

WARHAMMER
40,000

SANCTUS REACH

THE RED WAAAGH!



CAMPAIGN SUPPLEMENT

THE RED WAAAGH!



**THE OPENING OF THE
SANCTUS REACH CAMPAIGN**

INTRODUCTION

The Sanctus Reach System resounds to the roar of the Beast. The Red Waaagh! has conquered world after world in its galactic rampage. Only the valour of true heroes – and the low cunning of a few villains – has a hope of stopping it.

The Red Waaagh! is the first book in the Sanctus Reach campaign. It tells the story of the brutal invasion of Sanctus Reach by an armada of Ork spacecraft that grows mightier by the day. The campaign reaches its zenith on Alaric Prime, the last bastion of resistance in a system overrun by howling, battle-crazed greenskins. Alaric Prime is a Knight world, and the noble houses that govern it are more than happy to test their giant war machines against the sledgehammer planetary invasion of the Orks. Not only that, but their urgent requests for aid summon the elite of the Astra Militarum: several regiments of Cadian Shock Troops and a contingent of Tempestus Scions. But will their combined forces be enough to halt the Red Waaagh?

HOW THIS SUPPLEMENT WORKS

The Red Waaagh! contains the following sections:

- **Waaagh! Gruk:** The savage tale of the Ork invasion of Sanctus Reach, the brave Knights that defend the last of the Imperial worlds to fall to the Waaagh!, and the Cadians that reinforce them. Battle after battle unfolds in grand style as the war for Alaric Prime reaches fever pitch. However, as the true heroes of the war effort reveal themselves the story takes an unexpected turn...
- **New Missions:** Themed missions for your games of Warhammer 40,000, each representing a pivotal battle in the Red Waaagh! storyline.
- **Datasheets:** Datasheets that feature the Formations that fought in the campaign, allowing you to field these heroes and villains in your own games.
- **Planetstrike:** Rules for staging planetary invasions in the 41st Millennium, allowing you to fight such battles in any war zone, with any army. One player takes the role of attacker, throwing wave after wave of invaders at the planet, whilst the other stoically defends it with everything he's got. Drop ships loom in the firmament and the skies fill with flak as war unfolds on a new level.

NARRATIVE SUPPLEMENTS

This book follows a narrative, chronicling a specific war that unfolds across a swathe of the Imperium. It features a plethora of evocative stories and stunning imagery, providing a landscape within which you can use your own prized collection of Citadel miniatures. The book includes not only a set of rules for planetary invasions, but also new missions and datasheets which you can use to add spice to your games, whether these are set during the time of the Red Waaagh! or elsewhere.



WAAAGH! GRUKK



Waaagh! Grukk was a teeming fleet of Ork invaders that smashed its way straight through Sanctus Reach. At its head was Grukk himself, an Ork warlord with such a bloody reputation that Orks flocked from all around to fight at his side.

The Ork warlord Grukk is a ten-foot brute of muscle and rage. His physical presence alone makes him an intimidating sight, and underneath his scarred and pockmarked skin lies a body as hard as iron. Even when unarmed he is a terrifying sight. When he dons his monstrous power claw, Grukk becomes practically unstoppable.

It is a well-known fact that Grukk will fly into a berserk fury whenever his temper reaches its limit, and it doesn't take much to set him off. He once trashed an entire settlement purely because a grot attendant spilt engine oil on his breakfast.

As a younger Ork, Grukk killed Krugg the Tyrant, Warboss of his tribe, to seize power for himself. While such leadership challenges are par for the course in Ork society, the utter brutality of the battle and the spectacular fashion in which Grukk finished his old rival gave rise to the nickname 'face-rippa'.

Though the Orks of Grukk's tribe would never admit it, they are all a bit scared of Grukk, and rightly so. No one wants to lose face in front of his mates, after all.

Grukk's power claw is a howling, whining beast of a thing. It features a jutting kustom buzz-saw that Grukk uses to live up to his nickname as often as he can. It also magnifies his strength from merely impressive to utterly terrifying.

At the Slaughter of Black Gulch, Grukk famously tore open a malfunctioning Drop Pod to get at the Space Marines inside. He then cut all ten of the Adeptus Astartes into pieces, one by one, in a series of increasingly violent kills. It was such an ignoble fate that the commanders of the battle company authorised a revenge strike upon Grukk himself. Despite inflicting severe damage, the Space Marines were unable to complete their mission. Grukk is still alive today, albeit covered in a grotesque patchwork of thick, knotted scars. The same cannot be said of the Obsidian Glaives Chapter.

Though his strength is legendary, it is Grukk's utter certainty that he cannot lose that makes him so dangerous. He makes a habit of leading every charge, no matter the odds, and publicly butchers any Ork stupid enough to question his rule.

Grukk is always encrusted with the clotted blood of those he has killed. He never wipes it off, either, considering such acts as cleaning or washing to be 'runt's work'. His supporters claim that he has never lost a fight, not even once. It is this bloody reputation – and Grukk's habit of painting his ships with gore – that has led to his crusade of violence being known to his followers as the Red Waaagh!

This kind of renown spreads like wildfire in Orky society. Though he has never spared a thought towards the arts of leadership, Grukk has unintentionally started a Waaagh! that has blazed from one side of Sanctus Reach to the other.

Ork fleets from every part of the Sanctus Reach System converge upon the front line each week, hoping to get a glimpse of the Face-ripping in action. Many of the Orks inbound on the system believe that Warlord Grukk is blessed by Gork himself.

With every battle the Ork warlord wins, Waaagh! Grukk grows more powerful. There is very little chance of stopping it before it reaches critical mass and wipes out a swathe of Imperial space altogether.



GORK

The Ork psyche is so strong and robust that their reflection in the mirror-universe of the Warp is a potent force indeed. There are two mighty, belligerent and boisterous Ork gods that the greenskins believe in above all others – Gork, who the Orks say is brutal but kunnin', and Mork, who is kunnin' but brutal. Though both are warrior gods, Gork is the primary deity of clobbering, smashing, breaking, killing and pummelling the rest of the galaxy into submission. This is a notion that resonates strongly with the more single-minded warbosses of the Ork race, of whom Grukk is a perfect example.

GRUKK'S RAMPAGE

SANCTUS

Stellar Primo Nova

Sanctus is the star at the heart of the Sanctus Reach system. It is currently one of the most stable stellar bodies in the sector, though its solar flares plague nearby Obstiria every year.

TERENDIL

Paradise World
DECLARED PERDITAS 773.M32

OBSTIRIA

Home World of the Obsidian Glaives

*<INFORMATION CLASSIFIED
- ORDO REDACTUS>*

Obstiria is a world of barren black rock, battered by radiation from solar flares. Despite its harsh conditions – or perhaps because of them – Obstiria is the home world of the Obsidian Glaives Chapter. The world was the first planet to bear the brunt of Waaagh! Grukk. The majority of the Obsidian Glaives Chapter mobilised to hold back the Ork menace, but despite slaying hundreds of thousands of the greenskins that made planetfall, every day saw millions more land upon Obstiria until the Space Marines were slain.

GHUL JENSEN

Hive World

Population: >200,000,000,000
Tithe Grade: Decuma Particular –
Exactis Extremis
Aggregate: 1,350;
Aestimare: B50-E400

Planetary Governor Ghul Jensen the Latter XXIV ordered the planet's PDF to fortify his capital, Hive Jensen, to the exclusion of all other duties. Such was his influence that his command was obeyed. The redeployment delayed the capital hive's destruction for three days after the rest of the planet had been ransacked.

MALAGHAI MORCA

Rogue Trading Post

Population: >5,000,000
Tithe Grade: Solutio Tertius
Aggregate: 600;
Aestimare: D400-G40

The Orks were denied their fight on Malaghai Morca – the vendors that dwelt there were so well connected with Rogue Trader fleets that they had time enough to flee the planet before the Waaagh! stripped it bare.

SQUIRE'S REST

Agri World

Population: >10,000,000
Tithe Grade: Exactis Prima – Exactis Particular
Aggregate: 2,000;
Aestimare: C500-B50

Squire's Rest was once a peaceful agri world, but in the last few years it has been plagued by Ork raiders whose heavily armed junk-craft have the Jolly Ork symbol emblazoned upon their prow. It is thought that these raiders formed the outriders for Waaagh! Grukk.

THE WRATH OF GORK

The Ork flagship *Wrath of Gork* is a gigantic hulk of scrap metal, reinforced with giant slabs of obsidian scavenged from Obstiria's crust. Someone once told Grukk that 'red wunz go faster', but in Grukk's mind, bartering for red paint is a waste of time that could be spent on killing things. His hordes repaint their spacecraft after every battle – not with paint, but instead with the still-blooding limbs of their fallen enemies. The gore-spattered *Wrath of Gork* has butchered its way across the stars with such bullish momentum that those in its wake call Grukk's violent rampage the Red Waaagh!

ALARIC PRIME

Knight World

Population: >400,000,000
Tithe Grade: Solutio Extremis
Aggregate: 400;
Aestimare: C750-F1000

Alaric Prime is preparing for war on a scale undreamt of. Though there are Imperial reinforcements inbound, Alaric Prime's rulers fear it will be too little too late.

'Cross me, curse me or even look me in the eye and I'll kill ya stone dead, just ta teach ya a lesson.'

- Grukk the Face-rippa



DISTANT THUNDER



As the planets of Sanctus Reach crumbled one by one before the onslaught of Waaagh! Gruk, Alaric Prime girded itself for war. Aid was summoned from a nearby fleet out of Cadia and from the Schola Progenium world of Edificus. Before long the planet was fortified for the coming invasion, though strife still blighted the ancient houses of Alaric Prime...

The first warning that Alaric Prime had of the greenskin menace was on the vernal equinox of 443998.M41, when the twin Astropaths of House Kestren experienced the same midnight trauma. Each of the gaunt twins had vomited green ectoplasm during a terrible nightmare. Barefoot, they had rushed through the scone-lit corridors of Castle Kestren to the bedchamber of their master, Lord Gaulemort. The shivering Astropaths gabbled over each other's words, but each told of a billion bestial voices joined in one great unending warcry. Their spasms grew worse, and soon the pair lapsed into fever dreams.

When the import of their tale sank in, Gaulemort Kestren came close to panic. Every lord of the Imperium dreads his aides reporting an incoming xenos invasion. House Kestren's Astropaths had detected not just any incursion, but an entire Waaagh! headed in their direction.

That night Gaulemort sent messenger-skulls arcing out to every one of the knightly houses. Before long, each of the hovering devices had chattered its warning into the vox-chamber of a different Noble. All but one was ignored.



ALARIC PRIME

The planet of Alaric Prime is as hidebound by tradition and protocol as any other Knight world, yet it also has to bear the further burden of several thousand years of careless lawmaking. No law upon Alaric Prime has ever been repealed. It is illegal to yawn during daylight hours, illegal to talk when a Noble is speaking in earshot, even illegal to point at the stars in the night sky. So numerous and restrictive are the archaic laws of Alaric Prime that a full two-thirds of the planet's populace has been incarcerated or exiled by the over-zealous Justicars attached to each knightly house.

Most of Alaric Prime's surface is covered in a viscous sulphuric solution far thicker than seawater. The main continent of Alaric Prime is known as Sacred Isle, each island around it the domain of one of its knightly houses. The islands that form the rest of the habitable lands are little more than penitentiaries. Very few of those imprisoned are truly guilty of malicious conduct, but those that are criminal by nature inevitably thrive in the lawless proto-societies that result.



THE BROKEN SHIELD

The houses of Alaric Prime had long stood divided. Many of the noble lineages had long-standing feuds, and the years of oppressive tradition had bred frequent civil wars that had blighted the archipelagos and land masses of Alaric Prime without exception.

Though Gaulemort Kestren's message had reached each of its intended recipients, almost all of Lord Gaulemort's rivals had scornfully dismissed its content as a bluff or a distraction tactic. They believed that House Kestren wanted to increase its own power base whilst the other lords turned their attentions to their own defence.

The exception was Lord Neru of House Degallio. Having once piloted his Knight suit against the Ork pirates raiding Squire's Rest, the old warrior knew that the greenskin threat was a deadly reality; one that could overpower even the Obsidian Glaives. His own Astropath had run screaming into the night two hours before Gaulemort's messenger-skull had drifted in, adding veracity to the claims of imminent invasion.

At dawn the next day, Lord Neru gathered his most trusted Nobles into his keep's Rotunda Magnificat. A heated discussion took place. Neru proposed that they breach the sealed doors of Sacred Mountain at the earliest opportunity, using the ancient technologies within to summon aid.

Such a course of action was tantamount to blasphemy. Degallio's chamberlains politely reminded their lord it was named Sacred Mountain for a reason, for it contained relics from the time of the knightly houses' founding over ten millennia ago. Not only that, but rumour had it that the mountain's gates bore a powerful curse. Surely no man would risk bringing doom upon his house.

Neru believed they had no choice. Across the globe, reports were trickling in that each house's Astropaths were falling into a fugue state, clawing at their skin and ranting about green-hued tides. The knightly houses could not stand against an entire Waaagh!, even in the unlikely event they could unite the scattered people of the planet into a single army. They must break open the vaults of Sacred Mountain or die to a man when the Ork invasion hit home.

The Noble's men fell quiet, for the strict laws of Alaric Prime forbade the breach of holy ground. Only two of Neru's men dared speak up in support of his plan; his Knight Regal, Ursor Firesword, and his Aegis, Sire Jedric of the Black Shield.

Shaking his head, Lord Degallio stormed out of the Rotunda Magnificat and strode straight to the Chamber of Echoes. There he installed himself into his Throne Mechanicum and descended into the control cortex of his personalised Knight, the White Warden. The ancient war machine whirred into life, battle protocols flashing as it prepared for the trek to Castle Kestren.

Within a single day, Neru Degallio and his Noble escorts stood before Lord Gaulemort's candlelit court. Despite the protestations of his advisors, Gaulemort needed little convincing that Lord Neru's proposed course was sound. His own Astropaths had been completely incapacitated by the psychic bow wave of Orkoid energy, and he too had heard the legends of Imperial archeotech at the heart of Sacred Mountain.

The next day's sun rose as Neru Degallio, piloting the White Warden, ordered his retainers to melt through the adamantium bulkheads of Sacred Mountain. Deep inside the mountain's vaulted chambers, the Nobles of Houses Kestren and Degallio found all manner of forbidden technologies that bridged the gap between flesh and metal. Held high amongst the relics was a wrinkled Astropath, trapped like a fly in amber by a stasis field, his swollen cranium three times the size of a normal man's head.

Without hesitation, Neru Degallio deactivated the stasis field holding the ancient Astropath frozen in time. A psychic scream ripped through the darkness, stunning the Nobles and howling out into space. The psyker died almost immediately, but his cradle's dusty cogitator array showed that a distress call had been sent. All that was left was to wait.

'Two choices: we act now, or we sit here and rot, waiting for the beast's jaws to close. House Degallio chooses action! Arm thyself, sons of Alaric; gather thine allies. The war to end all wars is about to begin.'

- Lord Neru Degallio

A WORLD TRANSFORMED

A tense month passed. The knightly houses of Velemestrin, Brahmica, Terryn and Kamata were united in their censure of Houses Kestren and Degallio for their presumption in breaching Sacred Mountain, and the fragile diplomacy that held the planet's uneasy truce quickly broke down.

Just as the houses were on the brink of open war, a reed-thin message crackled out within each Keep's vox-chamber. Its audiosign was that of one Castellan Stein, a Cadian commander whose fleet had been tasked with reinforcing Ghul Jensen. Though the Cadians had arrived too late to fulfil their primary mission, they had outrun the cumbersome ships of the Red Waaagh! and hence were able to bolster the defenders of Alaric Prime. En route they had rendezvoused with a fleet of black-armoured

warships hailing from the nearby Schola Progenium planet Edificus, scrambling in response to the astropathic distress call.

Less than two weeks after the bulk landers of the Astra Militarum had made planetfall, Alaric Prime had been transformed. Each of its cities, fortresses and island penitentiaries had been warscaped, optimised and reinforced by masterful Cadian strategos. Regiments of disciplined soldiery manned every Aegis line and crenellated bunker complex. Those knightly houses that had managed to put aside their differences loomed in support, ready for battle. Here the Imperium would make their stand.

As every Cadian knows, the next most important piece of kit a Guardsman carries after his lasgun is his entrenching tool. In the final hours before the arrival of Grukk's rust-ships the men and women of the Cadian 1651st continued to dig. As Stein had told them only hours before, while inspecting the defences, 'A pint of sweat is worth a drop of blood, so dig those trenches deep.' The footsoldiers of the Imperial Guard were to be very thankful of their toil in the coming weeks.



HOUSE DEGALLIO



House Degallio was indisputably the most powerful knightly house upon Alaric Prime, in part due to the strength of its ancient alliance with the Adeptus Mechanicus. However, none could deny that Degallio's influence was directly related to an advantage that no other Alarican house could boast – unparalleled mobility in times of war.

House Degallio has a long and proud history of seafaring. Once, its steamships were little more than ugly hulks that conveyed the criminal elements of Alaric Prime to incarceration upon the volcanic hellscape of Isle Ignivitch. Since it opened a sideline in oceanic trade, the house has grown considerably in influence and wealth. At the house's inception, it had but one solitary Knight active, known as the White Warden. By the time its trade routes were fully established across Alaric Prime, its seaborne sacristies held several dozen Knights, each a warrior of great repute.

Even the mightiest battle steamer of Lord Neru's fleet is a mere tug beside the fusion-powered superstructure known as Isle Degallio. Originally a mobile conglomeration of prison hulks, Isle Degallio has become far more than a conjoined fleet. Over the centuries, layers of sea-mulch and captured turf have laid strata of organic matter over the adamantium stanchions of its foundations. It has come to resemble nothing less than a small landmass that roams the oceans of Alaric Prime under its own power.

In times of civil war, the titanic Isle Degallio makes haste for the coastline nearest to the battle, its fusion engines powering it through the ocean spray so fast that its attendant navy struggles to maintain its cordon around the island's perimeter. Once land is sighted, the navy spreads out into a great battle line of heavily-armed ships, pounding the coastline with artillery shells once the enemy is in range. Isle Degallio itself will power in close, its Knights striding across the bridges extruding from the isle's landmass into shallow waters before charging across the dunes and launching themselves into the fight.

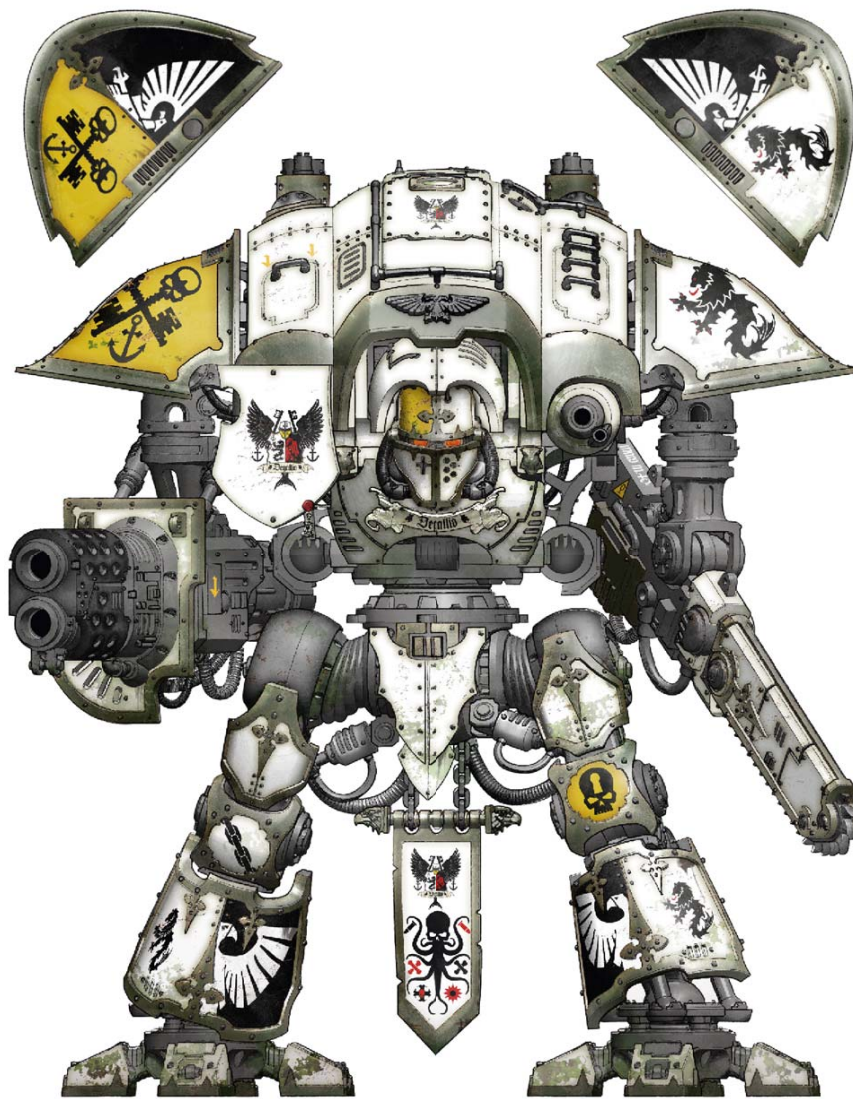
Isle Degallio is so large that it has its own civilian population. Several teeming cities dot its skyline, supporting all manner of industries and ensuring the isle's pre-eminence as a trading hub. Despite this, rival houses whisper that the islanders are inbred to a man, calling its warriors 'sea-lions', 'fish-eyes' and all manner of other unflattering nicknames. The noble lineage of House Degallio remains free from genetic weakness, in truth – there are always more than enough mamzels and consorts in each generation willing to exchange the boredom of their landbound houses for a life of seaborne adventure.

THE SEABLADE

The patriarch of the house is Neru Degallio, known to his men as the Seablade, and to his closest friends as the Old Walrus. Neru Degallio's flair in the arts of battle is legendary, as is his alarming facial hair. His consort, the svelte and skull-masked Lady of the Keys, is a powerful political force in her own right. She has been instrumental in the meteoric rise of House Degallio to the pinnacle of influence on Alaric Prime, possessing a fearsome intellect and considerable charisma.

Anyone who so much as hints that Neru or his consort might be past their prime is given the honour of fighting alongside the White Warden, Degallio's battle-scarred but indomitable Knight suit. As the battle rages, the patriarch's detractor is forced to reassess his opinion – no one can argue with a kill count that is more than double that of the next man.





Sire Garrett Degallio fights in one of House Degallio's Alabaster Lance formations, and is renowned for his courage and prowess in combat. Trained in the use of the sword by his uncle, the lord of the house, Garrett has won countless honours both on the field of battle and in ritualised combat with his fellow Nobles. As the Ork armada approached Alaric Prime, Garrett stood ready alongside his kin to drive the xenos invaders from his home world with righteous fury and the indomitable might of his Knight Errant.

THE WAAAGH! DESCENDS



The knightly houses of Alaric Prime marched to bolster their planet's defences at the very last opportunity. Millions of highly trained Imperial Guard already stood ready to defend the planet. Alaric Prime had become more than just a populous world – it was a symbol of the Imperium's defiance in the face of the Ork threat.

Despite their initial reservations, most of the Nobles of the knightly houses were impressed by the no-nonsense approach of the Cadians. The officer in charge of Alaric Prime's defences was an irritable but extremely capable leader named Jakren Stein. Castellan Stein had barked orders and browbeaten his naysayers so consistently that, by the time the Orks neared the planet, his Hydra squadrons and Icarus batteries could throw a net of firepower into the skies above every vital site. Neru Degallio and Lor Gaulemort joked that their flying messenger-skulls had better roll along the ground if they wanted to escape being bullseyed by a Cadian with an itchy trigger finger.

The general atmosphere across the planet was one of courage under adversity – even those mainlander houses that still resented Degallio for forcing their hand held their peace whilst the Cadians and Schola Progenium troopers were around. Though the knightly houses of the main islands were at truce, dangerous discontent still brewed amongst the houses of the lesser islands. There were many hidden pacts and agreements made, several of which revolved around the 'accidental' extermination of House Degallio and Kestren when the fighting began in earnest. Many islander houses had enlisted thousands of minor offenders from the prison systems into regiments they had dubbed House Militia. These undisciplined and immoral companies were unpredictable, but even the strictest Commissar turned a blind eye, recognising they would need every able man when the Waaagh! hit home.



JAKREN STEIN

Jakren Stein stands tall among the castellans of Cadia, a stoic and canny commander with a feel for war and a taste for blood. His reputation was hard won, though the story of his rise to power is clouded with rumour. It is whispered among the subalterns of rival Cadian regiments that early in his career Stein commanded a company in the defence of Hive Svard and brutally put down the Sorschan rebellion. During the battle for the Crimson Deep, it is said his company became surrounded by superior rebel forces who demanded his surrender. Rather than succumb, Stein flew into a rage, ordering an immediate attack which saw his company break out of the encirclement but lose nine out of every ten men in the process. Since then, Stein has hidden his dark temper from his men.

THE STORM BREAKS

Night after night slunk past. Word of the coming invasion had spread from one side of the planet to the other, and rumour was becoming certainty as the populace beheld the incoming invaders with their own eyes. Merely by looking up after sunset it was possible to see the pinpricks of light growing larger as the Ork fleet approached. Hundreds of new stars filled the skies, their engine flares flickering like pulsars. The civilians told themselves the Cadians had masterminded a defence that would easily shatter the Ork fleet. As if to confirm the supposition, scoptic plates taken by the Cadian battleships showed an invading force that was ramshackle in the extreme. Most of the ships, though blunt and fearsome in their aspect, were little more than rusted iron slabs bolted together in a haphazard fashion. It was deemed a wonder they had not fallen apart during the invasions of Obstiria and Ghul Jensen. Nobles from Houses Kamata and Terryn began to take bets as to whose Knight would tally the most ship kills if any Orks made it through the Cadian flak-net. Neru Degallio shook his head in dismay, and the Cadians remained grimly silent on the matter. To underestimate the Orks was to prepare only for the grave.

As the Ork craft reached low orbit, the terrible truth of their invasion plan became clear. The night sky was stitched with a crosshatch of red light as the Icarus lascannons of Firestorm Redoubts answered Castellan Stein's commands. Almost every laser beam found its target, but almost every one of them fizzled into nothingness. On came the Ork ships, growing closer by the moment. A spherical corona of fire blossomed around each of the Ork rust-ships as the energy of atmospheric entry betrayed their secret – a globe of force that protected the craft from harm. Though their physical construction was appalling, the force

fields of the primitive xenos craft were all but impenetrable.

War-klaxons sounded across the planet as the Nobles joined their minds to the mechanical sentiences of their Knights. The Cadians kept up their attack, sending solid shot and laser fire into the skies. Perhaps one in twenty of the Ork rust-ships were turned into blazing comets, disintegrating as they came, but the rest of them thundered down to Alaric Prime's surface with a tortured scream of engines. The ground shook wherever the rust-ships struck, staggering even the great suits of Knight armour. Giant ramps and drawbridges slammed down from the sides of each craft, and with a roar that sent ice-cold fear into the spines of all who heard it, the Orks began to pour out.



Even the Cadians were astonished by the brutal efficiency with which the Orks' advance forces made planetfall. The ramshackle construction of the rust-ships, at first thought to be a great weakness, now proved an advantage. Thousands of greenskins poured out of every hatch, hole and seam, trampling over each other in their haste to launch the first assault. Smoke-belching vehicles trundled across the crude drawbridges. At the waist of each rust-ship, truly huge war engines ground their way bodily through their transport's hull plates to stagger onto the plains below. The initial Ork assault had thundered down upon the landmass around Sacred Mountain – it was rumoured the Orks had psykers of their own, of a sort, and perhaps they too had heard the psychic distress cry from within the depths of the peak.

The thousand-mile ring of fortifications around Sacred Mountain bristled with heavy guns. Macro-cannon strongpoints hurled shell after shell into the massing Orks that stomped and roared in the shadow of their rusted craft. Quad-linked lascannons blasted apart Deff Dreads and Battlewagons as they ground their way clear of the scrum, and heavy bolters barked out a deadly rhythm whenever the massing greenskins spilled into their maximum range. Explosion after explosion boomed out, a deafening and blinding spectacle that made even the most battle-hardened Cadians shield their eyes at its intensity.

No matter the amount of carnage meted out by the Imperial gun lines, the Orks still came on. They poured towards the Imperial defences in a seething, shouting mass. Their great roar of bloodlust was like a wall of sound in itself, a roar that got louder with every passing second. The firecracker snap of lasgun volleys joined the thud of heavy weapons fire as the Orks came in range of the Cadian troopers manning each redoubt, and still it was not enough to halt the tide.

The Ork charge hit home like a tidal wave. Bodies were flung in all directions, bullets whizzed and ricocheted all about, and Guardsmen were snagged and dragged from the walls into the roiling mass of stinking alien flesh beneath. Incredibly, the Orks were using each other as stepping stones, piling atop one another in their haste to spill blood. The war for Alaric Prime had begun.

AIR WAR

Even as the Ork rust-ships fell like comets through the atmosphere, Castellan Stein threw squadrons of Thunderbolts against them in an attempt to knock them from the sky. From the ground, the Cadians could only watch as contrails wove between the enemy ships high in the upper atmosphere. What looked like a slow ballet of smoke and flame from the ground was a frenzied dogfight up close as Thunderbolts twisted and tumbled in aerial combat against Ork Dakkajets, their weapons leaving burning tracer fire in the thin air. Hopelessly outnumbered, the Thunderbolts were sent spiralling toward the earth one by one, their weapons no match for the brutal power of Grukk's assault.

THE KNIGHTS STRIKE BACK



Despite their extensive preparations, the Imperial Guard defenders were reeling from the intensity of the Ork attack. The Nobles of each knightly house strode into the fray in their titanic war machines, determined to prove their mettle on the field. They met their match when the Orks revealed a secret weapon of their own...

Steam-pistons groaned and lockbolts shuddered as the adamantium-clad war machines of the Alarican Nobles loped towards the Ork horde. Together the Knights numbered over two dozen. The foremost warriors of Houses Velemestrin and Brahmica pounded into battle behind those of Lord Gaulemort Kestren, eager to prove their worth. Rapid-firing battle cannons boomed, each blast overlapping the next in a tooth-rattling fusillade.

The waves of Orks hurling themselves forward were flung in all directions by each explosion. Great sprays of dark crimson blood gouted into the air like liquid fireworks wherever the battle cannon shells hit home. High inside the cockpits of their Knights Paladin, the Nobles of House Terryn panted like wolves on the hunt. Sire Dindh of House Brahmica laughed, on the edge of hysteria as he revelled in the glorious release of battle.

High on the ramparts of their fortresses, the Cadian officers watched intently, voxing back and forth as the charge of Alaric Prime's defenders hit home. The Knights were killing score upon score of the invading xenos, and the occasional Ork missile that corkscrewed into the Knights exploded prematurely on their ion shields or ricocheted off their thick plating without causing any real harm. The planet's Nobles were clearly no strangers to war.

Lord Gaulemort's Paladins stormed into the broken morass of xenos bodies, the cold metal feet of their war engines crunching greenskins into the dirt wherever movement twitched. Giant helms swung left and right, scanning the horde for the banners and totems that indicated leadership whilst battle cannons blazed again and again. In their wake came the Knights Errant of Houses Velemestrin and Brahmica. Heavy stubbers suppressed any rallying xenos on their flanks whilst thermal cannons stabbed great columns of destruction into those Ork war-constructs that had survived the rampage.

Working in concert, the Knights systematically annihilated the Orks in a broad column that led straight into the central mass of the heaving green tide. A trail of blackened, steaming destruction extended behind them as they crushed, blasted and stamped their way to the heart of the horde. The Orks were responding, slowly at first, but with increasing cohesion. Like the parting of a great sea, the greenskins flowed around the Knights' forward blitz, then swarmed in again behind them, cutting them off from the Cadians altogether and aiming their haphazard volleys at the flank and rear of each machine.

Stein's bellowed vox-orders crackled over each Noble's choirnet. One by one, they were voluntarily muted by the Knights. It was their time to kill, and they were close to the throat of their prey. House Kestren's Paladins plunged on into the horde, ion shields reconfigured to guard their rears. Reaper chainswords smashed poorly made Ork walkers into scrap metal. Many of the xenos fled in disarray as yet more battle cannon shells and melta blasts hit home amongst them. The foremost Knights had reached the shadow of the largest rust-ship, but their true prey was nowhere to be seen. The war machines were surrounded, and their brazen challenge had yet to be answered in force.



Rolundus Velemestrin could hear the blood pounding in his ears as he strode toward the rust-ship in his Knight suit, Gauntlet. Locked by tubes and tendrils into his Throne Mechanicum's wiry embrace, he looked down on the greenskins from above, the vantage point making him feel like a vengeful god. As he neared the horde, he sent a silent thought-burst to trigger his heavy stubbers. The ancient weapons clattered into life, their staccato blast muted by the vista-plates of the Knight's helm.

Outside in the smoke and blood Orks were being culled in their hundreds. Many died screaming, crushed into the earth by the Knight's giant feet. Others were cut down by the slugs of the large-bore stubbers, their own small arms fire sparking uselessly off the war machine's armour. Rolundus weathered the storm, oblivious to the aliens' futile attacks. The flashing amber icons on his canopy showed the dwindling ammo counter of the stubbers and streams of ghostly firing portents that guided his guns to their targets. It was only when the shadow of the rust-ship loomed up over him that Rolundus truly took stock of the wider battle. He peered out of the vista-plate, shifting to overlay the scrolling data runes and neural information that poured into his brain. His augurs were identifying alien warriors with heavy weapons closing in from all directions. Leader-beasts determinedly pushed lesser warriors into the line of fire of his fellow Knights, coming in close behind them. With a brutal impulse Rolundus triggered his battle cannon to swivel around and fire, its shells tearing into mob after mob of Orks in quick succession.

Suddenly the Noble recoiled in shock as a massive steel claw lunged out of the smoke and smashed into his Knight's vista-plate. Rolundus looked on in horror as a crack appeared in the canopy before his face, spreading with painful slowness like a spider's web. Oily smoke and the thick smell of blood suddenly poured into his war machine. A massive Ork war effigy filled the vista-plate for a second, its thrumming chain-arm raised to strike. Then the world burst into multicoloured light, and Rolundus Velemestrin was no more.



THE COMING OF GRUKK

The air filled with the ear-splitting screech of tortured metal as a full quarter of the rust-ship's flank began to fall open. A hinged slab of oxidised iron taller than a hab-block, the flank fell downwards, blotting out the sun for those Knights that had drawn too near to the craft. Six of their number threw their war machines into full reverse, crushing Orks underfoot as they backed through the throng. The orange-striped Knight of Sire Vocus was not so nimble. Hamstrung by the weld-cutters of a mob of greenskin pyromaniacs, its pilot could do nothing but fire its battle cannon at maximum elevation in an impotent attempt to halt the immense tonnage bearing down on it.

Sire Vocus' prized war machine was flattened like a rations tin under a jackboot. The muted thump of the Knight's detonation could be heard a split second before the rust-ship's flank hit the ground with a tremendous crash. A wave of dust and iron particles burst outward across the battlefield, blinding greenskin and Knight alike before billowing into the Cadian defence lines.

As one, the Orks roared their approval, beating their chests and storming forwards as the stunned defenders gave them the chance they needed. With their targets hidden by the dust storm, the tight volleys of the Cadians failed to find their mark. The green tide, barely held at bay in the first charge, broke over the Cadian fortifications with the force of a river bursting a dam.

Here the Orks were at their deadliest. Robbed of coordinated support from their big guns, platoon after platoon of Astra Militarum died as the xenos charge hit home. Tribes of barbaric, maniacal greenskins smashed heads from necks and sank chain-toothed axes into the faces of their reeling human prey. An unruly orgy of violence rolled outward, the bayonets of the Cadians barely slowing the musclebound terrors roaring and biting in their midst. Within the space of a minute the Ork vanguard had broken the Cadian line wide open. Broken corpses and silenced heavy weapons were hurled into the platoons mustering behind, a barbaric challenge before the charge began anew.

By the sides of the rust-ship, the ochre clouds had begun to clear. The surviving Nobles gaped in horror as the thinning curtain of dust revealed a vision of destruction. Lumbering out of the rust-ship was an Orkoid war god made metal and given life, its titanic frame all belly and belligerence. The rusted beast was so large it made the Knights ranged around it look like hunchbacked mutants confronting a grossly overweight Ogryn.

One of the effigy's arms, a cannon taller than any of its adversaries, boomed its challenge. Sire Faragheist's Knight was flung backwards, ion shield overloaded and limbs scattered amongst the wreckage. War-horns blaring a reply, Sire Luminer's Knight charged up the rust-ship's impromptu ramp and ducked within the beast's reach. His reaper chainblade bit deep into its plated gut, which vented a geyser of oily steam. In response the monstrosity loosed a spiral-painted rocket at point blank range. It blasted Sire Luminer's Knight armour off balance for long enough that the beast could bring its grotesque chainsaw-arm around in a gnashing arc.

Luminer's Knight was not cut in half so much as mangled and crushed beyond recovery, falling to its knees a moment before the Ork monstrosity gut-barged its juddering corpse into a dozen pieces.

THE SECRETS OF HOUSE KAMATA

The tale of Dyros of House Kamata is one tinged with betrayal, disgrace and sorrow. The second son of Hiram Kamata, Dyros was raised to bring favour to his house, one of Alaric Prime's chosen elite. When his older brother died, leaving Dyros the honour of taking over his Knight, the young man was only strengthened in his resolve to fulfil his duty.

However, during the Ritual of Becoming he heard the whispers of his deceased brother from the Throne Mechanicum. In doing so he learned the truth of his brother's death at the hands of his father, and the deep lies and treachery which lurked in the heart of his house. Dyros immediately severed his ties to House Kamata, vowing to accept exile rather than fight beside his father, and became a Freeblade known only as the Blade of Redemption. With the arrival of Grukk and the Red Waaagh!, Dyros has returned from the far reaches of Alaric to fight for his world alongside the Knights of Kestren and Degallio.



THE FALL OF HOUSE KESTREN



The charging Knights had burnt a great furrow into the Ork horde, but in their haste to prove themselves they had overextended themselves badly. The magnitude of their mistake only became clear when an Ork war engine debarked from the flagship *Wrath of Gork*, guns blazing. Already the fate of the knightly houses hung in the balance...

All around the greenskin horde was closing in, their crude heavy weapons aimed at the engines and rear-quarters of the Knights as they faced down the war-beast. The remaining walkers circled the Ork monstrosity, their ion shields crackling defiance as they pounded its torso and head with battle cannon shells.

The beast's iron hide had to be thicker than a bastion's walls to survive such punishment, but survive it did. The monster loomed forward, staggering down what was left of the ship's ramp with the idiot aggression of a drunken brawler. Blasting wildly with its cannon, it smashed into Sire Falchine Kestren's purple-plumed Knight, knocking the walker into the dirt before raising a great foot and stamping the Knight's helm deep into its chest.

Lord Gaulemort cried out in grief and defiance, driving his Knight around to close on the beast's rear. His thermal cannon speared out, blasting the Ork machine's primary engines to molten slag. The war-beast stamped and shuddered as it tried to confront its tormentor, but the Knight's cannon screamed fire once more, carving off the monster's chainsaw arm in a spray of glowing gobbets.

A loud clank came from the brutish walker's head. Lord Gaulemort recoiled in shock as a hulking Ork leapt from the thick smoke between the war-beast's horns and landed with a thump on his Knight's helm. The patriarch fired his Knight's heavy stubbers, blasting point-blank at the maniac greenskin clinging to his war engine. Even inside his cockpit he could hear the bullets pinging from the fiend's armoured hide. Sweating and wide-eyed, he commanded his fellow nobles to hold fire as he sent a desperate pulse of thought to his ion shield. Electrical energies began to crackle around the Ork's armour, building to a deadly crescendo that threatened to fry the xenos alive.

Sylvost Velemestrin ignored Gaulemort's order to hold fire and took the shot. A battle cannon shell smashed into Gaulemort's cockpit with explosive force, sending his Knight reeling back as its ion shield dissipated.

It was all the chance the Ork Warboss needed. With a wrenching screech, the carapace hatch of Lord Gaulemort's Knight was ripped away. Xenos drool splattered onto the Noble's face as the Ork bellowed his triumph a few feet above him. A smoke-belching power klaw lunged down and plucked Gaulemort from his throne, his body jerking wildly and spraying sheets of blood as it was sawed in two. All around, the green horde chanted and roared 'Grukk' over and over as their leader gorged on the hot flesh of his foe.

Reaper chainsaw raised, Gaulemort's son Moloris swung in for a revenge kill. However, as he passed the Ork war effigy it lurched suddenly to the left, hammering into Moloris' Knight and sending it stumbling into the dirt.

Growling, Warboss Grukk leapt from Gaulemort's crippled war machine to land in front of the bowed Moloris. Sparks rained down as the Ork's saw-klaw sheared off the Kestren Knight's helm-plate. Servos strained and whined as Moloris fought to return his Knight to its feet, but he was not quick enough. Grukk headbutted the icon-screen that was the only thing between him and the Kestren Noble. It shattered, and the Ork stamped one iron-shod boot into the pudgy noble's chest – ribs crunched and blood squirted as Grukk ground his screaming foe's innards underfoot.

Reeling at the loss of their leaders, the surviving Knights Kestren backed away towards the Cadian defence line. In focusing on the war-beast's destruction, however, they had allowed the Ork horde to all but swallow them completely. The aliens clambered up each Knight's legs, lobbing stikkbombs into engine blocks and shearing cables with chain-toothed axes. Sire Dindh of House Brahmica fell backwards as an Ork tractor beam found purchase on his carapace, toppling his Knight a moment before a mob of greenskins with welding torches swarmed over it and cut it to pieces. Oberstrauss of House Terryn barged through the throng before his Knight was blasted apart by a lucky shot from one of the rust-ship's guns. The situation looked dire.

THE STEEL HOST

Only three Knights were left when the throaty roar of tank engines filled the air. Thirty blocky hulls crested the rolling hills to the east of the Imperial Guard's defence lines. The armoured division fanned out, laying down a rolling bombardment that fell just behind the remaining Knights. Encircling Ork vehicles were sent pinwheeling into the air or blasted into a rain of nuts, bolts and scything hull plates.

A great shout of aggression came from the Ork horde as it ran headlong towards the line of tanks. The Cadian vehicles calmly reversed at the same speed the Orks were advancing, drawing them into the teeth of their guns. The Orks that had been overrunning the defence lines, seeing this new foe, abandoned the slim pickings they had left and sprinted towards the attack converging on the armoured regiment. Their insane bravado proved their downfall when a trio of Hellhound flame tanks hurtled from behind the battle tanks, their sheets of liquid fire reducing mob after mob of charging Orks to ash. Before long the thick stench of burning greenskin flesh filled the air.

Bought a reprieve, the remaining Cadian platoons spread amongst the defence lines, and those few Knights that had escaped the disaster shared vox-signs with the terse Cadian high command. They were to head south and rendezvous by the banks of Boiling River. The Ork vanguard had been blunted, albeit at a tremendous cost. In the process, however, every single knight of House Kestren – including Lord Gaulemort – had met a violent and painful death.



THE CADIAN 1652nd, THE 'STEEL HOST'



Despite the relatively late founding of the Cadian 1652nd, the Steel Host is one of the most celebrated of all Cadia's tank regiments. The cohesion and mutual respect that binds its squadrons together enables them to function at peak efficiency, either by supporting the 1651st's infantry or by adding their firepower to the artillery barrages of the 1653rd.



TANK COMMANDER SILAS OVIK

Silas Ovik is a short, compact man who his men joke is half-Ratling. Ovik's answer to the taunts is to let his impeccable record speak for itself, for he has led Cadia's armour to victory time and time again.



Ovik's personalised Leman Russ Vanquisher, Ovik's Fist, has claimed hundreds of war engine kills over the centuries.



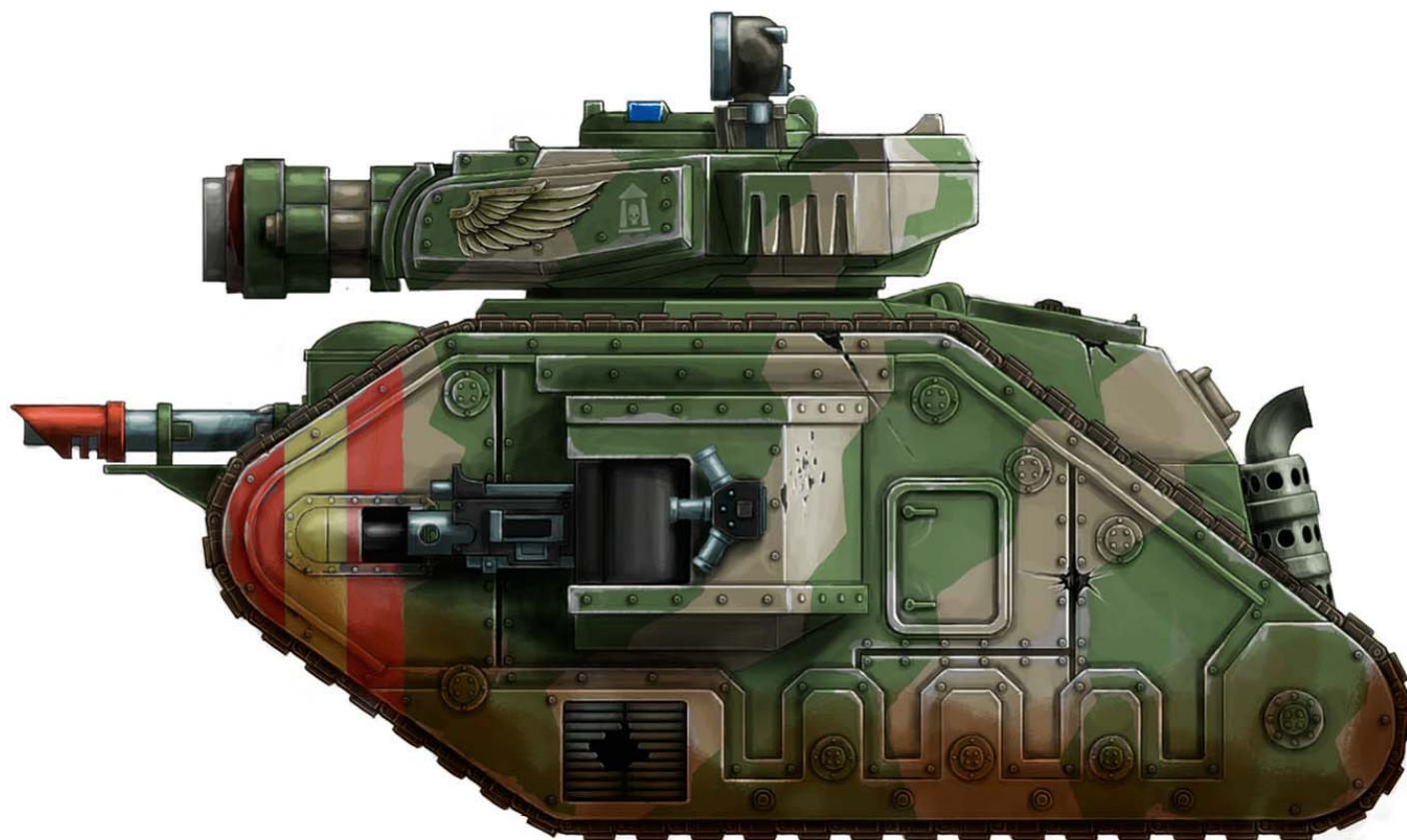
CREED'S GLAIVE

The Leman Russ Punisher known as Creed's Glaive is always the first into the fight. It has become a running joke among the Steel Host that if there is some way the crewmen of Creed's Glaive can bribe, trick, coerce or scheme their way to the front hours or even days before the rest of the company, they will take it. The crew maintain this is due to the relatively short range of their tank's punisher gatling cannon, a well-oiled reaper of lives that has taken a great toll on the Emperor's enemies over the years – they claim that unless they get stuck in early, there won't be any of the enemy left to kill.



