



NECROMUNDA

UNDERHIVE

MEDICINE
MAN

JONATHON GREEN

The background of the cover is a dark, atmospheric scene of an underground city. It features stone arches and structures, with glowing green spheres or lanterns scattered throughout. The lighting is dim and moody, creating a sense of mystery and danger.

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A NECROMUNDA SHORT STORY

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IN ORDER TO EVEN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THE BLASTED WORLD OF NECROMUNDA YOU MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND THE HIVE CITIES. THESE MAN-MADE MOUNTAINS OF PLASTEEL, CERAMITE AND ROCKCRETE HAVE ACCRETED OVER CENTURIES TO PROTECT THEIR INHABITANTS FROM A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT, SO VERY MUCH LIKE THE TERMITE MOUNDS THEY RESEMBLE. THE NECROMUNDAN HIVE CITIES HAVE POPULATIONS IN THE BILLIONS AND ARE INTENSELY INDUSTRIALISED, EACH ONE COMMANDING THE MANUFACTURING POTENTIAL OF AN ENTIRE PLANET OR COLONY SYSTEM COMPACTED INTO A FEW HUNDRED SQUARE KILOMETRES.

THE INTERNAL STRATIFICATION OF THE HIVE CITIES IS ALSO ILLUMINATING TO OBSERVE. THE ENTIRE HIVE STRUCTURE REPLICATES THE SOCIAL STATUS OF ITS INHABITANTS IN A VERTICAL PLANE. AT THE TOP ARE THE NOBILITY, BELOW THEM ARE THE WORKERS, AND BELOW THE WORKERS ARE THE DREGS OF SOCIETY, THE OUTCASTS. HIVE PRIMUS, SEAT OF THE PLANETARY GOVERNOR LORD HELMAWR OF NECROMUNDA, ILLUSTRATES THIS IN THE STARKEST TERMS. THE NOBLES -HOUSES HELMAWR, CATTALUS, TY, ULANTI, GREIM, RAN LO AND KO'IRON -LIVE IN THE 'SPIRE', AND SELDOM SET FOOT BELOW THE 'WALL' THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THE GREAT FORGES AND HAB ZONES OF THE HIVE CITY PROPER.

BELOW THE HIVE CITY IS THE 'UNDERHIVE', FOUNDATION LAYERS OF HABITATION DOMES, INDUSTRIAL ZONES AND TUNNELS WHICH HAVE BEEN ABANDONED IN PRIOR GENERATIONS, ONLY TO BE RE-OCCUPIED BY THOSE WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.

BUT... HUMANS ARE NOT INSECTS. THEY DO NOT HIVE TOGETHER WELL. NECESSITY MAY FORCE IT. BUT THE HIVE CITIES OF NECROMUNDA REMAIN INTERNALLY DIVIDED TO THE POINT OF BRUTALISATION AND OUTRIGHT VIOLENCE BEING AN EVERYDAY FACT OF LIFE. THE UNDERHIVE, MEANWHILE, IS A THOROUGHLY LAWLESS PLACE, BESET BY GANGS AND RENEGADES, WHERE ONLY THE STRONGEST OR THE MOST CUNNING SURVIVE. THE GOLIATHS, WHO BELIEVE FIRMLY THAT MIGHT IS RIGHT; THE MATRIARCHAL, MAN-HATING ESCHER; THE INDUSTRIAL ORLOCKS; THE TECHNOLOGICALLY-MINDED VAN SAAR; THE DELAQUE WHOSE VERY EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON THEIR ESPIONAGE NETWORK; THE FIREY ZEALOTS OF

THE CAWDOR. ALL STRIVING FOR THE ADVANTAGE THAT WILL ELEVATE THEM, NO MATTER HOW BRIEFLY, ABOVE THE OTHER HOUSES AND GANGS OF THE UNDERHIVE.

MOST FASCINATING OF ALL IS WHEN INDIVIDUALS ATTEMPT TO CROSS THE MONUMENTAL PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL DIVIDES OF THE HIVE TO START NEW LIVES. GIVEN SOCIAL CONDITIONS, ASCENSION THROUGH THE HIVE IS NIGH ON IMPOSSIBLE, BUT DESCENT IS AN ALTOGETHER EASIER, ALBEIT ALTOGETHER LESS APPEALING, POSSIBILITY.

*EXCERPTED FROM XONARIARIUS THE YOUNGER'S NOBILITE PAX IMPERATOR
- THE TRIUMPH OF ARISTOCRACY OVER DEMOCRACY.*

The flickering emerald flames of the fire illuminated just this one tiny corner of the vast sump-dome, drawing an eerie luminescence from the photo-reactive fungi coating the stalactites of ore-deposits suspended from the roof of the cavernous dome. They in turn cast shimmering, rainbow reflections on the oily sheen of the surface of the polluted lake where it lapped at the ferro-rockcrete shore. The eerie copper-green firelight also under lit the Ratskin Shaman's angular features, lending them an even more harshly cold and knifelike quality. The spiral tattoos on his cheeks seemed to swirl in the ever-changing light.

The shaman was clad in the garb of a tribal medicine man of the feral peoples of Necromunda. The rat bones strung to his ceremonial armour knocked against each other as he moved, the hollow sound eerily echo-amplified. From his waist hung the pelt of a giant rat, the same rat whose skull now adorned the top of his shaman's staff. He had a pointed goatee of a beard and from his pierced ears hung tiny archeotech artefacts. Such relics helped him to commune with the Hive Spirits and here, in the uninhabited dome, in the 'natural' environment of the toxic waste zones of the Underhive, he could commune with those same spirits more closely.

Casting a handful of Scarlet Feng spores into the fire, the shaman began his invocation, as thick, foul-smelling orange smoke poured from the fire of burning fungus stalks.

'Great Spirits of the Hive,' the Ratskin intoned. 'Once again our sacred lands have been desecrated by the hivers and evil drawn down upon us. Our hunters have become the hunted, slain by the Spider Daemon in its quest for fresh souls. Your humble servant, Quaking Dome, beseeches you to aid us now, o mighty masters of Hive Primus, the true Lords of the Spire. Send your terrible judgement down upon the defilers. Let the sacrilegious and the blasphemous know the wrath of your retribution,' the medicine man chanted, throwing a handful of grey-black grit into the flames. Picking up his staff he rattled it over the now sparking purple blaze. 'By the Hive Spirits, may it be so.'

Quaking Dome was suddenly aware of movement nearby. Looking beyond the fire he peered into the gloom over the lake. Sparkling diamonds eyes looked back at him. He felt the hackles on the back of his neck rise. At the same time he heard the rippling surge out on the lake of something moving towards him over the oily surface.

Raft spiders, hundreds of them, were gliding over the filthy water on spindly, crab-legs, their bodies white and glistening. Hearing a skittering sound above him the shaman looked up. Scuttling down the sides of the dome above him

were yet more arachnids. These were covered in coarse black and crimson hair and were as large as dogs. The spiders moved as one, as if guided by one will. Then they stopped, every single one of them, none encroaching within the circle of light cast by the flickering fire. The shaman's prayers had been answered.

Smiling like a snake, Quaking Dome got to his feet and walked unhesitatingly towards the mass of furry and slime-wet bodies. The arachnids parted before him and then surged in behind him to follow the shaman as he strode towards the tunnel that would take him out of the sacred dome and back towards the settlements of the hivers. Soon the desecrators would know what vengeance was, when the wrath of the Hive Spirits was visited upon them.

Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Warhammer 40,000](#)

[Medicine Man](#)