Weaver Option Teaser 26 March 2020

**Extermination 8.3**

**Terra Stands**

*It was a battle we couldn’t lose...and yet we lost it badly.*

*It shouldn’t have been possible. Despite the sheer chaos – no pun intended – provoked by the Disjunctions and the massacre-battles, the human forces were extremely limited in numbers. Counting the initial fleet, their ground forces and their reinforcements, these days it is considered fairly accurate there were less than one hundred million Imperial soldiers participating in the Second Fall, and this number is largely considered overblown.*

*Naturally, there were millions of insects helping the enemy. And there was an Yngir army to neutralise too. But when one considers the gigantic firepower available to the Dynasts of Commorragh and then their subordinates when Yllithian and Kraillach disappeared in the confusion of the conflict, the Aeldari should have won. Millions upon millions of warriors had poured into the Dark City. Several Craftworlds had begun to reinforce the battered lines.*

*But by the time the Last Wall of Zel’harst collapsed, whatever discipline and global strategy had once existed was largely in the process of disintegration. Yes, Dynast Maestros Xelian was still alive and had taken the mantle of supreme commander over the Dynast forces and coordinated the defence of many sub-realms against the invaders. If only this ‘supreme commander’ was not a complete moron fond of executing his subordinates to divert attention from his disastrous blunders.*

*The hierarchy and the communications had completely collapsed. Desertion was killing armies faster than our enemies did. Deprived of many aristocratic commanders, leaders fought each other for the command of a raiding force or an army, and generally ended dead under artillery fire before agreeing to a new General.*

*By this point, tens of thousands of slaves had launched their uprisings. The slave-masters had considered themselves artists in tormenting their prisoners with the small flicker of hope. The tortures they had inflicted were now repaid a million times in a short amount of time.*

*The civil war between Xelian and Vect forces continued to rage, though it had moved from Low Commorragh to High Commorragh. Fighting in the former sub-realm continued to rage though, as remnants of She-Who-Thirsts’ power and master-less mercenary’s warbands pillaged and killed for their own glory.*

*Many Aeldari survivors after this dark cycle insisted on the killing count of* Maelsha’eil Dannan *and tended to dismiss everything else. It was a mistake, in my opinion. The Queen of the Swarm brought us on our knees with the Mark of Commorragh, but she couldn’t have ensured the survival of her army for so long if we hadn’t made it easier for her. While there are no precise records and there never will be, it is entirely plausible that over five billion Aeldari died at the hands of other Aeldari during the Second Fall.*

*We were cornered in the very sub-realms which were our home, and at this moment when we should have amazed the galaxy with our power and the might of our forces, we did not rise to the challenge.*

*As Zel’harst suffered the wrath of the Angel of Death, the situation had stopped being disastrous to become hellishly untenable. A lot of Haemonculi Covens tried to implement their evacuation plans, a move which evidently infuriated many Dynast loyalists and didn’t take into account the fact that the Gates leading and exiting Commorragh were now crowded due to the destruction and the capture of the principal ports.*

*The catastrophe was further amplified as the servants of She-Who-Thirsts broke through into several sub-realms, generating more panic and bloodbaths as millions of Aeldari reacted individually or in small groups, their only acknowledged goal being to save their soul and their skin.*

*The armies of Commorragh and the Webway could have overcome these problems. We had the numbers, the firepower and the knowledge of the Webway where the battles were fought. But the Dynast armies were fighting on four fronts. Black Heart, Yngir, She-Who-Thirsts and the humans were all coming from different directions, and at some point a wise supreme commander should have understood this reality and tried to take this into account.*

*Unfortunately, the Dynast-in-charge was Maestros Xelian, and while his cruelty and his punishments were rightly feared, his skills in coordinating multiple armies over multiple sub-realms could rightly be considered below average. Many warriors went further and outright called him unfit to command anything larger than a colony of slugs.*

