

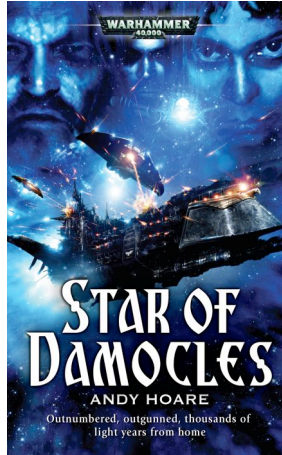
STAR OF DAMOCLES

The second Rogue Trader novel

By Andy Hoare

Lucian Rogue trader patriarch Lucian Gerrit and his family get swept up in an Imperial Crusade to track down and exterminate a subversive new alien race known as the tau. After crossing the vast reaches of the Damocles Gulf, the fleet finally arrives on the borders of tau space and set about their task of extinction.

The Imperial forces soon discover they have vastly underestimated the scale and resourcefulness of this new race and now the crusade must rely on Gerrit's courage and cunning to save the day when they find themselves outnumbered and outgunned, thousands of light years from home.?



About the Author

Andy Hoare works for Games Workshop as a games designer, where he writes and develops games systems and intellectual property. His previous titles for the Black Library are *Rogue Star* and *The 13th Black Crusade* background book. He lives in Nottingham, UK.

In the same series

Rogue Star

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LUCIAN GERRIT, ROGUE trader and master of the heavy cruiser *Oceanid*, stood before the wide viewing port of his vessel's bridge, his arms crossed behind his back.

'Any minute now...' Lucian muttered, scanning the black vista. 'Any minute...'

Without warning, the low growl of labouring plasma drives rattled the deck plates and the bridge lights dimmed for just an instant, before flickering back to full power. Lucian grunted his satisfaction as a turquoise and jade orb swung into view across the viewing port, to settle in the dead centre as the *Oceanid's* helmsman steadied the ship's course.

'Sy'l'Kell in range, sir. Closing as ordered,' the helmsman called out, working the great levers and wheels that controlled the *Oceanid's* bearing, speed and altitude.

'Thank you, Mister Raldi,' replied Lucian, turning his back on the viewing port and striding across the bridge. 'Continue as planned,' he said, sitting down in the worn leather seat of his command throne.

With the press of a control stud on the arm of the throne, the area in front of Lucian was filled with a static laced, greenish projection. The holograph, a priceless example of nigh extinct technology, projected a three dimensional image into the air, a grainy, flickering representation of the space around the *Oceanid*. Lucian's vessel was at the centre of the image, and a shoal of other icons formed behind him, each representing another starship.

‘Station three,’ Lucian called, addressing the half-man, half-machine servitor hard-wired into the communications console. ‘Open a channel to the *Nomad*.’

In response to his order, the bridge address systems burst into angry life with white noise, before the servitor slowly nodded to indicate that the communications link was established with the other vessel.

‘*Nomad*,’ said Lucian, ‘this is *Oceanid*. Do you read?’

‘Aye, Lucian,’ came the reply over the address system. ‘This is Sarik, and I hear you loud and clear. Are you sure you’re ready?’

Lucian chuckled out loud, refusing to be baited. ‘Yes, Sarik, I’m ready. Just don’t bite off more than you can chew. Lucian out!’

As the communications servitor cut the link, Lucian grinned as he imagined the expression on Sarik’s face. Sarik was a Space Marine, and Lucian did not doubt he would be outraged at having been spoken to in such a manner. But Sarik could take a joke, of that Lucian was sure.

‘Sir?’ Helmsman Raldi interrupted Lucian’s chain of thought. ‘The *Nomad* is accelerating to attack speed. Match her?’

Lucian glanced out of the viewing port as his helmsman spoke, catching sight of a distant point of light speeding ahead. The *Nomad* was a frigate, far smaller than Lucian’s heavy cruiser, but being a Space Marine vessel it was far more deadly than the average ship of her displacement.

‘Well enough, helm. Offset by one-fifty as planned.’

