



WHITE DWARF

ISSUE
458

INDEX
ASTARTES:
TOME KEEPERS

WAR IN THE
PARIAN NEXUS
PART II

SKAVEN VERSUS
KHARADRON
BATTLE REPORT

SOLO PLAY
RULES FOR AGE
OF SIGMAR

OUTLAW
BRUTES FOR
NECROMUNDA

AND MUCH
MORE FOR



WARHAMMER
40,000
FLASHPOINT
ARGOVON SYSTEM



Copyright © Games Workshop Limited 2020 excepting all materials pertaining to the New Line theatrical productions: The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King, THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY, THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG, THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES which are © 2020 New Line Productions, Inc. All rights reserved. The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King and the names of the characters, items, events and places therein are trademarks of The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Middle-earth Enterprises under license to New Line Productions, Inc. © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY, THE HOBBIT: THE DESOLATION OF SMAUG, THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES and the names of the characters, items, events and places therein are trademarks of The Saul Zaentz Company d/b/a Middle-earth Enterprises under license to New Line Productions, Inc. (s20)

All quotations from J.R.R. Tolkien's literary trilogy The Lord of the Rings (including any of the volumes thereof) © The Tolkien Estate 1954-55, 1966.

White Dwarf © Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2020. White Dwarf, GW, Games Workshop, Citadel, Warhammer Visions, Golden Demon, 'Eavy Metal, Paint Splatter, Space Marine, 40K, Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000, the 'Aquila' Double-headed Eagle logo, Warhammer Age of Sigmar, Battletome, Stormcast Eternals, and all associated logos, illustrations, images, names, creatures, races, vehicles, locations, weapons, characters, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are either ® or TM, and/or © Games Workshop Limited, variably registered around the world. All Rights Reserved.

Please be aware that Games Workshop products are usually sold unpainted and unassembled and the contents of any products may vary from those shown herein (for example, any banners shown may not necessarily be included). Pictures are used for illustrative purposes only. In accordance with national laws, Games Workshop is prohibited from selling spray paints and bladed equipment to certain age groups. Further, certain Citadel products may be dangerous if used incorrectly and Games Workshop does not recommend them for use by children under the age of 16 without adult supervision. Whatever your age, be careful when using glues, bladed equipment and sprays and make sure that you read and follow the instructions on the packaging. Prices correct at time of going to press. Customers are advised to contact Games Workshop for current availability and current Games Workshop prices. Prices quoted are for products sold by Games Workshop through its own stores, catalogue or website. Independent retailers are responsible for determining their own prices.

White Dwarf Manager: Ian Huxley

Managing Editor: Lyle Lowery

Printed by Precision Colour Printing Ltd in the UK for distribution to the rest of the world.

Distributed in the UK by Marketforce UK Ltd, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
Telephone: 0203 787 9101
Web: www.marketforce.co.uk

Email: team@whitedwarf.co.uk

WHITE DWARF (ISSN#0265-8712) is published monthly for \$9 by Games Workshop Ltd., Willow Road Nottingham NG7 2WS, United Kingdom, Periodical Postage is paid at Santa Ana, CA and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Games Workshop Customer Services, 6211 East Holmes Road, Memphis, TN 38141.

Games Workshop Limited.
Willow Road, Nottingham, United Kingdom, NG7 2WS

Represented by: Games Workshop Limited - Irish branch,
Unit 3, Lower Liffey Street, Dublin, Ireland

Registered in England and Wales

– Company No. 01467092.

November 2020



ISSN: 0265-8712 / Product code: 6024999600

EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBER COVERS!

If you subscribe to *White Dwarf*, you may have noticed that you have a different cover on your magazine compared to the ones found in shops. Subscriber copies feature a piece of artwork without the contents listing down the side, allowing you to appreciate the art in all its glory.

This month's cover features the Tome Keepers by Johan Grenier.

If you would like to subscribe to *White Dwarf*, turn to the end of the magazine for more information.



MEET THE WHITE DWARF TEAM

From their secret sanctum, itself hidden deep within the Warhammer Studio, the White Dwarf team works tirelessly to craft everyone's favourite Warhammer hobby magazine each month.



LYLE LOWERY
Managing Editor

Lyle has continued adding to his Tome Keepers army this month – the fruits of his labours can be seen in this issue's army gallery. He's also finished all his Warcry terrain and apparently he's got some more Nighthaunt on the go.



MATTHEW HUTSON
Senior Designer

Matt has returned to the Imperial Fists this month, having completed a Contemptor Dreadnought for his Horus Heresy army. He also got to level 40 in a non-Warhammer computer game. What a heretic ...



DAN HARDEN
Staff Writer

When he's not painting Blood Angels or converting Iron Warriors, Dan has been busy writing this issue's Index Astartes article for the Tome Keepers. Apparently, writing a background article is 'a lot harder than it looks'.



JONATHAN STAPLETON
Photographer

Jonathan has been working on a secret project for the last few months, the results of which you will see very soon in the pages of *White Dwarf*. Let's just say it involves soulless space androids from the future and leave it at that.



SOPHIE BOSTOCK
Designer

During the lockdown, Sophie has mostly been working on her Space Wolves army, having painted a squad of Hellblasters and Ragnar Blackmane. She reckons Ragnar's her best model to date, and we're inclined to agree!



BEN HUMBER
Designer

Having travelled the world, Ben returned from his sabbatical to find the office doors locked and the windows barred. After a little begging and pleading, we finally agreed to give him his job back, but now he owes us a favour ...

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Rob Alderman, Owen Barnes, Stu Black, John Bracken, Christian Byrne, Alessio Cavatore, Kevin Chin, Jay Clare, Callum Davis, Paul Foulkes, James Gallagher, Johan Grenier, Nick Horth, Dan Hyams, Jervis Johnson, Phil Kelly, Steve May, Tom Moore, Pedro Núñez, Sam Pearson, James Perry, Malcolm Sanders, James Swallow.



The home of Warhammer on the web, the Warhammer Community website brings you the latest news on Warhammer 40,000, Warhammer Age of Sigmar, the Horus Heresy, Forge World, Black Library, and more!

www.warhammer-community.com

WHITE DWARF

ISSUE 458

WE'RE IN A GIVING MOOD



It's already the holiday season ... somehow! In the spirit of giving, we've packed this issue with an assortment of cards and a poster as our gift to you. With the print version of this issue, you will find a Warcry card for Jakkob Bugmansson – hailed as the descendant of the legendary Bugman clan – that pairs with rules to use Bugmansson in a special challenge mission. Also, a Blood Bowl Star Player card brings a squirrel to the pitch, and new cards for Necromunda, Aeronautica Imperialis, and Adeptus Titanicus offer different strategies and tactics!

In addition, you'll find that a classic Middle-earth clash has been reimagined for *White Dwarf*, pitting two legendary wizards in a storied showdown. The playmat for that mini-game is also included with this issue.

On the other side of that playmat, you'll find a poster of the Tome Keepers. If you've been reading *White Dwarf* over the past several issues, you know all about the

White Dwarf team's journey in bringing the Tome Keepers Chapter of Space Marines from concept to a fully realised part of the Warhammer 40,000 universe. The amazing work of art on this poster was the first artistic rendering of the Tome Keepers, and Johan Grenier did a fantastic job with this assignment. I'm very excited to see the Tome Keepers come to life in this way, and I'm equally pleased for this art to appear on the cover and included poster.

This issue also includes a major milestone in the Tome Keepers' journey – one that marks an end to the beginning, I think. We present here Index Astartes: Tome Keepers, and now you can read the culmination of our 'Creating a Chapter' journey, brought to life with a rich history, beautiful art and an army of models. The Tome Keepers are here, but their journey is just beginning. There are many wars to fight, stories to tell and tomes to fill!

WHITE DWARF CONTENTS

4 CONTACT!

Letters, painting advice and beautifully painted miniatures. Also, solo play stories and a well travelled army.

10 WORLDS OF WARHAMMER

The history of the Mortal Realms (part I), as told by master chronologist Phil Kelly.

WARHAMMER 40,000

16 ECHOES FROM THE WARP

Warhammer 40,000 overlord Stu Black joins us to talk about abstraction and realism in games design.

WARHAMMER 40,000 FLASHPOINT: ARGOVON SYSTEM

20 ARGOVON CAMPAIGN: DEATH ON HISHREA

The Imperium conducts a full-scale assault on Hishrea in an attempt to close the Necron dolmen gates.

26 ASSAULT ON THE NURTHEOS SHORE

A compilation of short (but brutal) stories set on the Necron-dominated world of Hishrea.

30 ARGOVON CAMPAIGN: THE APOCALYPSE OF FORONIKA

The Argovon campaign continues on the blackstone-rich world of Foronika.

36 THE WOE OF CHOICE

The war on Foronika is balanced on a knife edge, as Major General Valdu is only too aware in this short story.

40 ARGOVON CAMPAIGN: CAMPAIGN RULES

A host of new campaign rules, including Xenotech Stratagems and two new Crusade missions.

WARHAMMER 40,000

46 INDEX ASTARTES: TOME KEEPERS

White Dwarf's home-grown Chapter gets its very own Index Astartes article, complete with exclusive rules.

WARHAMMER 40,000

60 PAINT SPLATTER: TOME KEEPERS

You've read their background and seen their rules. Now find out how to paint the Tome Keepers with this handy guide.

WARHAMMER 40,000

64 THE SONS OF ISTROUMA

Lyle shows off the Tome Keepers he's been painting, and we take a closer look at some character conversions.



Cover art by Johan Grenier



FLASHPOINT

20 JOIN US FOR THE SECOND PART IN THE ARGOVON FLASHPOINT SERIES. INSIDE, YOU WILL FIND NEW BACKGROUND AND RULES, ENABLING YOU TO PLAY THROUGH THE NEXT PART IN THIS EPIC CAMPAIGN.



**SUBSCRIBE TO
WHITE DWARF
TODAY!
SEE INSIDE
BACK COVER**

46

INDEX ASTARTES: TOME KEEPERS



76

BATTLE REPORT: THE COMET'S CALL



118

WIZARDS' DUEL



WARCRY

70 TROUBLE BREWING

Jakkob Bugmansson – latest in a long line of Bugmans – enters the Eightpoints in search of a long-lost brewing recipe.

WARCRY

74 A BARREL OF DRAUGHTS

You've seen the exclusive Warcry card for Jakkob Bugmansson that comes with this issue. Well, here's a challenge battle to use him in!

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

76 BATTLE REPORT: THE COMET'S CALL

The skaven take on the Kharadron Overlords for possession of a comet. But where it will land is anyone's guess ...

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

94 HEROES OF THE HINTERLANDS

When the world descends into Chaos, sometimes you just have to make war alone. Here we present rules for solo games of Warhammer Age of Sigmar.

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

110 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Jervis joins us to talk about rules semantics. Just don't get wholly within 2".

WARHAMMER UNDERWORLDS

114 GLORY POINTS

John Bracken investigates the important topic of being hunted. He recommends man traps. And some tasty-looking bait.

THE MIDDLE-EARTH STRATEGY BATTLE GAME

118 WIZARDS' DUEL

It's Gandalf versus Saruman in this iconic duel, which uses the free playmat that comes with this issue.

NECROMUNDA

122 NEW HANGERS-ON: OUTLAW BRUTES

Four seriously dubious allies for your Necromunda gangs. If you're hiring these guys, expect a call from the Enforcers any time round about ... now.

WARHAMMER 40,000

128 FAITH & FIRE PART VIII

In the penultimate part of the story, Verity and Miriya find themselves imprisoned as their quarries finally come face to face.

142 OUTSIDE THE STUDIO

We talk about the models we've painted and the games we've played while working from home over the summer.

CONTACT

Where we feature your thoughts, questions and painted miniatures. Send us your letters and pictures, and we'll print the best ones we get.



WORLD'S MOST TRAVELLED ARMY?

Hey team! I'm a long time reader of *White Dwarf* and a marine engineer – my job takes me all over the world and involves a lot of time at sea. When the Adeptus Custodes were released in 2018, I knew that I wanted to collect an army of them. They have a small model count but are extremely detailed, perfect for someone who travels a lot but can't carry a lot of hobby supplies.

I've struggled in the past to get projects fully painted due to the long periods when I am working away. So, to keep myself motivated, I decided to start taking models to sea with me to paint in my down time. As a result, over the last couple of years I have ended up with elements of my army having travelled well over 10,000 miles (possibly more – I'm not a good navigator), visiting a large number of ports. The bulk of my Troops choices were painted during a trip out in the Middle East, whereas Trajann Valoris was finished off the coast of Norway towards the end of 2019. The army has also had an overseas trip as a unified force, travelling to Sweden just before Christmas 2019 to face off against a horde of Tyranids. That year was a particularly good year for my Adeptus Custodes, as I managed to play thirteen games with a mostly painted force, something which has not occurred in years for me! This year, I have already added a squad of Aquilon Terminators and an extra Vindicare Assassin, and I have made a start on a Caladius Grav-tank. This should hopefully keep me on track to breach the 2,000-point mark by the end of 2020.

I'm now looking forward to *Psychic Awakening: War of the Spider* and hopefully some combined rules for Talons of the Emperor forces. In the meantime, I will be returning

to sea, this time with some Custodian Guard armed with pyrrhite spears to keep me sane. Keep up the great work, and I look forward to the next mail drop!

James Hughes
Boat-on-Sea (sometimes Cornwall), UK



That's an awesome tale to tell – thanks for writing in, James. Your Adeptus Custodes army must surely be the most well travelled Warhammer collection in the world, but we'll have to wait and see if someone else challenges your title. Perhaps we can get some Space Marines into space? We'll see ... And on top of a great story, your models look brilliant, too. Just goes to show that painting is still possible even when your paint station is pitching from side to side. We landlubbers have it easy!

Gotrek
by Eric Serra



Commander Shadowsun
by Pascale Roujou



Knight of Shrouds
by Michael Azzopardi





EMAIL US:
TEAM@WHITEDWARF.CO.UK



FIND US ON FACEBOOK:
SEARCH 'WHITE DWARF
MAGAZINE'



WRITE TO US:
THE WHITE DWARF BUNKER
GAMES WORKSHOP
NOTTINGHAM
NG7 2WS
UNITED KINGDOM

By submitting letters, articles or photographs, you give Games Workshop permission to feature them in White Dwarf, on the Warhammer Community page or on Facebook at any time in the future. To read our full privacy policy, see the White Dwarf Privacy Notice in the Customer Services section on

www.games-workshop.com

Blood Bowl Mummy
by Jonathan Rhodes



Auric Runemaster
by Benjamin Porter



Nassir Amit
by Andrew Semon



THE JOYS OF WHITE DWARF

I was really pleased to get issue 453 through the post a few weeks ago. (*Well, months ago now. – Ed*). With all the uncertainty of lockdown, it was nice to hear that satisfying thump on the carpet as my wonderful post lady pushed it through the letter box. The Royal Mail are awesome. Talking of noble heroes, a big 'thank you' to everyone who is involved in putting *White Dwarf* together, from the team itself to regular columnists and batreppers, printers and distributors. I'll finish with my top five articles from 453.

5) *Faith and Fire* Part III was EXCITING! Absolute chaos. I really need to get an Adepta Sororitas kill team together.

4) Designing your own Space Marine Chapter / Deathwatch codex update / another AoS campaign / Vokmortian's Tithe Legion. I know that's more than one thing, but I really enjoyed reading them all.

3) *Necromunda, Back from the Dead*. Daemons possessing dead gangers? I LOVE it! These rules are so much fun.

2) *The Middle-earth Battle Report*. So refreshing to see a LotR batrep. I really enjoyed it and loved the photos.

1) *Deathwatch Watch Master in Blackstone Fortress*. During lockdown, single-player games are awesome. The Watch Master is a one-man army! Please keep the single-player ideas rolling.

Nathan Carr
Plymouth, UK

We're pleased you enjoyed it, Nathan, and we're glad you kept the enemies at bay with that Watch Master. There will be plenty more solo gaming rules in the future, too. In fact, there are some in this very issue!

Corvus Cabal Warband
by Jonathan De Vos



ASK GROMBRINDAL

Greetings, mighty and wise longbeard! I have a question about that most inscrutable of Space Marine Chapters: the Dark Angels. During the Horus Heresy they are often depicted with checkered patterns on their armour. Can you find out what these markings mean?



Anthony Jefferson
The Rock, UK

Ah, heraldry, a noble art! According to my sources, the heraldic chequay was used to determine generation and seniority within the First Legion as it fought on Terra and across the Solar System. The number of layers in a chequay pattern and the shape of the pattern indicated whether that warrior be among the true firstborn or from a later generation of the Legiones Astartes. On Caliban, similar patterns had been incorporated into knightly arms of both individual knights and knightly orders for millennia. The merger of all those little squares was more complicated than you'd think!

Grombrindal



Tome Keepers Lieutenant
by Gareth Etherington

TOP PHOTO TIPS

In Contact, we want to show off the very best miniatures painted by you, our readers. Of course, great miniatures need great pictures, so we came up with a useful guide to help you out:

www.warhammer-community.com/the-model-photo

If you follow all the advice in that article, you really can't go far wrong. Our top tips are:

Always use a white background.

Make sure you've got good lighting.

Ensure the whole model is in focus, including the base and all its weapons.

Find the model's golden angle. If in doubt, take a look at the same model on the Games Workshop website to see how it was photographed.

HANGING ON

Dear *White Dwarf* team, I hope you all are doing well and keeping safe in this time of isolation. I currently live on my own and only go in to work when I am needed. So now I have a lot of free time on my hands. With the help of your downloadable books (I have just got a digital copy of *Mark of Faith*), catching up on my painting, and playing single-player Blackstone Fortress missions, I have kept some of my sanity. So thank you, and I hope that this crisis ends soon and we can get back to doing what we love.

Robert Etherington
Grimsby, UK



Hear, hear, Robert – we totally agree with you on that. I think we've all been painting quite a lot recently. We're glad you're having fun with Blackstone Fortress, though. You should try giving video link-up games a go, too – they're great fun as long as the internet behaves!



Myrmour Banshees
by Alessandro Miraldi

PAINTING QUESTION: TRUSKAN SNOWHOUND

First of all, I want to thank you for making this awesome magazine. I have been reading it for about a year now, and I always look forward to the next issue. I also have a question. In Galactic War Zones last year, you showed a Truskan Snowhound painted by Jason Lee. I would like to start an Imperial Guard ice-world army, and I really like his colour scheme. Could you tell me what colours he used?

Lukas Steilen
Hemsbach, Germany

Hey, Lukas, of course we can. Jason started by basecoating the whole model with Fenrisian Grey using an airbrush (you can use a normal brush, but an airbrush is quicker if you're painting a whole load of infantry). He then airbrushed the whole model again, but only from above, with Ulthuan Grey. This helps create natural highlights and shading. He then applied the camo pattern using real-life camo for reference. Good luck painting your army, Lukas – make sure you send us some pictures!



WHITE FATIGUES

Basecoat: Fenrisian Grey

Highlight: Ulthuan Grey

Highlight: White Scar

GREY CAMO PATTERN

Basecoat: Mechanicus Standard Grey

Layer: Dawnstone

Layer: Dawnstone & Administratum Grey

BEDROLL

Basecoat: Loren Forest

Wash: Agrax Earthshade

Layer: Ogryn Camo

Layer: Krieg Khaki

Zarbag's Gitz
by Jason Carter



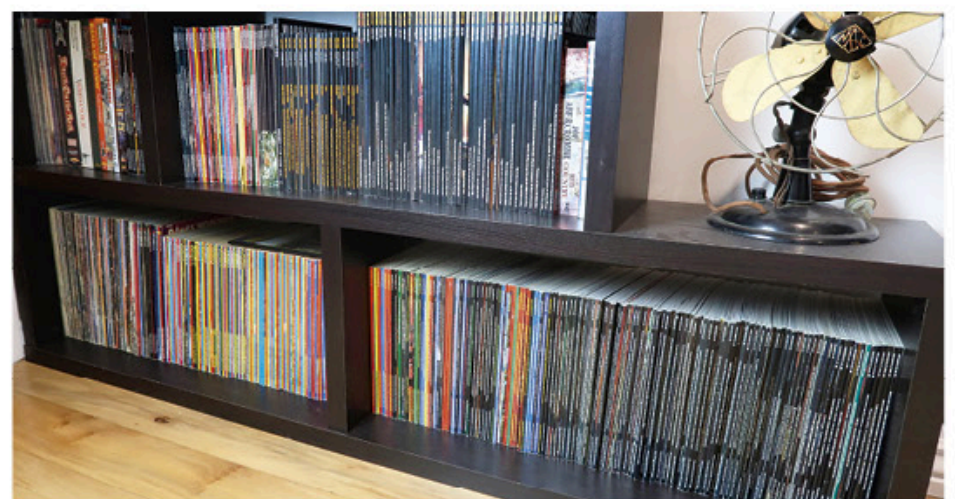
WHITE DWARF COLLECTION #1-450

Greetings, White Dwarfers! The reappearance of the issue number on *White Dwarf* #450 prompted me to track down the last few missing issues in my collection. And so ...

... Behold! Witness the true glory of every *White Dwarf* issue, all the way back to #1. I purchased my first *White Dwarf* – it was issue #4 – way back in 1978, and I've been hauling this ever-growing horde of surprisingly heavy magazines around with me from house to house all the long years since then. Obviously I missed a few over the years, so finally completing the collection was a momentous occasion. I look forward to filling the rest of this bookcase with future issues.

Obviously, I'm a big fan ...

Peter Gifford
Nelson, New Zealand



When you say you're a big fan, Peter, we assume you're not the one in the picture, right? We love technological progress, but sentient air circulators are perhaps a step too far. Regardless, it looks like you're sitting on a pretty hefty collection of *White Dwarfs* right there. Roughly one hundred and thirty-five kilos by our estimate. Or just under three hundred pounds for you Imperial types.



Gutrot Spume
by Ladislav Majer



Imperial Fists Apothecary
by Lewis Jones



Drukhari Haemonculus
by Liam Boulcott

FIANCÉE'S FIRST MODEL

This week, my fiancée, Kirsty, decided to paint her first (and apparently last) miniature. I had a spare Primaris Intercessor, so she set off painting that, deciding on making him a Space Wolf. Following the 'Eavy Metal Masterclass booklet, she took to painting quite well, as you can see by the results!

As for me, I've been working on my Ultramarines. Next up is Guilliman!

Tony Lightfoot
Consett, UK

Well, we think Kirsty's Space Wolves Intercessor looks great. Nice work, Kirsty. You should be justifiably proud of your first miniature. It is certainly better than most of our first attempts, that's for sure. We also sincerely hope it's not your last model. We reckon you'd have a superb collection if you kept up that level of painting! In the meantime, when are we going to see Guilliman, Tony?



XV95 Ghostkeel, Sa'cea Sept
by Dean Lecoq



Technomancer of the Onyx Phalanx
by Ben Mason

MODEL OF THE MONTH

This issue's model of the month is this extremely impressive rendition of the Triumph of Saint Katherine by Damien Tomasina, whose Sisters of Battle we featured in issue 456.

'I chose to paint my Battle Sisters using lots of object source lighting, both from natural sources such as the sun and from the many candles and braziers that they carry,' says Damien. 'It represents them bringing the Emperor's light to the darkness. The exemplar of Saint Katherine at the front, for example, has a lot of light reflecting off her

armour from above, helping to illuminate her. To her right (on the left in the picture), the representative of Saint Dominica carries the Ebon Chalice, which adds another light source: fire. I worked hard to make the light radiate from the chalice, adding yellow, orange and red object source lighting to her robes and armour. I used a similar technique to non-metallic metals for this, enabling me to build up a reflective effect on her clothing.'

We expect to see lots more Sisters of Battle from Damien in the future – apparently he has plenty more to paint!



WORLDS OF WARHAMMER



PHIL KELLY

As the Warhammer Studio's senior background writer, Phil is almost permanently (some might say eternally) immersed in the lore of the Mortal Realms and the 41st Millennium. He was last seen scurrying around in the depths of the studio archive and muttering something about chronology. Sadly we don't have time to go into that here ...

¹ By that I mean the time period rather than the game, or the actual age of the God-King himself. He insists he is 'thirty-something' if pressed, but in truth he's so old now that his birthday cake would have to be the size of Azyrheim to fit all the candles on.

² Now on its second iteration, thanks to the efforts of the tireless Jordan Green.

The Age of Sigmar¹ is but the latest in several epochs that span the history of the Mortal Realms. These are all detailed in the core books, campaign books and battletomes of this mighty hobby of ours. We deliberately did not put dates on these events for two reasons.

The in-world reason is that with years and seasons varying from realm to realm, and civilisation only just being re-established, there

would be little common frame of reference to act as a foundation for specific dates. The real-world reason is that in the past we have found hard and fast dates can be restrictive, and breaking those restrictions can lead to many a quandary. Instead, we measure things in looser terms like centuries and generations. This gives us a lot more wiggle room for manoeuvre, and it lends more of an epic feel than a scientific one.

That said, having a chronology is a useful tool to know what events followed what. For that reason, we've maintained a master timeline.² Because we've fleshed out the Age of Sigmar a lot over the last five years, I will be presenting it in three parts. First up is the Age of Myth, as well as the prehistoric time that came before it. I hope it proves useful for your own journeys, myths and adventures.



BEFORE THE AGES

FORMATION OF THE REALMSPHERES

After the destruction of the world-that-was, the Mortal Realms slowly form in the aetheric void. Various kinds of magic cluster together, crystallising and combining with nebulae, cosmic dust and the debris of the former world to form new realities. Contained in spheres of magical power known as realmspheres, many harden into vast discs, each fringed with archipelagos of solid magic. Also formed at this time are the Realmgates, examples of godly Old One technology that provide passage between the realms.

Early tribes of humans establish themselves, though they are barbarous and base.

DOMINION OF THE GODBEASTS

The godbeasts are at large in the realms at this time. Ymnog, Grandfather of Gargants, is amongst the greatest. The oral histories of the gargants say that he drank fully half of the First Ocean, broke reality into land, sea and sky with

his club, and that the godbeast Behemat and his two brothers grew from stones in his belly. Behemat is eventually able to escape, though his siblings are devoured. It is said that the first gargants crawl from Behemat's mouth as he lies sleeping.

TIME OF THE BRAY

The Beastman Greatfrays thrive, preying upon the human tribes with savage fury. Legends of their ravages are enshrined in the folklore of primitive cultures.

The Seraphon temple-fleets, having fled the destruction of the world-that-was, are drawn to the Mortal Realms. They are encountered by Dracothion, who – moved by their plight – leads them to the upper vaults of Azyr. Here the Seraphon begin to take celestial energy into themselves, becoming the Starborne.

SIGMAR AWAKENED

Dracothion observes the remnants of Mallus streaking through the heavens, chasing after it. Upon doing so, he notices Sigmar clinging to the core of the broken world. The godbeast senses a kindred spirit in Sigmar and revives him, who in turn bestows 'gifts' upon Dracothion. Sigmar is shown the Star Bridges and

Realmgates for the first time, and begins his exploration of the realms in earnest.

THE AGE OF MYTH

THE TRAVELS OF SIGMAR

Sigmar begins to explore the Mortal Realms in earnest, marvelling at the many strange and wondrous things he discovers. His deeds at this time become legendary, from slaying the volc-giants of the Great Parch to besting great Ymnog. The Dragon Ogors are cast out of Azyr, leaving them embittered and searching for Krakankrok the Black, the mightiest of their race.

WANDERINGS OF GORKAMORKA

Gorkamorka, the Twin-headed God of Destruction, roams the realms alongside his right-hand (or foot) man Behemat, searching for the best fights around. The god bites off more than he can chew, however, when he gets into a brawl with Drakatoa, the Living Avalanche. The mountain of primordial amber soon absorbs Gorkamorka, leaving him trapped and raging in confinement.

Worlds of Warhammer delves into the background of the Age of Sigmar and the 41st Millennium, looking at how stories are created and legends are born. This month, we travel back in time to when the Mortal Realms were born and the wondrous Age of Myth began.

RULERS OF SHADOW

Morathi awakens hurtling from the skies of Ulgu to land in the Umbralic Sea. Coming ashore in the Helleflux region, the sorceress – transmuted into hideous serpentine form – begins to travel across the mysterious realm. Gradually she begins to piece her shattered mind back together, learning many secrets and consorting with the shadow daemons that are born from the moon Dharroth. Eventually she is reunited with her son Malerion, now reborn as a god of shadow. Their meeting is a bitter one, but the two agree to work together, using their magic to raise up the citadel of Druchiroth in Greater Ulguoth.

AWAKENING OF THE EVERQUEEN

Alarielle is awakened by Sigmar in the Realm of Life. Enraptured by Ghyran's beauty but eventually tired of wandering alone, she plants soulseeds saved from the world-that-was. These grow into the first Sylvaneth glades, Oakenbrow and Gnarlroot. The Dreadwood are planted soon after in moribund Decrepita, beginning their rivalry with the youthful Oakenbrow of Neos. The children of the Everqueen spread far beyond the Realm of Life.

THE DEEDS OF GRIMNIR

Grimnir awakens in Aqshy surrounded by his duardin kin. The Burning Berzerker performs many great feats, such as capturing the godbeast Ignax – weakened from its recent battle with Great Nagendra, Father of Serpents – and shackling it to the Land of the Chained Sun. However, after the mysterious Thagduegi ('Great Betrayal'), Grimnir and Grungni are left chained atop the highest of Chamon's Iron Mountains.

RULERS OF LIGHT

Tyrion, Lord of Lumination, awakens in Xintil, having bonded with the energy of Hysh. He travels across the Ten Paradises, marvelling at all he finds but disheartened to be so alone. Eventually he travels to Haixiah, pushing towards the Realm's Edge. It proves too much, and Tyrion is blinded, though his willpower draws the respect of the spirit of the Realm's Edge. Tyrion awakes in Xintil once more, rejoicing to find his brother Teclis now by his side. The two learn to

work together as twin halves of the same godly whole, though they are dismayed to find no aelves wherever they look.

ENCOUNTER OF THE GODS

During Sigmar's travels, he encounters Tyrion and Teclis in Hysh. They are brought to Azyr, where they find a limited number of aelves. Tyrion teaches the people of Azyr much concerning warfare, athletics and philosophy, while Teclis offers his knowledge of magic and science.

THE FREEING OF NAGASH

After casting down the hydragors that guard the gates of Shyish, Sigmar travels the Realm of Death, uplifting its people and granting them civilisation's arts. Eventually, he discovers a realmstone cairn entrapping his old enemy Nagash. Though trepidatious, the God-King frees the Great Necromancer. Nagash agrees to aid Sigmar in the settlement of civilisation and establishes many cities, amongst them Nagashizzar.

THE LABOURS OF GRUNGNI

Grimnir and Grungni are released from their bondage by Sigmar as the God-King explores Chamon. Grateful, Grungni creates the Nineteen Great Wonders of Chamon, of which the perfectly straight Godwrought Isles are one. He also founds the duardin Khazalid empire before travelling to Azyr to forge the Sigmarabulum and Anvil of Apotheosis.

Chamonite is discovered in great abundance throughout the Godwrought Isles. This encourages trade and technological development, with the nations known as the Brothers Adamant – Sigyorn, Azgal and Crucible Prongs – profiting most.

THE DOOM OF GRIMNIR

Grimnir demands to repay his debt more immediately. He is charged with slaying the godbeast Vulcatrrix, Mother of Salamanders. The Burning Berzerker heads into the Hills of Aqshy, where he engages Vulcatrrix in a mighty duel. The battle ends with the mutual deaths of both combatants. The resulting magical conflagration levels the Plains of Aqshy, creates Vostargi Mont through the falling embers, and leaves the worshippers of Grimnir an orphaned people.

DUEL OF GODS

Riding atop Dracothion, Sigmar spots Gorkamorka trapped within Drakatoa. He bids his companion swoop down before delivering the amber godbeast a mighty blow with Ghal Maraz. The energies of the storm compel Drakatoa to expel Gorkamorka – who immediately smites Dracothion with a mighty blow from his club. An incensed Sigmar soon engages Gorkamorka in a duel that lasts for many days and nights. On the twelfth night, the two gods come to an understanding. Gorkamorka agrees to serve as a beast hunter in Sigmar's growing pantheon, for the Hammer God is the only being ever to fight him to a standstill.

Soon after, Alarielle and Nagash are independently approached to join the Pantheon of Order. They agree, though both retain focus on their 'home' realm above all.

THE GOLDEN CENTURIES

With the Pantheon of Order assembled, Sigmar truly begins his mission to spread civilisation across the realms. The Beastman Greatfrays are ousted from their ancestral hunting grounds and forced to the periphery of civilisation.

Great cities rise from Aqshy to Shyish. It is a time of relative peace and prosperity.

A STIRRING BEYOND THE VEIL

Within the Realm of Chaos, the Dark Gods fix hungry eyes upon the Mortal Realms. They begin to work their sinister influence on emergent civilisations, corrupting them from within. The Great Horned Rat fosters the skaven in Blight City, a sub-realm formed around the ruins of an ancient, half-real metropolis once known as Skavenblight. Here the ratmen multiply and learn the secrets of creating gnawholes.

The Slann Starmasters detect the machinations of Chaos and begin manipulating the development of civilisations believed to have a role to play in the wars to come, either subtly aiding them or wiping them out. The first nodes of the Astromatrix, a great web of arcane power, are connected.

A COMMON ENEMY

Tyrion and Teclis meet with Malerion and Morathi in Shyish, aided by an order of raven-worshipping monks – secret disciples of Tzeentch. They are united only in their desire to free their people's souls from Slaanesh. Thanks to Morathi's knowledge, a daring plan is formed.

RISE OF EMPIRES

Bataar and Aspiria become the principal nations of the Great Parch – at the expense of the Capilarian, Aridian and Flamescar tribes. Meanwhile, in Chamon, the steamhead pioneers of Chamon's Godwrought Isles, ancestors of the Kharadron, begin experimenting with extracting and refining aether-gold.

FOUNDATION OF THE FYRESLAYER CULT

The worshippers of Grimnir form the first-forged lodges, centred around the Salamander's Spine of Aqshy. They discover that the essence of Grimnir has mingled with that of Vulcatrix, forming ur-gold and Magmadroth eggs. Fyrds are dispatched to recover the ur-gold, and the Fyreslayers' reputation as mercenaries is established.

DOOM OF SHADESPIRE

The Katophranes of Shadespire earn Nagash's ire by creating shadeglass. The Great Necromancer works a spell to transport the essence of the city into the Hidden Gloaming, creating the Mirrored City.

LABOURS OF BEHEMAT

Needled by Tzeentch's whispers and Khorne's taunting laughter, Gorkamorka begins to resent his position on Sigmar's pantheon – especially since Behemat is still free to roam as he pleases. The Twin-headed God sets the godbeast

many tasks, culminating in a duel against Sigmar. Behemat is knocked unconscious, his body forming the greater mass of Scabrous Sprawl in Ghyran.

A PLAN IMMORTAL

Nagash begins to scheme for ultimate dominion. Arkhan the Black is charged with moving Shyishan realmstone to the realm's centre, one grain at a time. A score of lesser death gods are devoured by Nagash, and myriad underworlds are conquered. Cities built by the undead hosts are founded atop secret underground caverns, in which Nagash intends to conceal his mightiest armies.

THE FALL AND RISE OF ORPHEON KATAKROS

Orpheon Katakros, a military genius from Ghur, is slain. His soul awakens in the underworld of Ossia, where he swiftly rises through the nation's militant ranks. Several underworlds are annexed by his peerless command. When Nagash's hosts descend upon the Ossian Empire, he is intrigued by Katakros' skills and eventually agrees to remake the general as a Mortarch.

BIRTH OF THE CARRION KING

The vampiric champion Ushoran loses favour with Nagash and is remade as the Carrion King. He ravages the Nightlands of Shyish for a time before being dragged before the Great Necromancer and imprisoned within the Shroudage.

THE EVERWINTER COMETH

The Everwinter comes into being, pursuing the Beastclaw Alfrostuns; some say it is a curse set upon them by Gorkamorka himself. The Frostlord Braggoth Vardruk searches Ghur for the Golden Hunting Grounds, which he

believes to be beyond the grasp of the Everwinter, but he is tricked by a coterie of aelven wizards and frozen solid, along with much of the Boulderhead Mawtribe.

HEAVENLY GIFTS

Malerion gifts Sigmar the Gladitorium, through which he can secretly observe the God-King's armies; with this done, he largely retreats from the pantheon. Teclis gifts Sigmar the Enlightenment Engines; the God-King soon sets Grungni the task of reversing their effect to shroud the first of the eldritch caches known as Stormvaults.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GRUNGNI

After completing his tasks for Sigmar, Grungni disappears, leaving his people – the duardin – to fend for themselves against their multifarious enemies.

THE BINDING OF SLAANESH

Slaanesh is captured by the aelven gods and imprisoned in the Hidden Gloaming. The process of soul extraction begins using the Ocarian Lantern. Tyrion and Teclis also begin to distance themselves from the pantheon, and they become obsessed with saving their people.

BIRTH OF THE CYTHAI

Teclis creates the Cythai, but he fails to expel the lingering taint of Slaanesh in their souls. Though Tyrion stays his brother's hand, the Cythai flee beneath the waves of Hysh's Gealus Ocean to escape retribution, becoming the Idoneth. With them they take the Ocarian Lantern, and they hide it in the chasm of Sarr Danoi. Soon after, the disconsolate Teclis becomes aware of Sigmar's perversion of his Enlightenment Engines.

FOUNDATION OF THE KHAINITE CULT

Spurned by the gods and granted only a sliver of land in Ulgu to rule, Morathi leaves the Pantheon of Order to begin crafting her aelven people. She is accompanied by minor cults of Khaine, whom she rules as a prophet. The temple of Hagg Nar is established in the Umbral Veil.

SCATTERING OF THE IDONETH

Discontent between Idoneth factions in the First City of Gealrachi sees the enclaves spreading across the realms. Only the Ionrach, who establish the city of Priom in Ghyran's Maithnar Sea, attempt to keep in contact with their kin. The Idoneth begin raiding for souls, having learned the various magical arts required for their survival.

CREATION OF THE LUMINETH

After several more false starts, Tyrion and Teclis succeed in creating the Lumineth, an aelven race that seems to embody their ideals. Their patronage of this new race sees them further abandon the Pantheon of Order.

DESCENT OF THE LODE-GRIFFON

Tzeentch lures the godbeast known as the lode-griffon to the Godwrought Isles, its magnetic blood distorting the region. Straight landmasses begin to ripple and twist into the Spiral Crux, undoing the Brothers Adamant. The tribes of Odrenn, Ayadah and Viscid Flux are furthest from the centre of the Crux and begin to surpass the Brothers. Prosperis is founded by settlers from Viscid Flux.

THE FIRST GREAT WAAAGH!

Gorkamorka suddenly snaps, violently resigning from Sigmar's fraying pantheon. The resulting Great Waaagh!

is said to ravage from one side of the realms to the other. The original grot tribes diverge, scattering and forming their distinct subcultures. Orruks conquer the land bridge linking Aspiria and Bataar to the heart of the Great Parch. Though they are eventually forced out by a mighty Aspirian spell that creates the Kindling Forest, the influence of the civilised nations is further removed from the middle reaches.

Over the years, Alarielle becomes disenchanted with the Pantheon of Order due to the transgressions of Gorkamorka and Nagash, focusing more of her efforts on Ghyran alone.

ASCENSION OF VOLTURNOS

After a long campaign against the orruks culminating in the destruction of the ramshackle Flotsam Isles, Voltornos is named High King of the Idoneth.

THE MOUNTAINS ARCANE

In Ghyran, the sap volcano of Quogmia Mountain erupts, burying the city of Aelfgrove – that will later become the Phoenicium – in a tidal wave of mystical amber sap. In Ghur, the Silent People disappear into the living mountain of Beastgrave. Meanwhile in Hysh, the sentient peak Avalenor watches the Lumineth's rise with distant interest.

KINSTRIFE

As the Daughters of Khaine expand beyond Hagg Nar, tensions between the sects blossom into civil war. Morathi allows these conflicts to run their course, weeding out the weakest and those who would contest her rule or would unintentionally empower Slaanesh through their obsessive bloodlust.

The Idoneth of Dhom-hain launch raids along the coast of Ghyran's Tendril Sea. In doing so, they earn the ire of Alarielle and lose the Bánmhar – the White Sword enchanted by Teclis himself.

OPENING OF THE SKY-RIFTS

The nations of Azgal, Sigyorn, Patina, Prosperis and Viscid Flux come together to work a grand ritual of transmutation to kill the lode-griffon of the Spiral Crux. Though they succeed in slaying the godbeast, the ninth mage of their coven is revealed to be a Gaunt Summoner who alters the ritual, killing the other mages and opening tears in reality across the Crux. The forces of Tzeentch pour in.

THE RED FEAST

In Aqshy, the Vanxian warlord Threx Skullbrand challenges the warring armies of Flamescar, Aridian, Capilaria and Demesnus to a contest of arms in the Clavis Isles. Athol Khul fights his way to the top, but as the eight hundred and eighty-eighth barbarian champion falls, a grand ritual is completed. The Clavis Isles Realmgate implodes, opening a gateway to Khorne's realm, and daemons pour through. Athol swears himself to the Blood God, becoming Korghos Khul.



THE AGE OF CHAOS

Next issue, we venture into the Age of Chaos for part two of this series. Brace yourself!

A LITTLE EXTRA READING

What would you like to read about in Worlds of Warhammer? Let us know your thoughts and we'll pass them on to Phil!

team@whitedwarf.co.uk

WARHAMMER 40,000

In the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war! This issue, we've got new background on the Pariah Nexus, a couple of short stories, new campaign rules, an Index Astartes and a paint guide.





FLASHPOINT!

We return to the Pariah Nexus for the second part in the Argovon Campaign. Head over to page 20 for new background, stories and rules.



INDEX ASTARTES

The *White Dwarf* team's Space Marine Chapter – the Tome Keepers – get their very own Index Astartes article. It all begins on page 46.



ECHOES FROM THE WARP



STU BLACK

Having been beaten by his old gaming rival one too many times, Warhammer 40,000 Studio Megaboss Stu Black has arranged for Robin Cruddace to be taken away to the fighting pits of Commorragh so that he can assume command of Echoes from the Warp. This month, Stu talks about abstraction when it comes to writing games set in the 41st Millennium.

This month, I have snatched control of the autoquill from Robin to talk about abstraction versus realism in Warhammer 40,000. Unless you have just returned from beyond the Ghoul Stars, you will know we have recently released a new edition of Warhammer 40K, the ninth incarnation of this amazing game. I have been playing 40K since the end of the 1980s, and the game has continually evolved and changed over those thirty-plus years. I thought it would be interesting to talk a bit about one of the elements we consider when writing rules for our games: the balance between abstraction and realism/simulation.

To start with, it is worth thinking about what the game of Warhammer 40,000 is for – its purpose, if you like. We think the purpose of a game of Warhammer 40,000 is to have fun. That is the prime directive that everything else needs to be subservient to, which means it should be fun for everyone playing! This is different to the

objective of a game of Warhammer 40,000, which is to win by achieving your mission. It is important to separate why the game is played from what players are trying to achieve, as it helps us keep the most important thing as the most important thing – fun. This means when we evaluate a rules idea or concept, our prime criteria is: 'is this fun to do on the tabletop?'

ABSTRACTION AND REALISM

It is also important to outline what I mean by abstraction and realism or simulation. In this context, I use abstraction to mean rules that simplify actions or situations on the tabletop to make the game easier to play or more fun. A good example is that we assume all our troops have brought enough ammunition to last through whatever situation they find themselves in. This may be unrealistic; sometimes forces in the 40K universe would run short of supplies, and commanders would need to take this into consideration and be mindful of ammunition expenditure. However, accounting for this on the tabletop would make for a mountain of paperwork for players as they keep track of the number of rounds left in every one of their Space Marines' bolt rifles. It's more realistic, but a lot less fun (unless you really love spreadsheets). Realism or simulation, on the other hand, is where rules more accurately reflect what would happen in the reality of the Dark Imperium. For example, tanks and other armoured vehicles should find it easier to fire heavy weapons whilst on the move when compared to infantry.



Echoes from the Warp is a regular column about the rules, tactics and ongoing development of Warhammer 40,000, hosted by games developer Robin Cruddace. Or is it? Because that looks suspiciously like Stu Black, and apparently he wants to talk about something abstract.

WHAT'S A COUPLE OF INCHES BETWEEN FRIENDS?

All of the rules that make up Warhammer 40K, whether in the Core Book or a codex, sit on a spectrum with 'abstract' at one end and 'realistic' at the other. Part of a games developer's role is to find the sweet spot for each interaction that best helps achieve the game's purpose – fun. One of the most straightforward examples is the ranges of weapons and movement rates of miniatures when compared to the battlefield. According to the internet (*which is never wrong*), the effective range of a modern assault rifle is three hundred metres. Given that a Space Marine is a little over two metres tall and the miniature is a bit over an inch tall, an assault rifle would have a Warhammer 40K tabletop range of 150". Most of you will know that an autogun, which is the 40K version of an assault rifle, has an in-game range of 24", which translates to approximately fifty metres in the real world. This disparity is an abstraction to make the game a fun experience, not a reflection of autoguns being inferior to modern weapons. The game of 40K is broken down into battle rounds; most games last for five battle rounds, during each of which an Imperial Guardsman can move 6" (12" if he runs flat out, and you keep rolling lucky). This means he could only cover around one hundred and twenty metres during a real-world battle, but this abstraction allows us to play 40K indoors on a table in our house, rather than having to use the local park to recreate the field of war. These are some obvious abstractions that everyone who plays the game is familiar with and probably thinks nothing of. I don't think anyone would thank us for making players play on one-hundred-metre-sized boards and keep track of ammo for every gun, but many other situations are less cut and dried.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THINGS

As I have said, the goal is to make a fun game, so often we write rules that convey the feeling or spirit of the 40K universe rather than trying to simulate that universe. We know that psykers are rare and dangerous individuals in the Imperium whose powers are feared and can be deadly to friend and foe alike. If a psyker loses control of their powers, they can wreak unintended havoc and even act as a host for daemonic possession. We represent this on the battlefield with the Perils of the Warp rule. If a double 1 or 6 is rolled for a psyker attempting to manifest a psychic power, something has gone wrong. They suffer D3 mortal wounds and can explode, injuring nearby units. Now the odds of rolling a double 1 or 6 are



1/18, so quite rare over the course of an average game. But if those were the actual odds in the 40K universe, all the psykers would die pretty quickly from daemonic attack! The rule captures the essence of psychic powers being risky, but doesn't try to simulate it accurately.

Another example of clear abstraction that makes 40K work as a game is the edge of the board. As a tabletop war game, 40K is played on a board that – with the help of various terrain pieces – can represent anything from a seething death-world jungle to a ruined cityscape. The board has edges – your miniatures can't just wander off and come back on again – and reserve units can come sweeping on from those edges of the board to outflank enemy troops. When you stop to think about it, those forces don't suddenly appear from nowhere when a giant hand descends from the sky and places them within a certain number of

inches from the table edge. But we all accept this as part of the game, know what it is representing and don't let it break our immersion.

IT'S ALL A BIT OF FUN

Many of the examples I have talked about so far are abstracted for practical reasons: size of board, the amount of time available, not wanting to do loads of paperwork – those sorts of things. The other reason we use abstraction is to prevent situations that – while reasonable and realistic – are not fun for both players. For example, most games are played between two reasonably evenly matched forces, with players picking armies with similar Power Ratings or to an equal points value limit. This clearly does not represent most conflicts in the 41st Millennium, but it makes for a great gaming experience. Another example of this type of abstraction is the way wounds are assigned in the Allocate Attack step of the attacks sequence. When players allocate attacks to models as a result of shooting or fighting, those attacks must be allocated to any models that have already suffered damage before being allocated to those that haven't. This isn't designed to represent troops thrusting their wounded comrades into the line of fire, or enemy combatants focusing their ire on wounded enemies; it is there to make keeping track of wounded models simple and easy for both players. The alternative is where a unit of models with more than one wound each can have models

with many different numbers of wounds remaining, which necessitates keeping track of more information. Similar to this is the 9" 'Deep Strike bubble'. Many units in 40K have abilities that enable them to enter the battlefield via exotic means: jumping from aircraft, burrowing underground or teleporting directly into battle. These units have rules that generally prevent them from arriving within 9" of enemy models. Again, this is not because there is an element in the 40K universe the designers are trying to capture that forces combatants to not get too close to their enemies, but because it is not fun if one player's models get attacked with little chance to react and with no element of risk. The 9" restriction makes it unlikely, but possible, for a charge to be successful, as the average charge roll is 7.

A recent example of practical abstraction is the change to the Overwatch rule. Previously, when a unit was declared as the target of a charge it could shoot at the attackers with any ranged weapons, albeit with reduced accuracy (hitting on 6s). This represented the troops hurriedly firing their weapons at the enemy bearing down on them in an effort to blunt the attack. All good. However, in the new edition this is no longer an automatic reaction, and it needs to be triggered by either a special rule or the Fire Overwatch Stratagem. Does this mean that troops no longer act the same way in the 41st Millennium? Have they





forgotten how to frantically hose their enemy with lasfire? No. The changes have been made for two reasons that we think make for a more fun game. First, it helps out close-combat units and armies, and it slightly levels the playing field versus more shooty units. The second, more important, reason is it speeds the game up for both players. Many times Overwatch fire was ineffectual and involved rolling lots of dice to very little effect. This just used up valuable time in the game and often had no meaningful outcome, but players would always roll the dice because 'you never know!'. This is a good example of increasing the abstraction to improve the game at the slight expense of realism – in a real situation, if a platoon of Guardsmen were being charged by a horde of Orks, they would frantically open fire with their lasguns, no doubt – and probably to little effect!

THE RULES THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT

Finally, sometimes a cool idea or concept is ultimately rejected if it ends up being unsatisfying as it is being developed – for example, night fighting. Everyone agrees that night fighting rules sound cool – limiting ranges and lines of sight, sneaking about and ambushing enemy forces from the darkness. These scenarios are relatively straightforward to write rules for and initially seem to be good fun, and then the exceptions start! Everyone knows Space Marines

have auto-senses built into their power armour that enable them to fight in almost pitch darkness without penalty, so we modify the night fighting rules to not affect Space Marines (which seems entirely appropriate). Then we come to Tyranids – well, they are hyper-evolved space aliens from beyond our galaxy, so they can fight in the dark no problem, so we exempt them as well. Come to think of it, the T'au have really advanced technology with cool scanners and the like, so they can see in the dark, too. And Aeldari. Oh, and Necrons are undead space robots that can see in the dark for sure. And daemons, they are from another dimension and see souls, so darkness is no barrier to them, either. Eventually, only the poor Imperial Guardsmen of the Astra Militarum remain scared of the dark! By this point there are so many exceptions to a perfectly sensible and reasonable rules idea that, actually, the best thing to do for the game is to remove the rule.

Hopefully these examples have helped highlight the types of decisions the games development team makes to try to strike the right balance between realism and abstraction, while always remembering the purpose of the game: for both players to have a great, fun experience with their miniatures in bringing the battlefields of the Dark Imperium to life.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

What would you like to read about in Echoes from the Warp? Let us know your thoughts, and we'll pass them on!

team@
whitedwarf.co.uk



DEATH ON HISHREA



The galaxy is being torn asunder, and new war zones are exploding into life with ever-increasing frequency. This month, our Flashpoint continues to focus on the Argovon System, where death has come to Hishrea ...

WHAT ARE FLASHPOINTS?

Flashpoints are collections of articles that explore a particular region or war zone at a specific point in time. Flashpoints contain new rules for you to try out on the battlefield, plus new stories and background about the setting, giving you plenty of opportunities to theme your games. You could recreate some of the battles mentioned in the background section, convert characters based on the heroes in the stories or build a new battlefield to represent one of the theatres of war.

Flashpoints span multiple issues, and articles are always marked with the Flashpoint's symbol, making them easy to find in your copy of *White Dwarf*.