*The worst immediate consequence was undoubtedly on morale. At a time where millions died under the artillery guns and a gigantic sack of Commorragh was occurring, morale and faith were at rock bottom, the presence of a leader having a plan to save us would have made all the difference.*

*The enemy had* Maelsha’eil Dannan *and for the lowliest soldier her leadership and her presence were going to carry them to victory.*

*Every Aeldari on the battlefield, from the thousands-cycle old commanders to the hastily-armed conscripts, were persuaded the defeat was unavoidable as they reeled from the series of disasters ravaging the Dark City.*

*In the end, it probably made all the difference. Port Shard and Port Carmine were gone. The Port of Lost Souls was in enemy hands. Zel’harst and Mar’lych had been crushed militarily. And the counter-attacks faltered.*

*The Corespur, the traditional seat of power of Commorragh’s rulers, was now open to direct attack.*

*And each of the choices Xelian and Vect had taken in the past to engineer their supremacy was revealing itself to be a poisoned dagger.*

*We had lost Commorragh. The only questions worth asking were now how much of us were going to survive to see the aftermath of it, and which enemy would claim the ashes of the sub-realms...*

*I am Aurelia Malys. I was there when Xelian’s spire was disintegrated.*

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“*When legends walk, do not get in their path*,” anonymous Guard soldier, Battle of Commorragh.

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*It is a major understatement to say the fact the limited reinforcements granted to Operation Caribbean were the source of a lot of controversies, accusations and problems in the later years. These critics and influence struggles happened despite the representatives of the Adeptus Custodes taking personally the responsibility of having launched the sneak attack on Commorragh without referring it to the nearby Sectors and closest Imperial bases.*

*Caught off-guard, the Imperial Navy and all the other organisations did their best to send as many warships as it was humanly possible to deploy to Pavia. Unfortunately for the brave soldiers of His Most Holy Majesty, arming entire Battlegroups and refuelling a Battlefleet is a time-consuming process and by the non-classified Navigator testimonies, we know that the calm around the Pavia System was now a thing of the past.*

*Adding these factors to the obvious difficulty of manoeuvring fleets in what had been over two days ago a true space battlefield between the Imperium and the Pavia pirates, and the reinforcements to the Scouring of Commorragh arrived in extremely dispersed order. The call had resonated from Astropathic Choir to Astropathic Choir, and every captain able to divert from his or her course did so.*

*Unlike what the legend pretends, the Battle-Barge Vulkan’s Wrath was not the first rescue-warship to pass through the Eversprings Gate, it was the second. Chronologically, the reinforcements for the first phases of the fighting were (in parentheses the arrival hour in the Port of Lost Soul compared to the Mark of Commorragh):*

Imperial Navy Destroyer *Loyal Investigator* – Tempestus Battlegroup Acacia (77 hours before MOC)

Salamander-Mechanicus Rescue Fleet [Ref Aj6431c3X] (75 hours before MOC)

Imperial Navy Corvette *Prince of Pelicans* – Ultima Battlegroup Acacia (73 hours before MOC)

Astartes Strike Cruiser *Wrath of Sanguinius* – Flesh Tearers Chapter (70 hours before MOC)

Star Galleon *Arica Orpheus* – Rogue Trader Lady Magdalena Orpheus (65 hours before MOC)

Imperial Navy Light Cruiser *Sirius* – Tempestus Battlegroup Desaderia (64 hours before MOC)

Adeptus Mechanicus Explorator Flotilla Delta-Two – Metalica Forge-World – Strength: one Cruiser, four destroyers (63 hours before MOC)

Frateris Templar Destroyer *Holy Thunderbolt* – Heletine Diocese (62 hours before MOC)

Imperial Navy Flotilla Broadsword – Tempestus Battlegroup Desaderia – Strength: 10 destroyers (59 hours before MOC)

Rogue Trader Cruiser *The Last Opera* – Rogue Trader Great Duchess Olivia Cheshire (58 hours before MOC)

Adeptus Mechanicus Cruiser *Machine Myrmidon* – Atanix Triumvirae Forge-World (56 hours before MOC)

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*But as the Imperial forces reinforced their position in the burning Dark City, battle was joined in front of another Webway Gate*...

