



WARHAMMER

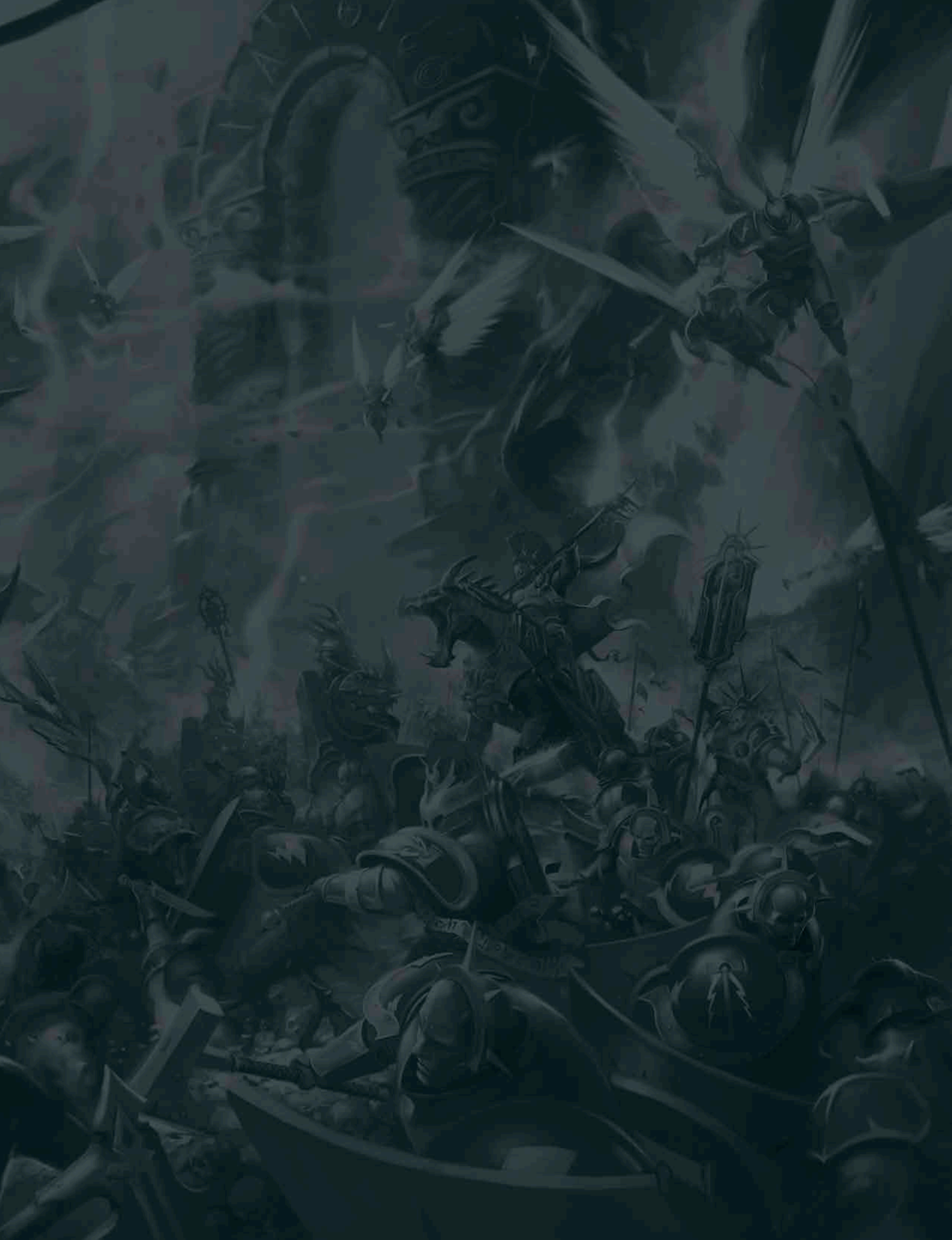


# WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

THE REALMGATE WARS

# QUEST FOR GHAL MARAZ





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 As such, outdated game scenarios and unit rules have been removed from this publication.



# **WARHAMMER** AGE OF SIGMAR

From the maelstrom of a sundered world, the Eight Realms were born. The formless and the divine exploded into life. Strange, new worlds appeared in the firmament, each one gilded with spirits, gods and men. Noblest of the gods was Sigmar. For years beyond reckoning he illuminated the realms, wreathed in light and majesty as he carved out his reign. His strength was the power of thunder. His wisdom was infinite. Mortal and immortal alike knelt before his lofty throne. Great empires rose and, for a while, treachery was banished. Sigmar claimed the land and sky as his own and ruled over a glorious age of myth.

But cruelty is tenacious. As had been foreseen, the great alliance of gods and men tore itself apart. Myth and legend crumbled into Chaos. Darkness flooded the realms. Torture, slavery and fear replaced the glory that came before. Sigmar turned his back on the mortal kingdoms, disgusted by their fate. He fixed his gaze instead on the remains of the world he had lost long ago, brooding over its charred core, searching endlessly for a sign of hope. And then, in the dark heat of his rage, he caught a glimpse of something magnificent. He pictured a weapon born of the heavens. A beacon powerful enough to pierce the endless night. An army hewn from everything he had lost. Sigmar set his artisans to work and for long ages they toiled, striving to harness the power of the stars. As Sigmar's great work neared completion, he turned back to the realms and saw that the dominion of Chaos was almost complete. The hour for vengeance had come. Finally, with lightning blazing across his brow, he stepped forth to unleash his creation.

The Age of Sigmar had begun.





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# THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE

**Across the Mortal Realms a thousand battles raged. Gone was the Age of Chaos, an aeon of oppression and fear that saw the peoples of every realm subjugated and enslaved. That long night ended with the breaking of Sigmar's Storm, for the God-King's crusade was so violent it shook the stars themselves.**

By the time Sigmar's great muster was complete, many of the Mortal Realms had not only been conquered, but also tainted beyond sanity. The material dimension was crumbling before the constant onslaught of the Dark Gods, and many of the Realmgates – mysterious portals that allow travel from one land to the next – were infected with raw Chaos. The Gates of Azyr – those portals that led from Sigmar's domain to the other Mortal Realms – were shut. In sequestering Azyr and those peoples still good and true, Sigmar had been forced to seal the magical pathways behind him.

Once his armies were ready to strike, the God-King worked a miracle long in the making. Sigmar's Tempest thundered from the heavens, a maelstrom of deadly celestial energy that roiled through the void. Though

it could not penetrate the Realm of Chaos, every mortal land was darkened by black clouds shot through with bolts of pure magic. From this godly storm hammered columns of force, striking near the long sealed Gates of Azyr. Each bolt left in its wake a shining cadre of warriors, small but powerful vanguards of the main assault to come.

Though Sigmar's warriors could ride the storm, blazing into battle from on high, such was their number that even the God-King could not hurl them all into battle at one time. Only by opening the Gates to Azyr from both sides at once could their magic be reinstated and the full might of the newly-forged Stormhosts be brought to bear.

These Thunderstrike Brotherhoods brought battle to a hundred Realmgates and more, smashing aside the forces

of darkness and seizing the Gates of Azyr. Sigmar's vanguard soon found itself fighting against impossible odds, for the armies of Chaos were without number. But hope was at hand. Dozens of Realmgates were flung wide, and the main body of the Stormhosts marched through the portals in glittering phalanxes to turn the tide.

Though every one of the Mortal Realms felt the might of the God-King, the storm hammered harder in some lands than others. The Realm of Fire was first to feel the wrath of the Stormcast Eternals. The Hammers of Sigmar, first of the Stormhosts to be forged, descended upon the Brimstone Peninsula in force, with Vandus Hammerhand at their fore.

That jutting promontory not only held a powerful Gate of Azyr, but was also

**D**uring the Age of Chaos, Sigmar's defeat upon the battlefields of the Mortal Realms was near total. He was forced to withdraw into Azyr, the Realm of Heavens. His exile was not an idle one, for the fires of wrath burned in the God-King's breast. Putting aside the ways of war, he plucked the heroes of the seven realms from their struggles and took them to the celestial forge.

In the great vaults of his palace, Sigmar enlisted the aid of the Great Maker, Grungni, to reshape those

mortal men into beings of unparalleled might. They underwent a hundred torments, the magic of star and storm mingled with the fibres of their being. Those who survived were Reforged into a new breed of warrior.

Host by host, Sigmar's armies took shape until the heavens were replete with heroes. Each had the power of the tempest running in their veins and the strength of the elements in their swordarms. Sigmar named them the Stormcast Eternals, and girded them in the magical metal sigmarite for the endless battles to come.





bordered by the Sulphuric Sea, making it highly defensible. It was an excellent beachhead for the invasion to come.

A Thunderstrike Brotherhood led by Lord-Celestant Vandus was the first to strike. It blazed into existence over the Igneous Delta, a bloodstained wasteland that led from Duardinia to the acidic ocean. There the Goretide ran riot, a horde of brazen murderers that worshipped the Blood God Khorne with every kill. The warrior king of those Bloodbound armies was Korghos Khul, known as the Butcher of Scorched Keep. He had slaughtered Aqshy's people from one side of the

Brimstone Peninsula to the other. In doing so, Khul had slain the Direbrand tribe – the very people that Vandus Hammerhand had once called his own.

The battle that ensued was furious beyond measure. Retributors smashed their lightning hammers into lumbering Khorgoraths, Liberators charged headlong into frothing Blood Warriors, and Lord-Relictor Cryptborn summoned the energy of the storm to blast his foes. Those Aqshian tribesmen who had turned to Chaos were cut down in their hundreds. As the battle raged, the Prosecutors under Lord Vandus' command hurled hammers

of raw magical force into the Gate of Azyr, as their brothers worked to open it from the other side. Though it cost the Prosecutors dearly, the Realmgate eventually crashed open.

Pure cerulean light spilled across the Brimstone Peninsula, glinting from the golden armour of Vandus Hammerhand as he met Korghos Khul in single combat. Driven by vengeful fury, Vandus smashed Khul to the ground, but before the Lord-Celestant could land the killing blow, the tides of battle swept the two warriors apart. As he scanned for his quarry, Vandus' mind was consumed by a dark vision.





**S**urrounded by the fires of the Igneous Delta, Vandus Hammerhand saw his destiny unfold before him. Vandus saw that he would confront Khul even as the Chaos lord climbed his great pyramid of skulls, the bloody head of an immortal clutched in one clawed hand. Vandus knew he must find a way to thwart the butcher Khul by closing his dread portal to the Blood God's realm. Should Vandus fail, the Lord of the Goretide would become yet more powerful, forever claiming Aqshy in his master's name.

Through cannibal tribe and blood-mad horde the Hammers of Sigmar forged on, assailed by monster, beast and daemon as they went. Thunder shook the firmament, and blood ran in thick rivers across the lands. When they came upon Khul's dire portal, Vandus brought his nemesis to battle.

Torn from his ultimate victory, Khul's wrath was great. Whirling his terrible axe with unbridled fury, he struck down the Dracoth Calanax, then bested Vandus with a flurry of mighty blows.

At the last moment, Vandus grasped the Realmgate at the heart of Khul's stronghold, and called down Sigmar's lightning. It struck with such force the dread portal was destroyed. The blinding light dissipated, leaving ruin in its wake. Of Vandus Hammerhand, there was no sign.



# THE STORM RAGES ON

**Aqshy was not the only realm to be wracked by the tempest, and clouds soon gathered over every land. Wherever a critical portal was held by the forces of Chaos, Sigmar's legions struck. Soon, silver armour glinted in the Jade Kingdoms, even as Chamon's Hanging Valleys entered a new phase of war.**

As the Hammers of Sigmar joined the fray en masse on the Brimstone Peninsula, battle was also met in the once-glorious paradise of Ghyran – the Realm of Life. Coveted by the Plague God Nurgle, many of those lands had become polluted and diseased beyond measure, yet there were areas that had escaped the plagues, those strange domains hidden from the sight of evil souls by Sigmar's old ally, Alarielle, Queen of the Radiant Wood.

The Stormcast Eternals sent to win the Gates of Dawn had been charged not only with paving the way for the rest of their kin, but with reaching out to Alarielle and winning her aid in the battles to come. The Hallowed Knights, most devout of all the Stormhosts, proved equal to the task. They took the fight to the grotesque legions of Nurgle with great passion. Though their burnished silver sigmarite was soon tarnished with blood and muck, they did not relent. While the filth of Nurgle splashed across their bodies, it could do little to dim the true faith shining in their souls, nor slacken the blazing power of the tempest itself.

Selflessness comes easily to the Hallowed Knights, and through sacrifice the day was won. Just as it seemed his kin were to be overwhelmed by a fresh attack from the Nurgle-worshipping hordes and their skaven

allies, Lord-Celestant Gardus proved his worth a dozen times over. Locked in battle with a blubbery, mountainous Great Unclean One, Gardus lured his foe through a corrupted portal and into the Realm of Chaos beyond. The creature's swollen bulk was such that it collapsed the gate, sealing itself and Gardus in the unutterably foul reaches of Nurgle's Garden. With that most hideous of daemons removed, the rest of the Hallowed Knights won the reprieve they needed to claim victory. Alarielle's people, the sylvaneth of the deep forest, began to emerge from the gloom to fight at the Stormcasts' side, and the hordes of Nurgle were driven off. The battle saw the forging of a link between the Stormcast Eternals and the sylvaneth – when quenched in blood, such bonds become strong indeed.



Meanwhile, in glittering Chamon, the Stormcasts' assault was led by the fiercely determined Celestial Vindicators. Having torn the Realmgates of the Anvrok Valley from the sorcerous cabal that had claimed them, the Warrior Chamber of Thostos

Bladestorm marched through the blade-haunted city of Elixia in search of a Chaos mage who had slain many of their number with fell magics. Their target lurked in the Eldritch Fortress, a vast edifice of metal and bone whose battlements thrust like jagged knives into the sky.

In truth, the Celestial Vindicators were marching into a trap. The castle's master, the sorcerous Ephryx, sought to drain the magical power of the Stormcast Eternals and use it to fuel his diabolical ploy to seal Chamon away forever. Over long centuries of preparation, Ephryx had turned the fortress into an arcane reservoir that siphoned energy from an artefact of immense power that glowed within the castle keep. Unaware of Ephryx's plot, and blinded by their hatred, the Celestial Vindicators charged in headlong, their sheer fury enough to break the jaws of Ephryx's trap. Lord Thostos cut through the Chaos garrison, even attacking the castle itself in his rage. This act forced Ephryx's hand, for he could not bear to see his creation cast down. He obliterated Thostos and his army with a spell of surpassing power, but in doing so, laid bare the secret at the fortress' heart.

The divine light that poured from the breach was that of Sigmar's long lost warhammer, Ghal Maraz.





## SIGMAR'S LAST BATTLE

Few tell the tale of how Sigmar came to lose his rune-enchanted warhammer, Ghal Maraz, because few survived the Battle of Burning Skies.

In the early years of the Age of Chaos, there was a time when the lands and peoples of the realms were besieged, but not yet corrupted. Tomorrow was still a promise and not yet a threat. But everywhere dread was taking hold, for the power of the Dark Gods waxed mightily. Although Sigmar's Alliance was breaking, still the God-King fought on, alone when he must.

The first incursions cut deep into the Eight Realms. Cities fell before the onslaught, yet always Sigmar, or one of his pantheon, led a counter-attack to drive off the invaders. Each of the greater daemons that led the Dark Gods' armies was defeated in its turn. Sigmar cast down the Khornate armies of An'ggrath. He smote Feculox, most immense of Great Unclean Ones, within of the City of Branches. Through the power of his immortal soul, the God-King fought off the magicks of the Lord of Change, Kiathanus. Luxcious the Keeper, first to call herself Ur-Slaanesh, withered in the face of his unbreakable resolve.



In the Realm of Fire, Sigmar led the twelve tribes of Bellicos to victory, clearing their lands for a time. Archaon was enraged. The Everchosen united the four powers to assail Aqshy's heartlands once more, bringing the daemonic champions together upon the Fireplains. As a great host of Chaos assembled in the plains of the Burning Realm, the God-King gathered his tribes once more.

The legions of the daemon champions covered the lands. Their combined armies stretched to every horizon, reaching into the sky itself – for they had torn a rent in reality, from which poured nightmares beyond count. The gods of Sigmar's pantheon opposed that fell host, and the ruinous slaughter that followed shook the realms.

Thus began the Battle of the Burning Skies. It was a great conflict that followers of Khorne later called the Battle of Skulls, for so many foes were killed that the amassed skull pyres were as mountains, blotting out the sun. Indeed, so great was the slaughter that, for a year after that battle, the seers of other realms still looked upon blazing Aqshy and saw only a burning death's head.

From above the advancing legions, Nagash summoned necromantic armies, while Gorkamorka rampaged unstopably, clubbing gaping holes into the oncoming hordes. The burning light of Teclis banished foes unnumbered, yet it was mighty Sigmar, always at the pantheon's fore, that turned the tide.



Crowned by thunderheads, titanic in his rage, the God-King could not be stopped. Each swing of Ghal Maraz hit with meteoric force, the hurricanes that swirled from each impact sweeping foes aside in waves.

Seven times Sigmar led the charge, his barely united coalition crashing deep into the enemy ranks that passed beyond the horizon. Seven times they threw back their Chaos foes, reaping a great tally with each clash.

On the eighth time, Sigmar shouted his world-shaking warcry and charged forth to meet the Four Foes he had defeated long ago – the daemon kings of Chaos known to their legions as the Tetrarchs of Ruin.

Sigmar bore down on the daemon commanders, a killing light blazing in his eyes. One after the other the Tetrarchs tasted Ghal Maraz's wrath, for in their pride they would not fight as one. When Archaon himself rode to oppose Sigmar, the God-King hurled Ghal Maraz, for he knew the Destroyer of Worlds was deadliest in a duel.

Yet in his battle rage, Sigmar was deceived. Tzeentchian illusion had tricked him into hurling his matchless warhammer not at Archaon, but into the very rent in reality from which poured the daemon hordes. Reality cracked and boomed as the Great Shatterer ploughed from one realm to the next, waves of destruction in its wake. Archaon's laughter was loud and cruel.



Through space and time Ghal Maraz hurtled on, lost to Sigmar's sight. The God-King despaired as the gloating of the Dark Gods rang in his ears, knowing that without his mighty hammer, the battle was all but lost.

Great was that day's slaughter, so great that it ushered in a new era. The disasters of the Nexus Wars ensued soon after, following which Sigmar retreated, shutting the Gates of Azyr behind him.

For long years Sigmar dwelt upon his losses, his rage simmering as he brooded on how best to reclaim his own.

The Dark Gods of Chaos were triumphant at last.

*Seven steps took Sigmar, striding as a giant;  
None could stay him, nor stand before his wrath.  
Again and again His foe-cracking hammer  
Wrought crimson wreckage.*

*Yet Archaon, the Three-Eyed King, the World-ender,  
Had united Four Foes of Old, the greatest of their kind.  
Across the aeons Sigmar had vanquished each before,  
As well they remembered.*

*So great was that battle, it set the skies aflame;  
So began the red dawn, the sword time, the wolf age.*

**- Excerpt from the Saga of the Burning Skies**

# THE REALMGATE WARS

Sigmar's Tempest struck, and the thunder of clashing blades rang out across the Mortal Realms. The Stormhosts, forged in high Azyr, blazed into the fray – yet in this new age of strife and battle, theirs were far from the only crusades to be unleashed.

## TO HURL BACK THE DARKNESS

CHAOS HAD CLAIMED ASCENDANCY OVER ORDER. WITH EVERY SENSELESS SLAUGHTER, WITH EVERY NATION CONQUERED, THE DARK GODS CAME CLOSER TO CONSUMING THE MORTAL REALMS ENTIRE. WITH THE ONSET OF SIGMAR'S DIVINE TEMPEST, HOWEVER, THE LIGHT OF HOPE BLAZED BRIGHT ONCE MORE THROUGHOUT THE LANDS.

## LIGHTNING OVER BAELGHAST

Amongst the corpse-strung skycaves of Baelghast, cerulean thunderclouds hurled nine full Stormhosts into battle against the monstrous hordes of Throgg.

## THE BUTCHERED KINGS

After breaking the Third Waaagh! of Garrados, the Bloodbound warlord known as Gorehelm turned upon the seven Nurgle-worshipping kings whose armies had helped clinch his victory. So much Chaos-tainted blood was spilt that day that the sentient quagmire known as Butcher's Swamp was born.

## AZYRHEIM'S REVENGE

With Sigmar's blessing, the Hosts of Azyrheim set out from the newly opened Gates of Azyr. Their armies sought red vengeance against those who had slain their peoples. In many cases, their justice was meted out in great measure.

## THE WORLDS BELOW

In the eerie silence of the Halls of the Dead, an alliance of duardin and Stormcast Eternals fought through armies of cannibal guardians and skeletal fiends, only to find themselves caught in the web of the Mortarchy.

## THE WARRIOR'S LURE

Aelven warhosts sent to primal Dhrund stacked high the skulls of horned shamans and tusked monsters alike. Less than an hour after the death of the gargants known as Bawler's Get, the savage priests of Gorkamorka answered the challenge of the aelf trespassers en masse.

## BLOOD IN THE GLOOM

Whilst pillaging the Shaomel Labyrinth, the armies of Borrogh the Black Gut found themselves embroiled in battle against shadowy foes that could not be banished by strength of arms alone.

## CLASHES BENEATH THE EARTH

Sigmar's knights went in search of the sons of Grimnir in the magma-powered empire of the Burning Karaks. They found bitter war against verminous horde and duardin throng alike, but their quest to win the allegiance of the Fyreslayers led to a chain of alliances that have yet to be broken.

## TIDE OF DEVASTATION

From the Gilded Fjords to the Screaming Stones, orruks seethed from skull-faced mountains and idol crags to fall upon the Chaos tyrants that had driven them from their ancestral lands. They had allies; grots snuck from spider-fissures, and hidden ogor tribes lurched from maw-like chasms and feasting caves to gobble down those too slow to escape. Many a Realmgate's defenders were left crushed in their wake, the priceless portals claimed only by carrion crows.

## AID FROM THE HEAVENS

WHEN WAR RAGED ACROSS THE BONE SAVANNAHS OF BAGRHATI, THE MIGHT OF CHAOS SEEMED INSURMOUNTABLE, WITH WARRIORS FALLING IN DROVES BENEATH THE BLADES OF THEIR RELENTLESS FOE. YET AT THE CRITICAL HOUR THE SERAPHON DESCENDED INTO BATTLE. THEY SPOKE NOT THE TONGUE OF MEN, BUT THEIR HATRED FOR CHAOS CARRIED A MESSAGE INDISPUTABLE AND CLEAR – THEY SHARED A COMMON CAUSE WITH THE ARMIES OF SIGMAR.

## CURSE OF THE JADE KINGDOMS

FROM THE SEEDS OF CONFLICT SOWN ACROSS THE JADE KINGDOMS, WARS BEYOND COUNTING GREW TO BLOODY FRUITION. THOUGH KHORNE SENT EIGHT TIMES EIGHT LEGIONS THROUGH THE GATES OF CHOGKORR, AND THOUGH TZEENTCH SANK HIS CLAWS INTO THOSE KINGDOMS RICHEST IN MAGICAL LORE, IT WAS NURGLE THAT COMMITTED THE GREATEST HOSTS TO CONQUER THE REALM OF LIFE.

## THE SEVENTH WAR FOR THE ALLPOINTS

A vast confluence of portals that once led to every Mortal Realm, the Allpoints, vital to the plans of gods and men alike, was plunged into the most spectacular of wars.

## THE SIGMARITE CRUSADES

In the Slaver's Wilderness, the Justicars of Azyr hunted evil warrior kings like beasts, whilst the Dracoth legions prowled the daemon graves of Chimeron. Meanwhile, in the Hanging Valleys of Anvrok, the Heldenhammer Crusade fought every evil the sorcerer Ephryx could muster.



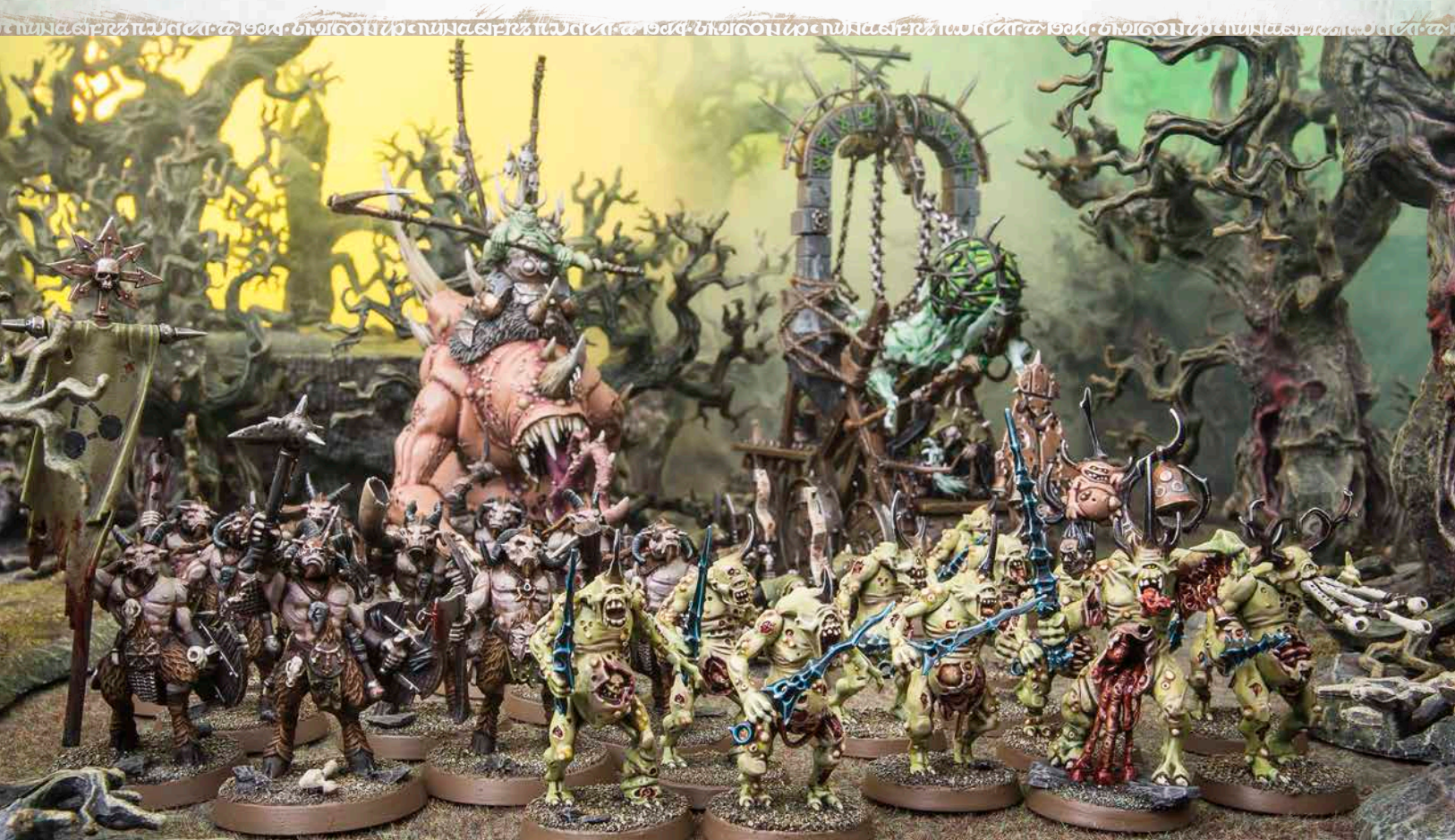
# MAKING YOUR MARK ON THE MORTAL REALMS

**The Mortal Realms are replete with tales of mighty heroes, bloodshed and betrayal, and part of the fun of owning a collection of Citadel Miniatures is in creating your own stories and bringing your models and the worlds they inhabit to life.**

The following pages contain chapters in a new and exciting tale that will shape the history of the Mortal Realms. Though they have long been held in the iron grip of bloody-handed tyrants, the realms are now touched by hope once more, for like a lightning bolt from a storm-wracked sky, Sigmar has unleashed his glittering Stormhosts. Their first objectives are chosen by the God-King himself, and across the realms, their example spurs warriors to battle in the cause of vengeance.

Woven into the tale of these climactic times are battleplans and Time of War rules which allow you to lead your armies through every vicious clash and bloody slaughter first-hand. The rules presented in the sections that follow give you a framework to make this tale your own. More than that, though, they enable you to tell your own stories set in the Mortal Realms, and use your collection of Citadel Miniatures in glorious battles of your own devising.

Some will fight to free the realms from the horror of Chaos rule, others to crush the upstarts who dare challenge the Dark Gods, or for some other, personal agenda. Whatever your goals, these rules will allow you to live out one exciting tale of battle after another, your exploits through the fantastical landscapes of the realms limited only by your imagination.





## BATTLEPLANS

Each battleplan is quite simply a set of instructions that tells you how to pick an army and set it up on the battlefield, how to play through an exciting battle between two Warhammer armies, and what you need to do in order to win. These instructions complement the ones found on the *Warhammer: Age of Sigmar* rules sheet, and offer you a variety of different ways to play.

