



**WARHAMMER**  
40,000

**ADEPTUS MECHANICUS**  
**GLADE**

**ROB SANDERS**

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## CLADE

Rob Sanders

*‘When the forge world of Velchanos Magna was rediscovered, the forces of the Adeptus Mechanicus went to war to reconquer it from the Dark Mechanicum. But at the heart of the world lurked a daemon called the Abystra Dynamicon, and its corruption flowed through liquid metal across the planet and powered the dark forges that created the deadly war machines ranged against the Cult Mechanicus forces.*

*‘Magos Dominus Theronymous Gant was at the forefront of the campaign, commanding skitarii legions and Legio Cybernetica constructs as he fought to bring the Omnissiah’s light back to Velchanos Magna. After one particularly vicious battle to claim the Anathdrach forges, Gant’s foe, Forge Master Vasco Phaedrega, escaped and the tech-priest dominus swore to hunt and kill the heretic and his twisted skitarii bodyguard.’*

– From *Wars of the Machine Cult*, publication suppressed

The spidery hydraulics of Theronymous Gant’s legs were largely hidden beneath his vestments but they made short work of wreckage-strewn terrain of the Planum Obsequia. The tech-priest was a hunched figure with multiple bionic limbs and mechadendrites snaking out from beneath his heavy robes. He walked with his rod of office in one of his many hands, stabbing its interface tip into the grit, scrap and corpses of the battlefield with crabby insistence. The stave’s workings glowed blue in the forge world’s perpetual night, lighting the way through the destruction.

The constructs of the Dark Mechanicum had paid heavily for their twisted faith. Gant skirted a monstrous crater that still steamed in the emptiness of the ashen wastes. A god-machine or one of the Adeptus Mechanicus ships stationed in orbit above had visited its fury on the warped forces gathered here. The planum was littered with bodies, cybernetic limbs and exposed workings.

Gant was followed by Breacher-Clade Rho~4 Servotaurux. Made up of twelve

Kataphron heavy battle servitors, the Breacher units were tracked like small tanks. The armoured torsos of turret-interfaced servitors little knew the honour they bore. The Kataphrons were holy weapons of the Machine-God, designed to tear the heart out of enemy formations with their hydraulic claws and arc rifles.

Gant held up one of his many bionic appendages and the Kataphron Breachers crunched to a halt. Gant's telescopic optics whirred to focus on a series of footprints. They were uniform, like those of bionic replacements, and deep – no doubt belonging to constructs carrying the weight of their war-plate, weaponry and augmentations.

<Mark coordinates,> Gant streamed in the binharic cant that the heavy battle servitors understood. <Targets have changed their heading.>

Rho~4[1/12] trundled forward. As the prime unit of the Kataphrons, the priest's orders were run through him. The servitor gave the simultaneous impression of a man caught in a machine trap – a soul furious to be free – and a cybernetic monstrosity drunk on its own destructive power. The only flesh visible was the Kataphron Breacher's half-face. Hive world tattoos wove elegantly about his eye and furrowed brow, running up across his shaven head. An ornamental cog attached to his nose clinked against the vox-grille that replaced his mouth.

<See?> Gant said, the steam of his breath departing the rebreather flasks that protruded from his hood. He poked the interface tip of his glowing stave at the prints.

Rho~4[1/12] did nothing but update his acquisition protocols and targeting data with numbers and dimensions. Gant snaked the curved alloy of his spine up and around, stabbing his rod of office in the direction the footsteps had taken. His optics whirred, extending telescopically from his hood. The priest cycled through his filters. An annotated enhancement suggested that his target had headed for the Neotrontia Collector Fields and beyond that the towering forges of the Crucib-Pentadictum.

<See how these foul hereteks run before the wrath of the Great Maker?>

As Gant led his Kataphron Breachers across the Neotrontia Collector Fields – like the nomadic caravans of earliest Mars – he could hear thunder on the horizon. The God Machines of the Legio Interfectra were engaging monstrous traitor Titans amongst the ore-depleted peaks of the Augol Mountains.

