

# VALEDOR™



**WARHAMMER**  
40,000

**APOCALYPSE WAR ZONE**





The Warhammer Vault exists to preserve the rich lore and background of Warhammer 40,000 and Warhammer Age of Sigmar. As such, outdated game scenarios and unit rules have been removed from this publication.

WAR ZONE  

---

VALEDOR

999.M41



# CONTENTS

THE VIOLENT DEATH OF VALEDOR ..... 5

MINIATURES SHOWCASE ..... 26

PRODUCED BY THE GAMES WORKSHOP DESIGN STUDIO

© Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2013, Games Workshop, the Games Workshop logo, GW, Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000, the Warhammer 40,000 logo, the Aquila logo, 40K, 40,000, Citadel, the Citadel Device, *War Zone: Valedor*, and all associated marks, logos, names, places, characters, creatures, races and race insignia, illustrations and images from the Warhammer 40,000 universe are either ®, TM and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2013 variably registered in the UK and other countries around the world. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

This is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this book are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is purely coincidental. British Cataloguing-in-Publication Data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library. Pictures used for illustrative purposes only.

Certain Citadel products may be dangerous if used incorrectly and Games Workshop does not recommend them for use by children under the age of 16 without adult supervision. Whatever your age, be careful when using glues, bladed equipment and sprays and make sure that you read and follow the instructions on the packaging.

[www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com)

**UK**  
Games Workshop Ltd,  
Willow Rd, Lenton,  
Nottingham,  
NG7 2WS

**NORTHERN EUROPE**  
Games Workshop Ltd,  
Willow Rd, Lenton,  
Nottingham,  
NG7 2WS

**NORTH AMERICA**  
Games Workshop Inc,  
6211 East Holmes Road,  
Memphis,  
Tennessee 38141

**AUSTRALIA**  
Games Workshop,  
23 Liverpool Street,  
Ingleburn,  
NSW 2565





# THE VIOLENT DEATH OF VALEDOR

## A PLANET TORN ASUNDER

The battle for the Valedor System culminates upon Valedor itself, known to the Eldar as Düriel – a once-beautiful planet invaded by Mankind, brought to ruin by the Tyranids, and pushed over the brink of destruction by the Eldar themselves.

### THE GREAT DEVOURER STRIKES

Since the brutal intrusion of the hive fleets across the Eastern Fringe, even the proudest Eldar mind has quailed at the Tyranid threat. So great is the menace of the invaders from beyond the void that the prophets of the Eldar race cried tears of blood at their coming.

The Autarchs and Farseers of the craftworlds know well that the tactic of evasion is of little use against an enemy capable of assailing such great swathes of space. Waiting for the invaders to expend themselves is not a viable solution either. The Tau Empire is but a single shield against a tide and, to the incredulity of the Eldar, the Imperium of Man is making matters worse by feeding the ravenous hive fleets entire generations of warriors in a ham-fisted attempt to stop their advance.

The seers and scholars of the Eldar craftworlds had long suspected that the Tyranid race grew stronger with every world it conquered, primarily due to the gargantuan bio-ships at the heart of each hive fleet. These monstrosities render down the harvested matter of their victims, combining it with the liquefied corpses of those Tyranids killed in the attack and subsequently reclaimed. Each new race the Tyranids encounter is killed, consumed, boiled down to biological gruel, and used to create ever more deadly weapon-beasts from the resultant raw materials.

It was this accelerated evolution that the Eldar sought to stop in the Valedor System, for should the hive fleets continue on their rampage, the craftworlds of the future would be doomed. Unbeknownst to them, the resultant war would force them to destroy the world of Düriel altogether.



## THE VALEDOR SYSTEM 999.M41



### THE VALEDOR SYSTEM, 999.M41 VALEDAN (PRIMOVITAE-CLASS STELLAR BODY)

Valedan is a relatively stable star, and its light and warmth allow complex ecosystems to flourish on several of its orbiting planets. It is theorised by Imperial Cosmologicos that only stable, life-giving stars such as Valedan attract the attention of Tyranid hive fleets, to whom a planetary system that allows the proliferation of biomass is the most vital of all resources.

### DAEA (DEATH WORLD)

The death world of Daea bursts into flame every time its elliptical orbit draws it close to Valedan. Oddly, this did not stop the advance of Hive Fleet Leviathan approaching the planet in 999.M41, presumably seeking the genetic secrets of hyper-durable life forms with which to bolster their own weapon-beasts.

### MEGUS (MINING WORLD)

Until the latter part of 999.M41, the mining planet of Megus was a thriving subsidiary to Valedor. The rich veins of adamantium that ran through its crust meant that its mining settlements numbered in the thousands, and its planetary defence force was amongst the strongest in the sector. The planet was invaded and effectively destroyed within six days by the seething wrath of Hive Fleet Leviathan, despite a spirited orbital defence from the guard-vessels that escorted its rich bounty to Valedor, and the courageous but ultimately hopeless efforts of the Imperial Guard regiments stationed there.

### VALEDOR (CIVILISED WORLD)

Known to the Eldar as Dûriel, Valedor was planetscaped along with the rest of the system in the mists of prehistory. It was intended as a safe haven for the ancient Eldar when their empire rose again. However, the arrival of Imperial settlers in 311.M39 saw the planet brought into compliance with Imperial tithe bands within a decade. By the end of 321.M39, it was reclassified from Viridian-class Mundus Novum to full civilised world status. The planet's thriving fortunes were to come to an abrupt end in 999.M41 when the Warp breach Vortex of Despair flared back into life, spitting out what appeared to be a translocated splinter of Hive Fleet Kraken.

### ECTOR (HIVE WORLD)

The hive world of Ector was the first Imperial world to bear the brunt of the questing tendrils of Hive Fleet Kraken. The planet's ice caps were invaded first, for they harboured a great deal of biomass in the form of large and aggressive polar fauna. Ector was a recruiting ground for the Crimson Castellans Chapter, and housed a garrison of twenty Space Marines at the time of the invasion. The Space Marines coordinated the defence of Ector's principal hive cities with such efficiency that it held out a full three months before the Tyranid swarms overran them.

### NUEN (PERDITAS)

Nuen is tainted by the Warp rift that interrupts its orbit. It has been declared Perditas ever since the Daemonstorms of 442.M35.



## THE WARHOSTS OF DÛRIEL

*The craftworlds of Biel-Tan and Iyanden, two of the mightiest of their kind, joined forces to cull the Tyranids that infested Dûriel. It was the Swordwind of Biel-Tan that first took the fight to Dûriel's surface, though the ghost warriors of Iyanden were pivotal in the latter stages of the war.*

The rapid evolutionary leaps made by the womb-beasts known as Norn Queens ensure the Tyranid swarms adapt at shocking speed to overcome their prey's technological advantages. With each piece of knowledge gained, and with each grotesque adaption, the hive fleet increases the lethality of its warriors in preparation for the next wave of assaults.

To the Eldar, the Tyranids represent an aspect of their mythological Dragon-concept – mindless destruction made manifest and set loose upon the stars. The Eldar know in their hearts that they must take up the challenge and fight the monster laying waste to their ancient domains, for only they have wisdom enough to defeat it. Yet they fear to do so, for their numbers are few, and the Tyranids are many – functionally infinite, if the Farseers are to be believed.

One such visionary was Taec Silvereye of Iyanden, a gifted but eccentric seer whose prophecies of invasion were proved unerringly accurate during the Fall of Iyanden. Perhaps, had his peers listened to him, they would have avoided disaster. Perhaps the craftworld's near-

demise was inevitable. Either way, the tragic fate of Iyanden had become well known throughout the ruins of the Eldar civilisation, a cautionary tale against underestimating the Tyranid race.