In each case, the battleplans presented in this book are based upon a key battle fought during the Realmgate Wars, and they can be used to refight these battles exactly as they occurred. However, in a broader sense, each battleplan presents an archetypal conflict that can be set wherever you so choose, and feature whatever forces you like. For example, a battleplan may present a heroic breakthrough, where one army punches straight through the lines of another to reach a vital objective. You could use this battleplan to stage such a conflict

in whatever realm you like, between whichever forces you have to hand; for example, you might see whether a horde of orruks can smash through the skaven lines amid the beast-haunted forests of Ghur.

The map included with each battleplan reflects the landscape on which that battle was fought during the Realmgate Wars, but, except where specified, you can use any scenery you like. Similarly, each example battlefield is 6 feet by 4 feet, but you can use a smaller or larger area if you wish.

The battleplans assume that all of the rules from the *Warhammer: Age of Sigmar* rules sheet are used, unless it specifically states otherwise in the battleplan's instructions. For example, you still use the rules for selecting a general, and for command abilities, unless the battleplan specifically says not to.


## IN TIMES OF WAR

Alongside the battleplans you will find new Time of War rules. These add another layer of atmospheric excitement to your battles, reflecting either the strange, arcane natures of the realms themselves, or the prevailing conditions of this stage of the Realmgate Wars. However you choose to use them, these rules will instill yet more drama and excitement into the legends forged in your own battles.

## MUSTER YOUR ARMIES

At the back of this book you will find a selection of warscrolls. Each of these details a type of unit that sees battle in this chapter of the Realmgate Wars, providing you with all the rules and details to field the models in battle, and to group them together in mighty battalions. Finally, all the core rules you need to play games of *Warhammer: Age of Sigmar* are also included at the end of the book, so you've got everything you need to go to war.





**C<sup>A</sup>**  
**CALL**  
**TO WAR**



# THE VAULTS OF SIGMARON

**Already the Mortal Realms resounded to the clash of a million blades. Though the spearheads of Sigmar's hosts had plunged into battle, the Heavens of Azyr still rumbled with the promise of war to come. Vandus Hammerhand had returned, scarred but unbowed, and his duties were far from over.**

Lord Vandus awoke, muscles tensed as he hung in the air under a thin dome of light. He shook bodily, not so much as if he had been struck by lightning, but rather as if a thunderbolt of energy had been torn from within him. For a moment, the Lord-Celestant found himself wondering – was he Vendell Blackfist once more? Had the powers within him been snatched away?

Vandus flexed his fingers, his sight returning. The ambient glow that filled the quenching chamber came only from the starlight filtering through the aperture at its apex. The certainty came to him that he lived on still. The Lord-Celestant checked his physique; it was that of a warrior rather than a smith.

The scars of battle had replaced the forge-burns of his former life. Vandus had not met death this time; Sigmar had struck him down in order to close the Gate of Wrath, but rather than destroy him, the God-King had taken him up to Azyr, just as he had many centuries before.

Shapes resolved in Vandus' sight; burnished plates of golden armour that orbited him like satellites. At a thought, the Lord-Celestant bound them to his will. Tendrils of electric force crackled out from his muscles, each linking to an armoured plate and pulling it sharply into place until he was clad in the blessed raiment of a Stormcast Eternal once more.

Just as Vandus' helm slid into place, the sonorous boom of a Knight-Heraldor's war horn reverberated around the dome. A summons, and a familiar one. Vandus extended his hand, and the hammer Heldensen crackled into being, clapping into his grip like the hand of a warrior kinsman. The Lord-Celestant raised his empty hand and grasped at the sky glinting through the iris-like aperture above. With a smooth motion, he pulled down his cloak of star-silk and donned it swiftly. It was time to meet his maker, and he would go in glory.

Outside the dome-like quenching chamber, Vandus was met by Laudus Skythunder, the bellicose war-caller



## LORD-CASTELLANT ANDRICUS STONEHEART

Andricus Stoneheart is the foremost Lord-Castellant of the Hammers of Sigmar. He is the Keeper of Storms-To-Be, the Shield Celestial and the guardian of Sigmaron's skygate. He wears his stubbornness like a cloak of iron over his embellished sigmarite plate, and his instincts for rooting out evil are almost as sharp as those of his Gryph-hound, Swiftclaw.

Long ago, the mutant menagerie of Vetcher Nadirr fell upon Andrec Stornoson's village. Though Stornoson was the village elder, more than twice the age of any of his peers, he was the first to take up shield and spear against the corrupted lava-beast ravaging the stables where the tribe's shamans sheltered. Andrec took the creature's fiery breath on his shield before spitting the beast with a golden spear – and slaying a dozen horned warriors besides. Sigmar was impressed, and gave Andrec a new life so he could defend the virtuous from Chaos forever more.



of the Hammers of Sigmar. Beside him stood an old friend – the Lord-Castellant Andricus Stoneheart. Together, they made their way through the magnificent halls and vaults of Sigmaron. Vandus' wonder at the marvels of Sigmar's palace had not dimmed; it was all he could do not to cast around like a mortal crossing the Gates of Azyr for the first time.

The warriors passed the Forbidden Vaults, taking care to look away as their oaths demanded. Suddenly, Vandus found his mind aflame with images. He saw golden figures climbing endlessly up a glacier of precious metal, battles upon bridges spanning a misted ocean of silver, and a hundred thousand eyes glinting in the darkness.

More visions came – a two-headed shadow silhouetted before a hellish portal of terrible power and a tide of daemons, each more hideous than the last, all burning with fires so hot they melted even fate itself. Holes ripped in the world's fabric split his focus wide, clawed hands and needle-toothed snouts pushing through until nothing remained but tatters of reason – and the sigil of a glowing hammer.

Vandus came to his senses with Laudus Skythunder clutching his shoulder. Dismissing Laudus' concern, the Lord-Celestant straightened and marched onward. By the time he stood outside Sigmar's throne room, he had regained his composure. The visions seemed no more real than waking dreams.

Inside, the God-King Sigmar stood before his celestial throne, raw majesty blazing around him. It took all the steel in Vandus' heart to look upon him, but he was honoured beyond measure when Sigmar called him to attend. Vandus stepped up to stand next to Thostos Bladestorm, a fellow officer called to Sigmar's side. The God-King gave his decree. They were to travel to the Realm of Chamon, for there, the hammer Ghal Maraz had been found.

Vandus and Thostos strode from the throne room, their souls aflame with righteous purpose. As they reached the celestine vaults, twelve Stormhosts turned as one, and Calanax, reborn in lightning, roared in greeting. The quest to recover Ghal Maraz had begun.





# VANDUS HAMMERHAND

**Lord-Celestant of the Hammers of Sigmar and embodiment of the vengeful storm, Vandus Hammerhand has already carved himself a place in history. He was the first of his Stormhost to be Reforged, and his Warrior Chamber was the first to strike back at the dominion of Chaos.**

Since his Reforging, Lord Vandus has proven himself to be a gifted leader, able to shape the rage of the Stormhosts as he once tempered and quenched the iron of his trade. Underneath his noble and dutiful aspect, however, he would like nothing more than to settle his blood debt against Korghos Khul.

Long ago, the Direbrand Tribe fell to the Goretide's wrath, its people mercilessly hacked to pieces. But for the young Vendell Blackfist's refusal to despair, the last traces of the tribe would have been lost, just as with so many others. Though Vendell had left his years as an impetuous warrior behind to forge the destiny of his tribe, his outrage drove him to battle. As his

people were cut down by the dozen, Vendell took up his sledgehammer and battered his way through the Blood Warriors that crowded his stalker-smithy. He cried a wordless challenge to the armoured king in their midst, but to Khul it was no more than the bleating of a goat bound for slaughter. Vendell saw his young sons, each of whom had struggled to the last, being violently struck down by Lord Khul. Where that dread axe swung, reality itself bled – Vendell's sons did not fall so much as shrink and disappear. In fury, the smith charged in, but traded no more than two blows before a sharp kick drove him to his knees. Winded, Vendell awaited the blow that would end his misery forever.

It did not fall. Light flashed across the blood-stained battlefield, and Vendell was taken to high Sigmaron, there to be reforged as Vandus Hammerhand by the God-King. Since that day, Vandus has put his duty first; his exceptional leadership and skill at arms have seen him earn the respect of all amongst the Stormhosts, and the trust of the God-King himself. Indeed, the visions that assail Vandus in moments of high tension are proof enough that his destiny is intertwined with that of Sigmar Heldenhammer. Regardless of the Lord-Celestant's exalted position and the responsibility it entails, he has sworn an oath to see his old nemesis slain – only when the deathblow finally falls will his soul be at peace.

## LORD-RELICTOR IONUS CRYPTBORN

If Vandus Hammerhand is the glory of lightning unbound, Ionus Cryptborn is the dark and brooding thunder that follows it. He carries the aspect of the grave with him, for he hails from Shyish, the Realm of Death. Even in Sigmar's palace, there are few that rest easy alongside a Lord-Relictor, for it is said their souls are scarred by the claws of the Great Necromancer. Still, a bond of brotherhood exists between Ionus and his Lord-Celestant, for Vandus can see past Cryptborn's grim and dolorous demeanour to the hero beneath. Though he speaks of it only to his fellow Lord-Relictors, Ionus was once Eonid ven Denst, a prince of the Amethyst Underworld. It was he that slew the many-skulled hydragor that wreaked havoc upon the courtiers of King Thanator's manse, and he alone that had the courage to speak against Nagash during the Days of Shattered Bone. Well might Sigmar take such warriors for his own – with the power to summon and bind the storm at will, the man who became Ionus Cryptborn is a redoubtable foe indeed.





# THE LOST WARHAMMER

**The Stormcast Eternals had attacked the Mortal Realms with the force of a hurricane. So fierce were the battles raging around the Realmgates that the death toll grew beyond counting, yet there was one site of power Sigmar considered so vital that he would sacrifice almost anything to secure it.**

In the glittering Realm of Chamon there exists a skyscape of Hanging Valleys. Set apart in the void, these mountainous lands are much like a world torn into scraps and arranged in staggered sequence. Riverfalls of molten silver connect them, each overflowing from an unimaginably vast crucible set above it all and heated by the warpfire of the zodiac serpent Argentine.

Between each mountainous landmass these quicksilver rivers fall miles through the void, only to be caught, funnelled through vast stone channels, and slowly cooled, their magic distilled and harnessed as if in the apparatus of some godly alchemist.

The largest of those valleys is Anvrok. A once-vital realm, Anvrok's gifted metalsmiths raised exquisite wonders in a city of precious metals. However, like all others, its culture was cast down by Chaos. It was in Anvrok that Ghal Maraz came to rest, long ago.

Ghal Maraz, called the Great Shatterer, is the ultimate symbol of Sigmar's supremacy. This grand warhammer was forged in another world, and another time. It is a weapon of such legendary power it transcends reality itself, more a manifestation of godly might than a physical object. Forged by the ancestors of the duardin, Ghal Maraz has crushed the skulls of daemon kings, ended the bloodlines of titans and sent empires

tumbling to dust. It is as much a sceptre of kingship as it is a tool of destruction. When Sigmar bore the hammer he commanded vast power, but in flinging it aloft at the Battle of Burning Skies, he relinquished his hold upon it. The God-King moved heaven and earth to find it once more, but to no avail.

Unbeknownst to Sigmar, the fabled hammer was drawn to Chamon, for like attracts like, and metal imbued with magical energy was in great supply amongst the Hanging Valleys. Those lands were also rich in the raw power of transmutation, and hence were greatly prized by Tzeentch, who hid the buried hammer from Sigmar's sight long ago. Only now has Ghal Maraz been found.



## LORD-CELESTANT THOSTOS BLADESTORM

Thostos Bladestorm's fury is that of a midsummer tempest. His wrath is destructive, yet somehow cleansing – by his command, the Celestial Vindicators cast out the darkness and leave the light of new beginnings in its wake.

The firstborn son of the guild-king Glothian, Thostos returned from a slayerquest to find his people butchered in his absence. His guilt-haunted rampage was halted only when Sigmar granted his wish for an eternity of vengeance. It was Thostos who led the first attack against the Eldritch Fortress of Anvrok. Thostos' assault wreaked havoc upon the walls built to trammel Ghal Maraz, undoing the works of the sorcerer Ephryx. During the battle, the Lord-Celestant was turned to living sigmarite by wild transformative power, but still he fought on. Only the detonation of the castle wall stopped his wild attack. Reforged in Sigmar's vaults, Thostos' body is flesh once more – though echoes of his strange death persist.



**‘Y**ou found Ghal Maraz, Thostos,’ said Lord Vandus. ‘A tremendous achievement.’

The skyvault corridors of the palace Sigmaron rang to the footsteps of the two warrior lords as they strode towards their Stormhosts in the celestine vaults.

‘Yet I failed to claim it,’ said Thostos. The warrior’s voice was strangely flat and monotonous. His mask, thought Vandus. It was merely the effect of his mask.

‘With a dozen Stormhosts and an open Realmgate close by, we’ll have it soon enough,’ said Vandus.

‘The sorcerer will not yield it easily.’

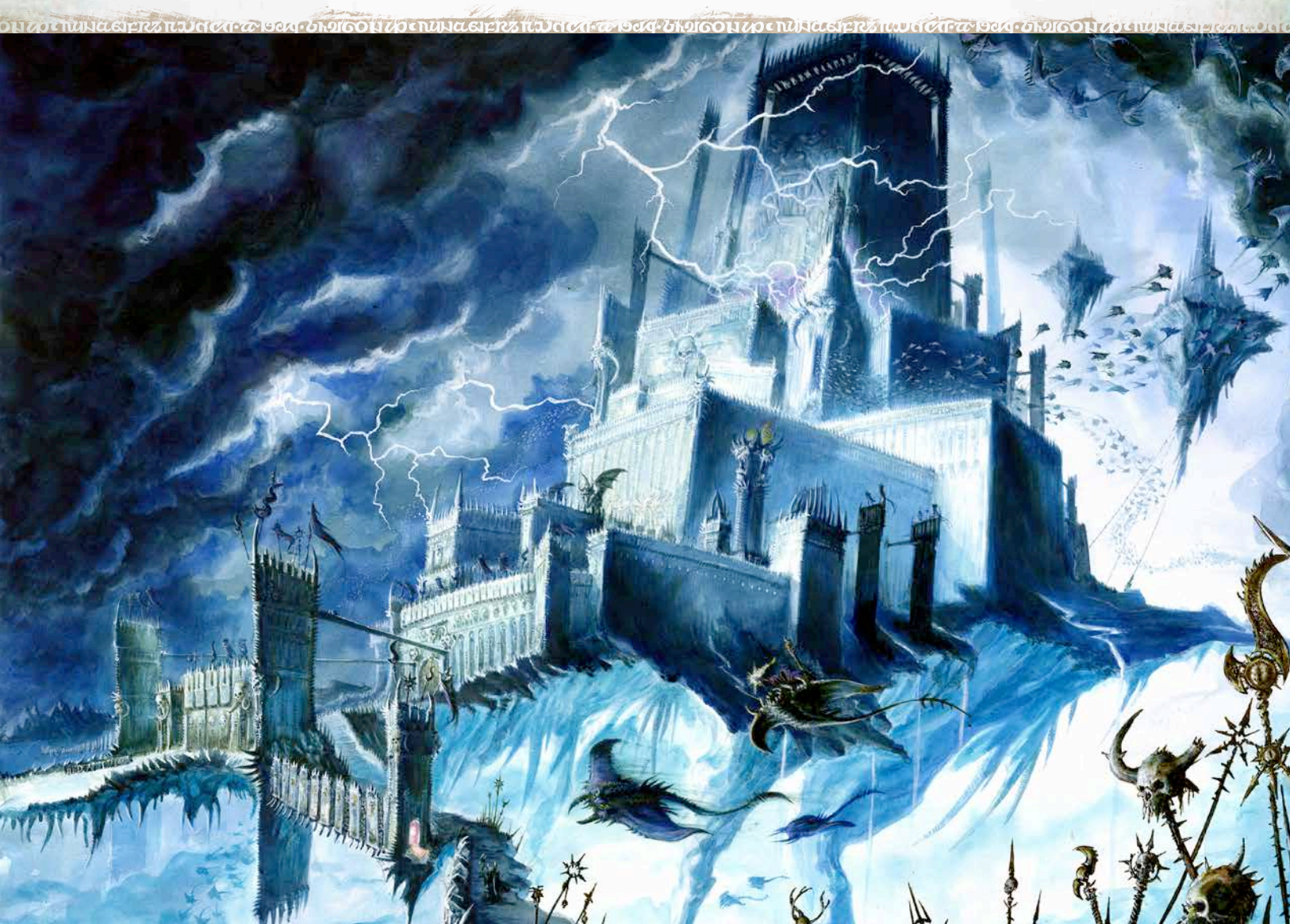
‘Then we shall prise it from the claws of his corpse.’

The two Lord-Celestants strode on, the sound of the great muster growing louder in the distance.

‘Lord Thostos,’ ventured Vandus. ‘Forgive me, but I must ask. Your Reforging. Has it... has it *changed* you? Are we truly eternal?’

Thostos stopped for a second, and met Vandus’ gaze. Behind the mask, Vandus saw blue fires burning. They were much like will-o’-the-wisps – the soul-stuff of those cursed forever to a twilight existence.

‘Yes,’ said Thostos, turning away to march onward.







**THE**  
**QUEST**  
**BEGINS**



# THE HELDENHAMMER CRUSADE

Twelve Stormhosts assailed the Hanging Valleys of Anvrok, foremost amongst them:

HAMMERS  
OF SIGMAR

CELESTIAL  
VINDICATORS

ANVILS OF THE  
HELDENHAMMER

LIONS  
OF SIGMAR

## HAMMERS OF SIGMAR COMMAND ECHELONS

Eight Command Temples led the Heldenhammer Crusade, including elements from:

HERALDOR TEMPLE - 'AZYR'S HERALDS'

JUDICATOR TEMPLE - 'JUSTICARS OF THE GOD-KING'

VALEDICTOR TEMPLE - 'GUARDIANS OF THE SKYGATES'

RELICTOR TEMPLE - 'THE RISEN SONS'

## CRUSADE CHAMBERS

The Hammers of Sigmar comprises over twenty crusade chambers. However, only ten are formally listed in the Annals Celestis.

HARBINGER  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
HURRICANUMS'**

Lord Nenthus  
Hurricanum

HARBINGER  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
FULGURINES'**

Lord Kaedus  
Fulgurine

EXEMPLAR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
ENGLORIAMS'**

Lord Octus  
Engloriam

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
THRICEBLESSED'**

Lord Devyndus  
Thriceblessed

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
ANNIHILATORS'**

Lord Andrus  
Nihilat

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
HAMMERHANDS'**

Lord Vandus  
Hammerhand

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
SKYKINDRED'**

Lord Escrus  
Skykith

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
HEAVENHOST'**

Lord Sargassus  
Heavenhost

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
STORMBOUND'**

Lord Tylos  
Stormbound

WARRIOR  
CHAMBER

**'THE  
STARBORN'**

Lord Vectus  
Starborn

## **'THE HAMMERHANDS' CHAMBER COMMAND**

Lord-Celestant Vandus Hammerhand

Lord-Relictor Ionus Cryptborn

Lord-Castellant Andricus Stoneheart

Knight-Azyros Liminus Stormsight

Knight-Heraldor Laudus Skythunder

Knight-Venator Yracus Cloudstrike

Knight-Vexillor Vorticus Galespear



# THE GREAT CRUCIBLE

CITADEL OF THROND

SIGMAR'S TEMPEST

THE VOID

DENVROK PRECIPICE

THE ALCHEMIST'S MOON

ARGENT FALLS

THE FLAMES OF ARGENTINE

THE SILVERWAY

BRIGHT TOR MOUNTAINS

DEFENCE OF THE SILVERWAY

THE SIEGE OF THE ELDRITCH FORTRESS

VAULTEN RANGE

SILVER RIVER

ELIXIA, THE SHATTERED CITY

ANVROK

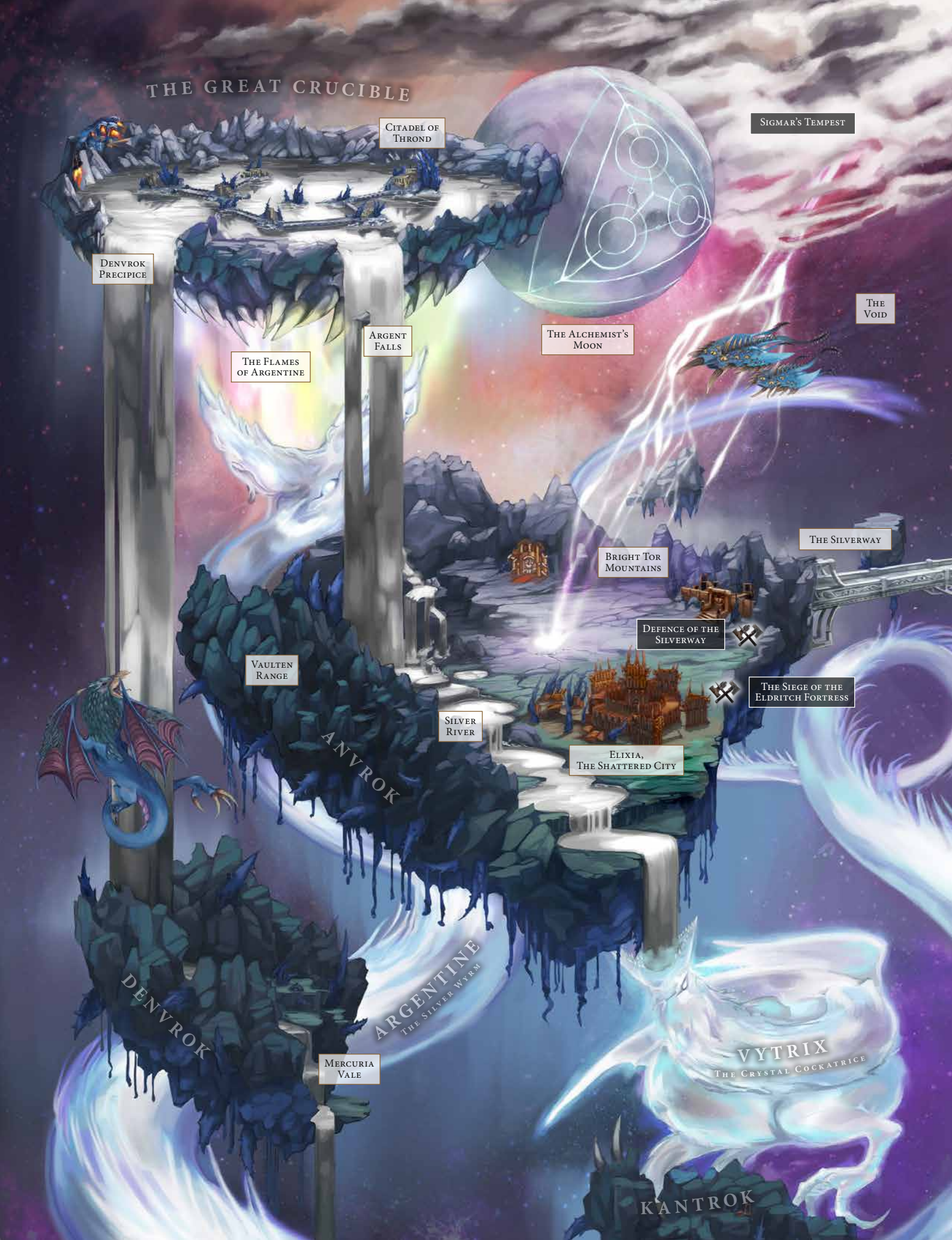
DENVROK

ARGENTINE  
THE SILVER WYRM

MERCURIA VALE

VYTRIX  
THE CRYSTAL COCKATRICE

KANTROK





# UNTO THE SHATTERED CITY

**The vanguard of the Stormhosts blazed into existence from comets of pure celestial energy. In great gleaming phalanxes, their brothers marched from Bright Tor Gate along the valley's trail, the leaders pausing to survey their troops before taking the perilous path to Elixia, the Shattered City.**

Though Lord Vandus had been charged with commanding the vanguard attack upon Elixia's jagged fortress, it was Lord Thostos Bladestorm that marched at the invasion's fore. The air crackled blue around him; all who approached him felt the heat of his rage. Small wonder, muttered his fellows, for here, in the Bright Tor Mountains, Thostos had died a sudden and shocking death. Now, under those same peaks, he would be avenged.

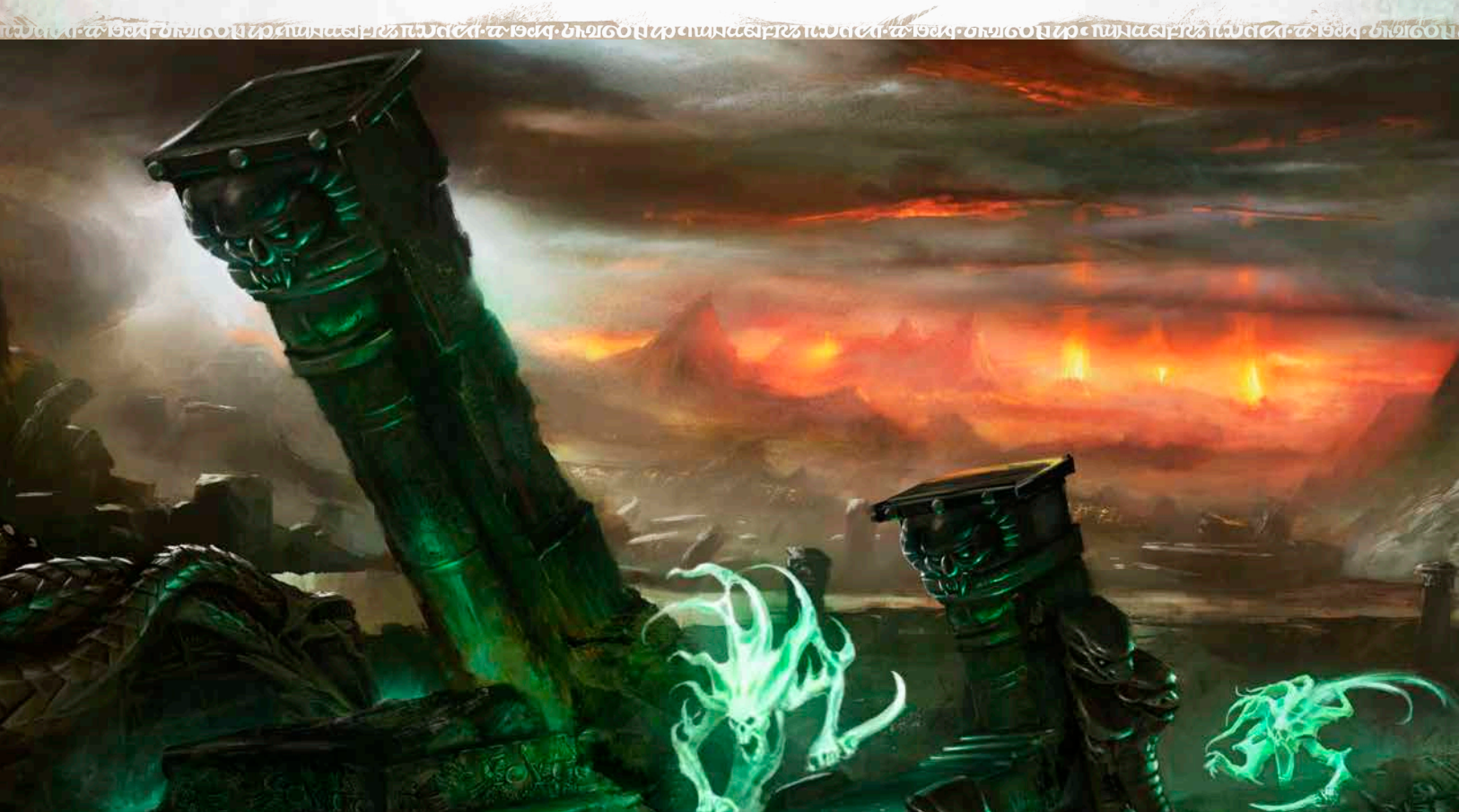
The Stormhosts had barely completed their muster when the avalanche began. A low rumble became a roar, then a deafening cacophony as the cliff face

came down, a wave of snow and ore-laced boulders crushing the rearmost phalanxes of the Celestial Vindicators before they could get clear. Blazes of storm-magic burst from the landslide, vanishing upwards to join the distant thunderheads – each was the essence of a dead Stormcast Eternal, drawn back to high Sigmaron to be Reforged by the God-King's will.

Ripples of shock and defiance flooded through the ranks of the Stormhosts as the braying laughter of beastmen drifted down from the peaks above. Lord Vandus shouted an alert to his fellow officers, and a dozen Lord-

Celestants rode their Dracoths up the mountainside, the scaled beasts bounding with the surety of mountain lions. A terrible bleating echoed through the peaks as the Dracoths tore apart the copper-skinned beastmen that had triggered the trap. Within scant minutes, the Lord-Celestants had returned, casting the heads of their assailants to the ground as proof of the kills. Yet the damage to the Celestial Vindicators could not be undone so easily.

