

# The All Guardsmen Party

Shoggy Seldom

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# Chapter 1

## Darwinian Character Creation

Our DM can be a little evil.

Last weekend our group got together for a marathon session to start a new campaign in a new system. Upon arrival we were all given copies of the Only War sourcebooks and told to build a regiment, then build grunt level characters, then make a few backup characters. Now our DM runs what we refer to as "High Mortality Games" (in our several year long DnD game so many PCs died that our GM actually appears on the "Hitler Scale" of death measurement) and we were all familiar with the nature of a guardsman's life, so each of us made a bunch of backups and didn't get too attached to any of our characters as we wrote them. No special snowflakes here.

Our regiment was mustered, our characters met and trained, and we were deployed to fight some orks. We learned the system in a few skirmishes and commiserated when some of our characters rolled poorly or screwed up and bit the dust. Then we were marched out to the trenches, given our piece of the line, and the battle started.

We had expected some sort of priority mission. We had expected to be the heroes who went in behind the enemy, or were dispatched to save a key position, or led the valiant charge. Instead we were put in a bloody trench and told to Hold The Line.

The Orks came and we killed them.

The Orks came again and we killed them.

The Orks came again and we killed them, but now we were low on ammo.



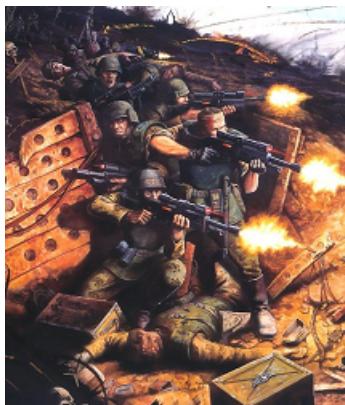


The Orks came again and some of us died.

The Orks came again and brought a tank and the rest of us died, except for me, I ran.

The first session ended there, with our first set of characters dead in the trenches. We agreed it was a proper introduction to the life of a 40k guardsman, and got ready for the next day's session where we expected to finally be sent on our mission.

The second session started with us watching my character's execution by the Commissar. Then we were put back in the same bloody trench and told to Hold The Line. We did better this time, we actually held out long enough for fresh ammo and reinforcements to come up, but in the end we died. Then we brought up new characters and did it again in another part of the trenches. Then again. Then again.



We were rolling up new characters between turns now, either to bring in as reinforcements or for when we had to start up as a new unit. Very rarely we would survive long enough to be rotated to the rear or take a non-fatal injury and get evaced, usually we all died. Finally after three in game days and dozens of character deaths we were told to Charge.

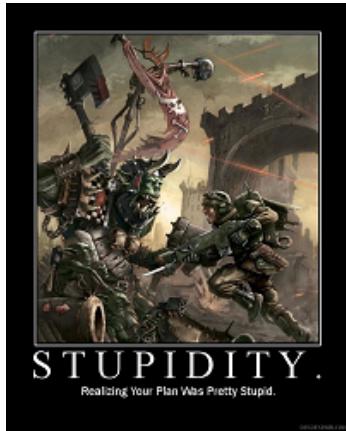
We bitched hard when we heard this, it was a death sentence. Our characters had done well this time, we were all still alive and ammo levels were good. We knew our squad could have held out much longer in our nice safe trenches. Our DM asked us if we wanted to lodge our complaints In Character, so we shut up and Charged.

We died like animals.

We fought on the left flank of the charge, then on the right, then got to play our first armored characters in the center. When the charge failed we played as a basilisk crew covering the retreat. Then our regiment was rotated off the front.

Our regiment had lost a third of its strength in that first engagement. Out of dozens of characters only ten had survived, and five of those were artillerymen who never saw the enemy. We were shown the battle map, we were shown where our squads held or failed, we were shown how our charge weakened the enemy for the fresh (and much more valuable) reserve troops to come up and break them. We were given a summary of the next

few months of light skirmishes and mustering, then we were sent into battle against Traitor Guard.



We were taking a city this time and once again our regiment acted as the cannon fodder. We secured and pushed, and secured and pushed, and died and died and died. We decided we'd take the Orks back any day, at least with them it was obvious who the enemy was and their snipers and heavy weapons teams were NOTHING compared to what we were fighting here. We were higher level this time and better at the game, but still we died in droves leaving only a few characters alive when our regiment was stood down while a veteran regiment took the lead.



Once again we got to see the nice little map of our progress, and we all got a warm fuzzy feeling when he showed us how our stubborn defense of one building had crippled an enemy advance, but we were exhausted. Our DM pressed us to play fast and make new characters faster. We would roll up Lil Jimmy who lied about his age to enlist, then have him bleeding out in a pile of rubble within a handful of minutes. It drained us. We were actually glad to take the evening off from playing to just watch movies and hang out.

The final day of our marathon started with more Orks, but this time we won. That's not to say we didn't die like frogs in a blender, but we damn well won. We pushed them out of their barricades and hounded them across the plains when they routed. I played a gunner in a salamander during the chase and mowed down greenskins like ugly blades of grass. We partied like champs in the tiny redneck town we liberated, then settled in for a few

months of boring garrison duty before we got redeployed. Then we fought some Tyranids.



It was only a splinter fleet so we actually had a chance, but it was hell. Our regiment was defending an evac point on some grassy agri-world and it was trench work again. We burned off the grass to clear lines of fire, dug ourselves into the rich soil, set up the heavy weapons, and watched the edge of the burn area like hawks. Trigger-happy hawks as it turned out, we wound up failing a spot-check and killing the first few retreating PDF to come

through the grass.

When the Tyranids came it was ridiculous. We mowed down wave after wave of gaunts, but unlike Orks Tyranids don't lose morale and break, they just keep coming as fast as you can kill them. We stopped using actual dice for a while, just so we could roll combat faster.



The bastards in command had decided to do a "Collapsing Defence", which meant we fought until the front trench was collapsing, then they shelled the bejeezus out of us while we retreated. We lost something like 20 PCs to our own gorram shells, but it really did work pretty well, at least until we ran out of ground to give. All the civvies were out, it was just a few regiments of guard crammed into a spaceport completely surrounded by the swarm. We were killing them off as fast as possible and hoping that either reinforcements or evac would come down before ammo ran out.

Things started to get bad when the higher forms of Tyranid started appearing. Gaunts and gargoyles are bad enough, but it was when the warriors showed up that we started taking serious casualties. The evac shuttles had started to ferry men up and we had some actual air support, unfortunately our regiment was going to be the rear guard. The end was in sight and morale was holding up well, right up until we encountered a Lictor brood, then things started to fall apart.

I hate Lictors, I bloody hate them. We played three backline squads in a row and each one was torn to bloody shreds by those sneaky bastards, all without us landing a kill. We started to rout, but our Commissar and his guards went into the breach, killed one of them, and shouted the regiment back into position.

Our evac finally came and what was left of our regiment started the final retreat. There were a few valiant last stands, but most of us managed to get to the shuttles. Our final squad had just boarded and was taking off when the air interdiction broke down and Tyranid air units started attacking the shuttles.



We were equal parts pissed and terrified as our DM described shuttle after shuttle being destroyed. The Regimental Commander's bird was nailed early, so were the bigger shuttles with the vehicles. He didn't say who was in most of the other shuttles, just rolled his dice and removed them from the board as they fell. It was heartbreaking.

Finally there was only one shuttle left. Even though the Tyranid fliers swarmed it, none of their shots seemed to hit and it started to climb out of the atmosphere. Then it was away, the fliers broke off and that one shuttle was headed for its fleet transport, free and clear.

Inside the shuttle our last set of characters was trying to figure out what the hell was going on. There were about fifty guardsmen crammed into a twenty man shuttle and no one was telling us anything. We had all heard the Tyranid fliers attacking and everyone felt it when we hit space. The guardsmen close to the cockpit relayed what they could overhear from the pilot's radio, so everyone knew that the other shuttles had been attacked but no one was sure exactly what happened. In any case we were all happy to be alive and were looking forward to getting off the crowded shuttle, then the shuttle stopped. The guardsmen near the cockpit told us we were being redirected to a different transport and the pilots did not look happy.



When the shuttle docked everyone piled out and we found ourselves in a completely empty loading bay. An order came via the speaker system to form up by rank for inspection, at this point our GM gave us a list of the guardsmen who were on the shuttle. Every single character who had survived a battle had been on the shuttle along with a few other grunts. All 37 of our beloved guardsmen had lived! (With the exception of the artillery crew we played, but screw those guys, teamkilling jerks)

We formed up, and after a bit of waiting the doors opened then a few squads of storm troopers marched in and instructed us to drop our weapons. There was a bit of argument on this point, until the captain of the stormtroopers pulled out an Inquisitorial Rosette and told us we were currently "guests"

of the Ordos Xenos.



After we were done pissing ourselves and disarming, an acolyte and a team of medicae entered. We were informed that our regiment had been disbanded, we were officially dead, and we would all be subject to a scan for genestealer infection.

At this point our DM ended the session. We were each handed copies of the Dark Heresy core book, a list of our surviving guardsmen with all the filler grunts crossed off, and were told to pick our characters for the next game.

Yea, so that's how our DM does backstories.

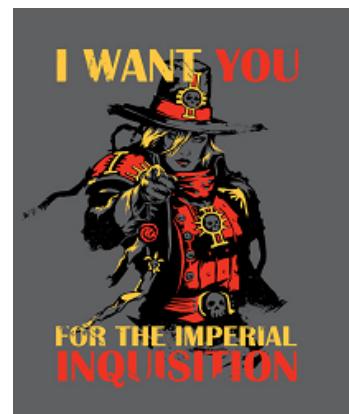
## Chapter 2

# Guardsmen and Pilgrims

So last time the surviving remnants of a regiment of Imperial Guard found themselves the guests of Ordos Xenos. Several guardsmen were found to be harbouring Genestealer infections and were purged, but the remainder were given the opportunity to continue to serve the Imperium as soldiers of the Inquisition. So no shit there we were, 37 guardsmen who had just graduated the Darwin School of Veterancy, on an Inquisition ship, getting told that our lives would now consist of hanging out with just about the scariest people in the Imperium and doing whatever they told us to.

Serving in the Inquisition is not a very normal job, as in there's no way of knowing how things are going to work or what you'll have to do. Inquisitors have tons of leeway in how they do things, so each one runs their team in their own unique way. You might get an Inquisitor who likes to travel around following rumors and hanging out with Heroes of the Imperium, and it's your job to act as 'the cavalry' when they get into trouble. You might get an Inquisitor who is really into research, and wind up spending all your time guarding an incredibly disturbing science facility. You might get an Inquisitor who hangs out playing psychic nursemaid to a band of spies, and end up being used as a meat suit by your boss when he feels a personal touch is needed. Or you might get the Inquisitorial equivalent of a Pokemon Trainer.

Pokemon Trainer isn't the best way to put it, Pokemon Professor might be better. Our Inquisitor collected teams from across the sector and handed them out to Interrogators who needed to get their feet wet leading a team.



This was actually a pretty important role, not every Inquisitor has time or men to spare when an apprentice Interrogator is ready to move on, so they would get sent to our boss. He would set them up with a team and mission and keep an eye on how they did. He had a real name, but we all called him Professor Oak.

Oak had a fair number of recruitment teams that wandered around looking for fresh meat, one of which was hanging around our battle checking for genestealers and drafting guardsmen who wouldn't be missed. We got packed up and sent along to Oak's mobile base of operations and got put through a crash course in being an Inquisition Goon Squad. Then we got split into squads of five or six, partnered up with a some combat-light teams, and handed out to dewy eyed Interrogators like the 40k equivalent of a bulbasaur.

We were playing as the Guardsmen, everyone else was handled by the DM. Each team was filled out to ten by other classes leaning towards the non-combat side. So more Adepts, Psykers, and Tech-Priests than the other classes. There was some of everything in each group as well as the Interrogator, who could be pretty much anything.

We worked with our DM to split our survivors up into groups, then he tacked on the sheets for our NPC associates, gave us a very vague overview of what each group's assignment was, and asked us which one we wanted to play as. The groups we didn't play as would all go on their own missions and the survivors would meet us when we got back to base. We chose the squad that was being sent as part of a two team force to check out some suspected cultist activity in a pilgrim fleet. Our roster consisted of five Guardsmen, two adepts, a tech-priest, a cleric, a Sister of Battle, and our Interrogator was a former Cleric.

So imagine you're a guardsman that's just been recruited, fought a brutal campaign that wore down your regiment, watched the remainder of that regiment get taken out by Tyranids, then found yourself in the hands of the Inquisition. Then the Inquisition purges a few of your buddies, gives you an offer you can't refuse, ships you through the warp, and dumps you into a



really creepy bootcamp. Finally they split you and your remaining buddies up into squads, introduce your squad to some weird lookin guy who seems far too excited to see you, and tell you to do everything he says. Now you're hanging out in a bunch of passenger cabins on a navy ship going Emperor knows where with a few of your buddies, an Interrogator, three nerds (one of which is more metal than meat), a priest, and a psychotic blond bombshell wearing armor that's probably worth more than all of your squad's gear combined. We were just a little weirded out.

Our merry band consisted of a cynic, a nervous med student, a lazy bastard, a shameless thief, and a paranoid by the names of Sarge, Doc, Heavy, Nubby, and Twitch. Technically the others were part of our band as well, but quite frankly we wanted nothing to do with any of them (with the possible exception of the Sister, and only in the hypothetical sense).

Our Interrogator and the others spent the entire journey going through the files that Oak had sent along, planning how they would hunt down the suspected cultists, sorting out who had contacts where, and brushing up on the exact flavor of the Imperial Cult that dominated the pilgrim fleet. We paid just enough attention to establish that we would be on ships the whole time and that we were not expected to actually do anything strenuous unless everything got screwed up. Then we played cards and slept a lot. Some people might say that two months is a long time to play cards and take naps, but those people have never served in the guard. And it wasn't ALL sack time, Sarge made sure we kept up on our PT and combat drill; gotta stay in shape. By the end of the trip we were well rested and ready to stretch our legs, whereas our teammates were wound up like springs and developing new conspiracy theories every few minutes.

We finally arrived at the Pilgrim Fleet which, as we understood it, was a bunch of ships full of hardcore zealots on their way to a world they considered holier than normal to pray, sight see, and generally replace the population that an Ork Waagh had recently removed. They had some sort of deal with the Ecclesiarchy to provide extra transports and fleet escorts, so it was basically just an Imperial colonization fleet, except everyone was just a teeny-tiny bit crazier than usual. They were hanging out in orbit around a Hive World refueling, refitting, and gathering more pilgrims.



The Nerds and Nuts (as we called them outside of their hearing) were pretty sure that a chaos cult had infiltrated during either this stop or a previous one and was planning something very evil. Probably something to do with Geller Fields, or Daemons, or Plagues, or Heresy. We operated on the assumption that they would tell us when they figured it out. Anyhow our ship joined the fleet escort and a bunch of voxing and liaising started.



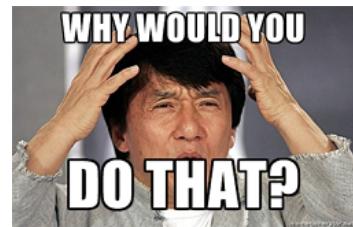
Our job was generally pretty simple; we were there to stand guard, look menacing, and always be ready to kick some ass. If The Boss went somewhere official we'd slap an =][= badge on and flank him like good little goons. If The Boss went somewhere unofficial we'd leave the badge off and slouch a little, truly we were masters of disguise. Whenever the Nerds and Nuts took shuttle trips to look up leads or meet contacts, at least one of us would tag along to watch their back or be on hand in case of emergency. Except when the Sister visited other Sororitas, we weren't invited on those trips for some reason.

When we weren't on duty we each had our own little pastimes. Sarge would worry about what insanity our superiors were planning while Doc would read his beginners guide to medicine and Heavy slept. Nubby would wander around looking for small objects no one would miss (he did this while on duty too) and Twitch would obsessively craft tripwire traps and drink recaff. Twitch and Nubby didn't exactly endear themselves to the locals, but supply and perimeter defence are important parts of being a guard, so we didn't mind.

Things were going pretty well for us, no one was shooting at us, the rations were good, it didn't rain on us when we stood guard, and no one outside of our Team yelled at us to do stuff. Occasionally we'd have to make a show of force or beat the shit out of someone who tried to mug one of our nerds, but generally things were pretty quiet. The most excitement we had in those first few weeks was when our cleric got in a 'religious debate' and Sarge had to pistolwhip the other debater until he put down the flamer.

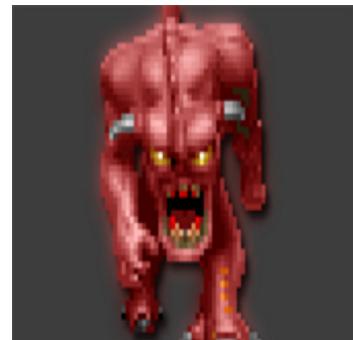
Eventually they must have figured something out because we all rebased to a single pilgrim ship and made ourselves the guests of the captain. While everyone else was running around saying things like 'The game is afoot' and 'We almost have them' and 'I can practically smell them' Sarge had us gear up and get ready for everything to go ploin-shaped. The cavalcade of screw-ups started with one of our nerds finding a Chaos Tome in a collection of holy relics and immediately deciding that it was his inquisitorial duty to find out exactly what flavor of Soul Destroying Evil it was. By reading it.

Unfortunately Nubby was currently on babysitting duty and was not experienced enough to know that the correct response to someone doing this to hit them until they stop being stupid. Instead he called for backup (which is a pretty good response in any case) while he kept the priest who owned the relic collection covered. By the time backup arrived the adept was giggling and speaking backwards.



Backup consisted of Heavy and Twitch as well as, unfortunately, the other adept and the cogboy. The two sane-ish nerds decided the correct response here was to try and take the book away from the gibbering adept and started chasing him around the room. Since neither the adepts nor the tech-priest were very athletic the chase looked a lot more like a bunch of nerdy kids trying to play tag than Inquisition agents pursuing a heretical artifact. None of us felt comfortable taking the initiative here, so we all just covered the doors to make sure no one entered or exited and stood there watching the demented game of keep-away. Then the gibbering adept finished the spell he had apparently been reciting and a minor daemon manifested.

This galvanized us nicely and all three of us started pouring las fire into the thing before it could do anything. Unfortunately the priest we'd been covering took the chance to run for it, then the gibbering adept followed him out the open door, then both our nerds gave chase, and now all four were running through a room full of pilgrims. The Priest was screaming about heretics and daemons, the adept was screaming about the Glory of Chaos, and the nerds were still trying to wrestle the book away. The pilgrims mobbed the insane adept and tore him and the book apart in seconds, then started chasing the nerds with similar intent.



The cogboy apparently took charge and decided that not being torn to pieces was the better part of valor. Then he concluded that the safest place to hide from a mob of maddened imperial zealots was with the tech-priests who kept the ship running. The nerds ran all the way to the ships engine rooms with a steadily growing mob at their heels baying for blood. The tech-priests let them in and closed the door behind them, but the mob refused to disperse and settled in to siege them out.

Meanwhile the heroic guardsmen shot the minor daemon until it stopped

moving, then stomped on it until it stopped being solid. That done we went to check on the runners and saw the mob chase them out. This was above our paygrade, so we decided to kick the problem upstairs and forted up while we waited for further orders. Eventually our Cleric and Sister arrived with Sarge and Doc in tow and The Boss voxed us all. We gave our report, the nerds were voxed and gave theirs, then The Boss gave us our orders. Us guardsmen were to secure the relics and demonic remains, the Nuts were sent to talk to the pilgrims' leadership to get the mob dispersed, and The Boss would talk to the Captain and get some support sent down. This sounded like a pretty good plan, but by this point we'd started to suspect that we were the only competent people on the team. What happened next proved us right.

Our Interrogator marched up to the Captain of an Imperial vessel, a man who could trace his family's command of the ship back to the founding of the sector, and started giving him orders. This did not go over well. While our Interrogator was an agent of the Inquisition and had the rosette to prove it, he was NOT an Inquisitor and the Captain of an Imperial vessel is generally considered to be second only to the Emperor by their crew.