A single tendril of Hive Fleet Kraken had detected, hunted down and slaughtered the greater part of Craftworld Iyanden's populace before being repelled at great cost. In the process, the once-vibrant worldship was reduced to skeletal ruin, and its people were forced to wake their dead and plunge them back into the fires of war, so the living could hope to survive.

## SORROW AND BANISHMENT

A Tyranid hive fleet is of an unimaginable scale; escaping its grasp is no easy feat. This proved truest of Hive Fleet Kraken, the most insidious of their kind.

Unlike the sledgehammer assault of Hive Fleet Behemoth, Kraken attacked in a series of questing, space-faring 'tendrils' – each comprised of hundreds of bio-ships – that probed the defences of the hive fleet's foes before driving home its attack against their weakest point.



Just as all seemed lost for the beleaguered craftworld of Iyanden, the tendrils constricting it had been defeated by the return of Prince Yriel's corsair fleet. The pyrrhic victory of the Eldar, in conjunction with the actions of the Imperial forces upon Ichar IV, shattered the main tendrils of Hive Fleet Kraken and reduced the bulk of the hive fleet to little more than a painful memory. However, the smaller tendrils that yet floated in the void were still enough to deal the deathblow, should they bring Iyanden to battle once more.

In the process of extricating themselves from the devastation of the Eastern Fringe, the seers of Iyanden harnessed the psychic backlash of their craftworld's near extinction. In a long and dangerous meditation ritual, they magnified these negative energies until they resonated through Iyanden's infinity circuit – the psychic matrix that forms the skeleton of each titanic worldship.

All the death and terror of the craftworld was focussed to a single point in time and space. The emotional energy pouring out of the mourning craftworld was so intense that it collapsed the veil between realspace

and the Immaterium, boring a hole in reality and leaving a temporary Warp storm in the craftworld's wake.

Several of the smaller tendrils questing towards the escaping worldship recoiled from the gnawing lesion it left behind, fleeing in disarray from the hellish portal. The tendrils of Hive Fleet Kraken that was nearest to Iyanden, however, was not fast enough to escape. Writhing like a living thing, it was drawn into the sea of unreality beyond the vortex.

The grieving Eldar cared little about what became of the splinter fleet they had banished into the Warp. Immediate survival was their first and only priority. For many, it was felt that sending the remainder of the hive fleet into a Daemon-infested hell realm had a macabre elegance. Though the act of opening such a large and potentially permanent wound in reality was strictly forbidden, the tactic had made Iyanden's escape a certainty.

It was an act that would come back to haunt them; the tides of the Warp are fickle, and the gods that dwell within the Immaterium revel in cruelty.



### THE DARK KIN

*Heavily outnumbered by the hive fleets, the Eldar had no choice but to seek the aid of their infernal cousins. Asdrubael Vect himself sanctioned the presence of the Kabal of the Black Heart upon Düriel, accompanied by their foremost allies – the Wych Cult of Strife, united under Lelith Hesperax.*





*The Shrine of the Patient Blade, famous upon Iyanden and Biel-Tan alike for their excellent tracking skills, methodically hunted down the Lictors of Hive Fleet Kraken in order to stop the beasts from returning to the bio-ships with knowledge of the Eldar warhost's presence.*

## DEBTS AND CONSEQUENCES

The awful scale of the hive fleets' threat had been made clear. The coming of the Tyranids would almost certainly see the galaxy torn open and the Eldar race dwindle even further toward extinction – a fate that could not be borne.

Several years after the events that had brought Craftworld Iyanden to its knees, the seer Taec Silvereye predicted a far-off war whose ultimate consequences would finish Iyanden once and for all. His prophetic abilities had been proven beyond all doubt during the invasion of Iyanden, and so the Farseer's cryptic words were relayed with all haste to the high council of the craftworld.

Led by the beautiful Spiritseer Iyanna Arienal, the seers of Iyanden cast their runes and sent their minds along the skeins of fate. Together, the seers had the strength to penetrate the lingering psychic shadow cast by the Tyranids to investigate Silvereye's prophecy first-hand. What they saw in the skeins of fate drove them to the edge of panic.

## THE SPECTRE OF THE KRAKEN

The Tyranid hive fleet that had caught Iyanden in its grasp still bore the psychic spoor of the Eldar minds it had tasted during the Battle of Iyanden. Its creatures carried a faint but traceable stain of angst; a thin patina of soul-stuff that only the most gifted Eldar psykers in the galaxy could detect. The Spiritseers of Iyanden excelled above all others in matters beyond the veil, and their Farseer colleagues guided their journeys across the void with expert precision. In this way, the hive fleet's passage could be followed across the trackless wastes of deep space.

As the hunting-ritual reached completion, each of the Spiritseers cried out in shock. The splinter fleet that had been swallowed by the Warp storm had not been destroyed as they had hoped, nor trapped amongst immaterial doldrums, but instead vomited out of the lesion in realspace known as the Vortex of Despair. It was heading towards a world already infested by Tyranids – those of Hive Fleet Leviathan.

The newest of the hive fleets to have penetrated the galaxy, Leviathan had glutted itself on the biomass of hundreds of Imperial worlds before plunging into the Ork empire of Octarius. The Imperium of Man had bought itself time by evacuating or destroying those worlds in Leviathan's path and diverting the hive fleet into Orkoid space, but in the process, it had acceded its inability to halt the hive fleet's inexorable advance. The Eldar would shoulder this burden alone.

## WARRIORS OF LEGEND

*A Gemini squadron of Revenant Titans was amongst the vanguard of Craftworld Iyanden. The Glittering Scream, armed with twin sonic lances, and the Sound of Sunlight, sporting deadly accurate pulsars, took a heavy toll on the synapse creatures of Hive Fleet Kraken, their twin pilots grimly comparing death tolls with every new engagement.*



*Sonic Lance*



*Pulsar*

*At the climax of the Dûriel war effort, the two Revenants fought alongside a towering Phantom Titan, the Curse of Yriel. It was this giant of battle that slew the massed Tervigons commanding the horde from atop the Aitric Plateau.*

## A DEADLY CONVERGENCE

The assimilation of two major hive fleets could be disastrous, for the Tyranids' evolutionary process would run riot, producing ever-deadlier strains of warrior-construct with the biological bounty they reaped. Should the armies of Kraken and Leviathan be reclaimed by the same bio-ships, those Tyranids that had tasted the genius of Iyanden and those grown strong on the tough genetic stock of Orks would combine into a new breed of super-predator. Within the veiny wombs of the brood-ships, an array of physically mighty and fiercely intelligent beasts would be born; an unstoppable potent strain of Tyranids that would spread across the stars to overwhelm the resistance of Eldar, Man and Ork alike.

## THE DESCENT OF DÛRIEL

Deep in the galactic south, the world of Dûriel glowed golden in the firmament. A luminous world of tropical heat and balmy seasons, it orbited at the ideal distance from its sun for sentient colonisation. The planet had always had a favoured existence under the auspices of the Eldar, and not merely through chance, for that ancient race had long ago planetscaped whole worlds to their whims.

Iyanna Arienal believed that Silvereye's prophecy pointed to Dûriel's recent conquest by the Tyranid voidspawn. The planet's name meant 'lambent fire' in the Eldar tongue, and the Spiritseer claimed that the prophecy's references to a dying flame meant that lambent fire was about to be snuffed out.

The Seer Council was assembled and the runes of seeing were cast. As the Eldar scribed the paths of the future, they were appalled by Dûriel's fate. Since its days as a radiant gemstone in the crown of the Eldar empire, the runes implied that the once-glorious world had not only been conquered by Mankind but also brought to the brink of ruin by the Tyranids.