The speck of light that was the *Nomad* sped off towards the rapidly enlarging globe that filled a large portion of the viewing port. The planet was called Sy’l’Kell, but the vessels were not headed towards the world itself. Studying the holograph, Lucian saw that his vessel was still a good distance from its target. He scanned the other ships holding formation with his. The *Rosetta* sat at three kilometres astern, a rogue trader cruiser captained by his son, Korvane, and another two kilometres further on, the cruiser *Fairlight*, commanded by his daughter, Brielle. He was gratified to see that both were exactly in position, for he had cause to keep a close eye on Brielle’s actions, following her increasingly

unpredictable behaviour of late. Dozens of other vessels were spread out across an area of space spanning fifty kilometres port and astern. Battlecruisers, cruisers and escorts arrowed towards a single point in high orbit around Sy'l'Kell, while half a dozen smaller vessels, frigates of a class similar to the *Nomad*, formed up with Sarik's vessel, more Space Marine frigates, each carrying a deadly cargo of the Emperor's finest.

Lucian spared a thought for their target, but only a brief one.

'Comms,' he called, 'give me the *Rosetta*.'

The bridge address system burst into life once more, the white noise even greater than before, the channel laced with a harsh, almost sub-sonic growl.

'Korvane?' Lucian called, 'Korvane, do you read me?' The channel hissed and growled, before a voice cut in suddenly.

'...ference from the outer belt, attempting to compensate. I repeat. This is *Rosetta*. I read you, father, but the planet's outer rings are playing havoc with our transceivers and primary relays. Over.'

'I read you, Korvane,' Lucian replied. 'I'm picking up the interference too, and I can only see it getting worse as we close on the target. We'll just need to let the Astartes carry out their mission and cover as best we can. *Oceanid* out.'

Lucian glanced out of the viewing port once more, noting that Sy'l'Kell almost filled the armoured portal. Its glittering, icy rings scored the blackness of space, causing Lucian to wonder what manner of substance or reaction might be generating the interference they seemed to transmit across a wide area of the void.

'*Fairlight*,' he said, the communications servitor at station three patching him through to his daughter's vessel at once. The channel opened, the interference bursting through the address systems before the *Oceanid*'s machine systems curtailed the signal.

'Duma's rancid left foot!' Lucian cursed. 'If you can't invoke the buffers I might as well work the vox myself.' The servitor nodded in mute response, incapable of taking offence at its master's scorn. Before Lucian could continue his invective however, another voice emerged from the howling comms channel.

‘*Oceanid*? *Oceanid*, this is *Fairlight*. I repeat, do you read me, father?’

‘Receiving, Brielle,’ replied Lucian. ‘Proceed as planned. No deviation. Do you understand?’

The comms channel howled its cold white noise for long moments, before the reply cut through, Brielle’s tone as chilled as the interference plaguing the communications system. ‘Understood. *Fairlight* out.’

Lucian sighed, but put aside his frustration at his daughter’s continued obstinacy. He looked instead to the flickering holograph, the device, or more accurately, the sub-space sensor banks that fed it, evidently beginning to suffer from the same interference plaguing the communications systems. Amid the grainy, imprecise projection, he finally saw the target. Looking up, through the wide viewing port now entirely filled by the globe of Sy’l’Kell, Lucian could just make out a tiny, blue pinprick of light.

Lucian felt his pulse race as adrenaline flooded his system. These were the moments he lived for.

‘BEGIN APPROACH, MY lord?’ Helmsman Raldi enquired, Lucian noting the sardonic tone in the man’s voice. Evidently, the master of the *Oceanid* was not the only man to enjoy the rush of ship-to-ship combat.

‘Mister Raldi, you have the helm.’

Lucian leaned back into the command throne as he felt the pitch of the *Oceanid*’s mighty plasma drives deepen. The bridge illumination switched to a bloody red, and the apocalyptic wail of the general quarters’ klaxon sounded throughout the vessel. The tone of the ancient drives grew lower as their volume increased, and every surface of the bridge shook visibly as virtually immeasurable power was bled from the plasma core and squeezed through the engines.

Lucian smiled as he watched the holograph, the relative positions of the other vessels swinging wildly as Raldi brought the *Oceanid* into a stately turn to starboard. Only the *Nomad* was ahead of

Lucian's vessel, the small frigate all but lost against the lurid glow of the planet's oceans far below.

'Shields up,' Lucian ordered. 'Frontal arc, minimal bleed.'

Memories of his last space battle still only too fresh in his mind, Lucian determined not to take any risks against this foe. He looked at the holograph to check that the master of the *Nomad* had done likewise, when a curse from a sub-officer caused him to look up.

'What?' Lucian demanded of the man seated at the astrographics station.

'It's hard to tell with all the interference, my lord.'