The image shows a scene from a video game or movie. A character in a dark suit stands at the bottom of a set of stairs, looking up. The stairs are illuminated by blue light, and there are yellow structural elements on either side. The background is dark and indistinct.

The Captain then sent us a brief message instructing us to "sort out any problems with the Cargo" without bothering him or his crew. While we were digesting this new development the Cleric and the Sister got jumped by the cultists we'd been looking for.

Luckily the Sister and Cleric were heavily armed, incredibly paranoid, and far more level headed in an emergency than the nerds were. They fought a retreat to the Sororitas enclave that kept watch over this ship-load of pilgrims and dug in. Unfortunately the only sisters in this enclave were Hospitallers and some other non combat orders, so while they could handle a bolter they weren't suited to breaking out against the besieging cultists. To put it simply, they were stuck until help came, just like our adept and cogboy. It was down to us to pull everyone's asses out of the fire and take care of business before things got any worse.

So no shit there we were, a bunch of ordinary guardsmen on a spaceship full of crazy pilgrims and cultists. Our boss was in the brig until the Captain was no longer pissed at him, our Nerds were trapped behind a mob that wanted to burn them as heretics, our Nuts were pinned down by a bunch of actual heretics, and it was OUR job to fix everything.

Sarge took command of the situation and started going through the Imperial Guard NCO Disaster Response Checklist.

Step 1: Secure the perimeter

Step 2: Determine chain of command

Step 3: Call for backup if needed

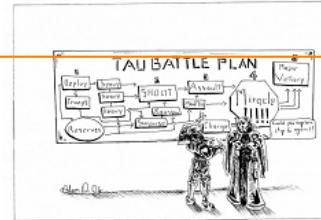
Step 4: Establish contact with friendlies

Step 5: Combine forces with friendlies and repeat

Step 1 was already done, we had that perimeter locked down like nobodies business, there just wasn't anything we actually cared about inside of it. Step 2 was a bit trickier, because we were still in vox contact with the Nerds and Nuts and we didn't trust them to tie their shoes much less lead an op. We solved that problem by saying something about vox interference and reducing the pickup range on our combeads until we could selectively ignore them. Step 3 was accomplished by asking the cogboy to get his ad-mech buddies to send out the contact code for the other Interrogator team that was looking at the fleet. Step 4 was already done as well, we knew exactly where the friendlies were, there was just a bunch of armed cultists and an angry mob between us and them. All that was left was to cracking on Step 5.

We decided that all things considered the Cleric and Sister could use our help more, and would provide more help in return, so we went for them first. Also they were holed up with a bunch of hot nurses as opposed to creepy machine men. Unfortunately we still had our orders not to let anyone touch the daemon goo or look for evil books. We either had to split up (which was stupid) or wait for reinforcements (which wouldn't be coming for a while) or use our initiative. So we tossed an incendiary grenade into the room and locked the doors and went to go rescue some hot nurses.

Unsurprisingly the cultists had set up an outer perimeter to keep out any reinforcements, so after we established where they were we fell back and started looking for other options. Nubby put forward the idea that the pilgrims seemed inclined to mob heretics, and these were



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definitely heretics, and why charge a fortified position when you can get someone else to do it for you. So Sarge found the nearest chapel and made a heroic speech about how the hot nuns needed our help and would probably be really grateful. Suddenly we had our very own mob of zealots.

The attack went more or less perfectly. The mob charged in from two directions and after the cultists started mowing them down we came in from a third. We cut into their flank like the pros we were; suppressing, advancing, and flushing like only a squad of guardsmen can. When we started to hit the cultists covering the Sororitas enclave the Sister and the Cleric saw their chance and pushed forward to meet us, crushing the last of the resistance.



Unfortunately the second we rescued them the Sister and Cleric started giving orders. Command of the zealots was taken from us and the entire mob was redirected towards the section of ship where the cultists came from. Per force we tagged along, but none of us were exactly keen to be taking orders again, especially since the Sister's plan seemed to consist of "Get 'Em". So while the Sister and the Cleric led the mob straight into a well prepared enemy position, we appointed ourselves as the Hospitallers' guards. Our squad hung around at the rear of the charge and helped the saner sisters pick up the wounded while we watched for flankers and waited for the shit to hit the fan.

We fully expected the mob's suicidal rush to fail, a lightly armed force trying to press through a choke point into a fortified enemy position wasn't going to work no matter how high their morale was. We weren't prepared for just how hard it failed though. The cultists had not only set up a very nice killzone at the single entry-point to their cargo bay, they had also set up all sorts of runes and circles in the killzone. The wave-of-bodies attack resulted in a whole lot of people dying right on top of these runes, which immediately started glowing and doing warpy stuff. By the time the mob lost heart and started to retreat the cargo bay was practically filled with lesser daemons. We took the reverse in the flow of bodies as our cue to move forward and lay down some covering fire.

Luckily the daemons were equal-opportunity warp monsters, they spent as much time attacking each-other and the cultists as chasing down the last of our pilgrim mob and its two erstwhile leaders. Between the daemons' lack of coordination and our covering fire the two nutters managed to hobble most of the way back to our position. Most of us wanted to leave them there, but Doc sprinted out and dragged them the rest of the way to our lines and back

to the Hospitallers. Between the two of them they had about three functional limbs and Doc spent the next few hours with the sisters patching them up.

At this point Sarge re-assumed command and decided that containment and waiting for reinforcements was the best of the available options. So we fell back around the corner, set up a barricade and Heavy's stubber, then settled in for the long haul. After a while the daemons ran out of cultists to eat and started to poke their noses around the corner and were promptly shot in the face. This was old hat for us really, we could defend a barricade in our sleep (literally in Heavy's case), and after a few initial rushes the daemons didn't really seem that keen on leaving their cargo bay. We all fell into our usual roles and routines from the guard; Twitch stared at the edge of the killzone and fired whenever he thought something might be moving while Heavy went to sleep sitting up with his eyes open and finger on the trigger. Behind the barricade Sarge went around yelling at people and worrying, Nubby went off to 'acquire' supplies, and Doc made eyes at one of the Hospitallers while they were both elbow deep in the Cleric's guts.

After a few hours of light trench duty, which was actually quite nice all things considered, our backup arrived. The second Interrogator's team (who had been doing Emperor-knows-what all this time) showed up at our barricade and Sarge explained the situation. Once again command was handed off, but luckily the new Interrogator decided to leave Sarge in charge of the barricade while he went to talk with the Captain and convince him not to just void our section of the ship. Our little troop had been reinforced to ten guardsmen, two psykers, and another damned Cleric, so Sarge decided it was time to be proactive.

Sarge wasn't happy to have another Cleric around and none of us wanted anything to do with the two psykers, so the Cleric was put in charge of keeping them as far away from us as possible. That taken care of, a plan of attack was quickly formed and a pair of grenade launchers were scrounged up from the other teams' arsenal and Nubby's 'collection'. We started a walking barrage up the hallway then slowly advanced our entire barricade until it was at the edge of cargo bay.

This wasn't exactly the fastest way to clear out the daemon infestation



but it was definitely the safest, not a single one of them managed to get within biting range of us. Once we were to the edge of the bay we just sat there and shot nades into it until we ran out, which took quite a while since Nubby could 'acquire' a surprisingly large amount of stuff. Eventually the launchers ran dry and it was time to clear the cargo bay the old fashion way, but the nades had done their job wonderfully. There wasn't really any cover left in the bay at all, so as long as we advanced slowly and carefully it was pretty easy to mow down the few remaining daemons before they got close. All in all it went pretty well, except for the big glowing shield thing at the back of the bay.



The shield was big and glowy and evil looking. We could sort of make out the remaining cultists inside of it doing cultisty-things, but we had no desire to get close to it. Quite aside from its appearance, there were quite a few corpses near it that looked like they had been turned inside-out. We scientifically examined the shield for a while, which is to say we shot it with every type of weapon we had sitting around, but nothing even dented it. Eventually we gave up and Sarge voxed the replacement Interrogator and the two adepts with him for advice. We got a long winded explanation that included a lot of terms like "ritual entropic shield" and "drawing power directly from the warp" and "energy based daemonic lifeform" and "attempt to psychically resonate with, then overwhelm the field" which boiled down "Go get the psykers to poke at it". This was not the solution we were hoping for.

We had all heard stories about psykers and had encountered a few chaos witches during one of our deployments, so none of us had any desire to be near our two psykers when they attempted to crack open the shield. With the exception of Sarge, the Cleric, and the other squad's leader we all fell back as far as we could and got ready for a shitstorm. It didn't take long, within a few seconds of the psykers walking towards the shield and getting all glowy everything went wrong. The first psyker started screaming and was suddenly surrounded by a torrential downpour of blood, then the second psyker started growing wings and horns. We all promptly opened fire on the possessed psyker and quickly reduced him to a thoroughly charred corpse while Sarge decked the first psyker and dragged him back to our barricade. Since one psyker was unconscious and the other was a pile of smoking ashes, we decided that it was probably time to figure out our own solution to the problem.

Our 'experiments' had established that las fire and grenades didn't do much to the shield, but since we were guardsmen we felt sure that enough faith and firepower could solve anything. We set up positions around the shield and started continuously plinking las fire into it, because when you have a fusion reactor to recharge your cells from you might as well lay down some indiscriminate suppressive fire. While we held the fort Nubby and the Cleric were sent to 'acquire' as many explosives, holy artifacts, and priests as possible. While they were out scrounging Twitch made a very good argument for setting up a blast shield. We voxed the cogboy and his buddies (who were STILL under siege), asked them to send down some servitors with big ol' metal shipping crates, then we built a big ass wall around the shield.

When the supply run was finished and the blast shield was in place we more or less just dumped several wheelbarrows filled with holy symbols into the walled area along with several barrels of prometheum. We got a lot more of the stuff than we expected, it turns out that "we're going to use it to blow up some heretics" is a pretty persuasive argument. After that we got the priests to bless all the explosives we could scrounge, we weren't sure it would help but it certainly wouldn't hurt and it let them feel useful. We tossed the holy munitions into the blast area as well and had Twitch set up the detonators. Then we got as far back as we could, started a ten second timer on the explosives and ran like hell.

None of us were really sure if the 'holy shrapnel' helped at all, but when we came back there was nothing left of the cultists and their shield except a glowing puddle of molten metal and a series of dents in the walls that no amount of buffing would ever remove. At this point Sarge declared victory and we all went to get a snack, a nap, and a cup of recaff. After that was done with we decided it was about time to retrieve the rest of our team and get the hell off the ship before anyone else tried to get us all killed.

We secured The Boss from the ship's brig by turning the clean-up investigation over to the second Interrogator and promising to never bringing our boss back to the ship, ever. While he was escorted to the shuttle we chatted with some of the priests who helped us make our



giant Holy Hand Grenade and got them to smooth things over well enough for us to get our adept and cogboy back. Finally we got our Sister and Cleric deposited in our shuttle's infirmary, where they would stay until we handed them off to Oak's doctors for a complete set of augmetics, then we went out and got drunk.

We enjoyed a night of drinking with our friends from the other team as well as a few of more helpful pilgrim priests and our surviving nerds. The high point of this was us all giving Doc shit for being hung up on one of the Hospitallers then hauling his drunk ass down to their enclave and getting him to declare his undying love for her and her "dexterous hands and perfect stitching". We dragged him away before he could devolve into soppy poetry, piled into our shuttle and called it a night. By the time we all woke back up we were docked with another navy transport and on our way back to the ISS Pokemon Center.



The trip back was almost exactly the same as the trip out, except we hung out with the cogboy a little more and Doc was kept busy. The tech-priest had been damn handy working with the ship's ad-mech and handling our communications, so we were promoted him to the rank of 'cogbro' and he was welcome in our quarters. Doc had a pretty stressful trip, it was his job to keep the Sister and Cleric alive until they could be handed off to Oak's medical teams, but he'd never had proper medical training, just a crash course in field aid and meatball surgery. The ship's surgeons could have helped, but the Interrogator re-

fused to ask the captain for their help for some reason, so Doc cracked open his medical books and did the best he could. They lived. Mostly.

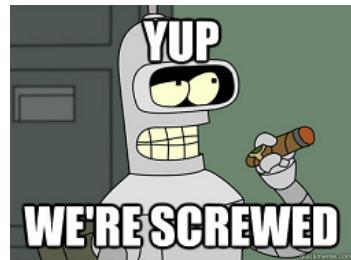
When we finally got back to the Inquisitor's ship we immediately went out and found the other survivors from our regiment. We all swapped tales of incompetent superiors, insane teammates, horrific enemies, and intense boredom until word came down that our Interrogator was being praised for his success and would be elevated to full Inquisitor. Everyone had a good laugh about this and we joked about where he'd find himself imprisoned next, right up until we got word that he was looking for us with the intent to add our squad to his new retinue.

We spent the next week or so hiding with the cogbro in the bowels of the ship while all of our buddies made up wild and conflicting stories about our untimely death, reassignment to a penal legion, imprisonment by the Ordos Hereticus, induction into the Astartes, and so on. Eventually he left along

with the surviving Adept, as well as the Sister and Cleric, both of whom had more metal in them than the average tech-priest by this point. We all breathed a sigh of relief and returned to our regiment's little camp.

After a few weeks of R&R, or as close as you can get on an Inquisition battleship, a runner came down and told us we were being assigned to a new team under Interrogator such-and-such, and we were to report to our shuttle immediately. With a weary sigh we packed up our bags (or over-loaded wheelbarrow in Nubby's case) and headed out to our transport. When we got to the shuttle the pilot helpfully informed us that "the Interrogator, his two assistants, and his three psykers" were already aboard. Twitch and Nubby both tried to run for it, but the shuttle's hatch was already closed.

Twitch and Nubby were retrieved and we all moved into the main seating area of the shuttle. We were greeted by our new Interrogator and introduced to our new teammates, one of whom was giggling and chewing on a seat cushion. As we stared in horror the Interrogator gave us a quick briefing, explaining that we had been assigned to go find out why a world hadn't been supplying psykers to the Black Ships. We did not have a good feeling about this.





# Chapter 3

## Dude Where's My Psyker?

This is the ongoing tale of a bunch of guardsmen who got drafted into the Inquisition after their regiment was reduced to a mere 37 men by a combination of Orks, Heretics, more Orks, Tyranids, and of course, their own leadership. Currently, they're working for an Inquisitor that is the 40k equivalent of Professor Oak; he provides teams and missions to Interrogators who need to get some leadership experience before becoming full Inquisitors. The lot of these guardsmen is rather thankless, they're matched up with five other less combat focused team members, assigned to an Interrogator, and sent out to fight the enemies of the Imperium.

Our story starts with Nubby and Twitch vainly trying to open up the locked exit to the shuttle after being told that their new squad contained three psykers in addition to an assassin, tech-priest, and the Interrogator himself. Sarge is screaming internally as he remembers that the last psykers he worked with accidentally summoned a blood storm and turned into a daemonhost the second they tried to do anything. Doc is captivated by the sight of a fat little man-child chewing on a seat's headrest. Heavy has decided that this is all above his paygrade and is making himself comfortable by lying across a row of seats. The Interrogator explains that the team is on its way to find out why a planet has not been supplying psykers to the Black Ships. One of the psykers asks Sarge to stop screaming, it's making it hard to think.

Current Psychic Phenomena Count: 0 Current Perils of the Warp Count: 0

So no shit there we were, stuck on a small ship with three psykers, on



*[screams internally]*

fix

our way to perform a top to bottom search of an entire planet, all for the sole purpose of finding MORE psykers. We did not have high hopes for this mission. Hell, some of us had serious concerns about whether we'd even still be sane when we got there.



The journey itself wasn't so bad. Instead of being guests on a navy vessel our Interrogator actually had his own small ship. Sure, almost all the space was taken up by our Interrogator's huge ass cogitator array, but at least we didn't have any navy ratings trying to take our weapons away, or bitching at us for setting trip-wire traps in the corridors. The problem was the people we had to make the journey with.

We didn't like any of the psykers. One was a smarmy tool, who spent far too much time talking and making himself look pretty; then there was the weasly creep, who constantly scanned everyone's thoughts and ratted to the boss; and finally, there was this psychotic man-child who would occasionally throw telekinetic temper-tantrums. We called them Face, Snitch, and Nutjob respectively. Compared to these guys, the snooty social assassin chick and the incredibly antisocial tech-priest weren't that bad. The Interrogator was infinitely worse.

Our Interrogator was adept-path and apparently some sort of data wizard. It took an entire ship just to carry all of his cogitators and he loved those machines like they were his children; unfortunately the bastard wasn't a complete shut-in. Instead of staying in the dark with his cogitators, he constantly held meetings and forced us all to attend. Not a day would go by without him calling us together to update everyone on what little clues he'd found, or check up on how we were preparing for the mission, or lecture us on proper inquisitorial behavior. It was horrible.

On our previous mission we happily ignored everyone else on our team while they happily did likewise. This time, we had an Interrogator who had never used a gun in anger giving us unwanted advice about combat drill, kit loadout, regulatory compliance, and freaking etiquette. This was all done in a tone of smug benevolence; he understood that we were just dim-witted manual laborers and couldn't be blamed for not being as smart as he was, that's why it was his duty to do all the hard thinking for us. The cherry on top of this was Snitch, who would report what we were THINKING to the boss. Every time those lectures filled us with murderous rage the little weasel would go and tell on us, then we'd get a second lecture on proper attitude towards authority. God Emperor we hated him.

Eventually we arrived at the planet which had earned the Inquisition's attention by providing the Black Ships with nothing but pathetically weak psykers completely unsuited for any use whatsoever. There were probably dogs out there with more psychic talent than the strongest psyker sent to the ships, but when the Black Ships had scanned the planet there were no unsanctioned psykers running around, so they took the pathetic tithe and left. Now we were here to find out where all the psykers that should have been on a planet of this size had gone. The gist of all the little briefings we suffered through was that a disappearance on this scale meant that we were either dealing with corruption in the government, a massive cult, some kind of psyker-eating daemon, or Eldar. This meant that unless proven otherwise, we had to assume that EVERYONE was in on it, so until the Interrogator got some sort of evidence we wouldn't have any outside support.

The posh assassin chick and Face did all the social legwork. They would circumspectly shake people down for information while we loomed in the background, or preferably down the street at a cheap diner. Apparently they were very good at it, since everyone aside from us thought they were absolutely delightful to be around. At the end of each day they would transcribe everything they found and beam it up for the Interrogator to process.

The other information gathering team involved the tech-priest and Snitch hanging around in the equivalent of an unmarked van. They spent all day driving around hacking wireless networks, scanning peoples thoughts, and dumping all the information back to the boss in orbit. We got to drive the van and fetch snacks.

We didn't all get to leave the ship, one or two of us were always stuck at base since it was apparently our job to babysit the Nutjob psyker. It really was babysitting too, 'cause we'd have to clean up the messes he made, get food for him, calm him down when he threw a fit, and entertain him when he got bored and started pulling rivets out of the walls with his brain. Poor Doc got that job more than anyone else, he just wasn't very good at saying no. Aside from that though, it was an improvement over the trip out there. We were occasionally able to get away from our teammates and whoever was backing up the social team got to visit some pretty high-class parties. It



was always a nice opportunity to snag some good food and, in Nubby's case, pocket the silverware.



After a while, the Interrogator called us together and informed us of his brilliant deductions and masterful analyses. These involved money trails, newfound political power, falsified ship manifests, and other stuff we didn't really care about. It all boiled down to, "Someone in the government is selling the psykers off planet". Once our Interrogator was done explaining his genius, he had everyone but himself rebase to a few floors of apartments, located in one of the larger cities on the planet. After the team was settled in, he sent us out to take some long, hard looks at a bunch of the nearby banks.

We enjoyed being away from him and his constant meetings, and quickly turned the building into a proper guard barracks. Which is to say that Twitch wired the place up with dozens of traps, Nubby started fencing stolen goods out of the garage, and the rest of us built a set of barricades between us and the outside world, as well as between us and the rest of our damned team. It felt good to be home.