Bloodstained snow and corpse-strewn tundras defined the warfare on Hishrea. Task Force XI's mission was to liberate the world from the Necron menace, and the xenos were unwilling to relinquish it lightly.

This being an excerpt of the introduction to Chapter 3 of *Volume VII of The Definitive Account of the War for the Pariah Nexus*, written by myself, Esteemed Appointed Historitor Alfus Rekorik Smigh. Composed in the hallowed cloisters of the citadel-basilica of St. Hermiad the Humble. May its impregnable walls ever defy the impotent assaults of His hated foes. This chapter

will elaborate on all of the many actions fought on Hishrea. In this introduction, however, I will highlight a handful of examples to give the reader an understanding of the nature of the fighting as well as identify some of the battles I have deemed amongst the most interesting and/or pivotal.

PLANET DESIGNATION: HISHREA

Planetary System: Argovon

Population: 5,485,920,176 [Last population census before emergence of Pariah Nexus. Actual numbers now indeterminate.]

Primary Classification: Mining World [Some older records state Death World]

Secondary Classifications: Agri World; Hive World

Segmentum: Ultima

Gravitum: 1.1 Terran approx.

Tithed Produce: Rare gas elements; equine animal-derived protein; Astra Militarum troops

Notable Military Elements: Hishrean Mountainmen [local defence]; Hishrean Floestriders [local defence]; Hishrean Harpoonists [infantry Astra Militarum regiments]; Hishrean Avalanchers [armoured Astra Militarum regiments]; Hishrean Powdermen [artillery Astra Militarum regiments]

Planetary Governor: Lugiphron Thror XIV



HISHREA

Being the furthest world in the system from its star, Hishrea is locked in perpetual winter. It is a planet of formidable geography. Its vast, freezing oceans are miles deep and home to all manner of dangerous megafauna. Its northern pole is surrounded by an unbroken chain of cryovolcanoes known as the Death's Collar. Most of the world's dozens of city-spires are isolated by tall ranges of jagged mountains that are coated in ice for much of the planet's rotation around its sun. These cities sit atop thermal vents reaching deep into Hishrea's core that largely shield them from the cold – though to say that these habitations are safe is laughably incorrect. They are densely populated; disease is frequently rife within them. Much of their populations toil day and night in perilous gas mines, where cave-ins, explosions and leaks are common. Those not engaging in this back-breaking work are, if anything, more vulnerable. To them falls the harrowing task of protecting the labourers from frostwyrms. These creatures, though small, move in tides of hundreds. They can bore through frozen rock and strip a person to the bone in seconds. They are truly frightful beasts, and though successive planetary governors have tried, purging them has proven not only impossible, but costly¹.

Nonetheless, Hishrea is rich in resources vital to the population as well as the wider sub-sector and beyond. The great oceans are plied by a nomadic populace that lives aboard fleets of steamships that are heavily armed and optimised

for the hunting of sea-dwelling fauna. Whilst most of these Oseann Clans follow the megashoals of helikoprioids, many also hunt schools of delphinidae and bloodwhals or even specialise in the slaughter of the elusive livyatahn and steelhide sharks. These fearsome people are known to be especially warlike and independent. Though it took Argolishian missionaries much effort² to break through the clans' deep, borderline heretical beliefs, they were ultimately successful. Now the clans are among the most fanatically devoted to the Emperor of all the population. They equate the Emperor to an ocean-dwelling beast of monstrous size, so powerful and so clever that he cannot be hunted and instead rules over the Great Sky Oseann, protecting the people from other monsters that wish evil and lack nobility. The clans' heroism is a fine example to us all. The story of their eventual martyrdom sends shivers down the spine and renders one speechless. I have read the accounts many times in my research for this history, and never has it failed to move me.

TASK FORCE XI

Admiral Archibalda Tansk was assigned to overall command of the Imperial forces dispatched to Hishrea. In comparison to other worlds, such as Iaso, Argovon and Argolish, Hishrea was deemed far less important to the Imperial war effort³, and thus Tansk had one of the smallest commands out of Task Force XI. Neither the Necrons nor Hishrea's harsh environment, of course, made allowances for this weakness, and the fighting was no less arduous than on any other planet in the

¹ The last attempt was made during the premiership of Lugiphron Thror XII. His tunnellers reached a nesting site successfully, but doing so was a critical error. It provoked a savage response; we now know that frostwyrms are viciously protective of the caverns in which they plant millions of eggs at a time. The disgusting creatures followed the tunnels all the way back to Hive Oadunn. It is thought that around 98% of the hive's population were killed, and the entire city collapsed.

² Indeed, it cost many their lives.

³ Though the Necron presence meant that the world could not be ignored.

⁴ *Casualty reports I've consulted suggest that on average, a third of casualties suffered were due to extreme weather events or the climate in general. The 19th Athonian Tunnel Rats, ordered to explore the Midthadian Ice Caves, suffered an extraordinary 80% casualties due to geographically related reasons. They encountered no enemies whatsoever, despite the reports of strange, lithe, laughing beings that had inspired the full exploration.*

⁵ *In this war, high casualties were suffered on almost every battlefield on every world.*

system. Indeed, thanks to the conditions, it was arguably worse⁴. Many of the accounts already published (with far too much haste to my mind) have heaped judgement and scorn on Tansk for the eventual defeat she suffered on Hishrea, but here I intend to set the record straight. Though I cannot deny that Hishrea was a loss for our Imperium, such a statement not only undermines the bravery and zeal of those who fought, but also ignores the wider strategic gains the conflict gave. Without Tansk's patience and cool assessment of the situation, not only would we have had no idea that the Aeldari were present at all in the Argovon System, the total losses suffered would have been, in my judgement, much higher as well.

What a great many either do not know, have forgotten or even refuse to acknowledge was that until the withdrawal, Tansk was winning the war for Hishrea. That is not to say that losses were not high⁵, but it is clear that the Necrons had lost the initiative (if indeed they had it in the first place) and that there was a tangible sense of solidarity between the Imperial forces involved that only grew stronger under Tansk's leadership and especially as more victories were accrued. The Swift-tooth and Sharp-beak Oseann Clans formed

an unbreakable bond with the 53rd Division of the Aeronautica Imperialis – the Sky Lions – and a number of Archaeopter-mounted Skitarii maniples from the Forge World of Voss Prime. Swarms of Necron flyers descended on the clans' hunting rigs, and the clans poured anti-aircraft fire into the sky as vicious dogfights raged overhead. Many a downed Imperial pilot was saved by the daring of the clans' skilled skiff drivers. At great cost, the 211th Athonian Tunnel Rats managed to lure a number of frostwurm swarms into an awakening Necron tomb complex that saw the Necrons' Canoptek constructs nearly overwhelmed by the voracious petromyzons. What was left of the complex was stormed by dozens of Adeptus Mechanicus cohorts hailing from the Forge World of Ryza supported by the admirably determined Athonian 211th. During the evacuation of Hive Baduen, a number of regiments of Miasman Redcows, Formund Scorpions and Hishrean Steamrunners fought a fighting retreat to buy time for civilians to be evacuated, employing highly efficient communications and counter-attack protocols that meant eighty-seven percent of the city's population could be taken out of the immediate danger zone before the city fell.





It has been two weeks since I gave the order to withdraw. I prayed on my decision for twenty-four hours. Admitting defeat here has been the hardest decision I've made in all my sixty years of service. So many abandoned. So many dead. But we have no choice. The arrival of the tomb fleet changed everything. I could not have foreseen the Lord of Night and Steel being able to summon such reinforcements. My ships were outnumbered ten to one. My forces on the ground, despite having the initiative and gaining momentum with each day, would surely be crushed. I have tried to evacuate as many citizens as I can. I confess before the Emperor's gaze that I wept as so many refused to give up their home and yield before the xenos onslaught. Though I so desperately wanted to fight and die beside them, my duty is to the Imperium, not to my own ego and desire for glory. Each day I meditate on their resolve and courage. I drew my blade over my palm, letting my blood spill on their letters of refusal. I vowed to myself and to their souls that we will return and avenge them.

≥≥ Excerpt from the campaign log of Admiral Archibalda Tansk ≤≤



It cannot be more evident that Tansk's order was given in the most severe of situations and done with the heaviest of hearts. Hers was not a decision of weakness or cowardice, as some – many of whom have never left the safety of their chambers on Terra, I might add – have tried to label it. Sadly for our Imperium, which surely needs individuals of Tansk's calibre, Task Force XI high command lacked the understanding to see her actions for the necessity they were. I may be chastised for this statement, but make it I must, for if we are to succeed, we must learn from our failures as well as our successes. They had Tansk executed for negligence, incompetence and cowardice. It is a shame upon our Imperium that this was allowed to happen – even if one is determined that her actions were borne out of personal weakness, how can one deny that her forces brought essential reprieve to those fighting on Argovon? Within hours of arriving in the world's orbit she deployed the 13th and 2nd Attrobian Manticores of the Militarum Tempestus, by whose actions were the Necrons prevented from crossing the Causeway of Saint Mattian the Twice Martyred. She relieved sieges across numerous citadel-chapels, and by sending in the 90th Sondoran Gearheads and 1st Praetorian Hussars when she did, our forces were able to seize the Grand Hospital of St. Bartolomma the Healer, which to this day the Necrons have never recaptured!

⁶ Though this is a brief summary, numerous battles, some of considerable size, still took place in this time.

⁷ With thanks to archaeo-scriptor xenologist Ekkio Frond for confirming the correct term for these unholy energy portals.

⁸ The Daemionifuge's success on Cherist gave a new strategic imperative to the entire war in the Pariah Nexus. Destroying dolmen gates could massively reduce the ability of the Necrons to redeploy their forces quickly. They became priority targets, and many commanders were willing to sacrifice eye-watering numbers of troops to bring them down.

⁹ Lieutenant Gادات bal Nurval led the Tome Keepers and Chaplain Kawil Ichwel led the Obsidian Jaguars.

¹⁰ Many would never see their seaborne homes again; some were destroyed or the people themselves fell ill or were slain. The Massacre at the Sajan Isthmus saw 90% of the Blue-fang Clan wiped out when they were mercilessly bombed by Necron aircraft.

¹¹ Even now, how this happened is largely a mystery.

ASSAULT ON THE NURTHEOS SHORE

The Assault on the Nurtheos Shore is one particularly pivotal action in the Hishrea campaign, and I would argue it was the turning point of the war – that is until the tomb fleets arrived and Tansk was forced to withdraw her strength. Up until this point, Tansk's forces had been largely fighting consolidation actions, creating safe zones (at least as safe as could be reasonably expected), reinforcing or securing hive cities and skirmishing⁶. While many of these were successful, there had yet to be a decisive engagement that gave Imperial forces essential momentum. The enemy's strength had to be tested and ascertained as much as it could. Due to Hishrea's relatively primitive state and lack of significant value, cartographical resources were limited, and reconnaissance troops were put to task all over Hishrea to build up some understanding of the Necrons' strength and positions. They discovered, after many months of arduous missions negotiating Hishrea's unforgiving terrain, that the Necrons had a significant presence in an area known as the Nurtheos Shore. Hives Zisha and Scadi were in the nearby vicinities, and both were completely out of contact, suggesting their total loss to the Necrons. Upon further investigations, carried out by patrols of Anvarsian Ice Rangers as well as Ratlings from the 167th abhuman auxiliary corps, it was discovered that the Necrons had set up a number of structures and had a pair of dolmen gates⁷. Tansk resolved that striking the Necrons' position here directly would not only set a new tone for her campaign, but it could potentially break the back of the Necron presence on Hishrea in an instant as well as hamper Necron movements in the wider war if the gates could be destroyed or disabled⁸. She assembled an assault force, also enlisting the assistance of the Obsidian Jaguars and Tome Keepers Chapters⁹, to whom would fall the task of delivering the hammer blow, along with Knights of House Miranor.

The shore itself was fifty kilometres long, with orbital scans indicating that all of it bar a small number of cliffed areas and tidal marshes were suitable for landing assaults. Tansk assembled a force including elements from almost every arm of the Imperium. The Adeptus Mechanicus of Ryza committed dozens of macroclades and provided a considerable number of suitable craft to deploy the armoured vehicles of the Ikarran Kataphracts, Hishrean Steamrunners, Lascareen Thunderers and Pluthern Ironclads that were marked to lead the assault. Thousands of Chimeras were prepared to transport assaulting infantry – of which Vuxorian Venators, Valhallan Ice Warriors, Truskan Snowhounds and Vastadt Expedrines were but a few of the Astra Militarum troops involved. Adepta Sororitas of the Order of Our Martyred Lady and others deployed with

them. The Razor-wing, Black-fin and Iron-dorsal Oseann clans were particularly instrumental in providing transport vehicles for Astra Militarum troops, many of their people leaving the vessels that had been their homes for generations to allow greater capacity for fighting personnel¹⁰. A dawn assault was planned. With the kind of techno-sorcery the Necrons have at their disposal, it made little sense for Tansk to order a night attack. Such an act would present innumerable additional challenges to her commanders and troops whilst almost certainly providing no difficulty at all to the Necrons.



Before the assault was launched, Tansk ordered advanced troops to deploy. Their task was to confuse the Necrons, spring traps, trigger defensive systems early and carry out related missions to help make the main assault landing as smooth as possible. Vastadt Expedrines and Sashani Patrollers worked in tandem with maniples of Adeptus Mechanicus infiltrator Skitarii. Among the most crucial actions to take place during these preparatory stages of the attack were the deployment of the Tome Keepers' and Obsidian Jaguars' Vanguard troops. Crucial to Tansk's plans, to them fell the vital duty of planting the teleport homers and beacons that would allow the Space Marines to deploy at speed accurately. As it turned out, very few of the infiltration forces made direct contact with the Necrons.

When the assault craft began their runs against the shoreline, Aeronautica Imperialis forces provided air cover. To the crews' – and indeed command's – astonishment, they identified very few viable targets, and as the first landing waves drew close, hundreds of aircraft withdrew to refuel without having fired a single missile or dropped a single bomb. Reports, commander logs and transcripts of briefings unanimously show that officers were both surprised and suspicious. Nonetheless, they were committed and continued the assault. It was felt that adequate forces had been assembled for the task and that, regardless, by now it was too late to turn back. The eventual victory is a testament to the officers' resolve. It is yet another example of fine, cool leadership on Tansk's part that makes her execution even more tragic.

When the first troops left their beaching craft and advanced on the shoreline, the Necron defences sprung into action¹¹. In many parts of the line, whole swathes of the first wave of troops were obliterated in their entirety, and it is largely only thanks to testimony from the second or third



wave of forces that we have any idea of what really happened. There is some conflict, but it appears that gigantic defensive weapons and artillery seemed to appear out of nowhere, or rise up from beneath the ground, striking Imperial forces with bolts of arcane lightning¹².

Despite this surprise, the thought of withdrawal does not appear to have entered the minds of any of the assault's overall commanders. Those who did raise concerns seem to have been reassigned to logistical roles far from frontline duty. The commitment to duty was correct – Imperial forces pushed on, despite the strength of the opposition. I am told that prayers were ever on the lips of our troops as they pushed on into the fray. Ground was gained thanks to the heroics¹³ of the Devildogs of the 12th Pluthern Ironclads, the 16th Deltic Phoenixes of the Militarum Tempestus and the 222nd Ikkaran Centaurs sentinel regiment at the Kor Firth, the Vanyr Kame and the Forseth Hoodoos. It must be noted that at many breakthroughs, Missions of Adepta Sororitas played a key role in leading them. It was during this time also that the previously inserted infiltration units played a role in helping to either destroy Necron artillery

positions or halt reinforcing phalanxes of Necron infantry from reaching the battle. But many of these instances were isolated, and vast swathes of the shoreline remained unsecured by the end of the day. The assault on the Harias Flats had to be abandoned. It was simply impossible for troops to advance more than a hundred metres there. It was at this point that the Adeptus Astartes struck. Drop pods full of elite warriors turned the tide of battles on the verge of being lost. Their transports delivered armoured vehicles just where a breakthrough had been gained and needed to be capitalised on. While the battlefield situation was very much rested on tenterhooks, the Space Marines changed this. When the lances of House Miranor arrived, crashing to the ground in what I can only imagine to be a most glorious fashion¹⁴, in their drop keeps and personal armoured sarcophagi, the tide was truly turned. What could have been disaster was not. The battle itself raged on for several months, and during this time approximately eight percent of Imperial forces would play at least some role in it, as well as a considerable number of local defence troops. Though costly and gruelling, both dolmen gates were eventually toppled and victory was won.

¹² See Appendix III.c for the full casualty listings by regiment, macroclade and Order.

¹³ And, let it not be forgotten, sacrifices.

¹⁴ Oh, to have been present to witness that!



ASSAULT ON THE NURTHEOS SHORE

On the snow-covered world of Hishrea, the forces of the Imperium seek to destroy a pair of dolmen gates. But first they must overcome the perils of the Nurtheos Shore in this series of short (but brutal) vignettes penned by Callum Davis.

Lieutenant Gadatas cut the Necron in half at the midriff with his power sword before driving the point of his blade into its torso on the ground. Within seconds it phased out of existence. The fell technology that led to the Necrons vanishing in such a way made the fighting look terribly one-sided.

Human and posthuman corpses littered the battlefield, with no fallen Necrons in sight. But in truth, the Imperium was winning this day.

'Centax!' Gadatas roared. In response, Bladeguard Veterans around him slammed their shields into the Necrons before them. The command was one of many coded battle cants that pointed to past lords, battles and strategies all Tome Keepers learned. It made orders simple for the Space Marines, yet almost impossible for enemies to understand in the heat of the fighting. The xenos wielded heavy ranged weaponry – though equipped with heavy cleavers fixed to their ends they were clumsy in comparison to the ornate and finely balanced swords of the Bladeguard. Slamming shields into them made it only harder for the xenos to bring their weapons to bear.

Gadatas' troops, as well as others of the task force, were breaking through a cordon of Necrons to reach the xenos lord, who stood on a rise overlooking the fighting.

I will have you, monster, he thought. I will hack you down.

'Gedryon,' he ordered. The Bladeguard formed a wedge, with him at the point. As one, the Tome Keepers pushed on, hacking, stabbing, thrusting and parrying. They were an unstoppable force. Gadatas cut one Necron in half shoulder to sternum; another he beheaded.

As Gadatas kicked a destroyed Necron from his blade, he saw more xenos advancing against his forces using some kind of anti-grav pack. These warriors were different. They carried two-handed blade-tipped staves that crackled and glowed with eldritch energy.

'The lord must be desperate if he sends in his best,' Gadatas said. Gesturing with his sword, he led his warriors directly to the staff-wielding warriors. Gadatas laid into them, sensing victory. The first could only parry two of his blows, the second barely three. Adadanu on his left was cut down when a Necron drove the blade of its staff into his shoulder, between the shoulder guard and the helmet. Within seconds another warrior had taken his place in the Gedryon formation.

Gadatas looked ahead. Nothing remained between him and the Necron lord.

He pointed his sword at the alien commander.

'You are mine!'



Palatine Melyssa could see the top of the bluff. She panted, with exertion.

'We are close, my Sisters!' she roared. She looked behind her. Dozens of her Order followed.

Their black armour hid the scorch marks that surely covered them all. The glorious tabards many had worn into battle had burnt away. Blood dripped down the faces of many. Some were missing teeth, their mouths made to little more than bloody wounds.



Melyssa turned back to the top of the bluff, seeing Necrons there. She opened fire, sending a stream of bolts in their direction. 'Emperor purge your cursed existence! With Him at my side are all things possible!'

She continued advancing, shooting as she went. Her Sisters caught up with her, adding their guns to her own. The Necrons returned fire. Sisters disappeared, reduced to their molecular elements by beams of green lightning before they could even scream.

'Emperor grant me Your holy vengeance!' roared Melyssa. 'Kill them all!'

She was running on pure hatred. Her muscles burned, but she pushed through the pain. Had the Emperor not suffered infinitely more than she could ever suffer? She gritted her teeth, spittle flying from her mouth with every exhausted breath.

Finally, Melyssa reached the rise. With bursts of bolter fire she cut down more Necron warriors. Others she struck down with furious hacks of her power sword. Sister Yosephine on her left engulfed several with blasts from her flamer.

'Advance!' Melyssa yelled. They had much ground to take this day. Only then did she look further away into the gully on the far side of the bluff they had just seized. Only then did she see them – the Monoliths, floating towards her and her Sisters. She stopped.

So many, she thought. She looked to her left and right. She saw the tiredness in her Sisters – and their determination. They had fought through terrible horrors to get even this far. The Emperor had seen them safe.

He will see us safe again, she thought, and she stepped forward.



There were no explosions. No screams. No sounds of battle of any kind. Just the roaring of the Chimera's engines as it raced to the shore, and the rapid churning of the sea water. Lavarra had expected there to be chaos, confusion, a death of fire and fumes and water. She had no idea if the other Anvarsian Ice Rangers of the squad around her felt the same. She dared not ask. She looked around at the group.

So rugged. So much experience. Such warriors can't feel fear like mine, can they? Lavarra thought. All wore thick winter-weather gear and spiked boots. Ice picks hung at belts alongside las cartridges and frag grenades especially designed to function in extreme cold. The men among them were heavily bearded. Kedaril had no nose; he had lost it to frostbite seven campaigns ago.

They were part of the first wave on Mun Beach. They were advised that no enemy had been identified, but they had to be ready for anything.

Move forward; move quickly; aim true; cover your comrades, she remembered.

Their orders were to storm the beach and then climb the Icecliffs of Hodr. The cliffs were why the Rangers were sent here.

Claim the top. Deny it to the enemy. Link up the beaches on either side. That was the plan.

But they had to cross five hundred yards of open beach before they could do that. Their gear could get sodden in the disembarkation, making them heavier. Trudging across sand would make the task no easier.

Stop these pointless worries, she thought, shaking her head. *The Emperor is with us, as He always is.*

'Ten seconds!' came the word from the driver over the vox in the Chimera's troop hold.

A part of Lavarra wished they were under fire. At least it would take the tension away. Or so she thought.

The time evaporated. She felt the Chimera's tread find purchase on the beach. Suddenly the vehicle started lurching left and right. Then she heard the explosions. They weren't like the sounds of battle cannons or missiles. There was no powder in these terrific roars. Instead they were almighty crackles, thunderous and high-pitched all at the same time.

The Chimera slowed.

'Out now!' shouted the driver over the vox. 'Get out and disperse!'

The Chimera's rear ramp lowered.

'Moving disembarkation!' bellowed Sergeant Trenkarh. 'Loose formation! Get up the beach!'

Lavarra was near the front of the Chimera, so she followed much of her squad out on to the sand. She could see blazing green light over their shoulders. But nothing could prepare her for what she saw next. Wrecks of Chimeras burning with alien green flames littered the shoreline. The corpses of burnt Rangers were everywhere. Within a handful of hurried steps she had already trodden on a charred leg. Her boot spikes dug into the cooked flesh, and she dragged the limb with her for five metres before she even realised. She shook it off as quickly as she could. The air was filled with agonised screams as Rangers were engulfed in the horrific energies.

'Make for the cliff,' she said to herself. 'Make for the cliff.'

She'd already lost sight of her squad.

She ran to the cliff anyway. She'd find them there.

A blast threw her off her feet. Her left side burned with agony. Green flames danced on her white uniform. She patted them out hurriedly, each slap of her gloved hand sending waves of pain through her entire body.

'Make for the cliff,' she said through gritted teeth. Tears formed in the corners of her eyes.

She tried to force them back. 'Emperor be with me.'

Lavarra ran. Other Rangers were advancing too. She recognised none of them. To her left, one hobbled forwards, using his lasgun as a cane. Another Ranger clutched her lasgun and what must have been her severed arm in one hand. To her right among the Rangers, sorry individuals thrashed around, screeching, as eldritch fire engulfed their entire bodies. Lavarra could not bear to look. She drew her eyes up. Balls of viridian energy arced overhead, slowly finding their way to the Rangers' devastated landing site.

The Ranger in front of her sank into the ground. Disappeared. Then another. Then a creature burst out of the sand. It moved with frightening, insectoid speed on dozens of legs, driving its talons through Ranger after Ranger. Its eight green eyes glowed with a seemingly predatory malice.

Lavarra froze in terror. All she could think to do was shoot. But it moved too quickly for her to aim.

She roared as she opened fire wildly, pulling the trigger over and over again. Those few shots that made their mark didn't remotely slow it. She could see others of its kind bursting up through the sand all over the beach.

Then every one of the monsters' eyes turned to her.



The Land Speeder Storm, liveried in the vellum-coloured heraldry of the Tome Keepers Chapter, shot over the frozen landscape. Ubar bal Eriba hung from the side. He gazed over the terrain. Much of it was permafrost, boggy and uneven. Temperatures were sub-zero.

Few armies could cross this in good order, he thought.

Not far away, alien structures sat ominously. Silent for now, it seemed, but they were no doubt capable of unleashing phalanx after phalanx of android warriors all but impervious to pain, fear and much of the cold world's climate. Though Ubar had been implanted with many of the Adeptus Astartes' unique organs, he was not yet a true Tome Keeper, and he shivered slightly beneath his layers of carapace armour. He did not flinch when flecks of ice bit at his face after being kicked up by the Land Speeder's anti-grav upwash.

His squad's mission was simple. Head for an area known as the Heidron Palsas. Amongst all the terrain around them, this area presented one of the few stable routes for both Imperial and Necron armies to pass through. When the 112nd and 564th Valhallans and the 11th Touzen Tank Korps captured the sectors of shoreline assigned to them, it would be here they advanced through. It had to be secure.

That was where the Tome Keepers came in. Their rapid

insertions would shatter any Necrons that dared to attempt to move through.

'*We're on approach,*' said the pilot over the vox. '*Get ready.*'

'*Teleport homer secure,*' said Nudesh bal Zeri.

'*Enemy patrol spotted. Warrior-class Necrons,*' said the pilot.

'*Circle them. Ubar, they are yours to slay,*' said Sergeant Kinaa.

'Yes, Sergeant,' said Ubar. He switched off the safety of his sniper rifle. He moved into a more stable firing position and brought the weapon into his shoulder. He adjusted the sight to account for the speed of the vehicle. He looked through the scope. He saw the patrol. The Necrons appeared to shamble through the undulating terrain. Their gait belied their deadliness in combat. He aimed at the one at the rear, keeping his crosshairs over its head. The pilot kept the Land Speeder incredibly level. Ubar calmed his breathing. He fired. The Necron's head came clean off.

'*One more, Ubar,*' said Sergeant Kinaa. '*Then we move in with bolter and blade. We do not have time for anything else.*'

Ubar took aim a second time, again at the rearmost Necron. 'Machine spirit, serve me well this day,' he intoned. He fired. He watched as the round bored through the Necron's skull, ripping it off the body with a violent tear. Sparks flew where cables and metal had been shorn apart.

'*Move in,*' ordered Sergeant Kinaa.



'Tritons!'

The men and women of the 91st Haephosian Tritons Company rose to their feet, making the sign of the Aquila as they did so. Each had their head completely shaved and had a barbed trident tattooed to their left cheek. A number sported other tattoos – blood drops, fish scales and spiralled shells. They were clad in skin-tight bodysuits of deep navy blue.

Colonel Miseno looked at the soldiers. His soldiers. Haephosian Tritons. He stood tall, shoulders back, chin raised, chest out. He was equally clean-shaven. The points of his trident tattoo were each joined by a pair of blood drops, indicating his rank as company commander. His other cheek was marked with thirty-eight scales, each representing a campaign he had fought in. An anchor was marked in the centre of his forehead. In the Tritons, it marked a soldier who had performed only the very bravest and most selfless acts.

'Be seated.'

Every soldier did as ordered. They were sat in a kind of



amphitheatre aboard the Black-fin Clan capital hunting rig *She Who Slayed the Great Livyatahn*. The stage he stood upon was made of hard driftwood, the hundreds of pieces held together by ropes of dry sinew and glue formed from the blubber of oceanic monsters. The frame for the tiers of seating was all made of bone that could only have been taken from the corpses of seagoing megafauna. The whole space was lit by daylight pouring through an open ceiling. Miseno looked up at them all, taking in their faces. He drew a deep breath, inhaling the unmistakable tang of salt. The hunting rig moved up and down with the waves in a manner that now soothed him, though during his training many cycles ago, such rolling would have made him vomit all over his uniform. He wore the same suit as the soldiers who looked down to him.

It is good they see me from above, he thought. I am a soldier, just like them. I must prove myself to them just as they must prove themselves to each other.

'The hour is close,' he said. Though he spoke no louder than he would in conversation, such were the acoustics of the amphitheatre that his words carried to all present, even in the highest tiers.

There is more to these clansmen than battles and hunting, he thought. What stories must they tell in this place, what acts of drama must they perform? The Haephosian Tritons encouraged cultural learning, for in many an ancient tale were there lessons of strategy and tactics to be learned.

'We approach the Nurtheos Shore. The 91st's key objective is the Marman Drumlins.'

He pressed the button on a small handheld device he carried. A holocartographica, placed at the centre of the stage, came to life. It depicted a series of sloping, frost-covered hills forming out of the ocean.

'It won't surprise you to know that we have to get to the top. It's the highest point for two kilometres in all directions and overlooks an area known as the Saehr Hollow. Once we've taken the Drumlins, Basilisks and Medusas of the 810th Xomoni Blasthounds will be air-dropped in. They'll dominate the whole area and stop the Necron counter-attacks we are bound to face. They'll then provide the fire support for the advance. We are in the first wave. The 212nd is on our right flank, the 4th on our left. Let me be clear: for them, this is a fight for second place. We'll plant the 91st's colours at the summit before they've reached the shoreline.'

At that, every soldier drove the butt of their lasguns onto the ground once. The noise was like a thunderous clap that reverberated around the amphitheatre. Miseno smiled.

'I thought so.'

'We will insert via sub-aqua means,' he continued. 'Engineer sections, you'll be clearing the razorcoral after we go through. We need to make a path for the follow-up waves that'll be consolidating our gains and forming the main push of the advance inland. The 33rd and 36th Tagax XIII Ogryns are

following us up, along with the 2398th Valhallans. They aren't Triton solid, but they're capable. But without us they're useless, and the push inland won't even begin, let alone succeed.

'Let me be clear. They've chosen us for this task because they know Tritons get the job done. We solve the problems command knows about and the ones they don't. We are the safest pair of hands for the task at hand, and it is without any doubt I look each of you, as my equals in war, in the eye.

'And I tell you as I do so that all of you are equal to this task. Some of you have fought the Necrons before. Many of us remember Kannilar. We remember those we lost there. Now is our time for vengeance. Some of you haven't fired your weapon in anger yet. Today you'll get your chance; don't think you won't for even a second. We should all thank the Emperor for this opportunity. To earn a scale, to avenge our losses and to once again serve Him.'

Once again, every soldier in the company slammed the butt of their lasguns to the ground.

Miseno was sure it was even louder this time.

Miseno closed his eyes and formed the sign of the Aquila. When he did so he crooked in the fifth digit on each hand so that he only showed three fingers, symbolising the trident of the Haephosian Tritons' core characteristics: faith, dauntlessness, indomitability.

'God-Emperor, grant us but a portion of Your strength,' he intoned.

'With it may we drown Your foes,' sounded the voices of the entire company.

'Lord of Mankind, grant us but a portion of Your wisdom.'

'With it may our minds flow faster than those who would undo Your realm.'

'Master of all Humanity, grant us but a portion of Your courage.'

'With it may we throw back the tide and wash over all that stand against us.'

Miseno opened his eyes.

'Ready yourselves. Say your prayers. Bless your weapons. Tend to the machine spirits of your gear. I'll see you at the top of the Drumlins.'

A final time, the company beat their lasgun butts into the ground.

No sound is more beautiful, Miseno thought. No sound inspires me more.





THE APOCALYPSE OF FORONIKA

Deep within the Pariah Nexus, the war for the Argovon System continues to escalate. As the war grips the planet of Foronika, the forces of the Imperium must defend vital ground against a Necron invasion.



The bloodiest battles of the Argovon campaign were fought on Foronika, with countless millions of lives lost. Task Force XI of Battle Group Kallides vowed they would fight the Necrons to the death in order to secure the world and its precious resources – ancient blackstone deposits.

This being an excerpt of the introduction to Chapter 6 of *Volume VII of The Definitive Account of the War for the Pariah Nexus*, written by myself, Esteemed Appointed Historitor Alfus Rekorik Smigh. First drafted overlooking the orbital bombardment of Keritha III. May the xenos look upon the Emperor's vast power and tremble before their deaths. This chapter will elaborate on all of the many actions fought on Foronika. In this introduction, however, I will highlight a handful of examples to give the reader an understanding of the nature of the fighting as well as identify some of the battles I have deemed among the most interesting and/or pivotal.

FORONIKA

Foronika is the closest of the Argovon System's inhabited planets to the star and is swelteringly hot all year round. Its elliptical orbit ensures that average temperatures fluctuate considerably all over the world.¹ Much of its landscape is made up of ash deserts, high-rad zones, dried lake beds and heat-cracked mountain ranges. Desert regions are plagued with ferocious dust storms that, on occasion, have been recorded reducing armoured vehicles to corroded wrecks in a matter of minutes.² Its small oceans are highly acidic, largely populated only by phytokrill that can survive the harsh conditions. Fresh water is relatively scarce, with

PLANET DESIGNATION: FORONIKA

Planetary System: **Argovon**

Population: 183,009,647 [Last population census before emergence of Pariah Nexus. Actual numbers now indeterminate.]

Primary Classification: Mining World

Secondary Classification: Adeptus Mechanicus Research Outpost

Segmentum: Ultima

Gravatum: 1.2 Terran approx.

Tithed Produce: Mineral and gas elements; Astra Militarum troops and materiel

Notable Military Elements: Foronikan Prospect Guard [local defence]; Foronikan Pioneers [Astra Militarum infantry regiments]; Foronikan Ironstalkers [Astra Militarum Sentinel Corps]; Significant Adeptus Mechanicus presence hailing originally from Voss Prime – included hundreds of maniples of troops of all kinds before emergence of Pariah Nexus

Planetary Governor: Rungus Myern I. Magos responsible for Adeptus Mechanicus operations Cencilus Theti-Tybar



much of it at ground level forming oases that records suggest were quite beautiful, though have long since been reduced to horrific mud zones in which now only the most depraved of penal legions are deployed.³ Much of the flora that populated Foronika comprised of thickets of various species of barbed ironcacti, spined ghost-flowers and poison-blade high-grass.

Some noted scholars, including Aukland Fex of my own order, and Archeogeologor Xariz Gokim of the Adeptus Mechanicus, speculate that Foronika's unusual climatic conditions are what caused the world's unusual quantity of blackstone to form. My wider research has found many conflicting views on this subject matter, including direct refutations of the aforementioned experts. Regardless, Foronika's blackstone deposits are, to the best of my knowledge, abnormally large. Though they withheld knowledge of both the esoteric substance's presence as well as their own until a suspiciously late moment, the Adeptus Mechanicus have retained a very significant presence on Foronika for years. They conducted their activities without the wider knowledge of the Imperium; for how long exactly they have apparently refused to disclose to anyone. Though many of the Adeptus Mechanicus' forgeshrines are now in ruins, in flames, being fought over or reduced to their constituent molecular components by Necron weaponry, the forgeshrines were once dotted over the surface. Many were – and some still are – linked to all manner of ancient Necron structures that are, according to Mechanicus researchers and archeotechnologists, millions of years old. Some of these edifices have been discovered to be tomb-crypts full of xenos automata, others are evidently extraction-arcana constructed to mine the noctilith in aeons past.

Though I believe much of Foronika's native population has been destroyed in the endless battles that have raged all over the world, it is my understanding that by the time that the Cicatrix Maledictum emerged, a considerable number of native Foronikans were employed by the Adeptus Mechanicus. Many served as menial labour; others served as scouts and provided local information. In exchange for their service, the savants of the Adeptus Mechanicus not only provided them with more regular and reliable food supplies but also mechanical augmentations that extended

their lives far longer than they would normally be expected to last.⁴ Being so close to a star, Foronika is bathed in radiation which resulted in significant numbers of birth defects and a much-shortened lifespan for the average inhabitant. Such was the popularity of working for the Tech-Priests that hundreds of settlements were abandoned in their entirety. A portion of Foronika's population are (or rather were) nomadic, following herds of emaciated aurox in pollution-belching vehicles constructed from metal derived from poorly refined ore.⁵ Others hunted dunerats and giant cragroaches amongst the world's mountainous regions, often utilising domesticated pterocs. These flying reptiles seemed to have formed a strong, mutual bond with their human masters.

¹ The heat is such a defining feature that planetary legend states that the world was named Foronika for Foronika Argovon's (the system's apparent founder) temper.

² Local legend tells of at least some storms being sentient, apparently targeting individuals or nomadic tribes. I scoffed when I first heard of these, listening to vox recordings of exhausted and terrified locals, the only survivors of destroyed refugee columns or failed missions and reclamation parties. When I heard, however, of the disappearance of the 984th Kharbys Iron Cavalry and 5493rd 'Eternally Grateful' Penal Legion, along with eight macroclades of Martian Skitarii in the Braktis Desert, I began to wonder. There have been many more disappearances since. My research indicates a frightening corroboration between these events, the legends and formal accounts of attacks by Necron Scarab swarms. These constructs must have attacked citizens for centuries.

³ The largest of these once stunning areas of lush vegetation was monikered 'the bonesoup' by a penal legion whose identity was never formally recorded – for the sheer quantity of human osseous matter that permeates metres-deep mud over an area many scores of square kilometres in size.

⁴ Let it not be said, however, that these people were not already hardy. To get a full understanding of exactly what life was like for the average Foronikan, I heartily recommend reading all 2,378 teraquanta of Volorin Kendar's Of Hel-shorn Razordust and Infernal Sand-ticks, An Account of Twelve Years Among The Foronikan People. The Rogue Trader was forced to land on Foronika to avoid his pursuing creditors and has written of daily life in incredible detail. The text was taken from him when he was caught, and over a period of nine hundred years it passed through many hands before reaching mine, courtesy of Tech-Priest Zuxor Lispis of Mars. It has occurred to me that it is by Kendar's account that the Adeptus Mechanicus learned of Foronika's blackstone deposits. How much knowledge of our Imperium must lie in forgotten books gathering dust in private, abandoned or secret libraries? I am thankful that Lord Commander Guilliman seeks to find these troves and bring what information they hold to life. Perhaps scribed somewhere are the clues we need to defeat all kinds of our foes?

⁵ Foronika does have considerable mineral wealth, but climatic conditions have made large-scale mining operations hard to justify, especially given the mineral wealth on other worlds in the Argovon System.

UNEXTINGUISHABLE INFERNO

Due to the significant blackstone deposits on Foronika, High Field Marshal Hynflaager had little choice but to devote a significant portion of his strength to ensuring it could not fall into the Necrons' clutches.⁶ When he went on to the system's capital world of Argovon, he trusted command of the force sent to secure Foronika to Major General Oyer Valdu. Archmagos Archeogeologor Akuminor Xor of the Martian Adeptus Mechanicus elected to join Valdu. Combined, Astra Militarum and Adeptus Mechanicus forces deployed to Foronika numbered in the tens of millions. Yet as we know now, not only was it not remotely enough, but an endless stream of reinforcements in the years since the initial deployment has so far failed to break the deadlock with Necron forces.

War on Foronika had been raging for some local months by the time the Imperial Navy and Mechanicus fleets, spearheaded by the Ark Mechanicus *Asterius Evictus* and Lunar-class cruiser *Imperator Triumphant*, arrived in the system. Logs recovered from the wreck of the *Imperator* some months later talk of furious battle raging in space around Foronika. They describe tomb fleets engaged the limping remnants of system-defence battle groups desperately attempting to stem the endless tide of

Necron legions descending on to the world's surface. When distress calls flooded on-ship vox channels, threatening to destabilise fleet cohesion with their sheer number, Major General Valdu ordered Admiral Elektra Govine to respond to all with a single message: 'Hold firm. Have faith in the Emperor. He protects. We are coming.' Once this was transmitted, virtually all calls were blocked out for military expediency. Commanding the fleet to restore order in Foronika's orbit, Valdu's next task was to find suitable landing zones for his armies. It seems from the same recovered logs that Akuminor Xor wasted little time in carrying out the same work. In a rare stroke of luck, the fact that the majority of the world's population was in Mechanicus employ meant that there were few occasions where Valdu had to choose between defending inhabited areas and protecting vital assets – the populace largely dwelled around Mechanicus outposts and stations. With this being the case, it was much easier for Valdu to assess priority deployment locations for his forces and decide which areas were most in need, and indeed worthy of, reinforcement and additional protection.

Much of the initial fighting over the course of the first local year was stabilisation efforts.⁷ Mechanicus forgeshrines

⁶ The deposits themselves are too large to destroy using scorched-earth tactics.

MAJOR GENERAL OYER VALDU

Due to the combined-arms nature of Indomitus Crusade efforts, involving forces from any and every branch of the Imperial military, diplomatic and mediation skills were vital for any commanding officers to be successful. These skills Valdu had in abundance, and it was for this reason in particular High Field Marshal Hynflaager selected him to take charge of the campaign on Foronika, as inevitably, ultimate success there would depend greatly on cooperation with the Adeptus Mechanicus.

With the organisation's well-earned reputation for obtuseness clear in his mind, Valdu determined to work well with the Magi of Mars without compromising the needs of the forces under his direct command as well as the needs of the wider campaign. Though the goals of the Adeptus Mechanicus and other Imperial forces were, and indeed are, ostensibly aligned, to this day it remains uncertain as to how reliable the Adeptus Mechanicus have been, are, and will be. Tens of thousands of troops, as well as hundreds of Sisters of Battle of the Order of the

Bleeding Heart, were abandoned to their deaths defending one forgeshrine in the Khidoth Maar. Four score cohorts of Skitarii were abruptly withdrawn when the forgeshrine was successfully destroyed after its accumulated blackstone and data were fully evacuated. It was only by Valdu's efforts that more incidents like this were averted, but it is highly likely that his ability to carry out his primary task – that of winning the war – has been hampered massively through constant discussion and negotiation with difficult tech-magi.¹

¹ This is not to say that all have been unreliable by any means. Several preceptories of the Order of the Bleeding Heart, the 73rd, 872nd and 1st Miasman Redcows and two regiments of Sondoran Gearheads fought for several weeks alongside the forces of Tech-Priest Dominus Thalaktus Bek in the Mavuto Pass, retaining it in Imperial hands for all that time before pushing the Necrons back. This is but one of many hundreds of examples one can draw from to underline the fact that, for all the potential for conflict and friction, cooperation between conventional Imperial forces and the Adeptus Mechanicus has been strong and effective enough to ever prevent the Necrons from gaining the upper hand for long – though this has evidently taken much effort on the part of many senior commanders to achieve. And, arguably, any effort in this regard should not be necessary.



⁷ Officially speaking, at least. I would argue that the entire war has yet to go beyond this phase. There is always another crisis, another incursion for the Necron foe or another glorious victory or strategic breakthrough by our own forces. All quickly mean little. I heard recently that the Gwazan Dikes, a series of natural barriers between the largest of the remaining Adeptus Mechanicus forgeshrines, Epsilon-Theta-IXΣ, and a colossal Necron tomb complex Imperial forces under General Barkila Thorne failed to destroy, has once again fallen to the Necrons. Inevitably yet more millions will be thrown into that meat grinder to reclaim them. It causes one to wonder how much even the Necrons care about this world. Have they some reason to pin so many Imperial troops to this location, keeping them from other battlefields? Surely the Necrons have no shortage of noctilith elsewhere, if they have been able to construct the vast obelisks which seem to be the source of the Pariah Nexus' effects?

and noctilith extraction hubs needed to be relieved of massive sieges. Marching Necron hosts needed to be intercepted. Awakening tomb structures had to be silenced before their hibernating denizens emerged in their full strength. Major General Valdu, utilising his exceptional diplomatic skills, organised many coalitions of Imperial military forces to secure some vital early victories. The Sigma-III Forgeshrine was constructed within the Mtendre Oasis, and it sat atop exploration tunnels and excavation sites delving several kilometres below Foronika's surface. In scorching heat, the 632nd and 13th Tallarn Desert Raiders, 45th Vastadt III Expedrines sabot group and three Ogryn detachments pushed back the Necron forces that had spilled through into the tunnelplexes. The Theta-Chi Forgeshrine more resembled a fortified city, full of factorums, promethium relays and ore refineries. Within its sprawling confines, companies of Tempestus Scions of the Jukan Chimeras regiment, four regiments of Kanak Skull-takers and the 36th 'Death is Mercy' Penal Legion fought a brutal close-quarters campaign against the Necrons that had occupied much of the settlement, suffering eighty-three percent casualties in the process.

Despite early successes, the Necrons' numbers were incalculable, and they quickly responded with immense – in some places utterly overwhelming – force. The Myeso Mamelons – rock formations which had been converted into a colossal, seemingly impregnable fortress early in the war by the Adeptus Mechanicus – was completely destroyed within two weeks of the Necron siege. Such was the extent of the Necron boring operations beneath the huge natural edifice that much of the fortress collapsed. The fortress had been reinforced by Imperial troops before the siege. Some twenty-four regiments, mostly of the Kraddian Thunder Legions, Umbra-Thelloxian Gloomguard and Raddai Groundcrushers, were destroyed in their entirety, as well as a Preceptory of the Order of Our Martyred Lady and a lance of House Terryn. The Adeptus Mechanicus have refused to share with me details of their losses during the Foronikan campaign up until this point; the only information I have is what I have been able to scour by off-hand references to them in other Imperial sources. It is doubtless, however, that they were enormous during this battle, as well as countless others. Another such defeat has since been named the Dinghani Malpaís Slaughter. Hundreds of thousands of Astra

Militarum troops, with thousands of vehicles, were sprawled over the hard, uneven ground, marching to secure the strategically significant Taj Cuesta.⁸ Their progress was apparently tediously slow, according to eyewitness testimony of the few surviving Thunderbolt fighter pilots of the 956th 'Sky Lancers' Aeronautica Imperialis Division. Even rugged Chimera vehicles got stuck amid the sink holes, with troops having to resort to back-breaking manual labour to fragment the dense rock formations that standard entrenching tools were almost useless against. The Necrons struck the almost-laughably vulnerable troops from above and within. Swarms of

bomber craft strafed the stricken column whilst creatures I have later been able to identify as 'Flayed Ones' materialised among the troops, hacking and slashing at random. Outnumbered one hundred to one, Imperial air cover was helpless to prevent the attack, though many brave pilots died in the attempt to do just that. Less than one percent of the troops in the column survived. They feigned death or hid beneath overhangs, vehicle wrecks or even their comrades' corpses. Tallarns, Palladians, Miasmans and more. All were later executed for cowardice. I will leave readers to judge for themselves the value in such an exercise.

⁸ Intelligence of the ground that troops were expected to cross appears to be frighteningly lacking in these early stages of the war. Doubtless this is due to the fact that Valdu was forced to act immediately upon arrival to have any chance of preventing defeat, let alone achieve eventual victory.



> The following is an extract from the estimated disposition of the Astra Militarum and Foronikan local defence forces that are known to have taken part in what is now known as the Foronikan Apocalypse, as recorded by Officio Logisticarum Metascrivener 3rd Class Thodensia Plunthar in the name of the Almighty Emperor, the Primarch Reborn and Groupmaster Marran.

INFANTRY ELEMENTS

6 regiments of Tallarn Desert Raiders
9 infiltration battalions of Tallarn Molerats
143 regiments [at least] of Foronikan Offworlder Veterans
18 sabot groups of Vastadt II Expedrines
21 regiments of Palladion Rifles
3 regiments of Ventrillian Nobles
15 regiments of Kanak Skull-takers
6 companies of Black Torus Scouts
38 regiments of Miasman Redcows
24 regiments of Umbra-Thelloxian Gloomguard
13 regiments of Savlar Chem-dogs

ARMOURED ELEMENTS

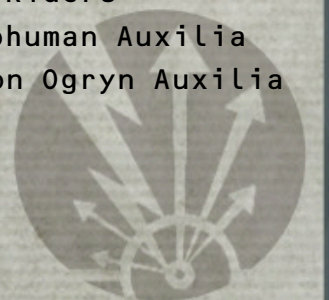
107 tribes of Foronikan Nomads
4 echelons of Dragoons Exemplar
18 TreadcoHORTS of Graskiuhn Steelflanks
22 regiments of Kharbys Iron Cavalry
7 regiments of Sondoran Gearheads
53 regiments of Mephiteion Crimsoncogs

ARTILLERY ELEMENTS

32 regiments of Kraddian Thunder Legions
12 gunhosts of Sarronikan Trebuchets
29 batteries of Xomoni Blasthounds
18 regiments of Helqun Doombringers

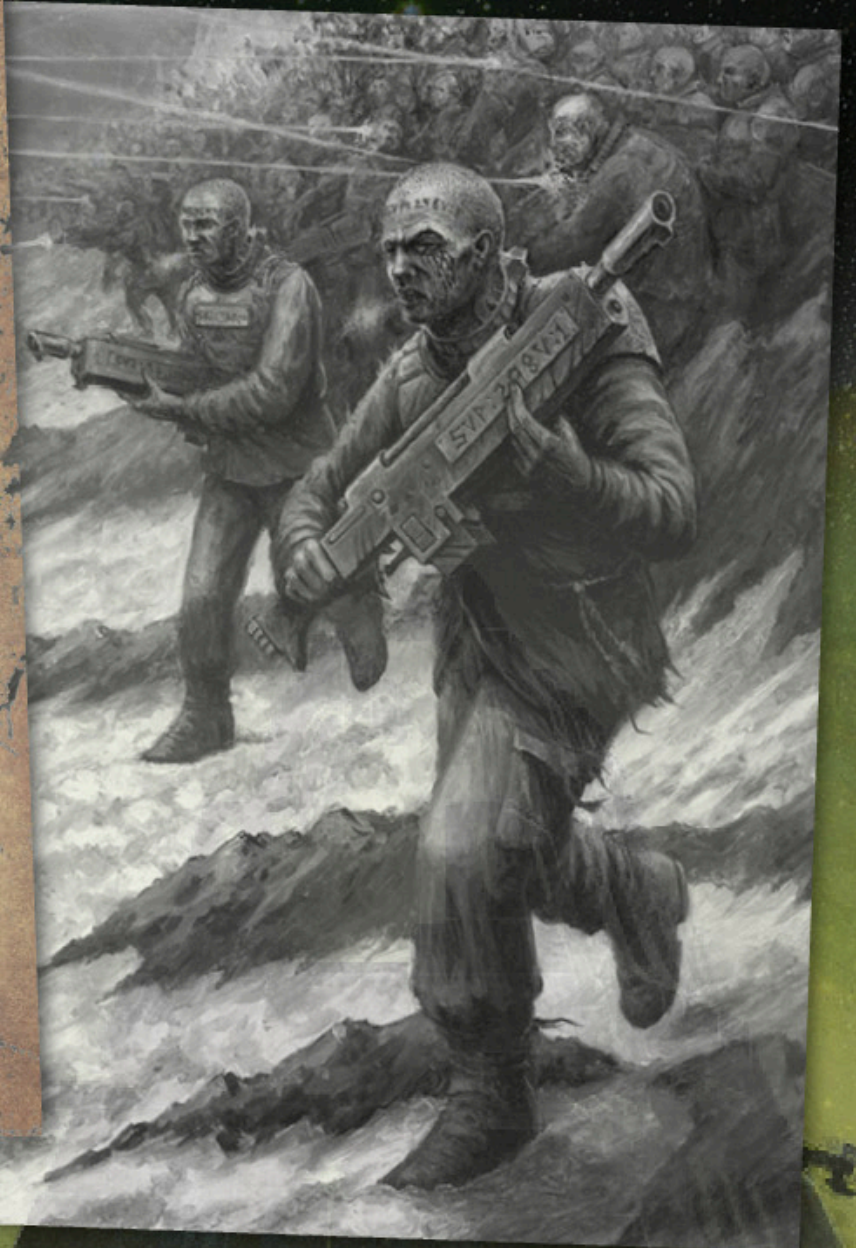
MISCELLANEOUS ELEMENTS

11 regiments of Gantor Rough Riders
32 regiments of Attilan Rough Riders
7 detachments of Anark Zeta Abhuman Auxilia
24 detachments of Lafar Hegumon Ogryn Auxilia
8 clades of Kya Thine Adepts
600+ Penal Legions





Historitor's Note: Data pertaining to the forces involved in the fighting on Foronika is painfully inaccurate. Entire regiments were destroyed without ever being officially logged, and are only known to have fought thanks to off-hand mentions in fragmented and heavily censored officers' logs or recovered servo-skull outputs. It is impossible to estimate the number of local troops involved – at the time of writing, local defence forces have been so thoroughly bled dry by the Necrons that what little remains of them have been merged into other Astra Militarum forces. So many regiments have been merged now due to high casualties that the current 42nd Foronikan Offworlder Veterans contains troops from no fewer than thirty-one other regiments hailing from nine different worlds. This war zone has become a quagmire. To be sent there is a death sentence. Is it any wonder that a growing percentage of forces involved are penal forces? Can it really surprise even the dullest observer that the number of military offences is increasing and that their punishment is increasingly penal legion service?