PRIDE OF CADIA

The Leman Russ Vanquisher Pride of Cadia is the command tank of Colonel Threska, the 1652nd's most senior officer after Ovik himself. Threska has always believed in leading by example and his venerable tank perfectly encapsulates his merciless style of warfare. During the Ironcore World Offensive, Pride of Cadia tallied a dozen confirmed armour kills during the opening hour of combat alone.



INDOMITABLE MIGHT

Indomitable Might, or simply 'Old Indomitable' to its crew, has a reputation for being a temperamental, unruly beast. Its machine spirit requires constant soothing and it has a habit of shutting down during training exercises. That such a cantankerous machine has found its way into one of Cadia's most prestigious tank companies is due only to its impressive warrior spirit, for when battle is joined Old Indomitable will rush forward to engage foes bigger than itself, often slaying them outright with its demolisher cannon.



The grand banner of the Steel Host flutters above the tank in the regiment that has scored the most vehicle kills in the previous engagement. This tradition ensures much friendly competition, and occasional heroism, from the tankers of the Steel Host.





THE THUNDERHEADS

Perhaps the most elite tank squadron in the Steel Host, the Thunderheads have been the regiment's lynchpin for over three centuries, spearheading every assault and acting as an anchor for every defence. The tanks of this honoured squadron have served since the 1652nd's founding; the scars and honours etched into their hulls can be read as a history of the regiment itself. Competition for a place as a Thunderhead crewman is justifiably fierce, and only tankers who have earned the Valedictio Imperialis are even considered for this distinguished duty.



SKY-REAPER

Before being attached to the Steel Host, the Hydra Sky-reaper was deployed alongside Shock Troop regiments during the Tellex Campaign, providing the Cadian infantry with much needed air-defence against the winged horrors of Hive Fleet Leviathan. Sky-reaper's attachment to the 1652nd was in direct response to the famed regiment's losses to Ork aircraft on Orgath's World. Whilst some of the Steel Host's more veteran tank crews see Sky-reaper's deployment as a constant reminder of their defeat, even these critics have reason to be grateful of its presence when enemy bombers are patrolling the skies.

STEIN'S ANVIL



The Cadians are famous for the precision with which they wage war, yet against a foe as unpredictable as the Orks, even their discipline was tested to the limit. As millions of Ork invaders spilled from their rust-ships, it became obvious that only by isolating and destroying each element of the xenos army could the Imperium hope for victory.

Castellan Stein knew his *Tactica Imperialis* well. The war doctrine of that ancient tome teaches that where the enemy comes on in a great horde, it is best to meet them at a narrow point, so that their numbers cannot be brought to bear. The large numbers of rust-ships and the wide open plains of Alaric Prime had robbed him of such a strategy, so Stein had planned to rebuff the Ork attack from a defended position instead, attempting to blunt its momentum with a wall of lasfire. Once one rust-ship's horde had been neutralised, he intended to retreat to Boiling River and use its great bridges as killing fields to deal with the next rust-ship's swarm. If all went well, they would roll out their mobile defence across the continent, fighting a running battle where the Orks would struggle to bring their numbers to bear.

Things had gone worse than badly during the initial engagement, however. The calamitous events that unfolded amongst the Imperial lines had allowed more Orks to muster south of Sacred Mountain. Now the horizon was black with xenos marauders, stomping and shouting with boundless battlelust. Recon Sentinels had reported back that many of the greenskins were engaged in salvage operations, hauling not only their own wreckage back to the rust-ships but also that of the fallen Knights. What had become of the pilots Stein didn't like to think.

Lowering his magnoculars, the castellan shook his head in disappointment. The Ork attack had been slowed, but not stymied in the least. Greenskins still boiled out of the hull of the titanic craft, and to its leeward side another thousands-strong horde had amassed. Even now the greenskin throng flowed towards them, merging with the salvagers on the windward side to come on in a great mass.

The scale of the Ork invasion was becoming horribly clear. Stein made a quick mental calculation. If each one of the rust-ships fighting through the flakstorm in low orbit held a similar number of xenos warriors as those already planetside, Alaric Prime would be lost in less than a week.

With an effort of will the Cadian officer returned his thoughts to the task at hand. There was an extermination to be conducted, and with Boiling River as their ally, a great toll could be taken on the approaching horde. As the castellan's command tank sent vox-codes to the battle tanks and artillery of the Cadian 1652nd and 1653rd, his infantry quickly and efficiently formed up into the formation his men called 'Stein's Anvil'. Platoon after platoon took up position on the banks of the river, heavy weapons braced and ammunition piled high.

If reports from Stein's Valkyries were accurate, the poor coordination of the Ork invasion still afforded them a chance to suppress it section by section. The remainder of Grukk's forces planetside could be held and perhaps even broken on the banks of Boiling River before the warriors from the easternmost rust-ships made their way northwards to cut off the Cadian escape route. Such a military feat would require impeccable discipline and perfect timing. Stein smiled thinly to himself; those were qualities that every man in the Cadian 1651st possessed in great measure. He had seen to it himself.

As the Cadians made their final preparations on the banks of Boiling River, the vox-net crackled intermittently with nautical shanty-signs. To Stein's mind, they could have come from only one source. It looked like Warboss Grukk was about to get a surprise of his own.



From his tank's cupola, Silas Ovik watched the Orks charge toward the bridges and into the teeth of his squadron's overlapping fields of fire. A veteran of many tank battles against the Orks, he recognised the distinctive black-and-white chequer patterns of their forward elements. Goffs, they called themselves, or something like it. While the beasts displayed no great wit or tactics, Ovik knew all too well how unstoppable they could be on the charge. The Goffs liked to fight as an avalanche of green-skinned muscle, iron-shod boots and horned helms against which few foes could stand for long. Ovik had seen more than one Imperial position overrun by the Orks, the brutes leaping over their dead to get at the enemy.

As they charged towards Stein's defence lines, the Goffs chanted and yelled, their voices joining to become a deep rumble. The chant mixed with the hammering of their boots and filled the air with a wall of menacing sound. No matter how many times he heard it, the sound was enough to give Silas Ovik pause.

Better get to it, he thought, closing the cupola and drawing a bead on the onrushing xenos horde.

THE RAIN OF DEATH

As soon as the Orks were in range, the artillery squadrons of the Cadian 1653rd opened fire. Heavy munitions rained death into the massed horde stomping its way towards the riverbanks. Manticores fired high-explosive rockets in soaring arcs, Wyverns

hurled munitions that filled the air with razor shards, and Basilisks thundered a thirty-gun salute to Stein's battle plan.

The din of the rolling barrage was immense. From Stein's vantage point it looked as if the gods themselves were levelling their hatred at the xenos throng.

Just as the castellan had anticipated, the Ork masses ran forward rather than falling back, hoping to close within the reach of the Imperial Guard artillery.

It was a brave strategy, but ultimately a foolish one. A flotilla of ramshackle Ork vehicles hove into sight, the dust trails of their passage marking them clear as day. One by one, they found themselves under pinpoint fire from the platoons that occupied the bastions beyond the river, and one by one, they blossomed into flame. Wherever a mob of Orks grew close to the banks of Boiling River, a hundred lasguns would spike out into their ranks until the Orks had to climb over the corpses of their comrades to advance. Stein nodded appreciatively as his platoons went about their bloody work.

The signals ringing out across the vox-net were coming in so fast it was difficult to keep track. The Cadians stationed at Bridge Zeta Sec had fired their own artillery barrages into the ironclad Ork army inbound on their position, but with far less effect – their detonations had been all but nullified by crackling force fields that protected the Orks from harm. The riverside platoons were culling Orks at a gratifying rate, but the tide of invaders would not be stemmed for much longer.

It was time for phase two of Stein's battle plan to swing into place. As the Ork footsoldiers pounded towards the bridges, a trio of Chimera armoured transports hurtled up the ramps of both the Zeta Sec and Zeta Tert bridges. The vehicles formed a wall of steel, multilasers blazing. They had barely stopped moving before squads of Ogryns debarked from inside and lumbered past them, each abhuman warrior hefting a slabshield as the Orks' fusillade thickened.

Crude bullets hammered away at the shieldwall to no real effect. Hurlled stikkbombs left the warriors unfazed, their thick armour plates absorbing each blast. Rotund xenos bomber-beasts bounded towards them, fuses hissing on their backs. The great Ogryns merely toe-punted the beasts into the river, pillars of murky water erupting wherever they detonated. Amongst the bastions on the east side of Bridge Zeta Tert, Castellan Stein watched the exertions of his abhumans with no small measure of pride. The Ogryn counter-attack could buy them all the time they needed.



Commissar Palev screamed at the Bullgryn squad to hold the line as the first Orks slammed into their shields. Palev could almost feel the air tremble as the great abhumans strained their muscles to hold back the greenskins. As the Orks pressed forward, their choppas, boots and fists hammered into the slabshields. The Ogryns pushed back, bracing their heavy feet and gradually forcing the green tide back.

In isolated places Palev saw an Ork tumble over the shield wall, though these were quickly beaten to the ground under battle mauls and heavy feet. Even when the roaring Ork horde was more than a dozen deep against them, still the Ogryns stood their ground. They were a wall of steel, muscle and grit through which no mere mob of Boyz could hope to pass.

THE BATTLE OF THE BRIDGES



The Ork horde that poured from the landed rust-ships had overpowered the Knights sent against them, and the flames of battlelust burned bright in the invading greenskin armies as they pushed onwards. The Astra Militarum took a stand at Bridges Zeta Sec and Zeta Tert, hoping to engage the numberless throng across as narrow a frontage as possible.

The Ork vanguard, in their eagerness for war, plunged bodily into the river and attempted to swim across. They soon found out why the people of Alaric Prime called it Boiling River – the sulphurous vents that bubbled on the riverbed made sections of the watercourse hiss with simmering, toxic fumes. To the amazement of the Cadians stationed on the riverbank, the greenskins kept on coming where a human would have been boiled alive. Across the wide watercourse, the Orks spilt into the water like a stampeding herd of beasts, thrashing their great ape-like arms as they slowly propelled themselves through the bubbling liquid.

Though the toxicity of the waters killed only a small portion of the Orks, it slowed the rest enough to make their deaths all but certain. Thousands of ruby-red lasbeams burned the air as the platoons stationed on the riverbanks ignored the egg-stink of the river's sulphur fumes and opened fire with well-drilled precision. Before long the water was filled with smouldering greenskin corpses that bumped together as they floated towards the yawning mouth of the Great Estuary.

GRUKK'S BIG RED CHARGE

Then Grukk himself reached the fight. With his war effigy reduced to a scrap metal fortress by Gaulemort Velemestrin, the Warboss had trundled to the front line in a massive horned wagon emblazoned with a giant white bull's head. The vehicle was the target of flurries of missiles and laser blasts from the Cadians manning the other side of the river, but despite dozens of armour plates being blasted from its chassis, the thing kept coming. It thumped bodily over the tank traps at the end of the bridge before its metal maw clanged open, disgorging a posse of massive Orks. At their head was Grukk himself, his power claw revving and his voice raised in a bestial roar while his massive attack squig drooled human blood from between mantrap jaws.

Stein and the rest of the Cadian high command muttered darkly at this new development, reassigning their Valkyrie and Vendetta air support to intercept the xenos commander before he could reach the Cadian line. In the distance, lights winked and columns of jet-flame lit the night as the heavy aircraft of the Militarum Tempestus regiments lifted off from the Skyshield nexus, Taurox APCs tracking in their wake. They were only a few miles distant, stationed between bridges Zeta Sec and Zeta Tert, but the Warboss was faster. Smashing luckless underlings from his path, he stormed across the span of the bridge through a blinding net of lasfire, head lowered like a charging bull-grox.

The Ogryns upon the bridge set their slabshields and prepared for the Ork elite's impact, but Grukk had built up a cannonball momentum. He hit the Ogryns' line with such force the massive abhumans were bowled bodily to the ground. The Warboss started to lash out with his massive power claw, not sawing and crushing as he had against the Imperial Knights a few hours before, but using it as a giant metal club to bludgeon the reeling Ogryns to mush. Bonehead Grunkt, the sergeant of the Bullgryn squad, raised his power maul in both hands and took a swing at Grukk's head that would have decapitated a Space Marine. Grukk stepped backwards at the critical moment before launching forward to shoulder-barge Grunkt over the side of the bridge. The Ogryn's bellowing faded as Boiling River pulled him deep below.

The Ogryns were reinforced by another two Bullgryn squads just as Grukk's bodyguard hit home. Each Nob was clad in the heaviest armour their Meks could provide. An untidy brawl that was more wrestling match than melee spilled across the bridge. The Valkyries and Vendettas that had scrambled from the nearby Skyshield nexus passed overhead, but with their abhuman comrades mingled amongst the Ork Meganobs, decent firing solutions were all but impossible.

Behind the Ork elite came a roaring flood of Ork warriors that stamped and chanted, the air all but set alight by their ravening battlelust. Blasts of fizzing green energy arced up into the skies from strangely-dressed shamans in their midst, two of them finding the Vendettas that roared overhead, striking their engines and sending them spinning out of control.

The Cadians stationed on the other side of the bridge focused their fire and made every volley count, killing hundreds of Orks and forcing those behind to scramble over the corpses of their comrades. They might as well have been throwing rocks against the waters of a burst dam. The green tide broke over the mauling Meganobs and Ogryns in the centre of the bridge and poured past, Grukk and his bodyguard all but hidden from sight as the Orks hurdled and leaped for the other side of the bridge. Lasfire spat, and with each passing second a dozen more Orks died. It was not enough.

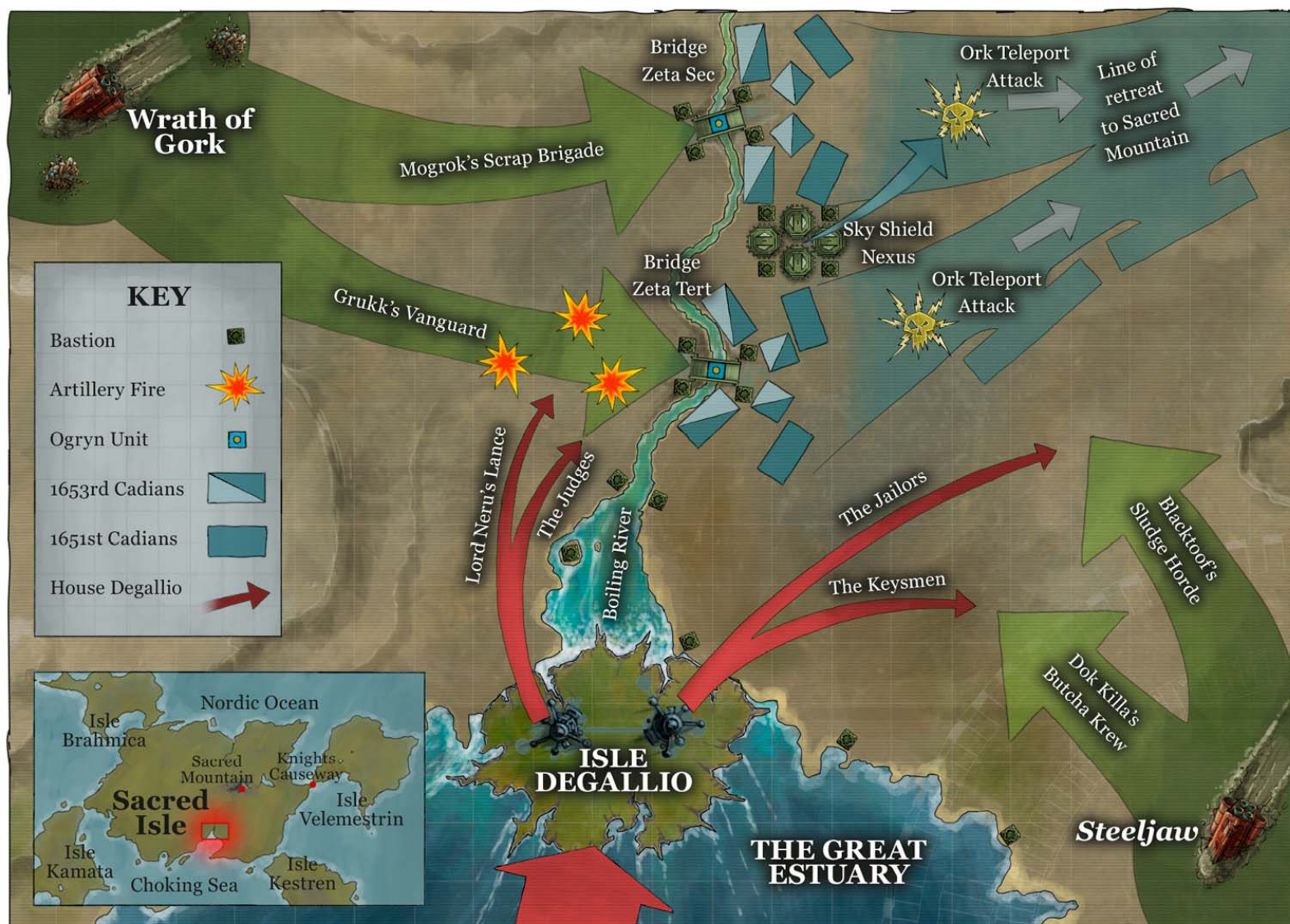


Gholo Velemestrin watched as the Orks tried to cross Boiling River, cramming onto the bridges or leaping into the water. Through the magnification plates on the canopy of his Knight he could see the battle for the bridges slowly unfolding below him. The Noble smiled grimly as he watched the aliens thrash and burn in the sulphurous water of the river, remembering the old tales of the blood of the mountain and the toxic fires which burned still beneath its roots. One such tale told of how Boiling River had been known by another name, now lost to the march of time, but that it had turned toxic overnight when off-world invaders had sought to plunder the mountain. Some had mumbled that it was merely coincidence that the river had turned toxic that night, a deep fissure opened by a chance earthquake releasing virulent chemicals from deep below; cutting the raiders off from their vessel and cooking those that dared to cross. Gholo knew better. As he watched the Orks' skin burn and bleach, he knew that he was watching the vengeance of

THE STAGGERING STRIKE

Castellan Stein had predicted this eventuality; even expected it. Platoon by platoon, the Cadians began to withdraw, their pace measured as they moved to new predetermined positions without talking or slowing their rate of fire. Such was their precision and training that each soldier emptied his las-clip at the same time as the rest of his squad, kneeling to reload just as the squad behind them took up the slack. The Orks boiled from the bridge in a scrambling heap, many of their number as much dead as alive as the horde fell over itself in their haste to reach close quarters. Some of them succeeded, tearing into the withdrawing Cadians with such force that the Guardsmen could not escape. Choppas rose and fell, limbs were hacked from bodies and heads cut in half as the frenzied violence of the Waaagh! took its toll.

Wherever a Cadian platoon fell, the triumphant Orks looked up from their bloody work only to realise they were exposed in a clear killing field. Heavy weapon platoons deployed at the rear of the Guard line hammered mass-reactive bolts and lascannon fire into the blood-covered marauders. Ork bodies shuddered and were ripped apart as the Guardsmen avenged their comrades with grim efficiency. Each time an Ork mob reached the Cadian line it would quickly find itself in no man's land. Moments later it would be ripped apart by the counterfire of nearby support platoons. Stein's trap had been set well, and its jaws were claiming xenos lives by the hundred.



'If any of you so much as think about firing before I give the order, you just volunteered for permanent rearguard and latrine duty to boot. We are the best soldiers in the Imperium, and the honour of Cadia rests on your shoulders. The God-Emperor himself is watching, so don't you dare fire, not before you see the points of their teeth. But when you do, let them have all hell!'

- Sergeant Dain Halban, Cadian 1651st regiment, Infantry Company Epsilon

THE RIVER RUNS RED



The Cadian strongpoint on the eastern side of Boiling River had proven all but unassailable. At that moment, though, the Orks' tribal shamans entered the fight. Moments later, mayhem reigned as the Ork invaders appeared from nowhere, falling upon the rear of Castellan Stein's lines and reversing the flow of the battle with one swift blow.

Stein's carefully positioned crumple zones had blunted the Ork advance at Zeta Tert and Zeta Sec alike. The Bullgryn squads had ultimately fallen to Grukk's onslaught, and the number of Orks charging across the bridges had proven practically endless. Still, the sheer discipline of the Cadian platoons had seen their ordered retreat tactics triumph again and again. As the Orks bottlenecked themselves on the far side of the river, the artillery companies of the 1653rd sent barrage after barrage hammering into the mass of green flesh, each blast taking a great chunk out of the horde. Stein nodded. So far, for every one of his men that had fallen, fifty, perhaps sixty Orks were littering the bridgeheads as corpses.

Then came something the Cadian high command had not predicted. Pinpricks of green light skidded and fizzed across the plains behind the Imperial Guard lines before blooming into shimmering hemispheres the size of hab-domes. The bubbles burst with audible pops to expose mob after mob of Orks, covered in blue warpaint and stomping their feet in unison as they chanted 'Ere we go' over and over again.

The artillery squadrons gazed in shocked awe at the frothing warriors that had materialised only a few hundred feet from them, the xenos psykers in their midst still glowing with faint green light. Desultory lasgun fire took down a handful of the newcomers, but it was of no use. The Orks swarmed amongst the static artillery, clambering over tracks and backplates to catch the panicking gunmen desperately trying to escape. It was hopeless. In a matter of minutes the Basilisk and Wyvern positions were overrun.

Stein frowned as the vox reports from his artillery went silent, and commanded his air support to come back around. Less than a minute later, Tempestor Prime Whitlock's Valkyries and Vendettas were inbound again, lascannons picking off Orks here and there with each pass. The Orks were all over the artillery batteries; even heavy bolter fire had little effect on them. Alarmingly, the barrel of each Basilisk had been raised to maximum elevation.

Many of the captured Basilisks lurched into one another with screeches of metal or turned slowly on the spot, but for the most part, they opened fire. There came a staccato series of booms as the artillery pieces looted by the blue-painted Ork raiders hammered their payloads into the skies. Up the earthshaker shells went, each tracing the steepest of parabolas in the air before falling back down into the ranks of the withdrawing Cadian platoons below.

The sheer violence of the sudden barrage destroyed all cohesion in the Cadian retreat. Each round killed a dozen or more of the tightly-packed soldiery slowly retreating from the front line. With the Guardsmen on the riverbanks occupied by the sudden heavy fire, the Orks that had swum across Boiling River were free to clamber up the banks, blades held between their snaggletoothed jaws. Within minutes the entire battleline was engulfed in violence. The ordered, disciplined Cadian withdrawal was fast becoming a total rout.

Stein was barking orders into his vox, desperate to restore the tatters of his battle plan and secure the planned retreat to the flanks of Sacred Mountain, when his Astropath, Zeil, approached him. Apprehension was etched upon the mystic's eyeless face.

Stein motioned for his men to be silent as Zeil stuttered his report. Two more Ork hordes had made planetfall to the southeast. He could feel a dull, threatening roar in the back of his mind that told him the savage armies were moving in to cut off their line of escape.

The vox-net crackled with shouts and screams as the Ork assault redoubled in intensity. Castellan Stein was cursing furiously when there came a clear and welcome drawl over the comms channel, calm and measured and heavy with the weight of years.

'This is Lord Neru Degallio, requesting permission to join the festivities.'

'Bloody well get on with it then!' shouted Stein, veins bulging in his neck.

Less than a minute later, the ground shook with such violence that the entire Cadian high command were almost pitched from their feet. All eyes turned south to see that the horizon had sprouted a profusion of towers and hive-spires. In the far distance, a looming cliff of metal ground towards the forces at Zeta Tert, its sheer mass forcing the ground to shudder in revulsion.

Isle Degallio slammed bodily into the mouth of the Great Estuary. It clogged the kilometer-wide watercourse like a cork sealing a bottle. Giant ramps, each easily as large as the river bridges the Ork invaders were now charging across, slammed down onto the mainland. Across their spans marched dozens, scores even, of Imperial Knights.


The giant walkers advanced at a loping run that filled the horizon with dull red dust, splitting up into four sub-houses as they came. Two of the Knight lances took the west bank, moving in to bombard the thickening bottleneck of Orks attempting to cross at Zeta Tert. The other two groups headed east at speed, moving on an intercept course to cut off the Ork hordes that Zeil had detected to the south east. The dull thump of distant explosions echoed across the plains as the Knights blasted the leading vehicles at the head of each horde to scrap metal.

Stein breathed a heavy sigh of relief, thanking the Emperor for a moment before shouting out clipped instructions to each of his subsidiary commands. The orders were relayed through the ranks in tones that brooked no argument.

Slowly, painstakingly, and at a great cost in lives, the Cadian echelons re-established order. Militarum Tempestus regiments

commanded by Tempestor Prime Whitlock flew in at speed, disembarking from the rear doors of their Valkyries in mid-air. Activating their grav-chutes, the descending warriors scythed down the Orks milling around the artillery batteries with pinpoint hot-shot lasgun fire, killing every last one of the xenos before their boots even touched the ground.


Squad by squad, the Cadians mounted up into their Taurox and Chimera transports and began their retreat in earnest. Cannon turrets pivoted backward to fire a stream of las and solid shot into the horde as it milled and swirled behind them, the xenos shouting obscenities in their wake.



Sergeant Dain Halban spat into the dirt and ejected the smoking spent clip from his lasgun. He yelled at his squad to continue their measured retreat from the river as the men behind them laid down a rhythmic pattern of lasgun fire that scythed into the advancing Orks. Artillery rounds were hammering into their packed ranks as the xenos pressed close together to cross the bridges. Dain allowed himself a cruel smile as geysers of dirt and broken Ork bodies were hurled into the sky wherever a shell struck home. With clear orders and years of training, his men were stoic in the face of the foe. Every man and woman fired in well-disciplined ranks, not a single lasblast missing its target.

Dain was about to order another wave to fall back in good order when abruptly the artillery fell silent. For a moment amid the din of battle the sergeant was unsure of himself, perplexed as to why Stein would silence the guns with the Orks still pressing forward on all fronts. The next sound he heard was unmistakable, a descending whistle that every veteran knew to fear. He screamed out a warning only a fraction of a second before the first shell fell among the company. In an instant the neat firing line and ordered retreat of Dain's platoon was shattered, and it was the Orks' turn to yell and jeer as the Cadians' own artillery was turned against them. For a few brief, chaotic moments, Dain tried to rally his men, reorder the lines and continue the fighting withdrawal, but all order was swept away by a barrage of shells, falling at random all along the Cadian line. At first only a few men turned and ran, panic distorting their faces as they fled, but in the space of less than a minute the fragile Cadian formation collapsed completely. The retreat swiftly became a rout.

As Orks pressed forward without the suppressing fire from the Cadians to slow their advance, the rear elements of the company became embroiled in a messy melee. Overrun by a snarling green tide, the defenders of Alaric were falling to crude blades and sheer brute force. Determined to die facing the enemy, Dain turned and emptied his clip in a hail of lasfire. With the Ork attackers almost upon him, Dain braced for death, bayonet raised, but was thrown to the ground by the shockwave of a battle cannon shell detonating. Deafened and gasping in the dirt, Dain looked up in awe. An Imperial Knight stepped over him, blotting out the light of the stars for a moment. The great war machine thundered into the Orks, engines roaring like some primeval predator ready to feed.



*'By the Echoes of the Great Sea and our Ancestor Knights,
By the Blood of our Blood and the Spirit of Alaric,
Be our Blades never Dry and our Guns never Cold,
While the Enemies of Man walk upon the Sacred Isle.'*

- War Oath of House Degallio



SAVIOURS FROM THE SEA



The arrival of the Isle Degallio came not a moment too soon, for the greenskin hordes emerging from distant rust-ships were drawn to the sound of battle as starving men are drawn to the smell of freshly-cooked meat. As Lord Degallio made his presence felt, the struggle for Boiling River was rejoined with renewed fervour.

The Alabaster Lancers of Lord Neru Degallio, at full strength and with ammunition to spare, chanted the joyous battle hymns of their ancient order as they bore down upon the Ork invaders. They hit Grukk's bottlenecked column at Zeta Tert like a chevalier's spear plunging into the neck of a terrible green wyrm. Thermal cannons reduced Orks to superheated mist and rapid-firing battle cannons tore gouges out of the packed ranks just as the Cadian 1653rd artillery had done before. The death toll quickly mounted.

Lord Degallio himself led a squadron of his finest Knights to the far end of the bridge, ion shields reconfigured so they crackled between his warriors and the missiles that corkscrewed crazily from the horde in their direction. With a series of pinpoint blasts from their thermal cannons, the lancers melted through the stout girders and stanchions that raised the bridge above the boiling waters.

Their plan was sound – to strand the Orks of the first rust-ship on one side of the Great Estuary to allow their Cadian allies to escape – but the bridge had withstood the passage of millennia, and it would not fall easily. Worse still, the massive forms of Grukk and his Meganobz were bullying their way through the horde toward them at speed.

Lord Degallio's Knight suit, the White Warden, stamped its way into the throng. Crouching low with a hiss of hydraulics, the Knight's reaper chainsword whirred in a horizontal arc only a few feet from the ground. Dozens of Orks were chewed into red ruin as the Warden's arm ground on, but Degallio's true target was not the greenskins. At the fullest extent of the arc, the Warden's chainsword carved right into the central stanchion that held the bridge firm, screaming in exertion as its titanium teeth juddered through the heart of the bridge. Focused heavy stubber fire from Degallio's escort brought down any Orks that got too close to their lord, holding them back for a few vital seconds. With a great metallic scream, Degallio pushed the barrel of his Knight's battle cannon under the ruined bridge next to its chainsword and discharged a point-blank blast.

Slowly, miraculously, the White Warden lifted the splintering end of Bridge Zeta Tert like an ancient Alarican demigod performing a mythical feat of strength. Rubble cascaded down, crushing the Orks that were pushed into the gap as hundreds of their tribe-mates fought to get within striking range of the great ivory walker. With a tremendous crack of stone, the bridge toppled to the right, a full half of its length falling away into the sulphurous waters of Boiling River. Hundreds of Orks fell with it. Grukk and his heavily-armoured retinue, only a few metres from bringing their power claws level with the White Warden's helm, staggered sideways for a moment before pitching into the depths with a great splash.

The Ork horde gave a monstrous bellow of rage and frustration. Bridge Zeta Tert, which had stood firm in the face of thousands of years of erosion and the hammer blows of Imperial artillery alike, had been destroyed.



THE SEABLADE OUTMATCHED

The sight of so many explosions erupting at the bridgehead of Zeta Tert had acted like a beacon for the bulk of the Ork horde. Lumbering, smoking war machines closed in on the Degallio Knights, their crude cannons sending fat-bodied shells hurtling towards the escort that protected Lord Neru as he collapsed the bridge. With the Degallio bodyguard focussed on keeping the Ork footsoldiers from swamping their master, a few of the approaching Ork walkers scored direct hits on the brightly-accountred Knights, dropping them to their knees or, in the case of Sire Betel Degallio, detonating their target spectacularly as the walker's reactor went critical.

With the bridge collapsed and a new threat fast approaching, Lord Neru ordered his Knights to rally in the watercourse of Boiling River itself. The Knights carefully stepped backwards into the shallows of the river, a feat of agility that the Ork walkers would find impossible to emulate. Navy-pattern ion shields were brought up in formation to form a crackling shield of energy that flared bright every few seconds as Ork shells struck home.

It was then that the xenos walkers came into view through the dust and confusion of battle. Squat Orkoid effigies ground forward on piston-driven legs, looking for all the world as if Grukk's own war machine had spawned a brood of metal monsters and sent them to finish what it had started. Solid-shot cannons of extreme size hung like muscular arms from each of the humanoid walkers, thundering an impressive volume of firepower into the Degallio ranks. The Alabaster Lancers' ion shields deflected or detonated the majority of the shot, but here and there a shell snuck through, detonating on an armoured thigh or ripping open a heraldic carapace.

Lord Neru quickly surveyed the situation from the cover of the ruined bridge. There were dozens of the damned things heading

through the smoke, and the western Degallio detachment had been reduced to fewer than ten strong in the fighting at the bridgehead. Worse still, the Knights were taking heavy fire from the Orks that had been fighting the Cadians on the other side of the river.

With two massive Ork armies having no foe to vent their fury upon other than the Degallios, Lord Neru's options were narrowing fast. He ordered his lance to break formation and stride downriver as fast as possible in box formation, the ion shields of the outlying Knights to either side and those of the rearmost Knights protecting their backs as they made all speed toward Isle Degallio. Along the banks of the river, the footslogging Ork horde did their best to keep pace, but the Knights were masters of their war engines and still had plenty of power left to burn.

THE GREAT ISLAND

A ramshackle flotilla of Ork vehicles followed the Degallio Knights, roaring along the river bank. They veered and swerved as they fired wildly inaccurate volleys at Lord Neru's lancers. The vehicles pursued the splashing, stomping Knights for kilometre after kilometre, their crew whooping and making foul gestures as they zoomed along the riverbank. Swarms of buzzing copter-craft hurtled up the watercourse, guns blazing as they darted past like giant mosquitos harrying their cumbersome prey. For the Knights to turn and fight would be to allow the pursuing hordes a chance to catch up, and that could not be allowed.

Lord Neru gritted his teeth as Sire Tetherine Degallio's Knight went down into the water, its leg blasted from its hip by a lucky rokkit shot. His Knights were so close now he could almost imagine the kiss of the sea on his face. Any moment now the Orks would learn a painful lesson.

Suddenly, there it was – a distant crack-boom that was swiftly followed by a vast column of water shooting upward at their flank, which consumed a trio of Deffkoptas that were whirring past the retreating Knights. A moment later the riverbank exploded into fire as detonations stitched their way through the xenos pursuit with merciless, relentless force. Scrap pinged and scythed through the air, bouncing off Knight carapaces and thudding into the dust as the Ork vehicles were reduced to shards of glowing shrapnel. Isle Degallio itself had joined the fight, its long-guns in range and accurate enough to hammer the Ork forces without endangering their own warriors.

With the immense firepower of the iron island brought to bear, the few surviving Ork vehicles howled off into the wilderness, looking for less ferocious prey. Warhorns blaring, Lord Neru Degallio's Knights marched the last few hundred metres to their fortress, a vast hangar bay opening in the island's guts as they drew near. The battle of the bridge was over, and with it, the momentum of Grukk's assault blunted.



DA FISTS OF GORK



Though slow and cumbersome, the Gorkanauts known as 'da Fists of Gork' are amongst Gruk's most powerful assets. Each has fought on a dozen worlds, and their rusted hulls are spattered with the remains of a wide variety of alien species as well as the blood of countless Imperial troops.



KANKILLA

Drogg, the pilot of Kankilla, was once stomped by a Killa Kan after its Grot pilot decided to take revenge on his bullying nemesis. Drogg survived, albeit barely. He then spent his fortune on the killiest Gorkanaut he could afford before crushing the offending Killa Kan, and every other Kan in the tribe.



BLAGFIST

Blagfist is piloted by a rich Deathskull Nob called Bokk Stickyfinga. He stole the war machine purely as a way to ensure he had his pick of the best loot. Not a week goes past without Blagfist being equipped with even more firepower, looted from the remains of another blasted battlefield. Indeed, so successful a thief is Bokk – an outcast from the Charadon empire – that he refers to himself as the ‘arch-larcenist’ of Charadon. Most of his comrades don’t get the gag, of course, but this never stops old Bokk from having a chuckle. This jocular personality is set aside in battle, however, for Stickyfinga takes his fighting very seriously. The old Deathskull might have swiped Blagfist as a means to an end, but he has since become quite attached to his armoured steed. Indeed, he takes any damage to the mighty walker as a serious personal insult, focussing his anger on those who dare fire upon him. Needless to say, between the Gorkanaut’s vast firepower and trampling mass, few foes live to make this same mistake twice...



DEFFHEAD

The Gorkanaut known as Deffhead earned its name not because of its beweaponed iron helm, but because during a battle on the canyon world of Mongrel III its looted comms gave out: the oblivious pilot ignored the advice of his comrades and toppled straight into a ravine.



DA BLACK GUT

Da Black Gut is ancient by Gorkanaut standards. The veteran walker earned its name after tearing out the belly of a Hierophant Bio-titan on Vorpax Eliara. Since that day, the Gorkanaut's front plate has been scorched black by Tyranid bio-acid, as has the face of its pilot, Gobshak.



GORKSPUNCH

Gorkspunch is an ugly mechanical brute whose pilot, Rotgrubb, is a fervent believer in that most brutal of Ork warrior gods. His giant klaw always has a fresh coat of green paint, for Rotgrubb maintains that the right hand of his machine is the instrument of Gork himself.

THE CLOCKWORK MASSACRE



The shocking impetus of Waaagh! Grukk's initial assault had been spent, and the Imperial troops had consolidated their forces at the base of Sacred Mountain. Wounded and out for revenge, Grukk had bashed together an army larger than his two previous forces combined. More so than ever before, the Imperial allies were ready for him.

The assault from House Degallio had bought the Cadians vital time to withdraw, as Castellan Stein had originally planned. The Cadian 1651st had mounted up in their transports, and whilst Lord Neru's Knights drew the Ork vehicles away south along the banks of Boiling River, the Cadians made good their escape. A thick pall of dust covered their tracks as they pulled away from the Ork assault at the twin bridges of Zeta Sec and Zeta Tert, heading towards the rallying point of Sacred Mountain.

Stein knew full well that, at this early stage in the war, the danger had been stayed rather than averted altogether. The scattered holdings of the planet had limited the amount of damage the Orks were able to do thus far, and the actions at Grukk's flagship and the bridges of Boiling River had killed thousands of Orks – perhaps even tens of thousands. Yet by the estimates of Stein's strategos, the marauding xenos numbered in the billions.

Wherever a rust-ship had landed, the Orks were still deploying in great numbers. Just as the castellan had feared, their hordes were converging upon the plumes of smoke and dust that had been kicked up by the battles thus far. Unless a decisive blow was struck soon to break the back of the hordes, the Cadians and their Imperial Knight allies would be surrounded, forced into a defensive war where their superior mobility was next to useless.

Stein's vox-net was opened wide. His clarion sign eventually reached the barons of the remaining knightly houses, and a consensus was reached. The allies were to lay an ambush on the slopes of the mountain, using its steep shoulders and rugged terrain to slow the Ork advance to a crawl as the big guns of the Astra Militarum and knightly houses took their toll. Stein himself would lead the foremost defenders, a show of defiance that was sure to bring Ork leaders to battle and possibly even draw Grukk himself to the front line, for Stein's psyker adjutant was certain the brute had made it out of the Battle of Boiling River alive. The castellan knew from his past battles against the green menace that killing the leader of an Ork force would likely cripple its morale and cohesion in one blow. Still, it was a risky gamble – where the leaders of each Waaagh! went, the most devastating of attacks were sure to follow.



Stein looked down at the column of dark green tanks rolling into battle formation and nodded to himself. Plenty left, he thought. Plenty left to force a quick victory. He'd seen an Ork command-collapse before, but never from such a perfect vantage point as this.

Turning back to his unit, Stein had his vox officer send his clarion-sign for what felt like the fiftieth time. The interference caused by the mountain was not helping. Whatever was inside that forbidding peak had an electromagnetic signature to rival an Ark Mechanicus.

A screaming crackle came over the vox before Kavel tuned it in. A thick, formal Alarican accent emerged from the static.

'...rendez-vous. Cadia, this is Lord Viashtu for Houses Brahmica and Velemestrin, requesting of thee more details. Imperador Vidas.'

Stein rushed over and grabbed the transmitter gauntlet. 'Meet-point Sacred Mountain, coordinates Sanguine-Six-Alpha-Deus-Three.'

White noise filled the vox for a moment. Dust clouds dotted the horizon, closing in with deceptive speed. Judging by the numbers involved, they were definitely hostiles. Stein could hear the roar of the approaching Waaagh! on the wind; it was not a pleasant sound.

'Sacred Mountain is... rather large, Lord Stein,' came a tentative reply.

'What? I'll repeat; Sanguine-Six-Alpha...' shouted Stein. Then a horrible suspicion dawned. 'House Brahmica, are you telling me you don't actually understand Imperial grid coordinates?' Static fizzed over the vox-net, but nothing more.

'Look,' said Stein tersely, scanning around, 'you know the ridge that looks a bit like a big red teat? We're about a mile south east of that.'

'Ah,' said Lord Viashtu, 'received and understood. Will relay to Houses Brahmica and Velemestrin forthwith. Ave Imperador. Oh, and Lord Stein? We have a... distinguished visitor with us...'

THE COMING OF GERANTIUS

As the hours of anticipation dragged past and the Cadians manned the slopes of Sacred Mountain, Lord Viashtu and the rest of House Brahmica marched into view. With them were the Knights of House Velemestrin and, at their rear, a slow-moving walker the Knights knew only as Gerantius. The creature was a Knight, but the pitted green and bronze of its structure spoke of an immense age that no mortal life could have spanned. Stein moved up to interrogate the new arrival, but his strident calls yielded no response.

There was a sudden series of booms as the artillery stationed on the scree just below Stein's position opened fire. The Ork hordes were within sight, and the castellan had given the artillery commander of the 1653rd a standing order to fire as soon as they were within extreme range. Stein spun on his heel to watch the volley of shells arc through the air to their vanishing point, blossoming into a string of dust clouds amongst the teeming hordes in the foothills below. A moment later the rumble of explosions reached them.

'All guns fire at will!' roared Stein. His message was relayed up and down the line with practiced efficiency. The Cadians had dug in across the fortified slopes of the mountain with overlapping fields of fire that reminded the castellan of the Kasrs back home. Textbook stuff, thought Castellan Stein. This should be a total slaughter.

Soon the platoons added their heavy weapons fire to the fusillade. The Orks below accelerated, but the closer they came, the more force met them from the slopes. Baneblades and Stormhammers added their voices to the infernal din; then the battle cannons of Houses Brahmica and Velemestrin's Knights Paladin. The Ork charge fragmented, becoming streams of greenskin vehicles that rumbled and bounced across the scree, but they were bullseyed with clinical efficiency by the lascannons of Stein's heavy weapon troopers. Lasguns bristled from behind every escarpment and battlement, but as yet, none of the small arms had been fired. The volume of heavy firepower that was pouring from the Cadian firing line had ensured not a single Ork had made it to within rifle range.

A thin tingle of unnatural energy crawled across Stein's scalp, and behind him bright green bubbles of energy began to sizzle into existence on the scree. Orks by the dozen shimmered and hissed into being wherever the bubbles burst, but hundreds of lasguns were already pointing towards them, and the teleporting Orks were felled by volley fire from rank upon rank of Guardsmen.

As Stein watched, the ancient Knight Gerantius strode down the slope, then loped faster, then leapt into the air. A knot of teleporting Meganobz materialised beneath him just in time for him to land with both feet. He crushed most of them in an explosion of loose stone before vaporising the rest with a close-range blast from his thermal cannon.

Stein could hear shouts of encouragement and applause from the other Alarican nobles drifting over the vox-net. 'Stop congratulating it and keep firing!' he snapped into the vox.

Even with the unpredictable heroics of the Knights, the battle plan was proceeding like clockwork. Ork fighter jets sailed through the skies towards their position, but the Steel Host's Hydra was quick to fill the skies with a flak pattern that saw them tumble down in flames. Fat-tyred Ork buggies bounced along the mountain pathways, each torn to shreds by cannon fire from the Taurox transports that formed a gun line of their own on the lower slopes. A trio of the bladed mini-copters the Orks used as outriders swept low, their guns chattering. Gerantius launched itself off a boulder and bodily smashed two of them out of the sky whilst its pivoting heavy stubber brought down the third. Stein blinked in disbelief at the ancient walker's agility.

The cloud of dust below was coming closer, but the uneven terrain of the mountainside was forcing the greenskins to attack piecemeal. Another two Ork fighter planes were punched from the skies by Hydra fire, whilst mortar shells were lobbed high by Cadian Wyverns before detonating in a string of explosions. The Ork race's compulsion to engage in melee would be their undoing, thought Stein; he would ensure it.



AN ANCIENT ALLY

During the first battle for Sacred Mountain, the appearance of Gerantius, the Forgotten Knight, had a potent and dramatic effect upon the Nobles present.

Every one of them had grown up hearing tales of the legendary Knight, stories told to them by their fathers, peers and even whispered to them by the echoes of their ancestors from inside their Thrones Mechanicum.

Such was the presence the ancient Knight carried with him that it filled the Nobles with terrible and final purpose; they were resolved to destroy Warboss Gruk and rout his Red Waaagh! utterly for daring to set foot upon their world.

GERANTIUS, THE FORGOTTEN KNIGHT



The ancient Knight that dwells in the heart of Sacred Mountain bears the scars of millennia of war. Though the legend of a cyclopean guardian possessed of uncanny prescience is common to all the islands of Alaric Prime, these tales vary massively in the detail. Some islands believe Gerantius is a giant cast in iron, others that he is a psychic ghost trapped in the form of a machine, and still more that he is an immortal Knight frozen in time from ages past. Despite their theories, none truly know who the mysterious warrior once was, nor the secrets of the vault in which he whiles away the centuries. Without him the priceless secrets of Sacred Mountain – and perhaps Alaric Prime itself – would have been lost long ago.