Before long, word came down that the Interrogator had identified the operation's banker and the whole ground team was sent off to get some answers out of him. So while Heavy hung out in the van with the socially unacceptable members of the team and ignored the ugly little man prodding his brain and demanding candy, the rest of us infiltrated the bank. That is to say we put on suits, which succeeded in making us look exactly like guardsmen in suits, and marched behind Face and the assassin into one of the planet's largest banks.

There was a little bit of trouble getting through security, which was entirely our fault. All of us had kept our las-rifles underneath our suits, and Twitch was still carrying a few det packs. We weren't very good at disguises. Luckily, between Face doing some psyker stuff and the tech-priest's hackvan messing with the security systems, we got in fine.

After we were past security, Face and the assassin greased a few palms and screwed with a few minds. Before long, we all sat down to a nice discussion

and tea-time with the banker. Well, they sat, us guardsmen stood around and looked ominous. Various falsified credentials were shown, psychic tricks were used, and a discrete uplink was attached to a cogitator, then everyone left happy and healthy. We decided to exit via the back way so as not to trouble security again, and also because Nubby had wheeled out the tea-trolley when we left.

The boss and the rest were pretty excited about what was found on the banker's cogitator. The next few days were spent in relative peace while the Interrogator worked with the rest of the team to map out a web of corruption and bribery. This lasted right up until Snitch called us one evening and said a large group of hitmen was moving through the empty floor below us.

We were locked and loaded within seconds and started laying fire into the hitmen from multiple sides before they even hit the edge of the perimeter. We had good cover, good firing lines, knowledge of local terrain, superior weaponry, much better training, and the element of surprise. It was a slaughter. The last three of them were pinned down by Heavy and Twitch while the rest of us flanked them when everything went dark, and horrific screaming started. When the lights returned all the hitmen, dead or alive, had been reduced to chunky salsa and we could all hear Nutcase giggling upstairs.

This killed the mood, everyone eyed the psyker nervously as we packed up our shit and got the hell out of there before the authorities showed up. We elected to exit via the garages in a cargo truck while the rest of the team used the shuttle on the roof. None of us wanted to be anywhere near the Psykers after that show, also Nubby and Twitch didn't want to leave anything behind. *Psychic Phenomena Count: 1 Perils of the Warp Count: 0*

fix

We rebased to another almost identical set of apartments and went about guardifying it again, except this time Twitch was given free reign on the entire buffer floor instead of just the entrances and windows. While this meant that entering our base via the main entrance took about fifteen minutes and carried a very real risk of grisly death, we knew that people were actively trying to kill us. Also, we didn't want to depend on anyone who turned bodies into chunky salsa and giggled about it for our perimeter security. The rest of the team started using air transport exclusively after the assassin nearly lost a hand when she didn't follow Twitch's entry instructions correctly.

After a few days at our new base doing scan trips and otherwise laying low, Snitch found a young nascent psyker powerful enough to be worthwhile.



So our team of elite inquisitorial agents started staking out a toddler. Our unmarked vans followed the kid day and night, from his hab, to the daycare, to the playground, and everywhere else you might take a toddler.

Imagine five heavily armed men all clustered around a screen watching a kid being pushed on a swing while behind them an undeniably creepy bugger relays what everyone in the playground is currently thinking and a psychotic man-child picks his nose and mutters to himself. Eventually our weird stakeout paid off: a bunch of suits showed up and grabbed the kid and his mother.

So no shit there we were, five guardsmen and two psykers in the middle of a playground chasing a bunch of g-men carrying a struggling woman

and a small child. The woman and child were screaming, the g-men were calling for backup, our psykers were yelling about one of the g-men being a blunter, and while we all had our guns out none of us wanted to open fire in the middle of a playground. We were gaining on them (being a sprinter is a survival trait in any guardsman), but right as we reached them one of them slapped a button on their chest and another one of them started to float into the air as the surrounding area was covered with frost. We all immediately slammed into an invisible wall and were scattered across the ground, while Snitch stopped and started muttering himself and gesturing.

None of us wanted to be in the middle of a psyker fight, so we flanked the invisible shield, left Heavy to cover the enemy Psyker, and resumed the chase. The g-men had gone to ground in a playscape and opened fire on us with small arms, but were having trouble because the child was apparently emitting random bursts of static electricity. We decided that survival was more important than civilian casualties and returned fire from whatever cover we could find, and since we

were damned good at our jobs thing went pretty poorly for the g-men. We nailed most of them in the first few volleys which convinced the last few to keep their heads down while we flanked them. Behind us Heavy was laying stubber fire into the enemy psyker's shield and Snitch was pressing him hard, then with a little pop the enemy psyker disappeared.

While Heavy and Snitch watched the spot where the Psyker had been we rushed the remaining g-men. Our Interrogator was helpfully reminding us over the vox that he wanted prisoners, so we charged in to beat the shit out



of the last few survivors. Unfortunately at this point their backup arrived in the form of an unmarked government flier, which immediately began to lay down some serious suppressive fire. This was higher stakes than we were ready for, so we bugged the hell out while the remaining g-men piled in with the kid and his mother. The flier wasn't done with us though: as soon as its doors were closed, it lifted off and got ready to do a strafing run.

We hit the dirt and dodged the first pass like true guardsmen, while behind us the enemy psyker had reappeared with another pop and the fight resumed. This time the fight was over in seconds, the Nutjob had finally caught his fat ass up with us and with a little schlorp the enemy psyker turned inside-out. That done with, both the psykers and Heavy turned their attention to the flier, which decided that it was time to cut its losses and got the hell out of there. As we got back up out of cover the Interrogator called us to tell us that the assassin and Face had successfully tagged the flier with a tracer and the tech-priest would shortly be picking us up to assault whatever facility it landed at.

*Psychic Phenomena Count: 3 Perils of the Warp Count: 1* fix

Apparently some minor detail about the g-men or the flier finally gave the Interrogator the evidence he needed to safely call in official support. After he was done bitching at us for not capturing anyone, or stopping the flier, or whatever else we did wrong, our Interrogator told us a squad or two of Arbites would be assisting us. Nubby was understandably nervous about being around what were nominally law enforcement officers, and none of us were happy when the Interrogator explained that he was only bringing in the Arbites because he thought we were incompetent, but overall this news was well received by us guardsmen. More bodies between us and incoming fire is always welcome, doubly so if they had heavy armor and good fire discipline.

The facility we landed at was large, grim, and obviously a shuttleport; therefore our job in this raid was to capture any available information about where the shuttles would be going. So while two squads of Arbites had fun clearing the place room by room with judicious use of shotguns and shockmauls, we kept a secure perimeter around the rest of our team as they uplinked cogitators and mind-scanned people. Aside from a few runners and



idiots too dumb to surrender, we didn't have any excitement until one of the Arbite squads found the psyker holding area.

As the Arbites closed in, one of the g-men apparently decided that the situation was unsalvageable and released the psykers. Under the cover of a dozen psychically gifted children freaking the hell out, they punched through the Arbite squad and headed right towards us, or more likely the flier we were examining. We opened fire as the heavily armed g-men entered the hangar and had them pinned in the hallway until Sarge and Heavy's cover got blown apart by a fireball. Once again we found ourselves caught in a psyker duel; it was three on three, and this time, Nutjob wasn't curbstomping them.

The fight seemed evenly matched, our psykers stood there and grimaced a lot and occasionally manifested horrible smells or small earthquakes, their psykers sat in cover and did likewise. We didn't have line of sight on any of them and when we tried to toss in a grenade, it got slapped back at us halfway through its arc. We weren't exactly sure what to do, but after the fourth creepy occurrence we decided it was time to use our initiative to end this shit before someone summoned a daemon.

Sarge appropriated a nearby forklift, drove it outside the hangar, and then we slapped a bunch of det packs on it. We turned it toward the outside wall of the hallway the psykers were holed up in, put a brick on the pedal, and blew the entire hallway into rubble before anyone noticed what was going on.

It surprised the hell out of us when the dust cleared and two of the psykers were still there, hiding under a shield, but it didn't last long after that. With a hellish bang, one of the psykers shot into the air and splattered against the shield and the last psyker immediately turned inside out. We could hear the Nutjob giggling back in the hangar.

fix

;Psychic Phenomena Count: 8 ;Perils of the Warp Count: 2

That was the last of the resistance. We poked through the military hardware that was left behind while the rest of our team did inquisitorial stuff to the surviving g-men and their cogitators. After they were finished, we packed up our loot and headed back to base to rest and re-arm while the Interrogator played with all the data we got for him. We were assured that before long he'd know where the psykers had been sent from the processing facility, and were told to get ready to launch another assault as soon as he had a target.



Being guardsmen we knew that the best way to prepare for an assault is to eat a good meal and catch as much sleep as possible, so as soon as our kits were prepped we all hit the sack while the rest of the team watched the perimeter. This meant that we were all deep asleep, with the exception of Twitch who merely dozed with his las-gun pointed at the door and the safety off, when a second assassination team got through our outer perimeter.

The enemy must have seen the remains of their last team and decided that the psykers were the primary threat, because this team had at least one untouchable with it. Unfortunately for them, untouchables don't do anything to stop booby traps.

The whole team had slowly cleared a small path across the floor that Twitch had trapped and reached the big expensive security door that led to our makeshift barracks. They formed up behind their best infiltrator and got ready to storm the place as soon as he hacked the door controls. Then the door opened, and they had exactly .25 seconds to express surprise that anyone would tape several short-fuse grenades to the inside of a top-of-the-line security door.

This woke us all up and, Twitch being Twitch, he'd put an entire clip and two frags into the open doorway before anyone else was upright. He probably didn't hit anyone since the six grenades taped to the inside of the security door had vaporized everyone near it, but he sure as hell convinced their rearguard to start falling back. Not that it did them any good: before the rest of us were on our feet Twitch hit the remote detonator for the every single mine he'd placed below us. The entire buffer floor was blown to shrapnel, taking the rest of the assassination team with it and setting off alarms up and down the entire block. Luckily, the building was non-flammable and sturdily built, so aside from a very rude awakening no one we really cared about was hurt.

Sarge decided that nap-time was over, so we kitted up and waited for the word from our Interrogator. Before long it came, he'd pinpointed a Rogue Trader that was receiving the psykers and carrying them to off-world slave



markets. A joint naval and Arbite force would meet us in orbit, and we would board the trader before they made their escape. Our primary objective was to capture the senior crewmembers and find their contact within the local government. Secondary objectives included: retrieving any psykers currently on the ship, capturing the navigational and financial logs, and “Not blowing the ship up like you blew up our base; are all guardsmen this incompetent?”

So no shit there we were, on a naval boarding shuttle, on our way to capture a Rogue Trader and his retinue from a ship filled with captive psykers. We were not exactly enthusiastic about our odds of survival. Rogue Traders have a reputation for being, or at least employing, very scary people. Plus, an entire ship of untrained ones was a terrifying thought, ours were bad enough alone. Still, we were guardsmen, facing certain death for unappreciative superiors is what being a guardsman is all about.



None of us really enjoyed the shuttle trip, the pilot was clearly terrified and the evasive maneuvers made us all nauseous. We half expected to be blown out of space before we got to the ship, but we landed on the hull without incident and cut our way into the interior. While we did this, several other navy and Arbite shuttles were doing likewise. This was not a subtle attack, so it was hardly surprising that before we got ten feet in the ship’s alarms started to go off. We knew our business though, and mowed down all opposition before they got a shot off on us.

The assault was going well for all of the teams. We’d seized the engines and main batteries, the main hangars were on the verge of surrender, and the tech-priest was pretty sure he’d located the bridge. Seizing the initiative he remotely hacked all the entrances to lock open so they couldn’t be shut against us. Unfortunately those turned out to actually be the doors to the psykers’ isolation cells, the second he opened them everything went to hell. Literally.

Ghostly images filled the air, the frescos on the walls started weeping blood, unearthly screaming came from every direction, and a stench that put even Nubby’s lack of hygiene to shame emanated from the air vents. Our psykers moved forward to try and sort things out before the entire ship got sucked into the warp or something, but we wanted nothing to do with a section of spaceship filled with supernatural darkness and constantly fluctuating gravity. We still had a mission though, and since the psychic activity was blocking vox communication Sarge took operational command.

We needed to get to the bridge, which the rather embarrassed tech-priest assured us was definitely just a little farther past the psyker holding area. Once there we needed to find the Rogue Trader, subdue him, and hit him until he rattled on his buddies. The problem was that even though there were other passages to the bridge that didn't go through the psyker cells, the psychic spillover had turned that entire section of ship into a No Man's Land. Just walking in there would be suicide, but Sarge figured that there was a safe way to cross the hellscape if we only could find the right people.

Sarge was pretty sure that any ship carrying a bunch of unhappy psykers would have at least one untouchable on board, just in case something like this happened. All we needed to do was find out where they were, and convince them to take a walk with us.

So we had our tech-priest do a quick scan to find out if any areas nearby weren't experiencing paranormal activity, then went to go knock on some doors. Sure enough, we found two untouchables hanging out in a cabin speculating on what all the fuss was about. One of them tried to make a fight of it and got shot for his trouble, but the other understood that in times like this, all men need to come together and serve the Emperor. So we cocooned him in duct tape, threw him over Heavy's shoulder, and set off for the bridge.

The walk was really quite pleasant as long as you ignored the dents, stains, puddles, and complete absence of any living creature. We waltzed right up to the bridge without any opposition, and found it locked down tighter than a Sororitas Convent when the guard was in town on leave. While the locked doors might have posed a problem for some of the other boarding groups, Nubby had helpfully attained several of the cutting tools that the shuttle crew had used to open up the outer hull.

So with the tech-priest's help we found a section of wall which was much thinner than the blast door and started cutting our way in. Sadly, even with a breaching charge to help with the final step, a lascutter is not quick or subtle. All we found in the bridge after we flashbanged the shit out of it and stormed in was a bunch of empty seats and a locked door labeled "Escape Pods"

We used the ship's vox to contact the Boss and explain the situation. After he was done bitching at us, especially the poor tech-priest, he decided



that given our lack of success he would track the Trader's escape pod instead of just blowing it out of the sky. We were to go get our damned psykers back and get ready to raid wherever the Trader finally went to ground.

So with our duct taped untouchable in tow, we went back into the psychic no man's land and started sorting shit out. The DTU really trivialized everything, it was just a matter of walking up to the psykers, having Doc tranq them, then tossing them on the pallet Heavy was pushing. Occasionally we'd run into a minor daemon, or crazed crew member, or obvious daemonhost, but between the DTU and a liberal dose of lasfire nothing posed a real threat. We eventually collected all the surviving psykers (a few of them were inside out, freaking Nutjob) and found our three psykers a little worse for wear, but ready to go after the Rogue Trader as soon as we knew where he was going.



*Psychic Phenomena Count: 23* *Perils of the Warp Count: 5*

fix

The pallet full of sedated psykers was turned over to the Arbites along with the DTU. We were sad to see him go, he was like a big sticky teddybear that kept us all safe and happy, but he had to stay with psykers so we handed him over to the Arbites and headed for the shuttle. The Interrogator voxed us with directions to pick up the assassin, who had spent the whole mission getting her nails done or something, and report to an Arbitre precinct near some big government mansion. Our Interrogator had used his INCREDIBLE skills and BRILLIANT mind to track the Rogue Trader here, and oh so cleverly pinned Secretary Such and Such as the mastermind of this whole mess. Our job was to quietly go in and capture the Secretary and the Rogue trader so they could be used by the Inquisition to sort all this out without causing a massive scandal or minor war.

So while the Arbites put up a very discrete perimeter and the tech-priest worked with some local engineers to quietly shut down the mansion's communications, the rest of our team planned our infiltration. By this point Sarge was done with everyone's shit and vetoed several complex ruses suggested by the assassin and Face. Eventually they just gave up and the team was disguised as a group of heavily armed guardsmen and some dangerously unstable psykers.



These weren't exactly the best disguises, but we felt pretty sure that everyone could act their part. Grumbling about obstinate guardsmen and stupid plans, the rest of the team dressed themselves up as officers and good ol' fashioned sanctioned psykers. For our part we tacked on the insignia of a local regiment and caught some sleep while the rest got their costumes in order.

When everyone was dressed up we walked right through the mansion's security pretending to be a local general dropping off some extra protection for his good friend the Secretary. The poor sod was out of his mind with panic, he was calling in every favor he had to fortify his mansion and we fit right in with all the others. Our credentials weren't even checked, as soon as we claimed to be reinforcements we were waved past security and let inside. He even invited the 'General' up to his office to personally thank him for his generosity.

We walked right into the Secretary's office and presented ourselves to him while the Rogue Trader stood behind him and stared at us boggle eyed. Nothing good can last forever though, and after a few seconds of speechlessness the Rogue Trader called the Secretary a bloody idiot and opened fire.

The Rogue Trader was a little late though, by the time he drew his weapon the assassin had grabbed the Secretary and we had already killed several bodyguards. We signalled the Arbites to move in, grabbed some cover, and started a two way firefight between the Trader and security reinforcements. We had him well pinned and had started to flank him when the far door burst open and the Trader's retinue entered the fight, two of them were already glowing. Once again we found ourselves stuck in the middle of a damned psyker duel. Meanwhile, the Arbites moved in to detain everyone, and without direct orders from the Secretary none of the security forces felt inclined to argue with the Arbitre's APCs.

Back inside, Heavy was mowing down reinforcements with his stubber,



Twitch was nailing anyone who left cover, and the rest of us were steadily advancing on the Trader and his psykers. Surprisingly, the two enemy psykers were holding off all three of ours, and aside from a few phenomena neither side appeared to actually be doing anything. Eventually our slow advance got us a good shot on the Trader and his retinue, pushing the psykers to try something desperate.



Face collapsed, but one of the Trader's psykers burst into flame, taking a pair of retainers with him. In response, Nutjob and Snitch doubled down on the last psyker, until suddenly Nutjob fell to the ground screaming and one of the last retainers did likewise.

Suddenly the retainer got to his feet and tackled the last enemy psyker to the ground and started beating the shit out of him while giggling. While we all watched this, Nutjob got to his feet, drew his sidearm and shot Heavy in the back of the head.

A second shot was fired at Twitch, but a quick dodge saved him. Unfortunately, the second he stopped covering the Trader, a round hit him in the back. While this happened, Sarge and Nubby downed the last retainer and the Trader disappeared with a loud crack. Immediately afterward, the enemy psyker stopped moving, Doc ran towards Twitch and Heavy, and both the possessed retainer and Nutjob collapsed again.



While Doc started patching up Twitch, Snitch collapsed in exhaustion, and Nubby headshot the psyker and the retainer that had been attacking him. Sarge scanned the room for the Trader, and with a tired giggle Nutjob began to sit up. Immediately the injured Twitch drew his sidearm and emptied an entire clip into the little bastard. No one commented on this.

Sarge and Nubby slowly approached the door to the bathroom attached to the office. Right as they reached it a voice from inside announced "I would like to surrender to the Inquisition, and put myself and my ship at their disposal in this current investigation." Both Sarge and Nubby ignored this and started prepping a breaching charge. Before they finished, they heard the assassin, who had been hiding with the Secretary behind a filing cabinet, comm the Interrogator and tell him that the target had been captured and the Trader was surrendering. The Interrogator ordered Sarge to "Accept the

gentleman's surrender and escort him to the shuttle." With a weary sigh, Sarge removed the charge and relayed the message.

After a few seconds the Rogue Trader opened the door and smugly declared, "I knew we could work together, this was such a tragic misunderstanding—" whereupon Nubby yelled "Ee's got a gun!" and Sarge blew his head off.

The Interrogator was not happy.

That was the end of our part of the investigation. Doc got Twitch stable and patched everyone else up, while Sarge collected Heavy's body and Nubby looted the corpses.

It was sort of awkward sitting there waiting for the all-clear from the Arbites. The Secretary was moaning and crying in a very annoying way, and the rest of the team kept shooting us death glares while they struggled to restrain him. We offered to help, but they refused us for some reason. The mood was not improved by Nubby making some truly horrific noises as he tried to pry something out of the Trader's corpse. In the end he had to borrow Doc's bonesaw.