Lucian rose to his feet and crossed the bridge to loom over the man's shoulder. 'Let me see.'

Lucian stared at the man's console, reams of data scrolling across its banks of flickering screens. His mind raced as he tried to piece together exactly what he was seeing. Interference, certainly, and there was something else, but what?

'Station nine!' Lucian called. 'Give me a near space reading, now.'

The servitor stationed at the adjacent console nodded, machine nonsense squealing from the speaker grille crudely grafted into the flesh of its neck. The main pict-slate at the centre of its console lit up with a representation of the gravimetrics readings of the area of space around the *Oceanid*.

Once more, Lucian's mind raced as he attempted to assimilate the information presented on the screen. No wonder he needed so many servitors, he mused, dismissing the thought as his eyes fixed on an anomaly.

There, in the lee of the target, into which his vessel's active sensors could not reach, there was a ripple in the fabric of the void, a signature he had seen before.

'Sarik!' He bellowed, the servitor at the comms station opening the channel immediately.

Through the wail of interference, Sarik's voice came back over the bridge address system.

'Gerrit? Go ahead, but make it quick. I'm somewhat busy.'

'Sarik, divert all power to your port shield, now.'

‘Are you...?’

‘Do it!’

The communications channel went abruptly silent. Lucian held his breath, not realising he was doing so, before the holograph showed that the *Nomad* was rapidly bleeding power from its main drives while its shield was being raised. He let out his breath. He’d apologise later, he mused, if he got the chance.

An instant later, and the viewing port was filled with a great, blinding flash of purest white light. Having closed his eyes by reflex, it took a moment for Lucian’s vision to clear. Nevertheless, flickering nerve lights rendered him almost blind.

‘Report!’ He bellowed, not caring who answered.

‘Ultra-high velocity projectile, my lord. We’ve seen them before,’ Lucian’s ordnance officer replied.

His vision clearing, Lucian looked to the holograph. The projectile had struck the *Nomad* amidships, half way down her port bow. Looking up, Lucian saw from where the projectile had been fired, as a long silhouette glided into view against the turquoise oceans of Sy’l’Kell.

‘I knew it,’ Lucian said. ‘I absolutely knew the camel toed bastards would try it on.’

Exhilaration flooded through Lucian’s body as he sat in his command throne once more, gripping the worn arms as generations of his forebears had done before him.

‘Helm, twenty to port. Ordnance, prepare a broadside.’

As the helmsman laboured at his wheel and levers, Lucian watched as the opening moves of the coming battle played out before him. The target, towards which the stricken Space Marine frigate still sped, was now visible. A mighty space station, shaped like some giant mushroom, blue lights twinkling up and down its stalk, wallowed at the centre of the viewing port, its bulk black against the lurid seas of the planet around which it orbited. A vessel emerged from behind that station; the same vessel that had come so close to destroying, in a single shot, a frigate of the White Scars Chapter of the Adeptus Astartes. Lucian’s grin became a feral snarl

and his eyes narrowed as the tau vessel cleared the station it had been hiding behind.

‘Enemy vessel powering up for another shot at the *Nomad*, my lord,’ called the ordnance officer. ‘She’s going for the kill shot, sir.’

‘That’s what she thinks,’ replied Lucian. ‘Ordnance? Open fire!’

‘But, sir’, the ordnance officer sputtered, ‘I have no firing solution. We’ll...’

‘I said open fire damn you!’ bellowed Lucian. ‘Do it, or so help me...’

Lucian was glad to see that the officer had the presence of mind to order the broadside before his master could complete, or indeed enact, his threat. The *Oceanid* shuddered as the port weapons batteries unleashed a fearsome barrage towards the tau vessel. Lacking a solid firing solution for the war spirits of the super-heavy munitions to follow, the majority of the shells went wide, their fuses detonating them at random across the space between the two ships.

No matter. If Lucian had meant to destroy the tau ship he would have waited, but had he done that, the *Nomad* would now be smeared across a hundred square kilometres of local space. The tau vessel aborted its shot against the Space Marine frigate, its blunt nose coming around to face the greater threat presented by the *Oceanid*.

‘My thanks, Gerrit. I am in your debt.’ Sarik’s voice came over the address system.

‘You’re welcome,’ replied Lucian. ‘Good hunting.’