THE WOE OF CHOICE

In high orbit above the world of Foronika, Major General Oyer Valdu oversees the ongoing war with the Necrons. Casualties are mounting. Land is being won and lost. And his allies are being particularly troublesome. Choices must be made in this story by Callum Davis.

Major General Oyer Valdu leaned on the command lectern. He waved away three servo-skulls in rapid succession. All were clutching small, neatly wrapped scrolls in their mechanical claws.

'Not now,' he muttered under his breath. Whoever dispatched those reports and messages would have to wait a little longer. *I need to see everything, he thought. Before I am bogged down in minutiae.*

The war room on board the *Imperator Triumphant* was an immense facility set over two levels. Several hundred Navis Imperialis and Astra Militarum officers pounded the decking with their polished boots, moving briskly about their duties. The room was rendered swelteringly hot by the sheer number of personnel packed into the space and the amount of activity being undertaken.

Condensation dripped from the metal walls. Many officers were shouting clipped orders, demanding updates or making verbal reports. Scores were sat at vox and pict stations. Dozens of servo-skulls swarmed through the air, moving between Astra Militarum, Imperial Navy and Adeptus Mechanicus personnel. Sweat dripped from men and women's foreheads, bags set heavy under their eyes. Banks of servitors sat in pits around the edges and centre of the room, never ceasing to babble streams of binharic data. Holographic screens lined the walls, showing datastreams depicting casualty rates, ammunition levels, fuel stores and dozens of other details of war.

At the centre of the war room were four holographic pictables depicting Foronika's surface at the very centre. Valdu's command lectern overlooked them. Officers shuffled icons and runes painted in different colours and bearing different symbols representing Imperial armies, regiments and deployments across all five of Foronika's continents. There were countless other icons, uniformly black, representing the known forces of the Necrons.

Valdu had slept for just two hours. It had been his first real rest since they had arrived in Foronika's orbit a week before. Had he taken any more stimms, his judgement would have failed him.



So much has changed already, he thought.

'Auberon's forces are missing,' he observed. He directed the comment to no one in particular, but knew he would get a response.

'Destroyed, sir,' said Brigadier Fenike, his eyes heavily bloodshot. 'Overrun.' One of his hands was shaking. He wore the uniform of the Elcsheer Bronzeclads. Valdu could have sworn the man was greyer than he had been just a week ago. Fenike stood at his own lectern, the marble of which had been shaped into the likeness of the famed War-Marshal Prochorus Hadad.

'More tomb ships arrived. Navy couldn't intercept. The Necrons landed more troops. Auberon force-marched to pin them on their landing zones. He couldn't get there in time. The bomber wings we sent to support him were destroyed – the 673rd Bomber Division has now been wiped out. Auberon didn't stand a chance. He had already lost two-thirds of his strength. We don't know of any survivors. The 102nd Dragoons Exemplar echelon, 17th Umbra-Thelloxian, 128th Pontic, 455th and 310th Attilan and 1st Helqun have been wiped from the lists.'

Why couldn't the Navy intercept? What was happening to stop the advance of this new Necron force? How big was it? What were the xenos ships doing now? How fared the ongoing void battle? So many questions raced through Valdu's mind. To ask them was almost pointless. In a war of the scale this one had already become, even the discussion of the total loss of six regiments was too small a detail at this level of command. In the past week a dozen or more had already been written off the force's roster.

'Sir,' said Colonel Stenna, Valdu's communications adjutant. She had the command lectern to Valdu's left. It was carved to resemble St. Lysanius, Bringer of Vengeance. 'Archeogeologor Xor wishes to speak with you.' She staffed a direct, encrypted vox link with Akuminor Xor's flagship, the Ark Mechanicus *Asterius Evictus*.

'I suppose the good archeogeologor has refused to give any indication of what he wishes to discuss this time,' said Valdu.

'Only that it is of the utmost importance,' said Stenna, with the faintest hint of a wry smile.



'As it always is,' said Valdu. He didn't have the energy to return the gesture on Stenna's lips.

If only he had deigned to be so urgent and communicative with us at the start of this endeavour, Valdu thought. The Tech-Priest had kept to himself knowledge of the Adeptus Mechanicus' research sites on Foronika until the last possible moment – unhelpful when setting strategy. Valdu shook his head. *But at least he told us,* he supposed. He placed the vox set over his head, sliding its neural spikes into the augmentations surgically fitted to the top of his skull. He winced as they clipped into place. Such a measure ensured that only he could hear the archeogeologor's words. Or so he had been told. *Who knows what the Necrons can do?* he thought.

'Archeogeologor, this is Valdu.'

'*That incompetent fool Auberon has left me exposed,*' said Xor. His voice sounded like a large bunch of keys being scraped over rusted iron grating.

That incompetent fool saved my life on Cerika and broke the back of the rebellion on Cerebrun Delectatio, thought Valdu. He bit his tongue.

'How so?' the major general asked.

'*By rushing at those ships he could never reach. I had to redeploy a hundred macroclades to fill the gap made in the line. My forces now have only 63.784% coverage of the positions around the Thegma-Erasto IX, Kelti V, Etarho and Omnicron-Lambda XIII forgeshrines. This level of vulnerability is unacceptable. None are safe now, and this new Necron host marches on them all,*' stated Xor.

Valdu looked to his personal dataslate, typing in codes and references to see the live cartograph of the region those

forgeshrines were home to. It featured current troop placements and movements, even of Mechanicus forces. It had been a particularly crucial achievement of Valdu's to persuade Xor to provide his people with information regarding where the Mechanicus' macroclades were deployed. Though he doubted the Martian Tech-Priests had deigned to share with him absolutely everything.

Xor was right. The archeogeologor's lines were thin, perilously so.

'*Major General, I will not tolerate the loss of even one of the Omnissiah's sacred sites here,*' said Xor. '*Their riches are incalculable, and as I have made clear to you, none of these locations can be evacuated without surrendering vital resources to the Necrons.*'

'Yes, and Omnicron-Lambda XIII dominates the Dilathine Highlands,' said Valdu. 'Which would give the xenos considerable military advantage.'

Valdu returned to his dataslate, seeing which of his forces were nearby to reinforce the position and were not themselves under heavy attack. There was no shortage of troops in the vicinity, but a great many were hard-pressed. Even as he read and considered, he saw the 543rd Savlar Chem-dogs deleted from the entry. *Another lost.*

There were no more troops available. All the nearby regiments and armies were engaged, and withdrawing them would open up more weaknesses. The 12th and 19th Necromundan Guard were barely preventing themselves from being surrounded only thirty kilometres from Kelti V. It was only a matter of time before they were overrun unless the 438th Ynmaran Ironsides could get to them in time. Ten regiments of Lannari Hadesguard held the Nhodd Gulch and



were slowly pushing the Necrons out of it – one of the closest things to a success story he had so far in this war. To withdraw some of their troops might not only see their advance slow but be reversed. He could not fail to let them link up with the 721st Mordian and 6th Cimbran Gunhauers, who were themselves the only real protection for another forgeshrine.

'Every minute counts, General,' said Xor. *'The Necrons grow closer.'*

'A wise man once told me that if he were to be given six hours to hew a priceless gemstone from a cave wall, then he would spend four sharpening his pick, and another practising his swing,' Valdu said.

'This is not the time for petty homilies and clichés,' retorted Xor.

'Your predicament is mine, Archeogeologor. I would not see your forgeshrines fall any more than you would.'

'Then we need solutions. My part is done. I rebuilt our lines to make up for your ill-disciplined officer's folly. My deployments are as efficient as they can be. But they will not stand to concerted attack. All four will fall as the situation stands. This is not acceptable. To me nor the High Field Marshal.'

He is right, thought Valdu. Hynflaager had been clear. The Adeptus Mechanicus' facilities could not fall. Their protection was the entire purpose of Valdu's sizeable military force. Valdu pored over the maps and troop deployments on his dataslate, looking for anything. The faintest weakness in the enemy, the slightest opportunity for a kind of tactical advantage. Some gap he could exploit.

There must be something.

'You will have your answer, Archeogeologor,' Valdu said. *'Careful analysis is required.'*

'If your gemstone hacking metaphor were to apply here, you would only have ten minutes, if that.'

'You complained of my general's rash actions, did you not?' asked Valdu.

'I did. I stand by it. Foolish. Stupid. Disastrous.'

'You would now ask of me the same kind of behaviour,' said Valdu. *'Many of the nearest troops shield more of your sites, indirectly or otherwise. I would not wish to expose them and merely move our problem elsewhere.'*

Valdu returned to his cartographs and troop deployment lists. He was sure Xor's forces could not hold in their current positions, though no doubt the archeogeologor's positioning of them was as effective as the situation allowed.

I wish you had stayed put, Auberan, he thought. *You may have undone us here.* He hated to admit it to himself, but it might be true.

Even as he searched for anything that might aid him among the data, a constant feed of reports trickled into his personal console, keeping him updated as to wider events of the war.

*****Redstone Plateau Successfully Captured. Est. loss 54,000 souls.*****

*****Konateh Fjard Under Attack. Est. loss 47,000 souls and counting. Situation Developing.*****

*****Forgeshrine Upsilon-Mu XIX Fallen. Est. loss 13,000 souls.*****

The stream never stopped.

So many lost, thought Valdu. *So many battles that need my attention. Yet here I am placating this half-metal, asinine—*

Valdu shook his head. *I cannot think like this. Emperor, give me your strength to rise above this pettiness. It is your work I do here, your work I must accomplish and cannot fail.*

His thoughts kept returning to the Necromundan Guard and



the Ynmaran Ironsides. Though far from unoccupied, provided the Ironsides were successful, all three regiments would be freed from combat relatively soon. Perhaps soon enough to aid him in this situation. They were closest to Thegma-Erasto IX, the hardest to defend of the four Mechanicus stations Xor needed protecting. It was not sat on any high ground, and its structures sprawled over the landscape, meaning a wide front was needed to protect it from all directions.

He had an idea.

'Xor, what kind of defensive line coverage do you need to be confident you can hold all four of your forgeshrines?'

'My current calculations based on known enemy movements suggest a minimum coverage of 72.513% is needed to buy time to redeploy additional macroclades and restore security to truly satisfactory levels. But that is time we do not have,' said Xor. *'Why do you ask this?'*

'Because, Archeogeologor, I think I have a solution. But I have to ask you to take some risk. I have assessed the cartographs, I have read the troop deployments and seen how embattled some are and are not. There is no way to bring troops in the time needed to guarantee the safety we both want for your facilities, or to avoid taking risks I cannot take.'

'It does not sound like you have much of a solution, General,' said Xor.

'I have three regiments near Thegma-Erasto IX. But they will not be able to make their way there immediately,' said Valdu.

'Explain.'

'Two are currently under severe attack, the third is on its way to relieve them. When that has happened, they will go to Thegma-Erasto IX.'

'They might fail. My forces at the forgeshrine will not be able to hold for long.' The impatience in Xor's voice was palpable to Valdu, even through the horrible grating of the archeogeologor's intonation.

'They won't be holding, Xor.'

'Do not think me a fool, General.'

'I need you to withdraw them to defend the other shrines.'

'What?'

'What defensive coverage of the other three shrines will their redeployment allow, Xor?' asked Valdu.

'I will not entertain this idea! What I risk is too—'

'You have little choice, Xor. Neither of us do. Neither of us can materialise reinforcements. We must make do with what we have. No action we take in this war can be guaranteed of success. We both know this.'

There was a pause. Though barely seconds long, Valdu knew

Xor must have been making all kinds of calculations.

'The coverage for the other three forgeshrines will be 73.291%, General,' said Xor finally.

'That is enough, yes?' said Valdu. It was not really a question.

'Barely. Room for error is almost nil. Note that this is not agreement ... yet. What is your plan?'

Thank you, God-Emperor, prayed Valdu. He was getting somewhere.

'If you withdraw the forces defending Thegma-Erasto IX to the other shrines, your defences around the remaining three will be secure enough. In that time, the Necrons may or may not capture Erasto IX. Meanwhile, the three regiments I referred to earlier will escape the xenos and make for Erasto IX. If the Necrons have taken it, the regiments will take it back. It is the hardest of the shrines for us to defend, so it would also be for the foe. If the xenos have not yet taken it, my forces will garrison and fortify as necessary.'

Again, there was a pause.

'The odds of their success are extremely low, it is calculated,' said Xor. *'I know the Necromundans' predicament.'*

What else do you know? thought Valdu. Specific military information of that kind was not routinely shared with the Adeptus Mechanicus. Apparently, the Martian Magi may have gained access to secure networks.

'What are the odds of all four shrines falling should we not follow this plan?'

'Considerably more likely,' admitted the archeogeologor. Valdu could not help but smile at the reluctance in Xor's voice.

'Then we are left with little choice, Xor. I do not like it. I know you do not either. But this is the fight we are in. Should we fail, I promise we shall make every effort to reclaim Thegma-Erasto IX. You have my word, sworn in the name of the Emperor.'

'Very well, General. I am persuaded ... for now. Know that I will not forget this if disaster befalls us. And nor shall Mars.'

The vox line communication terminated.

Valdu ran a calloused hand over his face. *Another internal battle won,* he thought. Every conversation with the archeogeologor was exhausting, but they had to work with him. Valdu pulled the vox links out of his cranial implants.

'General,' said one of his officers. 'More tomb ships have landed, in the Vynchaza Depression. Lieutenant General Min's XXVI Corps is effectively surrounded, and at least twelve squadrons of bombers now have no safe route back to their airfields.'

So it continues, Valdu thought. *Emperor grant us all strength.*

ARGOVON CAMPAIGN

The Argovon System is in a state of all-out war, the forces of the Imperium battling desperately against the might of the Necron race. In this, the second article in the Argovon Campaign, you will find new campaign rules and two missions to fight through.



Over the following pages, you will find part two of the Argovon Campaign set in the embattled Pariah Nexus. This article provides additional rules for phase 2 of the campaign, introducing a new resource that players must gather for phase 3. If they are feeling desperate, however, they can use this precious resource now to aid their forces in battle. You will also find

two new Crusade missions unique to this campaign set on the embattled worlds of the Argovon System. The first of these is an Incursion mission set on Hishrea. The second is a Strike Force mission set on Foronika. During the Determine Mission step, players can agree to play one of these missions instead of one found in other publications. Happy gaming!



CAMPAIGN RULES

GAINING XENOTECH

Buried throughout the Argovon System, and unearthed by the conflict, strange xenotech devices are being discovered by forces on both sides. While the Imperial forces seek to study these to better aid their understanding of the impending threat facing the system, the Necron forces seek only to reclaim their ancient artefacts and restore them to their rightful place within their tomb complexes.

Each time you fight a battle during campaign phase 2 of the Argovon Campaign, you can accumulate Xenotech points. Xenotech points are added to your total at the end of the battle unless otherwise stated. Each time you gain any Xenotech points, record the total gained. At the end of each battle in phase 2, when reporting the number of war zone points gained, each player must also report their current Xenotech points total to the Campaign Master. These points will be used in phase 3 of the Argovon Campaign.

Xenotech points are gained for the following:

- If you win a battle, gain 3 Xenotech points.
- If you draw a battle, gain 2 Xenotech points.
- If you lose a battle, gain 1 Xenotech point.
- If the enemy **WARLORD** is destroyed during the battle by a melee attack made by a model from your army, gain 1 Xenotech point at the end of that phase.
- Selecting the Search for Xenotech Crusade Agenda (see below).

If you are fighting a Crusade battle during campaign phase 2 of the Argovon Campaign, you can select the following agenda instead of another that is available to you.

Search for Xenotech

Xenotech Agenda

INFANTRY and **BIKER** units from your army can attempt the following action, as described in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*:

'Search for Xenotech' (Action): At the end of your Movement phase, one unit from your army that is within 3" of an area terrain feature can start to perform this action. This action is completed at the start of your next Command phase. If completed, gain 1 Xenotech point.

RISKING XENOTECH

If your army is Battle-forged, during each battle in campaign phase 2, you can spend Xenotech points from your total in conjunction with Command points to use the Stratagems over the page. Each Stratagem will tell you how many Xenotech points to spend from your total when it is used. Deduct this from the total on your Order of Battle. If your Xenotech points total is 0, you cannot use any of these Stratagems until you have gained more Xenotech points.





Xenotech Stratagems

Each army in the Campaign has access to these Stratagems during phase 2 of the Argovon Campaign. Each time you use one of the Stratagems below, it will instruct you to spend a number of Xenotech points from your total, as previously described.

FIELD PROJECTOR

1CP

Xenotech Stratagem

As this humming device is cast to the ground, it opens and several nodes fan out, projecting a wall of energy between your forces and the foe.

Use this Stratagem at the start of your opponent's Shooting phase. Spend 1 Xenotech point and select one unit from your army. Until the end of the phase, that unit is treated as having the benefits of Light Cover (see the Warhammer 40,000 Core Book).

PERSONAL REVITALISER

1CP

Xenotech Stratagem

Detecting rent flesh or sundered armour, this device plays a beam of sickly light over the area, repairing minor damage.

Use this Stratagem at the start of any battle round. Spend 1 Xenotech point and select one **CHARACTER** unit (excluding **VEHICLE** units) from your army. Until the end of that battle round, each time that **CHARACTER** model would lose a wound, roll one D6: on a 6, that wound is not lost.

SIGNAL DISRUPTOR

1CP

Xenotech Stratagem

Extending strange aerials, this device scans the bearer's own communications signals and blocks any that do not conform to the same patterns.

Use this Stratagem at the start of your opponent's Reinforcement step. Spend 1 Xenotech point and select one unit from your army. Until the end of the phase, enemy models cannot be set up within 12" of that unit.

MATTER TRANSMOGRIFIER

1CP

Xenotech Stratagem

Casting a strange beam of light upon the target, this indecipherable device alters it at a molecular level, rendering even the most threatening foe harmless.

Use this Stratagem at the start of your Shooting phase. Spend 1 Xenotech point and select one enemy unit that is within 6" of a unit from your army. Roll six D6: for each result of 4+, that enemy unit suffers 1 mortal wound.





CRUSADE MISSION – INCURSION DEATH ON HISHREA

MISSION BRIEFING

The attacker is commanding a small force on a raid deep into enemy territory. The purpose of the raid is not to use their own force of arms, however. Instead, they aim to goad a series of colossal frostwyrms into the heart of the enemy army and then escape, allowing these beasts to wreak havoc on their foe.

Mission Rules

Objective Markers: The Defender places four objective markers anywhere on the battlefield that are more than 9" from any battlefield edge and more than 9" from any other objective marker.

Summon Frostwyrms (Action): One unit from the Attacker's army can start to perform this action at the end of their Movement phase if it is within 1" of an objective marker. The action is completed at the end of the Attacker's turn. If this action is successfully completed, replace that objective marker with a frostwyrms marker.

First Turn: The Attacker chooses who gets the first turn in this mission.

Voracious Maws: At the start of each battle round, starting with the Attacker, players alternate selecting a frostwyrms marker until each marker has been selected once. After each selection, players roll off. The winner can move that marker a number of inches equal to their roll.

At the end of each battle round, the Attacker rolls one D6 for each frostwyrms marker on the battlefield, adding 1 to the result for each counter on that marker. On a 4+, every unit within 6" of that marker suffers D6 mortal wounds, then that marker is removed. On a 1-3, place a counter on that frostwyrms marker.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

Victory points are awarded as follows:

Devouring Maws (Progressive): The Attacker scores 20 victory points each time a frostwyrms marker is removed.

Supplies Protected (End Game): The Defender scores 20 victory points at the end of the game for each objective marker that is still on the battlefield.

They Are Coming (End Game): The Attacker scores 10 victory points for each frostwyrms marker on the battlefield at the end of the battle.

Hold Ground (End Game): Each player scores 10 victory points for each objective marker they control at the end of the battle.

VICTOR BONUS

The victor scores 1 additional war zone point and 1 additional Xenotech point.

STRATAGEMS

Players can spend Command points to use the following Stratagems during this mission.

Sneak Into Position 1CP *Attacker Stratagem*

Use this Stratagem at the start of the first battle round. Select one unit from your army (excluding AIRCRAFT units) and make a Normal Move or an Advance with that unit. That unit cannot finish this move within 9" of any enemy units.

Lead Them Away 1CP *Defender Stratagem*

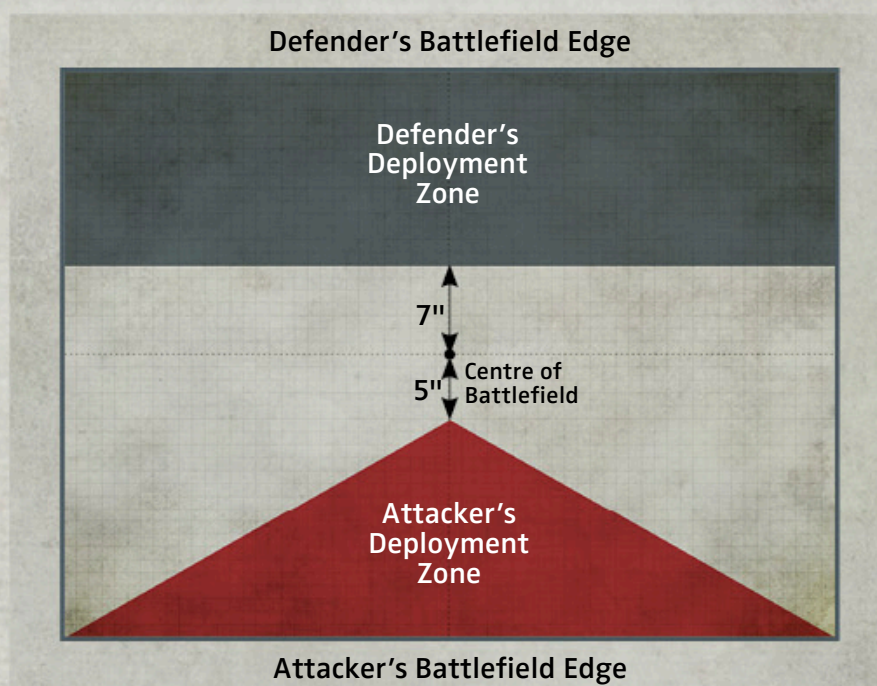
Use this Stratagem at the start of the battle round, after rolling off to see which player moves a frostwyrms marker. Re-roll your dice.

AGENDA

The Defender can select this Agenda instead of another available to them.

Hold Them Back *Defender Agenda*

At the end of the battle, for each objective marker on the battlefield, the Defender can select one unit from their army that is within range of that objective marker. Each selected unit gains 2 experience points.





CRUSADE MISSION – STRIKE FORCE THE APOCALYPSE OF FORONIKA

MISSION BRIEFING

The enemy has driven out our vanguard forces and taken possession of this world's significant blackstone resources as well as its extraction equipment. We must drive them back again and ensure the work done here does not simply further the foe's agendas.

Mission Rules

Key Locations: Before any terrain features are set up, players should nominate 4 terrain features to be key locations. These should be the largest terrain features. During the Create the Battlefield step, one of these should be set up in each battlefield quarter, as close to the centre of that quarter as possible. A key location terrain feature retains any terrain traits it has, but in addition is treated as an objective marker except that it cannot be removed for any reason.

Extraction Machinery: At the end of each battle round, each player rolls one D6 for each unit from their army that is within range of a key location. On a 1, that unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

Victory points are awarded as follows:

Hold Locations (Progressive): At the end of each player's Command phase, the player whose turn it is scores 5 victory points for each of the following conditions they satisfy (for a maximum of 15 victory points):

- They control one or more key locations.
- They control two or more key locations.
- They control more key locations than their opponent controls.

This mission objective cannot be scored in the first battle round.

No Prisoners (Progressive): Score 10 victory points at the end of the battle round if more enemy units than friendly units were destroyed during this battle round.

Secure the Facilities (End Game): At the end of the battle, the player that controls the most key locations scores 20 victory points. If that player controls all four key locations, they score 30 victory points instead.

VICTOR BONUS

The victor scores 2 additional war zone points and 2 additional Xenotech points.

If the victor controls all four key locations at the end of the battle, then in addition they gain 3 Requisition points after this battle instead of 1.

STRATAGEMS

Players can spend Command points to use the following Stratagems during this mission.

Activate Extractors - 1CP Mission Stratagem

Use this Stratagem at the end of a battle round, before rolling for any units affected by the Extraction Machinery mission rule. Select one key location which has a unit from your army in range of it. When rolling for the Extraction Machinery mission rule at the end of this battle round for units within range of this key location, on a 1, that unit suffers D6 mortal wounds instead of D3.

Never Hear Us Coming - 1CP Mission Stratagem

Use this Stratagem when you select an enemy unit that is within range of a key location as the target of a charge. Until the end of the phase, that enemy unit cannot fire Overwatch or Set to Defend.

AGENDA

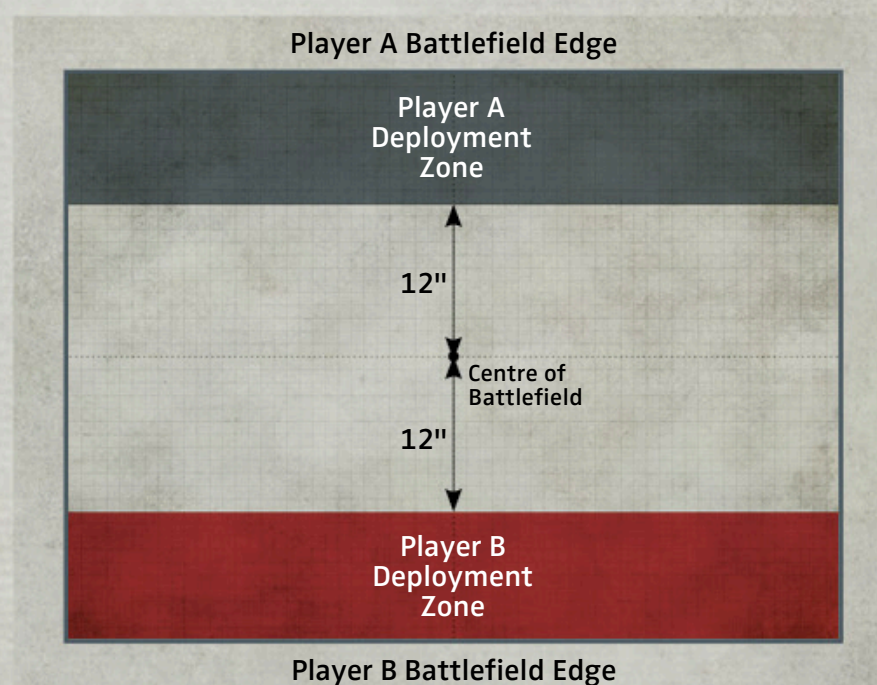
The Defender can select this Agenda instead of another available to them.

Extract Samples Mission Agenda

Keep an Extract Samples tally for each unit from your army. Add 1 to a unit's Extract Samples tally each time it successfully completes the following action:

Secure the Area (Action): Infantry units from your army (excluding **CHARACTERS**) can start to perform this action at the end of your Movement phase if it is within range of a key location that has no enemy units within range of it. This action can only be performed on each key location once per turn. The action is completed at the end of your turn.

Each unit gains a number of experience points equal to their Extract Samples tally. At the end of the battle, if the total of all Extract Samples tallies in your army is 6 or more, gain 1 Xenotech point and 1 war zone point.





INDEX ASTARTES

Forged in the aftermath of the War of the Beast, the Tome Keepers have battled the enemies of the Imperium for nigh on eight millennia. Their quest for truth in a galaxy built on lies has seen them face many unenviable foes.



TOME KEEPERS

Truth and Consequence

By Dan Harden & James Gallagher

With tactical precision and fearless resolve do the Tome Keepers wage war on the enemies of the Imperium. They fight not just with sacred bolter and honoured blade, but with the accumulated knowledge of aeons etched in their minds, for they believe that only through truth and understanding can they finally defeat Humanity's many foes. Every battle is meticulously planned, every foe tactically analysed and every ally carefully scrutinised to ensure that victory is achieved in the most efficient manner possible. Then, when the battle is won and the fallen counted, all is recorded once again, the better to serve the Tome Keepers in their next war.

Such practices have served the Tome Keepers well, for they have endured almost eight millennia of warfare, proving themselves time and again in the crucible of battle. Indeed, their strategic insights have proven invaluable against myriad alien races – most notably the Necrons – drastically shortening wars that the Administratum estimated could take years, if not decades, to prosecute. Yet their dogged determination to record everything and challenge previously unchallenged conventions has seen the Chapter come into conflict with other organisations within the Imperium – organisations that believe the Adeptus Astartes should have complete faith in the Emperor and his servants, and far fewer questions.

BIRTH OF A CHAPTER

THE FOURTH FOUNDING

The Tome Keepers were founded in 546.M32 in the wake of the War of the Beast. The war against the Orks had taken a huge toll on the Imperium's armies, and new Space Marine Chapters were required to defend the Imperium from the galaxy's many threats. Gene-seed was taken out of cryo-storage and new samples received from all extant Chapters. It was from the Ultramarines' gene-stock that Chapter 281 – later to be known as the Tome Keepers – was born.

As with most newly created Chapters, officers and specialists were requisitioned from the parent Chapter. Captain Caelus Viator, formerly of the Ultramarines 2nd Company, was elevated to the rank of Chapter Master, and he oversaw the creation and training of four hundred battle-brothers over the following two decades. Their training ground would be that of Dornak IV, a barren death world in the Segmentum Solar. The new aspirants were subjected to years of harsh physical training, psycho-indoctrination, genetic alteration and painful surgical enhancements before they were ready to become warriors of the Adeptus Astartes. Several hundred passed the gruelling tests. Many thousands did not.

+++ref:37/b Alpha+++

- Planet Signifier: Istrouma
- Designation: Adeptus Astartes Successor Chapter Planet
- Gravity: 1.3 x Terran standard
- Terrain: var Volcanic, Mountainous, Desert
- Population: 8 billion
- Planetary Governor: Saargon bal Zakir, Chapter Master and Keeper of the Truth
- System: Istrouman System
- Sub-sector: Caracros Sub-sector
- Sector: Macharius Alpha Sector
- Segmentum: Segmentum Pacificus
- Tithe Grade: Adeptus Non (disputed)
- Sub-ref: Istrouman Tithe/White Book

Istrouma exists in a state of perpetual suffering. Scoured by baleful energy from the system's white dwarf star, the planet's surface is heavily irradiated, save for a single large continent that survives on the dark side of the world away from the star's harsh glare. In addition, the planet's erratic orbit and the orbits of its two moons create periods of dramatic tectonic upheaval that alternately birth new mountain ranges or tear open the crust of the planet to reveal seas of molten lava.

Istrouma is sparsely inhabited by Imperial standards. Small colonies of miners exist out in the barren wildernesses and deep beneath the mountain ranges, but the majority of the world's population lives on the one easily habitable continent. The capital city is Niveneh, beneath which can be found the vast libraries of the Istrouman people. The Fortress Monastery of the Tome Keepers can be found towards the planet's northern pole atop the Zaatos mountain range. It is heavily shielded to protect it from radiation.

Thought for the day: Facts are chains that bind perception and fetter truth.

As Viator's forces came to battlefield readiness, the Chapter's assets were also assigned. Battle Barges and Strike Cruisers arrived from far Macragge, along with armoured vehicles, aircraft, Drop Pods, Dreadnought chassis and twenty venerated suits of Tactical Dreadnought armour. Accompanying these war assets were thousands of Chapter serfs – logisticians, tech-savants, ship crews, medicae personnel, fabricators, artisans, requisitioners, architects, servitors and countless others. Supplies were accumulated from planetary tithes, ammunition was allocated, litanies were recited, and machine spirits were appeased. In the year 567.M32, Chapter 281 was declared ready to serve the Emperor.

TO FIND A WORLD AMONGST BILLIONS

Assigned to watch over the Segmentum Pacificus and the warp routes towards Terra from the galactic west, the starships of the fledgling Chapter headed for the Sol Mandeville Point and made the warp translation to the little-known Caracros Sector without incident. The region of space was sparsely populated according to Imperial records, but teemed with alien life forms, from Aeldari Corsairs and Hrud infestations to marauding warbands of Orks. Yet there was one planetary system, right at the heart of the Caracros Sector, that they all seemed to avoid. It was in this system, designated GB 6-77, that the Chapter decided to make its home. Four of the system's eight planets were inhabitable. They made planetfall on Istrouma.

THE SKY WARRIORS AND THE CHRONICLERS

What the Space Marines discovered when they landed was a world that had been forgotten by the Imperium, a mere footnote in a galaxy of a billion worlds. Yet the Istrouman people welcomed the Space Marines with open arms, for they recognised them as the sky warriors of old and as great heroes of Humanity. Viator and his retinue were treated as honoured guests and led to Niveneh, the world's principal city, where they were received with dignity and awe by the planetary council. The Space Marines were told the long history of Istrouma and how its people travelled from Ancient Terra millennia ago, and they were shown many great artefacts wrought by the planet's artisans.

And they were told of a great tragedy that had befallen the people of Istrouma. Over thousands of years, their life expectancy had fallen drastically, and the planet's inhabitants rarely lived past the age of thirty. Children became apprentices at a young age, working with members of their family in their chosen craft. Skills were taught quickly, and everything was chronicled in personal journals so that future generations could pick up where their forebears left off. The artefacts previously shown to Viator and his officers took on new meaning – they had not been crafted by a single person, but by scores of artisans over many short lifetimes. Yet the Istroumans did not begrudge their short lives, for they knew – as they explained to Viator and his men – that though their own books may close,

THE TOME CELESTIAL

Each battle-brother bears the insignia of the Tome Keepers Chapter – a four-pointed white star sitting on an open black book. The star represents GB 6-77, the white dwarf star around which the Chapter's home world orbits. The book symbolises the acquisition and recording of knowledge. It sits open to show that knowledge is infinite and that understanding is more powerful than blind faith. A Tome Keepers book is never shown closed unless in memoriam.



THE TRIAL OF PAGES

The selection process for Tome Keepers aspirants is known as the Trial of Pages. Held on Istrouma on the first day of every calendar month, aspirants are gathered from across the system and brought to Niveneh, where they are pitted against each other in trials of strength, endurance and survival. Only the most determined have any chance of becoming sky warriors and only the very best aspirants are chosen by the Chapter's Master of Recruits and High Orator. Successful aspirants are known as Pages until they complete their training, whereupon they become full battle-brothers.

their legends would live on through their words. Death, they said, was to be embraced, not feared. The Space Marines were taken beneath the city of Niveneh where they bore witness to a vast library that was almost a city in its own right. Entire streets and thoroughfares were dedicated to millions upon millions of books, dataslates and information terminals. Upon those shelves lay the history of aeons. The contents of the library would shape the Chapter's future for millennia to come.

THE TOME KEEPERS

Viator believed that Istrouma and its inhabitants had great promise. He saw that the people of Istrouma were hardy and resourceful, and their accumulated knowledge was almost beyond comprehension. To the tactically minded Viator, the collection of strategic monographs in the library were reason enough to forge Istrouma into a Chapter Planet. With the blessings of the planetary council, orbital landers descended from the clouds, and construction began on a vast Chapter fortress atop the Zaatos Mountains at the planet's inhospitable northern pole. To honour the event, the Istroumans presented Viator with one of their greatest possessions – a stasis-sealed volume known as the White Book. Viator returned the honour in the naming of his Chapter. The Chapter and its warriors would henceforth be known as the Tome Keepers.

THE FIRST RECRUITS

Istrouma proved to be a wise choice for the Tome Keepers' home world. The planetary system was rich with natural resources, and its four habitable planets provided a large number of recruits. Many families put their sons forward for the Trial of Pages in the hope that they would become sky warriors, thereby bringing great honour to their family name. The young hopefuls competed in trials of strength and endurance, before being taken far into the rad deserts to test their survival skills. They fought each other in specially constructed arenas, watched closely by the Master of Recruits. Many did not survive.

As the surviving aspirants became neophytes, they began the organ implantation process required to become Space Marines. Yet when the eighteenth implant – the progenoid gland – was implanted, the Chapter's Apothecaries noticed that it had a curious psychological side effect. The previously short-lived Istroumans were now virtually immortal now they had become Space Marines, and many struggled with the dichotomy, feeling they were being denied their rightful place among their departed ancestors. This feeling was echoed by many of the Istrouman people, who began to see them not as the glorious warriors they imagined, but as pariahs. Some of the new Tome Keepers tended towards



```
++ Data Inload 445.M33 ++
Technoarchaeologist
Darik Heliophon <
Forge World: Stygies VIII <
Deployment: Explorator Fleet
Semplanax <
Specific: GB 6-77 <
Inload Classification:
Stellar Anomaly <
Specific: Xenos Technology <
Inload Authorisation:
01011000 01100101 <
```

Contained herein a report of the alien technology that surrounds the white dwarf star GB 6-77 in the Caracros Sector, this being an introduction on the subject.

There sits around this star an anomaly of artificial design. Much like the Iron Ring of Holy Mars, the anomaly takes the form of a giant continuous band that surrounds the star at the celestial equator. It orbits at a distance of approximately five thousand kilometres. Based on the diameter of the star, the ring is estimated to be around eighty thousand kilometres in circumference. It rotates at the same speed as the star, though due to a lack of defining features, it appears static in long-range scans.

Short-range scans reveal the ring to have apertures on its outer face and protrusions on its inner face. The protrusions take the shape of truncated square pyramids and appear to have no function. The apertures open when approached by small craft.

The interior of the ring is void sealed but lacks any kind of atmosphere, necessitating void suits be worn at all times. It is heat shielded, suggesting some kind of power source is still operational, though there are no indications where the power source may be. There are no windows. The interior, like the exterior, is devoid of features, though there are what appear to be control panels with crystalline viewing screens at regular intervals along the section that we explored. The panels do not activate when touched. The walls, like the entire station, are made of an unidentifiable metal alloy. Samples could not be taken as the metal appears to be impervious to both tools and weapons. Attempted destruction of the anomaly has proven impossible both from the interior and the exterior. Reprisals have not been forthcoming as a result of our investigations.

In conclusion, the anomaly appears to do nothing. It has been classified xenognosis. The Tome Keepers Chapter of Space Marines monitor the anomaly in perpetuity.

LIVERY AND HERALDRY

The Tome Keepers wear armour the colour of ancient vellum. Their Chapter symbol is displayed on their left shoulder pad unless otherwise supplanted by a Crux Terminatus.

BATTLEFIELD ROLE

The battlefield role insignia follows the dictates of the Codex Astartes to the letter.

RANK MARKINGS

Rank markings are shown on helmets. Veterans wear black faceplates. Veteran Sergeants also wear black faceplates but with a red helmet, as laid down in the Codex. The most notable deviation from the Codex is the Lieutenant's helmet, which is a reverse of the Veteran Sergeant colours. The company Captain typically wears the traditional parchment of the Tome Keepers, but with the addition of a skull or laurel. Personal heraldry is also allowed.

COMPANY COLOURS

Company colours are the same as those used in the Codex Astartes, displayed on the chest device.



Battle-brother Eriba, 3rd Company, 2nd Squad (battleline)



2nd Battleline Squad



Chapter Icon



Battleline



Close Support



Fire Support



Veteran



Command



Battle-brother



Veteran



Sergeant



Veteran Sergeant



Lieutenant



Captain



recklessness, seeing themselves as dead men walking, having already outlived their natural lifespans. Many more became sullen and introspective. Yet within all of them was instilled a fearlessness of death and a mutual acceptance of mortality's impermanence that surpassed even that of their own people.

THE CHRONICLERS REBORN

With careful psycho-indoctrination, the new recruits learned to harness their grim resolve, yet something still rankled within them. Many used their few minutes of personal time each day to write journals – a persistent hangover from their former lives that the Chaplains (later to be called Orators) seemed unable to quell. As the neophytes became fully fledged battle-brothers, they began to note down observations on their foes, devising new tactics and strategies for their destruction. Chapter Master Viator watched with interest. Though the Codex Astartes promoted adherence, it also encouraged innovation. Had not their Primarch Roboute Guilliman praised the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge? As the Chapter grew to full fighting strength, Viator called for his battle-brothers to embrace the traditions of Istrouma. Battle-brothers were encouraged to develop new skills and further their understanding of their myriad foes. Many books were written. And, over the following millennia, many books were closed.

BATTLEFIELD DOCTRINE

Where other Chapters may rely on aggression or overwhelming firepower to secure victory, the Tome Keepers place a heavy emphasis on clinical battlefield discipline, relying on superior tactics and an understanding of the enemy's capabilities. Alongside their everyday training, battle-brothers are required to conduct in-depth studies on the enemies they will face, to analyse all of the Tome Keepers' major engagements and to become proficient in the Chapter's battle cant. With this knowledge, a battle-brother will know what strategy is being employed and his role within it in just a few short words. Each battle-brother is also encouraged to keep a journal of his own battlefield observations and learnings, thereby furthering the knowledge of the Chapter as a whole and enabling the constant development and employment of new tactics and strategies.

CHAPTER BELIEFS

The Chapter cult places strong emphasis on the traditions of Istrouma while upholding the teachings that science and reason should prevail over superstition and blind faith. As a whole, the Chapter's warriors are scholars almost as much as soldiers. They are considered to be thoughtful, measured, and somewhat humanitarian by Imperial standards and will often put civilian lives before their own.

THE CLOSING OF THE BOOK

The Tome Keepers have adopted several traditions from Istrouma, including the Closing of the Book ceremony. When a battle-brother is slain, their personal tome is retrieved by an Apothecary along with their progenoid gland. Following the engagement, one of the warrior's peers will write the final chapter in their tome, detailing their heroic death. A ceremony – officiated by the Company Orator – is then held to celebrate the deeds of the fallen battle-brother. During this ritual, his book is ceremonially closed and wrapped in red ribbon, signifying his sacrifice. In time, the journals of the fallen are all returned to Istrouma and the library of Niveneh.



PURITY SEALS

Like most loyalist Space Marines, the Tome Keepers often adorn their armour with purity seals to show they are not tainted by Chaos. In addition, each battle-brother is permitted to add a strip of parchment to a purity seal inscribed with the names of those who have died fighting alongside him. It is said that when Chapter Master Sabium finally fell in battle, his purity seals had over eight hundred names recorded on them, every one written by his hand.



NOTABLE ENGAGEMENTS

The Tome Keepers have fought in many notable conflicts, their honour rolls full of great victories. Countless worlds have been liberated and billions of lives saved by their selfless actions. Yet powerful enemies have also been made ...

THE DETONATION OF 56-KAPPA MUNITA

The munitions world of 56-Kappa Munita was the scene for the first large-scale martial engagement of the Tome Keepers Chapter in 228.M34. The planet sat just outside the predicted path of Waaagh! Gobrok, which had already smashed through two sub-sectors. By conducting a series of fleet-based actions, the Tome Keepers were able to lure Gobrok's ramshackle starships towards 56-Kappa Munita and then engage the Orks on the planet's surface. Though vastly outnumbered, the Tome Keepers fought only on their own terms, ambushing exposed columns, making fighting retreats and always occupying the higher ground. Growing evermore enraged at his evasive foe, Gobrok conducted an all-out attack on the planet's city-sized munitions storage facility into which he had seen the Tome Keepers retreat. It was exactly what the Tome Keepers expected. Having already evacuated the facility's workers, they detonated the explosives they'd planted and blew Gobrok – and the majority of his Waaagh! – to pieces.

THE SANCTIMONIA CONFLICT

In 291.M37, the Ecclesiarchal world of Sanctimonia was overrun by the forces of Chaos. Within months, the entire sector was ablaze with the taint of Chaos. The Tome Keepers responded to the astropathic pleas for help and – along with a Black Templars Crusade, two Convents of Adepta Sororitas and eight Astra Militarum regiments – began a campaign of cleansing the fallen worlds.

The first signs of discord amongst the allied force occurred on the hive world of Gleb when Canoness Sophira – a vehement witch-hater from the Order of the Argent Shroud – balked at the presence of Chief Librarian Eshuh and his retinue of Librarians. Her distrust of the psykers led to a much higher casualty rate than expected, particularly when telepathic communications from Eshuh were ignored by the Ecclesiarchal forces. Less than a year later, on the shrine world of Bepax, the Tome Keepers under the command of Captain Saduq were forced to destroy the Mausoleum Divinito – a vast crypt containing the bodies of over three hundred Imperial martyrs – when a warp portal was opened inside it by a conclave of demagogues. Incensed by the unholy act of desecration, the Ministorum were further enraged when Saduq pointed out that the entombed had

already been martyred once and that a second time would do them no further harm.

On the civilised world of Happenstance, the Tome Keepers were to join three Dephon Regiments in a combined assault on a heretic-held city. The Astra Militarum – who were accompanied by Simonius Faulke, Cardinal Palatine of Sanctimonia – were to engage the enemy defences while the Tome Keepers conducted a Drop Pod assault on their command position. When the city came in sight, however, Faulke ordered the Astra Militarum to advance immediately and slaughter the enemy in the Emperor's name. He disregarded the battle plan devised by the Tome Keepers, deeming their prudence and caution to be a lack of faith in the

Emperor's protection and divine guidance. The Dephon were almost wiped out as they launched their attack, and the Tome Keepers were forced to abort their own mission to extract them. The Tome Keepers decried Faulke's disregard for Human life. In turn, Faulke accused them of dereliction of duty.

The final blow came when the Tome Keepers joined the assault on Sanctimonia. As they assailed the holy capital, the Black Templars and Adepta Sororitas made no distinction between heretic forces and civilians, deeming that a decade on a Chaos-held world would be enough to taint even the strongest minds. Though their actions proved to be prudent in the aftermath, the Tome Keepers would not forgive their allies for what they saw as wanton butchery and

XENOS HUNTERS

Since the Chapter's inception, ninety-six battle-brothers have been seconded to the Deathwatch, their understanding of xenos races and their meticulous records on such subjects proving a massive boon to the alien-hunting elite. Their ongoing conflict with the Thokt Dynasty Necrons has already proven invaluable in the war for the Pariah Nexus.



++ Inquisitorial Report ++

Observations regarding the White Book

- > Drucasta Xeng (Interrogator)
- > Ordo Hereticus (Gathalamor)
- > Holy Order of the Inquisition
- > Categorisation: Heretical tomes
- > Sub-categorisation: Tome Keepers
- > Clearance Level: Sepia

As requested, my lord, a detailed description of the so-called White Book of the Tome Keepers.

I find the White Book in the librarium of the Chapter Fortress. It is not guarded, but then neither is it easily accessible. In fact, it is impossible to get close to it at all, for it is contained within an arcane stasis chamber that is entirely at odds with the design of the rest of the librarium. Where the cloistered halls around me are constructed out of granite and bedecked with carved wooden shelves, the stasis chamber is of dark metal, old and pitted. Scans reveal the temporal distortion of the stasis field to be approximately nine thousand years, which predates the creation of the Chapter.

The White Book is visible through a small observation window akin to an armoured porthole. It floats above a suspensor lectern, held perfectly motionless by the stasis field inside the chamber. The book is roughly four hands tall by six wide (three hands per page) and the pages appear to be made of pseudo-paper as opposed to parchment or vellum. It lies open and faces towards me, making it impossible to analyse the cover, which I assume is white given the name of the book. The clasp is visible, however. It is made of silver or a silver-like material, and chased with geometric patterns. The spine of the book seems to be broken by the way the pages fall open, and there are

clear signs of fire damage, though nothing substantial. Bookmarks protrude from several pages, though there is no way of telling the significance of them.

The book is open close to the centre on page one hundred and forty-four. I cannot tell if this was done deliberately to balance the book, or if there is a particular significance to those pages. I will, of course, send you a full transcript of the text [find file attached]. It is legible, written in High Gothic in a steady hand. It makes mention of discovering the truth in all things and that knowledge should be valued above all else – nothing that I would describe as heretical. Indeed, it is a maxim that we ourselves follow. I can only imagine the frustration the Librarians must feel at not being able to access the knowledge inside.



THE SOMNOLENT SEERS

The Somnolent Seers are a sect of Istrouman prophets who use dreams as a form of psychic divination. Though their short lifespans prevent the seers from becoming formidable psykers, their aptitude for harnessing the warp has ensured that many of the Chapter's Librarians have been drawn from their ranks over the millennia. The most notable household is House Mahru.

the slaughter of potential innocents. The Tome Keepers departed Sanctimonia on difficult terms with both the Black Templars and the Ecclesiarchy.

THE AWAKENING OF SALAX

In 748.M41, the astropathic choir on Istrouma received a scrambled message from the Adeptus Mechanicus mining world of Salax on the outskirts of the Hyrakii Deeps. Suspecting an Ork invasion, a Tome Keepers task force arrived at Salax only to find the entire planet scoured of Human life. More troubling was that there were no tell-tale signs of Ork activity.

Making planetfall near the mining facility, the Tome Keepers discovered signs of battle, but none like they had ever recorded before. Whole segments of the research station appeared to have

been shorn off, the bare metal shining in the sun. Discarded tools, weapons and equipment lay everywhere, neatly bisected. Of the Tech-Priests there was no sign. As Chapter serfs began documenting the scene, Captain Ilunae led the task force into the heart of the mountain beneath the facility. As they approached the bottom of the access tunnels, a swarm of metallic creatures burst from the darkness to engulf the Space Marines. They were soon joined by far larger constructs that materialised through solid rock, their bladed limbs slicing easily through the power armour of Ilunae's troops. Despite the sudden assault, the Tome Keepers dispatched their foes and pushed on into the tunnel. What they found inside was not a series of caverns, but a Necron tomb complex, the walls lined with row upon row of stasis crypts. Necron Immortals were the first to awaken.

IN DEATH THEY SERVE

Dreadnoughts are highly venerated by the Tome Keepers, for they have endured hundreds, if not thousands, of years of warfare, thereby accumulating vast knowledge and battlefield experience. Though formidable fighting machines in their own right, the Chapter's Dreadnoughts will often offer tactical or strategic advice to the strike force they are fighting alongside and, in some cases, have even led task forces where their field of expertise is of particular relevance. For the Istrouman-born Tome Keepers,

Dreadnoughts hold a special significance, for they see them as the ideal balance between death and duty. Upon interment in a Dreadnought's sarcophagus, the battle-brother's book is closed, signifying their passing and enabling their soul to take its rightful place in death alongside their ancestors. Yet through ancient technology and a Dreadnought body, their mortal remains continue to fulfil their duty to the Chapter. It is an idealised fate that many Tome Keepers aspire to.