Ten thousand years ago, the planet of Dûriel had been scoured clean of Eldar by the psychic shock wave of their empire's self-destruction. All that was left were the cadavers of those whose souls had been taken by Slaanesh, soulless husks which eventually rotted and crumbled to dust.



*The Eldar were greatly unnerved by the fact that Dûriel's moon, Ulaniel, turned the colour of blood as they entered the system – the red moon has been a portent of disaster for the Eldar since the death of Eldanesh many millennia ago.*

However, the works of the Eldar are built to endure the passage of time. When the crude warships of the Imperium's settler fleets made planetfall, the Eldar's architecture, art, and landworks endured.

The Imperium slowly settled the abandoned world with its own people, and set about the systematic destruction of every single thing the Eldar had made. After a decade of hard labour and controlled detonations, the lands of the world were carpeted by ivory-hued dust punctuated by fist-sized chunks of psychoplastic and spars of wraithbone.

The Imperium rebuilt Dûriel with grinding predictability, covering the once-golden meadows with thick black ferrocrete and erecting cathedrals and hab-blocks in which the constant influx of settlers could live and worship their Emperor. Over the years, Dûriel was changed completely. Millennia of abuse saw the planet's forests wither away to twisted, petrified stumps. Its warm oceans dried up entirely as the populace coaxed more and more geothermic power from the planet's core. War, disease and strife raged back and forth across the planet as the Imperium beat its destiny into the world.

Yet the yoke of Mankind was a kind fate in comparison to the coming of the Tyranids. The warrior-swarms of Leviathan overcame the Imperial defences in a series of bloody victories that took less than a week. Then the feeding process began in earnest, but still the planet's woes were not over. Even as Leviathan rained billions of voracious feeder-organisms onto the planet's surface, the splinter fleet of Hive Fleet Kraken drifted towards Dûriel to join the feast.

'The voidspawn shall be cast  
into the Abyss,  
To a dying flame shall the hungry  
ones be drawn,  
There to meld with their kin,  
There to quicken the Great Change.'

- THE PROPHECY OF THE  
RED DEATH



*The Ascendant Echo shrine took to anointing themselves with alien ichor in the early stages of the Dûriel campaign, daubing the rune of the Howling Banshee on their bone-coloured armour in the hope of attracting the favour of Khaine.*



*Aluinthralann, Exarch of the Strangling Veil shrine, came to prominence during the battle for Iyanden, where he used his warp jump generator to leap vertically into the path of a Harpy. Locking his powerblades into the beast's carapace, he reduced the creature's head to a fine red mist before teleporting away once more.*



### THE MYSTIC'S EYE

*The ancient Farseer, Taec Silvereye, guided his craftworld's presence on Dûriel. Though he lost his right eye to a Genestealer's claw in the invasion of Iyanden, the elderly seer's 'third eye' – that which is said to see the unseeable – was second only to that of Eldrad Ulthran himself.*

### VOICES IN THE VOID

The runic divinations of Iyanden's Farseers implied that the splinter fleet had been cast out of its strange odyssey in the Warp – deliberately ejected, if the runes spoke true – and had poured forth from the Vortex of Despair to head straight for Dûriel. Even if Iyanden's armies risked the shattered tunnels of the webway en masse, the chances of them making planetfall in time to stop the Tyranid hive fleets merging were dangerously small. Only Craftworld Biel-Tan, gliding through the galactic south on its own unfinished business, had any hope of reaching the war zone before the hive fleets mingled.

Wasting no time, the Seer Council of Iyanden sent a psychic plea for the intervention of their cousins on Biel-Tan. Concerned that this was not their fight to win, Biel-Tan's war council were divided as to whether they should unleash the Swordwind, until Iyanna Arielan sent them a message consisting of single word she knew would resonate within their warrior hearts – extermination.

### THE SWORDWIND STRIKES

Within the space of a few hours, Craftworld Biel-Tan was drifting purposefully towards Dûriel. To make their final approach directly through realspace, and hence stray into the path of

the converging hive fleets, would be pure folly – Biel-Tan would likely suffer the same fate as Iyanden. Instead, the Swordwind's warhosts made careful use of the webway's widest passageways to complete the journey to the Tyranid-infested planet.

A steady stream of sleek grav-tanks and swooping flyer squadrons flashed out of the ancient webway portals that glittered atop Dûriel's highest mountains. The Tyranids in the valleys below were entirely unaware of the skimmers taking position in the spore-choked clouds above. The component parts of the Swordwind carefully maintained arrowhead formations at the heart of each cloudbank, and elite wings of Crimson Hunters swooped past the Falcons and Wave Serpents as they took up prearranged positions. Before the sun had set, an invisible army of Eldar had gathered in the skies. By the next morning, they had spread out across the planet, located the Tyranids of the Kraken swarms that were to be their prey, and reconvened above them, all without leaving the cover of the clouds. By the time the sun rose, the Eldar were in position to strike from a muster point high above the mountain known as the Godpeak. Beneath them, a crimson sea of Tyranid chitin stretched across the valley and beyond. A great swathe of Tyranids from the Kraken splinter fleet swept across the plains, bounding towards the distant swarms of Hive Fleet Leviathan with the intent of harvesting as much biomass as possible – rival Tyranids included.

### THE FORMS OF THE BEAST

*When Tyranids invade a world, the creatures the hive ships release upon it range from trillion-strong clouds of spores to looming giants the size of hab-blocks.*



The eater-beasts of Leviathan were oblivious to the approach of Kraken's armies. They were preoccupied with devouring the biomass of Dûriel's twisted forests and, once their gullets were full, hurling themselves into the steaming pools of acid that dotted the planet's ravaged landscape. Though they knew it not, the swarms were about to combine.

Should the Tyranids of the Kraken splinter fleet join the feast, and should their biomass be merged together in the acidic digestion pools, all the bio-ships would have to do to reap the bounty of both was absorb the bubbling, acidic gruel from the capillary towers sprouting from each pool. There was no time to waste – in order to keep the two Tyranid swarms separate, the armies of the Eldar had to strike as hard and as fast as they could.



Out of the skies came the Swordwind, waves of grav-craft bursting from the clouds as pulsars and scatter lasers spat bolts of white-hot death into the massed Tyranids below. The shuriken catapults and cannons of Biel-Tan's Guardian battlehosts raked great furrows across the vanguard of the splinter fleet swarm, clawing up Tyranids and cracked earth alike. The fury of the sudden assault forced the Tyranids to seek cover amongst the twisted vegetation. As the beasts milled in confusion, squads of brightly-coloured Aspect Warriors debarked onto the plateaus that dotted the Valley of the Gods, assessing their prey before falling upon the xenos below.

Autarch Aloec Sunspear of Biel-Tan had long studied the Tyranids, and he knew well that the swarm's cohesion could be broken by the destruction of a few choice targets. As Sunspear calmly relayed his commands, Dark Reapers strode to the cliff-like edges of the Godpeak mesas. Their missile salvos detonated amongst the Tyranid Warriors that were marshalling the swarm below, sending chitinous limbs and broken boneswords in all directions. Heavy weapons flickering, squadrons

of War Walkers picked off bulbous Zoanthrope broods whose psychic shields overloaded under the relentless energy beams. Fire Dragons levelled tight volleys of fusion gun fire at the bulky Tervignons hunkering down in the rocks, the searing agony of each kill sending out psychic shockwaves that saw Termagant broods surrounding their progenitors drop writhing to the ground. Sunspear himself led an honour guard of Exarchs against the snake-bodied terrors that were attempting to cut off their retreat. Through the orchestrated slaughter strode the Avatar of Khaine, the boundless battlelust of Biel-Tan made real. Tyranid leader-beasts died by the dozen at his hand, for his blood was fire, and he carried death in his grasp.

