

# **Into the Hulk**

## **Chapter 15: Drone Ambush**

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## Chapter 15: Drone Ambush

*I expected the ladder to be deadly. I didn't expect the ladder to be that deadly. Cian Wall Walking down the shaft procs a warp manifestation (usually semi-harmless), that procs into a Perils of the Warp event (not good), gets one of the least-deadly results (16: thrown 1d10 meters into the air) that turns out to be the third-worst possible result given his circumstances. Ouf. Then ZTO got to try her hand at the climb, damn near crit-fails, and has to burn fate to survive. One party member on 1 health, and a second on 0 health and one head-hit away from probably death.*

*And we have a combat encounter coming up.*

*Yeah, I'm feeling the grimdark setting now. Here we bloodydamn GO!*

*Warning: Plot Armor is a lie perpetuated by the foul daemons of the Warp. You have been warned.*

*Would you kindly correct my spelling errors?*

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You wait all of 40.906 seconds until your mental processes complete their recalibrations. Your organic legs still feel like half-cured adhesive, but you force yourself to stand and call the party close for a whispered conversation. "We're in no shape for a stand-up fight, and trying to sneak by would likely just get us ambushed if those things have any sort of techno-sorcerous auspex scanners. I say we just ambush them, blow them away, and move on with caution. Questions?"

Atellus grins, "With respect, I'd say that fall knocked some sense into you."

You'd grin back if you still had a mouth, "I'll take that as a compliment on the durability of my reinforced cranium. A word of warning: this Munitions Vault almost certainly feeds to a set of macrocannons. Nothing we carry is likely to detonate any of the ammunition, but if things *do* start exploding, just run like the Warp itself was chasing you. It'll be your only chance to live."

This sobers everyone up somewhat, tempering their bloodlust. You nod then lead the way towards the doorway into the munitions vault. The doorway is half-shut, and you will have a split second to act before the floating things can respond. You take a small chance, and waive Atellus and Cian to the far side of the door so that all of you can enter in short order.

Atellus leads the way into the Munitions Vault. A booted foot forces the door to slide back into its frame with a squeal of protest, and he dashes into the vault, sliding behind a projectile thrice the height of a man, and easily thick enough to hide a man laying on his back with his arms outstretched. The floating platter things begin to turn about, searching for the source of the noise, but Atellus' shotgun booms before they can move far. The shot connects with one of the floating things: most of the lead pellets smear across the surface of the dome, but smoke begins to leak from beneath the plating, indicating that at least some of them struck something important.

Four of the floating things, including the smoking one swerve into whatever cover they can find: projectiles, catwalks, hanging chains. You note that all four of them appear to be fitted with both a weapon and an auspex scanner. They hold their fire, apparently trying to conceal themselves, but the smoke reveals at least one of their positions

Cian leans around the doorway and steadies his aim on the one floating thing that *didn't* run for cover. The heavy SPP-5h Hand Cannon round connects, spinning his target in a full circle, smoke and sparks sputtering fitfully from the gouge in its domed surface. It stays in the air however, and rotates to face the doorway.

Kathrine, seeing where the thing's two guns are pointing, dashes to join Atellus behind the solid cover of the projectile. Her Naval Pistol barks three times in her hands. Flechettes whine everywhere *except* for the surface of her intended target. You hear her curse along with the accompanying *click* of a spent shell failing to eject as her weapon jams.

The two-gun wielding drone finally maneuvers, zipping upwards to hide beneath a catwalk. Moments later a torrent of blue plasma bursts rail down from its position, slamming into things all about Cian's position in the doorway. Clearly the thing has marked Cian as the most dangerous threat, given that it was his shot that had marked it so. The first shot eats right through the wall in a spray of vaporizing metal. Cian flinches and tries to duck back into cover, but two more rounds tear right through his quilted vest, into his torso, and out the far side. His corpse hits the deck, his clothes burning fitfully.

