WARHAMMER 40,000

SANCTUS REACH

HOUR OF THE WOLF





CAMPAIGN SUPPLEMENT

WARHAMMER VAULT
WARHAMMER+



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HOUR OF THE WOLF



THE CONCLUSION OF THE
SANCTUS REACH CAMPAIGN

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INTRODUCTION

Alaric Prime is gripped in the green fist of the Ork, its defenders reeling from the impact of the Red Waaagh!. The Space Wolves have arrived to pry the world from the invaders, yet they face a war that will become more desperate by the day.

Sanctus Reach: Hour of the Wolf is the third book in the three-part Sanctus Reach campaign. Following on from the events described in *Sanctus Reach: The Red Waaagh!* and *Sanctus Reach: Stormclaw,* this book follows the final, fatal battle for Alaric Prime. Compelled by honour and guided by prophecy, the Space Wolves arrive to reinforce the defenders of Alaric Prime. Fighting shoulder to shoulder, the Space Wolves, Cadians and Knights begin to drive the Orks back, one step at a time. As cracks begin to show in the Imperial alliance, the defenders of Alaric Prime are forced to fight harder than ever to survive. Yet as the two forces battle to the death, none can predict the terrifying consequences of their bloody war.

WARHAMMER 40,000 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, stratagems, datasheets and other content for you to spice up your games of Warhammer 40,000 and reenact the events of Hour of the Wolf.

HOW THIS SUPPLEMENT WORKS

Sanctus Reach: Hour of the Wolf contains the following sections:

- **The Wrath of Fenris:** The war for Alaric Prime reaches new heights of savagery as the Space Wolves loose their fury. As the conflict swings back and forth, traps are laid and sprung, and mighty heroes rise in victory or fall in bloody ruin. As the Orks are driven ever back, their leaders are forced to resort to truly desperate measures, the consequences of which will be grave indeed.

- **New Missions:** Themed missions for your games of Warhammer 40,000, written to represent pivotal battles in the Hour of the Wolf 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 II:** Five exciting new missions that expand upon the Planetstrike rules featured in *Sanctus Reach: The Red Waaagh!* Death rains from the skies and invaders descend in hordes while defenders man the battlements. Choose whether to lay waste to fortresses or fend off your opponent's elite warriors and hold your ground.

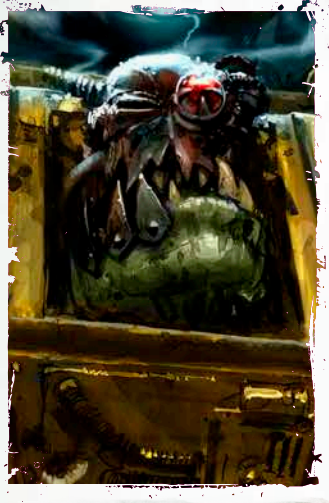






A WORLD BESET

Death has come to the Knight world of Alaric Prime. The titanic Ork Waaagh! of Mogrok the Mangler has swept across the planet, overwhelming the defenders and burning and looting all in its path. However, this war is only just beginning.



BRAINZ OVER BRAWN

Mogrok the Mangler was once the power behind the throne of Waaagh! Grukk. Now, having engineered the downfall of his former boss, Mogrok rules the roost. He is that rarest of things, an Ork with a plan (one that doesn't just involve punching people's teeth in and yelling 'Waaagh!')

The Mangler has used chicanery, larceny, gratuitous forward planning and a healthy dose of outright violence to humble the human defenders time and again.

Now he stands poised on the brink of a victory that will cement Big Mek Mogrok as the ruler of the Waaagh! once and for all. With the Imperial defenders at their wits' end, Mogrok looks set to become the biggest, baddest boss since Ghazghkull Thraka.

Waaagh! Grukk hit the Sanctus Reach system like a tidal wave. Millions of Orks fell upon Obstiria, the home world of the Obsidian Glaives Chapter, annihilating the Space Marines wholesale. The hive world of Ghul Jensen fell next, the Orks' momentum seemingly unstoppable. Finally, their trail of destruction brought the greenskins to Alaric Prime, an ancient and hidebound Knight world of turbulent oceans, verdant islands, and grim, sprawling penitentiaries.

Warned of the impending threat by their household Astropaths, the knightly houses of Degallio and Kestren elected to take action. They breached Alaric Prime's Sacred Mountain, succeeding in using the ancient secrets hidden within to send the Imperium a cry for help. Though the aftershocks of this deed almost brought the stiff-necked houses to civil war, the situation was defused by the arrival of Cadian reinforcements. Castellan Stein led a massive army group of Cadian regiments down to Alaric Prime's surface, their numbers augmented by an accompanying strike force of Schola Progenium Tempestus Scions.

Stein's forces dispersed across the surface of Alaric Prime, swiftly digging in and preparing their defences against the coming of the Orks. The main Cadian strength was concentrated upon the planet's primary landmass, Sacred Isle. Meanwhile, smaller forces were dispatched to garrison the isles of Kamata, Brahmica, and Velemestrin – which adjoined Sacred Isle by way of natural or man-made bridges many miles in length – and the dozens of smaller rigs, mining facilities, refinery isles and dock-complexes that dotted the planet's sulphurous seas. None could predict precisely where the Orks' first blow might fall. The entire planet had to be ready.

Their regiments bolstered by the looming presence of Alaric Prime's mighty Knights, the Cadian defenders dug their trenches deep and aimed their weapons at the skies. Soon enough, false stars lit the heavens as the Ork rust-ships began their thunderous approach.

RAIN OF RUST

The greenskins fell from the skies in their millions. Their craft soon proved to be sheathed in nigh-impenetrable bubbles of force. The rust ships plunged down through Alaric Prime's atmosphere before slamming into Sacred Isle en masse to disgorge tides of screaming greenskins. It was an unsubtle headbutt of a planetary invasion, and one that set the planet's defenders reeling. Believing themselves more than a match for their crude foes, the Knights of House Kestren charged headlong into the Ork horde. Though their display of bravado was stirring, they had reckoned without the sheer ferocity of Warlord Grukk Face-rippa. Surrounded and outmatched, the charge of House Kestren went from debacle to massacre, as one Knight after another was brought low. Without the Knights' support the Cadian front lines were swiftly overwhelmed, and only the intervention of the famed 1652nd Cadian tank regiment, the 'Steel Host', prevented an outright disaster. The Cadians fell back in good order, yet could not ignore the fact that an entire knightly household had been lost before the war had even truly begun.

The Orks' momentum had to be slowed. To this end, Castellan Stein initiated a strategy to draw the Orks in and cut them apart. While the Imperium's forces on outflung islands fought holding actions, Stein met the main thrust of the Ork horde as they attempted to cross the two bridges over Boiling River. Deploying his regiments in a formation known throughout the army group as Stein's Anvil, the Cadian commander planned to funnel the Orks onto the bridges and slaughter them en masse. The battle that followed was a veritable meat-grinder. Orks died in their thousands as precision shelling and small arms fire rained down upon them. Bullgryns marched onto the bridges, locking shields and shutting the door hard in the face of the Ork charge. Yet when Warlord Grukk thundered into the press, the Imperial defenders began to lose ground. Worse was to follow as a great horde of greenskins crossed the river by means of warpcraft, falling upon the Imperial artillery positions and

turning the guns upon the Cadians below. Only the intervention of House Degallio rescued the situation, their island fortress disgorging a strike force of Knights who crashed into the Ork flank. The Knights inflicted hideous casualties upon the greenskin horde, even hurling Grukk and his retinue into the bubbling waters of Boiling River. Once the Cadians had withdrawn, the Knights fell back.

Matters looked grim for the Alarican forces, but treachery was brewing within the Ork ranks. When the Imperium's forces rallied on the slopes of Sacred Mountain the Ork hordes suffered an almighty blow. At the battle's height, the half-boiled Warboss Grukk charged forth once again only to find that someone had disabled the force field on his personal Battlewagon. Facing the wrath of Stein's dedicated bodyguards and the ancient Knight known as Gerantius, Grukk was caught in a brutal firestorm of grenade rounds and plasma blasts, before having his prized ride unceremoniously kicked over on top of him to finish the job.



THE WAR OF KUNNIN'

In the wake of Grukk's fall, the Ork horde dissolved into mayhem. The Orks were leaderless, fighting amongst themselves for power. Stein capitalised on this, isolating one Ork horde after another and exterminating them without mercy. Yet the men of the Imperium could not know that, even as they thought themselves resurgent, they were playing into the hands of Mogrok the Mangler.

Long had this devious Big Mek coveted Grukk's rusty throne, and now he moved to seize it. This phase of the battle for Alaric Prime would come to be known as the War of Kunnin', and it saw one Ork ruse after another brought to bear. Loot was central to Mogrok's plans. His Lootas and Burna Boyz crawled like flies across each battlefield to reclaim and recycle the iron carcasses left in the wake of war. Seeing Mogrok as the boss who started all the best fights (and won them), the tribes united behind him. The forces of the Imperium were denied reinforcement by cleverly laid ambushes and booby traps, while Blood Axe Kommandos struck at munitions dumps. Worst of all, Mogrok was nearing completion of a mighty super-weapon: the Klaw of Mork. This device seized a meteor from its orbit around the planet and began to draw it down on a collision course with Sacred Isle.

A desperate raid by Tempestor Prime Whitlock's Tempestus Scions saw the Klaw of Mork sabotaged, sending the meteor off course. The Imperial forces fell back to Sacred Mountain itself. As if responding to the plight of its defenders, the mountain's systems woke to reveal a mighty fortress hidden beneath its flanks. Meanwhile, below, the bedrock yawned in a great chasm, this new moat swiftly filling with boiling water from subterranean rivers. In the newly revealed Fortress Alaric, the Imperial forces could find shelter from the storm about to descend.

As the final Ork offensive began, the Cadians and surviving Knights fought back hard. However, Mogrok had one more deadly ploy prepared, and the Cadians could only watch in horror as a re-launched rust ship collided with the plunging meteor. Smashed back onto its original course, the meteor streaked down and ploughed into the flank of Sacred Mountain. In a blast akin to the strike of a cyclonic torpedo, the impact sent a thunderous shockwave roaring out in all directions to slaughter hundreds of thousands on both sides. Yet even amidst this devastation, many combatants had survived. Those soldiers of the Imperium sheltered deep enough within Fortress Alaric were protected from the fury of the blast. They clung to lasrifles and stared at each other with wide eyes as the corridors shuddered and the lights flickered madly. Outside, the Knights had reacted with selfless nobility, engaging ancient protocols that projected a crackling net of ion shielding from one walker to the next. Though several of their number paid the ultimate price for this heroic act, the rest stood firm in the face of the blast, a great swathe of their Cadian allies shielded in their midst. As for the Orks, Mogrok wasn't the sort to drop a meteor on his own army without planning for the consequences. The greenskins were protected by massive domes of force under which they now huddled. As the stunned survivors clambered to their feet it was clear that a mighty Ork horde remained.

It was then that a new rain of falling stars appeared, cutting through the smoke. As they plunged towards the planet's surface, the howling began, and everything descended into fire and mayhem again.



A CASTELLAN UNBOWED

A veteran of battles uncounted, Jakren Stein has faced the worst that a hostile galaxy can throw at him. Yet the battle for Alaric Prime has tested him to his limits, spiritually and mentally.

The Cadians are no strangers to hardship, their officers trained to make calculated strategic responses to even the most hopeless of situations. It is not the Cadian way to squander soldiers needlessly, yet neither are they a people who shrink from doing what must be done. However, the butchers' bill for Alaric Prime rises astronomically and still victory seems no closer at hand.

In Mogrok, Stein has found a nemesis who overcomes all his training and experience. Grukk was a monstrous butcher, but at least he was predictable. Since the rise of Mogrok, the war has been slipping out of Stein's control. The Ork's tactics are so outlandish that the Imperium's forces can do little but react. With each defeat, Stein's frustration grows, his dangerous temper boiling closer to the surface. With each new casualty report, his hope is crushed a little more.


A WORLD AT WAR
Ork rust ship landing site
Major battle site
Fortress Alaric
Imperial strongpoint
Imperial installation
Isle Brahmica
Imperial Outpost 245
Cadian and Brahmica forces fighting Orks
The Northern Refinery
Northern Highlands
The Big Smasha
Orbital relay station
Sulphur mine
The Pallid Plains
Fortress 14
Sulphur mine
Sulphur Marshes
Prisonfort 231
The Crimson Klaw
Sulphur mine
The Grox Markets
Fort Black Hammer
The Scar
The Salt Domes
Manufactorum Complex Ro-Alpha
The Wrath of Gork
Yellowfog Forest
Silvermist Forests
SACRED ISLE
Kamata's Eye Refinery
The Ironforge
Isle Kamata
CHOKING SEA


NORDUS OCEAN
Isle Kordus
Comet Path
Prismatic Bay
Isle Velemestrin
22000
The Amber Wastes
Velemestrin Bay
Scalding Canal
4500
House Velemestrin reinforcements trapped here
2000
Twins of Fire
Sacred Mountain
The Hallowed Lake
Fortress 12
Knights Causeway
Imperial Outpost 291
Comet Impact Crater
Ork blockade zone
Ashflow River
Imperial Outpost 290
Complex Administrata
Imperial Outpost 289
Teutonia Spaceport
Haftguard Fortress
The Spear
Boiling River
Speartip Refinery
Bridge Zeta Sec
Skyshield Nexus
Vigil Lighthouse
THE SEETHING SEA
Bridge Zeta Tert
Sulphurbough Jungles
Isle Degallio
The Steeljaw
The Great Estuary
Kestren Manufactorum Complex
Blistered Isle
Isle Kestren
Kestren Mines

THE WRATH OF FENRIS

As the shockwave of the meteor's impact fades and the dazed Cadian survivors drag themselves to their feet, they are outnumbered more starkly than ever by the greenskin invaders. The situation looks bleak, but as contrails fill the skies, it becomes apparent that the tables are about to be turned upon Mogrok's horde in a shocking and violent fashion.

THE FURY OF FENRIS

The skies above Sacred Mountain boiled with smoke as black as night. Ash fell in a dismal rain across the reeling combatants below, while out on the plains mighty firestorms still raged. Great mounds of rubble and wreckage lay strewn about the mountain's feet, rising above a spiderweb of cracks and fissures that jetted clouds of sulphurous fumes. It was into this apocalyptic wasteland that the Sons of Russ plunged on trails of fire.

Dozens of grey-blue Drop Pods plummeted toward Sacred Mountain, glowing with the heat of atmospheric re-entry. As they fell, the vox network of the Cadians and the crude comms of the Orks alike whined with feedback. From every speaker-grille and vox-horn burst a chilling howl, rising in volume as the Drop Pods sped toward the ground. The cry of a thousand hungry wolves cut through the greenskins' bellowing, drawing their eyes skyward to the doom descending upon them as the thunderous howl reached its crescendo. Moments later, the assault craft struck home.



Thrusters bellowed flame, slowing the Drop Pods' meteoric plunge at the last moment. Ceramite and plasteel crashed against stone with boneshaking force as each craft hit the flanks of Sacred Mountain. From below, Mogrok's green horde sent up a monstrous roar, a challenge to match the howling of the attackers. In answer, locking bolts blasted free, the Drop Pods slammed open, and an avalanche of power armoured ferocity plunged down the mountainside.

Squad after squad of Blood Claws burst from their restraints, loosing howls of feral joy as they charged toward their foe. They leapt across ragged chasms and plunged heedlessly down sheer slopes, surefooted as the wolves that gave their Chapter its name. At their head charged a figure of legend. Ragnar Blackmane sprinted towards the Orks, his night-black pelt billowing behind him and a killing light in his eyes. Behind this charging mass loped grizzled squads of Long Fangs, their heavy weapons slung easily over their shoulders as they sought a vantage point to cover the attack. The moment they were in position, the veteran warriors unleashed a vicious fusillade into the milling Orks below. Ramshackle tanks exploded, pierced by ruby spears of light, while frag missiles corkscrewed into packed masses of greenskins to detonate with flesh-shredding force.

Galvanised into action, the Ork horde surged forward once more. Many thousands of greenskins still remained around the feet of Sacred Mountain, and now they hurled themselves towards their foes with renewed vigour. Yet their efforts seemed ill-coordinated, lacking purpose and cohesion. Ork vehicle crews struggled to restart crude engines choked with ash and dust. Smaller greenskins scattered in all directions, heedless of the angry bellows of their bullying overseers. Seeing their confusion, Castellan Stein felt fresh hope surge through him. Faced with the destruction of his entire force, he had allowed despair to drive him to momentary madness – now his training and discipline snapped back into place. Filled with a new purpose, the Cadian commander began to bark a steady stream of orders. His forces swiftly consolidated their position and began to pour a storm of fire into their foes. Ork corpses were flung into the air as battle cannon shells struck home, while volleys of lasgun fire fell among the greenskins like a hissing rain. Those Knights whose suits still functioned added their own wrath to the bombardment – rapid-fire battle cannons and thermal cannons roared, blowing bloody holes in the heaving press.

Moments later, the Claws of Russ struck. Howling ferocious war cries, Ragnar Blackmane's Blood Claws charged into their foes with a resounding crash. A ragged curtain of Ork shots punched several of the hot-blooded young warriors from their feet, but this only added to the Space Wolves' maddened rage. Swords and axes swung in crimson arcs,

hewing limbs and heads from hapless Orks with every pass. Blackmane was a whirlwind of destruction amid his cumbersome foes, weaving and dodging as the Orks hacked frantically at him to no avail. Grabbing one huge Ork around the throat, Blackmane stove in its skull with a single thunderous headbutt. Still clutching its twitching corpse, he bulled forward, using the Ork's body to soak up a fusillade of crude bullets before hurling it to one side and carving his blade through the necks of two Boyz at once. Around him his brethren fought with similar ferocity, inspired by Blackmane's example to ever greater acts of heroism and violence. Blood sprayed in jetting arcs and the ground was soon carpeted with mangled green bodies as the Blood Claws' charge broke the greenskin line.

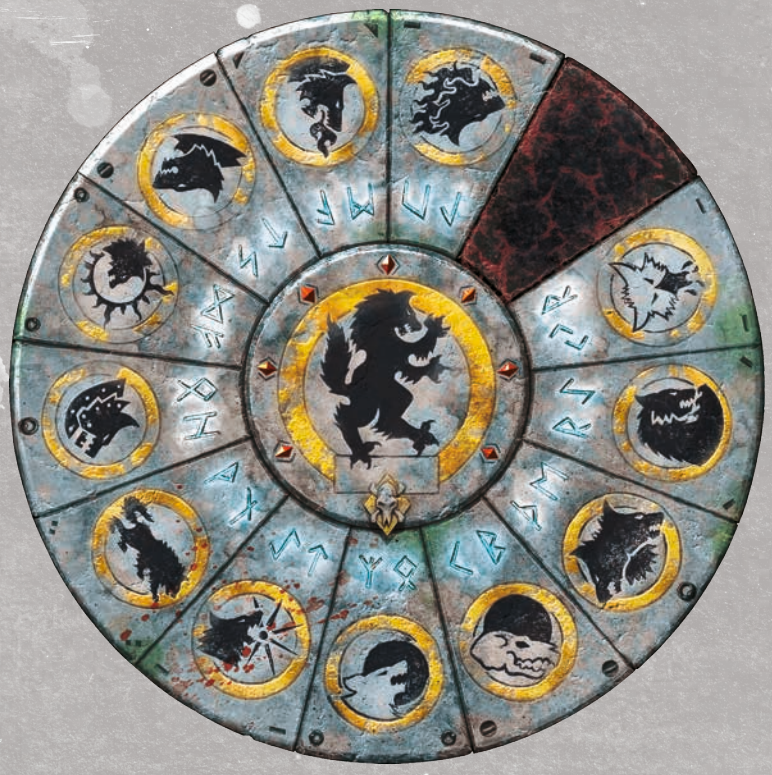
Trapped aboard his powerless Knight, Lord Neru Degallio watched the butchery unfold with awe and admiration. The scale of the carnage was breathtaking, the spreading panic among the greenskins satisfying beyond words. He had seen the Obsidian Glaives in battle before, yet their precise, measured way of war bore little resemblance to the animal ferocity being unleashed below. As the fighting swept between the legs of the White Warden, Degallio struggled to awaken the spirit of his damaged Knight, desperate to join the fight once more.

Orks live for fighting, but in the face of such punishment Mogrok's horde began to lose ground. More greenskins were hurling themselves into the melee with each passing moment, but the Blood Claws were cutting them down as fast as they came, and the punishing barrage from the Long Fangs was exacting a heavy toll. As the Cadian forces steadily disengaged they were able to bring ever more firepower to bear, Orks falling before their fury like wheat before scythes. Artillery crewmen who had sought shelter in the deep bunkers of Sacred Mountain now returned to the fight, pneumo-lifts delivering them back to the surface ready to man their guns once more. As the Basilisks and Wyverns began to rain heavy shells and vicious shrapnel down on the carnage below, the Orks died even faster. A fierce grin spread across Castellan Stein's face as he watched the foe begin to crumble. The Imperium might win this war yet, he thought.

'Sons of Fenris! Now is the hour of blood! Now is the time to fight! By the end of this day, every warrior among you will have a new verse to add to your sagas! In the name of Russ and the Allfather, kill them all!'

- Ragnar Blackmane





THE GREAT COMPANIES

The Space Wolves are notorious for their deviations from the Codex Astartes, one example of which is the structure of the Chapter. The Space Wolves are organised into twelve Great Companies. These brotherhoods have more in common with a tribe of warriors than a conventional company of Space Marines. Each is led by one of the twelve heroic Wolf Lords, and each Great Company can vary enormously in size and composition.

The force that came to the aid of the defenders of Alaric Prime comprised elements from the Great Companies of Ragnar Blackmane, Krom Dragongaze and the current Great Wolf himself, Logan Grimnar. These mighty heroes led their warriors in person, determined to purge Alaric Prime and the entire Sanctus Reach System of the greenskin taint once and for all.



STRIKE FORCE STORMCLAW

A single Space Marine is the equal of dozens of lesser foes. There are those from the Sons of Russ who would claim that a single Space Wolf is worth even more. The throng that Logan Grimnar led to Alaric Prime, designated Strike Force Stormclaw, comprised over two hundred of these vaunted warriors, the cream of whom fought at the Old Wolf's side.

A KROM DRAGONGAZE'S WARBAND

Originally tasked with leading the second wave of Space Wolves down to the surface of Alaric Prime, Krom Dragongaze instead chose to seek his own glory. Peeling off from the invasion forces in his Thunderhawk, the arrogant Wolf Lord went on the hunt for none other than Warlord Grukk Face-rippa himself. It was a quest that would end in ignominious failure, Krom and his handpicked warriors barely escaping the Blistered Isle with their lives.

For this reason, the Fierce-eye and his retinue would fight harder than ever during the battle for Alaric Prime. From the hot-headed younglings of Krom's Blood Claws, through his steady, dependable Grey Hunters and up to his fierce veteran Wolf Guard, all would strive to recover the lost honour of their Great Company. Yet none would fight as hard as Krom himself: the bitter taste of shame lay thick on his tongue, and would be washed away only by the honeyed mead of victory well-won. It could be no other way, for Krom's towering ego could not sustain any further damage.

B LOGAN GRIMNAR'S WOLF GUARD

A mighty hero of a thousand battlefields and more, the ruler of the Space Wolves remains as potent a warrior as he ever was. Riding to war in his chariot *Stormrider*, the Old Wolf falls upon his foes like a thunderbolt. He hacks down his foes with the feral joy of a true son of Russ, fighting with a vigour that belies his great age. Yet Grimnar is far more than a mere warrior, for with centuries of experience comes boundless wisdom. The Old Wolf is a cunning tactician, wielding the might of his unruly Chapter with a skill few could match.

Alongside Logan Grimnar fight his dedicated Wolf Guard. Formed into squads of Terminator-armoured veterans, each of these battle-scarred Fenrisians is a hero in his own right. Together, they comprise a force of such potent lethality that few enemies can even slow their advance, much less fight them on equal terms. Combined, the sagas of Grimnar's Wolf Guard tell a tale of unbridled glory that would take many years in the telling.

C THE HONOURED ANCIENTS

Deep within the Fang sleep the Dreadnoughts of the Space Wolves, each sarcophagus thronging with glorious memories and dreams. Only in dire need are these valorous ancients awoken, and only at the behest of the Great Wolf himself. The majority of Dreadnought pilots are many centuries old, yet those heroes interred in the Venerable Dreadnoughts of the Space Wolves can count their age in millennia. Logan Grimnar will often keep these ancients close at hand during battle, for not only are their skills in combat exceptional, but their wisdom and insight can change the course of whole wars.

D THE STORMSPEAR

The Space Wolves possess an extensive armoury of battle tanks with which to support their operations. Strike Force Stormclaw boasted a sizeable complement of these armoured behemoths, from dependable Rhinos to massive, rumbling Land Raiders. These vehicles were collectively known amongst the strike force as the Stormspear, and the Stormspear played a pivotal role in several of the fast-moving, hard-hitting engagements that the Space Wolves fought on Alaric Prime. Living up to its nickname, this mighty spearhead of tanks was hurled into the very heart of one Ork horde after another, deploying the warriors of Fenris amongst their enemies and scouring the foes of the Imperium from the face of Alaric Prime.

E RAGNAR'S BLOOD CLAWS

Though replete with his Grey Hunters, Wolf Guard and Long Fangs, Ragnar Blackmane's company has ever been famous for the exploits of its Blood Claws. Despite the unprecedented speed of his climb through the ranks, Ragnar himself is still comparatively young and hot-headed, engendering a sense of kinship with the Blood Claws under his command. It is for this reason more than any other that his Great Company always throngs with packs of wild eyed Blood Claws looking to earn glory beneath the Young Wolf's banner.



The complement of warriors that Ragnar Blackmane brought to Strike Force Stormclaw was reflective of this trend. Grimnar's prodigy ensured that his personal Wolf Guard strode to war at his side, backed by a core of experienced Grey Hunters and Long Fangs. Yet the bulk of his force comprised Blood Claws, Swiftclaw Bikers and Skyclaws, all baying for blood and ready to write glorious new verses for their warrior sagas.

BACK FROM THE BRINK

The greenskins are reeling from the Space Wolves' lightning offensive, yet still they press forward in a bellowing mass. Now, as the battle hangs in the balance, the very gates of Sacred Mountain come under xenos attack once more.

'Hey, Olaf. See that Shadowsword down there? Yes, that one! How many other Shadowswords can you see, rocks-for-brains? Three barrels of Goldenfrost Stout says me and Skard can haul that ugly son-of-a-troll back onto the bridge before it takes a dip in the World Wolf's drinking trough!'

- Gunnar Redhammer, Wolf Guard to Logan Grimnar

Castellan Stein had assigned two super-heavy tanks to guard the gate of Fortress Alaric – the Baneblade *Iron Ettin* and its sister tank, a Shadowsword named *Steel Cyclops*. Though the crews of both vehicles had fought with honour and distinction, *Iron Ettin* had been carved open during the height of the battle by a band of heavily armoured Orks with roaring buzzsaws for fists. The commander of *Steel Cyclops*, Jens Paultzer, had feared his tank would be next. He had thus ordered his driver to roar out onto the drawbridge before the gate, putting some distance between his tank and the foe. Then the meteor struck, and everything turned to white light and thunder.

Paultzer regained consciousness with a lurch. He gasped in a breath, only to retch on a lungful of thick, oily smoke. Coughing and wheezing, the commander scrambled upward through sparking wires and buckled metal. He recoiled as the dead weight of his gunner's corpse fell against him, then heaved the body aside and triggered the hatch release above the marksman's throne. Fresh air flooded the interior of the stalled tank. Paultzer drank it in like good amasec, pulling himself up and grubbing blood and oil from his eyes as he tried to take stock. As his head cleared, it became obvious that the honourable *Cyclops,* veteran of scores of engagements, was dead. However, Paultzer's eyes widened with horror as he took in his own predicament.

When the meteor hit, great sections of Sacred Mountain had broken free and tumbled down to wreak havoc on attacker and defender alike. One such boulder, easily the size of a bulk lander, had narrowly missed *Steel Cyclops*, but had taken a great bite out of the side of the drawbridge. Now the *Cyclops* sat powerless, slewed lengthways across the bridge. Its front axles were hanging out over the precipitous drop to the boiling waters below. Even as Paultzer tried to quell his sudden vertigo, he could hear the bridge's superstructure emitting tortured groans, its cables singing with tension as they strained to support several hundred tons of tank. He watched nervously as fresh cracks spread across the rockcrete with alarming speed.

The comet's blast had thrown the armoured Orks around like toys. Many had plummeted off the bridge to their deaths. The rest were strewn about near the fortress' gates, their prone forms dusted with a thin coating of ash. Now, though, the resilient greenskins were stirring once more. One by one, they hauled each other to their feet, servos whining in protest and battered joints sparking. The Orks caught sight of *Steel Cyclops* and, amid much bellowing and revving of saws, advanced on their stricken prey. At the same time, more greenskins were sweeping onto the far end of the drawbridge, followed by clanking walkers belching black smoke. Some of the brutes were shoved off the precarious remains of the bridge by their jostling fellows. However, many more scrambled ever closer, determined to finish off Paultzer's tank before breaching the gates to the fortress itself. Trapped, with no power and no escape, Jens Paultzer drew his sidearm and prepared to die.