Eventually the Arbites finished clearing the mansion and a team escorted us back to their precinct. A flier came and picked up the Secretary along with the assassin, Snitch, and Face, and hauled them off to some secure facility somewhere. We weren't told anything, we were definitely on the Interrogator's shit-list.

Final Psychic Phenomena Count: 28 Final Perils of the Warp Count:

7

We hung out with the Arbites for a few hours and they were nice enough to give us some food and help sew Twitch up while we waited. After a while shuttle came for us, as well as, to our surprise, the tech-priest. It took us to the Interrogator's ship. The ride up was pretty somber: Heavy was dead, both his and Nutjob's corpses were in the hold, and we knew the Interrogator was furious with us. Not even Nubby's jokes about the selling price of secondhand gold teeth or his reenactment of the Rogue Trader's death could cheer us up.

When we got back to the ship we were treated to a long lecture about



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how our incompetence had ruined the Interrogator's carefully laid plans. We were told how Sarge's disobedience had removed a vitally useful source of information, how our poor decision making had killed a valuable teammate, and how the tech-priest's mistake on the ship had jeopardized the entire mission. He also made several remarks about our general behavior, attitude, hygiene, and education, then finally pointed out that if only we had acted as professionally as the rest of the team Heavy would still be alive. If the bastard didn't have remote control of the ship's security servitors, Sarge would have probably killed him.

In the end we were ordered to pack up and return to the shuttle, we would be returning to Oak's ship on a naval transport while the investigation was finished with the aid of the Arbites and local Ad-Mech. A secure data-slate containing a summary of the investigation so far as well as a detailed critique of our performance was sent along with us. It came with a dire warning that Oak would be expecting the slate and any attempt to accidentally lose it would go poorly. So we packed up our gear and Heavy and boarded our shuttle. However, as a final afterthought, we propped Nutjob's corpse upright in the bathroom where it would hopefully scare the shit out of that damned Interrogator.

The trip back was a lot better than the trip out. None of the navy boys bothered us and we bonded with the tech-priest over our mutual hatred of that bastard Interrogator. So aside from Sarge's usual drills, we mostly just lounged around and came up with ideas for how to change the report after the tech-priest finished hacking the "secure" data-slate.



Very few pieces of technology can resist a tech-priest with a month of travel time on his hands, before the trip was even half done he had it cracked open and ready for a little judicious editing. There was a strong sentiment to wipe the whole thing and replace it with a picture of a butt and a note that said "blah blah blah I'm a gigantic tool blah blah blah," but cooler heads prevailed. We simply removed all negative references to ourselves from the report, and rewrote the disciplinary note to simply say that we were no longer needed and were being released back to Oak. As an afterthought, we went through the entire report and dialed the Interrogator's self-praise up to eleven. We hoped it would help him come off as a complete tool to anyone who read the report.

Eventually we arrived back at Professor Oak's giant spacefaring inquisitorial school, which was currently orbiting some random agri-world. We dropped off the data-slate, got debriefed, and went to go find our fellow guardsmen. Sure enough, there were a few of them holding down the little section of the ship that we had claimed back when we arrived. We got together, shared some stories, and planned a suitable funeral for Heavy. We called up the tech-priest and found our other cogbro still hanging out in engineering, so we invited them both down to the planet with us. Then we got Heavy out of storage, "requisitioned" a shuttle, and headed down to the agri-world to give him a proper sendoff.

In the morning the cogbros helpfully hauled all of our hungover asses back onto the shuttle and got us back aboard before anyone noticed we had left. That done with, we settled in for a few well deserved weeks of R&R. On some days, a squad would come back with tales of success or failure and occasionally missing a few men. Other days, a runner would come down and a squad would head out or a new one would be pieced together. Eventually, the squad's R&R time ran out, so we packed our bags and waited for the runner to come for us.

The runner didn't come though. Instead, one day as we lounged in our makeshift barracks, a tall man ducked into the room. He wore dress greens and positively reeked of Officer. In a chipper voice he greeted us and invited our squad and "that strapping young fellow with the sword" to join him on a little expedition. He said he was going into a combat zone and thought that we'd enjoy a chance to get back into action and solve "a few little military problems that are right up our alley, wot wot!"

So with a weary sigh, we gathered up the one man in the regiment dumb enough to prefer a sword over a good old fashioned las-gun and followed our new Interrogator to the shuttle.





# Chapter 4

## What's In The Box?

This is the ongoing tale of a bunch of guardsmen who got drafted into the Inquisition after their regiment was reduced to a mere 37 men by a combination of Orks, Heretics, more Orks, Tyranids and, of course, their own leadership. Currently they work for an Inquisitor that is the 40k equivalent of Professor Oak, he provides teams and missions to Interrogators who need to get some leadership experience before becoming full Inquisitors. The lot of these guardsmen is rather thankless, they are matched up with five other less combat focused team members, assigned to an Interrogator, and sent out to fight the enemies of the Imperium.

The squad recently lost their heavy weapons specialist to psyker related bullshit. His replacement is Cutter, the only surviving melee specialist from the regiment.

Cutter is strong, fast, and a little too enthusiastic for comfort. He signed up as part of the Regiment's logistical support as a scribe, but the second he got his hands on a Chainsword he found his true calling. A life spent scribing followed by a career in swording has left Cutter a little socially inept, but a tendency to scream and hack off limbs excuses most social faux pas. His previous squad died rather messily when a bunch of bloodletters got into melee range, only Cutter was equipped to handle a close quarters battle. Cutter unsettles the other guardsmen, being bloodthirsty and aggressive is one thing, but willingly leaving cover to close to melee range is just plain crazy.

Our story starts with the squad taking their seats in the shuttle as their



new Interrogator introduces the rest of their team and a briefs them on their mission. They are being sent to "take a peek at the new poppers some of the lads have found", "make sure everything is tickety-boo with the big hats and the boffins", and "give greeny what for if things get dull".

A pair of adepts and a pair of tech-priests are trying to figure out what their mission actually is without insulting their new boss. An older man is serving tea and helping to decipher some of the Interrogator's more arcane expressions, Doc is taking notes. Cutter is ignoring everything in favor of raiding the snack bar and Nubby is picking at the decorative inlay on the table, trying to see if it's actually gold. Twitch is watching Sarge and getting very nervous. Sarge has realised he is currently in the presence of the greatest known threat to a guardsman's life in the galaxy, an enthusiastic officer.

So no shit there we were, on our way to an active warzone to investigate some guardsmen's shiny new guns. Guns which were apparently so good that soldiers were refusing orders from the Commissariat to destroy them and demands from the Adeptus Mechanicus to fork them over. For the sake of these guns guardsmen were actually defying two organizations that scared the bejeezus out of any sane soldier, including us. We were quite possibly going to try to TAKE these guns away from an unspecified number of guardsmen. While they were using them. In the middle of a battle. With orks. Our Interrogator insisted it would be "jolly good fun".

The Interrogator was such a stereotypical upper-crust officer that it bordered on parody.

He was prim, proper, cheerily bloodthirsty, and almost impossible to understand. Given the slightest motivation he would regale anyone around him with old war stories, or musings on the art of war, or lectures on proper gentlemanly behavior. He wasn't one of the sneering, bureaucratic officers though, he firmly believed he was "just one of the lads" and liked to "get stuck in with the rest of the boys". To top this all off he actually embraced the moniker Rupert, the insulting guardsman term for a nobby officer, and insisted we call him by it. We would have called him that



anyways, he was a complete bloody Rupert, but it just wasn't the same if he liked the name.

He'd spent decades in the Guard leading heroic charges by day, hosting formal dinners during the evening, and retiring to the best accommodations around for the night (fighting in the dark would be "simply barbaric", and was well beneath him). At some point in all this he acquired an incredibly skilled batman who became absolutely key to the smooth running of his life. Providing tea before it was asked for, scheduling meetings that no one knew was needed, and identifying and disposing of several discrete threats to his charge's life.



One day an Inquisitor took note of the batman's literally supernatural talent for butlery and there was a bit of a scandal. One thing led to another and both of them wound up joining the the Inquisitor's retinue. Now years later they were still together and working to bring a better class of manners to the Inquisition. We called the batman Alfred.

We traveled on a Navy vessel in surprising comfort, apparently the Captain's family knew the Rupert's or something. In fact it seemed that everyone over a certain rank had some sort of familial connection to our Interrogator. The adepts spent the trip learning military law, the tech-priests studied the technical reports on the new guns, and we tried our best to do our usual drill and sleep routine.



Our Interrogator wouldn't have any of that though, the bugger insisted on wandering down to our barracks every few hours. Not a day would go by without him telling us the story of some incredibly valiant charge, stalwart defense, or duel to the death with the enemy's leader. Sarge noticed that these stories never seemed to mention how many guardsmen died along the way.

The Rupert also frequently dragged the adepts and tech-priests down to our quarters and insisted they brief us on the results of their research. At first we dismissed this as some sort of misguided attempt to build camaraderie in the team, but he kept doing it. He even started asking for our opinions and actually listening to them, so long as they didn't go against his own. This sort of behavior worried us, it just wasn't normal. Something was seriously wrong when the backup muscle gets this much attention and intel.



and be inquisitive. US, the guardsmen, the mudfeet; a group of under-educated, over-armed gorillas with a penchant for laziness, petty theft, paranoia, and completely reasonable cowardice. We were expected to go out there and talk with Imperial Guard Generals, Mechanus Magi, and bloody Commissars, and look for heresy. Which we would presumably find by asking these scary people very nicely if they were heretics.

Sarge went spare. As a unit our previous experience in this sort of thing consisted of shooting anything we were told to, or was trying to kill us, or just looked weird; we were not qualified to figure this shit out for ourselves. Sarge and Doc might have been reasonably intelligent within their fields of expertise, but Nubby was a cretin and a thief, Cutter was borderline psychotic, and Twitch had spent the last few days wiring trip mines into all the cabin's air vents; just in case the Navy tried to kill us all in our sleep. Of course every time the subject was broached with the boss-man all it got a was a laugh, an admonition to be more confident, and a story about how good ol' guardsman know-how had solved problems no one else could figure out.

When we finally reached our destination and marched out of our shuttle we were probably the most nervous looking men to ever wear such sinister uniforms. If the Rupert hadn't led the way we would have probably been arrested for impersonating officers.



The Emperor forsaken ball of dirt we landed on was currently in the grips of a major war with the Orks. The planet was being reclaimed from the greenskins, and after the navy had their fun it fell to the guard to remove the orks from the 'economically vital' regions of planet. Hundreds of regiments were simultaneously clearing every hive in on the planet with mixed amounts of success.

One front in particular was doing far better than expected, largely due to the sudden appearance of new more effective weapons in several of its regiments. Imperial forces were rapidly pushing

greenskin forces out of the outer hive, and at this rate the hive would be taken months ahead of schedule. Of course the immediate response to such resounding success was the generals on the other fronts calling the Commissariat and Ad-Mech down on the poor suckers. Bloody stupid brass.

We walked into a threeway argument between the Commissariat, the Adeptus Mechanicus, and the Generals in charge of the front. The Commissars saw guardsmen winning fights without anyone being executed for cowardice, and decided that this was obviously some form of heresy. The Ad-Mech saw weapons that were far too shiny for guardsmen to use, and decided that all these guns and their source should be given over to them. The front's Generals saw a chance to be big damned heroes, and wanted the Commissariat and Ad-mech to go bother someone else.

Over the next few days we followed our Interrogator around as he talked to seniors officers. Our days consisted of meetings, teas, briefings, and formal dinners. The Rupert seemed to know everybody who was anybody, he constantly chatted with important people while we hung out with their subordinates.



We finally got a clear set of details on the problem at hand. Autoguns, chainswords, and body armor that were far superior to standard issue gear was being traded via the guard's black market. Guardsmen were quickly trading out their kit for the new gear, and using it to wreck the orks' shit. The amount of gear that was appearing was as impressive as its quality, but despite the sheer volume of weapons appearing on the market, no one was sure where they came from. After all, the Imperial Guard's black market has experience dealing with hostile investigations and both the soldiers and their officers were being less than helpful.

Being a bunch of guardsmen ourselves we weren't inclined to take useful weapons away from soldiers who needed them. In our opinion the Commissariat and Ad-Mech were a bunch of dickheads, so we'd only do what they wanted if the weapons or their source proved to be evil. So the big questions we needed to answer were: What was so special about the guns, did they do anything to the troopers who used them, and where the hell did they come from?

Answering these questions was apparently our job, the Rupert seemed to have no intention of doing anything aside from having tea with the rest of the brass. Occasionally he'd offer a piece of incomprehensible advice, or send us to talk to someone specific, or politely yell at someone who was being difficult, but mostly it was just tea. Alfred was generally more helpful, his advice and warnings helped immensely and kept us from making a complete

hash of things.



had expected a complete and utter disaster, so only a few major screwups was considered a wild success in our book.



had found.

Of course Doc wasn't really a doctor, he was a medic. He wasn't really in the business of curing people, just making them more comfortable while they die. So he thoroughly embarrassed himself during the briefings by asking stupid questions about how to spell things, why a procedure was done, and what the 'green wobbly bit' was. In the end though, he managed to determine that none of the soldiers had shown any sign of physical change aside from being a little stronger than average.

Cutter and Sarge went to talk to the Munitorum, since Cutter was a former Munitorum scribe and Sarge didn't trust Cutter not to kill anyone if left alone. Cutter's scribe training came through and both of them got access to the records the Munitorum kept on the new weapons, as well as a chance to examine one of the chainswords which had fallen into their hands. Throwing caution to the winds Cutter took the sword and started swinging it around like an idiot.

Cutter declared the sword to be pretty damned awesome and immediately claimed it as his own. When the Munitorum objected he insulted their filing system and challenged them to a duel to the death for ownership of the shiny new sword. Sarge considered this to be perfectly normal behavior for Cutter,

In addition to the dinners, teas, and soirees over the next few days each of us went to a few briefings held by each of the three major players. We'd pair up with one of the adepts if we needed legal or investigative advice, or a cogboy if there was going to be any sort of techno-babble. Otherwise we'd bring a squadmate for moral support or to act as a lookout if we were doing something sketchy. All in all our investigations turned out far better than we had expected. Of course we

The Commissariat and the Mechanicus had detained a few troopers who had been using the weapons and obtained a few corpses of soldiers that had died using them. The detainees were being kept around for questioning, but the corpses had been immediately cut apart in the name of science. As the only member of our team with medical training Doc was sent to talk with the medical staff and magos biologis about what they

dumped the problem on one of the adepts, and got Cutter the hell out of there before he killed anyone.

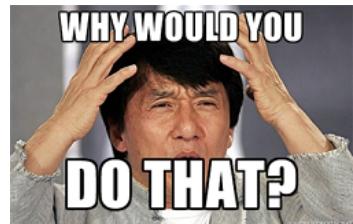
The real problems were Twitch and Nubby, before the end of the investigation both of them were banned from investigating anything ever again.

Twitch wasn't the most stable person at the best of times, but he was far worse around Orks. It was an Ork Kommando raid which had initially triggered his paranoia, so being this near an entire army of them made Twitch incredibly, well, twitchy. He was initially sent to interview a few soldiers who had used the mysterious guns. Unfortunately each session devolved into him questioning everyone in sight about the last Ork sighting, the quality of the perimeter defenses, and whether anyone else had seen that barrel over there move.



Twitch's only contribution to our investigation was repeatedly insisting that this was all the Orks' fault. We eventually gave up on him and let him secure the base after a particularly memorable formal dinner. In a short period of time he accused several officers of 'acting orky', decked a clerk who tapped his shoulder, and accused the troopers who restrained him of being cleverly disguised Orks.

In some ways Nubby was even worse. While Twitch wildly accused people and random objects of being Orks in disguise, Nubby was actually mistaken for a gretchin on three separate occasions. The first two were embarrassing for everyone involved, but guards are meant to be suspicious and no one was actually hurt. The third time was much worse.



Nubby was supposed to be attending a demonstration of one of the mysterious guns along with one of the tech-priests. The demonstration was held in an ad-mech warehouse; Nubby being Nubby he immediately dumped the job onto the tech-priest and wandered off to see what was in stock. He was found by a pair of servo skulls as he pillaged fancy looking data slates out of several inadequately secured storage lockers.

A short firefight ensued, which attracted a nearby enginseer, who in turn misidentified Nubby as a gretchin looter and called for reinforcements. By the time word got to Sarge several more servo skulls were destroyed, Nubby was hiding behind a crate of plasma weapons, and a guard patrol was arguing with the enginseer about whether a gretchin could actually detonate a plasma

weapon. Sarge sorted everything out and a suspiciously bulky looking Nubby was escorted out of the building in exchange for a promise that he never return.



Between the interviews and the demos we got a pretty good look at the weapons and their effects. The tech-priests said there wasn't anything sinister about their function, they were just very well made and never seemed to jam or misfire. There were a lot of fancy words about alloys and mechanisms and shit too, but that really didn't concern us. All we knew was that the autoguns hit about as hard as a bolter, the recoil was just hard enough to let you know the gun worked, and both their report and action sounded awesome.

Cutter expressed similar sentiments about his new chainsword along with dire threats against anyone who tried to take it away from him. He did the same thing if you tried to take away his food though, so we were pretty sure it wasn't anything sinister.

The incredible awesomeness of these weapons was suspicious, but Doc was positive that they weren't mutating anyone. Just to be sure we had the adepts and Alfred, who we were pretty sure was psychic, see if they could detect anything spooky about the gear. None of them detected any warp stuff around the weapons or armor, though Alfred said they were definitely a little weird.

We had almost all the information we needed now. We knew that the weapons were suspiciously awesome and the soldiers used them because they were awesome. We knew that none of the troopers were turning into daemons or mutating and that the weapons weren't doing anything warpy, and Twitch knew that everyone was secretly an Ork. The only information that was still missing was the source of the gear, and as it turned out that last piece of intel was in Nubby's pants.

During his little escapade in the Mechanicus warehouse Nubby had crammed his packs, pockets, sleeves, and pants with expensive looking knick-knacks, parts, tools, and data slates. It was standard procedure to hold Nubby upside down and shake him after one of his adventures; mostly to see if he had gotten his hands on anything important, but also because we had a running bet on how much he'd take. One of several data-slates he had shoved down his pants contained information about a crazier than usual magos who had built a portable weapons factory.

The factory had provided millions of weapons and tons of ammo to the local PDF, but had stopped working a few years after the magos died to

techno-bonitus or something. Eventually the weapons were replaced with more standard gear, but the factory was studied by generations of tech-priests hoping to get it working again. Right up until an Ork Waaagh rolled over the planet.

We brought this info to the Rupert, who immediately recalled tales of an unusually well armed group of greenskins that had been wiped out recently, as well as the name of the regiment which led the final attack. This just so happened to be the same regiment which was spearheading the current attack. A few transports were requisitioned and our little force headed out into the thick of things to have a chat with the regiment. Of course within minutes of our departure, convoys from the Commissariat and the Adeptus Mechanicus rolled out as well.

The regiment in question was currently so far forward that you had to cross through Ork controlled territory to reach them. The only reason they weren't considered to be cut-off and surrounded was the fact that they were kicking so much ass that their boots had started to smell like Ork butt. None of us were keen on crossing the gap between the main lines and the regiment, except for the Rupert, who was happily standing out of the top hatch and waving his sword around. We were paragons of bravery when compared to the adepts and tech-priests though, they didn't see the attraction of driving through a burned out city filled with Orks.

The second we left imperial lines our vehicles started taking small arms fire. Our Interrogator cheerily blasted away with the pintle mounted gun while we kept our heads down and the non-combatants pissed themselves in terror. All in all the drive was pretty pleasant though, nothing heavy enough to pierce the armor was fired at us, the drivers dodged all the land mines, and none of the Orks were good enough shots to hit the Rupert. Unfortunately it came to an end at a crude barricade a few blocks short of the regiment's position.

Now a sane man would have just driven back a bit and tried a different street, but not our Rupert. With a 'Tally Ho' he hopped out of the top hatch and charged the barricade. We all stared at him for a few seconds as he calmly climbed the barricade, completely ignoring the shots landing all



around him. We were considering the merits of just leaving him out there when Cutter revved his sword and charged after him with Alfred close on his heels.