The Stormhosts marched on in grim silence, more determined than ever to wreak bloody vengeance.





Before the Alchemist's Moon had crested the mountain peaks, the first of the Warrior Chambers had reached the Shattered City. The sense of magnificence brought low was palpable. Silvered statuary lay broken in the streets, ornate temples to Sigmar's pantheon were wrenched and split into ruin. Everywhere the corrupting touch of Chaos had twisted or disfigured exquisite works of art raised in the Age of Myth. Shadows flitted in the distance, strange shrieks both distant and uncomfortably close, yet somehow in unison.

Negotiating through the confines of the city, the Stormhosts were forced to go retinue by retinue along the streets, for their sheer numbers made them unwieldy. Only after the first Warrior Chambers had passed through the gates did horned warriors burst out from the ruins, screaming incoherently.

**‘Look to the shadows!’ ordered Ionus Cryptborn as his Retributor escort drew in close. From the gloom, dark figures rushed out.**

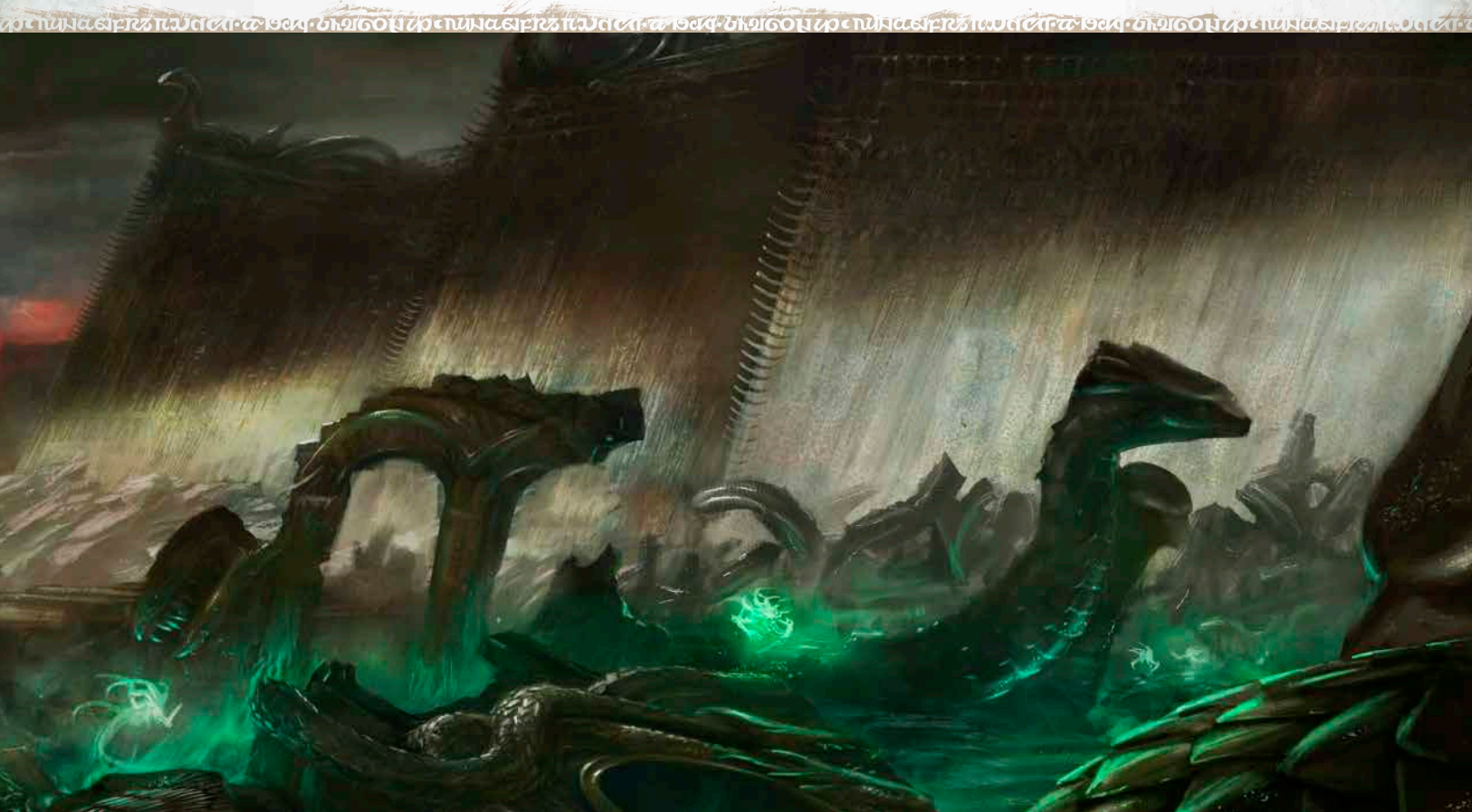
**‘Ambush!’ shouted Vandus, hefting the hammer Heldensen.**

**A pair of armoured warriors dived from a serpentine arch, jagged axes swinging. The first was caught by a blast of lightning from Calanax’s fanged maw, and hit the tarnished cobbles as a steaming mess. The second met Vandus’ hammer, his broken body flailing away.**

**‘The sorcerer’s minions,’ said Thostos, his voice as cold as winter. ‘This time he sends evil men to contest our approach.’**

**‘We shall pass the test, brother,’ said Vandus, motioning his Liberators forwards as Judicators climbed crumbled stairs to loose killing shots into the ruins below. ‘These are irritants, nothing more.’**

**Thostos made no reply. He thundered down the street, sparks fizzling in his footsteps. A knot of bare-chested savages rushed from a ruin-strewn alleyway to fall upon him, but they were hurled back one after another, blood spouting from missing limbs and stump necks. Hacking, hewing, killing, Lord Thostos drove further on into the ruins. Within seconds, he had disappeared entirely into the unnatural shadows swathing the city.**





## WAR IN THE GILDED RUINS

The ambush erupted from all sides. Thousands of Chaos worshippers surged out of the twisted metal of the ruins, the uncanny synchronicity of their attack speaking to a greater mind behind it. The Heldenhammer Crusade's woes did not end there, for the city itself was turning upon the interlopers...

Movement flickered through the streets leading towards the Square of Living Blades. A heartbeat later, the vanguards of each Stormhost found themselves beset right and left. Armoured brutes and bare-chested maniacs burst from concealment, pouring from behind walls and dropping from above. With every second a hundred more were revealed. Perhaps some magic had hidden them from sight, perhaps the shining magnificence of the Stormhosts had betrayed their approach. It mattered little – though wary of ambush, they were not prepared to fight an entire army in an instant.

Though many of their number were cut down by a hail of hurled axes and boulders heaved from on high, the Celestial Vindicators gave a joyous roar, for their need for vengeance would soon be slaked. Their spearhead elements broke ranks and charged headlong down the westernmost streets, smashing rubble and shouldering aside statues in their haste to close with the foe.

Lord Vandus shouted for them to hold the line, but he may as well have called for a hurricane to halt its fury. The prey was in sight, and the Celestial

Vindicators would kill them all, or die in the attempt. With Lord Thostos missing and his Warrior Chamber quickly becoming over-extended, Vandus' own flank was looking dangerously exposed. Hundreds more Chaos worshippers emerged from tumbled buildings, seeking to cut off those Celestial Vindicators storming ahead through the statue-lined streets.

Ever stoic, Andricus Stoneheart was there to meet them, three dozen Paladins at the indomitable Lord-Castellant's side. Confident the matter was in hand, Vandus called out to the



architect of the attack, challenging him to single combat. There was no reply, save for mocking laughter that echoed through the winding pathways of the city.

The taunting sound was swallowed by the clash of iron and steel. Battle was erupting across the broad road beyond the square. Spiked Chaos maces crumpled sigmarite plate, swords plunged into throats and hammers and broadblades all found their mark in turn. Before a minute was out, the Steelmarch's gutters ran red with blood. Not since the early days of the Age of Chaos had the ruined city witnessed such a horrendous deluge of killing.

Summoned by the dreadful carnage, the angry ghosts of those who had died within the city reaches rose from the cracked streets. They climbed upwards like gobbets of shimmering quicksilver, screaming skulls atop each wraith-like form.



**The Great Shatterer, Ghal Maraz: a prize truly beyond measure.**

In groups of two and three, the spirit creatures tore themselves free and fell howling upon Chaos Warrior and Stormcast Eternal alike. Ionus Cryptborn cast a foreboding glance towards his Lord-Celestant. Death calls to death, and the city was rife with it.

A dozen figures leapt from the broken statuary of the vault house to Vandus' left. The heavy-set warriors slammed into the Prosecutors flying through the air and bore the winged warriors down hard, crashing into the tight-packed hosts crowding the streets. The attackers met their ends at the heads of sigmarite warhammers, but not without cost – several Prosecutors spasmed, crackled, and disappeared upwards in flashes of blue energy. Vandus glowered behind his mask. Everywhere, mayhem reigned. He had the notion a greater mind was behind the attack, a force that was not planning to tackle the Stormhosts head on, but to delay them so it might make its escape.

## THE SILVER MAIDEN

The Shattered City echoes to the outrage of Celemnis, Swordmaiden of the Argent Sisterhood, whose magical blades defend the city even though none are left to wield them. All who hear her banshee screams clutch at their throats, suffocated by a well of sorrow so profound they can do nought but drown in it.

Celemnis was once a weaponsmith renowned across Anvrok and beyond. The daughter of a Ninemage, she poured body and soul into each creation, threading a single hair from her russet locks into the heart of each blade so it could cut through spirit as well as flesh. Yet fate was to play a cruel trick on Celemnis. Her workshop was torn apart by Chaos invaders, its steelworkers slain to a man. When she refused the advances of Ephryx, the sorcerer ordered her boiled alive in a cauldron of molten silver. Her vengeful ghost haunts the Shattered City to this day, howling in grief at those who trespass upon her realm.





Unable to bring their full might to bear, the Stormcast phalanxes had been peeled apart by the attacks to their flanks. Ruins that had seemed deserted burst into life as deranged warriors poured through broken vaults, debris-strewn temples and windows lined with iron teeth. Those furthest into the city were completely embroiled, bogged down by warbands intercepting them via the gates of what had once been the Celemnis Armoury. Ghost-like figures and silvered wraiths harried those warriors making for the cut and thrust of battle, clawing with cruel talons and whispering their hatred of those trespassing upon their domain.

Through it all rode Lord Vandus, issuing stern orders to his men. His Liberators veered left, charging the mob of bare-chested axemen forming a battle line in the heart of the square. Judicators broke right, firing skybolts

on the move as they made to outflank the horned knights galloping from the main armoury gate. In the mouth of each alleyway stood a retinue of Protectors, sent by Vandus to guard the flank of each marching column. They stood no more than five abreast, but their whirling swordstaves set up an impenetrable barrier, taking heads from necks and laying open torsos until the alleys were blocked by barricades of sundered corpses.

Across the city the death toll rose. Just as the Chaos forces wavered, a monstrous beast soared from the clouds, all claws and leonine mane. The armoured warrior on the creature's back scythed his blade through a rank of Judicators atop the ruins, kicking the lone survivor into the streets. The armoured lord muttered oaths in the dark tongue, and from nowhere, two voices answered him in unison.

The voices were drowned out by the eerie song of the Silver Maiden. As if borne upon the melody, her shimmering swords shot through the gloom to slice the throats of all who heard it. Here and there a Chaos worshipper grabbed the hilt of a passing blade and wrested it for his own, turning it against his Stormcast Eternal foes. Where iron and steel had failed to penetrate, the stolen swords cut through sigmarite as if it were no more than tin. These were Celemnite blades, legacies of a bygone age, and their edge was keen indeed.

To the east of the square, a sliding puddle of molten silver began to flow upwards until it formed a gaunt female figure with hair the colour of copper. Anguish and rage twisted her beautiful features as she beheld her creations in the hands of her persecutors. She opened her mouth wide, and screamed.

**A** soul-rending shriek filled the square. Chaos worshippers and Stormcast Eternals alike clutched at their throats and fell to the broken cobblestones. Within seconds, almost all had fallen still – those who survived were swiftly impaled by the flying blades that sliced through the air around them.

‘This city is not short of horrors, Vandus,’ called out Ionus Cryptborn. ‘You cannot fight a curse with blades.’

The terrifying scream rang out again, sending another dozen warriors to an early grave. Across the Square of Living Blades, the light-blurs of dead Stormcast Eternals were reflected from the tarnished silver statue at its centre – a regal lady, clutching swords. The plaque at the statue's feet told Ionus the rest.

‘Celemnis!’ he shouted, ‘We fight for the same cause!’

The banshee turned, mouth twisting in curiosity.

‘Queen of Blades,’ said the Lord-Relictor, ‘I beseech thee, send your ire against those that earned it.’ He took the sword from his reliquary, and held it out, hilt-first.

Celemnis looked at Ionus as if she saw him for the first time. Tendrils of her long hair reached out to take the proffered blade, the ghost of a smile on her lips. Suddenly she convulsed, head back and jaws too wide.

This time, Ionus heard nothing at all – nothing but the clatter of armour as every Chaos-tainted soul within a hundred paces fell, pallid and dead, to the cobbles.





With the heart of the city suddenly uncontested, Vandus bellowed for his phalanxes to forge ahead over the corpses of their foes. The Hammers of Sigmar obeyed without hesitation, but the Celestial Vindicators ignored him, running further into the city in search of new foes to slay. Incensed, Vandus vaulted from Calanax's back onto a tumbled ruin, intending to call the headstrong warriors to account.

As he steadied himself on a statue of a stardrake, a vision seized Vandus with such blinding force it sent him to his knees. He saw a waterfall of silver, frozen in time; in the void beyond it, strange drakes coiled and fought. Each was so vast the shimmer of its scales was as the glitter of galaxies. When his sight cleared, the Celestial Vindicators were gone.

High above that Stormhost vanguard, the leader of the Chaos ambushers, Lord Maerac, circled his manticore in the storm-wracked skies. His plan had worked well enough, catching the interlopers from all sides and slowing their progress. Anvrok's metal-sheened ghosts had forced Maerac's horde to cede the Shattered City's heart; somehow the invaders had turned its spirits against them now. Yet his warriors had won Ephryx a good deal of time to secure their mutual prize. Maerac grinned behind his helm. Once Ephryx met with an unfortunate accident, the hammer's power would belong to him alone. After all, the Oracle had promised him that only the strongest of men could claim it. Grinning, he summoned his fellow riders and dived into the embattled city once more.

The streets of the ruined metropolis were still thronged with armoured tribesmen, but ploughing into them were the Celestial Vindicators, who were proving all but unstoppable in their fury. Sheer momentum carried the Stormhost vanguard through the streets, appearing from a distance as a thunderous river of cerulean that engulfed everything in its path. Wherever a tribe of axemen blocked a choke point or cut off a plaza, a pillar of lightning would blaze from the heavens, leaving behind it a retinue of plate-clad paladins. Decimators hewed foes by the dozen, and Protectors held back the cavalry charges of the tribe's horned knights. The Stormhost vanguard was cutting a path towards the far periphery of the city, intent on assaulting the Eldritch Fortress itself. The battle was far from over.



Like a boulder hurled from the sky, Maerac's mantichore dived claw-first into Vandus' command echelon. A swirl of violence erupted. Maerac plunged his spear through Vandus' shoulder, plucking him from the ruins and bearing him into the air.

With a defiant roar, a blue-armoured lord leapt from a nearby bell tower to smash his hammer into Maerac's helm. The blow took his head in a welter of gore. Lord Thostos raged, the blade in his left hand punching through the mantichore's skull to send it crashing into a ruined temple. Both Vandus and Thostos emerged from the debris, battered but alive. At Vandus' command, the embattled Warrior Chambers redoubled their attack. It was enough. With their leader slain, the tribesmen melted away.

**T**he vanguard phalanxes of each Stormhost crested the ridge of the city limits, Vandus at their head. Bloodied but eager, they were ready to charge the fortress walls beyond with the joy of righteous battle in their hearts and a fierce cry on their lips. The sight that greeted them left each warrior gasping in disbelief.

'It's gone,' said Lord Vandus, his words dull with despair.

A leaden weight pressed upon the heart of every one of Sigmar's chosen. Not a soul amongst them spoke as they slowly gathered at the ridge's edge. Beyond them was a crater, many miles in width and deep as any lake. It was as if some impossible beast had reached down from the heavens, scooped out the Eldritch Fortress, and borne it away – and with it, the sacred hammer the Stormcast Eternals had fought to claim.

'So we go after it,' said Ionus Cryptborn. 'Our path is merely lengthened.'

'But how, if some fell power has claimed it and taken it who knows where?'

Cryptborn shrugged. 'Fear not, Lord Vandus. We will find a way.'



# THE BATTLE OF ARGENT FALLS

**Lord Vandus and his Stormcast Eternals were shocked to find their sorcerous enemy had fled – taking his fortress with him. Their quest lay in tatters. With the aid of their allies, they might yet prevail – but ranged against them were foes uncounted, waiting for their moment to strike.**

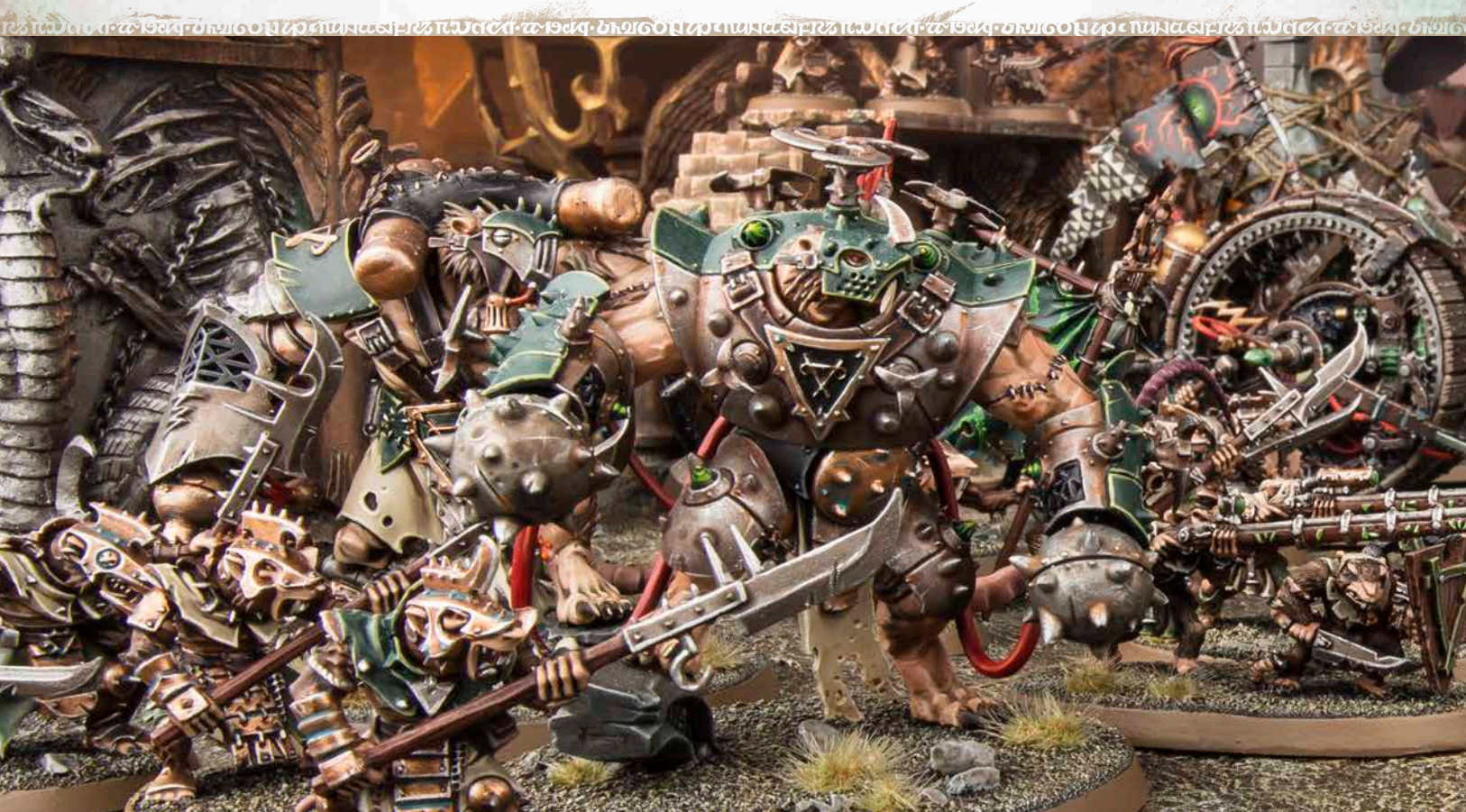
The crusaders looked back over the Shattered City to the mountains bracketing Anvrok's great valley, seeking signs of the Eldritch Fortress, but it had passed beyond their sight. Other valleys hung in the darkening void above, smaller versions of Anvrok, lit by the lambent Alchemist's Moon. Above them all was the Great Crucible, a vast disc that filled half the sky. The fortress could be anywhere. Short of passing back through the Realmgate and being cast out once more through the storm, there was no way to search those strange realms. None amongst the Stormhosts wished to return to Azyr empty-handed, especially so soon

after their quest began. Stymied, the leaders of the Stormhosts gathered atop the crater's crest. Tempers ran hot, and the same questions were asked time and time again, honest exclamations of bewilderment becoming more like mantras of confusion and despair.

As the Alchemist's Moon dipped behind distant Tavrok, a shimmer in the air resolved into a lithe figure – the Silver Maiden, Celemnis. Ionus Cryptborn felt her eyes upon him, and bade her greetings as if she was an old friend. She bowed her head, and presented the holy sword he had gifted her from his reliquary. Its edges

glimmered sharp and silver. As he replaced it in the hands of the skeleton borne upon his staff, Cryptborn asked her if she had seen to where the castle had fled, and if so, how they could proceed there with as mighty an assemblage as the crusade.

In answer, Celemnis pointed upwards at the Great Crucible. She beckoned for Cryptborn to follow, and set off west into the city. The Lord-Relictor followed after her, tilting his head as he met Lord Vandus' gaze. Vandus made the sign of the hammer, nodded approvingly, and motioned for his men to follow.





Through mountain pass, clay mine and ore-strewn valley, the Stormhosts travelled, treading secret paths shown to them by Cryptborn's strange ally. Here and there, the Chaos tribes and monsters that had taken Anvrok launched ambushes and traps, but they retreated to the shadows soon enough when the Stormcast Eternals brought their strength to bear.

Before the eighth day was out, the Stormhosts had reached the Argent Falls, liquid silver splashing in glutinous waves and gobbets across the mountainside below them. A township crested the crag that overlooked it, as ruined as the Shattered City before it. At its heart was a raised dais, crested with six statues of drakes.

Celemnis silently pointed a long-nailed finger at the Dragonfate Dais, and disappeared.

**T**hrough a vortex of warpflame, the Oracle peered down at its rat-like supplicant. For once, both the daemon's heads were in agreement. This twitching, half-mechanical opportunist was no true champion of Chaos. Yet time was pressing. It would have to suffice.

'Listen, then,' said the Oracle's left head. 'I bid you breach Chamon at the Anvrok Dais and take battle to the Stormcast Eternals.'

'Yes-yes,' said the skaven warlord. 'We know the ways. And in return...'

'Do not tell me,' said the Oracle's right head, its boredom weighty enough to crush mountains, 'you wish to usurp your leader's position.'

The skaven warlord squeaked in glee. An incontinent dribble of warpfire squirted from his arm-cannon, hissing onto the ritual circle. Tendrils of foul smoke wound towards the invisible cracks in reality.

'Very well,' said the Oracle, gesturing theatrically as tradition dictated. 'Kill the one called Hammerhand, and the fates shall align as you wish.'

'Yes-yes!' chittered the skaven, scampering into the darkness. 'Biters! Drillfiends! Hurry! Follow the tell-smoke!'





The celestial vanguard made its way through the township towards the statue-ringed dais. A runic circle held aloft by a curving stairway, it overlooked the catcher-channels and siphon mills the long-dead populace had used to harness the Argent Falls. With the wealth the township had harnessed, it was small wonder its people had sought the protection of the gods. Such a shrine was hard to ignore; though every ancient settlement had its Dragonfate Dais, few indeed were rendered in red gold. And yet, against the barbaric hordes of Chaos, the protection of their old gods had availed them little.

A whine cut under the roar of the Argent Falls; something not natural, something not of this realm. Lord-Celestant Hammerhand had barely called his men to arms when there came a tearing, ripping shriek. All around the assembled brotherhoods, slivers of green light were opening like

lesions in the fabric of reality itself. Strange green-black drills were poking through each split, juddering as they ripped them wide. The drills withdrew, just for a moment.

Shouldering into reality came massively-built Stormfiends. They growled loud as the ratling cannons built into their arms and chests hammered bullet-shards of warpstone into the Hammers of Sigmar at the front of the battle lines. Rank upon rank of Stormcast were shredded, falling to their knees before disincorporating in blurs of blue lightning to rejoin the storm above. Wrecker-beasts with arms ending in mace-like grinders lowered their heads and charged, smashing into Lord Vandus' Paladins and flattening them into the gold-spattered streets.

Behind them, skaven poured out of the wounds in the air, a brown-black stream that spread like sewage

gushing from an overflowing drain to swirl through the ruins. The speed with which the creatures scurried into cover was unnatural. Here and there a verminous rifleman would rise up and bullseye a Stormcast Eternal, the shot so powerful it punctured sigmarite armour and flesh, bursting back out to spatter the ruins with gore.

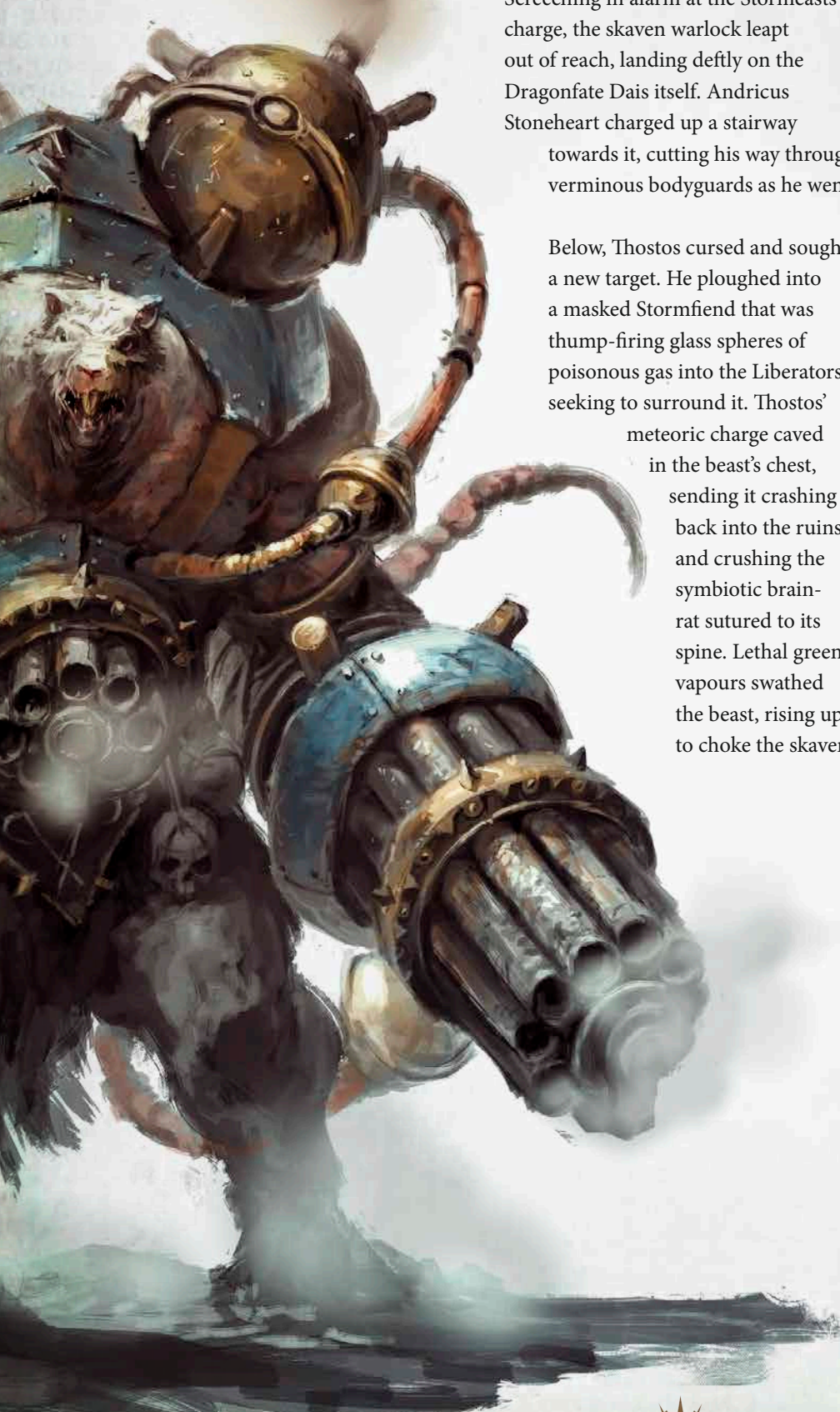
Lord Thostos led a spearhead wedge in counter-charge, only to be met head on by a stream of liquid warpfire from the cackling creature skulking amongst the gun-armed Stormfiends. Tongues of black flame burned into Thostos' Decimator escort, melting them to stinking slurry inside their armour. Thostos himself shimmered golden in the flames, his footsteps clanging loud as his body spontaneously transmuted to invulnerable sigmarite. He pounded on, the iron-banded halberds of Stormvermin attackers snapping upon his metallic hide as if they were no more than twigs.