Gant's spidery hydraulics cracked the shattered pieces of solar cells and he looked up. With Velchanos Magna tidally locked with its dismal star, this side of the planet did not receive any light for the collectors to harness. The magos

dominus suspected that instead of sunlight, the arrays gathered energy in the form of the fell radiance that ordinarily afflicted the forge world's skies from the warp storms above.

Looking down at a larger piece of solar cell, the reflective surface broken and warped, Gant's optics detected something looking back at him. The mirror raged with the infernal glow of the planet's daemonic core. Gant looked about at the sea of shards. The Abystra Dynomicron was watching him. Lifting one of his appendages, Gant let its tip strike the mirrored surface before putting his augmented weight on the smashed remnant and shattering it further.

They soon came to the Crucib-Pentadictum. The forges of the monstrous complex towered above them but the great powerhouses of production seemed long-dead. All was silent but for the jangle of chains and the sound of grit on the wind. The furnaces were dormant. Bulk conveyers sat on the freightways and cargo plazas. The sprawling installation was devoid of life, mechanical or otherwise.

<Engage search-and-destroy imperatives,> the magos dominus told Rho~4[1/12].

As grit and glass turned to rockcrete and freightway rails the Kataphrons spread out, turning in their armoured turrets. As they scanned for targets, the weaponry that replaced their arms hummed to ominous life.

The forge shrines were but perverse reinterpretations of form and function. The chassis and carcasses of long-dead unbelievers decorated the buildings alongside ruinous symbols that had been painted, scorched and stamped into the architecture. Vanes had become crowns of corruption-smearred spikes, while gaping entrances and production accessways had melted, sagged and warped into horrific metal maws.

Gant slowed and stopped, looking down at the cracked boulevard they were following. A small trench went up its centre, filled with an off-colour bar of solidified iron that ran like a single rail up through the complex. Gant had seen such trenches all over Velchanos Magna, with no idea to their purpose. It was just one of the world's mysteries that were yet to be solved. He knelt to investigate the dull and unnatural lustre of the metal.

The bark of a shot echoed about the boulevard, and Rho~4[8/12]'s head exploded. As the servitor's weaponry drifted downwards with a dying hydraulic hum, Gant snatched up his macrostubber. Rho~4[1/12] rumbled forward, placing his bulk between the shooter and his master. Broadcasting a warning in binharic cant, the Kataphron Breacher lifted his hydraulic claw, indicating that the priest

should assume cover. As Gant moved behind the corpse of Rho~4[8/12], several more shots rang out, sparking off the dead battle servitor's breacher-plate.

<Nullify threat,> the magos dominus commanded.

Rho~4[1/12] and three of his Breachers accelerated up the boulevard, their tracks chewing up the shattered rockcrete. With sprockets and wheels thrashing away, the heavy battle servitors bounced and smashed through the wreckage adorning the freightways.

Lifting their weapons, the Kataphrons smashed the furnace roofs with helical arc-streams. An enemy shooter dropped to the rockcrete floor and smouldered. Crashing through vanes with the gravitic fields of his torsion cannon, Rho~4[1/12] seized a second cybernetic shooter and ripped him out of the busy architecture. As the tumbling body of the enemy sniper snapped and broke under the force, Rho~4[1/12] dragged his foe down into the crumbling rockcrete floor. Accelerating further, the Breacher ran his tracks straight over the shooter's helmed head.

Moments later Rho~4[2/12] skidded to a stop beside its primus unit, as Gant clung to the breacher's back with his mechadendrites and bionic talons. The priest looked down on the headless body of the shooter. Dressed in the rubber cloak and hood of Anathdrach forge temple guard, the Dark Mechanicus skitarii was a mess of deviant, warp-flushed workings.

Gant heard the static-laced sound of vox-hailers.

'Pig-priest,' a voice echoed across the boulevard. The wet, metallic hack of a rebreather drowning in corruption got the magos's attention. 'Acolyte of an empty god. You wish to follow me? Follow me into the embrace of oblivion, into gratitude of our true galactic masters, the crafters beyond the veil. Join me in a realm of knowledge unbound and advancements undreamed of...'

