



Know Your Foe

The tale of a man fighting an enemy he isn't sure even exists.

By John Simpson Wedge

+++=[Inquisitorial Access Only]=+++ Encryption Level/ Security Classification: Orion ++Attempting mainframe access++ ++Retrieving records++ ++Password required++ Password:***** ++Password accepted++ ++Downloading File 231b-25f-6774s-'Lord Aurelius Crowe'++ ++File Accessed ++

When one looks at Lord Aurelius Crowe, the good Imperial citizen who abhors the alien and believes truly in the supremacy of man, it is hard to remember that he is also a Rogue Trader.

Lord Crowe was born in 849.M41 to moderately affluent parents on the space station 'Odarion IV' above the planet Taggaris. While titled, the family were far from rich; the rank of 'Lord' had been presented seven generations earlier when Alexei Crowe had been the Planetary Governor's manservant and had taken a bullet from a would-be assassin.

Aurelius did not get on with his parents; he longed for adventure among the stars like his uncle who was a Captain in the Imperial Navy, but his parents preferred to stay on Ondarion IV living a relatively care-free life. At the age of 17, Aurelius Crowe stole his father's title and escaped left the station, hiding away onboard the first vessel he found.

The vessel he chose turned out to be the 'Emperor's Flame', a Sword class frigate operating as part of a flotilla under the command of Rogue Trader Goran Bade. At this point, Lord Crowe made a decision that would change his life forever; instead of staying hidden, he approached the nearest Proctor, showed his Identification Papers and requested to see the captain. Naturally he was arrested and his papers were seized.

However, 48 hours later Lord Aurelius was hauled out of his cell and dragged up to the bridge to meet the captain. He was astonished to find that the captain was in fact his uncle Gregori Crowe! When Aurelius told his uncle what had happened his uncle laughed and instantly promoted him to the rank of Second Lieutenant.

Crowe spent the next century serving under Gregori, exploring the Eastern rim of the galaxy. Over the years Aurelius displayed strong leadership skills but also the ability to handle himself in boarding actions, which proved extremely useful in combating the numerous pirate bands they encountered on their travels.

It was while repulsing an Eldar boarding actions that he met Lucius Cortez, forming a friendship that would save both their lives. Lord Crowe had been granted command of the 'Emperor's Flame's' defenders and, being a young and courageous (some would argue foolhardy) officer he decided to lead his men from the front. Lord Crowe's ferocious attack inspired his men to fight

harder than they ever had before and within a few hours the majority of Eldar forces were in retreat. All was going well until a group of pirates managed to flank the defenders, blowing a hole through one of the ship's bulkheads. The resulting explosion killed many of the forward defenders and stunned Lord Crowe who collapsed against a wall. He saw a group of aliens walk towards him raising their weapons, Crowe was sure his time was up. He closed his eyes and made the sign of the Aquila, thanking the Emperor for the life he had lead. He snapped to his sense when he heard the unmistakable roar of a heavy bolter. The high calibre shells ripped through the Eldar pirates, blasting apart their fragile bodies with ease.

Lord Aurelius leaped up and ran towards his saviours, expecting to see a squad of defenders. Instead he saw just one man, wielding his heavy bolter as if it were no heavier than a lasgun. The soldier introduced himself and the two set off to find more defenders. They hadn't taken three steps when an Eldar marksman hit Cortez. The shuriken rounds hit him in the right arm, severing it from the rest of his body. Lord Crowe dragged the injured man round the corner and saw a lesser officer. Deferring his role of commander to the other officer he hauled Cortez up to the ship's medical facility. Ordering the surgeons to give the wounded man the best care possible, Lord Crowe returned to the fray, never to see Cortez again, or so he thought...

As time went on, Aurelius moved further up the chain of command until, at the age of 24 he became First Officer. He was his uncle's right hand man, loyal adviser and good friend.

While there was some grumbling amongst other officers, Aurelius did not simply receive his post due to blood ties; he was hard working, full of energy and ready to attempt the impossible. To make matters more interesting, the 'Emperor's Flame' was growing in renown too, thanks to her efforts in the battles of Mannar and Orane. Her captain Gregori Crowe was becoming somewhat of a hero to the fleet.

However, all changed at the battle of Eurydice. Sensor teams had just been sent down to the newly found world when a fleet of alien ships emerged from the far side of the planet and began charging their weapons. As soon as Bade saw this he ordered his ships to attack, concentrating all firepower on the large vessel at



the centre of the enemy fleet. The 'Emperor's Flame' had other ideas, instead of joining her sister ships she instead attacked the smaller escorts that had begun to harass the Sensor Teams. The alien attack was hampered, causing the ships to retreat. But it came at a heavy price; four of the escorts had been crippled, the Gothic cruiser 'Firebrand' had taken a torpedo to the bridge, killing the command crew, and Bade's flagship the 'Silent Blade' (a Lunar class cruiser) had lost both of its lance batteries. Gregori was called before the Rogue Trader to explain his actions; events had taken a turn for the worse.

