on the Ruinous Powers,” an Ulm veteran said, his uniform more grey and brown than white at this point, and one of his arms was bandaged.

“Yeah, if by paragraph you mean two lines of text, and the official solution is the demand we pray the Emperor daily,” the Andes representative in their group put back his rebreather on his face. “Symon was a good guy...”

“Enough of this seditious talk,” the Commissar’s voice cut like a blade the whispers and the conversations. “Vox-operator, how is the situation on the rest of the ship?”

“Vox channels are full of screams and heretical interferences, Commissar. I think it’s best to not listen whatever the abominations want us to hear.”

“Agreed,” the discipline officer looked hesitant. “We must regroup with the rest of the company to oppose these things. Has the Magos mentioned how badly he wanted the xenos in the cells alive?”

Wei opened her mouth to answer...and suddenly she found herself lying on the ground. There had been no sign of any enemy presence, no illusion, nothing to tell them they were under attack...but as she painfully tried to stand, her eyes went directly straight to the grinning face of a xenos.

She had not understood at all the expression ‘eldar clown of murder’ when the Astartes Dreadnought had voiced it on the battlefield, but now she had to admit it was appropriate. A grinning golden mask. Clothes which changed colour every second. Shoes which would have looked prodigiously uncomfortable even in a ballroom. In one of its hand, it held the key-unit for the cells, in the other a bloodied dagger.

Wei tried to stand and instantly she had a long blade against her throat. Of course the treacherous xenos had liberated its friends from the cell.

She prayed a few guards of her group had survived and were already running away to seek reinforcement, but the eldar clicked his fingers and she was authorised to turn her head...only to watch the headless head of the Commissar on a bayonet and disembowelled corpses in grotesque positions. How in the name of the Emperor had this thing managed to kill them in mere seconds?

“Go on, kill me, xenos. I won’t give you anything.”

“Kill, kill and kill, this is the tale of you, humans,” the clothes of the eldar took a bright red colour. “Sacrifice and neat control, a golden throne and a fight against your very souls. You fall, you rise, and you fall again. Comedy and story for the greater end.”

The xenos paused.

“Your death, not today.”

The dagger danced in the air.

“A message for the bearer of the Sword of Vaul, the one who masters the chitin-life.”

Wei swallowed. They were speaking about the Colonel.

“If you dare...”

“The Will must strike true with the Song of Nebula. Destroy and perish. Save the blood tear and win. Interesting choice, and tragedy follows, ha!”

A blue portal opened and the white-armoured and the green-armoured eldar disappeared into it.

Wei Cao stood as the Harlequin danced around the techno-sorcery it had just conjured.

“We will kill you for this, you know. What happened in the last battles will never be forgotten by the Guard. My commander is going to you kill you all.”

“The Swarm strike deep...the Swarm fail against Death!” the portal disappeared and she was alone with the dead. The cells were opened and no one was breathing.

“The Emperor was right to demand your extermination...” and she began to run towards the hangar bays where two Companies of Fay Guardsman were supposed to rest. Wei didn’t trust at all the eldar, but she wasn’t going to be very useful guarding empty cells...

**Missy Byron**

To her eternal annoyance, there was indeed a common point between the PRT idiots and the Space Marines of the Imperium. The moment she announced she was going to fight a battle with them, ‘oh, my God/by the Emperor no, you’re too young and bah, blah, blah.

Seriously, what was the problem with humanity? She was one of the most experienced Wards ever, she had a badass power, and she had fought against Endbringers and S-class criminals. But no matter what she did, they saw her as a tiny inoffensive child!

What was she supposed to do to change that? Compress an entire city before making the fuel depots explode in a volcano-style explosion?

Thus when the first red-skinned beasts she saw began to laugh at her and say she had a tiny skull, Vista felt she could be forgiven for the violence of her actions.

In one second, the demon-dog-things were directly in the path of the murderous black-armoured Space Marines and got the beating of their lives. They were dismembered, torn apart, and used to beat more enemies.

“Wow!” exclaimed a soldier who looked more dead than alive with his wounds and his bandages. “These guys know how to treat the enemies of the Emperor! With me, men! We are going to kill the enemies of the Emperor!”

The battle resumed, with more enemies coming but the majority of the Space Marines had used their ramming-pods to arrive to the cruiser. The ones in full red were fighting in a precise and methodical manner. The ones in black...didn’t. In fact, there was one to explain what they were doing, and it was butchery.

There was no tactic, no flank attacks and no taking cover. They were rushing towards the enemy and slicing it apart with enormous swords. And they were screaming incoherent war-screams.

“BLOOD ANGELS! BLOOD ANGELS WITH ME! DEATH TO HORUS! DEATH TO HORUS!”

“FOR THE EMPEROR! NINTH TRIUMPHANT!”

These were the clearest battle-cries but most of the time the Astartes roared and roared.