Gant recognised the voice as belonging to Phaedrega. He looked about the complex, the empty boulevard and the derelict darkness of the furnace works lining the freightway. His quarry was nowhere to be seen.

'I shall pass, I think, forge master,' Gant called, his own voice bouncing between the buildings.

'Join me,' the vox-hailer crackled and seethed with static, 'in sacrificing all to the otherworldly lords of incalculable creation. Let us give ourselves – flesh and metal – to the Abystra Dymomicron. Let our deaths be sparks in the darkness, the soul-fuel of gods terrible and true.'

Phaedrega's invitation echoed about the Crucib-Pentadictum.

'You first,' Theronymous Gant called back.

The wet rasp of laughter tailed off into a hiss of madness and determination. 'I fear not the darkness,' Vasco Phaedrega said. 'That which comes next...'

Rho~4[1/12] turned in his turret to face his master and blurted forth a harsh stream of cant. The Kataphron had detected movement on the boulevard ahead. Peering forward, his telescopic optics extending, Gant saw figures moving out of cover. The thrash of tracks, the hum of hydraulics and the roar of power plants filled the air as his Kataphron Breachers moved into formation.

<Destroy the untrue constructs,> the magos dominus ordered.

Rho~4[1/12] issued a stream of orders in binharic cant, prompting Rho~4[3/12] and Rho~4[12/12] to assume Gant's flank while the magos held onto Rho~4[2/12]. The primus unit tore up the cracked and cratered freightway, leading the rest of the Kataphrons into battle. Like a line of small tanks advancing along the boulevard, the Breachers charged their arc rifles and torsion cannons.

As they accelerated to attack speed, the tracks of their armoured hulls leaving a dust trail of pulverised freightway, Gant could see Vasco Phaedrega limping across the freightway at a crossroads ahead, dressed in black, ribbed robes like his skitarii. Phaedrega was reciting some fell incantation, falling in and out of rancid code and languages the magos dominus's cogitators failed to recognise.

Like a living shield of armoured plate and devotion, Rho~4[1/12] and his Breachers surged forward. Accelerating up behind with Rho~4[2/12] and the pair of battle servitors acting on their aegis protocols, Gant filled the channels with canticles of faith.

<You are the children of the Ommissiah,> Gant told the Kataphrons. <Forged from lives unworthy, to serve as a cog in the great machine. Let the Motive Force flow through your flesh, your workings and the weaponry with which you have been blessed. Be form. Be function. Be one with your hallowed purpose and protocols divine. The enemies of Great Mars stand before you. Their wayward designs and corrupt imperatives are an affront to all that is logical and governed by reason. They deserve only destruction, delivered by servants of the Machine-God, cybernetic and true. Destroy the false constructs!>

As the Kataphron Breachers closed on the malformed Phaedrega and his temple guard, the skitarii primed their carbines. They stood in an unflinching circle before the accelerating might of the Kataphrons thundering down on them. Gathered about their corrupted forge master at the heart of the crossroads, the skitarii stood fearlessly with the furnace towers of dormant forges looming over them.

As the Kataphron Breachers cleared their weaponry to fire, the Anathdrach temple guard did something that was unthinkable to Gant. They turned – the barrels of their carbines aimed inwards – and blasted Vasco Phaedrega with a single salvo of warp-tainted rounds. The forge master was flung this way and that as gunfire tore through his robes and workings. Before the heretek had hit the freightway floor, and with his techno-incantations still echoing through the forge-complex’s vox-hailers, the skitarii of the Dark Mechanicum turned their weapons on themselves. Bringing the muzzles of carbines up to their hoods and under their chins, the temple guard of Anathdrach ended themselves. In a flash of automatic fire and a shower of brain and workings, their warp-tainted bodies crashed to the floor beside their fell master.

As the Kataphrons slowed and lowered their weapons, Rho~4[2/12] rolled on through their ranks. Coming to a stop, the Breacher allowed Gant to disembark. Climbing down from the rear hull of the heavy battle servitor, the magos scuttled towards the corpses on the crossroads. Stabbing his staff of office into the crumbling rockcrete, he made his way through the cybernetic corpses, while the Kataphrons established a perimeter around the slaughter, the magos dominus picked through the remains. He jabbed at dead skitarii with the interface prong of the walking stave and turned corpses over with his snaking mechadendrites, trying to decipher why they would turn on their master in such a way when their doctrina imperatives should have ensured their loyalty and obedience.