Aurelius revealed a great deal about himself by his reaction to Gregori's sudden fall from power. He behaved in a very different manner from most of those around him. He did not begin to fight and bicker with his fellow officers in an attempt to gain promotion to Captaincy, nor did he attempt to distance himself from the calamity by joining in the general vilification of the fallen idol. Instead, he summed up the situation rapidly and acted decisively by busying himself to secure his nomination as a commanding officer onboard the 'Firebrand'; the largest but leaderless ship in the fleet.

His intention in doing so was two-fold. He wanted to advance his own claims to preferment by bringing himself to the attention of the Rogue Trader and his inner council of advisors, he also wanted to prove that, unlike his uncle and former master, he was trustworthy and could be depended upon to get the job done. This display of both hard work and loyalty resulted in him coming favourably to the notice of Bade, who was soon very pleased to welcome him into his personal service. Aurelius now held two positions of high importance; now not only was he a Captain, he was also a member of Goran Bade's Inner Sanctum.

It is still not possible to accurately chart all the stages in Lord Aurelius' ascension from a mere adviser to a fully fledged Rogue Trader; the only person with access to the data records from the Inner Sanctum's meetings is Lord Aurelius himself. But however it happened, it was certainly not a rapid process, for it was not until the fleet entered the Imperial shipyards above Hape IV in the year 992.M41 that he was presented with Goran Bade's Warrant of Trade.

One thing that is certain however, is that Lord Aurelius' 100 year long career as Goran Bade's disciple did not pass smoothly. Many agree that the troubles began with the rediscovery of the planet Orpheus in the latter portion of 885.M41.

The planet Orpheus was in fact just within the borders of Imperial controlled space, however it had been trapped by a warp storm for several thousand years. Orpheus had been colonised several centuries after the Horus Heresy by the billions of refugees who's homes had been destroyed by the traitor legions. The planet was blessed with huge mineral deposits and sophisticated mining complexes covered almost a third of the planet's surface. The inhabitants had continued to venerate the Emperor as an immortal God even after the storm sealed them off from the rest of the Imperium, however over time the rituals and beliefs of the Cult Imperialis had been lost or forgotten.

The warp storm ended as abruptly as it had began, Bade's flotilla was only a short jump away from the system and they seized the opportunity to discover more 'uncharted' worlds. When Bade realised what he had found, he sent a request for an Ecclesiarchial expedition to be sent to the planet to reinstate her into the Imperium. While this was occurring, Lord Aurelius began to set up meetings with the planet's rulers to discuss the creation of trade routes with nearby Imperial Forge Worlds.

For several years trade with Orpheus flourished. Bade made more profit from the mineral rich planet than he had from nearly 500 years of adventuring. However, while loading his cargo fleet with precious metals for a routine cargo run, he received a communiqué from the planet that would change his life.

While boring a new mineshaft, workers had unearthed some ruins that appeared alien in origin, Bade was astonished to



discover that the buildings were made of a similar material to the vessels he had encountered above Eurydice several years earlier. Bade and the Planetary Governor debated what to do; both were desperate not to get the Inquisition involved, but equally, neither wanted to be accused of hiding things from the Empire. Unfortunately, their choice had already been made; an undercover Inquisitor disguised as a Priest contacted his Order who had passed on his findings to the Ordo Xenos. An Inquisitorial strike team was on its way. Bade loaded as many of the alien artefacts as he could onto his vessel and headed to Hape IV, hoping to dispose of his wares there, while the Planetary Governor under saw the destruction of the dig sites.

Though the Inquisitorial strike team left Orpheus a few months after their arrival, Bade refused to return to the planet that had made him so rich; believing that the Inquisition was aware of his part in the cover up and thus was after him. Lord Aurelius was highly sceptical but said nothing, not wanting to anger the man who was becoming more and more paranoid with each passing year.

The pair spent the next 75 years exploring the Ghoul Stars near the Cardinal World of Dimmamar. Whenever they docked in an Imperial world, Bade would rigorously scan the port's database searching for any vessels he had encountered before. He would never leave the ship and often locked himself in his private chambers for weeks on end.

After a few years he became convinced that the merchant vessel the 'August Soul' was in actual fact a Ordo Xenos Inquisitor's ship in disguise. Bade had two reasons to believe this; firstly the vessel appeared in the same system as his fleet an unusually high number of times, and secondly, he could find no background information as the ship; it had no history, no cargo records and no docking warrants. Aurelius however, remained sceptical. Putting it down to coincidence and poor record keeping.

By 992.M41 Bade's paranoia had almost completely consumed him, it was in this year that the flotilla entered Hape IV, this was to be Goran Bade's last voyage. Upon docking with the Imperial shipyards Bade made a public announcement. He announced that, at almost 600 years old, he was now retiring from the position of Rogue Trader having made a vast fortune from his adventures. He was to pass his Warrant of Trade onto his greatest ally Lord Aurelius Crowe, who had been like a son to him. At this point he presented Lord Aurelius with a gift; the 'Silent Blade' had been in dry-docks since the battle of Eurydice undergoing extensive refits and now she was complete. Her lance batteries had been completely removed and in their place were massive cargo holds, capable of storing as large a payload as most commercial gigatankers.