It was completely insane. Vista was glad it was a battle and she was so concentrated on remodelling the battlefield to ensure the demons, robed mutants and spike-warriors harmed each other, because it was a spectacle of insanity. Walls were painted in blood, and from time to time you could see skulls and screaming faces emerging from it. They were marching on a carpet of dead and agonising monsters. They were ravaging the ranks of the demonic hordes.

And the Space Marines were continuing their charge. Black armours in the heat of the massacre, red and red-gold armours providing the fire support and the flying mobility. Here and there, one of the huge armoured warriors fell, but this didn’t even slow down the speed of their advance. One warrior with a golden chalice was recovering something from their throats and the slaughter continued.

She had to run continuously to follow their damned rhythm, and she wasn’t the only one. In every hangar and corridor they passed, they met stunned survivors of the cruisers’ crew, their wide eyes confirming that yes, the Astartes had saved them and yes, the demons had been dispensed what they called ‘the Emperor’s justice’.

“Who is in command of this company?” Contessa asked to a large group of survivors arriving from a nearby elevator. In the last minutes it had become evident they were not going to be able to follow the insane speed of the Astartes. The men and women in front of her looked like they had survived hell, literally. One of the reasons you could tell their original uniform had been black was because it was a colour able to absorb a lot of dirt and not look too much like you had rolled in unpleasant substances.

“I am, Inquisitor,” the woman who replied had certainly an arm broken but the other arm was holding a lasgun and her blue eyes were burning with determination. “Captain Sevrev, Second Company of the Fay 20th.”

“We need to descend to the U-level hangar bays, Captain.”

The woman, to Vista’s surprise, outright snorted.

“And I want a few millions Throne Gelts and a planet once I retire, Inquisitor.”

Contessa for once showed some emotion on her face and it was annoyance. One hand went on the pistol she had kept until now in her holster.

“You have no idea what is at stake, Captain.”

“With all due respect, Inquisitor, I don’t think you understand what is happening under our feet,” the woman didn’t spit the words but it was a very nearly thing. “My commander is downstairs with over fifty Astartes, and in the last ten minutes, we have ferried her over sixty thousand insects. There are fucking demons, monsters, Chaos Astartes plus gigantic insects able to kill you in one strike. Magos Lankovar tried to reinforce the level early in the assault and his Skitarii got trounced before they had the chance to shout ‘Omnissiah’.”

Several soldiers nodded soberly.

Vista was far more concerned by the mentions of insects. Skitter was their commander, then. She was the only one which would require insects as a source of reinforcements.

“It’s a madhouse, and our Acting-Colonel expressly told us not to reinforce her position. In her own words, there’s no point sending good men in a battle where Astartes do not survive. I intend to obey her orders. I am going to secure the Tech-Priests and we will go guard the vaults and the engines. Take the codes for the elevators if you want, but be aware you are going to die for nothing if you go in this melee. And the new Astartes didn’t look like they were too concerned about friendly fire.”

“I think you will find humans can survive wherever they wish,” Contessa marched out in the other direction, her goal in this conversation apparently fulfilled.

Less than a minute of waiting later, they found back the Brother of the Red Space Marines. They were far less of them this time...and they were not fighting against small demons-dogs and human-sized opponents anymore. No, their opponents were clad in blood-soaked armours with evil runes, black brands and they brandished massive roars. Oh and they roared even louder than the ‘normal’ black armoured Marines. The walls were bleeding more, and this time the carpet was human skulls, insects carcasses and demons spread where they had died.

“I will distract them,” and Contessa voiced no objection. Slowly she began to remodel the ground behind the demon worshippers...what a bad idea it was to let all these spikes unused. At least it was her opinion and she was sure one of these beast-headed madmen shared her opinion when he tried to make a step and got impaled by what had been one of his friends’ weapons.

As she twisted the ground behind them and Contessa had finally decided to use her pistol to kill every monster with a perfect headshot, the outcome of the battle was not in doubt. But then she realised the problem was not the battle itself.

The problem was that the fight had just been a skirmish compared to the clash occurring over four hundred metres away in the next hangar.

The battle was not between two human forces. Or at least one was partly human and the other one was definitely beast-demonic. On one side, tank-sized centipedes were dominating the war zone, surrounded by a sea of lesser centipedes and black-armoured beetles, with multiple aerial waves of insects vaguely looking like orange mutant bees. Behind them, blue-armoured Astartes were firing with massive guns which had nothing to shame the huge weapons of the Brothers of the Red.

And they were losing. If their opponents had been human, Vista was sure these huge bastions of claws, chitin and mandibles would have massacred everything in their way, but the enemy wasn’t human. It was demonic, and it was coming from hell.

She could see far in the distance the blood-coloured light from a gigantic gate where the creatures were coming from in an endless tide. They were beasts of nightmare, dogs which were sure to make a mythical Cerberus pale in comparison, vaguely humanoid things with black blades and beast heads.

“**Your pathetic resistance comes to an end, servants of the Corpse**.”