Facing an unknown enemy, Ilunae shouted 'Third Hephax' over the vox – a battle cant that every Tome Keeper present knew by rote. As the Tactical Marines advanced fearlessly towards the enemy, bolters blazing, the company's Assault Marines skirted the flanks to come upon the enemy from behind. Chainblades screamed and shuddered as they smashed into the metal warriors, while power weapons sliced through the Necrons far more easily. As Ilunae joined the fighting, his Devastators planted melta bombs around the complex before leading the retreat. The Tome Keepers fell back to the surface in good order as the Necron complex detonated. And so did the Tome Keepers record their first engagement with the Necrons of the Thokt Dynasty – the beginning of a war that would last over two hundred years.

THE ERA INDOMITUS

The dying years of the 41st Millennium were a trying time for the Tome Keepers. Two centuries of war with the Thokt Dynasty had already taken their toll on the Chapter when the Great Rift sundered the galaxy. The Chapter, reduced to just over two hundred battle-brothers, was facing annihilation. Yet salvation came in the most unlikely of forms. The Primarch Roboute Guilliman was reborn, and in his wake came the Primaris Space Marines – a new hope against the encroaching darkness. The Tome Keepers, for so long vilified by the Adeptus Ministorum and shunned by other Imperial organisations as a result, suddenly found their ranks bolstered. Too many books had been closed over the course of the last two centuries. Now, many new ones were being opened ...

LEGERIN HEQITE

The crowning glory of the Tome Keepers' fleet is the *Legerin Heqite*, an Excelsis-class battle barge that can trace its history back to the Great Crusade. It is rumoured that the Primarch Roboute Guilliman once walked her hallowed corridors, and, it is hoped, he will do so once again now that he has been reborn. The starship's Istrouman name roughly translates as 'Seeker of Truth'.

THE TRIUMVIRATE OF TRUTH

The Librarians of the Tome Keepers are, like those of other Chapters, well versed in psychic disciplines, from pyromancy and geokinesis to divination and technomancy. Yet the vast majority of Tome Keepers Librarians specialise in telepathy, using their minds to send vital battlefield communications, inspire their allies and confuse their foes. One telepathic power the Tome Keepers Librarians have developed is the ability to psychically boost and empower the voice of another, enabling them to inspire and embolden their battle-

brothers across great distances and to heightened effect. It is because of this ability – known as Amplification – that a company's Ancient, Orator and Librarian will often congregate together on the battlefield. As the Orator reads from the Ancient's weighty tome, the Librarian will imbue his words of wisdom and knowledge with psychic energy before sending them booming directly into the minds of the company's battle-brothers, driving them to greater acts of courage and valour.



COMPANY STRUCTURE

As scions of the Ultramarines Chapter, The Tome Keepers follow the tenets of the Codex Astartes closely, particularly when it comes to Chapter organisation and company structure.

The Tome Keepers 3rd Company includes a diverse mix of warriors, from experienced battle-brothers to Greyshields and newly forged Primaris Marines. As one of the Chapter's Battle Companies, the 3rd – also known as the Godbreakers – have always been at the forefront of the Chapter's wars and crusades, most recently against the Necrons of the Thokt Dynasty and the Death Guard of Abaddon's 13th Black Crusade.

CAPTAIN NASIEM BAL TERGU, CAPTAIN OF THE 3RD COMPANY, KEEPER OF THE KEY

Battle-scarred and iron-willed, Captain Nasiem is a superlative tactician, a fearsome warrior and the inspirational leader of the Tome Keepers 3rd Company. A veteran of over two centuries' experience, Nasiem has fought in countless wars against aliens and heretics alike, though his greatest knowledge lies in battling the Necrons. Indeed, Nasiem shares many traits with his xenos foes, for he is implacable, dauntless and, some say, unkillable.

Promoted to Captain during the Great Reordering, Nasiem crossed the Rubicon Primaris as soon as the technology was available to do so, reasoning that it would bring him closer to his new Greyshield charges. It proved to be a wise move, uniting his company into a fighting force the likes of which the Tomb Keepers had not seen for many generations. Nasiem now leads his company to war in the Pariah Nexus, his knowledge of the Necrons a vital boon to the war effort in that sector.



The arrival of the Primaris Marines was a major boon to the 3rd Company, which received the majority of the new Greyshield draftees during the Chapter's Great Reordering. Returned to fighting strength, the Godbreakers joined the Indomitus Crusade in the Ultima Segmentum, attaching itself to Battle Group Kallides. The knowledge and experience of the company's battle-brothers would prove vital in the war against the Necrons in the Argovon System.

COMPANY ANCIENT KAE BAL ZHUNE, BEARER OF THE TOME EMPIRICUS

Brother Kae hails from the barren tundra world of Kastix on the outskirts of the Istrouma System. A man of few words, his dour appearance belies a paternal streak that has seen him take many of the newer members of the company under his wing, instructing them in the ways of the Chapter. Implacable on the advance and indomitable in defence, he was Nasiem's first and only choice for Company Ancient. Into his care was entrusted the Tome Empiricus, a book of valuable knowledge and tactical insights from which the Tome keepers can draw great wisdom. Though Kae traditionally bears the book atop an Aquila standard, he has been known to carry it into battle so that Orator Sephax can read inspirational passages from it. Like his Captain, Kae crossed the Rubicon Primaris during the Great Reordering. He still wears his Sternguard pauldrons, the Crux Terminatus a mark of his veteran status within the company.



ORATOR SEPHAX, THE YOUNG FURY

Bombastic and full of righteous fury, Sephax is the spiritual heart of the 3rd Company and the second-in-command after Captain Nasiem. Drafted into the Chapter as a Greyshield Chaplain, Sephax is young by Space Marine standards at barely forty years of age, yet he quickly made a name for himself on the battlefield as both an inspirational rhetor and a brutal fighter. Indeed, Sephax's crozius arcanum takes the form of a huge double-handed mace that he wields with relative impunity, every swing pulverising the flesh and armour of his foes. It is little wonder that the Orator is often found fighting alongside the company's close-support elements, leading devastating charges to break the back of the enemy army, all the while bellowing out the tenets of the Tome Empiricus. Since joining the Chapter, Sephax has taken to writing his own battlefield journal – a practice that he has encouraged other Greyshields to adopt.



EPISTOLARY LYKANDOS, THE TRUTHSEEKER

Where Sephax is outspoken and voluble, Lykandos is quiet and sullen, a virtual recluse within the Chapter. Recognised as a latent psyker when he was a novitiate, Lykandos endured great pain and suffering during his training as a Greyshield Librarian, and he was left badly scarred by the experience. To this day his skin appears pale and waxen, his eyes forever haunted by things that no sane mind should witness. Yet with experience came understanding, and Lykandos undertakes his duty with great solemnity, for he knows that now, more than ever, sanctioned psykers are required to safeguard the security of the Imperium. As an Epistolary, Lykandos is a gifted telepath primarily responsible for battlefield communications. However, his quiet demeanour is not to be underestimated. With a simple gesture he can shatter the mind of an unguarded foe, or even force them to do his bidding. Only the strong-willed have any hope of resisting his powers.



TOME KEEPERS 3RD COMPANY: 'THE GODBREAKERS'

Here follows the force disposition of the 3rd Battle Company of the illustrious Tome Keepers – most noble warriors of the Adeptus Astartes – at the moment in which they join Fleet Primus of the Indomitus Crusade. May their wars be prosecuted with all haste and their enemies smited with righteous fury.

COMPANY COMMAND

Captain Nasiem bal Tergu – Keeper of the Key
 Lieutenant Gadatas bal Nurval
 Lieutenant Sanduq bal Kudana
 Company Ancient Kae bal Zhune
 Command Retinue

CHAPTER SPECIALISTS

Orator Sephax
 Librarian Lykandos
 Apothecary Kelam bal Nureem
 Techmarine Rabash bal Raetut

THE ARMOURY

2 Predator Tanks
 2 Vindicator Tanks
 2 Repulsors
 1 Repulsor Executioner
 6 Impulsors
 2 Rhinos
 1 Land Raider
 3 Land Speeders (and crews)
 2 Stormtalon Gunships (and crew)
 2 Stormhawk Interceptors (and crew)

DREADNOUGHTS

Venerable Dreadnought – Venerable Brother Dhumat, The Shield Eternal
 Ironclad Dreadnought – Brother Kasaad
 Redeptor Dreadnought – Brother Nadinusur
 Redeptor Dreadnought – Brother Inevah

SQUADS

Squad 1: Battleline – Squad Taulza (1)
 Squad 2: Battleline – Squad Ishlar
 Squad 3: Battleline – Squad Harzeem (1)
 Squad 4: Battleline – Squad Gaudas (2)
 Squad 5: Battleline – Squad Karime
 Squad 6: Battleline – Squad Urizu
 Squad 7: Close Support – Squad Burias
 Squad 8: Close Support – Squad Kadur
 Squad 9: Fire Support – Squad Agum
 Squad 10: Fire Support – Squad Jagurth (2)
 Squad 11: Vanguard – Squad Lornax (2)(3)
 Squad 12: Vanguard – Squad Marut (3)
 Squad 13: Veterans – Squad Darius (4)

NOTES

1. Squads Taulza and Harzeem are Tactical Squads. Combat losses leading up to, and in the wake of, the Noctis Aeterna have caused these squads to be amalgamated over time. These twenty warriors are the last non-Primaris members of the company.
2. Sergeants Gaudas, Jagurth and Lornax are former Greyshields not of Istrouman birth.
3. Seconded from the 10th Company.
4. Seconded from the 1st Company.

FLEET ASSETS

Strike Cruiser: *Hariwok*
 Two Gladius-class Frigates



The Company Ancients of the Tome Keepers often carry a vexilla into battle rather than a traditional cloth banner. Beneath each Aquila standard is attached a weighty tome in which the company's greatest military feats are recorded. Though copies of these volumes exist, they are treated with great reverence and protected by powerful coruscating force fields. The book carried into battle by the 3rd Company's Ancient is known as the Tome Empiricus.



CHRONICLES OF THE TOME KEEPERS

Many are the battles fought by the Tome Keepers, their legacy of war writ large across the stars for almost eight millennia. Now, in the Era Indomitus, new legends are being written as the Tome Keepers bring their bolters to bear on the enemies of Humanity, their quest for knowledge and truth always at the forefronts of their minds.

M32 THE FOUNDING

A Time of Bloodshed

The War of the Beast almost sees the downfall of the Imperium. Though an Imperial victory is eventually forthcoming, the cost in lives and resources is colossal. Frustrated by the actions of the High Lords of Terra, Grand Master of Assassins Drakan Vangorich has the majority of them assassinated, leaving him virtually the sole ruler of the Imperium. With the support of Maximus Thane – Lord Commander of the Imperium – Vangorich sanctions the creation of a new founding of Space Marines. The decree is passed in 546. M32 and the Fourth Founding is born.

A New Chapter

The Adeptus Mechanicus oversees the creation of four hundred battle-brothers using Ultramarines gene-stock. Captain Caelus Viator, formerly of the Ultramarines, is given command of the fledgling Chapter. Over the following two decades, Viator trains his new recruits while the Chapter's assets are mustered.

New Frontiers

The Chapter establishes a home world on the planet of Istrouma in the Segmentum Pacificus. The Chapter is named the Tome Keepers following the presentation to them of an extremely rare manuscript.

Stellar Anomaly

An alien construct is found surrounding the white dwarf star in the Istrouman system. It cannot be destroyed, yet neither does it seem to pose any threat. The Tome Keepers use its airless corridors to practice void combat routines.

M33-34 THE XENOWARS

Valuable Lessons

Following a series of raids by Aeldari from Biel-Tan, the Tome Keepers join a crusade into the Segmentum Tempestus to hunt down and destroy their craftworld. They battle the elusive aliens across a dozen star systems and are dragged into conflicts with several other alien races in the process.

After becoming embroiled in a three-year war with a nascent Ork empire, the Imperial forces abandon the hunt for Biel-Tan and disband. The Tome Keepers make detailed notes on their foes, vowing never again to be tricked by the aliens.

Waaagh! Gobrok

The entire Chapter is mustered to battle Waaagh! Gobrok. The Ork Warboss is finally brought to heel with explosive results on the munitions world of 56-Kappa Munita.

The First Amplification

On the lightning-wreathed world of Jagh, Librarian Artax discovers that he can psychically transmit the voices of others, enabling the company's Orator to be heard over the planet's violent electric storms. All future Librarians are taught this ability upon their induction into the Librarius.

Massacre in Black Gulch

On the dark moon of Faenor, a squad of Tome Keepers are assailed by a foe that appears to be made of shadows. As they are picked off one by one and dragged into the darkness, the two surviving battle-brothers enter the phosphor mines of Black Gulch, drawing their enemy in with them. Trapped in the darkness, they ignite the phosphor dust, revealing a nest of Mandrakes. Though almost blinded, the Space Marines finally overcome the aliens, who have nowhere to hide in the searing light.

M35 AN IMPERIUM DIVIDED

The Nova Terra Interregnum

The Ur-council of Nova Terra denounces the High Lords and claims rule of the Segmentum Pacificus, plunging the Imperium into civil war. The Tome Keepers are among the Chapters sent to quell the rebellion, which lasts over nine hundred years. During this time, great injustices are wrought upon the civilian populations of the Imperium, both by renegade forces and the Ecclesiarchal armies that are supposedly sworn to protect them. Though they prosecute their wars efficiently and pragmatically, the Tome Keepers are left disillusioned by the conflict.

M37-39 CENSURE

Misguided Faith

Following a campaign to liberate the Ecclesiarchal world of Sanctimonia from the forces of Chaos, the Tome Keepers are censured by the Adeptus Ministorum for a series of apparent transgressions. Though the Adeptus Astartes are not bound by Ecclesiarchal law, nor required to follow its teachings, the Tome Keepers nevertheless find themselves unfairly vilified by other Imperial organisations in the wake of the campaign.

Activation

A stellar flare from GB 6-77 lights up the night sky of Istrouma for almost an hour. Unseen in the glare, the stellar anomaly surrounding the star contracts briefly, then returns to its normal size.

The Bellrath Crusade

The Tome Keepers join the crusade to liberate the Laanath Rifts. Once again, poor relations with the Adeptus Ministorum lead to internal conflict, which subsequently draws the eye of the Ordo Hereticus. Frustrated with their supposed allies, the Tome Keepers choose to fight solely alongside the Sons of Medusa against the alien race known as the Hellgrammite.

M41 THE TIME OF ENDING

A Diamond in the Rough

The Trial of Pages yields disappointing results, producing just a single aspirant. The boy is called Nasiem of House Tergu.

A New Threat

An Adeptus Mechanicus mining project uncovers a dormant Necron tomb on the world of Salax. The Tome Keepers investigate and, following a brief battle, believe the aliens eradicated. In reality, the destruction of the tomb complex only hastens the reanimation protocols of the Thokt Dynasty. The Hyrakii Deeps become a hotbed of action as the Necrons seek to drive out the Orks that dwell there and the Tome Keepers struggle to keep both alien factions contained.

The Constantinius Iconoclasm

The Tome Keepers are dispatched to Nova Terra once again, where they join the Iron Knights Chapter in the pacification of a rebellion led by the renegade Constantinius. So great is the former Space Marine's heresy that the entire sector is plunged into open war for thirteen years.

War in the Hyrakii Deep

Having eradicated the Orks in the Hyrakii Deep, the Necrons of the Thokt Dynasty begin attacking Imperial worlds. The Tome Keepers 3rd, 4th and 9th Companies join the Skitarii Legions of Stygies VIII and the Legio Honorum in defending them. During this time, the Chapter suffers great losses, including several strike cruisers and a large number of armoured vehicles. Despite repeated requests for aid, the Tome Keepers and Stygians are left to prosecute the war on their own. The Necrons, relentless in their pursuit of reconquest, continue the expansion of their empire to this day.

The Eye Opens

Abaddon launches his 13th Black Crusade. Chapter Master Saargon bal Zakir leads every warrior he can spare from his depleted Chapter towards the Eye of Terror in a bid to aid the Imperial forces. His fleet of ships arrives too late to join the war around Cadia, but aids in the defence of Chinchare and Agripinaa. More than one hundred battle-brothers and almost a score of battle tanks are lost defending the forge world, while those fighting on Chinchare are virtually wiped out by daemons of Nurgle. Though these losses are a severe blow to the Chapter, many more worlds would have fallen without the Tome Keepers' intervention.

Skies of Darkness, Skies of Fire

As the Noctis Aeterna plunges the galaxy into darkness, the Somnolent Seers of Istrouma begin to record the strange dreams experienced by the planets' inhabitants. Thousands of disturbing accounts are recorded before the Librarians of the Tome Keepers realise the peril and intervene. The dream diaries are gathered up and burned, though it is rumoured that some are saved from the flames. As the pyres burn away to ash, a great scar can be seen splitting the galaxy.

The Night of a Thousand Rebellions

Whole swathes of the Segmentum Pacificus fall to insurrection as Chaos cults spring up on scores of key worlds. Captain Aneser

leads the under-strength 5th Company to Kaillic VI, which has been taken over by the Pleasure Cult of Vorlak the Everblind. A swift Drop Pod assault by the Tome Keepers makes short work of the cult hierarchy, but the battle is far from over. Guided by the scent of ecstatic death, Daemonettes and Fiends glide through the gossamer-thin veil between worlds and assail the Tome Keepers forces. Though the warp rift is sealed and the daemons banished, over forty Tome Keepers are slain, Captain Aneser among them.

A Light in Dark Times

Rumours reach the Tome Keepers that Roboute Guilliman – Primarch of the Ultramarines and their ancestral primogenitor – has been reborn. Chapter Master Saargon seeks confirmation from Holy Terra, but no answer is forthcoming.

An Unexpected Emissary

A small fleet of Imperial ships under the command of Shield-Captain Jasek of the Adeptus Custodes arrives at Istrouma. Jasek demands to meet with the Chapter Master, but Captain Abonidas, Master of Recruits, welcomes the visitors in Saargon's stead. Upon arrival at the Fortress Monastery, Jasek proclaims that the Chapter is to be reinforced and that a tribute of gene-seed is to be received. The meeting lasts less than one hour. Jasek departs, leaving behind one hundred and twenty Primaris Space Marines, a batch of newly modified gene-seed and a host of medicae and technical staff.

The Great Reordering

Upon his return to Istrouma, Saargon welcomes the new battle-brothers with open arms, though he finds the lack of information surrounding their arrival curious. The Chapter is reorganised to accommodate the new Greysheild battle-brothers. The majority of the Chapter's existing warriors are elevated to the 1st and 2nd Companies, with the 3rd and 4th Companies taking the bulk of the draftees. The Chapter's Apothecaries trial the new Primaris gene-seed on the first batch of novitiates before offering existing battle-brothers the chance to cross the Rubicon Primaris. They volunteer to do so unanimously but, fearful of losing many of the Chapter's veterans to the unknown process, Chapter Master Saargon orders caution. The newly promoted Captain Nasiem is the first to undergo the dangerous procedure.

THE ERA INDOMITUS

The Pledge

The Tome Keepers pledge two full battle companies to the Indomitus Crusade. The 2nd Company joins Battle Group Oberon of Fleet Tertius as it swings past Avernia and into the Segmentum Pacificus. Chaos uprisings are rife in this region of space but are easily quashed by the huge armada. The battle group heads north to relieve the beleaguered naval base at Hydraphur. The 3rd Company joins Battle Group Kallides of Fleet Primus in the Nephilim Sector, now more commonly known as the Pariah Nexus.

War in the Pariah Nexus

Under the command of Captain Nasiem, the 3rd Company arrive at Argovon in the Argovon System. They join forces with the Navroni 43rd and Samlech 109th Astra Militarum regiments in order to eradicate a Genestealer Cult uprising that has taken over one of the planet's primary industrial sectors. The cult Patriarch is slain by the Tome Keepers, ending the year-long conflict and establishing Argovon as a staging post for further military actions in the system.

The majority of the 3rd Company quickly redeploys to Foronika. The planet is sparsely populated but rich in noctilith deposits, making it a valuable resource for both the Adeptus Mechanicus and the Necrons. Alongside Knights from House Boros, the Tome Keepers succeed in driving the Necrons back from one of the largest blackstone deposits. The planet is far from secure, however.

Meanwhile, a second force under the command of Lieutenant Gadatas deploys to Hishrea – the sixth and outermost planet in the Argovon System. The Tome Keepers, along with other Imperial forces, are tasked with the destruction of a pair of dolmen gates, which are being used by the Necrons to bring reinforcements into the system. Though the approach to the gates is carefully scouted, the Imperial advance is caught entirely unawares when Necron pylons erupt from the ground and begin tearing through their ranks. Only the intervention of the Tome Keepers and Obsidian Jaguars prevents a wholesale massacre. The dolmen gates are finally destroyed after two months of gruelling warfare, but the victory is a pyrrhic one. A Necron tomb fleet soon arrives in-system, forcing a full-scale retreat from Hishrea.

CODEX SUPPLEMENT

This section presents the rules for fielding an army formed from the Tome Keepers Chapter, an Ultramarines successor Chapter. The rules in this section can be used alongside those found in *Codex Supplement: Ultramarines*.

We recommend that the Tome Keepers use the Bolter Fusillades and Indomitable Successor Tactics, as described in *Codex: Space Marines*.



CAPTAIN NASIEM

5 POWER

No.	Name	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	A	Ld	Sv
1	Captain Nasiem	6"	2+	2+	4	4	6	5	9	3+

Captain Nasiem is equipped with: Sunwrath Pistol; master-crafted power axe; frag grenades; krak grenades. Your army can only include one **NASIEM** model.

WEAPON	RANGE	TYPE	S	AP	D	ABILITIES
Sunwrath pistol	12"	Pistol 2	8	-3	2	-
Master-crafted power axe	Melee	Melee	+2	-2	2	-

ABILITIES

Angels of Death (See *Codex: Space Marines*)

Iron Halo: This model has a 4+ invulnerable save.

Captain of the Third Company: If this model is included in your Crusade army, it automatically gains the Master of the Arsenal Honorific, even though it cannot normally gain any Battle Honours. This does not increase its Crusade points.

Rites of Battle (Aura): While a friendly **TOME KEEPERS CORE** unit is within 6" of this model, each time a model in that unit makes an attack, re-roll a hit roll of 1.

Keeper of the Key: If this model gains a Warlord Trait, it must be the Master of Strategy Warlord Trait (see *Codex Supplement: Ultramarines*). No other models in your army can be given the Sunwrath Pistol Relic (see *Codex Supplement: Ultramarines*).

FACTION KEYWORDS: IMPERIUM, ADEPTUS ASTARTES, TOME KEEPERS
KEYWORDS: INFANTRY, CHARACTER, PRIMARIS, CAPTAIN, NASIEM



EPISTOLARY LYKANDOS

5 POWER

No.	Name	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	A	Ld	Sv
1	Epistolary Lykandos	6"	3+	3+	4	4	5	4	9	3+

Epistolary Lykandos is equipped with: bolt pistol; force stave; frag grenades; krak grenades. Your army can only include one **LYKANDOS** model.

WEAPON	RANGE	TYPE	S	AP	D	ABILITIES
Bolt pistol	12"	Pistol 1	4	0	1	-
Force stave	Melee	Melee	+3	-1	D3	-

ABILITIES

Angels of Death (See *Codex: Space Marines*)

Psychic Hood: Each time a Deny the Witch test is taken for this model, if the unit attempting to manifest the psychic power is within 12" of this model, add 1 to that Deny the Witch test.

Reliquary of Gathalamor (Aura): While an enemy **PSYKER** unit is within 18" of the bearer, subtract 1 from Psychic tests taken for that unit, and each time a Psychic test is failed for that unit, roll one D6: on a 4+, that unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

The Truthseeker: If this model gains a Warlord Trait, it must be the Calm Under Fire Warlord Trait (see *Codex Supplement: Ultramarines*). No other models in your army can be given the Reliquary of Gathalamor Relic (See *Codex: Space Marines*).

PSYKER

This model can attempt to manifest two psychic powers in your Psychic phase and attempt to deny one psychic power in your opponent's Psychic phase. It knows *Smite* and either two psychic powers from the Librarian discipline (See *Codex: Space Marines*) or two psychic powers from the Indomitus discipline (see *Codex Supplement: Ultramarines*).

FACTION KEYWORDS: IMPERIUM, ADEPTUS ASTARTES, TOME KEEPERS
KEYWORDS: INFANTRY, CHARACTER, PRIMARIS, PSYKER, LIBRARIAN, LYKANDOS

ORATOR SEPHAX

5 POWER



NO.	NAME	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	A	Ld	Sv
1	Orator Sephax	6"	2+	3+	4	4	5	4	9	3+

Orator Sephax is equipped with: absolver bolt pistol; Benediction of Fury; frag grenades; krak grenades. Your army can only include one **SEPHAX** model.

WEAPON	RANGE	TYPE	S	AP	D	ABILITIES
Absolver bolt pistol	18"	Pistol 1	5	-1	2	-
Benediction of Fury	Melee	Melee	+2	-2	3	-

ABILITIES

Angels of Death (See Codex: Space Marines)

Spiritual Leaders (Aura): While a friendly **TOME KEEPERS CORE** unit is within 6" of this model, models in that unit can use this model's Leadership characteristic instead of their own.

Rosarius: This model has a 4+ invulnerable save.

The Young Fury: If this model gains a Warlord Trait, it must be the Iron Resolve Warlord Trait (See Codex: Space Marines). No other models in your army can be given the Benediction of Fury Relic (See Codex: Space Marines).

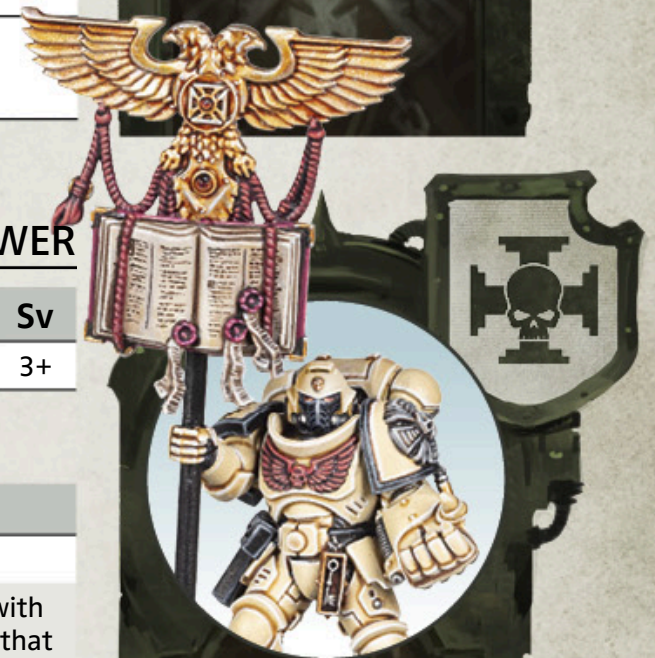
PRIEST

This model knows the *Litany of Hate* and one other litany from the Litanies of Battle (See Codex: Space Marines). In your Command phase, if this model is on the battlefield, it can recite one litany it knows that has not already been recited by a friendly model this turn. Roll one D6: on a 3+, the recited litany is inspiring and takes effect until the start of your next Command phase.

FACTION KEYWORDS: IMPERIUM, ADEPTUS ASTARTES, TOME KEEPERS
KEYWORDS: INFANTRY, CHARACTER, PRIMARIS, PRIEST, CHAPLAIN, SEPHAX

ANCIENT KAE

5 POWER



NO.	NAME	M	WS	BS	S	T	W	A	Ld	Sv
1	Ancient Kai	6"	3+	3+	4	4	5	4	8	3+

Ancient Kai is equipped with: bolt pistol; power fist; frag grenades; krak grenades. Your army can only include one **KAE** model.

WEAPON	RANGE	TYPE	S	AP	D	ABILITIES
Bolt pistol	12"	Pistol 1	4	0	1	-
Power fist	Melee	Melee	x2	-3	2	Each time an attack is made with this weapon, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll.

ABILITIES

Angels of Death (See Codex: Space Marines)

Astartes Banner (Aura): While a friendly **TOME KEEPERS CORE** unit is within 6" of this model, add 1 to the Leadership characteristic of models in that unit. In addition, each time a model in such a unit is destroyed by an attack made by an enemy model, roll one D6. On a 4+, do not remove the destroyed model from play – it can, after the attacking model's unit has finished making its attacks, either shoot with one of its ranged weapons as if it were your Shooting phase, or make one attack with one of its melee weapons as if it were the Fight phase. After resolving these attacks, the destroyed model is then removed.

Seal of Oath: At the start of the first battle round, before the first turn begins, select one enemy unit. While a friendly **TOME KEEPERS** unit is within 6" of this model, each time an attack is made by that unit that targets the selected enemy unit you can re-roll the hit roll and the wound roll.

Bearer of the Tome Empiricus: If this model gains a Warlord Trait, it must be the Nobility Made Manifest Warlord Trait (see Codex Supplement: Ultramarines). No other models in your army can be given the Seal of Oath Relic (see Codex Supplement: Ultramarines).

FACTION KEYWORDS: IMPERIUM, ADEPTUS ASTARTES, TOME KEEPERS
KEYWORDS: INFANTRY, CHARACTER, PRIMARIS, ANCIENT, KAE

POINTS VALUES

Captain Nasiem

Unit size 1 model
 Unit cost 100 pts

Orator Sephax

Unit size 1 model
 Unit cost 90 pts

Epistolary Lykandos

Unit size 1 model
 Unit cost 100 pts

Ancient Kai

Unit size 1 model
 Unit cost 95 pts



THE TOME KEEPERS

You've read all about the Tome Keepers in Index Astartes. Now you can paint your very own army of them using James Perry's stage-by-stage painting guide. So crack out your bone-coloured paint and join the Tome Keepers' crusade!

James: The Tome Keepers wear parchment-coloured armour, so it was inevitable that I would be using Wraithbone spray as the undercoat for them, both on the model show here (painted using the classic method), and on the model painted with Contrast paints over the page.

CLASSIC STYLE

With Space Marines, it's always advisable to tackle the power armour first, since it's the largest part of the model. This is doubly important for a predominantly light-coloured model like a Tomb Keeper – you don't want to paint all the darker details first, then have to layer the

BATTLE READY

Using the stages to the right, James painted a Tome Keepers Incursor so that he's ready for the battlefield. An army painted to this standard this would look great.



POWER ARMOUR



Basecoat: Ushabti Bone
XL Base



Wash: Mournfang Brown & Lahmian Medium
M Glaze

GUN CASING



Basecoat: Abaddon Black
S Base



Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze

GUNMETAL



Basecoat: Leadbelcher
S Base



Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze

PARADE READY

With a few extra highlights to each area of the model, James took the Battle Ready Tome Keeper and made him Parade Ready. Enemies of Humanity beware!



Layer: Wraithbone
S Layer



Layer: White Scar
XS Artificer Layer



Layer: Eshin Grey
S Layer



Layer: Administratum Grey
XS Artificer Layer



Layer: Stormhost Silver
XS Artificer Layer

bone colour over them. It entirely defeats the point of the light-coloured undercoat!

For this Incursor, I used a little water to thin down the Ushabti Bone on my palette, then I applied it to all the armour panels. This can take several coats, but it's worth applying the paint in thinner layers to get really smooth coverage rather than applying one thick layer and leaving brush strokes all over the model. Besides, if you're painting a whole squad, the paint should be dry on the first model by the time you finish the last.

I painted the black and silver areas next as, between them, they make up the bulk of the secondary colours on the model. The two are largely interchangeable when it comes to choosing which one to paint first. Really it depends whether you prefer painting the gun silver then painting all the black panels, or the other way around.

MAKING PAINTING EASIER

Tome Keepers Sergeants wear red helmets as dictated by the Codex Astartes. To make painting this Intercessor Sergeant's helmet easier, James painted the head separately, undercoating it with Chaos Black Spray (as opposed to Wraithbone) and then painting it with the same colours as featured in the Red Details swatch below. He glued it in place with Plastic Glue after finishing the rest of the model.



RED DETAILS



1
Basecoat: Gal Vorbak Red
S Base



2
Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze

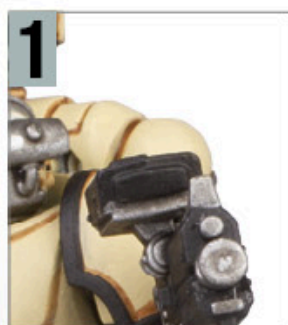


3
Layer: Wazdakka Red
S Layer



4
Layer: Squig Orange
XS Artificer Layer

GREEN LENSES



1
Basecoat: Abaddon Black
S Base



2
Layer: Caliban Green
M Layer



3
Layer: Warpstone Glow
S Layer



4
Layer: Moot Green
XS Artificer Layer

LEATHER POUCHES



1
Basecoat: Rhinox Hide
S Base



2
Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze



3
Layer: Mourfang Brown
S Layer



4
Layer: Balor Brown
XS Artificer Layer

BRASS DETAILS



1
Basecoat: Balthasar Gold
S Base



2
Wash: Agrax Earthshade
M Glaze



3
Layer: Sycorax Bronze
XS Artificer Layer



4
Layer: Flayed One Flesh
XS Artificer Layer

SKIN



1
Basecoat: Catachan Flestone
S Base



2
Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze



3
Layer: Kislev Flesh
S Layer



4
Layer: Flayed One Flesh
XS Artificer Layer

CONTRAST STYLE

James: For the Contrast method, I started with the armour once again. This time I mixed Skeleton Horde with Contrast Medium and applied it liberally all over the armour. The Medium is added to the Contrast paint to make it more translucent and stop it staining the armour too dark. It also helps create a gradation on the armour panels, with the pigment settling more in the recesses and leaving the raised areas lighter. It basically does all your shading for you.

When it comes to applying the next colours, I recommend using your S Layer brush with the Contrast paints. This may feel too small for the job, but you need to have good control over the Contrast paints to stop them flowing onto the parchment-coloured armour you've just painted. It will take a little longer, but it's worth it to make sure you're neat. However, if you do make a mistake, you can tidy it

up easily enough with a new layer of Wraithbone followed by Skeleton Horde. Or, if it's a really small area, a dab of Ushabti Bone; no one will notice!

TOP TIP

When I first tested out the Tome Keepers colour scheme, I actually used a mix of both regular painting styles and Contrast paints. I found that Contrast paints are the easiest and quickest way to get the parchment and black areas looking good – the Intercessor Sergeant on the previous page was painted using them, in fact. I then used regular Base, Wash and Layer paints to apply all the other colours. What you'll find is that the more miniatures you paint, the more you start to develop your own styles for particular colours. I previously used Abaddon Black for blocking out black areas, for example, but now I use two coats of Black Templar because it gives the same effect and it's quicker. Combining the two styles is certainly not a bad thing!

BATTLE READY

Using the stages to the right, James painted a Tome Keepers Incursor using only Contrast paints for most of the base colours.



POWER ARMOUR



Undercoat: Wraithbone
Citadel Spray



Basecoat: Skeleton Horde & Contrast Medium
L Shade



Layer: Wraithbone
S Layer



Layer: White Scar
XS Artificer Layer

GUN CASING



Basecoat: Black Templar
S Base



Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze



Layer: Eshin Grey
S Layer



Layer: Administratum Grey
XS Artificer Layer

GUNMETAL



Basecoat: Leadbelcher
S Layer



Wash: Nuln Oil
M Glaze



Layer: Stormhost Silver
XS Artificer Layer

PARADE READY

With a few extra highlights to each area of the model, James took the Battle Ready Incursor and made him Parade Ready. Check out his big mine!



STUDIO-STYLE BASING

The majority of the models in the studio collection are painted with the same basing scheme. The basecoat is a layer of the Technical paint Stirland Mud (shown on the left). This is then drybrushed with Balor Brown and Screaming Skull. You don't even have to wash your brush between colours if you don't want to! The rim is Steel Legion Drab, and the base is finished off with a few Middenland Tufts (shown on the right).



BONE UP ON YOUR PAINTING

What's that, you want more painting guides? Well fortunately for you, the Warhammer TV channel on Youtube has loads of painting guides for bone-coloured armour, including Deathwing (shown below), Howling Banshees and Adeptus Mechanicus vehicles. There are even some great painting guides for eye lenses, leather and alternative basing styles, too. Why not give them a try?



RED DETAILS



Basecoat: Flesh Tearers Red
S Layer

GREEN LENSES



Undercoat: Wraithbone
Citadel Spray

LEATHER POUCHES



Undercoat: Wraithbone
Citadel Spray

BRASS DETAILS



Basecoat: Balthasar Gold
S Base

SKIN



Undercoat: Wraithbone
Citadel Spray



Basecoat: Dark Angels Green
S Layer



Basecoat: Wyldwood
S Base



Wash: Agrax Earthshade
S Layer



Basecoat: Fyreslayer Flesh
S Layer



Layer: Wazdakka Red
S Layer



Layer: Warpstone Glow
S Layer



Layer: Mourfang Brown
S Layer



Layer: Sycorax Bronze
XS Artificer Layer



Layer: Bloodreaver Flesh
S Layer



Layer: Squig Orange
XS Artificer Layer



Layer: Moot Green
XS Artificer Layer



Layer: Balor Brown
XS Artificer Layer



Layer: Knight-Questor Flesh
XS Artificer Layer

THE SONS OF ISTROUMA

You've read the new background for the Tome Keepers, seen the rules for some of their characters and had a look through two excellent painting guides. What better way to finish off the experience than with a gallery of beautifully painted models? Lyle tells all.

Below: Lyle's infantry are now backed up by armoured firepower. 'I'm still experimenting with how to paint my vehicles,' says Lyle. 'I applied pin washes of Seraphim Sepia over an Ushabti Bone basecoat for my Impulsor, while the Redeptor features wet blending for the shadows and highlights. The Repulsor Executioner – my latest vehicle – was preshaded with an airbrush before an airbrushed application of Skeleton Horde.'

Lyle: Back in issue 454, I painted the test schemes for the first Tome Keepers models in our History of a Chapter article. Since then, I've painted quite a few more of them as part of a studio painting challenge (more on that next month), and I am now well past the 50 power level mark. With this month's Index Astartes article being all about the Tome Keepers, now definitely seemed like the right time to show what I've been up to.

When it comes to building armies, I tend to paint what I think looks coolest. I started by adding a unit of Inceptors to my force because I love their spaceman atmospheric insertion helmets. I also love the heavy weaponry of the Hellblasters – particularly the heavy plasma variant – so a unit of them joined the army, too. They've got a definite Horus Heresy heavy support squad vibe

about them. I also added a unit of the new Bladeguard, an Apothecary, some more Intercessors, a Repulsor Executioner and a few other bits besides. I haven't named all my units yet (spoiler: we're working on a name generator!), but I plan to do so as I start playing some Crusade battles.

To paint my Tome Keepers, I started by mixing up a big batch of 1:1 Skeleton Horde and Lahmian Medium. I've found if you're tackling a big army project that uses a mixed paint, it's always worth making enough of it right at the start to keep your colours consistent. I sprayed all my models with Wraithbone, then gave them an application of that mix. I use Corvus Black as a basecoat for all the black areas and Khorne Red for all the red bits. The rest of my colours are pretty much the same as shown in Paint Splatter.





My Apothecary and Bladeguard Veterans. Because Apothecaries have the extra duty of collecting the tomes of the fallen, I converted mine with a couple of books around his neck.



I've got enough Troops units to create a Battalion Detachment now, but there's always more to add to the army. There's the rest of the Indomitus box set for a start!



HEROES OF THE 3RD COMPANY

As you have seen in Index Astartes, we converted four models to represent the characters of the 3rd Company, which were then painted by members of the studio army painting team.



CAPTAIN NASIEM BAL TERGU

Our Captain was the first Tome Keepers character we showed back in issue 455. He is based on the Primaris Captain model with Sternguard shoulder pads, Hellblaster plasma pistol and a Sanguinary Guard power axe.

EPISTOLARY LYKANDOS

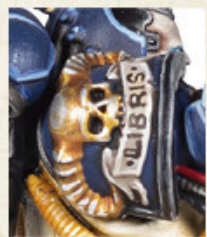
Lykandos is based on the Primaris Librarian with a staff converted from the regular Librarian model and a gesticulating Intercessor hand. His head is taken from Jensus Natorian, the Librarian in Kill Team Cassius.

COMPANY ANCIENT KAE BAL ZHUNE

Kae is made from a regular Intercessor. His power fist and shoulder pads come from the Sternguard kit. His banner is an Adeptus Custodes vexilla with a Ravenwing book attached beneath it. His journal is from the Intercessors kit.

ORATOR SEPHAX

Sephax is based on the Primaris Chaplain model. His crozius is converted from a Deathwatch thunder hammer with the head of a Deathwing mace. His bare head is from the Deathwatch Kill Team. His helmet is from a Blood Angels Chaplain.



MORE FIREPOWER!

This unit of Hellblasters was painted by studio painter James Perry, who also painted the Tome Keepers in this month's Paint Splatter (so he's got plenty of experience with them now). As mentioned in Paint Splatter, James combined two different painting styles, using Contrast

paints for the parchment-coloured armour and black areas, then regular Base, Wash and Layer paints for the other colours. As it turns out, painting Parade Ready Tome Keepers is actually pretty quick! James's Hellblasters have red Aquilas, marking them out as members of the 3rd Company.



WARHAMMER

AGE OF SIGMAR

From the maelstrom of a sundered world, the Eight Realms were born. And with their birth began a war to claim them. Here we present a Battle Report, new solo-play rules and a new Warcry hero.





THE COMET'S CALL
A comet of indescribable power draws the attention of the skaven and the Kharadron Overlords. Our explosive Battle Report kicks off on page 76.



HEROES OF THE HINTERLANDS
Fancy going solo in the Mortal Realms? Well, now you can with these single-player rules and missions. Begin your epic gaming quest on page 94.



TROUBLE BREWING

A JAKKOB BUGMANSSON TALE

Jakkob Bugmansson, Brewmaster General of Barak-Nar, is famed for the quality of his alecraft and his shrewd eye for profit. In this story by Nick Horth, Bugmansson journeys to the Eightpoints in search of ancestral secrets that might aid his quest for the perfect pint.

'Like so many Khazalid bloodlines that claim to have survived the horrors of the Unbak-Grund intact, the exact origins of Clan Bugman are difficult to discern. Rune etchings recovered from the mines of Karaz-Rhak appear to suggest that one Angbuld Bugmansson was once an honoured guest of High King Gori Grotculler's court, but there exists equally persuasive evidence of major alehouses bearing the iconography of the 'six Xs' as far afield as the Pallorwastes of the eastern Shyish Innerlands and even – some whisper – beneath the cursed lands of the Eightpoints. It certainly seems possible that the clan of brewmasters had mastered the business of realms-wide corporate franchising long before the foundation of the sky-empire.'

The Bugmansson Legacy: A Study of the Noble Brewmasters by Svend Skagrund

Gunnery Sergeant Geffi Tulsdottr's support for her current mission had at first been lukewarm. Some weeks ago, when the extraction team had first entered the Eightpoints via night-time aetherchute drop, losing half their numbers in the process, she would have downgraded that to 'unenthusiastic'. Currently, she was feeling downright mutinous. Had it been eight days or ten that they had been wandering this cursed wilderness, assailed by whooping bands of skull-wearing savages and unspeakable abominations? Her chronorig had packed up long ago.

'You know what I would give for a deck beneath my boots and the wind at my back?' grumbled Thunderer Bargi Dronk, hefting his heavy mortar.

'Wishes are for aelves and beardlings,' said Thunderer Graum. The other survivors of Tulsdottr's section – Thunderers Laffi, Hadramsson, Steffig and Gundersson – muttered their agreement.

'Tell that to the oh-so-famous Brewmaster General,' said Dronk, gesturing at the figure striding across the sulphur-wastes ahead. 'He's wishing for a miracle if he thinks we're going to find anything in this hellhole. Whoever on the Council signed off on this outing needs to be lashed to an endrin and flown through a flock of razor-wings.'

'Quiet,' Tulsdottr hissed. 'You're supposed to be professional soldiers, not slack-mouthed aeronauts swapping outlandish tales in some back-port drinking pit.'

This place was beginning to get to them. Even she could feel it. The duardin in the distance turned to face them, his weather-beaten face bared to the elements as he beckoned the Barak-Nar Thunderers over. The Brewmaster General's empty right eye socket gave the permanent impression that he was giving a bawdy wink.

'We're close, my lads and ladies,' Jakkob Bugmansson bellowed, brandishing a small brass orb with two whirring antennae – some custom-built form of aethermantic locator. 'The signal's blaring. We're so very close now.'



With that, he trudged on, swaying slightly from side to side under the sloshing weight of his back-mounted keg. Tulsdottr sighed. The truth was that their company had jumped at the chance to accompany the legendary Jakkob Bugmansson in his endeavours; after all, what soldier wouldn't want to serve alongside Barak-Nar's famed Brewmaster General, the genius whose frothing concoctions quenched their throats and warmed their cheeks after every hard-fought battle?

The thing was, it was all very well meeting your heroes, so long as they didn't drag you along to the most dangerous corner of the realms on some damned fool's errand that would get you all horribly killed. Which was exactly what Bugmansson had done.



They tracked the aethermatic signal to a charred crater at the foot of a series of craggy hillocks smothered in an ill-looking yellow mist. The curved shell of an endrin lay rusting on the ground, attached to a harness that had been shredded either in the crash or subsequently – Tulsdottr could not be sure. There were several gouging tears in the thick metal of the endrincasing.

'Claw marks, by the look of it,' she said. 'Doubtless courtesy of the same beast that brought down the endrin-cutter.'

Thunderer Laffi whistled softly. 'Wouldn't like to come face to face with whatever did that.'

The package itself was nowhere to be seen.

'The first Bugmansson Distilleries were opened in Barak-Nar some eight-score years after the Battle of Madralta, during the era that serious students of Kharadron brewcraft have come to know as the Wars of Fermentation. During this period, several rival guild-companies battled over profitable contracts to supply the rapidly growing Kharadron navy with shipboard ale. Bugmansson's Breweries would face stiff competition from Gulbar Gold Standard, Skyfarer's Choice and, of course, their most resilient foes – the Firehop Brothers of Barak-Zon. Far from taking place solely within boardrooms and offices, this 'war' was often fought with fists, bar stools and whatever else was close to hand. Indeed, during the ceremony that bestowed the title of Brewmaster General upon the legendary Bjarni Bugmansson – making him the first duardin to ever hold that hallowed position – proceedings were interrupted several times by low-flying endrins scrawled with insults and unfounded accusations as to the personal hygiene and mating habits of Bugmansson's ancestors.'

A History of the Hop Wars by G.S. Rognorsson

'There we are then,' said Thunderer Dronk. 'All for naught, as I've been saying from the start.'

'I might only have the one eye,' said Bugmansson, 'but that's sufficient enough to notice what's staring me right in the face. Look there.'

He pointed out a series of deep furrows in the pockmarked ground: tracks left behind by someone dragging several very heavy items. The trails wound up a shallow slope towards a cluster of thin, jagged rocks that curled upwards like the legs of a dead spider. It was hard to tell in the foul mist, but Tulsdottr thought she spied a black plume of smoke curling about the tips of those peaks.

'Someone's pinched what's rightly mine,' Bugmansson growled, slapping his great, broad-bladed battleaxe in one gauntleted fist. 'And Ol' Trustworthy here says it's time to repay the insult.'



'By Grungni's beard,' moaned Bugmansson with the air of a grieving relative at a funeral. 'Those savages, those ... *wazzoks!*'

The good news was that they had found the shipment. The bad news was that it was in the hands of a cadre of ironclad savages, who had cracked open the stout metal barrels emblazoned with a golden 'B' and were currently in the process of pouring the radiant amber liquid down their throats. Drunken peals of laughter split the air.

These raiders, pale-skinned and bedecked in bloodstained plate armour, were armed to the teeth with cudgels, hammers and vicious-looking barbed mauls. They were big, all of them, their muscles corded from a lifetime of brutish violence. Metal totems marked with the symbol of a spiked portcullis had been thrust into place surrounding their makeshift encampment. A number of severed hands had been nailed to these banners and were slowly decomposing in the humid climate. Though clearly inebriated, this lot were clearly no strangers to murder. Fortunately, neither were Tulsdottr's Thunderers.

'Right,' she said, ducking back behind the rock face, out of view. 'Dronk, I want you up there behind those razor-fronds with that mortar. Soon as I give you the signal, you open up. Everyone else? You're with me. Soon as the first shell falls, we move. And watch your fire discipline; we came here to recover those crates, not—'

'Err, Sarge?' said Graum, pointing behind her.

She turned to see Jakkob Bugmansson draining a mugful of foaming ale drawn from his keg. Wiping his moustache with the back of one hand, he hefted his battleaxe and clambered up over the slope, charging down towards the camp and yelling at the top of his lungs.

'Jakkob Bugmansson becomes the seventeenth duardin to hold the title of Brewmaster General. His ascension has been met with excitement and despair in equal measure. Many traditionalist brewmasters abhor the upstart duardin's attempts to refine his craft using the latest Barak-Nar aethermatic technology. These grumblings reached a (foamy) head just last wind-cycle, when one of Bugmansson's still-ships exploded in the skyways above Barak-Zilfin, causing widespread damage and leading to over fifty civil grudge-suits against the Brewmaster General. Rumour has it that the stricken vessel was carrying a lighter-than-air beer that could be transformed into potable liquid through a simple aetherchemical reaction, thereby reducing the need for shipboard storage space by as much as two-thirds.'

The Sunrise Herald, Barak-Nar

'Steal a Bugmansson's property, will you?' he roared as he went. 'Slurp and spill it all over your ugly *umgi* faces? Come and answer for your crimes, you blaggards!'

'Son of a scuttler,' muttered Tulsdottr. Then she cocked her aethershot rifle and charged in after the Brewmaster General.



To their credit and despite being half-cut, the iron-armoured raiders reacted swiftly. Even as Jakkob Bugmansson came staggering and sloshing down the sulphurous slopes towards them, brandishing his glowing axe, they were scrambling for weapons and chain-draped shields. Tulsdottr heard the deep 'gulp' sound of Dronk's

mortar firing, and a second later two of the Chaos worshippers were hurled into the air on a plume of smoke and dirt. Then came the sharp crack of aethershot rifles as the Gunnery Sergeant's half-dozen soldiers found their targets with customary accuracy.

Solid-shot rounds hammered across the raiders' thick armour, staggering them. Some went down howling, clutching gaping holes in their chests. Others came on fast, chanting grim battle-cants as they lumbered towards their assailants. One burly fiend tried to shatter Tulsdottr's legs with a heavy hammer, but she dodged the wild blow and fired a salvo of shots that blasted the human's arm off at the shoulder.

Bugmansson had made a beeline for those 'B'-marked containers as yet unopened, almost crashing straight into a helmed warrior armed with a mace and chain. The woman sent the chain whirling over her head, lashing it against the Brewmaster General's armoured shoulder and narrowly avoiding his one good eye.

'Get your grubby hands off my property!' Bugmansson roared, his battleaxe whirling in his hands with blinding speed. Its white-hot edge sheared through the spiked mace's chain. Before the woman could react, Ol' Trustworthy's haft came up to slam her between the eyes, dropping her to the floor like a fuel-dry frigate.



The Thunderers' opening volley had felled several raiders, but now the battle had devolved into a messy, close-quarters skirmish. Thunderer Laffi went down, face mask crumpled by the business end of a two-handed maul. Tulsdottr heard a muffled cry from Hadramsson and turned to see him being assailed by two foes, their vicious clubbing blows driving him to the floor. She took aim and shot one through the forehead, and then her rifle clicked dry.

The Gunnery Sergeant was cursing and jamming another cartridge into the breech when a terrible keening cry split the air and a winged shadow fell across the encampment. Descending like a living comet came a leonine monstrosity with bat-like wings, racing towards Geffi Tulsdottr with a hungry leer upon its face. It would have got her too, had something not barrelled into her from the side just before the manticore struck, sending her sprawling. She turned to see Jakkob Bugmansson clambering to his feet, eyes locked upon the foul monster as it circled for another pass. The head of an Arkanaut-issue skyhook protruded from the beast's matted flank, and there were scorch marks across its face that Tulsdottr recognised as fumigator burns.