As the dusk turned to darkness, Autarch Sunspear's plan came to fruition. Without the guidance of their synapse creatures, the Kraken swarms found themselves directionless and confused, milling around like a dammed river swirling back on itself. The Tyranids of Hive Fleet Kraken had been kept separate from those of Leviathan, and the immediate danger averted – for a time.



*To the horror of the Farseers that met them in battle, the Zoanthropes the Eldar came to know as the Mindthieves bore not only a numbing aura of despair but also the psychic echoes of Iyanden's Eldar, who had been amongst the biomass absorbed from their craftworld.*

## THE PHOENIX HOST OF IYANDEN

*Craftworld Iyanden's armed might was much depleted after their first disastrous encounter with Hive Fleet Kraken in 992.M41. The craftworld's population had been reduced to a fraction of its former glory. Nevertheless, once the previous incarnation of the Kraken swarm had been defeated, almost all of the spirit stones belonging to the fallen had been recovered intact. As the craftworld's much-depleted warhost journeyed through the webway to rendezvous with their Biel-Tan allies in the Valedor System, Iyanden's Bonesingers made a prodigious effort to grow rank after rank of ghost warrior shells in the once-empty holds of their Falcon and Wave Serpent grav-craft. On the final approach to Dûriel, the spirit stones of the lost were interred in the still-warm wraithbone shells and the rituals of summoning performed. An entire generation of warriors were reborn like phoenixes from the brink of oblivion, their spirits hungry for revenge.*



## THE LEVIATHAN AWAKES

The Hive Mind that controls the Tyranid race has a cold and deadly intelligence, and it cannot be denied for long. After the initial surprise of the invasion, the brood-beasts of the Kraken splinter fleet had scurried into a hundred hiding places, scattering in all directions to evade the deadly hunters that had cut swathes through their ranks. The Eldar began the systematic destruction of those warrior-beasts they could find. Striking Scorpions spattered the scree with alien ichor whilst Swooping Hawks and Warp Spiders flitted from boulder to spire, methodically slaughtering the lesser Tyranids with lasblaster volleys and monofilament webs.

Yet the Tyranids of Hive Fleet Kraken were not alone upon the dying world of Dûriel. What had first appeared to be storm clouds massing in the distance soon proved to be something far more deadly. Urgent reports from the Vyper outriders of the warhost detailed an airborne swarm of staggering proportions that was inbound upon the warhost's position. The sleeping giant that was Hive Fleet Leviathan had been awoken.

The horizon buzzed with activity as swarms beyond counting swept across the plains. Thousands of leather-winged Gargoyles flocked towards the flat highlands from which the Aspect Warriors had launched their assault, and though the arrowhead attack runs of the Cloudstrike Squadrons above sent a great many blazing to the plains below, they could not stop them all. The chitinous mass broke over the Eldar position like a living hurricane. Thin screams filled the air as the Eldar were quickly overwhelmed by the sheer number of foes. Squad after squad of Aspect Warriors broke and fell back to the waiting grav-craft hovering at the lip of each mesa. Their pursuers pressed the assault, ravaging swarms of fleshborer beetles filling the skies with vile chitinous bodies as the Eldar reached the apparent safety of their Wave Serpent and Falcon transports. Shimmering clouds of the Tyranids' living ammunition boarded the transports along with them. The grav-tanks sped off into the night, unaware that in the act of sealing their hatches, they had also sealed the fate of those in their holds; now little more than abattoirs filled with Tyranid eater-beasts and Eldar bones.

*The ghost warriors that made up much of Iyanden's warhost included massed formations of Wraithguard and Wraithblades, over a dozen looming Wraithknights, and a gigantic Phantom Titan that strode the battlefield like a vengeful god.*



## THE LIVING STORM

On the plateaus below, the heavier elements of the Eldar warhost were fighting for their lives against the throng of winged Tyranids that had descended upon them. Harridans the size of small spacecraft burst through the swarm on gigantic wings, snatching up agile War Walkers and dashing the delicate Eldar machines to pieces against the sheer face of the Godpeak. Hive Tyrants and Harpies borne on clawed pinions screamed death into those winged Eldar brave enough to weather the spore-clouds that choked the skies. Hive Crones carved great gouges into the wraithbone of those Eldar Titans that moved to intercept the swarm, whilst below them, the Avatar's fierce red glow was hidden from sight by the volume of weapon-beasts piling atop it.

Autarch Sunspear had no option but to send a command-pulse of withdrawal to what remained of his warhost. His worst fears had closed around him like talons around a throat – the entire planet was infested. The Swordwind's only real hope of achieving a swift victory had been to attack with overwhelming force, slaughter the splinter fleet, and escape before the swarms of Leviathan could bring their impossible might to bear. In this, the Eldar had failed. Though a great many of the Kraken splinter fleet had been slaughtered, the deadly threat it represented remained at large. As ferocious as the Swordwind was, the invading swarms were just too numerous to overcome without outside aid.

The price of that aid would prove costly indeed.

*Directly before the invasion of Ector, the world's Planetary Governor ordered the withdrawal of every man, woman and child into the nearest hives. Each of the twenty hives had but a single Space Marine from the Crimson Castellans Chapter seconded to it. Their presence saved hundreds of thousands of lives. The Tyranids initially invaded from the polar caps, gleaned information about the planet's population from its ice stations. Thousands of warrior-beasts began to swarm across the plains around each of Ector's hives. They were met with disciplined fire solutions from on high. Over a million Tyranids were killed without significant loss. Meanwhile, a single space lane was cleared on the far side of Ector, towards Valedor, allowing the Crimson Castellans to evacuate a great portion of the population.*

*The next wave of invaders evinced a daunting evolution – without exception, these Tyranids had wings. The larger beasts fell upon the hive's artillery from above, its Crones ripping open the thinnest parts of the outer exostructure to allow great swarms of Gargoyles to flood its corridors. There were persistent rumours of mysterious xenos warriors that shone like crystal fighting alongside the hive gangers, led by one who introduced himself as the Hand. It was none other than Asurmen, fighting to slow the Hive Fleet's advance. Despite his intervention, the mountainous cities fell to the winged Tyranid invaders one after another. In the end, only the intervention of the dispossessed Eldar Exodite Isarion allowed Asurmen to escape an untimely death and reach Dúriel in safety.*



*With the ghostglaive Gift of Alethreak, the Wraithlord Rahinet of the Bitter Sunrise single-handedly drove back the slithering Ravens and Trygons that breached the sanctity of the webway atop Mount Deus.*



*Rahinet's wraithbone shell is decorated with the images of the serpentine beasts she slew.*



## DESPERATE TIMES

The Farseers of Biel-Tan, casting their runes in their craftworld's Dome of Crystal Seers, had long suspected that the Swordwind's pre-emptive strike would not be enough to destroy the splinter fleet altogether. There were simply too many of the creatures. Though one swarm might be destroyed by the blades of the Swordwind, all it would take was a rain of reinforcements from the bio-ships and the threat would begin anew. To attack the Tyranid forces conventionally was as futile as trying to save a harvest from a locust swarm by killing individual its insects.

The Farseers greeted the returning Autarchs of the Swordwind with grim expressions and bowed heads. There were no debates this time, no ritual observances or titles; simply a declaration that chilled all who heard it. Craftworld Iyanden was inbound, but it was still too far away to help, and even should its warhost successfully negotiate the webway, conventional measures would not be enough. Even scouring the planet clean with a firestorm, a ploy much beloved by the dull-witted human strategists of the Imperium, was not guaranteed to kill those Tyranids that could burrow under Dûriel's surface and use its skin as a shield.