After his speech he took Lord Aurelius to one side. His only words were "The 'August Soul' is here." Then he left the station for the planet's surface, never to be seen again.

Lord Aurelius was astonished; Bade had no fortune left after his fruitless exploits in the Ghoul Stars and he himself was no better

off. He needed money and fast. The it hit him, the most obvious way of making profit would be to send his new freighter to Orpheus and re-establish the trade routes.

A few months later, Lord Crowe's superfreighter, (christened 'Eurydice' after the battle that had changed his fortunes) left port for Orpheus, as she was heavily armoured and armed there was no need for an escort. Lord Aurelius sat back and waited for his ship to return, laden with priceless metals. Then he could begin his career as Rogue Trader properly. He also noted, with slight amusement, that the 'August Soul' left port only a few days later.

After three months, Lord Aurelius had received no word from the 'Eurydice', but heavy warp storms had been disrupting communication for some time so he was not overly concerned.

Six months went by and there was still no word from his ship or from the planet Orpheus. However, the warp storm had only recently seceded so he still could not be sure of the cause. At this point Lord Aurelius decided that if he received no messages by the end of the 7th month, he would set out for Orpheus.

Seven months came and went and yet there was still no response. It was only then that Lord Aurelius readied his fleet and set a course for Orpheus. He chose to command the operation from the 'Emperor's Flame', the first Imperial vessel that he had served upon.

When he arrived at Orpheus, he did not find the mineral rich planet, teaming with life that he had expected. Instead he was face with a barren ball of rock, scorched of any sign that life ever existed. There was no sign of his vessel either; she had vanished.

Lord Aurelius was furious; the loss of Orpheus was bad enough but the disappearance of 'Eurydice' was incomprehensible, the cost of her payload was estimated at around 200 billion Imperial Credits and she had gone. Lord Aurelius ordered his fleet to scan the system for any sign of his missing ship. It was then that he noticed a faint energy reading at the edge of the system, his heart leaped when he thought he'd found 'Eurydice' but then it skipped a beat when he realised that he recognised the signature. It was the 'August Soul'.

He ordered his ships to engage and capture the vessel before it made a warp jump, but it was too late, the ship had fled into the immaterium. At this point, most men would have given up, but Lord Aurelius was not like most men. It was clear from the 'August Soul's' warp trail that it was heading back to Hape IV, so he ordered his fleet to pursue at full speed.

When they arrived at Hape IV they found the 'August Soul' abandoned in a civilian docking berth. Lord Crowe ordered his fleet to disband, as he had no more use for it. He then raised a call for volunteers from the crew of the 'Emperor's Flame', explaining his intentions and the dangers involved in the mission. He received only two.

The first he recognised instantly as Lucius Cortez, now sporting his new bionic arm and carrying his favourite weapon; a heavy bolter. The second was a Naval Provost; a member of the Adeptus Arbites whose duty it was to ensure the Emperor's Law was carried out onboard the ship. The Provost introduced himself as Judge Reno Hent. When asked why he wanted to help his answer surprised Lord Crowe. Judge Hent explained that according to the Dictates Imperialis, the person or people that ordered the destruction of Orpheus were guilty of over 1 billion charges of murder, furthermore, the destruction of the 'Eurydice' could be interpreted as “Deliberately hindering the actions of an Imperial Citizen”, a crime he considered heinous in nature.

Lord Aurelius accepted both of the volunteers. Collecting his equipment from the armoury and with his newfound followers in tow, he headed for the planet's surface to find the people that had driven his mentor to insanity and stolen his fortune...



Equipment: Stubber, 2 reloads & Laser Sight, 10 Man-stopper rounds; PAC Shotgun,1 Reload (8 shells); Short Sword; Flak armour on chest, abdomen and groin; Heavy robes on Arms & Legs.

Special Abilities: Deadeye shot; Quickload; True Grit.

Crowe is Right Handed.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Lord Aurelius Crowe	63	72	63	64	78	89	93	85	96



Equipment: Heavy Bolter, 1 reload; Armoured Gauntlets; Average Bionic Right Arm (St. 45,+1 Armour on right arm) Open Helmet with built in Bio-scanner & Range Finder (1 action to change modes).

Special Abilities: Rock Steady Aim; True Grit.

Lucius Cortez is Right Handed.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Lucius Cortez	37	52	88	63	57	56	38	68	42

Equipment: Shock Maul; Carapace Armour on all locations except head; Open Helm with average auto-senses; the Book of Law; Justicator (see below).

Special Abilities: Ambidextrous.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Judge Reno Hent	56	64	46	47	64	71	78	91	69

Justicator: Class: Rare, Type: Pistol, Range: F, Acc: 0, Dmg: 2D6+4, Shts: 15, Rld: 2, Wt: 20

Notes: Limited to members of the Adeptus Arbites. The Justicator comes with an inbuilt shot selector and may be equipped with any of the following ammunition types; Flechette, Hellfire, Executioner, Inferno.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Some people will know me as Aurelius 12 from the Conclave. When I'm not battling for the Emperor's soul, I'm marching into battle with my Wildcat Space Marines, or defending the Gothic Sector with my Imperial fleet. Either that or I'm working to finish my A-Levels!