'There he is,' the Brewmaster General growled, slapping the haft of his battleaxe into a gloved palm. 'There's the blighter that brought down my courier and caused me to lose three-dozen damned crates of vintage amber. Up you get, Gunny. Time to earn your pay.'



Geffi Tulsdottr leaned against the smoking carcass of the manticore and breathed a heavy sigh of relief. Somehow, the bulky monster had managed to avoid crushing the precious remaining cargo crates in the culmination of its death dive and had instead squashed two or three of the barbarians into paste. The rest were dead or had fled. The Gunnery Sergeant winced as the wound in her leg began to throb; the talon had sunk deep, and out here in the wilds, infection could set in at any moment. She reached for the last pot of bindpaste on her belt.

'Forget that filthy stuff,' said Bugmansson, who had regained much of his natural cheer despite being splattered head to toe in gore and entrails. 'Wet your

'With the assent of the High Council, the Brewmaster General of Barak-Nar has assembled a fleet of privateer argo-endrins to dispatch his latest blends across the airs, undercutting our own deliveries and generally being a right pain in the *guzzugs*. Whatever routes Bugmansson's using, he's getting his ale to port faster than we can pull a pint. Mark my words, if we don't act soon it'll be Bugmansson's XXXXXX or nothing at every taphouse in the empire.'

Yorgi Drummons, Brewmaster General of Barak-Urbaz

'The sky-fleets may run on aether-gold, but I won't rest until each and every aeronaut from Barak-Nar to the Market City is fuelled by Bugmansson's beer.'

Jakkob Bugmansson

chompers with this instead. I guarantee it'll put the shine back on your boots, my girl.'

He held out a tankard filled to the brim with sweet amber gold, with a light frothy head and a smell of fresh-cut hops. She took it eagerly. The five survivors of her platoon gathered about, and the Brewmaster General gave them all a measure of their own.

As one, they clinked tankards and drained them dry. Cold, liquid wonder coursed down Tulsdottr's throat, setting her tastebuds aglow with zesty, caramel flavours. It was firm but not too hoppy, sweet and light but with a kick like a recoiling aethercannon. Instantly, she felt all the fatigue and misery of the last ten-day slog evaporate into the ether. Even her leg wound ceased its throbbing drumbeat and merely tingled pleasantly. She wiped her mouth with the back of a gloved fist and stared at the grinning Brewmaster General, whose one good eye winked in delight.

'Not bad, eh?'

'By all the gold in the sky,' she stammered. 'What is this stuff?'

'It's an old Bugmansson blend,' said the Brewmaster. 'Of that I'm as sure as my beard is greying. But not one that's been supped upon for a good few centuries. On my orders, one of my lads went digging in this benighted place, hearing as he had some interesting rumours about sunken duardin ruins. That which you've just partaken of was all that was left of an ancient distillery built by my kin in better times, deep beneath some hellhole called the Skullpikes. The aforementioned acquaintance tried to extract it by airship, which was brave but ill-advised. In any case, this little lot is destined for my brewing labs. Mayhap we can work out the secrets my ancestors used to create such a glorious elixir.'

He nodded to the small pile of containers, of which only two remained intact.

'We've talked payment, and I'm of the sort that always delivers what's owed. But I think you've earned yourselves a bonus. Tell me, how'd you feel about taking one of those there kegs for yourselves once we're out of this midden pit?'

The Thunderers stared at one another like awestruck beardlings.

'What do you say?' Bugmansson said. 'Would that make up for your hardships, lads and lassies?'

'Aye, Brewmaster!' came a chorus of eager replies, and none of them louder than that of Geffi Tulsdottr.

A BARREL OF DRAUGHTS

The famed Brewmaster General, Jakkob Bugmansson, seeks to reclaim a cargo of his legendary tipple, Bugman's XXXXX. Below, you will find the rules for using Jakkob Bugmansson in Warcry, plus a new challenge battle to play through.

JAKKOB BUGMANSSON IN WARCRY

You'll find Jakkob Bugmansson's fighter card included with this issue of *White Dwarf*. Jakkob Bugmansson has no points value and no faction runemark, meaning he can only be used in this challenge battle. In addition to

Jakkob Bugmansson's fighter card, you can find a list of abilities Jakkob Bugmansson has access to below, as well as rules for the artefact of power he bears: Ol' Trustworthy.



ABILITIES

JAKKOB BUGMANSSON	[Double] Shot of Duardin Courage: Pick a visible friendly fighter within 3" of Jakkob Bugmansson. Until the end of the battle round, count each critical hit scored from attack actions that target that fighter as a hit instead.
JAKKOB BUGMANSSON	[Triple] The Medicinal Compound: Jakkob Bugmansson can use this ability only if he is more than 1" away from all enemy fighters. Pick a visible friendly fighter within 3" of Jakkob Bugmansson. Remove a number of damage points allocated to that fighter equal to double the value of this ability.
JAKKOB BUGMANSSON	[Quad] 'Get Your Grubby Hands Off!': Jakkob Bugmansson can use this ability only if he is within 3" of an objective. Jakkob Bugmansson makes a bonus attack action. If an enemy fighter is taken down by that bonus attack action, he can make 1 additional bonus attack action.

ARTEFACT OF POWER

Ol' Trustworthy: *This master-crafted axe is emblazoned with many ancient duardin runes and is said to be an heirloom of the Bugman family that has been handed down from father to son for many generations. In battle, its rune of cleaving and rune of fury glow white-hot as this weapon cuts through any foe who threatens Jakkob Bugmansson or his breweries.*

When Jakkob Bugmansson makes an attack action, before making the hit roll, you can choose to either awaken the 'rune of cleaving' or the 'rune of fury'. If you choose to awaken the rune of cleaving, add 5 to the Strength characteristic of that attack action. If you choose to awaken the rune of fury, add 3 to the Attacks characteristic of that attack action. The rune of cleaving and the rune of fury can each be awakened once per battle.



XXXXXX MARKS THE SPOT



A week ago, a Kharadron Frigate making a risky detour across the skies of the Bloodwind Spoil was forced to drop its load after being set upon by a winged beast. Rumors hold that the jettisoned cargo was several prized barrels of a long-forgotten blend of Bugman's XXXXXX, and now the famed Brewmaster General, Jakkob Bugmansson, has hired your warband as bodyguards as he sets out to recover these ancient casks.

You are promised a handsome pay for your services, but as you close in on the prize, you spy a group of opportunistic raiders in the distance, no doubt seeking the prize for themselves. At the same time, from the skies above can be heard the cries of the winged beast as it prowls the valley for prey. This will not be an easy task ...

SET-UP

Prerequisite: 1 dominated territory

Stake: None

THE WARBANDS

The Challenger and the Adversary each muster a warband as described in the core rules (*Core Book*, pg 36), with the following amendments:

1. The Challenger must muster an Order warband, and all fighters in the Challenger warband must be chosen from the Challenger's warband roster.
2. The Challenger warband also includes Jakkob Bugmansson (see page 74). This fighter does not cost any points and does not have a faction runemark. Jakkob Bugmansson can only use the abilities on page 74.
3. All adversaries must have the same faction runemark.
4. The combined points value of the fighters in the Challenger warband cannot exceed 1,250.
5. The combined points value of the adversaries in the Adversary warband cannot exceed 1,500.

BATTLEPLAN

Terrain: Draw 3 terrain cards; the Adversary picks 1 of them to be in play.

Deployment: Frontal Assault

Victory: Starting with the Adversary, the players alternate placing objectives until they have placed 3 objectives each. Each objective can be placed anywhere on the battlefield more than 4" from the battlefield edge and more than 8" away from any other objectives.

The battle ends after 6 battle rounds. When the battle ends, the player who controls the most objectives is the winner.

Twist: Draw a twist card as normal.

SPECIAL RULES

Everything or Nothing: Each time a player gains control of an objective, they gain 1 additional wild dice that can be used from the start of the next battle round.

The Winged Beast Returns: At the start of each combat phase, the Adversary rolls a dice and adds the number of the current battle round to the roll. If the score is 5 or more, the winged beast has returned, hungry for prey. The Adversary sets up 1 monster with the **Fly** runemark (✈) anywhere on the battlefield floor.

The monster is treated as a chaotic beast for the rest of the battle (even if it has a different faction runemark) and is subject to the rules for chaotic beasts (*Core Book*, pg 48). Once the winged beast has returned, the Adversary does not make any further rolls at the start of the combat phase.

THE SPOILS

If the Challenger wins the battle, they receive the following spoils:

Payment Due: The Challenger receives D6+3 glory points. After rolling the dice, the Challenger can choose to haggle over their payment. If they do so, they must re-roll the D6. The Challenger must accept the second roll.

Casks of Bugman's XXXXXX: The Challenger receives 1 **Bugman's XXXXXX** lesser artefact (*Tome of Champions 2020*, pg 89) for each objective they controlled at the end of the battle.



THE COMET'S CALL

The seers and astronomers of Chamon have been tracking the path of a glittering comet across the firmament. It is only a matter of time before it comes crashing to the ground. When it does, there will be a desperate battle to claim it.

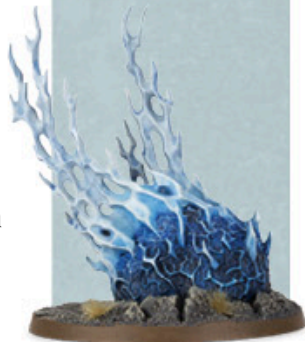


Across the Mortal Realms, magical materials are highly valued by every race. Artisans, weaponsmiths, sorcerers, architects and more besides are constantly on the hunt for unique substances that can be worked into their latest creation, be it a weapon of good or a talisman of evil.

Such rare materials are hard to find. Some lie beneath mountains or plains waiting to be dug up. Others float gossamer-like through the air, invisible to those without the wyrding sight. On occasion, some come crashing down from the heavens as fiery comets, trails of molten sigmarite glittering in their wake. In Chamon, the Realm of Metal, that is exactly what has happened. The Kharadron Overlords, always interested in turning a profit, see much value in a huge lump of sigmarite. But the nefarious skaven have their eye on the prize as well ...

EVERBLAZE!

Dan and Jonathan will be using an Everblaze Comet (taken from Endless Spells: Stormcast Eternals) as the objective. You can use anything to represent the comet, but why would you want to use anything else when there is actually a comet model available?



A GIFT FROM THE HEAVENS

This month's Battle Report is a classic *White Dwarf* clash, pitting Kharadron Admiral Jonathan against skaven Arch-Warlock Dan in A BATTLE TO THE DEATH! Well, no, not quite. Actually, they will be fighting over a mysterious comet that has come hurtling out of the sky. Kharadron Navigators and skaven seers have both predicted where it might land, but its trajectory is still uncertain, which means both armies will have to move fast to claim it when it hits land. Total carnage will, no doubt, be an exciting by-product.

For this battle, Age of Sigmar games developer Sam Pearson was kind enough to provide us with an exclusive battleplan, which you can find over the page should you wish to play it yourself. As you'll soon find out, being close to the comet is the only way to win, but getting near it also really hurts. What a dilemma!



'Hard astarboard, shipmaster,' bellowed Admiral Strongarm to the Captain of his flagship. The Captain passed on the order to the duardin at the helm, who spun the ship's wheel with practised ease. The Kharadron Ironclad thrummed with power as the huge airship hove to port and then settled on its new course, its aether-endrins glowing in the darkness. Strongarm turned to his Navigator, who nodded in agreement.

'This is definitely the right canyon,' said Jeffers, looking at the astronomical instrument in his hand. It whirred and clicked frantically like a sonarscope hunting for enemies. He leaned out over the ship's railings and looked up past the crackling aether-endrins. The sky was still heavily overcast, its normally golden hue hidden behind thick, grey clouds. 'Figuring out precisely where the comet's going to land, though, is another matter entirely,' he said with a shrug.

Behind his helm, Strongarm frowned deeply and pursed his lips. This canyon, like all the canyons in the Zirconic Mountains, was infested with skaven. The longer his ships stayed here, the greater the chance of them being noticed by the foul ratmen. He wanted to get in, grab the loot and get away quick, not loiter around in mid-air. Even more worrying was the prospect that the comet may strike one of his ships. The disgrace would be crippling, the financial losses even more so.

'Move in close to the canyon walls,' he instructed the Ironclad's Captain. 'Signal Bori's Frigate to do the same. Get all the crew on deck, and have them watch the skies for signs of the comet.' He made to turn away, but something caught his eye over the Captain's shoulder. Red eyes were glinting among the rocks, watching the ships as they passed by. 'Make sure they're armed,' he added. 'Just in case.'

ACQUIRE THE ASSET

Jonathan: This battle will be the first time that Dan and I have used our armies with their updated battletomes, and I for one am really excited about that prospect. It's fair to say that Kharadron shooting is now significantly more impactful, and I'm really looking forward to unleashing it on Dan's army.

My plan is pretty simple. I'm going to move up fast using the Prosecute Wars With All Haste amendment to get as close to the objectives as possible. Then, when the objectives start disappearing in rounds two and three, my units will be pretty close to the remaining one to secure it. I reckon my firepower should see off Dan's large infantry units while my Arkanauts secure the comet. Neither of us has taken particularly combat-nasty characters, so I get the feeling a lot of this game will be fought at range. We'll see, I guess!



QUICK-QUICK, MUCH POWER!

Dan: I've gone all guns and magic for this battle. In my experience, skaven tend to struggle when it comes to combat, so what better way to deal with an enemy threat than at range? I can then sneak over and prise the comet from cold, dead Kharadron hands right at the end.

As always, the numerical bulk of my force is made up of Clanrats and Stormvermin because I don't feel a skaven army looks right without them. However, those sixty models only make up a quarter of my force; the rest is all nasty stuff! I know Jonathan will be taking his airships, so Warp Lightning Cannons are definitely required, as are some smaller guns in the form of Warfire Throwers and a Ratling Gun. I reckon I can shred Jonathan's infantry easily enough – I just hope my magic will be enough to deal with his heroes.





THE BARAK-JAZBAZ AIRFLEET

Allegiance: Kharadron Overlords

Kharadron Code:

Artycle: Honour is Everything

Amendment: Prosecute Wars With All Haste

Footnote: Without Our Ships, We Are Naught

Leaders

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Admiral Strongarm | 120 Points |
| | - General | |
| | - Command Trait: <i>Tough as Old Boots</i> | |
| | - Artefact: <i>Gattleson's Endless Repeater</i> | |
| 2 | Aether-Khemist Kincoal | 90 Points |
| 3 | Aetheric Navigator Jeffers | 100 Points |
| 4 | Endrinmaster Cogtrane | 100 Points |

Units

- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 5 | 10 Arkanauts | 90 Points |
| 6 | 10 Arkanauts | 90 Points |
| 7 | 10 Grundstok Thunderers | 240 Points |
| 8 | 5 Grundstok Thunderers | 120 Points |
| | - <i>Aetheric Fumigator</i> | |
| | - <i>Decksweeper</i> | |
| | - <i>Grundstok Mortar</i> | |
| | - <i>Aethercannon</i> | |
| 9 | 6 Endrinriggers | 200 Points |

Behemoths

- | | | |
|-----------|--|-------------------|
| 10 | Arkanaut Frigate | 220 Points |
| 11 | Arkanaut Ironclad | 480 Points |
| | - <i>Great Endrinwork: The Last Word</i> | |

Extra Command Points: 2

Total Points: 1950



THE WARP HORDE OF CLAN FERRIK

Allegiance: Skaventide (Clans Skryre)

Leaders

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Arch-Warlock Ratticus Klaue | 160 Points |
| | - General | |
| | - Command Trait: <i>Overseer of Destruction</i> | |
| | - Artefact: <i>Esoteric Warp Resonator</i> | |
| | - Spell: <i>Warp Lightning Shield</i> | |
| 2 | Warlock Engineer Mus Racul | 100 Points |
| | - Spell: <i>More-more-more Warp Power!</i> | |
| 3 | Warlock Engineer Squib | 100 Points |
| | - Spell: <i>Chain Warp Lightning</i> | |
| 4 | Warlock Bombardier Gleb | 100 Points |
| | - Spell: <i>Chain Warp Lightning</i> | |

Units

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 5 | 20 Clanrats | 120 Points |
| 6 | 20 Clanrats | 120 Points |
| 7 | 20 Stormvermin | 280 Points |
| 8 | 3 Stormfiends | 260 Points |
| | - <i>Shock Gauntlets</i> | |
| | - <i>Ratling Cannons</i> | |
| | - <i>Windlaunchers</i> | |
| 9 | Ratling Gun | 80 Points |
| 10 | Warpfire Thrower | 70 Points |
| 11 | Warpfire Thrower | 70 Points |
| 12 | Doomwheel | 160 Points |
| 13 | 5 Skryre Acolytes | 60 Points |
| 14 | Warp Lightning Cannon | 180 Points |
| 15 | Warp Lightning Cannon | 180 Points |

Extra Command Points: 0

Total Points: 2040

BATTLEPLAN

THE COMET'S CALL

Two armies converge on a star-filled night, for the scryers and prophets of each have foretold of a mighty celestial comet that will descend from the heavens above. Where exactly it will land, none can be sure. However, one thing is certain: it cannot fall into enemy hands.

SET-UP

The players roll off, and the winner decides which territory each player will use. The territories are shown on the map below.

The players then alternate setting up units one at a time, starting with the player who won the roll-off. Players must set up units wholly within their territory, more than 12" from enemy territory.

Continue to set up units until both players have set up their armies. If one player finishes first, their opponent must set up the rest of the units in their army, one after another.

THE COMET

Each warlord has been tasked with securing the comet once it has crashed upon the battlefield.

This battle uses the **Everblaze Comet** endless spell model as its objective. During the battle, it is not treated as an endless spell and no rules from its warscroll are used. Instead, it has its own rules, which are detailed below. If players do not have access to an Everblaze Comet model, a token or base can be used in its place. We recommend one that is 40-65mm in diameter.

PREDICTION POINTS

Neither warlord knows exactly where the comet will land.

At the start of the first battle round, after deciding which player will take the first turn, the players alternate nominating 1 point on the battlefield to be a **prediction point**, starting with the player taking the first turn in that battle round.

Each prediction point must be more than 9" from any other prediction points and the battlefield edge, and more than 1" from any terrain features. The player taking the first turn in that battle round nominates 3 prediction points, and their opponent nominates 2.

At the start of the second and third battle rounds, after deciding which

player will take the first turn, the player taking the second turn in that battle round picks 2 prediction points and removes them from the battle.

In the third battle round, after the 2 prediction points have been removed, 1 will remain.

CRASH LANDING

The comet impacts with a thunderous boom that resonates for miles around, carving a deep furrow into the battlefield and pulverising anything caught in its path.

When only 1 prediction point remains, models within 2" of that point are slain, then the comet is set up with the centre of its base upon that point.

Next, starting with the player taking the second turn in that battle round, the players alternate placing dice on the battlefield, one at a time. These dice are referred to as **trajectory dice**. Each time a trajectory dice is placed on the battlefield, it must be placed exactly 6" away from the comet and more than 4" inches from any other trajectory dice. The first trajectory dice placed shows the number 1,





the second shows the number 2, and so on. 6 trajectory dice are placed in total, each showing a different number.

Then, one player rolls a dice and removes all trajectory dice except the one that matches the roll. After that, the other player draws a straight line from the comet to the edge of the battlefield that passes across the remaining trajectory dice and rolls 3d6. They then move the comet a number of inches along that line equal to the roll. The comet moves as if it can fly, passing over other models and terrain features.

After the comet has moved, each unit within 3" of it, and each unit that had models passed across by it,

suffers 2D6 mortal wounds. If the comet finishes the move touching any models, it continues to move along the line until it is no longer touching any models, then it stops. If the comet reaches the edge of the battlefield, it stops. If the comet reaches the edge of the battlefield and it is touching any models, those models are slain, and then it stops.

SECURING THE COMET

Even after its destructive arrival, the comet radiates enough heat to incinerate anyone who strays close.

After the comet has moved, it is treated as an objective until the end of the battle. However, distances are measured to and from the edge of

its base rather than the centre. In addition, once the comet has moved, at the start of each subsequent battleshock phase, each unit within 6" of it suffers D3 mortal wounds.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts for 4 battle rounds.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

The player who controls the comet at the end of the battle wins a **major victory**. If neither player controls the comet at the end of the battle, the players count the number of friendly models within 12" of the comet. The player with the highest number wins a **minor victory**. Otherwise, the battle is a **draw**.

DEPLOYMENT

With the skaven pouring into the canyon in search of the comet, the Kharadron draw up their battleline and prepare to fight. They cannot let the ratmen claim such a valuable prize.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

Jonathan and Dan used the objective markers from Warcry (it's almost like they had the box to hand ...) to represent the five prediction points mentioned in the battleplan.

They placed them all across the centre of the board (A-E), reasoning that both players had a chance of removing counters, so better to place them where anyone could get to them. At least, that was the theory ...

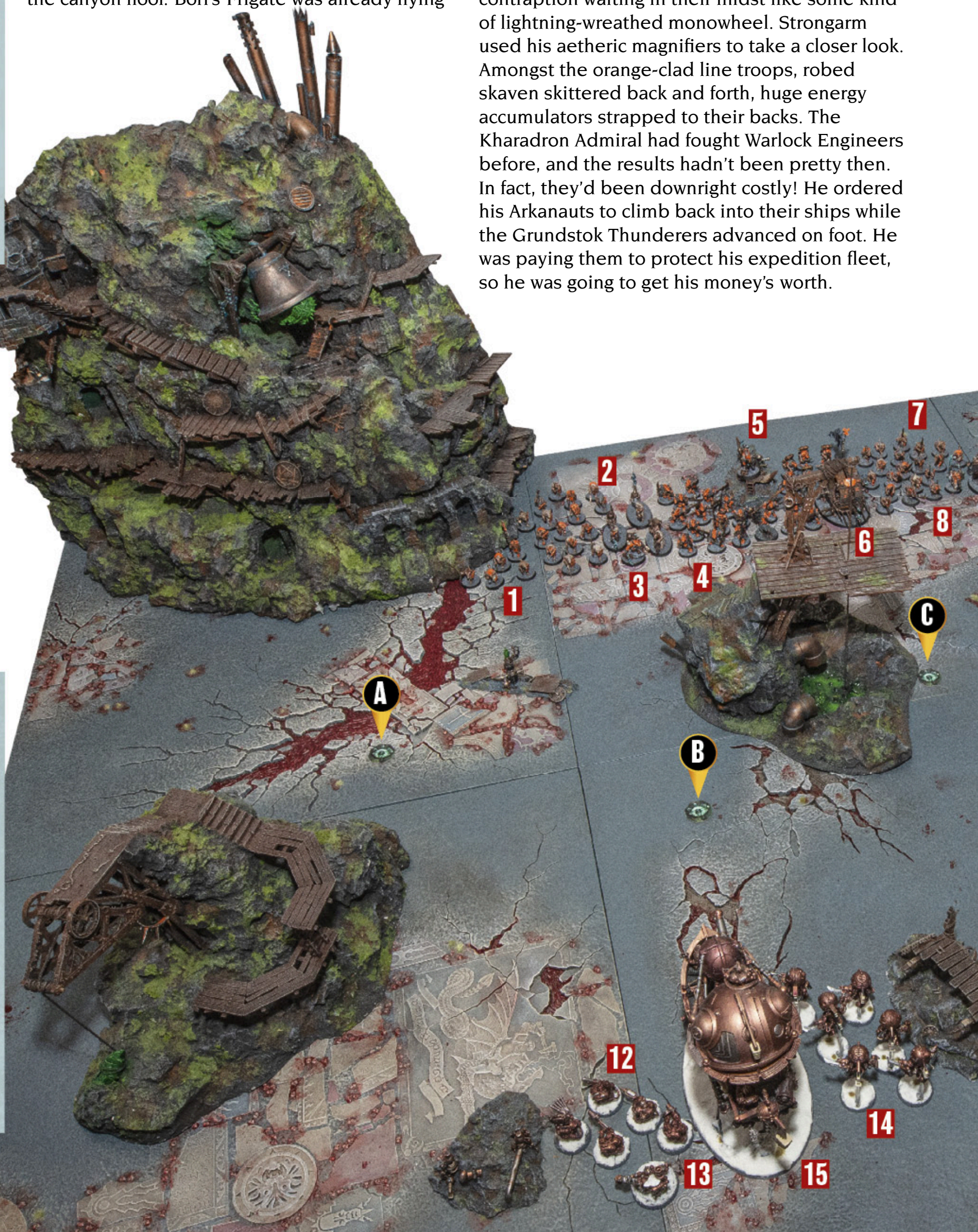
Admiral Strongarm watched in annoyance as the skaven emerged from their mountainous lairs. Ordinarily he wouldn't have been too fazed by such a small horde, but these ratmen seemed to be dragging out some pretty heavy artillery. To the north-east, Strongarm could see a pair of Warp Lightning Cannons being slowly wheeled down to the canyon floor. Bori's Frigate was already flying

dangerously close to them, but fortunately his own Ironclad was a little further away and clearly out of their range. Strongarm wanted to keep it that way.

Towards the base of the canyon sat the majority of the skaven horde. Clanrats and Stormvermin stood several ranks deep, an infernal skaven contraption waiting in their midst like some kind of lightning-wreathed monowheel. Strongarm used his aetheric magnifiers to take a closer look. Amongst the orange-clad line troops, robed skaven skittered back and forth, huge energy accumulators strapped to their backs. The Kharadron Admiral had fought Warlock Engineers before, and the results hadn't been pretty then. In fact, they'd been downright costly! He ordered his Arkanauts to climb back into their ships while the Grundstok Thunderers advanced on foot. He was paying them to protect his expedition fleet, so he was going to get his money's worth.

RIDING IN STYLE

Kharadron Overlords can garrison an airship as if it were a building, enabling them to fly into battle rather than trudge along on foot. Because Jonathan's Arkanauts only have a 9" range on their privateer pistols, he elected to garrison them in his ships and fly them forwards into the fray. The Arkanauts could then be deployed when the final resting place of the comet was revealed.





SKAVEN DEPLOYMENT

Dan places a unit of Clanrats (1) on the western flank of his army. Next to them, he deploys all three of his weapon teams (2) and his Arch-Warlock Ratticus Klaue (3) so that he can use his Overseer of Destruction command trait on them.

Towards the centre of his battleline are the Stormvermin (4) and the Warlock Bombardier Gleb (5), followed by a Doomwheel (6) and a second unit of Clanrats (7).

The Warlock Engineer Squib (8) is deployed next to the trio of Stormfiends (9).

The eastern flank is dominated by Dan's artillery – a pair of Warp Lightning Cannons (10) overseen by the Warlock Engineer Mus Racul (11).

KHARADRON DEPLOYMENT

Jonathan sets up his unit of five Thunderers (12) on his western flank, accompanied by Endrinmaster Bronn Cogtrane (13).

He places the Endrigriggers (14) near the Ironclad (15) so they can hitch a lift or repair it when required.

The Aether-Khemist Grenat Kincoal (16) stands in the centre of the battleline, with Admiral Strongarm (17) and a unit of ten Thunderers (18) close by.

To the east, a Frigate (19) is joined by Aetheric Navigator Magma Jeffers (20).

Jonathan deploys his two units of Arknauts aboard the two airships.



BATTLE ROUND ONE – SWIFT ADVANCES

The Kharadron Overlords of Barak-Jazbaz move swiftly, seeking to dominate the canyon floor before the skaven swarm all over it. But the ratmen are much faster than the duardin expect.

AMENDMENT

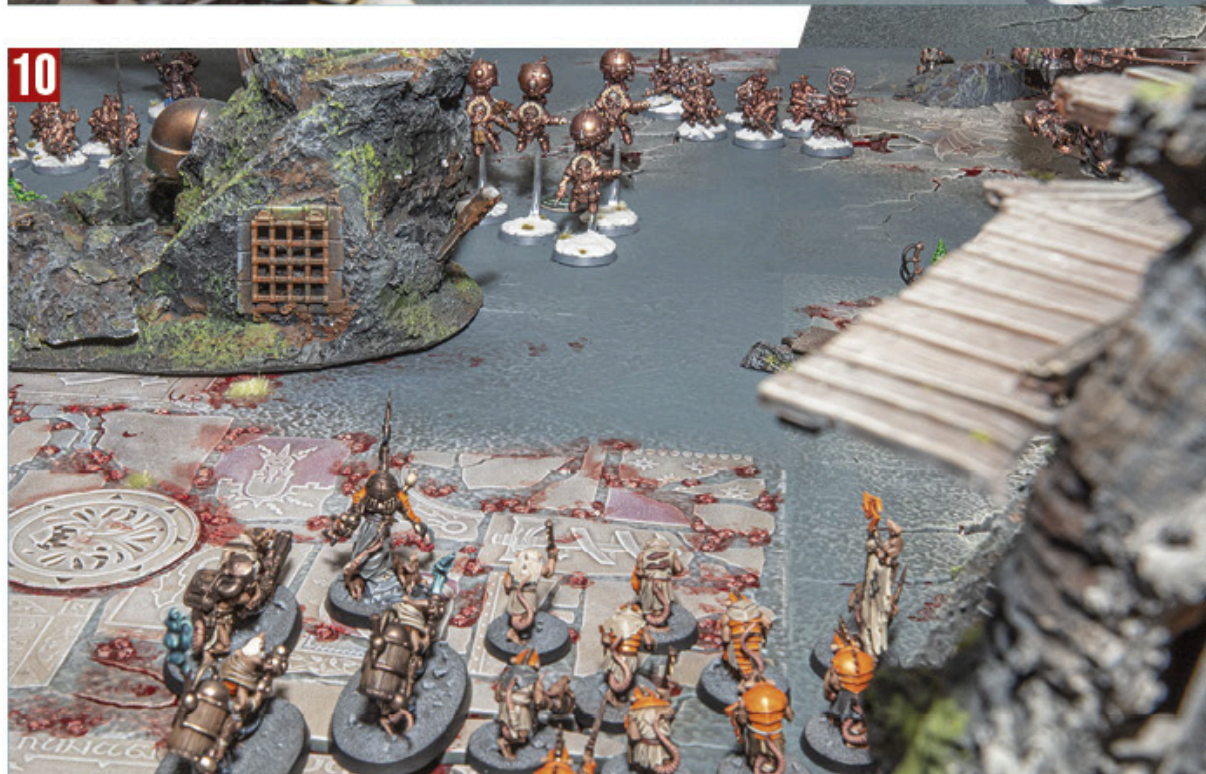
Jonathan picked the amendment Prosecute Wars With All Haste for this battle. His logic was that being able to run and shoot in his first turn would enable him to advance onto the northern side of some of the prediction points, making it difficult for Dan to take control of them. Some of his shorter-ranged guns (such as the aethershot carbine on his Ironclad) would also be in range. Against a horde of skaven, every shot really counts!

With a roar of turbines and the hum of aether-endrins, the Kharadron airships advanced up the canyon towards the skaven, closely followed by Strongarm's infantry. The Kharadron Admiral had always been a headstrong commander.

It wasn't long before the duardin opened fire, the Ironclad unleashing every gun it had on the skaven infantry racing towards the thin duardin lines. Torpedoes and cannon-fire shredded the Stormvermin, with the nearby Clanrats also taking casualties. Strongarm nodded with approval as explosions rocked the canyon. The western flank was advancing well. He turned his attention to the east, where Bori's Frigate was flying dangerously close to the Warp Lightning battery that had established itself among the rocks. The Frigate opened fire but barely damaged the ramshackle cannons. Strongarm flinched as the skaven war machines started to power up.

Arch-Warlock Ratticus Klaue squeaked with anger as the Stormvermin fled the battlefield. Already the beard-things were trying to dominate the canyon and claim the prize that was rightfully his!

With a wave of his claw he ordered the skaven of Clan Ferrik forwards. Charging up his warp-power accumulator, he sent coruscating arcs of lightning racing out to strike both the duardin and their war machines. Further bolts of green energy lashed out to join them, cast by his Warlock Engineers. As duardin warriors collapsed lifeless to the floor, Klaue's Warp Lightning Cannons opened fire on the Frigate racing towards them. Powered by arcane science, twin beams of searing green energy tore through the airship's hull, almost blasting it from the sky. Ratticus Klaue grinned evilly behind his mask as he ran towards the closest knot of duardin. His stormcage halberd lashed out, decapitating one of their number. *This will be easy-quick*, he thought.





The Ironclad (1) moves towards prediction point A and then fires its aethershot carbines at the Clanrats (2), killing six. It aims its torpedoes and great sky cannon at the Stormvermin (3), slaying twelve and forcing the other eight to flee.

Jonathan moves the Frigate (4) onto point D before firing on the Warp Lightning Cannons (5). It causes just two wounds.

The Grundstok Thunderers (6) run towards point C, followed by the fleet's heroes (7). A volley from their aethershot rifles (augmented by the Aether-Khemist) kills five of the Clanrats (8).

The Endrinriggers (9) race forwards towards prediction point B.

The Warlock Engineers unleash a torrent of magic, causing five mortal wounds on the Endrinriggers and six on the Ironclad.

The Arch-Warlock (10) protects himself with Warp Lightning Shield before charging the Endrinriggers. By the end of combat, there is only one left alive.

Warlock Engineer Mus Racul (11) powers up a nearby Warp Lightning Cannon, which causes a colossal eight mortal wounds on the Kharadron Frigate. The other lightning cannon causes two more wounds.

The Clanrats charge the Ironclad, but six of them are blasted apart by The Last Word. The survivors flee.

The Doomwheel (12) slams into the Thunderers, killing two of them.

MORE-MORE WARP LIGHTNING

Dan's skaven army is based around warp lightning. His four Warlocks can churn out a devastating number of mortal wounds, as can his Warp Lightning Cannons. He can also use warpstone sparks to make his spells, shooting and combat attacks more powerful. However, such power does come at a cost. His Arch-Warlock can inflict up to eighteen wounds on himself if he uses his warp-power accumulator incorrectly!



BATTLE ROUND TWO – A STORM OF MAGIC ... AND BULLETS

Admiral Strongarm's crew unleash the full fury of their aethermatic weapons, cutting down the skaven with ease. But the Warlocks of Clan Ferrik have even more devastating weaponry at their disposal.

Between lightning blasts and aethershot, the canyon had descended into total chaos, the air a strobing mess of lights and smoke. From where he stood, Admiral Strongarm could see most of the canyon, his keen eyes picking out the enemy positions and the disposition of his own troops. Nearby, Aether-Khemist Kincoal set to work augmenting the guns of the nearby Grundstok Corps as they blasted away at the Doomwheel trying to run them over. Navigator Jeffers further added to the confusion by summoning an aetherstorm to hinder the progress of the Stormfiends that were lumbering ever closer.

Shots rang out as the Kharadron opened fire once more, the Ironclad and Arkanauts sweeping clear the western flank, leaving only the Warlock Bombardier and the Skryre Acolytes unscathed. Close by, the Grundstok special weapons team fired everything they had at the Arch-Warlock, their combined firepower finally shorting out the lightning shield he'd erected around himself. With a violent bang, the shield exploded, severely wounding the skaven leader. Endrinmaster Cogtrane quickly stepped in to finish him off, but the Engineer evaded him long enough to kill off the last of the Endrinriggers.

Then the magic began once again. Cramming warpstone sparks into his maw, Ratticus Klaue unleashed a storm of warp lightning that scoured the western end of the battlefield. Behind him, Gleb added to the destruction with his own spells, but his powered-up doomrocket bounced harmlessly off the hull of the nearby Ironclad.

Across the battlefield, Mus Racul directed the fire of the Warp Lightning Cannons. The first cannon blasted the Frigate apart in a shower of warpstone and aether-energy before detonating spectacularly as the feedback blew apart the warpstone core at the heart of the huge gun. The second cannon aimed a searing beam at the Kharadron Navigator in an attempt to stop him unbinding the skaven's spells. The shot hit home, but when the green lightning subsided, the Navigator remained stubbornly alive.

Ratticus Klaue squeaked in frustration and ordered his Clanrats to engage the enemy and stab-claw them to death – the comet would be impacting soon, and he had to have it! He clamped his mechanical claw around the closest thing to him and squeezed hard. The unfortunate Endrinmaster's armour crumpled violently; Klaue revelled in the smell of spilt blood.



FEWER PROSPECTS

Jonathan won the roll-off to see who would take the first turn in this battle round and elected to go first. This meant that Dan got to remove two of the prediction points for where the comet would land. He picked points **A** and **D** – the ones underneath the Ironclad and the Frigate. These were easily the most defensible points for Jonathan, which meant he now had to embark on a quest to capture the other three instead.

The Arkanauts (**1**) disembark from the Ironclad (**2**) and take out the Ratling Gun and a Warpfire Thrower (**3**). The other Warpfire Thrower and one of the Stormfiends (**4**) are killed by the Ironclad.

The second unit of Arkanauts (**5**) disembark from the Frigate (**6**) and move towards prediction point **E**. The Frigate fires at the Stormfiends and Warp Lightning Cannons (**7**), causing four wounds on the former and three on the latter.

The Thunderers (**8**), Navigator (**9**) and Aether-Khemist (**10**) blast the Doomwheel apart.

The other unit of Thunderers (**11**) use Pin Them, Shred Them, Finish Them to knock out the Arch-Warlock's (**12**) Warp Lightning Shield. The Endrinmaster (**13**) charges Klaue, but fails to kill him. In response, Klaue casts Warp Lightning Storm, which hits the Thunderers, Ironclad and Endrinmaster. He easily finishes off Cogtrane in combat with his halberd.

Mus Racul (**14**) overcharges the Warp Lightning Cannon once more, which obliterates both the Frigate and itself! Nearby, the Stormfiends shoot two Thunderers then fail their charge.

The Skryre Acolytes (**15**) take down two Arkanauts with their poisoned wind globes.

The Clanrats (**16**) charge the Thunderers along with the Warlock Squib. One duardin and one skaven are slain.



BATTLE ROUND THREE – LIGHTNING ALWAYS STRIKES TWICE

The comet comes crashing to earth between the two armies. The skaven are closest to it, but the Kharadron army is in much better shape. It is now a race against time.

THE COMET!

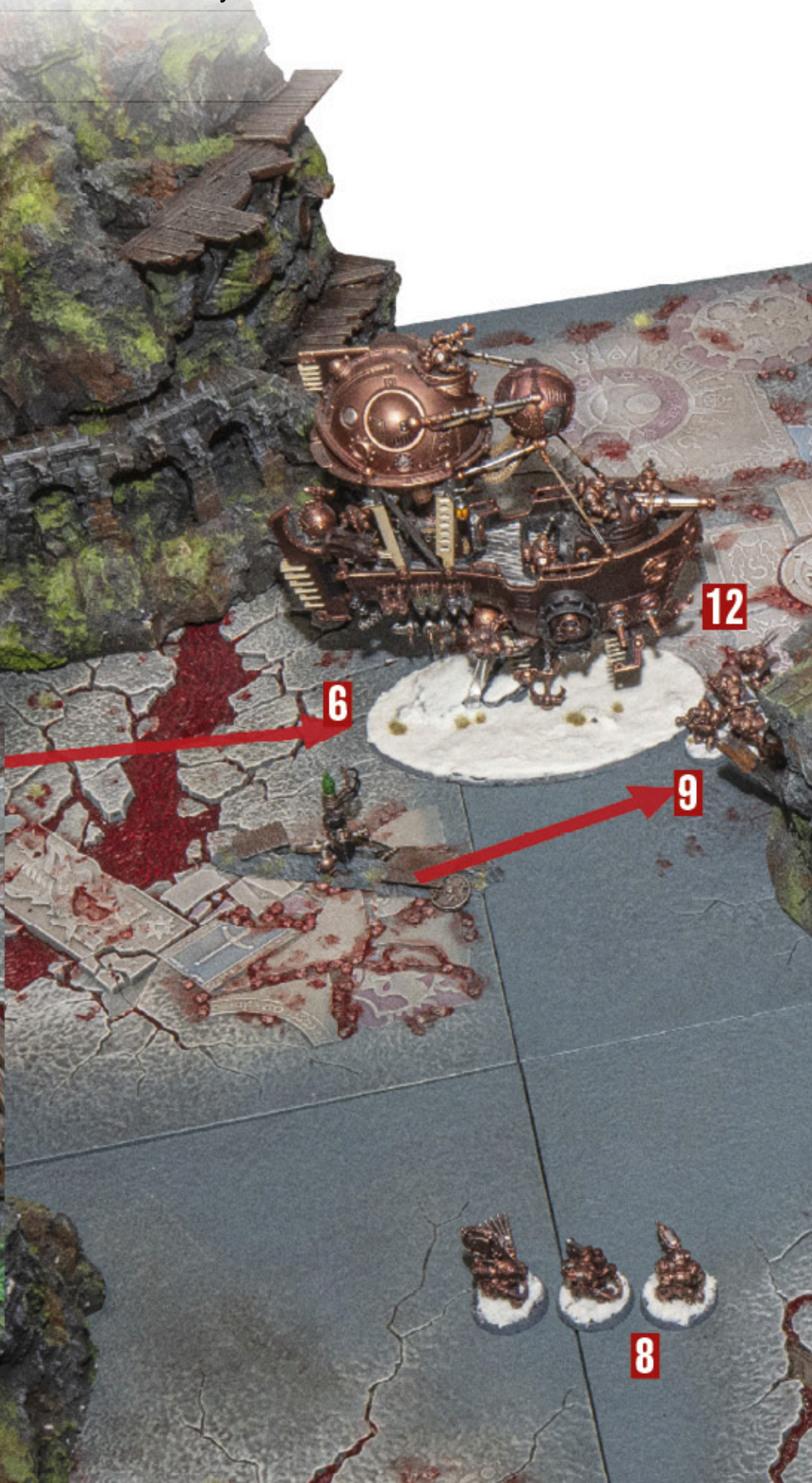
Jonathan took the first turn, so Dan got to choose where to bring down the comet. He picked point **E** on the eastern end of the board, reasoning that it was closest to his units and furthest away from Jonathan's Ironclad. As per the rules, the comet came crashing down **(1)**, then ploughed across the battlefield in a random direction ... right towards Dan's Stormfiends. One of them was left pulverised in the comet's wake **(2)**.

Admiral Strongarm braced himself as the comet came crashing through the clouds and collided with the hard earth. It hit the ground, bounced up and through a Stormfiend, then came to rest near one of the skaven constructs in the centre of the canyon.

To the west, Strongarm's troops were struggling to bring down the skaven general, who was once again wreathed in a crackling lightning shield. With a backward glance, Strongarm fired his pistol at the Arch-Warlock, saw his magical defences detonate explosively, and then strode into combat with the nearby Clanrats. Both Kincoal and Jeffers were already fighting alongside the Thunderers, but one of the skaven Engineers had also joined the fray. Halberd wreathed in warp energy, the diminutive rat-creature hacked the Navigator's legs out from underneath him and ran him through. Strongarm roared in anger and started smashing his way towards the Warlock.

From his vantage point to the north, the Warlock Bombardier Gleb was having a wonderful time. His rockets were making loud explosions, while the ground around him was scorched black with the discharge from his warp-power accumulator. He launched another bolt of warp lightning at the encroaching Ironclad then scarfed down a warpstone spark before launching another rocket. Once again, it ricocheted off the duardin ship, but the distant detonation was most pleasing. The nearby Acolytes were rather more successful, their poisoned wind globes eating through the metal hull of the huge ship.

Across the battlefield, Mus Racul's beady eyes had witnessed the comet's arrival, and now the Warlock Engineer made his bid to claim it. Squib was busy fighting the enemy, Klaue was out of action and Gleb was far too trigger-happy. The prize would be his! But first, there were some duardin nearby that needed to be dealt with.





Kincoal (3) augments the Thunderers' (4) guns before they shoot six Clanrats (5) to death.

Jonathan uses the footnote Without Our Ships, We Are Naught to heal two wounds on the Ironclad (6). The ship then fires at the last Stormfiend and the Warlock Bombardier (7), killing the first and wounding the second.

The other Thunderers (8) fire at Ratticus Klaue but fail to kill him. The Arkanauts (9) are similarly unlucky. Eventually, Admiral Strongarm (10) takes him down with his Endless Repeater.

The combat phase sees Squib the Warlock (11) slay Navigator Jeffers, while Strongarm smashes apart a couple of Clanrats. Dan uses Inspiring Presence to keep the Clanrats in the game.

The Arkanauts (12) charge the Skryre Acolytes (13). One duardin and one skaven are slain.

Squib casts Chain Warp Lightning, hitting everything around him, while Gleb blasts the Ironclad with warp lightning, causing six mortal wounds. His doomrocket, once again, does nothing.

Mus Racul (14) and the Warp Lightning Cannon (15) move towards the comet, then fire on the Arkanauts (16), killing two of them.

The Skryre Acolytes throw their poisoned wind globes at the Ironclad. They cause three wounds, taking it down to two. They are subsequently killed in combat.



BATTLE ROUND FOUR – CLAIM THE COMET

With both sides having taken severe casualties, the last few fighters battle grimly on for possession of the comet. Only greed keeps them going, for the comet is a mighty prize indeed.

Mus Racul had never seen such devastation. Skaven bodies littered the ground, interspersed with the duardin dead. Patches of ground glowed faintly where they had been struck by warp lightning or aethershot. The air was heavy with ozone and the stench of burnt flesh and fur.

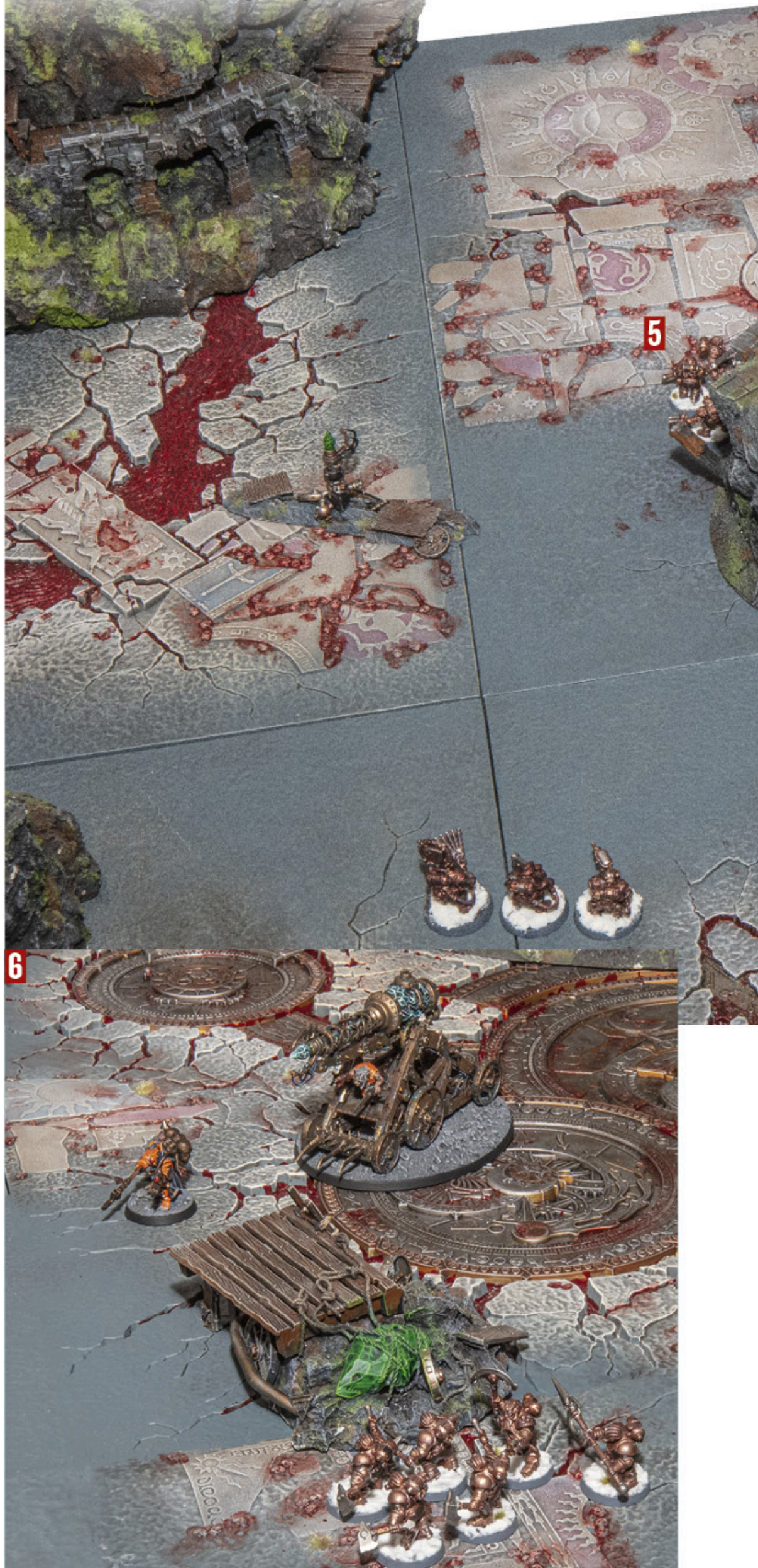
To the west, Gleb pushed his warp-power accumulator to the point of no return before unleashing a devastating blast of warp lightning at the Ironclad, bringing the huge vessel crashing to the ground. His personal victory was short-lived, however, as the nearby Arkanauts raced towards him, their privateer pistols finally felling the Warlock Bombardier.

Mus Racul turned his attention back to the comet and ran towards it, closely followed by his last surviving Warp Lightning Cannon. He might well be able to claim the prize, but only if the cannon and Squib could hold off the enemy for long enough. The skaven slaves crewing the cannon pushed it round to face the encroaching Arkanauts, then unleashed a blast of energy so powerful that every one of them was instantly vaporised. Mus Racul dived for cover as the cannon's warpstone core began to steam, but it did not detonate.

Squib was less successful. Having failed to harness the magic around him, he shot the nearby Aether-Khemist, then tried to chop him up in combat. However, his dependency on warpstone sparks finally got the better of him, and the Engineer keeled over, writhed around in pain, then lay very still, much to the surprise of the Aether-Khemist.

Seeing the skaven forces in such disarray, Admiral Strongarm crushed the last Clanrat and advanced as fast as he could towards the comet. Ignoring the warnings of Kincoal, he ran straight past the blazing star-metal and slammed into the Warlock Engineer who was trying to claim it for his own. One swing of his skalfhammer was all it took to batter the skaven sorcerer aside. The crew of the nearby Warp Lightning Cannon wisely fled into the darkness.

Strongarm turned to survey the comet. His armour was beginning to get dangerously warm, and he retreated a few yards until his warning gauges went back into the yellow. His last few Arkanauts made their way over to him. His expedition was in a sorry state, but his prize would buy him many new airships. Of that he had no doubt.





Dan wins the roll-off to see who will take the first turn in the final battle round. He elects to go first in an attempt to cause as much damage as possible.

The Warlock Engineer Squib **(1)** fails to cast Chain Lightning, but his warlock pistol critically injures Kincoal **(2)**. He eats a warpstone spark to finish off the Aether-Khemist in combat, but suffers a fatal overdose instead.

Mus Racul **(3)** succeeds in casting Warp Lightning and blasts apart an Arkonaut. Gleb **(4)** is even more successful – his Warp Lightning destroys the Ironclad. His doomrocket, however, misses the Arknauts **(5)**.

The Warp Lightning Cannon **(6)** is overpowered by Mus Racul before it fires on power level 2 at the Arknauts. Not a single one survives.

The Arknaut Company shoot at Gleb, finally silencing the rocket-happy Bombardier.

Admiral Strongarm **(7)** finishes off the last Clanrat **(8)** in combat, then advances towards the comet. He runs straight past it to attack Mus Racul. The fight is brief!

The last Thunderer **(9)** and Kincoal move to secure the comet, but it still burns with such intensity that both of them are slain by the heat. At the end of the battle, only Admiral Strongarm is close enough to hold the objective. The Warp Lightning Cannon is the only skaven unit remaining.