## STORMFIENDS

Created from a disturbing process involving a blend of arcane science, blasphemous biology and cartloads of raw warpstone, skaven Stormfiends are the creations of diseased minds. They have the strength to batter down castle gates and armaments powerful enough to reduce those cowering inside to a gory paste. These potion-swollen monsters are born from the breeder alchemy of the skaven warrens, then have experimental weapons fused to their limbs with strange crystalline tools that mutate the wielder as much as the creation. Melded to the back of each Stormfiend is a twisted rat-thing little bigger than a human child, its bulbous brain lending a low cunning to these otherwise demented shock troops. The Stormfiends' usefulness is not restricted to the battlefield, either – they make formidable bodyguards and excellent sappers, their warpstone-powered drills, grinder-maces and ratling cannons allowing them to bludgeon and bore their way through not only rock, but even the cracks that the skaven have forced between the worlds.





Screeching in alarm at the Stormcasts' charge, the skaven warlock leapt out of reach, landing deftly on the Dragonfate Dais itself. Andricus Stoneheart charged up a stairway towards it, cutting his way through verminous bodyguards as he went.


Below, Thostos cursed and sought a new target. He ploughed into a masked Stormfiend that was thump-firing glass spheres of poisonous gas into the Liberators seeking to surround it. Thostos' meteoric charge caved in the beast's chest, sending it crashing back into the ruins and crushing the symbiotic brain-rat sutured to its spine. Lethal green vapours swathed the beast, rising up to choke the skaven

weapon-teams that had taken position in the ruins and send them tumbling into the streets. Thostos emerged unharmed from the mist, his hammer and sword dripping blood as he cast about for more foes to slay.

In the shadow of the Dragonfate Dais, Lord Vandus was locked in battle against a brute with whirring scythes instead of fists. Calanax lunged and bit off its head, but somehow the Stormfiend fought on, one scimitar-like blade piercing Vandus' pauldron and reopening the wound Maerac had dealt him. The Lord-Celestant cried out in pain, desperately backhanding the hammer Heldensen into the beast's torso and sending it sprawling to the ground. He had barely regained his balance when a ragged split in the veil ripped wide nearby. A pair of lumbering Stormfiends barrelled out, warpdill arms punching the air.

This time the Stormcast Eternals were ready for them; winged Prosecutors swept down, blinding the beasts with hurled hammers of force even as Vandus spurred Calanax into a leap that pushed one of the creatures back into the ether it had crawled from. Heldensen looped round, connecting with such elemental force that the second Stormfiend collapsed in a mass of broken bone and scorched flesh.

From an adjoining mountain pass rolled a crackling war engine, a mill-wheel contraption with sparking blades that sent green lightning crackling into the Judicators firing upon it. It crushed a pair of Liberators under its careening bulk as it came on at terrific speed



through the battle lines drawn up to intercept it. A bolt of green force shot out, blasting Calanax to his knees right in the war engine's path. Vandus sought to spur his mount aside, but Calanax would not rise.

Ionus Cryptborn thundered up the stairs of the Dragonfate Dais, raising his reliquary high. He chanted the oath of the Great Shatterer, his words amplified and sent skywards by the dais' strange magic. His prayer was swiftly answered. A column of raw

energy thundered down scant metres from Vandus and Calanax, blasting the oncoming Doomwheel to a scattering of smoking splinters and scorched fur.

The Stormcast Eternals roared to the skies, redoubling their assault on the armoured ratmen that had sought to cut them down. The musk of fear soured the air as the verminous horde realised its leader had fled rather than face retribution. A shrill screeching echoed through the streets as the skaven army turned tail and ran,

skittering away into the ruins like ghouls fleeing before the dawn.

Vandus bellowed his jubilation, clanging his hammer loudly against the blade raised by Thostos before saluting his Lord-Castellant, Andricus Stoneheart, who stood in the ruins above. Then Vandus' joy died as he saw the Lord-Castellant buckle and fall, a smoking bullet hole in his forehead. Andricus' body vanished in a blur of light a moment before it could hit the street.

**‘We cannot call upon the God-King’s beneficence again,’ protested Vandus.**  
‘The others look to us. We must show strength, not weakness. And how are we to speak to the heavens?’

‘Call upon the Great Drake instead,’ rumbled Thostos.  
‘This dais was raised to honour him.’

‘But... I know not how,’ said Vandus, ‘I am no drake.’

Below the Lord-Celestants Calanax roared, leaping up the stairs to join them atop the dais.

‘My son!’ boomed the Great Drake Dracothion. A ripple in the sky resolved into a smiling reptilian face, its teeth the glimmer of stars and its coils the swirl of nebulae.  
‘How fare the wars of men?’

Calanax roared, his dragon-tongue inscrutable.

‘We have a boon to ask of you, mighty one,’ called Vandus, after the two drakes had concluded their private discussion. ‘We must find the Eldritch Fortress that once crested the Shattered City.’

‘A dark place, yet with a heart of light,’ said the zodiac-beast. ‘I saw it rise. It bathes within the Crucible. You seek to reach it? To claim the Hammer of the Stars?’

‘We do,’ said Lord-Celestant Vandus.

‘Then the sea of silver must cool,’ mused Dracothion. ‘It has been long since I dared the wyrm Argentine’s fires. Go swift, then, whilst his will is diverted. May the heavens shine upon you, noble Calanax.’

A million shooting stars streaked across the sky, shimmering into the west. Vandus watched as under the Crucible’s dimming disc, constellations writhed. Slowly, impossibly, the Argent Falls slowed, solidified, and cooled into a solid, lumpen mass of precious metal that stretched all the way to the vaulted skies above.

A silken song haunted the silence that fell across the valley. With ethereal grace a hundred of Celemnis’ flying swords flew to embed themselves in the silvered mass like the rungs of a ladder.

‘We climb, then,’ said Thostos.

‘Aye,’ said Vandus. ‘We climb. All of us.’



## CELESTIAL VINDICATORS

The Celestial Vindicators were forged not from those who implored Sigmar for salvation, but from those who demanded a chance for retribution. Their close-knit brotherhoods are united in their burning hatred of Chaos, and none lay claim to a graver calling than the Warrior Chamber of Thostos Bladestorm.

Its phalanxes are like natural disasters given form; once unleashed upon the foe, they will fight with great fury until the last spark has been extinguished from their bodies. Each warrior has a tale of atrocity and madness in his past that drives him on like a raging engine of destruction.

Thostos' chamber, known as the Bladestorm, is treated with caution even by its allies. When the killing wrath is upon them, there is little that can stop their rampage.







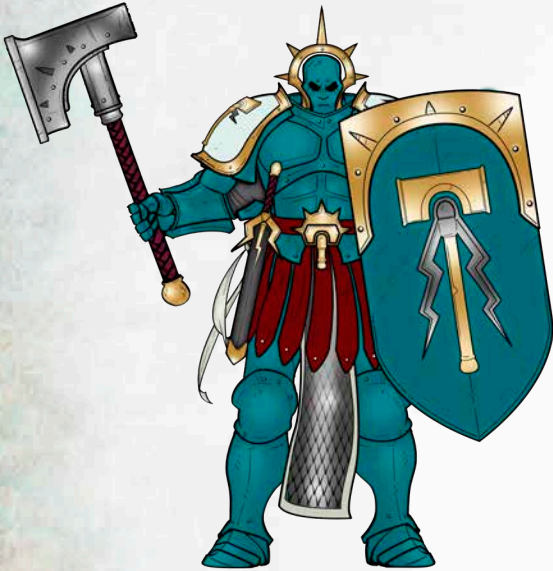
The crackling volleys launched by Judicators can slay even the mutant war-beasts of Chaos.



Sigmarite axes raised, the Decimators challenge the foe to attack.

# CELESTIAL VINDICATORS

Clad in their interlocking armour of cerulean, white and gold, the Celestial Vindicators look every inch the conquering heroes. Yet this noble aspect hides the killing fury burning in the breast of each and every warrior.



Like wrath incarnate, the Celestial Vindicators fall upon their foes with bellows of rage. They harbour an especially vehement hatred for the Ruinous Powers, a loathing that manifests itself as explosions of furious violence whenever they enter battle. Retribution is foremost in the minds of these Stormcast Eternals, a bold and noble cause that is reflected by their striking panoply of war.

Upon their shields, the hammer and lightning icon shared by Stormcasts of the First Striking is picked out in

glinting gold, while the same shining hue haloes their helmets and glints at the edges of their shoulder guards. Their armour is a rich cerulean shade, a colour that crackles vividly in every bolt of lightning the Vindicators ride into battle.

Against these deep, rich colours, the bone white of the Celestial Vindicators' shoulder guards stands out in striking contrast, the better to show off the blood of tyrants and Chaos worshippers that spatters them by battle's end.



The plume on a Liberators-Prime's helm can be painted to indicate his chamber. This Liberators-Prime belongs to the Warrior Chamber of Thostos Bladestorm.



This Liberators is armed with a warblade and carries a sigmarite shield. The rest of the Liberators in his retinue will bear the same armaments.



After carefully clipping your model from its sprue and assembling it with Citadel Plastic Glue, undercoat it with Macragge Blue Spray. Take care to ensure an even coat.



Next, paint the armour Sotek Green, then use Retributor Gold for the golden trim and details, and Celestra Grey for the tabard trim and other areas of white.



A wash of the colours in the Citadel Shade range adds contrast and brings out detail. Use Nuln Oil on most of the model and Reikland Fleshshade on the golden areas.



Use Citadel Layer paints to bring colour and definition to the raised areas. For this stage use Sotek Green, Retributor Armour and Ulthuan Grey.



Highlight the model's edges, using Temple Guard Blue on the armoured areas, Runefang Steel on the gold and White Scar to pick out all the white details.



Apply PVA glue to the base and cover it with Citadel Sand. Drybrush the sand Screaming Skull. Once dry, add Middenland Tufts with PVA glue. Paint the rim Steel Legion Drab.





**THE**  
**B** **LIGHTED**  
**REALM**



## GHYRAN'S PLIGHT

**The Jade Kingdoms were beset by the legions of the Dark Gods. However, while Queen Alarielle still lived, the seeds of hope survived. Seeking to renew an alliance long withered, Sigmar committed a great force of Stormcasts to the Realm of Life – and in doing so, began a new cycle of war.**

Relentless as the waters of a filthy flood, Nurgle's armies flowed in great number across the Jade Kingdoms. For five centuries their war of corruption had raged. Rot-clad daemons and bloated Blightkings carved down all who stood before them, their victims' screams smothered by the drone of a billion flies. Vile contagions thickened the waterways into phlegmy gruel. The ragged banners of Nurgle jutted from every horizon, and entire civilisations turned to the Plague God's worship rather than fall to the sickness that ravaged their lands.

Life, however, is as adaptable as it is tenacious. From within the vale of Athelwyrd, hidden deep in Rotwater Blight, Alarielle directed her subjects in their war against the armies of Grandfather Nurgle. Though vast woodlands withered and corrupted shimmerfalls rained poison upon the lands, still the sylvaneth hosts fought on. Yet, gradually, the horrific grind of the War of Life wore upon Alarielle's spirit. Just as summer must give way to winter, she retreated into cold dormancy, leaving her minions to struggle on as best they could.

Noisome fogs and vast clouds of daemonic insects swarmed across the skies, and it seemed as though Rotwater Blight faced its final days. But then came the thunder, and with it, Sigmar's mighty storm. Exploding from the heavens amid blasts of crackling power, the Stormcast Eternals brought both salvation and retribution. Long ago, Sigmar and Alarielle had been allies, and now the God-King sought to reforge those bonds. The Knights-Azyros took Sigmar's light to the dark places of her domain, bearing their master's word to the brooding queen.



Meanwhile, Sigmar's Stormhosts flashed down to seize critical Realmgates. Though all faced battle, none was more costly than the fight before the Gates of Dawn. Here, Lord-Celestant Gardus' Hallowed Knights fought the daemon legions of Bolathrax, the Great Unclean One. The battle saw reinforcements hurled in from both sides, and there the sylvaneth offered their first true gesture of aid to the Stormcasts. Death filled the forests, a thousand souls slain with each passing minute. Determined to close the corrupted Gates of Dawn, and unable to best Bolathrax, Lord-Celestant Gardus plunged through the Realmgate itself. Lured after him, Bolathrax's bulk brought the gates crashing down. This sacrifice brought victory, but left Gardus stranded in the hellish garden of Grandfather Nurgle.

**G**ardus' breath rasped loud, cutting through the fevered pound of his heartbeat. Every step was a herculean struggle, dragging his limbs through thigh-deep, sucking ordure. Were it not for the fires of faith burning within his breast, he would have been dead days ago.

'Only the faithful,' he gasped, 'only the faithful.' The words escaped his bleeding lips again and again. They had become a mantra that kept his limbs moving, kept his abused lungs snatching in filthy breaths.

'Why dost thou flee, little morsel?' the voice boomed from the haze behind him. 'Can we not promenade Grandfather's glopsome gardens together?'

He had fought the daemon, and been found wanting. In this place, so close to the seat of Nurgle's power, he stood no chance at all. So Gardus fled, on and on through the endless filth. He forced down a choking giggle of madness at the thought he might keep doing so forever. Yet suddenly, the haze ahead lit with a flickering, golden light. So beautiful was the sight that his clotted breath caught in his throat. Wherever that glow originated, it could not be of this hideous realm. Feeling a surge of hope, Gardus pressed ahead, wading on toward the swelling, lambent light...



# LORD-CELESTANT GARDUS

**There are none in Sigmar's hosts more devout than Gardus, the Steel Soul. So strong is his fortitude that the curse of the daemon can gain no purchase upon him. It was Gardus that Sigmar sent against the hordes of Nurgle, but even he did not realise just how sorely the Lord-Celestant would be tested.**

The qualities of honour, duty and sacrifice run so deep in Gardus they have come to define him. Even as a mortal man, when the Lord-Celestant was merely Garradan of Demesnus, his quiet strength was the foundation for an entire community of healers.

Garradan worked for many long years to bring succour to the sick and the cursed of Demesnus Harbour. His earnest goodwill and impressive physical presence won him many acolytes, with plenty of admirers amongst them. Garradan never put his own needs above those of his flock, even forsaking sleep for long weeks.

His constitution was legendary; not once did he contract an ailment from the moss-lepers and mildewed starvelings he tended from dawn until dusk. Though many suspected it, his true calling only became clear when the hospice of Grand Lazzar was attacked by the madmen of the Skinstealer tribe.

With a four-foot iron candlestick in each hand, Garradan went about the defence of his colony with chilling efficiency. Blood splattered white sheets once more, spilled not in the name of mercy, but in anger. When Garradan was finally put down by a spear thrust from behind, he fell with

a prayer on his lips. It was a plea to the stars themselves, a last request for the strength to smite those with cruelty in their souls, wherever they were found.

Great Sigmar listened well – Garradan was taken up to Sigmaron and given new life. In the Gladitorium his talents as a warrior surprised everyone – even Gardus himself. Seeing the mark of greatness upon him, Sigmar elevated Gardus to the rank of Lord-Celestant. When the Storm of Sigmar broke, Gardus was hurled to the swamps of Ghyran, a dire duty ahead of him. And beyond the gates of reality, an even fouler fate awaited...



## LORD-CASTELLANT LORRUS GRYMN

The only warrior ever to have fought Gardus to a standstill in the Gladitorium, Grymn is the rocky cliff upon which many a tide of blades has broken. His fellow Hallowed Knights claim that Grymn could wear down a daemon lord – not just with parrying blade and indomitable stamina, but with impromptu battlefield lectures on proper bladesmanship and correct footwork.

Despite the fact that he shows friendship only to his beloved Gryph-hound Tallon, Grymn is a valued asset in the ranks of the Hallowed Knights. Given orders to defend a fellow officer or a site of power, Grymn will give every iota of his attention to the task, barking orders until an impenetrable bulwark of shields and blades surrounds his charge. Now the Lord-Castellant's stubbornness may well prove the difference between victory and defeat for his Stormhost, for with the loss of Gardus, it falls to Grymn to guide the Hallowed Knights through the treacherous lands of the Realm of Life in his stead.





## TO SILENCE THE DIRGE

**The Gates of Dawn were closed, Bolathrax and his horde banished. But Nurgle's taint remained. As the fog of war faded, a deeply unsettling note rang out, driving the sylvaneth to flight. The Stormhosts, sent back from Azyr to win Alarielle's assistance once more, would first have to destroy its source.**

Gardus was gone. The phrase was muttered over and over, not only amongst the Hallowed Knights, but the ranks of the other Stormhosts too. The best of them had plunged into the hellscape of the Realm of Chaos, in the process collapsing the gate behind him. In that dread realm, the God-King holds no sway, and it was whispered that the fate of a Stormcast Eternal lost there would surely be dire indeed.

After the fall of the Gates of Dawn, Sigmar had recalled the depleted Stormhosts and issued them with a new charge. They must return to the

Realm of Life in search of Alarielle. Her location was concealed even from the God-King's eyes, but he despatched his warriors to Rotwater Blight, hoping they might seek her out there. The Stormcasts' mood was sombre, for the combined force of Astral Templars and Hallowed Knights still numbered less than half their original strength.

Even as the Stormhosts struck the loam, their ears were assailed by a terrible noise – it was the Dirgehorn, a dread artefact known throughout the lands for its unearthly sound. The hideous drone rolled through

the valleys as a wave of pure discord, infecting the ears of all those Stormcast Eternals who heard it with thoughts of despondency and gloom. Every blast withered healthy shoots and turned green leaves black; every tree and rock that echoed with its sonic malignance sprouted a new clutch of boils and buboes. Its effect upon the sylvaneth watching from the tree line was worse still. Crying out, the forest spirits clutched their heads with palsied fingers, their bark-like skin growing cracked and pale. Seeking those few sanctums that remained beyond Nurgle's reach, the sylvaneth fled.



Climbing atop a twisted stump, the Lord-Castellant of the Hallowed Knights, Lorrus Grymn, shouted to the shaken Stormhosts. Their course was clear. They would have to destroy the source of this dread sound if they wished to liberate Rotwater Blight from its curse. The truth held in each bellowed command was like a clarion call, cutting over the droning that filled the swampy forest. Zephacleas of the Astral Templars saluted Grymn, a high honour from a Lord-Celestant. As a gesture of respect to their brother Stormhost, Zephacleas and his warriors followed Grymn into the twisted forest.

With a clear mission ahead of them, the Stormcast Eternals found focus. Retinue by retinue they slogged through the stinking mire, Prosecutors winging above as they guided their kin to firmer ground. Though the Dirgehorn's blare made it all but impossible to talk, the Stormcast Eternals' training saw them fall into

rough groups, then ordered phalanxes as they marched along the mould-spotted trails. The blaring noise was emanating from the vine-choked hills overlooking Rotwater Blight, once the site of intense war between the sylvaneth and the forces of Nurgle. Though it pained them to get closer, as long as the noise grew slowly louder, the Stormcast Eternals knew they were



**The Dirgehorn was originally hewn from the skull of a giant plaguebeast.**

on the right path. The Stormhosts struggled on through belching quagmires, hillocks of dead insects and corpses of chain-throttled oaks that moaned for help at their passing. Above, the skies swirled sallow puce, deathly grey and bruised yellow, here and there shot with red, like infected fluids spilling from a long-wounded gut. With every new day, the dolorous moan of the Dirgehorn grew louder.

Grymn bade the Stormhosts take rest every other day, yet so powerful was the demoralisation spread by the blighted realm that they could find no peace. Some amongst the Stormhosts, their spirits sapped by the hideous noise, found they could not rise without being torn from the loamy earth by their fellows. At the fore, however, the Hallowed Knights pressed on, their silver armour shining like a beacon for the others to follow. They had their duty, and they would meet it no matter the cost.

## GLUHAK, THE CRUSTED BLADE

Born upon a fever victim's deathbed many centuries ago, the Beastlord Gluhak has a brutish appearance that belies a cunning mind. It was ancient Gluhak that laid the traps, brewed the poisons and organised the hunting sorties that – over the course of a week-long hunt – brought the elder beast Brondtos to its knees. Though the creature was unkillable, one of its many horns was hacked away by Gluhak's mutant giants and consecrated in the name of the Urfather, Nurgle.

It is this artefact that Gluhak dragged up to Profane Tor and fashioned into a brayhorn so powerful its rasping note can be heard by Grandfather Nurgle himself. Gluhak tells his tribe that any who sound the horn without the Plague Lord's permission will sink into the loam, never to surface. In truth, his jealous guardianship of the Dirgehorn stems not from zeal, but from a desire to personally twist and pervert every hale and healthy life form in the Jade Kingdoms.





The champions of Nurgle's armies soon heard of the invading army's approach, for news of the Stormhosts' arrival had reached them via buzzing blightfly and scurrying pox rat. The mightiest amongst them, a coven of three mutant lords whose star was waxing high, commanded their lieutenants to wait. They were content to plot their next confrontation, stacking the odds in their favour whilst letting the corrupted realm's horrors take their toll. The strategy was sound, for the blighted lands were challenging even the most indomitable of Sigmar's warriors.

At the Lake of Screaming Reeds, the Stormhosts came under attack from bulbous rot-flies and squamous daemon toads bigger than bulls. Sticky tongues yanked Liberators into the mire, yellow fangs biting through their armour before volleys of arrows burst the vile creatures in explosions

of stinking pus. At the battle's climax, Zephacleas of the Astral Templars fought the toad dragon Ga'Blorrhg, but his blade was unable to penetrate the beast's blubbery flesh, for the creature had grown gigantic on a diet of tortured souls. Only with the aid of the Hallowed Knights fighting as a single mighty force could Zephacleas contain that enormity's rampage. The valour of the Hallowed Knights' Paladins allowed their brothers to force past, even as Ga'Blorrhg crushed those warriors at the fore into the suffocating muck.

Onward to the Grove of Blighted Lanterns they went, thinking the clearing's lambent lights might be a sign of succour, but instead finding them infested by daemon insects that proved poisonous foes indeed. After another half day's trudge, the battered Stormhost vanguard marched

into a rain of arrows south of the Greenglow Lake. The Prosecutors winging beneath the storm-wracked skies spotted stump-horned ungors swarming the forest ruins, and the Stormhosts charged in, scouring the tumbled buildings of beastmen. Most of the ungors were quick to retreat, but the bleating screams of those left behind rang out, drawing dozens of Jabberslythes from their swampy lairs. So hideous were these creatures that an invisible wave of madness preceded them, driving many a Stormcast Eternal to his knees in despair before the beasts could be fought off.

With the Dirgehorn's dreadful cacophony growing ever louder around them, the Stormhosts found that their war mantras were drowned out completely. The long march to free Rotwater Blight was fast becoming a waking nightmare.

**L**et them come,' said Gutrot Spume, briny tentacles stroking his pock-marked axe, 'I relish the chance to sully something fresh.'

'Good old Gluhak's herd will keep them occupied, should his Jabberslythes fail,' said the sorcerer Slaugoth. His jowls wobbled in silent amusement. 'That horn proved quite an asset. I shall miss its godly flatulence.'

A greataxe arced through the air to slam into a fallen yew. 'There is little to find amusing,' came the sonorous voice of Torglug. 'These invaders are disrupting the plan. We are killing them and renewing the search.'

'As you have said,' sighed Spume, flicking muck onto a clean patch of his own armour, 'several dozen times.'

'They are making for the hag tree,' continued Torglug, rising up to his full height. 'Spume, your Drowned Men are stopping them. Sparing a few, though. Grandfather is wishing to find new test beds for his plagues.'

Spume turned on his heel and stomped away, smacking a Blightking from his path with the flat of his axe.

'Slaugoth,' continued Torglug, 'you are tainting the skies. Bringing juicy scents for the Deluge to follow.'

'And what about you, my dear?' said the obese sorcerer.

A scythe-wielding warrior emerged from the trees, whistling a harvest tune. 'He shall do as we tell him,' the newcomer said, 'for his role is the most vital of all.'







# TORGLUG THE DESPISED, LORD OF PLAGUES

**Torglug is one of Nurgle's executioners. His great rusted axe is the bane of warrior priests, ogor kings and daemon despots alike. Through force he rules a coalition of daemons, beasts and men.**

Torglug has been ravaged most mightily by diseases and plagues, and has long since found allies in pain and despair. These he brings to all who oppose Grandfather Nurgle, for there is nothing Torglug despises more than ungratefulness and the cowardice of those too frail to embrace Nurgle's vision. The fact that he once opposed his patron bothers Torglug greatly, and he is keen to wash away the memory of his defiance in a tide of violence.

When he was merely Tornus, warrior guardian of the Everdawn tribe, Torglug was one of the most stubborn defenders of the Lifewells. He fought day and night against the invading hordes, proving so redoubtable that instead of killing him, his foes pitched him into the Pit of Filth. He survived

for weeks, each of which brought some vile new development to his disease-wracked body. But still his pride would not let him accept death. He climbed from the pit on the seventy-seventh day, claimed body and soul by the power he once fought against so hard.

With each new day Torglug's axe reaped more glory for Nurgle. Soon enough he was given the honour of poisoning the Lifewells he had previously defended. The Plague God is a forgiving sort, and Torglug's past life became a distant memory for both disciple and divinity. Since that day, Torglug has risen high in Nurgle's favour. He and his bodyguard of Putrid Blightkings have claimed rulership of several noxious tribes, fighting at the forefront of the hunt for Alarielle, Queen of the Radiant Wood.

**T**orglug is known to the sylvaneth as the Tree-cutter of Thyrr. Many sacred groves have been denuded by the edge of his blade, just as their guardians were hacked down by the score. To the Ghyranites, he is the Despised One, a hero brought low by the slow rot of mortal pride. The Viridian Ogors call him Gut-Spiller, for his axe has opened many a stomach to the foul mist of the Graven Peaks. To the daemons of Nurgle's Manse he is Ironhood the Woodsman, for he has hacked down life-trees by the hundred to better fuel the decay spreading from his master's garden. By a dozen other names he is known, for Torglug's allegiance is a high prize indeed, and his tale is only just begun.



## BLARE OF THE DIRGEHORN

**The Stormcast Eternals were close to their quarry now – so near they could feel its baleful sound as a physical force. The low drone of Gluhak’s fell artefact was relentless. Perhaps, if that vile noise had stopped for even a moment, they would have been alerted to the jaws of the trap closing around them.**

The vanguard of the Stormhosts carved onward through the riotous life of Rotwater Blight. Wherever the path disappeared, Decimators would hack through the undergrowth, vines as thick as tree trunks spraying viscous sap where the Stormhosts hewed a path through the densest areas. More than once the Stormhosts found themselves wandering the same paths they had already cut. When they drew close to the bubbling morass of Greenglow Lake, they kept it to the west in wordless agreement, hoping it would prove a valuable landmark. In doing so the Stormcast Eternals drew too

near the lake’s edge. Tendrils lined with hundreds of gasping mouths lashed out from the lapping waters, catching up the closest warriors and dragging them to a watery doom before Prosecutors could soar in to drive the monsters off.

With every sunset, despair set in a little more. Gone were the tales of warrior virtue that had once kept the Stormcast Eternals hale of spirit as night drew in, their inspiring stories replaced wholly by the Dirgehorn’s blare. Oftentimes, the rolling waves of sound seemed like the laughter of some grotesque god, chortling at the futility of their toil.

Though they fought with every ounce of their being against Nurgle’s dread influence, many a warrior’s thoughts turned to survival rather than conquest. Some desired not to destroy that artefact which had proved their bane, but merely to escape its evil sound.

There were those of the Stormhosts’ number that stumbled off, half-torpid as they wandered through the night. Many sought the silence of Greenglow Lake, diving deep into the brackish waters only to be dragged low by the terrors that haunted its depths. Others strode into the lake’s rippling edges,



scraping blades against the filth that caked them head to toe in the hope they could wash themselves clean of the forest's taint. When the mouth-lined tendrils came for them, their struggles were short-lived; death was a high price, but not without its allure. By now, all had embraced the fact that their souls would return to blessed Azyr, and the hellish landscape that had worn them down would become a distant memory – truly it seemed that to return to the heavens in failure was better than to slog through Ghyran's foulness for even a single hour more.

Not one of those who fell to the Dirgehorn's peculiar curse hailed from the Hallowed Knights. Every night Lord-Castellant Lorrus Grymn made the circuit of a thousand of his brothers, clasp wrists with them in the warrior's handshake and exchanging a few words as he met their gaze. He would not let them forget their duty. The fortifying light of his warding lantern burned off the layers of filth caking each kinsman's sigmarite, returning their armour to a glorious lustre and sharpening blades pocked by supernatural rust.