Extract from the *Scouring of Commorragh*, by Lu Braganza, 330M35.

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“Terra stands.” Words attributed to the Primarch Sanguinius, Siege of Terra, M31.

**The Warp**

**Crystal Labyrinth**

Thought for the day: All Daemons are Falsehood. They are lies given the shape of creature by the fell power of Chaos.

**Impossible Fortress**

A large proportion of humanity, for all its other major flaws, had long understood killing the messenger arriving with bad news was a stupid idea.

Unfortunately for the daemons having the temerity to displease the Changer of Ways, Tzeentch understood it too. Proper punishment began and ended with ***change***.

Sometimes being blasted apart by one of the Four like Khorne did was definitely less dolorous than the kind of mutations the Great Conspirator reserved to its defeated minions.

As a consequence, the Duke of Change which had been charged to oversee the campaign of Pavia wasn’t looking like a Duke of Change at all now that Tzeentch had unleashed some of its pent-up aggression for the litany of bad news the Architect of Fate had received following the catastrophic conclusion of the Shadowpoint. The bird head had been replaced by a curious hybrid by a mix of lemming and platypus. The body could have passed for a pig, if there wasn’t blue fur and zebra coloration moving randomly. And the paws themselves had more in common with a bear than any farm animal.

It was kind of evident, but Tzeentch was extremely, extremely angry.

Many daemons in the Impossible Fortress were mutated beyond recognition. Exits vanished and millions of eldritch entities were trapped into labyrinths mazes or libraries filled to the brink with daemon-eating books.

But the Changer of the Ways was not the Dark Prince of Excess. The opportunity seized by the Anathema of the humans had only been possible because the Four had been, in hindsight, too overconfident with space-time paradoxes involving souls.

The Architect of Fate was not going to let the being besieged on the Golden Throne try a second time this method once the current disaster was over.

The Master of Fortune cursed the Anathema, a scream so violent it mutated ninety-nine sorcerers across the galaxy with additional limbs and tentacles, leading to the birth of a cult known as the Spawn Hour.

Trillions of plots and billions of plans were now in ruins, for the future they had been supposed to guide was no more.

The grand tapestry of fate was reduced to ashes, and what was coming to life to replace it was changing so fast not even one of the Four could manipulate it deftly.

Tzeentch loved change. Tzeentch loathed this change he was unable to master and use for his own purposes.

Still, the Changer of the Ways could already see some of the threats the Anathema had prepared for Slaanesh.

A generous ally would have tried to help the Youngest God or at least warn the Doom of the Eldar that the actions ordered at Commorragh and elsewhere were utterly counterproductive.

Tzeentch was not a generous ally, and in this particular instance the ever-plotting Lord of Sorcerers had decided to do what a myriad of civilisations would have qualified as ‘stopping throwing good money after bad’.

The expeditions of the Thousand Sons in the Webway were commanded to retreat to real-space immediately, beginning with the one commanded by Ahzek Ahriman. The same orders were transmitted to the Scintillating Legions. Of the nine Legions guarding Calastar and the Siege of the Terran Webway, only one remained behind. Several Warp Storms and time-cults were sacrificed coldly in pyres of blue flames by the timeless Architect of Fate.

Change could be pragmatic, and Tzeentch was Change. The wheel had turned against the Master of Fortune, but there would be other battles, other destiny points. The Anathema had burned half of the painting and the other was going to be extinguished in light. But a new artwork would take its place, and the Changer of the Ways would be there to fight it thread after thread.

A last paradox remained.