Aiming his shoulder-mounted eradication ray down at Vasco Phaedrega’s corpse, Gant turned the forge master over. Beneath the heretek’s bullet-ridden body, the magos dominus found one of the strange trenches. He looked around. Running like rails of rancid iron through the rockcrete of the boulevard, the trenches came from four directions, meeting in a cross at Phaedrega’s feet.

With a metallic flash, the solid iron at the intersection raged to an infernal glow. As Gant backed away, the iron within the trench heated, turning rapidly molten. Stepping over and away from the spitting fury of liquid iron, the magos dominus watched the glow shoot out along the trenches. Cursed iron sizzled and liquefied along bifurcating channels that split and split again, creating the layout of a great circuit across the complex boulevards.

Gant did not know whether the ruinous forge master had invoked the daemonic core of the planet or whether the Abystra Dynomicron had sacrificed its dark servants in order to invoke itself but he knew that he had walked into a trap.

As the Kataphron Breachers circled the site of the ritual sacrifice, their

weapons ready, the raging heat of daemoniac sentience melted the iron running along the freightways and into the dark and dormant forges. Within moments, the installations came to dreadful life. The magos could hear the heavy-duty labours of possessed machinery from within and the forge world's night was lit by the sudden infernal blaze of daemoniac industry.

Gant saw shadows in the forge entrance-maws. Shadows became silhouettes. Silhouettes became mechanical menaces, stomping out of the fires of roaring furnaces. A small army of daemon engines stalked from their birthing pools of liquid iron and out into the night. The possessed machines glowed with both the infernal heat of their creation and the unnatural light of their inner malevolence – nightmares of steaming plate and warped weaponry. They proceeded from every forge, marching out onto the boulevard like statues given relentless life. Warp-fuelled automata staggered like newborns, their plate and twisted limbs adorned with spikes. Hunchbacked Decimator engines towered over the hellish machines, tottering under the weight of their own armour and dragging the sparking talons of siege claws along the ground.

Guided towards the servants of the Machine-God by the Abystra Dynamicon, the army of daemon engines spilling from forges moved up the freightways. They marched with a mechanical, doom-laden gait towards the crossroads intersection and Gant's clade of Kataphron Breachers. There was nowhere to flee. The daemoniac core of the planet had him. It had used Vasco Phaedrega as bait in the gargantuan trap that was the furnace-lined production complex.

<This is the spawning ground of evil,> Gant announced in binharic cant. With his every word the daemon engines of the Crucib-Pentadictum came closer.

The Kataphrons remained in position around the magos, their tracks still and arc claws spitting and snapping. Their weaponry was aimed along the freightways in all four directions.

<This is a place where workings are perverted, iron is not itself and the holy sanctity of the machine is enslaved to the will of unnatural flesh. Abominations from beyond wear perversions of our weaponry, systems and plate like a second skin. These are not the will of the Great Creator. Their actions proceed not from the Motive Force. They are machines unrecognised by the Machine-God and heretical in his eyes. He therefore charges us to eradicate these abominable automata and send the things that pollute them back to the unreality from whence they came. My protectors, do your sacred duty.>

Rho~4[1/12] issued orders, prompting designated even number Kataphron units to reverse, enclosing the magos dominus in a shield of battleplate.

Designated odd number battle servitors rolled forward with the primus unit to meet the enemy.

With their tracks shredding the crumbling rockcrete of the boulevard, the six Kataphron Breachers smashed into the forward ranks of the daemon engines. Foetid battle-automata were knocked aside, off the uncertain hydraulics of their newly forged legs and crashed to the floor. The battle servitors turned in their turrets, hydraulic talons fixing onto robots and hurling them into their hell-crafted kindred. The crackling talons of arc-claws sizzled through plate, retracting with coruscating pincerfuls of daemonflesh and dread workings.