*Semi-Auto burst from lascarbine: +10% to hit. Magazine is now at 28/30 rounds. Range is short: +10% to hit.*

*Fire at Tau Gun Drone: Success! needed <52, got 09.*

*Damage inflicted: 2d10+4 Energy. Result: 17.*

*Critical Hit! One damage die rolled a 10: inflict a further 1d10+2 damage. Result: 27 total damage done to target.*

You respond by leaning out of cover and bringing your Blinkenlight Lascarbine to bear on the source of the plasma fire. You take a half-moment to be sure of your aim, then squeeze off two rounds. The Ommissiah must be guiding your aim, because both rounds strike true. You strike something important, because the stream of plasma fire cuts off instantly. A short second later the floating thing crashes to the deck, smoke leaking from every crack and joint in its construction, its lift unit, weapons, and guiding intelligence utterly destroyed.

Atellus leans out of cover, yelping when he comes face-to-scanner with one of the floating things. His shotgun booms in instant response and a second wreck joins the first on the floor, flung into the open by the muzzle blast.

The three remaining things clearly decide that hiding is of little use, and open fire. The first sprays a suppressive burst in Atellus' direction, but he gets back into cover without taking any hits. The second lays down fire on the other side of the projectile, looking to either trap Atellus or pick off Kathrine. It gets lucky, or Kathrine gets unlucky: Three rounds crash into

Katrine's chest. The thickness of the edge of the projectile and the thickness of her Flack Vest keep her alive, but only just. You can detect the stench of charred meat as she is flung bodily back behind the projectile, stunned by the impacts. Fortunately she is in cover, and has allies to cover her while she recovers her wits. The third thing tries to pick off Atellus, should he be foolish enough to poke his head out of cover, but you hear the *PShhhh* of emergency plasma vents activating as its weapon malfunctions.

Katrine moans, and tries fitfully to do something, but she only succeeds in flopping about on the floor. Fortunately the plasma hit she took has cauterised the wound it made, so she isn't bleeding out.

*Semi-Auto burst from lascarbine: +10% to hit. Magazine is now at 26/30 rounds. Range is short: +10% to hit.*

*Fire at Tau Explorator Drone: Success! needed <52, got 51.*

*Damage inflicted: 1d10+2 Energy. Result: 12.*

*Critical Hit! One damage die rolled a 10: inflict a further 1d10+2 damage. Result: 17 total damage done to target.*

You take another moment to adjust your aim, searching for the source of the suppressive fire pinning Atellus in place. You know Atellus needs to reload anyway, but it's a trivial task to backtrack the stream of plasma bolts to their source. You squeeze off two more shots, but only one of them strikes the mark. Once again your shot hits something telling, because the plasma bolts cut off abruptly. Nothing crashes to the deck, so you presume the drone is still active despite the damage.

Atellus keeps his head down and breaks open his weapon, sending the spent shells arcing into the air.

One of the remaining things puts an aimed burst into the floor a few centimeters from Kathrine's feet. The second one tries to put a burst through your head, but misses by a comfortable margin as you press your body to the floor. You can pick out the *Thrumm* of a plasma weapon coming back into battery, and know that the third one has managed to clear whatever malfunction it had suffered.

Katrine shakes her head, paws at her chest, and winces when her hand comes into contact with flash-burnt skin instead of cloth. The feeling clears her head of its stupor, if nothing else.

*Semi-Auto burst from lascarbine: +10% to hit. Magazine is now at 24/30 rounds. Range is short: +10% to hit.*

*Fire at Tau Explorator Drone: Success! needed <52, got 43.*

*Damage inflicted: 1d10+2 Energy. Result: 10.*

You roll back to a kneeling stance and try for the same thing that you hit before. One of your two shots goes wide of the mark, but the second strikes home. You surmise that you took

out the thing's lift unit when it tumbles from the air in a wild descent that terminates in a thunderous crash on the floor.

Atellus finishes loading shells into his shotgun and snaps it shut.

The two remaining things clearly decide that you are now the biggest threat in the fight. The first one misses you by a comfortable margin, but the second one doesn't. Two of its three-bolt burst make a hole in the wall next to your torso. The third round hits something on the far side of the wall and stops short. You feel hot metal flick into your robes and lodge in your Flak Vest. You thank the Ommissiah for the protection that cover offers for keeping you alive.

Kathrine pulls herself to a kneeling position hard against the side of the projectile and frantically starts clearing the jam from her Naval Pistol.