As tragic as it was, the only certain way to prevent the hive fleets uniting was to physically destroy the planet from the inside out and, in the process, exterminate every living thing upon it. This act would have been of little challenge to the Eldar empire of old, but for the craftworlders, it was a different matter – the power of those glory days is remembered in legend and little else. Biel-Tan could still depopulate a world over time, but it had long since lost the ability to destroy a planet.

Amongst the Farseers meditating in the Dome of Crystal Seers, the runes of Iyanden and Biel-Tan were orbiting the runes of dying hope and imminent catastrophe. However, the runic symbol for *Llith'antu Khlavh*, loosely translatable as 'the knife that stays the blade', was cycling the rune for dawn. It was a jagged and unpleasant symbol, long associated with the craftworlders' sinister cousins, the Dark Eldar. Yet it implied that aid could be sought from the unholy cities of the webway and still arrive in time to stop Dûriel's fateful assimilation.

Autarch Sunspear was the only member of the Biel-Tan war council to have visited Commorragh and survived. He still recalled a pathway to that surreal and twisted realm, though many of its portals were metaphysical in nature and had likely shifted over the centuries.

Summoning his peers once more, Sunspear told the war council of Biel-Tan that there was no way a delegation of the Swordwind could approach Commorragh without being delayed or even hunted unto death. Even if they were successful in their journey, they might not return in time to stop the Tyranid bio-harvest, for the Dark Eldar were unlikely to reveal their secret paths through the webway to outsiders. Yet there was still a slender path into the future that held hope.

## STRANGE AMBASSADORS

Slowly and with great dignity, Sunspear made his way across Biel-Tan to the Great Ampitheatre and took down a delicate mask of porcelain – half-laughing, half-weeping – from the apex of its archway. As soon as Sunspear had made his way onto the crescent-shaped stage, the mask tumbled from the Autarch's fingers and shattered into a hundred shards on the platform below.

To the war council's growing fascination, each of the shards threw up a glittering pillar of light that coalesced into an Eldar warrior-dancer. Sunspear knelt before the shimmering figures, relaying Iyanden's dilemma and covering Biel-Tan's recent battle in an archaic form of Eldar language unheard upon the craftworld for centuries. Aid must be given, he said, and swiftly – lest the galaxy face a threat magnified to unstoppable levels.

The Harlequin imagos said not a word, though the regal figure at the heart of their great troupe bowed elaborately. In a flash of multicoloured diamonds, the warrior-dancer images shattered apart and vanished back into the shards scattered before the kneeling Autarch.

Sunspear rose back to his feet and stated flatly to the astonished onlookers that the craftworld would prepare for war once more – they were returning to Dûriel, this time with not one, but two allied armies at their side.



## A DEAL IN THE DARKNESS

What infernal bargain was struck on Biel-Tan's behalf in the dark reaches of the webway remained shrouded. Yet Sunspear's ploy to use the Harlequins as ambassadors to the Dark City proved extremely effective. Within the space of a single day, the warfleet of Biel-Tan, taking up position around the webway portal to Dûriel, was shadowed by the blade-like attack craft of the Dark Eldar. Contact had been made between the craftworlders and their Commorrite cousins, snide and caustic at first, but businesslike enough when the matter of Dûriel's fate came to hand.

As tense hours slid past, a rapport was established between Sunspear and the leader of the Dark Eldar warfleet – the wizened Lord Sarnak, whose permanent grin was unsettling in the extreme. The Archon claimed to be working under the authority of Asdrubael Vect himself, a fact that was backed up by the many warships in his fleet. Along with a key element of the Kabal of the Black Heart, Sarnak had brought fully half of the infamous Wych Cult of Strife. It was a formidable boost to Biel-Tan's chances of victory.

Yet the real prize of the Harlequins' bargain with the Commorrites was far more exotic. Vect's Kabalites possessed the power which Biel-Tan sought – a device that could utterly destroy a planet.

This most potent of weapons took the form of a psychically activated doomsday engine. The Fireheart, it was called; a complex nodal resonator capable of causing a planet's molten core to enter violent death throes and send lakes of lava bubbling to the surface. Despite its potency, it was of little use to the Dark Eldar, for they had outlawed the use of psyche-based weaponry long ago, on the grounds that it attracted the attention of their nemesis, Slaanesh. Yet the Fireheart was of great value to the craftworlders.

With sadistic relish, Lord Sarnak informed the Eldar high council that, unfortunately, the Fireheart device could not be used remotely. A ritual circle of seers would have to activate it planetside and remain there to ensure the correct psychic rites were observed in order to fully destabilise Dûriel's core. The craftworlders had no choice but to comply.



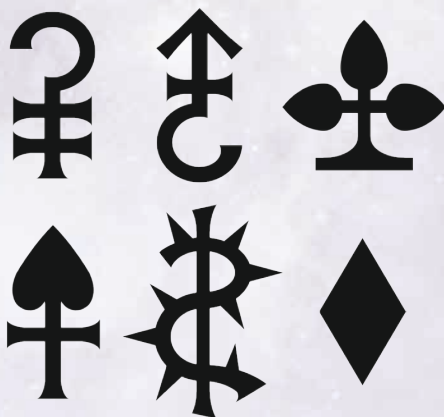
## THE ELDRITCH RAIDERS

*The original followers of Prince Yriel, known after his exile as the Eldritch Raiders, fought alongside him during the invasion of Iyanden and the battles upon Dûriel alike. It was Prince Yriel that dealt the death blow to the Trygon ravaging the peaks of Dûriel in the climactic battle.*

## A DESPERATE ALLIANCE

*The Great Troupe that visited Biel-Tan the night before the Dûriel planetfall had an unusual amount of Death Jesters in its number. Their shrieker bio-shuriken fire tore the heart out of the Tyranid Warrior broods that directed the swarms' centre mass.*

*Each of the warbands of warrior-dancers that formed the Great Troupe wore a different symbol upon their dathedi holo-suits and exotic wargear, but as to the true meaning of the icons, even the Eldar of the craftworlds remained ignorant.*



*The Commorrite Eldar that fought alongside the warhost of Biel-Tan took a perverse delight in adorning their armour with the colours of Iyanden. They mockingly maintained that they wore the colours in support of the beleaguered craftworld's plight, though their constant references to necromancy and their own reincarnation processes left a stain upon the craftworld's honour that Iyanden's leaders will never forget.*



## THE AVATAR OF IYANDEN

*Long before the Eldar of Craftworld Iyanden made planetfall upon Dûriel, their Avatar raged in the heart of their craftworld, impatient to take revenge upon the swarms of Hive Fleet Kraken.*

The craftworld's seers would have to ride out the planet's extermination as it unfolded around them, their unavoidable death the price of Dûriel's certain destruction. Of course, there was no way they could complete the Fireheart's activation without a full-scale military invasion to buy them time.

The Archon giggled manically as he leered close to the holographic device linking him to Sunspear and his kin, drinking in the dismay of his craftworlder cousins as a torturer revels in the breaking of his prey. The price of Dûriel's destruction would be great indeed, costing the lives of the craftworld's greatest psykers.

Still, the course of the future was set. The Swordwind had been gathered, and the fate of Dûriel was set in motion. All that remained was to wage war – or so the Autarchs thought.

Down on the planet's surface, there was a twist in Dûriel's fate that even the Farseers had not foreseen. Hidden in the Valley of the Gods, a webway portal – the most secret of gateways – had been breached.

## WAR IN THE WEBWAY

In their haste to retreat from Dûriel and formulate a new attack strategy, the armies of Biel-Tan had failed to properly seal the blazing portals to the webway that sat atop the highest of the planet's mountains.