323.M33 THE SCOURING OF THE TROGLODYTES

Gerantius exterminates the viridian troglodytes that infest the dank tunnels beneath Sacred Mountain. He kills their hulking, sightless king in single combat and reroutes a sulphurous underground river to flush the rest of the vile brood from the mountain's roots.

268.M35 THE DAEMONBREACH KILL

Gerantius stalks out of Sacred Mountain when a botched ritual in Castle Veric results in a daemonic infestation. Though the horned beasts that spill from the Warp breach are eventually driven back by the Knights of Alaric's noble houses, the Inquisitor that coordinated the war effort decides that the populace has been tainted beyond recovery. He decrees that Exterminatus is the only answer. Before the Inquisitor's deadly message can be sent, Gerantius detonates his ship's fusion drives with his thermal cannon, killing everyone on board. The event is reported to the Imperium as a 'regrettable accident'.

454.M35 ARCHAEO TECH RAIDERS

The Rogue Trader Belleraphio van Dyne breaches Sacred Mountain with the help of a pack of inquisitive Ratling mechanics. The light-fingered 'investigators' are crushed under Gerantius' armoured feet.

397.M36 THE RUSTING CURSE

Without warning, Gerantius appears on the far side of Alaric Prime and douses a remote monastery in purifying flame. Though none will ever know, this act suppresses a dreadful rust-plague that would have reduced all metal upon the planet to ferrous dust.

959.M36 RENEGADE ASSAULT

The renegade Space Marines that call themselves the Malefactors descend upon Alaric Prime, intent on seizing as many Imperial Knights as they can for their own burgeoning warband. Gerantius leads the defence of Sacred Mountain before hunting down and destroying enough of the invaders to drive the rest off-planet.

291.M37 A CRUEL SURPRISE

The Commorrite raiders that descend upon Alaric Prime in search of mortal playthings are met by the wrath of the planet's silent sentinel as soon as they open their webway portal. Barely a handful of the vicious xenos warriors make it through the storm of thermal cannon fire that greets their arrival, and the survivors' retreat is just as swift as their appearance.

114.M39 THE TORONAC AMBULL CULL

When the ambull population of Isle Toronac threatens to destabilise Alaric Prime's ecosystem, Gerantius emerges once more and begins to hunt the lumbering claw-beasts one by one. He kills over six thousand ambulls before retreating to Sacred Mountain. his battered shell encrusted with the dried gore of his kills.

792.M39 A TRAGEDY OUT OF TIME

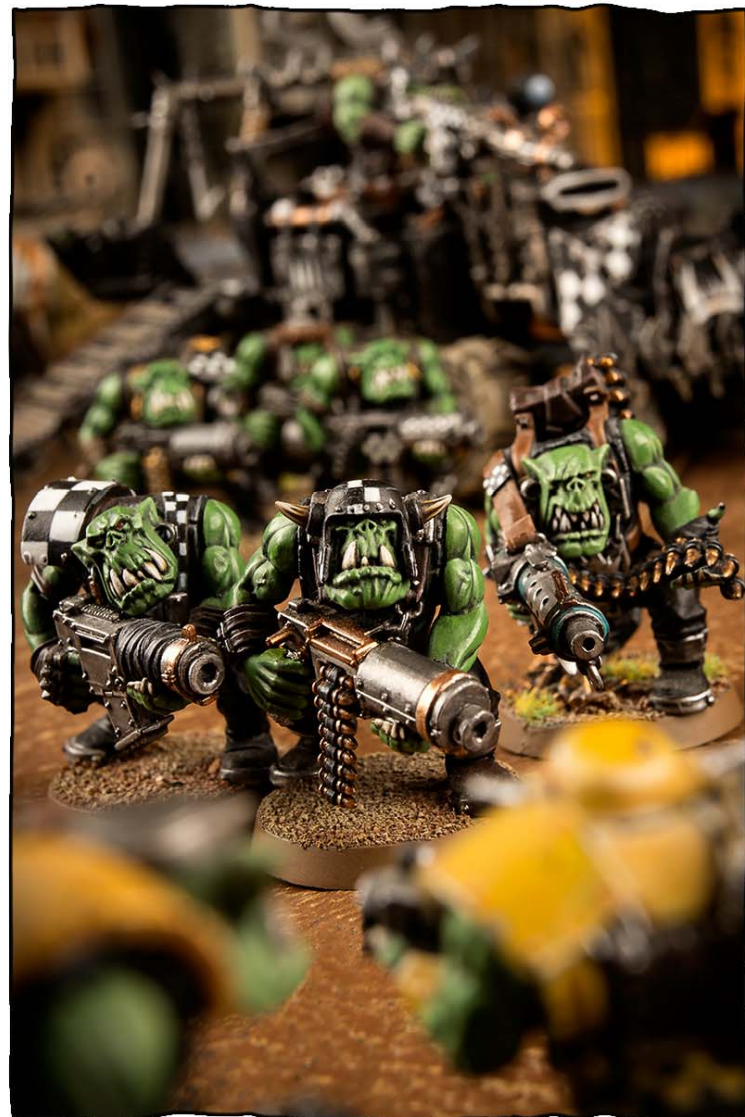
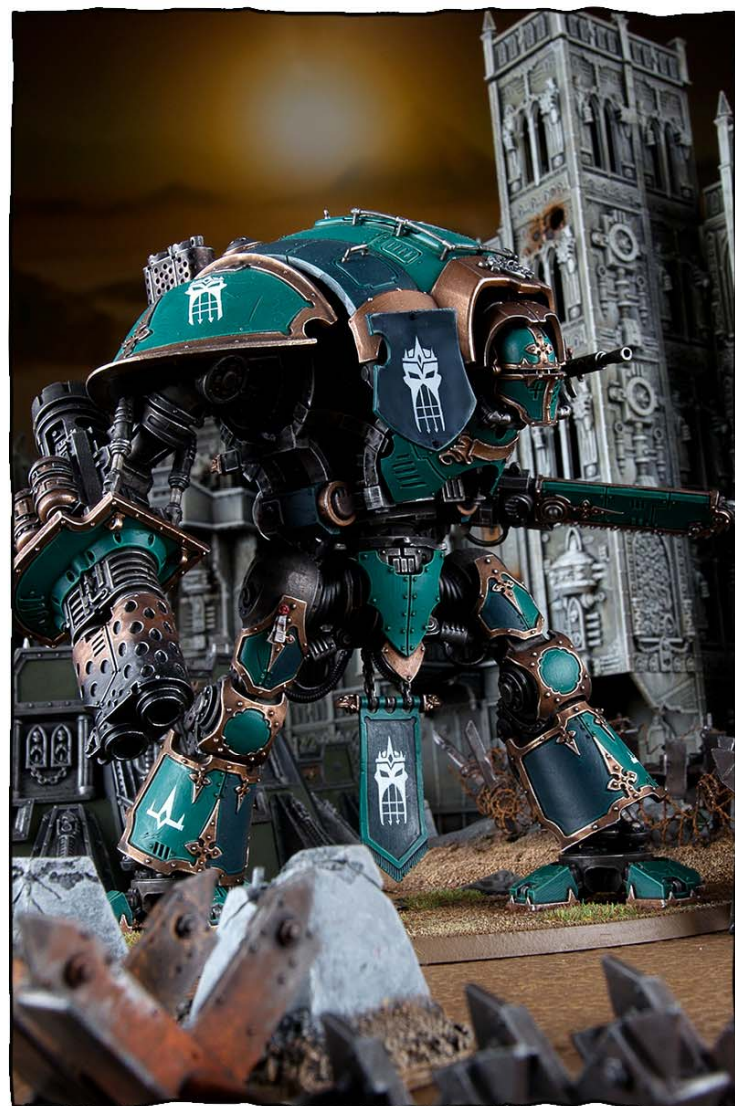
Six regiments of Astra Militarum make the translation from Warp space on the outskirts of the Sanctus Reach System, heading to Alaric upon orders to intercept and destroy the Malefactors. Unbeknownst to them, the fickle tides of the Warp have dislocated their arrival time. They arrive several millennia too late. The Imperial Guard instead wage war upon the incarcerated masses of the Alarican prison isles, believing the criminals there to be the renegades they have been ordered to kill. The intervention of Gerantius complicates matters just as the Alarican knightly houses are trying to prove their loyalty to the Imperium. War breaks out, but only for a few days – the Degallio household successfully brokers peace after its messenger-skulls make it to the Imperial Guard high command. The death toll still numbers in the thousands.

898.M41 XENOS HUNT

When a scattering of Tyranid vanguard organisms make their way onto Alaric Prime, Gerantius hunts the Lictors and Genestealers down until all have been exterminated. In the process, he prevents a tendril of Hive Fleet Gorgon from diverting its deadly attentions to the planet.

998.M41 WAAAGH! GRUKK

The Orks invade Alaric Prime in force, and Gerantius stirs from his slumbers once more.



FALL OF A LEGEND



The Ork invaders were throwing themselves at the defended positions in ever-greater numbers, but so far the Cadians and their Knight allies had proved equal to the task of hurling them back. As the mountain slopes became littered with smouldering corpses, Grukk himself entered the fray, and the Knight Gerantius moved to stop him.

The ground shook as a trio of gaudily-painted Ork wagons grumbled up the slope below the Cadian lines. In their wake came the tusked monstrosity that was Grukk's own personal transport, protected to some degree by the wall of scrap metal trundling before it. Krak missiles and lascannon blasts blew away plates of ablative armour, but the Orks had anticipated such a fusillade, and it slowed them hardly at all.

Stein gestured with his arms to the nobles of House Velemestrin and Brahmica, and their Knights Errant stomped forward in response. Thermal cannons screamed as the Battlewagons trundled into range, coring two of the three Ork wagons and clipping the third so that it veered sharply into a boulder-strewn ravine. Grukk's own transport barged through the flames of its predecessors, its curving tusks sending scrap metal in all directions. The thing was coming right for Stein's position.

Without warning, Gerantius changed direction and barged sidelong into the Ork wagon, sending it crashing over onto its side. The massive vehicle skidded down the slope for a few metres before grinding to a halt, its passengers spilling out into the dust and flinging themselves towards the legs of the ancient Knight that had overturned their ride. A hulking figure was amongst them, light glinting from its giant saw-palmed claw.

'Forward teams, advance and fire,' said Stein in clipped tones. In response, three Cadian weapon squads revealed themselves from behind the boulders strewn around Stein's position. Grukk stumbled towards them, bellowing defiance through bloodied jaws.

Stein raised his plasma pistol and fired. The bolt struck home in Grukk's midsection. On cue, all three of his special weapons teams opened fire, a staccato thump filling the air as krak grenades fell around the Warboss in an explosive rain.

Grukk was hurled from his feet as the grenades struck home, his roars blotted out by a string of deafening bangs. Dust, stone and burned blood spumed into the air amid puffs of blinding flame. A moment later, Gerantius' great claw-like foot came around in a sweeping kick, rolling the Warboss' wrecked Battlewagon onto his broken body with a final, resounding crash.

The spectacular felling of the Ork Warboss had been so explosive and, most of all, so public that not one single Cadian or Ork could have failed to see it. Waves of dismay rippled through the Orks at the base of the mountain.

'Now!' shouted Stein, 'Charge! For Cadia and the Emperor, charge!'

In response, a thousand Cadians poured from the barricades and boulders, roaring a war cry of their own. Lasfire lit the slopes and bayonets flashed bright. Running down the slopes, they fell upon the reeling Ork vanguard with impressive force. Few of them reached the resultant combat, for Stein had judged his timing perfectly. Robbed of their great leader, the Orks turned tail, and were already in full retreat by the time the Cadians hit home.

The battle had turned into a massacre. With the rout of the Ork front line, the xenos milled in confusion. Those retreating hampered those who tried to advance, whilst those advancing got in the way of those who were trying to retreat. It could hardly have been a more target-rich environment for the Cadian artillery stationed high on the slopes.

A hailstorm of ordnance rained down and greenskinned limbs were blasted high into the air as Imperial Guard Basilisks and Wyverns walked their deadly barrages through the horde.

The breaking of Grukk's horde was every bit as spectacular as Stein had hoped. He smiled wide, cracked his knuckles, and gave the order for pursuit.



While the battle raged on the slopes of Sacred Mountain, fighting still sputtered and flared around Boiling River and the beached rust-ships. Orks and Guardsmen continued to fight for their lives in the wake of the great Warboss' defeat and the intervention of the Knights of Alaric.

Distracted by the events on the mountain, the Ork bosses were taken by surprise by the lone Knight of House Kamata that emerged from the smoke and fog of battle, charging across the open ground toward the Wrath of Gork. The Guardsmen still holding positions on the same side of Boiling River gave a ragged cheer as the Knight crashed through the thinned Ork lines and bodily smashed its way inside the hulking rust-ship.

The Freeblade Dyros Kamata had returned. He lumbered into the ship's hold, where Mekks were cutting up the remains of the Knights that had fallen in Kestren's charge. Over the hiss of burners and the whine of saws, feeble human moans and wails drifted around the ship's hold. With a withering hail of fire from his heavy stubbers, Dyros cleared the chamber and set about searching the wrecks for the living.

THE BREAKING OF THE CLANS

As the ordnance rained down and word of Grukk's death spread throughout the teeming masses, the cohesion of the Ork invasion began to break apart. Castellan Stein and his men watched the Ork horde erupt into a series of scuffles, then brawls, then full-blown battles as the bosses of each tribe fought to become the new master of the leaderless Waaagh! and claim the invasion for their own, even as the Imperial bombardment continued. With the death of Grukk, the battle for Sacred Mountain was effectively over, at least for now.

Having broken like a wave against the tidal bastion of Sacred Mountain, the Ork horde was easily scattered over the next few days by the determined assaults of the Cadians and their Knight allies. Stein's after-siege actions were every bit as inspired as his layered defences. With each bombardment and Militarum Tempestus assault they forced more and more ground in between the Ork clans and tribes, deliberately driving wedges between those who wore blue warpaint and those who painted their vehicles red, and separating those clad in chequered black and white from those in ostentatious yellow.

The goal of the Astra Militarum's new strategy was not to exterminate the xenos outright, for the Orks still numbered in their billions, but to divide and displace. Castellan Stein believed that, should he succeed in breaking the Ork clans into separate armies, they would fight amongst themselves. In the battle for ultimate leadership that ensued, the warring Ork tribes would effectively be doing the defenders' job for them.

Big Mek Mogrok oversaw the vanguard advance from atop a requisitioned Morkanaut. Idly picking his nose, he watched as Warboss Grukk and his Battlewagons blazed a path up the mountainside. The dumb brute was heading into a humie trap, Mogrok mused, flicking a nose-squig into his maw and biting down with a crunch. Even a snotling could see that.

Same old Grukk, always charging in. His bullish temper had got him good and boiled at the battle for the bridges. To his credit, he had got back into the fray soon enough, dripping wet and pale as a Squiggoth's guts, but angrier than ever. Only a fool would have challenged his right to lead right then. Still, one day that foul temper would be the boss' undoing; all of Mogrok's fellow Bad Moons were agreed on that.

The Big Mek had a feeling that day would be today. Especially as he'd personally disabled the force field on Grukk's ride less than half an hour ago and triggered his personal tellyporta gubbins before the big lunk could find out.

Mogrok twisted the aerials on his telly-scope, and the heart of the enemy lines came into dirty focus. There was that pansy flag, the one the humie king used as his bosspole. After the kicking Grukk had taken at the bridges, the flag was a red rag to a bull-grox, and the humies knew it. Sure enough, Grukk's Battlewagon was hurtling right toward it, smashing through the wreckage of his escort in the hope of a trophy kill. The green humie walker nearby had other ideas. Mogrok chuckled as the war machine barged Grukk's ride onto its side and started stamping on the retinue that spilled out.

'I got a good shot on that big green fing, boss,' said Mogrok's Mek mate, Dagogg, squinting into the crosshairs of his shokk attack gun. 'Want me to give him a nasty shokk?'

'Nah,' replied Mogrok, scratching some dried blood off the end of his piston-klaw. 'I reckon Grukk's got this one covered.'

There was a rippling string of bangs as the humie king's gunmen blew Grukk off his feet. The big green walker drew back a foot, booted the Warboss' wrecked ride and rolled it over onto Grukk's fallen body. At this sight, a shuddering roar of disbelief spread across the mountainside.

'Oh dear, I was wrong, wot a disaster,' said Mogrok, drily. 'Back to the ship, Dagz. Time for us Mekes to show 'em how it's done.'

THE TRIBES DIVIDED

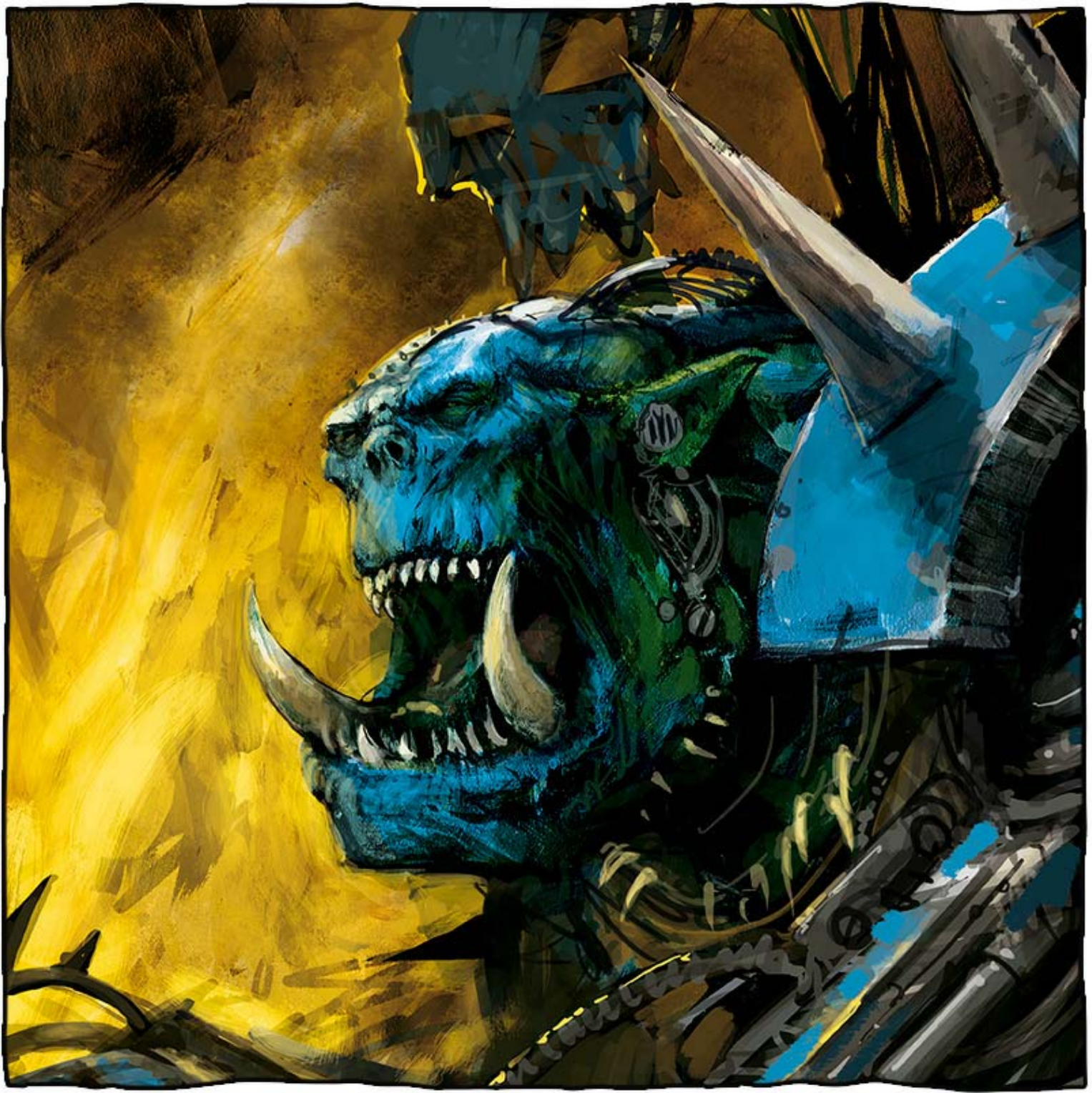


Following Grukk's fall at the battle of Sacred Mountain, the Ork clan rulers scattered throughout the invading armies began a series of civil wars to determine who would lead in the defeated Warboss' stead. There were several main contenders dotted across the planet, each bashing heads at his own rust-ship in order to steal a march on his rivals.



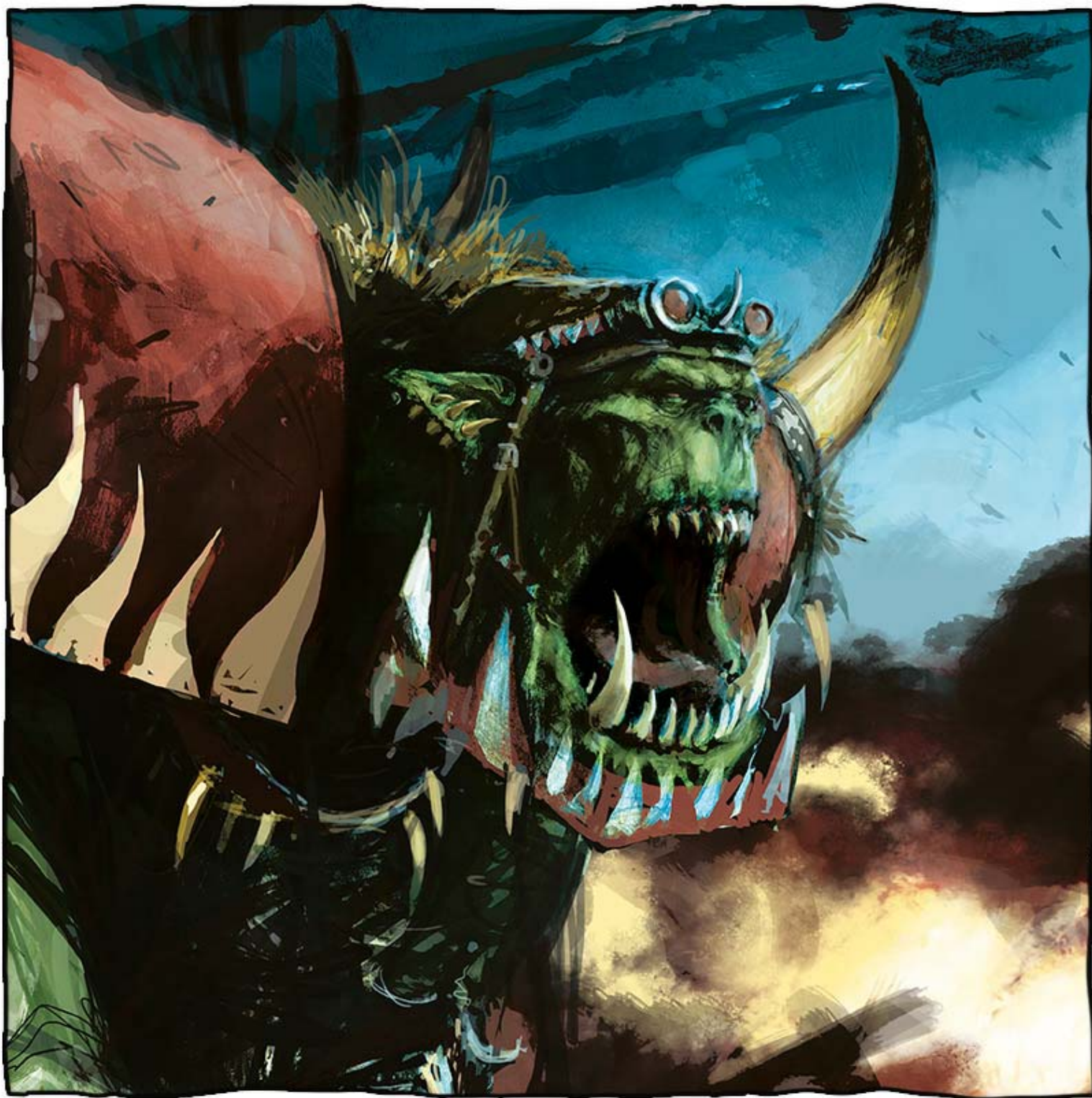
BADDFRAG THE TANK BOSS

Baddfrag knows his Mark 8 Mars pattern Chimera from his Mark 6, and takes any excuse to lecture his fellow Blood Axes on the subject. He loves nothing more than showing off his collection of looted wagons in battle by levelling a storm of crude but effective firepower at the foe.



RADDAK BLUEFINGA

The Deathskulls are a superstitious lot, and none more so than Raddak Bluefinga. A shortage of blue pigment saw him fight without his warpaint upon Obstiria, and he lost his arm in the first hour. Since then he has been covered in 'lucky' blue paint, and demands the same of his followers.



SKYBOSS WINGNUTZ

An avowed Speed Freek, Wingnutz had a near-religious experience upon the hive world of Ghul Jensen when he first piloted a Dakkajet. Since that day, Wingnutz has amassed a ramshackle fleet of looted and kustomised aircraft that follow in his wake.



BOGROT BONES

Bogrot is a dirty, low-down cheat, and a legend amongst the clans of Waaagh! Grukk. An itinerant peddler with an eye for a crooked deal, Bogrot rides his pet Squiggoth at the head of a massive scrap caravan that boasts more Orky artillery than the rest of the tribes put together.



GASHRAKK DA FLASH

Warboss Gashrakk is that rarest of all things – a clean Ork. A former first mate of Badrukk himself, he was thrown out of the Kaptin's armada for being too much of a show-off git, and that's really saying something.

Gashrakk has an unusual compulsion to own the shiniest, newest wargear he can get his hands on, and keeps his grot hordes busy in a never-ending cycle of polishing, scrubbing and repainting. His lads like to boast their boss never fires the same gun twice. Most of the time, they're right – Gashrakk has a crew of Gretchin who carry a selection of his kustom shootas to war so he never has to worry about repeating himself.

Despite – or perhaps because of – his obsessive need to show off, Gashrakk is a serious force to be reckoned with. The Bad Moon's every act is thought out in advance. Battle plans are carefully prepared to ensure maximum showyness. Indeed, it is not unheard of for Gashrakk to refuse to commit his forces to a fight unless he knows he's on to a winner. This has been known to cause grumbles of resentment amongst Gashrakk's ladz, but the boss keeps his warband in line by showering them with loot.

Besides, the only thing a Bad Moon likes better than looking good is kicking their enemies' heads in while they're doing it. Gashrakk's obsessive planning ensures that more often than not, this is exactly what his followers get to do. The other Ork warleaders on Alaric Prime sneer at 'old last minute Gashrakk', for Da Flash's warband have been known to come thundering in only once the real fighting's done and victory already assured. Yet this scorn is just thinly veiled envy – Gashrakk's ladz have all the best kit, and always seem to be in the right place at the right time to snatch the glory for themselves.

Unsurprisingly, Gashrakk's rather un-Orky approach to warfare has led to him accumulating preposterous amounts of wealth.

After all, its easy to bully your way to the pick of the loot when your ladz are less shot-up than everyone else's. His warband boasts dozens of Flash Gitz, and hundreds of richer-than-your-average-Ork Boyz. Furthermore, this vast slab of muscle is backed up with an impressive arsenal of war engines and killer contraptions. Artillery galore, walkers of every (bright yellow) stripe, and a fleet of gold-chased Trukks and Battlewagons cement Gashrakk's military might.



BIG REDD DA WARPHEAD

The mysterious Warphead known only as Big Redd is held in awe amongst the madboyz of Waaagh! Gruk. Taller than a full-grown Goff Nob, and forever muttering to himself, Big Redd vomits green lightning at any who challenge him, burning them to a crisp.



GOFFBOSS DROGG

The battle-hungry psychopath who calls himself Goffboss Drogg is in contention for the leadership of the Ork hordes purely because his rust-ship arrived late. Having escaped the slaughter of Boiling River and Sacred Mountain, Drogg's horde is untouched and spoiling for a fight.

WAAAGH! MOGROK

Unbeknownst to the rest of the Ork bosses vying for leadership, there was one amongst them who was already well ahead of the game. Whilst the other clans and tribes fought amongst themselves, Big Mek Mogrok and his Bad Moons were already enacting their plan to embroil the Imperial forces in the greatest battle Alaric Prime had seen yet.

Big Mek Mogrok was a know-it-all git through and through. He was the kind of Ork who would rather build a giant war engine covered in dakkaguns than run towards the foe pell-mell, getting shot to bits in the normal greenskin manner. Though he has often been accused of 'not being one of da Boyz,' Mogrok is so good at creating big, impressive war machines that not even Gruk himself was dumb enough to refuse him a place in the upper echelons of the tribe.

Though none of the would-be Ork warlords of the Waaagh! liked to admit it, Mogrok had been the power behind the throne for quite some time. It was Mogrok that pioneered the force fields that allowed an armada of rust-ships to blast their way through the Warp rift that led to the Alaric system, force fields so powerful they could even shrug off the ground-to-orbit defence lasers of their target world's fortified cities. It was Mogrok who was behind the creation of the deadly Gorkanauts that engaged the Imperial Knights at Boiling River, and it was his intermittent genius that spawned the Morkanauts hidden at the heart of his own personal horde.

What few of the Ork invaders suspected was that Mogrok had been waiting for his chance to usurp Gruk's rule for many years. Mogrok intentionally steered the Waaagh! toward Obstiria, reasoning that a Chapter of Space Marines defending their home world would be fierce enough to cut Gruk down to size or even, with a bit of luck, slay him once and for all.

Amazingly, the Warboss' headlong charge had been powerful enough to smash open the Obsidian Glaives' fortress monastery before they could turn the tide. With several billion Orks falling upon a thousand Space Marines in a sudden avalanche of violence, Gruk secured victory, and Mogrok was forced to keep to his back seat role for a little longer.

Alaric Prime was Mogrok's last chance to see Gruk brought low before the Waaagh! left the system in flames, and the tedious interstellar voyage to the next system put a crimp on his plans. Luckily the Knights of the planet proved up to the task, and the gateway to true leadership soon swung open.

Mogrok's first act after Gruk's downfall at Sacred Mountain was to muster his forces back at his titanic rust-ship, *Toof o' Mork*. No sooner had he marshalled his horde of Mekboyz, Lootas, Battlewagons and walkers than he had set off across the plains, heading for the largest concentration of humans he could find.

Mogrok knew that humies had some weird ideas about who and what was worth protecting. For some reason, the bigger and badder the humie, the more likely he was to come to the aid of the smaller humies when they got into trouble. The Space Marines were proof enough of that, turning up to the fight whenever a Waaagh! got a bit of momentum behind it. It was exactly the sort of thing that annoyed the Big Mek about these weaklings that had somehow spread across the galaxy – weaklings who deserved to be slaughtered, not saved. Still, that was why Mork had sent him to grind them into the dust and take their planets for himself.

Whilst his rival Warbosses were still fighting amongst themselves, Mogrok led his Mek horde towards the massed formations of human infantry making their way across the savannah towards a plateau of crenellated keeps in the distance. Humie runts, thought Mogrok; killing a few thousand of those weaklings should be the perfect bait for bringing the big stompy Imperial walkers out into the scrap – and, in the process, lure more battle-hungry Orks to join Mogrok's fight.

This time, however, it would be the Orks that sprung the traps on the humies, not the other way round. Mogrok's horde had more than enough dirty tricks to take out even the biggest of the humies' war robots, and a few hundred tanks besides.

The Big Mek grinned toothily as his fizzing telly-scope brought the human army trekking across the plains below into focus. With all the preparations he'd put in place, the payoff was going to be a lot of fun.



MORK

Mork, the most cunning god of the Ork pantheon, is the patron deity of greenskin thinkers, creators and shamans. Whereas Gork is most likely to clobber an enemy god in the face, Mork will happily wait until his enemy's back is turned before raising his club and belting him around the back of the head. It is Mork who is revered by the stranger and arguably more intelligent strains of Orks – Kommandos, Weirdboyz, Mekboyz, and those rare Warbosses who like to have a good hard think about their battle plans before beating their enemies into a bloody red paste.



THE WAR OF KUNNIN'



The sledgehammer tactics of Waaagh! Grukk had taken a massive bite out of the Sanctus Reach System, but had failed at the last. The methods of his successor, Mogrok, were unusual for his kind – he preferred to think first, then fight later. As the Imperial forces were about to find out, they could be shockingly effective.

The first stage of Mogrok's grand plan was geared more around the Ork mindset than that of his foes. The Big Mek understood what made the Ork race tick, and knew how to use that knowledge to his own advantage.

Whilst the other tribes were fighting amongst themselves, Mogrok intended to start a sufficiently large and impressive battle against the human forces to draw the attention of the other Orks. The Big Mek's rivals would kick themselves for not thinking of the same plan, and hurry to join the fighting in order to prove to their tribes that they too were up for a good scrap and not a bunch of skulking wimps. In the process, the rival Ork tribes would concede that Mogrok was the fastest and most killy of them all.

If Mogrok's plan worked, and if he could keep the kill count nice and high, he would become the de facto new Warlord of the Waaagh! before long. Of course, this was only the beginning, but Mogrok wasn't about to reveal the true scale of his plans just yet – not even to his best mate, the metal-limbed Painboy known as Fourclaw, or his fellow Big Meks taking up position across the planet.



When Grukk was taken out, his loyal Skull-Nobz were swiftly run off by Mogrok's followers. Led by Bossnob Skrak, they herded together those grots and oddboyz they could kick into line, before setting off to find somewhere new to plant their bosspoles.

Days later, the last survivors of this ragtag tribe washed up on the shores of Blistered Isle. The scrap-skiffs that had borne them to this isolated spot were coming apart, yet they had served their purpose. As Grukk's last greenskins stumbled up the beach between hissing sulphur vents, their beady red eyes settled on the distant silhouettes of humie buildings. Stuff to kill, stuff to loot, and best of all no Mogrok – Grukk's ladz shot each other toothy grins before setting off to get stuck in.



DA BIG SCRAP

So began a series of ever more unusual battles that unfolded across the hinterlands of Alaric Prime. The first of these displayed Mogrok's typical cunning.

On the rolling Auspice Savannah, far to the east of Sacred Mountain, Stein's second in command, Sergeant Fleiss, had rendezvoused with the remaining Knights of House Brahmica. Thousands of tanks and millions of infantry teemed across the plains in loose formation, intending to use the castle of the knightly house as their base of operations whilst they scoured the eastern side of the continent of greenskins.

Mogrok mustered his lads together, and mounted up alongside every one of those tribes he could bribe, trick or coerce to accompany him. A massive armoured wedge of Ork vehicles trundled and bounced across the open plains towards the marching Cadians, sending up a cloud of dust so large it could be seen from the Imperial augur-craft in high orbit.

When the human troopers saw what was approaching them, they had plenty of time to prepare for it. They deployed their heavy weapons and formed up their tank companies with practiced efficiency, turning to face the oncoming wall of Ork vehicles whilst stockpiling ammunition for a marathon slaughter. Without cover, the greenskins would be easily picked off at range – with three full regiments of Astra Militarum at his disposal, Sergeant Fleiss was confident that he could cover the Auspice Savannah in Ork corpses before the sun set without the loss of a single Cadian life.

As the wall of mismatched Ork vehicles came closer and closer, the Imperial Guard heavy weapons teams worked out their firing solutions. At a barked command from Fleiss they let fly with every gun they had. Krak missiles blasted scrapwagons into bits one after another, autocannons barked an insistent rhythm as they tore Trakks and Trukks to pieces, and lascannon beams flashed a searing red as they bullseyed iron-jawed Battlewagons. Again and again, Ork vehicles were flipped end over end with the force of the impact. The first wave of vehicles was utterly destroyed, halting in their headlong charge and forcing those behind to slew to a halt. It was not long before the second wave was picked off in its turn.

Running as fast as he could through the fug of dust behind the vehicles, Mogrok stifled an evil chuckle. The humies had taken the bait. Being a Mek had its advantages when it came to asking favours; he'd personally promised every one of the Wheel Steelas tribe a better wagon with more wheels than they could count if they would lend him their rides for the day. It took some convincing, and a lot of pressure from Mogrok's heavily-armoured mates, the Mekanobs, but it had definitely been worth it. The humans had smashed the tribe's wagons up good and proper, forming a wall of scrap metal right across the plains. What the human army-boys didn't know was that the vehicles were empty of everything apart from the occasional steering-grot, and the desert rocks that Mogrok had placed on each accelerator pedal. As for those stubborn speed freaks who had opted to disobey

Mogrok and stay in their driving seats for the big charge; well, they wouldn't be a problem for long.

The advance of the footslogging Ork horde had been completely obscured by the linear junkyard of scrap metal and the clouds of dust and smoke the vehicles had left in their wake. The mainstay of the Ork army was running like hell towards the humie lines, the most resilient of Mogrok's troops at the fore. First to bash their way through the wall of scrap metal were the Feet of Mork, Mogrok's hundreds-strong Dread Mob. Their numbers were bolstered by the primitive steam-dreads of the Kogheads, anxious to get into the fight.

Behind the massed Killa Kans and Deff Dreads came the Mekanobs. Mogrok grinned toothily as he watched the armoured veterans advance – whenever the humie army's missiles hit home, they either bounced off or knocked the Nobs over for a moment, only for them to struggle up and lumber back into the line.

Rushing behind the iron-clad vanguard came Boss Raddak's Deathskulls, 'lucky' blue paint still dripping from jaws and armour plates alike. Mogrok reckoned the armour was probably more of a source of good luck than the blue pigment, but they'd agreed to the big charge, and that was good enough for him.

In their wake came Mogrok himself and the vast mass of iron-armoured Boyz that ran alongside him, their squabbling Gretchin servants holding onto their tinpot hats as they scurried to keep up in the rear. All told, the armoured horde covered the plains in a tide of shouting, whooping maniacs that stormed towards the Cadian lines with choppas raised.

The Imperial Guard held their ground, just like Mogrok had known they would – the proud humans still had little idea of the dangers they were facing. Massed lasguns took their toll, but with so many armoured brutes at the front of the charge, only the heavy weapons put sizeable dents into the charge.

Mogrok's horde hit home with the force of a tidal wave, smashing through carefully deployed formations to careen into the ranks behind. Before the hour was out, a dozen square miles of open savannah had been embroiled in a desperate close quarters battle.



THE SMOULDERING ISLE


The Smouldering Isle lies in the farthest reaches of the Choking Sea and is among one of the few deep water mines on Alaric Prime. During the rust-ship invasion, significant numbers of Orks landed on the isle under cover of a terrible sulphuric cyclone that had driven the workers and Astra Militarum garrison underground. What followed was a vicious and bloody battle in which the Cadians, supported by convict militia and a handful of Knights, fought to keep the island's ports in Imperial hands.

Blinded by the acid wind and rain, both sides exchanged fire and ran sorties though the storm. Infantry were forced to fight from on board sealed transports, or else cower within whatever shelter they could find.

Those footsoldiers exposed to the elements were slain within hours, whole platoons of Cadians and rampaging Ork mobs flayed to the bone by driving acid rain. Ork wagons and Imperial battle tanks alike cracked and melted under the vitriolic downpour, their liquidised hull plates mixing with the organic slurry of the passengers trapped on board. Every hour brought some new horror, yet the battle ground on.

Only the Knights seemed immune to the cyclone's wrath, their specially treated hulls shrugging off the sulphur rain. The mighty war engines charged the Ork lines time and again, smashing one attack wave after another despite their own mounting casualties.

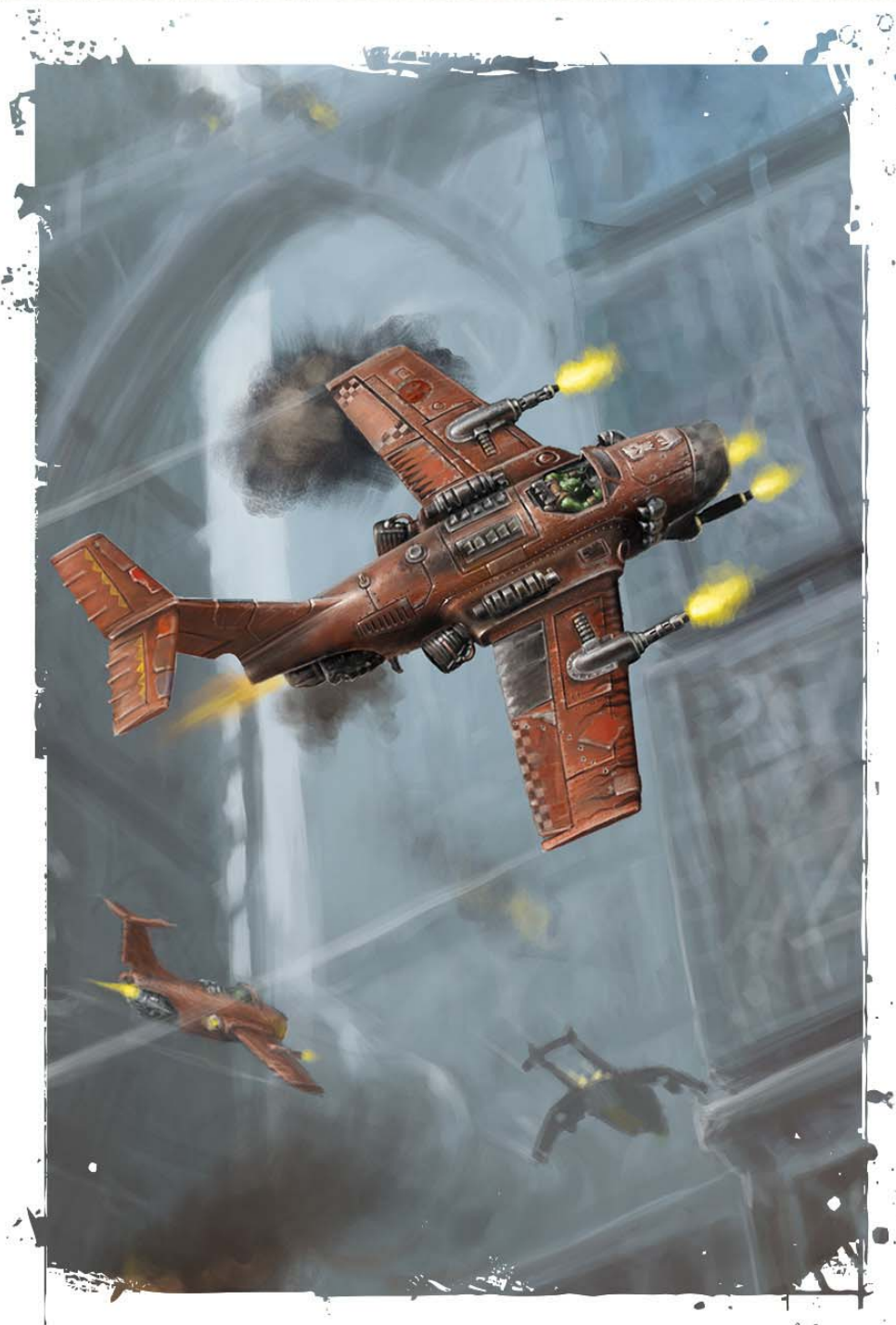
However, even the bravery of the isle's Nobles and their Cadian allies was not enough. One by one, the ports fell to the Greenskin menace. Port Adamant was the last to be overrun, the isle's defenders fighting to the last amid the collapsing galleries of the Collesium Administrata. Sire Danforth, the last Noble alive on the Smouldering Isle, drove his Knight suit into the very midst of the enemy horde. As the cyclone winds howled around him, Danforth screamed his hatred and fired until his guns ran dry, yet even his inspiring charge could not prevail. Caught in a storm of rokkits and energy bolts, Danforth's Knight finally detonated, reduced to a searing fireball that threw flickering light and shadow across the Collesium's blasted ruins. In the end all that remained was horde after horde of screaming Orks, their skin bleached white and scarred by acid rain.





'Humies think they is the smartest, making twisty plans and layin' kunnin' traps like they come up with war. We come up with war! Orks are the best at scrapping, get us close and we'll tear anything to bloody bits. All the Boyz need is a shove in the right direction, and Mork'll do the rest!'

- Mogrok the Mangler



FLIGHT OF THE MORKANAUTS

The first of Mogrok's big plans had gone off without a hitch, but there were plenty more to come. Dark shadows fell across the savannah as a gigantic rust-ship descended from the clouds above. Fearing the worst, flak-tanks at the rear of the Imperial armies hammered into the skies until their ammunition reserves ran dry, but their volley fire did little more than tickle the belly of the mammoth spacecraft that loomed above them.

A shrill whistling sound drifted over the roar of battle for a moment before several massive balls of scrap metal dropped out of the skies, unceremoniously ejected from the airlocks of the rust-ship above. In the war for Obstiria, Mogrok had been most impressed when Grukk's hordes had been struck by the orbital assaults of the Obsidian Glaives. Yet the scrap-pods that tumbled out of the rust-ship's guts held a far more unusual cargo than even the superhuman Adeptus Astartes.

Smashing down into the rear echelons of the Cadian armies, the building-sized balls of iron burst apart, killing dozens of men with each impact. At first the reeling Guardsmen thought that the hillocks of badly-painted metal were intended as blunt projectiles and nothing more. The true purpose of the bombardment only became clear when some of the scrap-hills started to come to life. Fixer-grots scurried from hatches that had been exposed by ablative layers that had fallen away, taking advantage of the confusion to hammer sheets of metal back into place and spot-weld broken joints.

One by one, the Morkanauts that had plummeted into the Cadian ranks crackled with green-white electricity and stomped forward step by hesitant step. The humming energy weapons that formed their arms ratcheted downwards and discharged great blasts of lightning into the Cadian ranks, frying men to blackened stumps wherever they hit home.

Battle tanks and transport carriers hammered shells into the rotund monsters that had dropped into the Cadian rearguard, but with little effect. Though they looked like the illicit offspring of a Stompa and a Mek's workshop, the beasts had been built to last.

As the Cadian headquarters barked frantic orders to re-arm and re-engage, the rust-ship above revealed the next of its secrets. Colossal hangar doors opened in the rear of the giant craft, a profusion of mag-cranes lowering down another metal mountain. The beast looked like some awful deity of the Morkanauts rampaging below, three times the size of the largest of their number, and with guns to match.