Now, he thought, I’ve got a tau vessel to take out before it ruins everything. As the explosions cleared, the greasy black smoke left in their wake almost entirely obscured the other vessel. Lucian judged that the distance between the two ships would level at an impossibly close five hundred metres before they parted once more. Five hundred metres, he mused, remembering just how deadly another tau vessel had almost proved at such a close range in a previous engagement. There was too little time for an effective broadside, but he had other tricks up his sleeve that the tau had yet to see. Besides which, he thought, it doesn’t pay to let the enemy get too used to one’s tactics.

‘Ordnance, I want a focused lance battery strike on the module aft of the central transverse,’ he said, indicating one of the many blocky, modular units the tau vessel appeared to be carrying slung beneath its long spine.

‘Aye, sir,’ replied the ordnance officer, Lucian noting with satisfaction that the officer was plotting the lance strike against the exact point he had intended.

At seven hundred metres, Lucian could make out the details of the flanks of the tau vessel, though he could not fathom the meaning of the many symbols or icons applied to its surface.

‘I have a solution, my lord,’ the officer said. ‘Fire pattern set.’

Lucian knew that even now, the sweating crews in the lance batteries atop the *Oceanid* would be toiling at the traversing mechanisms of their turrets, cursing crew chiefs threatening them with eternal damnation should they falter in their work.

At six hundred metres, the drifting smoke and debris of the broadside cleared enough for Lucian to pick out the point against which he had ordered the lance strike. At five hundred and fifty metres, he saw it clearly, and so did the ordnance officer, who communicated a series of final adjustments to the turret crews. A horizontal line of clear blue light appeared at the centre of the module, gaining in height as it was revealed to be an armoured blast door opening upwards. A row of armoured figures was framed against the blue light, the like of which Lucian had seen before, from a distance, the last time he had fought the tau.

‘You have fire control, Mister Batista.’

‘Thank you, sir,’ replied the ordnance officer, adjusting his uniform jacket, straightening his back and clearing his throat.

‘Now would be good,’ added Lucian.

‘Yes, my lord.’ The officer depressed the control stud that passed the fire order to the lance turrets. An instant later the lance batteries spat a searing beam of condensed atomic fire at the tau vessel, parting the smoky clouds, spearing the open bay, vaporising the armoured figures, and passing clean out of the other side of the module, accompanied by a rapidly expanding cone of fire and debris.

‘Target well struck, sir,’ the ordnance officer reported.

‘Well enough, Mister Batista,’ Lucian replied. ‘Prepare for a second strike.’ Lucian scanned the flanks of the enemy vessel as the range closed to five hundred metres, seeking further armoured bays from which the battle suits he had seen used before might deploy.

‘Negative, my lord,’ the officer replied, doubt obvious in his voice.

‘Negative?’ Lucian asked. ‘Report.’

‘Something’s blocking the targeting mechanisms, overloading their machine spirits, my lord. I can’t...’

‘The interference?’ asked Lucian, theorising that the incessant interference flooding from the rings of Sy’l’Kell was somehow confounding the *Oceanid*’s targeting arrays.

‘No sir, there’s something else.’

Damn these xenos to the Gideon Confluence, thought Lucian, at once irritated and impressed by the tau’s ingenuity. He crossed to the wide viewing port and looked out across the narrow span of smoky void between the two vessels. The ships were rapidly passing one another in opposite directions, the tau vessel veering to its port in a course that would take it away from the *Oceanid* and towards the station. Odd, thought Lucian. He had expected the enemy to close even further in order to make full use of the extra-vehicular armoured suits, as they had done against Korvane’s vessel in the last battle.

Even as Lucian watched, the wound punched in the tau ship by his lance strike slid past, almost filling the entire viewing port. He judged the hole to be at least twenty metres in diameter, and as it passed across the dead centre of the port, he was afforded a view right through the enemy vessel, to open space beyond. The *Nomad* passed across that space, the tau ship turning towards her.

Lucian realised why the enemy ship was seeking to disengage from his own: it was seeking to hold him off while it swung around on the smaller frigate. He drew breath to order a change in course, when another sight greeted his eyes. A shoal of miniscule white objects, each propelled by a small, blue jet, was swarming across the gap between the two ships. So these were the cause of the fire

control failure, Lucian realised. They were some kind of decoy, each, judging by their movements, possessed of some manner of machine intelligence, their density and erratic course confounding any effort to get a target lock on their mother ship.

‘I can’t get a solution at this range, my lord,’ the ordnance officer reported. ‘Whatever those things are, each one has an etheric signature far in excess of its size. All together like that, at such close range...’