No one could call what followed a heroic charge, it had more in common with a comedy sketch than a valiant assault on enemy lines.

Your typical heroic charge doesn't have two adepts screaming like little girls, or a pair of tech-priests bitching about illogical behavior, or a bunch of guardsmen trying to keep the nerds down below the covering fire from our drivers. Also, most charges are supposed to be against something more fearsome than a bunch of Gretchin with handguns, but we weren't complaining. Of course none of that bothered the

Rupert, he and Cutter gleefully ran to the top of the barricade and started wreaking havoc with swords and pistols while Alfred did his best to keep them from getting shot in the back.

Eventually the rest of us caught up with the idiots, the Gretchin routed, the drivers headed back to the main lines, and the Rupert led us on an 'invigorating stroll through the city'. We followed the sound of autogun fire to the regiment's perimeter where we found the way blocked by a bunch of full sized Orks who were busy tossing Gretchin out of cover and watching them pop. Cutter found this utterly hilarious.



Thinking quickly Sarge had Alfred distract our Interrogator with a flask of tea while we formed a plan. Twitch would lead with some grenades, Sarge would flank left, Nubby and Doc would lay down covering fire, and Cutter would... run straight in screaming before any of us got into position.

Cutter's sudden charge caught us all off guard, it is a widely known fact that no guardsman has any business being closer to an Ork than the maximum range of their lasgun. Orks are bigger, stronger, and tougher than almost any soldier and they usually have a bunch of buddies nearby, despite all this the bloody psychopath was rushing straight into melee range of a whole squad of boyz.

We did our best to lay down covering fire and watched in surprise as, instead of dying messily, Cutter began taking the greenskins apart.

His new sword wrecked their choppas and his berserk fury surprised the hell out of the Orks. Limbs were flying, blood was everywhere, Gretchin were screaming, and not a single Ork noticed that we were mowing them down while they were busy, but it wasn't enough. The Orks began to overwhelm Cutter and we were sure that our melee specialist was going to be Squig food. Then, with a scream that perfectly matched Cutter's, another group of guardsmen rushed into the Orks from behind.

The fight was over in seconds and we all moved forward to greet the troopers who had saved Cutter. As we approached we noticed that each of them had a shiny new autogun, chainsword, and set of body armor; we had found the regiment.

The walk to regiment's HQ was a little awkward. The troopers who escorted us were the biggest, ugliest, smelliest soldiers we had seen outside of the Ogryn auxiliaries and their accents were the worst we'd ever heard. Now, every world has its own variation of low gothic and several older regiments even have their own battle languages, so it wasn't unheard of for guardsmen from different regiments to have trouble talking to each other, but this was just ridiculous. It sounded like low gothic with half the letters missing, a lot of shouting, a bit of hitting, and a ridiculous amount of slang. We couldn't understand half of what they said and they didn't even try to understand us, it was lucky that Cutter had picked up their language somewhere and was able to act as a translator.

With Cutter's help we managed to convey that the Interrogator wanted to talk to their commander, that two 'friendly' convoys would be arriving shortly, and that we wanted to know where their guns came from. To our surprise this was accepted without fuss, there weren't any pointed questions, or evasions, or violent reactions. The Rupert, Cutter, and Alfred went off to talk to the regimental commander while the rest of us were taken to see what the troopers called The Box.

The Box was a huge pile of pipes, gears, screens, and other techy stuff; all crammed into a cube the size of a normal hab, which sat on a large flatbed in a warehouse. It had a big hopper on one end and a few conveyor belts coming out the other, as we watched a huge mess of scrap metal was dumped into the hopper by some of the troopers. A little while later a few of the new weapons rolled out on the belts and were collected by the troopers. The tech-priests were freaking out and yelling at each other in binary, we took this as a positive identification of The Box as the magos' gun factory.

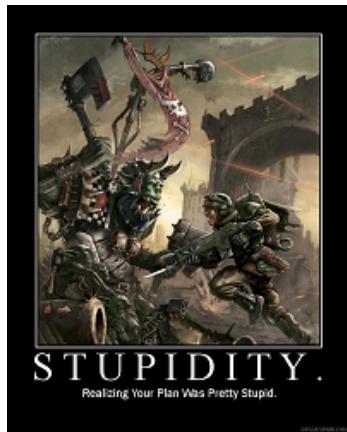




We sat around and watched The Box for a bit while the adepts and tech-priests did their thing. Sarge and Doc speculated about the value of The Box and whether the odd behavior of the troopers was something sinister or not. To a man they were bigger and meaner looking than most guardsmen, the regiment was much farther forward than any sane guardsman would push, and they all seemed to be happy. Guardsmen are not supposed to be happy. Sarge was betting on some sort of daemon living in the box, Doc thought there might be

some sort of heretical archeotech in there, Nubby didn't care, and Twitch had his own theory.

Twitch's paranoia had apparently gotten the better of him. He was interrupting every conversation to tell us that the troopers were Orks, and that the box was full of Orks, and that the Orks outside were double Orks. Eventually we sent him to go secure us a base, the nerds said they couldn't concentrate with all his shouting.



When the Interrogator returned from his little meeting and we brought him up to speed on The Box. Sarge and Doc shared their concerns about it being daemonic and corrupting the regiment, but the Rupert wouldn't hear a word of it. He maintained that the regiment was "positively spiffing; a splendid example of indomitable guardsman spirit" and that the regimental commander was "a jolly good fellow with just the right attitude for life in the guard, manners might need some polish though". The nerds and Alfred were no help, they all maintained that there was no warp corruption around The Box, though Alfred did admit it felt odd. As a last ditch effort Sarge convinced the Rupert to take a tour of the

lines and watch the troopers in action.

So once again we split the party. Sarge, Cutter, Alfred, and the Interrogator went off to see how the troopers acted in combat while the rest of the team kept an eye on The Box.

The regiment was constantly fighting Orks so it was easy to find some action to watch. A section of the perimeter was currently taking fire from a group of Orks, and as they watched a full out assault was launched. Sarge was taking careful note of the troopers' discipline (poor), accuracy (abysmal), and

attitude (excited), when he noticed that Cutter and the Rupert were missing. Both of them were rushing to reinforce the troopers' firing position before the Orks closed to melee. With a curse he and Alfred ran to catch up.

Sarge didn't have to worry though, before either of the idiots got to the barricade the troopers jumped out of cover and counter-charged. Autoguns in one hand and chainswords in the other, the troopers ran screaming into the onrushing Orks and everything devolved into a melee. Sarge and the Rupert stood on the barricade and watched in disbelief as more and more Orks and troopers ran to join the fight, both sides abandoning their positions for a chance to join the brawl. They were barely able to keep Cutter from running in too, if they hadn't all worked to restrain him he would have happily taken his new chainsword into the melee.

This was enough to convince the Interrogator that things were screwed up and The Box needed to go. Cutter was dragged away from the growing fight as they went to rejoin the team and see if blowing the source of the weapons to pieces fixed anything. Cutter calmed down as soon as he was away from the fight, but Sarge was pretty sure that the melee specialist was currently crazier than usual and started looking for a way to get the chainsword off of him without losing any fingers. When they reached the warehouse they found it crawling with troopers.

With Cutter's help they talked their way inside where they found blood, bullet holes, several more troopers guarding The Box, and Twitch barricaded in the room he had been fortifying.

While Sarge and Cutter had been out spectating the rest of us had been chilling in the warehouse. Suddenly all of our coms went dead and one of the tech-priests helpfully informed us that we were being jammed. Not having anything better to do Doc and Nubby got directions towards the source of the jamming and left Twitch in charge of the nerds and The Box. Twitch did not feel this was important enough to merit leaving the room he was currently wiring with mines.

The source of the jamming turned out to be three chimeras with Commissariat markings that had just arrived. A single Commissar and a few squads of storm troopers were milling around trying to talk to the troopers and failing spectacularly. The second he saw the two guardsmen the Commissar and his goons marched over and ordered them to lead him to the source of the weapons.





arrived the Commissar took one look at the box and made a terminal mistake; in nice loud voice he ordered his men to remove all the troopers from the room and rig The Box with explosives.



This was a little unfair, we were in the Inquisition, we were supposed to be the guys that went around with storm troopers ordering people to do stuff they didn't want to do. Doc raised this point, but the Commissar was not inclined to take orders from a bunch of "jumped up guardsmen". When Doc tried to press the issue he got clubbed to the ground by one of the goons and Nubby decided that not having a concussion was the better part of valor.

Doc was left on the ground as Nubby led the Commissar and his men to The Box. Once they

The second one of the goons tried to evict a trooper shit went south. The goon got decked, the Commissar shot the trooper, a few dozen more troopers rushed in, and things devolved into a general melee. Nubby and the nerds took their chance and ran for Twitch's safe room, but the traps weren't quite finished and opening the door would've probably killed them all. So Nubby and the rest hid behind some rubble and watched as the Commissar and his goons were hacked to pieces by the enraged troopers.

The fight went on for a good while after the last of the Commissar's goons were dead, but eventually the troopers got tired and things quieted down. The corpses that littered the floor weren't just left there though, the troopers started gathering them up and dumping them into The Box where they were consumed with wet crunching sounds. This was a bit much for one of the adepts and before Nubby could restrain him the stupid bugger started screaming and praying. The troopers took notice of this and wandered over to the team's hiding spot.

Nubby immediately surrendered to the troopers and they were all led away by a big one with a whip. None of the troopers even checked the door that lead to Twitch's bolt-hole.

After all of this was relayed to Sarge and the Rupert it was decided that there would be no more splitting up. Twitch was pried out of his pile of explosives and trip wires and the whole group set out to find the rest of they set off to save the rest of the team. What followed was much more of

scavenger hunt than a rescue mission.

The adepts were found first. They were both waist deep in a latrine pit with shovels while a bunch of troopers laughed and threw things at them. Cutter negotiated their release by kicking the largest trooper present in the crotch.

The tech-priests were in a nearby building helping a larger than usual trooper with a few augmetics weld entire chainswords onto auto-gun bayonet mounts. Cutter's negotiation tactic failed, it turned out the trooper's augmetics were a little more extensive than they had at first appeared. Luckily he was too busy laughing at Cutter's pain to notice when one of the tech-priests came up behind him and tased him.

Doc was found in the medical tent where a trooper in a smock was chasing him around with a circular saw and screaming about "fixing dat pesky brain". We skipped straight to the tasing this time, then went off to find Nubby.

To our surprise Nubby was in the command tent serving drinks and snacks to the regiment's officers and dodging the occasional kick. The officers were all huge men, by far the biggest we'd seen so far, but the Commander dwarfed them all. It took three sets of body armor kludged together to fit him, he was covered with weapons, and he had the Commissar's hat on his head.

We weren't keen to try tasing him and having Cutter kick him in the junk was out of the question. So as tactfully as possible the Rupert greeted the Commander and offered to exchange a flask of his brandy for Nubby's release. To our relief he accepted. Reunited once more, we all headed for The Box to sort things out before one of the troopers snapped and we all got killed.

We immediately ran into problems when the troopers guarding the warehouse wouldn't let us in. A few arguments and blatant lies were tried, but the guards absolutely refused to stand aside. The Rupert started making plans for a glorious assault in which we would easily kill all the troopers, destroy The Box, then ride a tank of unspecified origin to safety. Sarge decided to go make his own plan.

It was Nubby's newfound status as regimental bitch that saved us from the Rupert's plan. While our Interrogator brainstormed with the nerds about where a unit of horse cavalry could be found for the victory parade, the rest of us did a little experimenting. We quickly discovered that as long as he was



carrying a pile of junk taller than he was the guards would just ignore the greasy little soldier, only paying enough attention to throw a kick his way or lazily try to trip him. Seizing the initiative we stuck a pair of detpacks to a few pieces of scrap metal and sent our most cowardly squadmate to go destroy The Box and save the day.



Arms loaded with cargo Nubby waddled towards the warehouse entrance. We all held our breath as one of the guards looked right at him, but all the trooper did was aim a lazy kick at Nubby's rear as he sidled past. We were all on pins and needles, ready to leap into action the second Nubby called for help, but the call never came. Instead after a few minutes Nubby sprinted back out as casually as he could manage.

Right as he passed the guards one of them held out his foot and Nubby ate dirt. All the guards laughed as Nubby face planted and landed right

on the detonator he was holding.

We all hit the dirt as an explosion shook the warehouse. Immediately afterwards we heard several smaller, wetter sounding explosions. As we rose out of cover to check on Nubby and the warehouse we were greeted by the sight of several headless guards slumping onto the ground. Sarge saluted the stunned Rupert, informed him that perimeter was clear, and requested further orders.

Not being men to look a gift horse in the mouth, or at least not this particular gift horse, we grabbed Nubby and followed our Interrogator into the warehouse to make sure The Box was completely destroyed. Inside we found several more headless troopers and one side of The Box blown open like a bag of popcorn. Weapons raised we slowly flanked around to get a look at what was inside, ready to face some daemonic monstrosity. It was full of Orks.

Twitch was so damn smug.

Well they weren't EXACTLY Orks, they looked more like Ork servitors, Servitorks. Regardless of what precisely they were, the second one saw us they let out a mighty 'Waaagh' and charged. We were ready for them though and the fact that most of them were still attached to The Box by tubes and cables slowed their pace significantly.

We poured las-fire into the Servitorks as they piled out of The Box. Fire discipline was maintained, targets were called out, and every soldier stood his ground; unless you counted the adepts or tech-priests that is, they ran like little girls. We were bloody pros, it seemed like every shot we fired either killed or crippled, and the last Servitor collapsed a few feet short of a very disappointed Cutter.

We slowly advanced on the smoking hole in The Box, keeping an eye out for more surprises and, on Twitch's insistence, headshotting every single fallen Ork. When we reached the edge of the hole we all stopped. The Box was now filled with billowing smoke and random sparks, none of us guardsmen were eager to find out why.

While we all stood around and debated the merits of walking into a smoking, xenos-powered, weapon dispenser, one of the tech-priests apparently found his balls. He marched past us, head held high, and declared his intent to "return this relic to the bosom Omnissiah". A few seconds later there was a loud 'Zzap' and a smoking pile of metal sailed back out of the hole.

The Rupert let out an anguished shout and swore revenge, truly that cogboy had been a man among men and his like would never be seen again. He started a very moving speech about bravery, camaraderie, and charging into a box full of sparking smoke that was obviously hiding an Ork psyker. While he did this we all popped frags and chucked them into The Box.

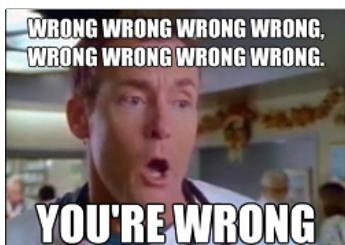
We repeated this until we were out of frags, then waited until the smoke faded and revealed a partially slagged interior with a few smoldering Ork bits. The remaining tech-priest was none too happy with us and the Rupert seemed pretty put out that no one had wanted to charge into the smoke, but we didn't give a shit. As far as we were concerned this was a job well done and the last thing to do was slap enough det packs onto the



damned thing to make sure no one could ever fix it.

When we explained our plan to the rest of the team the remaining tech-priest called us a bunch of uneducated meatbags and stormed off. We ignored this and went to retrieve the munitions that Twitch had been wiring into his bolt-hole. This was not exactly a fast process and Twitch spent the entire time gloating, so everyone but Sarge went to go check the perimeter. Outside the warehouse the camp was absolute chaos; only the troopers near the warehouse had lost their heads, the rest of them just seemed to be very confused about just what the hell was going on.

The Rupert grabbed one of the panicking troopers and demanded a status report. In an entirely non-orky accent the soldier explained that the entire regiment had just realized that they were over extended, short on ammo, and had no defensive positions worth manning. The entire regiment was preparing to bug the hell out and get back to the main imperial lines, if we wanted to get out before the covering barrage hit we better get moving too. It felt damned good to hear that.



We were all congratulating ourselves, grabbing well-earned smokes, and watching Twitch work when the tech-priest returned. He made a very passionate sounding plea for returning The Box to the ad-mech for study. His completely monotone voice was overflowing with emotion and it melted our icy guardsman hearts, how could we stand in the way of science and deprive the Mechanicus of what was practically a holy relic? With tears in his eyes Sarge told the tech-priest that he could take home all the scraps he could carry after we blew the damned thing to shrapnel. For some reason this didn't go over well.

There was a lot of shouting, some unkind things were said, and eventually the Rupert came over to see what all the fuss was about. We explained the situation and the tech-priest made his case for taking the mind altering, xenos powered box of horrors home with him and presumably marrying it since he loved the damned thing so much. Luckily our Interrogator came down on the side of reason. He very politely told the cogboy that this idea was incredibly stupid, and by extension so was the cogboy for even thinking it. This was the final straw for the tech-priest, he screeched something in binary and metal claws ripped through one of the warehouse's doors. Apparently the Mechanicus convoy had finally arrived.

The senior magos of the local ad-mech detachment, the one who had been arguing with us about proper ownership of the weapons during the investi-

gation, tore through the doors and he was a lot bigger than we remembered. When we had initially dealt with the magos he had looked like a normal tech-priest, he'd apparently decided to go get a few combat augmetics for his trip to the front. Being guardsmen we all firmly believed that there was no such thing as overkill, but this was damned close; there were probably smaller dreadnaughts out there. He stomped in with a few servitors backing him up and calmly asked the Rupert to reconsider.

A sane man might have seen the folly of arguing with a three meter tall pile of guns and mechadendrites, but not our Interrogator. In his mind there was no way he could be wrong; anyone who disagreed was either unbelievably stupid or doing it just to spite him, therefore it was his job to either educate them or win them over with his gentlemanly charm. While we all stood back and tried to look non-threatening the poor bastard did his damnedest to explain the way the universe was supposed to work to an increasingly annoyed magos. When this failed he tried to appeal to the humanity of a creature that was more closely related to a Leman Russ than the average human being. When that inevitably failed the Rupert gave in to his frustration, drew his sword, and challenged the metal monstrosity to a duel.

The magos responded by tasing him.

Tasing probably isn't the right term. For one thing most tasers aren't tesla coils mounted on the end of a metal tentacle, also tasing doesn't usually involve a ten foot bolt of lightning that melts swords or chars arms to the bone. It sure as hell incapacitated the Rupert though.

That was enough to convince us that we wanted no part of this shit. While Alfred and Doc saw to our slightly over-cooked Interrogator Sarge formally surrendered The Box to the magos and had Twitch hand over the detonator to the explosives he had covered the box with. We bid farewell to the magos and the little shit-stain of a tech-priest then made our way to the exit. As we left we watched the two cogboys, practically oiling their pants in delight, walked up to The Box then reverentially entered it through the hole we had blasted.

Then Twitch hit the trigger on his backup detonator.



Seriously, who doesn't set up redundant detonators when they're doing demolition work? It's not like you want to walk up and try to fix it if your detonator fails. Some people are just so stupid.

We made our way to the Chimeras the Commissar had used to get here and requisitioned a few drivers from the regiment. The trip back was much less eventful than the trip out, half a regiment had just been through the area and no Gretchin is dumb enough to take pot-shots at a Chimera. Sarge used the vehicle's vox to call HQ and get them to walk the covering barrage over the regiment's former position after the retreat was finished. Sure we had reduced the two tech-priests and their box to greasy stains on the ground, but there was no harm in making sure.

We rode back to HQ with the comforting sound of IG artillery in our ears.

Sarge delivered the team's report to the Generals and the other big wigs since the Rupert was doped to the eyeballs on painkillers. We gave the regiment and the remaining weapons a clean bill of health, after The Box and its weirdboy had been dealt with the weapons had stopped being supernaturally awesome and the troopers had stopped acting like Orks. All that remained was some perfectly normal gear and some unusually buff soldiers.

We pinned the death of the Commissar and his storm troopers on the Orks, it was more or less true anyway. The Commissariat wasn't exactly happy with this explanation, but they blamed us instead of the troopers and we were already on our way off planet, so we didn't worry too much. The Mechanicus was also pretty pissed about the destruction of The Box, unfortunately their boss had mysteriously gone missing during the retreat and they didn't have the authority to really do anything about it. We suggested that both groups lodge a formal complaint with Oak.