From his vantage in the big scrap at the front line, Mogrok looked up with paternal pride as Gungutz slowly descended into the fight. As he had instructed, the titanic war effigy opened fire long before its dangling feet crunched into the plains. Giant bolts of energy flew from the crackling electrokannon that it had in place of its left arm. Some even hit home in the Imperial ranks below, adding to the mayhem in the human lines.

Right on cue, the humies' own walkers were stalking out of the giant stone castle that Mogrok could see jutting from a plateau in the middle distance. Beetle-backed but long-legged, they loped forward at quite a pace. Mogrok wasn't bothered one bit. The big engines were dwarfed by Gungutz – that much was obvious, even from a distance – and he had a nasty surprise in store for them, too. The Big Mek snorted in derision, still watching the Knights as he absent-mindedly clouted a screaming humie into the ground with his greatspanner. Their god must be puny indeed if these little walkers were embodiments of the Emperor they kept squeaking about.

Though Grukk's vanguard attack had been doomed from the start – Mogrok had seen to that – it had at least shown the Big Mek what the humie walkers could do. The war machines hammered their long-range shells into the seething tide of Orks pouring into the big scrap on the savannah, a steady flow of bellowing greenskin warriors that was even now being bolstered by the tribes of Mogrok's rivals. Not nearly good enough, thought Mogrok – shooting shells into an Ork horde was like dropping stikkbombz into a river in the hope of stopping its flow. The Big Mek scanned the skies, but there was no sign of his next trump card just yet. The main event was up ahead.

The humie walkers loped towards Gungutz in groups of three, the ground shaking as they synchronised their attack run. Now was the real test. The Big Mek raised his telly-scope to his good eye, muttering a quick prayer to Mork that his lieutenants could remember what they had been told the night before the battle.

As if in answer, the massive gut-kannon mounted in the centre of Gungutz's great belly boomed once. A double whip-crack echoed across the plain, and a spinning bolas made from mooring chain and two boulder-sized cannonballs hurtled outward. It missed the incoming Knights by a mile. 'Try and hit 'em then!' bawled Mogrok, raising his kustom mega-blasta and turning a couple of heavily-armoured humies into a fused mess to make himself feel better. So much for that idea.

MORK'S MEKS

A Big Mek has to be both kunnin' and fixy to pilot a Morkanaut, and that goes double for Mogrok's lads. During the Red Waaagh!, Mogrok gathered together some of his best Big Meks and unleashed them on the defenders of Alaric Prime by the most direct invasion vector he could devise.

ROKSTIK IRONSTITCH

All Meks like to tinker with things, but Rokstik's enthusiasm includes himself. With the help of his Painboy, the Mek looted three of his four limbs from other Orks. His Morkanaut is similarly patchwork, its riot of colour evidence of many 'donors'.

GUTMASH FESTORK

Being a Big Mek is dangerous – even if the enemy don't get you, your own machines might. Festork has 'died' and been brought back more times than he can count (not that he can count particularly high); he now marks his Morkanaut's armour with his own 'deaths' rather than his kills.

MIDGIT MOGOK

Suspiciously small for an Ork, Midgit is rumoured to have been built by Mogrok. Some Orks reckon he is a failed experiment to make a Morkanaut think for itself, while others reckon it was Mogrok trying to make another version of himself.

GITFINK HOLLOWSKULL

Orks are natural looters and are always after bigger and better trophies. Gitfink has taken this to the extreme; anything he stomps ends up hanging from the hull of his Morkanaut. The collection of skulls, hull plates and other shiny stuff clanks and bangs whenever it moves, leaving his foes in no doubt that something big is coming for them.



ATTACK OF THE WRECKIN' KREW

Up ahead, the humies were making a concerted attack now, and Mogrok was forced to focus on the serious business of breaking heads. Such was the din of battle that he barely noticed when the roar of jet engines signalled that Skyboss Wingnutz and his lads had finally made their appearance. And they call themselves Speed Freeks, mused Mogrok as he punched a human trooper's ribcage into his lungs. Surely the whole point of having your own red Dakkajet was getting stuck in nice and early?

One of Wingnutz's aerial nutters came in low. The giant wrecking ball that Mogrok's Meks had chained to its tailplane ploughed a furrow through Orks and humans alike as it passed. Stupid git, thought Mogrok; he'll be dead in a moment. Sure enough, the heavy metal lump caught on the wreckage of a humie tank that the Mekanobz had just scragged. A split second later it yanked the cable tight, forcing the cocky flyboy's jet to take a nosedive into the battle below and sending up a plume of greasy flame. Dozens of Wingnutz's Blitz-bommas took this as their cue for a point-blank strafing run. They peeled off and hurtled downwards at top velocity, many of them failing to pull up in time and slamming nose-first into the ranks of the Cadians scattering across the plains below.

Up in the skies, the rest of Wingnutz's lads were more or less sticking to the plan. As the human walkers stalked forward, hammering Gungutz with their cannons, the Ork jets veered towards them at low altitude with their wrecking balls trailing behind. As the jets skimmed directly over each of the walkers, they released their heavy iron cargoes so that they hurtled and bounced unstoppably through the Imperial lines. Several careened into the wide carapaces and shoulder-plates of the humie walkers, bowling over some and breaking open others. Wingnutz himself scored a direct hit, the giant lump of pig iron he released from his trail-cable smashing straight into the command cockpit of the walker below and crushing it into mangled scrap.

Those Knights that were still standing turned and blazed away with the light-bore auto-weapons on their carapaces and the much more formidable shell throwers on their arms. One of the flyboys was tagged and had his wing torn off, spinning around and around before slamming into the walls of the humie's fort on the plateau in the distance.

Mogrok fought his way clear of the melee around him and clambered atop the ruined shell of a humie tank for a better view. Only a few hundred metres away, a red-armoured walker was storming towards Gungutz in the confusion, lances of deadly energy spitting out from the spiral-painted gun on its weapon arm. One of the blasts took Gungutz right in the head, vaporising it in an instant. The effigy still strode on, raising its guns once more. 'Nice try, ya runts,' muttered the Big Mek as a double boom echoed across the plains.

This time the chain-bolas worked as Mogrok had intended, whipping around in a spinning horizontal arc that took the Knight's legs out from under it and sent it pitching headlong into the ground. The bolas ploughed on across the plains, bouncing and yanking in crazy arcs before taking the knee joint from another walker and sending it slowly toppling into the dirt.

The battle was going strong, and hundreds more Orks were piling into the fray. It was more than enough to bring the rest of the tribes running, and there was plenty of spectacle for the lads to chew over later. 'That ought to do it,' thought Mogrok, reaching up to flip open a panel on the side of his tellyport blasta. A few deft tweaks of the device's kustom wiring achieved the desired effect, the weapon beginning to emit a bass hum. 'Let's see any other zogger pull this off,' grinned Mogrok to himself as a teleport flare enveloped him. The coordinates were set, and Mogrok was on his way. There was plenty of work still to be done.

THE ISLES UNDER SIEGE



Mogrok's tellyport jump would carry him away toward the coastlands, the battle for the Auspice Savannah raging in his wake. The human forces would no doubt attempt to bring their own reinforcements to the battle via the natural bridges that linked Alaric Prime's major islands. The Big Mek could not allow this to happen. Luckily, he had a cunning plan.

As day turned to night and the carnage on the savannah grew to ever more epic heights, the Knights of House Velemestrin sought to cross the gap that lay between their own island and Sacred Isle. There was but one fordable point between the two land masses, a place where an archipelago of huge flat stones protruded out of the sea. The site was known to the natives as the Knight's Causeway. With care, and assuming the tides were right, a Knight could pick its way across from Isle Velemestrin to Sacred Isle. Mogrok, who had invested a lot of effort and millions of Orks in keeping the savannah embattled, had made it his personal mission to ensure no such thing occurred. Unfortunately, the forces he had to spare were very little – quite literally, in fact.

When Mogrok zapped into view on the cliffs overlooking the Knight's Causeway, hundreds of Gretchin were scurrying to and fro along the rocks. They were desperately trying to mount the flat plates of electronic gubbins that Mogrok had entrusted to their Runtherds the previous day. The plates should have been in place by now; the horizon was already dotted by the hulking shapes of the human walkers approaching the causeway. Mogrok spat out a string of swear words that would have made a Goff flinch. At this rate they would have nothing that could stop them from crossing the causeway in time.

Mogrok stormed up to the largest, gnarliest Runtherd he could find and demanded to know what was taking so long. In response, the grumpy old Ork just waved his herding stikk vaguely in the direction of a knot of Gretchin wrestling an electro-plate across a rope bridge of loose wooden slats. As Mogrok watched, the bridge bucked and twisted wildly. The metal plate pitched into the sea, a bunch of Gretchin falling in after it.

Snarling his disappointment, Mogrok shoved the Runtherd over the edge of the cliff and watched him splatter on the rocks below. It improved his mood a little. He stomped on through the confusion, resolving to root out Mek Dagogg from wherever the useless git was hiding and get his shokk attack gun into the fight.



Dagogg's cunning as a Mek could be seen in the terrible carnage he wrought as part of the Red Waaagh! During the assault against the Obsidian Blades Space Marines it was Dagogg who knocked the orbital defence platforms out of the sky by flinging them at each other using his Shokk Amplifier (though it promptly broke after this one exhibition of its awesome power).

In the following ground battle, and with the aid of his Runtherd, Grabber, he was responsible for the nightmare that was 'Snotling rain'. Tragically there were only a handful of survivors on either side to tell the tale of Dagogg's cunning, and the Mek had to content himself with Grabber's vacant grins of approval instead of the widespread acclaim he felt he deserved.



By the time Mogrok had found Dagogg, the first of the human walkers had picked a path halfway across the Knight's Causeway, slowly striding from one flat stone to another. Dagogg narrowly escaped a beating from Mogrok's piston-klaw when he protested that he had not been sleeping and was merely aiming with his eyes closed whilst he waited for the targets to get into range. Firing up his shokk attack gun, Dagogg called for his Runtherd mate Grabber to get the snotling mobs nice and close.

A thunderous boom interrupted him as the first of the Knights crossing the causeway took a ranging shot with its cannon. The shell detonated on the face of the cliffs nearby, and Mogrok swore in consternation. Dagogg grumbled about how you couldn't rush these things, his black tongue protruding from the corner of his mouth as the shokk attack gun's whirly bits spun faster and faster.

A fat pop like a bursting bubble punctuated the sound of crashing surf as a shimmering hole in reality appeared in front of the gun's propellers. The noise was swiftly followed by the whooshing rush of the vacuum tube at the gun's rear. Grabber the Runtherd took his cue, shoving Snotlings closer to the gun and kicking his squig-hound into action.

Mogrok squinted across the causeway to see a stream of spasming Snotlings appear in mid-air some twenty feet from the nearest Knight before tumbling into the booming waves below. The Big Mek growled threateningly, his menacing bass tones carrying under the din of squealing Snotlings. 'I know, I know,' said the gunner irritably as he adjusted dials and twiddled screws. 'Grabber, get them snotties in here now!'

The world filled with noise, light and pain as a battle cannon shell detonated right in the midst of the Snotling farm. Mogrok felt the force of the explosion hit him like the hand of Gork, hurling him toward the edge of the cliff. He barely had time to shout in terror before Grabber's runt-catching stick lashed out, its spiked pincers sinking into the pitted metal of Mogrok's armour and arresting his lurching fall. 'Gotcher!' wheezed Grabber, straining mightily as he and his grots hauled Mogrok's mega-armoured weight back to safety. 'Biggest runt I caught all day!' Half-deafened by the explosion, the Big Mek let the comment slide. He made

a mental note to find the Runtherd a nice new electropod, though he hadn't put his mind yet about which end of the prod he would present to Grabber first.

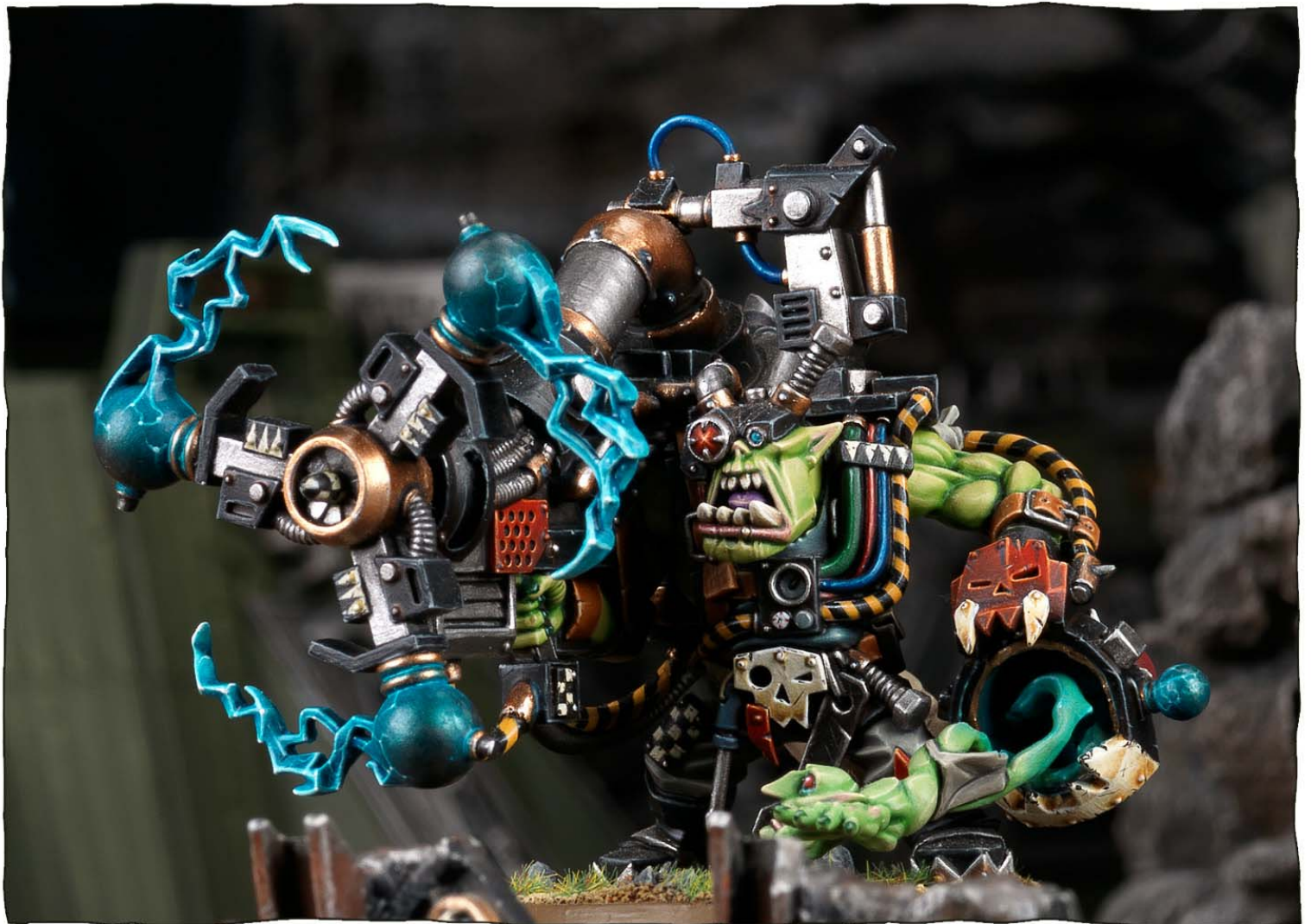
Down on the causeway, one of the Knights had nearly made it across. Still shaken by his close escape, Mogrok could only watch as the Knight aimed its battle cannon straight at him. Then the giant walker put its foot down right on one of the electro-plates the scurrying Gretchin had managed to get into position.

There was a sudden flare of green energy under the Knight's foot, and the walker's leg vanished, reappearing ten feet to the right. It dropped down into the surf as gravity claimed its due. A moment later a blunt shell whistled over Dagogg's head, sailing harmlessly into the distance as the towering warrior's aim was spoiled. As the walker began to tumble sidelong into the crashing waves, Mogrok found his voice. He shouted in triumph, turning to Dagogg, 'The plates work! You can have the next one, Dagz – get 'em inna head this time!'

Unfortunately, almost all of the Snotlings that had survived the battle cannon blast had scurried away or were running around shrieking with Grabber's squig-hound in hot pursuit. Mogrok cast around frantically, seeking any alternative. His gaze settled on several Burna Boyz who were loafing about nearby, and an evil grin spread across the Big Mek's face.

'Ready?' shouted Mogrok moments later, his question answered by a thumbs-up from Dagogg. As the gunner Mek squeezed the firing bar, the Burna Boyz let fly, sending a roaring column of flame straight into the vacuum tube.

Halfway across the strait, fire blasted from the foremost Knight's eye-plates. It fell to its knees with a clang as the Shokk Attack gun filled its cockpit with flame, but its corpse stayed upright. The causeway was blocked – and with it, any chance of swift reinforcement for the Imperial forces.



Cadian Signals Batt. Epsilon, Vox Intercept 345b [CALLSIGNS ALARIC]

'... Vermillion Lance proceeding apace, Sire Versteran, causeway appears stable and clear...'

'Understood Sire Tormus, send out your Sword and Shield, make sure the way is open... These damnable creatures are wont to hide among the rocks.'

'By your word my lord, I can see some movement on the cliff, and some kind of—'

'Tormus! What was that flash? What is going on? Tormus! Respond!'

THE KAMATA KOMMANDOS

Whilst Mogrok's schemes were causing unbridled carnage across the eastern reaches of the Sacred Isle, his Blood Axe ally Tankboss Baddfrag was carving around Isle Kamata at the head of a loose column of two hundred heavy Ork tanks.

Baddfrag's collection of repurposed Imperial armour had almost doubled in size since he had made planetfall upon Alaric Prime. Whilst the rest of the Orks had looked for a nice open space in which to muster their forces, Baddfrag had aimed his rust-ship *Da Choppa* squarely at the Imperial tank company on manoeuvres in the Kamata Desert.

After the rust-ship's earth-shaking descent, the Tankboss had targeted those battle tanks that had escaped his initial strike with the kannons of his rust-ship, destroying them one after another before his prized wagons trundled out onto the sands. Once his own armoured company was deployed in a defensive perimeter around *Da Choppa*, Baddfrag's lads salvaged as many of the burning wrecks as they could. The Tankboss' Meks had a whale of a time rebuilding Leman Russ tanks of all descriptions, adding more dakka and painting glyphs wherever they could. Yet despite his new acquisitions, Baddfrag was unable to claim the desert for his own.

Though Isle Kamata's knightly defenders were embroiled in the war for Sacred Isle, Baddfrag's company of reclaimed vehicles was constantly outranged by the Imperial Guard artillery company stationed around the Great Oasis. Even his Blood Axe air support, the infamous Drop Kommandos, had lost too many of their fighta-bommas to anti-aircraft fire to risk a return run. A perimeter of Ork wrecks ringed the oasis, each marking the extreme range of the earthshaker cannons and Hydra autocannons that guarded it. The Cadians had enough water and shade to keep position for as long as necessary, and the vast tracts of desert were so large that it was all but impossible to cut off their ammunition supply lines. It was a problem that even the famously cunning Blood Axes were at a loss as to how to solve.

The breakthrough came when a mob of Drop Kommandos that were prowling the dunes found themselves in the path of a column of Chimera armoured transports heading towards Kamata Keep. Realising they were badly outmatched, the Kommandos dropped into the sands and camouflaged themselves as best they could. Being Blood Axes, they did a pretty decent job – good enough for some of the Guard tanks to stop directly over two of their number whilst the tanks' crews slaughtered the rest.

Inspired by their reprieve from Mork, the lucky Kommandos strapped themselves to the undersides of the Chimeras with as many of their bandoliers and belts as they could. When the transports started off again, the Orks hung on for grim life, and they were borne across the dunes for several miles. The Kommandos were eventually shaken loose by their unwitting hosts, and one of them was run over by the next tank in the armoured column as soon as he was free. The other escaped, and trudged back to Baddfrag's camp with a toothy grin plastered across his face.

At dawn on the next day, three more Drop Kommando mobs set out into the desert, each with his kit wrapped in sackcloth the colour of sand. They searched for days for the tank tracks of Imperial supply routes, circling the Great Oasis whilst taking care not to stray anywhere near the burnt-out wrecks of previous Ork attacks. Sure enough, they eventually found the trails of an Imperial supply route toward the oasis.

One by one the Kommandos buried themselves good and deep in the dunes between each of the paired tank treads. The sand shivered occasionally here and there as a Kommando suppressed a gleeful chuckle. It took the best part of two days for an Imperial supply run to come past, and when it did, it was going in the wrong direction. Several of the Kommandos clamped themselves to the underside of the tanks anyway and were borne away to the Sacred Isle. Two were crushed to death, having got the wrong end of the stick and buried themselves under the track-marks rather than between them. This effectively weeded out the chaff, for Kommandos are possessed of that rarest of Orky virtues – patience.

When a supply convoy headed for the Great Oasis did eventually come past, each of those Kommandos who had not wandered off or been stung to death by burner-scorpions latched themselves on to the underside of a Chimera, revelling in the rewarding prospect of some well-earned kills. When the supply train trundled into the perimeter of the Great Oasis, they were waved on by the Cadian guards without incident. It was an oversight that was to doom the entire isle.

THE FROZEN COMET

With its first sightings dating back to the Time of Settlement, the Frozen Comet has lit the skies of Sanctus Reach for as long as anyone can remember. A massive ball of spaceborne rock, the comet takes its name from the vivid white tails that stretch out in its wake, looking to the people of Alaric like a vast double icicle in the sky. The comet completes a slow circuit of Sanctus Reach, some years drifting far out into the void, others almost brushing the atmosphere of the system's worlds. In the time of the Red Waaagh! the comet drifted close to Alaric Prime, casting a ghostly radiance through the night.

THE BATTLE FOR THE OASIS

The Kommandos waited under their vehicle hosts until the dark of night before making their move, but when they did, it was spectacular. After carefully sowing charges and bundled stikkbommz around the backs of each of the Cadian quartermaster tents, they detonated the artillery company's ammunition in a series of spectacular explosions that sent flames and mushroom clouds billowing up into the night sky.

This was the signal that Tankboss Baddfrag had been waiting for. His Battle Fortress gave a menacing growl as it prowled over the dunes towards the oasis, two hundred looted vehicles in its wake. This time the artillery barrage that hammered into the armoured wedge was short-lived. Baddfrag drooled with anticipation as his prized tank company closed in for the kill.

They were beaten to the punch by the airborne forces of the Drop Kommandos. Ten, fifteen, twenty looted skimmers braved the flakstorm hurtling up towards them, their bay doors opening to send scores of Kommandos spilling out. Each of the Orks fired up an improvised rokkit pack as he fell and corkscrewed down into the Cadian ranks, from a distance looking much like a fireworks display in reverse. Many of them made the landing, but many more came to earth with a dull thump, or ploughed like burning comets straight into the waters of the oasis.

Above them, Orky aircraft and whirring Deffkoptas were sent hurtling down in flames by the Hydra flak tanks and aegis interceptor guns of the Cadian defenders. But with so much of their ammunition gone up in smoke and the Kommandos running wild in their ranks, the Cadian fire patterns were in tatters. Explosions blossomed again and again; what had begun as a midnight raid was escalating into full-scale war.

The morning sun rose on the smouldering remains of the 1645th Cadian support regiment, not a soul alive amongst them. Baddfrag had already moved on. The story of his victory spread from tribe to tribe, and it was not long before his tactics were being aped across the island. Captured tanks, looted transports, even stolen Knights soon roamed Isle Kamata. The Imperial defenders had a new foe to take into account – their own scrap metal.



'Look at them green-lookin' humies, paradin' around in lines like a buncha Stormboyz. They act like they've got sticks up their arses. Oi – hang on – I fink I got an idea. Gobstrap, get me a few o' them humie corpses.

They're gonna get anuvver chance to ride about stickin' out the top of their precious tanks...'

- Tankboss Baddfrag, prior to the infiltration of Kamata Hold

MOGROK'S LADZ

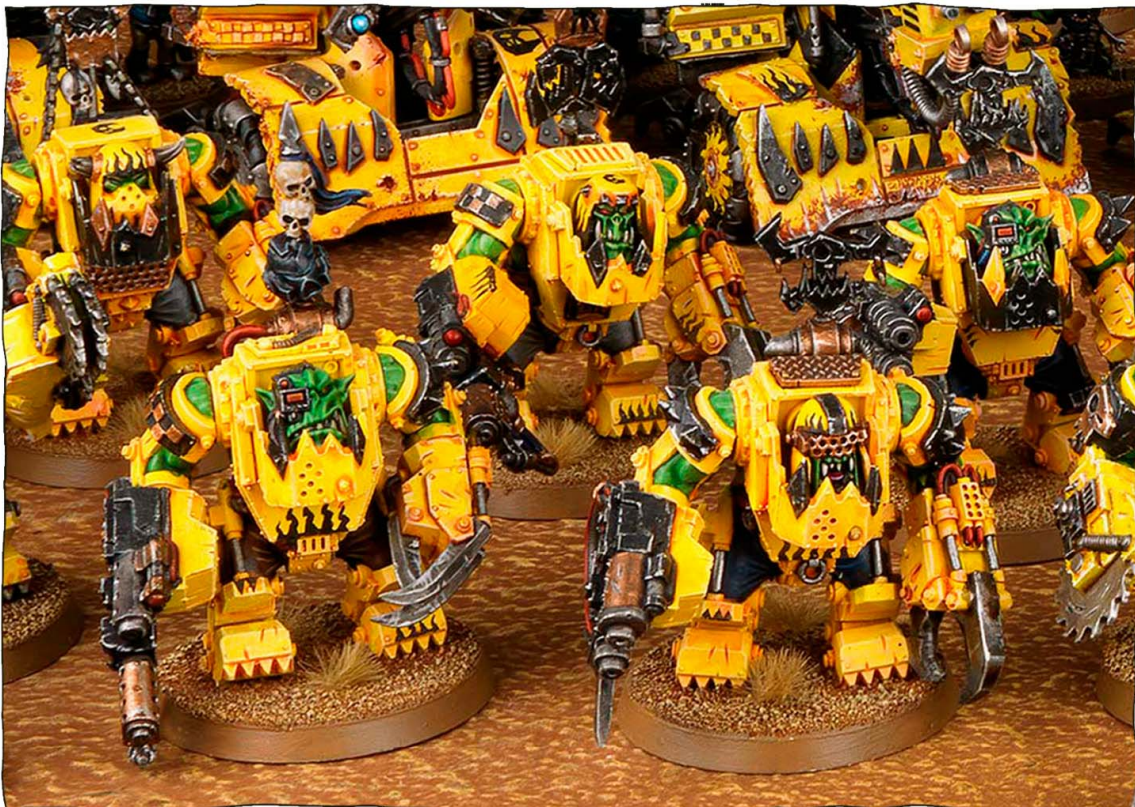
Though he does not inspire the same terror as his hulking predecessor, Mogrok has a swathe of tribes devoted to his rule. From amongst this horde, Mogrok has hand-picked the most inventive or belligerent to act as his personal retinue.

Big Mek Mogrok is a veteran of a hundred battles, many of which he started himself. Over the decades since he first began to break heads for fun and profit, he has accumulated a vast number of followers. These are not the usual Orky hangers-on, for Mogrok has never been one to follow the norms of greenskin society. Instead they are a collection of the junkyard dogs and metal-heads of greenskin society; scrappers, show-offs, looters, thieves and mechanics to an Ork. The unbridled creativity exhibited by the Meks in Mogrok's horde means that his Bad Moons are never wanting for large and extremely dangerous machines of war, from man-portable kustom blastas to Mek Stompas that blast the enemy to bits with bolts of green energy.



A. DA MEKANOBZ

The Nobs in Mogrok's warband are so rich they are always clad in the best armour that teef can buy. So advanced are the technologies involved – for Orks, at any rate – that their wearers have had to master the knack of fixing gubbins and resetting wossnames even in the midst of battle. Some of them even consider themselves to be Meks in their own right, though next to Mogrok, they have about as much mechanical knowhow as a braindead Snotling. Still, every one of them understands the fundamental tenet of wearing mega armour – get stuck in as quick as possible and kill anything you can catch.



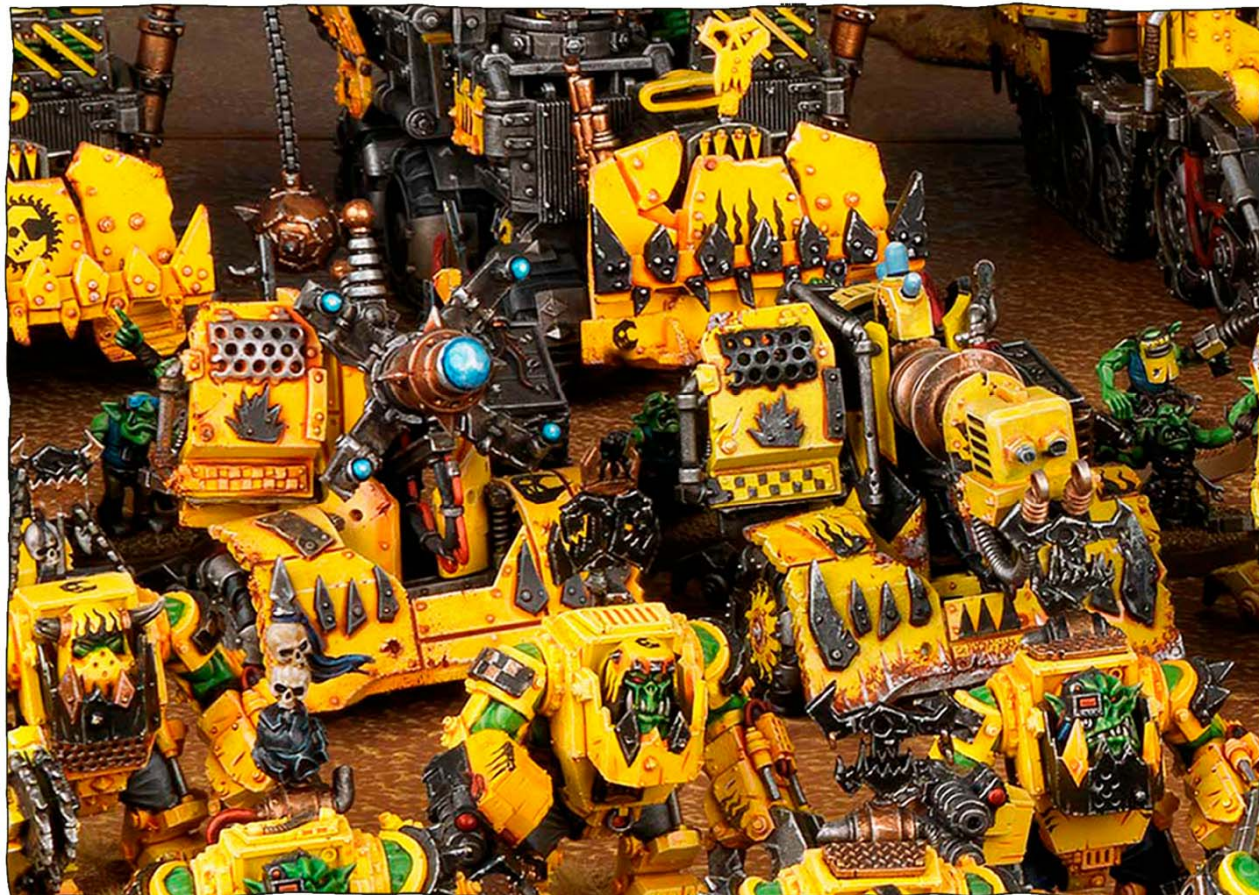
B. DA WHEEL STEELAZ

Since the triumphant charge of their many-wheeled Battlewagon 'Big Yella' at the Battle of Black Gulch, the Wheel Steelaz have clung to the idea that the more wheels a Battlewagon has, the faster it will go. Because of this belief it is not uncommon for one of Mogrok's tribe to wake up one morning to find his favourite wagon raised up on a stack of rocks and its wheels mysteriously absent.



C. DA KANNON KREW

For Mogrok, simply shooting the enemy is a waste of an opportunity. Far more fun to test out a few new inventions in the process, especially if the field test results in the foe being blown to atoms in the process. The batteries of Da Kannon Krew are replete with their master's latest inventions, a manner of wild and potentially unstable weapons jostling for position in their ranks. It takes a special type of grot to crew these guns without getting blown up, but then again, that's half the fun...



D. DA DAKKABOYZ

The average Ork Boy wants nothing more than to get stuck in at close quarters as quickly as he possibly can. However, Mogrok prefers a certain discerning desire for dakka in his handpicked ladz. After all, charging at the enemy guns is all part of a good fight, but the odds of victory are much improved by the ability to fire back. To this end, the Dakkaboyz all wield the biggest, noisiest shootas they can get their snaggle-taloned hands on. This is made easier for them by a combination of teef galore and Mogrok's personal patronage. Indeed, Mekboyz in Mogrok's Waaagh! have been known to drop kustom jobs for greenskins of other tribes in order to get Da Dakkaboyz' work done first. Unsurprisingly, this leads to widespread resentment and no small amount of violence. However, so long as Da Dakkaboyz go to battle with all guns blazing, Mogrok couldn't care less.



E. DA BURNIN' TEEF

This convoy of Wartukk-driving loons is so named for their initiation ritual of drinking a gallon of promethium and igniting the resulting belches. This is hardly their only peculiarity, for the enduring obsession of these Bad Moon speed freaks is to be at one with their Trukks. They believe that the more in tune they are with their vehicles, the better those vehicles will work. This odd belief sees the Orks of Da Burnin' Teef roaring like Trukk engines, decorating their bodies with hammered in engine-bits, and even eating whole handfuls of oil squigs before battle. For any other race, such behaviour would be at best eccentric and at worst physically harmful. However, Orks being Orks, this crude attempt at synergy actually gets results. The Trukks of Da Burnin' Teef bellow like wild beasts, responding to their drivers' every deft touch and proving more reliable than any Ork contraption has any right to be.



F. DA FEET OF MORK

The Deff Dreads and Killa Kans of Mogrok's Bad Moons are known collectively as the Feet of Mork, because they are as stompy as Mogrok's Meks could make them. Owing to the Dreadmoon Contests – regular competitions that Mogrok holds (and always wins) as to who can build the most Deff Dreads over the course of a single lunar cycle – his hordes boast so many of these clanking, smoke-spewing walkers that the Feet of Mork often outnumber the greenskinned throngs at the heart of their rival tribes.



THE GREAT LOOTIN' SPREE



As Mogrok's big plans got into full swing, the war produced a mountain of scrap metal to be claimed by the clans. The abundance of wrecked hulls gave the creative Orks plentiful opportunities to hammer out new contraptions, but a good few got their skulls banged together by Mogrok's lieutenants in the process – time was of the essence.

It was clear to Alaric Prime's human forces that the reputation the Orks had for destroying everything within sight was not unfounded. Yet there exist greenskins of an unusually innovative nature who see war as a time for creation as well as destruction. Much to Mork's delight, they constantly recycle whatever scrap they can salvage in an effort to build even more guns and metal beasts – and perhaps even get a fight out of it in the process.

With the toll of ruined humie vehicles mounting up nicely, the Deathskulls and the Blood Axes set to work creating new battlefield curiosities on an ad-hoc basis. In the pauses between rounds of gunfire, wave upon wave of their lads scoured the battlefield for some good old-fashioned lootin'. Within hours a whole array of fancy new gizmos, the likes of which had never before being imagined, could be seen rumbling back into the fray.

Da Wheel Steelaz, however, found the spoils of war to be slim pickings. Some were lucky enough to stumble upon decent wrecks, and a good number of tanks had their treads prised off and replaced by fat-tired wheels. Out of desire for greater speed, the Steelaz modified several Trukks to bear as many pairs of wheels on top of their chassis as were usually found underneath. The Steelaz' Meks reckoned that, should any of these things be blown upside down in battle, they could still rumble forwards.

Sadly, as became clear in the heat of battle, no Ork had thought to properly connect these other wheels to the axles or engines. Those few flipped over by incoming fire simply scooted to a halt in the middle of the battlefield. It was not uncommon for some dumbstruck Guardsman or Cadian Whiteshield to witness upside-down Trukks being shoved into battle by grunting (and thoroughly disgruntled) Ork mobs.

Before long those same human troops found themselves on the receiving end of the slowest Trukk assault in history. Dug-in platoons were swamped by the tribe's 'pushas', Boyz who were keener than ever for the bloody vindication of battle.

Many of the more enterprising Wheel Steelaz looted the wrecks of Sentinels or the towering Knights that had met them in battle. Despite their disappointment in these things not possessing any proper wheels at all, the lads would not give up their loot to the other clans. Their curiosity soon led them to yank apart all armour plates and internal gizmos in an effort to find anything vaguely circular; whether they were dials or cogs, each round object was stuck to the side of their new acquisitions to see if it would make them go faster.

Soon, Trukk-treddas, Wagon-walkers and Bigga Kans marched with a mind-bogglingly awkward gait into war. Da Wheel Steelaz were well pleased, hooting with laughter as the juddering movements of the wagons tilted them this way and that. A lot of fights erupted even before they got into the main scrap. When the Steelaz finally got there, many of their contraptions proved unexpectedly useful, allowing the greenskins to cross broken ground and lob stuff from a great height.

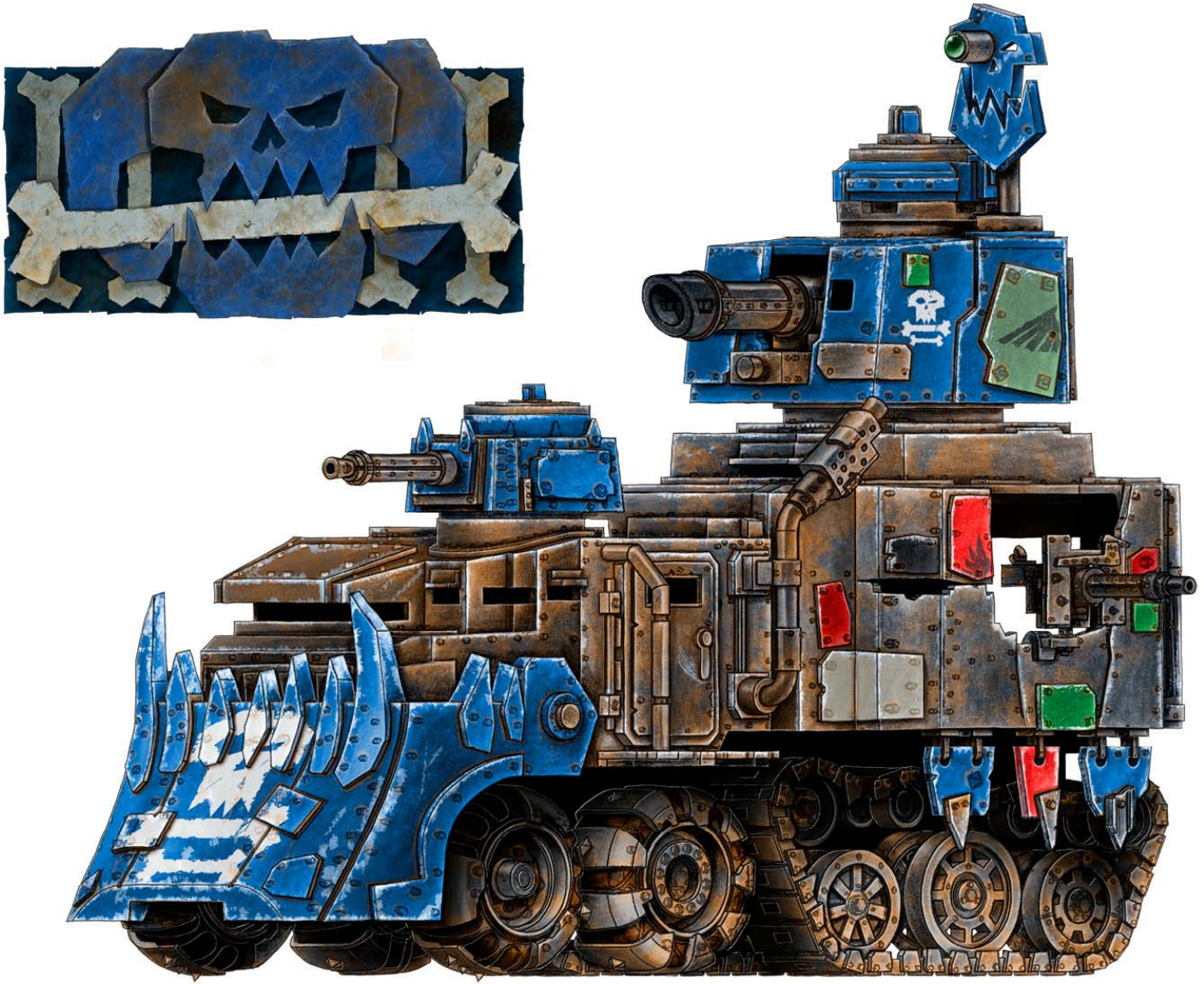
Their newfound delight was momentarily ruined when Gashrakk da Flash rumbled past in his new ride: a massive, gleaming Battle Fortress with the helm of a fallen Knight lashed to its bonnet. Gashrakk himself sat smugly in a central throne bashed together from loads of shiny exhausts, and even as the Wheel Steelaz watched in envy, teams of Gretchin were painting the armour panels hammered to the sides with big yellow stripes. Its highly polished metal was so bright that Alaric's blazing sun reflected from it with dazzling intensity, sending one Trukk-tredda veering out of control and another careening into the side of a nearby rust-ship. Gashrakk paused only to laugh, pat one fat wheel and hurl an obscenity before speeding away, leaving Da Wheel Steelaz to chug onwards through a cloud of smoke and dust.

Yet the smoke-belching wagons that came to life on the veldt were little more than distractions in the greater war effort. Behind the mayhem of the front line, Mogrok was working on an invention that could destroy an entire island in one blow.



SKRAPMASHA

A Deffskull Battlewagon with a dangerous reputation, Skrapsmasha is amongst Raddak Bluefinga's favourite war machines. Its notoriety is mostly down to Skrapsmasha's gunboss, a one-eyed old skarboy by the name of Wrecka. Originally this gnarled pirate was a Mek with a thing for building unually accurate artillery. However, a fateful rain of battlecannon shells left Wrecka's Mek Gunz in ruins and the Mekboy himself a mangled mess. The Painboyz did what they could – or at least, what they could be bothered – and the newly bionic greenskin found himself a place on Skrapsmasha's crew. Here he has excelled, putting all his old artillery know-wotz into practice at the controls of the Battlewagon's killkannon. Indeed, Wrecka is even able to place his shots to cripple enemy vehicles instead of destroying them outright. His helpless targets are left at the mercy of the Deffskull lootin' gangs, a bounty ready to be grabbed.



DA RUMBLEFORT

The crew of Da Rumblefort make most Deffskulls look positively respectable by comparison. This scabby gang of freeloaders are so irredeemably light-fingered that even their own clanmates don't trust them, and for good reason. Da Rumblefort is, in fact, an agglomeration of nicked components from countless other greenskin wagons. Its chassis alone is made up of bits from no less than four other Battlewagons, two Wartrukks, and a smashed up Morkanaut. Da Rumblefort's engine is as much dakkajet as battle fortress, and its tracks hail from half a dozen different tanks. Meanwhile its guns were stolen from so many unwitting contributors that half the mobs in Raddak Bluefinga's tribe would take umbrage were the truth to be known. Da Rumblefort always gets patched up after every battle, and if that means a few other crews find themselves missing vital gubbinz in the heat of battle, well that's good for a laugh too.



Deffbringa, a Battlewagon that does exactly what its name suggests.



Streaking through the wartorn skies, the Dakkajet known as Blue Funda spots the best wrecks for looting and radios their position back to the Boyz below.

DEATHSKULLS

The Deathskulls enjoy pillaging a good pile of scrap every bit as much as they enjoy killing the previous owners. Upon landing on Alaric Prime, however, their rust-ship was ravaged by gunfire. The reservoir of blue paint that they'd brought to slap on their bodies and any bits of metal that came their way ended up gushing out of bullet holes like blood spilt by a fallen herd creature. Many of the Deathskulls tried to stem the leaks with their own arms and even their bodies, but the damage had been done, and most of the lucky paint was lost.

This was considered by all to be a bad omen. Craving blue-hued metal for their fighting machines, the Deathskulls singled out the cobalt walkers of House Terryn, but their foes would not fall easily. Grots were dispatched to filch blue-barrelled big guns from Da Kannon Krew, steal bits of armour from Da Mekanobs and even pinch blue scrap from Da Wheel Steelaz. The Deathskulls were soon kitted out well enough, but when the other clans recognised bits of their old vehicles with hastily scrawled out insignia, fist-fights were not far behind.

For a large part of the fighting on Alaric Prime, the Deathskulls had to defend themselves against attacks from their own kind as well as from the human forces – a clear sign, Raddak Bluefinga grunted, of the bad omen unfolding.

THE VALIANT



The fighting on Alaric Prime took a bitter toll, accounting for millions of lives. While the Cadian 1652nd regiment bore the brunt of the Orks' wrath, few among Alaric's populace escaped unscathed from the terrible crucible of war. The lists of those that had given their names in Alaric's defence stretched endlessly across the great tally halls of the Nobles.



FALLEN NOBLES OF ALARIC

Blessed be his name and deeds, **Goralan Helmast** fell during the glorious House Kestren charge, taken when his Knight fell before the Warboss Grukk, Alaric curse his soul. Though his bones were lost to the foe, his spirit will live on forever in the stones of his keep and the blood of his progeny.

Foully slain during the sulphur storm at Kraken Falls, **Kyрана Calestros** held back an Ork flotilla for half a cycle even as the toxic rain and wind stripped his Knight to its bones. Only when his canopy cracked and his flesh fell from his skull did his guns fall silent.

Long live the memory of **Phyne Degallio**, favoured progeny of our Great Lord of the Sea and skilled at both blade and lance. Taken by the treachery of the enemy while defending the citizens of the Smouldering Isle, he drowned in his Knight and was borne to the sea floor by an Orkoid war effigy.

Ingloriously taken, **Rolundus Velemestrin** was murdered in his sleep by foul xenos infiltrators who slipped into his stronghold beneath the careless watch of his thrice-cursed servants and guards. Praise be to the Noble who, even bereft of his Knight, laid low many of the aliens' number before succumbing to his wounds.



HONoured DEAD OF CADIA, ANNO MERIDIAN 232.443.998.M41, ALARIC PRIME

Cpt. P. Foyle 4531652b

Battle of Hill Epsilon Kay 1216 – Extensive xenos close combat trauma, identified by uniform fragments and rank insignia.