Helical streams of electrical energy flashed from the Kataphron Breachers' arc rifles. As the streams slammed into warped battle-automata and hunched Decimator engines, workings and weaponry exploded in violent showers of sparks and metallic frag. Daemonic blood oozed like oil from between clinkered plates. Like an electrostatic exorcism, the arc-streams rattled through the daemon engines, banishing the immaterial entities of furious malevolence that drove the monstrous heaps of scrap.

While the Kataphrons seemed an unstoppable force of fury and destruction, the daemon engines kept coming. Even as the battle servitors tore hellish hearts from armoured chests, crushed prone war machines beneath their tracks and drove the monstrous essence of daemonic fusions from their armoured tombs, more of the dread automata proceeded from infernal furnace works. Decimators smashed lesser engines aside to get to the Kataphrons, roaring their elemental rage. Rho~4[11/12] was impaled on the talon of a siege claw and torn from his turret socket. The servitor's truncated body was thrown between Decimator engines who tore his body apart.

Rho~4[5/12] was immobilised by a small horde of twisted battle-automata who smashed their crackling power fists down through his hull and left track. Swamped by droning daemon engines, the Kataphron Breacher was rendered into ruptured flesh and scrap.

Rho~4[9/12] fought with the furious might of the Machine-God, all but clearing the western approach before walking heresies blasted walls of warpflame from the barrels of carapace-mounted combustors, and the Breacher was lost in the torrent.

The Breachers protecting Gant offered supporting fire from the sacrificial site. The blinding brilliance of arcstreams blasted through the warp-tainted automata, overloading their workings and turning their hell-crafted forms into explosions of immaterial flame and pranging shrapnel. Torsion cannons cut swaths of

destruction through the advancing metal monstrosities. As the torque fields fixed on hulking limbs, weaponry and spiked plate, the projections revolved, tearing a churning maelstrom of invisible force through the enemy.

Daemon engines had appendages torn from their bodies, plate was wrenched and twisted savagely from Decimators and automata were broken in half. Forge-spawned robots were thrown backwards while other infernal constructs were smashed into ruins that sparked and streamed smoke from the freightway floor.

Within the armoured circle of Kataphron Breachers, Gant stepped from rear hull-section to rear hull-section, aiming his own weaponry between the brute forms of his heavy battle servitors. Tapping on plated shoulders with his staff of office, the magos dominus had the Breachers lean aside as he sent hailstorms of bullets from his macrostubber into the approaching enemy. Locking his shoulder-mounted eradication ray into position, Gant fired the powerful weapon, melting monstrous Decimator engines into nothingness and evaporating from existence entire columns of relentless daemoniac machines.

<Bring these aberrations iron enlightenment,> Gant commanded as a Decimator took the head of Rho~4[3/12] in the talon-tips of its siege claw and ripped it from his armoured shoulders, leaving a gore-spouting stump. <Bring it with beam, track and claw.>

The magos dominus emptied his macrostubber into the daemoniac war machine as it turned and charged towards him. Crumbling shards of rockcrete bounced on the boulevard with its every step while its armoured chest turned into a display of sparks and stub ricochets. As the priest's weapon ran dry the Decimator engine answered with its own storm lasers, cutting through Rho~4[2/12] with sizzling beams of warp-streaked light. As the heavy battle servitor died in his turret, Gant was forced to leap onto the hull of Rho~4[10/12], who suffered a similar fate.

Suddenly the great Decimator stopped, as though its thunderous advance had been stopped by some unseen force. Pulled down to its knees, the rockcrete shattering beneath it, the thing's weaponry grew silent. The sound of shredded workings and cabling could be heard within the plate of its barrel chest. Gore and oil splattered to the ground as the abomination's head was pulled backwards into its chest to be churned up with the rest of its afflicted innards. As the daemon engine fell forward and collapsed in a heap, Gant saw that Rho~4[1/12] had rolled up behind the thing and blasted rotating beams of gravitic energy up through the daemon engine's back.