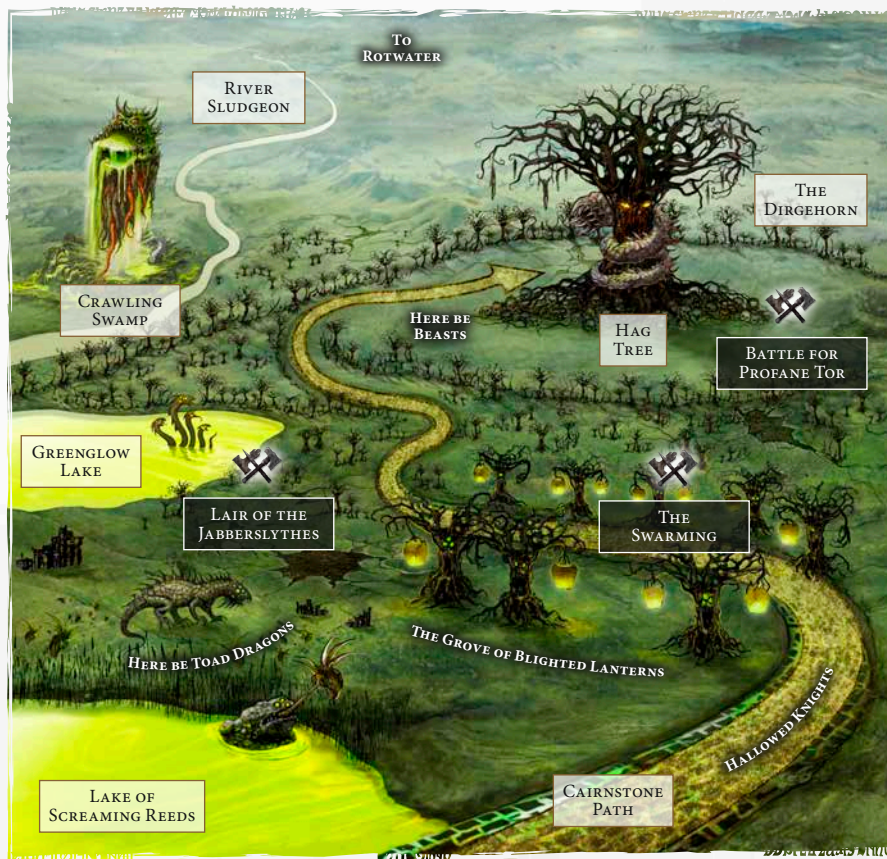
One morning, the Stormhosts found succour from another, unexpected source, when a group of ailing Dryads wordlessly beckoned them towards a hidden glade. Wary of a trap, Grymn sent his Prosecutors on ahead, but they reported back with an account of fresh bubbling springs surrounded by lush green vegetation. The Stormhosts followed the sylvaneth onwards, hoping for a safe haven from the landscape of terrors.

**G**rymn took off his crested helm of office, dropping to one knee and scooping a handful of spring water to his mouth. At his side, his Gryph-hound cocked its head, watching its master carefully.

'At ease, Tallon,' said Grymn, ruffling the beast's neck feathers, 'the water's clean all right.' He was amazed to hear his own words clearly; here, the constant drone that plagued them had receded to a distant hum. He drank again, and his fatigue sloughed away – warm golden light spread through him to every finger and toe. 'In fact,' he mused, 'it may be vital.'

Grymn turned to his vanguard, a broad smile splitting his lips for the first time since his Reforging. The warriors started back, suspecting their leader had finally succumbed to the feverish madness of Ghyran's curse.

'Get in here and drink, you slack-jawed oafs,' he laughed, waving the all-clear to the Prosecutors above. 'Looks like we've found the only pure water in the forest. Better than pure,' he said, crystal-clear droplets glittering from his palm. 'Perhaps our allies have not deserted us after all.'





After the respite afforded by the life-giving springs, the Stormcast Eternals felt a renewed sense of hope. They were tempest-borne warriors, the sons of Sigmar himself, and they were determined to see an end to the terrible curse of the Dirgehorn, no matter the cost.

The Stormhosts climbed against the rise of the hill with stoic and deadly focus. Each retinue's armoured heels fell in unison as they stamped down the queuing black fronds and twisting lianas that grasped weakly at their ankles. So close to the Dirgehorn, the fell artefact's bray was louder than ever before. But now, instead of plaguing their minds with hopelessness and despair, the sound made them incandescent with anger.

When the Stormcast Eternals came under attack by beastmen lurking in the twisted trees, they knew they were getting close. The carnage they wrought

in response was terrible. For every Hallowed Knight sent blazing back to the heavens, a dozen savage mutants were slain, their distorted bodies already half-digested by the black fronds by the time the Stormhosts marched on.

The creatures that sought to bar their path grew larger and fouler. Pot-bellied ungors were replaced by broad-shouldered gors that fought harder than any Chaos tribesman, armed with crude but deadly blades in each hand. Wherever the gors were shot down by a squall of arrows, horn-crested terrors armoured in thick rusted plates rushed in, two-handed axes swinging to hack away legs and sever swordarms. And no frenzied beasts were these – the Bestigors fought to topple their foes with sweeping cuts to the shins before placing the spiked ends of their axes under the masks of the fallen warriors and driving their killing blows home in spurting geysers of blood.

The Stormhosts were undaunted, and fought on step by bloody step, their hammers crushing elongated skulls and jag-toothed faces. When a clearing appeared in the distance, their bestial assailants redoubled their attack – tribes of snorting bullgors barrelled through the foliage, smashing aside lesser beastmen in their haste. Greataxes that could have hacked a Dracoth in two cut through tempered sigmarite as if it were parchment, driving great wedge-wounds into the torsos and necks of those Stormcast Eternals that answered their brazen challenge. Blood spilled down silver armour, gore sprayed from ragged stumps, thatched and matted hides were clotted further still. The driving assault of the Stormhosts ground to a messy halt, all semblance of cohesion broken apart by the sheer ferocity of the beastman attack.

Here and there bullgors prised away armour to gorge on the hot meat of



## GUTROT SPUME, THE LORD OF TENTACLES

The Lord of Tentacles is the commander of Nurgle's plague fleets, vast galleons of rotten wood and putrid caulk that sail the void. In the Realm of Life, this foul armada burst forth from the grimy slop of the Rotwater, unclean fluids sluicing from their hulls as the drowned warriors that once manned their timbers shouted gargling warcries. Spume's flagship is no true vessel, but a titanic rot-kraken – an old ally of Spume's that now drags its way across Ghyran's reaches, a slimy trail stretching behind it as its tentacles uproot elder oaks like saplings.

With such power at his behest and an army of Nurgle's champions behind him, Gutrot Spume has grown arrogant indeed, if his fellow commander Torglug is to be believed. Perhaps, though, it is his indomitable self-belief that is his greatest strength. Only time will reveal whether he is truly a match for the Stormcast Eternals invading his master's annexed realm.



their victims. When the Stormcast Eternals disincorporated into crackles of blue light, the rage of the horned monsters reached new heights. Denied the bloody feast they craved so desperately, the bullgors began lashing out at their smaller kin nearby, grabbing their broken bodies and stuffing them roughly into their fanged maws to gobble down still-warm viscera. The Stormcast Eternals were quick to capitalise on their betrayal, hammers and blades lashing to claim life after life. Distracted, the bullgors were easy prey for the strikes of Grymn's Paladins, lightning hammers blasting through barrel chests and thunderaxes laying open spines.

The Stormcast Eternals gloried in the sight of the Retributors going about their work. Hammers rose and fell with renewed vigour, gleaming swords

impaled throats and burst through chests. Sensing the ebb and flow of battle turning their way, Lorrus Grymn hooked his lantern onto his halberd's tip and held it high, bellowing a rallying call that even the Dirgehorn's blare could not drown out. His brethren took heart, forming into an armoured wedge with the Lord-Castellant at its tip.

Not a single sigmarite weapon went unused as the Stormcast vanguard mounted its counter-attack. The violence grew so intense that the air turned pink with a mist of gore.

It was Grymn that first staggered onto Profane Tor, the corrupted peak where the beast tribes made their lair. He and his Protectors struggled not to choke at the stench emanating from a towering hag tree. Noose-throttled corpses and spiked cages containing twisted

skeletons dangled from its mutated branches. Amongst the piled weapons and trophy skulls stacked against its base was the Dirgehorn itself, curled like a serpent around the tree's trunk. A Beastlord with a crown of horns put his lips to it and blew, the horn's drool-slopping maws yawning wide to blast forth its unholy curse.

The Stormcast Eternals forced their way forwards against the deafening din, the noise so loud and all-consuming they fought to prevent being bowled over. Skin blackened and metal tarnished at the sound. High above, lightning flickered as Sigmar's Tempest rolled in, but even its godly rumble was inaudible over the dirge. Beastmen swarmed in from all sides, driven to utter fearlessness by the call of their dread artefact. Much to Grymn's dismay, they were not alone.



Slogging through the sludge at the clearing's edge came split-bellied axemen, their rusted armour dripping brine. The patches of flesh that bulged around straps and plates were the pallid blue-white of a swollen corpse. At their head was Gutrot Spume, the Lord of Tentacles, his iron blade held aloft in wordless challenge.

Prosecutors launched from the clearing's edge, soaring on wings of light to hurl hammer blows at the Putrid Blightkings even as Judicators sent volleys of arrows burning across the clearing. Distended guts burst, rope-like intestines spilled, breastplates fell away to reveal slither-tongued mouths behind.

Incredibly, the monstrous warriors kept coming. Their lumbering advance accelerated into a charge, and soon the Hallowed Knights found themselves

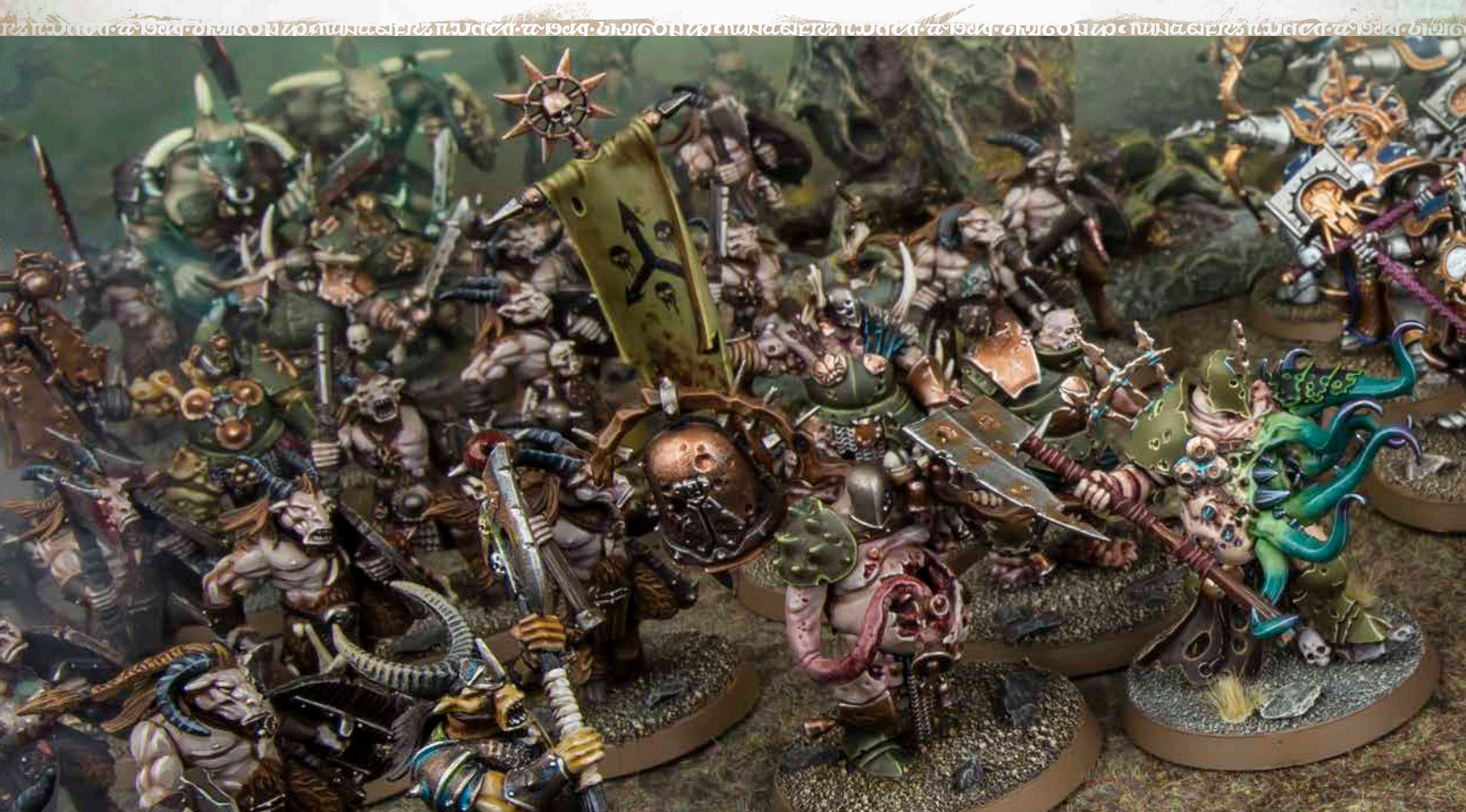
beset by mutant and grotesque alike. Axes and flails whipped left and right, and one after another the silver-armoured warriors were cut down.

The battle surged and rolled across the Profane Tor. Droplets of cerulean rain turned to a shower, and then a downpour as Sigmar's Tempest broke. The gore-streaked tableau was lit by strobing lightning, each bolt revealing a new struggle. Liberators locked shields with froth-mouthed gors, desperate to land a telling blow. Judicators ran sidelong as they launched volley after volley at the cyclopean giants prowling the misted eaves. Bray-Shamans sent swarms of pincer-legged insects crawling into the fray, and armoured champions of Chaos hacked a path through the ranks of their foes.

Still the Stormcasts fought on. Lorrus Grymn smashed and kicked his way

through the melee, barging a two-headed beastman from his path to slam the spike of his halberd into Gutrot Spume's shoulder guard. The Chaos champion wheeled round, three of his tentacles wrapping themselves around the polearm's haft to hold it fast. The Gryph-hound Tallon was quick to intervene, his iron-hard beak cutting through the sinewy appendages to free the weapon once more.

Grymn, loath to be caught out a second time, parried Spume's every strike. Sparks flew from clashing blades, again and again. For long minutes the duel ground on. It was not a showcase of speed and grace, but strength and bloody-minded stubbornness, for both combatants wielded weapons that could fell a tree with a single sweep. Their blows were powerful, but predictable, and neither opponent was able to best the other.





Spume became frustrated, then enraged at this upstart warrior who had the temerity to defy him. In his fervour the Chaos champion left an opening beneath his upper limbs. Grymn spotted it immediately. Snarling in triumph, he slammed the butt of his polearm through Spume's guard and into the beaked maw at his armpit.

The jabbing blow splintered the teeth that ridged its gnashing mouth, and Spume's axe fell as all seven of his tentacles withdrew in a spasm of agony. Grymn raised his blade for the deathblow. Suddenly he was plucked by the hag tree's gnarled branches and hurled across the clearing to slam hard into a moss-encrusted menhir. Grymn struggled to rise. His body was broken, but his duty was done nonetheless. In keeping the horde's champion at bay, Grymn had given his Paladins a chance to reach the Dirgehorn itself.

**D**ecimator-Prime Machus' double-bladed axe swept back and forth with the unstoppable rhythm of a pendulum. He had spotted a tall Beastlord amongst the hag tree's roots, tendrils of magic linking him to the brayhorn that had caused so much woe.

Black blood splashed across Machus' helm as his axe took the head from a four-horned beast. Rot-clad axemen stomped into his path, a wall of blubbery wet flesh between him and the Beastlord he had seen amongst the roots. His vision swam. This close to the repugnant brayhorn, he could barely think straight, let alone fight through Nurgle's finest footsoldiers.

With a yell, Machus flung his axe end over end through the air. Sigmar must have guided his arm, for it hit the Beastlord with such force it smashed him into the giant horn, splitting it along its length. The artefact's great drone rose to a scream as its magical energies roiled out of control. With a titanic boom, the Dirgehorn exploded, and the hag tree with it. A thousand sharp daggers of oak filled the air, enough to impale the flesh of every nearby warrior not clad head to toe in blessed metal.

When Machus' senses returned, he saw only Stormcast Eternals left standing in the clearing, dazed but intact. Beastmen lay broken and bloody all around. Machus hefted his axe. There was red work to be done.





## STOPPING THE ROT

**At long last, the Dirgehorn had been silenced. Saved from the deafening torment of its monstrous din, the sylvaneth emerged from hiding, filled with a fresh desire to wreak vengeance upon the servants of Nurgle. Soon enough they found a target for their ire – the Glade of Horned Growths.**

The quiet that followed the Dirgehorn's fall was no true silence. Flies still droned. Swamp-sludge still bubbled and popped, while rotted boughs still creaked and moaned in the gloom. Yet the relief the sylvaneth felt was akin to the kiss of warm summer sunlight. No longer did their bodies shudder with fevered anguish, and no longer were their thoughts clouded by pain. With this realisation came relief, and then furious anger. The sylvaneth had been tortured to within an inch of their lives, and they would have revenge upon their abusers.

First to raise her voice in wrath was the Branchwraith known as the Lady of Vines. Among the most devoted of Alarielle's lieutenants, the Lady of Vines had never faltered in her prosecution of the War of Life. She had improvised her own commands when her beloved mother receded into melancholy, and had stood as foremost defender of the Shimmertarn for many years. No matter how bleak things became, the Branchwraith had never allowed the embers of her hope to die. Now, that fire was kindled anew by the arrival of Sigmar's vengeful Stormhosts.

Borne aloft upon a throne of coiling lianas, the regal Branchwraith threw back her head and sang out a perfect note. It pierced the Wyldwoods, echoing by secret ways until it reached the ears of her brothers and sisters. With a rustling hiss that grew to a tempest roar, the sylvaneth surged from their places of refuge to answer the lady's call to war anew. Alarielle might still brood on better days, but these sylvaneth would not stand by while others fought their battles for them. The fury of the forest would be unleashed once more.



As they gathered in a glimmering grove, the Lady's warriors clamoured to be heard. The Shrieking Willows should be cleansed, some insisted. Others said the Floating Isles of Talbion should be retaken, or that they should punish those who had winded the Dirgehorn. The Lady of Vines rose upon her throne, her strident tones cutting across the debate. There was one threat she wished to see ended above all others – the noxious fume that had been drifting from the Glade of Horned Growths for many days. This fug rotted everything it touched, and had already reached as far as the Vulturine Geysers. The Branchwraith feared the smog's spread might swallow Rotwater Blight entire. This, then, would be their battle; the sylvaneth would find the source of the entropic fog, and they would put an end to it once and for all.

**S**o tall was the Treelord his shadow engulfed the Lady of Vines. With a creak of ancient wood, he dropped to one knee. The regal Branchwraith gestured languidly, though her leaves shivered in glee.

'Rise, Lorhaldh, my love. You need not bow so low.' The Treelord remained upon his knees, a gesture that sent a ripple of whispers through the Dryads thronging the grove. 'She answers not,' boomed the mighty spirit, 'Thus you are my liege, and to you I offer fealty and counsel both.'

The Lady of Vines felt a surge of hope. Treelords could be mercurial, their inconstant natures making it hard to rally them in common cause, but Lorhaldh was well respected indeed. Her face remained composed. 'As the seasons, then. What counsel give you, great Lorhaldh?'

'Only this, my lady. Much evil is there amid the Glade of Horned Growths, and gnawrats a-many. Like autumn leaves shall our warriors fall.'

The lady's throne of vines writhed as she leaned forward, a vicious smile creasing her lined face. 'Fear you not, my love. Though our foes are rich in pestilence, the god-trees shall aid us against them.'



# KRATSIK OF THE RED BOIL

**The Glade of Horned Growths harbours many evils, but none so foul as the Brotherhood of the Red Boil. At their head comes the rabid Plague Priest Kratsik, whose toxic faith is founded on a ravenous hunger for power. By his command do the swarms of Clan Pestilens infest Rotwater Blight.**

The skaven are a conniving and endlessly selfish race, for whom betrayal comes as naturally as drawing breath. Typically, they offer fealty or worship only so long as it benefits them, and they are always convinced of their ability to manipulate or double-cross those they serve. It is thus extremely rare to find true believers amid the heaving masses of skavendom. Still, Plague Priest Kratsik is amongst their number.

When the Horned Rat ascended to join the monstrous pantheon of the Chaos gods, his Verminlords were dispatched on missions of conquest.

Many a seer or warlord was undone as he attempted to wrest power from the rat-daemons, and many were punished for their temerity. It is in the nature of skavenkind to attempt to outwit their betters; even the Horned Rat himself has struck an uneasy bargain with Nurgle, an alliance born in plague and festering pox. Skaven agents would join the hunt for Alarielle; should they find her, Nurgle would gift them the choicest plagues and a Jade Kingdom in which to enjoy them.

Amongst these chosen minions is Kratsik of Clan Pestilens. Watched over by the Corruptor Vermalanx,

the Plague Priest's faith has proved fanatical. His violent excesses have seen many armies brought low by disease.

This is not to say that the Plague Priest lacks the cunning to manipulate his rivals. Indeed, in his fervour to prove himself the most faithful of the Horned Rat's servants, Kratsik has engineered the demise of countless Chaos champions and skaven warleaders. However, he recognises that manipulating a god is beyond even him. Instead, Kratsik screeches his deity's praise all the louder, that the Horned Rat might favour him with his festering bounty.



## THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE RED BOIL

Plague Priest Kratsik's most fanatical followers are known as the Brotherhood of the Red Boil. Wild-eyed and ferocious, these frenzied killers surge into battle with frothing spittle spilling from their fanged jaws. The corruption that weeps from their blades is so virulent that even a shallow cut can kill, while beneath their matted fur, their hides are wrinkled and leathery enough to turn aside arrows and blades. It is their total obedience to Kratsik that makes the brotherhood truly dangerous, however; at a word from their Plague Priest, the Red Boil will rush eagerly to their deaths without a second thought. Though such bravery seems to stem from fanatical devotion, in truth the brotherhood's insane courage flows from the blessings of Nurgle. Within the brain of each Plague Monk nestles a fat daemon maggot, hatched from the crimson buboes on Kratsik's foul body and utterly loyal to the Plague Priest. Even as these parasites chew hungrily at mouthfuls of rotting brainflesh, they compel their hosts to obey their skaven master in all things.





## AMID THE MURK

**The Glade of Horned Growths squatted amid the Forest of Blight like a vast canker. On orders from Vermalanx the Corruptor, the skaven of Clan Pestilens lurked there in vast numbers, their presence tainting the woods. As ever with the ratmen, their true purpose was obscured by conflicting schemes.**

Rot-smog belched from the bulky censer of Kratsik's Plague Furnace. The skaven priest fanned the hideous fumes, coaxing the seething green clouds to rise like coiling serpents through the Glade of Horned Growths. Corrupted by the portal to Nurgle's realm that pulsed in their midst, the trees here had been infested by grotesque fungi. Foul stalks burst from hollow trunks, fans of moistened matter and fronds of spore-heavy tendrils forming a writhing ceiling that shut out the light. Yet even these horrible growths recoiled at the corrosive touch of the rot-smog.



Whatever those foul fumes engulfed turned swiftly to pus and slime. Already, several patches of the glade had been devoured. Only bubbling mounds of black ooze remained to mark an area that had once housed trees, beasts and a clawful or two of Plague Priest Kratsik's less cautious underlings. Further out, the rot-smog spread and curdled amid the woods, bark sloughing away at its touch while it ate away at land, air – even light.

This was holy work indeed, thought Kratsik proudly, and it was all thanks to the blessings of Vermalanx.



The Verminlord Corruptor had bestowed upon Kratsik an urn of moaning ashes, which now burned within his Plague Furnace to produce the tainted smog. It was Vermalanx, too, who had commanded Kratsik to lead his fecund followers to this glade, to infest and fortify it. The Corruptor had known that the energies spilling from the Realmgate would magnify the rot-smog's powers, and spread its fume far and wide. Kratsik gazed across the murky clearing, over the heads of his sea of followers, to where Vermalanx hulked amid the gloom. The Corruptor was a being that embodied the might of the gods. Whatever the Verminlord commanded, Kratsik would do to prove his worthiness.

A skaven sorcerer crouched amid the shadows, one whose opinion of Vermalanx was quite different. Perched on a jutting root, obsessively flensing the skin from an unlucky rat, Grey Seer Skurrik twitched his tail with

impatience. He had come here, to this stinking, tree-infested place, in pursuit not of war but of study. Kratsik had been irritating him with questions as to his agenda, but it was none of the Plague Priest's concern. In truth, the Verminlord had promised him the resources and opportunity to capture a Stormcast Eternal for dissection. The means to achieve his goal, Skurrik had acquired – a spell of binding seared into his thoughts by the Verminlord as payment for a rune-jar full of old ash.



**The Horned Rat has many guises, amongst them the Great Corruptor.**

Skurrik was eager to use the spell, yet the Verminlord had kept him waiting for days while Kratsik boiled up poisoned smoke from his Plague Furnace. If something didn't happen soon, Skurrik would call upon his rot-thing allies instead. The seer jabbed his claws into his rodent specimen, grinning at the thought. There were pacts that even the Verminlord didn't know about.

It was then the entire glade began to shudder. The jolts were faint at first, but rhythmic, and grew swiftly stronger. Skurrik scrambled to his feet as Kratsik's Plague Monks became aware of the pounding and began to chitter and wail. Skurrik had a horrible feeling he knew what those reverberations were. Footfalls, but not those of mortals; nor even those of monsters. From beyond the glade, screeches rose from Kratsik's sentries, along with the frantic clanging of brass gongs. Huge forms loomed on the horizon, and they were getting closer by the moment.

## THE LADY OF VINES

Gnarled and weathered by centuries of war, the Lady of Vines is Alarielle's seneschal, and one of her greatest generals. The Branchwraith is quite literally the right hand of her queen, cut from Alarielle's wrist and nurtured into a courageous and skilled lieutenant. The Queen of the Radiant Wood sprouted a new hand soon enough, for her veins sing with the magic of life, and the sacrifice was worth making – in creating her favoured daughter from the stuff of her own body she ensured unquestioning loyalty. However, the Branchwraith was born while Alarielle remained in her summer aspect, full of wrath and energy. Thus, as Ghyran's queen faded into torpor over the course of the War of Life, the Lady of Vines remained as aggressive and certain of victory as ever. Just as summer waited for its time to come again, she felt convinced that her mother would one day rejoin the fight. Those doubts that Nurgle sent to worm their way into her heartwood were swiftly burned away by the radiant vigour and certainty that permeated her being.







# VERMALANX THE CORRUPTOR

**A malignancy upon the Mortal Realms, the Verminlord Corruptor known as Vermalanx is ancient and cunning beyond words. In Rotwater Blight, he seeks to enact his most evil scheme yet.**

Vermalanx the Corruptor is the Horned Rat's chief agent in the Jade Kingdoms. All the Verminlord's intellect is bent toward exploiting Nurgle's looming victory for his own malicious ends. Early in the War of Life, Vermalanx realised that the key to victory lay with Ghyran's fey queen. However, though his agents have crept far in search of Athelwyrd, the Hidden Vale, they have met with no success.

Undeterred, Vermalanx has concocted a plan so vile it could poison a sane mind forever. If Alarielle could not be found by her foes, he reasoned, then her own guardians would have to

betray her. To this end, Vermalanx has enlisted the aid of not only Kratsik, but also the infamous vivisectionist Grey Seer Skurrik. Striking a baleful bargain with the seer, Vermalanx had Skurrik's agents creep into the basement of Grandfather Nurgle's manse. Though they risked the very foulest retribution, the terrified ratmen stole an ancient urn, said to contain the ashes of a mighty Treelord trapped for unknown aeons. These ashes Vermalanx gave to Kratsik, bidding the Plague Priest burn them in his Plague Furnace. The resultant rot-smog was so potent it dissolved the fabric of reality.

Knowing that his foes cannot not leave such an atrocity unpunished, Vermalanx has settled his forces around the Realmgate in the Glade of Horned Growths, content to wait. The sylvaneth will come to him, and when they do, he will prise Alarielle's location from them, whatever it takes.

**T**he clearing was thick with writhing shadows and chittering Plague Monks. In its midst towered Vermalanx, eyes glowing faintly amid the haze. From beyond the glade, he could hear the screech of Kratsik's sentries. The jarring shrieks brought a death's-head leer to the Verminlord's cadaverous features. Surely these trespassers were Alarielle's minions, walking right into his trap. They would give him their lady, whether they wished it or not – and when he had Ghyran's faded matriarch in his claws, the spell of transformation would be unleashed through that puffed-up fool Skurrik. Athelwyrd would soon dance to his tune, and once one Jade Kingdom was his, more would follow...





