

# NECROMUNDA

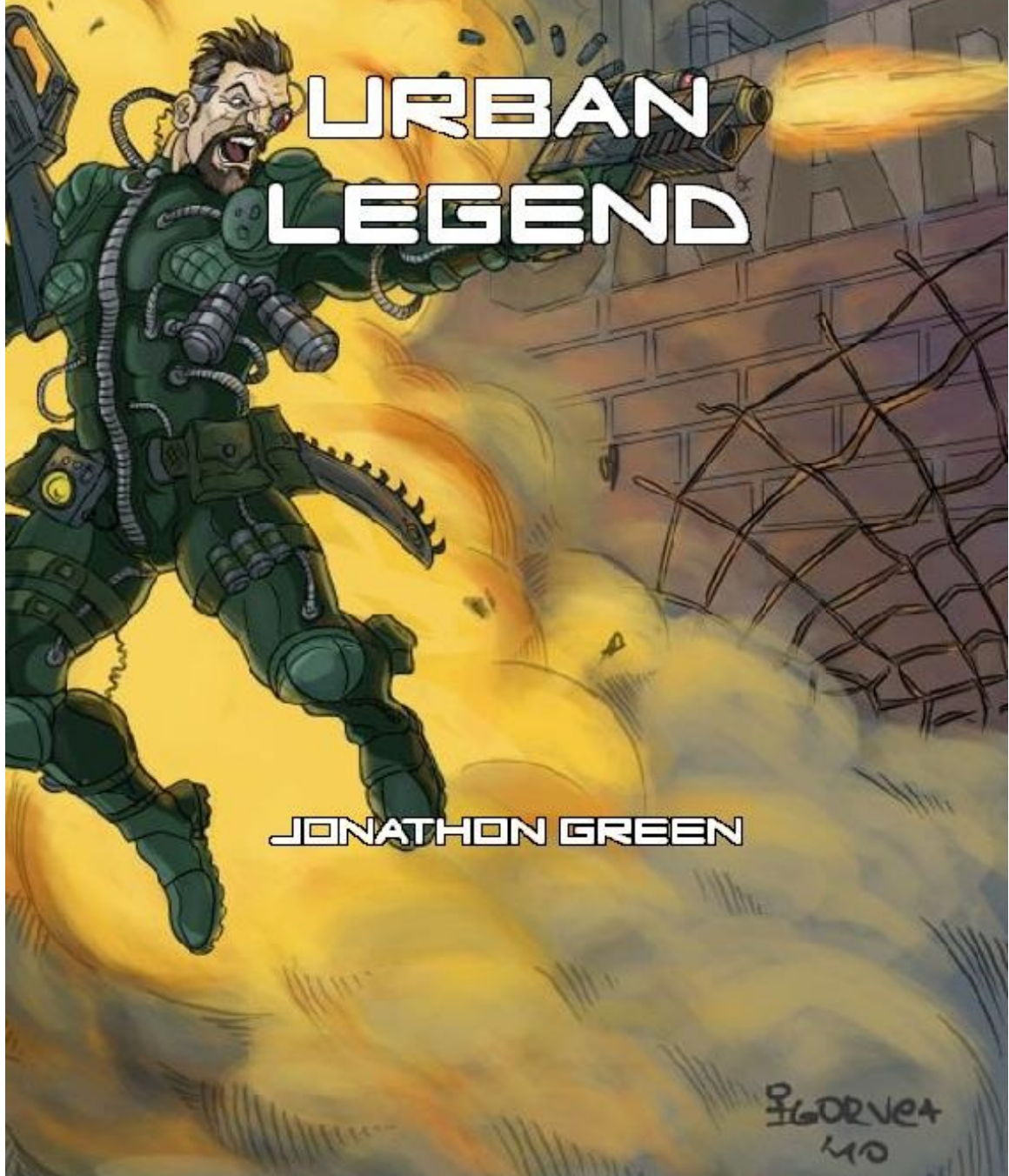
UNDERHIVE

## URBAN LEGEND

JONATHON GREEN

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**NECROMUNDA**  
**UNDERHIVE**



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A NECROMUNDA SHORT STORY

# URBAN LEGEND

JONATHON GREEN





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.*

‘Now I know what you’re asking yourself,’ the bounty hunter said, taking a cheroot from a crumpled packet, that had been secreted in one pocket of his long leather coat, and lighting it, all the while keeping the wide-calibre stub gun trained on the Van Saar. ‘What you’re wondering is, did he fire eleven shots or twelve? Well, do you fancy finding out?’