The Eldar warhost had fought with the fury of Khaine to keep the swarms apart. The skies had been cleared above the valleys and poisonous ichor had spattered down like rain. In their pride, the craftworld's armies believed that they had bought themselves time enough to regroup. To the dismay of the war council, however, there remained a leader-beast upon Dûriel powerful and prescient enough to direct the disparate Kraken swarms toward the now-defenceless mountaintop portals.

After the Biel-Tan warhost had withdrawn, the Tyranid swarms, driven by the psychic imperatives of the Swarmlord, penetrated the shimmering gateway in the Valley of the Gods. They leapt and scuttled in their hundreds through the portal to the labyrinth dimension. Even the rapid intervention of the Wych Cult of Strife, its Raider grav-craft scrambling to reach the



*The Carnifexes that smashed their way into the Eldar webway proved all but impervious to even the scatter laser fire of the War Walkers that moved to intercept them. Only the intervention of Iyanden's Wraithknights prevented them from destroying a spar of the webway.*

swarm in an attempt to halt the intrusion, was not enough to stem the tide of alien bodies. Despite the blades of the Wyches and the vicious volleys of darklight and splinter rifle fire levelled at the Tyranid horde, the Dark Eldar warhost could not hold them back indefinitely. A great cry of anguish rang out through the webway's tunnels as the Eldar realised that their sacred realm had been infested.

Whilst Biel-Tan's Farseers held a psychic council of war in preparation for a second strike, the armies of Craftworld Iyanden were deployed deep in the reaches of the webway, making all haste for the front line in the Valedor System. As they opened the last few portals between them and their destination, they were met head-on by a ravaging swarm of Tyranids.

The massed Eldar of Iyanden immediately fell back in controlled retreat, unable to fight their way through the wall of crimson-carapaced bodies flowing towards them. It was then that Taec Silvereye ordered the advance of the ghost warriors. Impervious to the claws and talons of Kraken's beasts, the statuesque constructs of the Iyanden

warhost formed a wall of wraithbone that plugged the tunnels one by one around the Godpeak's webway gate. Roaring Carnifexes that had bullied their way into the webway's tunnels smashed the Wraithguard apart before being destroyed in their turn by the Wraithknights that stooped through the glowing tunnels.

Yet it was the emergence of the heroes of Eldar legend that saw the tide turn. Led by Iyanden's own Avatar and bolstered by the High Council of Iyanden, all six of the fabled Phoenix Lords vaulted and sprang from spar to shattered spar. Every slicing shuriken and pinpoint thrust took a Tyranid life. Maugan Ra mowed down scores of gaunts with his great battle-scythe, the Maugetar. Jain Zar duelled deftly with a pair of Hive Tyrants, and Baharroth blinded Carnifexes one after another, allowing Fuegan to incinerate the beasts with his burning lance.

Slowly, inevitably, the invading Tyranids were pushed back. The grand warhost of Iyanden trampled their bodies to emerge triumphant onto Dûriel's peaks. The final battle was just beginning.



### THE CULT OF STRIFE

*The massed Wyches that scrambled to defend the webway vaulted through the scuttling broods of Termagants in its tunnels to form a barrier of blades, slashing open the gravid bellies of Tervignons as they passed in order to whittle down the swarm. Only in after-action reports did the craftworlders ascertain the true motives of the Wyches that bolstered their ranks.*

## THE WAILING DOOM

*The ritual weapon of the Avatar of Khaine is the Suin Daellae, an artefact heavy with the weight of slaughter. It crackles with raw murderlust, screaming for mortal blood.*



## THE MOLTEN HEART

*The Fireheart's psychic pulse resonated all the way to Dûriël's core, inflaming it to such an extent that magma boiled to the surface across the entire planet.*



## THE FIREHEART AWOKEN

When the Eldar of Biel-Tan returned to Dûriël, a pang of pure sorrow flared in their hearts. The planet bore as much resemblance to its former beauty as a flayed skull did to the face of a lovely maiden. It had been systematically stripped bare of all life – all life, that is, save for the Tyranid invaders themselves.

Bubbling, tentacle-fringed digestion pools scarred the surface like open sores, and massed spore-beasts belched alien foulness into the air. Eater-swarms from both hive fleets roamed the valleys, seizing the last scraps of biomass from the planet's crust before plunging bodily into the digestion pools. Left to their own devices, the larger warrior-beasts of the hive fleets fought amongst themselves, slaves to their baser instincts now that Dûriël's conquest was complete. In the middle distance, a thin forest of swaying mouth-parts quested for earthbound capillary towers, their ribbed lengths vanishing into the heavens. From afar, they looked like the tentacles of some celestial sea monster hunting for prey.

Autarch Sunspear knew that the bio-ship tendrils were beyond his reach. Each mouth-part was wide enough to accommodate a grav-tank in its serpentine gullet, and the swarms that surrounded them would fight like crazed beasts in their defence. The Eldar had hours, at best, to stop the red-tinged digestion pools that dotted the valleys from being drained by the probing tendrils high above. The absorption process had begun.

## THE SPEAR OF KHAINE

As Autarch Sunspear surveyed the dismal landscape of what had once been Dûriël, the disembodied voices of his roaming Vyper pilots whispered in his ear. A highly unusual point of conflict had been located, several leagues to the north – the outriders had found a trail of Tyranid corpses that led to a seething mound of purple chitin. The Vyper pilots requested Sunspear's advice on how to proceed. Wasting no time, the Autarch requisitioned a nearby Falcon and took to the spore-choked skies.

As Sunspear's sleek grav-tank led a formation of Eldar skimmers over the hellish landscape, he dimly perceived a burning red glow at the heart of the mound of Tyranid dead to the north.

Sunspear gave a shout of elation. He could clearly make out the raging Avatar of Biel-Tan amongst the horde, oozing molten metal from a dozen wounds, but still fighting with the fury of Khaine himself. The mighty *Suin Daellae*, known as the Wailing Doom, burst from the chest of a rearing Mawloc even as his bloody hand crushed the head of a Tyranid Warrior with a wet pop. Here was the supremacy of the Eldar writ large; here was where they would make their stand.

At Sunspear's command, the armies of Biel-Tan hurtled down from the Godpeak towards the Avatar of their warrior god. Debarking atop the mound of alien corpses, the great host of Aspect Warriors raised their voices in a fierce war shout and prepared to buy their seers the time they needed to activate the Fireheart. The Farseers, hurrying from the cavernous holds of the Naiad-class cruiser *Vaul's Caress*, bade their escort carry the Fireheart to the thinnest part of Dûriël's crust. Scant minutes later, the nodal core of the ancient device began to pulse a deep red. Subsonics thrummed through the parched earth under their feet.

The seers were not the only warriors to emerge from the *Caress*. Unfolding themselves from the largest cargo bays were giants born only for war. A Phantom Titan reared up to its full height, its noble head reaching the spore-clouds as its ancestral colours shimmered under protective holo-fields. At its flanks strode a pair of Revenant Titans, twin engines of destruction. The trio of war machines moved with a fluidity that belied their size, striding into formation with the practiced ease of the Aspect Warriors below. Zooming past the shoulders of the magnificent Titans came bladed Dark Eldar grav-craft and flocks of murderous Scourges, appearing to the craftworlders much like black-winged vultures whirling in search of their next meal. In their wake came a host of brightly-patterned Venoms, their fluttering pennants proclaiming the glory of the Laughing God.

Atop the Godpeak, the webway portal burned bright as unit after unit of Eldar took up formation, weapons ready and eyes blazing with the need for vengeance. No matter the cost, the Fireheart would be activated, and Dûriël would suffer a fiery and violent end.