## THE BATTLE FOR THE GLADE

**The sylvaneth launched their attack upon the Glade of Horned Growths, determined to cut off the choking rot-smog. The skaven responded with the ferocity of true fanatics. Yet when others encroached upon the conflict, the swift strike of the sylvaneth wyldwood descended into utter mayhem.**

The ground shuddered beneath the crashing limbs of Rotwater Blight's god-trees. From a distance the strange creatures resembled giant, upside-down oaks lumbering along on thick, silver-leafed branches. Eyes bulging in disbelief, Kratsik's sentries watched from perches amid the warped canopy of the glade as a trio of the towering, impossible tree-things ploughed towards them. Atop the foremost tree, her tendrils entwined with the roots that writhed there like a crown, stood the Lady of Vines. The Branchwraith's head was tilted back, her eyes screwed shut as she enforced her will upon the

elder tree-spirits that bore her into battle. Still, the Lady's mouth quirked, her sap running hot at the sounds of squealing coming from below. The ratmen were right to fear, for an army of Dryads amassed in the hollow trunk below her. Vengeance was coming.

The sylvaneth attack hit the rat-infested canopy of the Glade of Horned Growths with tremendous force. Emitting rumbling booms, the mighty god-trees leaned forward, revealing their trunks to be filled with tendrils and creepers to which the sylvaneth clung. Dryads and Treelords leapt from

within to attack. Bulwarks of bloated fungus were smashed aside, spores bursting from their stringy flesh as they toppled and tore. Maddened skaven scrambled through the twisted eaves, hacking at Treelords with rusted blades, but to no avail. Swarming around the giant sylvaneth came branchlings grown in the hidden places of Rotwater Blight. These spry tree-spirits keened with fury, the desire to slay their foul oppressors resonating in their song. They landed amid the tangled branches of the glade and set about the teeming Plague Monks with screams of indignation. Lashing, taloned limbs



whipped out to tear through rotting cloth and leathery skin. Skaven blood fell like rain, pattering down upon the thirsty, sucking leaves of the glade. Plague Monk corpses followed, tumbling through the branches with their necks broken and their bodies torn.

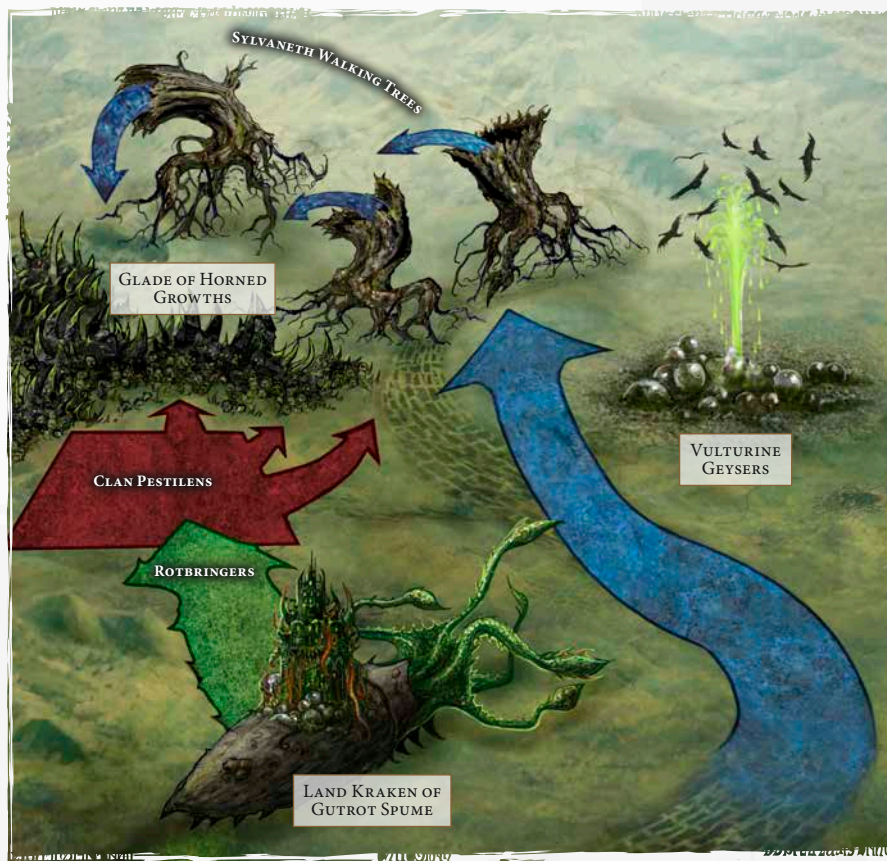
Behind the first wave of Dryads came older, war-weathered spirits meeting the frenzied counter-attack of the surviving Pestilens sentries with implacable fury. In their midst were a pair of Treelords, Lorhaldh and his seed-sibling, Thellembhol. The Treelords climbed ahead of their Branchwraith matriarch, swatting ratmen from the Lady of Vines' path. Thick, coiling branches swept left and right, smashing shrieking skaven from their perches and pulverising them in sprays of gore. Already, another wave of gabbling Plague Monks was scurrying along the branches to meet the Lady of Vines' warriors. Marking their approach, the Branchwraith knew well that the hardest fighting still lay ahead.

Down in the clearing, Grey Seer Skurrik watched an army of sylvaneth stalk from the tree line. While the Plague Monks chanted their foul litanies, Skurrik scampered over to stand in the dirty light that spilled from the Realmgate. Skurrik wasn't sure who was attacking, but he wasn't one to take chances. It was time to call upon the rot-things with whom he had made pacts behind the Verminlord's back. Swiftly, the Grey Seer knelt before the fungus-covered Realmgate at the clearing's heart and scratched a sigil into the muddy ground.

**‘W**ither and split, blacken and crack!’ screamed Kratsik as a thicket of sylvaneth dropped from the trees. He swung his plague censer furiously, fumes spilling over the Brotherhood of the Red Boil as they scurried beside him. At his back, the Plague Furnace rumbled and creaked. Rot-smog billowed from it, melting branches and dissolving those luckless skaven standing downwind.

Somewhere great Vermalanx was lurking in the shadows, watching and waiting for his moment to strike. There would likely be hundreds more tree-things skulking around, too, encircling the skaven encampment in a devious ambush. As though the thought had summoned them, lithe shapes emerged from the treeline. The Dryads darted forward, talons whipping out to impale a band of luckless Plague Censer Bearers.

‘Now!’ shouted Kratsik, ‘Kill-kill!’ At the head of a tide of plague-ridden ratmen, he charged frothing into the fight. There was no better way to prove devotion than with blood sacrifice, after all – and as usual, Kratsik intended to be on the right end of the knife.





The Realmgate's jaundiced glow flickered, then flashed brightly. The pulse of light speared into the sky, a beacon that Skurrik's allies could not fail to see. Sure enough, horns moaned to the south just moments later. Distant, for the moment, but they would be here soon enough, for they had been waiting for the Grey Seer's signal. Skurrik was not the only one keen to capture one of the Stormcast Eternals alive.

The seer was just turning away when the Realmgate issued another pulse. Skurrik span in surprise, tail twitching nervously as a figure in filth-caked, silver armour staggered coughing from the gate. In one hand, the figure clutched a hammer that crackled with aetheric energy, while a slime-slicked cloak clung to his shoulders.

For a moment, Skurrik just gaped. Then the wild-eyed warrior gave a terrible scream, a bellow of mingled horror and

relief. Panic surging, Skurrik chittered a swift incantation and vanished in a puff of reeking smoke.

Left alone before the gate, half-mad with fever and horror, Lord-Celestant Gardus vomited painfully. Only one clear thought remained in the warrior's head. He must find his brothers. They must be told. They must know the secret. Gardus stumbled from the clearing, following the sounds of fighting in the distance.

Meanwhile, war raged on beneath the trees. With the Brotherhood of the Red Boil leading the charge, the skaven had swarmed into battle. The first Dryads to stand in their path were buried by the chittering tide. Though lashing branches impaled dozens of Plague Monks, the sylvaneth were swiftly overrun. Black-slimed blades rose and fell, hacking through bark hides and spraying green sap in all directions. Yet these first Dryads had

been brave volunteers, bait for a trap that the skaven had taken without a second thought.

Now the greater force of the sylvaneth joined the fight, dropping down from the canopy above. Kratsik's forces were caught completely by surprise. The battle soon became a vicious slaughter as the vengeful Dryads choked and stabbed, flayed and throttled. Screaming Plague Monks fell at an astonishing rate.

With twinned booms that shook the ground, the Lady of Vines' Treelord guardians dropped from above, crushing ratmen into paste beneath their splaying feet. Rising to his full height, Lorhaldh sent strangleroots rushing out to entangle a warband of the Red Boil. Even as he tore the frantic ratmen to pieces, his seed-kin Thellembhol waded into the fight, each swing of his long limbs hurling skaven through the air.



## GREY SEER SKURRIK

A rebellious sorcerer with ambitions of conquest, Grey Seer Skurrik is utterly obsessed with the energy that drives living things. For years he has haunted the fringes of Rotwater Blight, preying upon the fallen in his quest to understand the magics of life itself. Skurrik desires to create an army of arcane super-beings, with which he hopes to assume rulership of the skaven Masterclan. Such plans were but fever-dreams until the onset of Sigmar's Tempest. However, having learned of the storm-born power that fuels Sigmar's warriors, Skurrik knows he has found his raw material. To this end, the Grey Seer struck a bargain with Vermalanx the Corruptor. In exchange for a single – admittedly dangerous – theft, Skurrik has been taught a mighty spell that can bind even a Stormcast Eternal for capture. Congratulating himself on manipulating the rat-daemon, Skurrik has allied himself with Vermalanx's forces. Such a powerful fiend would surely see battle against the storm-things soon enough, and when he did, Skurrik would be ready to pounce.



In the midst of it all, the Lady of Vines descended from above, arms outstretched and face a cold mask of fury as her throne lowered her to the ground. Here were defilers and poisoners, those whose kind had driven her mother into sorrowful torpor. None would be forgiven. Singing her song of death, the Branchwraith stabbed and slashed, and Plague Monks died.

Kratsik screeched his fury at the sight of his pox-ridden flock laid low. The Plague Monks were fighting back in a blind frenzy, Dryads falling left and right to their rusted blades, but the sylvaneth attack had wreaked havoc. Worst of all, Vermalanx was nowhere to be seen, seemingly oblivious to his subjects' cries for deliverance.

Turning, Kratsik smashed a Dryad to the ground with his plague censer, then

chattered a command to the embattled Plague Furnace crew. Kicking away the sylvaneth attempting to clamber onto the carriage, the crew-rats wrenched on their ropes and chains. With a discordant clang, the Plague Furnace's mechanism released, allowing its great censer to swing forward in a wide arc.

The moan coming from within the censer became a wail of anguish as the huge metal ball swung into the melee. Its crushing weight pulverised Dryads and Plague Monks alike, but the worst was yet to come. Rolling forth in a great cloud, the rot-smog engulfed a swathe of the battlefield, annihilating everything it touched.

Dryads collapsed, bodies melting away in seconds to leave steaming puddles of sludge. Plague Monks fell too, squealing their last amid the fumes.

Yet as the cloud dispersed, it was clear that the sylvaneth had suffered worse. Dryads by the score simply dissolved. Even noble Lorhaldh was down on hands and knees, one side of his body reduced to a huge, festering wound. His strangleroots thrashed at the skaven nearby, but they darted clear.

Kratsik, seeing his chance, broke into a manic charge. His claws splattered through rotting muck as he ran. He leapt from a fungus-stump, plague censer arcing high. The toppled Treelord raised a branch to stay the blow, in doing so brushing a cloud of vile rot-smog. His features twisted in revulsion as the limb sloughed away into mulch. Kratsik's censer whirled, its smoking ball mashing Lorhaldh's face into rotting wood and rancid sap. Kratsik stamped his feet and screeched in victory as the Treelord fell dead.



At the same moment, a discordant blaring of horns sounded from the southern edge of the clearing. The Lady of Vines turned her horrified gaze from poor, slain Lorhaldh to behold the hulking warriors now forcing themselves between the fungus-riddled trees. As if matters had not been desperate enough, now the bloated servants of Nurgle had joined the fight. Heaps of dead skaven lay everywhere, far more than remained standing, but the Branchwraith's forces were also in disarray, shocked by the sudden deaths of so many of their own.

Bellowing their glottal war cries, the Blightkings charged. Their axes and scythes swung in ponderous arcs, cutting Dryads down to bleed ruddy sap into the muck. As one, the surviving sylvaneth recoiled, panic blooming in their hearts. The Lady hissed her rage, vines lashing out to

punch through the nearest swollen warrior and tear him messily in two. She grasped for the flowing magic of the land, dragging a mass of thorned tendrils from the ground to tangle the Blightkings' legs. But they would not be stopped, stomping down root and liana with pox-riddled blades swinging.

It was at that moment that Lord-Celestant Gardus charged from the trees. Catching sight of the suppurating servants of Nurgle, the Stormcast lord roared with a fury that bordered on madness. Gardus brought his weapons to bear, hammer smashing a Blightking's head from its blubbery neck even as his blade cut the legs from another. The hammer came back down to shatter the Rotbringer's skull. Divine lightning crackled from Gardus as he slew over and over, burning away the slurry that caked his armour and setting the Putrid Blightkings aflame.

So great was Gardus' wrath that he blazed like a newborn sun, white fires lining him like an aura. Try as they might, the Blightkings could not stop his onslaught.

As the servants of Nurgle were smote to the ground, the sylvaneth renewed their assault. Maddened by grief, Thellembhol stormed forward, kicking skaven from his path. Strangleroots lashed out, ensnaring the ramshackle structure of the Plague Furnace. Bellowing his fury, the Treelord wrenched the foul contraption sideways, sending it crashing down into the Plague Monks that surrounded it. Its censer split, spilling a billowing cloud of red hot ashes that melted ratmen to gory sludge.

Kratsik watched in disbelief as his last warriors burned. How could this be? He screeched long and loud,





beseeking Vermalanx for aid, but the Corruptor was nowhere to be seen.

Instead, it was the Lady of Vines who approached, striding from the swirling ashes with her thorned tendrils lashing. Kratsik snarled, baring his fangs. But instead of charging, the Branchwraith halted a stone's throw away, answering his challenge with a hiss of contempt.

The Lady of Vines fixed her eyes on something over Kratsik's shoulder. The Plague Priest span, his snarl curdling into a frightened croak as Thellembol loomed over him. Kratsik spat the first syllables of an incantation that would turn the monster's sap to sludgy pus, but he knew he was already too late.

A massive foot rose, and then slammed down again as Thellembol stamped the life from the vile skaven who had slain his seed-sibling.

**B**ehind a cloud of sorcerous shadow, Vermalanx had watched the battle in gloating silence. The tree-things had come as he had predicted, slaughtering Kratsik and his expendable vermin. The rot-things had been an interesting surprise, but the sudden arrival of the blazing Stormcast Eternal had sealed their doom. As Vermalanx looked on, the silver warrior staggered across the clearing, his holy fires dying. The surviving Treelord moved to block his path, but the female tree-thing waved it back. Vermalanx listened intently as the silver warrior spoke.

'Lady,' said the warrior, 'through great horror have I come. I must return to my brothers. I... I have seen the Hidden Vale, reflected... I can lead them to...' As if realising to whom he spoke, the silver warrior stopped short.

'Fear you to tell your tale, son of Sigmar?' replied the tree-thing. 'You have learned a dangerous truth, it seems. Perhaps your coming shall bestir my mother from darkling dreams. We shall take you to your brothers.'

With that, the tree-thing turned away, her surviving sylvaneth and the silver warrior following. At a gesture from Vermalanx, the Gutter Runners who lurked in his shadow rose and filtered through the trees.

The Hidden Vale, thought the Verminlord. Soon, Alarielle would be his.





## THE GRAND CONGREGATION OF NURGLE

The Chaos-worshipping armies that roamed abroad in Ghyran were collectively known as the Grand Congregation of Nurgle.

Amongst their number were diseased tribes of beastmen, hosts of droning plague daemons, scurrying swarms of Plague Monks and gangrenous Rotbringer warriors determined to claim Ghyran for their own.

Though they were far from the only Chaos forces to assail Ghyran, the armies of the Grand Congregation were led by some of the most potent champions ever to have given their bodies and souls to Nurgle. So great is the Lord of Plagues' desire to take the Jade Kingdoms for his own that he will stop at nothing to claim them, even if it means unleashing every foul spell and contagion ever brewed in his legendary cauldron.







Entropy made flesh, the daemon hosts of Nurgle spread disease and despair wherever they go.



The air itself rebels against the horrendous stench of the Grand Congregation.



# THE GRAND CONGREGATION

Retching foul warcries from between their ravaged lips, the worshippers of Nurgle surge into battle. Clouds of buzzing flies swirl around these befouled warriors, crawling across bloated flesh, ragged cloth and verdigrised plates of armour. Truly, the servants of Nurgle are a vision of horror made real.



Suppurating foulness leaks from diseased rents and fat boils all across the bodies of Nurgle's servants. Everything about these warriors is rotten and foul, whether they are hulking Putrid Blightkings or hunched, chittering Plague Monks. Weapons and armour crawl with rust and pox, their edges stained with poisonous filth.

Flapping robes and cloth are hued in dull greens, browns and greys, caked with muck and teeming with fat lice. Their claws, teeth and jutting horns are the colour of mouldering bone, while

their fleshy hides vary from the pale white of a bloated corpse, to the foul grey of spoiled gruel.

The banners that these disease-ridden warriors hoist aloft display the vile signs of their masters, ranging from the three foul orbs of Nurgle to the jagged rune-scratch of Clan Pestilens. Each of these profane symbols brings horror to the foe in equal measure, for all know that the onset of the legions of Nurgle heralds sickness and woe without end.



Use a selection of different Citadel Shade paints – such as Reikland Fleshshade, Athonian Camoshade and Biel-Tan Green – to recreate the various diseased complexions of the Putrid Blightkings.



The shield of this Putrid Blightking bears many marks of battle. You can create this weathering easily, by applying Runefang Steel in rough patches where the brass has been chipped away.



Clip your model carefully from its sprue and assemble it with Citadel Plastic Glue, then apply a basecoat of Zandri Dust Spray over a Chaos Black undercoat.



Next, apply base colours. Use a mix of Citadel Shades and Base paints; Seraphim Sepia on the flesh, Castellan Green on the armour, and Balthasar Gold on the brass.



Washes from the Citadel Shade range form the next stage. Apply Reikland Fleshshade to the skin and brass, then apply Agrax Earthshade to the armour and weapon.



Use Waywatcher Green, Brass Scorpion, Skavenblight Dingo and Gorthor Brown to add definition, retaining the shading from the previous stage in the recesses.



Highlight the model's details with a Citadel Fine Detail Brush. Use Screaming Skull on the flesh, Straken Green on the armour, and Runefang Steel on the metal.



Glue sand and stones to the base, then paint them Mechanicus Standard Grey, adding drybrushed layers of Karak Stone and Screaming Skull. Paint the rim Steel Legion Drab.



The background image is a high-contrast, atmospheric scene. It depicts a stone floor with a jagged crack running through it, from which a stream of bright orange and yellow lava flows. The floor is made of large, dark, irregular stone tiles. In the background, a wall of stone is visible, featuring a skull mounted on it and a decorative, possibly ornate, structure on the left side. The overall lighting is warm and dramatic, with a strong glow from the lava and a hazy, golden light in the upper portion of the frame.

**THE**  
**GREAT**  
**CRUCIBLE**



# A GRUELLING CLIMB

**In the realm of Chamon, the Heldenhammer Crusade fought through perils both physical and mystical, only to find the Eldritch Fortress ripped from the land. The Stormhosts scaled the solidified silver of the Argent Falls, hoping to find Ghal Maraz's resting place at its zenith.**

Hand over hand the Stormhosts ascended, higher and higher until mountainous Anvrok was but a shadow in the clouds beneath. The Celemnite blades embedded themselves in the soft metal like rungs; where the last of the Stormcast Eternals lifted his foot from a sword, the blade would yank free and hurtle upward to take its place as a new handhold at the top. The Stormhosts were still strong, despite the trials suffered thus far – seen from the city of Elixia, they glinted like a glorious constellation rising slowly over the horizon. Winged Prosecutors orbited like comets around them, Dracoths climbed with talons dug into silver. The

climb took days of hauling, grasping and grinding of teeth. Stormcast Eternals were built for war, not feats of agility, and in their battle plate, each weighed as much as three normal men.

Exhaustion was not the only foe on this fell climb, for dread Tzeentch had claimed even the gaps between the lands. From that bleak space between the Hanging Valleys came creatures of Chaos by the score. Razor-winged skyrays swooped from the nothingness, screaming shrilly. Those not intercepted by soaring Prosecutors dived in, wings slashing at outstretched wrists and spiked tails crunching

into faceplates. Many a blow caused a Stormcast Eternal to miss his footing, or to grasp so hard at a ladder-sword that his fingers were sliced clean away. Boots slipped and grips failed, sending warriors plummeting for long minutes to break upon the rocks of the Vaulten Range – or tumbling away into the dark void, lost even to the reach of Sigmar.

In the far distance, the stardrakes Dracothion and Argentine coiled and fought. The Silver Wyrms had its jaws clamped upon Dracothion's flank; the celestial dragon's bellows of pain mingled with godly thunder rumbling through the void.





In Anvrok far below, many a Warrior Chamber still marched across the valley's ore-laced tracks. Their Lord-Celestants, unconvinced by Vandus' plan to ascend to the Great Crucible, sought Ghal Maraz elsewhere. The Anvils of the Heldenhammer took battle to the copper-skinned beastman tribes that roamed the peaks; the Lions of Sigmar hunted for potential duardin allies and found something far darker instead.

Yet the stardrake had spoken truthfully at the Dragonfate Dais, and those who braved the terrifying climb did not do so in vain. The vanguard eventually gained the lip of the Great Crucible at the edge of the Argent Falls, hauling themselves onto the slick of solid metal that stretched away to meet a distant perimeter of shallow hills. A pall of condensation hung over the panorama. Within it, dark shadows gathered.

**V**andus peered into the mist, trying to make sense of the silhouettes and muffled sounds beyond. Something was massing there. War drums thudded and boomed in the distance.

**'We have a welcoming party,' he mused, vaulting into Calanax's saddle and hefting Heldensen. 'It seems our foes are forewarned.'**

**'The silver grows warm, lord,' answered Ionus Cryptborn. 'Perhaps Dracothion can no longer keep Argentine's fires at bay.'**

**'Alchemy reigns here, even over the stars,' said Vandus. He motioned for Thostos to join him. 'Form a wedge, brothers. This is likely to turn ugly.'**

**'Some of us were never pretty in the first place,' said Cryptborn.**

**'Your first jest, Ionus?' Vandus laughed uneasily. 'Congratulations!'**

**Echoed by the mist, the Lord-Celestant's forced mirth became wild laughter. 'Congratulations!' mocked the mist, over and over. The sound turned to eerie music, then to thunder, then to shouts of hatred and spite. With a rising roar, a horde of fell warriors emerged from the mist.**





The silvery mists thinned, swirled away by invisible hands as if the gods themselves wished a clear view of the carnage to come. The Stormcast Eternals formed up, their Lord-Celestants at their fore. Though more warriors joined them with every passing second, and though dozens of Prosecutors had landed upon the crucible's silvered lip to help haul their kin over the edge, those who had completed the climb were outnumbered many times over. Up ahead, the tribe of Chaos worshippers known as the Bleak Horde was emerging from a jagged confusion of high towers, walkways and bridges. Warband after warband poured down wide stairways to the surface of the Silver Sea. In the far distance jutted a plug of rock, a bowl-like plateau veiled by multicoloured clouds. Vandus could see in his mind's eye that the

Eldritch Fortress sat atop it; even as he witnessed it, the castle – or more accurately the Realmgate under which it had settled – was scrying him in turn.

The Silver Sea was growing warmer to the touch. Dracothion had returned to the Heavens of Azyr to heal the wounds torn in its flanks, and the corrupted drake Argentine was breathing its warp-fires once more. The crepuscular light of the Alchemist's Moon shone down upon soot-black plates as the Chaos horde broke into a charge, the clangour of their war cries deafeningly loud. Rather than setting a shieldwall, the Stormcast Eternals counter-charged, for they had little enough ground without conceding more.

The points of the Stormcast wedge formations struck the enemy line like shovels thrust into a mass of

coal. With their best and brightest at the fore, the phalanxes were all but unstoppable. Head lowered, Thostos ploughed through the plate-clad ranks, smashing aside all in his path as his fellow Celestial Vindicators drove in to widen the breach. Lightning crackled around Ionus Cryptborn as he blasted armoured mutants to steaming heaps; nearby, Lord Vandus cried in triumph as his every blow smashed a hulking brute against the anvil of the hot silver underfoot. Blood flew as Retributors laid about themselves with their lightning hammers; Decimators lopped heads with each smooth sweep of their triangle-bladed axes. At the edge of every Stormcast wedge, Protectors whirled their blade-staves, their tips lashing out to take a life wherever a Chaos Warrior sought to pass their guard. The Warrior Chambers fought together as they had been trained;



hundreds of magical weapons wielded as one. It was a sight that would make Sigmar himself proud.

Their foes cared little, for they had blades to spare. Where their battle line wavered, a pair of disembodied voices rang out in unsettling unison, and the horde pressed on. A semblance of military discipline steered these black-armoured warriors, and the centre of the battle line fell back towards the stairways – in doing so, allowing their flanks to envelop the Stormcast Eternals pushing through their lines.

The war axes and halberds of the Chaos Warriors began to take their toll, biting deep into sigmarite armour and hacking limbs from bodies in welters of glittering blood. Half-armoured mutants stormed from a tall keep, knocking Stormcast Eternals to the ground with malformed claws and club-like limbs. Half-daemon warriors bullied their way to the fore, their



**The Shardgate glows above the inner keep of the Eldritch Fortress.**

strange living blades gibbering in freakish satisfaction as they drank hot blood and gnawed through bone.

Thostos changed direction to veer towards these fell savages, leaning into the fight as he battered his way through the press. He roared in fierce joy, taking a great tally as the mutants found their Chaos-tainted blades, which had cut through plate so effortlessly, rebounding from the living sigmarite of the Lord-Celestant's flesh. Behind Thostos, the last Celestial Vindicators to gain the crucible's lip charged in, their exhaustion burned away by the fires of war as they massacred their mutant foes. Yet despite their valour, they were too few to stem the tide.

Slowly, agonisingly, the battle was turning against the Stormhosts. If the Chaos Warriors pushed past to the top of the Celemnite ladder, those yet to ascend would be at the mercy of their axes, and the quest would end in blood.

## EPHRYX, NINTH DISCIPLE OF TZEENTCH

The sorcerer Ephryx swore himself to Tzeentch long ago, bargaining away his soul in exchange for the ability to enslave magic. He did so not for the sake of mortal power, but in order to claim an entire realm in the name of his Dark God, casting a ritual that would see all Chamon's gates diverted to Tzeentch's Crystal Labyrinth. In aeons gone by, Ephryx oversaw the binding of the Great Shatterer, Ghal Maraz, to this master plan. Over long centuries the sorcerer built the Eldritch Fortress, a skull-encrusted edifice as much a magical siphon as it was a physical stronghold. Harnessed by the castle's keep, the warhammer's magical potential gave Ephryx much of the aetheric energy he needed for his ultimate goal. Since the Storm of Sigmar broke, Ephryx has planned to steal the power of the Stormhosts to supply the rest. Ephryx manipulated events so that allies both mortal and daemonic were aligned to bend the Heldenhammer Crusade to his will. But as with all who seek the boon of Tzeentch, the puppet master is all too often a puppet in his turn...





## TO SPAN THE SILVER SEA

**Beset on all sides, the Stormcast Eternals fought with the fury of lions. Stubborn defence alone would not be enough, for the Silver Sea was growing painfully hot. Only by fighting their way to the bridges that spanned it could Vandus and his kin hope to continue their quest.**

The determined assault of the Stormcast Eternals was devolving into a swirling, desperate melee. Overhead, unseen voices called out commands in the dark tongue, attempting to marshall the overwhelming Chaos force even as Lord Vandus ordered feints and counterthrusts of his own. His efforts were largely in vain, for at such close quarters the battle only grew more frantic. Few amongst the combatants had time to dwell on tactical manoeuvres with so many blades and hammers slashing left and right. The armoured corpses that grew

thick on the ground hindered cohesion all the more. Soon, trampling the dead became preferable to the alternative, for the silver underfoot was yielding and unsteady. Each new footstep pressed deeper into the metal's softening surface as it grew ever closer to melting point. The Stormcast Eternals had to break the deadlock, or friend and foe alike would sink into viscous metal, never to escape.

Thinking quickly, Vandus swept his arm at a swathe of nearby Decimators, shouting for them to forge a path to the

nearest stairway. They went about their allotted task with pitiless efficiency, taking it in turns to swing wide blows with their heavy axes, then peeling off and retreating so that a fresh warrior was ever to the fore. Mutant brutes charged in, axes and weapon-limbs lashing out, but a host of Prosecutors soared overhead to blast them down before they could intercept.

The Decimators found themselves slopping through the corpse-strewn silver sludge, the flesh of their feet searing within their armour. Ahead, a



garrison of Chaos Warriors emerged from the coils of mist still clinging to the towers, wading forward with shields raised to block the Stormcast assault.