The abomination that billions of chaos cultists worshipped shivered in fury. But the thread wasn’t disappearing, and letting it remain in the Great Game would undoubtedly cause more problems later than it would ever provoke at this particular clash of fates.

The thread was cut.

And for the first time since the Horus Heresy, a Warp Storm disappeared like it had never existed, leaving a trail of dead worlds, ruins beyond count, trillions of extinguished lives...and a single warship.

Tzeentch seethed, and resumed plotting. Let the Anathema win this battle. The Architect of Fate would win the Long War.

**The Warp**

**Navigator Lully Vegtam**

Ironically, it’s this damn pain in his back which informs him he’s still alive.

Lully coughed and coughed...before opening his eyes. To his relief, everything appeared to be in the same state it had been before he lost consciousness. By it, it meant the room was a war zone and the blood stains where five other Navigators had lost their lives were still there. In all the precipitation, it had been easy to forge these dirty evidences of violence were ever there. There had been...other priorities at the time.

And there were others now. Lully coughed before repeating three times the mantras of his House and once more he opened his third eye, dreading by advance what he was going to find. Obviously the Gellar Fields had been restored since the latest horrifying incident, but it did not mean everything was well.

The first impression was...disturbing. The currents were not those of the region he remembered. The Warp Storms he had tried to avoid were nowhere in sight. The deluge of horrors vomited by the Empyrean had diminished in intensity and changed.

Lully Vegtam didn’t recognise anything. Over the course of his distinguished career, he had memorised hundreds of maps his Magisterial House was famed for, and many others his associates and family weren’t supposed to have access to. And yet none of the maps are of any use in this situation. Everything is wrong...save one thing.

The Navigator began to shed many tears, not of pain, but of pure joy. No matter how many betrayals had occurred, no matter how many years have passed in realspace, the Astronomican still shone over the galaxy.

“Terra stands,” Lully whispered, though no one would be able to hear him as this level’s inhabitants had been transformed into meat and corpses by the latest daemonic incursion. “Praise the Emperor.”

The Warp Storms had diminished and the currents were wrong, but using a point of reference, he was sure he could calculate a new course to a naval base. They wouldn’t be able to reach Terra, they were too far, but...

Something brilliant illuminated his room, and for a second the Navigator stayed there unmoving, blinking and unable to process what he was seeing.

A tall golden-armoured figure was in front of him. It was utterly impossible, of course. More than a dozen armoured fortified doors stood between him and any intruder, and the Gellar fields were still active.

But the angelic figure was here.

Lully knew instantly it was the Great Angel...and at the same time it wasn’t. It was all the purity, the compassion and the nobility of the Primarch...but at the same time it was not. His third eye revealed this was a true being of light beneath the golden armour. There was no sign of flesh or mortal presence.

The pain in his back and his chest was progressively getting more bearable. The being of light didn’t speak. An armoured finger was raised and instantly a destination was there in his mind.

There was no word of comfort, no praise, and yet the Navigator heard them nonetheless. He had a choice to make. All the while knowing the wounds he had received when his son-in-law decided to literally stab them in the back were going to kill him sooner or later.

Lully Vegtam blinked and suddenly the Angel was not here anymore...but fading golden mist informed him it hadn’t been a hallucination.

“Only in death does duty ends,” these shouldn’t be the words a Navigator should live for...but there were worse ones in this galaxy of untold horrors.

Taping three extremely elaborated codes, Lully reopened the communications with the bridge. And at the other end, he heard the gruff voice of Captain Castor.

“The trap was near foolproof.”

“But it takes only one to claim vengeance,” Lully finished.

“It is good to hear your voice again, Lord Navigator. We feared the worst after the latest incursion.”

“Captain, the Astronomican shines once more. And there is a battle waiting for us...”

In all likelihood the translation back to realspace was going to be the death of him. But he was not going to die in the Sea of Souls. And sometimes it was relief enough to give everything away for the sake of the Imperium.