The ranks of the horde opened to reveal a gigantic red-black demon. It wielded a gigantic axe and a whip, both weapons so large and so heavy no Astartes could possibly wield them.

“**I. AM. THE. ANGEL’S BANE**!” And for every word, a brutal blow fell indiscriminately in the ranks of its followers or the insects.

“**Your father is no more sons of the Sanguinius! Your doom comes and your souls belong to Khorne**!”

From nowhere came a storm of red and black lightning, and in one second, over one hundred Space Marines collapsed like they had been puppets one had suddenly cut the strings off.

**Harrowmaster Jeremiah Isley**

A Space Marine knows no fear. A Space Marine knows the galaxy is unfair.

In times like this Jeremiah was forced to remember these sentences with an increasing regularity.

But it was cold comfort when your reinforcements, more than one hundred Astartes of the former Ninth Legion, fell without a single enemy touching them.

Well, at least it proved the servants of Khorne were hypocrites like the rest of their malicious brethren. If that was not a sorcery attack, he was ready to eat his power armour, beginning with his helmet.

Not that he was going to have the opportunity to do so.

Ka’Bandha was coming.

He was slaying insects right and left, and...wait a second, why did the Bloodthirster was suddenly hundreds of metres away when it had been making a breakthrough seconds before?

“HARROWMASTER, WE NEED A NEW STRATEGY.”

“Yes Pierre, we do.” The problem was that for the life of him, he didn’t find anything in his mind susceptible to be adapted to their desperate situation. The strength of the Alpha Legion had always been in indirect fighting. But assuming for an instant it had not been, you couldn’t fight the hordes pouring of this blood gate with a handful of Space Marines. By the Omega, they couldn’t even approach the damned thing, never mind sabotaging it. So far, only the shield provided by the insects of Acting-Colonel Taylor Hebert had allowed them to limit the losses.

They had to close the gate but they weren’t strong enough. The only sane tactic would be to self-destruct the ship...and they would never have the seconds to escape.

Whatever disorientation had plagued Ka’Bandha was gone. The Greater Daemon brought its axe high and generated a massive shockwave as it hit the ground.

“**BLOOD FOR THE BLOOD GOD! BRING ME THEIR SKULLS**!”

Like a single malevolent entity, thousands of demons charged forwards.

“My armour is contempt. My shield is disgust. My sword is hatred.” The old litany was on his lips. Was it going to be the end of his Cohort after so many centuries?

“IN THE EMPEROR’S NAME, LET NONE SURVIVE!” Ancient Pierre roared and over thirty Alpha Legionaries raced to meet the daemons.

There was a flash of silver and in mere seconds hundreds of monsters were annihilated. A rain of millions of crystals devastated the battlefield. But the daemons came nonetheless. The Colonel of the Fay 20th had drawn a sort of sword-archeotech and it was fury incarnate. But in screams and madness the Enemy came. Flames and black blades met the Space Marines as impossibly shard crystals eviscerated the servants of Khorne.

The inferno roared and Ka’Bandha entered the melee once more. The ground and the air seemed to be against the monster, but the very physics broke against its bleeding axe.

“**MORE BLOOD! MORE SKULLS**!”

One of the greatest centipedes was beheaded with ridiculous facility and his warriors were thrown to the ground like toys. Thankfully, it was not the kind of sorcery which had immobilised the descendants of the Blood Angels, but at least three of his battle-brothers didn’t rise once more.

This last attack had devastated the insects’ ranks. Where they had been thousands if not tens of thousands, there now were mere hundreds and the bigger ones had been butchered in the last waves.

Around the Acting-Colonel there were a dozen of guardsmen and the lone black-armoured Astartes - who with the kind of sword he was wearing had to be a Fallen. In addition to his last Alpha Legionaries, this was all what they had left. There were a few mortals behind the moaning and agonising sons of Sanguinius, but he doubted they would alter the balance. Not against a Bloodthirster. Not against Ka’Bandha, a Primarch-worthy opponent.

“**NICE TRICK WITH THE SWORD OF VAUL, MORTAL. BUT YOU WILL NEED TO DO BETTER IF YOU WANT TO STOP ME**.”

All daemons were liars, it was well-known, but in this instance the abomination was unfortunately not stretching much the truth. Wherever the crystals cut its skin, the formidable regeneration abilities of the Bloodthirster were erasing the damage in the blink of an eye.

The Acting-Colonel advanced in front of the colossal beast. Jeremiah wanted to scream at her, but technically the young girl had operational command...and all his brilliant plans had not exactly functioned so far.

The contrast could not have been greater between the two opponents. On one side, a slave of Khorne, red-black skin, fangs, spikes, talons, claws, and an axe and a whip capable to tear armies apart without much effort.

On the other a lone human, armed with a sort of sniper rifle on her back, and the very sword which seemed responsible for this crystal rain.