## THE FINAL BATTLE

The precision and speed of the Eldar attack was a military work of art. It took several minutes before the alien hordes became truly aware of the scale of the threat assailing them. Yet as knowledge of the Eldar's presence flowed through the synapse creatures of the swarm, the sea of Tyranids recoiled and bunched up, readying for an assault of unprecedented size. With the fury of a predator that had been cheated of its prey, the swarm screeched as one and plunged towards the Eldar massing in the Godpeak valley.

Hive Fleet Leviathan's attack was terrifying in its intensity. Lumbering packs of Carnifexes bulldozed their way across the corpse-fields, charging headlong into a storm of shuriken catapult fire to crash straight through the Aspect Warriors that moved to stop them and then into the ranks of the Eldar Guardians behind. In their wake came massive Tyrannofex gun-beasts, their symbiote-weapons hurling vile salvos into the air as the Dark Eldar carved through the skies above. Harlequins wove a deadly dance with a horde of Genestealers that lapped around the Eldar flank, the ground below the combatants saturated with blood.

To the south, a trio of Hive Tyrants marched with deadly intent towards the Eldar warhost, the living shields of their escorts protecting them from the worst punishment meted out by close-knit Shining Spear squadrons that zoomed as fast as the eye could follow. On the slopes, gladiatorial teams of Wyches eviscerated squat-bodied broodbeasts and

Succubi matched their peerless agility against the sheer ferocity of the serpentine Ravens that burst from the ground under their feet. To the east, the ground trembled as a gigantic Hierophant stalked from the forest of capillary towers, stabbing its way towards the Eldar army's position with menace in every step. The Phantom Titan that had debarked from the *Caress*, and its Revenant escort, leapt from the rear echelons to engage the beast with pulsar and sonic lance, each shot boring a hole straight through the monstrosity. In answer, the bio-titan roared and fired a volley of burning biological gunk, coating one of the Revenants from head to foot and boiling away its systems until it toppled backwards into the dirt.

## REVENGE OF THE LOST

The battle raged on; a stalemate at first, though the corpse count rose high on both sides. As yet more Tyranids joined the fray, the odds were stacked further against the Swordwind and its allies. To Sunspear's mounting unease, broods from both Leviathan and Kraken were boiling out of the foothills of the Godpeak and falling upon the Guardian warhost that sought to protect the Farseer council as they awakened the Fireheart device. The attack was as sudden as it was unexpected, for the devious tendrils of the Kraken splinter fleet had waited for a gap to emerge in the Eldar battle line and then darted forth with all the fury they could muster. There was simply no time to reinforce the Guardian host; every one of the Eldar and their allies were fighting



## CAPILLARY TUBES

*The ribbed tubes of matter that dangle down from the bio-ships in the last stage of a Tyranid invasion latch on to the bubbling digestion pools on the planet's surface and draw their sickening bio-gruel all the way up to the alien fleet above.*



## DIGESTION POOLS

*Digestion pools act a little like a planet-wide series of external stomachs, breaking down the biomass of Tyranid and prey-creature alike. Their contents were all that remained of Dûriel's populace, the human bio-matter mingled with those of their Tyranid persecutors and the genetic secrets of Orks and Eldar from previous planetary conquests.*

at close quarters against Tyranids of every conceivable kind. The situation was dire indeed, for if the Fireheart was disrupted, then all would be for naught.

Though the Guardian warhost was holding back the vanguard of the swarm with focused shuriken fire, it had little hope of stopping the leader-beast that coordinated the assault. The giant Hive Tyrant stormed headlong into the Eldar ranks, its four glimmering boneswords carving apart any brave enough to bar its path. Nerves aflame, the Farseers beneath its gaze began to falter in their psychic activation ritual. Only the strident voice of Taec Silvereye kept their focus intact.

Just as the Hive Tyrant loomed too close to stop, swirling holes in the fabric of reality opened like irises within its body, ripping the creature apart in explosions of ichor. The ghost warriors of Iyanden stalked from the Godpeak webway portal towards the beleaguered Swordwind, their wraithcannons ripping apart the largest Tyranids whilst the distortion scythes of speeding Hemlock Wraithfighters snuffed out the lesser gunbeasts by the score. Wraithlords strode confidently into the Tyranid Warriors that were coordinating the assault on the valley, slashing their ghostglaves left and right. The elegant Wraithknights in their wake sniped the remaining synapse creatures with controlled blasts from suncannons and heavy wraithcannons. Screeching Gargoyles flapped and clawed at the ghost-constructs, but to no avail. Their statuesque physiques were so indomitable, and their senses so far removed from the mortal plane, that the Tyranids proved little more hindrance than a cloud of moths to a hunter.

The arrival of Iyanden's warhost had bought the Farseers time to complete the Fireheart's activation. As the psychically charged nodes of the device glowed a fierce red, the surface of the planet trembled and began to split open. Superheated steam vented from a thousand fissures as columns of lava soared skyward, and Dûriel screamed in protest.

The battle in the valley, already on the brink of madness, boiled over into pure mayhem as the ground shattered into shifting, cracking plates. Massed broods of Tyranids were tipped into the red-hot molten rock that rose unstopably

underfoot. The hisses of their demise sounded like rain on a hot steel plate as the fires of Dûriel consumed them whole.

## THE GODPEAK SPEAKS

The air had filled with smoke and screams, yet instead of panicked withdrawal, the Tyranid broods redoubled their assault. Those Eldar still planetside were forced to fight with every ounce of fury they could muster, invoking Khaine to give them strength and springing across the gaps that opened wide in the planet's crust. Not all were successful. Whole chunks of the surface were breaking up and dissolving in the rising lava that gushed from each new wound, pitching Aspect Warriors and Tyranids alike into the cleansing fires. The Godpeak itself shook mightily before its cap burst open in a titanic triple pillar of white-hot lava, an immense pyroclastic cloud billowing out in all directions to consume the warriors on its flanks.

The craftworlders' Dark Eldar allies hurtled through the skies as the Fireheart device worked its ancient magicks below, pausing in their escape only to subdue the larger Tyranid beasts in a storm of blades and herd their recumbent forms into the runic hexcages that hung from their Raider transports. Cries of despair floated up from the lava as hundreds of embattled Eldar were dissolved in the planet's lifeblood, a macabre mockery of the Tyranid digestion cycle that had been broken open by this forced catastrophe.

All around was confusion and terror. Even the bio-ships in orbit above seemed to know that destruction was at hand, for the ribbed capillary tubes were writhing fast, sucking up their gruesome harvest with desperate vigour. Autarch Sunspear cried out in dismay as he watched Hive Fleet Leviathan's probing tubes latch onto the digestion pools filled with Hive Fleet Kraken's ruddy biomass. The capillary towers began to funnel the acidic gruel to the bio-ships with great peristaltic pulses.

The Eldar had failed at the last hurdle – the tentacled monstrosities of the hive fleets needed only a small sample of the mingled biomass to birth a new race of supernaturally advanced bio-constructs. Despite the Eldar's best efforts to stop them, the Tyranids had snatched their prize from the fires of defeat.



## THE TWISTED STRIKE

Just as Sunspear's heart felt like it was about to turn to cold stone, the roaring thunderclap of supersonic aircraft boomed overhead. The Autarch could just make out the jagged, sickle-winged shapes of Razorwing fighter squadrons hurtling through the skies overhead, the edges of their wings limned with the flicker of monomolecular fields. His eyes widened as the Razorwings darted at incredible speed through the storms of magma and shot towards the capillary towers that were draining the planet dry. Rather than avoiding the great muscled tubes, the jetfighters used their aircraft to carve through the capillary towers one by one, placing their wing-blades with such expert precision that the liquid feast being sucked into the bio-ships spurted out like blood from severed arteries. The variegated tubes of the capillary towers toppled downwards, their precious liquid cargo gushing in all directions from the severed stumps. Sunspear laughed with disbelief and astonishment. The bio-ships of Hive Fleet Leviathan had been cheated of their ugly feast after all, and with Dûriel falling apart beneath them, they had no hope of reclaiming it.