**Segmentum Tempestus**

**Desaderian Gulf Sub-Sector**

**Fifty-seven hours before the Mark of Commorragh**

**High Commissar Lyon Gregor**

Usually Lyon didn’t tolerate anyone shouting profanities in his presence. It was undignified and unprofessional, and they were in the Imperial Guard of His Most Divine Majesty, not in some sort of sordid bar or underhive’s slum!

In this instance however, the High Commissar had to admit the man next to him had some reasons to be furious.

“WHAT IN THE NAME OF THE TEN THOUSAND HELL-POLECATS ARE THEY THINKING?” General Calum MacLean shouted with the full power of his lungs. “OPERATOR, ASK FOR A NEW COMMUNICATION TO BE OPENED! I AM GOING TO CHALLENGE THIS BASTARD TO A DUEL!”

The words could have brought him a smile, if the hot-blooded red-haired man hadn’t already drawn his massive sword – that for some reason escaping him the Desaderians persisted calling a ‘claymore’ – and looked indeed ready to order a transport and go duel to death the one who had insulted him.

“General. Enough.” Venting your anger in private when sufficiently provoked was fine, but Lyon was not going to tolerate an action going against the reputation and the interests of the Astra Militarum.

General Calum MacLean muttered a few words under his breath which certainly were polite or appropriate for noble company, but Lyon Gregor let it go. After all, he wasn’t sure the target of these insults didn’t deserve them.

“My apologies, High Commissar,” the red-haired Guard veteran grumbled. “It was...not professional of me. But I will not change my words. We have not the strength to attack the Webway Gate.”

“And like I said before, I totally support your strategic analysis of the situation.”

The problem, mused the High Commissar, was that in the ruckus of the announcement of the Commorragh invasion, people had totally forgotten about the Desaderian Gulf and the Webway Gate opened here. To be fair, it was a completely sound decision. The Gate which had been captured at Pavia had been captured intact by Imperial forces. The one which was in the Desaderian Gulf was still in enemy’s hands.

The enemy’s nauseating presence was fairly minor to what it had been a few days ago when it had captured the *Forgehammer*. But it was still an impressive xenos Battlegroup: one battleship, three cruisers and over forty light attack craft.

Since everything able to make safe Warp translations was on its way to Pavia, what Calum MacLean and Lyon Gregor had left to find and capture the Webway Gate was one obsolete destroyer and twenty military transports carrying the two hundred and thirty thousand men of the Desaderian Munitorum tithe.

Given the rapport of strength, the best solution would have been to imitate the rest of the Navy and Astartes reinforcements, and use Warp engines to reach Pavia. Or it would have been, if the transports had Navigators, which wasn’t the case. The Desaderian System had been hit hard by Drukhari raids, and the murderous long-ears had entertained themselves by leading the Guard in vain hunts while they tortured their Astropaths and Navigators. As a result, there wasn’t a single Navigator left to allow them to travel to Pavia, and they lacked the strength to assault the Desaderian Gate with any realistic chance of success.

They still lacked it now, but good luck convincing the master of the Battle-Barge *Abhorrence* of that!

“They are completely mad,” General MacLean repeated for the third time in one hour. “The long-ears have the speed and mobility advantage. These pirates and monsters aren’t going to stay on top of the Gate; the moment they stop laughing they will cripple the Abhorrence like they have disabled the Forgehammer. And this time, they aren’t going to both towing it back to Commorragh!”

“I know,” Lyon replied in a cold tone with a hint of reprimand. “But whether or not the Black Templars succeed or fail in their endeavour, please refrain to challenge an Emperor’s Champion in personal combat.”

General Calum MacLean was an excellent duellist with a claymore in his hands. But he wasn’t *that* good.

“They will fail,” the Desaderian retorted with steel-like determination. “Save a miracle of the God-Emperor, Marshal Hermann Malberg and his crusaders won’t be able to do more than scream at the closed Gate...if they’re lucky.”