‘Saint Katherine’s pasty arse,’ Lucian cursed, causing the ordnance officer to blush and the helmsman to smirk. ‘They’re after the *Nomad*, and if they get her this whole operation will have been a waste of time. Mister Raldi, bring us in hard on the orbital, I want every ounce of power through the mains, but be ready on the retros.’

As the helmsman nodded his understanding, Lucian ordered a comms channel to the *Nomad* to be opened.

‘Sarik, do you read?’

Lucian glared out of the viewing port as he awaited the frigate’s reply. The tau vessel had passed from view, to reveal the tau orbital beyond, and in its shadow, the floundering Space Marine vessel. Fires raged across the *Nomad*’s port flank. Misty contrails snaking from her aft section betrayed a massive hull breach through which oxygen was bleeding uncontrollably.

An angry burst of static was followed by the distorted, barely audible voice of the Space Marine. ‘Aye Lucian, I read. We’re preparing for our run.’

‘You won’t make it at this rate, Sarik,’ Lucian replied, knowing full well that he was pushing the Space Marine’s bounds in speaking to him in such a manner, but continuing regardless. ‘That vessel has you in its sights, and in your state you can’t hold it off for long enough. Will you accept my aid?’

For a long moment, only hissing, popping static was audible over the communications channel. Lucian prayed that the Space Marine would put pride aside, just this once, and accept the aid of another. Then Sarik’s voice came back.

‘You and I shall have words, Lucian Gerrit, when this is over. In the meantime, speak your plan.’

Lucian felt relief flood his system, but saw that he did not have the luxury of time. ‘We’ll be with you shortly, Sarik. In the meantime, I suggest you continue on your course on momentum only, and shunt all available power to your aft shields. Understood?’ ‘Understood,’ came the reply, this time without delay. ‘Nomad out.’

‘Well enough,’ said Lucian, as he sat in his command throne and turned his attention to the holograph. He took in the relative positions of the remainder of the fleet. He was gratified to see that his children’s vessels had maintained formation with his own, keeping a distance as ordered, yet close enough to respond to any order he might issue. He was even more pleased when he saw that the other vessels, even further out, had yet to close in on the action. He smirked as he imagined the scenes on the decks of those ships, picturing the various captains raging in jealousy as they watched Lucian save the Space Marines’ bacon and take all the glory.

Steady, he thought to himself. The glory was not his yet, and he still had a Space Marine frigate to rescue, a tau cruiser to take care of, and a space station to capture. This would match the exploits of old Abad, if he could pull it off, Lucian mused. Abad had taken on a Reek voidswarm at the Battle of Ghallenburg, and single-handedly stemmed the tide of filthy xenos interface vessels as they made planetfall. Lucian would do likewise, he determined, and to hell with the others.

‘Approaching orbital, my lord,’ the helmsman reported, interrupting Lucian’s rumination. He looked to the holograph and saw that the alien space station lay three and a half thousand metres off the starboard bow. The tau vessel was completing a stately turn that would bring it directly behind the *Nomad*. It had yet to open fire, but Lucian judged that it would not be long.

‘Trim mains, Mister Raldi. Hard to starboard, full burn all port retro banks.’

Lucian stared at the holograph as the helmsman carried out his orders, feeling the enormous gravitational forces exerting themselves on his ship as it changed course sharply. The banks of mighty retro thrusters mounted along the length of the port side

coughed into life as power was cut from the main drives, the *Oceanid* entering a manoeuvre that would see her slingshot right around the alien space station.

Then, the ordnance officer called aloud, 'Brace for enemy fire!' Klaxons echoed up and down the *Oceanid's* companionways, warning the crew of incoming fire, but Lucian knew that his ship was unlikely to be the target, for the tau had a more choice prey in their sights.

Lucian closed his eyes against the bright discharge of the tau's ultra-high velocity projectile weapon, his vision turning red for an instant, despite the fact that his eyes were closed tight. An instant later the viewing port dimmed automatically, once again, its simple spirit too slow to respond to the flash.

'*Nomad* struck, my lord,' called out the ordnance officer. 'The enemy fired her port weapon, sir. *Nomad's* shields took the worst of it, but I think her projectors took some feedback. Second shot any moment...'

The tau vessel fired a second time, and Lucian was thankful that the viewing port was still dimmed. Despite this, he saw the tau space station etched in stark silhouette, for the *Oceanid* was now on its far side with the tau ship on the other. He looked to the ordnance officer, who read off his report.