Lt. 2nd C. Kern 9221652k

Landing Zone Primus 'Rust-ship' landings – Partially consumed by hostile xenos parasite (ref. b7 84k 'Biter Squig').

Lt. 3rd T. Roan 6761652d

Gamma Kay 229 Bridgehead Boiling River Defence – Missing during bridge collapse and consequent sulphuric rain deluge.

Cp. H. Breen 4431652b

Battle for Shrouded Port, Smouldering Isle Campaign – Killed in destruction of port facilities, body unrecoverable (ref. Witness 3511652c).

Cp. K. Darnelos 8211652k

Landing Zone Primus 'Rust-ship' landings. Crushed by allied asset during counter-attack (ref. M7 7 'Knight').

Lt. 1st S. Gerbin 6301652c

Battle of Hill Epsilon Kay 1216 – Cause of death spontaneous psychic combustion and massive organ rupture (ref. b583y Ork Psyker).

Sgt. 1st E. Venks 9091652d

Warden Island Mercy Sanctions – Missing during the disappearance of local convict population and Astra Militarum assets.

Lt. 2nd Y. Torm 7291652e

Battle of Hill Epsilon Kay 1216 – Slain by treachery within the ranks, inadvertently enforcing Commissariat Edict (ongoing investigation ref. Hill Epsilon Martyr-pact).



AUTOMOURNED SERVANTS OF THE IMPERIUM

Tech-Magos Terus Corgan

Killed during the battle of Boiling River, Magos Corgan died defending the Cadian 1653rd artillery position. Unwilling to surrender a Basilisk to the greenskins, Magos Corgan – blessed by the Omnissiah be his name – detonated an earthshaker shell in the breach of the gun, releasing its machine spirit and saving it from the foe.

Astropath Ascendant Seemus Neth

Euthanised by Commissar Dyrk during the Battle of Hill Epsilon when tainted by xenos' psychic spoor. To prevent the alien from plundering his mind, Seemus Neth chose the blessed bolt shell as an end to his torment.

[EXPUNGED BY HOLY ORDER]

For notable actions in the [RESTRICTED CITATION ORDO XENOS] death and ruin upon the foe [PURGED FROM MEMORY] – A single bullet of vengeance [RESTRICTED CITATION ORDO XENOS] died in silent agony [VANQUISHED BY HOLY ORDER]

Cpt. Cobolt Laynce, 12th Cadian Airwing

Killed during engagement over landing zone Primus 'Rust-ship' landings – After sustaining extensive damage to his Thunderbolt, Cpt. Laynce showed great valour and faith in the Emperor, ramming a rust-ship with his aircraft and permanently disabling its guns in the process.

DYROS, THE SCORCHED KNIGHT



The Freeblade known as the Scorched Knight was as much a product of the Red Waaagh! as he was a combatant within it. Having rejected his family only scant months before the arrival of Grukk and his Ork hordes, Dyros was still finding his way within a world become strange to him. When he had learnt of his older brother's murder at the hands of his father he had cast off his family obligations. Overnight he rejected the caste systems of Alaric, taking his Knight and striking out on his own.

Scorching off the symbols of House Kamata in the Damatoi volcano range, Dyros struck out into the hinterlands of the world, determined to right the wrong committed against his brother by their father, Hiram Kamata. The Red Waaagh! gave him all the opportunity he could ask for. In the chaos of the invasion he returned to the shadow of Sacred Mountain to see the blood debt paid.

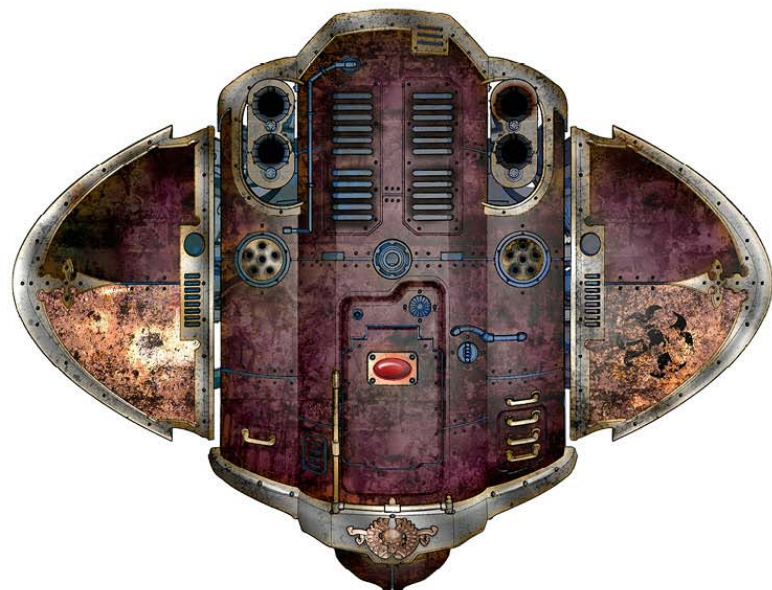
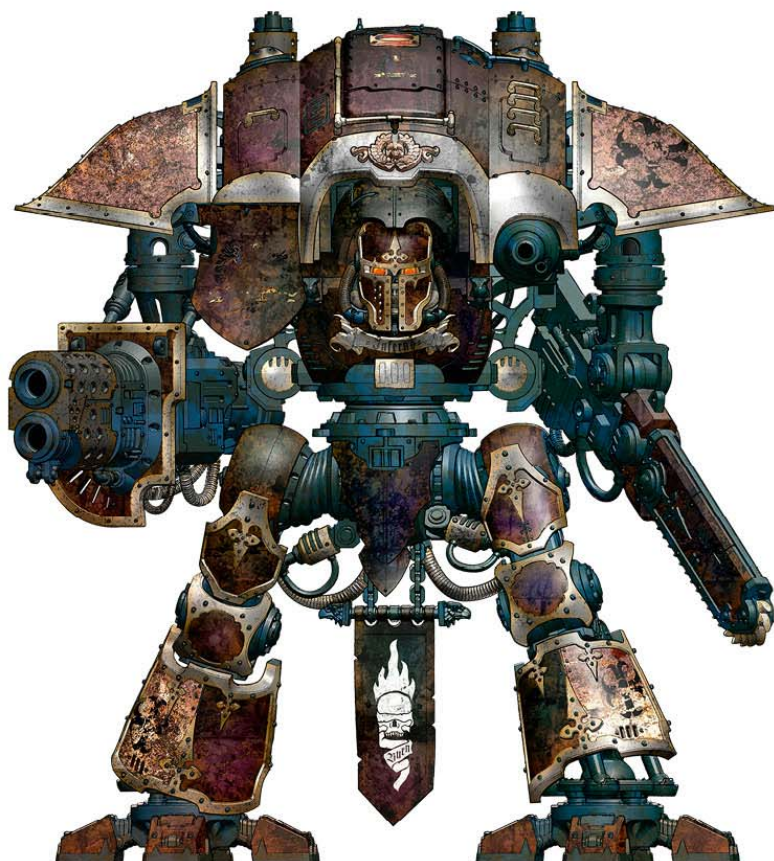
A skilled and able warrior, Dyros was instrumental in disrupting the Ork forces around the mountain and accounted for hundreds of greenskin kills. He chose not to fight alongside the other Nobles, instead striking against rearward units or Ork artillery. His lone Knight would often be seen by Cadian Guardsmen, its burnt hull obscured by smoke and flame as it smashed Ork wagons to scrap or tore through massed ranks of greenskins with its reaper chainsword. In the space of a few cycles the legend of the Scorched Knight had sprung up among the Imperial forces. Guardsmen and commanders cut off or abandoned to the tides of war would pray for his appearance, their eyes scanning the horizon for the distinctive hunched form.

Unknown to the Cadians, Dyros did not fight for them. He fought to keep his world free, to purge the alien and maintain his honour; but mostly he fought for revenge.

What no one could know was that when Dyros' brother Tyras had perished within his Throne Mechanicum, part of his mind had remained. It was this fragment of Tyras that had told Dyros about the deadly malfunction his father had engineered, about the madness in the heart of his house and the long list of crimes committed by Hiram. While words alone might not have been enough to sway Dyros, his brother was able to share visions of their father's madness via the Throne, forever changing the young man.

Dyros was to get his chance for vengeance during the last battle for Sacred Mountain. In the chaos of the melee, Hiram's own Knight was toppled by a crashing Dakkajet. Dyros, who had been fighting in the vanguard of the Imperial forces, saw his father fall and hastened to his side. When Hiram looked up to see which Knight had come to his aid his gaze fell upon the armour of Dyros. One look at its scorched insignia and, even through his insanity, the patriarch knew his time had come. Levelling his thermal cannon at his father's canopy, Dyros let the rage and hatred of his brother wash over him. A final mental pulse ended the crimes of his father once and for all.

Though dozens of other Nobles had seen Dyros decapitate his father's Knight, none barred his way when he finally strode from the field of battle, for each and every Noble respects the right to settle debts within his own house.



'Though we stand tall within our Knights, we are not above the laws of men. Let every tyrant tremble in my sight should he think himself immune. As long as I draw breath the guilty will be punished, be they xenos invader, cursed traitor or highborn criminal.'

- The Freeblade Dyros, speaking to the surviving kin of House Kamata

TANK COMMANDER SILAS OVIK



Rumoured to have been the bastard son of a noble family who was exiled to carve out a life in the wilderness, Silas Ovik has developed something of a grim, determined and aloof nature, even for a Cadian. As a child he came to the attention of the Imperial Guard officer corps after he shot dead a pack of slobbering Cultists attacking a local settlement. It transpired this boy had taught himself how to maintain and even improve the lasgun he had used to such effect in the incident. Despite the feral look about the lad, and his small, wiry frame, the value of such initiative and instinct did not go unnoticed.

Due to his time spent hunting in the wilds of Cadia, Ovik had developed a strange propensity to wait until the last possible moment, making absolutely sure of the shot before pulling the trigger. His rivals in the cadet brigades would mutter that this betrayed suicidal tendencies, but his senior officers recognised it indicated an unusual level of calm and focus under pressure. They decided that young Ovik's skills were perfectly suited to the tank regiments.

Because of his short stature, his upbringing and his rather unusual nose, Ovik has received more than his fair share taunts – over the years, many have joked that Ovik's father was a Ratling. But he has never risen to the bait. As a man of few words, he has instead earned the respect of his men by letting them witness his skills at the hunt.

Despite being a master of all variants of the Leman Russ, Ovik prefers to command from the cupola of a Vanquisher, where he can destroy war engines from afar just as he hunted wild beasts as a child on Cadia: one shot, one kill.

With his deft touch and quick mind guiding the tankers under his command, Ovik's squadron famously stalked the Daemon Engines that had infested Prosan during the Belliger invasions of 988.M41. His pinpoint accuracy took apart Warpsmith Vutos' monstrous creations one by one and denied the momentum that would surely have seen the fall of the planet. Later that year, during the Ork incursion of Crisson Vael, Ovik was forced to assume command after a suicidal air strike took out the Cadian command HQ. There, he led two squadrons of tanks against three Stompas, outwitting and frustrating his foes long enough for further support to arrive and destroy them outright.

Such demonstrations of grit, nerve and intelligence saw Ovik promoted to the legendary Steel Host of the Cadian 1652nd. In a regiment already celebrated for its high level of efficiency, Ovik's record since joining has been nothing short of remarkable. As the commander of the Steel Host, he has repeatedly led Cadia's armies to victory from within his Leman Russ Vanquisher, *Ovik's Fist*. It has become a mark of pride for other tankers to have fought alongside him, and his men obey him without question.



TEMPESTOR PRIME SALEM WHITLOCK



Tempestor Prime Salem Whitlock is the epitome of a Schola Progenium officer – bold, courageous and utterly dedicated to the Imperium. Whitlock's personal honours and roll of victories would put most career officers to shame, and the respect he instils in his men is the envy of any Commissar. The Tempestor Prime commands none other than the 50th Kappic Eagles – the toughest, most decorated company of Tempestus Scions this side of Segmentum Solar. Though they number barely a single company, under Whitlock's command they are worth more than a regiment of regular Guardsmen – and they know it. If Whitlock and the Kappic Eagles have any flaw at all, it is their assumption that their orders will be obeyed to the letter regardless of whom they are delivered to.

Orphaned at the age of two, Salem Whitlock was raised by the Schola Progenium on the Shrine World of Phrell. During his youth, his determination, devout loyalty and natural leadership marked him out as officer material, and for many years it was believed he was destined to join the Commissariat. However, as a Tempestus Scion cadet, Whitlock displayed an acumen for tactics that his drill abbots felt more suited to Militarum Tempestus command. His subsequent advance through the ranks of the Militarum Tempestus has been nothing short of meteoric.

As a Tempestor, Whitlock led the drop assault that brought the decade-long siege of Fortress Hellstar to a bloody end. His squad swept through the stronghold with ruthless efficiency, gunning down every Cultist inside in less than eighty minutes. As a Tempestor Prime, Whitlock orchestrated the strikes that crippled an Eldar warhost at Telvarr Prime. He then personally led the assault against the xenos witch-commander, who he slew whilst simultaneously redeploying his Valkyries and Vendettas to cut off the warhost's line of retreat, resulting in a bitter aerial duel that the Astra Militarum won through attrition and sheer determination.

There are few Imperial Guard officers who can coordinate the actions of an entire company as fluently as Tempestor Prime Whitlock. Even fewer can do so in the thick of the fight, where Whitlock can be seen barking orders while snapping off shots with his bolt pistol. Whitlock insists on leading from the front, facing the same dangers as his men and assessing the battlefield first hand. It is this selfless bravery that inspires the Kappic Eagles to victory, the same quality that saw them at the front when the fate of Alaric Prime hung in the balance.



'Right, listen up, all of you. Vogstrau, Derkel, get your teams upstairs and secure a vertical perimeter. Shriver Squadron – you're air cover. Vendrel, Kleist, you're with me. Resps on full; these undertunnels aren't going to be pretty. Lord Brahmica – keep those gates closed, even if you have to block them with your walker's arse. Just get it done. Now.'

- Salem Whitlock, prior to the Purge of Alexei Keep

THE KLAW OF MORK



Big Mek Mogrok had already made his mark on a dozen warfronts, but the true glory of his plan to assault Sacred Mountain was yet to unfold. When Cadian high command got word that a planetoid passing Alaric Prime had been altered in its course and was now heading right for Sacred Isle, a desperate gamble began to unfold...

Thirty miles to the south-east of the Sacred Mountain, Mogrok had been hammering and bashing away at the rust-ship *Bad Gob* with a grim intensity. Day and night he had been busy with his greatspanner and welding torch, bolting on some bits and tearing off others.

Only when the ship's nose cone fell away to reveal a great twisted claw did a collective grunt of understanding rise up from the Meks gathered around it. Standing almost as high as a Stompa, the Klaw of Mork was covered in thrumming compactors and strange protrusions, all linked together by a maze of cables and wires. With a final blow from his bending wrench, the Big Mek activated the strange weapon. A few moments later, vivid green light coruscated around its talons before shooting out into the sky.

High above the giant claw, the beam of greenish energy probed in the darkness before coiling like a snake around the celestial glimmerings of the Frozen Comet. Tearing the star-debris from its ancient orbit, the device dragged the giant rock toward Alaric, bringing it downward with terrible inevitability.



THE CASTELLAN'S COUNCIL

When the vast energies of the new Ork super-weapon sprang to life alarms went off across the Imperial augur array. Dozens of servo-skulls and cogitator cores whirled to life in a babble of binary whispers. From within tiny asteroids and clusters of orbital debris, hidden mechanical eyes searched the surface of Alaric Prime. Scanning the great tractor beam, they began sending a stream of data back down to the surface and the cogitators of the Cadian headquarters.

Castellan Stein shifted through the dataslate reports, re-reading the same urgent missives again and again from his commanders. As hard as it was for him to believe, it seemed the Orks had built some kind of orbital tractor beam. They were using it to pull down the celestial body the Alaricans called the Frozen Comet. Worse still, if the reports were accurate it would slam to earth on top of Sacred Mountain.

Stein and his allies convened an emergency council to discuss their next course of action. Many of the Nobles argued for an immediate assault against the Ork tractor beam, even if it meant stripping vital forces from other fronts to do so, while Stein's commanders urged a massive artillery strike. By now, Stein knew enough about the Ork rust-ships to be sure that a frontal assault against the invaders' guns would be tantamount to suicide, whilst any artillery attack would prove useless against their force fields.

Whitlock, the Tempestor Prime, spoke up. He believed there was a weak point in the field, reasoning that where the beam for the tractor cannon went out, there must also be a way in. Though the gap would be too small to fly a Valkyrie through or make an accurate strike with a Deathstrike missile, it was in all likelihood large enough for a trooper to drop through with a grav-chute. The Tempestor Prime was sure that if they could get in intact, his men could destroy the force field generator from the inside. Once the field was down, an airborne Militarum Tempestus unit could make a run on the tractor cannon itself and take it out. Stein agreed; it looked like their best shot. With the tractor cannon disabled, the comet would hopefully be put off course in time, and maybe even orbit the planet instead of striking it. It was a slim hope, but they would not get a second chance.



ORK FORCE FIELDS

Ork technology seems to work in no small part because the Greenskins believe it will, and their force fields are no different. Electrical shields like those protecting the rust-ships in Grukk's fleet are fuelled not just by a ragged collection of conduits and compactors, but also by the unshakeable self-belief of the greenskin horde. This somehow gives these fields the strength to thwart all but the most determined attempts to breach them, the Orks inside laughing and flinging insults as heavy shells and missiles explode harmlessly against their fizzing, hissing shield.

A LEAP OF FAITH

A few hours later, Whitlock's Valkyrie came in low across the plain under cover of darkness. The Tempestor Prime leant out the open doorway as flattened grass whipped by below. In the gloom alongside his own craft, two other vague shadows signalled the rest of his flight. Up ahead he could see the shimmering crackle of the Ork force field and the vivid green beam that reached up into the night sky. Turning back, he could see the red light of the cockpit illuminating the shadows of his men. He held a hand to his jaw, keying his microbead and voxing all three Valkyries at once.

'Five minutes to contact. Squad Secundus and Squad Tertius, be in place and ready when that field comes down. We'll only get one shot at this. Squad Primus, we get the honour of going in first. Prepare grav-chutes for the jump.'

As the Valkyries closed in on the Ork force field dome, Whitlock's craft peeled off, climbing toward the invisible opening at its peak. It was a sound enough theory – there must be some kind of gap around the tractor cannon beam. It was a calculated risk, but it was this sort of gamble that he had built his career upon.

Whitlock didn't even pause as he leapt out into the darkness. Hurtling down toward the force field, the Tempestor Prime leant into the wind, aiming for the blazing green beam and the barely visible ring of distortion around it. He hardly had time enough to think that the Orks probably didn't even know about this hole in their force field before it flashed past him. Behind him several other Scions free-fell through the gap, arms held tight at their sides. All slipped past unscathed, save Orrost, who drifted too close to the tractor beam. Its irresistible power snatched him from the air like an insect caught by a lizard's tongue, yanking him downward and vaporising him upon the claw itself. Whitlock had no time to mourn his loss as his grav-chute arrested his descent. A split-second later his boots hit the ground, his men forming up close behind.



'This here's Da Klaw of Mork,' yelled Mogrok to the assembled Bad Moons. 'It's going to smash the humies' mountain good!'

The Big Mek flicked switches and yanked levers on his huge traktor kannon's control panel to roars of approval from the gathering Ork horde. Shaking and sputtering, the contraption's engines sprang to life, the cables leading to the Klaw arcing with jolts of greenish energy. Standing at Mogrok's side, Dagogg and Grabber watched the scrap engine rattle into life with eyes wide.

'Wot's it for den?' Grabber asked, scratching his head.

Mogrok pointed a gnarled green finger at the sky. Squinting, the other two Orks could just make out a pale speck carving a path through the heavens. Adjusting his bionik eye, Dagogg took a closer look. The speck resolved itself into a frozen comet, its surface swathed in clouds of ice and rock. Even as he watched, a flickering green beam reached out from the Klaw and washed around the comet. With painful slowness the satellite started to swell in size. Each moment, the beam spitting from Mogrok's Klaw drew it a little closer to Alaric Prime.

'So how do you kill a humie mountain?' said Mogrok. 'Well, I reckon droppin' another mountain on top of it's a good place to start. We bring that sparkly great comet fink down into the fight, it'll blow up everyfink wot ain't under a force field. Enuff talkin,' the Big Mek said, adjusting his tool belt. 'I got to go and sort some fings out. Don't let nuffink mess with me Klaw, or I'll boil ya in oil!'

Dagogg could only nod in dumb agreement as he watched the comet glimmer in the green light that shot up into the heavens. Fine-tuning his bionik eye, he could see that it was definitely headed in their direction.

'So wot's this fink doing again, Dagz?' said Grabber, looking even more confused than normal.

'Right,' said Dagogg. 'You know how you grab the grots wiv yer grabba stick, and then you chuck 'em about the place fer a larf?'

'Yep,' replied Grabber promptly, his pincer-stave flexing to illustrate his point.

'Well,' replied Dagogg, sighing happily. 'It's a bit like that. But wiv a moon.'

DAREDEVILS AND DETONATIONS



Having identified the source of the strange tractor beam that was drawing the Frozen Comet ever closer, the Tempestus Scions under Salem Whitlock made speed to their rust-ship target. Attacking under cover of night, they mounted a full-throttle assault into the heart of the Ork base, their mission to disable its force fields and destroy the tractor beam.

MISSION: DISABLE

The Tempestus Scions slipped swiftly across the Ork encampment, moving like shadows among the piles of scrap and debris. The Tempestor Prime led them toward a hastily-built flak tower, where a cluster of Ork guns protected both the tractor beam and the force field generator that shielded it. Whitlock directed half his squad to make for the top of the tower while he led the rest toward the generator at the structure's base.

Taking the Orks completely by surprise, the Tempestus Scions blasted their way into the tower's lower level. Through the smoke and chaos the Imperials pushed inside the teetering structure, hot-shot fire scything down anything which moved. Even though none of the Orks had any idea where their attackers had come from, they knew a fight when they heard one. Mobs poured in from every direction, drawn by the sound of combat. The sentry Orks inside the tower fired their shootas wildly in the confined space, solid rounds blowing holes in the rusting walls or ricocheting off in random directions.

Dagogg the Mek had been tinkering with the guns at the top of the tower when the first Scion charged over the perimeter wall below, gunning down the closest cluster of grots with a salvo of red laser blasts. Growling, the Mek manned an artillery piece of his own invention, kicking protesting grots out of the way. With a whine and pop the big gun grabbed one of the humies, flinging him into the air and squishing him like a bug.

No sooner had the corpse fallen than half a dozen took his place, fanning out across the lower gun deck. Under the lash of Grabber, the grots turned their guns on the Tempestus Scions and opened fire. The tower lit up with the flash of zzap guns and the boom of kannons. At such close range, most of the shots went wide, but another Scion was mashed into the deck by a lucky hit from a bubble chukka's ball of force.

In the bowels of the tower, Tempestor Prime Whitlock fought his way into the generator room, fending off wild choppa swings and ducking mad shoota fire. Guarding the controls was a towering Ork Nob. The xenos gave the Tempestor Prime a broken toothed grin and cracked its knuckles. Whitlock didn't even pause as he brought up his pistol, obliterating the Nob's head in a volley of bolt shells.

'Charges here, here and here!' he yelled, and his men swiftly set their satchel bombs. As soon as the Scions had obeyed they retreated from the room. A heartbeat later, the tower shuddered from a contained explosion as the explosives on the generator detonated.



GRAV-CHUTES

The Militarum Tempestus have at their disposal some of the best gear of any Astra Militarum unit. Among this specialised equipment is the grav-chute, a single-man anti-grav device that grants its wearer a dangerously direct method of entering the fray. Engineered from ancient suspensor technology, the chute has a complex integral cogitator that uses augurs to detect altitude and velocities. It is a testament to the Tempestus Scions' bravery that a soldier never really knows how long this charge will last, or whether it will kick in at the right altitude, each time he makes a jump.



MISSION: DESTROY

With a deafening crack of energy and a vivid green flash the force field collapsed. Almost immediately the scream of engines announced the arrival of Whitlock's Valkyrie reinforcements, near-invisible in the darkness as they raced across the sky.

Still in a state of confusion, the Orks were firing at anything that moved. Tracer rounds lit up the dark. Dagogg had a group of the Tempestus Scions below pinned down, grots trying to drag them into the dirt while their guns flashed and fizzled. Hearing the arrival of the Valkyries, Dagogg swung his Smasha upward and peered into the dark. His bionik eye pierced the blackness, adjusting until he could clearly see the telltale glow of Imperial aircraft engines. Waiting until the last possible second, Dagogg fired the Smasha, its gravimetric beam reaching out and enveloping the craft. The big gun bucked as the Mek threw the captured Valkyrie into the ground. A sudden flash of fire marked the point where it smashed into the ground, its burning remains tumbling end over end across the encampment. Content that Grabber's lads had the humies in check below, Dagogg lined up the Smasha on the second Valkyrie.

Halfway up the tower, Tempestor Prime Whitlock saw the first Valkyrie come apart in a ball of fire as it hit the ground. 'Dammit,' he spat, 'we need those guns taken down!' The Tempestor Prime sprinted on, leading his men once more onto the gun platform.

The Tempestus Scions fought up the rickety stairs to the Ork gunners and slave-runs up top, throwing themselves into the fray. Whitlock saw a large, brutish Ork lining up a gun on his remaining Valkyrie and emptied his bolt pistol's clip in the beast's direction, forcing it to dive for cover.

All around him beams of arcing energy, solid rounds and explosive shells flew filled the air. Whitlock took cover behind a pile of broken crates. Nearby, one of his men jerked violently as a zzap gun burned a hole right through him, while another was blown to fragments by a kannon hit. Ork reinforcements poured in at a steady rate.

Scanning the battle with a quick glance, Whitlock gave the order to retreat. The surviving Tempestus Scions fell back to the edge of the upper gun platform, dodging fire before leaping off into the darkness. In their wake the Orks yelled insults at the retreating foe.

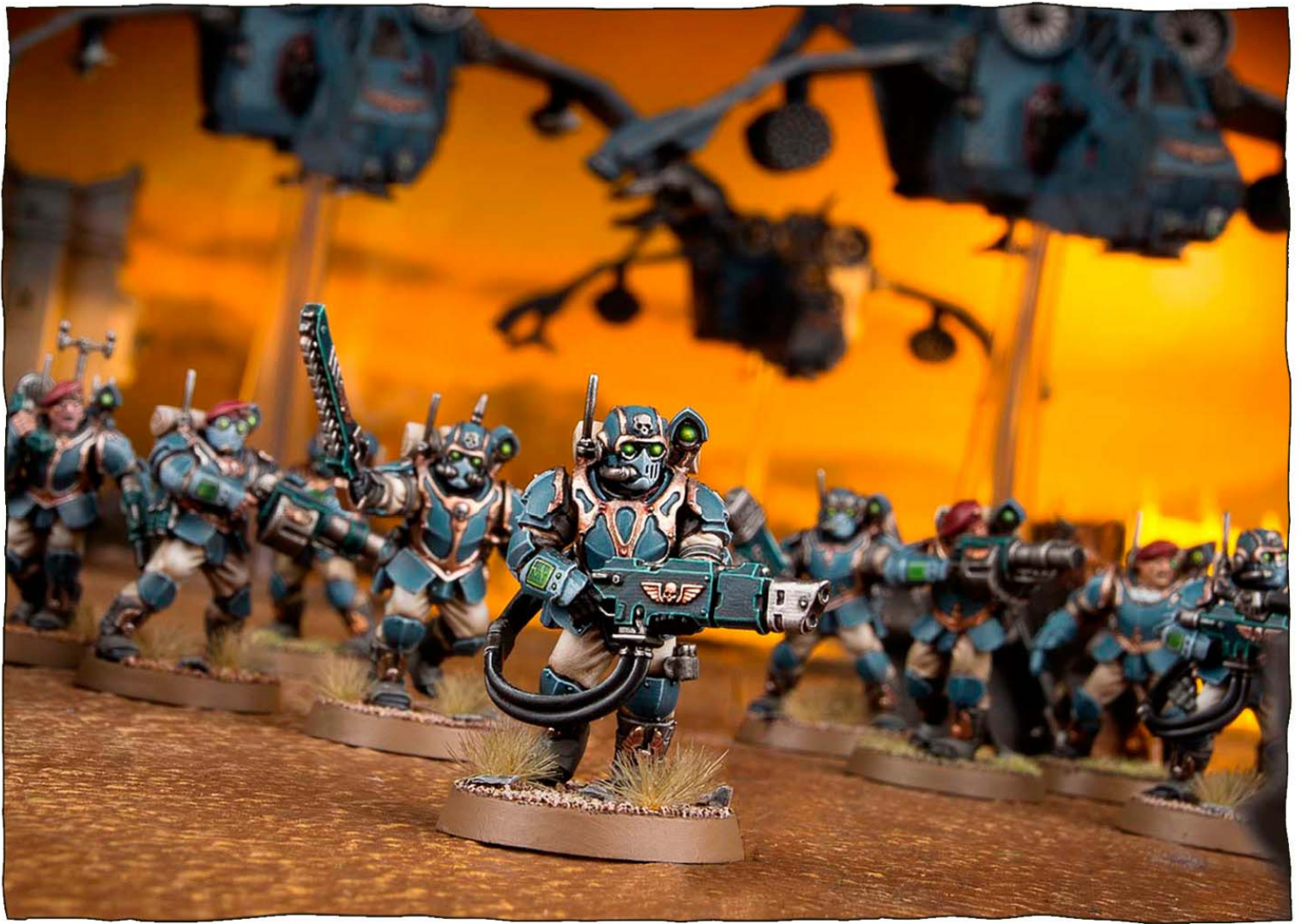
As he fell through the darkness, Whitlock pulled the detonator from his belt, squeezing the trigger and setting off the satchel charge he had left leaning against the pile of ammo crates. Above and behind him the sky lit up as the gun platform vanished in a cloud of fire.

With their grav-chutes slowing their fall at the last moment, the Tempestus Scions hastily formed up around the Tempestor Prime. 'Primary target open,' he voxed. 'Repeat, primary target is open!'

The Tempestus Scions rushed to the edge of the Ork encampment. Behind them the xenos were banding together into mobs, screaming, waving their choppas and firing their shootas wildly as they charged.

Even as Whitlock braced himself for close combat, the closest mob vanished under a hail of heavy bolter fire. Looking up, he watched as a Valkyrie bellied in low on howling engines, the door gunners firing into the gathered Ork warriors. Leaping up into the cabin, the Tempestor Prime looked toward the rust-ship where the tractor beam still hummed and flickered. Out of the darkness a single Valkyrie appeared, falling into formation with Whitlock's craft as they climbed and sped off across the plain. The Tempestor Prime counted down silently in his head.

The flash turned night into day. Shading his eyes, Salem Whitlock allowed himself a smile as he watched the rust-ship come apart in a spectacular conflagration of orange-green flame.



THE SACRED AND THE SCARRED



The tractor beam had been disabled by Whitlock's efforts. Though the inbound comet would hit the planet, it had been knocked off course; its impact point was projected to be in the sea north of the Sacred Isle. A massive Ork attack on Sacred Mountain was going ahead anyway. All across the planet, preparations for the final battle were made.

THE BEACON LIT

Castellan Stein stowed his magnoculars for the tenth time, teeth pressed together in frustration. His command Chimera was bumping and rolling across the savannah towards the centre of the Sacred Isle, its passage so erratic it was impossible to pick out details more than ten or so kilometers distant. Yet this was the most direct route to their destination.

With the teeming Ork hordes storming unchecked across several of Alaric Prime's largest islands, it was only a matter of time before their convoys of badly-made vehicles converged. Every clan and every tribe would be desperate to be part of the grand battle that would break Alaric Prime once and for all. By the best calculations of the augur array, the invaders were converging upon the largest landmark of them all.

On the horizon ahead a great column of brown smoke linked the earth to the sky, a stilled tornado against the dark blue firmament. Below it was Sacred Mountain, its many peaks and ridges jutting towards the evening stars. The armoured columns were getting close; Stein could just about make out the strange concentric ridges that dotted the mountain's flanks. He had lost several of his finest platoons there in the battle against Warlord Gruk, despite his best efforts. For every Imperial Guardsman that had died, though, a hundred Orks had been cut down. In the cold mathematics of war, it was a great victory, and one that Castellan Stein would gladly repeat a dozen times over if he could.

Unfortunately, the smoke trail they had left in the wake of the battle was the largest on Sacred Isle by far, and it had proved a beacon to xenos and Imperial defender alike.

Judging by the scores of dust-trails converging on the mountain from all over the horizon, protecting the peak's outer

approaches would not be so straightforward this time. East, south, west; the distance left between each xenos convoy and the mountain itself was worryingly similar. He'd seen the stills relayed from orbit a dozen times over. Played in chronological sequence on the data-slate, it was as if a noose of smoke trails was tightening around the neck of Sacred Mountain.

That's not coincidence, thought Stein. One of the damned things is coordinating all this. The one with the brain.

The Chimera's command augurium chimed three times, and Stein ducked back into the cupola to examine its display. The energy spikes it was detecting were immense. There was something inside the mountain's depths that crackled with an insane amount of potential energy, and if anything, the readings were increasing. In last night's war council the Alarican nobles had insisted that the peak should be defended to the last, though none seemed to be able to give him a convincing reason as to why. Yet they were clearly on to something. Stein's Astropath, Zeil, had told him that, when viewed with the witch-sight, the mountain positively glowed.

Late the previous night, the moustachioed Lord Neru of House Degallio had announced the dispatch of a task force of Knights to the mountain's easternmost gulch. Having no real authority to stop him, Stein had merely shrugged w. Backwards bastards all, he thought. They were probably sacrificing virgins to the Volcano God this very minute.



Neru Degallio's anxious frown wrestled with a disapproving scowl for control of his eyebrows. The frown won. While he sat fretting within his Knight armour, his consort was still up there on the ridge, her silver-plated skull gleaming in the evening sun as she offered up one of House Degallio's Greater Keys. Even in her robes of state, she looked tiny and delicate next to the caryatids that framed the Sacred Gate.

It should be him up there at her side, thought Neru, not some other Knight – even if that Knight was the legend Gerantius. Neru sighed heavily. In matters of duty he could no sooner win a fight with his consort than he could wrestle Gerantius to the ground barehanded. Above them, the comet was getting larger by the hour, and a sense of imminence pervaded every house and regiment. Now was not a time for a fiery argument, nor for half measures.

A muffled boom echoed across the slopes. Startled from his reverie, Neru subconsciously raised the White Warden's weapon-arms in response, even as his eyes scanned the display in front of him for the source of the noise. Directly ahead of the Lady of the Keys and her looming companion, a black line had appeared down the length of the Sacred Gate, partially concealed by the drifting dust set up by the movement of such an ancient mechanism. With a banshee screech the great brass-plated doors opened inwards; a metre, then a metre more. Then they stuck fast.

Gerantius strode forward, lowered one knee in the rubble, and put an armoured shoulder to the nearest, forcing it open in a shower of sparks. The ancient Knight, made small by the dimensions of the immense portal, gestured with a elegant sweep of his chainsword for the Lady Degallio to enter first. She curtsied daintily, and her seraph-mites accompanied her inside in a fluttering halo. Gerantius stood to his full magnificent height and stomped after her, briefly saluting the timeworn caryatids that guarded the gate before disappearing into the darkness.

Lord Neru was still staring hard at the great open gate three hours later. As the sun was beginning to set, a low rumble shook the firmament, sending klaxons ringing around his Throne Mechanicus. The earth-tremor grew more intense, its vibrations more and more severe until the White Warden was forced to kneel to keep its balance. Cracks were appearing left and right, cutting strangely regular patterns across the parched stone and tumbled scree.

Sacred Mountain was waking at last.

THE MAN AND THE MOUNTAIN

Stein watched in awe as the Imperial Guard armoured columns rumbled closer to the mountain ahead. The entire landmark was shuddering hard, its outline blurring as boulders and loose rocks cascaded down its flanks. The Cadian officer ordered the all-halt – he had no wish to get his men buried alive. Great cracks and lines were appearing all across the mountain's surface. The mountain was shaking loose the scree and rubble that covered its sides. Angular shapes and metal-plated domes were being revealed in each concentric ring that girdled its peaks.

Avalanches of loose stone cascaded down slopes that tipped from steep to vertical, their rubble tumbling into sheer-walled chasms that yawned where tumbleweed had rolled only moments before. Pitted metal defence lines shook free of their rocky camouflage, redoubts and bluffs revealing blunt fortifications that conformed so well to the natural lines of the mountain that it was no wonder Stein had not spotted them before. Slabs of permasteel and plascrete slid and ground into hidden recesses as eagle-headed shields unfurled around artillery pieces with a bore so large that a soldier could crawl inside with room to spare.

One by one, the Cadian tankers were opening the cupolas and hatches of their tanks, climbing out with a shocked slowness to their movements, their eyes riveted on the vision ahead. Speechless, they watched the mountain transform into a giant stronghold that made the famous Cadian kasrs look like molehills by comparison. A voice in Stein's head objected at the breach

of protocol, but he couldn't tear his attention away to order his men back into their vehicles. Their awe was completely understandable.

The peak folded and reconfigured, shouldering off slabs of rock like a prehistoric monstrosity shaking off the ice of the glacier that had trapped it over the aeons. At its feet, a deep chasm had opened up in the ground around its circumference; a chasm that was swiftly filling with boiling water from the subterranean rivers below. A giant drawbridge clanked out from the eastern ridges, extending across the newly-formed moat. Stein was watching the military brilliance of a people long dead.

This was what Gerantius had been guarding. This was what Degallio's heirloom-keys unlocked. No wonder the knightly houses were so protective of it, even if so many millennia had passed since its construction that they no longer knew why. As the dust of its hatching began to settle, Stein gazed up at one of the great wonders of the Imperium; the colossal tomb of the planet's founder, so vast and militarised that he could protect his world in death just as he did in life. Below him, in the Chimera's humid guts, the castellan heard the Astropath Zeil breathe two words of wonder.

'Fortress Alaric...'



THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Focusing on the task at hand once more, Castellan Stein barked a series of orders into the comms array. He had already mentally assigned the different corps under his control to the various battlements and redoubts ringing the mountainsides, and his men were quick to obey. By the time night had fallen, his tank companies had trundled across the giant span of the drawbridge that had emerged on the eastern side of the vast fortress.

The Baneblade *Iron Ettin* and its Shadowsword companion *Steel Cyclops* took up position on either side of the great gate, the last line of defence should any assault somehow manage to get past the armoured companies that lined the bridge. The Knights of House Velemestrin, Terryn and Kamata, having reached the Cadians' position a few hours earlier, paced back and forth at the mouth of the bridge as if impatient for battle. The Imperial Guard made better use of the time available to them before their artillery was in range. Gunners familiarised themselves with point weaponry and anti-aircraft installations. Unexpected reinforcements from Alaric's criminal elements had been assigned to defensive positions, each Ogryn team briefed three times over and each defence line further shored up by debris and dead bodies.

Night drew in as the Ork hordes grew closer, darkness cloaking the horizon. Yet the mountainsides were illuminated as if by the fullest of moons. The comet that blazed through the stratosphere above the mountain was getting larger and brighter by the hour. Whitlock had disabled the Ork tractor beam that had been drawing it closer, but the satellite's momentum was such that it was still heading towards the planet's crust. Stein took some comfort from the knowledge that, due to Whitlock's efforts, its projected course would see it crash into the ocean north of Sacred Isle instead of into the mainland as the Orks had no doubt intended. The resultant tidal wave would be disastrous for those on the plains, but not so much for those warriors high up on the mountainsides.

If anything, Stein was cautiously grateful for the inbound comet – as well as posing a very real threat to the Ork hordes that would no doubt be converging on their position, it gave the Imperial Guard a little more light to work by. Astropath Zeil seemed to think otherwise, but the castellan was close to ignoring him altogether. His speech had become ever more desperate and erratic over the last few days, and he had even taken to babbling about magical floods, blood-warriors and noble beasts in his sleep. Perhaps the heraldry of the knightly houses was conjuring vivid imagery in his troubled mind, perhaps there was some symbolic riddle yet to be cracked. There was enough work to be done without having to decipher the nightmares of a psyker. Stein put it out of his mind and focused on the force dispersions for the battle ahead. This time he would break the invasion for good.



THE FINAL ASSAULT



The Orks are converging upon Fortress Alaric in their countless millions. This time, their advance is not the uncoordinated, belligerent thrust typical of Warlord Grukk, but a cunningly wrought series of tactics that lead the Orks right to the doorstep of the Cadian defenders. Worse still, the threat from the skies is far from over...

THE HORDE APPROACHES

Stein's men were still shoring up the defences that had shuddered out of the slopes of Sacred Mountain when the mass of greenish-black on the horizon came into visual range. A great horde of Ork walkers led the assault, ranging from the size of Ogryns to the size of hab-blocks. Each was waving its weapons, be they giant shears, chainsaws, wrecking balls, massive buzz saws, rock-drills, or a profusion of large-bore guns jutting out from their shoulders and arms. Every one of them had a set of wire-coil horns curving around its head, crackling with barely-harnessed energy.

At the heart of the walker horde was the giant effigy the Nobles had encountered upon the Great Savannah, the ruin of its missing head replaced with the tusked cab of an armoured Battlewagon. It was escorted on either side by two captured Imperial Knights. They stumbled and lurched like the dead brought to life, the heraldic devices on their carapaces daubed over with crude death's heads that dripped blue paint into the dust.

To the east and west alike the Ork hordes were spilling around the foothills of Sacred Mountain. Stein looked at his dataslate in consternation. It was receiving live cant from those pict-skulls that had made it into low orbit without being crippled by the energies of the approaching comet. Fortress Alaric looked much like an island lost in a green-black sea of bodies. His gut rumbling, the castellan gnawed on the end of his lho-stick, fighting to keep his calm as the sheer scale of the task sank in. 'Better get started,' he muttered to himself as the Orks came into extreme artillery range.

Stein gave his aide, the Master of the Ordnance, the signal to commence bombardment and strode to the parapet of the Aquila stronghold he was using as his base. Within seconds the Basilisks stationed on the lowest foothills of the mountain had spoken. Great plumes of smoke drifted up from each of their earthshaker cannons. Stein followed the high parabolas of each artillery squadron's barrage, nodding in approval that the next volley had been fired before the first had even struck home.

The smile dropped away from his face when the first set of shells slowed and then stopped in their ascent twenty metres above the Orks, hanging in the air as if they had sunk into some thick, invisible jelly. The second volley thundered down after the first, only to suffer the same fate. The castellan raised his magnoculars, a horrible suspicion dawning as a scattering of live ordnance thickened above the Ork horde. The crackling wire horns attached to each of the walkers – was it possible they were creating some kind of electromagnetic field, one that repelled falling ordnance as easily as a duralumin rainshield stopped an acid squall? If so, the Orks had robbed the Cadians of their long-range advantage in one fell swoop.

A galling half-hour of impotent artillery fire later, the Ork vanguard had piled forward at impressive speed. Mobs of howling xenos had reached the edge of the boiling moat in a dozen different places. As they had covered the last half-mile, lascannon teams had picked out a few of the largest clusters of artillery shells that still hovered high above the Ork walkers. The resultant chain explosions had taken down pockets of Ork vehicles here and there, but hundreds, perhaps thousands more remained. It felt to Stein as though every tribe, clan and mob on Alaric Prime had somehow converged on his position at the same time.

Stein grumbled under his breath. If they could not rain shells down on the foe, they would have to deliver them via a more direct method. The castellan spat an order into his vox-bead, and the Leman Russ battle tank companies ranged along the length of the boiling moat trundled into position. Three by three they opened fire, each shell raising a wake of white spume across the moat as it thundered towards the approaching Ork horde. Several of the shells exploded amongst the greenskin ranks with gratifying thumps, but many more detonated prematurely, flame blossoming across invisible hemispheres of force. Guttural laughter drifted up from the plains below, seeming to mock the castellan's pitiful efforts to thin the horde. Somewhere, thought Stein, there was an Ork war-mechanic begging for a priority kill.

Patience. Waiting for a satisfying kill required patience in spades.

Though Silas Ovik had brought down many greenskin vehicles so far, he still thirsted for a genuine trophy. Now he had found a worthy specimen.

The Orks had thoroughly sullied a Baneblade. The super-heavy tank sported a great iron maw, huge exhausts, and mechanical claws jutting out of the sides. Well, Ovik thought, if these Orks were to treat the machine like a beast, he'd have to slay it like one.

THE BEAST UNSTOPPABLE

A high-yield artillery shell whistled down out of the skies, its trajectory taking it straight towards Mogrok's upraised face. The Mek twitched one of the levers on his shoulder-gubbins and chuckled darkly to himself as the shell slowed to a crawl, then a complete stop. It span in the air twenty metres above him, a metal fist denied its killing strike. Mogrok's netmagnet was working even better than he had hoped. He was fine with the humies' big guns chucking even more of their shells over to his side of the moat. They would be reused soon enough.

Up ahead, the bubble fields were working well enough, protecting the rest of the lads from the tank squadrons at the front of the humie line. Just a thin strip of river to deal with before they could get stuck in, and Mogrok already had plans for that little problem too.

Trundling and stomping their way across the plains to the east were the scrapper caravans of Bogrot Bones, the famously irascible Snakebite warboss. Goaded by Runtherds, his Squiggoths lumbered up to the edge of the boiling river and knelt down, the scrapheaps of useless nick-knacks and badly rusted gubbins they carried on their howdahs cascading haphazardly into the churning waters. Loading wagons and flatbed Trukks acted in much the same way, their piston-raised hindquarters scattering yet more rubbish into the water. Slowly but surely the moat began to fill at its thinnest point, a rough causeway of junk promising a way across.

A few hundred metres to the west, a trio of pug-nosed anti-grav minelayers dangled the flank of a rust-ship into place, forming a rough and ready bridge for Bogrot's lads to cross. All the while the scraplord's artillery farms were hurling solid shot into the Cadians that were moving to intercept, forcing them to keep their heads down. To Mogrok's approval, all of the Snakebite tribe's really zappy guns were kept way back, on maximum elevation or just jammed in the earth pointing upwards. They had their part to play too; just not yet.

A series of klaxons and horns blared across the plains as the Wheel Steelas found out that the shiny new rides Mogrok had built for them had no brakes. The Big Mek slapped Dagogg on the back and pointed as the entire tribe hurtled headlong into the boiling waters of the moat, their bellows of outrage rising above the bass thunder of the human guns. Just as Mogrok had planned, the unfortunate Speed Freeks formed another fordable point as their wagons piled in one atop another. Orks of all stripes began to leap across from one sinking vehicle to the next to reach the opposite shore and get the killing started up close.