*Semi-Auto burst from lascarbine: +10% to hit. Magazine is now at 22/30 rounds. Range is short: +10% to hit.*

*Fire at Tau Explorator Drone: Success! needed <52, got 20.*

*Damage inflicted: 2d10+4 Energy. Result: 9.*

You let out a wheezing breath and steady your aim. Both of your shots connect with another of the flying things, but it manages to angle its domes top surface to splash the incoming fire across its armor. It staggers from the double strike, but keeps floating.

Atellus leans out from cover and pups a wild shot in the general direction of your target. You hear only the clatter of lead on steel and surmise that he has missed.

One again both of the floating things focus their fire on you. Once again one of them manages to miss, and the second one finds the mark. One of the bolts makes it through the weakening cover and flash-burns a strip of fallible flesh on your left arm. It begins to tingle and goes numb as your body struggles to process the unexpected sensory input.

*Suffered 1 point of critical damage to your left arm: tests involving it will be at -30% for your next turn.*

Kathrine leans carefully out from cover and lets off a three-round burst from her freshly reloaded Naval Pistol. This time she doesn't miss, and you hear the whine of steel on ceramite as the flechettes strike her target. The floating thing comes apart under the barrage in a rain of ceramic shards and metallic fragments. Fortunately nothing detonates, presumably because the damage simply tore the target apart.

You curse your weak, fleshy arm for going numb and your biological legs for feeling like wet nutrient paste as you dash to the cover of the far side of the door. You rub feeling back into your arm, careful not to aggravate the flash-burned section.

Atellus works his way around the edge of the projectile, searching for the last floating thing. He sights it and fires his shotgun. The lead pellets splatter harmlessly against the ceiling, and Atellus ducks back into cover to reload again.

The last floating thing has had enough. It turns in place, blasts a hole in the grating of a vent cover, and side slips inside, vanishing further into the wreck of the *Mhongu Khagahn*.

You stand up out of cover, and start to gather what is left of your team, assessing the casualties. Cian Mac Vir Dannan is dead, 71.365% of his torso vaporized by the plasma strike. Kathrine is busy wrapping bandages over her burnt chest, wincing as the chilled counterspetic gell works its way into her flesh. She will live, but can't take much more damage. You are in a similar state. Your head is leaking blood, your left arm has a flash-burn, and any further damage would almost certainly put you on death's door. Atellus is unharmed, somehow, and staring worriedly at the far side of the Projectile he had been hiding behind.

"Umm, Mech-Wright Terezna Olegovich, is that supposed to be *glowing*?"

You glance over at the projectile, noting the blue glow of the exposed internal components and the half-melted radiological hazard warning symbols stenciled onto the casing. "Probably not. We shouldn't tarry here any longer than we have to. Kathrine, can you move?"

She winces, but nods, "Yes, yes I can. Are we just going to leave Cian behind?"

"We can't bring him with us, he'll fall into two pieces if we try to pick him up. And we can't linger to fashion some sort of body-bag either. Atellus, how's your aim? Do you think you could hit a laspistol powerpack from the far side of the room?"

He shrugs, "Probably, why?"

"I'm going to set Cians laspistol to overload, and then you're going to set it off by shooting it with my Lascarbine. The resulting fire will cremate the remains. Kathrine, can you administer the Last Rights while I work?"

Your remaining party members nod solemnly. It's the best you can do under these trying circumstances. It takes a good half-hour or so (you'd know exactly if you had a chrono) for the last rights to be administered and for you to rig Cian's pistol and backup charge pack. Atellus takes very careful aim and puts the lasbolt exactly where it is needed. Cian's body is quickly coated in burning flames from the ruptured powerpack.

In a macabre twist of fate, the next large room that you need to traverse is a Chapel to the God-Emperor of Mankind. You note that it has been befouled by neglect, and the altar is stained with some sort of red-brown substance, probably a dried liquid.

Your party could use a rest, a chance to stop and bandage your wounds tighter, but you have an itch between your shoulder blades about this place. You don't trust instinct as much as you do logic, but it would be a good idea for Kathrine to at least re-consecrate the altar as best she can if you do decide to stop here. Otherwise you can just press on and hope for the best.