Narve Vanderacken didn’t say anything but moved his hand away from the autopistol lying on the plate metal floor only a few centimetres from his fingertips. He could feel cold sweat beading on his brow and trickling into his greying beard. How had it all come to this? What had started off as a straightforward hunt for a piece of tech, stolen by those Emperor-cursed Escher gangers the Hive Tigers, and a bike chase along Thunder Road, one of the few remaining stretches of navigable highway in the Underhive, had ended up with half his gang killed in a flash-flood of industrial waste, no doubt caused by a discharge from the manufactories of Hive City far above, and Vanderacken himself being pursued across half the Rust Sand Desert by one of the most ruthless and notorious hired guns in the sector, with a reputation that reached from Toxic Sump to Steel Canyon.

Vanderacken looked up at the bounty hunter, the brim of his hat hiding his eyes, silhouetted against the fitfully flickering, red-glowing hazard beacon, that also cast its ruddy light over the scuffed and scored yellow and black diagonals of the factory barn’s loading berths. Nathan Creed, gunslinger, bounty hunter and downhive desperado, took a long drag on the smouldering cheroot and reached into the folds of his coat again. This time he pulled out a black metal sphere, bisected into two hemispheres by a knurled ring. Vanderacken swallowed hard. It was the Inferno device: the stolen piece of tech that had got them all into this mess in the first place.

‘I found this in the smoking ruins of what used to be the gambling hole of Lucky Break,’ the bounty hunter’s voice was a distinctive downhive drawl, ‘thanks to a tip-off from a half-breed, who bought his freedom with the information he gave me, and something the good Doc Haze knocked up for me in his workshop.’

Creed tossed the sphere into the air, making the Van Saar wince, and then caught it deftly in his gloved hand. Vanderacken gulped audibly. In a split second he made his decision: it was now or never. The Van Saar made a lunge for the autopistol and rolled sideways as his hand closed around it. The last of the twelve-shooter’s dum-dum bullets impacted against the floor with a metallic ringing. ‘Damn!’ he cursed.

The bounty hunter dived for cover as a chattering hail of autopistol rounds tore apart the fungus wood crates that he had been standing in front of only moments before. He landed heavily, sliding to a halt behind a crane gantry.

‘Now what you should be asking yourself,’ Vanderacken declared, barely able to contain his newfound mirth at this reversal of fortunes, ‘is how you’re going to get out of here alive now that you’re effectively unarmed and I’m the one holding the loaded gun.’

‘Is that so?’ came Creed’s retort from behind the loading assembly. ‘You know what?’ he went on. ‘What you don’t realise is that I was never after you or this infernal Inferno Device to begin with. I only got involved when you and your boys started using me for target practice.’

‘Okay. So I guess we were both just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.’ Vanderacken’s tone was deadly serious now, as serious as a hivequake. ‘Now give me the device.’

‘I don’t have it,’ came the husky drawl.

‘What do you mean, you don’t –’ It was then that sudden, harsh realisation struck the Van Saar ganger, like a speeding motorbike. ‘Oh shi –’

The sub-sonic explosion shook the factory to its very foundations. What glass remained in its high, gothic-arched windows was blown out in a hail of diamond splinters. Crane pylons came crashing down in a cacophonous clattering crash, while the shockwave buckled the steel plates of the floor, sending barrels and drums bouncing away along the length of the building.

As Narve Vanderacken clawed his way out of the pile of twisted wreckage where he had landed, his body below the waist a bloody mess of pulped bone and tissue, Nathan Creed calmly strode towards him.

‘I told you,’ the bounty hunter said crouching down next to the dying ganger, his voice barely more than a whisper, ‘you shouldn’t have got me involved. I’m bad news. The worst. But seeing as I’ve got your undivided attention perhaps you can help me after all. You wouldn’t happen to know the whereabouts of one outlaw pit slave, arsonist and Guild caravan hijacker, who goes by the name of Crusher Harlon, would you?’

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