A MOST VALUABLE ACQUISITION

As the comet finally cools, the surviving Kharadron survey the battlefield. Victory is theirs, but the price has been shockingly steep. Perhaps too steep ...

‘Our armies blasted each other to bits in more spectacular fashion than ever before!’ - Jonathan

‘If anyone out there has any tactical advice for Stormfiends, I would love to hear it. Emails on a postcard to ...’ - Dan



HOW MUCH FOR A NEW AIRSHIP?

Jonathan: I knew from the start that it would be a brutal game, and I was right. Dan and I have fought quite a few games against each other in the past using our armies, but neither of us have had a chance since our updated battletomes came out. Suffice it to say, both books lived up to expectations, and our armies blasted each other to bits in more spectacular fashion than ever before!

What I was most impressed with was the shootiness of the army. The Kharadron feel really dangerous at range now, which is as it should be. And their ships are tougher and more manoeuvrable. I really enjoyed planning my tactics and moving everything around to get into position – it felt like a proper military engagement. The Thunderers did a lot of the groundwork, while the Arkanauts came in to mop up. There was a lot of coordination, which I felt really benefited my force, with units boosting each other with their presence or else hampering the enemy to slow them down. The addition of a Navigator to my force was a wise decision. Not only did he slow down the Stormfiends for several rounds, he also successfully stopped one skaven spell every turn. An extra Warp Lightning here or there could have made a real difference to the outcome of the game. If you're facing a magic-heavy army, Navigators are very handy!

On that note, what an experience fighting a Skryre army! The sheer volume of spells was crazy, and the amount of damage they can do is ridiculous. Dan took a lot of risks, forcing his Warlocks to consume vast amounts of warpstone sparks to power them. I'm really amazed it took four rounds before one of them suffered a warpstone overdose. Perhaps I should have focused my attention on the Warlock Engineers more and ignored the skaven infantry, but then I would have had to fight them for control of the comet at the end of the game, and they would definitely have had the numbers advantage.

WE WAS CHEATED!

Dan: How does that saying go? Something about the best-laid schemes of mice and men? Well, my mice-men had a good plan, and it all fell apart quite quickly. Like Jonathan said, both of our armies have had a significant boost, but I honestly did not expect the Kharadron shooting to be quite so devastating – the Arkanaut Ironclad is a monster! If I had been Jonathan, I might not have targeted the Stormvermin, but it seemed to be a smart move, as it reduced the size of my army by a quarter. That's a lot of bodies to lose very quickly. Then I made the catastrophic error of charging the Ironclad with my Clanrats. I just wanted to hold it up and force it to disengage. My Clanrats got pulped by grapeshot from its cannon, and then I found out it could disengage anyway as long as it wasn't too damaged. Big error on my part. It would have been far wiser keeping the Clanrats near my Arch-Warlock to keep him alive. Ah, hindsight ...

And on that note, how good were my Warlocks? Well, some of them. My Arch-Warlock was a magical monster, and his Warp Lightning Shield (combined with his high armour save) made him very hard to kill. Admittedly, it can get a bit painful when it fails, but that's the price you pay for being an evil sorcerer-rat. Then there was Gleb, the Warlock Bombardier. Every doomrocket (more-more doomrocket!) hit the Ironclad. Every single one wounded, too. And every time, Jonathan somehow made his 5+ save. I rolled once just to see how many wounds it could have done. Ten, it turns out. Gleb killed the Ironclad with Warp Lightning in the end. He redeemed himself.

What would I have done differently? Well, I usually bring in my Stormfiends with a Warp-Grinder team, which might have been helpful. Honestly, though, I never seem to do well with them! If anyone out there has any tactical advice for Stormfiends, I would love to hear it. Emails on a postcard to: team@whitedwarf.co.uk

AETHER-HIGHLIGHT OF THE GAME

Jonathan: My first round of shooting was awesome, and it was a hot contender for favourite moment of the game. However, I really enjoyed the game mechanics of the battleplan, particularly the way in which the comet comes down. It was a bit of a gamble letting Dan pick where it

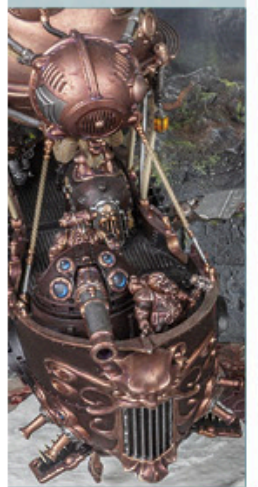
would land, but I really needed that first turn in the third round to capitalise on my gains. When the comet did come down, though, it was great fun trying to figure out how to make it hit Dan's units. And it did, too – smack into the Stormfiends!



KHARADRON OF THE MATCH

Jonathan: Oh, it has to be the Ironclad. I've always been fearful of Stormvermin, and it utterly rinsed them in the first turn. I actually felt a bit bad about that. But not for very long.

The Ironclad proved its worth at taking out both large and small targets at range, making it a really valuable asset in my force. Then again, at 480 points, you'd certainly hope it would be!



WARPSTONE-TAINTED HIGHLIGHT OF THE GAME

Dan: I love the insanity of fielding a Clans Skryre army – there is just so much potential for destruction, but there is also a lot of potential for it to all go wrong. And that's why my favourite moment was the when my Warp Lightning Cannon overcharged itself with help from the nearby

Warlock Engineer. It aimed its sights at the Arknaut Frigate, powered up, fired a devastating blast of warp lightning (it was power level 1, which means a guaranteed twelve mortal wounds), then blew both itself and the Frigate to pieces. That's the proper way to use skaven!



SKAVEN OF THE MATCH

Dan: My Arch-Warlock, without a doubt. In the first two turns of the game, he caused twenty-four mortal wounds from magic and shooting, plus a further five regular wounds in combat. He is a proper monster. My only regret is not sending the Clanrats with him, as then he could have used Look Out Sir! to protect him a bit better. I need to think more cowardly next time I play!



HEROES OF THE HINTERLANDS

Across the Mortal Realms, vast armies clash on countless battlefields. Yet sometimes it is a group of valiant heroes sent on a daring quest who will save the day. Here we present rules for fighting your very own solo campaign in the Age of Sigmar.



The Mortal Realms are vast beyond comprehension, and the wars that are fought across them are so large they can last for centuries. Yet amidst these mighty conflicts, there are times when a few brave heroes (or vengeful villains, depending on who you bend your knee to) will set out on an important quest to achieve what many thousands could not. Perhaps they are sent behind enemy lines to hunt down a cruel king or deadly Necromancer. Maybe there is an ancient relic that must be recovered without the enemy knowing, or a valuable treasure that needs to be stolen from under their nose. Whatever the quest, there is sure to be much danger along the way, for where warriors walk, battles inevitably occur. It is almost as if they are looking for trouble. Here, Age of Sigmar games developer (and hero for hire) Sam Pearson explains what solo and cooperative play campaigns are all about.

SOUL WARS

The Soul Wars box set is one of the best ways to get into Warhammer Age of Sigmar. It's also an excellent way to start a Heroes of the Hinterlands campaign, as it includes two great characters – the Lord-Arcanum and the Knight-Incantor – both of whom make excellent adventurers.

The Nighthaunts in the box are perfect adversaries for a solo campaign, too, as you'll find out in this article.

Sam: Over the summer of this year, I put together two solo campaigns for Warhammer Age of Sigmar, which we showcased on our Warhammer Community website. The aim was to give hobbyists a way to play games of Warhammer even if they were stuck indoors.

These campaigns generated a lot of buzz and excitement, so in this article I have polished up those initial rules and expanded upon them. Over the next few pages, you will find everything you need to play through the Heroes of the Hinterlands Age of Sigmar campaign, including three types of adversaries – the Nighthaunt, Khorne Bloodbound and Gloomspite Gitz – giving you a choice of Death, Chaos and Destruction to battle against. Now all you need to do is select your heroes and prepare for battle. Let us know how you get on by emailing team@whitedwarf.co.uk!

SOLO AND COOPERATIVE PLAY

Across the Mortal Realms, away from the civilised lands reclaimed by Order, danger is not hard to find. In crumbling cities, sinister forests and pitch-black caves lurk all manner of beasties, be they those of Chaos, Death or Destruction. Here can be found tales not of the clash of epic armies, but of small bands of stalwart heroes who venture into these places to fight these horrors. The battles fought in the hinterlands of the Mortal Realms are quick and brutal, and only the strong will survive. Do you have what it takes to rise to glory and become a mighty warrior?

Usually in battles of Age of Sigmar, two generals will face off, each with an army under their command. The Heroes of the Hinterlands campaign is a little different. Here, the players take control of a band of heroes that make up the **adventuring party** and will battle against **adversaries** controlled by the game. You can play through this campaign alone – controlling all the heroes of the adventuring party – or together with friends or family with each controlling one or two heroes.

THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Another way this campaign differs from a standard Age of Sigmar campaign is that it is ongoing and only ends when the entirety of the adventuring party is slain in battle. This means there is no way to ‘win’ the campaign as it were, but there are still several different measures of success you can use while playing. The first is to keep a tally of how many battles the adventuring party wins before it is wiped out. While playing through the campaign, you can use the **campaign roster** on page 97 to record how many battles your adventuring party wins. If you are playing as a team of players, you may also wish to keep a tally of how many adversaries each hero slays, so that the player with the highest score at the end of the campaign can be celebrated.

GETTING STARTED

To play through the campaign you will need the following:

- A flat surface roughly 30" × 22" in size. A Warcry board is perfect, but a coffee table or even the floor will suffice!
- 6 scenery pieces from your collection.
- Up to 5 HEROES.

- A selection of **adversaries**. These are the enemy warriors you will battle against. This article includes rules for Nighthaunt, Khorne Bloodbound and Gloomspite Gitz adversaries. You could also use these rules as the basis for other Citadel Miniatures in your collection that you might want to use as adversaries.
- The warscrolls for your HEROES and adversaries. (*Warscrolls can be downloaded for free from our webstore, or in the Warhammer Age of Sigmar app. – Ed*)

- A battletome for each of your HEROES.

- Dice, a tape measure and anything else you would usually bring to a game.

FORMING THE ADVENTURING PARTY

To play the campaign, you first form an adventuring party. This will be the army you use in each battle

during the campaign. You can play through the campaign with a single hero, but it is more enjoyable if you use a few. If you are playing through the campaign solo, we recommend you choose 3 HEROES to make up your adventuring party. If playing as a group of players, we recommend each player takes control of 1 or 2 HEROES. The number of HEROES determines how many adversaries there might be in each battle, so choosing more HEROES does not necessarily give you an advantage.

Follow the steps below to form your adventuring party:

- Pick 1-5 HEROES, each with a Wounds characteristic of 7 or less, that are not named characters.
- Choose an allegiance for each HERO. Each HERO can have a different allegiance.
- Fill in the details on the campaign roster (pg 97).



STARTING AND ENDING THE CAMPAIGN

To start the campaign, you must make an exploration roll on the exploration table below to see what the first territory you enter holds. Most territories will harbour adversaries, requiring you to defeat them in battle before you can continue. If you are lucky, however, you might find a peaceful territory where you can set up camp and rest for the night, or even one that holds ancient treasure! To make an exploration roll, roll 2D6 and consult the exploration table below.

During the campaign, you will be instructed to make further exploration rolls.

The campaign ends when all the HEROES in the adventuring party are slain in a single battle.

ADVENTURING PARTY SPECIAL RULES

The following rules are used for the adventuring party during the campaign.

Lasting Injuries

After each battle, keep track of which HEROES from the adventuring party were slain in that battle and which HEROES had any wounds allocated

to them in that battle. HEROES that are slain are permanently removed from the adventuring party. HEROES that have any wounds allocated to them start the next battle with the same number of wounds allocated to them.

Rewards to be Found

No allegiance abilities are used for the adventuring party to begin with, but as you battle out in the Hinterlands of the Mortal Realms, you may be awarded artefacts of power, command traits and other rewards from your set of allegiance abilities.

Desperate Allies

Although the HEROES in the adventuring party might have different allegiances, they are considered to be a single army. This means the adventuring party gains 1 command point at the start of each battle round (for the players to choose how to use), and the HEROES treat each other as friendly models.

Threat Level

You will record a **threat level** on the campaign roster. This indicates when the actions carried out by the adventuring party incur the wrath of a vengeful warlord.

The threat level starts at 0, and each time you make an exploration roll, it increases by 1. If the threat level has reached 5, the next time you are called to make an exploration roll, do not roll a dice. Instead, the result is considered to be 'Warlord Encounter' (Spectral Lantern has no effect upon it). If the battle is won, the threat level is reset to 0.

RECRUITING NEW HEROES

As standard, you can only add new HEROES to your adventuring party when you roll the 'Long Respite' result on the exploration table. If you are playing in a group, and especially with younger players, you may wish to waive this rule and allow new HEROES to be added to replace any slain at the end of each battle so that no one is left out of the fun for long.



EXPLORATION TABLE	
2D6	Result
2-4	<p>Warlord Encounter: <i>You have tracked down a mighty foe. Defeat them in battle to rid the realms of their menace!</i></p> <p>You must win the 'Defeat the Warlord' battleplan to continue. If you win the battle, reset the threat level to 0, and then make an exploration roll.</p>
5-7	<p>Deadly Encounter: <i>Enemies approach on all sides. Stand fast and prepare to fight!</i></p> <p>You must win the 'Wilderness Battle' battleplan to continue. If you win the battle, make an exploration roll.</p>
8-9	<p>Short Respite: <i>You find a safe place to set up camp for the night, allowing you a chance to rest. However, you cannot linger here for long.</i></p> <p>You can heal 1 wound allocated to each HERO in the adventuring party. Then, make an exploration roll.</p>
10-11	<p>Long Respite: <i>You find a settlement out in the wilderness, allowing you to rest for a few days and to recruit new allies to your cause.</i></p> <p>You can heal D3 wounds allocated to each HERO in the adventuring party. In addition, roll a dice. On a 4+ you can add 1 new HERO to the adventuring party following the rules shown above in 'Recruiting New Heroes.' Then, make an exploration roll.</p>
12+	<p>Hidden Treasure: <i>This territory holds a powerful relic that will aid you in your battles to come.</i></p> <p>You receive the 'Relic' option from the Loot table (pg 107). Then, make an exploration roll.</p>

HEROES OF THE HINTERLANDS

CAMPAIGN ROSTER

Adventuring Party Name						
Battles Won		Threat Level		Map Fragments		Spectral Lanterns

Hero's Name	Warscroll	Rewards/Items	Wounds Suffered	Battles Won	Enemies Defeated

Permission to print or photocopy for personal use only. © Games Workshop Ltd 2020



THE ADVERSARIES

During the campaign, the adventuring party will battle against enemies controlled by the game. These enemies are referred to as **adversaries**. The following rules are used to dictate how adversaries behave in battle.

THE ADVERSARY ARMY

The adversary units used in each battle are referred to collectively as the adversary army. The number of adversary units in the adversary army is listed in the description of the battleplan (pg 108-109). Rules for picking the units in the adversary army can be found on pages 100-105.

There are two types of adversary unit. Units in the adversary army with the **HERO** keyword are referred to as **boss** units. All other units are referred to as **minion** units.

BATTLE ROUNDS

At the start of each battle round, one player rolls a dice. On a 1-3, the adversary army takes the first turn. On a 4+, the players take the first turn.

THE ADVERSARY ARMY TURN

When it is the adversary army's turn, a special turn sequence is used instead of the standard turn sequence, as follows:

- Action phase
- Combat phase
- Battleshock phase

This means that if your **HEROES** have any abilities that can only be used in an enemy phase not shown in the list above, you cannot use that ability in battles for this campaign.

THE ACTION PHASE

During the action phase, the players activate the units in the adversary army, one at a time, until every unit has been activated. To activate a unit in the adversary army, roll a dice and consult its behaviour table. The minion behaviour table can be found below. The boss behavioural tables for Nighthaunt, Khorne Bloodbound and Gloomspite Gitz can be found on pages 100-105.

Each behaviour table has three columns, each with four results. To determine which column to use, start with the column on the left and check to see if the unit meets the criteria written below the title of the column. If not, move on to the middle column and check again. If the criteria are still not met, move on to the column on the right. Each result on the behaviour table has a corresponding list of actions that the unit will perform. The actions are carried out in the same order as they appear on the behaviour table. Immediately resolve the actions before activating the next unit in the adversary army.

Many of the actions require the players to determine the closest model or closest unit. If there are ever two or more eligible models or units, the players can pick which is treated as the closest for the purpose of that action.

Adversary units finish any sort of move as a single group, with all models within 1" horizontally, and 6" vertically, of at least one other model from their unit.

MINION BEHAVIOUR TABLE

D6	In Combat <i>Any models within 3" of any enemy models.</i>	Close <i>Any models more than 3" from but within 12" of any enemy models.</i>	Far <i>All models more than 12" from any enemy models.</i>
1	Steadfast	Steadfast	Steadfast
2-3	Hold	Hold	Hold
4-5	Hold	Charge	Advance
6	Rampage	Charge	Advance



STEADFAST

The unit does nothing. In addition, it is not picked to fight in combat phase this turn. However, until the start of the adversary army's next turn, add 1 to save rolls for attacks that target this unit.

HOLD

If this unit has any missile weapons that are in range, it shoots at the closest enemy unit. Otherwise, the unit does nothing in the action phase of this turn.

CHARGE

1. The unit makes a normal move. Each model from the unit must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.
2. The unit then attempts to make a charge move towards the closest enemy unit. The first model moved in the unit must be the model closest to that enemy unit.
3. If the first model moved can finish its charge move within $\frac{1}{2}$ " of the closest enemy unit, it moves as close as possible towards the enemy unit and the charge is successful. Otherwise, the charge fails and no models from the unit move.
4. If the charge is successful, each model from the unit must finish its charge move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.

ADVANCE

The unit makes a normal move. Each model from the unit must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.

RAMPAGE

This unit immediately fights. It is picked to fight in the combat phase of this turn as well.

THE COMBAT PHASE

In the combat phase, alternate picking units from your army and from the adversary army to fight, starting with a unit from the army whose turn is taking place. Each time an eligible unit from the adversary army is picked to fight, each model in that unit then piles in towards the closest enemy model and attacks the unit it belongs to with all of its melee weapons that are in range.

ALLOCATING WOUNDS

When wounds are allocated to a unit in the adversary army, pick which model in the unit to allocate the wounds to (with any restrictions that normally apply).

At the end of any turn, if an adversary unit is split into two or more groups, no models are removed from that unit. Instead, the next time that unit makes any kind of move, the models must reform back into a single group. If they are unable to do so, that unit cannot move.

THE BATTLESHOCK PHASE

When models flee from an adversary unit, do the following:

1. When removing models, you must attempt to keep the unit in coherency if possible.
2. Command models, and those with weapons different to what the rest of the unit is armed with, should only be removed after all other models have been removed.

USING ADVERSARY ABILITIES

Abilities on the warscrolls of adversary units that automatically come into effect are always used (for example, the Ethereal ability found on many Nighthaunt warscrolls or the Chilling Horde ability on the Chainrasp Horde warscroll).

If a rule says you can re-roll a charge roll or part of the attack sequence, do so if the roll would fail after any modifiers are applied.

If there are multiple adversary units that can attempt to unbind a spell, the players can pick which adversary unit does so.

For abilities that are more difficult to use, the following pages will explain how they are used.



NIGHTHAUNT

The Nighthaunts are malevolent spirits cursed to an eternity of suffering for the crimes they committed in life. Enslaved to the will of Nagash, Supreme Lord of the Undead, they are a terrifying blight upon the living.

NIGHTHAUNT MINIONS

To generate Nighthaunt minion adversary units, roll a dice on the chart below. If the result has models that are not in your collection, re-roll the result or pick an option for which you have the appropriate models.

D6	Warscroll	Unit Size (models)
1	Chainrasp Horde	Double the size of the adventuring party + D3
2	Glaivewraith Stalkers	The size of the adventuring party
3	Grimghast Reapers	The size of the adventuring party + D3
4	Myrmourn Banshees	The size of the adventuring party
5	Bladegheist Revenants	The size of the adventuring party + D3
6	Spirit Host	Half the size of the adventuring party (rounding up)

NIGHTHAUNT SPECIAL RULES

The following special rules apply to Nighthaunt minion adversaries.

Myrmourn Banshees

Spell-eaters: In the enemy hero phase, this model will attempt to unbind the first spell that is cast within 30" of it that another unit does not attempt to unbind.

NIGHTHAUNT BOSSES

To generate Nighthaunt bosses, roll a dice on the chart below. If the result has a model that is not in your collection, re-roll the result or pick an option.

D6	Warscroll
1	1 Knight of Shrouds on Ethereal Steed
2	1 Guardian of Souls with Nightmare Lantern
3	1 Lord Executioner

BOSS ACTIONS

In addition to the actions dictated by their behaviour table, Nighthaunt bosses each have their own special actions as described below.

Knight of Shrouds on Ethereal Steed

Lord of Gheists: At the start of the combat phase, this model will use its Lord of Gheists command ability. When it does so, the closest other friendly unit within range of the command ability that is within 3" of any enemy units is picked as the target of the command ability. If there are no eligible units, then this model is picked as the target.

Guardian of Souls with Nightmare Lantern

Spectral Lure: Each time this model is picked to activate, once all its actions determined by the behaviour table have been resolved, it will attempt to cast the Spectral Lure spell. Enemy WIZARDS can attempt to unbind the spell as normal. If it is successfully cast, the target is picked as follows:

1. If there are any friendly units within range of the spell that have had models slain, the closest one is picked and the spell is resolved.
2. Otherwise, if there are any friendly units that have any wounds allocated to them, the closest one is picked and the spell is resolved.

Unbind: In the enemy hero phase, this model will attempt to unbind the first spell that is cast within 30" of it that another unit does not attempt to unbind.

Lord Executioner

Staring Death in the Face: At the start of the combat phase, if it is eligible to do so, this model will use its Staring Death in the Face ability. When it does so, pick the closest enemy HERO as the target.



NIGHTHAUNT BOSS BEHAVIOUR TABLE

D6	In Combat <i>Within 3" of any enemy models.</i>	Close <i>Any models more than 3" from but within 12" of any enemy models.</i>	Far <i>More than 12" from any enemy models.</i>
1	Spectral Summons	Spectral Summons	Spectral Summons
2-3	Twilight Translocation	Twilight Translocation	Twilight Translocation
4-5	Deathless Vigour	Deathless Vigour	Deathless Vigour
6	Rampage	Charge	Advance

SPECTRAL SUMMONS

Add 1 Nighthaunt minion unit to the adversary army and set it up wholly within 6" of this model.

TWILIGHT TRANSLOCATION

Remove this unit from the battlefield and set it up anywhere on the battlefield more than 12" from any enemy models.

DISAPPEAR INTO THE UNDERWORLDS

Heal D3 wounds that have been allocated to this model and then remove it from the battlefield. In the following action phase, do not roll on the behaviour table for this model. Instead, the players must set it up within 1" of an enemy unit.

DEATHLESS VIGOUR

Heal D3 wounds that have been allocated to this model.

RAMPAGE

This unit immediately fights. It is picked to fight in the combat phase of this turn as well.

CHARGE

1. The model makes a normal move. It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.
2. The model then attempts to make a charge move towards the same enemy unit.
3. If the model can finish its charge move within ½" of that enemy unit, it moves as close as possible towards the enemy unit and the charge is successful. Otherwise, the charge fails and the model does not move.

ADVANCE

The model makes a normal move. It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.



KHORNE BLOODBOUND

The cannibal warriors of the Bloodbound crash into the foe like an unstoppable, gore-streaked axe blade. Their numberless battle-hungry warriors are the bane of civilisation.

KHORNE BLOODBOUND MINIONS

To generate Khorne Bloodbound minion adversary groups, roll a dice on the chart below. If the result has models that are not in your collection, re-roll the result or pick an option that you have the appropriate models for.

D6	Warscroll	Unit Size (models)
1	Bloodreavers	Double the size of the adventuring party + D3
2	Blood Warriors	The size of the adventuring party + D3
3	Wrathmongers	The size of the adventuring party
4	Skullreapers	The size of the adventuring party
5	Flesh Hounds	The size of the adventuring party
6	Khorgorath	1

KHORNE BLOODBOUND SPECIAL RULES

The following special rules apply to Khorne Bloodbound minion adversaries.

Flesh Hounds

Collars of Khorne: In the enemy hero phase, this model will attempt to unbind the first spell that is cast within 30" of it that another unit does not attempt to unbind.

Khorgorath

Taker of Heads: This unit will use its Taker of Heads ability at the end of the combat phase.

KHORNE BLOODBOUND BOSSES

To generate Khorne Bloodbound bosses, roll a dice on the chart below. If the result has a model that is not in your collection, re-roll the result or pick an option.

D6	Warscroll
1	1 Mighty Lord of Khorne
2	1 Bloodseccator
3	1 Bloodstoker

BOSS ACTIONS

In addition to the actions dictated by their behaviour table, Khorne Bloodbound bosses each have their own special actions as described below.

Mighty Lord of Khorne

Collar of Khorne: In the enemy hero phase, this model will attempt to unbind the first spell that is cast within 30" of it that another unit does not attempt to unbind.

Bloodseccator

Banner of Wrath: At the start of the combat phase, roll a dice for each enemy unit within 8" of the bearer. On a 4+ that unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

Bloodstoker

Whipped to Fury: At the start of the action phase, this model will use its Whipped to Fury ability. When it does so, the closest other friendly unit within range of the ability is picked as the target of the ability. If there are no eligible units, then this model is picked as the target. The effect of the ability lasts until the start of the next action phase.



KHORNE BLOODBOND BOSS BEHAVIOUR TABLE

D6	In Combat <i>Within 3" of any enemy models.</i>	Close <i>Any models more than 3" from but within 12" of any enemy models.</i>	Far <i>More than 12" from any enemy models.</i>
1	Mighty Blow	Summon Flesh Hounds	Summon Flesh Hounds
2-3	Mighty Blow	Murderlust	Murderlust
4-5	Rampage	Murderlust	Advance
6	Rampage	Charge	Advance

MIGHTY BLOW

Pick 1 enemy unit within 3" of this model. That unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

SUMMON FLESH HOUNDS

Add 1 FLESH HOUNDS unit to the adversary army and set it up wholly within 6" of this model.

MURDERLUST

1. The model makes a normal move of D6". It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.
2. Then, all other units in the adversary army that are not within 3" of any enemy units make a normal move of D6" (roll for each). This does not count as their activation.

RAMPAGE

This unit immediately fights. It is picked to fight in the combat phase of this turn as well.

CHARGE

1. The model makes a normal move. It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.
2. The model then attempts to make a charge move towards the same enemy unit.
3. If the model can finish its charge move within ½" of that enemy unit, it moves as close as possible towards the enemy unit and the charge is successful. Otherwise, the charge fails and the model does not move.

ADVANCE

The model makes a normal move. It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.



GLOOMSPITE GITZ

The Gloomspite Gitz infest the dank places of the Mortal Realms like a proliferous fungus. Though by their very nature anarchic, when these creatures unite under a common cause, they are capable of wholesale destruction.

GLOOMSPITE GITZ MINIONS

To generate Gloomspite Gitz minion adversary groups, roll a dice on the chart below. If the result has models that are not in your collection, re-roll the result or pick an option that you have the appropriate models for.

D6	Warscroll	Unit Size (models)
1	Stabbas	Double the size of the adventuring party + D3
2	Shootas	Double the size of the adventuring party + D3
3	Squig Herd	The size of the adventuring party + D3
4	Squig Hoppers	The size of the adventuring party
5	Fellwater Troggoths	Half the size of the adventuring party (rounding up)
6	Rockgut Troggoths	Half the size of the adventuring party (rounding up)

GLOOMSPITE SPECIAL RULES

The following special rules apply to Gloomspite Gitz minion adversaries.

Fellwater Troggoths

Regeneration: Each time this unit activates, it uses its Regeneration ability.

Rockgut Troggoths

Regeneration: Each time this unit activates, it uses its Regeneration ability.

Throwin' Boulders: When this unit 'holds' and is within 12" of any enemy unit, it uses its Throwin' Boulders ability, picking the closest enemy unit as the target.

GLOOMSPITE GITZ BOSSES

To generate Gloomspite Gitz bosses, roll a dice on the chart below. If the result has a model that is not in your collection, re-roll the result or pick an option.

D6	Warscroll
1	1 Loonboss
2	1 Fungoid Cave-Shaman
3	1 Loonboss on Giant Cave Squig

BOSS ACTIONS

In addition to the actions dictated by their behaviour table, Gloomspite Gitz bosses each have their own special actions as described below.

Loonboss

I'm Da Boss, Now Stab 'Em Good!: At the start of the combat phase, this model will use its I'm Da Boss, Now Stab 'Em Good! command ability. When it does so, the closest other friendly unit within range of the command ability (24") that is within 3" of any enemy units is picked as the target of the command ability. If there are no eligible units, then this model is picked as the target.

Fungoid Cave-Shaman

Spore Maws: Each time this model is picked to activate, once all its actions determined by the behaviour table have been resolved, it will attempt to cast the Spore Maws spell. Enemy WIZARDS can attempt to unbind the spell as normal.

Unbind: In the enemy hero phase, this model will attempt to unbind the first spell that is cast within 30" of it that another unit does not attempt to unbind.

Loonboss on Giant Cave Squig

Redcap Mushrooms: The first time this model is picked to activate while it is within 3" of any enemy units, it uses its Redcap Mushrooms ability.



GLOOMSPITE GITZ BOSS BEHAVIOUR TABLE

D6	In Combat <i>Within 3" of any enemy models.</i>	Close <i>Any models more than 3" from but within 12" of any enemy models.</i>	Far <i>More than 12" from any enemy models.</i>
1	Savage Underhand Blow	Cunning Plans	Cunning Plans
2-3	Cowardly Git	Cowardly Git	Cowardly Git
4-5	Drink Fungus Brew	Drink Fungus Brew	Drink Fungus Brew
6	Rampage	Charge	Advance

SAVAGE UNDERHAND BLOW

Pick 1 enemy unit within 3" of this model. That unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

CUNNING PLANS

Add 1 Gloomspite Gitz minion unit to the adversary army. Set up the first model in that unit 9" away from this model. Then set up the other models from the unit wholly within 6" of the first, and within 1" of another model in the unit.

COWARDLY GIT

Remove this unit from the battlefield and set it up anywhere on the battlefield more than 6" from any enemy models.

DRINK FUNGUS BREW

Roll a D3 and apply the following effect:

- 1 – This model suffers 1 mortal wound.
- 2 – Heal D3 wounds that have been allocated to this model.
- 3 – Heal all wounds that have been allocated to this model.

RAMPAGE

This unit immediately fights. It is picked to fight in the combat phase of this turn as well.

CHARGE

1. The model makes a normal move. It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.
2. The model then attempts to make a charge move towards the same enemy unit.
3. If the model can finish its charge move within ½" of that enemy unit, it moves as close as possible towards the enemy unit and the charge is successful. Otherwise, the charge fails and the model does not move.

ADVANCE

The model makes a normal move. It must finish the move as close as possible to the closest enemy unit.



FIGHTING BATTLES

The following rules are used in each battle you fight during the campaign.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The battlefield should be roughly 30" x 22" in size. Before each battle, you will need to set up the battlefield with scenery pieces from your collection. Each battlefield needs 3+D3 scenery pieces, and each quarter of the battlefield should have at least 1 scenery piece placed within it. Otherwise, the players should feel free to set up an exciting battlefield with an atmospheric location. Perhaps your

heroes are battling amidst the ruins of an ancient city or within one of the dark forests of the realms.

ORIENTATING THE BATTLEFIELD

Once you have set up the battlefield, nominate one long battlefield edge and roll a dice. On a 1-3 that battlefield edge is the adversary battlefield edge; on a 4+ it is the adventuring party battlefield edge.

THE LOOT TABLE

Each time the adventuring party wins a minor victory, the players roll once (in total) on the loot table opposite to see what rewards the adventuring party gains. If the adventuring party wins a major victory, roll twice instead.

To roll on the loot table, you will need to roll a D66. To do so, roll a six-sided dice twice. The first roll determines the ten, and the second roll determines the unit. For example, if you rolled a 3 followed by a 5, the roll would be 35.



LOOT TABLE	
D66	Result
11-16	Nothing But Dust Your party finds nothing.
21-26	Map Fragment <i>This torn piece of a map suggests there is treasure to be found close by.</i> Keep a record of how many Map Fragments you find. When the tally reaches 3, you receive the 'Relic' option from the Loot table, and then the record is reset to 0.
31-33	Healing Potion <i>This glass bottle is filled with a sparkling crimson liquid that heals and refreshes.</i> Give this item to a HERO to carry. In your hero phase, you can choose for the HERO carrying this item to use it. If you do so, you can heal up to D3 wounds allocated to that HERO. Then, the HERO that used this item is no longer carrying it.
34-36	Spectral Lantern <i>This lantern illuminates the way forward in a ghoulish green light, but it is soon spent.</i> Keep a record of how many Spectral Lanterns you find. Each time you roll on the exploration table, you can choose to spend 1 of your Spectral Lanterns to re-roll both dice. You must accept the second result.
41-43	Aqshian Flamewood Stake <i>Even the incorporeal forms of gheists are immolated in flames when a sharpened stake of Aqshian Flamewood is driven into them.</i> Give this item to a HERO to carry. At the start of the combat phase, you can choose for the HERO carrying this item to use it. If you do so, pick 1 enemy model within 1" of this HERO and roll a dice. On a 1, nothing happens. On a 2+, that model is immediately slain. Then, the HERO that used this item is no longer carrying it.
44-46	Scroll of Translocation <i>Arcane glyphs dance around this scroll, hinting at the magic it holds.</i> Give this item to a HERO to carry. In your hero phase, you can choose for the HERO carrying this item to use it. If you do so, pick 1 model within 3" of this HERO (including itself, if you wish) and remove that model from the battlefield. Then, set that model up anywhere on the battlefield. Then, the HERO that used this item is no longer carrying it.
51-53	Grave-sand Ossuary <i>It is said that the grave-sand contained within these ossuaries gives one control over death itself.</i> Give this item to a HERO to carry. In your hero phase, you can choose for the HERO carrying this item to use it. If you do so, pick 1 other friendly HERO that has been slain in this battle. You can heal 1 wound allocated to that HERO so it is no longer slain, then you can set it up on the battlefield within 3" of the HERO that used the ossuary. Then, the HERO that used this item is no longer carrying it.
54-56	Potion of Aqua Ghyranis <i>A liquid that sparkles like ground crystal, a few drops of this potion can heal grievous wounds in an instant.</i> Give this item to a HERO to carry. In your hero phase, you can choose for the HERO carrying this item to use it. If you do so, heal all wounds allocated to that HERO. Then, the HERO that used this item is no longer carrying it.
61-66	Relic <i>You have found a powerful treasure to aid you in battle.</i> Pick 1 HERO in the adventuring party and pick 1 of the following: Artefact of Power: You can pick 1 artefact of power from this HERO's set of allegiance abilities and give it to them, if you have not done so already. Spell: If this HERO is a WIZARD, you can pick 1 spell from their set of allegiance abilities for them to know, if you have not done so already. Prayer: If this HERO is a PRIEST, you can pick 1 prayer from their set of allegiance abilities for them to know, if you have not done so already.

BATTLEPLAN

WILDERNESS BATTLE

With enemies enclosing in, you must fight your way to victory and purge these lands of their taint.

THE ARMIES

The players use their adventuring party as their army.

The adversary army includes D3+1 minion units.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up the battlefield as shown below.

SET-UP

Set up the adventuring party first, anywhere wholly within their territory. Then, set up the adversary units wholly within their territory.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts until all the models from one of the armies are slain.

AMBUSH

Danger lurks in every shadow for the adventuring party, and in the heat of battle, they need to be careful of the enemy closing in from all sides.

At the start of each battle round after the first, the players roll a dice. On a 1, add 1 minion unit to the adversary army. Set up that unit on the battlefield wholly within the adventuring party's territory.

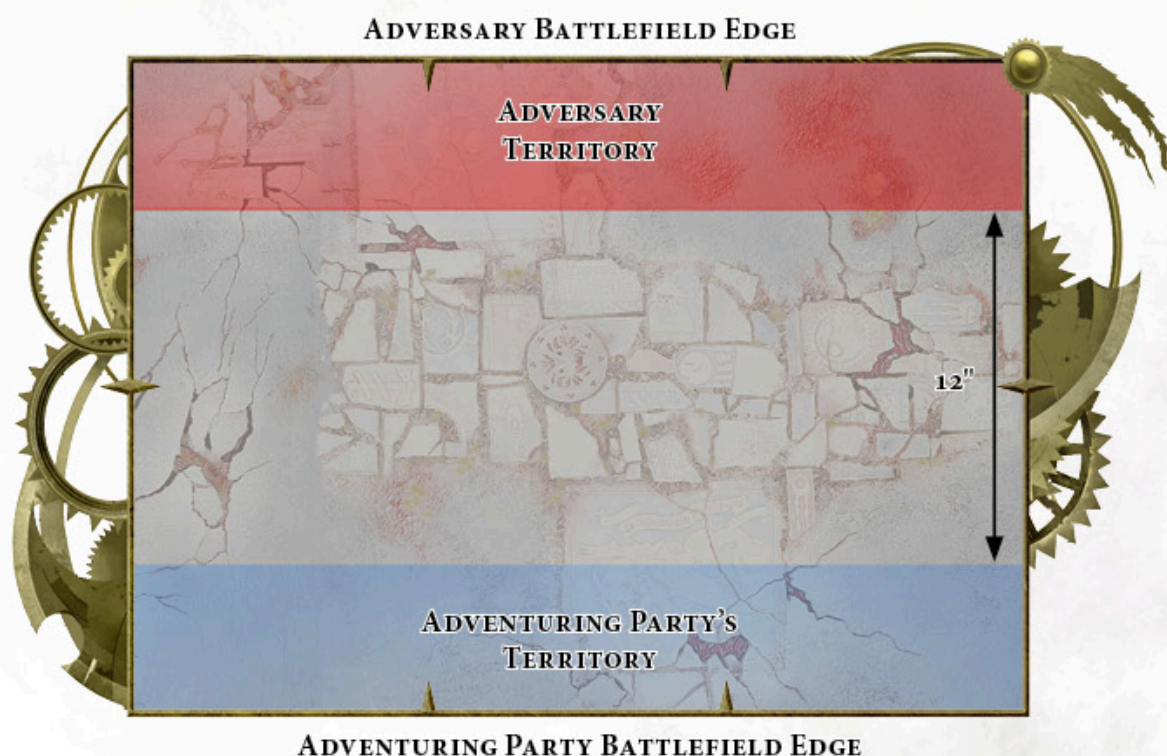
GLORIOUS VICTORY

At the end of a battle, if all the models in the adversary army were slain, and none of the models in the adventuring party were slain, the adventuring party wins a **major victory**.

Instead, if all the models in the adversary army were slain and some of the models in the adventuring

party were slain, the adventuring party wins a **minor victory**.

Otherwise, if all the models in the adventuring party were slain, the adversary army wins a **major victory** and the campaign ends.



BATTLEPLAN

DEFEAT THE WARLORD

A mighty enemy stands before you, but to defeat them, you must first cut a swathe through the legion of warriors that seeks your blood.

THE ARMIES

The players use their adventuring party as their army.

The adversary army is made up of 1 boss unit and a D3 minion units.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Set up the battlefield as shown below.

SET-UP

Set up the adventuring party first, anywhere wholly within their territory. Then, set up the adversary units wholly within their territory. The boss unit cannot be the closest unit to any of the models in the adventuring party.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts until all the models from one of the armies are slain.

REINFORCEMENTS

This powerful enemy keeps many of their warriors close by, ready to come to aid should the alarm be raised.

At the start of each battle round after the first, the players roll a dice. On a 1, add 1 minion unit to the adversary army. Set up that unit on the battlefield wholly within the adventuring party's territory.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

At the end of a battle, if all the models in the adversary army were slain, and none of the models in the adventuring party were slain, the adventuring party wins a **major victory**.

Instead, if all the models in the adversary army were slain and some of the models in the adventuring party were slain, the adventuring party wins a **minor victory**.

Otherwise, if all the models in the adventuring party were slain, the adversary army wins a **major victory** and the campaign ends.

REWARD

If the **HERO** that slew the boss adversary (either through an attack or an ability on its warscroll) does not have a command trait, the players can pick 1 command trait from that **HERO's** set of allegiance abilities for it to have in all future battles during the campaign.



RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



JERVIS JOHNSON

Jervis has been a staple part of the Warhammer Studio for many decades, and he's been instrumental in the design of many great games during that time. During the great lockdown of 2020, Jervis has spent much of his time working out how to maintain social distancing without affecting unit coherency. Apparently this gets complicated in buildings ...

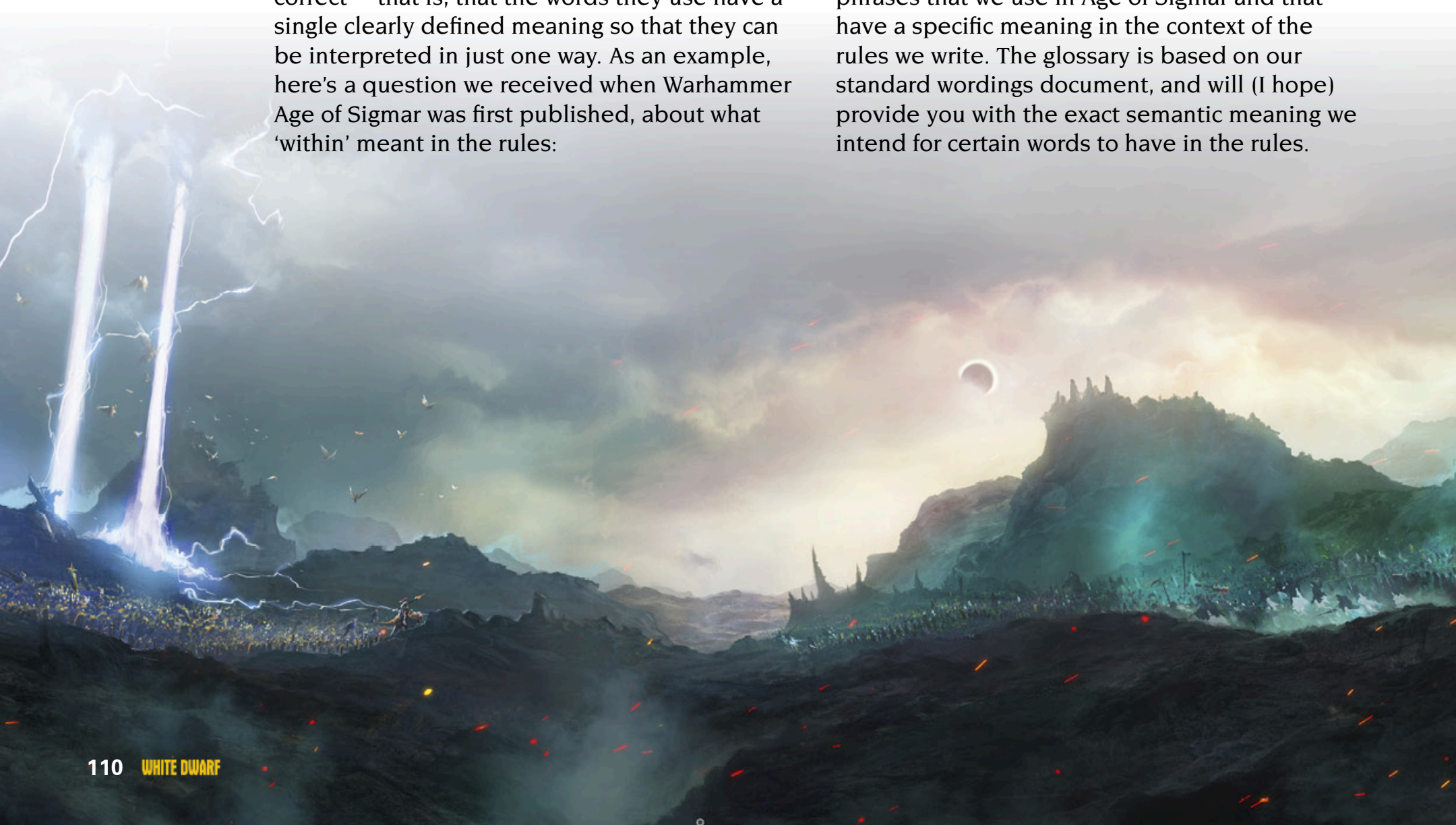
In this month's Rules of Engagement, I'm going to discuss something that is close to the heart of rules writers and editors everywhere – the semantics of rules writing. I know, I know, I'm excited too! Seriously, though, semantics are very important when it comes to writing and understanding rules. For those who don't know about semantics, it is the study of 'the meaning of a word, phrase or text'. For the purposes of this article, the most important thing we can learn from semantics is that a word or phrase can have more than one meaning, and the meaning of a word can change depending on its context. Because of this, it helps a lot when writing rules to define a single meaning for certain key terms in order to avoid confusion. Doing this helps rules writers and editors to ensure that the rules are 'semantically correct' – that is, that the words they use have a single clearly defined meaning so that they can be interpreted in just one way. As an example, here's a question we received when Warhammer Age of Sigmar was first published, about what 'within' meant in the rules:

What does the word 'within' mean in Age of Sigmar? Does it imply, for example, that for two units to be within 12" of each other, all of the models in both units have to be within 12" of each other, or is the distance measured only from the closest models in each unit?

This problem is now dealt with in the core rules themselves (see Measuring Distances on the first page), with an addendum in the Designers' Commentary that covers what to do when a rule refers to 'wholly within'. If you are interested, you'll be able to find the definitions for 'within' and 'wholly within' later on in this article, so I won't repeat them here.

Anyway, problems like this led to the rules writers and editors developing a set of standard definitions for certain words and phrases in the rules, which we compiled into a now very lengthy document called the 'standard wordings'. Referring to the standard wordings document helps us to ensure that we use words that have a specific semantic meaning consistently and that we do not substitute other words for them in any of the rules we write. This document continues to grow as we learn more and more about which rules phrases can cause confusion.

And that brings me to the purpose of this article, which is to provide a glossary of words and phrases that we use in Age of Sigmar and that have a specific meaning in the context of the rules we write. The glossary is based on our standard wordings document, and will (I hope) provide you with the exact semantic meaning we intend for certain words to have in the rules.



Rules of Engagement – curated by the Age of Sigmar games developers – focuses on the creation, design and evolution of the rules for Warhammer Age of Sigmar. This month, rules supremo Jervis discusses semantics. From now on, this is a quibble-free zone.

GLOSSARY – RULES TERMS

I in every X: Many warscrolls allow weapon options and other upgrades to be taken by '1 in every X' models. If the unit has fewer than 'X' models, the weapon or upgrade cannot be taken. For example, 1 in every 10 models in a unit of Blood Warriors can replace the unit's weapon option with a Goreglaive. If the unit had 5 models, a Goreglaive could not be taken.

A: In Age of Sigmar, 'A' or 'a' is synonymous with '1'. Therefore, 'roll a dice' has the same meaning as 'roll 1 dice'.

Abilities: Abilities appear on warscrolls and in battletomes and battleplans, and they cover things that the model can do during a game that aren't covered by the core rules or that modify or take precedence over the core rules. Certain abilities do not specifically apply to a model or unit, but they allow 'you' (the player) to do something. When this is the case, you can only use the ability once, even if you have several units with the ability in your army.

After: The word 'after' is treated as being synonymous with 'immediately after'. For example, 'after this unit has made a charge move' has the same meaning as 'immediately after this unit has made a charge move'.

Allocate Wounds: Wounds are allocated to a model after all attacks by an attacking unit have been completed (allocation takes place after the attack sequence has finished). Whenever a rule refers to the wounds that have been allocated to a model, wounds that were negated or healed are not counted.

Any: The word 'any' is treated as being synonymous with 'one or more'. For example, 'add 1 to hit rolls for models that are within 6" of any models with this ability' has the same meaning as 'add 1 to hit rolls for models that are within 6" of one or more models with this ability'.

Attack Sequence: When a model attacks with a missile weapon or a melee weapon, the attack is resolved by carrying out the attack sequence. The damage inflicted by an attack is not allocated until after all of the attacks made by the attacking unit have been resolved.

Attack(s): An 'attack' is carried out by each model in a unit when the unit shoots or fights. The number

of attacks each model makes is determined by the Attacks characteristics of the weapons the model is armed with and that it can use for that attack. Each of the attacks made by a model is resolved using the attack sequence in the core rules.



Base: The word 'base' refers to the plastic stand each model is supplied with that allows it to be placed upon the battlefield without falling over. The base is considered to be part of the model for rules purposes.

Battlefield: The surface on which a battle is fought is called the 'battlefield'. It is not considered to be a terrain feature and no scenery rules apply to it.

Can and Must: If a rule states you 'can' do something, then it is up to you whether you decide to do it or not. If a rule states you 'must' do something, you have to do it. If a rule does not specifically state whether you can or must do something, then the assumption is you must do it.

Characteristics: When a characteristic is referenced (Bravery, for example), always use the value of the characteristic after any modifiers to it have been applied.

Charge Move: A 'charge' or 'charge move' is the move made by a model or unit following a charge roll.

Command Abilities: When a rule refers to a model 'using' a command ability, it is referring to the model from which the range of the command ability is measured. When a rule refers to a unit 'benefiting' from a command ability, it is referring to the unit to which the effects of the command ability are applied.

Core Rules: The term 'core rules' refers to the rules in the Warhammer Age of Sigmar Core Rules book or Core Rules booklet that appear before the rules for battleplans, warscrolls and allegiance abilities. Abilities, spell and prayer effects and scenery rules take precedence over the core rules.



Damage: The Damage characteristic is used to determine how much damage is inflicted by a weapon in step 4 of the attack sequence. Damage is only converted into wounds when the damage is

allocated to the target unit, after all of the attacking unit's attacks have been resolved.

Declare: The term 'declare' means that you must state clearly to your opponents what it is you must declare, and you must repeat the information if your opponent asks you to do so.

Destroyed: A unit is considered to be destroyed when the last model in the unit is slain or flees. When measuring the range to a destroyed unit, measure to the last position occupied by the last model in the unit to be slain or flee.

Dice Roll: Many rules require a player to role a dice. The number and type of dice to be rolled will be specified when a dice roll is required; if a rule simply says 'roll a dice', you must roll 1 six-sided dice. The appropriate dice must be rolled by the player in a manner that generates a random result. The players must decide for themselves what to do if a dice rolls off or misses the gaming table and what to do if a dice is 'cocked'.

Failed Roll: A dice roll is 'failed' if it does not achieve a result that is beneficial to the player rolling the dice. Such rolls can also be said to 'fail' or be 'failures'.

Garrison: Any models that have joined a terrain feature's garrison are known as the 'garrison' or 'garrisoning models'.

Move: The term 'move' refers to all moves, not just moves that occur in the movement phase.

Passing Across: In order for a model to 'pass across' another, part of the moving model's base must have moved across any part of the other model's base. A flying model can move up to an enemy model so that their bases overlap and then move back, and this will count as having 'passed across' the other model.

Roll: The term 'roll' is synonymous with 'the result' of a roll. Both refer to the roll after any re-rolls have been made and/or modifiers applied. For example, 'on a roll of 4+' has the same meaning as 'on a result of 4+'.



Secret Information: Unless a rule specifically tells you to keep something secret, there is no secret information in Age of Sigmar. You must reveal the composition of your army if asked, and you must allow opponents to read the warscrolls and allegiance abilities you will be using in a battle if they wish to do so.

Singular and Plural Keywords: The singular and plural forms of a keyword are synonymous for rules purposes.

Spell Effect: A spell's effect is what happens if the spell is successfully cast. For example, the effect of the Mystic Shield spell is to allow you to pick a unit within 18" of the caster and re-roll save rolls of 1 for that unit until your next hero phase.