<Bring down these unhallowed temples of creation,> Theronymous Gant

called to the remaining Breacher units, gesturing around at the forges. Many of the furnace works had already fallen to darkness, their remaining resources and the fell power of the Abystra Dynamicon spent. The balefires of creation had died away and the toothed maws from which metal monstrosities had proceeded were now empty. Concentrating their fire on those forges that still burned bright with the molten iron of birthing pits, the Kataphron Breachers tore the guts out of the buildings with torsion cannons and overloaded the sentient machinery that toiled within in arc-streams of electrical energy.

Rho~4[6/12], still fighting the daemon engines, exploded in a ball of flame and his ruptured power plant took out a throng of battle-automata that had been beating the Breacher into the freightway with their power fists. With that last knot of foes defeated and straggler engines still marching into the withering fire of Gant's heavy battle servitors, the magos dominus was about to announce their victory. The furnace works all about them were either demolished wrecks or twisted temples of silent darkness. He turned his eradication ray on the last operational forge, blasting the entrance columns, causing the superstructure of the furnace works above to collapse and bury the bright blaze of the maw in thousands of tonnes of wreckage.

Then he heard an ungodly roar. The trench of daemoniac iron that fed the forge with its malefic power still burned bright in the boulevard before it. The small mountain of wreckage that the building had become began to quake. A pair of huge hydraulic pincers punched through the scrap to take hold of a girder that had collapsed across the entrance. At first Gant thought that the monstrosity beyond might heave the thick girder aside but instead it cut through the structural support with ease.

As the magos dominus stumbled back, Rho~4[1/12] and his remaining Breachers thrashed forwards on their tracks. The daemoniac war engine pushed through the wreckage of the forge, shaking off cabling, struts and sections of roof. It was unlike the daemoniac walkers that had marched from the other furnace works. Scuttling forth like a spider on spiked hydraulic legs, the infernal engine cleared a path with its metal claws. Riding atop the legs was a tank-like hull that mounted fearsome weaponry, including the fat barrel of a battle cannon. Crowning the abomination was a daemoniac skull of black metal that leered at Gant and what remained of his Kataphrons. As its horrific maw opened and an inhuman bellow of mechanical rage emitted from its armoured chest, Gant thought he heard the frustration of the Abystra Dynamicon.

Arc-streams of searing energy blazed from Rho~4[12/12] and Rho~4[4/12]

and danced across the daemon engine's form. Grabbed in one colossal pincer, Rho~4[12/12] was turned into a mulch of pulverised flesh and plate. The abomination's second claw came down like a hammer, smashing Rho~4[4/12] down through his own hull and tracks. The resulting explosion damaged the claw and knocked the magos dominus back into a stagger.

As the metal monster retracted the sparking stub of its mangled limb, Rho~4[7/12] blazed an arc-stream across its armoured chest. For a moment the daemon engine stalled before returning fire from its reaper autocannons. A torsion cannon blast from Rho~4[1/12] turned the weapons array into a mangled mess of twisted barrels and spilling ammunition belts. Jammed, the weapon exploded, knocking the daemon engine sideways on its scuttling legs.

Locking hydraulics in place and bracing itself, the daemon engine blasted a shell from the fat cannon mounted centrally on its spiked hull. Rho~4[7/12] was annihilated by the apocalyptic blast that thundered through a forge opposite and brought the building crashing to the ground.

Only Rho~4[1/12] was left. The Kataphron Breacher voxed a stream of binharic cant at his priestly master. The battle servitor needed to get the magos away from the great daemon engine.

<Your aegis protocols be damned,> Theronymous Gant roared back. <By all that obeys logic and is true, this aberration of iron will be destroyed.>

As the daemon engine reached out, Gant blasted away with his eradication ray, turning the monstrous claw at the end of the appendage to streaming smoke carried away on the wind. With a resounding *clunk*, the engine smashed Gant's augmented body aside with the stump. It angled a multi-barrelled missile launcher down with a series of nasty clicks, forcing Gant to engage his refractor field.

As a missile slammed into the protective field, the magos dominus was knocked back, his form at the centre of a crackling ball of energy. At such close range the daemon engine was also battered back, but that didn't stop the thing firing another missile at Gant. This time he was knocked head over cybernetic body, coming to rest at the foot of a furnace building's column, his refractor field sizzling to nothing about him.