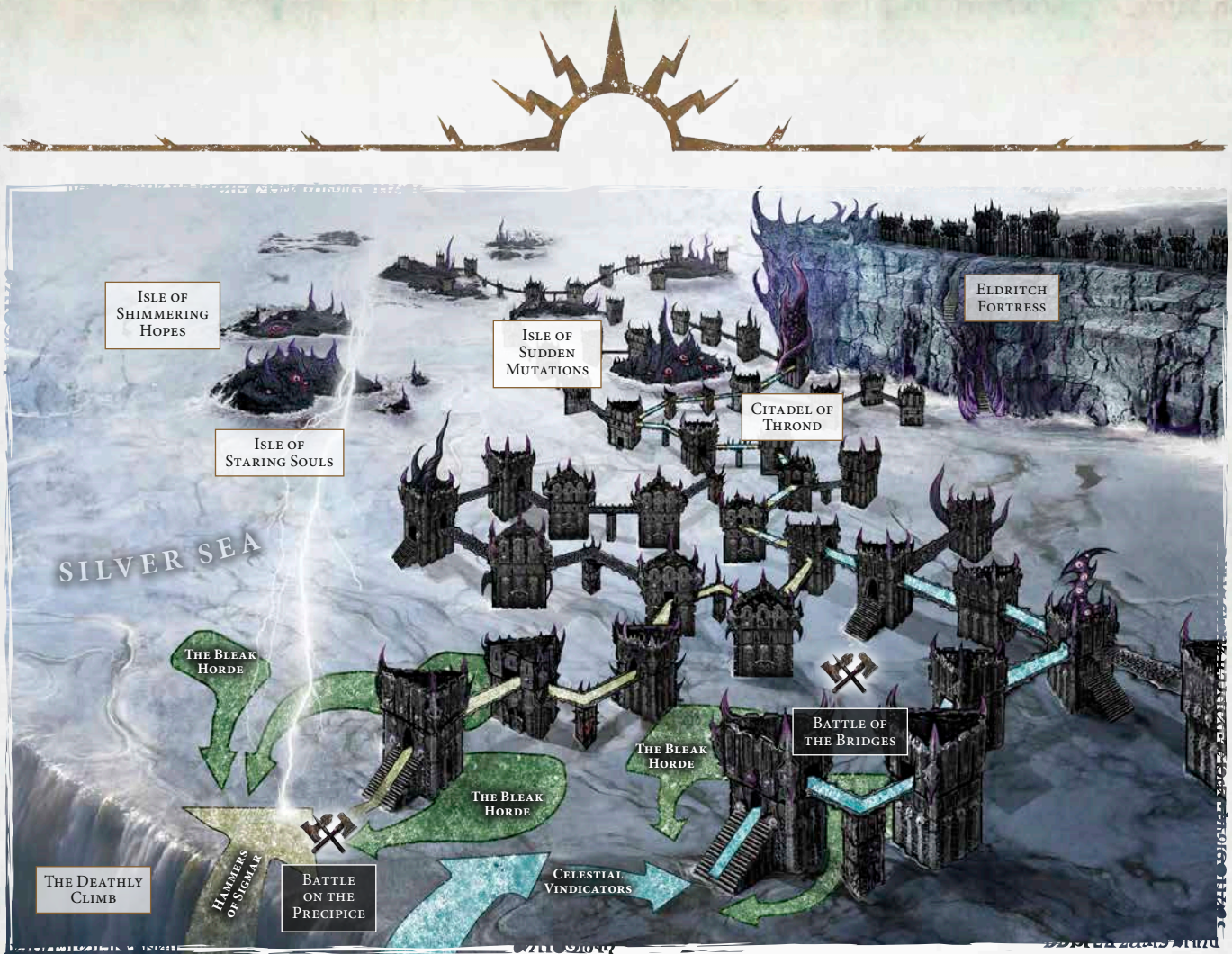
Lord Thostos ploughed into them like a battering ram, his escort of Judicators loosing arrows into those still standing after his rampage had passed. Vandus' Decimators made it to the keep wall, establishing a perimeter so that those Stormcast Eternals nearby could leap to the safety of the ramp. Thostos roared a command, and a spear's throw away his own Decimators followed suit, opening a path for their fellows to reach safety. Rank by rank, the Stormcast Eternals fought their way onto the blood-spattered stairs leading up to the bridges and into the complex of walkways beyond. Behind, the larger part of their crusade fought on.

**I**onus!' shouted Vandus from atop a spiked walkway. 'Make haste!' The Lord-Celestant felt frustration heat his blood. Though scores of warriors had fought to the stairways and beyond, the rest were still intermingled with the Chaos horde. Perhaps a tenth of their number would make it through before Argentine's fires boiled the rest alive.

'There are too many!' shouted Ionus Cryptborn, raising his reliquary. 'I shall forge a path if I can! For Sigmar and Azyr!'

A colossal bolt of lightning shot from the skies to slam into the Lord-Relictor. It coursed through him, shooting across the molten silver to turn every servant of Chaos within a hundred paces to scorched meat. The Stormcast Eternals were empowered and found their passage suddenly unbarred. They surged for the walkways, wading through the simmering metal. Cryptborn was the last to leave. He sank further as he struggled on.

As Vandus watched, a horned hulk of armour and burned flesh surged up from the molten silver, axe drizzling as it carved an executioner's arc. Vandus roared a warning, but it came too late. The blow struck the Lord-Relictor in the face, splitting his head in two as a forester would split a log.



Vandus cried out in horror, leaping from Calanax's back to rush down the stairway. A defensive screen of Protectors closed in front of him, three of their number shoving him roughly back. Vandus stumbled, eyes drawn to the skies as the blue light – all that remained of his friend – vanished upward. Aghast, the Lord-Celestant was hauled to safety.

At the foot of the stairway, liquid silver bubbled and popped. Decimators hacked down the Chaos worshippers clambering to escape the glooming metal below. Hundreds more simply sank, their screams becoming liquid gurgles as their throats filled with boiling, viscous metal. Soon their corpses were claimed by the silver tide.

Brought to his senses by the calls of his Protectors, Vandus felt his anguish turn to hot anger. The Lord-Celestant had lost not only Andricus Stoneheart, whose expertise in siege theory would be keenly missed, but also Ionus, his most trusted advisor and link to the God-King. Lord Thostos was an excellent tactician, but he was all but lost to his battle rage, already out of earshot as he smashed through the hordes choking the western walkways. It was for Vandus alone to command the survivors of the vanguard – less than five hundred warriors in a twisted land thronged with madmen.

The Lord-Celestant vaulted back into Calanax's saddle and rode his Dracoth hard up the stairways. On the walkway

to his left, the Celestial Vindicators smashed their way through the mob of hardened warriors and bare-chested tribesmen that tried in vain to slow their progress. Horn-helmed axemen and tattooed berserkers tumbled from the bridges to plunge screaming in the molten silver below. The sight of their demise brought grim smiles to many in the ranks of the Celestial Vindicators, for their hatred of evil ran deep.

Calanax bounded from walkway to bridge to shattered spar, approaching the front line once more. There, a knot of Decimators hacked a gory path through the warriors of the Bleak Horde. The Chaos forces, sensing their numbers were of little use on such a narrow frontage, began to fall back.



A blaring warhorn rang out, sonorous and deep. The retreating warriors, many of whom were heading for the keeps and towers, broke into a run, some clambering atop the spars and statues of the walkways in their haste to clear a path.

From the maw-like gates of the nearest keeps rode regiments of twisted knights. Calling out in the harsh tongue of Chaos, they lowered their cruel-looking lances and galloped straight towards the Stormcast Eternals. The Decimators at the fore of Lord Vandus' brotherhood were spitted through chests, guts and necks, their axes all but useless against the long-hafted polearms of the foe. The dying Stormcast Eternals vanished upward

in shafts of azure light, and the Chaos knights carried their momentum into the Liberators behind. More lances pierced sigmarite, the knights laughing as they drove their attack deeper still.

Behind the knights hurtled heavy iron chariots, each pulled by an armoured beast with saurian jaws and the barrel chest of a mountain ape. The Stormcast Eternals, unable to move aside on the narrow walkways, charged to meet them – and in doing so, ran headlong to their deaths. Scythed wheels struck sparks as the chariots ploughed into the Stormhost battle line, maiming and killing as they went. Any that survived the tremendous, crushing weight of a chariot's impact were cut down by the halberds and axes of its riders.

Telltale flashes blazed into the heavens by the score. A ripple of shock flowed through the advancing Stormcast Eternals; the Bleak Horde had found a way to break their relentless advance.

Vandus spurred Calanax forward, whirring Heldensen around his head before commanding his beast to leap – not forward into the crush, but sidelong, from one walkway to the next. The Dracoth ploughed bodily into the foremost chariot, bowling the whole construction over into the sea of bubbling metal beyond. Heartened, the Stormcast Eternals fought back all the harder. Decimators and Retributors joined the fray, and soon chariot, knight and warrior alike were reduced to mangled ruin.

**I**t appears, King Throned, that our guests fight on.'

The horn-crowned sorcerer stirred the scrying pool with long fingers before casting a baleful glance at his ally, a giant of a man with a billowing scarlet cloak. 'Clearly harsher measures are called for.'

'My chariots, Lord Ephryx. If not those running the ramps and walkways, then those in the fortress. Such fusions of metal, man and beast cannot be stopped.'

'They must not be allowed to reach the hammer, fool! Your ape-like monsters have already failed,' sneered the sorcerer, 'as have the beasts that pull their chariots.'

'Then perhaps you shall have to risk your own neck.'

'Unlikely,' scoffed Ephryx. 'I have other... *allies*. They will win time for me to harness the energies I need and steal Sigmar's prize away to the Crystal Labyrinth, before the moon's passing changes the silver's state.'

The sorcerer stroked the molten gold of his scrying pool, and the surface shimmered as if alive. A skull-like visage swam in the depths, eyes burning with hate.

'The ones you call Stormcast,' crooned Ephryx. 'They fight to the shadow of the Shardgate. They seek the fortress, and that which Sigmar must not claim.'

'Your sorceries prove weak, then,' said the apparition. 'Why should I help? I have my own concerns.'

'If you consider your strength so superior to mine, it's time to prove it.' Ephryx smiled. 'And Vandus is here.'

'The Hammerhand,' spat the figure. 'I shall march for the Allpoints, and summon a daemon host of my own.'

Ephryx chuckled as the pool grew still. In the alcoves beyond, a two-headed giant nodded to itself, drew a sign in the air, and dissipated in a swirl of dark flame.



# THE LAST ASCENT

**Lord Vandus had taken a desperate gamble. He had led the Stormhosts to win passage across the Silver Sea, but the Eldritch Fortress was still out of reach. Only by harnessing the energies of Chamon at the critical moment could the Lord-Celestant hope to seize ultimate victory.**

The Stormcast Eternals had been roused to the peak of violent indignation by the Bleak Horde's cavalry attack. They struck back at their foes in a hurricane of hammers and blades, the Chaos forces soon reduced to corpses and twisted scrap metal. Clearing a path, Judicators and Liberators put aside their weapons and heaved cadavers over the side as if they were no more than sacks of grain. They would not be stopped, for the fate of the crusade hung in the balance.

Every second spent idle burned Thostos like acid. The Lord-Celestant paced like a trapped lion, eager to begin the slaughter once more. Vandus instead sought enlightenment from the great

constellations above, just as when he had gazed into the void during the Long Calm. He was greatly vexed. Though he could now see the Eldritch Fortress atop its plateau, he knew not how to reach it. The rocky cliff was angled sharply against them, and the muscles of the Stormcast Eternals still burned from their exertions.

As Vandus watched the Alchemist's Moon creep slowly through the sky, an image flickered in his mind. A vision of the great orb's passage around the Hanging Valleys came to him. When it was at its apogee, the silver drake Argentine would shy from its brightness, and the sea of molten metal would set solid once more.

In a flash of inspiration, Vandus had the answer. He rode Calanax to the top of a skull-strewn keep and addressed his Stormhosts en masse, giving a speech that banished the fatigue from their muscles and fanned the spark of righteous fury to an inferno. Ghal Maraz was within their reach – they must claim it, or die in the attempt.

The Stormcast Eternals fought on through the Bleak Horde's warbands, taking keeps and towers one by one as they conquered the Silver Sea. They fought also the land itself, for at times the magical flux that infected it was like a physical force. The moon's arcane influence buffeted both sides with ripples of change, for when clad head



## KING VEXOS THRON OF ANVROK

King Thron is the lord of the Silver Sea, master of the Gorebeast Menagerie and terror of the Hanging Valleys. After enslaving the beasts of the crucible's rugged edge, Thron and his army of monstrous chariots soon brought death to their rival tribes. When the Alchemist's Moon waxes and the Silver Sea sets firm, Thron leads hunting parties across its surface, running down all those who do not pay him tithes.

In the Age of Chaos, Tzeentch cast his malign influence over the people of Anvrok. It was Thron that turned most readily to his worship. The jealous monarch had no intention of passing his crown to his son, and bartered away his soul in return for everlasting life. Thron is slowly realising that this eternity will be spent as a puppet rather than a lord, and his anger at the Changer of the Ways grows with each day. Still, whilst he claims dominion over the Great Crucible, he can still salvage some pride – any who threaten his domain are met with the full measure of his wrath.



to foot in metal, the warriors were like lodestones for the realm's transmutative magics. Here, the combatants found themselves clad in dull lead; there, they were suddenly wearing precious gold, or filigree frameworks of spun wire. When the moon turned their sigmarite as hard as diamond, the Stormhosts surged forward with great alacrity. But ultimately it was the steel in their souls that saw them win out. Their bravery never wavered; even in the face of terrible losses they ploughed on without a backwards glance.

The Stormhosts reached the plateau's cliffs just as the moon rode high.

The moment of truth was nigh, for the skull-clad towers of the Eldritch Fortress shuddered with strange energies as Ephryx's rite of translocation fought to raise it from its resting place once more.

Great was the struggle that took place in the fortress' shadow. King Thron'd keeps studded those reaches, and his warriors were far from beaten. When Retributors took their hammers to the foundations of Thron'd's own mighty citadel, the crusade's intent was finally clear to its foes. The Stormhosts sought not to lay low the horde, but to push past to the true prize.

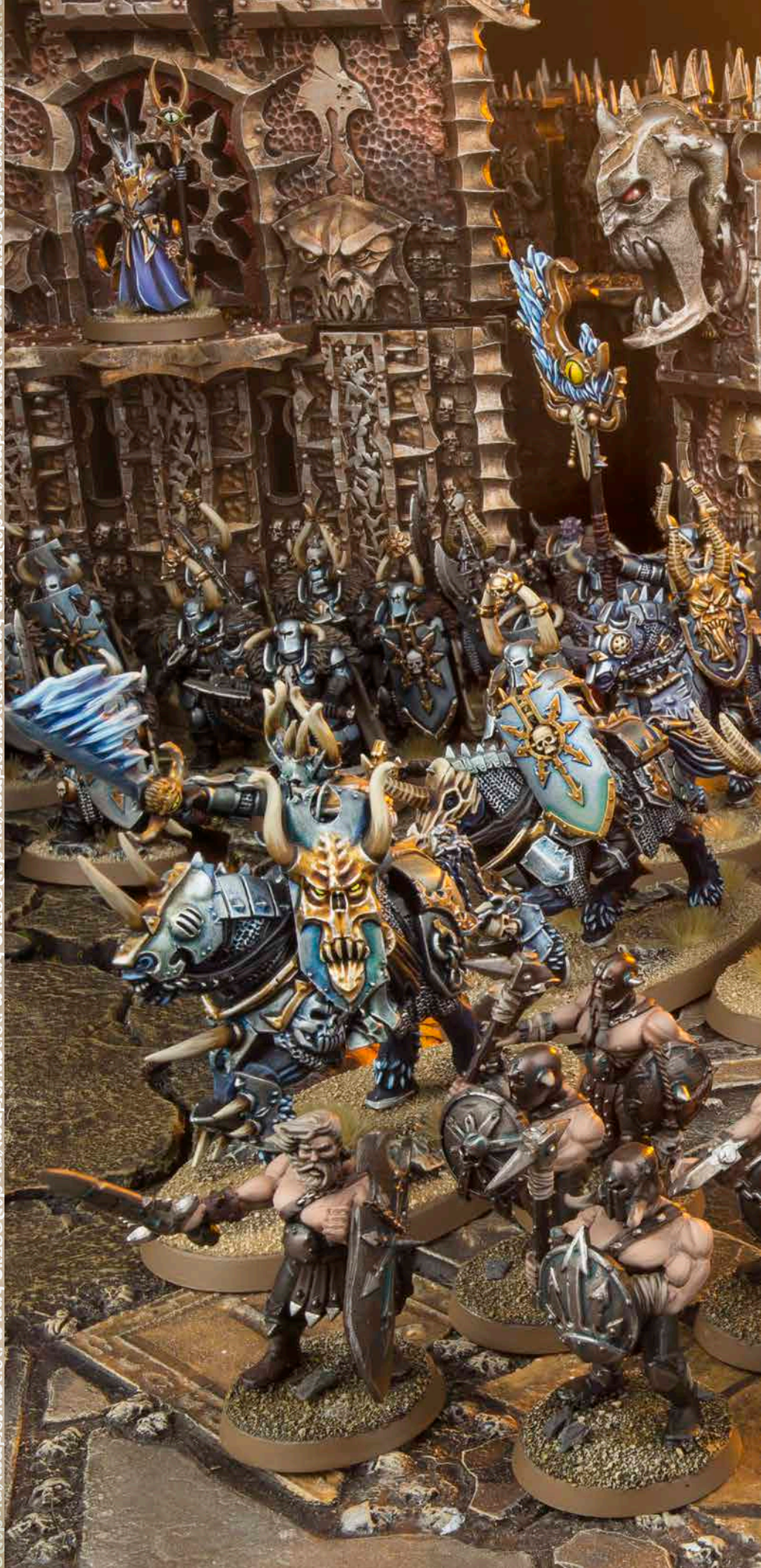
The timing of Vandus' plan was immaculate. Groaning as if in pain, the citadel's foundations crumbled under the pulverising blows of the Stormcast Eternals. The citadel toppled into the Silver Sea, sending a tidal wave of metal splashing towards the plateau. Its crest broke across the cliffs just as the Alchemist's Moon set the silver solid.

From the highest battlements, Ephryx stared aghast. His whispered protests grew into a scream of genuine fear. His beloved fortress was held fast, trapped by a bridge of solid metal that the Stormcast Eternals were already charging up in great number.



### THE BLEAK HORDE

The Bleak Horde of King Thrond has subsumed, corrupted or slain every one of the tribes that eked a living on the Great Crucible's edge. Though the Hanging Valleys are rich in every precious metal known to man, metals from Anvrok can change from solid to liquid or from gold to lead in the cycle of a moon – and when every man claims riches, notions of wealth are obsolete. Gold and silver are of little use in the brutal economy of the blade and the dagger – since the age of Chaos, violence has become the only true currency. In this, the Bleak Horde is rich indeed. Many are its iron-clad tribes – the body of King Thrond's horde numbers in the thousands. But it is the chariot-riding aristocracy of the Great Crucible that is to be feared the most. Exceptional bladesmen to a man, they ride to war in chariots pulled by brutal gorebeasts that can rip a man's head off as easily as a child might pluck the legs from a fly.







Lord Maerac of Manticorea, scourge of the Shattered City, was slain by Thostos Bladestorm.



King Thron of Anvrok rides his Gorebeast Chariot in defence of the Eldritch Fortress.

# THE BLEAK HORDE

Cruel-hearted worshippers of Tzeentch, the Bleak Horde of King Vexos Thron rules over the crucible with an ironclad fist. Alongside them stand the mighty warriors that serve the twisted sorcerer Ephryx. Garbed in savage finery and precious metals, this dark alliance is a terrifying sight.



The cruel servants of the Sorcerer Ephryx and Chaos Lord Thron radiate menace and power. Many bear the twisted sigil of almighty Tzeentch with them to war upon their standards and shields, bellowing praise to the Changer of the Ways that he might steer their fates towards glory and conquest rather than bloody defeat.

Multicoloured flames dance around screaming, unnatural blades, while weird, warped notes skirl from their war horns to pluck at the strands of their foes' sanity.

Ephryx' towering warriors wear spiked plate armour of silver-blue hue, within whose plates the reflected light bends and warps in unnatural ways. Gold detail stands out brash upon shield and blade, while weapons flicker with the pink and blue fires of change.

Not all of the Bleak Horde worship Tzeentch; others march in simple, barbarous black. Still, as masters of the crucible they carry weapons and shields crafted from silver, bronze and iron, upon which the sigils of the dark gods stand stark and proud.



To create a sense of unity throughout your collection, use a consistent colour palette and basing technique on all of your models.



The unit that this Chaos Warrior belongs to is distinguished by the colour of its cloaks, but features the gold details worn by the rest of the force.



After clipping your model carefully from its sprue and assembling it with Citadel Plastic Glue, undercoat it using Chaos Black Spray. Take your time and ensure an even coat.



Next, use Leadbelcher followed by Ironbreaker to paint the armour. Use Balthasar Gold for the gold details, and Khorne Red for the model's cloak.



Use washes from the Citadel Shade range to add contrast. Use Nuln Oil on the cloak and leather, and apply Guilliman Blue to the armour to give it a blue sheen.



Add Waywatcher Green in patches to create the effect of shifting colours. Then apply Gehenna's Gold to the gold details, and Khorne Red to the cloak.



Highlight the model's edges using a Citadel Fine Detail Brush. Apply Runefang Steel to both the armour and gold areas, and highlight the cloak with Evil Sunz Scarlet.



Add sand to the base, then paint it black, and add drybrushed layers of Balar Brown and Screaming Skull. Paint the rim Steel Legion Drab. Glue on Middenland Tufts with PVA glue.



# WAR OF LIFE





## THE OAK OF AGES PAST

**The Hidden Vale of Athelwyrd remained beyond the sight of Chaos invaders and Stormcast Eternals alike. Only Lord-Celestant Gardus knew how to find it – and even should the Stormhosts uncover its whereabouts, the strange portal that led there was obstructed by a daemon of surpassing power.**

Having shattered the Dirgehorn and slain its bestial defenders, the Stormhosts left Profane Tor for the smog-shrouded reaches below. There a lambent glow wound ever closer. Its light was so warm it could hardly belong to an evil creature.

There was great jubilation when Lord Gardus emerged from the twilight undergrowth, borne upon a living throne of wicker like some Ghyranite saint. As one the Hallowed Knights knelt, blades held forth in allegiance. With them saluted Astral Templars,

Guardians of the Firmament and many Stormhosts besides. Gardus was rejuvenated by the sight of his brothers, just as they were energised by his return. All had heard of his sacrifice at the Gates of Dawn. That he had returned alive was miraculous.

Many questions were levelled at Gardus, most born from awe and admiration. He told of his travails in the Garden of Nurgle, though it cost him both physically and emotionally to speak of them. In the long weeks of his exile, he had fought not only to

survive, but to stay one step ahead of Bolathrax, the Great Unclean One. In doing so he had uncovered many a surreal sight – including, he said softly, the location of Alarielle's Hidden Vale. Athelwyrd's essence had been reflected in Nurgle's realm all along, but the daemons of Nurgle were simply unable to look upon it, and thus remained oblivious to its presence. His tone strange, Gardus said that only a pure soul could perceive it. It was clear to all who listened that the Lord-Celestant did indeed hold that honour, even after his terrible ordeals.

THE ROTWATER

# OAK OF AGES PAST

THE OAK OF AGES PAST

PROWLING CLOUDS OF FUG

RUINS OF OAKHAVEN

THE WORLD PIMPLES

PUPA GROTESSE

FLOATING ISLES OF TALBION

GELID GUSH

VULTURINE GEYSERS

GLADE OF HORNED GROWTHS

THE WALKING TREES

LAND KRAKEN OF GUTROT SPUME

LAKE OF THE MER-WIGHTS

GLACIA OCCULUM





Not an hour passed without Gardus' hard-won wisdom being sought by his fellows. How had his sojourn lasted weeks when only a few days had passed in Rotwater Blight? How had he confounded Nurgle in his own garden, and lived to tell of it? What of the sylvaneth he encountered in the Glade of Horned Growths? A shadow passed over the Lord-Celestant's features whenever he was forced to recall his ordeals, and his answers were guarded. But his sense of duty prevailed, and he treated each of his brothers with patience and respect.

That eventide, after hearing of his brothers' victory over the Dirgehorn, Gardus told the Hallowed Knights a tale in his turn. The Lord-Celestant gathered his officers around the cleansing light of Lorrus Grymn's lantern, secretly hoping the artefact's light would remove the tarnish from his soul as he spoke of matters that would ruin the minds of lesser men.

In order to locate the Hidden Vale, they must find the Oak of Ages Past – celestial driftwood cast through the void to settle in Ghyran's misty swamps. Though only a part of that gnarled old tree had survived the cataclysm that befell the world-that-was, that splinter had grown vast, glutted on the energies of Ghyran. One end of the Oak was twisted and foul, its roots mutated into questing tentacles and dribbling mouthparts. The other end, however, remained pure. Green flowers and new shoots tentatively unfurled from its budding twigs, and a stream of immaculate water flowed from its trunk, becoming a river that bestowed life-giving energy to the lands.

Scant distance away, even this once-pure watercourse had been tainted by Nurgle's greed. Night after night Bolathrax had lumbered in pursuit of Gardus, mocking him as he went. The garrulous greater daemon boast of the many foes ranged against the Stormcast

Eternals. Amongst them was a Great Unclean One, known as Pupa Grotesse, that squatted mid-stream to befoul the once-clean watercourse.

Since Pupa Grotesse had settled into his new home, the waters south of his lumpen buttocks became a flood of infected fluids – his vileness was so potent his hourly ablutions saw the waters turn filthy rather than his blubbery flesh turn clean. That repugnant watercourse had once been called the River Vitalis, but was now better known as Gelid Gush. It would have to run clear once more, for in order for the Stormhosts to reach Alarielle and request her aid, they would have to pass through it. The Hallowed Knights must fight their way to the mouth of the Gush and slay the daemon at its heart.

Dawn broke, and the Stormhosts plunged on. Tendrils and thorn-vines recoiled from Gardus' path as he strode



## TEGRUS OF THE SAINTED EYE

Wherever Lord Gardus leads his chamber, Tegrus wings through the sky, always ready to dive into the fray and cast down the worshippers of Chaos wherever they may hide. But in order to smite the foe, one must first hunt him down – a maxim Tegrus of the Hallowed Knights swore as a mortal, and still holds as a vital truth.

During the Cleansing of Azyr, Tegrus scouted out the Chaos warbands infesting the Nihilad Mountains, raining blazing arrows down upon them to expose their position to Sigmar's armies. He fulfils a similar role as Prosecutor-Prime of the Hallowed Knights, though he now smites his foe with hammers of celestial energy. It is to Tegrus that Lord-Celestant Gardus turns whenever the foe eludes him, be it in the peaks of Azyr or the jungle-thick kingdoms of Ghyran. Though he has been offered a place as one of Sigmar's hunter-assassins, he feels a great duty to his warrior chamber, and will fight there until the God-King himself orders otherwise.



forth, new energy in his steps. With the hideous din of the Dirgehorn gone, the Stormhosts gained momentum. They reached the Vulturine Geysers in a matter of hours, intending to press onwards along the wide sprawl of moss-covered cairnstones that served as Rotwater Blight's only true road. Those strange springs, which once birthed beautiful paradise birds in great plumes of feathers, now spat copious gobbets of infected oil. Within the black morass flapped the creatures that had given the geysers their new name; drip-winged carrion birds with cruel beaks that took flight at the Stormhost vanguard's approach. Spraying black liquids left and right, they fell upon the Liberator retinues at the fore.

Gardus shouted a command, and Prosecutor-Prime Tegrus took wing, his warriors following close behind.

Whilst the Liberators below raised shields to block their attackers and Judicators fired arrows to make sure of each kill, Tegrus and his brethren hurled hammers of raw force at those carrion flapping unsteadily through the air above.

In a matter of minutes the ground was covered in avian corpses and tar-slicked feathers, and Tegrus had returned to his Lord-Celestant with news. From the air he had seen the Oak of Ages Past, its enormous hollow trunk unmistakable as it jutted on the horizon. An arboreal city smouldered in its shadow. To the east, something massive did indeed bulge upwards at the oak's widest end, but the landmark's nature was obscured by a dark and swirling mist. To the northwest, Tegrus had seen strange floating islands, their snow-capped peaks crowned by ugly green clouds.

To the northeast, a pale swathe of foulness smudged the Blight as Gelid Gush wound to the opposite horizon. If they made for its riverbank, suggested Tegrus, they merely had to follow its flow upstream and they would eventually reach their quarry.

Gardus thanked the Prosecutor-Prime for his advice, but in his heart he knew that simply marching up to Pupa Grottesse would be impossible. To tarry in water polluted by a greater daemon would kill even a Stormcast Eternal – or worse, infect him with supernatural sickness that could claim his soul. The gate to Alarielle's vale would not be reached quite so easily. Even should they slay Grottesse, his foulness would likely damn them all in the process. Nonetheless, he spoke a quiet command, and the Hallowed Knights strode onward.