When an ability allows a unit to ignore the effect of a spell, it means that the effects of a spell that has been successfully cast and that has not been unbound do not apply to the unit. This does not stop other units being affected by the spell. The abilities of endless spells are not the same as spell effects, so abilities that allow a unit to ignore the effects of spells do not necessarily allow it to ignore the effects of endless spell abilities.

Spell Range: The range of a spell is the first distance mentioned for the spell. For example, if a spell said 'if successfully cast, pick a point on the battlefield within 12" of the caster and visible to them, and roll a dice for each enemy unit within 3" of that point', then the range of the spell is 12" not 3". Anything that modifies the range of the spell will therefore only modify the first distance. Note that if the range of a spell is 'anywhere on the battlefield', then an ability that increases the range will not have such an effect.

Successful Attack: A 'successful attack' is one in which the hit roll and wound roll succeed and the save roll is failed.

Successful Roll: A roll is 'successful' if it achieves a result that is beneficial to the player rolling the dice. Such rolls can also be said to have 'succeeded'.

Successfully Cast: If the casting roll of a spell is equal to or greater than the spell's casting value, and it is not unbound, then the spell casting attempt is a success, and the spell is successfully cast.



Target: Many rules and abilities require that you pick an enemy unit. In such cases, the unit that you choose is considered to be the 'target'.

This and That: When an ability says 'this model' or 'this unit', it is referring to the model or unit using the ability and on whose warscroll the ability appears. When an ability says 'that model' or 'that unit', it is referring to a separate model or unit that was referred to earlier in the same ability.

Triggered Effects: Sometimes a dice roll will trigger an effect. When a dice roll triggers more than one effect, each effect that applies to the dice roll is triggered once. For example, if a weapon has one rule that says an unmodified hit roll of 6 causes 2 hits on the target instead of 1 and another rule that says that an unmodified hit roll of 6 inflicts D6 mortal wounds, then a hit roll of 6 would cause 2 hits, but only 1 of the hits would inflict D6 mortal wounds.

Visibility: When a rule requires an enemy unit to be visible in order for it to be picked as a target, all that is required is for at least one model in the unit to be visible (not the entire unit).



Wholly On Terrain: A model is wholly on a terrain feature if its base is touching the terrain feature, and no part of its base extends beyond the edge of the terrain feature. If the model does not have a base, it is wholly on a terrain feature if the model is touching the terrain feature and no part of the model extends beyond the edge of the terrain feature.

Wholly Within: A model is wholly within a certain distance of something if every part of its base is within the stated distance. A unit is wholly within a certain distance of something if every part of the bases of all of the models in the unit are within the stated distance.

Within: A model is within a certain distance of something if at least part of its base is within the stated distance. A unit is within range of something if at least part of the base of any model in the unit is within the stated distance. Compare this to 'wholly within', above.

Wizards: When the rules refer to a 'wizard', it means any model that can attempt to cast and/or unbind a spell. When a rule refers to a '**WIZARD**' in keyword bold, it means only models that have the **WIZARD** keyword.

Wounds Inflicted or Suffered: The terms 'inflicted' and 'suffered' are used in reference to wounds that have been allocated to a model and have not been negated or healed.

You and Yours: When an ability on a warscroll says 'you' or 'yours', it is referring to the player that has the unit from the warscroll in their army. When an allegiance ability says 'you' or 'yours', it is referring to the player that is using those allegiance abilities for their army.



I hope this month's column will help you gain a better understanding of the nuances in the way that the rules of Warhammer Age of Sigmar are written. Of course, you can still get in touch with us with your questions by emailing the rules team at AoSFAQ@gwplc.com. The questions you send in will help us to further refine the standard wordings we use in our rules, and they are always gratefully received.

GLORY POINTS



JOHN BRACKEN

John Bracken is a games developer in the Box Games team and writes rules and articles for Warhammer Underworlds and Warhammer Quest. It's rumoured that John carries his power deck with him at all times in case he gets challenged in the street. Apparently he was 'Avin' a Good Time until his opponent's Grasping Hands got involved ...

Hello all and welcome! For this issue, I thought it would be fun to present a deck-building article that explores building a themed deck for competitive play in Warhammer Underworlds, focusing on the Quarry keyword that was introduced to the game with the advent of Beastgrave. Building a deck based around a single keyword can be a lot of fun, and hopefully it will inspire you (no pun intended) to build your own, similar decks, for the same or different warbands.

Let's set the scene. You are trapped in Beastgrave and you are Hunted. Yes, Hunted with a capital H. Everything wants to eat you, from that suspicious-looking cave over there (but do you see gold inside?) to that large mushroom with teeth over yonder (it seems edible ...). Even the landscape wants your blood, as you are sent plummeting to your doom when a sudden earthquake dislodges you from the ledge you are clinging to, tipping you into a ravaging chasm. Worse still, in the tunnels around you are roving warbands of noble warriors and unhinged lunatics alike – and all of them, without exception, are seeking your head.

Well, I say if you are doomed to be a perpetual victim of Beastgrave, then you may as well lean into it. Thus I introduce to you the deck I have cheerfully and optimistically dubbed 'Doomed Enterprises'. This deck takes the Wurmspat, a tough warband of Nurgle Rotbringers with a decent damage output, and loads them up with powerful upgrades which give them the **Quarry** keyword. The only downside is that certain other **Hunter**-specific cards will be of more benefit against my Quarries, but I'm confident that the innate toughness of the Wurmspat, and some of the tech cards I've included, will offset this nicely. Doomed Enterprises seeks to doom the efforts of your enemy whilst getting your fighters punched in the face – repeatedly and often, in fact – as you march to your eventual victory. Of course, getting

your fighters stabbed a lot, regardless of how tough they are, can also lead to your doom, so Doomed Enterprises is something of a double-edged sword and needs to be managed carefully.

ARCHETYPE

This deck is an example of the control deck archetype. It functions around forcing even reticent, 'gun-heavy' or control-focused warbands to come to your fighters – instead of needing you to charge them – thereby maximising your action efficiency each round. You'll be looking to make an Attack action with two fighters per round, with either Sepsimus or Fecula adding a third or even a fourth. The overall game plan is to hold central objectives whilst taking enemy fighters out of action. Any card that doesn't directly aid you in those endeavours is there to make sure your opponent can't carry out their own objectives.

SITTING 'PRETTY' - OBJECTIVES

The first port of call for most players when building decks is objective cards, and I always start with surge objectives. I try to pick what I think will be the easiest ones to complete and get them sleeved up first. Most of them are self-explanatory, but I have a few specific ones I'd like to bring your attention to, so I can highlight how other cards in the deck interact with them (1-5).

As you read these cards, the plan should start to become clear – get your fighters onto objective tokens and force your opponent to attack them! This can be done simply by Inspiring your fighters and putting them in the right place. Even an opponent who has no interest in attacking your warband will have little choice if your fighters are placed in a prime position, blasting out spells and hurling spears into unfortunate nearby fighters. As you can see, a single enemy attack can score all of these objectives in one fell swoop (though of course you'll only have up to three of them in your hand at a time), and your fighter is all but guaranteed to survive the attack.



1



2

Glory Points is our column all about Warhammer Underworlds: Beastgrave. Curated by games developer Dave Sanders, it delves into the development of the game, plus rules, tactics and gameplay. This month, though, John joins us to talk about being hunted.



The trick is to make sure you don't get driven back off the objective, so there are certain cards in the deck to ensure that won't happen (6-9).

As you can see, each of these cards either gives your fighter a Guard token or prevents them from being driven back. Of course, achieving this positional perfection in the first place is not easy, as speed is the great weakness of this warband. You'll need some cards to increase your chances of being in the right place at the right time.

RESTLESS PRIZE (10)

Restless Prize is an old favourite and serves to ensure that your fighter, once they have made a Move action, will have a valuable objective token sat directly underneath them. It has an additional benefit in certain matchups, which we will come to later. The trick is to position your fighter in the right place before moving the objective. You should move the objective before your opponent makes their attack – so in your own power step – if you have any of the above objectives in your hand.

INVERT TERRAIN (11)

Invert Terrain serves two different purposes against aggro and objective play.

Against opponents who are playing the 'objective' play style, you want to use this spell to make sure your opponent can't sit back on their objectives if they get to place three of them at

the start of the game. Play the card as early as possible after advancing Fecula into their territory and try to aim for the farthest possible objective from you (or one you don't think you will be able to attack or sit on this round). The lethal hex portion of the token flip is not as important as simply taking an objective off your opponent. As an aside, you should also look to place your own objectives as far away as possible from your opponent at the start of the game, meaning they have to walk past your bulky Nurgle Wall o' Doom™ to get to them once you turn one of theirs into some useless sludge or toxic lava.

Against aggro warbands, you want to carefully place your own objectives in the middle of the battlefield, so you can use this card to create an opportune lethal hex to kick your opponent into, or just to make it awkward to get to your fighters.

DISTRACTION & NIGHTMARE IN THE SHADOWS (12, 13)

Finally, these two cards allow you to punt enemy fighters off objectives so your own fighters can go and plop themselves atop them. Alternatively, if you are feeling especially sneaky and lucky, you could use it to bring an enemy fighter into range so that it can attack you without charging, thereby increasing your chances of scoring the objectives listed above. Your opponent will almost certainly not be able to pass up the chance! Of course this is risky, depending on which fighter you choose to push ...



THE BEST OF THE REST

As for the remaining objectives, many of them are straightforward enough, but there are some that merit a few notes to explain their use in this specific deck.

AHEAD OF THE HUNT (14)

This is, as the inestimable Phil Kelly would say, 'a gimmie'. It's guaranteed to get scored provided you can equip a single upgrade over the course of the game, so it's perfectly safe unless you are extremely unlucky in the early game.

THE HUNTER HUNTED (15)

This is, admittedly, a more risky objective, but it's quite achievable when you consider that the Grymwatch, Skaeth's Wild Hunt and Grashrak's Despoilers all provide relatively easy-to-kill Hunters. Even a 4-wound fighter like Rippa Narkbad is by no means unkillable to the mighty Wurmshpat, who have a reliable and powerful damage output.

SWIFT CAPTURE (16)

This card may seem at odds with our strategy, but that's not the case. Ghulgoch usually doesn't get stuck in until round 2 at the earliest, so in the meantime he may as well get an objective in your territory while he waits. While reliable Ghulgoch does that, you can send Sepsimus and Fecula into enemy territory to grab whichever objective they can (using the cards mentioned above to make sure they keep hold of it). Moving Ghulgoch onto an objective as a first action is also a nice play to begin with while you wait to see what your opponent does, as it doesn't really give away your overall strategy.

BOLD CONQUEST (17)

Fecula is a great leader, and you can combine Restless Prize and this objective to charge her on to the objective token and have a pop at a nearby enemy fighter. It feeds into our overall strategy, and because Fecula doesn't deal vast amounts of damage with her spell Attack action, you can usually expect a revenge attack on your 'squishy' leader. In turn that might score Over My Dead Body or Steadfast Defender (and scoring Bold Conquest might let you draw into one of these). That's a good deal all round.

PUSHY PLAY STYLE

As ought to be evident by now, you want to sit on and hold objectives, whilst killing anything that comes near (and dragging in anything that doesn't want to). Every gambit has been chosen to make this easier to do, which involves a lot of pushing. Let's take a closer look at some of the less obvious picks.

GO TO GROUND (18)

This card may seem out of place but, simply put, you don't want your fighters to die. Given their moderate speed, they may not be able to get into position before they have taken too much damage to be able to reliably hold an objective against an enemy warband. This counts doubly against warbands that can do a great deal of spell damage that you can't use your innate resistance against. In this case, getting a fighter out of the way can be a game-saving play. Aim to disrupt! In addition, because your fighters will often be Quarries, they can be set up anywhere you want in your territory. If you can pull it off early, even in a situation where you are on the receiving end of the 'long board', you may be able to squeeze a few extra hexes out of whichever fighter gets left at the back of your territory. Finally, popping yourself onto an objective in your territory that your crafty opponent is making a beeline for is a worthy use of this card, and it highlights again the potential locked away in the Quarry keywords, just waiting to be unleashed!

BLIND HUNGER (19)

I'm not sure how many people will run this fine card after it is released (at the time of writing it isn't out), but I think in this deck it is a fun and useful inclusion. The best time to use it is either in the first round or when your opponent has one card left.

The logic behind playing Blind Hunger in the first round is simple. If your opponent took a do-over, then using this spell means you are more likely to discard a card they were looking for, or you've turned a good five-card hand into a lesser four-card hand. If they didn't take a do-over, then great – your spell is almost guaranteed to hit something of value. It's a win-win!



14



15



16



17



18



19



20



21



22

Playing Blind Hunger when your opponent only has one power card in their hand is great. Knowing your opponent is 'out of tricks' is very reassuring, especially for this warband, and if your opponent was holding onto a powerful card like Restless Prize or Rebound, then making them discard it is potentially very powerful. Losing such a card can also tilt your opponent off the face of the planet, which never hurts your chances of winning!



THE STRENGTH OF THE PREY

Overall, being a Quarry is not great, as Hunters typically get some bonuses against your fighters, making them easier to kill. In this deck, however, becoming a Quarry is your aim! 'But why?' I hear you cry, 'Are you mad?' Not so, good reader, but rather I have a plan ... In general terms the upgrades in this deck, while *potentially* making your fighters easier to kill, are offset by *definitely* having powerful effects which work well alongside the innate defensive tools of the Wurm spat. It is also worth bearing in mind the following two facts:

1: Not everyone runs Hunters, or Hunter-specific upgrades. If your opponent doesn't, you get all the benefits and none of the drawbacks.

2: Hrothgorn's Mantrappers are a solid warband with a growing player base (especially at time of writing), and as more warbands are released, I expect this to grow. As Hrothgorn makes every enemy fighter a Quarry anyway, with this deck you are reaping all the rewards for exactly, mathematically, zero of the downsides, as you would be suffering those regardless.

So let's see what we get in terms of upgrades we haven't already covered.

CRYPTIC COMPANION (20)

This is a great upgrade that works well with our strategy. Glory helps you win games, and it all but ensures your opponent will be attacking the fighter with this upgrade, or at least will be trying

to push them off an objective they're holding. Cards like Cloaked in Shadow, Sidestep, Hidden Presence and Steady Advance will help ensure your opponent can't use any tricks to push your fighter off, or allow you to get back on it with a minimum of fuss.

PREY'S CUNNING (21)

This is a tech card to prevent wizards blasting your tough fighters to pieces with gambit spells. It also stops Collapse, Raptor Strike, Snare, Lethal Ward, Pit Trap – the list goes on and on.

UNSTOPPABLE TREAD (22)

This card is great in nearly any deck, but it gets a special mention here. That's because it allows the fighter to charge an enemy fighter that is cowering on an objective and then take it off them, as long as they were driven back or taken out of action. Praise Grandfather Nurgle!

END PHASE

Well, there you have it – a nuanced control-style deck that aims to prevent your opponent from achieving their goals whilst battering them senseless with your own, powerful fighters. There is a lot of 'play' in the deck – which means you will have a lot of decisions to make correctly in order to pilot the deck successfully – but the satisfaction from winning will be immense! Bear one thing in mind: if your opponent won't play ball and hit your fighters on objectives, you will need to start scoring your easy objectives (Abundance of Caution, Hidden Purpose). Use your upgrades gained from those easy glory points to start taking enemy fighters out of action, which you should be more than capable of doing!

There's one caveat: this deck is *probably* not going to win a Grand Clash any time soon. There is a lot of risk/reward included here that top-tier decks typically shy away from, and a very good opponent who spots early on what you are doing may well navigate your minefield of ploys and fighters. However, the objective here is not to give you an award-winning deck, but to highlight the depth and variety of Warhammer Underworlds cards, especially given the recent addition of the Hunter and Quarry keywords. Hopefully it's given you some ideas about how to build your own, wackier decks in the future!

TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS

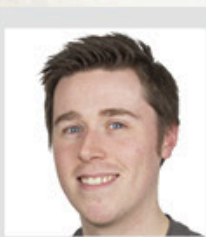
As ever, do write in if you have any suggestions or something that you'd like to read about. You can contact me by email at:

whunderworlds@gwplc.com

or by sending a letter to Dave Sanders, Books and Box Games, Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS.

WIZARDS' DUEL

This month, the Middle-earth team's rules writer, Jay Clare, focuses the Palantír upon the fierce battle between Gandalf and Saruman as they fight within the Tower of Orthanc, allowing you to re-enact this epic clash of Wizards for yourselves!



JAY CLARE

Jay has been enthralled by the Middle-earth Strategy Battle Game since the tender age of 10, and he remembers the classic *Battle Games in Middle-earth* magazines with great fondness. In fact, that's where his first miniature came from – Aragorn from Helm's Deep!

One of the most dramatic scenes in *The Fellowship of the Ring*™ is when Gandalf goes to visit Saruman in order to relay his concerns over the discovery of the One Ring in the Shire. Of course, Gandalf soon comes to realise that Saruman has abandoned reason for madness and thrown in his lot with the Dark Lord in exchange for the promise of power. This all comes to a head when Saruman shows his true colours to Gandalf, culminating in the two Istari engaging in a duel of sorcery inside the main chamber of Orthanc.

In the Strategy Battle Game, there is no real way to play out this event, what with it only featuring two characters and nothing else, and this felt like a real shame considering how important this scene is in the story of *The Lord of the Rings*™. This then got me thinking about how best to recreate the Wizards' Duel.

I then remembered an old article from the *Battle Games in Middle-earth*™ magazine that Games Workshop published back in the early 2000s. Within one of the issues there was a mini-game provided so that people could play through this exact scene, complete with a hex grid for the Istari to move around on.

Well, I thought that it would be fun to revisit this classic mini-game. So I set about playing through it (it's a tough life being a games developer!) and adapting the game for inclusion in *White Dwarf*. I must say, playing it again now is every bit as fun as I remember it being back when I was in school. Just remember that it is mandatory to shout the names of your Magical Attacks and Defences (perhaps using your best Ian McKellen or Christopher Lee impressions!) – it makes the game far more exciting and gives you the feeling of being an all-powerful Istari. Enjoy!

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play this mini-game, all you need is the playing surface included with this issue, miniatures to represent Gandalf the Grey, Saruman the White and the Palantír, a D6, and a pen and paper or two additional different-coloured D6s for each player.

OBJECTIVE OF THE GAME

The objective is simple. The first Wizard to reduce their opponent from 15 wounds to 0 is the winner.

THE GAMING AREA

Setting up the gaming space is easy. Simply put the playing surface provided with this issue on a table, then place Gandalf and Saruman on their starting locations – Gandalf on the 'G' and Saruman on the 'S'. The Palantír is placed in the central hex. Once this is all set up, you are ready to play.

THE GAME

The game is played in a series of turns as usual, following the phases listed below:

TURN SEQUENCE

1. Priority
2. Move
3. Choose Attack and Defence
3. Execute Attacks

PRIORITY

In the first turn, Priority automatically goes to Saruman – after all, he does get the drop on Gandalf! In subsequent turns, both Wizards roll a D6 and Priority will go to whichever Wizard rolls highest. If the rolls are tied, Priority will go to the Wizard who did not have it in the previous turn.

MOVE

The Wizard who has Priority may then move one space into any adjacent hex. However, they may not move into a hex containing the other Wizard or the Palantír. Unlike the Strategy Battle Game, only the Wizard with Priority gets to move on each turn; the other Wizard does not get to move.

CHOOSE ATTACK AND DEFENCE

In this mini-game, the Wizards do not engage in hand-to-hand combat, even if they are next to each other; they are too busy trying to assert their magical dominance over the other. Instead, each Wizard secretly chooses one Magical Attack and one Magical Defence from the Magical Powers chart (see page 121) and writes them down or uses different-coloured dice to keep track of their selections, making sure that their opponent doesn't see what they have chosen.

Magical Attacks are made up of two components: Push and Crush. A Push forces the enemy Wizard

away (a horizontal blast), whilst a Crush damages the target by flattening them on the floor (a vertical blast). Each Magical Attack comprises different combinations of these two components, representing the magical blast coming from different angles (see Magical Powers chart, page 121). For example, the Bang! Magical Attack can Push 1 and Crush 2, whilst the Whack! Magical Attack can Push 3 and Crush 0, and so on.

Magical Defence powers can completely stop only one of the two components (cancelling all Push or all Crush), or protect the Wizard against both but to a lesser degree (–1 Push and –1 Crush).

EXECUTE ATTACKS

To execute their Attacks, both players simultaneously reveal their chosen Magical Powers. They must also shout the magic word attached to the selected Magical Attack and Defence. Yes, this is compulsory, and it makes it far more fun!

Starting with the Wizard who has Priority, compare their chosen Magical Attack with the opponent's Magical Defence. The Push and Crush components of the Magical Attack are modified by the protection granted by the Magical Defence. For each point of Push that makes it through the opponent's Magical Defence, the Wizard may move their opponent one hex further away, in a direction chosen by the attacker. For each point of Crush that makes it through the opponent's Magical Defence, the opposing Wizard suffers 1 point of damage.

If a Wizard would be pushed into an obstacle, such as if they cannot complete the push because a wall or the Palantír stands in the way, the Wizard will suffer damage. In this situation, the Wizard suffers damage equal to the number of hexes they should have originally been moved. The number of hexes the Wizard had been moved before they hit an obstacle does not matter. For example, if Gandalf would have been pushed two hexes, and he is moved one hex before colliding with a wall, he will stop next to the wall and will then suffer 2 points of damage.

THE PALANTÍR

If a Wizard is in a hex adjacent to the Palantír, and the opposing Wizard is not, then they benefit from the powers of the Seeing Stone. This means that, before the Wizard selects their Magical Defence, their opponent must declare one of their Magical Attacks that they have NOT chosen this turn – giving them a better chance of being able to protect themselves. If both Wizards are next to the Palantír, then its powers are cancelled out, and neither player gains the benefits.



GAME EXAMPLE

GANDALF'S ATTACK

Gandalf reveals he has chosen to attack with Slam! (2 Push/1 Crush). Saruman responds with Stop! (No Push). Saruman's Magical Defence prevents him from being pushed, and so he is only crushed for 1 point of damage (see fig. 1).



SARUMAN'S RESPONSE

At the same time, Saruman reveals he has chosen to attack with Whack! (3 Push/0 Crush). Gandalf has chosen the Shield! (-1 Push/-1 Crush) Magical Defence. This results in Gandalf being pushed two hexes and suffering no damage (see fig. 2).



GANDALF RETALIATES

Later in the game, Gandalf attacks with the Smash! (0 Push/3 Crush) Magical Attack. Fortunately for the White Wizard, Saruman has chosen the No! (No Crush) Magical Defence, stopping all the Crush damage. This results in Saruman being entirely unaffected (see fig. 3).



SARUMAN'S ASSAULT

At the same time, Saruman has chosen to attack with Whack! (3 Push/0 Crush). Gandalf has chosen the Shield! (-1 Push/-1 Crush) Magical Defence again. This should result in Gandalf being pushed two hexes away from Saruman and suffering no Crush damage. However, Gandalf is only one hex away from the wall when he is pushed. As he cannot complete the push move away from Saruman, he is slammed into the wall and suffers two damage – one damage for each hex he should have been pushed in this situation (see fig. 4).



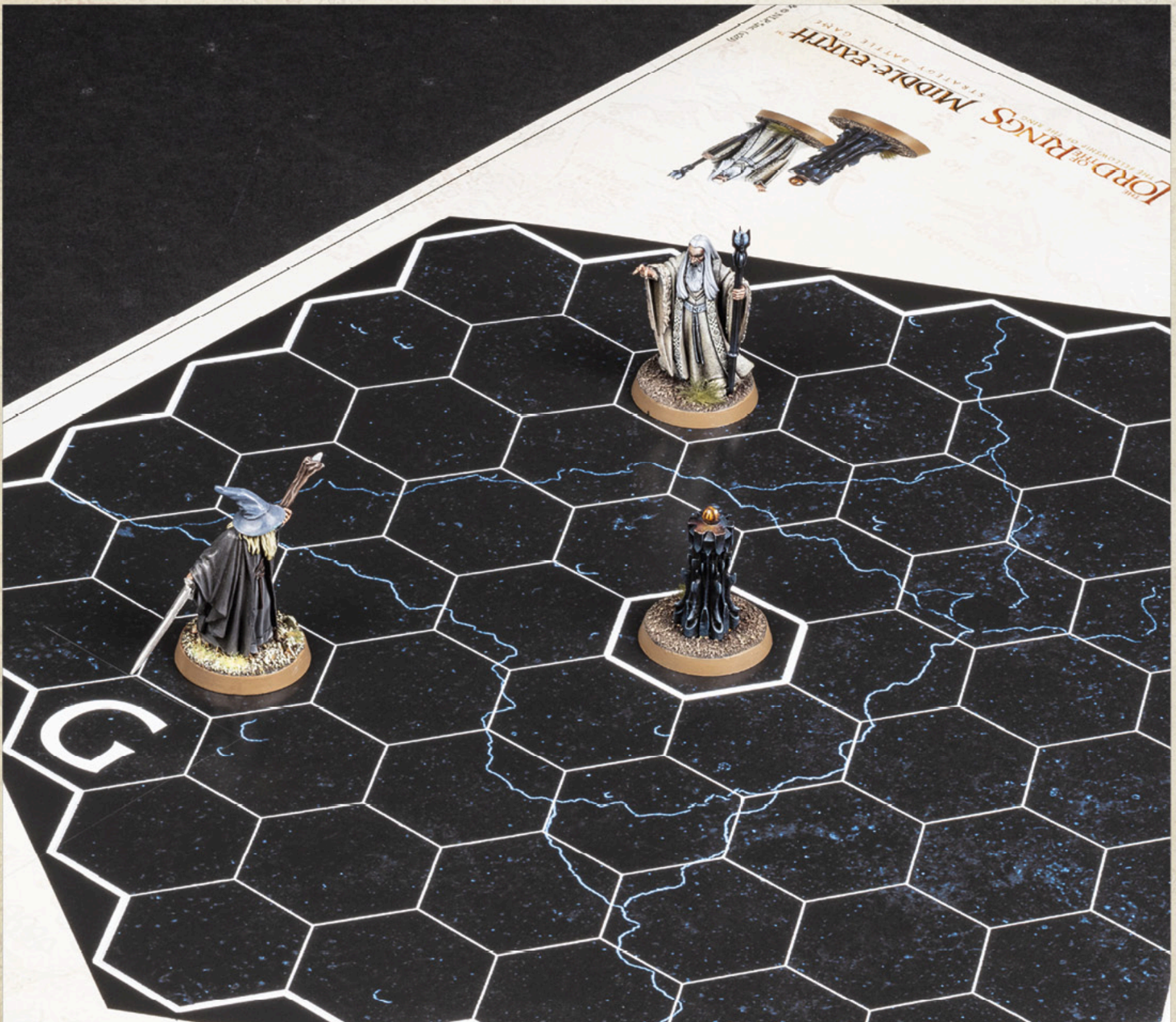
WINNING THE GAME

Each Wizard has a total of 15 wounds. Each time they suffer damage, reduce the number of wounds they have remaining by the number of points of damage they suffer.

When a Wizard loses their final wound, they are knocked out, allowing the other Wizard to take their staff and win the game! This happens immediately, so if the Wizard with Priority knocks out their opponent before they have a chance to resolve their Magical Attack, then their opponent cannot complete their Magical Power and the Wizard with Priority is the winner. As such, this mini-game can never end in a draw.

MAGICAL POWERS CHART	
Magical Attacks	Magical Defence
1. Whack! 3 Push/0 Crush	1. Stop! No Push
2. Slam! 2 Push/1 Crush	2. No! No Crush
3. Bang! 1 Push/2 Crush	3. Shield! -1 Push/-1 Crush
4. Smash! 0 Push/3 Crush	

WOUNDS CHART				
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
Defeat				



NEW HANGERS-ON: OUTLAW BRUTES

Looking for some extra muscle, but not picky about where it comes from? Have an open mind about tentacles, insanity and crimes against nature? Then you might be in the market for an Outlaw Brute! Read on to find out how to hire one for your gang.



GANGS OF THE UNDERHIVE

The full rules for hiring Brutes as part of your gang can be found in *Necromunda: Gangs of the Underhive*. This book also includes new Hired Guns, Hangers-on, Exotic Beasts and an updated Trading Post.



All manner of horrors, monsters and abominations stalk the underhive, and some of them can even be 'trained' to fight in a gang. Mutated Ogryns, underhive creatures that are bundles of glistening eyes and rubbery tentacles, scrapcode-infected cyber-automata and even otherworldly denizens are all potential additions to gangs who are unwilling, or perhaps unable, to acquire more 'mainstream' Brutes.

Outlaw gangs in particular have far fewer scruples when it comes to hiring unusual heavy-hitters, not limiting themselves to Slave Ogryns or pilfered mining servitors. Cut off from their Clan House armouries (or perhaps part of the clanless underclasses), these gangs are more than willing to recruit fighters most sane Necromundans wouldn't touch with the business end of a renderizer. After all, if you already have

a price on your head, and everyone thinks you're the scum of Necromunda, why not hire a mutant horror to watch your back?

USING OUTLAW BRUTES IN NECROMUNDA

Outlaw Brutes are (unsurprisingly) Brutes that can only be hired by Outlaw gangs (see *Necromunda: The Book of Judgement* or *Necromunda: The Book of Ruin*), but that otherwise follow all the normal rules for hiring Brutes. Over the next few pages you will find rules for using Scrapcode-corrupted Ambots, Mutated Ogryns, Sump Beasts and Warp Horrors. The Scrapcode-corrupted Ambots, Mutated Ogryns and Sump Beasts can be hired by any Outlaw Gang, while a Warp Horror may only be hired by a Helot Chaos Cult gang, a Corpse Grinder Cult gang or a Chaos Corrupted gang. Some creatures are too much even for the most deranged gangs ...

O-1 SCRAPCODE-CORRUPTED AMBOT 220 CREDITS

Not all monsters are made of flesh and bone. Some are Mankind's machines gone awry, their brains subverted by scrapcode, a malign tech-virus that drives its subjects to madness. On Necromunda, Mining Automata are sometimes the targets of this malady, their systems corrupted by Heretek or tech-traitors. Such a beast is an abomination against the Machine God, a horror of iron, wires and whirring mining claws, loosed upon the denizens of the underhive. Outlaw gangs will pay well for a Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot, the mechanical monster easily as dangerous as a dozen gangers when unleashed into combat. Only the most desperate and heretical of individuals covet such monsters; men and women for whom the sacrilegious act of owning a mind-poisoned automata is the very least of their crimes.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Cl	Wil	Int
4"	3+	5+	5	5	3	5+	3	8+	6+	9+	10+

Steve May converted this corrupted Ambot using spikes from various Chaos kits and a skull from the Skulls set.



WEAPONS

A Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot is armed with two tunnelling claws. All Scrapcode-corrupted Ambots are equipped with Light Carapace Armour.

OPTIONS

A Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot may replace one of its Tunnelling Claws with a Grav-fist +90 credits

A Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot may be given Heavy Carapace Armour +55 credits

A Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot may be given Armour Spikes +15 credits

SPECIAL RULES

Machine Madness: Scrapcode-corrupted Ambots are hopelessly insane, often as dangerous to their handlers as their enemies. All attacks made by a Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot have the Reckless trait. In addition, after a Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot Seriously Injures a fighter, or sends them Out of Action, roll a D6. On a 1 the Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot immediately gains the Insane condition.

Valuable: Should a Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot be captured by a rival gang and not be rescued, it may be

SKILLS

A Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot has the Berserker and Nerves of Steel skills (as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*).

RECKLESS

Reckless weapons are indiscriminate in what they target. Before making an attack with a Reckless weapon, randomly determine the target of the attack from all eligible models within the fighter's line of sight and range of the weapon. If the weapon also has the Rapid Fire (X) trait, then any additional hits generated from the Firepower dice must be distributed among the maximum number of eligible targets. If there are more hits than eligible targets, the fighter may choose where any spare hits are allocated.

sold to the Guilders as normal. However, if another outlaw gang captures it, and the Ambot is not rescued, they may choose to either sell it on the black market for its cost in credits, or to keep it and add it to their gang roster for free, assuming they have sufficient Reputation to take on an extra Hanger-on.

Armour Spikes: When any fighter moves into base contact with a Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot with this upgrade, or an Ambot with this upgrade moves into base contact with any fighter, that fighter suffers an automatic Strength 1, AP -, Damage 1 hit before any other attacks are made.

SKILL ACCESS

A Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot has access to the following skill sets:

	Agility	Brawn	Combat	Cunning
Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot	-	Secondary	Secondary	-
	Leadership	Ferocity	Shooting	Savant
Scrapcode-corrupted Ambot	-	Primary	-	-

0-1 MUTATED OGRYN

210 CREDITS

Mutated Ogryns are nightmare brutes whose DNA has been warped and changed by the insidious taint of the warp. Such mistakes of nature are routinely purged by the Imperial House, lest they taint the good abhuman stock of their world, but sometimes they escape. Lured downhive by the promise of isolation and darkness, the dull-witted mutant Ogryns find new masters, to whom their twisted limbs and unreasoning violent temper are regarded as beautiful gifts to be cherished and nurtured. Outlaw gang leaders mould these poor, misguided creatures into their personal protectors, the mutant Ogryn as faithful and loyal as their sanctioned counterparts – albeit with a greater knack for psychotic murder.



The Chaos Ogryn from Blackstone Fortress: Traitor Command makes for an excellent Mutated Ogryn.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Cl	Wil	Int
5"	3+	5+	5	5	3	4+	3	7+	6+	8+	9+

WEAPONS

A Mutated Ogryn is armed with two Open Fists.

OPTIONS

A Mutated Ogryn may replace one of its Open Fists with a Power Maul +30 credits

A Mutated Ogryn may replace one of its Open Fists with Horrific Appendages +20 credits

A Mutated Ogryn may be upgraded with Furnace Plates +15 credits

SPECIAL RULES

Murderous Brute: In addition to the True Grit skill (see below), when recruited, a Mutated Ogryn may be given a single randomly determined skill from either the Ferocity or the Savagery skill sets. This skill does not cost any XP and does not increase the fighter’s value.

Slow Witted: Mutated Ogryns, like their sanctioned counterparts, are not especially bright or quick on the uptake. This fighter may never be activated as part of a Group Activation.

SKILLS

A Mutated Ogryn has the True Grit skill (as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*).



SKILL ACCESS

A Mutated Ogryn has access to the following skill sets:

	Agility	Brawn	Combat	Cunning
Mutated Ogryn	-	Primary	Secondary	-
	Leadership	Ferocity	Shooting	Savant
Mutated Ogryn	-	Secondary	-	-

0-1 WARP HORROR

Most sane outlaws will have nothing to do with something as terrifying as a Warp Horror, seeing in the creature the anathema of all hivers, be they loyal subjects of Lord Helmawr or criminal scum. Chaos cults are, of course, another story. It is a great boon for a cult dedicated to the Dark Gods to gain the aid of a Warp Horror. Whereas more mundane Chaos Spawn are examples of mutation run rampant, the Warp Horror is a genuine creature of the immaterium and has unique powers and abilities as a result. Warp Horrors also come in myriad shapes and sizes, often defying the laws of nature and leaving no doubt as to the realm from whence they were birthed.

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Cl	Wil	Int
6"	3+	6+	6	4	3	4+	3	9+	6+	7+	9+

210 CREDITS



This hideous-looking Warp Horror is represented by Vulgrar Thrice-Cursed from the Kill Team: Rogue Trader set.

WEAPONS

A Warp Horror is armed with two Horrific Appendages.

OPTIONS

A Warp Horror may take any of the following upgrades in addition to its Horrific Appendages:

Massive Tentacles	+50 credits
Warpfire Breath	+90 credits
Undulating Skin	+40 credits

SPECIAL RULES

Terrifying: If an enemy fighter wishes to make a Fight (Basic) or Shoot (Basic) action that targets a Warp Horror, they must make a Willpower check. If the check is failed, they cannot perform the action and their action ends immediately.

Note that, as the action has not been performed, and if the fighter's activation has not ended, they may attempt to make the same action again.

Warp Denizen: In the End phase of each round, roll 2D6. If the result is equal to or lower than the current game round, the Warp Horror suffers a Flesh Wound. As a creature of the immaterium, a Warp Horror ignores all Lasting Injury results with the exception of Memorable Death.

Undulating Skin: A Warp Horror with this upgrade reduces all damage it suffers by 1, to a minimum of 1.

SKILLS

A Warp Horror has the Nerves of Steel skill (as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*).

SKILL ACCESS

A Warp Horror has access to the following skill sets:

	Agility	Brawn	Combat	Cunning
Warp Horror	-	Secondary	Secondary	-
	Leadership	Ferocity	Shooting	Savant
Warp Horror	-	Primary	-	-

0-1 SUMP BEAST

Sump beasts come in countless variations, from multi-headed tox serpents and fanged dome-crawlers to mutant grox and albino sump-spiders. The only thing they all have in common is they are large predatory creatures and universally vile to look upon. However, despite their disturbing appearance, when reared from birth, some of these horrors can prove surprisingly loyal, seeing the gang leader as their adoptive parent and fighting furiously to defend them. A particularly venerable sump beast might even remain in a gang under successive generations of leaders, each new gang boss inheriting the creature from the predecessor as a faithful – if nightmarish – protector.

200 CREDITS



Steve May converted this Sump Beast using an Akhelian King's deepmare with the head of a Kharibdyss. Gruesome!

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld	Cl	Wil	Int
3"	4+	4+	5	6	4	5+	2	9+	4+	5+	9+
5"	4+	5+	4	5	4	4+	2	8+	5+	6+	10+
4"	3+	4+	5	4	4	4+	2	9+	4+	5+	9+

WEAPONS

A Sump Beast is armed with Ferocious Jaws.

OPTIONS

A Sump Beast may take any of the following upgrades, in addition to its Ferocious Jaws:

Lashing Tail	+50 credits
Crushing Claws	+70 credits
Prehensile Tongue	+60 credits
Venomous Bite	+35 credits
Multiple Legs	+20 credits
Scaly Hide	+40 credits

SPECIAL RULES

Many-shaped Horror: When a Sump Beast is recruited, the recruiting player chooses one of the profiles from those listed above. In this way, the profile can be matched to the model being used to represent the creature, whether it is a lumbering brute, a rapidly moving predator or a scuttling horror of many legs and eyes.

Underhive Monster: When a Sump Beast is activated, if there is a Seriously Injured fighter within 6" (friend or foe) it must make an Intelligence check. If this check is failed, the Sump Beast must make a Charge (Double) action or a Coup De Grace (simple) action against the Seriously Injured fighter.

In addition, a Sump Beast must always make a Coup De Grace action if able, rather than choosing to consolidate.

Scaly Hide: A Sump Beast with this upgrade has a 4+ Save.

Poisonous Bite: The Ferocious Jaws of a Sump Beast with this upgrade gain the Toxin trait.

Multiple Legs: The Movement Characteristic of a Sump Beast with this upgrade is improved by 2" and it gains the Clamber skill.

SKILLS

A Sump Beast has the Unstoppable, Fearsome and True Grit skills (as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*).

SKILL ACCESS

A Sump Beast has access to the following skill sets:

	Agility	Brawn	Combat	Cunning
Sump Beast	-	Secondary	-	Primary
	Leadership	Ferocity	Shooting	Savant
Sump Beast	-	Secondary	-	-

CLOSE COMBAT WEAPONS

Weapon	Rng		Acc		S	AP	D	Am	Traits
	S	L	S	L					
Crushing Claws	-	E	-	-	S+3	-1	2	-	Knockback, Melee
Ferocious Jaws	-	E	-	-	S	-1	1	-	Melee, Rending
Grav-fist									
- Melee	-	E	-	-	S	-1	2	-	Melee, Pulverise
- Ranged	6"	12"	+1	-	*	-1	2	5+	Blast (3"), Concussion, Graviton Pulse
Horrific Appendages	-	E	-	-	S	-1	2	-	Melee, Pulverize, Rending
Lashing Tail	E	6"	-	-	S	-1	1	-	Impale, Melee, Versatile
Massive Tentacles	E	4"	-	-	S+1	-	1	-	Drag, Entangle, Melee, Versatile
Open Fists	-	E	-	-	S	-1	1	-	Knockback, Melee
Power Maul	-	E	-	-	S+2	-1	1	-	Melee, Power
Prehensile Tongue	E	2"	-	-	S	-	1	-	Drag, Melee, Versatile
Tunnelling Claw									
- Melee	-	E	-	-	S	-1	2	-	Melee
- Ranged	4"	8"	-	-	6	-2	2	5+	Melta, Scarce, Sidearm

SPECIAL WEAPONS

Weapon	Rng		Acc		S	AP	D	Am	Traits
	S	L	S	L					
Warpfire Breath	-	T	-	-	3	-1	1	4+	Blaze, Template



FAITH & FIRE

BY JAMES SWALLOW

Sisters Miriya and Verity find themselves imprisoned in the dungeons of the Null Keep. With Torris Vaun on the loose and gathering an army, and Viktor LaHayn about to enact his foul plan, time is running out for the Adepta Sororitas. Part VIII of IX.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It was a dungeon, and the designs of such places had not changed in tens of millennia, since the very first days that men caged men and tortured them to gain secrets and superiority. Robbing their prisoners with even the dignity of that name, the tenders considered the tiers of cells in the Null Keep as a paddock for things they thought to be less than human. The clerics who had pledged loyalty to LaHayn's project kept his secret well; one glimpse at the men with eyes sewn shut and lips fused together in the test chambers was enough to instil that kind of devotion. There was always a need for more experimental subjects, whether it was for the psyker-slaves to practise on or for LaHayn's pet biologists adepts to doctor. The tech-priests liked to toy with the brains of the operant and the latent, trying to enhance the powers of the former and engender spontaneous psychic phenomena in the latter. These experiments were designed to induce 'breakouts' – artificially generated telepaths and psychokinetics – but more often than not, their end results were corpses or things that had to immediately be put down. Vaun stole past the testing rooms, the humming psychic landscape of silent screams prickling at the edges of his mind. His quarry lay elsewhere, deeper inside the prison levels.

There were only a few tenders in the main chamber, busying themselves with hushed discussion at a cogitator pulpit or ministering to the gaggle of gun servitors ambling about the perimeter of the room. The machine-helots were constantly in motion, never tiring of their endless patrols of the lava tube corridors. Vaun recalled from his youth the way the once-men clanked about the stone floors, the mouths of their guns forever questing for something out of place, so that they might kill it. He had heard that the blanked minds of the servitors were festooned with implanted triggers, devices that would stir pleasure impulses in them whenever a runaway was brought down. The psyker used a maintenance ladder to convey him to the ceiling where the overhead cargo rail was fixed. Light did not reach up here, but his abhuman senses were more than enough to let him navigate his way, metre by careful metre.

Presently he came to a pulley and chain arrangement, dangling close to the guard station in the middle of the elliptical chamber. Vaun turned himself so that his feet were flat against the ceiling and his body pointed downward along the line of the chain. Below him, he could see the tenders in conversation, utterly unaware of the killer that hung silently above them.

'I've secured the new intake as you requested,' said the first, 'but there are not enough guards for the chamber.'

A nod from the second priest in grey. 'Ojis had them transferred to the engine room. The orders came directly from the deacon himself.'

'Is he here? Did you actually *see* Lord LaHayn?'

'I was not so blessed.'

Vaun sneered at the sanctimonious tone and gathered his power, cupping it in his mind like a hand shielding a candle flame. With a sudden shove, he pushed off and the heavy chain unravelled with a clanking rush.

The two tenders looked up in surprise, and their upturned faces met a rain of fire coming down. Streaks of unnaturally heated air ripped into them like laser bolts. Vaun spun about on the chain, letting the action whip him around. He spread the fingers of his free hand and let witchfire streak out from it in a wide red fan. The psionic flames lashed the priests who tried to flee and the slow-reacting servitors drones.

He dropped from the chain into a ready stance and moved to a tender who was beating madly at his burning robes. Ignoring the fire and the man's cries, Vaun hoisted the cleric off the floor and ripped a ring of heavy keys from his belt. The tender tried to say something, but Vaun threw him hard against the wall and he fell away. Flame licked about the ebon stonework, pooling in runnels of molten liquid.

Stubber rounds cracked past the killer and he ignored them. At the back of his mind, he could feel the gaze of other psykers upon him, and in the half-dark it was possible to glimpse dulled eyes peering out from barred slots in cell doors. *Be ready, cousins.* He broadcast the thought to all of them. *Freedom is close at hand.*

The slow gun-slaves were gathering themselves and formulating plans of engagement; Vaun could hear them clicking orders to one another in the metallic prattle of machine code. He had to be quick. Stepping over a smoking body he found the second tender on his hands and knees, feeling his way toward an escape tunnel. Vaun took a handful of his robes and spun him over. Grotesque burns covered the pink-black mass of the priest's face and his hands were swollen claws. This one also had a hoop of keys, which went into Vaun's grip with the others. The tender tried to say something, but his heat-ravaged throat could manage nothing more than a mew. Vaun broke his neck with a savage kick and left him to choke.

Gun servitors advanced on him as he reached the wide cogitator pulpit. Vaun rammed the keys home in twin slots; normally, two tenders would have been needed to perform the action at either end of the long console, but Vaun's psychic reach had none of the limits of his flesh and blood limbs. The keys turned, one by hand and the other by telekinesis, and a hooting tocsin warned of the opening of the cell doors. The servitors hesitated, weapons deflecting from the single target at the pulpit to the dozens of new ones boiling out of their confinement. Vaun tipped back his head and laughed as the ponderous machine-slaves were beaten down and torn apart by angry psykers.

He watched his erstwhile brethren fight like beasts. These were a poor lot, he realised, and barely one of them with the skills or brains of those he had recruited before Groombridge. The late, dull-witted Rink and disagreeable Abb had been the model of genius in comparison. These ones had no discipline, not an iota of the self-control that Vaun demanded from his men, and in such low numbers they would not last long against a concerted effort by the deacon's forces. The poor fools all bore scarring where the phase-iron of their cells had burnt them time and time again; but they would do. Even an army of rats would be better than no army at all.

'Cousins!' he called, the word cutting through the acrid, smoky air. 'There's more of those tinplate clockworks down here, and plenty of tender tenders to boot!' The escapees replied with lusty cheers. 'The time has come to pay back that old whoreson LaHayn in kind! Who among you would join me in handing out some reprisal?'

'Aye!' they called, tearing guns from flesh-mounts and surging into the tunnels. Vaun laughed again, his amusement lost in the clamour.



Thin drools of meat smoke dropped into the prison pit, pooling around the ankles of the women. With quick gestures, Miriya directed Verity back against the black stone walls, concealing her in the shadows. Gunfire, the crackling of flames and shouts of pain filtered down to them. The metal grille over the cell was sent clanging with noise as a troop of gun servitors stamped across it, weapons letting out chugs of stubber fire.

'It's him, all right,' growled Miriya, 'I know that voice. The witch clings to life like some kind of parasite.'

'I don't understand,' replied the Hospitaller. 'What could he want down here in the dungeons?'

The Sororitas kept her eyes fixed on the bars above, coiling the beads of her chaplet ecclesiasticus in her hand. From one end of the rosary of black pearls dangled a sliver insignum in the shape of the letter 'I', dressed with a stern skull imprint; the sigil of the Witch Hunters. 'You heard his words. He is rallying them, inciting them. Like a lit torch to a drum of promethium.'

As if to give weight to her words, a flash of flames licked over the ceiling above, and a tender ran past, his robes burning. Verity blanched at the strangled sounds of the priest's death screams.

'It appears we may not have the luxury of a considered escape,' added the Sister Superior dryly.

The popping of weapons died off and presently they heard the scramble of footsteps overhead. Faces, dirty with soot and grime peered down at the women with mixtures of avarice and hatred. A familiar, insouciant aspect soon joined them. 'Well, well. What an interesting reversal of fortunes this is,' said Vaun, savouring his amusement. 'How does it feel to be the prisoner now, Sisters?'

Miriya seemed to lack the words to convey her cold, hard anger at that moment, and so she simply turned her head and spat into the darkness.

Vaun's smile waned. 'I had thought Viktor would have killed you for me. I see that he couldn't even get that right.' The psyker sighed, and some of the other escapees about him giggled in amusement. 'Enjoy your new accommodations, ladies. I'm sure you'll find them just as disgusting as I once did.'

'You can't leave us here!' Verity blurted.

'Of course I can. You let me live when you had the chance to kill me, Sister Miriya. Now I have the opportunity to return the favour!' Vaun mocked, and he turned to go. 'While I go on to lay waste to this planet, you'll still be here, trapped and helpless, waiting for a rescue that will never come. Perhaps you'll die from starvation or infection. You might find a trickle of water from the upper tiers, which will sustain you for a time. Eventually, though, you'll need to find food.' He leered at the Hospitaller. 'But with nobody to feed you, there's only one source of meat down there.' With a callous laugh, he moved off, his new cohorts trickling away after him.

'Bastard.' The word slipped from Verity's lips before she realised it, and her cheeks reddened. 'Sister, forgive my profanity. It was unseemly of me...'

Miriya watched the grille carefully to be sure that Vaun had gone. 'On the contrary, Sister, I concur. He *is* a bastard, of the most loathsome order.' The Celestian turned her attention back to her Chaplet. For a moment, Verity thought the woman was going to commence a prayer, but instead she gripped the skull icon adorning the insignum and turned it counter-clockwise. Workings inside the chaplet clicked and whirred, and with an oiled hiss a shaft of razored metal emerged from the device. Miriya saw her watching. 'Case-hardened argentium-carbide steel,' she explained, 'so that a Battle Sister may grant herself the Emperor's Peace if she is captured.'

Verity's face blanched. 'You don't intend to...?'

Miriya shook her head. 'It is not yet time for either of us to kneel before the Golden Throne. Not while there is work to be done.' The Battle Sister wrapped her fingers around the brass fleur-de-lys on her breastplate and twisted it, yanking the metal decoration off its rivet. She turned it in her other hand and held it like a push-dagger.

The Hospitaller's eyes widened as she began to understand the other woman's goal. 'What can I do?'

Miriya shrugged off her battle cloak and tensed. 'Pray for divine intervention.' The Battle Sister drew back and then ran at the wall; at the last second she used the rusted bedstead like a springboard and threw herself at the stone facia. Sparks flew as the chaplet blade and the brass flower bit into black rock. Impossibly, Miriya hung there, clinging to her improvised pitons. With slow, unbending will, Verity watched her push upward, grinding the knifepoints against the sheer basalt for leverage.

The younger woman did as she was asked, and began a whispered litany.



The priest Ojis bowed so low that LaHayn thought the man's hooked nose would touch the stone tiles. 'Your grace, there has been an incident on the dungeon tiers...'

'Elucidate.'

'A failure of containment in the cell blocks.' The deacon thought for a moment he detected a measure of reproach in the priest's voice, but he let it go. 'It appears the locking mechanisms were released. Several test subjects and aberrants scheduled for exploratory execution have escaped. There are not enough gun servitors to police the entire level...'

'How did this happen?' he snapped. 'Whose failure is this, Ojis? Answer me!'

'My lord, I did warn you about depleting the numbers of—'

LaHayn advanced on the man. 'You dare lay the blame at *my* feet?'

Ojis paled. 'No, no, my Lord!' He backed away a step. 'I was merely making an observation!'

The deacon snarled and looked away. 'This is not coincidence, Confessor Ojis. The witch Vaun is at work here. I know his methods. This is a smokescreen.' He tapped his lips, musing. 'You are to take direct control of the frateris militia inside the Keep. Get below into the dungeon tiers and bottle up those freaks. Terminate them all.' LaHayn began to walk away.

'But, your holiness!' piped Ojis, 'I am not a warrior!'

'We are all soldiers in the Emperor's war,' the deacon replied. 'Never forget that.' He threw Ojis a last look. 'I am relocating to the engine chamber. I do not want any more disruptions!'

'But what about Vaun?'

LaHayn grimaced. 'He'll come to me of his own accord, mark my words.'