The daemon engine turned its hull on its spidery legs and shrugged off the attentions of Rho~4[1/12]'s torsion cannon. As armoured panels twisted and detached from its obscene mechanical body, it locked hydraulics and fired the monstrous battle cannon. Rho~4[1/12] sped backwards and missed the worst of the catastrophic blast, but as a fountain of rockcrete was sent skywards, the

Kataphron Breacher bounced on a smashed track. With the explosion washing over his breacher-plate and grit raining down about him, the battle servitor came to a shuddering halt.

‘Over here, you abominable machine...’ Theronymous Gant vox-hailed across the freightway. The daemon engine turned on its hydraulic legs, its battle cannon moving towards the magos dominus and then back towards the battle servitor who, though immobilised, was re-charging his weapon. Gant fired a beam of disincorporating energy from his eradication ray straight through the legs of the monstrous machine, blasting a spiked limb to nothingness. Unbalanced, it toppled backwards.

< Rho~4[1/12],> Gant transmitted in binharic cant. <Bury this thing.>

The Breacher turned in his turret with a damaged judder and blasted the gravitic force of his torsion cannon at the nearest forge, tearing the structural innards out of the fell temple. The building cascaded down around the Kataphron. Heavy support struts, corrugated wall sections, girders and furnace works architecture smashed down around Rho~4[1/12] like an avalanche of steel.

As the Kataphron disappeared beneath the collapsing forge, the tumbling wreckage partially buried the daemoniac war machine. With girders lying across it and the twisted detritus of the temple weighing it down, the abomination could not get to its legs or turn its armoured hull. Its monstrous weaponry was now fixed on the sky.

Scrambling up the mound of wreckage, hidden by a miasma of dust, Gant made his desperate way up towards the buried engine. Holstering his macrostubber and locking his spent eradication ray in place on his shoulder weapons cradle, the magos dominus pulled his cog-bladed power axe from his back and gripped it in two of his many bionic talons. Using his walking stave to steady himself across the debris, Gant pulled himself up towards the daemon engine with the snaking length of his mechadendrites.

The infernal creation was still attempting to raise its bulk from the wreckage and turn its useless weaponry. The leering metal skull of its daemoniac form roared the ire of not only the furious entity that possessed it but also the Abystra Dynomicron that had given it dread life.

Swinging his power axe down with all the force in his augmented body, Gant attempted to chop the abomination’s head from its mechanical body. The sizzling serrations of the cog-blade bit into daemoniac flesh again and again. The thing roared, and then it screamed. Its death was not clean, with the axe taking five

strikes to cut through the brawn of its neck. Finally, and with the agonised screeches of the monstrosity still echoing about the Crucib-Pentadictum complex, its metallic head bounced down the wreckage slope.

Taking a moment to thank the Omnissiah for the victory, Theronymous Gant followed the head down to where Rho~4[1/12] had been lost to the collapsing forge. Using the power axe like a pick, the priest began to dig the heavy battle servitor out of the wreckage. Uncovering his head and shoulder, Gant soon realised how pointless the endeavour was. A girder had caved in the servitor's tattooed head and knocked the ring from his nose. The magos stood there for a moment before grunting. He hadn't uncovered Rho~4[1/12] out of concern or respect.

Without the Kataphron Breacher and his tracks, it would be a long walk back to the forces of the Machine-God.

Shouldering his power axe, Magos Theronymous Gant left the heavy battle servitor behind and made his way south out of the complex, his staff of office tapping the freightway as he did.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Rob Sanders** is the author of ‘The Serpent Beneath’, a novella that appeared in the *New York Times* bestselling Horus Heresy anthology *The Primarchs*. His other Black Library credits include the Warhammer 40,000 titles *Adeptus Mechanicus: Skitarius*, *Legion of the Damned*, *Atlas Infernal* and *Redemption Corps* and the audio drama *The Path Forsaken*, along with the Warhammer Archaon duology, *Everchosen* and *Lord of Chaos*. He has also written many Quick Reads for the Horus Heresy and Warhammer 40,000. He lives in the city of Lincoln, UK.

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