The sudden bellow of engines filled the air, followed swiftly by blossoming explosions. The *Cyclops* rocked alarmingly as a trio of long-snouted Fenrisian gunships swept overhead, their weapons chattering a hail of death into the Orks that packed the bridge. Howling beams of ice-white energy stabbed down, punching through the armour of lumbering greenskin walkers. Return fire rattled ineffectually from the aircrafts' hulls, while crude rockets corkscrewed around them. A fresh downdraft threw up a storm of windblown ash to obscure Paultzer's view momentarily. Running lights cut through the murk, and suddenly another pair of bulky blue-grey craft were there, mere feet above his head. Assault ramps whined open and packs of massively armoured warriors leapt onto the bridge, each one causing a slight tremor as they landed. At their head was a figure whose name was legend throughout the Imperium. Paultzer had seen his likeness on statues, holo-shrines, even propaganda flyers. Now, standing amid his Terminator-armoured Wolf Guard, forming a shield between Paultzer's tank and the saw-fisted Orks who sought to destroy it, Logan Grimnar himself joined the fight.



TORFIN DAGGERFIST

A long-serving member of Logan Grimnar's Wolf Guard, Torfin Daggerfist's saga is a blood-soaked tale. As a mortal, Daggerfist suffered from berserk rages that would cloud his mind whenever battle was joined. In this state he proved all but unstoppable, shrugging off wounds that would fell an ice bear while inflicting such ruin upon the bodies of his foes that it was not long before he was chosen to join the ranks of the fabled Sky Warriors.

Many of the Wolf Priests feared that Daggerfist would succumb to the curse of the Wulfen when implanted with the Canis Helix. He was to prove them wrong. While mastering the beast unleashed within him during his trial of Morkai, Torfin also learned to harness his own innate fury. His rage was now bound to his will, rather than he to it.

This achievement made Torfin Daggerfist a lethal warrior, able to wake his inner beast at a moment's notice or calm it as soon as such killing fury was no longer needed. During the battle for the bridge of Fortress Alaric, Daggerfist charged in alongside his liege-lord, carving a path of red ruin through the Orks with his blood-drenched wolf claws. So heroic was his conduct that Grimnar gave Daggerfist the honour of bearing his personal banner for the remainder of the campaign.

The armoured Orks didn't even pause. They broke into a charge, buzzsaws snarling as they lurched toward the Great Wolf and his bodyguards. Grimnar hefted his massive axe and ran to meet them. The great blade swept low, scything the legs from under the lead greenskin. Even as the monstrous creature tumbled forward, eyes bulging with shock, Grimnar sidestepped and reversed the swing of his blade to power through the torso of another Ork. Ropy guts spilled out onto the bridge as the brute simply fell in half, and then Grimnar's Terminators were there alongside him. Paultzer cried out as he watched one Fenrisian take a pair of bladesaws to the face, his unhelmeted head erupting in a blizzard of blood and bone. Yet everywhere else the Wolf Guard and Orks were crashing together, thunder hammers and wolf claws tearing crude armour plates apart even as whining Ork saws chewed into adamantium or skidded off storm shields. The fighting was shockingly brutal, but the Fenrisians were swiftly gaining the upper hand.

Paultzer's heart shot into his mouth as he felt *Steel Cyclops* give a sudden, ominous lurch. For a moment he thought he was about to plunge to his death despite the Space Wolves' intervention, and just had time to curse his fortunes, before he realised that his Shadowsword was sliding sideways, away from the drop. Craning his neck, the commander's jaw dropped open as he caught sight of a scrum of figures in Terminator armour, their mighty shoulders set against *Steel Cyclops*' flank. Step by torturous step, the Wolf Guard slowly heaved the crippled Shadowsword onto safer ground.

With Paultzer's tank heaved aside, the Terminators formed an unbreakable line across the narrowest part of the bridge. Unmindful of the danger, they braced their legs and let fly into the approaching greenskin horde. Streams of assault cannon fire and cyclone missiles scythed through the tight-pressed greenskins, even as the Space Wolves' attack craft screamed back overhead, strafing the Orks mercilessly. Faced with this hurricane of firepower, the greenskins on the bridge fell back in disarray while, near the gates, Grimnar finished off the last of his armoured foes with a brutal overhead blow. The Great Wolf turned and favoured Paultzer with a fang-toothed grin. Shaking with relief, the tank commander responded with a heartfelt salute. He then sagged back into the hatch of *Steel Cyclops* to begin the grim search through his tank for other survivors. The bridge was secure, and Paultzer was sure the Space Wolves would make the greenskins pay for every single life that they had taken.

'It was as if the Emperor's angels came to rescue me in person. Me and Vardin and Moss. Not that I knew they'd lived through the crash by that point. I tell you, Logan Grimnar's very own warriors saved me that day, me and the *Cyclops*. A more noble and selfless band of heroes I have never seen before, nor will I again!'

- Jens Paultzer, Cmdr. Steel Cyclops

THE CHAIN REFORGED

As follow-up waves of Space Wolf infantry and armour make planetfall, the Ork forces are swiftly driven back. Combining their strengths, the Imperial forces begin a steamroller offensive to reclaim their world.

THE FIERCE-EYE'S RETURN

Three days after Mogrok's horde was broken at the foot of Sacred Mountain, Krom Dragongaze and his warband reappeared amid the Imperial lines. Led by Beoric Winterfang and his Wolf Guard pack-mates, the battered band of Fenrisians marched out of the wilderness bearing their wounded and their dead. Wolf Lord Krom was amongst the former, leaning upon Beroic's armoured shoulder as he limped along. Still, as his followers trudged up the boarding ramp of the Stormwolf that came to collect them, the Fierce-eye's volcanic glare dared any to question his failure on Blistered Isle.

By Grimnar's order, Krom and his followers were ferried back to Sacred Mountain to recover and rearm. The Old Wolf refused Dragongaze's hails, goading Krom to fury with the message that he was 'too busy leading heroes to spend time coddling fools'. Still, though outwardly Dragongaze remained violently unrepentant, he nonetheless followed his master's orders to the letter. Krom and his warriors returned to Sacred Mountain, claiming a string of bare-walled chambers for their own and submitting to the ministrations of Wolf Priests and Iron Priests alike. Yet the Fierce-eye vowed that his men would return to the war as soon as they were able, with or without the Old Wolf's blessing.

Around Sacred Mountain, Mogrok's hordes were falling back in disarray. Savaged in the jaws of the Space Wolf assault, pounded relentlessly by the firepower of the Cadians and Knights, the Orks could take no more. Rivers of frantic greenskins flowed away from the mountain in all directions, dust clouds rising in their wake. Bikes and buggies rattled off at breakneck pace, weaving through heaving masses of Orks who fought and clawed at each other in their haste to escape. Lumbering walkers ploughed through the retreat, leaving trails of crushed green corpses behind them. Close behind came the warriors of the Imperium, faces grim as they poured fire into the retreating masses.

The Imperial vox network buzzed with activity as strategies were coordinated and command structures re-ordered. The moment Logan Grimnar had taken to the field, he had adopted overall control of the theatre. Castellan Stein wasted no time in announcing himself to the Great Wolf and requesting orders, adding, 'Let's give the greenskin scum a good sharp kick in the teeth, sir,' and earning a barrel-chested laugh from Grimnar in response.

This swift and willing integration was not entirely mirrored by the surviving Knights of Alaric Prime. Sacristan salvage teams were already plying the battlefield in fat-tyred maintenance crawlers, but for now, Neru Degallio remained locked silent within the powerless, looming shell of his Knight. Without his authority, the surviving warriors of houses Velemestrin, Brahmica and Kamata were engaged in a fierce debate as to who should have the honour of responding to the Great Wolf's repeated – and increasingly impatient – vox-hails. It thus drew a collective gasp of outrage when the Scorched Knight, Dyros Kamata – tiring of his older comrades' stilted bickering – responded to Grimnar with an open offer of allegiance on behalf of all the Alarican knightly houses. It was Ragnar Blackmane who responded to this message, cutting through the other Knights' shocked outbursts and protests with a demand that Dyros come fight alongside him in person. After all, the Freeblade was clearly a warrior after his own heart.

OVERWHELMING FORCE

Matters of protocol resolved, the Imperial forces now formed into several fast-moving spearheads and pushed out from Sacred Mountain. The Orks' leadership structure seemed to have entirely collapsed, a fact that gave Stein some pause. However, he recalled an old Cadian proverb, which holds that the good soldier disdains not the Emperor's gifts, and so the Imperial spearheads drove out through the reeling Orks with murderous efficiency.

To the south, Gerantius led a thrust towards Boiling River. Accompanied by a detachment of Degallio Knights and several squads of Space Wolves, the Forgotten Knight herded the Orks before him like vermin. Though he spoke not a word, his intent was clear and his actions deadly. Bolters chattered and thermal cannons roared as the Imperial attack drove south, supported by squadrons of Stormfangs and Land Speeders. Soon a trail of blazing Ork wrecks and sprawling corpses led from Sacred Mountain to the very shores of Isle Degallio itself.

Other, broader battlefronts pushed out north and west, linking up with scattered pockets of Imperial resistance as they went. Fortifications were purged with fire and reclaimed by force. Cadian battle tanks executed armoured charges alongside speeding packs of Swiftclaw Bikers to drive the greenskins from munitions dumps and besieged trench lines. There was restrained celebration amongst Cadian command when word spread that Tempestor Prime Salem Whitlock had been found injured but alive in the wreck of his crumpled Valkyrie.

Meanwhile, to the east, the Wolf Lord Ragnar Blackmane and the Scorched Knight were pressing forward with all speed, leading a combined Imperial force in a bloody advance toward the Velemestrin Bridge.

Coordinating the campaign from the vaulted strategium of Sacred Mountain, Grimnar and Stein watched their forces advance on all fronts. To the castellan, it seemed that for the first time in days, victory was once again within the Imperium's grasp.



THE IMPERIAL ADVANCE

1. Cadian 1652nd regiment breaks xenos lines around Hallengarth, confirmed kills on three gargantuan class xenoform creatures

2. Swiftclaw Biker pack ref. 'Giantslayers' bring down xenos war effigy during relief of Outpost 377-Delta

3. Strong xenos resistance along the Sanctorum Line, Space Wolf advance stalled. Massive casualties inflicted on xenos 0:22 after contact by Manticore (*Indignant Spite*). Space Wolf advance resumes 0:25 after contact

4. Xenos artillery overrun by Sire Martaus Brahmica and elements of Cadian 1657th infantry / Space Wolves Stormfang Gunships

5. Ragnar Blackmane leads breakthrough of xenos fortifications in valley – ref. Velemestrin Gate – Freeblade appellation '*Scorched Knight*' confirmed kill on super-heavy class xenoform walker

BADRUKK'S LURE

The arrival of the Space Wolves on Alaric Prime has pulled the planet's defenders back from the brink of defeat. Yet Grimnar's warriors have reasons of their own for coming to the Sanctus Reach – the wolves of Fenris are on the hunt.

THE WEIRDBOX

Mogrok the Mangler first made common cause with Kaptin Badrukk many months before the Red Waaagh! descended upon Alaric Prime. The two nefarious greenskins held a secret meeting aboard Mogrok's rust ship, during which bargains were struck, fungus brew was quaffed, and plans were drawn up. The Kaptin quickly recognised the genius inherent in Mogrok's devious schemes, while for his part the ambitious Big Mek saw in Badrukk an ally for whom no dirty deed was too low, nor risk too great if sufficient loot was up for grabs. When Kaptin Badrukk returned to his kroozer, he took with him a loaned cadre of Mogrok's finest Meks, as well as an ancient technological artefact that Mogrok had scavenged from the ruins of a dead alien world.

This glowing device, christened Da Weirdbox by the greenskins, could read and extrapolate incoming Warp signatures, even forcing targets to drop out of the Empyrean. Once nailed firmly to the Kaptin's throne it would allow him to spring deadly ambushes with incredible precision. In return for this kingly gift, all Mogrok demanded was a couple of little favours...

When Strike Force Stormclaw entered the Sanctus Reach they came in search of the cunning and deadly Kaptin Badrukk. Only once they had translated in-system did the Fenrisians detect the astropathic distress call from Alaric Prime and rush to lend their aid. Yet even then they hoped to find their quarry on the wartorn world below, for the wolves of Fenris do not willingly give up the hunt.



Months earlier, Badrukk's reign of terror had begun with an attack upon Port Mourning, a deepspace station to the galactic north of Sanctus Reach. Here, a badly damaged Space Wolf frigate was undergoing repairs. Badrukk struck with the sudden fury of an avalanche, his ragtag Freebooter fleet obliterating everything in their path. All that reached the Fang was a single astropathic message, garbled and desperate – it told of a prodigious Ork pirate fleet, and of bellows of 'Waaagh! Badrukk' from every vox on the station. This was to be but the first of a string of attacks against Space Wolf holdings and forces centred around the Sanctus Reach. Training facilities were destroyed, lone Space Wolf craft ambushed, and Fenrisian protectorate worlds reduced to blazing charnel houses. Always the name Badrukk was linked to these atrocities, gabbled in frantic cries for help or daubed in low gothic on the smoking wreckage the Orks left in their wake. Yet it was the attack upon the *Magnir's Revenge* that finally provoked the wrath of Logan Grimnar.

The Strike Cruiser *Magnir's Revenge* and its accompanying escorts were en route to relieve the siege of Brazen Halo when its Navigator complained of wild fluctuations in the currents of the Empyrean. Wolf Guard Battle Leader Kai Blackpelt, responding as he thought wise, ordered an immediate translation to realspace. However, as the Space Wolf craft tore their way through the meniscus between the Warp and the real, proximity augurs howled and warning runes lit up. Waiting in ambush was a bristling ring of Ork warcraft, the entirety of Badrukk's fleet poised to strike. Even as Blackpelt roared orders to his bridge crew, hundreds of minor impacts were registering all across the hull of *Magnir's Revenge*. Void shields began to flicker into life, but it was already too late.

One by one the Mek-built grabba mines now peppering the *Revenge's* hull hummed into life, projecting a vast traktor field out into space around the Strike Cruiser. The traktor field – a localised gravitational anomaly of massive power – snatched the tightly grouped escort ships that had followed *Magnir's Revenge* out of the Warp and hauled them in at suicidal speeds. One by one the Strike Cruiser's escorts tumbled into her flanks, impacting like meteorites. Hull armour sundered, flames blossomed forth, and atmosphere vented in a whistling gale as the Space Wolf ships were mashed helplessly into a single crippled mass of metal. Hundreds died amid the catastrophic fury of the collisions, but worse was to follow. As the short-lived grabba mines burned themselves out, Kaptin Badrukk ordered a boarding assault with everything his fleet had. Ramships and killkroozers jostled with hurtling rokks and slab-jawed assault boats as the Ork ships pounced, spilling thousands upon thousands of Freebooterz and Flash Gitz through rents in the *Revenge's* mangled hull.

Despite the havoc they had wrought, the Orks were met by fierce resistance from the surviving Space Wolves. Helmets locked and mag-clamps engaged, the Fenrisians charged furiously down corridors filled with the shriek of escaping air. Lights flickered, fat sparks rained from ruptured panels, and gravity fluctuated madly as bellowing Orks fought howling Space Wolves across skewed and buckled chambers. In the observium several squads of Grey Hunters made their stand amid a blizzard of tumbling crystal shards from the gallery's shattered dome. Blood, glass and bodies swirled in zero gravity as the battle raged. In the enginarium, Badrukk's Meks led a horde

of Lootas and Burna Boyz on a rampage that saw the defenders slain and the engines pulled apart in a matter of hours.

A dozen minor battles raged through the mangled corridors and chambers of *Magnir's Revenge* and what remained of her sister craft, the Space Wolves staging desperate ambushes and mad charges into the teeth of the foe. Yet it was in the Strike Cruiser's cavernous embarkation chamber that the battle would be decided, as Kai met Badrukk in open battle. Blackpelt's hand-picked elite faced down hundreds of howling Orks, gravitic distortion allowing the combatants to brawl furiously on the deck, on the walls and even on the ceiling of the embarkation chamber.

The Space Wolves' guns roared, their blades sang, yet the enemy's numbers were simply too great – and they could swamp the wolves from every direction at once. Surrounded by a mass of his finest Flash Gitz, Badrukk himself struck the final blow. The Gitz' snazzguns roared like thunder, filling the chamber with their noise and light as shells, rockets and blasts punched one Space Wolf after another off his feet. Even as Blackpelt led a last charge Badrukk sighted carefully down the barrel of da Rippa at the roaring Wolf Guard and squeezed the trigger.

It was over a Terran standard month before a frantic force of Space Wolf ships broke Warp and rushed to the aid of *Magnir's Revenge.* They found the ship still mashed together with her escorts and floating all but dead in the void of space. Around the *Revenge* was a sprawling field of wreckage and void-burned Space Wolf corpses. Yet augurs still read one lifesign, flickering dimly on the Strike Cruiser's bridge. It was here that the Fenrisians found an insult that they could not let stand. Pinned to his command throne with crude rivets, shaved and tortured, Battle Leader Kai Blackpelt still clung to life, his body a ruin of crusted blood and flayed muscle. He would live, it seemed, but by strength of will alone. Above the Wolf Guard's crippled form, a static-laden hololith played and replayed, over and over. It showed the laughing form of Kaptin Badrukk, slamming one bejeweled fist against his barrel chest and then beckoning tauntingly.

The message was clear: 'Come and get it.'

FENRISIAN CAUTION

Logan Grimnar is a veteran of hundreds of years of war. Yet he is still a son of Fenris, and once roused his temper is a terrible thing indeed. Grimnar was not so great a fool as to believe that Kaptin Badrukk's brazen challenge could be anything other than the bait for a crude trap. So be it, reasoned Grimnar, he would play along with this pirate's puppet show. However, Logan had assembled so powerful a strike force of Space Wolves that when the jaws of the trap closed, they would do so upon an iron fist. Logan Grimnar intended to reach down the throat of this Orkish snare and tear its guts out, much as he hoped to do to Badrukk himself. The Ork's last regret would be making Grimnar angry.



THE BAIT IS TAKEN

The Orks are in full retreat, unable to slow the Imperial offensive grinding its way across Sacred Isle. Yet Mogrok the Mangler is nothing if not sneaky, and things may not be as straightforward as they seem to Alaric Prime's defenders.

DA WOLF BOYZ

Every Ork knows that if you want a really good scrap, you go pick a fight with a Space Marine. Yet, much as a connoisseur of fine wines can appreciate the best vintage in his cellar, so the smarter Orks know that some of the super-humies are far more fun to fight than others. After all, getting blown to bits hundreds of yards from the front lines by a squad of Ultramarines just lacks a certain something.

As far as Mogrok was concerned, the best fighting was to be had against the Space Wolves. This was for the simple yet compelling reason that, of all the Adeptus Astartes, Space Wolves are the most like Orks. After all, 'da wolf boyz' love nothing more than a good scrap. They love a good choppa, enjoy a drink or three, and have a healthy appreciation for wearing teeth and bits of dead things (they're magic – just ask the Weirdboyz). That such behaviour might serve a higher purpose or be interwoven with a certain feral nobility was neither here nor there to Mogrok – da wolf boyz were the Space Marines he wanted to fight, and no one else would do!

All things considered, Mogrok was feeling mightily pleased with himself. Reclining in a smoke-belching throne made out of a looted humie tank, he picked his nose with a rusty screw and congratulated himself on being a decidedly sneaky git.

When, several days earlier, Mogrok had looked skyward from the midst of his horde and seen the Drop Pod contrails streaking the sky, he hadn't panicked. Far from it. Instead, a big, nasty grin had twisted his already monstrous features, as he realised the wolf boyz were here at last. Admittedly, it might have been nice if they'd left off until he'd finished with the first lot of humies he was clobbering, but he'd dropped a whole rok on that lot, so how much fight could they have left in them? Seeing that his real quarry had taken the bait, Mogrok had triggered his soopa-tellyporta and removed himself, a good handful of his most loyal Meks, and a swathe of nearby greenskins from harm's way. Now he sat in his throne room at the heart of his rust ship, listening to one report of disaster and mayhem after another while feeling like the cleverest Ork on the planet. Yet there was only so long he could bask in his own genius before matters got out of hand, and it did sound like the boyz were taking a bit of a kicking. Yes, decided Mogrok with a heavy sigh, it was probably time to stop taking a breather and get back in the fight.

Mogrok's throne room was packed with Nobz, Mekz and assorted hangers-on, all having a good old flap about how badly the war was going. Sitting forward suddenly, Mogrok clanged his piston-klaw against the arm of his throne to get his ladz' attention. When this didn't work, he singled out the most vocal of the nearby Nobz and shot him point-blank through the face, spraying the luckless greenskin's brains across a gaggle of grots. As the echoes of the shot reverberated around the throne room, a hush fell and all eyes turned to Mogrok. He nodded firmly.

With his audience's attention firmly secured, Mogrok shouted for calm. Affecting a tone that he hoped was reassuring – or at least suitably intimidating – Mogrok explained that everything was going to plan.

At this announcement there was a ragged cheer that dwindled slowly into head-scratching and a couple of confused brawls. It was Dagogg – his skin still scorched and peeling after the attempt by the humie kommandos to blow him to bits – who first built up the nerve to ask the question.

'Er... boss? I know its probably dead sneaky and all but... um... how does getting walloped by da humies count as "goin' to plan"?'

Mogrok turned to Dagogg with a leer so ugly it could have curdled fungus-brew, and launched into his explanation. It was obvious to anyone with half a brain that Grukk was eventually going to bite off more than he could chew. Worse, he was likely to drag the Waaagh! down with him. Mogrok, encouraged by more hesitant nodding than puzzled stares, forged gamely ahead. He'd arranged for Grukk's unfortunate accident; sabotaging the kustom force field on the Warlord's Battlewagon had been easy enough, and Grukk had done the rest without Mogrok needing to lift a finger. In the wake of Grukk's demise, who had brought the Waaagh! back together? Mogrok. Who had arranged all the best fights? Mogrok. Who ruled the Waaagh! now? Mogrok.

He faced a sea of blank stares. There was some squabbling at the back that sounded like it was about who had the shiniest shoota. Mogrok toyed with his own gun's trigger, then resolved to keep going.

Why had the Waaagh! attacked this world at all, he asked his slack-jawed audience. Not just because it was there, but because he, Mogrok, had told Grukk that they should. And why, Mogrok asked his ladz, would he have gone and picked this planet in particular? One Nob, feeling particularly brave, scratched his backside and spoke up.

'Coz it was... big? Boss?' Another gunshot, and the grots at the back squealed as they were sprayed in porridgey brains for the second time in as many minutes.

With a whine of servos and gears, Mogrok lurched to his feet, his voice rising to



a furious bellow. They had attacked this world because he was smart. They had attacked it because he, Mogrok the Mangler, had a plan so cunning that Mork himself would be impressed. While the Waaagh! had been getting stuck in all across Alaric Prime, Mogrok's secret ally had been leading the King of the Wolf Boyz right to them. It wasn't a surprise that the Wolf Boyz had shown up, it was all part of Mogrok's grand plan. And now that the Space Marines were here, Mogrok was going to crush them!

Once the Wolf King's head was stuck on Mogrok's bosspole, all the Boyz would know who was boss, and this would be the greatest Waaagh! of all time. This announcement caused Mogrok's underlings to break into wild cheers. That's more like it, thought Mogrok. Time to go and stomp some Wolf Boyz good and proper.

Within the hour, Big Redd – Mogrok's chief Warphead – and his Weirdboy disciples were rocking and gibbering as they sent think-speaks to their counterparts across Alaric Prime. Speed Freek messengers roared out in all directions from Mogrok's rust-ship, bearing word of the plan by Deffkopta and Warbuggy. As the news spread, the greenskins began to gain a semblance of order. The boss was promising reinforcements real soon, and an even better fight than before, not to mention enough loot to turn any Mekboy's head. Although it didn't stop the rout, it at least turned some of the bigger warbands at bay and began the fighting anew. Meanwhile, engines chugged and roared as fresh-built Morkanauts and Battlewagons lumbered from the Meks' workshops by the dozen.

The great bridges leading to Sacred Isle shuddered beneath the stampeding boots of millions of greenskins as – on Mogrok's orders – Orks abandoned the isles of the minor houses and made for the big fight. Meanwhile, from Kraken Falls to Warden Isle, Orks too distant to get in on the action instead hurled themselves at the Imperial defenders with fresh vigour, determined to have their own big scrap and draw off Imperial reinforcements in the process. The jaws of Mogrok's cumbersome trap were about to close on Logan Grimnar. Yes indeed, thought Mogrok as he scrambled aboard his brand new Battlewagon, everything was going according to plan.

'Even a Grot knows that the King of da Wolf Boyz is the biggest and baddest Space Marine there ever was. He's bigger than a deff dread, with a head like a gnasher squig but... hairier. He's got six arms and they're all made of guns and choppas and stuff, and if you shoot him he don't care because he's too tough. His voice is so loud he can shout at the sky and make it fall down, and if he gives you a wallop then bits of you fly everywhere like when Grogruk ate that stikkbomb for a dare. Even Gork and Mork think he's pretty hard, and if Mogrok doesn't get him then I reckon one of them'll have a go next.'

- Nozbrog, Ork Boy, on Logan Grimnar

THE JAWS OF THE BEAST

Reinforced by thousands upon thousands of boyz, the Orks on Sacred Isle have returned to the fight. Now, with the promise of the biggest and best punch-up yet to goad them on, they counter-attack in massive force. Everywhere the battle rages as Alaric Prime burns in the furnace of a war that Mogrok means to take to the stars.

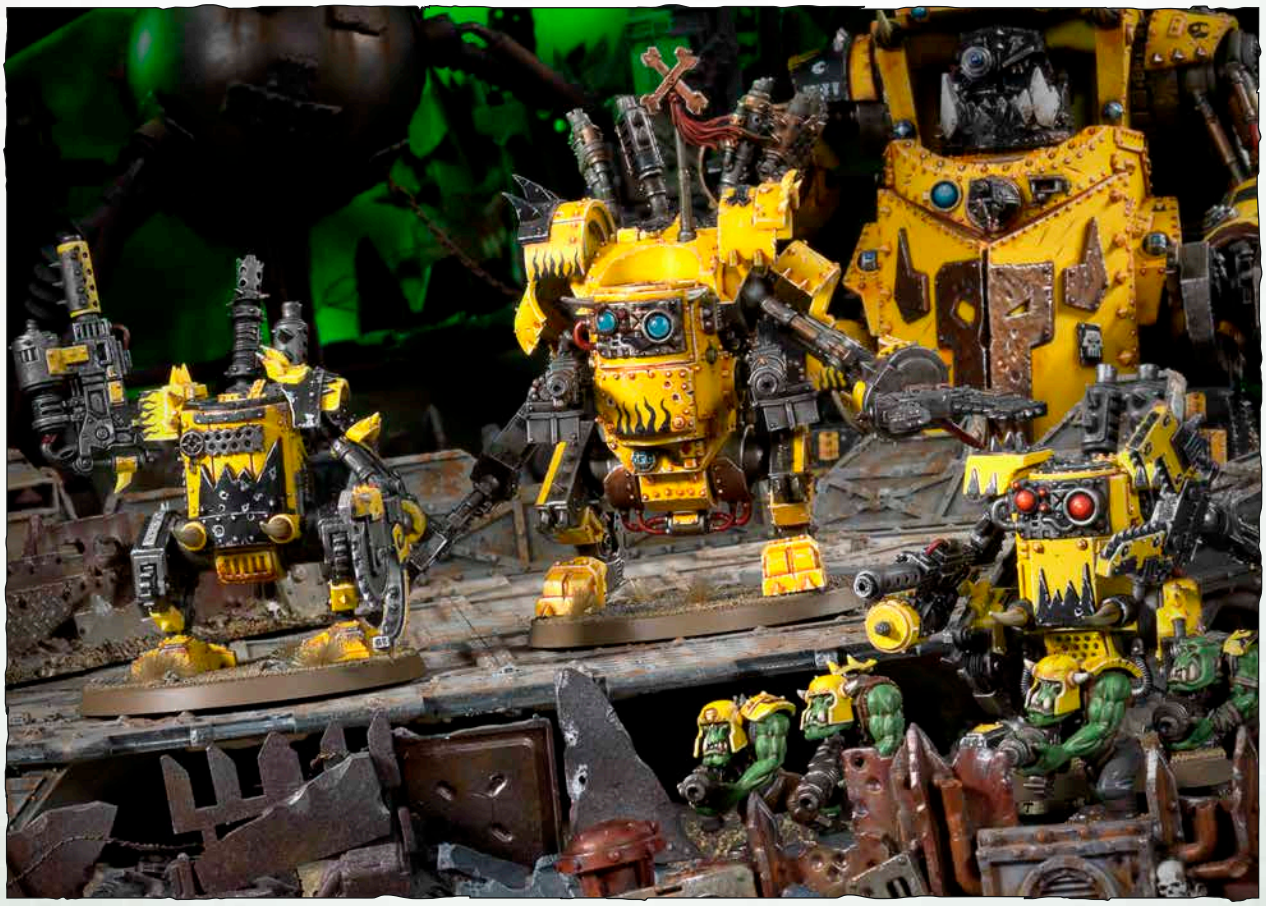
> 'By the Allfather, they're like an avalanche! This will make a magnificent saga! Gunnar, more of those filthy trollwrought tanks, get the melta on them! Pack, this is Ingvar, I hope your blades are thirsty. And no getting yourselves killed, or the Old Wolf will never let you hear the end of it!'
>
> *- Pack Leader Ingvar Stonebrow, Defence of Fortress 47*

The shift in the war for Alaric Prime was breathtakingly sudden. Mogrok had waited just long enough for the Imperial forces to spread themselves out, allowing them to think his armies were broken and leaderless before hitting them hard from every direction. The word was out that Mogrok was going to go clobber the king of da wolf boyz, and no Ork was going to miss a fight like that!