To the west, Tankboss Baddfrag and his coveted Chimeras were crossing the moat in twos and threes. To Mogrok's pleasant surprise the Blood Axe warboss' claims that the humie tanks could traverse water were being borne out. All around the circumference of Fortress Alaric the Orks were closing in on the humie defenders. 'That there river's gonna be red come mornin',' said Mogrok to himself, picking a gob-squig out of his cheek and inspecting it for a moment before biting down hard. Things were warming up nicely. Any time now the humies would take the bait and come out of their hidey-holes ready to be killed properly.

'Commander,' came the call over the vox, 'the vehicle's done what you said and followed us out. You want us to handle it, sir?'

'No. This one's ours.'

'That might take some doing, sir.'

'Just as well we've got the right tool for the job.'

The looted Baneblade rumbled across the plain and fired. The shell exploded mere yards away, a shudder rocking the Vanquisher.

Ovik grinned. 'We'll start by removing that.'

At his command, Ovik's Fist rumbled nimbly parallel to the Baneblade, and the gunner rotated their cannon. A pause, an order, a shot, and in the distance the turret of the Baneblade exploded. Somehow, the prey managed to keep moving – towards them.

'Sir,' the driver shouted, 'it's going to ram us!'

'Ready another shot,' Ovik replied coolly.

They waited as the crippled Baneblade closed with them. Ovik held his ground, savouring the moment.

'Awaiting orders, sir...'

Ovik ignored the madly chiming auspex now, resorting to more basic instincts. He could almost hear the hollering of the greenskins before he finally issued the order.

Ovik's Fist fired at close range, the explosion obliterating the looted vehicle. When the smoke settled, it revealed little more than a ruined shell, without a greenskin in sight.

THE NOBLES SALLY FORTH

'Three fordable points by my count,' said Stein, grimly. Half a mile below him, hundreds of Orks were stumbling or sinking into the boiling waters of the moat. Somehow, though, hundreds more were making it across the improvised scrap bridges, buoyed up by a combination of dogged determination, bloodlust and suicidal bravery. Mob after mob were gunned down by the massed Taurox transports the Tempestus Scions had stationed along the inner bank of the boiling moat, but with their attention focused on the Orks that had already made it over, they were allowing those still to come the time they needed to effect a crossing. They had to counter-attack fast.

The castellan clearly wasn't the only one to have reached the same conclusion. Stomping down the slopes in great sprays of scree were the surviving Knights of the Alarican noble houses. At their head were three spearheads of Knights from House Degallio, their off-white armour clearly visible to friend and foe alike. On the western slopes, four of the Knights from House Terryn had formed a tight square and were covering each other's advance. As they grew closer to the improvised Ork bridges, volley after volley of rokkitsoared towards them, impacting on their ion shields with a series of small explosions. Try again, thought Stein, watching as the Knights stamped and blasted the Orks back into the boiling waters of the moat. It would take a lot more than that to fell Terryn's Nobles.

At the far end of the vast drawbridge defended by Stein's super-heavy tanks, a scattered contingent of Imperial Knights fanned out to take on the Orks thundering across the plains. The blackened beast the men had taken to calling the Scorched Knight was first to reach the enemy lines. As Ork artillery shells smacked from its carapace to its left, the Knight swung its ion shield around to deflect the barrage, only to leave its right side exposed to a roiling gout of fire from the flamethrower-armed Orks at the fore of the horde. The walker fought on, wreathed in flames.

To its rear came a Knight whose heraldry marked its pilot as Hiram, patriarch of House Kamata. Stein hurriedly voxed a warning as he saw an Ork aircraft come in low, a wrecking ball of rusted metal trailing behind it. It made no difference. The plane pulled up from its dive too late, smacking nose-first into the walker and ploughing both of them into the dirt in a horizontal column of fire. Ahead, the flaming figure of the Scorched Knight turned around and loped back to its fellow Noble, its ion shield covering its rear. To Stein's amazement, after only a moment of hesitation it lowered its thermal cannon and spat fire right into the pilot's helm, detonating it from the inside.

Nearby, the Knight whose heraldry identified him as Sylvost Velemestrin was knee-deep in roaring Orks. Each of the greenskins was wielding a large sledgehammer capped with a crude rocket, and they were manually detonating their charges against the weak spots of Sylvost's Knight. The walker flailed its arms wildly, blaring its war-horn in an appeal for help just as Lord Gaulemort Kestren had done moments before Sylvost had sealed his fate. Knights from several houses turned, but none of them did more than watch as Sylvost was taken apart limb by limb.

The Degallio vox-net crackled with the chime of a bell.

'Thus does the ghost of Gaulemort Kestren find his rest.'



HONOUR AND DEATH

Lord Degallio, the Seablade, bowed his head for a second and retuned the vox of his Throne Mechanicus. The lord and master of their Cadian allies had let loose a stream of invective that would have made a kennelmaster blush, screaming that the Knights were supposed to be defending the bridge, not settling old scores. The poor man clearly had only a rudimentary understanding of honour, and of the forces that haunted the slopes of Fortress Alaric.

It was obvious that they needed to crush the infernal beast that was coordinating the invasion to secure victory. Such kills were the speciality of the Degallio house – lop off the head of the beast, and slay its body in the process. The knightly triumvirates he had named Alabaster Lances were up to the task. With the White Warden at their head, House Degallio's finest would soon carry the day.

Ahead of Degallio's striding Knights the legendary figure of Gerantius was storming through the Ork ranks, his shield flickering fast as it blocked incoming fire left and right. The ancient was heading off on some quest of his own, but the White Warden loped after it like a devoted squire; Degallio would be damned if he'd let Gerantius go unsupported. The mysterious Knight's legend spoke of always defending the needs of Alaric Prime, and there was every chance that it instinctively knew what needed to be done. If there was indeed some fiendish mastermind coordinating the Ork assault, Gerantius would like as not be heading straight for him, and Lord Neru intended to be around for the kill. He had no doubt that he could dispatch the beast if it was only identified, and such a prominent part in the victory would cement his position as Alaric Prime's leading patriarch for decades to come.

The waves of Ork infantry that seethed around them were giving way to larger and ever more impressive constructs. Some were almost the same height as the Knights themselves, the fat-bellied war machines that they had encountered west of Boiling River. Degallio blew away the upper half of one of the beasts with a flurry of shots from his battle cannon, revealing the torso of the walker behind. Standing on the shoulder of the next greenskin effigy was a metal-headed Ork mechanic hoisting a strange, whirring contraption that was firing a ghostly green beam right at Gerantius' helm. Degallio's battle cannon was still reloading, so he mind-fired a stream of stubber bullets at the Ork gunner, but only burst apart some of the runtish creatures that scurried at the greenskin's feet.

Suddenly a terrible shriek pierced the roar of battle. Where the green beam touched Gerantius' helm, its light was turning white. The tendrils of that light reached back to the Ork mechanic himself, pulling him and a half-dozen of his runt-creatures into the tunnel of ghostly emanations. Degallio watched in fascination as the Ork gunner twisted and thinned, his corporeal form mingling with those of the screaming slave-creatures. His impossibly elongated body bristled with tiny, twitching hands and horribly distended jaws before the tunnel of light vanished with a wet pop. Gerantius strode on.



MAYHEM UNBOUND

High on the ramparts of Fortress Alaric, Stein was coordinating tight bursts of interceptor fire on the ramshackle Ork flyers and one-man 'copters that were buzzing across the boiling moat. Dozens of the crude aircraft had been brought down in flames and oily smoke, but more were heading in. With his Thunderbolt squadrons expended against the descending rust-ships, only Whitlock and his men afforded any kind of air superiority.

Worse still, the gates that the Baneblade *Iron Ettin* and Shadowsword *Steel Cyclops* had been guarding had been fired upon several times by greenskin artillery and lumbering Mek-walkers – the resulting damage and electromagnetic interference had permanently jammed them halfway open. To Stein's surprise, swarms of servo-skulls, stained by verdigris, had poured unbidden and unexpected out of the dark tunnels of Fortress Alaric, their clacking claws and lasbiters nipping at those Orks that had taken the drawbridge. A brave attack, thought Stein, but such diminutive assets would not confound the brawling greenskin hordes for long.

On the slopes themselves, wherever the Ork artillery barrages had taken chunks out of the corpse-shored defence lines, Stein's pre-briefed Ogryn teams were filling the breach. Their slabshields were locked in a wall of metal and flesh that bounced back any greenskin mob foolish enough to assault it. To his knowledge not a single line had yet been breached, a testament to the Ogryns' dull but effective fortitude.

The next few seconds put the lie to Stein's conclusions as a mob of promethium-stained Ork arsonists stood well back from the Ogryns and soaked them in flame. To their credit, the abhumans stood their ground for almost a full minute before losing their temper and charging out, clubs swinging and badly-burnt faces roaring in anger. Stein knew how they felt. Unfortunately the Orks were quick to take advantage, pouring around the flanks of the Ogryn unit and running pell-mell into the defence lines behind.

Stein knew that his plans had enough redundancy built in that such minor breaches would be contained and the xenos invaders exterminated by disciplined fire traps. However, the sight heading for the heavens made a claw of ice contract around his heart.

Across the world, the Ork rust-ships had been used as ready-made fortresses by the Ork invaders, and Stein had assumed them beached like the megawhales they resembled. He had been wrong. A massive Ork spacecraft was lurching through the skies in a series of bursts and explosions, hoisted aloft once more by the mad science of the greenskin mechanic caste. To Stein's horror it was curving around on an intercept course towards the comet that even now streaked through the skies. Tempestor Prime Whitlock's Valkyries and Vendettas had veered off to intercept, but their long-range lascannon fire was achieving little more than searing off the ablative sheets that comprised the thing's hide. Only by boarding the craft could Whitlock have any hope of taking control. Stein still had hope it could be neutralised before making too much of an impact – if the castellan could choose any men for the mission, Whitlock's Tempestus Scions would be top of the list.

Stein watched the Militarum Tempestus craft move in, climbing higher and higher towards the rust-ship's belly. Then something terrible happened. All of the unexploded ordnance that had been captured by the greenskin mag-field on the plains below suddenly shot up into the air as one, a curtain of steel shells hurled by a giant invisible hand. Dozens of Taurox Primes were plucked from the flanks of Fortress Alaric and thrust up into the air with them by the electromagnetic field's upward force.

Just as the inverse rain of metal reached the same altitude as Whitlock's flyers, green beams of crackling energy flew skyward from the rear of the Orkoid scrap caravan. The resultant chain of detonations lit up the skies for miles around. The burning chunks of Whitlock's skimmer-borne platoons and Stein's transports fell from the skies to spear down into the chaos of the battle raging below.

Stein's heart sank as, above the still-blossoming explosions, the burning rust-ship rose with terrible, unstoppable momentum, a flaming meteor in reverse breaching the stratosphere of a firebound planet. The castellan cried out in horror as the burning rust-ship blazed white for a second, then detonated directly adjacent to the inbound comet. The skies were devoured by a great halo of blinding flame that roared overhead in all directions. When Stein recovered his wits, he saw that the sheer force of the multi-megatonne explosion had knocked the frozen comet onto a new course at the last moment. It was heading right for the armoured flank of Fortress Alaric.



THE FOOT OF GORK DESCENDS

'Shields!' shouted Stein into his vox-array, 'Regiments 1651 to 1654, get inside the mountain, and raise whatever shields you can find! 1655 to 1657, retreat as fast as possible!'

Even as the castellan shouted the words, he knew it was no use. There was no way the Cadians could withstand the meteoric impact of the celestial body inbound on their position. Even the Knights would be obliterated by its sheer godlike force.

The Orks would be burnt from the face of the planet too, a black testament to their mindless need for titanic violence. Despair roiled through his chest. Even those men that managed to get inside the mountain would be buried alive in the very tomb they were trying to defend. Something snapped in Stein's mind. 'Cancel those last orders!' he roared into the vox, 'All Cadians, all Ogryns, all Knights, all personnel to attack with full force! You're dead already, so face the Emperor soaked in xenos blood. For Cadia! For Alaric Prime! Kill 'em all!'


A great roar resounded across the slopes of Fortress Alaric. It was not the guttural heave of a greenskin war-bellow, but the raw-throated cry of ten thousand human warriors united in desperate bloodlust. The skies burned a dangerous red as the massed regiments of the Cadians charged over their defensive positions to the Orks spilling across the circumference of the moat. Las-bolts burned open torsos, bayonets speared guts and gloved fists broke snaggletoothed fangs. Within seconds of Stein's order, every man and beast within a mile of the fortress was embroiled in desperate close combat.

Unbidden, the Knights were racing to form a half-mile ring around the thickest knot of Stein's forces. There were only two dozen of them left, now, but they were united in purpose. The Orks on the plains below were erecting great force-pylons that crackled as they were hoisted into the air. There was barely a minute before the fortress would be flattened. The comet blazed like a suicidal sun.

Stein flagged down his command Chimera as it scrambled to the front line, hoisting himself up onto the front and drawing his ornate power sword. Ahead was a knot of Ork drop-troopers, many of their crude rokkit packs ignited by the heat of the inbound comet. The transport slewed to a halt, and Stein used its momentum to leap screaming into the midst of the xenos warriors, his blade scything a head from a thick neck, then getting lodged in the skull of another as his plasma pistol blasted the guts out from a third. The screams and roars of battle were eclipsed by an omnipresent roar and a bow-wave of heat that filled the air with the stench of burning hair.

The world filled with blinding white light as the comet struck home. Every man, Ork and machine outside the protective aegis of a power field was blasted to ash in an instant. A whole flank of the Sacred Mountain was torn away, crumbling down into the boiling moat to leave the honeycombed innards of the great peak open to the air.

Roaring in triumph, the surviving Orks poured forward in an unstoppable mass. Sacred Mountain had fallen.



As great clouds of smoke curled across the mountain's southern slopes, a flash of green light flared in the gloom. With a crack, several Ork Nobz and a herd of terrified-looking Gretchin teleported into existence. They glanced about themselves urgently, alert to potential threats, but in the wake of the comet's impact no-one was looking for one more small band of greenskins. Satisfied that their arrival had gone unmarked, the Nobz set off, jogging uphill with the grots scurrying on their heels. At the top of a wreckage-strewn ridge, the greenskins stopped and cast about. Finally, at the violent gesticulations of their horn-helmed leader, the Nobz and grots descended upon a particularly large heap of junk from which a rusting kannon barrel stuck up like a marker.

In the wake of the clockwork massacre, the war had swept on at a pace that left little time for clean-up. As the greenskins dug frantically through the wreckage, they soon found the rusted hulk of Grukk's Battlewagon still lying where Gerantius had kicked it all those weeks before. It was one of the Nobs that struck gold, hefting aside a slab of mangled metal and shouting excitedly to his comrades to come look at what he'd found. His grunting was cut short as a massive green fist, scarred and shaking, pistoned up from the wreckage to grab him about his thick throat. Watching the bulge-eyed Ork's struggles with interest, the group's grinning Mekboy brandished a mass of wires, glowy lights and spinning gubbins. The greenskins braced, several grots jamming grubby fingers in their ears or pinching their long noses tight, then with another deafening crack the entire mob vanished along with their miraculous prize...

Meanwhile, cradled in Stein's arms, Astropath Zeil coughed blood onto his robes. Of the command squad, only Stein's vox officer had died in the comet's moment of impact. Using some ancient protocol that Stein would never understand, the

Alarican Knights had united their ion shields in a great aegis dome that had shielded hundreds of Cadians from death by incineration. It had burned out many of the Knights' number, several of the giant machine-martyrs now pillars of flame that lit the hellish tableau around them as the after-effects of the comet's collision faded.

Alaric Prime's dead Nobles were in good company. Millions of fighting men and women had their lives snuffed out in the instant that the frozen comet had struck the fortress. Even the mountain itself was grievously wounded, its flank laid open to the skies.

Many of the cannier Ork tribes had erected their own shields too – the bubble-fields that had protected them thus far proof even against the godly impact of the comet. Thousands of the beasts were roaring unimpeded towards the breach in the mountain's flank even now. Stein felt like he had died inside, even if his body was

still alive.

Zeil coughed again, and pointed at the skies. Stein looked up. More meteorites, by the look of it; the final blow. Then the flame of hope sparked in his chest once more.

They were the contrails of Imperial Drop Pods.



RED WAAAGH! MISSIONS

This section includes several Warhammer 40,000 missions inspired by the pivotal battles of the Red Waaagh! These missions will provide players with new ways to use their armies and a wealth of new tactical options to master.

HOW TO USE RED WAAAGH! MISSIONS

There are several ways in which you can use the Red Waaagh! missions. The most straightforward is to select the mission for a battle you are excited about from the campaign guide, and use the mission to recreate the battle on your tabletop! The Armies section of each scenario provides guidance on the forces present, while the mission's special rules will ensure that all of the most important elements of the original battle will be recreated.

Another way to use these missions is to fight a campaign by playing through the scenarios sequentially. If you do so, then one player should command the forces of the Orks in all of the battles, while their opponent commands the opposing side. Keep a note of each player's wins and losses, and the winner of the campaign is the player with the highest number of victories once all of the missions have been completed. In a campaign, the winner of a named mission is granted a bonus when playing the next mission, as noted opposite. In the case of a draw, neither side gains a bonus in the next game.

Finally, it is worth noting that you can use the missions using different armies from those that took part in the actual battle. With a little imagination and some minor modifications on your part, you can easily use them to fight battles with any combination of forces and terrain you have in your collection.

PLAYING RED WAAAGH! MISSIONS

However you use these missions, it only requires a handful of modifications to the Preparing for Battle rules described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, which are detailed below. Besides these modifications, a Red Waaagh! mission uses the normal rules unless it specifies otherwise.

THE ARMIES

Each mission states which armies must be used in order to fight the battle. If both players have models for both of the armies involved in the battle, then roll-off to see which player gets to pick the army they will use, and their opponent must use the other army. More typically, each player will have just one of the armies listed, and that will be the army that they use.

In addition to the armies listed, most missions list a number of characters and/or units that must be taken if they are available. These represent leaders and units that played an pivotal part in the battle and which it is important to field if you possibly can. However, if you cannot field them, it doesn't stop you from using the scenario with the forces you do have available.

UNIQUE CHARACTERS

Characters noted as being Unique in their Army List Entry represent particular individuals, and because of this, they can only be used in a mission if they are listed as one of the models that must be taken for that mission. This is sensible: they were either at the battle, or they were not! Any units other than unique characters can be chosen freely from those units available to the relevant armies.

Some scenario special rules and victory conditions only apply to certain specific characters or units. If the specified character or unit isn't present at your version of the battle, then the associated special rule or victory condition is ignored: it only applies if the relevant model is used.



THE BATTLEFIELD AND DEPLOYMENT

The deployment map, zones and instructions for a Red Waaagh! mission are included with the mission itself; don't use those in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

SPECIAL RULES AND EXPANSIONS

Most narrative scenarios have one or more special rules that help to represent certain unique aspects of the battle that the scenario recreates.

In addition, many of the missions presented in this section are Planetstrike missions. The rules for playing Planetstrike missions can be found in the appendix of this book, and we recommend you familiarise yourself with them before playing the mission.

The Imperium Sallies Forth uses datasheets that feature in *Warhammer 40,000: Stronghold Assault*, so you will need a copy of that publication to play this mission.

GRUKK FACE-RIPPA

Several of the missions presented in this section require the Ork player to take Grukk Face-rippa in their army, if the appropriate model is available.

If the Ork player owns Santus Reach: Stormclaw, they should use the model and the datasheet for Grukk that are included. Otherwise, Grukk can be represented by a Warboss with a power klaw, chosen from Codex: Orks.

CAMPAIGN CHART

1. THE RED WAAAGH! DESCENDS

Ork Victory: The Ork player will Seize the Initiative in The Knights Strike Back on a roll of 2+.

Imperial Victory: The Imperial Super-heavy Walker units have the Scout special rule in The Knights Strike Back.

2. THE KNIGHTS STRIKE BACK

Ork Victory: The Ork player receives a +1 bonus to all his Reserve Rolls in the The Fall of House Kestren.

Imperial Victory: The Ork player receives a further -1 penalty to all his Reserve Rolls in The Fall of House Kestren.

3. THE FALL OF HOUSE KESTREN

Ork Victory: Critical Units cannot Run or move Flat Out in Enter the Steel Host.

Imperial Victory: The Knight Survivors have the Fleet and Move Through Cover special rules in Enter the Steel Host.

4. ENTER THE STEEL HOST

Ork Victory: The Ork player can re-roll the scatter dice for each of his units that arrives from Deep Strike in The River Runs Red.

Imperial Victory: The Imperial player re-rolls all failed To Hit rolls when making Overwatch shots in The River Runs Red.

5. THE RIVER RUNS RED

Ork Victory: The Ork Warlord gains the It Will Not Die special rule in The Clockwork Massacre.

Imperial Victory: The Imperial player can re-roll the D6 when any of his units identifies a mysterious objective in The Clockwork Massacre.

6. THE CLOCKWORK MASSACRE

Ork Victory: The Ork player has +1 Stratagem Point to spend in Flight of the Morkanauts.

Imperial Victory: The Imperial player has +1 Stratagem Point to spend in Flight of the Morkanauts.

7. FLIGHT OF THE MORKANAUTS

Ork Victory: Each of the Orks' Firestorm Attacks 'bounce' twice, rather than once, in Attack of the Wreckin' Krew (see the Wreckin' Balls special rule).

Imperial Victory: The Imperial can activate D3+1 fortifications per turn instead of D3 per turn in Attack of the Wreckin' Krew (see the Skyfire Defence Network special rule).

8. ATTACK OF THE WRECKIN' KREW

Ork Victory: The Ork player's Sneaky Gits unit has the Fear, Fearless and Relentless special rules in Battle for the Oasis.

Imperial Victory: All of the Imperial player's units have the Hatred (Sneaky Gits) special rule in Battle for the Oasis.

9. BATTLE FOR THE OASIS

Ork Victory: The Imperial player makes 2 fewer Firestorm Attacks in The Klaw of Mork.

Imperial Victory: The Imperial player makes 2 additional Firestorm Attacks in The Klaw of Mork.

10. THE KLAW OF MORK

Ork Victory: The Ork player has a -1 modifier to any Foot of Gork rolls he makes in The Imperium Sallies Forth.

Imperial Victory: All Super-heavy Walkers fielded by the Imperial player have the Furious Charge and Rage special rules in The Imperium Sallies Forth.

11. THE IMPERIUM SALLIES FORTH

MISSION 1: THE RED WAAAGH! DESCENDS

The Red Waaagh! has come to Alaric Prime as rust-ships filled with battle-hungry Orks descend from orbit on trails of fire, the greenskins eager to make planetfall and get stuck into the fight. Across the planet a network of fortified strongholds have been reinforced and garrisoned by the brave Imperial Guardsmen of Cadia. They stand as Alaric Prime's first line of defence, ready to greet the Ork invaders with simple heroism and a deadly storm of firepower.

DESIGNER'S NOTE – PLANETSTRIKE

The Red Waaagh! Descends is a Planetstrike mission. Full details of Planetstrike missions, mission special rules, Warlord Traits and stratagems can be found in the appendix of this book.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player's army may only include units with the Orks Faction. They are the Attacker in this mission. The Imperial player's Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction, and their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications. They are the Defender in this mission.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Imperial player can place up to eight fortifications anywhere on the table that is more than 6" from the centre of the table. They do not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Imperial player. Once all fortifications have been placed, the Imperial player can then set up any other terrain on the table in a manner of his choosing, but may not place any terrain within 6" of the centre of the table.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

After terrain has been set up, the Imperial player must place an Objective Marker on the centre of the table.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 4 Stratagem Points.

The Ork player selects any one table edge to be his. The Imperial player's table edge is the one opposite the Ork player's.

The Imperial player deploys his force anywhere on the battlefield. All of the Ork player's units start the game in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Ork player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, the player who controls the Objective Marker scores 5 Victory Points.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

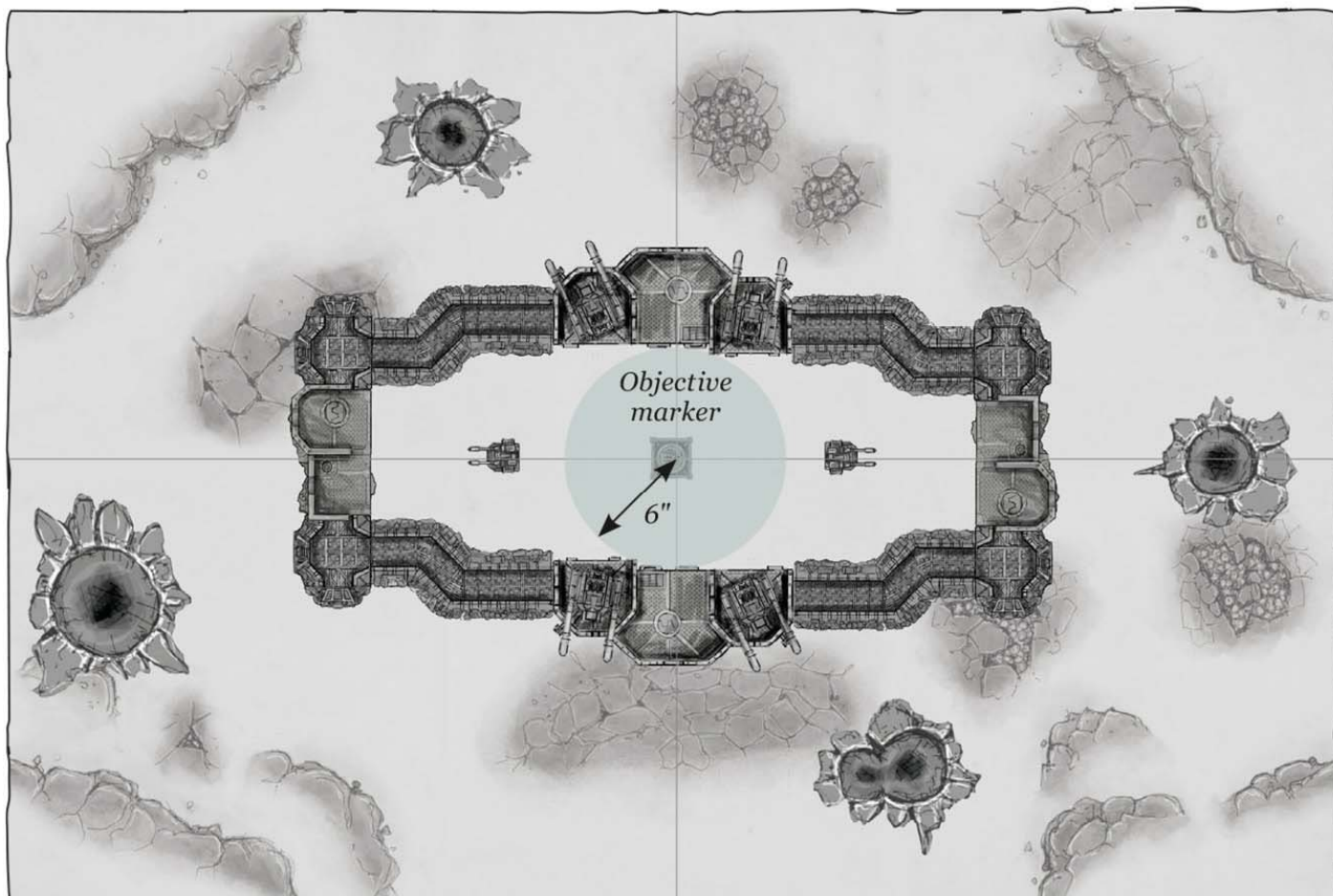
Firestorm*, **Mysterious Objectives**, **Night Fighting**, **Planetary Assault**, **Scramble!**, **Shock Tactics**.

* The Ork player rolls a D3 and adds the number of buildings that are on the table to the result. Each section of a multiple-part building counts as a separate building. The total is the number of Firestorm Attacks that the Ork player makes.

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

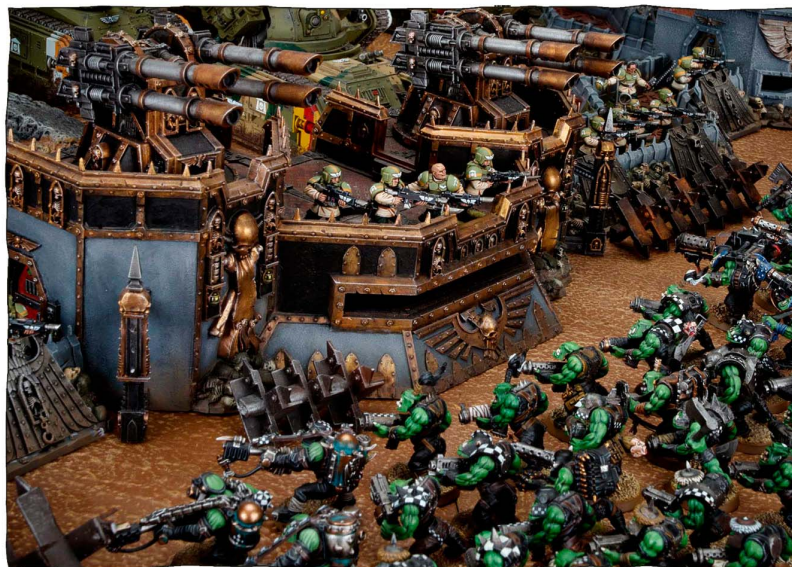
- All of the Ork player's units start the game in Reserve.
- The Imperial player can place any number of his units in Reserve, but must, whenever possible, deploy at least one unit for each building or gun emplacement that he placed on the battlefield. Each section of a multiple-part building counts as a separate building.

Target Secured: An Ork Player's scoring unit will control an Objective Marker even if an enemy scoring unit is also within range of the same Objective Marker.



This deployment map shows the fortifications garrisoned by the Cadian 1322nd in the Helltor Valley and is typical of the defensive sites used to protect Alaric Prime from the Red Waaagh!'s planetary attack.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.



MISSION 2: THE KNIGHTS STRIKE BACK

The Red Waaagh! has smashed into Alaric Prime and dealt the Imperial Guard defenders a reeling blow. The Knights of three noble houses, keen to begin the hunt, launch a devastating counter-attack against the greenskin horde. The Knights hope to drive the Orks from their world in a single glorious charge, but if their momentum falters, they could find themselves cut off and surrounded.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player's army may only include units with the Orks Faction and fortifications. The Imperial player's Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction, and his army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications.

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the deployment map included with this mission. Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits.

The Imperial player deploys first, using the rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* and the deployment map opposite. Any unit that cannot be deployed on the table starts the game in Reserve.

The Ork player then splits his force into two groups, with as close to half the total number of units in each group as possible. He then selects one of the groups; all units in this group are deployed using the rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* and the deployment map opposite (any unit that cannot be deployed starts the game in Reserve). All units in the other group are placed in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Imperial player goes first unless the Ork player can Seize the Initiative (see *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*).

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of the game, the Imperial player scores 1 Victory Point for each of his units that is in the Ork player's deployment zone, and 6 Victory Points if at least 3 of his units have exited the table (see the Break Through special rule, below). The Imperial player does not score Victory Points for units that are Immobilised or Falling Back.

At the end of the game, the Ork player scores 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are Immobilised or Falling Back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game (excluding those that have exited the table using the Break Through special rule, below), count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and will award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood, Linebreaker.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Reserves.

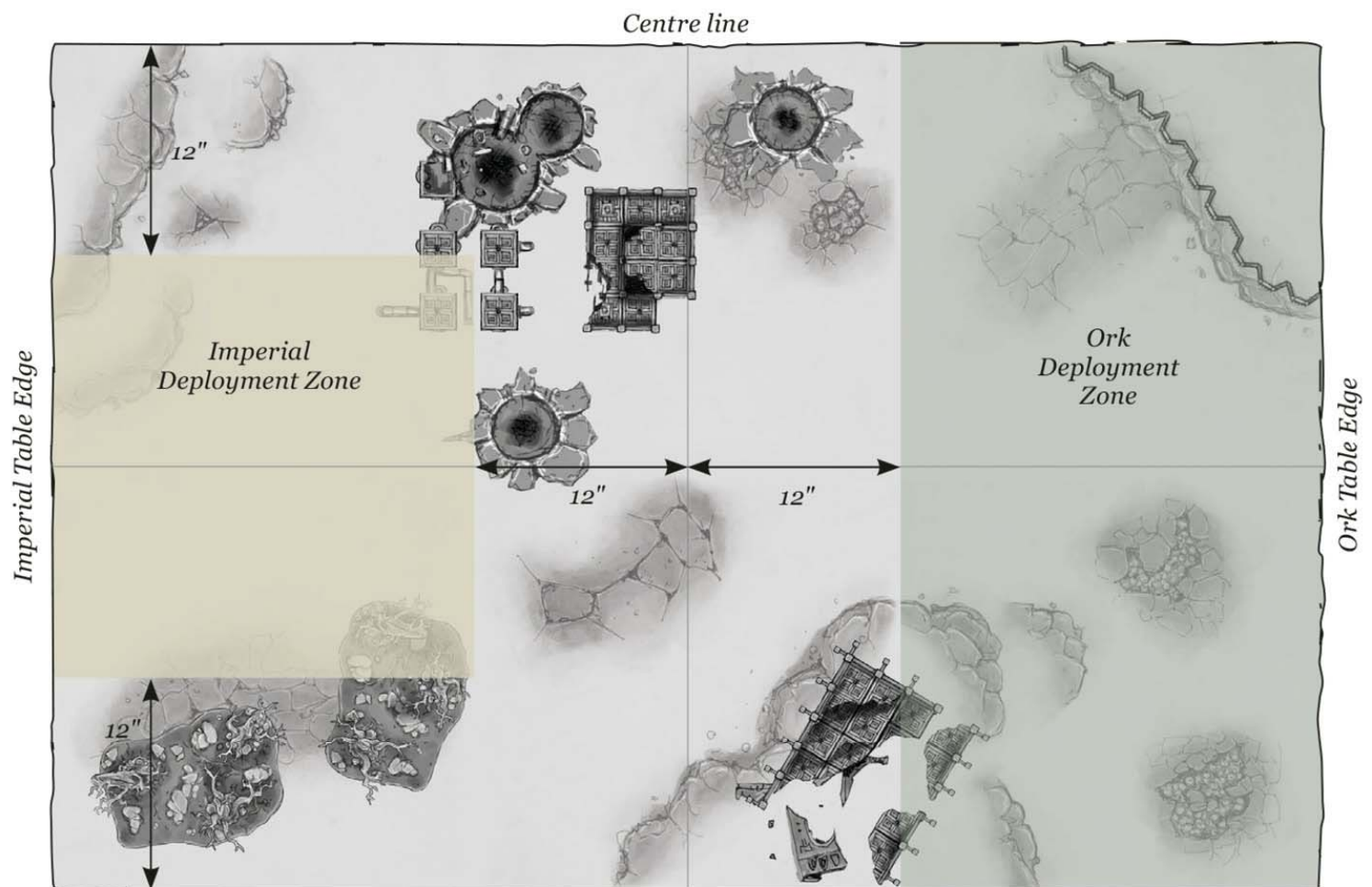
Break Through: In this mission, the Imperial player can move his units off the table from the Ork player's table edge. Units that are moved off the table in this manner take no further part in the game, but may award the Imperial player Victory Points (see Victory Conditions, above).

Over-extended: None of the Imperial player's units can use the Outflank special rule in this mission. Outflanking units that arrive from Reserves must move onto the table from the Imperial player's board edge instead.

Surrounded: All of the Ork player's units that start the game in Reserve have the Outflank special rule. If one of the Ork player's units already has the Outflank special rule, the Ork player can re-roll the dice roll to determine which table edge that unit moves onto when it arrives from Reserve.

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- All of the units in the Ork player's second group must start the game in Reserve (see Deployment, above).



This deployment map shows a broad stretch of battlefield between the Astra Militarum's lines and the Orks' rust-ships.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place terrain on the table as shown in the map.



MISSION 3: THE FALL OF HOUSE KESTREN

Though many noble warriors fell, a handful of Knights tore through the greenskin lines to threaten the Ork flagship, *Wrath of Gork*. As the Knights approach, the rust-ship's cargo ramp slams down and Warboss Grukk, commanding his personal Stompa, clanks down to meet the would-be heroes. With an enemy war machine to their fore and a pursuing mob of Orks to their rear, the last surviving Knights prepare to fight for their very lives.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Imperial player's Warlord must have the Imperial Knights Faction, and his army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications. The Ork player's army may only include units with the Orks Faction and fortifications, and must include the following units:

- Grukk Face-rippa. Grukk must be the Ork player's Warlord.
- Stompa (Grukk's Stompa).

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the deployment map included with this mission. Do not set up fortifications in the Ork player's deployment zone, but otherwise set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

DEPLOYMENT

The Imperial player deploys first, using the rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* and the deployment map, below.

The Ork player then deploys his Stompa using the deployment map on the following page. All of the Ork player's other units are placed in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Ork player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of each game turn, the Ork player scores 1 Victory Point if his Stompa has not been destroyed.

At the end of the game, each player scores 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are not on the board at the end of the game (excluding the Ork player's Warlord – see the Warlord Unleashed special rule below) count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

At the end of the game, the Imperial player scores 3 additional Victory Points if the Stompa has been destroyed.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting.

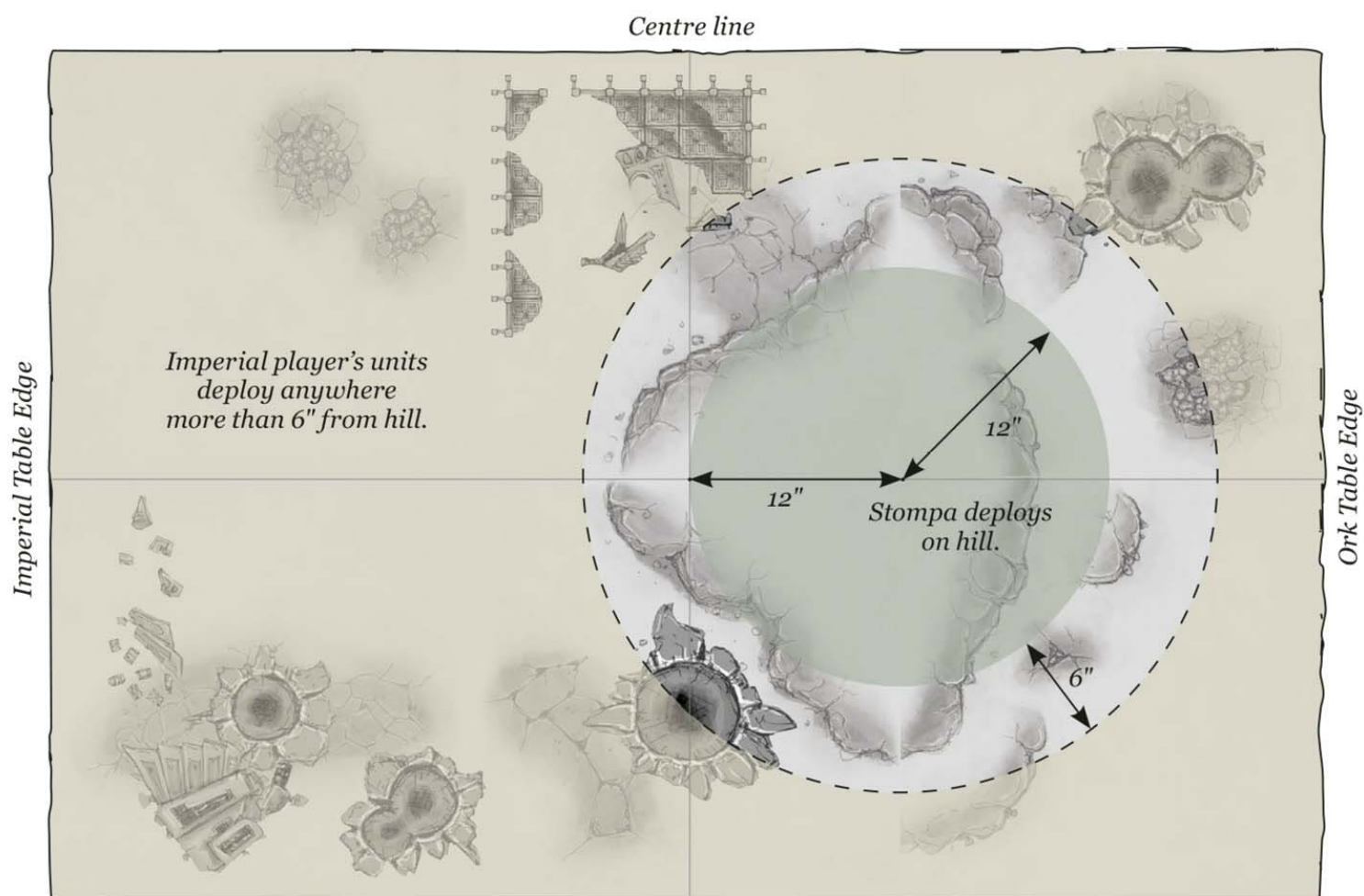
Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- With the exception of his Stompa, all of the Ork player's units must start the game in Reserve.
- With the exception of Fast Attack units, Flyers and Flying Monstrous Creatures, all of the Ork player's units suffer a -1 penalty

to their Reserve Rolls.

Surrounded: All of the Ork player's units that start the game in Reserve have the Outflank special rule. If one of the Ork player's units already has the Outflank special rule, the Ork player can re-roll the dice roll to determine which table edge that unit moves onto when it arrives from Reserve.

The Warlord Unleashed: The Ork player does not make Reserve Rolls for Grukk. Instead, if his Stompa is destroyed, the Ork player places Grukk on the table at the end of the current player's turn. Grukk can be placed anywhere within 12" of the spot where the Stompa was destroyed (measure from the hole of the blast marker that was used to resolve the Stompa's Catastrophic Damage).



This deployment map shows a large hill just outside the Ork flagship, Wrath of Gork.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place terrain on the table as shown in the map.



MISSION 4: ENTER THE STEEL HOST

Grukk's Stompa has been vanquished, but only at a horrendous cost in Imperial war machines and lives. Now a trio of surviving Knights must attempt to reach friendly lines, but their escape route is blocked by a tide of angry Orks. Things look desperate indeed until help arrives in the form of the Steel Host, a Cadian armoured company bristling with firepower and ready for battle.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player's army may only include units with the Orks Faction and fortifications. The Imperial player's Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction. The Imperial player's army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications, and must include the following:

- The Steel Host.
- 3 Knights Errant or Knights Paladin in any combination (the Knight Survivors).

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the deployment map included with this mission. Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits.

Then the Imperial player deploys his Knight Survivors in their deployment zone. The Imperial player's remaining units are placed in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

The Ork player must then split his force into two groups, with as close to half the total number of units in each group as possible. He then selects one of the groups; all units from this group are deployed using the rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* and the deployment map opposite (any units in this group that cannot be deployed on the table are placed in Reserve).

All units in the Ork player's other group are placed in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Imperial player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of the game, the Imperial player scores 1 Victory Point for each of his Knight Survivors that is within 12" of his table edge, and D3 Victory Points for each of his Knight Survivors that has exited the table via his table edge (see the Flight to Sanctuary special rule, below).

At the end of the game, the Ork player scores 1 Victory Point for each Knight Survivor that has not exited the table and is not within 12" of the Imperial player's table edge, and D3 Victory points for each Knight Survivor that is completely destroyed. Knight Survivors that are not on the board (excluding those that have exited the table – see the Flight to Sanctuary special rule, below) at the end of the game count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

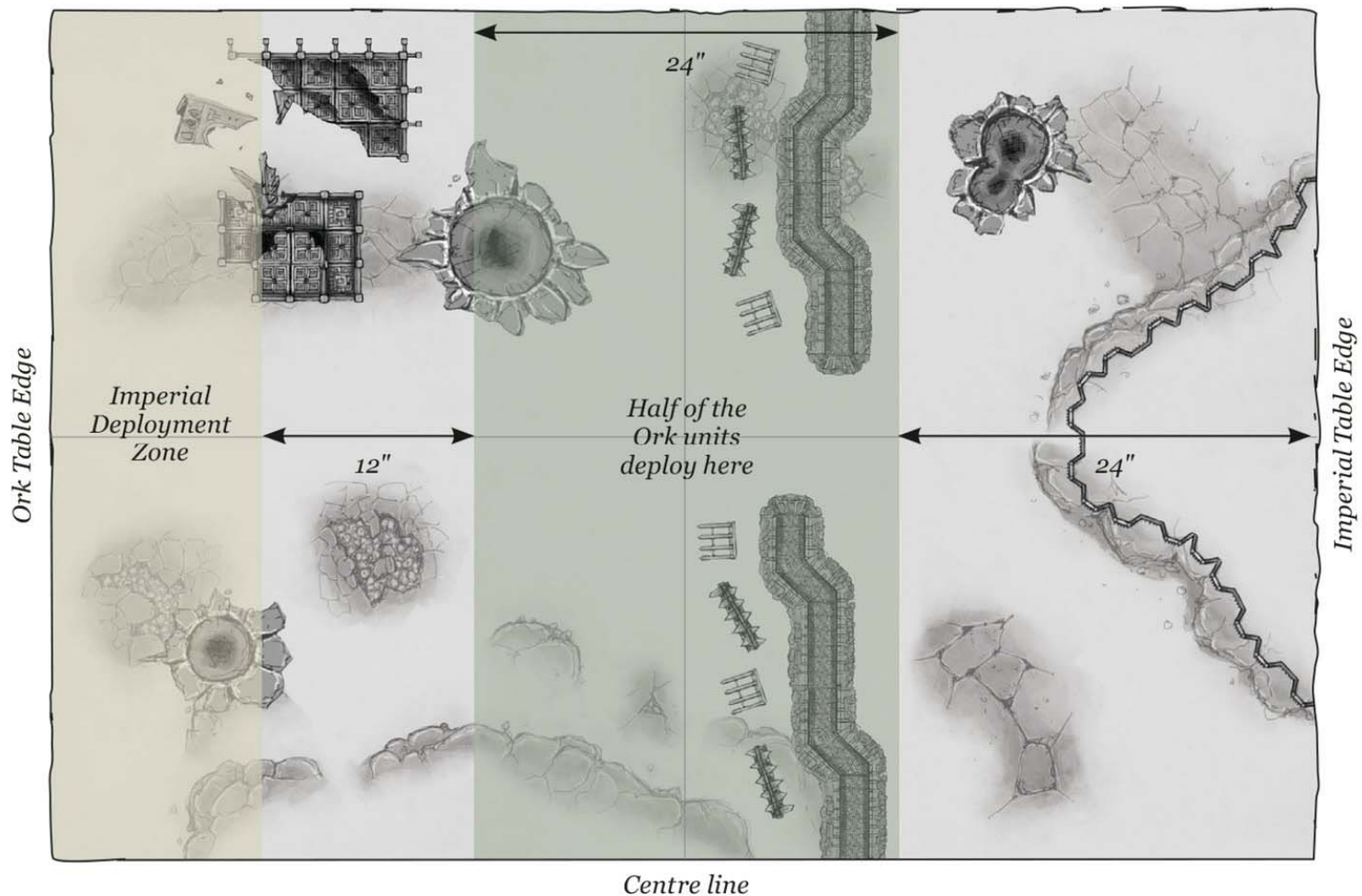
Night Fighting.