'*Nomad* struck again, sir. Port weapon again. Her shields are almost gone. I don't think she'll survive a third shot.'

'Hm,' replied Lucian. He'd seen the damage Space Marine warships could take, and was prepared to gamble that the *Nomad* would hold together. He had no choice, for his vessel would not complete its manoeuvre for several more, long, potentially painful minutes. Why hadn't the tau ship fired its prow-mounted weapon, he wondered?

As the *Oceanid* ploughed on, edging around the tau space station, Lucian's eyes were glued to the holograph. He saw that the tau vessel was trying to overtake the *Nomad*. The enemy ship was seeking to line herself up with the limping Space Marine frigate, which was careening towards the space station by way of

momentum alone, every last portion of energy devoted to maintaining its rapidly failing rear shields.

Lucian saw hope in the tau's actions. If he could intercept their ship before they were lined up, he knew he would have them. If he could not, then all was lost, for the tau would have the perfect firing solution and the frigate would be doomed. Then the thought resurfaced: why hadn't they used their prow-mounted projectile?

'They're launching something,' reported the ordnance officer. 'More of the decoys.'

Why were the tau launching decoys? Lucian's mind filtered the possibilities, but he was interrupted before completing his chain of thought.

'In position, my lord,' reported the helmsman.

'Open fire, sir?' asked the ordnance officer.

'Hold, Mister Batista,' Lucian replied. 'There's something else going on.'

The *Oceanid* having completed its long arc around the tau space station, Lucian's vessel was heading straight towards the prow of the enemy ship. Crossing to the viewing port and squinting to make out the enemy ship as the distance closed, Lucian yelled in elation.

'I congratulate you, Mister Batista!'

'Sir?' The ordnance officer replied, confusion writ large upon his features.

Lucian laughed out loud for the sheer joy of it. 'Your untargeted broadside, Mister Batista. Evidently, something struck.'

As the *Oceanid* closed on the tau vessel, a great gash upon its blunt, armoured prow became clearly visible. The position, Lucian knew from prior experience against tau cruisers, of its forward weapon turret.

The question remained, Lucian mused, as to why the tau had launched the swarm of decoys, which was closing in on the *Nomad's* drive section even as he watched. Then it came to him, and he bellowed for the communications channel to the Space Marine frigate to be opened one more.

'Sarik?' Only interference answered him, louder and more intense than ever. Lucian realised that the decoys, combined with

the static coming from the rings of Sy'l'Kell, must be blocking the ship-to-ship channels entirely.

‘Comms. Bleed all power from all available systems to near space vox.’

Lucian watched as the swarm of tau decoys arrowed towards the vulnerable aft section of the *Nomad*. They can't fire on me, he told himself, not with their prow turret out of action, but running with no shields in the middle of a space battle was considered bad practice, even by his standards.

A flashing tell-tale informed Lucian that the near-space vox was receiving all the power it ever would. This had better work.

‘Sarik!’ Lucian shouted, praying that his voice was being transmitted at full signal strength on all available frequencies.

‘Sarik, power up your main drives right now!’

An instant later Lucian saw that his transmission had got through. The *Nomad's* drives flared into life, crimson fire belching from them. The swarm of tau decoys was almost upon the *Nomad* when her drives spat into life, and they were incinerated in an instant, seared to ash and scattered into the void in a matter of seconds.

There, where the decoys had been clustered most densely, Lucian saw what he had guessed would be revealed: more of the tau armoured suits. Each was equipped with fusion weapons capable of ripping a crippled vessel to glowing pieces, and they had sought to approach the wounded frigate under the cover of the decoys. Now, the suits battled against the steadily increasing wash of the *Nomad's* drives. Armoured plating, the likes of which Lucian had rarely seen, kept them going, even though the unprotected decoys had lasted mere seconds. The fire of the frigate's drives was so bright that Lucian was barely able to see. Nevertheless he watched the bulking forms as they blackened, their metal skins melting and running off in great billowing streams of vaporised armour. He watched as each suit took on the aspect of a comet rapidly shedding its mass.

At last, the armoured suits were blasted to their constituent atoms as the *Nomad's* drives reached full output, the Space Marine

frigate powering inexorably towards the space station, its ultimate target.

Lucian crossed his arms at the viewing port. ‘Shields up, forward weapons target enemy ship’s bridge. Fire!’

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