Around Mogrok's titanic rust-ship, the air crackled with power and the stench of ozone as his Meks fired up several huge tellyporta platforms. Hooting and roaring with excitement, great masses of Orks were herded into place by their scowling Nobz before vanishing in blinding green flashes of light. Gorkanauts, Morkanauts, and even Stompas now lumbered into place, vanishing in their turn alongside whole squadrons of smoke-belching tanks and countless Mek Gunz. Each tellyporta enfolded its passengers in a bubble of glowing force before hurling them through the Warp to appear (more or less) right on the Ork front lines. Such a hit-and-miss deployment caused inevitable casualties. Yet for every mob teleported into solid stone, or Battlewagon dropped from several hundred feet up, another whole tribe of warriors was delivered amid or even behind the Imperial armies, to devastating effect.

ABSOLUTE MAYHEM

All across the planet, the resurgent Orks battered the Imperial lines like a hurricane. On the Lancepoint Plains a massive brigade of looted armour teleported into existence and surged toward the hotly contested Fortress 47. With Tankboss Baddfrag missing –



presumed blown-to-bits – Mogrok had purloined most of the old Blood Axe's prized tank collection and 'made some improvements'. The lurching swarm of armour now boasted a terrifying plethora of outsized artillery, and cut loose upon the fortress' Imperial defenders to spectacular effect. Crackling blasts of lightning danced along crenellated battlements, frying Cadian soldiers to a crisp with every shot. Enormous shells packed with high-explosives struck home against rockcrete and plasteel, blasting great craters in the defences and bringing walls tumbling down in avalanches of girders, stone and corpses. The Imperial defenders retaliated, directing a desperate rain of shots into the Ork tanks from emplaced lascannons and chugging heavy bolters. Yet behind the Wagons came a surging tide of Ork Boyz, the very greenskins who had been ejected from the fortress' defences just hours earlier. Now they poured back into Fortress 47 under the covering fire of the recently teleported tanks, scrambling through breaches and hacking apart the defenders within. Though a handful of Space Wolves made a brave attempt to sally forth, they too were driven back as the battle for the fortress intensified.

Meanwhile, the defences all along Mordred's Ridge found themselves under sudden, massive attack. The ridge was being used as a marshalling point for Cadian and knightly forces, but was plunged into battle as – amid storms of green lightning – Drogg's Goff horde appeared all around the human positions. For a moment, the Imperial forces believed themselves reinforced as the blocky silhouette of a Thunderhawk Gunship hove into view from the south. Yet cheers turned to screams as the craft stitched the ridge with a devastating rain of missiles and bombs. Now the crudely patched rents in the Thunderhawk's hull were clearly visible, as were the daubed Goff glyphs that covered its hull. As the Thunderhawk passed low over the onrushing Ork horde, its assault ramp yawned wide and a string of massive, black armoured greenskins hurled themselves out into midair. They were led by a howling monster whose silhouette – even at this distance – was horribly familiar to the Cadian soldiery. As the new arrivals crashed down on top of the Orks' Warboss, brief yet spectacular violence exploded, and for a moment the Imperial defenders could hope that the Orks might tear each other apart. Yet moments later, as the smoke and misted blood cleared, the foe were pouring forward once more, now led by a nightmare figure the Cadians had thought never to see again. Lasguns spat and thermal cannons roared, but nothing could drown out the ebullient greenskin chant of 'Grukk, Grukk, Grukk' that rolled over Mordred's Ridge like a blast-wave. Seconds later the Orks followed it, surrounding the bunkers in screaming hordes, lobbing stikkbombs into ammo bunkers and swarming around the feet of overwhelmed Knights. In their midst, Grukk Face-rippa and his Skull-Nobz ploughed into the foe, red eyes lit with savage joy as the Waaagh! surged around them once again.

On Brahmica Bridge, the damage done by duels between the Steel Host and the Orks was undone. Covered by the clamorous fire of Deathskull Lootaz, gangs of Meks swarmed over the damaged bridge. They welded chunks of rust-ship into place until it was passable once more. Soon, ten thousand bellowing Orks were over the bridge and into the Imperial rear lines.

Elsewhere, Sires Vayn and Drometh Degallio moved up to support the Astartes forces tasked with securing the Teutonia Spaceport. As they passed between the Administratum offices and the towering Precinct Primus, the Knights found the ground suddenly erupting at their feet. Clusters of tankbusta bombz, buried in the wreckage of the roadway, crippled the two Knights from the waist down, leaving them stranded and immobile. Even before the echoes of the explosions died away, the buildings to either side of the Knights lit up, Ork Kommandos emerging from hiding to pour fire into their stricken prey. Yet even as the Knights struggled frantically to bring their guns to bear against their tormentors, a fresh howl went up and a host of Space Wolves charged to their rescue. Guns rattled and axe-blades clashed as the Fenrisians began a bloody battle, room by room and floor by floor, to cleanse the Orks from the buildings they had infested.

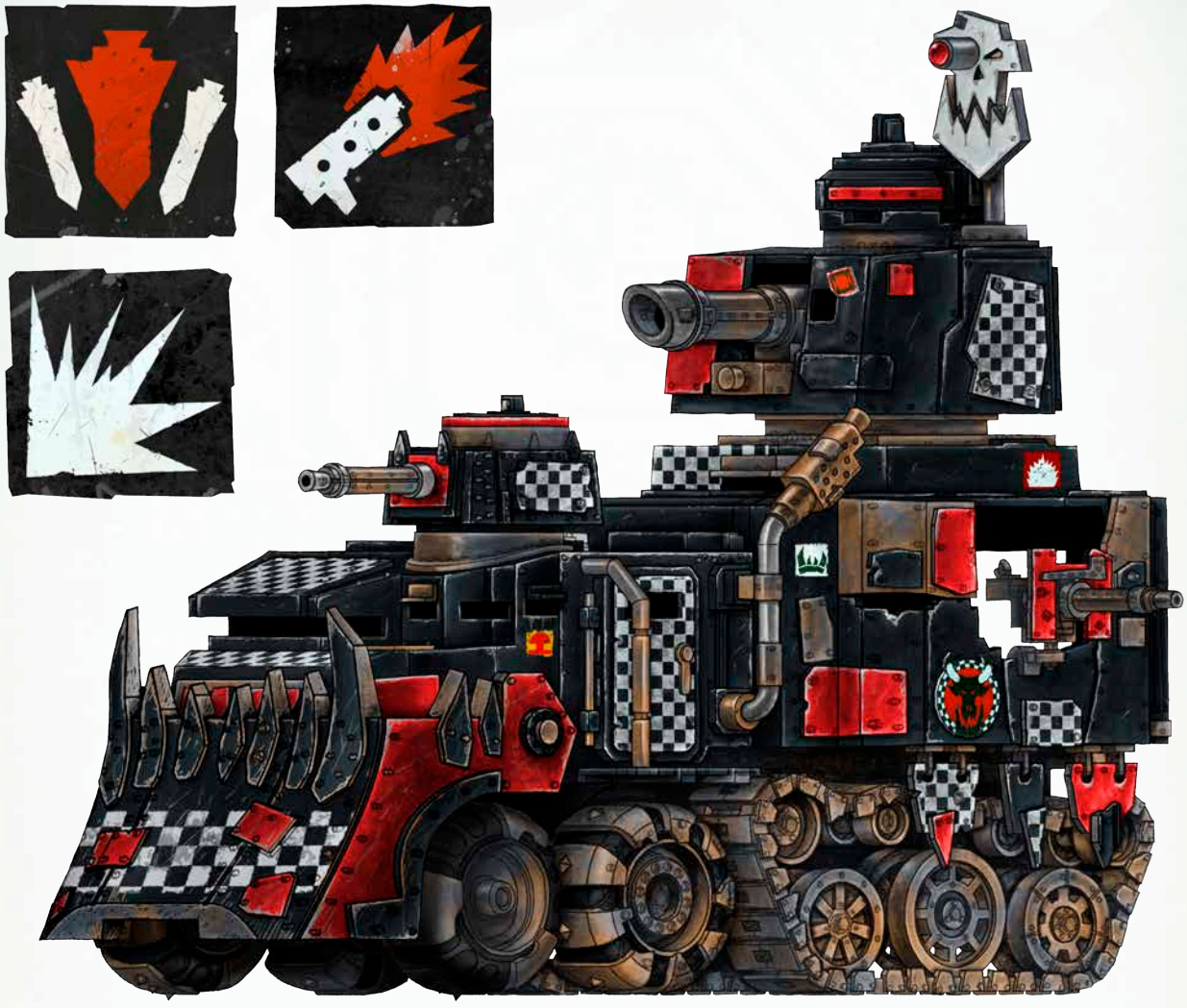
In orbit, the small Imperial fleet had problems of their own. Having lured the wolves to Alaric Prime, Badrukk's pirate armada had concealed themselves amid a nearby asteroid field and lain in wait. Now they moved to engage their hugely outnumbered foes. Barbarous warships fired their engines and surged to the attack, emerging from the asteroid belt with guns blazing. Everywhere the battle had reached a new intensity. The fate of Alaric Prime rested on a knife edge.

Veteran Sergeant Willas Rafe looked on in horror as the Orks boiled across Mordred's Ridge. He'd recognised the Ork Warlord the moment he'd seen that huge, rip-saw klaw churn its way into the other Ork leader's face. Grukk was back, and the rest of the Orks had taken his lead with barely a thought.

He'd watched as Grukk ploughed into the fight, turning men to mangled meat with every brutal swing. Half a hundred lives had ended at the Warboss' hands within minutes of the fight beginning. Anything that stood in the path of Grukk and his Nobz died horribly. The monstrous Ork had even felled a Knight, leaping onto its foot and ramming his power klaw clean through its ankle joint in a spume of flame and sparks. Now, as the massive walker crashed down in flaming ruin, Rafe and his Veterans realised that Grukk was heading right for their Bastion. Rafe bellowed at his men to get shooting, sighting on the nearest Nob and firing full-auto as it charged toward him. If Willas Rafe was going to die, he'd take a few of these filthy xenos with him before he went!

MOGROK'S MIGHTY MANGLERZ

Though many of Tankboss Badfragg's prized tanks were reduced to flaming scrap metal upon the plains before Sacred Mountain, many more survived. These were appropriated and kustomised by Mogrok and his Meks. The best of the bunch were formed up into the Blitz Brigade known as Mogrok's Mighty Manglerz, and set loose once more upon the defenders of Alaric Prime.



DA LUNGBURSTA

This lumbering gunbeast is the personal property of the self-styled Kommanda Krashdakka, an Ork whose obsession with big guns verges on the maniacal. Da Lungbursta *is studded with enough heavy guns to reduce an entire squadron of vehicles to scrap, guns that are constantly tinkered with by Krashdakka's Mekboy mate, Wrenchklaw. In battle, Kommanda Krashdakka tends to let the rest of the Blitz Brigade race ahead, biding his time and letting his ladz line up the tastiest targets in their sights. When* Da Lungbursta *opens fire it does so with a great big crashing roar, hurling a whistling volley of shells, rockets and shot into the midst of the foe and blowing its luckless targets to tiny, spinning bits.*

Dakka: Attack, noisy weapon, shoot, fight

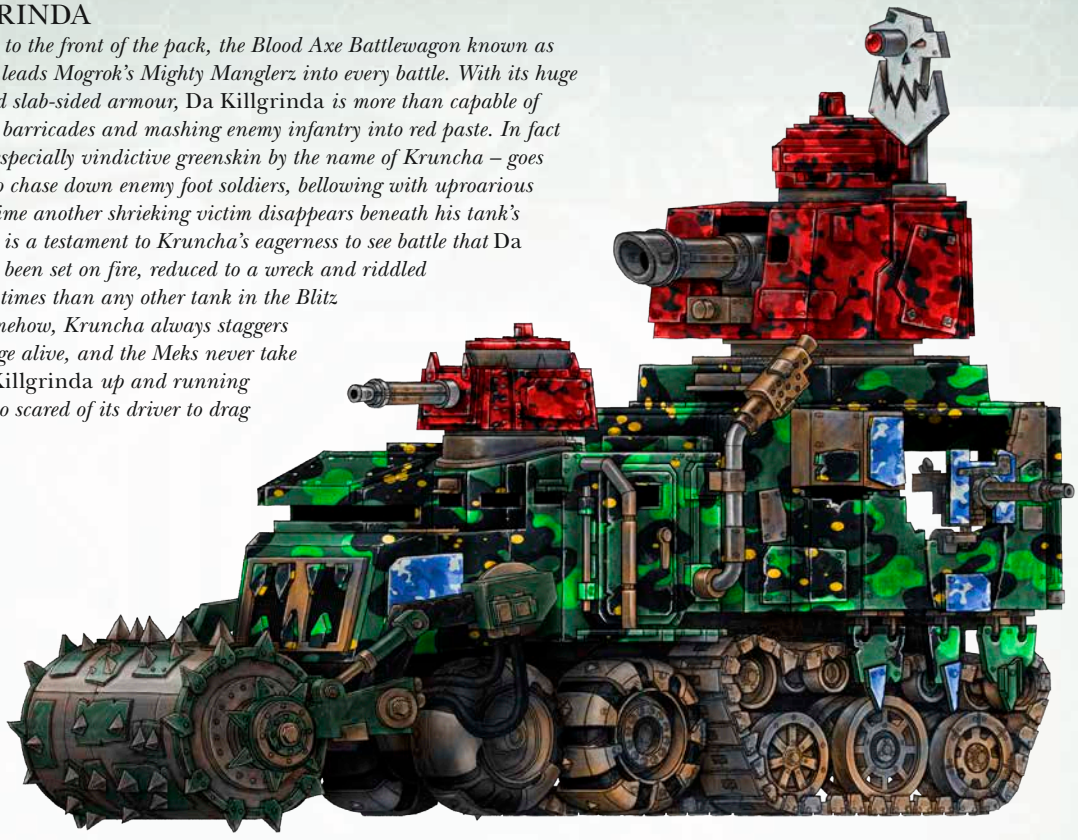
Blitz: Invasion, devastate

BAD: Evil, wicked, strong, tough

Grim: Ruthless, prowless, face, dangerous

DA KILLGRINDA

Barging its way to the front of the pack, the Blood Axe Battlewagon known as Da Killgrinda *leads Mogrok's Mighty Manglerz into every battle. With its huge spiked roller and slab-sided armour,* Da Killgrinda *is more than capable of smashing down barricades and mashing enemy infantry into red paste. In fact its driver – an especially vindictive greenskin by the name of Kruncha – goes out of his way to chase down enemy foot soldiers, bellowing with uproarious laughter every time another shrieking victim disappears beneath his tank's massive bulk. It is a testament to Kruncha's eagerness to see battle that* Da Killgrinda *has been set on fire, reduced to a wreck and riddled with holes more times than any other tank in the Blitz Brigade. Yet somehow, Kruncha always staggers from the wreckage alive, and the Meks never take long to get* Da Killgrinda *up and running again (they're too scared of its driver to drag their heels!).*



DA SKULLSMASHA

A garish mountain of armour and guns, Da Skullsmasha *is the prized possession of Bad Moon Nob Mugrot Manyteef. Given a fresh coat of paint by Mugrot's long-suffering grot riggers before every fight (and often halfway through if da boss isn't happy with the state of his ride),* Da Skullsmasha *is normally so brightly coloured that it can be seen from miles away. This, of course, is just how Mugrot likes it. Arrogant and boorish,* Da Skullsmasha's *boss is notoriously picky about who he lets ride aboard his prized Battlewagon. Even in the heat of battle he has been known to refuse a ride to all but Boyz of his own clan, and even then often imposes a Nobz and Flash Gitz only rule. After all, only the best deserve to ride to battle aboard a tank so bright that even Gork and Mork can't fail to spot it, and Mugrot is more than happy to turn* Da Skullsmasha's *guns on anyone who says otherwise.*



THE SKY HUNT

For all his faults, Mogrok is no fool. Though his forces are driving the Imperial battle line back step by bloody step, he knows those wolf boyz are tough nuts to crack. Determined to soften his enemies up, Mogrok calls in the flyboyz.

SKYBOSS WINGNUTZ

Skyboss Wingnutz has a reputation for flying like a cross-eyed squig with a stikkbomb up its backside. That this nutter has walked away from more crashes than he can count is seen by others as a blessing from Mork. This belief is so firmly held that his flyboyz carry bits of his crashed Dakkajets as lucky charms. Indeed, on more than one occasion Wingnutz has found himself sabotaged or even shot down by one of his own ladz who has lost their lucky buzz-cog or sprocket-nut and needs to 'acquire' a new one!

On ad-hoc runways and captured airfields all across Alaric Prime, grot ground crews dashed madly back and forth. They dragged dribbling fuel-hoses or strained under the weight of rusty carts loaded with teetering heaps of ordnance. Ork flyboyz swaggered toward their craft, snapping goggles down over beady red eyes and boasting loudly about how many humies they were going to kill. The throaty roar of ram-jets rose to a thunderous crescendo as squadron upon squadron of Ork attack craft propelled themselves skyward. Dakkajets in their hundreds wallowed gracelessly into the air alongside wings of Burna- and Blitza-Bommers. The lurching attack craft rolled, banked and tried (half-heartedly) not to collide with one another as they set a course for Fortress Alaric. The Ork air armada was coming, and beneath them advanced the greatest single horde yet to descend upon Alaric Prime's defenders.

From orbit, it seemed as though a great green wave was surging across the plains, the islands emptying as the invaders massed for their final blow. Hundreds of thousands of greenskins swept in from the south and the east, making for the main Space Wolf battlefront. Mogrok himself came with them, riding in their midst atop the roof of a hulking Battlewagon. This monstrous metal beast was studded with batteries of crackling energy weapons, and supported Mogrok's immense bosspole in a web of winches and cables.

As befitted his status, Skyboss Wingnutz led the air armada from the very front. He was therefore the first to see the Imperial aircraft as they scrambled to intercept his winged horde. Swooping down from the upper atmosphere came squadrons of Stormfang Gunships, spat from the launch bays of embattled Strike Cruisers. More specks climbed upward





BOZROG'Z BIGKILLAZ

Most Orks consider flyboyz to be a bit barmy, and none more so than the begoggled loons who pilot Blitza-Bommers. Nose diving toward the enemy at breakneck speed with a half ton of high explosives lashed to your wings might sound all well and good, but as the Snakebite Nobz are especially fond of saying, 'It's all fun 'n' games 'til someone gets blown ter bits.'

However, the pilots of the Blitza-Bommer squadron known as Bozrog'z Bigkillaz have made dive-bombing into an art form. Legendary for being flashy show offs with no sense of fair play, the Bigkillaz will circle high above the battlefield, actively avoiding getting into fights with other aircraft or ground targets while they single out a suitable victim. This prey will invariably be the biggest, baddest thing on the battlefield, but once it lies in the Bigkillaz' sights its days are usually numbered. Screaming down from on high, Bozrog and his boyz fly almost nose-to-tail in a suicidally tight formation well beyond the skills of most Ork flyboyz. Following their boss' lead, the whole squadron will drop all of their boom bombs at once. Their victim is pummelled with a tightly grouped trio of explosions that collapses shields and staves in even the thickest armour, detonating ammo and fuel reserves with monstrous force. Even as the flames billow skyward behind them, the Bigkillaz are already up and away, hunting for their next luckless target.

from the direction of Sacred Mountain, quickly resolving themselves into more Stormfangs, as well as several wings of Imperial Navy Vendettas. Even as the ground forces began to engage below, Wingnutz curled back his lips with a hungry snarl and slammed his thumbs down on his triggers.

The two waves of aircraft collided like furious stormfronts, streams of fire sawing through the sky amid flaming contrails and spinning metal. The Orks' numerical advantage was vast, yet the Stormfang Gunships drove hard into their midst, giving the greenskin pilots no chance to react. The Orks blazed away with furious glee, but the thick frontal armour of the Fenrisian gunships shrugged off their shots like driven snow. Return fire streaked out, searing beams of helwinter light clipping off wings and rupturing fuel tanks with brutal efficiency. The Orks' dense numbers worked against them, every jink and dodge sending Dakkajets and Burna-Bommers careering into one another. As the Vendettas added their lascannons to the fight, crude aircraft exploded in droves. Bullet-riddled Ork and Imperial craft plunged from the sky in blazing tangles as the air war intensified.

On the ground, the Orks fared better. Vast wings of Burna-Bommers and Blitza-Bommers screamed down to pound the Imperial battle line with explosive ordnance. Cadians died screaming behind their defence lines as they were consumed in hungry cauldrons of flame. Hydras hammered return fire into the skies, their attack patterns supported by the streaking flakk missiles of Long Fangs, and the blazing wrath of Quad Gun emplacements and Firestorm Redoubts. Even so, the greenskin aircraft continued to take their toll. Meanwhile, Ragnar Blackmane's ground forces were barely holding the Orks at bay. Arrayed along a low ridge studded with crater-pocked fortifications, Cadians and Space Wolves stood side by side as they poured fire into the sea of greenskins surging toward them. Knights loomed above, adding their own might to the desperate bombardment. The Orks charged forward in their thousands with their guns blazing and ramshackle tanks roaring. At the barricades, Blackmane fought with true Fenrisian ferocity, every blow and shot felling more foes. As another Ork fell away bloody, Ragnar glanced up, a howling scream signifying Ork dive bombers closing in. The air filled with an ominous whine, there was a blinding flash, and everything went white.

Ragnar hauled himself to his feet, ears ringing. The Wolf Lord spat blood and looked up to see a tight formation of Ork Bommers climbing hard through the maelstrom above. Blackmane traced their path back to their target, his eyes widening with horror as his gaze settled on the Scorched Knight. Sire Dyros' left arm was a sparking ruin, little more than a mangled stump. But it was the towering Knight's chest and head that had taken the worst of it. As the young Wolf Lord took in the ruptured horror of fire-blackened wreckage that had once been the Scorched Knight, a great, triumphant shout rose from the Ork horde. Nothing could have lived through that blast. With this realisation came a surging fury, one that Blackmane was only too glad to embrace.

BLOODED CLAWS

Ragnar Blackmane is famed for his rages, in the grip of which he enters a heedless killing frenzy. His feral wrath has been awoken by the loss of his ally, and is about to be unleashed upon the Ork horde with devastating consequences.

Ragnar, hold your position, it's suicide to attack now! ***Ragnar? ***Wolf Lord Blackmane, in the name of Russ and the Allfather, as your liege lord I command you to hold your position! By Russ, he's going to charge...

- Logan Grimnar, Fortress Alaric Strategium Vox-log

As the furious howl of Ragnar Blackmane rang across the vox, it was echoed up and down the line. The sound rose, mournful and cold as the winds of Fenris. As Blackmane vaulted the defence line, his Wolf Guard and the Blood Claws of Einar's pack were close on his heels. Incredibly, the dense press of greenskins was pushed backwards as the Space Wolves hit home. With the Orks reeling, Ragnar and his warriors began to cut a path into the throng. Blackmane's fury was incandescent, his movements too fast for the eye to follow. The Wolf Lord's frost blade severed heads, lopped limbs and hacked weapons in half amid a blizzard of blood and sundered metal. Around him, his followers fought to keep up, their faces alight with the fierce joy of battle. More young Space Wolves were joining the attack as it gained momentum. Skyclaws plunged in from above on trails of flame, bolt pistols blazing as boots crunched into upturned Ork faces. Swiftclaw Bikers leapt the barricade, wheels churning thin air for long moments before they crashed down amid the Orks, and began to carve a path towards their Wolf Lord. The Cadians poured supporting fire around the Space Wolves' flanks, doing what they could to assist. Yet the Orks still numbered in their hundreds of thousands, and one look at the grim faces of the Grey Hunters who had held their ground told the Imperial Guardsmen everything they needed to know. The air boiled with duelling aircraft above while a sea of baying Orks surged forward, closing ranks in the wake of Ragnar's assault.

All this was lost on Blackmane, for a red mist had settled across his vision. Nothing less than the blood of every Ork on Alaric Prime would quench his white-hot fury, and as Ragnar hacked his way forward the greenskins fell apart before him. Vaulting onto the wreck of a burning Ork tank, Blackmane sighted the great swaying banner of the Ork Warlord. It rose above the horde, flanked by lumbering walkers



and a great mob of greenskins with weird, glowing weapons. Ragnar wouldn't have cared if the Ork gods themselves had marched at his enemy's side. He took a running leap into the enemy ranks and began to carve a fresh path toward his foe.

The Orks unleashed everything they had at this deadly lord and his blood-covered warriors, yet mired as they were amid the green tide the Space Wolves made difficult targets. Coruscating balls of plasma blasted glowing craters in the horde and thrumming waves of force crushed swathes of green bodies to paste, but still Ragnar's wolves kept coming. The Swiftclaw Bikers of Ornolf's Giantslayers streaked wide around the fight to flank the nearest Ork walker. Hissing beams of melta fire reached out, burrowing through the war engine's armour to touch off its boiler in a great cloud of fire and searing steam. Even as the walker blew sky high, Ragnar swept his blade through the last of the Orks that blocked his path and suddenly the xenos Warlord was before him. The massive greenskin gave an incongruously resigned shrug, aped clumsily by its massive armour, and lumbered into a charge. The Ork's piston-klaw swept down toward Ragnar's head like the meteor that had fallen upon Sacred Mountain, yet the Wolf Lord wove aside, smashing the hilt of his blade into the Ork's face. Teeth flew as his opponent staggered sideways, only to give vent to a bellow of rage and swing again, servos and gears whining furiously. Ragnar caught the first blow on his blade, staggering under its force, then battered the follow-up swing aside and allowed the Ork's weapon to bury itself deep in the ground. Before the surprised greenskin could react, Ragnar swept his blade around and lopped off his foe's massively armoured arm at the elbow. Thick blood jetted forth as the Ork staggered back a step, before lunging forward with a furious roar to bite out Ragnar's throat. With another lightning-fast sidestep, the young Wolf Lord brought his blade around and hacked the Ork's head from its shoulders. Ragnar threw back his head and loosed another feral howl that was echoed by the warriors around him. The Ork Warlord was dead, but Blackmane's victory might yet prove short-lived. Though some fled at the fall of their master, hundreds of furious Orks still pressed in from all sides, driving the Fenrisians back into an ever tightening ring. The Space Wolves fought with undimmed fury, yet against such odds and so far from support they stood little chance of survival.

FENRIS

The death world from which the Space Wolves hail is beyond the imaginings of most citizens of the Imperium. Possessed of a towering, feral beauty, Fenris is nonetheless a world so lethal that none but the strongest can survive there. The human tribes who live on Fenris' surface must fight a constant war with packs of deadly beasts, with one another, and with the planet itself, simply to survive. It is from this hardy stock that the Space Wolves recruit, and from them that they inherit their jovial disrespect for death.




FROSTFANG

THE DEEDS OF RAGNAR BLACKMANE



941.M41 The Choosing

During an especially bloody Fenrisian summer, the Thunderfist tribe are ambushed by the Grimskull tribe in the wake of a victory feast. Flying into a berserk rage, the young Ragnar Thunderfist – something of a prodigal child amongst his tribe – butchers a great swathe of the attacking warriors. Though he eventually succumbs to his wounds, Ragnar's efforts draw the attention of the Wolf Priests. Ragnar's barely living body is unceremoniously dragged from beneath a mound of the dead, and he is taken to join the Sky Warriors.

952.M41 The Price of Victory

Ragnar Blackmane's pack are among those chosen to launch a punitive assault on the world of Henloth. Here, rebel factions have staged an uprising in the name of the Ruinous Powers. The situation swiftly escalates as the influence of Tzeentchian Daemons is revealed. As the Space Wolves struggle to prevent a full-scale daemonic incursion Ragnar Blackmane is forced to strike off the head of Rune Priest Bulvai Runemakke, whose erratic decisions have led to one disaster after another. Ragnar's instincts are born out as a glamour fades to reveal a Thousand Sons Sorcerer lying slain by Blackmane's hand. Yet many claim that Ragnar's behaviour was dangerously impulsive, for he had no proof beyond his own convictions that the venerable Space Wolf psyker had been somehow compromised by the foe. Some amongst the Chapter take to calling the impetuous Blood Claw 'Ragnar Packslayer', and his reputation is left badly tarnished.

983.M41 Thunderfist's Bane

During fierce fighting against Khornate Traitor Space Marines on the Forge world of Bhakhar, Ragnar is consumed by battle rage and plunges into the fray. He is thus far from Lord Berek's side when the Wolf Lord is slain by the Khornate Champion, Ghorox Bloodfist. Blaming himself for Berek's death, Blackmane vows to find vengeance or death.