Dogged but Defiant: The Knight Survivors have the It Will Not Die! special rule.

Flight to Sanctuary: In this mission, the Knight Survivors can move off the table from the Imperial player's table edge. Units that are moved off the table in this manner take no further part in the game, but award the Imperial player Victory Points (see Victory Conditions, above).

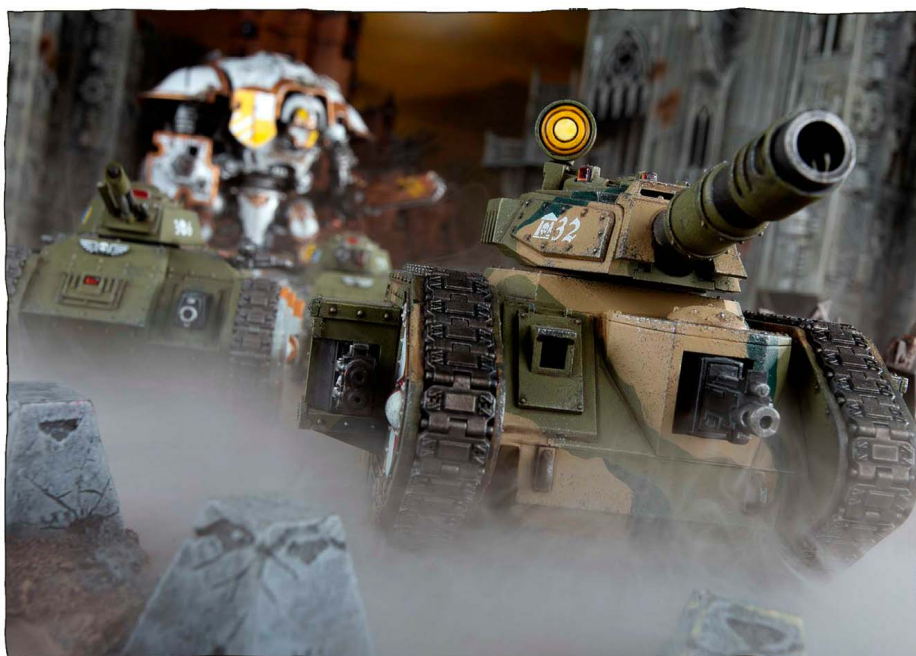
Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- Instead of making Reserve Rolls from the start of his second turn, the Imperial player makes Reserve Rolls from the start of his first turn.
- With the exception of the Knight Survivors, all of the Imperial player's units start the game in Reserve.
- All of the units in the Ork player's second group start the game in Reserve (see Deployment, above).



This deployment map shows a stretch of battlefield between the Ork flagship and the Cadian battle-lines.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place terrain on the table as shown in the map.



MISSION 5: THE RIVER RUNS RED

The onslaught continues and the Imperial Guard have fallen back to the fortifications guarding Boiling River's main bridge-crossing. If they can hold the Orks here – a bottleneck where the xenos cannot bring their numbers to bear and where artillery can rain fire upon their close-packed ranks – they may yet buy time to organise an ordered withdrawal. However, the Orks have plenty of Weirdboyz and don't plan to cross the bridge by conventional means...

DESIGNER'S NOTE – PLANETSTRIKE

The Red Waaagh! Descends is a Planetstrike mission. Full details of Planetstrike missions, mission special rules, Warlord Traits and stratagems can be found in the appendix of this book.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player is the Attacker in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Orks Faction, and they must choose a Primary Detachment that includes the following units:

- Gruk Face-rippa.
- 2 Ork Weirdboys

The Imperial player is the Defender in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications. They must choose a Primary Detachment that includes the following units:

- Bullgryn Squad (The Bridge Defenders).
- Any 3 vehicles from the following list: Basilisk, Manticore, Deathstrike Missile Launcher, Wyvern (Cadian 1653rd Artillery Company).

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the deployment map included with this mission. The Imperial player places up to four fortifications anywhere in his table half. He does not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Imperial player. He then sets up terrain in any manner he chooses, but access to the bridge must not be blocked.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 2 Stratagem Points. Then, the Ork player splits his force into two groups, with as close to half the total number of units in each group as possible. The Ork player deploys all units in the group containing his Warlord using the deployment map below. All units in the Ork player's other group are placed in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule). The Imperial player then deploys his force using the deployment map below.

FIRST TURN

The Ork player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each player scores 1 Victory Point for each of their scoring units that is in the Imperial player's table half.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Firestorm*, Night Fighting, Shock Tactics.

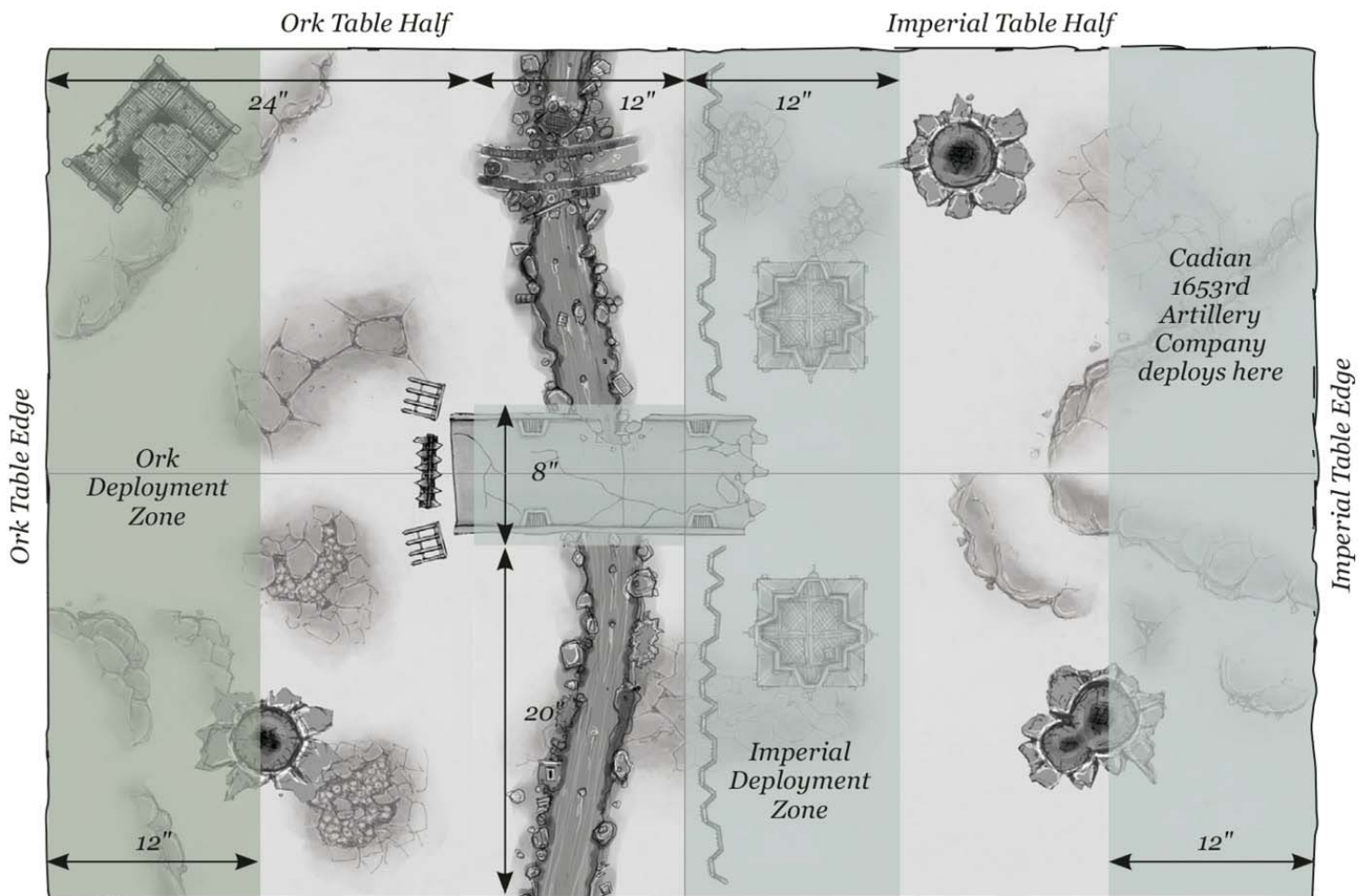
* The Ork player rolls a D3 and adds the number of buildings that are on the table to the result. Multiple-part buildings count as several separate buildings. The total is the number of Firestorm Attacks that the Ork player makes.

Boiling River: The river is dangerous terrain. Models that enter, leave or move within the river fail their Dangerous Terrain test on the result of a 1, 2 or 3. Any vehicle Immobilised within the river is automatically Wrecked.

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- All of the units in the Ork player's second group start the game in Reserve (see Deployment, above).
- With the exception of units that must start the game in Reserve, the Imperial player cannot voluntarily place any of his units in Reserve.

Where'd They Come From?: The Ork player's Weirdboys have the *Gate of Infinity* psychic power (see the **Daemonology** discipline in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*) in addition to their normal psychic powers. Do not include this power when determining if they have Psychic Focus.



This deployment map shows the main bridge-crossing and defensive fortifications that stand sentinel over Boiling River.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map. Note that you will require a river to span the width of your gaming table, and a bridge to cross it.



MISSION 6: THE CLOCKWORK MASSACRE

Having regrouped, Castellan Stein and the knightly houses of Alaric Prime have constructed a plan to draw Warboss Gruk into the open. Gruk – bull-headed as ever – has taken the bait and charged headlong into the jaws of a fiendish trap. Aided by the mysterious Knight Gerantius, Castellan Stein hopes to slay Gruk once and for all, but Ork Warlords are notoriously hard to kill, and they never go down without a fight.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player's army may only include units with the Orks Faction and fortifications, and must include Gruk Face-ripping as its Warlord.

The Imperial player's Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction. The Imperial player's army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications, and must include the following units:

- Company Commander with plasma pistol (Stein).
- Knight Errant (Gerantius).

THE BATTLEFIELD

Use the deployment map included with this mission. Set up terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

After setting up the terrain, starting with the Imperial player, the players take it in turns to place 3 Objective Markers in the Imperial player's table half.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits.

The Imperial player deploys first, and the Ork player second, using the rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* and the deployment map opposite. Any unit that cannot be deployed on the table starts the game in Reserve.

FIRST TURN

The Defender goes first unless the Ork player can Seize the Initiative as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of the game, the Imperial player scores 1 Victory Point for each Objective Marker he controls.

At the end of the game, the Ork player scores D3 Victory Point for each Objective Marker he controls (roll separately for each Objective Marker).

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Linebreaker, Slay the Warlord*, First Blood.

** In this mission, the Imperial player scores D3+3 Victory Points for the Slay the Warlord secondary objective, instead of just 1 Victory Point.*

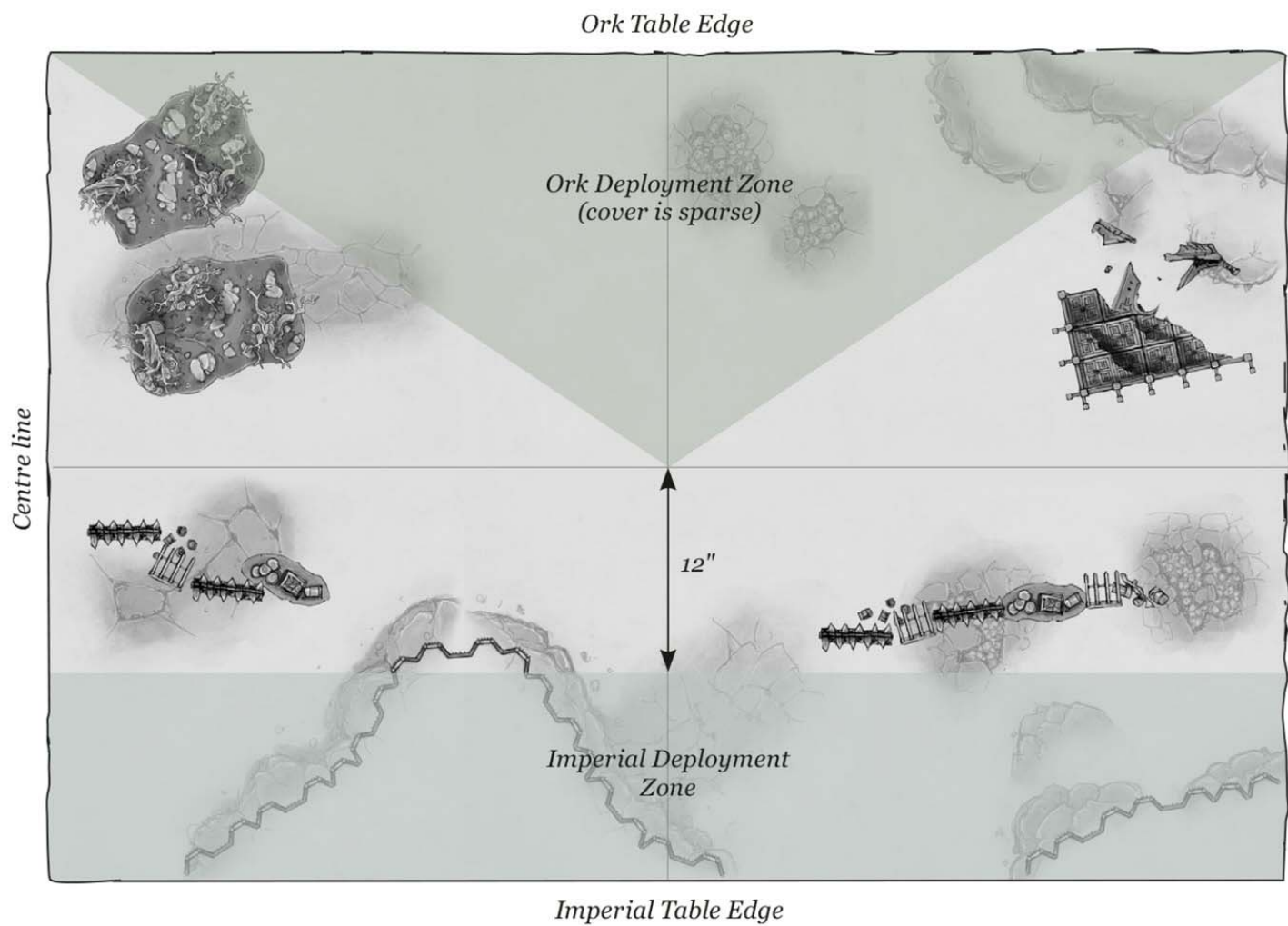
MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Night Fighting, Mysterious Objectives, Reserves.

Not Going Down Without a Fight: Gruk starts the game with +1 Wound. In addition, he has the Fearless and Eternal Warrior special rules.

Slayer of Tyrants: Gerantius has the Preferred Enemy (Gruk) special rule.

Surrounded: All of the Imperial player's units that start the game in Reserve have the Outflank special rule. If one of the Imperial player's units already has the Outflank special rule, they can re-roll the dice roll to determine which table edge that unit moves onto when it arrives from Reserve.



This deployment map shows Castellan Stein's chosen battleground for his ambush at the base of Sacred Mountain.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.

MISSION 7: FLIGHT OF THE MORKANAUTS

Mogrok's ascension to power marks the start of the War of Kunnin', and one of his opening ploys is a surprise assault on the Cadians' rear echelons. Having been inspired during the Obstirian War by the Space Marines' rapid orbital descent, Mogrok has cobbled together a number of sacrificial drop-craft to deploy his killiest war machines – his Morkanauts – right into the unsuspecting humies' lines.

DESIGNER'S NOTE – PLANETSTRIKE

Flight of the Morkanauts is a Planetstrike mission. Full details of Planetstrike missions, mission special rules, Warlord Traits and stratagems can be found in the appendix of this book.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player is the Attacker in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Orks Faction, and must include 3 Morkanauts (Mogrok's Surprise).

The Imperial player is the Defender in this mission. Their Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction, and their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Imperial player must place one building on the centre of the table. They then place up to four additional fortifications anywhere on the table. The Imperial player does not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Imperial player. Once all fortifications have been placed, the Imperial player sets up any remaining terrain in any manner he chooses.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

The Imperial player must place one Objective Marker within 1" of each fortification that is either a gun emplacement or a building (Objective Markers can be placed on battlements). The Objective Marker closest to the centre of the board is the Vital Objective (see Primary Objectives).

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 4 Stratagem Points.

The Ork player selects any one table edge to be his. The Imperial player's table edge is the one opposite. The Imperial player deploys his force anywhere on the battlefield. All of the Ork player's units start the game in reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Ork player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of the game, each player scores 1 Victory Point for each Objective Marker they control. The player that controls the Vital Objective scores an additional D3 Victory Points.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Firestorm*, Night Fighting, Mysterious Objectives, Planetary Assault, Scramble!, Shock Tactics.

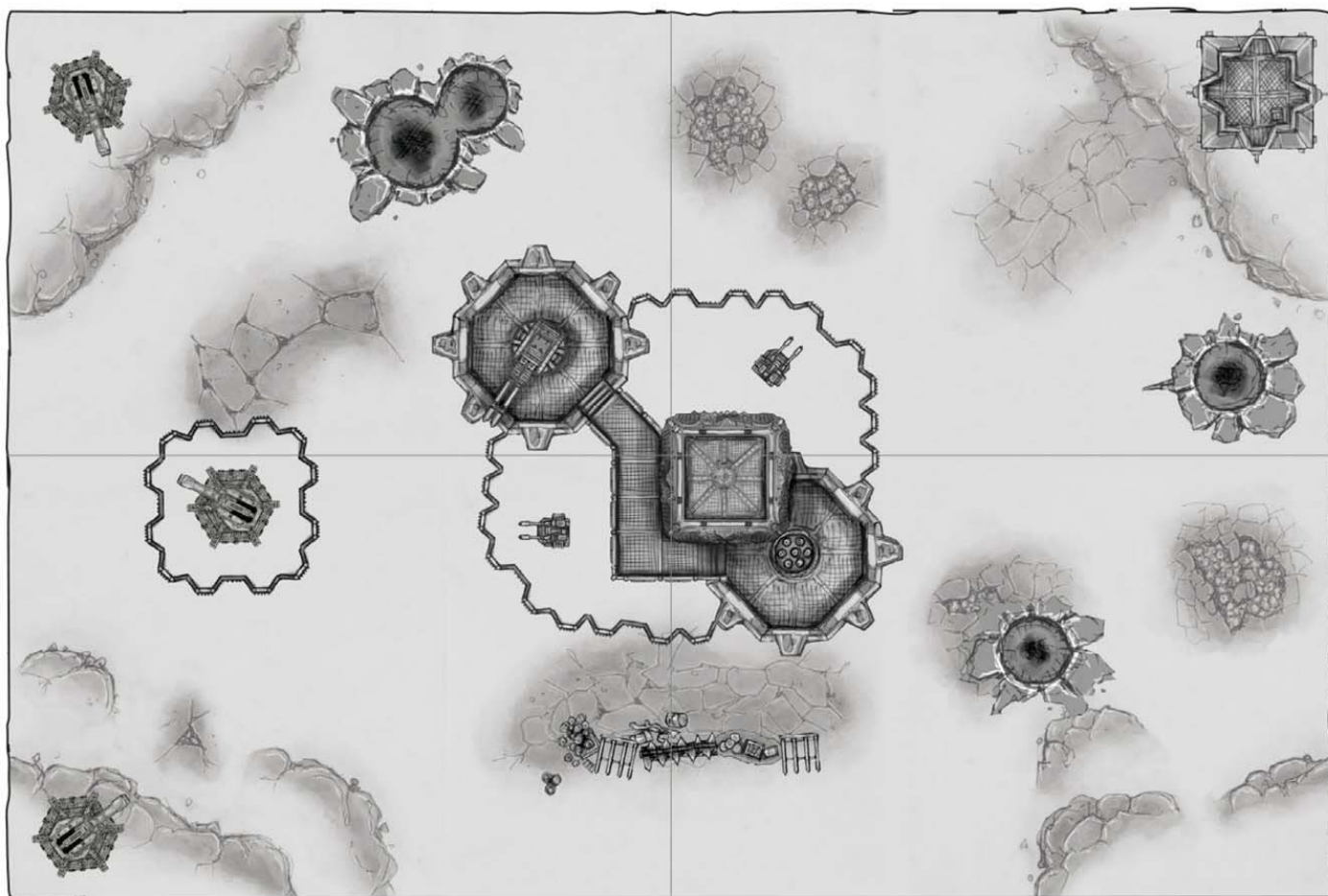
** The Ork player makes D3+4 Firestorm Attacks.*

Improvised Armour Drop: If the Ork player takes the Heavy Duty Drop stratagem, all of his vehicles/Monstrous Creature units can deploy via Deep Strike.

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- All of the Ork player's units start the game in Reserve.
- The Imperial player can place any number of his units in Reserve, but must, whenever possible, deploy at least one unit for each building or gun emplacement. Multiple-part buildings count as several separate buildings.
- All of the Imperial player's units suffer a -1 penalty to their Reserve Rolls.

Target Secured: A scoring Ork unit will control an Objective Marker even if an enemy scoring unit is also within range of the same Objective Marker.



This deployment map shows the fortifications protecting subterranean munitions silo Gamma-Zero and is typical of the rear-echelon defence sites on Alaric Prime.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.



MISSION 8: ATTACK OF THE WRECKIN' KREW

The defenders of Alaric Prime come under assault from above once more as Skyboss Wingnutz and his Orky aircraft drop huge wrecking balls, each a bouncing hunk of metal ploughing bloody furrows through the Imperium's ranks. As the Ork jets circle around to get stuck in with their more conventional bombs and guns, the beleaguered forces below must scramble to activate every air-defence weapon they can.

DESIGNER'S NOTE – PLANETSTRIKE

Attack of the Wreckin' Krew is a Planetstrike mission. Full details of Planetstrike missions, mission special rules, Warlord Traits and stratagems can be found in the appendix of this book.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player is the Attacker in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Orks Faciton, and they must choose a Primary Detachment that includes three Flyers (Skyboss Wingnutz and Da Wreckin' Krew).

The Imperial player is the Defender in this mission. Their Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction, and their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Imperial player places up to eight fortifications anywhere on the table. They do not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Imperial player. Once all fortifications have been placed, the Imperial player sets up any remaining terrain as he chooses.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 3 Stratagem Points.

The Ork player selects any one table edge to be his. The Imperial player's table edge is the one opposite. The Imperial player deploys his force anywhere on the battlefield. All of the Attacker's units start the game in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Ork player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of the game, both players score 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. The Imperial player also scores 1 additional Victory Point for each enemy Flyer that has been completely destroyed.

Units that are Immobilised or Falling Back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Firestorm*, **Night Fighting**, **Planetary Assault**, **Scramble!**, **Shock Tactics**.

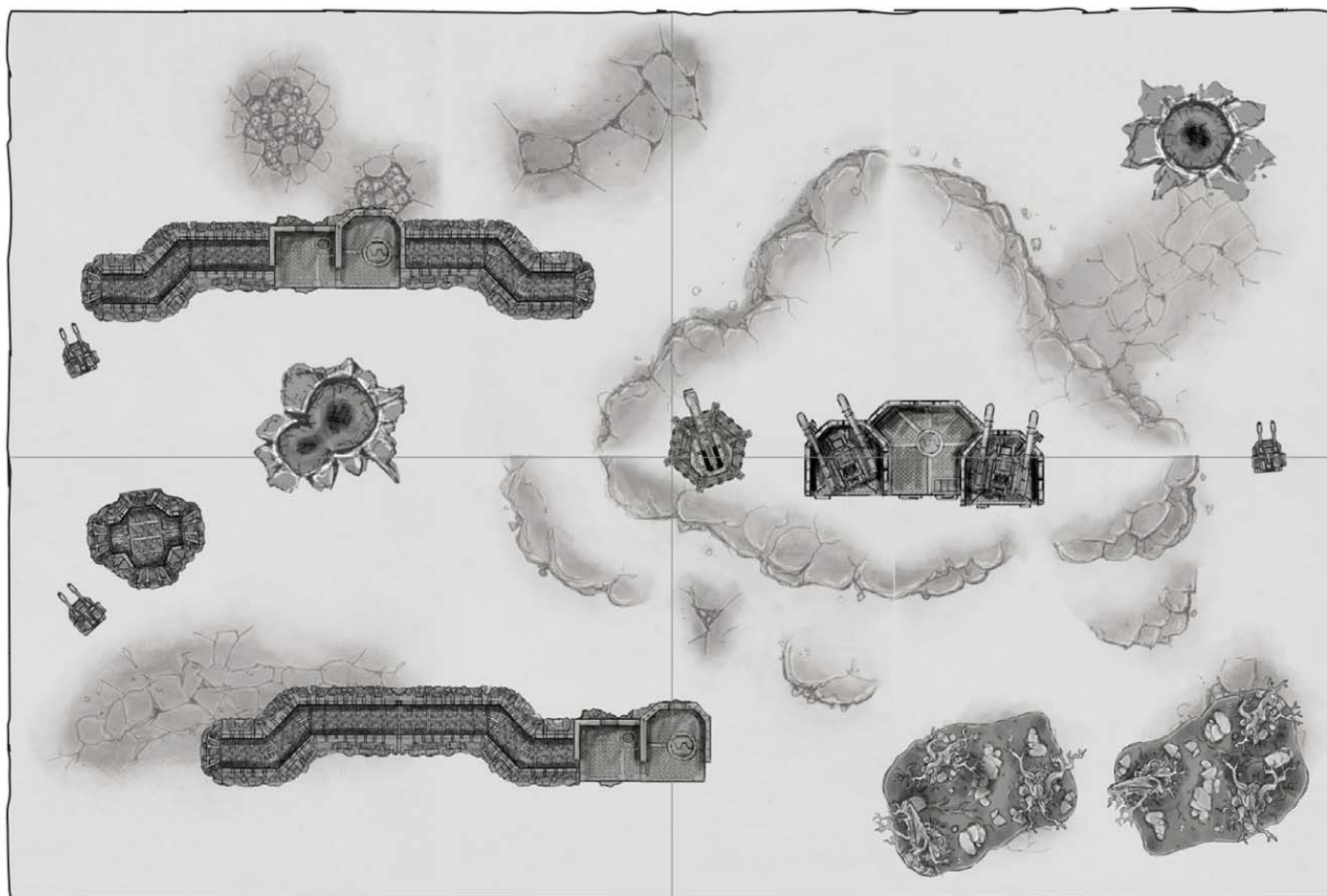
* The Ork player rolls a D3 and adds the number of Flyers in his force to the result. The total is the number of Firestorm Attacks he makes (see *Wrecking Balls* below).

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- All of the Ork player's units start the game in Reserve.

Skyfire Defence Network: At the start of the game, all emplaced weapons and gun emplacements are deactivated and cannot fire. At the beginning of each of the Imperial player's Movement phases he can select D3 buildings and/or gun emplacements – all of the selected buildings' emplaced weapons/gun emplacements are now activated for the remainder of the game and can shoot as normal.

Wreckin' Balls: In this mission Firestorm Attacks are resolved using the small blast marker instead of the large blast marker. When resolving a Firestorm Attack in this mission, scatter the blast marker and resolve hits as normal, but before removing the blast marker, scatter it once more from its current position. Any units beneath the blast marker's new position are also hit by the Firestorm Attack.



This deployment map shows a section of the Cadian HQ's outer defence perimeter that was attacked by Skyboss Wingnutz's Wreckin' Krew.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.

MISSION 9: BATTLE FOR THE OASIS

Baddfrag's Kommandos have infiltrated the Cadians' oasis base by hanging onto the undersides of returning tanks. Waiting for nightfall, the sneaky gits have placed bombs all over the base and Ork reserves are waiting for the first explosions to join the attack. The Orks expect nothing less than a quick and brutal victory, but so long as even a single Guardsman draws breath, the greenskin onslaught will be defied.

DESIGNER'S NOTE – PLANETSTRIKE

Battle for the Oasis is a Planetstrike mission. Full details of Planetstrike missions, mission special rules, Warlord Traits and stratagems can be found in the appendix of this book.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player is the Attacker in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Orks Faction, and they must choose a Primary Detachment that includes a unit of Kommandos (Baddfrag's Kommandos).

The Imperial player is the Defender in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum Faction and fortifications.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Imperial player places between one and six fortifications anywhere on the table apart from in the Sneaky Gits deployment zone (see map below). The Imperial player does not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Imperial player.

Once all fortifications have been placed, the Imperial player sets up any remaining terrain in any manner he chooses, but cannot place any impassible terrain in the Sneaky Gits deployment zone.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 2 Stratagem Points.

The Ork player selects any one table edge to be his. The Imperial player's table edge is the one opposite.

The Ork player then deploys the Sneaky Gits using the deployment map opposite. All of the Ork player's other units start the game in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

The Imperial player then deploys his entire force anywhere that is more than 3" from the Sneaky Gits deployment zone.

FIRST TURN

The Ork player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of each game turn, the Imperial player scores D3 Victory Points (roll at the end of each game turn).

At the end of the game, the Ork player scores 1 Victory Point for each enemy unit that has been completely destroyed. Units that are falling back at the end of the game, and units that are not on the board at the end of the game, count as destroyed for the purposes of this mission. Remember that Independent Characters and Dedicated Transports are individual units and award Victory Points if they are destroyed.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Firestorm*, **Night Fighting**, **Planetary Assault**, **Scramble!**, **Shock Tactics**.

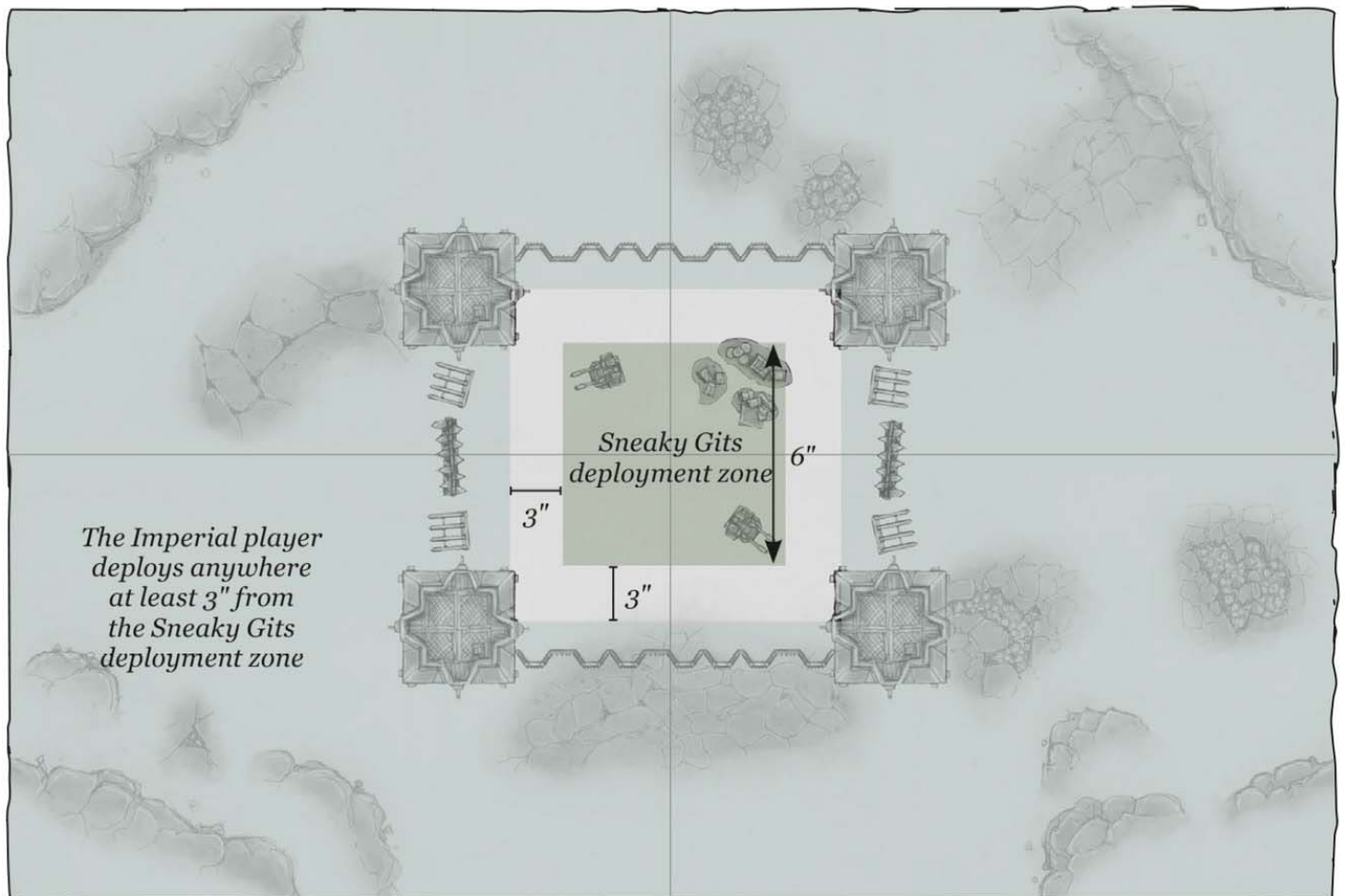
** The Ork player makes 3 Firestorm Attacks.*

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- With the exception of his Sneaky Gits unit, all of the Ork player's units must start the game in Reserve.

Night Attack: If the Ork player takes the Dawn Assault stratagem, the Night Fighting rules are used in every turn of the game.

Placed Explosives: The Ork player's Firestorm Attacks do not scatter and have the Ignores Cover special rule.



This deployment map shows the fortifications of the Great Oasis Base.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.



MISSION 10: THE KLAW OF MORK

The Orks have deployed a new super-weapon – the Klaw of Mork – to pull a passing comet out of orbit and bring it smashing down on Sacred Mountain. The Imperium is mounting a full assault against the super-weapon, but unless Tempestor Prime Whitlock's Tempestus Scions can disable the power field protecting it, the attack will be doomed to fail, and the fate of Alaric Prime will be sealed.

DESIGNER'S NOTE – PLANETSTRIKE

The Klaw of Mork is a Planetstrike mission. Full details of Planetstrike missions, mission special rules, Warlord Traits and stratagems can be found in the appendix of this book.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Imperial player is the Attacker in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum and Militarum Tempestus Factions. They must choose a Primary Detachment that includes a Militarum Tempestus Platoon (Whitlock's Brigade) and a Valkyrie (Whitlock's Brigade).

The Ork player is the Defender in this mission. Their army may only include units with the Orks Faction and fortifications.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Imperial player selects any one table edge to be his. The Ork player's table edge is the one opposite. The Ork player must place one fortification in the Imperial player's table half – this is the Sentry Fortification. The Ork player then places between one and three fortifications anywhere in his table half and selects one to be the Generator Control. They do not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Ork player. Once all fortifications have been placed, the Ork player sets up any remaining terrain as he chooses.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

The Ork player must place one Objective Marker within 1" of the Sentry Fortification and one within 1" of the Generator Control (they may be placed on battlements).

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 2 Stratagem Points. The Ork player then deploys his force anywhere on the battlefield. All of the Imperial player's units start the game in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Imperial player has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of each game turn, the Ork player scores 1 Victory Point if he controls the Generator Control Objective Marker.

At the end of the game, the Imperial player scores 3 Victory Points if he controls the Generator Control Objective Marker.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Firestorm*, **Mysterious Objectives**, **Night Fighting**, **Planetary Assault**, **Scramble!**, **Shock Tactics**.

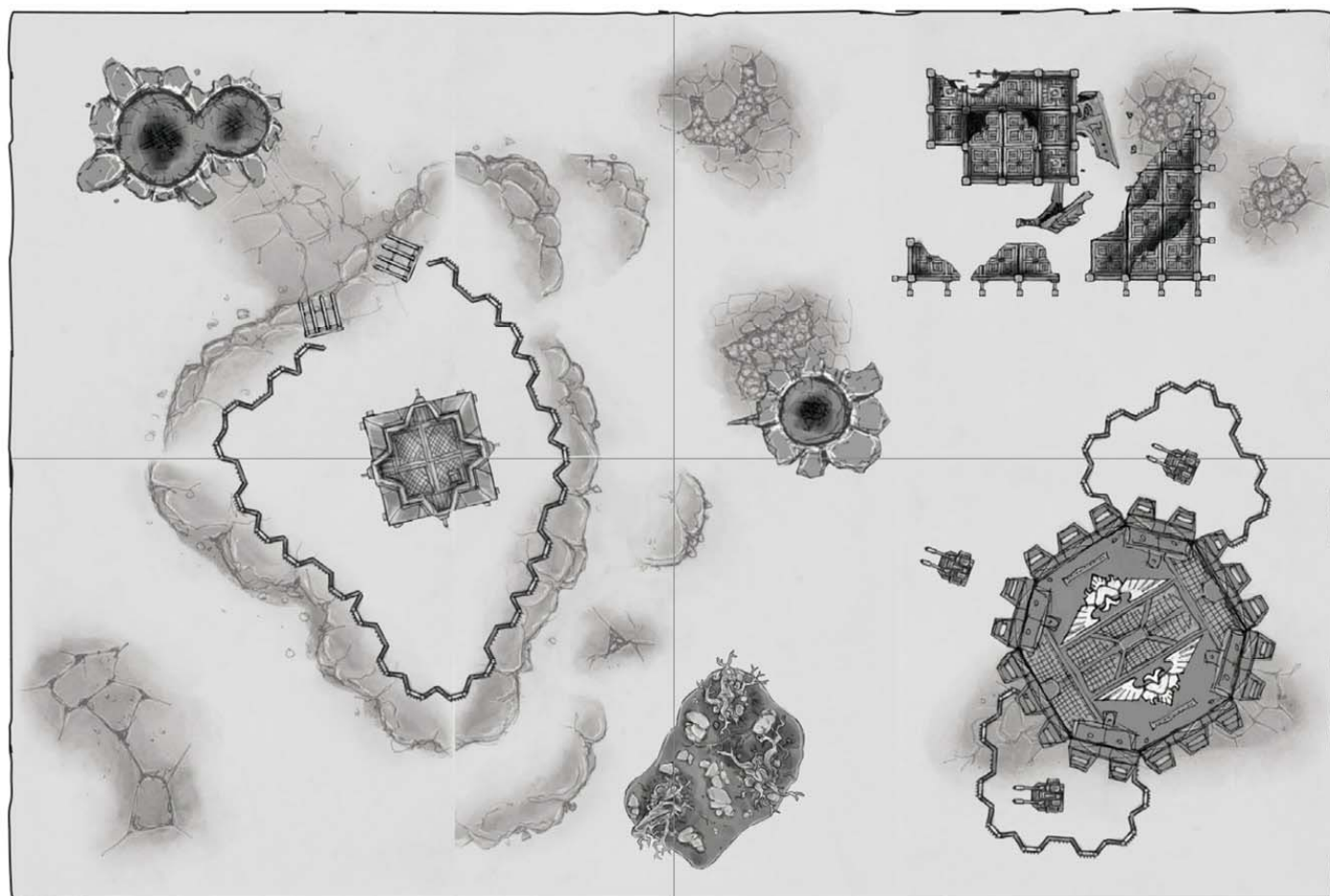
** The Imperial player makes 4 Firestorm Attacks.*

Disable the Sentry Guns: If, at the end of any game turn, one of the Imperial player's scoring units control the Sentry Fortification Objective Marker, then for the rest of the battle, all buildings and gun emplacements on the table can only fire Snap Shots.

Generator Secured: A scoring Imperial unit will control the Generator Control Objective Marker even if an enemy scoring unit is also within range of the same marker.

Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, with the exception of the following modifications:

- All of the Imperial player's units start the game in Reserve.
- The Ork player can place any number of his units in Reserve, but must, whenever possible, deploy at least one unit for each building or gun emplacement. Multiple-part buildings count as several separate buildings.



Centre line

This deployment map shows the fortifications protecting the Klaw of Mork's power field generators.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.

MISSION 11: THE IMPERIUM SALLIES FORTH

The Ork comet has been thrown off its collision course with the Sacred Mountain, but Mogrok has besieged Fortress Alaric nonetheless. Advancing under the protection of kustom bubble fields, the greenskins mean to stomp out the Imperium's final fortress. The defenders, spearheaded by the knightly houses of Alaric Prime, surge forth to meet them, intent on bringing the fight to the enemy. But even as they sally forth, an Ork rust-ship launches after the wayward comet with a plan to veer it back on target.

THE ARMIES

Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. The Ork player's army may only include units with the Orks Faction and fortifications, and must include the Mogrok's Bossboyz formation.

The Imperial player's Warlord must have the Astra Militarum Faction, and their army may only include units with the Astra Militarum, Imperial Knights and Militarum Tempestus Factions and fortifications. Their army must include at least one of the following formations:

- Adamantine Lance.
- The Steel Host.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Imperial player must place a Wall of Martyrs Imperial Defence Network (*Warhammer 40,000: Stronghold Assault*, pg 29) anywhere in his half of the table. He then places up to four additional fortifications anywhere on the table. The Imperial player does not pay any points for these fortifications, and none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Imperial player. Once all fortifications have been placed, the players set up any remaining terrain as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

After setting up the terrain, starting with the Imperial player, the players take it in turns to place D3+2 Objective Markers (see *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*).

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits. The Imperial player deploys first, and the Ork player second, using the deployment map opposite. Any unit that cannot be deployed on the table starts the game in Reserve.

FIRST TURN

The Imperial player goes first unless the Ork player can Seize the Initiative (see *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*).

GAME LENGTH

This mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

At the end of the game, the Imperial player scores 1 Victory Point for each Objective Marker he controls.

At the end of the game, the Ork player scores D3 Victory Point for each Objective Marker he controls (roll separately for each Objective Marker).

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Linebreaker*, Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

** In this mission, the Imperial player scores D3 Victory Points for the Linebreaker secondary objective, instead of just 1 Victory Point.*

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

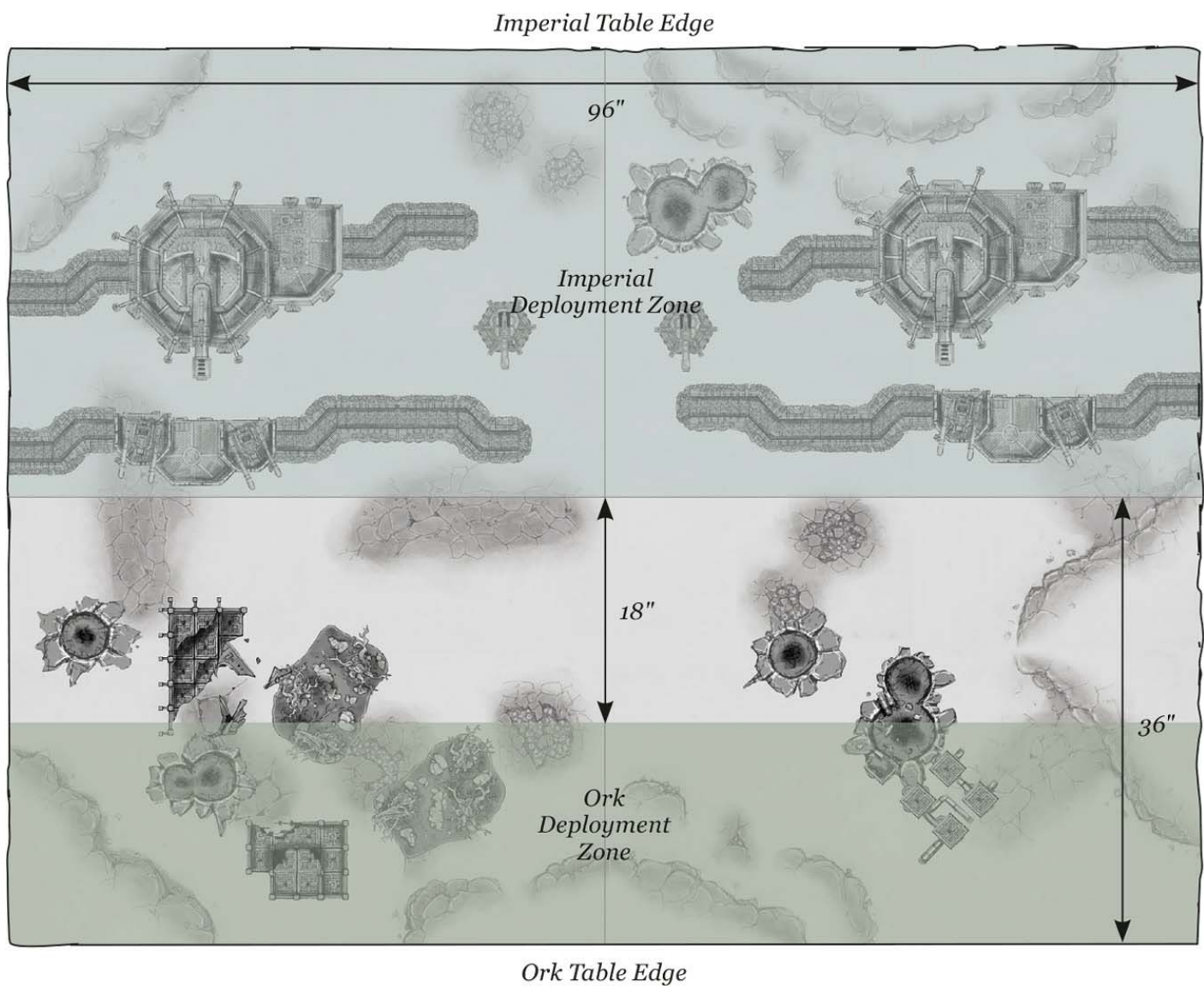
Night Fighting, Mysterious Objective, Reserves.