With the help of Alfred we requisitioned a berth on a navy ship going our way then got the hell off that planet before the Commissariat or Mechanicus tried to kill us.

The ride back to Professor Oak's Spacefaring Inquisitorial Doom School was relaxing. Doc got to learn about augmetic shoulder sockets and even



helped a navy surgeon install one on the Rupert. Nubby and Cutter played around with the weapons and gear they had looted. Sarge helped Alfred write the final report and enjoyed the fact that the adepts were too scared to talk to him now. Twitch gloated like a dog that caught a squirrel.

Every conversation with him started with "Remember how I said it was Orks and you all called me crazy?". There's nothing quite as annoying as a paranoid who's been proved right.

Eventually we got back to Oak's ship, delivered our report and wandered back down to our little section, it was good to be home. A few days later, well before we could get into the proper spirit of R&R, a runner came for us with orders to report to Oak's office. We all thought back to when we told the ad-mech and Commissariat to file a complaint and desperately hoped that Oak wasn't about to turn us all over as a gesture of goodwill.

Sarge's fears were unfounded though, after the rest of the team arrived Oak praised us all for our exceptional performance. He congratulated the Interrogator especially for identifying the root cause of the problem, removing a piece of heretical technology, and handling the political situation without launching a massive and wasteful purge (Sarge had to kick Twitch when "identifying the root cause" was mentioned). After he finished praising us and lamenting the treachery of the tech-priest, Oak presented a rosette to the Rupert and welcomed him as a full member of the Ordos. To our considerable surprise the Rupert turned the promotion down.

With tears in his eyes and a choke in his voice the Rupert explained that while Oak was happy with our team's performance, he was not satisfied with his own personal performance on the mission. He gave a heartfelt speech about the importance of looking out for your men, listening to their advice (Twitch got another kick here), and not taking foolish personal risks like challenging giant metal men to duels. We only understood three words in ten, but it was very touching nonetheless.

He ended the speech with a request that Oak let him take the exam again after he got a new augmetic arm. A rather bemused Oak agreed and dismissed us all. As we left the Rupert thanked us for our valiant service and promised to request us for his team once he had recovered. We weren't sure how we felt about that, he wasn't perfect but were definitely worse



interrogators out there.



Once that drama was over with we all went and enjoyed our downtime as only guardsman on leave can. There's an old guard saying that goes "Life is short, party hard".

Our R&R ended far too soon, we all still had money and functioning brain cells when the runner came for us. Sarge got us all into the suits Alfred had gotten us and looking far too spiffy we marched ourselves onto the waiting shuttle.

The most beautiful woman we had ever seen greeted us and told us to stand easy. Then, with a smile that would have made the Emperor himself blush, she asked us what we knew about genestealers.

Sarge barely managed to catch Nubby and Twitch as they bolted for the shuttle hatch.

# Chapter 5

## Nubby's Girlfriend

The squad is currently staring goggle-eyed at their Interrogator, who just so happens to be the most beautiful woman they have ever seen. They have just boarded the shuttle to their next mission, which they are being informed, involves purging multiple genestealer cults from an imperial world.

Doc is stuttering out a few poorly worded questions and trying not to stare at the Interrogator's chest while Cutter has already wandered off and is playing with his chainsword. Twitch and Nubby both tried to run for the exit at the world 'genestealer' and only Sarge's iron grip is holding them back. Behind the Interrogator there are five professional looking men who are eyeing the guardsmen with dubious expressions.

So no shit there we were, heading out to fight the foes of the Imperium under to command of the hottest woman within several cubic light years. Sure we were on our way to fight with a bunch of xenos monstrosities and mutant cultists, but our Interrogator was the envy of inquisition agents all across the sector. Any red blooded trooper would have given his right hand to trade places with us, except he'd need it for the long lonely nights after she'd ruined every other woman for him.

None of us had imagined there was ever an Interrogator like her, she was practically perfect. She had a dancer's grace, a charmer's smile, and a singer's voice; everything about her was beautiful and perfect. To top it all



off she had experience running every part of an inquisition operation, was a minor psyker, and was absolutely deadly with her force sword. It was a wonder that she wasn't already an Inquisitor, we all assumed that her boss had just wanted to keep her around as long as possible.

The rest of the team consisted of hard bitten multi-discipline adepts that could only really be called agents. They each had a bit of a specialty, such as technology or stealth or social infiltration, but they were all highly trained operatives that could fill almost any role in a mission. On top of that, every single one of them was wrapped around our Interrogator's little finger, they'd go into the eye of terror itself if she ordered it. They hung on her words at briefings and were constantly researching and practicing in hope of earning her praise.

So it was sort of surprising that most of us didn't really like her.

Doc and Twitch were terrified of her. Doc got tongue tied around most women, he could barely even talk when the Interrogator was around. He would drop what he was holding, stare at anything else in the room, then either freeze completely or mutter something and try to escape. Meanwhile Twitch had decided that anything that beautiful was specifically designed to destroy men. He firmly believed that she was some sort of daemon, or witch, or xenos, or mechanical construct; his theory varied from day to day. Their relationship was not helped by her repeated insistence that he not wire everyone's quarters with mines.

Sarge and Cutter were vaguely distrustful of her. Sarge had a completely justified distrust of authority: none of the squad's previous Interrogators had impressed him with their strategic ability and his guard superiors had been even worse. On top of this, while she was easier on the eyes than any of his former bosses, Sarge automatically assumed that any superior officer that didn't have at least one obvious battle wound probably spent most of their time getting guardsmen shot instead. For his part, Cutter didn't understand what all the fuss was about. Sure the Interrogator's force weapon was pretty cool, but there was only room in his heart for his chainsword-chan.

Nubby immediately fell in love though. He followed the Interrogator around like a foul mouthed, unhygienic, kleptomaniacal puppy.

Honestly we weren't sure who we felt more sorry for. Nubby's constant attempts to impress her were absolutely pathetic, but on the other hand she had to endure Nubby's near constant presence. He would follow her around



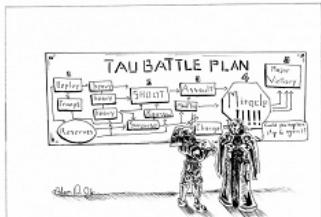
doing errands, offering her little gifts, and constantly telling her about the heroic exploits of Captain Nubby and his merry men. At first she encouraged this behavior, since Nubby was the only man in our squad that would give her anything more than a resigned salute. Everyone has their limits though and Nubby's chatter, blatant thievery, and SMELL could wear down anyone's patience. He even started standing guard outside her quarters while she slept, which was more than anyone should have to bear. Sarge put a stop to that as a sort of peace offering.

Once again, we claimed a section of cabins as our own and let Twitch fortify them. Thanks to our abysmal first impression, not to mention effect Nubby had on the rest of the team, we mostly got away with our routine of napping, PT, and ignoring everyone else. The others seemed to think of us as disposable muscle, and they definitely weren't about to traverse a literal mine-field or argue with a heavily armed paranoid just to talk to us. Of course we had to leave our territory to go to a few briefings with the rest of the team, but since we weren't part of the Interrogator Fan Club we weren't invited to stick around in their part of the ship. The only exception to our isolation was that every once in a while the Interrogator would come down and make an attempt at bonding with us. She stopped trying after Twitch threw holy water at her though.



The end result of all this mutual disgust, aside from making any casual conversation with Nubby unbearable, was that Nubby more or less became the liaison between our squad and the rest of the team. This meant that almost all the information about our mission went through a pathological liar who spent most of the time making eyes at the Interrogator instead of listening.

The information that filtered through to us wasn't exactly encouraging. A major genestealer cult had been broken up several years ago by some badass Inquisitor, but several splinters had already broken off and headed for other worlds. Recently several of those splinters had been tracked down to a medium sized imperial world smack in the middle of the sub sector. Oak had apparently decided that this was an excellent chance for some of the Inquisitor wannabes to prove themselves, so three teams were sent out to try and purge these infestations WITHOUT massacring entire Imperial cities. A few regiments of guard would be stopping by in a few months, so if the teams failed to solve things by then a more general purge would be performed by the boys in green.



Our three team force was given the rough location of no less than six genestealer infestations and told to go down and pinpoint each cult, take out its leadership, and then send in the locals to mop up the rest. Everyone would enter the system discreetly, so as not to spook the cults, and each Interrogator was given a trainee rosette to beat the local authorities over the head with. Each team was assigned two infestations and told to help the others when they finished or if the other teams called for help. Finally, if shit went south they were to try and convince the PDF to do a general purge.

Our Interrogator and the Agents spent the trip going through what info we had about the planet and the cults. The general theory was to find the public face of the cults, perform some sort of daring kidnapping operation, rip the location of the rest of the cult from their minds or databases, then plan a surgical strike with loyal elements of the PDF. We all eagerly awaited the second plan that would be formed after the attempt to capture a psychotic, mutant, xenos cultist surrounded by guards went ploin shaped.



We touched down in a fair sized city and immediately set up base in a pretty ritzy house, apparently the Inquisition wasn't skimping on this mission. The agents all started going out on their little fact finding missions: infiltrating political groups, examining real estate records, hacking databases, and in the Interrogator's case, attending extravagant parties. We were not invited on any of these missions on the grounds that we were so unstealthy that just being in the same general area would blow their cover. The lack of invitation didn't stop Nubby from attending the parties though, one can only imagine the disgust on the Interrogator's face when he kept showing up mid party in clothes he'd mugged off a servant or drunk nob.

Since we didn't have anything better to do we mostly lounged around, ate bad fast food, kept the vehicles in order, and generally transformed a beautiful town house into an Imperial Guard firebase. We had been in transit for several weeks and now we had been told to stay at base while the rest of the team did the investigating. While any guardsman appreciates down time, Sarge wasn't a fan of troopers sitting around with nothing to do, so he stepped up the schedule of our drills and we all helped Twitch fortify

the place. This eventually got us in trouble with the Interrogator, since apparently surrounding a house with razorwire counts as breaking cover, even if you cover it up with decorative shrubbery.

Our relationship with the rest of the team was definitely getting a bit strained. Cutter got yelled at for doing sword drills in the middle of the night: apparently some of the agents had trouble sleeping while someone was revving a chainsword and screaming obscenities at a training servitor. They were also unappreciative of Sarge holding 5am PT in the back yard, and Doc's insistence that everyone submit to a thorough physical. The real problems were Twitch and Nubby though.

Of course Twitch was doing his usual thing, but unlike our previous teams the agents had no appreciation for a properly secured perimeter. After an Agent ignored the posted directions and had to be rescued from a depressed land mine there was a big fight between Twitch and the Interrogator. His perfectly valid points about perimeter security, posted instructions, and the relative safety of mechanical dual action mines compared to motion activated ones were dismissed; in the end he had to remove all booby traps outside the squad's quarters, even the non-lethal ones.

To top everything off Nubby had ground the entire team's nerves down to the bone. His constant petty theft, chatter, and poor hygiene were bad enough, but he was practically stalking the Interrogator at this point. His very presence offended the Agents, and his behavior drove them all into a simmering rage. Only his fictitious rank of Captain and supposed command of our squad kept them from killing him or banning him from their briefings.

All in all it was a relief for everyone when they finally identified the front for the local cult and their primary moles in the local government.

The plan our Interrogator came up with was a beautifully choreographed series of misdirections and lightning strikes. There were cunning disguises, perfectly placed bribes, subtle pieces of blackmail, nearly impossible feats of stealth and speed, and in the middle of it all would be our Interrogator acting as the maestro. Every agent would work in perfect sync to draw the targets in, subdue them, and then return them with their memories modified and the cult none the wiser. Our squad would stay in the van and do absolutely nothing to screw things up.

An extravagant party was organized by the Interrogator and every one of the targets received an invitation they couldn't possibly refuse. A venue was chosen, disguises were perfected, traps were set, and a little out of the way room was filled with several sinister pieces of equipment and a very nervous



Doc. Doc was the only one allowed to even enter the building during the operation, and that was only because no one else was qualified to handle anesthesia. Mind you Doc wasn't really qualified either, his past experience with sedation primarily consisted of sticking unhappy people with the guard-issue one use morphine amps.

The plan called for a lot of really complex stuff that more or less boiled down to grab a target, take them to the little room, drug them, do psyker stuff to them, dump them back in the party with a gap in their memory, then repeat. Cynics that we were, we fully expected this to fail horribly. Our squad sat in the van armed to the teeth, listening to the comms, and just waiting for the screaming to start.

It was a bit of a let down when things went off without a hitch.

The social agents socialed, the stealthy agents stealthed, the psyker agent psyked. One after another the targets were brought to Doc's little room where he kept them sedated while our Interrogator and her assistant rooted around in their

deformed brains. The closest thing to a problem was when Doc found out that a genestealer hybrid is rather resistant to most tranquilizers, but immediately quintupling the dosage solved that problem. In a remarkably short amount of time we had all the information we needed on the local cult, and the victims had no idea that anything had happened. We were absolutely floored.

Seriously, the mission had taken less than an hour from the word go. Most of the night was taken up with going through the motions of the party while our squad sat in the van like a bunch of naughty children. It was the most successful Inquisitorial op we'd seen and Nubby gave us no end of shit about doubting his girlfriend. He was so goddamn insufferable that we eventually kicked him out of the van and told him to go stalk the Interrogator or something for the rest of the night.

The data gained from the party was used to create a detailed list of targets for surgical strikes by the local authorities. The list was packaged with several strategic 'suggestions' and dire warnings about the consequences of failure, then sealed by the Interrogator and handed off to a few powerful local officials who were believed to be trustworthy. We got to come along and watch as these packages were delivered, the snooty bastards nearly shit themselves when they were shown the Interrogator's Rosette.



The Interrogator sealed the packages and instructed the locals to only open them if ordered to do so by someone with an Inquisitorial Rosette. That done, we all packed up, sent a coded message to the other teams informing them of our success, and headed for the next cult location.

A less stalwart bunch of guardsmen would have started to doubt their cynical view of the world, but we had earned every bit of that cynicism with blood, sweat, and tears. Like hell were we going to give it up for something as trifling as a single successful mission. We comforted ourselves with the thought that nothing that perfect could happen twice. We told ourselves that the next op was practically guaranteed to have a colossal fuckup in it, even if we had to supply it ourselves.

Boy were we right.

We moved to another of the major cities on the planet and once again we set up shop in an incredibly posh house. We went about guardifying it while the rest of the team did their intel gathering things, but we were much more restrained this time. The success of the previous mission had been humbling. The team had put up with our shit and performed like professionals; the least we could do was be civil. That's not to say that we were any more fond of the Interrogator or any less sure of the impending disaster, we just didn't see the point of deliberately pissing the rest of the team off while they worked.

Even though we were acting more restrained our paranoia had been ratcheted up several levels by the success, it was just a morose sort of paranoia. Something was inevitably going to go wrong, but no one would ever listen to us or let us take perfectly reasonable security measures. So we just stewed in our makeshift barracks and prepared for all the complex plans to fall apart and dump everything into our laps. Our mood was not improved by Nubby periodically coming in and rambling about his lady love.

Before long the intel was gathered, the targets were identified, and another magnificent party was scheduled by the Interrogator. Once again the Interrogator and her agents put together an incredibly complex plan which would pull one target after another into the little interrogation room manned



by Doc. There were little differences here and there, but it really was the same plan as last time. Right down to us grumpy guardsmen sitting in the van where couldn't get into trouble.



We paid careful attention to the briefing this time, quietly tracking all the ways things could go wrong. When it was over we retreated to our quarters and started making our own contingencies. We had plans for stopping escaping targets, we had plans for intercepting cultists hunting our team, we had plans for holding off reinforcements. Hell, we even had plans for if the Interrogator and the psyker agent both simultaneously turned into

daemonhosts. Sure all these plans were more or less “apply las fire and explosives until it stops being a problem,” but we did have them.

The team was amped up and ready for another perfect op. Well at least Nubby, the agents, and the Interrogator were, but after several days of morosely speculating about what would go wrong our squad had the general attitude of condemned prisoners. We weren't sure what would be worse; if even a tenth of our paranoid worries came true we were all going to die horribly, but if everything went perfectly again we'd probably have to kill ourselves or join the Interrogator Fan Club with Nubby. Most of us considered death to be the better option.



On the night of the party our squad piled into the van with so much military hardware that we clinked when we walked. We had lasguns and melee weapons, ammo and medpacks, several different types of grenades, and more detpacks than even Twitch thought we needed. When a guardsman feels a sense of doom in the air, munitions are his security blanket.

Doc was sent off to his little room with a batch of super heavy tranquilizers he had prepped after the slight difficulty last time. He was going to be alone in there so we gave him a backup guard issue combead and, in direct violation of the Interrogator's orders, Twitch snuck him a few of his toys. That is to say, Doc was given enough directional mines to blow anyone coming through the front door to chunky salsa while simultaneously opening an escape route out the back.

We sat in the van, jittering and waiting for either the impending disaster or the most embarrassing moment of our lives. This op would make us, break us, or quite possibly kill us; all we could do was listen to the comms and wait to see which. You should have seen the look on Sarge's face when the elevator

the stealthy agent was on suddenly reversed direction and smashed him into the top of the shaft.

Grinning like schoolboys, we started piling out of the van even before the agent's scream was cut short by the inevitable \*splat\*. As we sprinted for the building we all felt a deep sense of satisfaction as two of the agents reported they were being followed, and Sarge almost started laughing when the Interrogator's order to abort was interrupted by a gurgling scream and comms going down. Twitch actually did start laughing when Doc reported hostiles approaching his position and his intention to blow the mines then rendezvous with us in the ballroom.

We hit the front doors right as Doc's mines went off. As the explosion shook the building we kicked in the door, buttstroked the rent-a-cops standing guard, and headed for firing positions. Nubby and Twitch sprinted up into the balconies to lay down covering fire while Sarge and Cutter started forcing a path through the crowd. It was complete pandemonium in the ballroom: the crowd was panicking, gunfire was coming from several directions, and the hostiles were almost identical to the rest of the party goers.

One agent was already down, another was pinned behind some pillars, and as we got into position we saw the Interrogator retreat out a side door with three cultists in pursuit. Nubby and Twitch made quick work of the cultists they could see and started sweeping the crowd for hostiles and the original targets. Sarge and Cutter finally made it through the crowd to the surviving agent where they found several cultists pretending to be guests and waiting for a clear shot. Cutter hit them in the rear and started making cultist hamburger while Twitch and Nubby shot anyone who didn't run from the madman with a sword. Sarge took this chance to run in and grab the pinned agent before more hostiles showed up.

The ground team was pulling back towards the front doors when the rescued agent spotted one of the targets in the dwindling crowd and broke away from the group.

Swearing under their breaths Sarge and Cutter ran after the agent as he closed on a spectacularly fat man. The panic in the room covered the sound of the agent's approach and he managed to land a decent hit with his stunner, but the fat man wasn't completely incapacitated. With startling speed he popped back onto his feet, locked eyes with the agent, and started to draw a weapon. Before he could kill the paralyzed agent Cutter hit him



like a truck and started repeatedly clubbing him over the head with the flat of his chainsword.



Once the fat man stopped moving Sarge pulled Cutter off and the whole group headed for the exit dragging the fat man behind them. Twitch saw the cultists' follow-up assassins enter the room before anyone else and immediately nailed two of them, prompting the rest to dive into cover. Thinking fast Sarge took cover behind the wobbling folds of the incapacitated target, and dragged Cutter and the agent down with him. They hunkered down behind the makeshift barricade and hoped to the Emperor that two hundred kilos of blubber would stop small arms fire.

It turned out that enough fat is just as good as a bunch of sandbags, and luckily the cultist's didn't have anything heavier than handguns. Twitch and Nubby picked off most of the cultists, and the last few decided to stick in cover and wait for reinforcements. Sarge was considered releasing Cutter to launch a flanking attack on them when Doc poked his head through the door behind the cultists.