983.M41 An Oath Fulfilled

Ragnar Blackmane finally runs Ghorox Bloodfist to ground on the shrine world of Perfidium. Their ensuing duel is long and violent. It ends with Ragnar hurling Bloodfist's broken body from the Templum Incarnadus to smash a crater in the pearlescent cobbles three thousand feet below. Having avenged his slain lord, Blackmane is elected as the new master of Thunderfist's Great Company. This announcement amazes all, the young Wolf Lord included.

942.M41 Morkai's Due

During his Trial of Morkai, the young Ragnar finds himself the prey of a great Fenrisian Blackmaned Wolf. Rather than succumb, Ragnar successfully battles and slays the beast, hauling its carcass back to the Fang in victory. With this heroic deed, Ragnar Blackmane is born.

949.M41 Blackmane's Fury

While en route to the Angelsfall warzone, the Strike Cruiser *Stormdrake* is boarded by Dark Eldar pirates. Ragnar's pack of Blood Claws are amongst the warriors who charge through the ship's corridors to repel the boarders. After Ragnar's Wolf Guard Pack Leader is felled with a virulent neurotoxin, Blackmane sees red and leads a maddened charge into the enemy guns. Though several of his packmates are slain amid a storm of crystalline splinters, the xenos are overrun before they can sabotage the *Stormdrake's* primary generatorum.

970.M41 Destiny Reclaimed

The Bladestar Cluster is overrun by the Ork hordes of a Blood Axe Warboss calling himself Borzag Khan. Fresh from a bloody, system-wide war against elements of the White Scars Chapter, this cunning greenskin has learned much about hit and run warfare. His fast moving, hard-hitting warbands wreak havoc through the Cluster until the arrival of Berek Thunderfist's Great Company. In a series of bloody skirmishes, the Fenrisians curtail the Ork advance and eventually corner Borzag Khan himself on the Antillian Plateaux. Here, amid the blood and thunder of battle, the frenzied Blackmane single-handedly hacks apart Borzag's bodyguards before slaying the Blood Axe Warboss in a crunchingly violent duel. Their leader slain, the remaining Orks are easy prey for the Space Wolves, the war drawing to a close just days later. Ragnar is lauded for his heroic part in the victory, the stain on his honour erased with an unprecedented promotion straight from Blood Claw to the ranks of Lord Berek's Wolf Guard.

984.M41-998.M41 Years of Blood

With the Imperium beset on all sides, Ragnar Blackmane proves himself a capable Wolf Lord in numerous bloody wars. Blackmane's Great Company specialise in crushing orbital assaults, and though Ragnar's elders express concern at the young Lord's ferocious temper, they cannot fault the results. Yet matters are to come to a head on the bloody fields of Alaric Prime, where his wrath may yet prove to be his downfall.

THE FURY OF WOLVES

Ragnar Blackmane and his surviving warriors are alone amid a sea of foes. Cut off and surrounded, losing ground by the moment, they cannot hold out for long. However, the Space Wolves will not abandon their own, no matter the odds.

CAGED BEASTS

As word of the battle filtered back to Krom, the Wolf Lord raged at his impotence. Yet he and his men were not yet ready for battle. None amongst them had escaped Blistered Isle without serious injury – Krom himself was still waiting impatiently for his fractured skull to reknit – and their wargear was scarcely in better condition. As he paced and cursed, the Fierce-eye finally had to admit to himself that his actions had been worse than rash. He bore no love for the whelp Blackmane, but if Ragnar's death was placed upon his shoulders beside the loss of the Vengeful Howl*, Dragongaze might never live the shame down.*

The strategium of Sacred Mountain rang with a thunderous crash as Logan Grimnar's fist smashed through the holomap table. Robed Sacristans and Cadians froze in fear as the Great Wolf stalked around the sparking table to loom above Castellan Stein. To the Cadian's credit, even dwarfed by the looming Great Wolf, Stein held his ground.

'Repeat yourself, Castellan Stein.' Grimnar's voice was a dangerous growl, echoed by the rumbles of the two enormous wolves that lurked in his shadow. Stein swallowed audibly, and spoke up into the sudden hush.

'My lord Grimnar, with all respect, your warriors are lost. They abandoned their posts – at great cost in lives to my own men – and charged into the very midst of the horde. A Cadian does not shirk from duty, but attempting a rescue now would simply waste even more of our strength. We cannot save Ragnar Blackmane, lord Grimnar. It is impossible.'

Grimnar continued to glare at Stein for a long moment, the Cadian commander quivering with fear before him. Then the Old Wolf scowled and turned away.

'Aye, perhaps it is impossible Stein. For little men like you.' With that, Grimnar strode from the strategium with his monstrous wolves at his heels. Though he was seething with frustration, Logan would not abandon Ragnar and his followers to their fate. As he swept along the corridors of Fortress Alaric, Grimnar spoke a steady stream of orders into his vox-bead. An icy shiver ran up the Old Wolf's spine as the reports came back. Stormcaller had forseen that Grimnar should hold his finest back from the fight lest such a disaster befall the Young Wolf. Yet to hurl so many of his own Wolf Guard into this boiling cauldron of war smacked of desperation. Many would not return from a battle against such odds, but he could not simply leave his hot-headed protégé to die. With a heavy heart, Grimnar snarled the order.

Njal Stormcaller knelt upon a bloody mat of freshly skinned pelts, his breath misting the ice-cold air of the cavern. Stripped to his black carapace, Njal's massive form was festooned with runic charms that crawled with flickering wyrdlight. Scattered around him lay handfuls of runestones and shards of bloodstained ice, steaming with a faint ectoplasmic vapour that Njal drew in with each slow breath. He closed his eyes and looked deep into the heart of the storm, plunging his consciousness through the skin of reality like a blade. In his mind's eye, a great slick of squirming, boiling entrails spilled from the belly of the Warp and spread slowly out before him. Sifting through the metaphysical offal in which he now swam, Njal began to read the signs.

Ghostly waves of fire and ice crawled in slow motion across the walls of the cave. The scattered runestones rose slowly into the air, orbiting the Fenrisian psyker like worlds around a star. Stormcaller's soul roamed far from his body, yet his lips still moved, words of prophecy whispering between them. Hovering at his shoulder a lupine servo-skull set quill to parchment and scribed Njal's future-telling word for word.

'The young king and the old... both shall come to peril... on the world of burning seas... hate begets hate, blood begets blood... the wolf shall plunge into the jaws of the beast... yet the echoes of the Primarch shall gather as one... they shall howl to a sky of fire and blood... and strikelike the wrath of the storm unbound... though a million blades be raised as one... and murder wash across the world... Russ shall protect his favoured sons...'

Njal's eyes flicked open, glowing with blue-white light.

'The weapons of wrath alone shall sunder the beast unchained!' he finished in a gasp, then fell forward onto his hands and knees as the light in his eyes went out. As Stormcaller retched blood and bile onto the mat of skins, runestones clattered to the icy floor around him. Each stone was shorn cleanly in half, and glowed as though plucked from the heart of a fire.

Slowly, Stormcaller rose to his feet, superhuman senses reorienting him to the material plane. As he plucked the scroll of prophecy from the servo-skull's grasp the strange servitor gave a burbling grumble of machine code. Njal absently waved it away, brow furrowing as he read the words he had spoken Echoes of the Primarch? From the Chapter's mighty relics to its every fierce warrior, each facet of the Space Wolves' existence could be said to echo Russ' own. Yet surely the truest echoes of the Primarch were those brave warriors who made up Grimnar's Wolf Guard, for they were mighty heroes all. Grimnar and Blackmane were to depart for Sanctus Reach within the day. Before they left, Stormcaller would ensure that his warning was heard.



Minutes later, plunging through the boiling madness of the air war, came a pair of Stormwolves. The craft arrowed straight toward the shrinking splinter of grey-blue armour lodged in the heart of the Ork horde. As they neared their target, humming green beams of force reached up from amongst the greenskins below and dragged the two assault craft groundward. Both slammed down amid the Ork throng, trailing a blizzard of flaming wreckage and pulped green flesh as they slewed to a stop hundreds of yards from Ragnar's embattled warriors.

Orks converged upon the downed craft. Suddenly the hull of the foremost Stormwolf buckled as if struck from within. Rivets popped as another resounding clang echoed from inside the craft, then suddenly its assault ramp flew free. Propelled by a thunderous blow from a powerfist, the huge slab of adamantium cartwheeled bloodily into a mob of Orks and the Wolf Guard stormed out after it. Fangs bared, the veteran warriors raised their guns and opened fire, directing a dense curtain of point-blank fire into the greenskin mass. The Orks, previously focussed on Ragnar's desperate forces, now found themselves attacked on two fronts. To their fore the surviving Blood Claws struck with renewed fury, pistols roaring and blades lashing out. The greenskins gave a mighty roar, this being the sort of fight Orks live for, but now they were dying faster with every passing moment as the ramp of the second Stormwolf slammed down and more Wolf Guard crashed headlong into the boiling mass of foes. The brawl was brutal in the extreme, the Wolf Guard fighting with the cold fury of Fenris against a seemingly numberless tide. First, one Terminator was hacked bloodily apart, then another, then more. Yet as the Orks died in their hundreds, the numbers between the Wolf Guard and Ragnar began to thin.

Suddenly the two Space Wolf forces were fighting as one, a surviving handful of Wolf Guard Terminators carving through the final rank of Orks to find Ragnar's warriors waiting beyond. Steaming heaps of Ork corpses carpeted the ground for yards in every direction, the foe backing warily away and summoning yet greater strength before trying again. The heroism of the Wolf Guard had earned the Blood Claws a chance at survival, but no more than that. Ragnar's men were far from rescued yet.

As his severed head bounced into the mud and rolled under his Battlewagon, Mogrok gritted his teeth. Well, he thought as he came to rest face down in the mud, this was just zoggin' typical. He'd done all the work, had all the best plans. And what did he get? Some wolf boy nutter with a great big sword runs up and knocks his block off. The daft git was going to get buried in Boyz for his troubles, but that didn't really help Mogrok very much. Suddenly he was rolling over, grasping fingers jammed into his nose, ears and mouth. Mogrok had a fleeting impression of beady red eyes and a leering, snaggle-toothed grin before he was shoved unceremoniously into a smelly sack.





THE GREAT WOLF STRIKES

The leaderless Ork horde is beginning to waver. Ragnar and his surviving warriors have been granted a temporary reprieve by the Wolf Guard, but remain in great peril. On the plains of Sacred Isle, in the skies above, even in orbit, Ork and Imperial forces are locked in a bitter battle. Now it falls to the Great Wolf to strike the killing blow.



THE OLD WOLF

For over five hundred years, Logan Grimnar has led the Space Wolves into battle, yet the fire in his heart burns undimmed, tempered by wisdom but fierce as ever.

The Orks were wavering. True, their aircraft still blackened the skies and their warriors turned the plains of Sacred Isle to a churning sea of green bodies. Yet their leader was slain, and reports flooded in from Imperial forces suggesting that word must be spreading through the greenskin ranks. Here and there, infighting was breaking out as the Orks turned on one another before the eyes of the Cadian defenders. Anarchic masses of xenos surged across the plains, falling easy prey to the Imperium's guns. There were still hundreds of thousands of Orks in the field, however, and more were still flooding in from the outlying isles, drawn by the promise of battle. Servo-skull pict-augurs showed Blackmane and his small band still holding out behind a rampart of Ork corpses, the few surviving Wolf Guard bolstering their ranks. The greenskins were massing to attack the young Wolf Lord's position once again, and in such numbers that it seemed unlikely any Space Wolves would survive. Now was the time for a decisive blow, before the Orks could regain their cohesion or momentum. Fortunately for the Imperium, Logan Grimnar was readying just such a strike.

THE STORMSPEAR

With a thunderous rumble, the great gates of Fortress Alaric swung wide. From within came a gunning roar of engines and a ferocious howl as the armoured might of the Space Wolves surged forth. Hurtling across the freshly repaired drawbridge of Sacred Mountain, a column of blue-grey Adeptus Astartes battle tanks made for the front lines. Land Raiders jostled with speeding Rhinos and squadrons of snarling Predators as they ate up the miles to the front. Vindicators



snorted smoke as they raced to keep up. At the tip of the spear, mounted astride his chariot *Stormrider* with the Axe Morkai brandished overhead, Logan Grimnar bared his fangs in a wild grin. Around him rode packs of Wolf Guard mounted astride loping Thunderwolves, their voices raised in chilling howls to match those of their warrior king.



Grimnar's armoured thrust hit the Orks like a mighty spear. Weapons roared in profusion, heavy bolters and autocannons stitching the greenskin lines with shots while lascannons spat and Ork tanks exploded in gouts of oily flame. The Orks laid down a storm of firepower in response, crude ordnance striking sheets of sparks as it hammered dents in armoured hulls. Here and there a shot punched through – Space Wolf tanks shuddered to a halt gouting flame, or flipped into the air as bomb squigs detonated beneath them with lethal force. Yet Grimnar was unstoppable, his axe hacking through green flesh with every swing. The Thunderwolf riders around him hit the Ork lines like a battering ram, the weight and momentum of their charge carrying them deep into the horde. Suddenly the sky filled with screams and the world burst into flame as Astra Militarum artillery fire fell in a great swathe amid the Orks. Grimnar watched a looming scrap metal walker come apart under the bombardment, flaming chunks of wreckage spinning away to smash more Orks to a pulp. He grinned and conceded that perhaps Stein wasn't completely useless after all. The foe were doing their best to fight back, massing behind captured barricades and pouring fire into the Space Wolf offensive with desperate ferocity. But Stein was rolling his barrage outward now, cutting a path of destruction through the Ork horde. With a ringing howl of fury, Logan Grimnar plunged into the corridor of flames opened by Stein's guns.

An army of greenskins was poised to overrun Ragnar Blackmane and his surviving warriors. Yet now they were sent reeling by Grimnar's charge. The Great Wolf burst through the flames of the Cadian bombardment, speeding tanks and striding Knights emerging upon his heels. Their guns loosed a torrent of fire into the greenskins, blasting massive holes in their lines. Ork field guns were overturned, crushed beneath the grinding tracks of Space Wolf tanks even as their grot crews scattered screaming.

As the Space Wolf assault bit deep, any last vestiges of a coherent Ork battle-line collapsed. Bereft of cover, the Orks were easy prey. Rhinos slewed to a halt, packs of Grey Hunters disembarking and driving the Orks back with crashing volleys of boltgun fire. Jets of flame washed across the tightly packed greenskins, turning them into roaring, flailing torches. Lascannon fire tore through Ork tanks as though they were made from rotten wood. As the greenskins tried to mass for a counter-charge, Grimnar slammed into their midst. Orks vanished under his chariot with meaty thuds or were decapitated by the Axe Morkai. Blackmane's surviving warriors were cheering now, charging out from behind their macabre rampart to hack and hew. Chased by shot and shell, the last Orks broke and fled, flowing away from Blackmane's position like the outgoing tide. Victory secured, Grimnar brought *Stormrider* to a halt and leapt down, his face set in a stony scowl. Both of his Wolf Lords had disgraced themselves since this war began, and the Old Wolf meant to see the first of them dealt with right now.

CHAPTER BANNER

The greatest of the Space Wolves' deeds are commemorated upon their Chapter Banner, a standard heavy with age and glory that was borne into the fires of Alaric Prime at the head of the Space Wolves' charge.



Torvald finally lowered his hammer, allowing the weapon to fall from his aching hands. It landed with a soft thud upon a carpet of mangled xenos bodies. Around him the surviving Blood Claws and Skyclaws were gathering up their wounded. Perhaps half their number remained, and many of the fallen would never rise again. It had been a battle for the sagas, but the cost had been fearsome. Torvald watched as Lord Grimnar approached up the mountain of fallen Orks, the Great Wolf's armoured boots squelching in greenskin gore with every step. Ragnar strode to meet him. The young Wolf Lord's armour was blood-slicked, scorched and battered, but his face wore a look of fierce pride. That look was erased with shocking suddenness as Grimnar's armoured fist crunched into the bridge of Blackmane's nose. The young warrior went down in a spurt of blood, eyes wide with shock and outrage. Yet as Blackmane tried to rise, Logan Grimnar planted a boot on his chestplate and roared directly into his face.

'One word, Ragnar, one single word of honour or victory or sagas and I swear by the Allfather I will beat you to within an inch of your life! You deserted your post and steeped yourself in the blood of your own. And do not tell me that you did these things in the name of some noble goal. It was your choler that led you here, your damnable temper and a Blood Claw's juvenile desire for glory! Look around, whelp. How many died today that you might take an eye for an eye? You have shamed yourself, Ragnar Blackmane. Now stand up, and do better!'

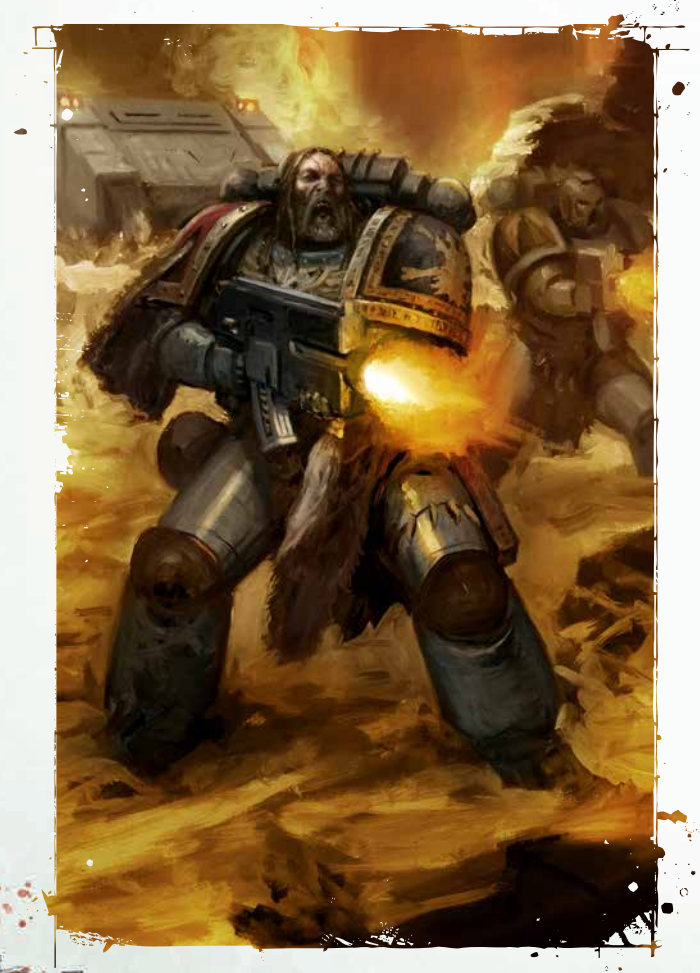
Grimnar removed his foot and reached down a gauntlet to pull Blackmane to his feet. The young Wolf Lord slapped the proffered hand aside – surging to his feet, he turned his back and stalked away. Torvald shook his head as he renewed his search for his fallen packmates. As if they didn't have enough enemies already.

THE IMPERIUM ASCENDANT

In the strategium of Sacred Mountain, the news of Ragnar's rescue met with a somewhat muted response. A pair of Tech-Priests had successfully restored the functions of the fractured holotable, yet the cracks in morale remained. Officers exchanged hunted looks, shooting nervous glances at the main doors in fear of the huge armoured figure that might fill them at any moment. Castellan Stein stood stiff-backed before the table's flickering display, watching the swarms of icons flowing across it with a fierce scowl. Despite his best efforts, the Cadian commander's temper had flared several times at subordinates forced to report bad news or request clarification of an order. Though he was loathe to admit it, Stein had been badly rattled by his run in with the Great Wolf – for a moment he had even feared for his life. Now, with the rescue of the hero he had written off as dead, the Cadian commander feared that any perceived error of judgement on his part would be compounded in the Space Wolves' eyes. Never mind that hundreds of his own good Cadian Guardsmen had paid the price for Ragnar's vainglorious offensive and subsequent reprieve – Stein knew better than most that the lives of his men were an expendable commodity, but Cadian blood was a coin he preferred to spend with his own hand and on his own terms. Still, as he watched the battle continue to play out upon the plains to the east, the castellan had to admit that the Orks were collapsing. It was now confirmed that Ragnar Blackmane's maddened charge had slain the Orks' warlord – if his offensive had been the swing that took the head off the beast, Grimnar's massive follow-up strike had been the spear-thrust to the guts that finished it off. As before, when Stein's men had felled the previous warlord of this Waaagh!, the Orks were reeling and panicked by the loss of their leader. This time, however, the xenos would not be given a chance to regroup. Turning from the map, Stein began to bark orders, determined to prove to these lords of Fenris that the men of Cadia did not shirk from doing the Emperor's work.



Castellan Stein's orders flowed out from the strategium, crackling from vox-horns or repeated by chattering servo-skulls up and down the Cadian lines. Banners were waved, priests bellowed exhortations and Commissars strode forward to lead by example. As one, the Cadian forces began to advance, bayonets fixed and lasguns blazing. Silas Ovik and his surviving crews gunned the engines of their Leman Russ battle tanks and began to grind forward, pounding fire into the disintegrating Ork masses as they did so. A pair of Deathstrike missiles were launched from the slopes of Sacred Mountain, passing over the plains with a roar like the anger of the gods. Ork aircraft desperately dived and rolled to avoid the enormous warheads as they plunged toward the battlefield, and as the missiles struck home it was as if twin suns were born in the midst of Mogrok's horde. Searing flames roared outward in all directions, fusing the mud of the plains to black glass and blasting Orks, walkers and tanks alike to clouds of ash.



Beset by Freebooter ships, tumbling in its last death throes high above the battlefield, the Space Wolf Strike Cruiser *Kraken* emptied its launch-decks. Even as their mother-craft streaked the upper atmosphere with flaming debris, another wave of Drop Pods and Stormfang Gunships plunged into the battle. The Drop Pods disgorged howling packs of vengeful Fenrisians and roaring Dreadnoughts into the fight, while the Stormfangs dived into the ongoing air war, their helfrost lances streaking the sky with searing light as they cut Ork jets in half. With fresh enemies joining the fight and their ground forces collapsing below, the remaining Ork pilots swiftly lost heart. One moment the sky was a roiling maelstrom of dogfights and sawing fire, the next the greenskin air armada disintegrated like a shoal of panicked fish. Ramshackle fighter craft streaked in all directions, many colliding with or firing upon one another as they went. Blossoming explosions filled the sky as the remaining Imperial air forces gave chase, and blazing scrap metal fell in a rain upon the plains below.

Everywhere the Orks were falling apart and the Imperial forces advancing triumphant. Knots of Orks still fought back with desperate ferocity, but the tide had well and truly turned. On the greenskins' southern flank Gerantius led a spearhead of Knights and Space Wolves into the milling foe, personally ramming his verdigrised reaper chainsword through the head of a towering Ork walker and toppling the mighty war engine. Around the feet of the Forgotten Knight, Grey Hunters and Long Fangs laid down



MORKAI'S GIFT

The skjalds tell of how Logan Grimnar first came by the Axe Morkai upon the bloody fields of Armageddon. During that terrible war it is said that Grimnar faced a dread champion of the Blood God Khorne in open battle. They say that the two mighty warriors duelled in a ring of blood and brass, beneath a sky turned hellish by fire and smoke, and that the crashing of their blows was as the thunder of falling stars.

It is said that Lord Grimnar suffered a grievous blow from his foe that sheared his own weapon in two and hurled him to the ground. There he lay upon the cracked stone and drifted ash, surrounded by mounds of smouldering skulls as the lifeblood poured from his wounded body. Yet as the heretic champion stood over him victorious, the skjalds claim that Lord Grimnar heard the howls of the Wolf King Russ, and was filled by a fresh and bloody purpose.

Rising once more to his feet, Lord Grimnar sank his mighty fangs into the bared throat of his foe. The bite of the Great Wolf is that of winter itself, so they say, and thus his foe was undone and crashed down in turn to lie in bloody defeat. Lord Grimnar took as a trophy his foe's mighty axe, claiming it as a gift from Morkai himself. To the ruin of his foes, the Great Wolf had it reforged for his use, and he wields it still.

a devastating storm of fire that drove back and scattered one Ork mob after another.

Along Mordred's Ridge, a last handful of Cadians and Space Wolves were still holding out in battered fortifications. Vast mobs of Orks bellowed and brawled outside, while Grukk tore at the armoured walls of a towering bastion, bellowing with insensate rage. The remaining defenders were preparing to sell their lives dearly, when suddenly explosions blossomed amid the Ork masses, and the Cadians and Fenrisians were hurled to the floor. As they rose to stare once more from armoured view-slits, the amazed defenders saw blazing craters strewn with dead Orks, the survivors falling back in disarray.

Bullgryns were marching up onto the ridge, locking shields between the smoking barricades while platoons of infantry followed in their wake. Mortar teams deployed in the lee of the abhuman line, lobbing shells into the retreating greenskin horde even as the ground shook to the tread of House Degallio Knights. Warlord Grukk charged madly towards these towering war engines, until a plummeting demolisher shell exploded directly at his feet. The Warboss was flung backwards, lacerated with shrapnel wounds and knocked unconscious by the blast. Yet even as a Knight loomed over him, the looted Thunderhawk swept in once again, a blast from its massive cannon sending the super-heavy walker reeling backward. Before any other Imperial forces could intervene, the last of Grukk's Nobz gathered their smouldering boss up and dragged him aboard the attack craft, its engines punching it back into the sky even before its ramp was fully closed. Grukk's last shot at reclaiming his Waaagh! had died beneath the guns of Mordred's Ridge. He would not get another chance at glory, at least not on Alaric Prime, and so the Waaagh! was denied the one Ork who might have held it together.

Mogrok's plan had failed. On every front, the combined forces of the Imperium pushed forward to victory. The Orks' strength was fragmenting into countless smaller warbands, Mogrok's Waaagh! tearing itself apart and fleeing in all directions to escape destruction. The Imperium had won a bloody victory over the Ork invaders, the xenos horde shattered beyond recovery. The fighting continued as the Orks fell back, however – many thousands of the aliens still remained and their fleet still fought on in orbit. The exhausted defenders knew that their work would not be done until every last greenskin had been hunted down and eradicated like the plague they were.

'Quick, grab Grukk! Job's a bad'un ladz! Mogrok's messed dis Waaagh! right up! Time to find some new 'edz to kick in! Just... don't wake da boss 'til we'ze well clear, eh?'

- Skrak Head-smasha, retreat from Mordred's Ridge

'All squadrons engage, steady advance and fire for effect. Thunderheads – you have the lead. Gentlemen, let's wipe these green savages off the map once and for all. '

- Commander Silas Ovik, Cadian 1652nd Armour

CLAWS OF GRIMNAR

The Space Wolves are a Chapter of individualistic heroes. The greatest of these saga-born warriors form each Wolf Lord's Wolf Guard, and none have won greater renown than those of the Kingsguard of Logan Grimnar himself.



RANULF IRONFANG

With over four centuries of war under his belt, Ranulf has seen it all, done it all, and killed most of it to boot. His crackling frost blade has tasted the blood of thousands, but his greatest foe – and the one that almost finished him – was the Chaos Champion known as Voidheart. The traitor took Ranulf's eye, though the old Wolf Guard lopped off his foe's arm in trade. Voidheart is still out there somewhere, and Ironfang swears there will be a reckoning.



GUNNAR REDHAMMER

The skjalds say of Gunnar Redhammer that the fiery heart of a Blood Claw still beats in his breast. Certainly this massive, feral warrior has a temper that would cause an ice troll to quail, and is never shy about setting it loose. Though he must, on occasion, be restrained by his cooler-headed comrades, in battle Redhammer lives up to his name. Gunnar carves a red path of ruin through his enemies with his thunder hammer's every meteoric swing.

LOGAN'S KINGSGUARD

Drawn into battle atop his chariot, Stormrider, Logan Grimnar is a figurehead of inspiration and strength to his allies. The Great Wolf is one of the Imperium's most popular and well known heroes, his likeness immortalised in statuary, stained-glass and holoshrine across the length and breadth of the Imperium. Grimnar's victories are numerous and well known, his deeds celebrated in story and song by cultures who have never even heard the words Space Marine.

As befits so great a warrior, the Master of the Space Wolves goes to war with heroes beyond counting at his side. However, even in such illustrious company there are those who stand out as true legends of their time.

Most of these mighty warriors find their way into the Wolf Guard of their liege, adding ever more verses to their glorious sagas as they plunge headlong into the greatest battles of their age. Five such warriors make up the pack known throughout the Fang as the Claws of Grimnar.

Clad in bulky Terminator plate and wielding a fearsome array of weapons, the Claws of Grimnar pride themselves on being at the forefront of the fiercest fighting whenever their lord's company goes to war. They are renowned for the volume of their boasts and drinking songs, almost as much as much as they are known for their unstoppable determination on the field of battle.