The Foot of Gork: The Ork player rolls a D6 at the start of each of their Shooting phases. If the result is less than or equal to the current game turn number, the comet smashes into Sacred Mountain. The Ork player can make an attack with the following profile, which can target any point on the table:

Range	S	AP	Type
N/A	D/10/8	1/2/3	Ordnance 1, Apocalyptic Mega-blast

Netmagnet Bubble Fields: Every Ork Independent Character has a Netmagnet Bubble Field. All models (friend or foe) within 12" of a model with a Netmagnet Bubble Field have a 4+ invulnerable save against any shooting attack. This is increased to a 2+ invulnerable save against any weapon with the Barrage special rule. If a model with a Netmagnet Bubble Field is slain, the hovering ordnance suddenly falls to the ground. Before you remove the slain model from the table, all units (friend or foe) within 12" of that model immediately suffer D6 Strength 8 AP3 hits. After this damage has been resolved, remove the model from the tabletop.

Sally Forth: All of the Imperial player's Super-heavy Walker units have the Scout special rule.



This deployment map shows the fortifications protecting the gate of Sacred Mountain.

If you wish to recreate this particular battlefield, place fortifications and terrain on the table as shown in the map.



FORMATIONS

This section details background and rules for five Formations that allow you to represent powerful groups of units that fought during the Ork invasion of Alaric Prime on the tabletop. Each Formation grants the units within it powerful bonuses. You may include these in your army as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

Each datasheet contains the following information:

- 1. Faction:** The unit's Faction is shown here by a symbol. The Formations in this book have one of the following Factions: Imperial Knights, Astra Militarum, Orks.
- 2. Formation Symbol:** Formation datasheets are identified by this symbol.
- 3. Formation Name:** Here you will find the name of the Formation.
- 4. Formation Description:** This section provides a background description of the Formation, detailing its particular strengths along with the tactics and methods it employs to wage war in the grim darkness of the 41st Millennium.
- 5. Formation Composition:** This section shows the number and type of units that make up the Formation.
- 6. Formation Restrictions:** This section details specific unit sizes, equipment, transport options and any further restrictions that you may be required to adhere to in order to include the Formation in your army.
- 7. Formation Special Rules:** Every Formation includes one or more special rules associated with the units that make up that Formation. The special rules for a Formation only apply to the units that make it up (even if there are other units of the same type in your army). Special rules that are unique to the Formation are described in full here, whilst others may be detailed in the Special Rules section of *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.



THE STEEL HOST



The famed armoured formation of the Cadian 1652nd, known as the 'Steel Host', have a well deserved and fearsome reputation. Every member of the formation must prove themselves as a Guardsman before they are trained for the armoured corps, facing the foe with lasgun, bayonet and flak armour. These men are then expected to make a commensurately better account of themselves when the formidable armour and arsenal of a Leman Russ Battle tank is at their command. Under the direction of Commander Ovik, the Steel Host have proven themselves exceptional among the armoured formations of Cadia – so exceptional in fact, that high command insist that Ovik's formation is accompanied by a Hydra to protect them from aerial threats. During the defence of Alaric Prime, the Steel Host were decisive in numerous battles, where their timely arrival and the devastating fire of their guns turned the tide or broke the enemy.



FORMATION:

- 1 Tank Commander
- 3 Leman Russ squadrons
 - 1 Hydra



RESTRICTIONS:

None.



SPECIAL RULES:

Elite Tank Crews: The Tank Commander, and all vehicles from this formation within 12" of the Tank Commander, have the Preferred Enemy special rule.



BEYOND THE RED WAAAGH!

Whilst these Formations each represent one of the many military forces battling for victory on Alaric Prime, you should not feel limited to using them solely in games based upon the events and characters of The Red Waaagh! Indeed, you are encouraged to incorporate these Formations into any game of Warhammer 40,000 that you play. The Steel Host, for example, is simply a local (to the Alaric Prime war zone) example of an Astra Militarum armoured company utilised by all regiments across the war zones of the 41st Millennium.





ADAMANTINE LANCE

Knights are trained to fight both as individuals and in close formation on the field of battle. Perhaps the most vaunted of these formations is known as the Adamantine Lance. In combat a trio of Imperial Knights will fight in close coordination, each taking on a specific role and aiding the others. Together, they are capable of dealing out devastation that will level any foe, while simultaneously reducing the vulnerability of their individual Knight suits. One Knight takes the leader's role of the lance at the head of the formation, striking deep into the foe. On his flanks the others take on the roles of shield and sword, the former warding off blows and the latter taking care of lesser foes. A well trained Adamantine Lance can plunge deep into the ranks of the enemy, covering each others' vulnerable arcs and scything down their opponents with precise and devastating blows from their reaper chainswords.



FORMATION:

- 3 Knights Paladin or Knights Errant (in any combination).

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

SPECIAL RULES:

Lance, Shield and Sword: As long they are within 3" of another Knight from this formation, Knights from this formation can re-roll failed saves for their ion shields. Furthermore, as long they begin the Assault phase within 3" of another Knight from this formation, Knights from this formation can re-roll their charge distances, and inflict D3 Hammer of Wrath hits when they charge instead of 1.



THE STEEL HOST

The famed armoured formation of the Cadian 1652nd, known as the 'Steel Host', have a well deserved and fearsome reputation. Every member of the formation must prove themselves as a Guardsman before they are trained for the armoured corps, facing the foe with lasgun, bayonet and flak armour. These men are then expected to make a commensurately better account of themselves when the formidable armour and arsenal of a Leman Russ Battle tank is at their command. Under the direction of Commander Ovik, the Steel Host have proven themselves exceptional among the armoured formations of Cadia – so exceptional in fact, that high command insist that Ovik's formation is accompanied by a Hydra to protect them from aerial threats. During the defence of Alaric Prime, the Steel Host were decisive in numerous battles, where their timely arrival and the devastating fire of their guns turned the tide or broke the enemy.



FORMATION:

- 1 Tank Commander
- 3 Leman Russ squadrons
 - 1 Hydra

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

SPECIAL RULES:

Elite Tank Crews: The Tank Commander, and all vehicles from this formation within 12" of the Tank Commander, have the Preferred Enemy special rule.





RAMPART DETACHMENT

When faced with marauding alien or heretic hordes, Imperial commanders can call upon Ogryn Rampart Detachments to hold the line. Where ordinary Guardsmen would falter and fall, the massed ranks of towering Ogryns stand as if rooted to the spot. Made up of two units of Bullgryns, the Ogryn Rampart Detachment is tasked with holding its ground against any opposition, forming an impenetrable shield wall. Such is the strength of the formation that it can turn aside almost any enemy infantry, and it even shields units taking cover behind it from fire. Enemy units have often been deterred just by the sight of an Ogryn Rampart Detachment – more than merely a defensive formation, they also excel at breaking enemy charges, shattering their strength with shield and maul and leaving only broken bodies and bleeding corpses at their feet.



FORMATION:

- 1 Platoon Command Squad
- 2 Bullgryn squads

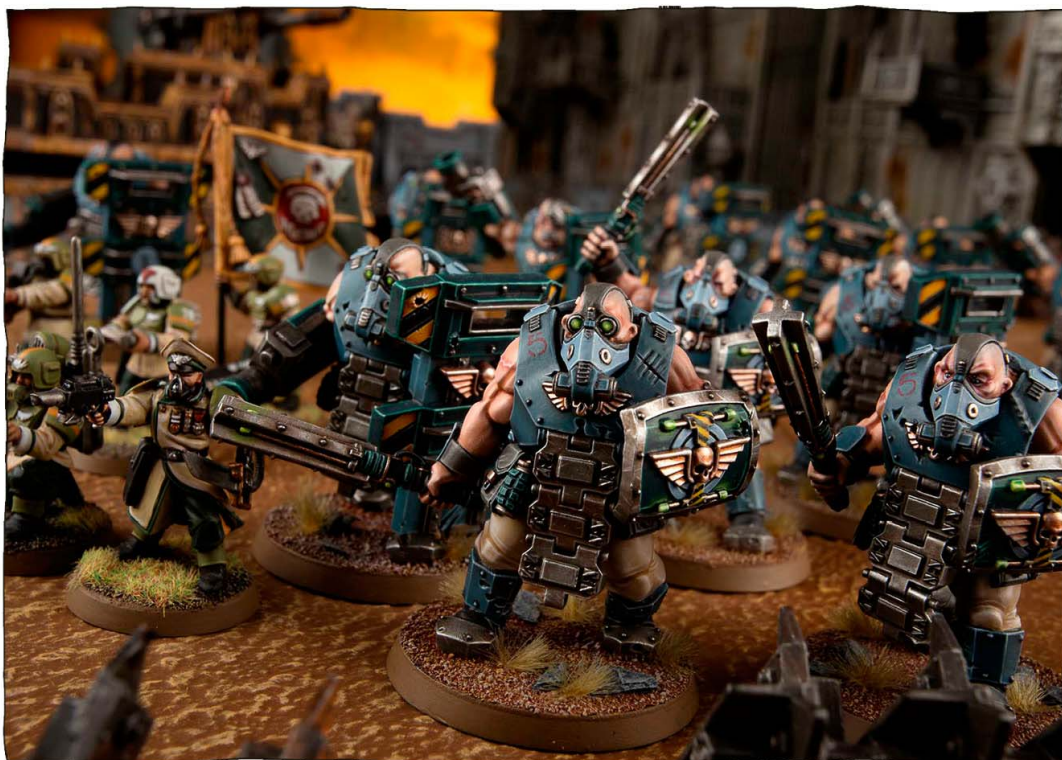
RESTRICTIONS:

Each Bullgryn squad must include at least five models.

SPECIAL RULES:

Counter-attack, Fear, Fearless.

Impenetrable Shield Wall: Friendly Infantry models that are partially obscured by models from this formation receive an additional +1 to their cover save.





The Gorkanaut Krushin' Krew are a rusting mailed fist smashing into the defenders of Alaric Prime. A trio of vicious Nobs command the towering war machines. Though each Gorkanaut is individually brutal and powerful, when gathered together they form the Krushin' Krew, a veritable tide of destruction and carnage unleashed upon the Imperium. There is nothing subtle about the Gorkanauts. Each is a towering, over-armed and formidable engine of war piloted by a creature which lives only for battle. Worst still, each Gorkanaut is in constant competition with the others, and is endlessly trying to outdo them. This bloody rivalry means that if one Gorkanaut takes down a foe, the others must take down a bigger foe, kill a larger number of humies or smash a bigger enemy wagon, and this contest rapidly escalates. The result is especially devastating when the Krushin' Krew turn their attention to a single target such as a Knight or fortification, each taking turns to land a shattering blow whilst mocking the others for their efforts.



FORMATION:

- 3 Gorkanauts

RESTRICTIONS:

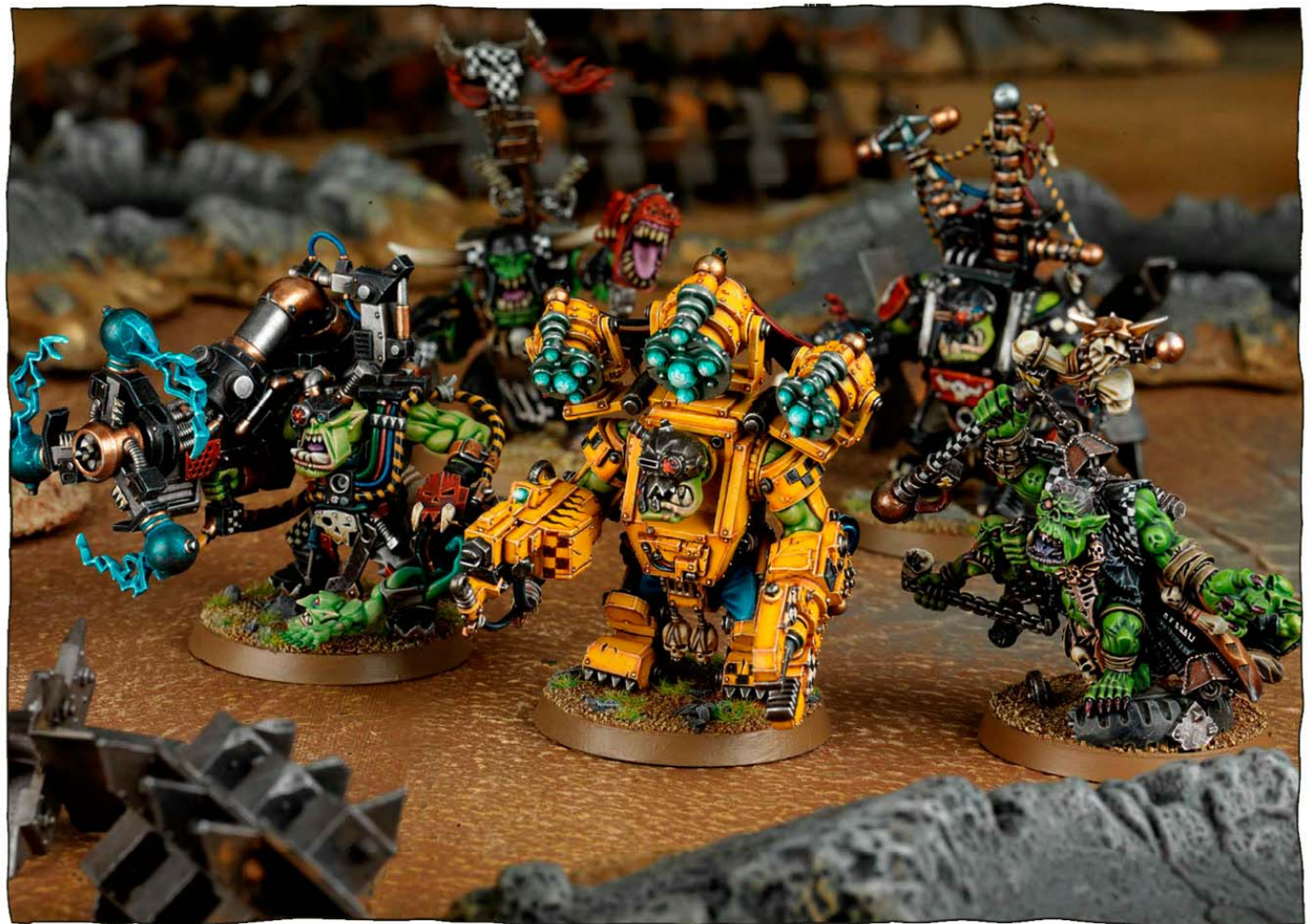
None.



SPECIAL RULES:

Escalating Rivalry: At the start of each game turn, look up the current game turn number on the following table. All models in this Formation gain the special rules listed on the table.

Turn	Special Rules
1	None.
2	Furious Charge.
3	Furious Charge, Hatred.
4+	Furious Charge, Hatred, Shred.





MOGROK'S BOSSBOYZ

Mogrok's War of Kunnin' was a new phase in the battle for Alaric Prime, and one characterised by dirty tricks and sneaky plans. The Big Mek Mogrok managed not only to unite the tribes but also to manipulate their bosses into doing his bidding. Though Skyboss Wingnutz and Baddfrag the Tank Boss were usually off leading their own formations into the fray, the other bosses would often accompany the Big Mek into battle personally. Amongst their number, Mogrok enlisted Big Redd da Warphead for his mastery of Waaagh! energy and Big Mek Dagogg for his skill with his shiny shokk attack gun. Gathered together, this motley collection of Ork 'kommanderz' not only provided him with a powerful bodyguard, but allowed Mogrok to direct the clans where and when he wanted them, out-manoeuvring the Imperial forces at every turn. For much of this stage of the war, the Imperium was slow to react to the plans and plots of Mogrok and he visited terrible ruin upon them for their folly.



FORMATION:

- 3 Big Meks
- 1 Warboss
- 1 Weirdboy (Mastery Level 2)

RESTRICTIONS:

None.

SPECIAL RULES:

Big Mek Mogrok: The controlling player must nominate one Big Mek in this formation to be his Warlord (Mogrok). Mogrok always has the Kunnin' But Brutal Warlord Trait (see *Codex: Orks*, pg 92).

Very Kunnin': Before deployment, the controlling player can nominate up to D3 friendly Ork units; these units gain the Acute Senses and Outflank special rules. The controlling player also adds +1 to any attempts to Seize the Initiative, as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

APPENDIX

PLANETSTRIKE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Planetstrike, an alternative way of waging war in the 41st Millennium. This appendix is an expansion to the Preparing for Battle section in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, allowing your collection of Citadel miniatures to battle to the death in a devastating planetary assault.

In a game of Planetstrike, the players take specific roles – one player is the Attacker, attempting to wrest control of a planet, and the other is the Defender, who will do everything to defend it. Planetstrike introduces a whole new set of tactical challenges to the battlefields of the 41st Millennium, and whether you choose to tear the planet from your opponent's grasp or annihilate the crazed invaders raining from the skies, your actions can determine the fate of an entire world.

PLANETARY ASSAULT

Planetary invasions are urgent, swift and terrible affairs, characterised by deafening noise, earth-shattering explosions and the stench of death. Thousands of reckless and battle-hungry warriors plunge downward upon trails of flame and vapour like vengeful angels, pouring from the drop-craft and low-orbiting spaceships that darken the skies above. Megatonnes of ordnance hammer down around these skyborne warriors, their detonations so devastating that the skies themselves seem afire; red, black and blinding white like the fires of hell. Pillars of ghostly light probe the skies, their colonnades all but transforming the battlefield into some vast and surreal shrine to the gods of war. Their touch is certain death to any invader caught in their beams, and red-hot debris rains from the skies as batteries of anti-aircraft guns take their toll.

Below the chaotic skies lies a war-torn landscape chewed up and spat out by the incessant bombardments that precede the invasion. The surreal mudscape is punctuated only by the ruined shells of once-proud buildings and by inviolable strongholds that jut like tombstones from the tortured earth. The comparison is apt, for the doomed soldiers who defend these bastions of order from the storm of violence that threatens to consume them will emerge as corpses or not at all.

The wounded and dying are spread across the tracts of no-man's-land between these bleak monoliths. Thunderous explosions come from nowhere to tear apart whole platoons, numbing the senses of the survivors so that they stumble into the teeth of the enemy's guns. Above them, attack craft roar across the skies through lattices of ruby-red lasfire and rocket contrails, strafing any soldier who dares stray into the open before screaming off through the flak to the next war zone. Drop Pods and gigantic landers plummet from the heavens, shaking the ground with their impact before disgorging yet more warriors into the merciless meat grinder of a planetary assault.

It is within this nightmarish and lethal crucible of battle that true heroes are forged, warriors of iron will and exceptional might who march grim-faced through barrages of shrapnel and fire without pause. It is these heroes who determine the fate of the planet, these heroes who defy the enemy to strike him down and tear their prize from his grip. Only the brave or the insane can hope to prosper. The empires of the 41st Millennium were ever built on the deeds of such dauntless individuals, and by their deeds they may yet fall.



LAUNCHING THE PLANETSTRIKE



Planetstrike is truly a war on all fronts, in which the enemy can appear at any time, from anywhere – especially from above! A game of Planetstrike allows you to recreate glorious invasions and desperate last stands in the battle-ravaged universe of the 41st Millennium. Will you play the Defender, setting up formidable fortifications and giving everything you've got to repel the invaders? Or will you play the Attacker, raining hellfire and damnation upon the foe before sending an army of your best troops to claim the smoking remains of his strongholds?

PLAYING A GAME OF PLANETSTRIKE

This appendix presents new rules that you can use to explore the kinds of missions that revolve around planetary assaults. These will illustrate the different sorts of tactics used to attack and defend a planet from orbital invasion, and they will provide new tests of your ability as a commander. Tried and trusted strategies will need to be re-thought in the face of new challenges, and you will need to think outside the box in order to secure victory.

In addition to presenting all the rules and stratagems you will need to play a game of Planetstrike, you will also find in this appendix a mission – Planetfall – that exemplifies the cinematic style of a Planetstrike game.

Additional Planetstrike missions can be found in the missions section of this book, representing many of the battles that took place upon Alaric Prime in the wake of the Red Waaagh!'s assault.



HOW TO USE PLANETSTRIKE MISSIONS

To play a Planetstrike mission only requires a handful of modifications to the Preparing for Battle section of *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, which are described below.

THE ARMIES

In a Planetstrike mission, one player is pitted in the role of Attacker and one as the Defender. As with any game that pits players in asymmetric roles, we recommend replaying the mission, but switching Attacker and Defender around to test out a different set of tactics on the battlefield.

It is also worth arranging to play a Planetstrike mission in advance so you can both prepare your forces; the Attacker and Defender in Planetstrike can take different compositions of forces to reflect the warriors they will require to secure victory in their designated role. The Attacker will spearhead his invasion with his swiftest and most veteran forces whilst the Defender mans the defences with every warrior he can muster and prepares to engage inbound enemies with his biggest guns. Both forces will be marshalled into battle by their bravest commanders, either to lead the invading forces in a brutal planetary assault, or to stand defiantly against them. If you are playing a Planetstrike Mission, you can choose to use the Planetstrike Attacker or Defender Detachments (if you are the Attacker or Defender respectively), when selecting your armies.



FORTIFICATIONS IN PLANETSTRIKE

When playing a Planetstrike mission, neither the Attacker nor the Defender can purchase fortifications as part of their army. Instead, the players (typically just the Defender) will place fortifications on the battlefield as described in The Battlefield section



PLANETSTRIKE BATTLEFIELDS AND DEPLOYMENT

Instructions for creating Planetstrike battlefields and deploying your forces are included in the Planetstrike missions themselves; you should use these rules instead of those found in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

WARLORD TRAITS

When you determine your Warlord Trait, you can choose to roll on the appropriate Planetstrike table instead of those normally available to your Warlord.

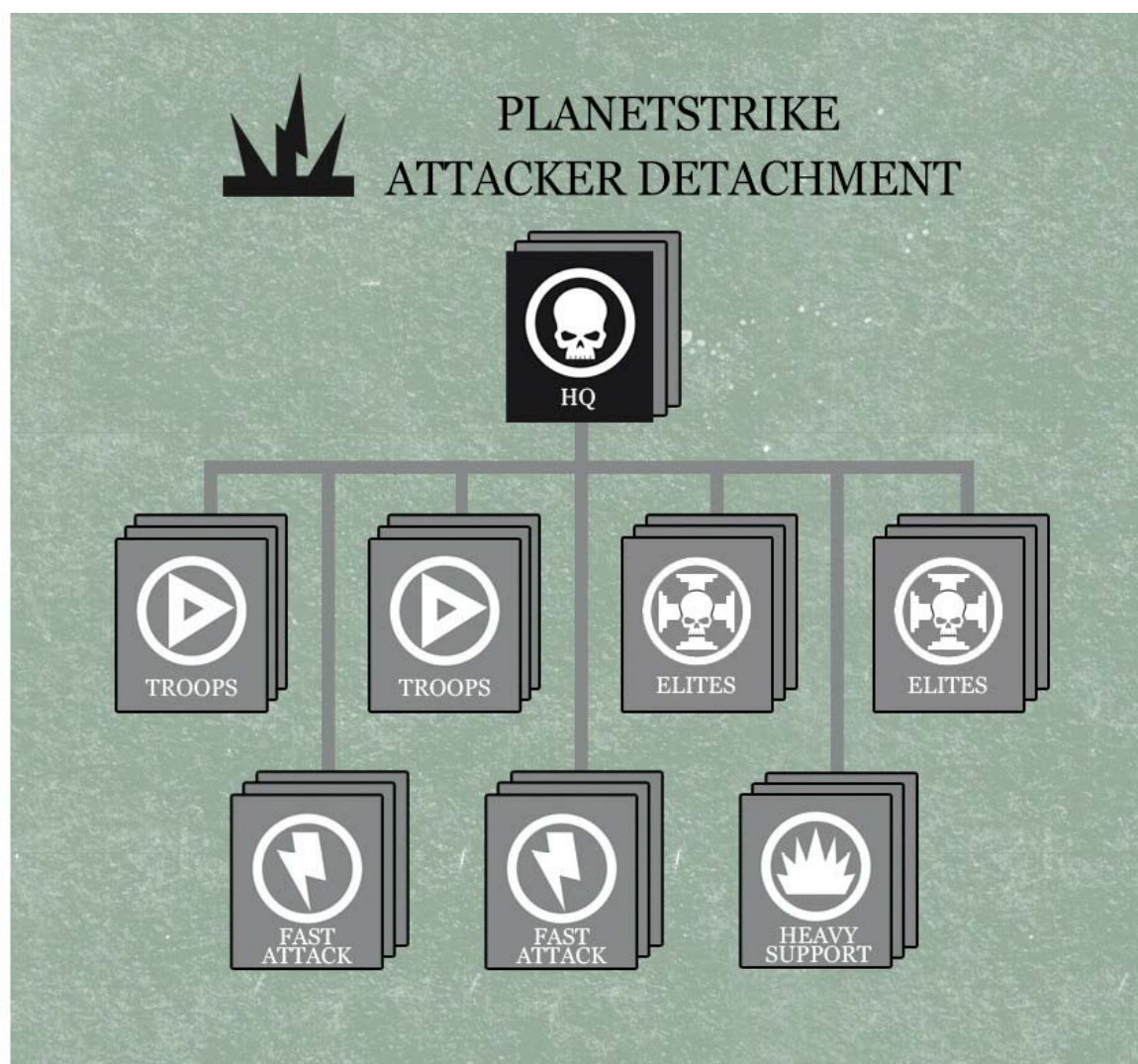
PLANETSTRIKE STRATAGEMS

After you have determined your Warlord Trait, you may then select your Planetstrike stratagems. These represent dirty tricks, cunning tactics, fiendish traps and special attacks. Some missions specify the stratagems that the Attacker and Defender have, but typically each player has a number of Stratagem Points to purchase stratagems of their choice. Some stratagems give a small tactical advantage and are only worth a single point, whilst others represent vast expenditures of resources and are worth several points. The stratagems and/or Stratagem Points each player has will be stated in the Planetstrike mission itself. You do not need to spend all (or any) of your Stratagem Points, but you cannot spend more than your total.

The Attacker and Defender stratagems can be found later in this section. Each stratagem can only be chosen once.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS IN PLANETSTRIKE

If an Objective Marker is placed on a building's battlements in a Planetstrike Mission, you control that Objective Marker if there is at least one model from one of your scoring units – and no models from enemy scoring units – within 3" of that Objective Marker, embarked inside that building or in base contact with that building (even if the building has suffered a Total Collapse result).



COMPULSORY

1 HQ

OPTIONAL

2 HQ

6 Troops

6 Elites
6 Fast Attack
3 Heavy Support

RESTRICTIONS

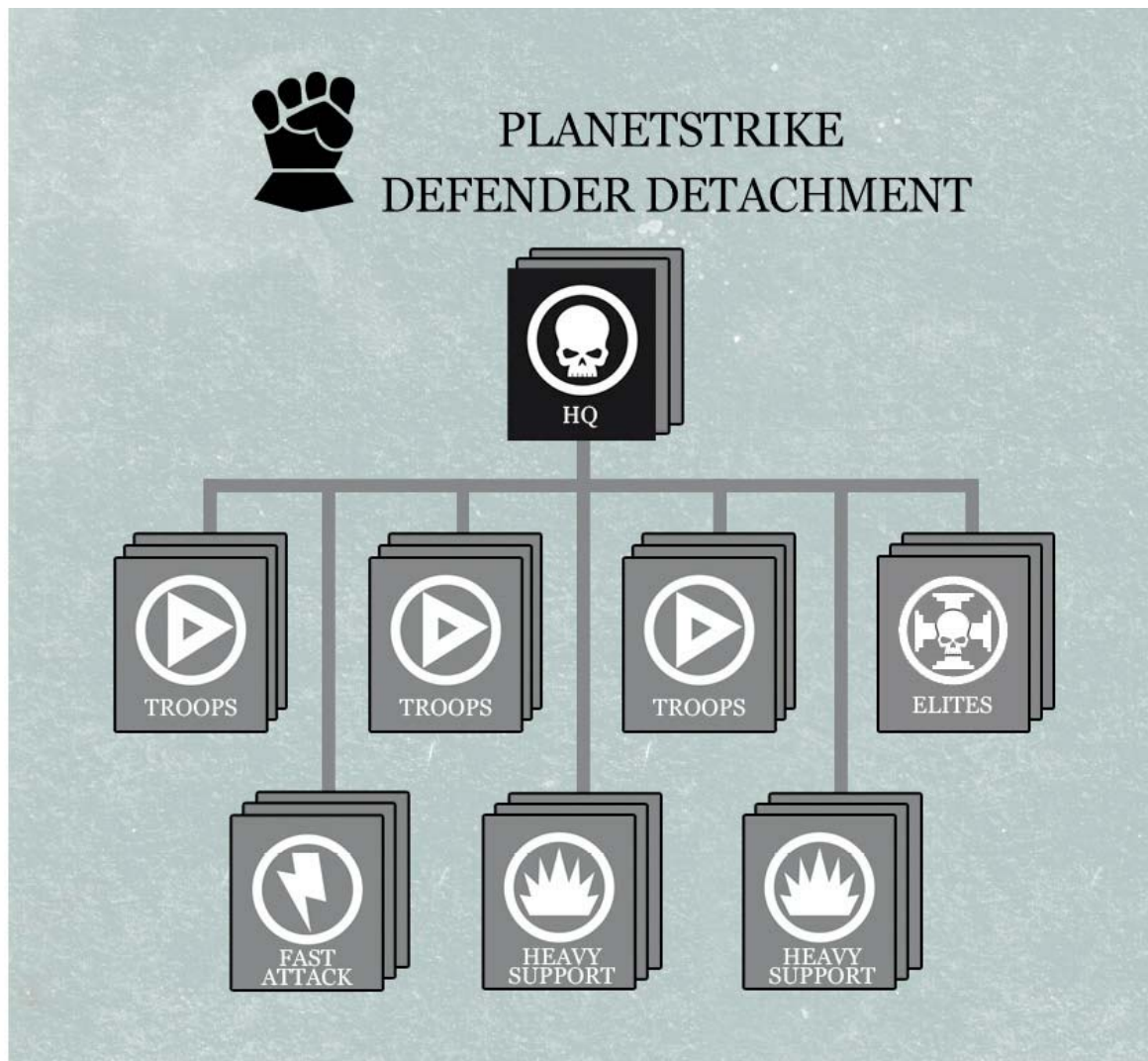
All units chosen must have the same Faction.

COMMAND BENEFITS

Ideal Mission Commander: You can re-roll the result on the Planetstrike Attacker Warlord Trait table.

Invading Battle Force: Once, in each of your turns, you can choose one unit before making any Reserve Rolls. You can choose to pass or fail the Reserve Roll for that unit automatically (it must still arrive on the fourth turn).

Offensive Strategy: If this is your Primary Detachment, you have +1 Stratagem Point to spend when selecting Planetstrike stratagems.



COMPULSORY

1 HQ

OPTIONAL

2 HQ
9 Troops
3 Elites
3 Fast Attack
6 Heavy Support

RESTRICTIONS

All units chosen must have the same Faction.

COMMAND BENEFITS

Ideal Mission Commander: You can re-roll the result on the Planetstrike Defender Warlord Trait table.

Defending Battle Force: Once, in each of your turns, you can choose one unit before making any Reserve Rolls. You can choose to pass or fail the Reserve Roll for that unit automatically (it must still arrive on the fourth turn).

Defensive Strategy: If this is your Primary Detachment, you have +1 Stratagem Point to spend when selecting Planetstrike stratagems.

PLANETSTRIKE MISSION SPECIAL RULES

A Planetstrike mission uses additional mission special rules as well as those found in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

FIRESTORM

If the mission has the Firestorm special rule, the Attacker makes Firestorm Attacks at the start of his first turn. This is treated as an additional, out of sequence Shooting phase. The number of Firestorm Attacks the Attacker can make will be stated in the Planetstrike mission itself. Each Firestorm Attack is completely resolved, one at a time, using the following profile:

	Range	S	AP	Type
Firestorm Attack	N/A	9	3	Ordnance 1, Barrage, Large Blast, Orbital Attack, Warscape

Orbital Attack: These attacks can target any point on the tabletop.

Warscape: If this attack's blast marker does not hit any models or terrain, the Attacker can choose to place a single Moonscape crater (see *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*) on the battlefield, centred on the blast marker's hole.

PLANETARY ASSAULT

If a mission has the Planetary Assault special rule, the Attacker uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* with the following modification.

Instead of making Reserve Rolls from the start of his second turn, the Attacker makes Reserve Rolls from the start of his first turn.



SHOCK TACTICS

If a mission has the Shock Tactics special rule, all of the Attacker's units that have the Deep Strike special rule **and** deploy via Deep Strike can charge in the same turn that they arrive from Reserves.

All of the Attacker's Infantry, Jetbikes and Skimmer units that do not already have the Deep Strike special rule gain the Deep Strike special rule. These units cannot charge in the same turn they arrive from Reserves.

All the Attacker's other units arrive from Reserves as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*. These units cannot charge in the same turn they arrive from Reserves.

Units that disembark from a Transport cannot charge in the same turn they arrived from Reserves, even if they or their Transport have the Deep Strike special rule.

Units arriving by Outflank do so normally, as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

SCRAMBLE!

If a mission has the Scramble! special rule, the Defender uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules* with the following modifications:

- Instead of making Reserve Rolls from the start of his second turn, the Defender makes Reserve Rolls from the start of his first turn.
- The Defender rolls a D6 for each of his units that arrives from Reserves and consults the chart below to see which table edge the unit will arrive from:

D6 Result

1-2 The unit moves onto the table from the Defender's table edge.

3-4 The unit moves onto the table from the table edge to the left or right of the Attacker's table edge (Defender's choice).

5-6 The unit moves onto the table from the Attacker's table edge.

Units that are arriving by Deep Strike or Outflank instead deploy using their special rules, as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.





PLANETSTRIKE ATTACKER WARLORD TRAITS

D6 WARLORD TRAIT

- 1. Siege Breaker:** Your Warlord, and the unit he is with, re-roll failed charge rolls when charging buildings or gun emplacements.
- 2. Burner of Worlds:** You can make one additional Firestorm Attack.
- 3. Fortress Destroyer:** Your Warlord, and all of his shooting attacks, have the Armourbane special rule.
- 4. Master of Timing:** Your Warlord, and the unit he is with, can choose to re-roll any of their Reserve Rolls (whether they pass or fail).
- 5. Lord of Precision:** Friendly units that Deep Strike within 12" of your Warlord roll one fewer D6 than normal (to a minimum of 1D6) when determining how far they scatter. Your Warlord must already be on the table at the start of the turn for this Warlord Trait to be used.
- 6. Strategic Attacker:** You have +1 Stratagem Point to spend when selecting stratagems.



PLANETSTRIKE DEFENDER WARLORD TRAITS

D6 WARLORD TRAIT

- 1. Protector of Worlds:** All friendly units within 12" of your Warlord have the Stubborn special rule.
- 2. Fortress Commander:** Whilst your Warlord is embarked inside a building, all rolls made against that building on the Building Damage table suffer a -1 penalty (to a minimum of 1). This is cumulative with any other modifiers.
- 3. Lord of the Ambush:** Your Warlord, and the unit he is with, have the Acute Senses special rule.
- 4. Prescient Defender:** All of your Warlord's ranged weapons, and all of the ranged weapons of the unit he is with, have the Interceptor special rule.
- 5. Counterfire Master:** Your Warlord, and all friendly units within 12", re-roll failed To Hit rolls when making Overwatch shots.
- 6. Strategic Defender:** You have +1 Stratagem Point to spend when selecting stratagems.



ATTACKER STRATAGEMS

HIGH YIELD FIRESTORM

4 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before you resolve your Firestorm Attacks. Your Firestorm Attacks are resolved at Strength 10 and AP2, rather than Strength 9 and AP3.

PLANETQUAKE BOMB

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of your Movement phases. All fortifications on the table that are buildings or gun emplacements immediately suffer a single Strength 10 AP- hit. In addition, all models (friend or foe) treat open ground as difficult terrain until the end of your next turn.

GREMLIN CURSE

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of the Defender's turns. All fortifications and gun emplacements on the table (no matter who is controlling them) can only fire Snap Shots until the start of the Defender's next turn.

SCORCHED SKIES

3 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before you resolve your Firestorm Attacks. You make an additional D3 Firestorm Attacks.

LASERBURN

3 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of your Shooting phases. Nominate one point anywhere on the battlefield, and a second within 8" of the first. Scatter both points D6", then draw a straight line (considered to be 1mm thick) between them. Each unit (friend or foe) under the line suffers a number of Strength 10 AP1 hits which are Randomly Allocated. The number of hits a unit suffers is equal to the number of models from that unit that are under the line. Vehicles are hit on their side armour.

GROUND OBSERVER

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before resolving your Firestorm Attacks. You can re-roll the scatter dice when making Firestorm Attacks.

HEAVY DUTY DROP

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before you make Reserve Rolls on your first turn. Select up to 3 vehicles and/or Monstrous Creatures (not including Flyers or Flying Monstrous Creatures) that do not have the Deep Strike special rule. The chosen units can deploy from Deep Strike, but cannot charge in the same turn that they arrive from Reserves.

DAWN ASSAULT

1 Stratagem Point

This stratagem is used before resolving your Firestorm Attacks. The Night Fighting rules are used until the start of the Attacker's second turn.

DESPERATE LAST PUSH

1 Stratagem Point

This stratagem is used at the end of Turn Six. If the mission uses Variable Game Length, you may choose to re-roll the D6 that determines if the game ends or continues.



DEFENDER STRATAGEMS

RAPID REINFORCEMENTS

1 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of your turns, before any Reserve Rolls are made. Select up to 3 of your units that are still in Reserve. These units will automatically arrive from Reserves this turn.

KRAK MINES

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of the Attacker's turns, before any Reserve Rolls are made. Roll a D6 each time an Attacking unit arrives from Reserves by Deep Strike this turn and has been placed on the table: on a 4+ that unit immediately suffers D6 Strength 6 AP4 hits. Vehicles are hit on their side armour. Wounds are allocated by the controlling player.

FOXHOLES

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before the Attacker resolves his Firestorm Attacks. All of your non-vehicle, non-Monstrous Creature models gain a 5+ cover save until the start of the Attacker's Movement phase.

JAMMERS

3 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of the Attacker's turns, before any Reserve Rolls are made. Until the end of that turn, the Attacker must roll an additional D6 for scatter distance each time one of his units arrives from Deep Strike Reserve (a unit that rolls a Hit still will not scatter).

AMMUNITION STORES

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of one of your Shooting phases. Until the end of that phase, all emplaced weapons and gun emplacements on the table have the Twin-linked special rule.

DIRECTIONAL VOID SHIELDS

3 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before the Attacker resolves his Firestorm Attacks. All of your fortifications and gun emplacements gain a 4+ invulnerable save until the start of the Attacker's Movement phase.

DROP ZONE DENIAL

2 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used at the start of the Attacker's first turn, before any Reserve Rolls are made. For the duration of the game, roll a D6 each time one of the Attacker's units arrives from Reserves and is about to move onto the table from the Attacker's table edge: on a 4+, the Defender may select a point on any table edge – that unit must move onto the table from that point instead.

FORTIFIED STRONGHOLD

4 Stratagem Points

This stratagem is used before the Attacker resolves his Firestorm Attacks. Select a single building. That building's Armour Value is increased by 1 on each facing (to a maximum of 15) for the remainder of the battle.

DEFIANT TO THE END

1 Stratagem Point

This stratagem is used at the end of Turn Five. If the mission uses Variable Game Length, you may choose to re-roll the D6 that determines if the game ends or continues.

PLANETSTRIKE: PLANETFALL

Invading forces orbit above, raining fire upon the foe, their landing parties inbound to take any fortresses still standing for themselves. The defender must weather the storm and repel the enemy, no matter the cost.

THE ARMIES

Agree which player will be the Attacker and which will be the Defender. Choose armies as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

THE BATTLEFIELD

The Defender can place any number of fortifications anywhere on the table. The Defender does not pay any points for these fortifications, and unless you and your opponent agree otherwise, none start the game dilapidated. All buildings start the game claimed by the Defender. Once all fortifications have been placed, the Defender can then set up any other terrain on the table in a manner of his choosing.

OBJECTIVE MARKERS

After terrain has been set up, the Defender must place 6 Objective Markers as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*.

DEPLOYMENT

The players must first determine their Warlord Traits and stratagems. Each player has 4 Stratagem Points.

The Attacker selects any one table edge to be his. The Defender's table edge is the one opposite the Attacker's.

The Defender deploys his force anywhere on the battlefield. All of the Attacker's units start the game in Reserve (see the Mission Reserves rule, below).

FIRST TURN

The Attacker has the first turn.

GAME LENGTH

The mission uses Variable Game Length as described in *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*

VICTORY CONDITIONS

At the end of the game, the player who has scored the most Victory Points is the winner. If both players have the same number of Victory Points, the game is a draw.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

At the end of the game, each Objective Marker is worth 3 Victory Points to the player that controls it.

SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

Slay the Warlord, First Blood.

MISSION SPECIAL RULES

Firestorm*, Mysterious Objectives, Night Fighting, Planetary Assault, Scramble!, Shock Tactics.

** The Attacker rolls a D3 and adds the number of buildings that are on the table to the result. Each section of a multiple-part building counts as a separate building. The total is the number of Firestorm Attacks that the Attacker makes.*

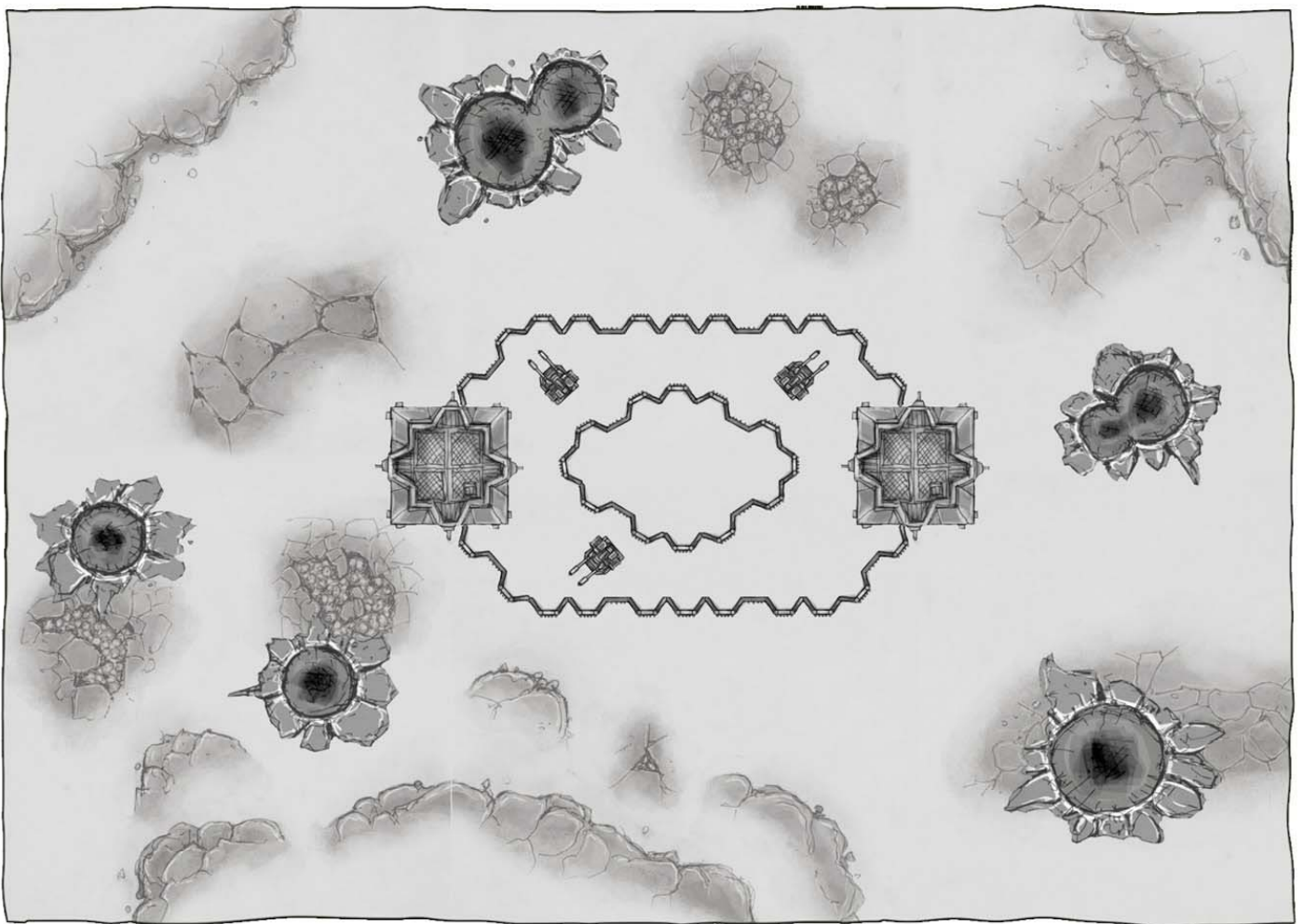
Mission Reserves: This mission uses the Reserves rules from *Warhammer 40,000: The Rules*, modified as follows:

- All of the Attacker's units must start the game in Reserve.
- The Defender can place any number of units in Reserve, but must, whenever possible, deploy at least one unit for each building or gun emplacement that he placed on the battlefield. Each section of a multiple-part building counts as a separate building.



*'The skies themselves burn, and we burn with them, yet we fight on.
This is our planet and ours alone.'*

- Vladimir Rex, Castellan of Hellhive Crag



The battlefield shown here is an example of a classic set-up for a game of Planetstrike. The defender has chosen to place his fortifications in the centre of the battlefield so that, whichever direction the attacker chooses to come from, he will be ready.



THE STORY CONTINUES...

Alaric Prime is only one of the many planets upon which Humanity fights for supremacy. The Imperium claims a million worlds within its reaches, and each is haunted by the spectre of endless conflict. The armies of Mankind wrest victory from a multitude of hideous foes, though they stand upon the brink of disaster – the conquests of aliens, traitors, and madmen are reaching fever pitch. Delve further into the nightmare future of Warhammer 40,000 if you dare, and you will find an entire galaxy of battle.



Though the battle for Alaric Prime sees Imperial Knights join the Astra Militarum to repel an Ork Waaagh!, a dozen other factions stand ready for the call to war. Each is further explored in its own codex, the indispensable guide to collecting that force and using it upon the tabletop battlefields of Warhammer 40,000.

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