Doc ducked back out of the room and we all did our best to keep attention off of him for a few seconds. Before long he stepped out of the door, calmly walked up to a pair of cultists and tranqued them while behind him the last missing agent walked in and headshotted the final cultist. The room was empty except for us now, so Twitch and Nubby dropped down from the balcony and everyone gathered together to plan the next move.

The fat man was thoroughly dead; it turns out that no amount of body mass will let you live through being used as meat shield against half a dozen handguns. To our surprise the two cultists that Doc had so thoughtfully tranqued were dead too. Apparently they weren't as genestealery as the previous targets had been and the quintuple strength tranq had instantly killed them. In fact a quick examination didn't turn up anything genestealery about them. We had a vague feeling that this was important, but since it wouldn't help us survive the current shitstorm we filed it away for later. Since we were the ones with working comms Sarge took operational command. The two surviving agents were told to fall in behind us, and we made our way out of the building.

Theoretically we should have tried to find the rest of the team first, but we knew one agent was dead and judging by the comm traffic the others were too. Nubby and the surviving agents argued for finding the Interrogator, but Sarge decided she was a big girl who could handle herself, so we all headed for base instead. We carefully made our way to the front door, and got ready for the completely exposed sprint to the van. Right as Sarge was about to give the order to run, the van exploded in a fireball that took out every other vehicle in the lot.

We all looked at Twitch, who shrugged and muttered about making sure no one tampered with it.

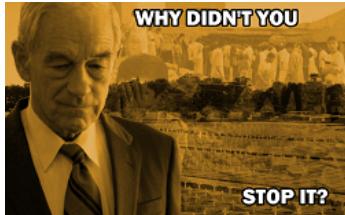
So no shit there we were, standing outside a building full of corpses (most of which WE were responsible for) with no vehicle, no form of Inquisitorial identification, and the rapidly approaching sound of sirens. Judging by the arm that landed next to Doc a bunch of cultists had tried to mess with our van and ran afoul of Twitch's perimeter defenses, but no one shot the agents when we sent them to check on the wreckage so we assumed that none of the hostiles were left. We could have hotwired a nearby vehicle and lead the cops on a daring chase, or we could have had the social agent try to bluff them, or we could have silently gone into custody and awaited rescue by the Interrogator, or we could have even tried to fight our way through an entire city's worth of cops. Instead we decided to just walk home.



The agents weren't exactly happy about this decision; none of us were disguised they said, it was a twenty kilometer walk they said, we were in plain sight they said, and we were all obviously carrying weapons they said. We ignored them though, and as we walked Sarge calmly explained that no sane copper was going to ask a bunch of guardsmen why they were carrying their weapons with them on leave, especially not when there was something much more important to deal with. He did acknowledge the point about it being twenty klicks back to base though, so after a few blocks we found a train station and rode home with some very scared looking administratum workers. Those of us with proper Guard-issue common sense caught some much needed rest while we travelled, the agents just sat there and worried about their precious Interrogator.

The sun was almost up when we got back to base, and the agents were dead on their feet. Doc opened the front door and nearly lost a hand when the Interrogator fired several bolt rounds through it, but after a bit of careful negotiation we convinced her to let us in. She seemed surprised that we

survived. It was a bit insulting really.



After the Interrogator put the bolt pistol down, we all filed in and Sarge gave the squad's report. Doc and the agents filled in the bits he wasn't there for, and we painted a pretty clear picture of the cultists' attack, our swift response, and the rescue of the agents. Sarge also made sure to mention the attempt to capture the fat man and the lack of genestealer characteristics on the cultists, but the Interrogator wasn't exactly impressed with this information. Instead she asked

some very pointed questions about why the interrogation room had been filled with explosives, why we had deployed without orders, and whose idea it was to rig the van with proximity mines. For the most part we stood there and ignored these questions in traditional guardsman fashion, but Twitch made a few unkind comments about the Interrogator's retreat which she graciously decided to ignore.

Eventually the Interrogator got tired of yelling at us and told the whole team to pack their gear up and get into the flier in the garage. She had decided that this part of the mission was beyond salvage and ordered an immediate purge by the PDF. We had less than an hour to get our shit together and get the hell out of there before the killing started.

None of us were happy about the purge order. A whole lot of civvies were going to be killed and the PDF grunts were going to be pretty messed up by the end of the purge, but in the end, it was the Interrogator's call to make. We didn't have any clever suggestions and she clearly wasn't interested in listening to our half-baked plans, so we kept our mouths shut. Hell, even if we had a real idea for fixing the situation we couldn't have stopped the purge without the Interrogator's Rosette.

So feeling like our heroic rescue had been for nothing, we collected everything we could carry, got into the team's flier, and awaited further orders.

We hadn't even finished stowing our gear when the Interrogator and the two agents sprinted into the flier in full combat gear. The agents jumped into the pilot seats, and we immediately took off while the Interrogator told us that one of the other teams had requested aid.

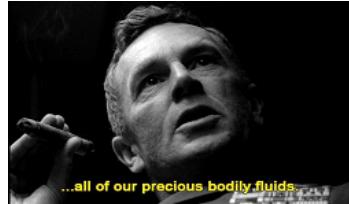
The Interrogator explained that the other team was on its way to deal with a nest of cultists and expected heavy resistance, so our team would make comm contact and act as reinforcements as soon as we arrived. We cracked open our supplies and started gearing up for a big fight as we flew. This time it would be a straightforward battle, and we would be ready. Far below us las and artillery fire started to spread across the city.

The squad was in a grim mood. Thousands, if not millions, of Imperial citizens were dying below us, and it was all because our team had botched a single op. We looked back on the sense of smug satisfaction we felt when the Interrogator's plan had fallen apart and felt a little ashamed. This wasn't just about proving ourselves right and keeping our asses safe, there were millions of lives on the line here. The entire squad vowed that this would not happen again, and each of us swore that we would do our damnedest to aid the other teams and complete the mission objectives, except for Twitch that is. Instead, the nutter swore that he would put a stop to the Interrogator's nefarious plans to harvest his precious bodily fluids. Doc hit Twitch and told him to stop plotting to kill our superior officer unless Sarge told him to.

We were all locked, loaded, and ready for action when we entered the other team's territory and the Interrogator made comm contact. She reported that the second team was pinned down in a building by several well armed cultists and hostile reinforcements were probably on the way. We would land on a nearby roof, get into position, then take out the attackers and any other cultists while the team inside finished their mission. The agents would stay in the flier and give air support if needed.

As soon as the flier touched down we fanned out across the edge of the roof and started setting up for one hell of a sneak attack. The targets below us were obviously professionals: they were spread across several pieces of cover, had military grade weaponry, and were maintaining fire discipline. Since these guys were head and shoulders above the cultists we had fought earlier, Sarge ordered us to hold fire and pick our targets for a massive opening salvo. Before any of us could finish setting up our shots though, the Interrogator ran to the edge of the roof and started pouring bolt fire onto the cultists below.

They responded instantly; every one of them turning towards the roof and laying down suppressive fire. We all immediately hit the deck, leaving the Interrogator as the only clear target. She threw up a force shield, but she wasn't a powerful offensive psyker and after a few seconds she collapsed with a scream. When Nubby saw this he burst out of cover and started hosing las



fire back at the cultists with no regard for his personal safety. Doc barely managed to pull him to the ground before their return fire killed him.

Sarge took stock of the situation, decided it was salvageable, and assumed operational command. Figuring he needed some form of identification for when he reached the other team, he grabbed the moaning Interrogator's bolt pistol with its obvious =][= marking, then ordered Twitch to take her back to the flier.



Twitch grumbled and pulled the limp Interrogator over his shoulder then started to slowly haul her towards the flier, complaining loudly that she wasn't even trying to walk. Sarge decided that the squad's current positions were fucked, so he gave the order to pop smokes and flashes then get into new ones. While we shifted positions, Sarge started flipping through frequencies on his combead in an attempt to contact the other team and coordinate an attack. We were still waiting for the smoke to clear and the fight to resume, when Cutter spotted the cultists' reinforcements coming in on their own flier.

We'd been ready for something like this though; both Sarge and Nubby had brought heavy ordinance along. Nubby got his launcher ready, and as soon as the flier came into range he nailed it with a Flakk missile. The shot wasn't perfect, and the pilot managed to make a crash landing at the edge of the smokescreen, but Sarge raised his nade launcher and dropped several rounds onto it before anyone could get out. That done with, he went back to scanning the comm channels and finally made contact with the other team. Sarge asked for a sitrep and we all got patched in just in time to hear "Our situation is FUBAR. We're pinned down by several heavily armed cultists, and someone just fragged our Interrogator's flier."

Whoops.

That was a little embarrassing, but these sort of things happen in combat and we were still in the middle of a fight.

Sarge told them that we had eyes on the cultists and would deal with things while the other team sat tight. As the smoke cleared he started dropping nades onto every piece of heavy cover he could see while the rest of us waited for him to flush out the targets. A few seconds later the other team voxed back and told us to "Bloody hurry, cause they're dropping nades right on our heads here."

Double whoops.

This screw-up was too big to be ENTIRELY our fault. In fact there was no way that a screw-up this big could be accidental. After all, the

Interrogator had been in comm contact with the other team the whole time and had been the first one to open fire...

We all turned our heads towards Twitch and the Interrogator and watched in horror as she sprang upright with Twitch's laspistol in her hand. Twitch reacted with lightning speed and threw himself backwards, but before he hit the ground she drew a bead on his head. She met his eyes, and then, with the most beautiful smile in the entire galaxy, she pulled the trigger.

This was Twitch's laspistol though; its owner was a man who once put directional charges on the backplate of his armor just to make sure no one snuck up behind him. There was an ominous hum when the trigger was depressed, the smile faded, and a second later the pistol's power cell went off like a small grenade. Taking the bitch's hand with it.

It really shouldn't have surprised any of us that Twitch had booby-trapped his weapons. He'd regularly told us to never, ever touch any of his stuff without asking first. It surprised us anyway though, and we all stared at the explosion like a bunch of dumb recruits. This meant that every one of us was dazzled by the explosion which blew Twitch and the Interrogator in opposite directions. As most of us tried to blink the spots out of our vision, Cutter charged for the downed Interrogator while swearing at the top of his lungs.

Cutter was damned fast, but he had a lot of distance to cover and the Interrogator was back on her feet in seconds. She sprinted for the flier and one of the agents poked his head out of the door to see what the hell was going on. What he saw was a badly wounded Interrogator running for safety while Twitch blindly sprayed las-fire and Cutter bore down on her revving his chainsword and screaming for blood, so in retrospect his decision to draw his sidearm and give her some covering fire was pretty reasonable. Reasonable or not it still screwed us though; Cutter had to start dodging shots and only caught up right as the Interrogator was boarding the flier.

Cutter made a good attempt at removing the Interrogator's pretty head, but he was forced to dodge at the last second by the agent. The Interrogator's counter stroke nearly impaled Cutter, but he fell back and only took a minor stab wound from her force sword. This gave the agent enough time to slam



the door shut, and the flier started to take off as Cutter futilely hacked at the door with his chainsword.



The moment the Interrogator broke for the flier Sarge started trying to raise the agents on the comm, but to his absolute disgust he found that the Interrogator had locked the whole squad out of the team's network. So with no way to get our side of the story across we just stood there and watched the flier take off. Our paralysis lasted until we realized that it was coming around for a strafing run.

It didn't surprise any of us that the agents had sided with their precious little Interrogator. Later on we might try to bring them around, but right then they were sheltering our enemy and trying to kill us. We all scattered and managed to avoid the first salvo from the flier's nose gun.

Thinking fast, Doc grabbed the missile launcher from a stunned Nubby and loaded our backup Flakk round. Doc wasn't exactly a pro at using the heavy weapon, but it was a pretty near miss and he definitely got a chunk of the flier. Sarge supplemented this with some airburst grenades from his launcher, and between the two of them we convinced the flier that we weren't worth the trouble. It turned tail and limped away into the distance as we all stood there and tried to figure out what the hell just happened.

We were brought back to reality by the sound of fighting from the street below. The cultists in the building were laying heavy fire onto the poor buggers that we'd done our level best to teamkill. Doc went to see to the slightly crispy Twitch and slightly stabbed Cutter, while Sarge and Nubby pumped the rest of the squad's grenade and missile launcher rounds into the building. This went a long ways towards convincing the other team that our previous attacks had all been a misunderstanding.

The barrage of explosives pretty much leveled the building, and none of the surviving cultists decided to stay and fight. Neither our squad or the team below was in position to give chase, so we all withdrew and tried our best to sort everything out over the comm.

We explained the situation as best we could, and, mostly thanks to the former guardswoman on their team, we eventually convinced them that this was all our Interrogator's fault. The problem was that we didn't really have any idea what to do about it. We were just a bunch of grunts, and the other team was down to a guardswoman, a psyker, an arbite, and a pair of badly wounded clerics. Apparently the Interrogator and all of their team's nerds

had been on the flier that Sarge and Nubby had blown to pieces. We blamed that one on the agents in the flier when they asked who had shot it down.

None of us had any great ideas about how to track down the Interrogator, so we decided to fall back to the other team's safehouse and see if we could raise the third team's Interrogator. We hotwired a pair of vans, and as we headed for their base Doc did his best to fix up the two wounded clerics. Neither of them was going to be back in the fight anytime soon though.

On the brighter side, Twitch had lost his eyebrows and needed a new pair of pants, but was otherwise fine. And Cutter hadn't even noticed the shallow stab wound he took, as he was far more concerned about the teeth his chainsword had lost when he tried to cut open the flier. The rest of the squad was completely unharmed, but Nubby was deeply depressed over the Interrogator's treachery. We tried to be understanding, but it was hard. Especially when he started spinning theories about what could have FORCED her into betraying us all.

When we got to the safehouse we all went about reloading and rearming ourselves while Sarge and the Guardswoman tried to contact the third team. Luckily there was a backup flier parked at the safehouse, so we started moving everything we might need into it in case the third Interrogator wanted us to join him. After only a few minutes of this we started to hear the distinctive sounds of heavy artillery and las fire in the distance.

We quickly realized that our Interrogator had called in another purge for Emperor knows what reason. Being inside an inexorably shrinking military cordon is bad, so we decided it was time to get the hell out of dodge. We loaded up the wounded and the last of the supplies we could carry, then the Arbiter got us into the air while Sarge and the Guardswoman tried to use the flier's vox to reach the local authorities.

We were wildly unsuccessful in our attempts to convince the PDF to stop the purge. Their orders had been given by someone with a genuine Inquisitorial Rosette, and Emperor help the man who defies the Inquisition. Sarge failed miserably when he tried to explain that WE were the Inquisition, as without a Rosette to prove it no one would believe him. We considered going back to look for the second team's Rosette, but since their Interrogator had



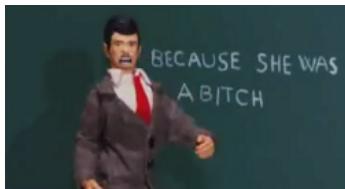
been wearing it when we blew him to pieces that idea was quickly abandoned. Eventually the PDF must have reported our attempts to stop the purge to the Interrogator, because they suddenly got very interested in where we were voxing them from. We quickly deactivated our vox, in case they could trace it, and watched the fireworks below us while we made our way towards the third team's last known position.

We spent a lot of time talking during the flight, none of this shit made any sense to us and we had no idea what to do about it. Initially we asked Twitch what the Interrogator's plan was since he'd been sure she was planning to kill us the entire time, but he quickly devolved into theories about "precious bodily fluids." Nubby wasn't any help either; he kept insisting that this was all some sort of misunderstanding and the Interrogator was a sweet girl who would never hurt a fly. We weren't going to get anything useful out of them, so we put our heads together with the rest of the team and tried to figure shit out.

Looking back it was sort of weird that the cultists at the party hadn't been genestealery or cared about shooting the fat man, so we decided that they must have been the Interrogator's friends and the plan had been to wipe out the whole team. If that was her main goal though she could have killed us all in far simpler ways, so we figured that it was supposed to look like an accident. We didn't really see the point though. If

she just wanted to order purges it provided a nice justification, but she hadn't ordered a general purge on the first cult. Maybe she wanted to perpetrate a mass murder and still pass her Inquisitor Test or something.

Anyway, it was definitely her plan to get us into a fight with the other team and presumably have us wipe each other out. We didn't really see a reason for that either, but maybe she just wanted to kill the other team and figured she'd take out two birds with one stone. It made a stupid sort of sense if she was low on cultist manpower and afraid of people trying to stop her purges. Her reason for the purges was still a mystery though; all we knew was that that she wasn't working with the genestealers, since they weren't going to live through the purges either. In the end we decided that she was just an utter bitch and tried to catch what sleep we could before the flight ended.



We woke to the sound of more artillery fire. We were over the city where the last team was supposed to be working, and we all recognized the shitstorm below us. The damned bitch had ordered another purge. We were pretty sure she couldn't have ordered this one without either enlisting or killing the third Interrogator, but it didn't hurt to check. We turned the vox back on called the third team, and to our surprise we actually got them on the first try.

Sarge immediately explained that our Interrogator had gone nuts, tried to get us to kill the other team, and was running around ordering mass purges for generic evil reasons.

Unfortunately the Bitch had their Interrogator under her thumb, so the only response we got was an order to surrender to the Inquisition and seek mercy for our sins. That was bullshit so we turned the vox back off and started to debate the merits of catching a ride back to Oak's ship, hanging out on some tropical island until this all blew over, or even getting a job on a rogue trader. Our boss was an evil bitch who got off on ordering mass purges, the nearest other official was totally whipped by said evil bitch, several major cities were being needlessly genocided, and no one on this damned planet would listen to us unless we had one of their Rosettes. Everything was a horrible bloody mess and it shouldn't have been our job to sort it out.



Our plans for desertion came to a sudden halt when the psyker from the second team started freaking out. We hadn't known this psyker for very long, but he didn't seem like the type to randomly start screaming; so while Doc saw to him we all started looking out the windows and checking the sensors for anything warpy going on. The problem quickly became apparent: a pair of massive glowing lines shot in different directions across the ground under us. A second later this was followed by dozens of smaller lines which formed eldritch symbols all across the city below.

We weren't exactly geniuses, but it didn't take a bloody savant to see that this was some serious warp shit or that the two glowing lines were extending towards the other two cities that the Interrogator had ordered purged. Even though none of us were sure about what was going on here, everyone was pretty sure this was all her fault.

The situation was going to shit at incredible speed. The only thing we could think to do was to try and get our hands on one of the two remaining Rosettes and use it to tell everyone to stop being retarded. So we stayed on course for the third team's base and hoped that both Interrogators would

still be there.



While we flew everyone geared up for a fight; we weren't going to ask nicely and appeal to reason then be really surprised when they all sided with the hot chick over a bunch of scruffy guardsmen. We were going to hit them hard and let the Emperor sort them out. After this shit was over we could argue with any survivors while Doc tried to reattach their limbs.

We sold the remnants of the second team on our plan. The Guardswoman and the whimpering psyker would come with us while the arbite han-

dled the flier and kept an eye on with the two wounded clerics still chilling in the back. The plan was pretty simple: bust in, head for the two Interrogators, kill or subdue anyone in the way, and hopefully grab one of those damned Rosettes intact. It was going to be a tight and brutal fight; several well trained hostiles, a lot of walls of varying thickness, an enemy who knew the terrain better than us, severe consequences for failure, and to top it off it looked like the safe house was located halfway up a damned tower. Not only would it be a rough fight, we also had to figure out a way to get inside without running into an ambush. Good thing we had a flier.

Now, this flier didn't have any weapons, so we couldn't really use it for air support. It did have a nice amount of armor though, and the third team's safehouse had some nice big windows...

A few minutes later we finally forced open the flier's doors and started digging our way out of the pile of safety glass, wall fragments, and destroyed furniture we had created with our landing.

All things considered, it was incredibly lucky that we were the first ones out of the wreckage.

As we stumbled out of the crippled flier we saw several hostiles struggling to get free, and we took the chance to hit them with some of Doc's, now normal strength, tranqs. We congratulated ourselves on successfully breaching the perimeter without even killing any other Inquisitorial agents. Probably. Truly we were the pinnacle of professionalism.