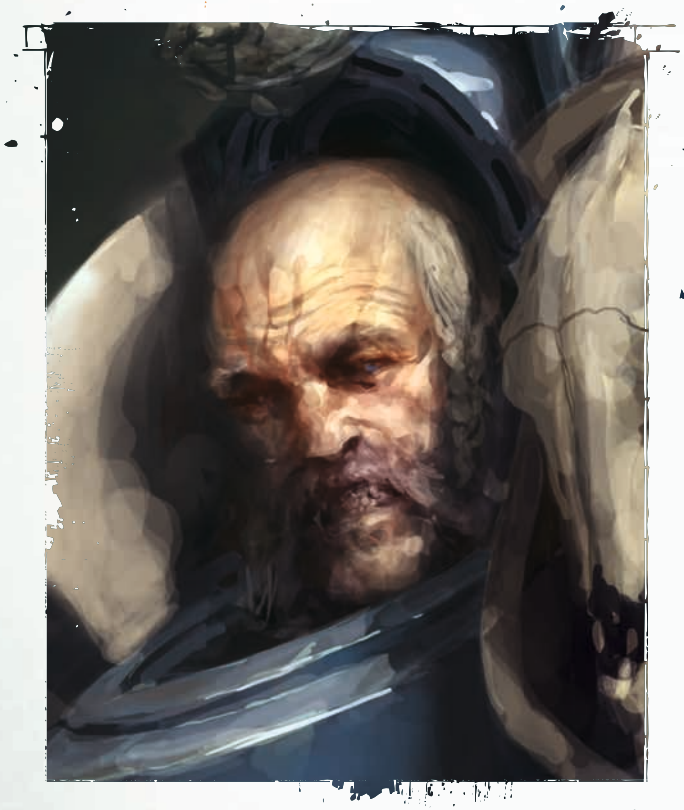


ULLI DRAGONSMOTE

From a young age, the warrior who would become known as the Dragonsmote had a fascination with fire. Before ascending to the ranks of the Sky Warriors, Ulli would fight his tribe's foes with a flaming axe, dipping its blade into kraken's oil before battle and setting it alight. It was this spectacle that first caught the eye of Ulrik the Slayer on the day of Ulli's choosing. This fascination with fire persisted throughout Dragonsmote's time as a Blood Claw and then as a Grey Hunter, where he wielded his squad's flamer with unsettling glee. When his ascension to the Wolf Guard came, it seemed only fitting this perennial fire-wielder be accorded the honour of bearing his squad's heavy flamer. This he has done ever since, bathing his foes in searing death and responding to their frantic screams of pain with his own joyous howls.

'Strike now my brothers, and strike hard. Drive the greenskins from this world with bolt and blade, for it belongs to the Allfather, not to the Ork. Leave nothing of these xenos but their scattered bones!'

- Logan Grimnar, upon the plains of Alaric Prime



SKARD FROSTMANE

Frostmane was so named for his preference for fighting amid the fury of the Fenrisian snows. An expert hunter and tracker, Skard prefers to do battle as the Thunderwolf does, his crackling wolf claws taking the place of his totem-beast's claw-jagged paws. In battle, Frostmane will circle his foes searching for a weakness, using concealing snows or dense mists whenever possible to veil his approach.



INGVARR THUNDERBROW

The skjalds claim that Thunderbrow has never once smiled, words his packmates can well believe. Grim of aspect, Thunderbrow rarely speaks. Yet the Claws of Grimnar know that they can rely absolutely on their seemingly sullen packmate, for he will never, ever let them down – Ingvarr Thunderbrow is the unbending iron backbone of his veteran pack, and his storm bolter's roar is voice enough.

THE HUNT BEGINS

Through an heroic effort and vast loss of life, the forces of the Imperium have broken the Ork Waaagh! on the plains before Sacred Mountain. Yet even as the Orks scatter, the skies open up and the sulphur-rains begin to fall.

FIRE IN THE SKIES

While the Imperium's armies battled across Sacred Isle, the Sacristans and Iron Priests within Fortress Alaric had bent their efforts to awakening its mighty orbital defences. Complex and half-remembered rituals were enacted, and with grinding inexorability their efforts bore fruit.

Even as the Great Wolf's charge was crashing headlong into the greenskin horde on the plains, massive plasma coils roared into life beneath Sacred Mountain. Hydraulic pistons the size of hab-blocks rose and fell in the darkness, their thunder building to a crescendo as arcing energy leapt between monolithic capacitors. Sacred Mountain shuddered once more as hundred-foot hatches irised open, making way for the yawning barrels of orbital cannons forged before the days of Old Night. Throughout Fortress Alaric, klaxons wailed and warning lights strobed while frantic personnel braced for firing.



The first shot hurled a spear of blinding light up into space and burned away the clouds above the mountaintop. In orbit, Space Wolf and Imperial Navy crews raised a fierce cheer as a massive greenskin cruiser was struck by the beam of energy. The craft shuddered apart, its two halves drifting away amid clouds of explosions and tumbling debris. A second shot followed the first, then a third, each monstrous blast eradicating swathes of ramshackle Ork spacecraft. As shots continued to thunder up from the planet below, the remaining Freebooter crews caught on that the fight had turned against them. Kaptin Badrukk's boyz, though still outnumbering the Imperial fleet many times over, turned tail and scattered on blazing thrusters. The Space Wolves Strike Cruisers gave chase, harrying their foes as they fled out-system, while the surviving Imperial Navy craft limped into a ragged cordon and began emergency repairs. In the chaos, amid fields of blazing wreckage, no-one noticed a single, gaudily decorated Ork cruiser sidling into a belt of debris and killing its lights and engines.

THE STALKING WOLF

The skies of Alaric Prime had been torn asunder in the weeks since the Orks' arrival. The rust-ships, the meteor, the Space Wolves, and now tumbling chunks of orbital flotsam, all had battered the planet's atmosphere until it could take no more. Dense banks of bruise-coloured clouds coalesced above Alaric Prime's isles and oceans. Thunder rumbled, titanic bolts of chain lightning leapt, and great hissing curtains of sulphurous rain and muddy ash began to fall. Though not as deadly as the acid-squalls that plagued the southern islands, this hissing deluge would scald flesh given time, and spawned grey-black pools and rivers of corrosive fluids that could be lethal to the unwary.

Out on the plains of Sacred Isle, Logan Grimnar stood amid a gathering of his pack leaders, untroubled by the acid rain that rattled from his bulky Terminator plate. The Space Wolves stood within a circle of tanks, their stablights driving back the evening gloom. The harsh glare threw the Fenrisians' shadows into stark relief as they held their council of war. Lord Degallio and Castellan Stein were also present, albeit as hololithic ghosts that haunted the circle's edge, flickering with each gust of wind and rain. Krom Dragongaze stood in the shadows at the circle's edge, occupying this subservient spot with his single eye narrowed as rain sizzled unnoticed down his face. He and Grimnar had exchanged brief, recriminatory words in the wake of Blackmane's rescue, speaking via vox as their transports roared toward the rendezvous.

Krom had fiercely denied his lord's accusations of incompetence and sworn the loss of the *Vengeful Howl* had been beyond his control. Had he been permitted his rightful place in the initial wave of the attack, he argued, he would not have needed to seek his own opportunities for glory. Grimnar had recognised that he would not elicit an open admission of failure from the Fierce-eye, but that the Wolf Lord knew his own failures and would be hungry to atone for them. Thus, as the Old Wolf set out his battle plan, he felt confident that Krom and his men would spare no effort to see it done, and repair the damage done to their reputations in the process.

Grimnar explained to his commanders that the Orks were broken and scattered, but still infested Alaric Prime in their thousands. To the Great Wolf it seemed evident that the strength of the Orks on Alaric Prime was their peculiar degree of ingenuity which seemed to stem from the preponderance of Ork mechanics in their ranks. Where most Ork hordes valued strength above all, these greenskins seemed to have an unnerving respect for cunning. This had allowed them to blindside the Imperial defenders time and again with madcap plans and unpredictable wonder-weapons. Thus, the Ork mechanic caste must be hunted down and exterminated lest the Orks regroup around a new leader as unpredictable as the last.

With the planet wreathed in smoke, dust and ferocious storms, the Orks would be near impossible to track using orbital auguries or conventional airborne scouts. Instead, the Space Wolves' exceptional senses would be put to good use. After all, an accomplished Wolf Scout could track his quarry through a Fenrisian blizzard, so what matter a little sulphur rain? The greenskin mechanics left behind them trails of spilled oil, burned wreckage, and the crackling ozone stink of their strange weapons. Trampled trails of footprints and tyre tracks clearly showed the passage of

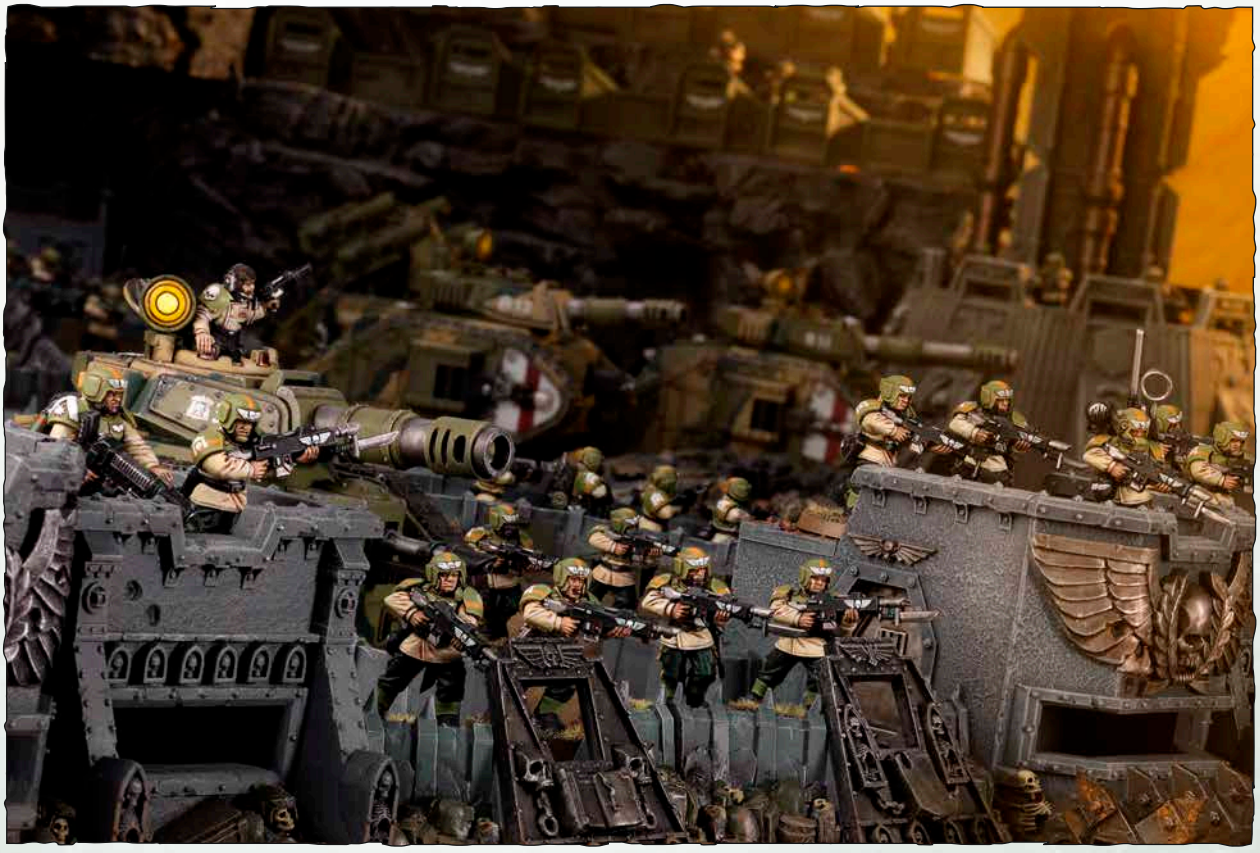
Ork vehicles, while the greenskins themselves created enough rubbish and row that a drunken Blood Claw could probably hunt them down. Grimnar announced that he would divide his warriors into small hunting packs whose duty it would be to hunt down the scattered Ork warbands that now roamed the plains and exterminate them one by one. The rain would present no risk to the enhanced metabolisms and power armour of the Space Wolves, instead providing them with excellent cover from which to stalk their quarry.

The Knights, too, were proof against the hazardous conditions. Lord Degallio, speaking for the surviving nobles of Alaric Prime, pledged their support to this hunt. The last household detachments of Degallio, Velemestrin, Brahmica and the rest would hang back behind the Space Wolves' advance lest the clank and roar of their Knights alert the Orks to their peril. They would form a hard-hitting reserve, and would assist the Space Wolves in dealing with any greenskin war effigies they encountered.

This left only the Cadians. Grimnar swiftly made it clear that he did not believe the soldiers of the Astra Militarum were well suited to this mission. Their tanks were loud and their advance ponderous, while unprotected Cadian soldiers would soon suffer terrible burns from the rains. Besides, stated Grimnar – his gaze cool as it lingered on the holo-cast of Castellan Stein – the Cadian officers had proved themselves a little too willing to admit defeat. As such, the Cadian armoured assets and those men who could be provided with Munitorum-issue survival cowls would follow up the Imperial advance as a rearguard.

They would secure those fortifications retaken by the advancing Space Wolf forces and ensure supply lines were maintained. Those forces not rated for severe weather operations would remain at Sacred Mountain, there to perform garrison duties and assist with manual repairs to Fortress Alaric. In truth, as his holocast winked out, Castellan Stein was relieved. Seated in the cupola of the Baneblade *Gatekeeper*, the castellan reflected that things could have been far worse. After his refusal to reinforce Blackmane, Stein had half expected to be relieved of command or even to face some form of barbarous punishment. Instead his men would be permitted do their duty as they always did, proving their devotion to the Emperor by fulfilling their orders without complaint. Even better, they would not be expected to fight in close proximity with Grimnar's lunatic warriors, nor to lose good Cadian lives chasing objectives that only super-humans could hope to achieve.

The Cadians had been the first to reach Alaric Prime and they had been fighting for many weeks now. Let the Space Wolves have their glory, let them write their sagas in blood and fire. The Cadians would move relentlessly out from Sacred Mountain in the Space Marines' wake and seize each objective as it presented itself. They would be the glacier to the Fenrisians' avalanche, their advance slow but inevitable. Thus would Alaric Prime finally be cleansed of the greenskin menace, one bloody yard at a time. With a grim nod to himself, Stein unhooked the vox-horn from its mount within *Gatekeeper*'s cupola. As he began to issue his orders over the sound of the rain rattling on the hull, the last of the daylight crept from the sky.



BLOOD AND OIL

Their course set, the Imperial forces grind into action once more. Space Wolf hunting packs spread out across the plains of Sacred Isle and beyond, and all across Alaric Prime Ork enclaves are relentlessly tracked down and torn apart.

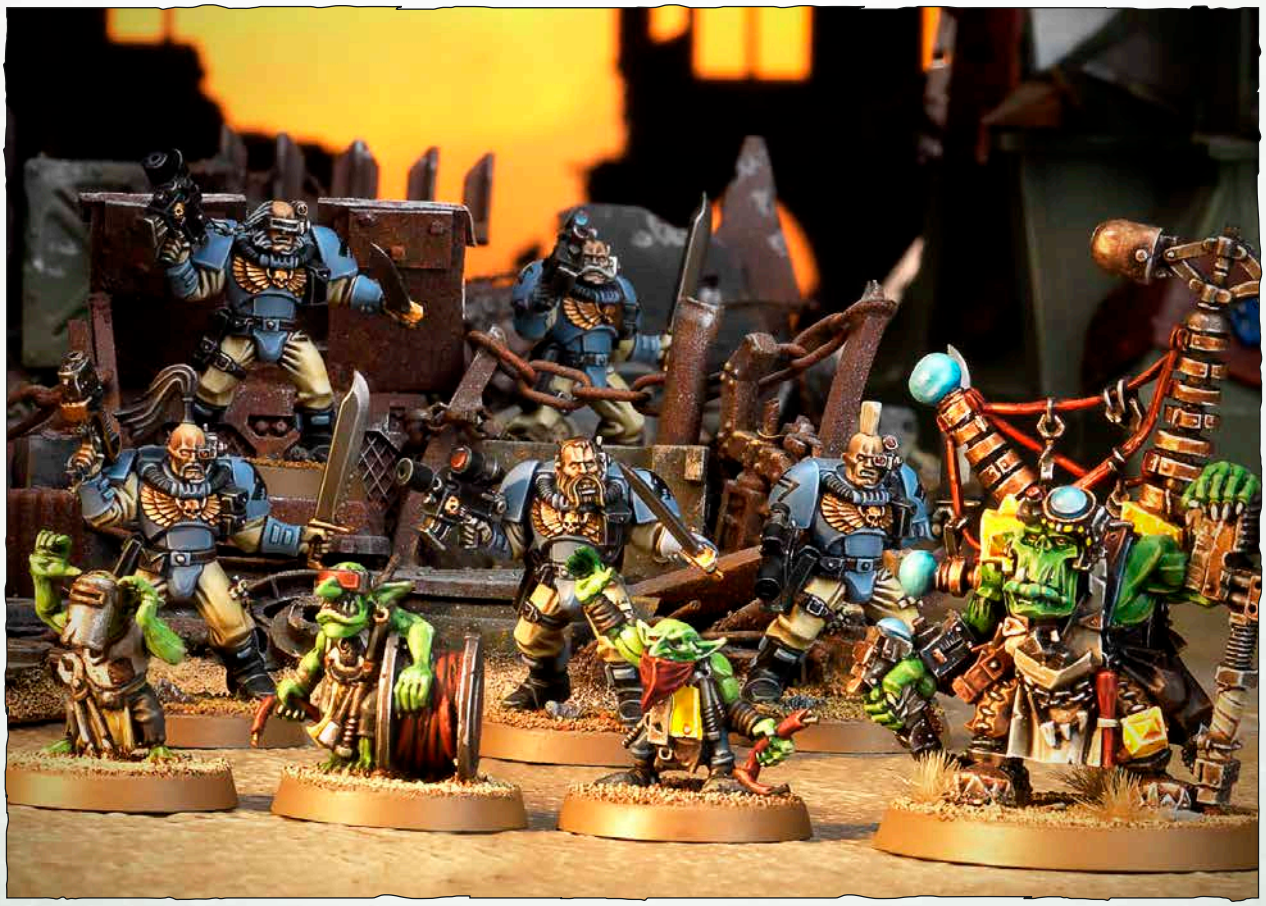
END OF AN EFFIGY

As the Space Wolves roamed across Sacred Isle, the Gorkanaut Blagfist finally met its fiery end. Lumbering through the darkness and rain in pursuit of harassing Wolf Scouts, Blagfist ploughed full tilt into a sucking sulphur-marsh and there stuck fast. To its flanks and rear, Long Fangs and Wolf Scouts stalked from the gloom, lascannons and meltaguns raised and ready. The night lit up as Blagfist was pierced by a searing web of energy blasts, before finally detonating with a mighty roar.

The Imperial war machine moved with a purpose. Though divided into small packs, the Space Wolves led the way with indefatigable determination. Wolf Scouts loped tirelessly across the plains, or boarded Stormwolves to pursue their prey across the sulfuric oceans. Others stalked through the rain-sodden grasslands with Fenrisian Wolves prowling at their heels. Behind them came packs of Grey Hunters and Long Fangs mounted in rumbling transports, ready to roar forward and lend their support at a moment's notice.

The Orks proved incautious prey. The Space Wolves' sharp senses homed in on the oily stink of the Ork Meks with ease. Throughout the first night of the hunt and on into the sodden half-light of dawn, the Space Wolves mercilessly ran one greenskin warband after another to ground. Thunderwolves surged from the darkness to send shocked Orks sprawling into the bloody mud. Fangs tore through green flesh and bolt pistols roared as the disorganised xenos mobs were overrun in short order.

Here and there the sound of sawing gunfire and shrieking rockets rolled across the plains as the Orks fought back. Their outsized guns and ramshackle tanks poured wild hails of fire out into the gloom, punching Space Wolves from their feet or lighting up tanks and Dreadnoughts in billows of smoke and flame. Yet always the Fenrisians pressed forward, Lone Wolves duelling with clanking Ork walkers while Wolf Scouts surrounded and gunned down panicking herds of Gretchin gun crews. As the hours wore on into days the Space Wolves roamed further and further afield, fiercely-fought battles erupting as they purged the surface of Alaric Prime with fire and blade.



THE HEADLESS BEAST

All across Alaric Prime the story was the same, Ork tribes falling in disarray before the advancing might of the Imperium. Yet the battle would not have been half so one-sided had the greenskins been able to ally against their common foe. Instead the Space Wolves were led to many Ork warbands by sounds of gunfire and clashing blades as the warlike greenskins fought to see who would take charge. Mogrok was dead, a new boss was needed, and suddenly every greenskin with a few scars to his name was getting delusions of grandeur. A hundred self-proclaimed Warlords had sprung up overnight, from Zzapboss Gorgrok and his big bad battery to Old Runtkicker, a traditionalist Snakebite who had won immediate support from the older Orks by promising to 'put a stop to all dis new fangled muckin' about'. Mogrok's surviving lieutenants did their best to throw their weight around and keep the Waaagh! together, but to no avail. A rumour even circulated that Grukk had risen from the grave, but this was quickly dismissed amid the continued in-fighting.



In the ruined town of Pentecost's Fall, Ragnar Blackmane came upon an encampment of Ork Meks. This mob had fortified the remains of the town with scrap-iron barricades and creaking gun-towers, before sending out their ladz to salvage every tank, buggy and bike within dragging distance. The Orks were still frantically attempting to repair their ramshackle Blitz Brigade when Ragnar's warriors launched a howling assault. Knights of House Velemestren strode in to support the offensive, the driving rain rattling from their hulls as their guns blasted holes in the Orks' stockade.

Ork artillery roared and hummed, hurling Space Wolves through the air, crushing them within their armour or obliterating them with cascading spheres of force, yet Blackmane and his Wolf Guard overran the greenskin guns and the Space Wolves flooded into the town. The surviving Blood Claws of Einar's pack took their bloody vengeance from the Orks of Pentecost's Fall, while Hrolf Longspear and his Long Fangs filled the town square with the burning wrecks of several dozen Ork vehicles. Still smarting from his reprimand Ragnar Blackmane ensured that not a single Ork left the town alive.

On Isle Kamata, amid the rocky crags and tangled trees of the Ironstone Heights, the rains created gushing cascades of mud and sulphurous water. A squad of Wolf Scouts detected traces of sump-oil and flakes of oxidised orange rust in the steaming run-off. Voxing for support, they followed the trail up the muddy slopes, gripping at twisted roots and jutting rocky outcrops for purchase. Sure enough, as they clambered higher the Wolf Scouts found increasing evidence of Ork activity. Heaps of broken junk lay here and there, hiding diminutive greenskins who were swiftly silenced by the Fenrisians.

Finally, on the highest plateaux, they discovered a large Ork encampment, shielded from the wind and rain by scrapmetal lean-tos. Here, Ork Meks appeared to have been working on a battery of looted Manticores. However, some kind of leadership challenge had broken out – over one hundred Orks now stood in a loose ring around two huge brawling Nobz. They yelled encouragement as the contenders beat each other senseless. Vox coordinates were relayed, and within minutes the roar of engines filled the skies. Streaking through the downpour came a trio of Stormwolf assault craft, guns blazing as their ramps hinged open to disgorge Krom Dragongaze and the last of his men. The Ork encampment was lit by the flash of muzzle-flare and the furious clash of blades as the Orks fought back, but they had been caught completely unawares. In a furious display of prowess, Krom and his chosen few butchered the greenskins without mercy. They howled as they killed, every crunching blow another sliver of catharsis for the battle of Blistered Isle.

Behind the Space Wolves' prowling advance came the dutiful Cadians. Columns of Chimeras and Tauroxes wound their way through the pouring rain, converging on each objective under the watchful guns of squadrons of Leman Russ and Hydra Flak Tanks. Stein spread his forces well, leaving minimal garrisons to hold each objective and ensuring sizeable reserves remained mobile. Several times the Cadians exterminated bands of Orks who had slipped through the net, but some men cautiously began to talk of final, lasting victory. Then the advance reached the Scrap Peak, and with shocking suddenness everything changed.

'Reading single contact ascending from planet, heading 45-77-3... no sir, appears to be Adeptus Astartes 'Thunderhawk' class craft but showing anomalies... Checking now sire... yes sir, structural modifications and tribal glyph-patterns concordant with Orks, data exload reads subsect 'Goff'... craft is outside engagement range, and she'll be long gone by the time Arrow Squadron achieve intercept vector... Aye sir, just one craft, but if we redirect forward lance battery... no sir... no... sighting logged and dismissed, sir, aye. My apologies for disturbing you.'

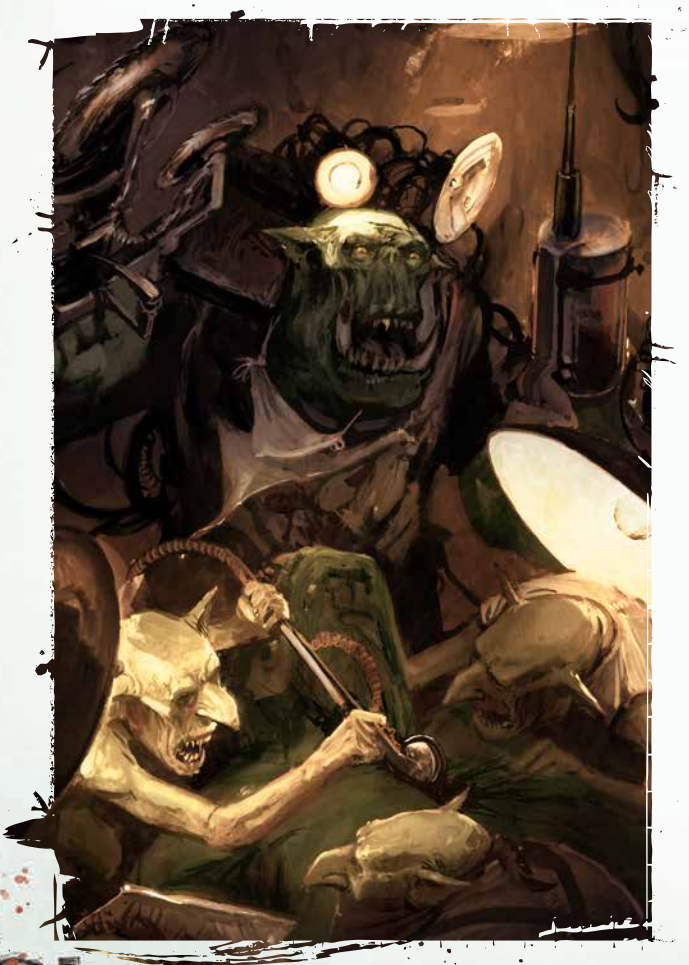
- Kel Heng, Officer of Ordnance, Sword Class Frigate Our Lady of Fire, *subsequently executed for dereliction of duty*

THE FALL AND RISE OF MOGROK

Mogrok the Mangler, scourge of Alaric Prime, devotee of Mork and Warlord of the Waaagh! is as dead as they get. Or at least, most of him is. Mogrok's defeat may yet prove to have been less than final, with catastrophic consequences.

In the northern highlands of Sacred Isle, the remains of an extinct volcano thrust up to loom above the hills. Once, its sweeping flanks had been densely forested, the land around its feet a patchwork of rich vineyards belonging to House Kestren. Its ancient caldera, meanwhile, had played host to an Imperial installation, abandoned for many centuries yet still watched over by deathless servitor-guns. Then came the Orks. The vineyards had burned. The forests had been felled for fuel or else used to build crude huts and squig pens, while the servitor guns had been overwhelmed by greenskin hordes. Now the mountain was a blackened ruin, covered in great groaning heaps of scrap-metal that pinged and rattled in the rain. The caldera's lip was ringed by slab-like fortress walls of rusting iron, dotted with gun-platforms where grot crews shivered and grumbled under the cover of ragged tarps.

Behind these walls, the caldera spread out in a broad crater several miles across, a crater that was now filled with glyph-daubed fortifications, towering scrap-heaps and a swarming shanty-town of tumbledown huts. Wagons and buggies raced around the crater's edge, while the ad-hoc streets of Scrap Peak churned with scurrying grots, brawling Orks, and clanking walkers. Across it all, the rain fell in perpetual sheets that sizzled as they met the smoke and sparks from countless fires and forges. Thousands of Orks had gathered at Scrap Peak, the largest remaining concentration of greenskins on Alaric Prime, and they were arming themselves to take the fight to the Imperium once more. Yet unbeknownst to most of the Boyz, their greatest weapon was nearing completion in the dimly lit surgery of Doc Fourklaw.



The Painboy leaned back from his bloody work, a leer stretching the gore-stained fabric of his surgical mask. He cast an appraising eye over his patient, nodding with satisfaction and setting aside his staple-slugga. Stretching out a crick in his back, the Doc took a careful step away from the slab before reaching out and throwing the big, red-handled lever. Telescopic lightning rods clanked upward into the sky above his surgery, unfolding with a rusty squeal, and within moments a great bolt of energy struck. Searing reflections flickered in the lenses of Fourklaw's goggles as, on the slab, his patient twitched and jerked and began to smoulder. The Painboy felt a moment of unease as his patient's scalp caught fire, filling the room with the stench of burning flesh. Yet his toothy grin resurfaced as, with a bellowing roar, Mogrok the Mangler sat bolt upright, eyes bulging with pain and shock. The huge staples that ringed his neck were still crackling with energy as the Mangler swung his brand new legs off the slab and staggered to his brand new feet. One arm lashed out, smashing a tray of tools to the floor with a crash, and Mogrok roared again before throwing up a great clot of blood and scabby flesh. Grinning madly, Doc Fourklaw leaned through the door to his waitin' room and bellowed. 'Oi ladz, it worked! 'Ee's alive! Da boss is alive!'