**Archon Vypus Kryjurid**

“What is taking you so long, incompetent wretches?” the Aeldari Archon hissed, holding tightly his favourite dagger in his left hand and a whip in his left while the corpses of three slaves surrounded him. “You had more than a thousand heartbeats to reconfigure the flux of this Gate!”

“Grand Archon, the modifications are complex and we don’t have the plans or the help from Vect’s artisans! We need more time!” the useless vat-spawn protested.

“You have a hundred heartbeats,” Vypus bared his teeth. “Past this deadline, I will start torturing your team one by one until you give me satisfaction!”

The communication was cut and the last Kryjurid fell on his couch covered in flayed skins with a sigh. Honestly, the nerve of these loudmouths! They promised a lot, but when the time came to fulfil their boasts in real deeds, there were suddenly far fewer people to present themselves in front of him!

“They must reconfigure the tunnel,” the courtesan he had invited for a night of pleasure in his personal quarters declared. “Otherwise the battle will long be over when we will reach Commorragh.”

“True,” if only they had been able to take some of Vect’s agents alive. They could have discovered how they had changed the time-dilatation characteristics of the Gate. Since they hadn’t, they had to do it the old-fashioned way, and judging by the last cycles, the wretches he was paying were far less intelligent than the mongrels Vect had hired for this task. “The Mon-keigh battleship?”

“It’s still accelerating in our direction, Supreme Archon,” the black-robed servant of Lhilitu replied. “It will be soon in range to fire at us.”

“We will be able to destroy these primates long before they’re able to figure our tactics,” no matter what outlandish rumours came out of Commorragh, here and now they had a slow and clumsy Mon-keigh ship unable to catch them or find them if they played to their strengths. “Imagine, if we succeed where Vect has failed...”

A purple eyebrow was raised.

“The primates have just proved they are perfectly able to find some forgotten Webway Gates and use one for a devastating invasion of Commorragh. So excuse me if I don’t share your optimism. I think we should pass through the Gate and close it. You might not capture more slaves, but your hulls have tens of thousands primates and other morsels in them. And what’s the issue if you don’t arrive in time for-“

“No.” Vypus said forcefully. “I will return to the Dark City in time to massacre the Mon-keigh brutes. I will win the Dynast’s crown which is mine by right.”

His mother had been the fifth concubine of Ultimate Archon Kraillach, and while he had not been authorised to take the name of the Blue Sun’s master, he was still a Prince of Commorragh by blood and might of arms.

“I think it is too risky-“

“Lord Archon! The modifications have been cancelled! The Gate is reconfigured for the use of your sublime fleet!”

Vypus Kryjurid laughed loudly. At last. If some serious threats had been all it took to motivate the wretches, he would have done it sooner.

Contacting his senior warriors, the Archon ordered them to regroup in a new offensive formation.

“We crush the arrogance of the Mon-keigh in this system and enslave them,” he told the cowardly courtesan, hoping she would be better in bed than at guessing the outcome of his grand projects. “Then we return to Commorragh and humiliate their friends. It’s simplicity-“

Alarms blared and the *Joyous Bloodbath* shook violently like explosive ordnance had nearly missed it.

“By Khaine’s bowels, what have the useless Gate artisans done now?” If they had damaged the Gate, they were going to pay it with hundreds of cycles of torture.

But before he had the time to do more than think about leaving his personal quarters, a rising maelstrom of Empyrean energy opened in the void extremely close to his fleet.

“Evasive course!” He screamed on his personal communicator. “Evasive course! Enemy incoming at killing-ground range!”

Vypus knew from the start it was going to be extremely close, especially if it was another Mon-keigh warship. But hopefully the first evasive course would confuse...

The Archon’s thoughts abruptly stopped as he saw the huge prow, followed by an equally monstrous mass of metal and weapons coming out of the Great Ocean. What was this thing?