“**EXCELLENT! GLAD TO SEE ALL SERVANTS OF THE GOLD CORPSE ARE NOT COWARDS! YOU WILL MAKE A NICE SKULL TO BRING TO KHORNE**!”

“Another day, monster. CUT!”

The flash of crystal was so blinding that for three good seconds, the optical sensors of his armour failed to adapt to this brilliance.

And then it was over.

The two opponents were still in the same locations....and Ka’Bandha wasn’t even looking hurt. By the Golden Throne of Terra, what it did it take to seriously hurt this monster?

“**WAS IT SUPPOSED TO DO SOMETHING**?” the Greater Daemon roared mockingly. “**PERHAPS YOU ARE NOT A WORTHY SKULL, AFTER ALL**...”

For all answer, the officer of the Imperial Guard opened her left hand...and a tear-shaped ruby was in it.

Jeremiah’s mind needed only a heartbeat to recognise the object. It was a Baal ruby. It had to be. And judging by the size and finesse of the jewel, the only place such an item could have been found was on the armour of the Primarch Sanguinius Himself.

“Are you sure you have not forgotten something, demon?”

The ruby started to burn in golden flames.

*Oh, by the Emperor...*

 Ka’Bandha roared in an apocalyptic fury.

“**YOU WILL GIVE ME BACK MY DUE**!”

The loud sound of a bolter shot interrupted the outburst.

Everyone, daemons and humans, turned and gasped. The sons of Sanguinius, who a minute ago had been all lying unconscious, dying or delirious, were now back standing in a compact formation and for all the Mark VII masking their angelic features, Jeremiah Isley didn’t need to be a psyker to know the fury burning in their eyes.

“I think you are going to suffer,” the red-gold Astartes warrior declared, the intensity of his hate burning like an inferno. “For the Emperor. For the Primarch. For the Ninth Legion. For the suffering you inflicted to us, these brave men and the galaxy.”

“**I WILL KILL YOU! I AM THE MIGHTIEST SERVANT OF KHORNE! NO MORTAL CAN STAND AGAINST ME AND LIVE**! **I WILL KILL YOU ALL**!”

Demons poured of the gate in a new tide of blood and madness nothing seemed to stop.

There was only one answer an Astartes could give to this monster.

“FOR THE EMPEROR!”

And like in the times of the Great Crusade, blue and red armours charged together against the daemons.

**Acting-Colonel Taylor Hebert**

Her fingers touched the tear-shaped ruby and then she was elsewhere.

*It is another starship but the corridors are not those of the* Magos Laurentis*. They are larger, sinister and they look diseased with their eight stars cross, a sort of black fungus covering everything and maleficent red eyes.*

*This is not her body. This is not the demon she insulted. It is another battle...but the enemies are all demons. Red-skinned shock troops with black blades, plague-things each more disgusting and full of green tumours than the other, hideous blue and pink shapeless entities burning with unnatural flames and pink depraved monstrosities.*

*She is cutting their ranks like they are nothing. She is advancing but the Astartes behind her are slowing down and one by one are cut down.*

*And then the last steps are climbed, the last enemies decapitated by a blade she will never be able to wield like this in a thousand lifetimes.*

*She is on the bridge.*

*This is a monstrous thing, in length, height and width. There is room for several regiments to deploy and fight here, and she’s probably understating the dimensions.*

*But like the corridors, it is diseased. Astartes in putrid colours are watching her arrival. Monstrosities which make the Adeptus Mechanicus like beauty models are everywhere. There are also demons, mutant-things and abominations which should not exist.*

*On the other side of the armourglass a titanic battle is raging. Thousands, no tens of thousands ships are fighting. Volleys after volleys are thrown into the void, millions of nuclear bombs and weapons which should have never been invented. Below, a planet burns in an inferno. From the corner of an eye she can see the light dying.*

*And the architect of this damnation is in the middle of this.*

*It is a monster. In several ways he is smaller than the Angel’s Bane, but it is a meagre consolation.*

*He is far taller than an Astartes, and clad in demonic-black armour. In one hand is a gigantic talon-claw. The other holds a two metres-long warhammer.*

*Surrounding him is darkness. Not the natural night, but the darkness of evil. She can see the faces screaming in torment, the mocking laughter of demons and the sheer loathing this eldritch thing felt towards life.*

*It is not human. It is completely, utterly evil. It is something which waits beyond reality and desires nothing but to enslave everything and everyone.*

*“Brother,” the giant warlord says in a quiet voice. “It is not too late! You can join me! Together we can rule the Imperium and rebuild humanity as it should be!”*

*Images and new visions try to assail her eyes and the rest of her senses. She sees an angel adulated by billions, no trillions of men and women. She sees the skulls of the orks and thousands of other species burned and eradicated so thoroughly until nothing but ashes remain of their existence. She sees Astartes armies going on a rampage, their opponents being crushed under million boots of ceramite. She sees gaudy golden towers being raised over paradise gardens, people basking in luxury and indolence. She sees a realm where men are protected from disease and death. She sees...She sees temptation...and Taylor sees the lie.*

*“No,” and the parahuman realised this was her voice, not the one who fought for this vision once upon a time. “This is a lie and you know it!”*

*“If you don’t join us, you will die, brother,” and while the darkness cloud grows in size and power, the warlord seemed genuinely sorry.*

*“Death is not a light sacrifice. But it is better to die than to be Chaos’ slave!”*

The vision faded and Taylor was once again facing the red-black gigantic abomination which calls itself Ka’Bandha. It did not look happy to see her at all.