BREAKIN' HEADS

Some hours later, Mogrok's surviving lieutenants stood before his new throne, wilting under the furious stare of their patched up leader. The Big Mek's new body had been donated by a massive Goff Nob, his cooperation secured by way of a big rock and the element of surprise. This fact was concealed by Mogrok's salvaged and much-patched mega armour. Still the Manger found himself attached to a body not his own, a sensation both unpleasant and weirdly tingly. Worse, his piston klaw was playing up, and he was sure his body-donor had been suffering from a nasty case of itching-squigs. All this paled in comparison to the news he received from his underlings. The Mangler's frown deepened by the second as he listened to one excuse after another. It seemed that Tankboss Baddfrag, having survived the demise of his kustom Baneblade at Sacred Mountain, had promptly gone and got himself fragged – badly – in a brawl with Big Redd's Madmob. Big Mek Ulgrut of the Feet of Gork complained that Skyboss Wingnutz' flyboyz had started dropping bombs on his Dredds, Wingnutz himself assuring Mogrok he'd only done

it in self defence 'coz them Mekz was plannin' sumfing sneaky'. Da Burnin' Teef had apparently been doing a great job beating up a bunch of the wolf boyz until Skragrok's ladz had jumped them, on account of how Skragrok reckoned Grukk was back only he wasn't, and then the whole lot of them had got stomped by a bunch of the big humie walkers.

On and on it went, until eventually Mogrok snapped. Lunging from his throne with a roar, the furious Warlord grabbed Big Mek Ulgrut's head with his sparking piston-klaw and ripped it off in a shower of blood. Even as Ulgrut's corpse toppled sideways, Mogrok was rounding on Raddak Bluefinga, tellyport blasta whining up to full power. Panic gripped Mogrok's underlings, several of them grabbing weapons while others dashed for the door. Skyboss Wingnutz was almost free when a second, looming figure appeared in the doorway. The flyboy had just time to register a massive greenskin swathed in an armoured overcoat, bedecked in jingling gold and gleaming glyphs. Then the barrel of Da Rippa smashed its way between his teef, gunfire roared, and the back of his skull erupted in a spinning cloud of blood and bone. Kaptin Badrukk kicked the twitching corpse off the end of his gun and waded in, his Flash Gitz close on his heels. Mogrok's old lieutenants fought frantically but, outnumbered and outgunned, they were never going to last long.

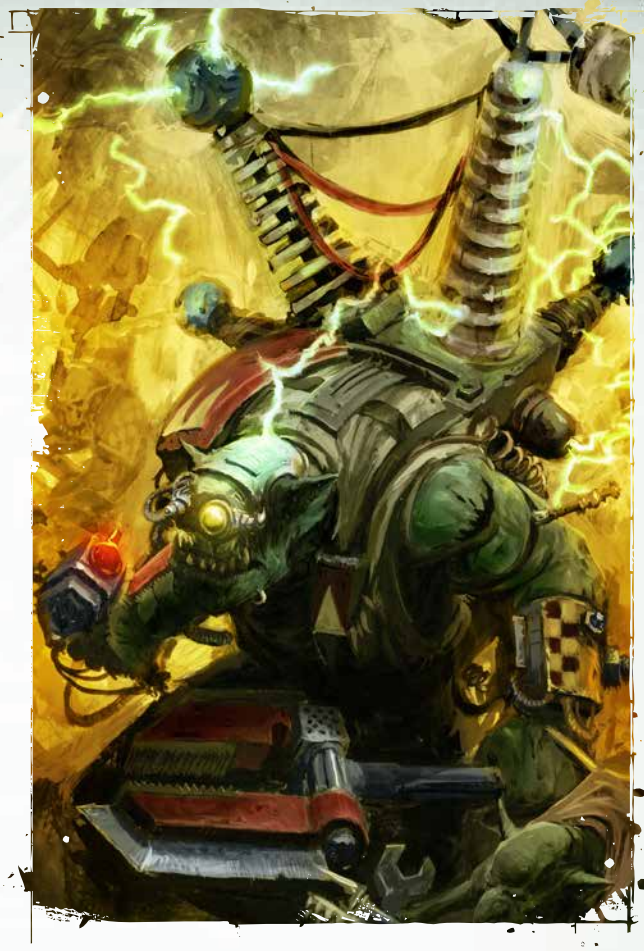
As the dust settled, Mogrok's shoulders heaved with exertion. He was spattered head to foot in gore. The severed head of Big Redd the Warphead was clutched in his meaty fists, tongue lolling and eyes dribbling green sparks. Kaptin Badrukk and his ladz stood off to one side, watching their employer askance in case his fury wasn't quite spent. Doc Fourklaw emerged cautiously from where he had been 'inspecting' the back of Mogrok's throne, and cleared his throat nervously.

'Tell ya what boss,' he said, 'dere is one bit of good news. Ol' Dagz has been workin' on sumfing I reckon you're gonna like.'

Minutes later, Mogrok strode through Scrap Peak's bustling shanty town, greenskins scattering from his path with stares of amazement.

'Dat's right!' he bellowed as he marched through the hissing rain, 'Mogrok ain't dead! I'm still da boss and dis is still my Waaagh! Spread da word – anyone what don't want Mork's foot up their backside better get to Scrap Peak and get in line, coz I'm takin' dis planet back!'

Doc Fourklaw hurried ahead, splashing through puddles and dodging between rumbling bikes and snapping squigs. He led his Warboss toward the old Imperial compound, kicking grots out of his path as he went. Behind came Badrukk and his boys, the Kaptin stalking along at Mogrok's shoulder and aiming his best scowl at the gawping Boyz all around. Mogrok had paid well for Badrukk's services thus far, and his schemes were a cut above those of the typical Ork tyrant. The Mangler hadn't paid up his last toof yet, the Kaptin would have bet his good eye on it, and he meant to stay on Mogrok's charitable side as long as the loot kept flowing.



The Orks had infested the installation, cannibalising its systems and covering its fortifications in glyphs and spikes. Mogrok and his retinue ploughed down smoky corridors lit by flickering lights and awash with junk and scurrying snots. Finally, they emerged into a cavernous underground space, a massive chamber that stretched away into the gloom. Rusting gantries hung in a patchwork web over a huge silo from which jutted the nose-cones of the biggest missiles Mogrok had ever seen. Slowly his face twisted into a horrible grin, an unhinged light kindling in his eyes as he leaned out over the railing to stare at the weapons below. An army of grot oilers were at work throughout the chamber, Mekboyz yelling directions or beavering away with welding torches and hammers. Many hung suspended from the rusted gantries, grots dangling in perilous rope harnesses as they worked to kustomise the warheads.

Mogrok found Daggog up to his elbows in a control-panel on the highest tier of gantries. The old Mek was surrounded by heaps of tools and spools of wiring, but he grinned broadly as he saw Mogrok's hulking form looming over him. The missiles, he explained with feverish excitement, had what the humies called 'vorteks' warheads – he still had a fair bit of tinkering to do, but as soon as he'd given this silo the kustom once-over they'd have a weapon that could blow every stinking humie on the planet into the arms of their puny god. Mogrok's grin at this news was so evil it could have frightened a Goffboss – he'd finish off the wolf boyz and conquer Alaric Prime, even if he had to blow the whole planet up to do it.

BADRUKK'S BOYZ

Kaptin Badrukk is the meanest and most kunnin' Freebooter Kaptin around. It comes as no big surprise that he has attracted a crew to match. Badrukk's Flash Gitz have the biggest guns, the shiniest gubbinz, and the meanest tempers of any Flash Gitz around. They're the best, they're the baddest, and they know it!



KAPTIN BADRUKK

An accomplished pirate who has plied the space lanes for years, Badrukk is a lot more than a common thug. Alongside his talent for violence, the Kaptin has a keen eye for loot and a kunnin' streak a mile wide. He keeps his ladz loyal by showering them with loot when the getting is good, and through harsh language and spectacular displays of violence when its not. Badrukk's one real flaw (aside from an ego the size of Gork's backside) is a love of his massive firearm, 'Da Rippa'. The radiation that pours off this terrifying contraption can cook a Snotling, and has left Badrukk with more than a few loose teeth and an alarming glow. Still the Kaptin wouldn't go to war armed with anything else, and is likely to keep blowing his enemies to bits with Da Rippa until the day it does for him too.

'Right you squig-botherin' sons o' snots, da humies is comin' over dat ridge any minute and dey's got more shinies an' medalz on 'em than a Bad Moon'z loot-heap. Now get yer snazzgunz ready, coz da quicker they getz dead da quicker we getz rich!'

- Kaptin Badrukk

TUFFSKULL

A notorious maniac with absolutely no pain threshold, the Flash Git known as Tuffskull is something of a mascot amongst Badrukk's ladz. From drinking boiling fungus brew to head-butting his way through bulkhead doors, once Tuffskull has set his mind to a thing he does it no matter how much of his own blood gets spilled in the process. Ork physiology is a pretty miraculous thing, but all this punishment has taken its toll – on a good day Tuffskull just about knows who and where he is, and often needs pointing at the enemy before he pulls the trigger. All the same, with his scrap metal mohican Tuffskull certainly looks the part, and he's always good for stopping a few bullets.



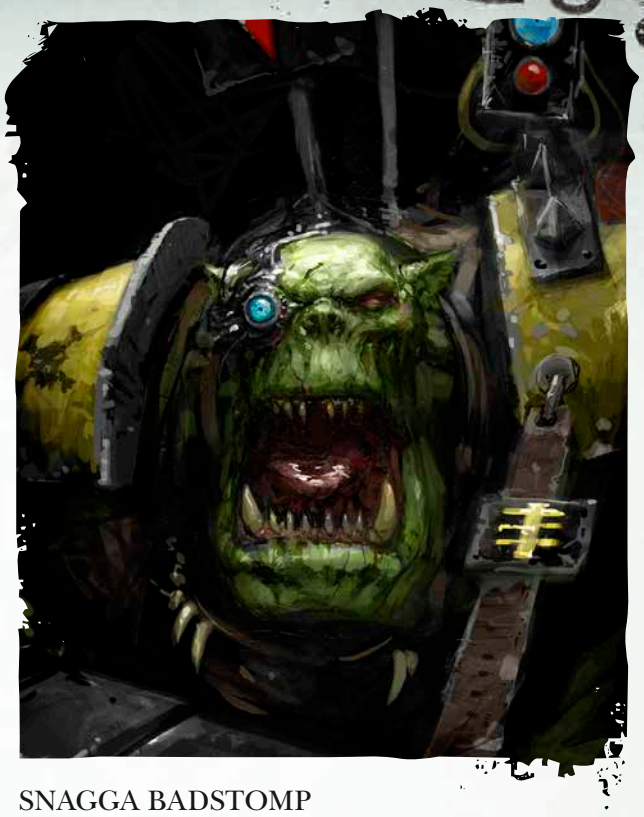
DA BLACKTOOF

Kaptin Badrukk's personal Kill Kroozer, Da Blacktoof, is an absolute monster. Kustomised beyond the bounds of sanity, the ship boasts a fang-jawed ramming prow capable of tearing an Imperial Battleship in two. Launch bays for space-capable Fighta Bommerz and assault boats vie for space across Da Blacktoof's hull with crackling batteries of oversized energy weapons. The ship's inner workings are equally overloaded, its tangled corridors and brightly painted chambers housing such wonders as scavenged void shield generators, cavernous holds overflowing with loot, and even a fully functional tellyporta array that often comes in very handy indeed.



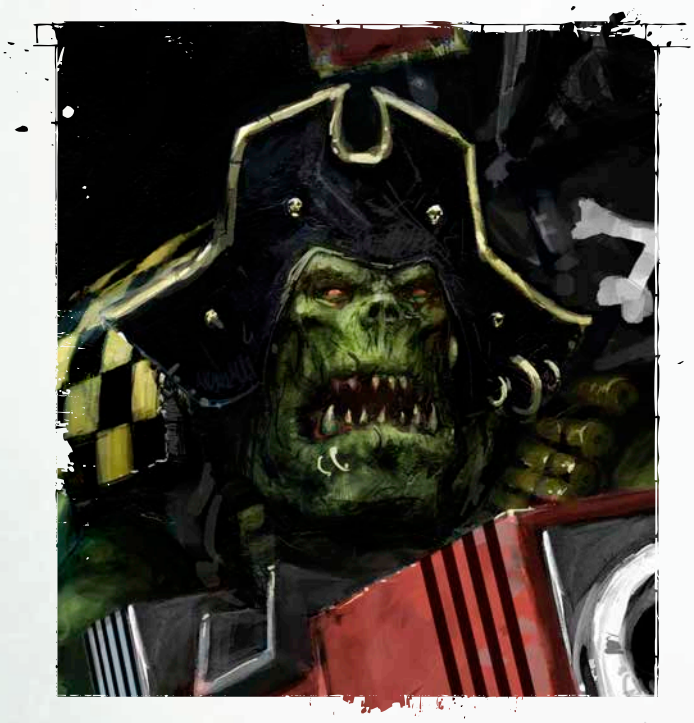
‘NASTY’ NAZRAKK

Notorious for shaking down captured foes for every scrap of loot they’re worth, no-one’s shinies are safe from Nazrakk. Even the other Gitz are nervous of the goggle-eyed freak, and wouldn’t dare turn their backs on him.



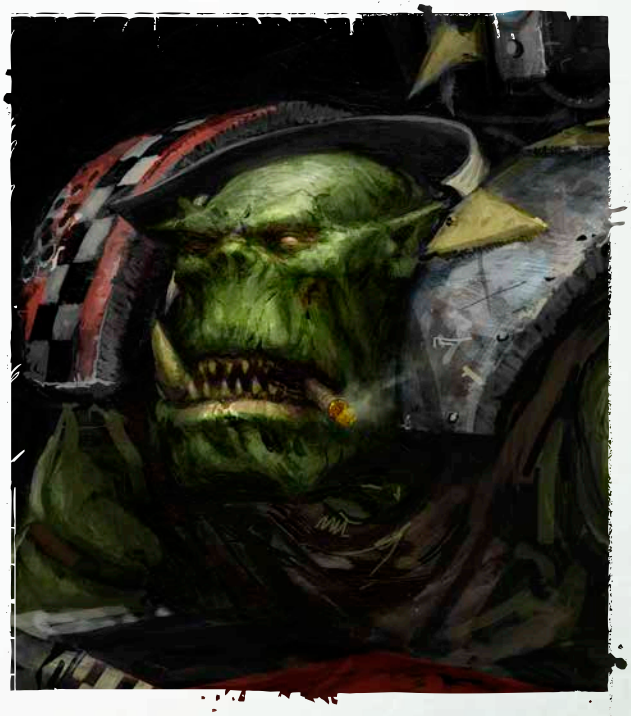
SNAGGA BADSTOMP

Snagga lost his favourite eye to a Catachan sniper during the Gravesprawl raid, and has harboured a hatred for sneaky, underhanded gits ever since. Nothing gives Snagga more pleasure than gunning such scum down in droves.



GROGG GITBLASTA

When Grogg found himself dissatisfied with his snazzgun he decided to just beat his mate Razbog to death and nick his instead. Grogg feels this has worked out pretty well, and still carries Razbog’s old skull into battle ‘fer luck’.



ZOGRAT DAKKASKRAG

Zograt loves the racket of rapid-fire weaponry more than anything else in his simple, violent life. His snazzgun has been tuned to make a truly awful din when fired, while Zograt has (unsurprisingly) wound up profoundly deaf.

THE BATTLE OF SCRAP PEAK

As the Imperial advance moves into the northern highlands of Sacred Isle, a sudden upsurge in greenskin resistance is noted. Realising the xenos are rallying around Scrap Peak, Grimnar orders an immediate attack to crush the Orks.

RESTORATION

The Knights of Alaric Prime had suffered terrible damage during the fighting for Sacred Isle. Still, the Nobles clamoured for action, haranguing the Sacristans with impossible demands. They ought to be at the forefront of the liberation of their world, not languishing at the rear. The Sacristans did their best to comply with these demands, patching the Knight suits of the nobles as best they could. Armour was welded, weapons fixed up and heraldry painstakingly repainted. More Knights marched back to battle every day. Yet such was the eagerness of the Alarican Nobles that many Knight suits returned to action before shields, weapons or even whole panels of armour could be repaired. In the subsequent engagements, many of these compromised Knight suits took a terrible pounding, timeless relics of the Omnissiah blown to smoking scrap for the sake of their pilots' wounded pride.



As the Space Wolf hunting packs moved deeper into the northern highlands they reported a rapid increase in greenskin activity. The Orks were regaining their cohesion, throwing up ramshackle fortifications to resist the Imperial advance. Anarchic greenskin patrols swept through the hills, their numbers too great for the scattered Space Wolf forces to engage without risking heavy casualties. Instead they held back, tracking a huge influx of Ork mobs that poured into the northern highlands from all directions. It soon became apparent that the greenskins were gathering around the fortified peak of an extinct volcano, and that their numbers were growing daily.

Logan Grimnar had no intention of allowing the greenskins to rebuild their strength. The initiative belonged to the Imperium, and so it would remain. Though the Imperial forces were spread far and wide, the Great Wolf knew that to delay would only allow the greenskins more time to gather and multiply. Commanding an immediate muster of all available forces, Grimnar prepared to launch an assault. For a day and a night, a sheltered valley to the south of the volcano served as an Imperial staging point. Stormwolves swooped in low over the hills to deliver Krom Dragongaze and his newly victorious band to the muster point, while Fenrisian tanks rumbled up the passes through curtains of sulphur rain. The White Warden and his Knights strode into the encampment, heads held high. Blackmane's warriors too answered the call, prowling out of the lengthening shadows of evening with hackles bristling. Finally, as full dark descended across the highlands, Grimnar deemed his forces sufficient. Though the Imperial Guard advance still lagged behind, the Great Wolf would wait no longer. Leaping aboard *Stormrider*, Grimnar signalled the attack with a long, drawn out howl to the storm-wracked skies above.

MOGROK'S LAST STAND

The Imperial advance was lightning swift. The Space Wolves and their knightly allies surged through the burned out remains of House Kestren's vineyards in a headlong rush, overrunning luckless patrols of greenskin bikes and buggies as they went. Around the volcano's feet the night was lit by the sudden flare of explosions and leaping flames, searing beams of red and white light cutting through the darkness as they blew apart crude barricades and watch-towers.

The element of surprise was total – dozing sentries were immolated and clusters of huts crushed flat by racing Space Wolf tanks. The Imperial forces cut through the scattered Ork encampments that dotted the slopes, surging out of the darkness with guns blazing. Panicked greenskins scattered before them and were mowed down as they ran. Within minutes the Space Wolves were nearing the fortress walls that ringed the caldera. Here, however, the fighting intensified. By now the alarm had been raised, frantic grots cranking the handles of rusty klaxons until their wails filled the air. Generators roared to life, the stark illumination of floodlights silhouetting the advancing foe. From watchtowers and fire-steps all along the walls, Ork artillery began to fire, whistling shells and energy blasts stabbing out at the Space Wolf tanks. Mobs of greenskins lugged heavy weapons up rickety ladders, spreading along the parapets to pour a hail of fire down on Grimnar's force. Land Raiders, Rhinos and Razorbacks slewed to a halt, squads of Fenrisian warriors piling out and taking cover amid the scrap-heaps that dotted the slopes. They returned fire with brutal efficiency, hails of mass reactive shells and frag missiles hurling defenders backwards from the walls in showers of blood.

Within the settlement, Orks were dashing back and forth in heaving mobs, fighting to get to their weapons, their vehicles, or just to charge toward the walls. The bass rumble of thunder was joined by the hollow booms of Ork artillery firing blind from within the settlement. Many of their shots flew wide, shells falling woefully short and detonating amid the tightly packed Ork defenders with devastating effect. Yet one shell dropped amid the Long Fangs of Ragnar Blackmane's company, blowing several veteran Fenrisians apart in a gout of flame, while a lucky salvo hammered into the Degallio



Knight of Sire Tormolos, looping over his ion shield and driving his Knight suit to its knees.

Grimnar was too wise a general to let his attack be stalled by the Orks' towering bulwark, however. Vindicators and Knights moved up, pounding at the iron walls with shell after shell. Stormfang Gunships swept overhead, screaming out of the darkness to scour the battlements with withering fire. Lord Degallio strode forward through the driving rain, rokkits detonating harmlessly against his flickering shield. Bellowing his hate at the aliens who had ravaged his world, Neru raised his reaper chainsword high and brought it down upon the wall before him. Roaring teeth churned through metres-thick iron with a rending screech. Sparks fell in waterfalls down the face of the wall while greenskins hurled themselves yowling from the ramparts. Degallio dragged his blade downward, bracing the legs of his armoured suit as he sheared a great rent in the wall. Taking a step back, blade glowing with heat, the White Warden raised one mighty foot and kicked hard. With a groaning, rending crash an entire section of the wall buckled inward, its own weight dragging it down in a grinding slow-motion avalanche. Orks were crushed and mangled as the breach tore wider, and then the White Warden was through. Lord Degallio bellowed curses as he blazed away at the foe, another battering-ram kick sending a battlewagon crashing end over end into the settlement below. Blood Claws poured between the White Warden's feet, Krom Dragongaze in their midst, and Grey Hunters at their heels as they charged towards the mobs of Orks that were rushing to meet them.

Great masses of greenskins were pouring forth from the settlement now, scrambling up the rocky inner slope of the caldera with guns blazing. They roared their anger and bloodlust as another section of the fortress wall crashed in amid smoke and flame, shells from the Vindicators smashing it flat. From the streets of Scrap Peak lurched hordes of Ork walkers and tanks, answering the Space Wolves' challenge with a reckless headlong charge. The two armies slammed together, venting their fury and desperation upon one another in a devastating display of violence. Blood ran in rivers, mixing with the rain that hissed down upon the battle from on high.

'Come on you stinkin' runts, da humies is right outside da wallz! Is you gonna let 'em just walk in 'ere and clobber us all, or is you gonna give 'em a proper kickin'? Come on ladz, Waaagh!'.

- Boss Zogdrok, Battle of Scrap Peak

'Brothers! Knights! Honoured Sires! Today we are not men of House Brahmica or House Degallio. Today we are Knights of Alaric Prime! We shall march upon the Ork and topple his walls! We shall take revenge for every ill we have suffered in this war! Today, we win victory! Now forward, Sires, for the Emperor!'.

- Lord Neru Degallio, Battle of Scrap Peak





DISASTER STRIKES

Things are not going well for Mogrok. His grand plans lie in ruin, his Waaagh! is all but annihilated, and the forces of the Imperium have broken into the streets of Scrap Peak. However, he has one last weapon at his disposal.

DA BLITZ

Boss Brogg was a formidable Blood Axe Nob, formerly one of Tankboss Baddfrag's chief flunkies. When Mogrok claimed Baddfrag's remaining motor pool for himself, Brogg impressed the Big Mek Warlord with his devious mix of kunnin' and basic numeracy. Mogrok put Brogg in charge of his so-called Mighty Manglerz, with explicit instructions to 'give the humies a good kickin' and not get yerself blown up like wot that numpty Baddfrag did'.

When the battle of Scrap Peak kicked off, most of Brogg's wagons were parked up west of the old silo. After smacking a few heads together, Brogg got his crews pointed the right way and started shelling the Imperial forces with a will. From the word go, however, Brogg had a bad feeling about this fight. When word reached him that the humies were through the walls, the Blood Axe tanker knew it was time to clear out. Mounting his personal Battlewagon, Brogg led over forty ramshackle tanks in a headlong breakout through the Imperial lines. The attack stopped for nothing, crushing anyone too slow to escape beneath spiked rollers while the wagons' gunners blazed away at passing targets. Though they left a trail of blackened wrecks in their wake, almost half of Brogg's vehicles broke out through a rent in the northern walls. They careered away down the volcano's slopes, disappearing into the night in a cloud of black smoke.

Mogrok the Mangler stood silhouetted by the wreck of a burning Trukk, blasting away at the wolf boyz as they charged up the street. Around him, crouched behind makeshift barricades and heaps of wreckage, Kaptin Badrukk and his Flash Gits were giving it some dakka. The noise of their guns was deafening and the mess they made of the charging enemy was impressive. Still, as shells and energy blasts whined around him, Mogrok had to admit things were looking dodgy. The humies were pushing his ladz back into Scrap Peak, with more Orks falling all the time. The din was astonishing, a constant roar of explosions and screams and gunshots and bellowing, reverberating within the caldera until it sounded as if the whole mountain was about to come crashing down. Bits of it even were – the teetering heaps of junk and rubbish that filled the settlement shuddered with every blast, many collapsing in roaring avalanches of scrap-metal that consumed attackers and defenders alike.

The Orks were throwing everything they had into the fight, mobs of Boyz charging into the teeth of the enemy guns while Lootas and Battlewagons sprayed fire at anything that wasn't green. Artillery shells sailed overhead, exploding with concussive force amid the outlying streets to hurl geysers of junk and gore into the air. Yet still the humies came on with their fangs bared in furious-looking snarls. Big wolf boy dreads stomped up the tangled streets, rain and bullets alike pinging off their shields while their choppas knocked whole handfuls of the Boyz flat with every swing. The wolf boyz riding even bigger wolves were back, the ones that fought like rabid gnasher squigs; everywhere they charged into the fight, Orks were torn limb from limb or hacked to bloody pieces in short order. Wingnutz hadn't left Mogrok many flyboyz to speak of, and the few he had were getting clobbered by the enemy planes. Even as he watched, another Dakkajet burst into flames above him, spinning madly downward to ricochet off the glowy shield of one of the huge humie walkers.

Behind Mogrok, a Morkanaut rounded the corner into his street, footfalls making the puddles jump and splash as its blastas spat searing death. Alarmingly, the bulky walker was venting flames from its boiler, limping badly and missing about half of its head. Even as the wolf boyz dived for cover, one of their big tanks roared up between them and punched a massive shell into the Morkanaut's guts. Mogrok was hurled from his feet as the metal monster went up, the explosion flattening a swathe of huts and sending flaming wreckage bouncing up the street. Servos whining, Mogrok pushed himself to his feet and promptly staggered as a trio of shots rattled off his armoured chest. Bellowing a war cry, Kaptin Badrukk lunged from cover, his massive shoota firing a string of glowing rounds that tore a wolf boy's arm off and spun him off his feet. The Freebooter grabbed Mogrok and hauled him behind a barricade, gold teeth bared in a strained grin at the effort.



'Don't go gettin' yerself fragged now boss. Least not 'til I get dem teef you owes me!' The wolf boy tank fired again, vaporising several luckless Flash Gitz as it began to roll forward. That was the last straw – Mogrok hadn't got where he was today by fighting battles he couldn't win, and he wasn't about to start now. He turned and stomped off, yelling for Badrukk and his ladz to follow. He had one weapon left that might level the playing field, and he'd be damned if he wasn't going to use it.

DESPERATE MEASURES

The silo was in a state of absolute chaos. As Mogrok barged in he saw Meks swarming everywhere, working frantically while grots dashed and shrieked around them. Blasts from Imperial shelling shook the chamber, causing the lights to stutter and Gretchin to tumble squealing from ledges into the void below. Storming up to the top gantry with Badrukk and his lads shoving along behind him, Mogrok yelled for Dagogg. The Mek popped up from behind a tangled heap of wiring, beady red eyes magnified to bloody saucers by his heavy goggles.



A WEAPON OF LAST RESORT

Weaponised vortex technology is perhaps the most dangerous ordnance available to any commander in the 41st Millennium. With the ability to punch a breach into the Immaterium, such a warhead tears down the walls between realspace and the Warp. A howling vortex is unleashed, a storm of unreality that devours all matter in its path. The effect upon anything caught in this rift is catastrophic – wherever the vortex spreads, it simply deletes reality in its wake. Armoured warriors, rumbling tanks, mighty war engines, even fortresses and space ships – all can be consumed by the ravenous attentions of a vortex warhead. Once such a breach is opened it cannot be voluntarily closed, and must be allowed to run its destructive course until it collapses of its own accord. More than one battle has been won for the Imperium through the use of vortex weaponry, only for the victors to be savaged in turn by the very weapons they have deployed. Needless to say, these risks mean that the use of vortex weapons must be sanctioned by the highest available authorities, and then only in the most dire of circumstances. The same cannot be said for the Orks, whose respect for the consequences of such dangerous weapons lags woefully behind their enthusiasm for its effects. Such is the danger of fighting the greenskins, for how can one contend with a foe who will deploy potentially apocalyptic weapons just for fun?

'Alright boss, 'ows the fight goin' then?' Mogrok scowled and grabbed the scrawny Mekboy by his throat.

'Just 'ow do you fink it's goin' Dagz? It's time fer the supa-rokkitz, that's 'ow it's goin'!' Dagz scrabbled, wheezing, at Mogrok's piston-klaw, and grudgingly Mogrok loosened it enough for him to croak a response.

'Right boss, sure fing, no worries... Except, er, well, they ain't quite ready yet...' Dagogg's nose made a horrible crunching sound as Mogrok smashed it to a pulp.

'Sorry Dagz, didn't quite catch dat. Must've been all the racket them humies is makin' blowin' up all my ladz. Now, is dem rokkits ready?' Dagz nodded frantically and flailed at a nearby control panel. With a grunt, Mogrok dropped the gasping Mekboy and slammed his piston-klaw down on the big red button.

