
The war for Maelstrom

Routine patrol

The genestealers had heard the machine's noise well before seeing it. No need to scream to attract the attention of other stealers in the vicinity, what one knew, the collectivity knew at once, except when the hivemind preferred it otherwise. The squad just had to wait and the others would be here shortly. The ruins of the old human structure offered the perfect waiting place. They wouldn't be spotted, and if those mechanical device somehow found them, the stone structure would protect them from their terrible canons.

- Sir, our scanners indicate that the alien life forms have taken refuge in the ruins. We will route them out.
- Roger that Mole B. We're on our way to help. Don't overexpose the prototype just yet.
- Got one, but the damn critters are hiding behind the wall.

One of the genestealer hadn't been quite fast enough to duck behind the wall. But that pain was already forgotten, the memory of it suppressed by the hivemind. They sensed their kind coming around the flank of the hovering machine. Some hormagaunt were also almost there, jumping over the rubles, running at great speed to overrun the enemy.

- Mole B here, we have detected more alien life forms coming east of our current position.
- Fall back a little Mole B, we've got you covered.
- Roger that, we'll deploy the pathfinders on the top of the hill.
- Ghost reporting, we're in position. Ready to mark target.

The hormagaunts rushed over the rubbles, leaping and running to cover the most ground. Their first target had just disembarked from the flying machine. They should be on them any minutes now. Lumbering behind them came two huge carnifexes. That bio-design had proven its worth in battle over and over again. The 'stealers were coming out of their hole, advancing on the machine. Their great claws would surely bring it down.

- Ghost here. We need evac right away. They are approaching too fast. They will be on us before we have time to shoot them down.
- Sir, I'm picking up the pathfinders. I'll drop them further away.
- Proceed Mole B. Devil one and two, deploy your squads in the standing building. We'll take advantage of the cover and the height to take out the advancing boggers.

Two other 'stealer had been killed by the flying machine, but with the warriors nearby, the pain didn't even have time to register in the mind of the others before being suppressed. The synapse creature were the perfect vessel for the hivemind's command. The hormagaunts continued their advance, even do their target had been taken right under their nose by the machine, they would continue their advance, leaving no place for them to redeploy safely. One of the carnifex opened fire with his venom canon, damaging the main weapon of the flying thing. The stealers could continue

their advance unopposed. The other 'fex, with his devorer, turned west, toward the other vehicles coming this way.

- Ghost here, we've been redeploy, we have the three warriors in visual, marking them for missile launch. That's two down. One to go.
- Alpha one here, we're in position in the large structure. Only one target in range, the freaking huge critter. Opening fire.
- Alpha two here, We're also in position in a structure. Acquiring target.

The small pellets shot by the enemy walking troops bounced harmlessly off the thick skin of the carnifex. Its skin almost as hard as metal couldn't be breached by such small things and the carnifex knew that. It didn't even bother seeking the cover of nearby ruins, taking the shortest path toward the vehicles. At the other end of the field, the remaining warrior took a shot at the skimmer with his venom canon, destroying the remaining armament of the thing. The genestealers were now moving in the open toward the skimmer. The hormagaunts had passed them moments ago, bounding and leaping towards the almost unseen squad in front.

- Hammerhead here, I've got the carnifex in sight, opening fire. It's a miss.
- Alpha one reporting, we're pouring fire on the beast to no avail.
- Alpha two reporting, same thing here.
- Keep firing. There must be a weak spot somewhere on its hide.
- Ghost here, we need evac again.
- Request denied ghost, Mole B is to withdraw from its current position. We can't let the prototype fall. Take out their last warrior and they shall break.
- Acknowledged. Target marked. Missile inbound. Target eliminated.
- Good job ghost.
- Sir, they're not breaking. They are still coming at us.

The hivemind grew distant. Its synapse creature having been taken out, the telepathic commands were not coming in. The 'gaunts automatically looked for direction from their eldest. He had been gifted by the hivemind with rare intelligence for its kind, he was an hive node. Their order still stood, they had a target not far in front of them, they would take them out. Running full speed, and then leaping that last distance, they made contact with the bipeds. It took less than five heartbeats to take them all out.

- Hammerhead here, we've hit the carnifex. It is oozing from the wound. I think we've opened that weak spot you were looking for.
- Devil one here, we've also managed to wound the thing. It is getting weaker by the minute.
- Alpha one reporting, target marked for missile. Target hit, but missile didn't explode.
- Alpha two reporting. We seem to have affected the creature with our fire.
- It is coming too close. We fall back. Mole B, get that prototype back to base. Hammerhead, I want you to escort it there. The rest of you follow me, we'll draw them away from the prototype.

With no more contact with the hivemind, the tyranids didn't pursue the Tau. Letting them withdraw seemed the most logical thing to do. The hivemind would send another synapse creature with new orders soon. They just had to wait.