“FOR THE EMPEROR!”

Her hand tightened around the ruby and she felt warmth. Exhaustion and doubts were leaving her. The ruby shone in golden flames and as the Astartes charged, she avoided the whip and the axe strikes easily.

Jump-pact activated, she directed the Nebula’s Sword for a new crystal attack, sent her last insects in the melee and screamed to challenge the darkness.

“WE WILL NOT BE CHAOS’ SLAVES!”

**Sergeant Gavreel Forcas**

The Emperor was not a God. This had been a fact Gavreel had only been too happy to agree with during the days of the Great Crusade. After all, the Emperor himself had affirmed he was not one on a regular basis – which had to be nearly every day of the Great Crusade when he thought about it.

The Imperial Truth had only emphasized this point further. Logic, science and hard work were humanity tools and could solve everything humanity faced in the stars. There were no gods. There were some psychic horrors created by xenos psykers and the atrocities of the Old Night.

Gavreel wondered what the former high officers of the First Legion would have said facing this battle. Hateful red-skinned monsters from the Warp one could only call demons or daemons depending your vocabulary, the very reality bleeding under the blades of the abominations and suddenly the officer he had sworn to protect had used her sword to tear from the hell-gate a ruby tear which looked suspiciously like one of the Baal jewels the Ninth Primarch had decorated his armour with.

And it had not stopped there oh, no. Suddenly the ruby was shrouded in golden flames, and Weaver had decided this was a good time to go fight a monster ten times her size, her body partially lit by a gold aura.

If there were no Gods in this galaxy, the former Dark Angel Legionary wanted to know the logical explanation. As far as he was concerned, it was totally and utterly impossible. And yet it was happening.

Taylor Hebert was dancing around the abomination with a celerity that was almost too fast to believe.

That too should be impossible.

Gavreel had trained with her. He had help refine her sword technique. Her speed and her agility were not bad. But they had both agreed she hadn’t the single clue how to use this damn xenos sword and that until they found an explanation to use it safely, it was better to rely on the much safer insects.

Insects. Much safer. Did he had really manage to utter that sentence when the beasts in question were Death Worlds-breed capable to clean one planet or two if you left them go rampant?

“SANGUINIUS! SANGUINIUS! FOR THE NINTH!”

The sons of Sanguinius didn’t seem to harbour his doubts. With bolter and blade, they threw themselves at the demons with an absence of tactics which would have made jealous the Twelfth.

Force was to admit, it was working. Between their aggressive behaviour and the massive barrage fire from the Alpha Legion the entities in front of them were at last pushed back. The constant rain of crystal which was falling and burning the daemons was also a net advantage. The fact more and more guardsmen and Skitarii were arriving from diverse elevators and accesses was providing them at last with a neat superiority.

But they were a sideshow, and Gavreel thought the Renegades of the Twentieth knew it too – one or two of their snipers tried constantly to fire in Ka’Bandha back the moment they could do it without shooting their ally.

Because the moment the Greater Daemon was free to turn its wrath against them, they would be extinguished.

Heartbeat after heartbeat, the red-black entity was getting angrier and the numbers of smaller beast decreased as their master demanded more demonic energy from the gate behind him. It was also losing ground. Its whip was striking empty air and its axe had been thrown away against some flyers which would never recover from this.

Gavreel tried to follow, but the daemons were throwing themselves against his blade. He was not following quickly enough... he was too slow...

The whip touched Weaver. A nearly-missed hit, but with a monster like this the sheer strength of the whip was enough to send her against the ground with a monumental speed.

“**AND NOW I TAKE YOUR SKULL FOR KHORNE**!” the daemon screamed with a triumphal voice.

Gavreel eliminated two other demons and ran like there was never tomorrow, all the while knowing he was too far...why was he too far...a burning spear was materialising...faster, faster...

A Wuhanese soldier came from behind a ruined tank and threw himself against the spear of Ka’Bandha as it went down. The poor man had just the time to scream as he was incinerated by the unnatural weapon.

But it had been enough for Taylor Hebert to roll away.

“**WORTHLESS. HIS SACRIFICE MEANS NOTHING**,” its killer laughed. “**HE HAS JUST GIVEN YOU A FEW MORE SECONDS TO LIVE**.”

Gavreel disagreed. He helped his commander to stand, grimacing as he saw the piteous state of her legs. He wasn’t an Apothecary, but he could see very well he might have made the situation worse...wait, what was this golden aura? Everything was burning in gold, the air was different, the sky, he saw the stars again, gold and suddenly there was power and energy...