Immediately, emergency lights began to strobe and armoured blast-screens slammed down around the observation gantries. Mogrok watched through the armaglass viewing port as flames lit in the depths and the entire silo began to shake madly. Grots and Meks scattered, scrambling for the exits as more big metal shutters ground down into place.

Scrabbling green bodies piled up against the sealed doors, clawing at each other in their desperation to escape. Badrukk and his lads gave an impressed murmur as a vast metal hatch yawned open above, scrap, squigs and flailing Orks tumbling down as the ground slid away from beneath them. With a swelling roar the rokkits began to lift off, surging upward amid a roiling firestorm. They climbed past the observation gantry, Mogrok's eyes alight with the fires of their exhausts.

Lumbering skyward, the rokkits ploughed up into the dark and the rain, the Orks below bellowing in glee as their superweapon was unleashed. Then suddenly, one of the rokkits lurched sideways and crashed into the warhead beside it. There was a monstrous, blinding flash, a string of thunderous booms, and then a terrible sawing screech as reality was torn apart. Jaws slack, Mogrok, Dagogg, Badrukk and his ladz watched in amazement as the vortex warheads misfired spectacularly. Billowing into existence above the silo, a searing, blood-red Warp rift spread like cracks running through the substance of the sky. Crimson lightning leapt and roared and the clouds turned from black to red. As the driving downpour turned to hot blood above Scrap Peak, the raw stuff of Chaos began to rain down upon the battle below.

'Well Dagz', muttered Mogrok, 'I fink we just broke da planet!' Dagogg nodded dumbly, staring up at the widening rent in awe. The silo was shuddering again, only now a coppery mist was beginning to seep from the scorched walls. Mogrok turned to Kaptin Badrukk.

'You still got dat tellyporta on yer kroozer?' The Kaptin nodded, producing a glowy device from inside his coat.

'It'll cost ya, Mogrok. Me an' da ladz, we don't work fer free'. Mogrok flashed his most ingratiating, fang-filled grin.

'Uvver worldz, uvver Waaaghs! Kaptin.' Badrukk sighed mightily and slammed his palm down on the button in his hand. In a flash of green light the Orks in the observation gallery vanished from the face of Alaric Prime. Moments later, all hell broke loose.

THE BLADES OF KHORNE

A rift into the realm of the Warp has been torn above Scrap Peak, and is widening by the second. Though the Orks are all but defeated, the defenders of Alaric Prime have no chance of respite as a new and deadly foe is about to join the war.

'Alright ladz, now I dunno wot the 'eck dem red fingz is, but they just did fer Roglod'z Boyz so I sez we give 'em a good kickin'! Get yer choppaz out, follow me, and the last one dead'z a grot! Waaaaaaaagh!'

- Grudzot, Goff Nob, Battle of Scrap Peak

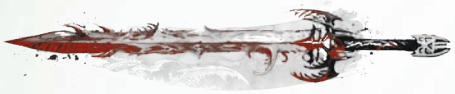
As the Warp rift widened, devouring the sky, all of Scrap Peak began to shudder. The ground writhed and cracked, blood-red steam leaping from rents in the caldera floor. Hot blood fell in hissing squalls, pooling underfoot until Ork and Imperial forces alike were wading knee deep in gore. A gale began to howl from the mouth of the rift, furnace-hot and thick with a coppery stench. As it swept across the Ork settlement, the jumbled mountains of scrap metal and wreckage began to writhe and twist.

Gaping skulls wriggled out of the junk heaps, emerging like clattering maggots. The metal itself melted and ran together, turning the colour of brass as it did so. Countless greenskins combusted horribly in the metal tide as their huts, their scrap-piles, even their tanks and walkers began to transmute into molten brass and flow upwards. An impossible brazen waterfall surged into the sky over Scrap Peak, sizzling and hissing in the bloody rain. As its tip met the edge of the rift, the molten brass shuddered and began to twist. Several hundred thousand gallons of steaming metallic sludge spread and arced and hardened into an almighty bridge that rose from the volcano and disappeared into the Warp itself. The vast, impossible construction was forested with spikes upon which countless skulls gnashed and wailed. Its span was etched with blazing daemonic runes, and its surface reflected the roiling madness of the Warp. The bridge was broad enough to accommodate an army, and as Orks and humans stared up in awe, thousands of hateful, glowing eyes appeared, staring back from the depths of the rift. Bellowing roars echoed forth, a thunder that drowned out all other sounds, and the wrath of the Blood God descended onto the wounded world of Alaric Prime.



A STORM OF WRATH

From the rift flew a rain of boulder-sized, blazing skulls. Where they struck, the daemonskulls exploded with monstrous force, hurling sheets of blood and flesh and metal in all directions. Fist-sized chunks of bone shrapnel punched Orks off their feet, their bodies sinking beneath the mire of gore. Brazen war horns sounded, their blasts rolling across the sky, and the legions of Khorne poured forth onto the brazen bridge.



At their fore came a mighty host of Bloodcrushers, their jostling stampede striking fat bronze sparks as they thundered down towards the Orks below. In the Bloodcrushers' wake came Daemon Engines, Blood Thrones, Skull Cannons and Soulgrinders whose pistons hissed and churned as they lurched from the rift. The Skull Cannons spread out across the bridge in brazen batteries and began to pound Scrap Peak with fire. Pouring between the snarling Daemon cannons came Bloodletters beyond count, howling their bloodlust as they dashed toward the foe. The rift squealed and crackled, haemorrhaging great flocks of shrieking Furies that swirled out to engulf the Orks in a whirlwind of claws and fangs. In a vast red tide, the daemonic host swept down into the blood-drenched caldera and the slaughter began in earnest.

One minute, the battered remnants of Mogrok's horde had been enjoying the fight of their lives against the wolf boyz. The next, the brazen legions of the Warp were descending upon them with jagged blades in hand. Most armies would have broken there and then, but the greenskins looked up at this new foe, bellowed 'Waaagh!' at the tops of their lungs, and charged right back at them. A horde of Goff Boyz met the Daemons at the base of the bridge, and blood sprayed in fountains as the two forces clashed.

The Bloodcrushers slammed into the tight-packed Orks with bone-crunching force, green bodies disappearing under brass-shod hooves. Hellblades lopped Ork heads from muscled shoulders with every swing, but the Orks fought back with the maddened fury of a foe that has nothing left to lose. Choppas hacked into daemonic flesh, sluggas roared as they punched shots through brazen armour. The last Goff Nobz were at the heart of the battle, their feet planted on the bridge itself and their power klaws swinging in brutal arcs. A thunderous uppercut took one Juggernaut under the jaw, hammering it clean into the air to crash down upon its roaring rider. Another Nob closed his fist around the waist of a snarling Khornate Herald, scissoring the bloodfleshed fiend in half even as the Daemon's blade plunged through his neck. For a long, glorious moment the Goffs held the mouth of the bridge with sheer bloody-minded determination, then the Skull Thrones crashed home in a hurtling wave and the greenskins were swept aside.

Now the Daemons poured out into the ruins of Scrap Peak, slaughtering as they went. Mek Gun crews scrambled to turn their weapons around, shrieking in terror as they were overrun by howling Daemons. The last few wagons rumbled through the press, guns roaring, until they were stamped flat or torn to bits by bellowing Soul Grinders. Mobs of Bad Moon Boyz pressed back to back in slowly diminishing circles, shootas bucking in their fists while spent shell casings piled up around their feet. Yet the Daemons came on in an unstoppable wave, and one by one the pockets of Ork resistance were butchered.

A single Morkanaut attempted to break away from the slaughter. Blazing skulls slamming against its force field, the machine trampled through the press of battle, a desperate mass of Orks and grots scrambling in its wake. Even as the Morkanaut pounded up a wreckage-strewn street toward the wall it ran straight into the waiting guns of the Space Wolves. Lascannon beams stabbed out, punching through enfolding energy and rusted armour. The walker's boiler exploded, rocketing its head high into the air even as its slab-like body keeled over into the Orks behind. The surviving Boyz tried a desperate charge, but they were shot to pieces in moments.

The Fenrisians were given no time for celebration. From behind the slaughtered Orks came a blood red host, daemonic eyes blazing in fury as they charged. The Imperial forces had pulled back as the Daemons slaughtered the Orks. They had prepared their positions as best they could, waiting for their foes to wear each other down in the maelstrom of violence. Now the Orks were gone, slaughtered to the last, and the defenders of Alaric Prime were next.

VENGEANCE

Hundreds of years ago, on the burning fields of Armageddon, Logan Grimnar incurred the wrath of the Blood God. Khorne's mightiest champions had been defeated by the combined might of the Space Wolves and Grey Knights, great Angron himself banished back to the Warp alongside the dozen-strong honour guard of Bloodthirsters that fought by his side. Grimnar had been newly promoted to Great Wolf a matter of months before the battle began, but it was his strategic genius and unflinching heroism that had held the legions of Chaos at bay long enough for Khorne's servants to be foiled. It was Grimnar who had slain one of the mightiest lords of the World Eaters, claiming his axe as wargelt. It was Grimnar who had been hailed as Armageddon's great victor. It was Grimnar upon whom the eye of wrathful Khorne had settled, and whose skull the Blood God now desired above all others.

Time flows differently in the Warp, days passing in years, decades in mere moments. All the while, Khorne's desire for revenge roiled in the Immaterium, growing furnace hot and forging legions of Daemons whose only purpose was its fulfilment. Bargains were struck, mighty entities trammelled in brass and fire and standing ready in serried ranks for their master's command. Now, as the skies opened above Alaric Prime and the Warp bled through, the Blood God seized his chance. Grimnar's bane was loosed upon the world. The blood debt would be settled.

MURDERTIDE

A host of Daemons has broken through from the Warp and descended upon Scrap Peak, intent on the death of every living thing on the planet. If the Space Wolves and their allies cannot hold the daemonic incursion here, all will have been for naught as the Warp will spill out across Alaric Prime and destroy everything they have fought so hard to save.

BORN OF SLAUGHTER

The first Daemon to burst through the rift above Scrap Peak was the Herald known as Slaughterborn, an entity spawned from the deeds of an especially murderous assassin. Known to some as the Brazen Blade, this deranged killer hired his services to cult leaders and demagogues throughout the Lonereach System, his only price being the skulls of those he slew. The Brazen Blade dedicated each act of murder to the Blood God, creeping close to his victims through subtlety and silence before butchering them in shockingly violent ways. With each mark slain, his skull shrine grew until, in a final act of blind dedication, the Brazen Blade plunged his daggers into his own throat, bathing the shrine in blood. That very moment, Slaughterborn howled into being in the Warp. The maddened horror was spawned from the life force of not only the Brazen Blade, but of his many victims. These conflicting spirits filled Slaughterborn with a directionless loathing, and a desperate need for violence that could never be sated. So it was that the Herald swiftly butchered his way to lordship over his murderous peers, and claimed a mighty Skull Throne for his own. As the brazen bridge shuddered into being above Scrap Peak, Slaughterborn's daemonic carriage burst from the Warp at the very head of the Khornate host, its master intent on the deaths of every mortal below.

The minions of Khorne had reaped a bloody tally from the Orks of Scrap Peak. Skulls in their thousands had been claimed already, blood spilled by the gallon to swirl amid the blazing wreckage and tumbled junk. The daemonic tide continued to pour down the brazen bridge, wicked blades clutched in taloned fists. Above them the rift pulsed and yawned wider, shuddering and howling as it fed on the souls of the slain. From its depths other Daemons began to pour, opportunist entities and Warp predators seizing their chance to breach the mortal realm and feed.

The Daemons of Tzeentch swooped into the Alarican skies, Screamers and Discs riding upon comet-tails of swirling flame. Pearlescent blotches flickered into being all across the battlefield – they danced and spread like the onset of some monstrous migraine before ripping open in gauzy, fronded curtains to reveal the Daemons of Slaanesh. Finally, from the churning gore and mud that swilled across the caldera floor, putrescent, lumpen shapes arose. Clutching rusted blades and oozing suppurant foulness from every pore, the Daemons of Nurgle stumbled forth to join the fight.

The Space Wolves watched this terrible scene unfold with growing dismay. Many of them had faced the servants of the Ruinous Powers before, and even those who had not knew tales enough to recognise the threat they now faced.

The Alarican Knights were not so well informed, bombarding the Space Wolves and each other with frantic cries of alarm. How could a foe so monstrous appear so suddenly and in such great numbers? What were these abominations? Should they stand and fight, or fall back and seek reinforcement? Even as they spoke, the Knights were horrified to hear their vox-channels blur with the droning buzz of a billion flies. Voices duplicated and repeated contradictory echoes, or degenerated into bestial roars that no human throat could utter. A vile gibbering and babbling rose behind it all, steadily choking communications with its maddening din.

Logan Grimnar cut across every vox channel at once, bellowing his message to all Imperial forces on Alaric Prime. The Great Enemy was here, the horrors of Chaos unleashed. Now was a time for courage, faith and strength greater than any the world's defenders had shown so far. Grimnar barked a command for all available forces to make haste for the caldera. Yet even as his words rang out the vox was buried in a deluge of maddened screams. Had anyone heard Grimnar's orders? Was help on its way? As the Great Wolf wiped bloody rain from his eyes, he could not be sure.

THE DARK GODS' DUE

The Fenrisians and Knights watched as a hellish tide boiled up from below them. It was almost as though the ancient volcano had stirred back to life, though in its sickened fury it spewed blood and Daemons in place of lava. Behind captured barricades the Imperial warriors clutched their weapons tight, restraining their own battle-lust lest it see them undone. Soon enough the fight came to them, just as Grimnar had known it would. With a sanity-blasting howl that struck home like a physical blow, the Daemons raised their weapons and charged. They flowed in a tide toward the thin cordon of Space Wolves that ringed the caldera. Insane horrors from the darkest nightmares of Mankind scrambled over one another in their haste to taste mortal flesh. At their head – vastly outnumbering their newly-arrived cousins – came the blood-spattered Daemons of Khorne with murder in their blazing eyes.

The Space Wolves opened fire with every weapon they had, a rain of mass-reactive bolts thundering down into the oncoming wave of daemonflesh. Shots punched through bodies and skulls, exploding with bone-pulping force. Daemons were hurled from their cloven feet in gouts of unnatural gore, limbs were sent tumbling, shorn from ephemeral bodies. Plasma blasts and helfrost beams washed across the oncoming horde, tearing ragged holes in the Daemons' ranks even as Vindicator shells and lascannon blasts smashed Daemon Engines to blazing ruin.



Still the unnatural horde came on, gaining ground with every second. Here a thundering spearhead of Juggernauts shrugged off the Space Wolves' fire to smash headlong into their barricades. There a wall of slump-shouldered Plaguebearers pressed up through the storm of shots, their corpulent flesh torn and ruined but their bodies still stumbling forward. Knights bombarded the enemy, their pilots' teeth bared and eyes wild. The ghosts of their thrones mechanicum knew this foe, and they whispered words of encouragement and warning to their living pilots amid fervent prayers.

Still it was not enough against the endless host that flooded down the brazen bridge. Skullcannons spat and roared, their otherworldly ordnance falling among the Space Wolves' lines in showers of flame. Soul Grinders coughed wads of sizzling phlegm that ate through armour and flesh with ease, or else retched great streams of hellforged bullets up the caldera's slopes to shred through barricades and powered plate. Blazing Tzeentchian chariots swept overhead, weaving between the fire of the Space Wolves' surviving aircraft to rain multi-hued Warp flames down upon the Imperial forces.

Through it all, the Space Wolves and Knights fought on, the bloody downpour slicking their armour and sizzling against their flesh. Their guns roared and spat until the barrels glowed hot and their ammunition ran dry. Long Fangs hefted spent heavy weapons from their shoulders, swinging them in brutal arcs to club their shrieking foes to their knees. And still the unnatural host came on, more and more of them leaping and scrambling up the caldera's slopes.

The Space Wolves howled challenges at their charging foe, vaulting the barricades to meet the Daemons with chainswords revving. Led by the howling, mad-eyed Wolf Lord Krom, the surviving Blood Claws hurled themselves down the slopes, ploughing into an onrushing mass of Bloodletters with their blades swinging. Behind them came Wolf Guard clad in bulky Terminator plate, guns singing a song of death, frost blades crackling. Still the Daemons boiled up from below, burying Grey Hunters, Blood Claws and Wolf Guard alike beneath their heaving, monstrous mass. They tore at Dreadnoughts, hacked through the hulls of tanks, scaled the legs of Knights and began to overwhelm their desperate foes.

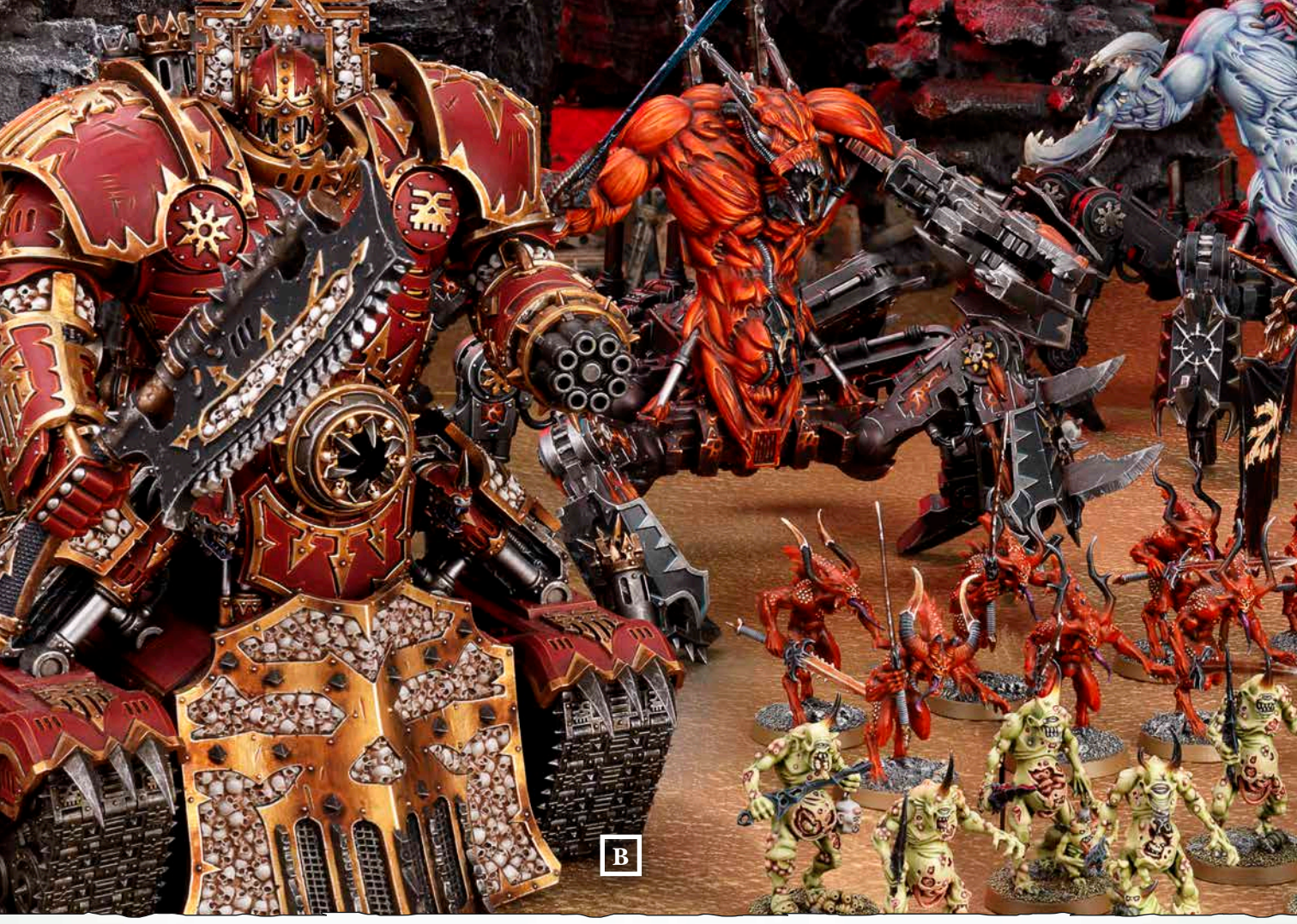
'A world of men
within themselves,
Hid safe on
ghostly thrones.

A mouth unto
a blazing heart,
Turn'd long to
blackened stones.

A wound long felt
to brazen pride,
The hounds enrag'd
the master.

A horde of blades to
claim the debt,
And we come
tumbling after.'

- Inscription found seared across Sire Thaniel Degallio's face after the Battle of Scrap Peak



THE DAEMONTIDE

The horde of otherworldly horrors that flooded Scrap Peak was less an army and more an ocean. Countless regiments of hellish warriors carried their gods' wrath onto the mortal plain, each vying to claim more souls for their patron than the next. Amongst this mighty throng, certain bands of Daemons stood out as especially ferocious and deadly.

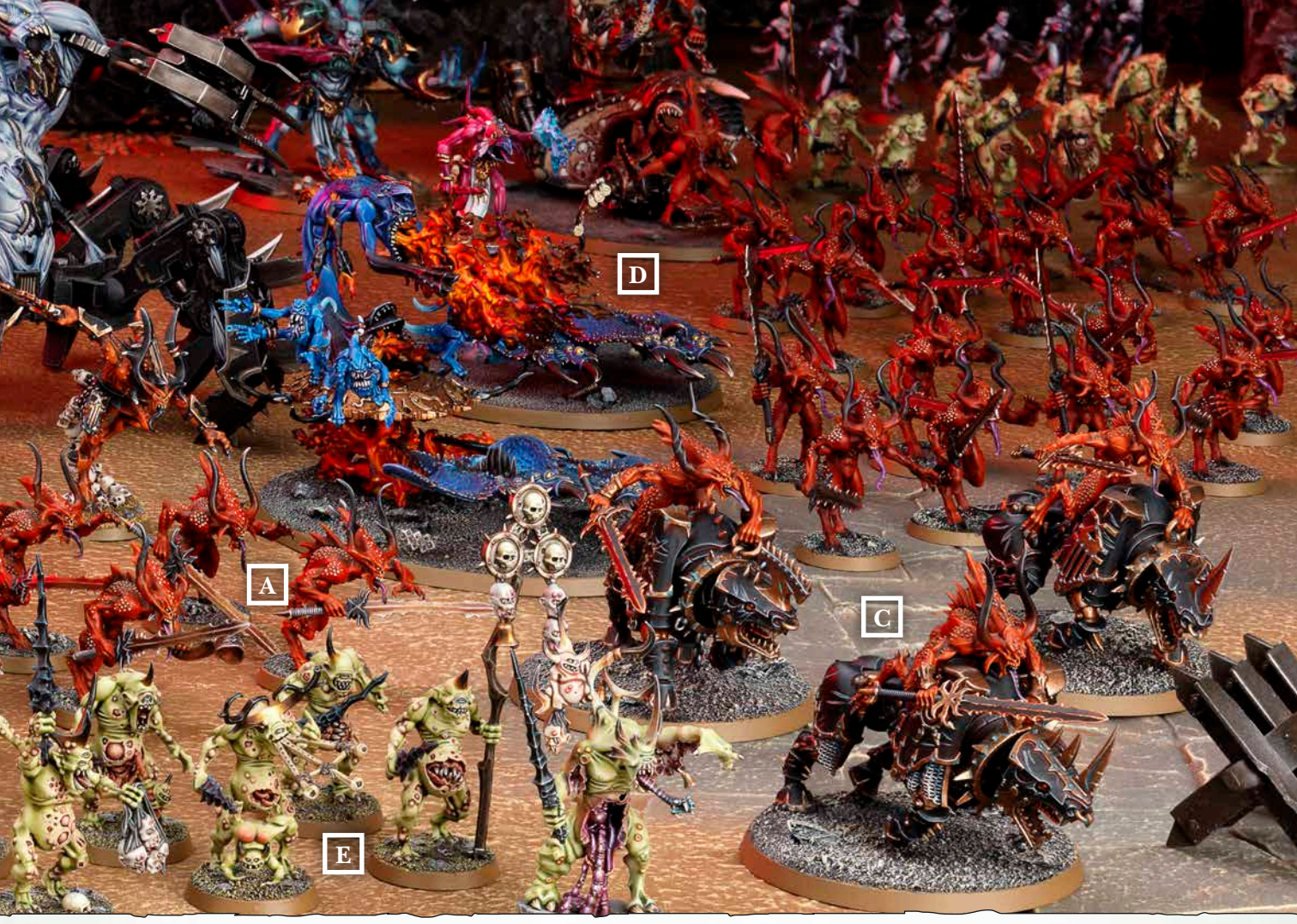
A THE VENGEFUL HOST

A teeming mass of gore-slick Bloodletters, the Vengeful Host formed the heart of the Daemontide. Every last Daemon in this fell company was born from the Blood God's thirst for revenge upon Logan Grimnar. They were birthed from the raw stuff of the Warp with his name already burning upon their lips. When the Bloodletters spoke, it was ever to proclaim their hatred of the Great Wolf and brag to their fellows of how they would be the one to claim his skull. They hungered only for Grimnar's soul, thirsted only for his blood, though they would slaughter any who stood between them and their chosen prey. When the veil tore asunder above Scrap Peak and their chance was presented at last, the Vengeful Host charged screaming into the fray with every fibre of their unnatural forms straining to reach and butcher the Space Wolves' lord.

B THE EATER OF SKULLS

This towering daemonic entity once enjoyed a place of honour at the foot of Khorne's throne. For time beyond time, the Eater of Skulls led great armies of Daemons in the name of his master, crushing the Daemon hordes of the other gods as often as the hapless hosts of mortal foes. During the Polychromide Wars, it was the Eater of Skulls that carved his way through a web of sorcery and waves of foes to devastate a swathe of Tzeentch's crystal labyrinth. On Corvosia the Eater of Skulls lived up to his monstrous epithet by severing and devouring the heads of every last member of the Corvosian Ecclesiarchy in a single night.

The Daemon fell from favour during the first war for Armageddon – he was amongst Angron's mighty honour guard, and failed to protect the Daemon Primarch from the vengeful attentions of the Grey Knights. Banished to the Warp, the raging Daemon found his essence trammelled in brazen shackles, for his god was most displeased with his failure. Bound to an unfeeling shell of brass and bone, the Eater of Skulls was condemned to languish within a mighty prison for all time, driven mad by his need for vengeance and his fury at his failure. Yet the Eater of Skulls was to be given a chance to redeem himself by his wrathful lord, and his imprisonment would not last forever.



C THE UNSTOPPABLE

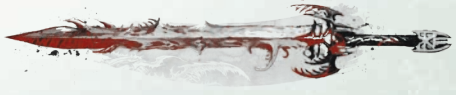
The Bloodcrushers who called themselves the Unstoppable were an elitist cadre. To join this blood-soaked brotherhood of Daemons, an aspirant had first to leap astride his newly bonded steed and make straight for the pustulant Garden of Nurgle. There he was expected to smash through the rotting boundaries of that rancid realm, trampling all that stood in his path. Only by embarking upon a maddened rampage through Nurgle's sacred garden and returning unharmed could the Bloodcrusher call himself one of the Unstoppable.

D THE BEDLAM STORM

When the Daemontide attacked, the skies filled with shrieking warpspawn intent on wreaking havoc. Amongst them swooped a number of Burning Chariots of Tzeentch: a strange band of daemonic huntsmen who named themselves the Bedlam Storm. Swooping on the impossible thermals of the Empyrean, these predatory entities would ride the edges of Warp storms. Ever watchful for mortal craft caught in the path of the storm, these gibbering charioteers would sweep down upon such desperate and damaged craft, lashing their failing Gellar fields with sorcerous flame before tearing the stricken ships apart and feeding upon the souls within. Upon the mortal plane their methods were much the same, soaring high above the battlefield in cackling, babbling packs before descending to finish off those who looked suitably weakened or in danger of being overwhelmed.

E THE SORROWBORN

A foul host of foetid horrors, the Sorrowborn were amongst the vilest of their kind. Resplendent with the many blessings of Nurgle, these Plaguebearers congealed around the unanswered prayers of those who had contracted Nurgle's most virulent plagues. They were drawn to the spilling of tainted vital fluids upon the mortal realm, seeking ever to wallow in the foulest concoctions imaginable. These they would imbibe, before harvesting mortal souls with which to empower the sloshing contents of their swollen bellies. Once a suitable tally had been reached and the soulfilth mix roiled madly inside of them, the Sorrowborn would fade away once more, returning to Nurgle's rotting manse. There they would stand in orderly queues, venting the gaseous excess of their foraging trip in a vile chorus as they shuffled slowly, patiently forward. As each of the Sorrowborn reached the front of their queue they would vomit forth their freshly gathered foulness into Nurgle's pitted cauldron, each adding their own ingredients to the oceanic mix of filth so that their master might spawn new plagues with which to add to their number. Such is the circle of life that Grandfather Nurgle so joyously embraces, and that his foes fight so hard not to join...



INTO THE BREACH

Daemons beyond count boil from the mouth of the rift, an endless tide that the Imperial forces can only hold back for so long. Logan Grimnar knows that the hordes of Chaos cannot be allowed to break free, and that the rift must be closed before irreparable damage is done, but to do this the Space Wolves must take the fight to the foe.