## THE RED DEATH OF DÛRIEL

His mission complete, Autarch Sunspear withdrew his forces as best he could. As the thorn-patterned grav-craft of the Swordwind hurtled skyward towards *Vaul's Caress*, news of the wider battle reached him. Craftworld Iyanden's contribution to the battle for Dûriel had not been confined to the battle planetside. Prince Yriel, the Grand Admiral of Iyanden's fleet, had coordinated his twin armada of spacecraft on a seemingly suicidal attack run against the splinter fleet of Hive Fleet Kraken. After his victories at Iyanden, he knew well how to slay the Tyranid monstrosities and instructed his commanders accordingly.

Though it cost him the better part of his fleet, Yriel's Eldritch Raiders and the Iyanden armada ensured the destruction of each and every one of Kraken's bio-ships before escaping as Leviathan began to close in. In their death throes, the splinter fleet's bio-ships expelled yet more organisms towards Dûriel's surface, but their deadly cargos died in a sea of lava as soon as they reached the shattered crust. The splinter fleet had been slain.

The doomed planet of Dûriel had been led to ruin by the Imperium and brought to the edge of destruction by the hive fleets that followed it. Yet it had been the sons of Khaine who had pushed it over the edge. The last of the Eldar left upon the ill-fated world were the Farseers of Biel-Tan, still channelling their psychic power into the Fireheart whilst the air itself ignited, incinerating everything upon its surface. As the Eldar fleet fled into the safety of anonymous space, they left behind them a burning world akin to a miniature sun – a lambent flame, fanned briefly into a raging inferno before being extinguished forever.

Meditating in his chambers on the *Vaul's Caress*, Autarch Sunspear prayed to the Eldar gods of old that Dûriel's fate was not a metaphor for that of the entire Eldar race.

No one answered.

## THE EBON STING

Deep in the bowels of Commorrhagh, the Succubus Lelith Hesperax presented her newest prize to the Haemonculi of the Ebon Sting coven. Her Wyches brought forth six great hexcages full of spitting, hissing Tyranid warrior-organisms; three sets with crimson carapaces and the other three armoured in the deep purple of a livid bruise.

After lengthy examination, the Haemonculi assured her that the beasts could indeed be fused into a single strain, and that the coven's breeding vats were up to the task. The resultant menagerie of weapon-beasts would be the talk of Commorrhagh's gladiatorial arenas for some time to come.

The regally-dressed Harlequin at Hesperax's side chuckled quietly, blowing a theatrical kiss towards the Succubus before bowing deeply and vanishing into the shadows. Preparations had to be made; after all, the Great Game never stopped for long.



## THE JADE SCIMITARS

*The trio of Razorwing Jetfighters known as the Jade Scimitars played a pivotal role in the war effort; each of the fiercely competitive pilots was determined to outdo his fellows in the destruction of the thirsting capillary towers that dotted the landscape.*



### ATTACK OF THE SKYSWARM

*As the Carnival of Pain hovers across the lava streams, they are intercepted by a Leviathan Sky Swarm. Tyranid monster fights Dark Eldar flesh-fiend whilst Dûriel wrecks its vengeance with boiling magma.*

# THE FIREHEART AWAKENS, DÛRIEL, 999.M41



*A Tervigon Broodnode spawns an endless tide of Termagants to bolster the chattering swarms. Nearby, a Tyrannofex Gunbeast Brood fires its monstrous bio-weapons at the Wraithknights stalking to intercept them, a gigantic Harridan moving up in support.*

*The very surface of Dûriel breaks apart as the Fireheart's immense power is channelled into the planet's molten heart. Tectonic plates splinter and boil away, and gouts of blazing fire are hurled high into the air. On shifting islands and across boiling lava streams, swarming Tyranids fight tooth and nail to kill the Eldar allies determined to deny them their prize in the most final way imaginable. The fate of Dûriel – and a hundred worlds besides – hangs in the balance...*



*A tendril of Hive Fleet Kraken prepares to hurl itself across a fiery chasm, hoping to exploit the opening made by the tunnelling Tyranids that have burrowed their way towards the Fireheart.*

## MONSTERS AND MAYHEM

*Hive Fleet Leviathan matches its bio-cannons against the firepower of massed Fire Dragon and Dark Reaper Aspect Warriors. Though they take a heavy toll, the Tyranids prove an unstoppable force. With no fewer than five Carnifexes and a Hive Tyrant to throw at the Eldar line, the Tyranids make it across the lava stream. The killing starts in earnest when close combat is joined, and grav-tanks are hurled into the magma by a rampaging Carnifex Crusher brood.*

*In the heart of the battlefield, the Eldar Farseers pull every trick and ploy available to them in order to bring the Fireheart to full power. Only by destroying the planet can the craftworlders deny the Hive Fleets their biological bounty, and they intend to do so, no matter the cost.*

*Meanwhile, the most mobile of the Eldar and Dark Eldar forces scramble across to claim the strategic objectives on the smaller islands, exterminating the Tyranid units that get in their way with focused volleys of fire.*







*Prince Yriel proved an inspirational leader and warrior supreme.*



*Asurmen and his Crystal Sons took a great toll on Ector and Düriel alike.*



*The ghost warriors of Iyanden turned the tide at Godpeak.*



*The raging Avatar of Biel-Tan Craftworld proved an unstoppable foe, even when buried alive by Tyranids!*



*A Harlequin from the Great Troupe*



*Iyanden's Spiritseers were led by Iyanna Arienal.*



*Iyanden's Farseers guided the Eldar grand strategy from the beginning.*



*Baharroth and his fellow Phoenix Lords plunged fearlessly into the Tyranid swarms.*

*Biel-Tan's grav-tanks used the cover of Dûriel's spore-choked clouds to outmanoeuvre and destroy key elements of the Tyranid swarms.*





*Lelith Hesperax killed countless Tyranids with her razor-sharp blades.*



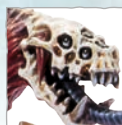
*Archon Sarnak ensured his aid came at a very high price.*



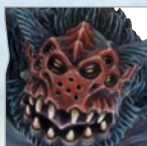
*The Kabal of the Black Heart is the most potent of its kind.*



*Wracks of the Ebon Sting Coven were sent to fight upon Düriel.*



*The Beastmasters and Khymerae of the Cult of Strife took a sinister interest in the Tyranid swarms they fought.*



*The Wych Cult of Strife take pleasure in setting their Donorian Clawed Fiends on the foe.*



*The Murderflocks of Commorragh contain a great many Scourges.*



*A Talos Pain Engine is a truly grotesque foe.*



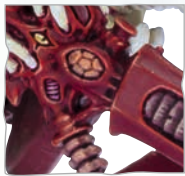
*The Hive Tyrants that led the swarms of Leviathan and Kraken were the living incarnations of the Hive Mind's will upon Dúriel.*



*Gargoyles by the million darkened the horizon wherever the Leviathan Sky Swarms attacked.*



*The Broodlords that led each Genestealer brood were a match even for the Harlequin Troupes.*



*The Carnifex is a living engine of destruction, evolved for slaughter and nothing more.*



*Lictors are faster even than Eldar warriors.*



The Tyranids that comprised the Kraken splinter fleet swarms come on in a dizzying variety of forms, each more lethal than the last.