“HE WAS A HUMAN, AND A HERO! YOU ARE NOTHING!”

A streak of gold blinded him and in the next seconds he watched the spectacle with his mouth wide open.

Ka’Bandha, Greater Daemon, general of the blood abominations, and self-proclaimed Angel’s Bane, received what could only be described as an Emperor-level beating.

First the whip was incinerated and one of the black wings was torn apart.

A heartbeat later the other wing and a good part of the left chest were vaporised.

The third strike sent the abomination right through the ceiling. The fourth hammered it into the floor.

It happened too fast, and the air was filled with incredible pressure, gold and crystal. The demons were annihilated.

At last, Ka’Bandha was sent a few feet away from the demonic gate. Its wings were gone. One leg was gone. Its regeneration capabilities, while unnatural and greater than a Primarch, weren’t able to cope with it. About a third of its skin was burning in gold flames and every time the black ichor of its wound came in contact with the flames, it was like acid met something inflammable.

The Bloodthirster screamed in agony, over and over.

“**YOU THINK YOU HAVE WON? YOU THINK THIS MATTER? I WILL KILL YOU, SPAWN OF THE ANATHEMA! I WILL MURDER YOU! I WILL OFFER YOU SKULL TO KHORNE! AND THE BLOOD ANGELS SOULS WILL BE OURS**!”

The Nebula’s Shard struck like lightning and suddenly the daemon was impaled on it where the heart should have been had it been a man.

A sort of crystal fist tightened around the neck of Ka’Bandha, preventing him from speaking and throwing more of its venom around.

“Liar,” the word had not been shouted, but everyone on the battlefield heard it. “You are a liar, like every servant of Chaos. Now be a nice abomination, and crawl back to Hell. And when you see your so-called God, tell him it was Weaver who kicked your ass.”

There was an explosion of light and when it dissipated there was nothing left of the Enemy. There was no demonic gate anymore.

The golden flames dissipated. The battle stopped, without any enemy to fight.

And Taylor Hebert collapsed, though he managed to catch her once again before she aggravated her wounds.

Strangely, Gavreel doubted many Astartes bodyguards faced these issues daily.

**Leet**

The device was completed.

If Leet was asked to give his opinion right now, he would be forced to admit he hadn’t the slightest idea how it was supposed to work.

And no it wasn’t the Ghostbusters’ affair all over again. How had he been supposed to predict the combination of his new vacuum cleaner and a holo-field was going to have such explosive effects on electronics?

This device was different. He hadn’t a single idea what was powering it, having been handed a sort of red-green box by a cyborg. He hadn’t had the time to examine the fibres, the connections or the quality of the material. He hadn’t a single idea what principles were supposed to make the thing works.

Given how much his Tinker inventions had a chance of failing in optimal conditions, activating this device was not dangerous; it was suicidal.

And yet, with hundreds of demons less than a hundred metres away fighting the last red-robed cyborgs, there was no other choice.

“Well, it was a fine ride,” the parahuman chuckled before adjusting the last lever and waiting for all the red lights to come into existence. “What is the expression these guys are already saying? Ah yes, Praise the Omnissiah!”

He pressed the big red button and an explosion of light blinded everything.

After a few seconds his vision came back...and Leet noted with pleasant surprise he was still alive.

The demons and the corruption which had been soaking everything were gone.

“It worked...it worked!”

And then the ships alarms began their strident scream.

“THIS IS MAGOS LANKOVAR. THE INTEGRITY OF THE HULL IS COMPROMISED. BEGIN EVACUATION. EXECUTE PROTOCOL 6A-K2.”

As the red-robed immediately rushed towards him, buzzed in excited manner, placed his device on a sort of chariot and began to run away, Leet decided it would be the prudent thing to follow them...

**Dennis Peters**

This space battle had gone so far beyond so crazy Dennis was sure he would have to invent a few adjectives to describe it correctly once it was over.

At the beginning the tight neat formations had been noticeable and you could almost compared it to a neat chess game.

This game was truly over.

The orks, for a reason known only to themselves, had decided that turning around and throwing their ramshackle ships against the guns of a demonic battleship was an acceptable strategy.

They had paid a dreary price, but under the sheer weight of their numbers, they had managed to pierce the tentacles and the horrible defences of the *Certamen Ferale*. God only knows how many thousands had been disintegrated in the last hour of battle.

Add to this that the Imperial coalition was also throwing ships in the middle of this storm, and he was totally unable to say what the hell was happening. Humanity was winning, as much as everyone could win this thing, mainly because the orks and the ‘Chaos’ were doing a lot of the difficult work for them.

“We should get back to the carrier,” he cautioned. “We are short of everything explosive to shoot the enemy.”

“Agreed,” Wolfgang approved, “there’s just a tiny little problem. I think our carrier is burning. I don’t think it is going to be in a state to recover us, never mind give us opportunity to rearm.”