'Emperor, hear me, give me strength,' the Celestian prayed, her arms tight with tension and effort. 'Grant

this mortal shell a grain of wisdom, a teardrop of Your might...' With the last word, she pushed herself up to the very lip of the prison pit. Miriya did not look down. If she fell now, it could break bones or worse, snap her neck. As she had told the Hospitaller, she did not have the luxury of death while the witchkin was still loose. 'Channel Thyself to me, make Your will known through this vessel.' Grasping the metal grate over the pit, the Battle Sister turned herself about and found the place where a throw-bolt secured it in place. She ground her boots into the walls, pressed the ceramite curve of her armour's spine to the phase-iron grille and steadied herself. 'I am Your wrath,' intoned Miriya, completing the catechism, 'Your fury and resolve. Give me strength, I am the Hand of the Emperor!' The words released a flush of adrenaline into her body and the Celestian threw her full weight against the bolt. The metal clanged and bent, but did not give way.

She let out a snarl of anger and effort. Her boots slipped on the stone, then found purchase again; she would not get another chance at this. 'Give me strength!' spat Miriya, drawing concentration from the acts of faith performed by the living saints, *'I am the Hand of the Emperor!'* New energy coursed through her, fuelled by her devotion, and she slammed herself against the metal. With a screech of breaking steel, the bolt snapped in two. Suddenly she was on the floor of the dungeon, the iron grille hanging open behind her.

A ragged figure – shorn of all hair it was impossible to know it if were male or female – gawped at the sight of the Sororitas, and ran away down the stone corridors, calling out in strangled yelps. Miriya ignored it and set to work dragging a pulley cradle into place on the overhead rail. Within a few minutes, Verity had joined her and soon they were hoisting Cassandra and Isabel out of the other pit-cell. The Hospitaller went to the injured woman's side and began to minister to her. Broken slats of wood discarded in the melee went into a makeshift splint.

Miriya surveyed the corridor. All along the walls, cell doors lay hanging open, some discoloured by flames or pocked with bullet impacts. There were dead servitors in heaps, some distinguishable only because their brass and steel bionics were visible among the blackened meat and bones of their corpses. The bodies of tenders lay about in corners, and in some places the remains of what were likely the prisoners of the Null Keep, malnourished and shabby humans still fresh with operation scars.

Cassandra approached her squad commander and gave

her a hollow-eyed, determined look. 'What say you, Sister Superior?'

'This indignity will not stand, Cassandra. We must see this place wiped from existence, as quickly as His spirit will let us.'

'Aye,' nodded the veteran Battle Sister, 'my thoughts still reel with the enormity of this madness. It beggars my belief to comprehend it all... To think that at the start of this we were chagrined at such an assignment.' She looked away. 'With each step we take on Neva, we spiral closer to insanity!'

Verity broke in with a sharp cry. 'Someone's coming!'

The ragged figure had returned, and this time with company. There were six of them, all in the shapeless coveralls of the Keep's inmates. Miriya raised an eyebrow as she realised that some of them were carrying Godwyn-De'az pattern bolters. The largest of them, a scarred female, had the Sister Superior's plasma gun tucked in her waistband. The psyker prisoners were wary; they knew that these women would be far more difficult prey than the slow-brained servitors.

Cassandra broke the watchful silence. 'Those weapons are icons of the Imperial Church, and they do not belong to you. Put them down, now.'

The large woman grunted like an animal. 'These toys not yours no more. Mine.' She prodded herself in the chest.

'Where is Vaun?' demanded Miriya. 'Where is your leader?'

The woman spat. 'Ain't my leader, ya painted chapel harlot! He's taken those who'd follow and gone.'

From the corner of her eye, Miriya saw Cassandra fingering her rosary. 'You are in charge here, then?'

The woman nodded. 'Got something to say 'bout it?'

Cassandra frowned. 'I find myself wondering. How could your mother have given birth to an ork with pink skin?'

It took a second for the insult to register, but then the hulking female was swearing and grabbing at the gun. The Battle Sisters moved as one; Miriya tossed the broken fleur-de-lys like a throwing star and used it to open the neck of a witch balling ticks of lightning around his fingers; Cassandra's chaplet, with its hidden blade revealed, crossed the space between the Sororitas and the

prisoners, burying itself between the beady eyes of the ringleader. The other four were still reacting as the Battle Sisters engaged them hand to hand, breaking necks and snapping bones with deft motions and kicks from spike-heeled boots. The last of them skittered away, pressing fingertips to his head. A wall of hard air rolled forward and battered the two of them back. Miriya felt a rush of panic as she was shoved toward the dark maw of the open prison-pit.

A gunshot rang out and the last errant psyker fell screaming, clutching his stomach, the invisible force dissipating instantly. The Celestian turned to see Isabel with her recovered bolter wobbling in an unsteady, off-hand grip.

'A fine shot,' she managed.

Isabel's face was sallow and clammy. 'Not so much. I was aiming for his head.'

Cassandra handed Miriya her plasma gun. 'They must have found our wargear.'

'Perhaps it was in a storage cell nearby?' opined Verity. 'I should search for my medicus case. I doubt these commoners would have known what to do with it.'

'Be quick,' ordered Miriya. 'Vaun has sown havoc here for his own reasons, and we should take advantage of it while we can. We must contact the Canoness.'



Above the gloom of the dungeon tiers, the Null Keep's inner chambers spread open into honeycombs of interlocking voids. In the past these spaces had been formed around great reservoirs of magma flowing from the core of Neva, but in the thousands of years since they had become cool and dank, turned over to the works of man. Like all the spaces within the volcano-citadel, the air was forever heavy with a dry, stone-baked heat that took the moisture from a man's lungs. Vaun moved up one of the broad spiral ramps that lead to the upper levels, patting sweat off his brow. The arid, claustrophobic air welled up unpleasant memories of his youth, and he damped them down with a determined snarl. At his heels, the loose gang of escapees followed. Their initial bellicose manner had softened somewhat as they left the dungeons behind. The smarter ones among them were starting to think beyond the next five minutes, wondering what good the breakout would do them if they had no plan, no escape route, and no direction. Predictably, they looked to their rescuer for guidance.

Vaun hesitated in the shadow of an ascent ramp and held up his hand, halting the others. The open chamber ranged above them was a maintenance bay for the landing pads high on the peak of the volcanic mount. Cranes as tall as watchtowers cradled a handful of coleopters and the pregnant shapes of cargo blimps.

'Skyships!' said a lispng voice behind him. 'We should take one and fly for it!'

Vaun looked back at them, not bothering to single out the speaker. 'Are any of you pilots?' Silence greeted him. 'Do any of you know where the deacon hides his bolter turrets on the outside of the Keep? No? Then by all means, be my guest.'

'We might be able to do it...' ventured another, a gangly female. She pointed upward. 'Skinny up the cranes, maybe.'

'You'd be dead before you tasted sky,' growled the psyker. 'Stick with me and you might live to see daylight.' He pointed towards the cable-car train lying unattended at a nearby dock platform. 'We'll take that to the upper tiers. If we do it quietly, they'll never know it until we're knocking at the door.'

'The upside?' hissed the bucktoothed lisper. 'You wanna go deeper into the Keep?' He rolled his eyes. 'The tenders keep us outta those decks for a reason, mate. It's runnin' alive with warp-poison up yonder!'

'Perhaps,' admitted Vaun, 'but not in the way that you can understand it.' He gave them a cold smile. 'Trust me, cousins, the only way out is to go through the deacon.'

'Sez you,' retorted the man, 'we're grateful for throwing the switches an' all, but I reckon from here on in, we'll take our chances.'

The psyker took a threatening step closer to the escapee. 'I didn't bust you out as a kindness, little fellow. You're all in my debt now. You can repay it by doing what I tell you.'

The lispng man twitched. Vaun sensed the twinkle in his aura as the escapee coiled up whatever witch-mark power he had in preparation to strike. 'You're not the boss o' me—'

Vaun did it so quickly that the prisoner had no time to scream; there was just a flash of yellow across everyone's retinas as the fireball flew from his hand and burnt its way into the lispng man's chest. Flames sizzled and popped, the corpse turning about in a wild pirouette before collapsing in a heap. The other ex-prisoners staggered backwards; the brutality of the quick murder

had taken every one of them off-guard. The psyker gave his charges a level look, reeling in the enjoyment he felt. 'LaHayn's up there,' he said, jerking a thumb at the roof, 'and he's holding on to a prize bigger than anything you wastrels have dreamed of. I'm going to take it, and you're going to help me.'

'The train, right?' said the gangly woman, nervously. 'What're we dallyin' for, then?'

Within moments the cable carriages had cast off and began their slow ascent of the funicular rails. A warm anticipation buzzed in Vaun's hindbrain; he couldn't be sure if it was some side-effect of proximity to the LaHayn's engine chamber or the rush of his own excitement, but the further they climbed, the more he failed to hold back a predatory grin on his face.



There were fumes everywhere, and it tasted like sour meat on Ojis's tongue. His trembling fingers searched forward over the metal grid of the elevator cage's floor, tracing through expanding puddles of oily fluid and wet spongy masses of what could only have been spilled brain matter. The confessor's legs did not appear to be working, and so with the dignity of his exalted station left far behind, he did his best to haul himself out of the lift. His mind reeled, the chaos that had erupted around him fuzzing his recollection of events.

He had been in the cage, descending into the dungeon tiers with his adjutants and the handful of servitors he had been able to divert away from the deacon's blockade. The chimes sounded as the elevator arrived in the staging atrium, and then...

Then there had been gunfire and screaming, the detonation of something large and pulpy spattering all over his hood and robes. Black-clad shapes, glittering like sword beetles, brandishing weapons. *An ambush.*

'This one is still alive,' the voice rattled in his ears, as if something had been knocked loose and broken inside his skull.

Strong, gaunt fingers took him by the arms and hoisted him up. The priest's vision swam with pain as his legs turned uselessly beneath him. Bone was poking wetly from his right knee joint. He managed a gasp as his mask was pulled off.

A face gained definition before him. A woman, after a fashion, sun-toned skin marred with grime and lines of blood. She had eyes like blue diamonds and the set of

her jaw was cruel. With a start, Ojis recognised her. She saw it too.

'I am Sister Miriya, of the Order of Our Martyred Lady, and you are my captive. Answer my questions and you will be granted mercy.'

Ojis blinked. His eyes were gummed with gluey fluids. He managed to nod woodenly.

'He has the sigils of a confessor on his rosary,' said the first voice again, from somewhere behind him. 'This one was with LaHayn before.'

'Yes,' said Miriya, studying him carefully. 'Ojis, wasn't it?'

The priest paled. She knew his name as well! This was going very badly. 'Please...'

'What are you doing here?' she demanded. 'Where's the deacon?'

'I was sent to suppress... escape.' His cranium ached as he tried to look around. Ojis could make out more dead bodies in the corridor. Whatever had happened down here, they had arrived too late to do anything about it. 'His holiness... in the engine chamber, at the central deep.'

'Engine chamber?' repeated a new voice. He saw another woman, clad in white robes, her golden hair in distress. 'The Null Keep has an engine? But this place is a building, not some kind of vessel!'

Ojis felt woozy as he shook his head. 'Not... Not that kind of engine.' He licked his lips. 'Please... Help me.'

Miriya drew him closer. 'Where is the Keep's communicatory? Speak, heretic!'

'Above,' he wheezed out the word. 'Can't get there without me.' He raised a hand. A fat gold ring glittered on one finger. 'I... I have the command signet.'

'Confirmed,' said the other Battle Sister, 'there is a governance mechanism preventing access to the uppermost levels of the citadel.'

Miriya's face soured and she let the cleric drop in a heap. He cried out in pain, but she ignored him. 'There is nothing so low as a false priest, Confessor Ojis. The God-Emperor keeps a singular hell reserved for your kind.'

Ojis looked up at her. 'But... The Ecclesiarch is enlightened! He knows the way...' He broke off, coughing.

‘The way to damnation,’ Miriya replied, pressing a plasma pistol to his forehead. The gun hummed to life.

‘No... No! Please! I recant!’ burred Ojis, ‘Please, Sister Miriya! You and I, we are both the kindred of the cloth! I beg you!’

Miriya paused. ‘You have betrayed the Imperial Church and the God-Emperor of Mankind. What could you possibly hope to beg from me, heretic?’

In a small voice he said; ‘Forgiveness?’

The chilling look in her eyes was all the answer he received. Her finger tightened on the trigger.

‘Sister, wait!’ called one of the other women. ‘You cannot shoot him!’

Ojis sagged, relief flooding him. *I’m saved!*

‘Why?’ demanded Miriya.

The other Battle Sister indicated the lock panel on the elevator controls. ‘This device not only requires the key of his signet ring, but also an optic scan.’ She pointed at the confessor’s face with a combat blade. ‘Had you shot him with a plasmatic burst, his eyes would have been destroyed.’ She offered the knife to Miriya. ‘You should use this instead.’

Miriya accepted the weapon with a gracious nod. ‘Thank you, Cassandra. Please, hold him down for me.’



The confessor’s body performed one last service for the church; as the lift cage arrived at the top of the ascent channel, she threw it into the elevator bay. The still-warm mass of corpse-flesh set off the servo-skulls in the guardian niches at the door to the communicatory, drawing their laser fire. Cassandra and Isabel used the distraction to shoot down the machines and move in. Inside the cramped chambers, blinded vox-adepts cowered in corners, too terrified to react against the intruders, constantly mumbling the contact-protocol hymns burned into their neural tissues. Thin slivers of watery daylight peered in through observation ports, showing the Nevan sun as it climbed over the rocky crags beyond.

Miriya made the sign of the aquila and addressed the central vox terminal, speaking directly into a bronze mask that turned to present a mouth grille to her. In a clear but fatigued voice, she said a string of hallowed code

phrases, prayer lines seemingly chosen at random from the Books of Alicia. The machine knew the cipher, as every communications device in the Imperium did; an emergency Sororitas contact protocol, known only to those of high Celestian rank and above.

‘Hear me,’ she began, ‘I seek audience with the honoured Canoness Galatea of the Order of Our—’

‘Miriya.’ Galatea’s voice crackled back at them through the mask-speaker. She turned the Battle Sister’s name into a curse. ‘If you wish to confess, the time for that has passed. You should consider yourself deserter extremist.’

Isabel choked back a rebuke. ‘How... How could she answer so quickly? Such a message should take hours—’

‘Silence your Sister, Miriya,’ retorted the Canoness, ‘look to the west. Your censure comes on swift wings, errant one.’

Verity pressed her face to one of the window slits. ‘I think I see something. Bright glitters in the dawn sky.’ She looked back at Miriya. ‘Aircraft?’

‘A reprisal force is inbound to your position, Sister Superior,’ continued Galatea. ‘Once I understood your wilful denial of my orders, I had the captain of the *Mercutio* scry the area about Metis City from orbit. His sense servitors tracked that aeronef you stole all the way to the wastelands.’

‘There is an explanation for my every action,’ insisted Miriya. ‘I initiated this very communication to inform you of my location—’

‘*You disobeyed me!*’ raged the Canoness. ‘You took this world’s most wanted man into your own custody! What possible explanation could you have for that?’

‘I have uncovered a conspiracy of which Torris Vaun is only one facet, my lady,’ Miriya said cautiously. ‘Within this fortress, the lord deacon is engaged in a dire plan of the highest heresy. I shall willingly give myself to any punishment you will ask of me, but I must insist you first hear this!’

The vox channel crackled for a moment, then Galatea’s voice returned, resigned and grim. ‘The transports will be within strike range in less than five minutes, Miriya. You have until then to convince me not to kill you.’

The Battle Sister began to speak, explaining all that had transpired since the assault on Baron Sherring’s mansion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Each time he entered the chamber, there was a moment when Viktor LaHayn recalled the very first time he had done so. He remembered the rough hessian blindfold being pulled from his eyes, the strange, directionless green-blue light impinging on his vision. He remembered the hand of the Gethsemenite abbot on his wrist, tight with anticipation; but it was the giddy rush of vertigo that came when he laid eyes on the engine that had always stuck with him.

The abbot was dead now, murdered along with the rest of his sect by Vaun, but the great device rumbled on unchanged, the two great spinning rings of black steel forever turning about the construct's central axis like spun coins. LaHayn had to stop to look at the thing. The motion of the rings, the slow orbit of the metallic rods within them; their movement made him light-headed. It was a marvel of ancient and lost technology, the way that the disparate components worked without touching one another or connecting in any way. The engine was as large as a house, yet it floated above the floor of the chamber effortlessly, steady as a rock. Nothing held it up there but the azure glow. The tech-adepts had once tried to explain the method of the sciences behind it, but LaHayn had dismissed them. It was enough for him to know that the engine was the creation of the God-Emperor.

He approached it. A low fence of brass bars kept the unwary from getting too close, but the deacon ignored it, scattering a couple of cowering mechanicus engineers as he stepped into the nimbus of the machine's aura-field. The adepts clicked and whirred at one another in urgent datum-streams. Like his tenders, they too were garbed in featureless grey robes. Once, as with every other tech-priest in his service, they had been loyal members of the Cult of the Machine God, sworn servants of Mars. But that had been before LaHayn's agents had recruited them, by kidnapping, subornment or by acts of piracy. To a man, they had all protested and struggled against the demands he had made on them – *until* he showed them the engine. It was pitiful, in a way. Every single mechanicus he took had willingly broken their oath and pledged themselves to his service the moment they laid eyes on the device. They knew it for what it was; a physical connection to the Great Works of the Emperor. They had many names for it; the Psymagnus Apparatus, Anulus Rex, the GodHand... But LaHayn preferred the designation the Gethsemenites had given the device. They simply called it the Engine, a fitting name for a device that held the power to remake the stars.

The last days of the God-Emperor were a mystery to many. His actions in the dark time before the raw

betrayal of the Warmaster Horus were shrouded in mythology and layers of obfuscation ten thousand years thick; but in all the holy tomes that spoke of His final actions before the enshrinement on the Golden Throne, there were mentions of His Works, of the secret machinations He was about in the laboratoria beneath the Holy Palace on Earth. In forbidden tomes, LaHayn had discovered scraps of old creed that the current generation of the Ministorum had declared apocryphal. He collected references to things that flew in the face of the current beliefs, names that none dared to speak, talk of star-children and the birth of new gods. The deacon courted death a hundred times over just for daring to possess such knowledge. Through all his gathered secrets, he traced one thread, unravelling it from the tapestry of the God-Emperor's clouded legacy; that strand of causality spanned the light years that stretched from Terra to Neva, undeniable proof that this distant world was touched by His hand, just as it was coloured by the passage of the warp. It was plain to see once the pieces were assembled, and the priest-lord saw it with shining eyes; the engine was the Emperor's bequest to humanity, to Viktor LaHayn himself. Like a sentinel, it had waited here beneath the stone walls of the Null Keep, waiting for one with the breadth of vision to know its purpose and awaken it. There was absolutely no doubt in Viktor's mind that he was that man.

The deacon came as close as he dared to the spinning rings and held out a hand, letting his fingertips enter their aurora. Trickle of force shifted through him, and he became a prism for their light. It was a gentle caress, the merest fraction of the true energy inside. He could feel the primitive matter of his brain struggling to comprehend the power of it, and always, the same fleeting sense of something magnificent just beyond his reach. *If only...* Not for the first time, LaHayn let himself drift and dream about what it would be like to know such capability. *To have the power to become one with the machine... To touch the distant mind of my God...* The enormity of that idea struck the breath from him.

'Soon.' The words fell from his lips. 'It will come to pass.'

He retreated beyond the cordon and found a tender on his knees, the cleric's face flat against the floor so he would not lay eyes upon the holy workings of the engine. 'My lord deacon,' said the priest, 'word from the high crags. A force of strike craft approach in skirmish formation. The sense servitors read them as bearing the mark of the Sororitas.'

His lips thinned. 'How many?'

‘Ten, perhaps more. Their silhouettes match the configurations of troop transports and armour carriers.’

LaHayn swore an oath so base that the tender flinched to hear it. ‘My hand has been forced. The Sisters of Battle are too narrow-minded to accept any explanations of our mission here.’ He sighed. ‘They cannot be allowed to interfere. You are to decant the pyrokenes. Deploy them in defence of the Keep.’

The tender dared to look up. ‘How many, my lord?’

‘All of them. The time for half-measures is over.’



Orders were relayed; commands became deeds. In the primary chambers where the ebon basalt vaults held ranges of glass cubicles, the hanging cable guides and open crane claws turned to the work of unlocking the psyker pods from their mountings. Ferrying them in the same steady, patient manner as burrowing insects would convey precious eggs within a colony mound, the machines took the huge fluid-filled beakers to exit chambers and tipped the contents upon the dark rock floor. One by one, LaHayn’s slumbering army of witches were being rudely awakened; and in the depths of their doctored minds, anger lit fires that the tenders directed toward the oncoming enemy.

Within the motion of this activity, in among all the moving carriages and turning cogs of the Keep’s cableways, a single train of cargo trailers moved against the flow, passing upward unseen toward the closed tiers.



The pilots brought their craft through the treacherous straights surrounding the Null Keep, keeping low to avoid the desultory puffballs of anti-aircraft fire from bolter emplacements on the upper battlements. Canoness Galatea had not considered opening a channel to the citadel with any request for surrender; those within could clearly see the black and silver livery of the transport flyers and they knew who it was that encroached upon them. If the denizens in the Keep had wanted to sue for peace, they had ample opportunity to ask for it – not that it would have been granted.

The razor-cliffed valleys leading to the tower of black stone were narrow and forbidding. Galatea had consulted with the Seraphim commander Sister Chloe during the flight from the staging area, and via hololithic conference with the sensors officer aboard the *Mercutio*, a rough and ready plan of assault had been

drawn up for the attack on the Keep. Stealth, it seemed, was the key strength of the location – but once that advantage had been squandered, it was no more or less defensible than the dozen other castles and strongpoints that her order had broken in the past. She hid it well, but there was a small fraction of the Canoness that was thrilled by the prospect of battle. Too long in the high realms of Neva’s moneyed society classes had made her feel distant and removed from the true purpose of the Sisterhood, and the glory that was to be taken in punishing the disloyal.

Her intention was not to lay waste to the tower, but to break the lines of defence and take those within as prisoners of the church. She numbered both the lord deacon and the errant Sisters of Miriya’s unit among her quarry – it would be easier for her troops to gather everyone and return them to Noroc for a full Inquisitorial inquest rather than attempt to sort through the web of accusations here. Whatever the outcome today, it would mean that Neva’s church and state would be forever changed in the aftermath. It was difficult for the Canoness to countenance the idea of a senior Ecclesiarch in league with psykers, but worse treacheries had been known to happen.

The flyers split from formation and began a rapid deployment, dropping to skate their landing gear across the black sand without slowing to a hover. Drop ramps yawned open and Battle Sisters threw themselves out, trailing descent tethers that would slow them and prevent the women from breaking their necks on landing. Other ships disgorged the flat ingots of tanks; Galatea saw the bulldozer blades of Repressors grinding forward and the black shapes of Immolators bearing down on the Keep’s outer perimeter. Units of Sister Retributors and Sister Seraphim went with them, the lightening sky making their armour glitter.

Chloe’s voice crackled in her ear. ‘My lady, we are about to deploy. Engagement commences on your mark.’

‘Begin,’ she said into her vox pick-up. At that word of command, her flyer dipped toward the ground and the Celestians in her personal guard made ready to disembark. It happened quickly; the ship scraped dirt with a hollow howl and Galatea threw herself out of the gaping hatchway. Then in a flood of hot downwash from the thrusters, the angular shape was powering away and the Canoness came to her feet surrounded by walls of black stone and women hungry for battle. ‘Press forward,’ she began, but a thunderous salvo of fireballs cut into the air ahead of the tanks, drowning out her voice with their passage.

‘Flamers?’ said one of the Celestians. ‘Inferno guns, perhaps?’

There was a familiar taint in the air, a greasy thickness that made her gut coil. ‘Not flamers,’ she growled, ‘witchfire.’

Close to the Keep, hidden gates were rolling open and out of them streamed figures in mad, violent disorder. To a man, they were all ablaze, pulling streams and spheres of unnatural flame from their bodies to hurl at the Sisters.

Galatea crossed herself with the sign of the aquila and began firing.



The way down from the communicatory was nowhere near as swift or as simple as their ascent had been. The elevator cradle steadfastly refused to operate at Verity’s increasingly frustrated commands, and finally the Sisters were forced to descend to the lower tiers of the Keep by the zigzags of steel staircase that ran alongside the lift shaft. They moved in near-silence, never speaking, with only the occasional grunt of pain from Isabel to punctuate their passage. They went down and down for what seemed like uncountable numbers of steps. At random, clatters of moving metal or distant explosions would find their way into the shaft and filter to their ears. The sounds seemed vague and second-hand, the dim echoes of a battle being fought by others.

Eventually, the stairs spread out to a shallow deck of corrugated metal and bare, open grids. Verity made the mistake of glancing down at her feet and her stomach knotted tight inside her belly; in the ruddy gloom, it appeared as if she were standing on thin air, the access shaft dropping away into abyssal depths below her boots. She looked away, taking care from that moment to keep her gaze steady at head height.

There was a balcony at the edge of the deck; sawtooth bays along one side allowed small cable cars festooned with guide-lines and metallic cogs to dock there. They resembled smaller versions of the omnibus-carriages from Noroc, even down to the protruding runner board at the rear and the handle-operated switching gear. Other docks were empty, home only to gently twitching bunches of cable.

Cassandra studied the bronze dials set into the nearest of the cable cars. ‘The tenders must utilise these carts to travel around the Keep’s interior.’ She plucked at a row of rocker switches, each labelled with a string of text in High Gothic. ‘Destinations within the tower are listed here. Some are locked off.’

‘Show me,’ Verity watched Miriya drift closer.

Cassandra pointed out switches with fine brass cages over them and lock-imprints where a signet was to be placed. The Battle Sister fished Ojis’s severed finger from a compartment at her belt and tested it in the locks; the switches obediently opened.

‘This one...’ said the Celestian, picking a cable car. ‘The late confessor has kindly provided us with passage to the restricted tiers of the citadel.’

Isabel’s voice wavered with suppressed pain and reflexively Verity went to her to check her dressings. ‘Were not the Canoness’s directives clear, Sister Superior? Forgive me, but did she not say we should attempt to link up with the landing force outside?’

Miriya nodded. ‘That is fully my intention.’ With a clicking of oiled gears, the concertina-mesh gate on the cable car opened. ‘But only after we have completed our immediate mission.’

‘To find Vaun?’ asked Verity, absently dabbing a counter-infective philtre on Isabel’s bandages.

The Celestian shook her head. ‘To kill him.’



The pyrokenes moved forward against the Sororitas skirmish lines in a tidal wave of unholy fire, the coiling stink of rotten, burning meat advancing ahead of them on the dry wind. Jets of orange promethium from heavy flamers on the front ranks arced outward to meet them, but the burning liquid splashed harmlessly about the witch-soldiers, lapping at their heels like breaking surf.

From her vantage point, Canoness Galatea saw the failure of the guns and barked an order into her vox. ‘Bolters, forward! Projectiles and energy weapons only!’ With unerring precision, the Battle Sisters with flamer weapons dropped back to let their comrades with boltguns and lasguns take their place. The oncoming pyrokenes met a spread of heavy shells and coherent light as they boiled over the pass.

To Galatea’s fury, the fusillade did not break their advance. Those hit by the incoming fire stumbled, some fell, but barely enough to make a difference. The swarming, burning figures overwhelmed a troop of Retributors and scorched the earth about them; then the fire-psykers ran over a silver and black Repressor tank, attacking it with their bare hands.

Abhuman fingers, clawed and shrouded by a nimbus of flames, dug into the metal of the armoured vehicle's flanks and bulldozer blade. The psychic heat softened the plating, riddling the Repressor with gouges where the pyrokenes dug into its surface like hot pokers pressing into wax. The tank crew were firing in all directions, but the creatures seemed oblivious to the shredding barks of the guns. Galatea saw one of the burning men rip the hatch from the tank and throw it away; then seconds later a shriek of sound came from inside the vehicle as witchfire flooded into it.

The Canoness shouted a battle prayer at the top of her lungs and urged her troops into the melee. Overhead, she heard the throaty roar of jet packs as Sister Chloe led the Seraphim, each woman borne up on streaks of white, each with a gun in either hand stitching tracer across the advancing foe.

The speed of the witch-fiends was frightening; they moved like an insect swarm, tumbling and scrambling over obstacles and each other, setting alight to everything around them that could combust. Galatea's bolter howled on full automatic, the sickle magazine clip emptying into the closest pyrokenes she could target. The psykers danced and twitched beneath her fire but failed to fall; she saw great fat chunks of flaming meat being ripped from them and blown away, and still they came on. Whatever devilish force of will drove them, it was incredible.

At her side, a Battle Sister with hair the colour of granite joined the Canoness with her storm bolter. It was enough; the psykers exploded in concussive grunts of noise, detonating hot, fleshy fragments and needles of bone.

'Emperor's blood, these creatures take a lot of killing...' growled the Battle Sister.

Galatea shot her a look. 'Fortunate, then, that we have much of that art to provide.'

'Aye!' snapped the woman, pivoting in place to engage more of the enemy line. Her cannon flashed orange-red and more death screams filled the smoke-clogged air.



The cable car continued to rise through the deck of the Keep, passing through levels where tenders ran back and forth like frightened birds or darkened tiers that showed flashes of workings as old as the heavens. They moved too quickly to determine much, passing into narrow channels wide enough that only two cars could fit within them,

then suddenly back out again into open voids strewn with curves of decking. The thin glow of aged biolumines gave the Battle Sisters little chance to see much more of their surroundings than glimpses; but they could hear the distant thrum of great machinery, and the faraway noise of gunfire.

Verity stayed close to Sister Isabel. The woman steadfastly refused to allow the Hospitaller to give her wounded arm anything more than the most cursory of examinations, or even to let her change the bandages that had become rust-brown with clotted blood. She had accepted nothing from Verity but a few dermal pads, small adhesive discs impregnated with pain nullifying agents. A trio of the white gauze circles ringed the neck of the injured Sororitas like a collar of dull jewels. Isabel's face was tight with denied agony, her skin pale and sallow.

Verity drew an injector carousel from the scentwood box at her hip and dialled a dose of powerful restorative from the glass tubes inside it.

Isabel eyed her warily. 'What are you about, nursemaid?'

'Don't call me that,' replied Verity, 'you require medication. It is my duty to give it.'

'I refuse,' the Battle Sister responded. 'My wits must be sharp, now more than ever.'

'Do as the Hospitaller says,' Sister Miriya said gruffly, 'pain is a distraction. I need you focussed.'

Isabel grumbled under her breath, but let Verity give her the dosage. The woman glanced up as she withdrew the injector. A high-pitched humming tickled the edge of her hearing. 'That noise...'

There was little room inside the cable car, and the iron box rocked on its guide wires as Miriya came up with her plasma gun in her hand. She had heard it too.

'Look sharp—'

Lasers, thread-thin and red as hate, lanced out of the darkness and cut across the carriage. Verity yelped as a beam took a finger's length of hair from the end of her tresses, but nobody was injured.

Miriya and Cassandra fired back into the black void and something exploded with a shattering crash; but the humming did not cease.

'Servo-skulls,' explained Isabel, using Verity's shoulder to prop her up. 'Guardians. We're getting close to the sealed

levels.' Two more of the grinning silver orbs dogged the cable car as they ascended, moving between support stanchions as they kept pace.

Isabel fired, missed, and cursed. Despite herself, Verity blushed to hear it. Cassandra's aim was true, and she clipped one of the skulls squarely in its anti-gravity drive mechanism. The automaton spun out of control and collided with its partner, destroying both of them.

Verity tried to peer out of the open cradle, but without warning Isabel dragged her down with a handful of her robes. There was a fleeting impression of something huge and metallic dropping from the upper levels, and the cable car rang like a bell as a brass-clad gun servitor landed amid the Sororitas. The quarters were too close for the armed women to shoot at the machine-slave, and Verity choked in fear as the thing swung a multi-barrelled stubber gun at her head. Something clicked and whined inside the gun mechanism but it failed to engage. This close to the servitor, Verity could see its one human eye glaring down at her and the ropes of spittle coating the helot's lips. It moved, trying to crush her against Isabel.

She struck out at the hybrid with the only weapon she had to hand – the injector – burying the needle in the wet jelly of its organic eye. The device discharged a massive quantity of stimulant potion, and the gun servitor went rigid with shock. It gave a rattling gasp and sagged against its own leg pistons.

'Did you kill it?' ventured Isabel.

Verity swallowed hard to rid her mouth of the taste of bile. 'A heart attack.' She glanced at the empty injector in her hand.

Cassandra frowned, examining the dead mechanism's casing. 'See here. It was already damaged. Looks like a glancing hit from a flamer.'

Miriya cradled her pistol, peering into the dark as they ascended through it. 'There should be more of them out there. Why aren't there more?'

'Thank the Throne for small mercies,' said Verity, as the cradle bounced over a set of points and began to slow. They turned, the carriage lurching from side to side, as a flat docking platform hove into view. The console ticking off the distance markers clicked to zero and without further surprises, they arrived at the secure deck.

The women disembarked in quick order. It was Cassandra who found the corpses of two more dead gun servitors and with them, a dark-skinned man in the grimy coverall

of a prisoner. There was no flesh on the man's hands, just the burnt sticks of his fingers. His clothes were crosshatched with lines of scorching.

'What does this portend?' demanded Isabel, irritably.

Miriya glanced at a train of cargo carriages locked to one of the other docking rigs, her expression grim. 'It means we are not the first to arrive.'



The loud hailers bellowed out the words of Katherine's Lament, and Galatea felt the passion swell in her veins. Unbidden, a savage grin broke out on her face; yes, there was death and destruction about her, yes, her Sisters were fighting and dying in conflict with a mass of the most dire witches, but by the eyes of the Emperor, she felt alive with divine strength! The Canoness waded into the sea of flames and dispatched any tainted souls that dared to stand against her. At her back, her bodyguard of elite Celestians marched with the battle hymn on their lips and bloody vengeance falling wherever they turned their guns. A pyrokene freak scrambled from the basalt rocks, howling murder. The witch had been shredded by the near-hit of a krak grenade detonation, ripping the psyker's legs from his waist; and yet still the mutant came on, shouting through the aura of gold fire surrounding it, projecting itself forward on the spindly pins of its arms. It threw itself at Galatea, mouth yawning to present a throat full of fiery bile.

The Canoness reacted with preternatural speed, the adrenaline racing through her veins in a flood of holy quickening. Her bolter's breech clacked open, the gun empty, and she took a chain at her belt and whipped it upward. At the end of the pewter links was a golden ball the size of a man's fist; a censer, still fuming with a potion of consecrated oils and sacred herbs. Galatea brought it up and used the device as a mace, batting the pyrokene away with a single stroke. The solution within the censer spilled across the pathetic creature's face and sent it screaming into the dirt; there it lay, clawing and dying as the potent oils ate into it like acid.

Galatea reloaded and moved on, her Celestians shooting in controlled hurricanes of bolt fire. There had been a moment when the pyrokene attack had begun, when the momentum of the Adepta Sororitas advance reeled; but the Canoness had turned them through it and now the psykers were in disarray. Broken from their wall of murderous fire, they were easier to kill in isolated clumps. The constant rattle of heavy bolters and the ear-splitting crack of lasers overwhelmed the rumble of unchained witchfire. Brute, ungoverned power was no

match for the ruthless, unstoppable fervour of the Battle Sisters. To a woman, they felt the hand of the Emperor at their backs, the spirit of the martyr swelling in their hearts. There was no such crime as the dark horror of the witch in the eyes of an Adepta Sororitas, nothing so base and so vile as a mind that had eschewed the warmth of His light and turned their face away – toward avarice, toward godlessness and the anarchy of Chaos. Their unbreakable faith shielded them against the malice of these foes, such forces of inner will that the weaker of the witchkin would find their foul cantrips ineffectual; but what they faced today was of a very different order. If Sister Miriya were to be believed, these were mutants fashioned by the hand of man, and worse, the hand of one who wore the garb of High Church.

The tanks had been staggered by the enemy, but now they rode high and with steady pace, crushing the blackened bones of fallen witches into the volcanic sands that coated the narrow valley approach. Hot tongues of energy from multi-meltas flashed, ripping into the battlements of the towering Null Keep.

Sister Chloe's voice called on the general vox channel, her words taut and urgent. 'Hear me below! The witches are drawing back! Be wary!'

'It's a trap.' The words came from her lips before Galatea was even aware she had spoken them, some deep-rooted battle sense drawing the conclusion before her conscious mind was even aware of it. 'All tanks, converge fire upon the entrance cavern to the Keep. Ignore all other targets.'

'What other targets?' began the grey-haired Battle Sister with the storm bolter, again at her side. Her words died in her throat as the last few witches came together and began to hurl fire in their direction.

At the same instant, pockets of black sand about their feet bubbled and churned. Sooty pyrokenes, aglow with hate, dragged themselves from burrows beneath the ground, emerging behind the advancing Sisters. Galatea whirled and cut them down before they could get free of the basalt dirt. The Celestians fell into a combat wheel and released bolt fire to all points of the compass.

'Too little, too late!' snarled Galatea to her enemies, 'Tactics first, force second,' she lectured. 'Whomever commands these wastrels is as much a soldier as I am a street doxy!'

The tanks drowned out the sound of the rout of the psykers as they fired in one destructive salvo. Beyond the thinning ranks of the witches, the guns of the Immolators

found their mark. Dark obsidian stone and heavy iron split asunder as spheres of explosive force tore their way into the Null Keep. The holdfast was breached, and the Sororitas onslaught came on.



'Th' door's locked,' said the gangly woman, throwing Vaun a look over her shoulder. 'The old creep ain't gonna open it just 'cos you ask nicely...' She flicked at her fingers where streaks of greenish fire clung across the rows of her knuckles, and spat at the black gates of phase-iron.

Vaun glanced around at the scattered corpses of the gun servitors, the broken pieces of the machine-slave force that the tenders had left to perish defending the engine chamber. He frowned, unable to find something suitable. The psyker turned his attention to the escapees. At last his eyes fell on a fat male, balding and sweating hard in the humid caverns. A line of acid drool lapped from his flabby lips, spattering at his feet.

'Flame-spitter, aren't you?' Vaun approached him, measuring the man's size. He seemed close enough for what was needed.

The fat man nodded once and more drool left his mouth as he spoke. 'Sometimes, I just can't keep it in.' He had a highborn accent; proof that it wasn't just Nevan commoners that LaHayn preyed upon. The others prisoners backed away, sensing danger. 'What's wrong?'

Vaun smiled warmly. 'Nothing. You'll do fine.' The psyker closed his eyes and turned a hammer of psychic force inside his mind; it released itself in a thud of displaced air. The fat man went squealing away and slammed into the heavy doors.

'What...?' The shock robbed the drooling witch of any other words. He tried to get up, but the force of the push had broken both his legs.

Vaun pictured the churning roil of psionic ectoplasm simmering in the fat man's ample gut. His kind of pyrokene was a peculiar breed, manifesting their ability like mythic dragons spewing fire from an endless reservoir of incendiary bile. The fat man and his sort were walking flamethrowers.

The psyker let his mind create the reality; he projected a boiling heat inside the wailing man, watching him twitch and moan. Chemical reactions made his body expand, the grey fleshy wattles on his neck stretching tight. Vaun's errant minions went for cover just as the fat man exploded. The wet concussion hammered at the phase-

iron doors, chewing a ragged hole in them. The gates tilted and sagged off their huge hinges.

Vaun strode into the engine chamber with his head held high, and rough laughter in his chest.



The stinking wave of putrid concussion knocked LaHayn against the ornate gold control podium, and he reflexively snatched at the argentium pepperbox gun connected to his wrist by an onyx rosary. Lasers keened at the far end of the chamber as tenders and servitors alike fired on the new arrivals; but through the noise, the grating, hateful sound of one man's amusement told him immediately who had dared to breach the sanctified hall.

The tech-adepts in the sub-pulpit beneath him tried to disengage themselves from their cogitators and flee, but the priest-lord struck out at them with savage blows. 'Cowardly fools! This is no time to abandon the work! Proceed as I command you and begin the commencement!'

They reluctantly followed his orders, and while the firefight raged on, a crackle of ancient cogs echoed about the chamber. LaHayn watched as one vast wall of the engine room grew a vertical fissure along its length, opening with ponderous speed to emit a cherry-red glow. The metres-thick doors drew back to allow a heavy tide of dry heat to roll in; beyond them was the open throat of the volcanic chimney at the Null Keep's heart, and just in sight the slow tides of the mountain's magma core.

The rings of the ancient engine basked in the ruddy glow, picking up speed as the power from the geothermal tap increased. For a moment, LaHayn forgot the battle raging nearby and felt a childlike excitement blossom inside him. 'Dear God-Emperor, it is working!' Eyes shining, the deacon made the sign of the aquila and anointed the controls at his podium with a vial of sacred unguent. He looked up, barely able to hold back the tears of joy, as the shifting metal planes inside the spinning rings shifted and merged. They turned about and coalesced into something that could only have been a throne. LaHayn worked the controls, moving his fingers over them in complex patterns that he had made into personal rituals. 'Yes!' he cried, 'at last, the conjunction of events comes to pass! As it was foretold, *as it should be!*'

The iron throne extended out of the spinning glow on a rod of brilliant white, cracking the black stone with the wash of its energy. The priest threw himself down and

bounded toward it, the blessed radiation engulfing him in warm, soft clouds.

He was only an arm's length away when the firestreak lashed into him. The burning thread of psy-force entered LaHayn's body from behind, just below his ribcage. It cut straight through him in a fountain of bloody steam, melting bone and organ meat. The deacon crashed to the basalt floor, the dull reflection of his agonised face staring back up at him.

Vaun made a tutting noise as he approached. 'Your problem has always been that you leave everything to the last moment, Viktor.' The psyker waved his hand and let another salvo of flame lines his from his fingertips, savaging the closest tech-adept. He paused over the priest as LaHayn struggled to drag himself across the stone. 'No, no. Too late now. You had your chance.'

'Not... ready...' the deacon groaned. 'Until... now...'

'That's just what I wanted to know,' grinned Vaun. He glanced up, licking his lips. 'This is it, then? The Psi-Engine of Neva? The machine that will make me a god?'

'No...'

'Oh yes,' retorted Vaun, 'and because I'm feeling so generous, I'm going to let you live long enough to see it happen.' He left LaHayn behind and marched into the glowing aurora. 'Goodbye, Viktor. And thank you.' He settled into the steel throne, shuddering with power.

The priest rolled on to his side and propped himself up. 'Ah. No, dear boy. It... It is I who should thank *you*.'

For the first time, uncertainty formed on the psyker's face. He opened his mouth to say something, but the throne folded about him, wrapping him in flat planes of burning metal.

Vaun cried out; but it was Viktor LaHayn's laughter that filled his ears.

Concluded next month



OUTSIDE THE STUDIO

Another month goes by, and most of us in the Warhammer Studio are still living our lives outside the office we once called home (well, for forty hours a week, at any rate). On the plus side, we're all getting plenty of painting done, many of us in anticipation of starting a Warhammer 40,000 Crusade campaign when we're allowed back to the gaming table. On the subject of gaming, a little trivia for you. This month's Battle Report between Jonathan and Dan was actually fought back in March the day before the pandemic lockdown happened in the UK. While everyone began the mass exodus from the studio, they frantically rolled dice, made notes and took pictures in record time before making their daring escape. At least, that's the excuse they're giving for any poor tactical decisions ...



FRIGHT NIGHT

Lyle has continued work on his Nighthaunt army this month, having painted a Spirit Host and a Spirit Torment. 'The Spirit Host is clearly entirely spectral (no armour or clothes), so it was one of the easiest models for me to work out how I wanted it to look,' says Lyle. 'Like most of my Nighthaunts, it's primed black and then airbrushed Administratum Grey and White Scar where I want it to look like ectoplasmic energy is materialising from the darkness. Then the whole model is given a thinned-down glaze of Nighthaunt Gloom to give it its spooky blue hue. I painted the Spirit Torment in a similar way, but when it came to his armour I basecoated it with Leadbelcher and then gave it splotchy washes of Reikland Fleshshade, Seraphim Sepia and Agrax Earthshade to give it a rusted, oxidised look.'



AKHORNE!

He may be diminutive, but this new Blood Bowl star player (see the exclusive card with this issue) can be a real menace on the pitch. Akhorne was taken from the new Blood Bowl Treeman kit and painted by Rob Alderman using Doombull Brown as a basecoat followed by a wash of Cygor Brown, a drybrush of Tuskgor Fur and a highlight of Squig Orange. Akhorne!



FREE STUFF!

You may already have noticed, but this issue of *White Dwarf* comes with a host of freebies, including cards for Necromunda, Blood Bowl, Aeronautica Imperialis, Adeptus Titanicus and Warcry. There's also a double-sided poster featuring new Tome Keepers art with a mini-game on the reverse. Plus, the card sleeve is recyclable – bonus!



As we come to the end of the magazine, we take a look at the games people have been playing and the models they've been painting outside the studio over the past month. This time: special characters, big guns, silver Space Marines, ghosts and a squirrel.

EVEN MORE CONTEMPT(OR)

Matt has just finished painting a second Contemptor Dreadnought for his Horus Heresy Imperial Fists army. 'The volkite culverin is one of my favourite guns, and I'm gradually adding all grades of the weapon to my force,' says Matt. 'I painted it in traditional Fist yellows, but with plenty of battle damage to show it's been in the heat of battle. Next up: more Imperial Fists, but Primaris ones!'



TIGURIUS ON CRUSADE

Dirk Wehner has recently finished Tigurius, but unusually, he's wearing white armour. 'I have an Angels Vermilion army,' says Dirk, 'but I wanted to paint all the new Space Marine characters. So I painted them in white "commander armour" for when they ally themselves to my other armies.'



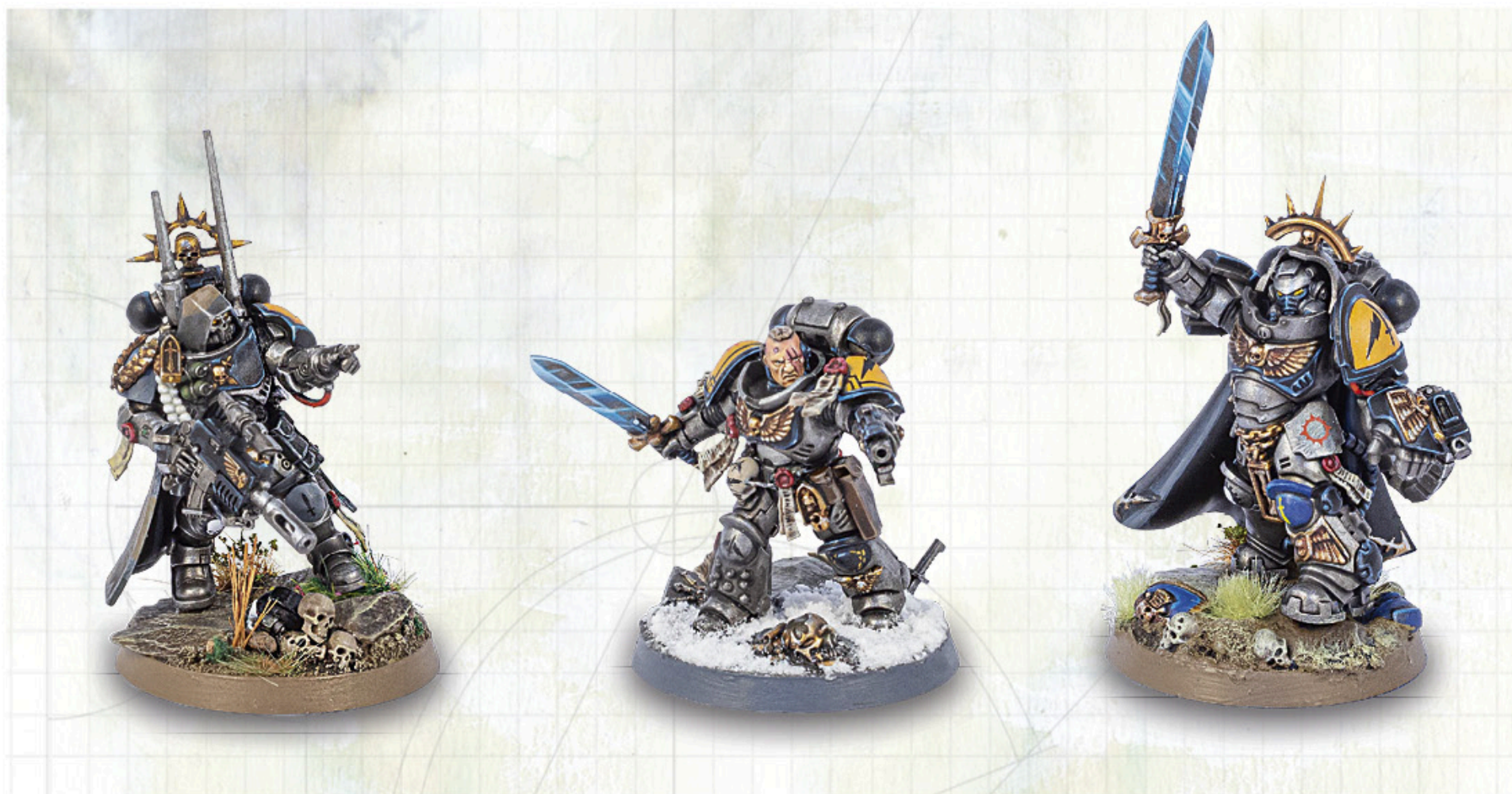
WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS

Dan's well known around here for his T'au collection, and during the lockdown he finally managed to get Commander Shadowsun painted. 'I painted her in night-time stealth mode,' says Dan. 'Her armour is sprayed Chaos Black, carefully edge highlighted with Lothorn Blue, edge highlighted again with Fenrisian Grey, and then given two coats of Guilliman Blue. That's it! While Guilliman Blue isn't available any more, Talassar Blue thinned down with Contrast Medium also does the job perfectly.'

REINFORCEMENTS FOR THE SILVER TEMPLARS

While the *White Dwarf* team has the Tome Keepers, the *Warhammer 40,000: Conquest* team has the Silver Templars – a Space Marine Chapter they also created themselves. Paul Foulkes, one of the team's designers, has a sizeable army of Silver Templars now and recently added this lot to his collection. 'I painted them so that I could play Crusade battles against my son Arran and his Death Guard,' says Paul. 'The Captain in Phobos armour was converted from

an easy-to-build Reiver with the hooded head of a Chaplain and a load of spare parts including a cloak from a Librarian. He leads my 8th Company Reivers (also shown below) into battle. The Captain has a blue knee pad to show he leads the 9th Company. The Lieutenant in the middle was converted to match the artwork in the Silver Templars codex right down to the placement of his purity seals and the relics on his belt.'



NEXT ISSUE

BEWARE THE SPIDERFANGS

NEXT ISSUE
ON SALE 18
DECEMBER

SUBSCRIBE TO WHITE DWARF

The **ULTIMATE WARHAMMER MAGAZINE**



- **NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!**
- **MAKE A SAVING ON THE COVER PRICE.**
- **GET WHITE DWARF DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR EACH MONTH.**
- **SUBSCRIBER COPIES ARE MAILED OUT EARLY AND SHOULD BE WITH MOST SUBSCRIBERS BEFORE THEY ARRIVE IN STORES.**
- **EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBER COVERS!**

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE AT GAMES-WORKSHOP.COM/WHITEDWARF OR CALL THE NUMBERS BELOW

CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTACT DETAILS:



UK

subscriptions@warnersgroup.co.uk
+44 1778 392083



REST OF WORLD

uk.custserv@gwplc.com
+44 115 91 40000



ASIA-PACIFIC

au.hobbyservice@gwplc.com
+61 2 9829 6111



USA & CANADA

custserv@gwplc.com
1-800-394-4263