After we finished patting ourselves on the back over our dynamic entry we formed up and started making our way deeper into the safehouse. We knew how to clear a building and had plenty of flash grenades, so we moved from room to room at a steady pace, flashing, sweeping, and securing. The first few rooms were all empty, but before long we ran into a pair of adepts who practically shit themselves when we flashed them. We clubbed them down, secured their hands and feet, and then asked them a few questions

about where exactly everyone was.

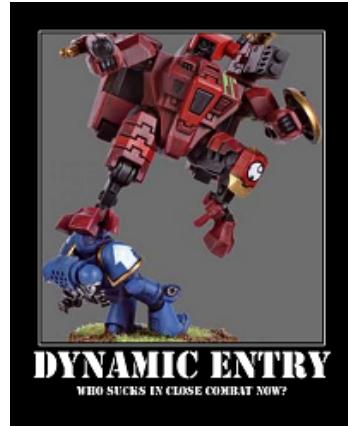
The adepts were actually very helpful. They made a few feeble attempts to defy us, but after Sarge hauled them both to a window and pointed out the glowing shit both adepts came around to our way of thinking. They also found Cutter's explanation of how the Three Strikes rule works with a chainsword very persuasive. They pointed us towards a set of rooms that belonged to the third team's Interrogator and confirmed that our former Interrogator was in there with him. We taped them to the wall and made our way towards the Interrogators; there was going to be a reckoning.

There are two good ways to clear a hostile building. You either want to hit hard and fast with several teams working together to take out the enemy before they concentrate their forces, or you want to move in stealthily and take out small groups of enemies while avoiding major ones. Unfortunately the small size of our team and our arrival via a crashing flier meant that these good options weren't really possible. We were stuck with the sorta-almost-ok option of just moving carefully and praying to the Emperor that we'd spot the inevitable ambush before it was sprung. We didn't.

We methodically worked our way towards the room where the Interrogators were supposed to be; we had it down to a science. Every room went the same: check the door, get into position, flash, storm, realize the room was empty, and move on to the next door. The lack of opposition was unsettling, and we were all on pins and needles when we got to a door that was sturdier than any of the others we'd seen. If the adepts had been telling the truth, both the Interrogators were inside.

We got into position and readied our weapons while Twitch checked the door for traps and quietly unlocked it. Sarge got a firm grip on the handle, cooked a flash, cracked the door open, and tossed it through. Before he even started to close the door the grenade bounced off something in mid air and sailed right back through. Sarge managed to get out an "OH SHI—" before the flash went off about eight inches in front of his face.

Sarge's shout triggered the bone deep reflexes that all guardsmen develop, and the rest of us managed to turn away. Everyone was still dazzled and



deafened, but at least we weren't completely blind. Also, our turn meant that we just happened to be looking in the right direction when the two agents dropped in through the ceiling. They landed on our flanks in perfect crossfire positions, and even though we were all deafened we could FEEL heavy boots pounding towards the door. Thank the Emperor that one of the agents came down next to Twitch and Cutter.

The agent who came down next to Twitch and Cutter was the social one we had gone through such trouble to rescue back at the party, and as he landed he raised a pair of autopistols. He had about a quarter second to look surprised before a full auto burst hit him in the chest and a chainsword hit him in the neck. That taught him to be ungrateful to his rescuers.



The second agent landed next to the guardswoman and psyker, neither of whom had reaction times as good as Twitch and Cutter. Before the guardswoman managed to raise her lasgun the agent landed a brutal kick on her head, raised his autogun, and opened fire on the psyker and Nubby. The poor bastard didn't have a chance to do anything, but his death gave Nubby the split second he needed. With weasley speed Nubby got behind the collapsing psyker and held him up like a shield while he sprayed the agent with wild las-fire. The Emperor was with Nubby: several of the unaimed shots hit the agent and Doc's followup salvo finished the job.

The entire fight had taken just a few seconds and the smoke from the flash was still fading as the second agent crumpled to the ground. The psyker was dead, the guardswoman was groggily cursing the dead agent, a barely conscious Sarge was lying on the floor, but the rest of us were okay. We had about two seconds to take stock of the situation before the door burst off its hinges and landed squarely on Sarge.

The door was followed by a pair of heavily armored arbites carrying shields and shock mauls. Shields raised, they stood right on top of door and looked really confused when they saw an entire squad of guardsmen facing them with weapons raised. There was a brief pause while the arbites realized that the agents were already dead, and we all stared at the feebly cursing lump being crushed under a heavy door and three hundred kilos of arbites. Then Cutter ran in with a scream and the fight was on.

Cutter did most of the work this time; there's just no good way to use a suppression shield to stop both las-fire and a maniac with a chainsword. The arbite on the left made a decent attempt at it though: he held off several strikes from Cutter and shots from Twitch and Doc while his buddy kept Nubby and the guardswoman from shooting him in the back. He couldn't keep it up though. A thrust from Cutter's sword nearly made it through, and the arbite parried the strike right into his buddy's back.

The wounded arbite staggered forward and removed over a hundred kilos of meat and armor from Sarge's back. With a roar of rage Sarge pushed himself upward and managed to unbalance the arbite that was still on top of him. We all seized the opportunity and several volleys of las-fire got past the arbites' shields, ending the fight.

While the rest of us restrained the badly wounded arbites and hauled them out of the way Sarge slowly pushed himself off the floor. With a pained groan he got his feet under him and lifted the reinforced door, complaining about its weight and cursing arbites in general as he did so. Right as Sarge managed to get upright, his curses were interrupted. A pair of bolt rounds came through the doorway and slammed into the remains of the door and his back.

The door took the brunt of the damage, but Sarge was thrown forwards and slammed into the wall head-first. This was the final straw, and Sarge slipped into unconsciousness as Doc hastily grabbed him and dragged him out of the line of fire. From inside the room we heard the third team's Interrogator yell at us to surrender in the name of the Holy Inquisition. A quick peek revealed that both he and the Bitch were holed up behind a makeshift barricade and had bolt pistols trained on the door.

So no shit, there we were, standing outside a room containing a pair of hostile and well armed Interrogators manning a prepared position, and with no noncom to tell us what to do. Up to now we had always looked to Sarge when the going



### **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:**



got tough, but he was out for the count. Twitch and Nubby immediately started arguing with each other, Cutter sat on one of the wounded arbites and worked on dislodging a piece of armor from his chainsword, Doc got Sarge comfortable in a corner, and the guardswoman stared at us like we were a bunch of retards.

Eventually Doc got tired of the guardswoman giving him the stink eye and decided that it was his duty as the only sane member of the squad to take charge. He put down his medkit, hefted his lasgun, crept as close to the doorway as was safe, and politely asked the third team's Interrogator if he'd consider surrendering the Bitch to us.

This resulted in a brief astonished silence and several bolt rounds sailing through the open doorway.

Doc was not deterred though. As the rest of the squad watched in disbelief he repeatedly tried to convince the two Interrogators to stand down. It really was something to see: Doc standing against the wall and calmly laying out our grievances and arguing Inquisitorial regulations. Especially considering that they would periodically fire bolt rounds at him. The crazy part was that he actually seemed to be making progress: the more he argued the more thoughtful the third team's Interrogator sounded and the more furious the Bitch sounded. The tipping point was when the guardswoman chimed in, confirmed Doc's story, and asked the Interrogator to look out the window at the glowing warpy stuff.

We heard him get up, walk to the window, and exclaim about it being a "three-fold sacrificial ritual." A second later we heard the distinctive sound of the Bitch's force sword, a meaty thunk, and the most sulfurous swearing to ever come out of such a beautiful mouth. The good news was that there was just one hostile Interrogator now.

Diplomacy wasn't going to work this time, though Nubby made a few attempts which only resulted in more swearing and bolt-fire. We wanted to just rush her, but our former Interrogator was a damned good markswoman and none of us were keen to try trading shots with her. We started trying other things: like grenades and blasting holes in the walls. Unfortunately we quickly discovered that the walls were too sturdy to blast through without collapsing the building, and she bounced every grenade back with her damned telekinesis. The best we could do was pop a smoke on our position and hope



it wafted towards her.

We were running out of options that wouldn't result in one of us getting shot when Doc remembered the arbites' shields. Two of us could charge in under smoke cover then try to flank her while the rest of the squad gave suppressing fire from the door. Hopefully the shields would hold long enough to get close to her and allow the rest of the team a chance to move forward. Cutter was an obvious choice for rushing in, but it surprised the hell out of us when Nubby volunteered to carry the other shield.

This behavior was very suspicious coming from Nubby. We reminded him that the Interrogator was a heretical super-bitch, but he just wouldn't listen. He insisted that she was a nice girl who just got stuck "runnin' wif a bad crowd." We pointed out that she tried to kill us all, he said that most of our superior officer had too. We pointed out that she had killed the other Interrogator, he said that we'd been planning to do that too so we shouldn't judge her for it. Finally Doc pointed out she had stabbed Cutter and would stab Nubby too if she got the chance. Nubby maintained that "lotsa people 'ave stabbed Cutter, I'm not worried, I fink she likes me deep down."

We gave up at this point and just gave him the damned shield. With any luck Cutter would get to her first and chop her head off before Nubby had a chance to be retarded.

We got ready, popped the smoke, and Nubby and Cutter ran towards opposite sides of the room. Cutter was faster by far, but right as he got close the Interrogator landed a grenade at his feet while staggering him with bolt rounds. Cutter leapt backwards in time but the blast still sent him and his shield flying across the room, Nubby took advantage of the distraction though. We all heard a clang as he clubbed the bolt pistol out of her hands, and another as he knocked her to the ground.

The rest of us started moving forwards, but stopped in sheer shock when we heard the Interrogator surrender to Nubby. She admitted that she had been forced to work against the Imperium by evil heretics who would kill her if she disobeyed. She just wanted to be safe.

We cleared the smoke and watched in amazement as he reached down



and helped her up, quietly telling her that he'd make sure it all worked out as he did so. He'd protect her from the "bad people," no one would ever hurt her again. Then in a fluid movement she drew her force sword, swung it in a circle, and bolted for large security door at the far end of the room as Nubby fell to the ground screaming.



Twitch and the guardswoman opened fire on her as she ran, but her damned shield held out just long enough for her to pass through the door and lock it behind her. Doc ran over to Nubby and found him lying a full meter from his legs; it was a bad wound but the cut had been across the thighs not the belly. Thinking fast, Doc put a tourniquet on both legs and started a blood transfusion. While he worked he lectured Nubby about the importance of critical thinking and listening to other peoples' advice.

Twitch, the guardswoman, and a moderately wounded Cutter walked over to the security door to see if they could get through it. To their surprise it wasn't an escape passage, it was a panic room. A little fiddling got the comm-screen working, and they were treated to the sight of a furious Interrogator sitting in the middle of a small rune covered room with a bloody sword in hand. A bit more poking let them find the transmit switch and Twitch formally placed the Interrogator under arrest and ordered her to turn over her Rosette and any bodily fluids she had stolen. She burst into hysterical laughter at this.

To everyone's surprise the Interrogator actually started monologuing once she had finished laughing. Her defeat by a band of dubiously competent guardsmen had apparently unhinged her. Her brethren had spent years preparing this ritual, the blood of innocents slain by their very protectors would fuel a warp-storm which would tear this entire blah blah blah, I'm a heretical-super-bitch, blah blah. When she started ranting about the glory of Chaos Twitch, Cutter, and the guardswoman quickly became bored and walked away from the intercom; leaving the infuriated Interrogator shouting about being able to watch us all die to the horrors of the warp before they claimed her.

While the guardswoman went to help Doc and Cutter guarded the security door, Twitch wandered over to the headless Interrogator. He poked the dead man with his lasgun, in the official Guard method for determining the ickyness of a corpse, then grudgingly started going through the man's pockets when the guardswoman shouted at him to stop being a pansy. Twitch found the Rosette pinned to the Interrogator's high collar. Well, most of it: the top quarter of the little device was feebly sparking in the puddle of blood

spreading from the severed head. Twitch got out his roll of duct-tape and went to work, but the end result didn't look very Inquisitorial. Also the data-jack was full of... fluids.

On the other side of the room Doc was finishing the field dressings and still giving Nubby shit. The subject had finally come around to how important it had been to get an Inquisitorial Rosette, and how Nubby had fucked it all up. Amazingly this got a response out of the semi-conscious Nubby.

↳ “Eh Doc, ‘choo remember how Sarge said I should stop goin’ fru peoples pockets? Well when I was helpin’ er up, I started finken about ‘ow dat fancy bracelet of ‘ers was so ‘portant. I figured dat if she was all being bossed round by chaos an’ such, she prob’ly shouldn’ be ‘lowd to keep it. So I nicked it while she was busy cuttin’ me legs off”

And just like that we won. The little shit’s kleptomania had saved us all. After years of telling Nubby to stop stealing people’s stuff, he grabbed the one thing that really mattered.

He was still an idiot though.

Doc grabbed the Rosette off of Nubby, tossed it to the guardswoman, and told her to comm to the PDF as fast as possible. We had completely destroyed the third team’s comm systems, but the flier’s vox was still intact. The arbiter and guardswoman started arguing with PDF officers and government officials from the wrecked cockpit. While they were trying to get the brass to see reason and stop feeding the giant sacrificial circle, seriously it was all glowing and shit, the rest of us decided what to do about the Interrogator.

She had really started freaking out when she realized the Rosette was missing, but the sight of Cutter chilling outside her door with his chainsword ready had convinced her to stay inside. We either needed to kill her or capture her; and as attractive as the first option was, it would be much easier to smooth things over with Oak if we were able to turn her over. The debate ended when Sarge pried himself up, staggered in, and ordered Twitch to weld the panic room shut.

With Sarge bossing us around we started getting shit done again.

Twitch blast welded the panic room shut, Doc went to help convince the PDF to stop being retarded, and Cutter started dragging all the wounded together for triage. Sarge and Nubby just sort of hung out and basked in the sound of the Interrogator’s outrage.



fix greentext



As the purges were called off the giant glowy runes faded away and the Interrogator's curses attained a whole new level of venom. That venom faded after Twitch found the panic room's air intake and sealed it shut. We all sat around and watched as she slowly ran out of fresh air and passed out, then we waited a bit longer. When Doc finally decided that she was either comatose or too hypoxic to cause trouble we cut open the doors, dragged her out, tranqued her, and left her in Doc's capable hands.

Sarge became the de facto Interrogator at this point. The second team had been reduced to two functional members, and what remained of the third team was being restrained by a few dozen rolls of duct tape until the situation could be explained to them. A flier was requisitioned and Sarge took the guardswoman and arbite to go sort everything out with the local authorities while everyone else stayed in the wrecked tower.

The situation was explained in broad terms. A cordon was to be put around all three cities and the surgical strikes in the sealed orders were carried out, but no more mass purges would be done until a fully certified Inquisitor ordered it. Sarge told all the brass and bigwigs to just sit tight and wait for the guard regiment to arrive with their senior Inquisitor; they'd be able to sort out the chaos rune bullshit and decide whether the genestealer cults warranted a full purge.

We used the Rosette to requisition a ride from the navy. We made sure everything was sort of stable before we left, but as far as we were concerned our mission now consisted of getting the Interrogator back to Oak as soon as possible.

The guardswoman who had helped us through the last battle decided to stay with the arbite, the two wounded clerics, and the rest of the third team. The local authorities needed the help of some people who knew how genestealers worked while they waited for the Inquisitor to show up.

After Sarge had requisitioned our ride home and convinced the navy we were serious people he handed the Rosette over to her; hopefully she would keep things from going all to shit before help arrived. As a sort of afterthought we formally invited her to hang with our regiment if she ever got back to base.

That done with we packed up our gear, wounded dumbass, and sedated Interrogator; then we got the hell off the planet.



Sedating a person for a long period of time doesn't really work. They tend to spontaneously die or just not wake up. This isn't an issue if you have a stasis pod, but that's not something you can get on most Imperial frigates so we had to improvise a little bit.

Letting the Interrogator sit in a cell was an invitation to disaster: it wouldn't be a day before she convinced some swabby to let her out, so we went the cold hearted medical route. Doc brushed up on his reading, got the senior ship's surgeon to lend him a hand, in this case hand means doing most of the procedure for him, and installed a shunt in the Interrogator's spine. This more or less paralyzed her from the nose down, and combined with a psychic damper it kept her from causing trouble.



She was kept in our private medbay next to Nubby. The force sword had done something nasty to Nubby's legs, it was going to take augmetic surgery to get them back, but he was remarkably cheerful about the whole thing. He spent most of the journey talking to the Interrogator and telling her stories of our adventures. Keeping her spirits up and all that. He thoroughly enjoyed having someone to talk to who didn't tell him to shut up or stop lying.

Doc taught the Interrogator how to communicate via blinking as a sort of experiment during the trip, but all she ever said was "kill me." Nubby thought this was needlessly grim and redoubled his efforts to cheer her up.

When we finally got back to Oak's spacefaring Inquisitorial school, Sarge handed over a report of the squad's adventures and refused to budge until a senior Interrogator confirmed that the report had been read and collected the Interrogator. Nubby was sad to see her go, and hoped that she would come visit after the Inquisition helped her with the "bad men."



We were all released to our quarters on Oak's ship; except for Nubby who got sent to the medical wing to start getting fitted for a pair of augmetic legs. We were finally able to relax in the company of our fellow guardsmen, but we weren't able to get into the proper spirit of R&R (see: Drunk) since we knew that Oak would call us up for a debriefing the moment we started drinking. He didn't keep us waiting long though: before the week was over we were summoned to his office to give a full report.

Sarge and Doc did their best to explain everything while Twitch and Cutter kept their damned mouths shut, and to our surprise Oak believed

every word. He questioned a few things and asked for clarification several times, but he believed every bloody word we said. At the end of the debriefing he told us the Interrogator was being turned over to the Ordos Malleus for interrogation, and we were never to speak of her again. This suited us fine and we all started congratulating ourselves on a job well done, then he offered Sarge the rank of Interrogator and a chance to advance to full Inquisitor.

The entire squad went to bat for Sarge when we heard this.



Cutter expressed his lack of faith in Sarge's combat ability. Twitch pointed out his lack of proper Inquisitorial suspicion. Doc raised the question of Sarge's overall physical fitness and mental fortitude, and from his comm link in the medbay Nubby raised the question of Sarge's lack of ethics and history of petty theft. None of us could condone the elevation of such a pitiful specimen to the rank of Interrogator.

It would dishonor the entire Inquisition. In the face of all these perfectly valid arguments Sarge regretfully declined Oak's offer; he just wasn't good enough to be an Interrogator, so he'd have to settle for being a simple sergeant.

A very bemused Oak acquiesced to Sarge's rejection, if the man's best friends didn't think he was interrogator material that was the end of it. So he finished the debriefing and sent us on our way. We went and drank until we puked, and then puked until we passed out. Except for Nubby, he was stuck in medbay eating and drinking nothing but nutritionally balanced meals, poor little bugger.

Our R&R binge lasted for quite a while, but eventually it came to an end. We geared up for our next mission, but unfortunately Nubby was still struggling with his augmetic legs. Learning to walk on artificial legs is a long and arduous process which not everyone can master, but Nubby had faith and assured us that he'd keep at it while we went on our next mission. Luckily, there was an open post in the quartermaster's department on the ship. It would be the perfect job for him while he got his feet under him as it were.

We left the medbay after that discussion with heavy hearts. None of us had exactly \*liked\* Nubby, but we couldn't imagine deploying without him. Where the hell would we get our ammo from? He always just seemed to have fresh packs for us.

As we got back to our barracks we were greeted by a familiar voice. Sitting in the middle of the room was the Rupert, complete with a shiny augmetic arm and Alfred at his back. He was chatting with Crisp, one of the few

surviving flamer experts in the regiment, and seemed to be enjoying himself immensely.

In a jolly voice he invited us over and told us he wanted our help on a “Little trip down to the colonies to sort out a spot of theological trouble.” According to him it was, “Positively benighted down there not a single illuminated thinker on the whole planet, no one to point them towards the light of the Emperor. You might call it a case of Dark Heresy, wot wot?”

We gathered up our kits and followed him out. After all, we knew there were worse Interrogators out there...