The dire fate of the mothership did not appear to faze his pilot very much.

“We just need...ah, that’s what we need, look! Mechanicus cruiser in distress, evacuation procedures activated. We are going to help them. I’m sure they will give us the bombs and the promethium we need in exchange for their salvation.”

The Tech-Priest behind them made something like a scream of distress.

“Omnissiah preserve us! This ship is not a carrier! It is not built to receive Starhawk Bombers!”

“Oh have a little faith...besides, look at the state of this ship. The *Certamen Ferale* demolished it, whatever I do inside is not going to be important at the end of the battle...”

The next seconds were a succession of impossible manoeuvres Clockblocker would never have tried in a PRT simulator, but Wolfgang Back tried them and somehow managed to evade everything the orks threw at them and break through a massive hulk’s barrage.

As the bomber somehow landed on one compartment which had seen better days, he thought an admirable restraint on his part not to kiss the metallic floor or his co-pilot console.

“Well, we are alive I suppose,” he laughed as the door was unsealed and opened.

“Stop complaining Clockblocker or I will give you six weeks of console duty!”

The familiar voice shocked him beyond word.

“Vista?” Dennis babbled incredulously.

“Surprised to see me?”

A feeble nod was all he just managed. Vista was here. He wasn’t the only parahuman to be sent to this crazy universe.

His fellow Ward looked like hell, pardon the pun. A lot of her costume was in tatters, including the additional armoured green parts which hadn’t been there before. There was a lot of blood and dirt on her, so much in fact the green colour had been completely tarnished on the chest. The helmet on her head looked like it was one second away from being cut in two parts.

“How?” That was all he managed to ask.

“Later,” and her voice broke no objection. “We have a lot of wounded to evacuate, including Skitter, and not enough flyers to do the job.”

Oh dear God, the insect-mistress was here. Here died tranquility and peace...

“What has she tried now?”

“Oh nothing much,” the young girl used one of the empty seats as a dozen of guardsmen carrying wounded poured in the bomber. “She made a Greater Daemon her bitch and fought several monstrous alien and demonic hordes nearly by herself.”

Clockblocker sighed. That sounded like the Skitter of Brockton Bay, all right.

“Promethium levels acceptable,” Wolfgang informed them after half a minute and the fact they had crammed over two dozen people in the tiny hull.

“Destination, Vista?”

“Bring us back to the *Opera Exitium*.”

**Trazyn the Infinite**

Trazyn smiled as a new ork space hulk rammed the Empyrean-corrupted battleship, pushing the two starships in the gravity well of the Attack Moon.

“You should have stayed away from this battle, Lord of Slaughter,” the Infinite Collector whispered.

Trazyn didn’t care what the plans of the abominations created by the Old Ones were for this battle, but he was sure they had not included this massive defeat.

“It seems our intervention won’t be necessary in the end,” he announced to the rest of his subordinates. “Activate our stealth fields and all the furtive counter-measures. Chart a slow course to leave this system. We are done here.”

“We obey, Overlord.”

“Have you found further information on the anomalies which disabled the signal of the Nebula’s Shard?”

“No, Overlord. And we have not enough data or time-prognostics to evaluate correctly the phenomenon. Perhaps, if we come closer...”

“No, this won’t be necessary.”

Trazyn looked at the last desperate offensives of the battle. There was a certain beauty to it, so far.

The many ork hulks attacking relentlessly the World Eaters’ battleship, the human fighters and bombers decimating their enemies in thousand-strong salvoes, the heavy ships making a massacre of the disabled ork warships...it was a spectacle rarely seen, even for a Necron commander.

But the battle, in the end, was just a thin veil over the real war.

A war the Emperor waiting silently on his Golden Throne had continued in a sublime and impressive fashion.

Trazyn had to applaud his old friend on this one. There was no doubt in his metallic body the Emperor had known he would give the Nebula’s Shard to Weaver, providing the necessary weapon to banish Empyrean entities with his golden light.

Plans within plans. Schemes within schemes. Mechanisms and ideas behind other mechanisms and ideas.

Impressive, really impressive.

Trazyn agitated his Empathic Obliterator, and walked away, his curiosity burning again.

A new game had been added to the old one, and the fact he ignored most of the rules and goals would make it extremely interesting to watch from afar.

“I gain an eldar fleet, but the prize may be far more important than these arrogant long-ears...”

His thoughts were abandoned as a familiar series of alarms began to play. Trazyn turned his head...and sure enough five Lychguards had materialised on bridge, managing to disable the five hundred and two active measures supposed to prevent the arrival of unwelcome guests.

“Welcome, honoured guardians of the World of-“

“Phaerakh Neferten demands your presence, *thief*.”

The activated warscythes and dispersion shields suggested any refusal would be ill-advised.

**Chapter Master Agiel Izaz**

To say the arrival of the survivors from the battle against Chaos didn’t follow the rules established by the Codex Astartes was the euphemism of the millennium.