THE CLAWS UNSHEATHED

For long moments, as the daemonic tide flowed over the barricades, the Space Wolves and Knights struggled desperately to hold it back. A boiling sea of snapping claws and bloody blades beat against the thin Imperial lines, and it seemed impossible that the Daemons would not break through.

Yet it was in this moment that the Wolf Guard pack known as the Claws of Grimnar truly proved their worth. Ranulf Ironfang and Ingvarr Thunderbrow stood back to back, frost blade and chainfist carving the Daemons down by the dozen. Skard Frostmane stalked through the mayhem, here disembowelling a Bloodletter as it tried to scramble up a Knight's shin, there stabbing his crackling blades through the back of a Slaaneshi Herald and tearing the fiend in two. Meanwhile Ulli Dragonsmote and Gunnar Redhammer fought like Fenrisian gods of war, slaughtering their unnatural foes with jets of flame and thunderous hammer-blows. It was on the fulcrum of this pack's heroic defence that the battle would turn, and their names that would appear first in the saga that followed.

Across the battlefield, the Imperial vox network crackled to life. Over the infernal din, Logan Grimnar's voice rang out once more, clear and cold. All who could reach the Wolf Lords were to join them and attack. Any warrior too far removed to aid in the offensive was to fight on regardless, their efforts bent toward drawing Daemons away from the portal. His orders given, Grimnar leapt astride *Stormrider* once more and loosed a war cry into the bloody skies. He was answered by his brothers, voices rising in a feral chorus until – for one brief, glorious moment – their howls rang above even the shrieks and screams of the daemonic horde. Then the sound was swallowed once more, drowned in a cacophony of damnation as the Space Wolves fought for their lives.



Reaching for glory and redemption, Krom Dragongaze led the charge. He drove into the foe with his finest on his heels, howling their fury as they fought. Daemonic horrors recoiled in outrage as the mailed fist of Krom's Wolf Guard smashed into them, billowing flame and crackling blades turning empyric bodies to vapourised slime. Krom fought at the fore, his axe a whirling, bloody storm that cleared a path for his warriors to follow. One moment an unstoppable tide of fiends were poised to break the Space Wolf line. The next, like the first tumbling stones beginning a thunderous avalanche, Krom and his warriors were ploughing forward, buckling the daemonic horde, cutting a path into which Grimnar and Blackmane swiftly followed.

Blood Claws, Grey Hunters, Dreadnoughts, Terminators: all pressed forward into the teeth of the foe as their attack gathered pace. The Daemons were falling now like wheat before a scythe, utterly wrongfooted by the mortals' temerity. Heavy bolters and assault cannons roared, thundering streams of fire into the enemy to clear the way. Bellowing in exhilaration, the Space Wolves quickened their pace as their momentum built – Land Raiders ploughed through the midst of the foe while Swiftclaw Bikers roared around them with guns blazing. The surviving Stormwolves and Stormfangs formed up above the attack, their strafing runs sweeping yet more Daemons out of the Space Wolves' way. The Fenrisians achieved a loping run, and then an all out charge through the streets of Scrap Peak. They smashed like the prow of a longship through the ranks of the foe, closing on the brazen bridge with every step. Grimnar fought now at the tip of the spear, *Stormrider* borne along amid a surging wave of monstrous wolves. The Knights strode alongside them, the imposing figures of the White Warden and the Forgotten Knight leading their surviving kin in one final, glorious charge.

Ragnar Blackmane snarled as he hacked down another grotesque fiend. He caught sight of Krom, battling furiously with a pack of gigantic red daemonhounds, but the two Wolf Lords were swept apart and suddenly Ragnar was clear. Blood swilled around the Young Wolf's knees, thick with greenskin corpses, and before him the brazen bridge rose up into the sky. At his back, the last of his Blood Claws hacked their way through the press, one of the Rune Priests at their head. The priest's eyes flashed with power and a skein of lightning leapt from his fist, reducing a charging mass of Daemons to vapour.

A great dark shape swooped overhead and, with a mighty splash, the White Warden's foot came down several yards ahead. Ragnar grinned as he watched the Knights stride clean over the Space Wolves and form a line at the foot of the bridge. Bloody rain soaked the mighty walkers, flowing in runnels down their bright armour and sizzling into sanguine steam against their ion shields. Yet still they radiated defiance and might. Their guns were blazing, a constant staccato thunder. Explosions marched up the brazen bridge, each blast annihilating Daemons by the dozen. Though the horde was pressing in around the Space Wolves now, forcing their unsustainable charge into embattled pockets, it looked as though the Knights might stem the Daemontide.

THE EATER OF SKULLS

Suddenly the rift pulsed with hellish light, a brazen roar welling from within its depths. Something vast moved at the top of the bridge, a huge shadow stirring amid the heat haze. Forth from the Warp rolled the Eater of Skulls, a Daemon Engine so vast that it all but filled the bridge's width. The towering Lord of Skulls gave a deafening roar, raised its daemonforged cannon and opened fire. The barrels of the mighty weapon screamed as they spun faster and faster, muzzles lit with hellish flame. The rain of shots hammered into the Knights' shields, causing them to flare and flash. Sire Thaniel Degallio's Knight stumbled, driven to one knee as its shield blazed with impacts. The noble gave one last scream of defiance before his shield exploded, the torrent of fire perforating his Knight's torso and hurling it to the ground in flames.

The Eater of Skulls ground forward, engines roaring as it crunched over smashed Soul Grinders and broken Skull Cannons. The super-heavy Daemon Engine continued to rake its fire across the Knights as it advanced, their own shots blasting chunks from the monster's armour but unable to halt its advance. Sire Galhain Degallio fell next, his Knight stumbling drunkenly before exploding in a spectacular ball of white-hot fire. Neru Degallio fired back, striding out to try and flank the Lord of Skulls, but its mighty cleaver swung in a meteoric arc and hammered the White Warden back into a mass of Daemons. Gerantius moved to engage the monster, only to be surrounded by a scuttling swarm of Soul Grinders. The Forgotten Knight's reaper chainsword carved through the clanking beasts, yet they had succeeded in blunting his attack. A lone Knight of House Degallio, that of Sire Furian, was left to face the Eater of Skulls by itself, but not for long. With a furious roar, the Khornate war engine charged into the luckless Knight, Furian retreating as he tried to bring his thermal cannon to bear. There was a terrible, grinding screech as the Lord of Skulls' cleaver pulped the Knight's helm, and then Furian's slain walker was sent crashing to the bloody ground. As Furian fell, so did House Degallio. Only their ruler remained, fighting on against a mounting tide of daemonic foes with tears of furious sorrow streaking his face.

Stormrider *swept through the battle of Scrap Peak. Logan Grimnar's eyes narrowed as he took in the scene of devastation before him. Three Knights were down, smoke and flame boiling from their riven corpses. The Forgotten Knight and the White Warden were both hard pressed, lesser Daemon Engines and hordes of maddened Bloodletters swirling about them. At the base of the brazen bridge loomed a vast monstrosity – the Lord of Skulls was even now turning its guns upon Blackmane and his warriors, their return fire ringing from its armoured hide. Grimnar gripped the Axe Morkai tight and bared his fangs in challenge, 'Very well then, monster. You want a fight? Let us write a saga, you and I...'*



PROPHECY FULFILLED

The Eater of Skulls is loose, a murderous, towering Daemon Engine that seeks to slaughter everything in its path and claim Logan Grimnar's skull for its god. With the Knights defeated, it is left to the lords of Fenris to slay the beast.

Even as the Knights of House Degallio were falling one-by-one, Wolf Lord Dragongaze fought to keep Strike Force Stormclaw from suffering a similar fate. For a moment, as he saw Ragnar swept toward the brazen bridge, Krom had burned to follow, to compete with the whelp for the glory to be had there. Yet he knew where that path led, saw again the Vengeful Howl *lying broken and the faces of the warriors he had lost on Blistered Isle. No. The skjalds would not sing of Krom Dragongaze that he had abandoned his kin for a fool's empty crown. Instead he hacked down the last of the red-scaled, brass-collared hounds that beset him, and patched into the vox. Bellowing over the daemonbabble, Krom ordered the surviving Fenrisians into defensive formations, threatening that any who sought glory over life would face his wrath. The Space Wolves would survive this insanity, Krom vowed, or else their wights would answer to him in the afterlife!*

The battle at the foot of the brazen bridge was quickly turning against the warriors of the Imperium. The Daemontide had been hurled back by the Space Wolves' offensive, but now surged in once more to surround the beleaguered Fenrisians. Space Wolves fought back to back in tightening circles against an overwhelming foe. At the same time the Eater of Skulls' rampage reaped an ever-greater tally, its huge gatling cannon chewing through tanks and Space Marines alike. The Knights had been felled, or else were surrounded and on the verge of being overrun. Yet while Logan Grimnar lived, he would never countenance defeat.

With a bone-shaking howl, Grimnar drove *Stormrider* forth, through the falling sheets of bloody rain, between the blazing corpses of once-proud Knights. As crimson lightning exploded overhead, the noble Wolf Lord swept down upon the Eater of Skulls with blade in hand. The Daemon Engine saw Grimnar coming, its burning stare locking with the Great Wolf's own, and it turned ponderously to meet his charge. The beast's cleaver fell, swift as a guillotine blade, only to churn up a great spume of bloody water as *Stormrider* swerved aside. Logan's own swing struck home, the Axe Morkai tearing through the Daemon Engine's armoured midriff in a welter of boiling gore. As *Stormrider* swept past, Grimnar's Thunderwolves ploughing through the bloody waters with grim determination, the Eater of Skulls bellowed its rage to the skies. Molten brass and steam gouted from the long slash carved by the Axe Morkai. Yet as Grimnar swept back for another pass, his foe was ready.

The Wolf Lord's blade hacked once more through the Eater of Skulls' hide, but in return the flat of the monster's cleaver smashed into *Stormrider* like a battering ram. The chariot was hurled through the air, splashing down in a tangle of traces and baying wolves. The Great Wolf, meanwhile, was thrown aside, rolling to a stop at the base of the brazen bridge. Grimnar rose, growling low in his throat, only to be smashed down once again as a hail of forge-hot bullets raked his armour. This time, the Old Wolf was slower to rise, blood leaking from rents in his Terminator plate. Even as he did so, gripping the haft of the Axe Morkai with both hands, he realised that the Eater of Skulls was upon him. The mighty cleaver swept down, teeth churning, hammering one, two, three blows against Grimnar's guard. The Wolf Lord blocked the first blow, skull-sized chain-teeth spitting like shrapnel as the two blades locked. The second impact, though, drove the Old Wolf to his knees, and the third smashed him sprawling onto his back. With a bellow of triumph, the Eater of Skulls rolled forward to grind Logan Grimnar beneath its tracks.

FROM THE JAWS OF THE BEAST

Suddenly, a blue-grey blur shot out of nowhere, hitting Grimnar's prone form like a bolt of lightning. Ragnar Blackmane rolled with his liege lord, both of them tumbling out of the Daemon Engine's path and into the bloody waters with a splash. The Eater of Skulls howled, apoplectic with rage as it hunted for its diminutive quarry. There they were, rising from the sanguine lake with blades clutched ready. The Young Wolf and the Old. Great Khorne wanted the old one's skull, had raised a whole legion of Daemons simply to claim it. Yet the Eater of Skulls would be the one to sever this aged cur's head, for it too knew his face of old and hated him above all others. The Eater of Skulls turned to face its foes once more, mighty tracks churning blood in fountaining sprays. It raised its cleaver high, levelled its monstrous guns, and prepared to blast them from existence.

A high-pitched, whistling scream caused the vast Daemon Engine's head to snap upright, a split second before a fiery explosion blossomed against its chest. The Eater of Skulls gave a roar of outrage, which was cut short by another trio of thunderous blasts that drove it back and cracked its brazen breastplate. Tracks grinding, the Daemon Engine fought against this unexpected storm of fire, but more shells were falling, explosions blooming all across its vast frame. One blast engulfed its wrist, severing the Eater of Skulls' hand in a shower of blood. Even as its cleaver crashed down,



more explosions punched holes in the Daemon Engine's body. They shattered the pressurised vats of gore that fuelled its furnace heart, they buckled the barrels of its cannon arm. Back up the bridge the Daemon Engine was driven, grinding its own warriors beneath its tracks. Yet still the shells hammered into its frame.

As their doom receded, Grimnar and Blackmane sought the source of their rescue. The Great Wolf was the first to see them and, to Blackmane's amazement, he began to laugh. Roaring over the lip of the caldera, surging through the torn walls of Scrap Peak, came valiant waves of Cadians, with a company of Leman Russ battle tanks leading the way. It was the combined thunder of the tanks' guns that had driven the Eater of Skulls back. Even now their shells were striking home, dismembering the beleagured Daemon Engine bit by bit.

'The echoes of the Primarch shall gather as one,' intoned Grimnar, shaking his head. 'Russ shall protect his favoured sons.' As the Leman Russ battle tanks ground forward and continued their furious barrage, Logan Grimnar laughed all the harder.

Castellan Stein gripped the edge of the cupola as *Gatekeeper* crested the rise amid a charging mass of Cadians. As the Baneblade rolled through a ragged breach in the greenskins' wall, Stein's expression betrayed his horror at the scene of bedlam that spread out below him. The entire caldera was a churning sea of madness, fiends from the darkest nightmares on the verge of overrunning the Space Wolves amid a monsoon of gore. Stein's eyes hurt as he beheld the awful rip in reality, the rune-etched brass bridge, the roiling lake of blood. Yet he gritted his teeth, fought down his revulsion and began to bark orders over the maddened babble of the vox. The castellan forced himself to absorb and dissect the scene before him as he hunted for a suitable target. There, at the heart of the battle, was some kind of super-heavy war engine. Ovik's boys were giving the thing hell, a pummelling rain of battle cannon shells slamming against its armoured form, but still it wasn't dead. Well, thought Stein, that could be remedied. Dropping into the cupola and slamming the hatch, he patched through to his gunnery seneschal.

'That super-heavy class abomination on the bridge. See it?' Stein nodded through his seneschal's stammered response. 'Never mind all that, Sergeant Retzler, just focus. That engine. Kill it. Now'. Stein watched his fuzzing green augur screen as *Gatekeeper* shook with recoil. A moment passed in which Stein's breath caught in his throat, then the shell from his Baneblade's main cannon hit home and blew its target's head off in a single, spectacular blast. The Daemon Engine rolled to a stop, secondary explosions shuddering through it, even as the Baneblade's crew erupted in elated cheers. 'A beautiful shot, Sergeant, good work.' Down there, staring up at the slain beast, Castellan Stein had caught sight of the distant figures of Grimnar and Blackmane. He permitted himself a thin smile as he realised his forces had rescued the Wolf Lords in the nick of time. 'That's right gentlemen,' he muttered to himself quietly, 'the Emperor protects, but he does it with good Cadian steel.'

UNCHAINED WRATH

The Cadians have arrived, and have felled the Eater of Skulls. Wave after wave of Astra Militarum infantry and armour are pouring into the caldera, their sudden assault causing the Daemontide to falter. With the addition of their innumerable tanks and soldiers, the Imperium has a chance to turn back the foe and save Alaric Prime once and for all.

'Gorsk, get a frag into that crater, now! Menler, Zemsky, cover right! Lesk, where the hell is that flamer? Keep praying boys, we're pushing them back! Wait... up there on the bridge... what in the Emperor's name is that thing?!'

- Sgt Kollermann, Cadian 1655th Infantry, Battle of Scrap Peak

Chanting fervent prayers to the Emperor, the Cadians swept down upon the daemonic host. At the fore came Ogryn squads and Tempestus Scions, Salem Whitlock fresh from his medicae cot and advancing defiantly in their midst. Behind them came infantry platoons, pressing forward alongside their Chimeras and Tauroxes while the APCs laid down fire. The Leman Russ tanks of the 1652nd had carved a path of ruin through the enemy, a path that the rest of the Cadian force now followed. On the ridge, batteries of Wyverns, Manticores and Basilisks maintained a thunderous bombardment. They marched their fire out through the tight-packed Daemons, raising a creeping curtain of explosions that slaughtered foes in their hundreds and paved the way for the Imperial advance. In the midst of the Cadian force, *Gatekeeper* advanced, flanked by late-arriving Knights from Houses Brahmica and Velemestrin. This super-heavy sledgehammer crushed anything powerful enough to resist the Cadian advance, their fire vaporising Bloodcrushers and reducing Soul Grinders to steaming slag.

As the Daemons wavered, the surviving Space Wolves launched into them with fresh vigour. Blades rose and fell, flamers roared and depleted bolt pistols emptied their last clips into daemonic flesh. Now did the Fierce-eye set his warriors loose, roaring at them to charge, to fight, to kill. Lord Krom led by example, his grin a fang-filled slash and his one eye wide with murderlust as he vented all his fury upon the faltering foe. Meanwhile, Grimnar and Blackmane had charged to the aid of the White Warden. They were even now hacking their way through the Daemons that assailed Neru Degallio.



The Forgotten Knight, meanwhile, had seen to his own ills – though limping from a deep gouge in one leg, and venting smoke from several vicious rents in his armour, Gerantius had slain every last one of his attackers. Even now, the verdigrised Knight was dragging itself toward the brazen bridge, weapons raised in challenge. The daemonic host seemed to be flickering, shimmering in and out of reality as the clouds raced faster and faster overhead. The portal was visibly shrinking as the Imperium's forces gained the upper hand, and for a moment cheers began to ring out above the Imperial lines. Then, with breathtaking suddenness, the still-blazing wreckage of the Lord of Skulls burst apart. Chunks of burning wreckage the size of tanks sailed in all directions, hurled aside by the violence of a vast dark shape. A bellow of pure fury shuddered out across the battlefield as the true Eater of Skulls – once trammelled within the Daemon Engine's frame – broke free. The unbound Bloodthirster beat its blood red wings with a sound like thunder, and took to the skies.

THE FINAL FIGHT

Soaring between dancing bolts of red lightning, the bloody downpour slicking its monstrous frame, the Eater of Skulls exulted in its freedom. The great beast roared once more, and across the battlefield men quailed in fear. Down below, the Daemon sighted its prey, Logan Grimnar, fighting furiously amid a throng of lesser Warp-spawn. Howling its wrath, the Bloodthirster furled its wings and dropped like a brazen meteor. It hit the lake with monstrous force, a geyser of blood shooting skywards at its impact. Even as the bow-wave of its landing rolled outward, the Eater of Skulls was running, huge muscles pumping like pistons as they drove it towards its foe. A Space Wolves Dreadnought moved to block the Bloodthirster's charge, but the Daemon's axe hacked through the Dreadnought's shield and the ancient behind it with a single swing. Enraged Wolf Guard astride monstrous Thunderwolves hurled themselves into the Daemon's path, but their blades shattered as they struck the Bloodthirster's hide. In return, the Eater of Skulls smashed one Fenrisian from his steed with its lash, before decapitating two more in a flurry of blows. A rain of Cadian battle tank shells fell directly upon the Bloodthirster as it shrugged off the bodies of the fallen Wolf Guard, but as the smoke cleared it strode from the flames untouched.

Grimnar – mounted again upon *Stormrider* – saw the Eater of Skulls barrelling toward him, seemingly immune to shot and blade. Suddenly, recalling the dark origins of the Axe Morkai, Logan heard again the final words of Njal's prophecy.

'The weapons of wrath alone shall sunder the beast unchained.' Hope stirring in his heart, Grimnar shot a glance at the young Wolf Lord fighting alongside him.

'Ragnar, can you keep the beast busy for me?' Dauntless as ever, Ragnar favoured his liege with a feral grin.

'If it wants to kill me, Old Wolf, it has first to catch me!' With that, Blackmane broke into a headlong sprint, charging straight toward the rampaging Daemon.

As Blackmane charged, the Bloodthirster gave a chuckle like hammered brass. It bellowed a challenge then, fast as lightning, swung its axe at Ragnar's neck. The Wolf Lord evaded the blow, throwing his head and shoulders backwards and sliding on his knees beneath the hurtling blade. Coming back to his feet, Blackmane rained blows against the Daemon's chest, sparks showering into the gore that washed about the combatants' shins. The Eater of Skulls spun and stamped, hooves slamming down with sledgehammer force to crush this nimble foe. Blackmane wove around each attack, rolling aside from another titanic swing of the Bloodthirster's axe with a mocking laugh. With a flick of its wrist the Daemon sent its lash whickering out, finally snaring Blackmane's ankle and spilling him from his feet. Even as the Wolf Lord fell, the Bloodthirster launched itself into the air, axe raised ready to cut him in two.

But the blow never fell – as the Eater of Skulls rose to the apex of its leap, *Stormrider* swept out of the driving, bloody rain. The Axe Morkai, once a fell blade of the Blood God, flashed in a single glittering arc. It scythed through corded muscle and brazen plate, hacking through the Daemon's bullish neck in an explosion of flaming gore. Eyes bulging with furious disbelief, maw stretched wide in a silent roar, the Eater of Skulls' head tumbled from its shoulders and splashed into the murk. As one, its mighty daemonic horde threw back their heads and screamed. As suddenly as they had appeared, the Daemons shivered like a faulty pict reel, then vanished as one. The bewildered silence they left behind was deafening. Then, the cheers began.

Ragnar Blackmane burst from beneath the bloody waters, spitting a mouthful of gore. His fangs showed white in his red-streaked face as he took in the scene around him. Above, the portal was collapsing in upon itself, crumpling like a sheet of parchment until it vanished altogether. Cut off from the sustaining energies of the Warp, the brazen bridge was sagging, turning rapidly to molten metal and falling apart. The Daemons themselves were gone, burned away like morning mist to leave a sorely depleted Imperial army standing amongst the bodies of the dead. Even the bloody rain had stopped, clouds tearing into tatters amid a high, sweeping wind. As Ragnar watched, sallow beams of dawn light fell through rents in the firmament to illuminate the wreckage of Scrap Peak.

A shadow fell across Blackmane, and he looked up into the ice blue eyes of Logan Grimnar. The Old Wolf grinned down at Ragnar, his smile pained but victorious. He reached down an armoured hand, palm open – this time, Ragnar grasped his liege lord's wrist in a warrior's grip, and Logan hoisted the young Wolf Lord to his feet.

'One for the sagas, eh my lord?' grinned Ragnar, spitting another mouthful of blood. Grimnar nodded slowly, taking in the carnage that surrounded them.

'Aye Ragnar, one for the sagas. But... I wonder what price this world may yet pay for our glory?'

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

Great swathes of Alaric Prime lie in ruins. The world's skies are choked, its people facing decades of ashen winter. More than two thirds of the Alarican populace are dead. Yet for all this, Alaric Prime has one last trial to face.

A NECESSARY EVIL

The Emperor's realm knows many threats, yet none more deadly than that of the Daemon. These malevolent beings are bent upon the downfall of the galaxy's mortal races, and will use every means at their disposal to achieve this end. A potent weapon in a Daemon's arsenal is the warping taint of its very presence. The essence of the Daemon is pervasive, its corrupting influence near impossible to resist. All those exposed to the merest hint of the daemonic must therefore be considered suspect. Whole regiments of the Astra Militarum, entire households of Knights, even the populations of whole worlds – all must be exterminated without mercy should the slightest hint of taint be suspected. The duty of enacting such purges falls to the ruthless Inquisitors of the Ordo Malleus.



Alaric Prime stood bloodied but unbowed. The world's infrastructure and population had suffered greatly, and warbands of Orks still infested the wilder places of the world, yet victory was victory nonetheless. The efforts of the Space Wolves, the Astra Militarum, and the Alarican knightly houses had smashed the strength of the Ork invaders – they had further contained the deadly incident that had occurred atop Scrap Peak, believing the planet's soul saved along with its body. The war's impact upon Alaric Prime's noble houses had been vast. House Kestren were gone, slaughtered by the Orks. Worse, of the once great House Degallio only Lord Neru now lived, he and his battered White Warden limping away from the battle of Scrap Peak in silence. In the days that followed, Neru Degallio would depart his world without a word, his shame and sorrow so great that he could not face returning home. Soon enough a new Freeblade Knight – naming himself the White Warden – would begin to carve out a fresh and bloody legend across the sub-sector, though upon Alaric Prime he would never be seen again.

Into the power vacuum stepped the survivors of Houses Velemestrin, Brahmica and Kamata. All three houses had suffered for the salvation of their world, and the battle had taught them a harsh lesson of unity or death. Claiming the holdings of Kestren and Degallio, the surviving houses took up the reins of power. Rumours persisted of Degallio's formidable consort, the Lady of the Keys, disappearing in the wake of a mysterious bomb-blast and leaving behind her a bloody vow of vengeance. There was little enough time to hunt for her, however, as many, smaller wars would need to be fought in the months to come. As well as the lingering traces of the once-great Waaagh!, the Alarican Islands now played host to warbands of escaped convicts, desperate men who would fight hard to retain their freedom. The Knights would need to hunt each threat down and destroy it in turn. As a matter of necessity many of the world's more archaic laws were repealed, releasing great swathes of the surviving populace, only to set them to work clearing away the detritus of war and rebuilding afresh.

A few of the surviving Alarican Knights had witnessed the daemonic incursion during the battle of Scrap Peak – these individuals had been sworn to secrecy that very day by none other than Logan Grimnar himself. Yet each had found his own way to cope with the monstrous things he had seen, most falling back upon their faith with a newfound fervour that was surprisingly infectious. Before long these so-called Sainted Knights had become wellsprings for a resurgence of the Imperial Creed across their world. New shrines sprung up from the ruins, and the people gathered to sing praises to the Emperor and the Omnissiah both.

As for the Fenrisians and their Cadian allies, something of a reconciliation was achieved. During a grand ceremony in the shadow of Sacred Mountain, Castellan Stein and his surviving officers were formally honoured by Lords Grimnar, Dragongaze and Blackmane. The Great Wolf sombrely thanked a bewildered looking Stein for his timely rescue, before belting out a barrel-chested laugh and insisting that the entire Cadian command corps joined his men in their victory revels. While the upshot left several officers temporarily hospitalised, the bonds of loyalty between Stein's Cadians and the Space Wolves were reforged stronger than ever before.

Soon enough, new deployment orders reached both Imperial factions, drawing them back to their ships and away into the stars. Yet a few puzzled Sacristans were witness to one final spectacle on the day of the Wolves' departure. As the Forgotten Knight strode across the drawbridge of Fortress Alaric, returning once more to his timeless slumbers, Lord Grimnar emerged from the darkened portal before him. Witnesses claimed that Gerantius stopped for a time, leaning down over the Great Wolf, for all the world as though the two were engaged in earnest conversation. Such a thing was, of course, unheard of, and thus impossible. Still, as Grimnar strode away to take ship on the final Stormwolf, and Gerantius returned to the darkness beneath his mountain, there were those who watched, and murmured, and wondered.



The darkness of space spread like a velvet tapestry across one wall of the bridge, flickering with countless pinpricks of light. Yet it was one in particular that drew her eye. From a bead of luminescence, the shape swelled on the monitor, becoming first an orb, then all too soon a planet. Swathed in turbulent banks of cloud, wreathed with great tangles of wreckage both Imperial and xenos in origin, Alaric Prime floated before her. It looked peaceful from so high above. Wounded, certainly, but no longer war-torn. Yet this world had known the touch of the Daemon, and for this it had to die. She derived no pleasure from the deed, for she was not so bloodthirsty as many of her order. Yet the fact of the world's corruption remained – it was evident in the anomalies riddling the religious credo that had spread so quickly amongst the people. Already her ship was settling into orbit, its sleek black hull invisible to all but the most complex sensors, a payload of cyclonic torpedoes loaded and ready to rain final, cleansing death upon the world below. As she awaited the moment to give the command, she studied once more the reports of her agents. Already the Cadians had been diverted, their Navigators drawn off course by a siren-song in the Warp. They would translate into a dead reach of space, only to find themselves contained by her loyal servants. The soldiers of Cadia might be mere Imperial Guardsmen, but they were a cut above the rest and if she could help it, they would not all go to waste. Most would not survive the purifying rituals, but she held some hope that the most useful personnel could be salvaged. Her agents had suggested the names Whitlock and Ovik in particular.

A muted chime alerted her to her crew's state of readiness. Nothing left now but to give the order, and commend the souls of those below to the mercies of the immortal Emperor. But before she could speak, alarms began to wail across the bridge. Her eyes widened as the helmsman reported several flickering beams of lance fire cutting through space to port. Warning shots, she thought. Amid a snarl of static, the star-field vanished, replaced by the flickering image of a fanged and barbarous warrior.

'Inquisition craft,' rumbled the apparition, its voice a guttural growl that made the bridge's vox-grilles buzz, 'this world is under the protection of the Space Wolves, by decree of Great Wolf Logan Grimnar himself. It has been claimed as wargelt and protectorate of the sons of Fenris. Any attempt to do harm to the world or to its peoples shall be taken as an act of open hostility. My lord learned well the lessons of Armageddon, Inquisitor. I have three ships under my command. On the world below are weapons that would swat you from the sky, aimed by one who cares only for defending his people. Please, give us cause to fight you.'

The Inquisitor shook her head in answer to her gunnery master's questioning look. So like the wolves to put honour before sense. This world was a canker that must not be allowed to fester, yet her asupex confirmed the Space Wolf's claims. To fight this day would be to die, and leave her duty incomplete. Taking a calming breath, she ordered his helmsman to withdraw, and to set a course toward Bakka. Let the wolves believe themselves victorious for now. This matter was far from closed.