“Take evasion courses and prepare to return to Commorragh! We return to Commorragh! Forget the Mon-keigh brutes, we-“

The enemy fired and his world exploded in flames. The Aeldari Admiral’s had just the time to see his bed-warmer severely wounded by many splinters before getting propelled against the door and losing consciousness.

How long he stayed that way, Vypus Kryjurid didn’t know, but when he opened his eyes again, it was to scream in pain as marvellous suffering was assaulting from every part of his body.

“You were right, disciple of Lhilitu. We should have closed the Gate.” The apology was too late. The lifeless eyes of the courtesan were not looking at him in the encroaching pool of blood.

The Archon smelled blood, and the pungent odour of smoke. He felt more than heard the moment artificial gravity stopped in the entrails of the *Joyous Bloodbath* failed. Vypus tried to rise, and realised neither his legs nor his arms were answering.

“Maybe it’s fitting. No one will remember us...save our enemies.” The young noble tried to laugh once more, but he spat more blood and strangely, the pain was getting less and less pleasant. “The End of Times...wasn’t supposed to be...like this.”

He was feeling them now. The claws of She-Who-Thirsts were severing his soul from his flesh.

His eyes rose a last time and he saw the unbelievably large battleship advance into the debris fields of what had been his fleet.

It was really ugly, by Khaine...and what sort of advanced civilisation used a name like *Flamewrought*?

Vypus Kryjurid laughed and died.

**Marshal Hermann Malberg**

A miracle. It was a miracle of the God-Emperor.

“Praise His Light, for we live in an era of miracles!” Hermann exclaimed.

There undoubtedly would be many heretics at this moment who would try to voice another opinion and spread doubts in the mind of the Faithful. But both as a loyal servant of his Most Divine Majesty and a Marshal of the Black Templars, he knew this was a miracle.

The *Flamewrought*, flagship of the Salamanders Legion, had returned from the ashes of Isstvan to punish the xenos and the traitors once more. It was a holy day for the Imperium, and the fact the Gloriana-class battleship was busy annihilating the Eldar fleet which had protected the Desaderian Gate a couple of minutes ago was evidently proof of the God-Emperor’s designs.

“It is just! It is righteous!” Castellan Marienburg declared. “The soul of the Eighteenth Legion was offended by the treachery visited upon the Forgehammer and the noble sons of Nocturne! The soul of the Eighteenth Legion will punish the vermin of Commorragh!”

“NO MERCY!” Emperor’s Champion Gottfried Montfort shouted.

“NO REMORSE!” dozens of Black Templars on the Abhorrence’s bridge continued. “NO FEAR!”

Hermann had never felt so alive and reinvigorated.

“Contact the Guard transports. They will follow us, or I will kill them for abject cowardice.”

“Yes, Marshal!”

Three hundred years old, and it seemed there were still things in the galaxy which could surprise him.

But it was for the better. His Light could find them anywhere in the galaxy and lead His Champions to victory.

“I am Hermann Malberg, Marshal of the Black Templars.” The white-black armoured Space Marine repeated the words generations of Marshals had spoken before him. “By the will of the God-Emperor, enemies of Mankind challenge our blades!

“SUFFER NOT THE UNCLEAN TO LIVE!”

“A Saint fight in the burning spires of Commorragh.”

“UPHOLD THE HONOUR OF THE GOD-EMPEROR!”

“Abominations and sorcerers have been allowed to feast in this realm of darkness for too long!”

“ABHORR THE WITCH! DESTROY THE WITCH!”

“We will be outnumbered a billion to one! The armies and fleets of the perfidious Eldar will assail us in untold numbers!”

“ACCEPT ANY CHALLENGE, NO MATTER THE ODDS!”

“Brothers, in the name of beloved Sigismund, First High Marshal...I PROCLAIM THE COMMORRAGH CRUSADE! FOR THE GOD-EMPEROR!”

“WE SHALL KNOW NO FEAR! FOR THE GOD-EMPEROR!”