There were serf chapters helping the wounded guardsmen and Tech-Priests to make the last steps which would bring them to the emergency medical wings. There were priceless machines, archeotech and technologic parts transported by Skitarii and guardsmen. There were Astartes of blue and red helping the people next to them finding their way and discharging what they had saved from the cruiser they had abandoned. It was disorderly and the sons of Guilliman if they saw this would probably die on the spot.

Agiel Izaz, Chapter Master of the Brothers of the Red, decided he didn’t care. All these warriors had fought the Ruinous Powers and lived to tell the tale. Of course his Chaplains were already organising long and unpleasant tests to verify the taint of Chaos was not going to spread aboard their Battle-Barge.

But for a few minutes, he was going to enjoy the fact he wasn’t feeling the Black Rage pressing against his mind anymore. Not a whisper. Not a sliver of pain. The world was...calm. The world was peaceful.

“You have given Magos Lankovar what he wanted?” He asked to the Marine of his First Company who had just arrived next to his personal observation post.

“Yes, Chapter Master...our...the...our saviour is for now in a stasis field. The Magos has already sent the call to several ships for medicae experts in order to support the resources of our Apothecarium. He remains confident she will recover completely, assuming she gets the required healing treatments.”

The poor battle-brother had tried very hard not to say ‘the Saint’, which was commendable. His lips twitched in faint amusement. A lot of Imperial organisations denounced regularly the Astartes Chapters as godless heathens. This was not, as the Ecclesiarchy regularly clamoured, because they had once been the champions of atheism during the Great Crusade. It was not because they were denied a seat the High Table at Terra. It was because the Space Marines knew, body and soul, that the Emperor was not a God. By His Voice, the Truth of the matter had been voiced multiple times.

Except that if the Emperor was not a God, what in the name of the Golden Throne had they just seen and experienced? It had been like their Father had been with them today. It had been...right. And their enemy had been banished, beaten so badly it would remember this defeat until the End of Times.

“She will get them. Whatever the cost.” In the name of the Ninth Legion and Sanguinius Himself, Agiel Izaz would make it so. It would not be said the Brothers of the Red Chapter and the sons of Sanguinius would not honour their debts, and this one was so great they might never pay it in full. “Give me the details of what the Tech-Priests took that what so valuable to send our sworn enemy after them.”

“An STC database, Chapter Master.”

“Ah.”

Naturally this would have angered the traitors, the demons and the heretics. Yes, this was a day full of surprises. He wondered if his two hearts were not going to stop after all these shocks.

“It is not corrupted?”

“The demons never managed to see it, never mind touch the force-field protecting it.”

Well, this was excellent news. More than excellent, in fact. But he was a bit tired to think about all the adjectives to add to this discovery.

“Tell our Scouts to keep their two eyes on our *cousins* until we know what to do about them and...”

His voice failed him as he arrived on the bridge. Exceptionally, he advanced immediately without returning all the salutes, his eyes fixed on the battle-scene.

The *Certamen Ferale*, Traitor battleship, had stopped struggling against the unavoidable and was plunging towards the moon designated as the *Death Star*. In its wake came dozens of crippled Space Hulks and hundreds of ork ships. Many crippled Imperial ships were also towed to their doom as reality burned in the fire of thousands of guns. Certainly the cruiser they had been fighting aboard was one of them. He would have loved to save it and reclaim it, but it was impossible. There was not enough time.

“Maximum power to the void shields,” he ordered. “Brace for impact.”

The end was almost peaceful. The heavy battleship which had once been a source of pride for the ship-builders of Mars inclined slightly its corrupted prow and then it struck the planetoid. There was a world-ending flash and Traitors and corruption were wiped out from the surface of the universe. The Battle-Moon didn’t immediately disintegrated...but there were hundreds of hulks and improvised projectiles following the Certamen Ferale in its funeral pyre.

No one would ever know which ork warship or failed asteroid had provoked the fatal deflagration.

Even the best long-range auspexes had their limits.

But the result was beyond words. One second the Battle-Moon was there, quadrillion tonnes of plasteel, debris, adamantium, earth, metal and weapons, brought together by the insane acts of the greenskins.

The next second a new star was born, one he hoped that in time, would be seen by the astronomers of every Segmentum.

“Ave Imperator,” the Astartes Chapter Master watched the light without flinching. “Thy will be done.”

**Author’s note**: Here ends the *Battle of the Death Star*, the first great epic battle of the Weaver Option. The next chapter will be an interlude and will conclude the Escalation Arc.

Thanks for all the reviews, the likes and the support!

The other links for the Weaver Option if you want to support or comment my writing:

P a treon: ww w. p a treon Antony444

Alternate History page: www .alternatehistory forum/ threads/ the-weaver-option-a-warhammer-40000-crossover.395904/

TV Tropes: tvtropes pmwiki/ / FanFic/ TheWeaverOption