## THE BATTLE OF ROTWATER

Every creature infesting Rotwater Blight seemed against the Stormcast Eternals, from the magic-eating leeches that drained the vitality in their blood to the plague daemons plotting their downfall. Though there were new allies still to be won, finding them would prove a challenge in itself.

Perhaps, if it were not in the nature of the Hallowed Knights to simply endure, the solution would have come to them sooner. Rather than discuss their next move, the Stormhosts ploughed onwards in stoic lockstep. For many long days they navigated the wilderness of Rotwater Blight, finding only strife. They clashed many times against the foul minions of Chaos, from running battles against pestilent skaven to the siege of Slaugoth's Rotfane, but took not a single backward step. None gainsaid Gardus' dogged approach, for he was a hero to all, and even the other Lord-Celestants looked to him for guidance.

But with every day that passed, Nurgle's influence waxed stronger. The creeping corruption of Rotwater Blight was once more taking its toll.



**Nurglings are mischievous, fun-loving, and utterly repulsive.**

It was the sound of battle that brought them to their senses, the screams of the dying waking the Stormcast Eternals like splashes of cold water in a sleepwalker's face. Those screams, though born of true agony, were extremely high pitched.

No ordinary clash was this. Many of Gardus' vanguard blinked in disbelief as they took in the tableau ahead.

Hundreds of fat-bellied plague daemons no bigger than a swamp grot's head were splashing and squealing in the roadside mire as they



slashed, clawed and bit at foes even stranger than they. Ranged against the Nurglings were scores of diminutive forest spites, brightly-hued and peculiar. Their forms ranged from thorned serpents to giant dragonflies glowing with inner light, and their intelligence was impressive – Lorrus Grymn raised an eyebrow to see the mismatched creatures enacting a perfect pincer attack. The forest spites would likely have had the upper hand, despite being badly outnumbered.

Unfortunately for them, the bulbous and disgusting beast-rider leading the daemon assault fought like a cruel goliath set loose amongst children.

Massive of gut, head a gurning likeness of his Nurgling charges, Morbidex Twiceborn swung a long-bladed scythe from atop his towering pox maggoth. His eyeless steed, Triple tongue, swept its simian arms through the army of forest spites, casting handfuls through

the air even as its warty tongues yanked others into its mouth. Steed and rider alike were so intent on slaughter they spared not a glance for the road, nor the swamp bubbling around it.

Gardus silently motioned his Judicators to the edge of the swamp, letting the tip of his blade fall as the signal for the killing to begin. Skybolts sizzled from behind a shield wall of Liberators, each bursting the blubbery gut of a plague daemon in a spray of vile fluids.



**The three-lobed symbol of Nurgle is feared across the Mortal Realms.**

Prosecutors took flight, winging towards the beast rider still cutting down forest spirits at the heart of the fight. The rest of the Stormcast Eternals, faces set behind their masks, drew their weapons and started forward.

It was then that Morbidex's unnatural grin grew wider still. His trap was sprung as from the other side of the road, behind the column of Stormcast warriors that had turned to watch the fray, the festering swamp began to boil. Rising from the muck, brackish water sluicing from their stooped and suppurating frames, came a horde of Nurgle's tallymen. Those at the rear muttered a monotonous chant, counting the diseases abroad in the swamp, but Wrech Gab'larr, the daemon herald at their front, was deathly silent. He and his daemon guard stared with malign intent at the backs of the Stormcast Eternals, eyes wide as they fell upon the trespassers with plagueswords jabbing.

## WRECH GAB'LARR, HERALD OF FRESH WOES

Many are the sacred duties of Nurgle's tallymen, but Wrech Gab'larr has one of the juiciest. It is given to him to catalogue the effects of Nurgle's plaguely concoctions on specimens never before encountered. Wherever a new breed of creature enters Nurgle's sphere of influence, Wrech Gab'larr is there, a clutch of virulent diseases crawling over his pock-marked flesh and a quill of bone tucked within his sagging sleeves of skin. Blessed with the observational skills of a born apothecary despite only having one eye, the daemon herald watches with unblinking interest as his master's latest experiments spread unchecked. Not a single detail of his subjects' agony will go unnoticed, for his duties do not end upon the field of battle. As the sun sets over his foetid paradise, Grandfather Nurgle likes nothing more than to sit upon the porch of his rotting manse, listening to Wrech Gab'larr's rolling bass tones as he recounts the tale of brave little diseases pioneering their way across fresh landscapes of flesh.





The daemons shoved their blades into the rearmost ranks, hoping to see diseases blossom in great measure. They were greatly disappointed. Rust-curses had little effect upon sigmarite, and wherever a blow proved fatal, their victim swiftly disincorporated in a blur of azure energy. Moments later the daemons' crestfallen expressions turned to surprise, then horror. At a barked command from Gardus, the Stormcast Eternals turned as one. A thicket of blades thrust outwards to sizzle into pox-raddled flesh, and with a series of crackling pops, ranks of Plaguebearers simply disappeared in puffs of foul-smelling gas. Maggoty tongue protruding from his lips, Wrech Gab'larr hacked a gap in the Stormcast lines, determined to bury his choice poxes in Stormcast flesh. The daemon had fought in Ghyran before – mortal prey usually quaked in terror whenever he so much as looked at

them. Somehow, though, these silver-armoured knights remained stoic, fighting back with finely-tempered fury.

At the head of the Stormcast counter-attack was Gardus, the white fires of his purity blazing across sigmarite to scorch and burn the foe. Whilst his Liberators crushed the Nurgling swarms, he fought towards Wrech Gab'larr. Hammers fell, horned heads burst in explosions of toxic fluids. Nurgle's tallymen had not expected anything like this level of resistance. At a shouted cry from Wrech, the Plaguebearers belly-flopped into the swamp, digging into the muck and disappearing from sight. Left alone, Morbidex Twiceborn lost his taste for battle, and kicked his maggoth deeper into the swamp. Tegrus soared in pursuit, but Gardus called him back, reticent to lose another warrior to the swamp's dire curse.

The Stormhosts were redressing their ranks when a frog-limbed spite flew its owl steed into their path. The spite warbled and squeaked, and Gardus was surprised to find he understood its meaning; the spites would pay their debt any way they could. Gardus explained the Stormhosts' dilemma – they had no way of passing through the poisoned waters of Gelid Gush. The frog-thing clicked its fingers, turned its mount, and headed north. Gardus, who had seen a strange nobility in the tiny creature, followed behind.

The alliance proved wise. The forest spites led the Stormcast Eternals along secret paths, emerging through a veil of vines into the ruins of Arborea. The treetop city was impressive despite its dilapidation, but for all its faded glory, it was dwarfed by the floating mountain that hovered above it. The Stormcasts' greatest test yet was ahead of them.

**‘Only the faithful,’ whispered Gardus as he clung to the topmost bough of the huge elder tree. Far below, the city of Arborea was pale in the mist. One missed step would be fatal.**

Summoning every mote of power in his body, Gardus flung himself into the mist. A second of weightlessness stretched out before he slammed into the loam of the floating isle. For once, he was thankful for the spongy vegetation swathing the lands; his fall was cushioned, and he regained his feet, bruised but unbroken. Lord-Relictor Morbus was next to land as Retributor-Prime Feros tumbled next to him in the mossy scree. Almost all of his warriors made the leap in safety – almost, but not all. Gardus watched in horror as the tree swayed at a critical moment, and three warriors fell to their deaths.

Overhead, the green-grey fog clouds that plagued the floating isles rumbled angrily, spitting unclean rain upon the Stormhosts as if in disgust. Gardus, his expression anvil-hard, motioned to his Lord-Relictor. Morbus nodded and lifted his reliquary, chanting loud. Before long a lightning-storm of azure energy had driven the fog clouds before it, releasing the isles of Talbion from their taint. Underfoot, the floating isle shuddered, grateful to its bedrock.

Gardus' voice echoed from the peaks. ‘We freed you, great island! Now bear us east, to the river's mouth!’

An awkward silence stretched out for long minutes. Not a single soul in the Stormhosts dared to speak. Then, incredibly, the airborne mountain began to move.





At the fore of the floating island stood Lord Gardus, looking down on the green-grey reaches of Rotwater Blight as a ship's captain would survey a stormy sea. The Stormhosts massed behind him, lost in a mixture of wonder and horror. There was the Oak of Ages Past, larger than a range of foothills. From its end flowed a ribbon of pure crystal water, turning midstream to a flow of putrid slop.

Their quarry, the greater daemon Pupa Grotesse, wallowed in the distance. The faint strains of his operatic bass drifted up to the Stormhosts as the mountainous blubber-fiend scrubbed his armpits and buttocks with a knobby boulder. As the isle grew closer, Tegrus' keen eyes picked out hordes of plague beasts frolicking and splashing around their lord.

In the heartlands of Rotwater Blight stood Ethrac Glott, his daemonflies whispering to their master of the

danger in the sky. Stoking the long-smouldering bones of his parents in his brazier, Ethrac summoned a great swarm of daemons. Then he ordered Ghurk to bear his siblings towards the World Pimples at the edge of the Gush. The daemons flew skyward. Before the hour was out an aerial battle erupted around the floating isle, Plague Drones soaring in to engage the Prosecutors defending it. Many a daemon was banished, just as many a blade-winged warrior was sent spiralling to the distant slop. The isle itself, however, continued to float on.

Ghurk Glott reached the World Pimples as the floating isle passed overhead. At the behest of his brother Otto, the lumpen giant squeezed the largest of the World Pimples with his giant tentacle, bursting it in a tremendous geyser of pus. The fluid splashed across the underside of the floating island, disrupting the magic that was holding it aloft.

The island fought with every ounce of its spirit to stay aloft, but it ailed still from the vile rains that had tainted it. The floating mountain drifted lower and lower until it plunged into the shallows of Gelid Gush, crushing entire mobs of plague daemons and sending a tsunami of infected water surging over Pupa Grotesse. Wobbling with anger at having his ablutions interrupted, the greater daemon yanked a rusted flail from the water and smashed it into the foremost Stormcast Eternals. Many perished, but the survivors charged in with hammers and swords raised.

Grotesse waved a fat hand, and packs of slug-like monstrosities bounded forth, flolloping and splashing through the river to fall upon the Stormcast Eternals. Eager to play with their new friends, the creatures shrugged off stab wounds and hammer blows as they bellied and crushed their way through the Stormcast ranks. Only the Retributors proved capable of felling



## MORBIDEX TWICEBORN

Morbidex Twiceborn has always honoured his debts, and to the Nurglings of his master's garden he owes a great deal indeed. Born in fire, the man who became the Lord of Nurglings was badly disfigured in his youth. Blaming flame-wreathed Tzeentch for his misfortune, he made it his life's work to seek out the Architect of Fate's arch-enemy, Grandfather Nurgle. In the end, it was Nurgle that found him. Whilst climbing a high peak that led into the Realm of Chaos, the young aspirant was buried alive under an avalanche of Nurglings. The daemon mites were of good humour, and posed Morbidex riddles in exchange for their help. For every quandary he got right, they squished him upwards, but for every wrong answer, they gifted him a physical attribute that echoed their own. Since his slimy rebirth amid that avalanche, Morbidex has become more powerful than ever. In Rotwater Blight he rides to battle once more on his pox maggot Tripletongue, gaggles of faithful Nurglings swarming in his wake.



them, each hammer blow shrivelling the slimy beasts into gobbets of wet ash.

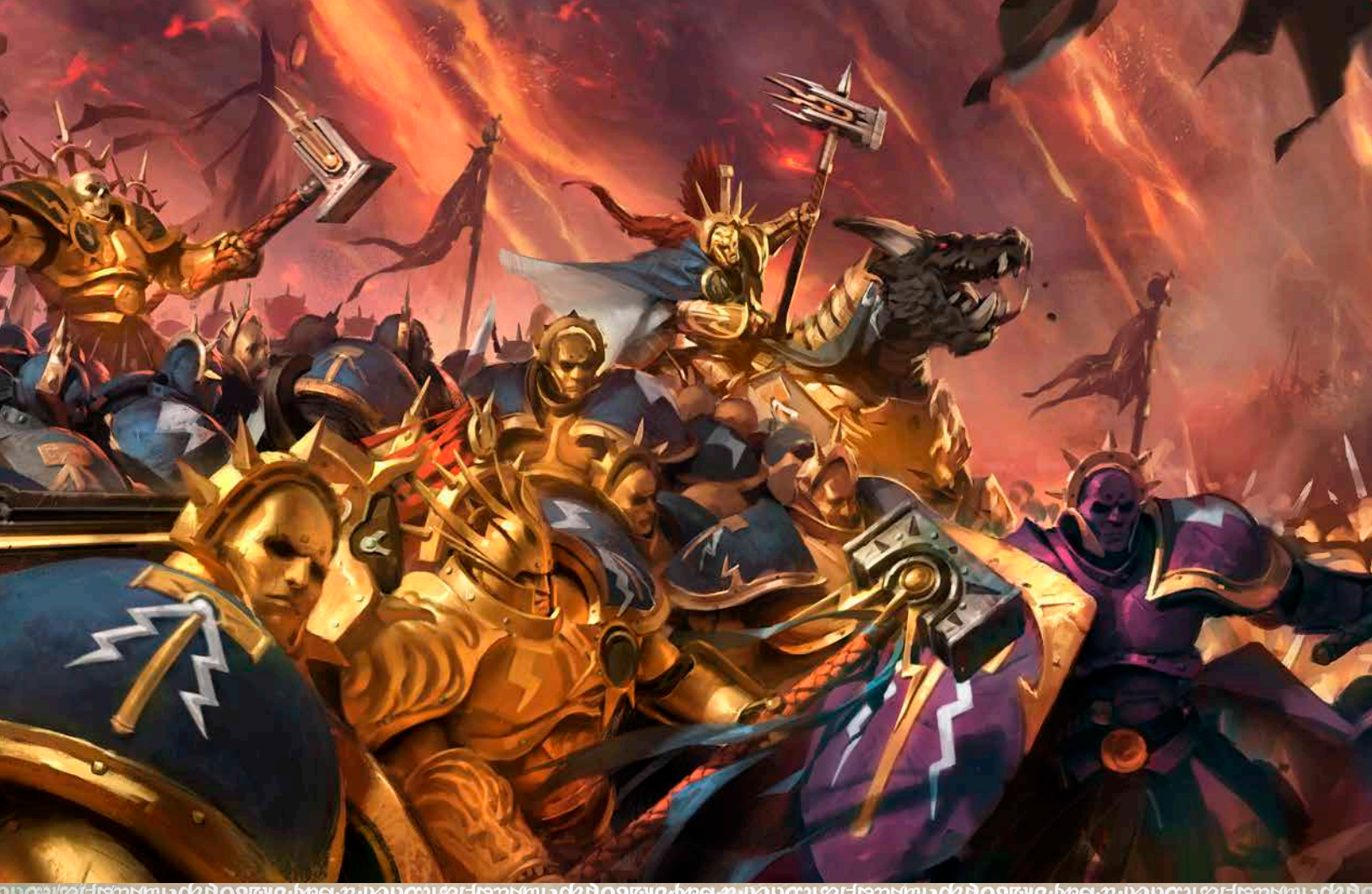
Pupa Grotesse grew increasingly angry as the battle raged on. Boulder-sized fists flew, and Stormcast Eternals were crushed, their bloody cadavers swiftly disincorporating. The skull-flail whirled, and whole retinues were hurled back like broken dolls. Though hundreds of Gardus' men charged in, few had strength enough to fight through the thick slop around the monster's haunches, and those that did found their blows rebounding harmlessly from his elephantine hide. Even the axes of the Decimators did little more than draw thin traceries of black blood. In contrast, the greater daemon's every swipe sent shattered bodies flying through the air. Many vanished in blazes of blue light, others splashed down to be claimed by noxious waters.

Gardus shared a glance with his Lord-Relictor, Morbus, before bludgeoning his way towards the greater daemon. His sigmarite hammer crackled with white fire as he slew Plaguebearer and Beast of Nurgle alike. Morbus came close behind, lightning crackling across his reliquary to spark out in a thick bolt that grounded upon Pupa Grotesse. This time the Great Unclean One took note. The daemon roared a spell that saw a dozen of Morbus' Protectors turned to boiling mush, and reached out to pluck Morbus from the mire and bring the Lord-Relictor towards his yawning maw. Gardus took his chance, running up a stump of rotten driftwood and shouting the daemon's name.

The Great Unclean One's eyes grew wide in alarm, for Gardus had used not his usual epithet, but his true name – spoken by the over-talkative

Bolathrax during his taunting pursuit in the Garden of Nurgle. Morbus, still clutched in the beast's hand, took his chance. He called out to the tempest – and the tempest answered. Crackling bolts split the skies, swathing Grotesse in sacred lightning. Morbus chanted louder, and Pupa Grotesse's flesh began to smoulder black. A deafening bang, and the daemon exploded like a sack of rotting offal left too long in the sun.

As soon as the curse of the Great Unclean One's foulness was gone, the sparkling stream flowed pure once more, its scintillating waters eating away like acid at the daemon horde even as it invigorated the Stormhosts. The Hallowed Knights plunged once more into the fray, and this time, there was no stopping them. Before the night was out, the daemon host was slain, and the River Vitalis was born anew.



## WAR IN THE HIDDEN VALE

**The River Vitalis ran clean once more, washing away the filth of the plague daemons and fortifying the warriors that had been its salvation. In passing through it, the Stormcast Eternals would not only find the Hidden Vale, but also bring the war for Rotwater Blight to a bloody conclusion.**

The Stormhosts raised their voices in war-song, for the rewards of their victory against Pupa Grotesse were clear in moments. The Gelid Gush was swiftly becoming a bad memory. Those who submerged themselves in the life-giving waters of the River Vitalis found their wounds clotting, puckering and healing over entirely.

Though many renewed themselves in this way, Lorrus Grymn was the first to immerse himself in the scintillating liquid – soon he felt the tiredness fall from his limbs, his body bursting with

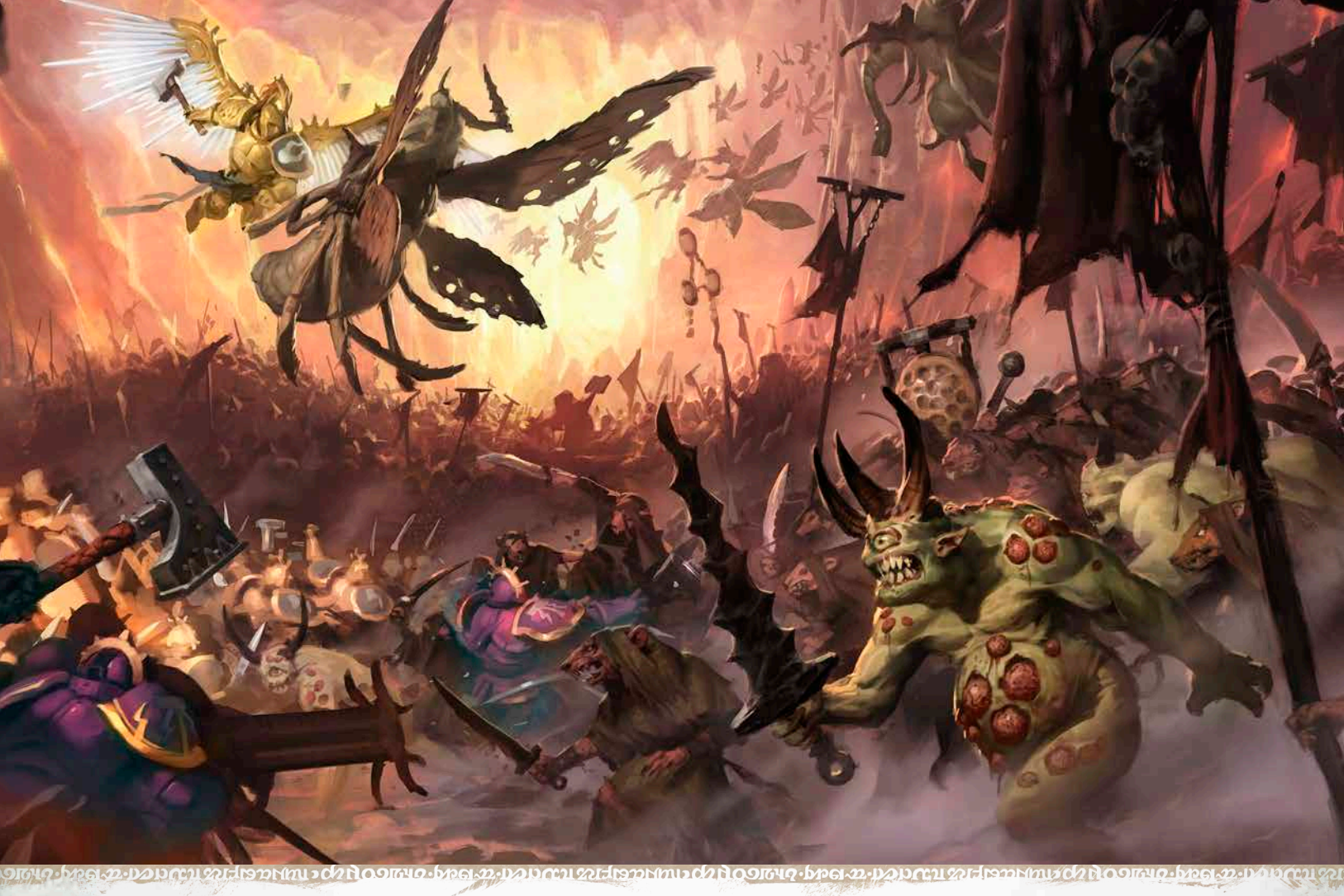
energy as if he were freshly Reforged. He was quick to tell Gardus of the river's magics, and before long every one of the injured had bathed his wounds. The exhausted, filth-caked Stormcast Eternals stood shining and undaunted once more.

The question was not long in coming – where next? Gardus summoned Prosecutor-Prime Tegrus to his side, and asked him to divine the secret of the river. Tegrus did not hesitate, but dived down into the glittering waters, his wings tucked back as he swam

deeper and deeper. Minutes passed; long enough for a seed of doubt to blossom in many a Prosecutor's heart, but Gardus remained impassive.

Suddenly Tegrus burst from the water and soared into the air, the spray of droplets shining like scattered diamonds. He told of an emerald light where the river's bed should be. Lord Gardus' suspicions were correct – they had found the Hidden Vale.

Gardus was first, as ever. Holding his breath, he waded deeper into the river,



letting the weight of his sigmarite armour pull him down. He felt the air burn in his lungs, every instinct screaming at him to claw his way back to the surface. But Gardus did not, for he was Stormcast. He took in a great lungful of water, and blacked out.

Tegrus, helm immersed, watched Gardus disappear. He nodded, the truth as clear as the water itself. They had to take Ghyran into themselves if they wished to reach Athelwyrd, to become one with the river rather than fighting against it. The warrior phalanxes took heed, their trust in Gardus and his officers so great they forced their will to override their survival instincts.

One by one, the warriors walked deep into the river, lost consciousness, and disappeared.

**S**kurrik grinned in horrible satisfaction as the last of the silver warriors vanished into the stream. His own agents had found the gate to Athelwyrd before those of Vermalanx. The Grey Seer took a tiny clay urn from his robes and smashed it with the hilt of his dagger. A swarm of fat-bodied flies spiralled out, growing larger by the second.

‘Storm-things pass into the river,’ chattered Skurrik. ‘It... it is the portal!’

The Glottkin coalesced from the swarm, hideous and proud. ‘That does make a kind of sense,’ said the warlord known as Otto, brushing flies from his open gut. ‘Ethrac, oh second-favourite sibling. This river is too pure by half. Summon Grandfather’s Deluge so we can flood this place for good.’

‘A meritorious idea, brother of my mother’s womb,’ said the sorcerer, stoking his brazier. ‘Gates can be forced open as well as unlocked.’

‘Oh yes! Ghurk, give the signal. Loud as you like, my lad. We’re going in.’

Skurrik covered his ears as Otto’s monstrous brother threw back his misshapen head and bellowed at deafening volume. In the middle distance, war horns answered by the score.



The Stormcast Eternals felt their senses returning one by one, and sat up to find themselves atop a lichen-clad slope of rock. Above their heads stretched the undulating swathe of the River Vitalis, glimmering ripples of light playing across its underside. The vale beneath it was breathtaking, so large it had its own mountain ranges; each was draped in evergreen forests and hung with glittering waterfalls. The trees lining the lower vale glowed softly, each as silver-skinned as the most youthful birch – many were entwined to form arboreal citadels of impossibly elegant design. Gossamer floated through

the warm air, fan-tailed birds winged through skies of coloured mist. Truly they had found paradise. For long hours the Stormcast Eternals wandered through Athelwyrd's bounty; if not for the abrupt orders of Lord-Castellant Grymn, they may never have escaped its spell.

The Stormhosts wound through many a dell and forest path in search of the denizens of the valley. Everywhere they felt eyes upon them, every strange animal, bird and insect falling silent at their passing. Unease set in, and when the path led to a grove lined

with spiral-etched menhirs, the ranks shuffled to a halt. Lorrus Grymn tutted and strode in, calling out for the shy sylvaneth to attend him.

A heartbeat later a thicket of iron-thorns shot up to enwrap the Lord-Castellant, tearing armour and flesh alike to hurl him to the ground in a bloody heap. Sylvaneth Dryads burst from the trees with eerie shrieks, falling upon the Stormcast Eternals to rip and slash and kill. Blazes of blue light shot upwards. The Lady of Vines untwined herself from an elder oak, whipping limbs catching and throttling



the Prosecutors that hurtled towards her with hammers raised. Only Gardus prevented a costly battle of attrition, calling out for his men to use shields alone against the foe. When the Lord-Celestant cried out to the sylvaneth, asking why it had come to this, the Lady of Vines stretched out a gnarled hand and pointed, shaking with rage, to the other side of the vale.

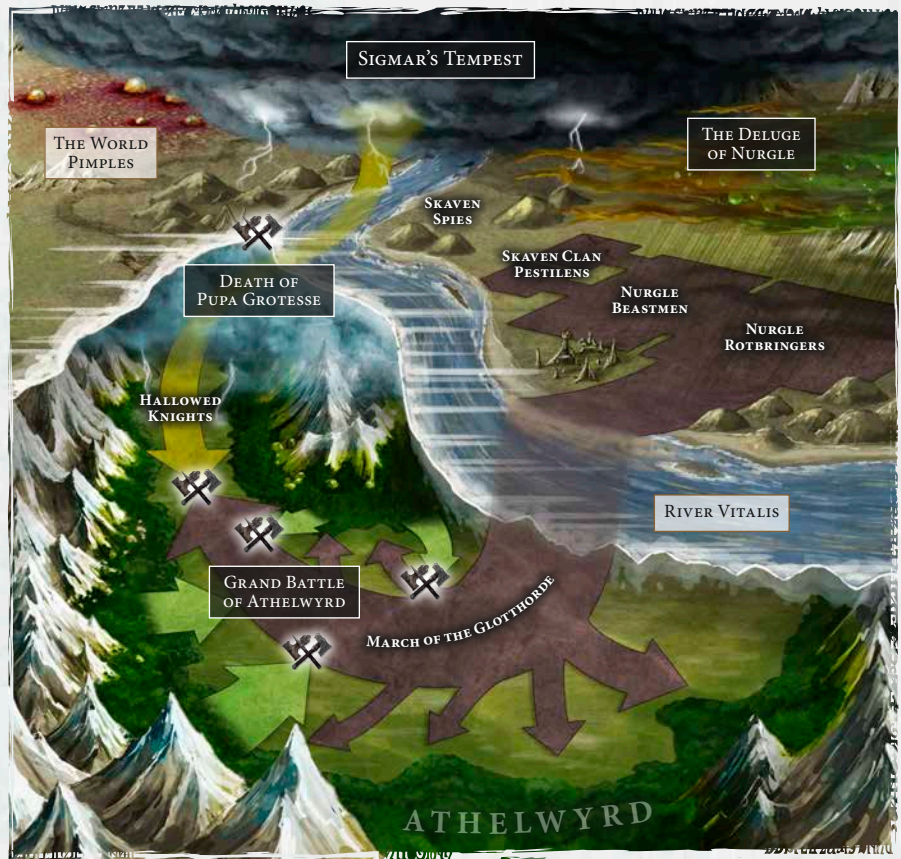
Pouring down the opposite valley wall was a wave of feculent fluid. Knee-deep amongst it were horde upon horde of Chaos worshippers, goat-headed beastmen, scurrying skaven and fat-bellied daemons. At their head pounded the lumpen form of Ghurk Glott, his brothers laughing in triumph atop his shoulders as the vanguard of the Nurgle army bowled headlong into the Dryads spilling from the trees. The battle between Chaos horde and sylvaneth blockade was fierce, but painfully one-sided. By crossing into Athelwyrd, the Stormcast Eternals had led the sylvaneth's worst nightmare right to them.

Just as the sylvaneth were about to renew their attack, the trees all about the menhir glade shook, twisted their branches together, and weaved twig and leaf to form a female face. Burning jade eyes met the gazes of Stormcast Eternal and sylvaneth alike. Murmuring in amazement, the wounded stood once more; even Lorrus Grymn was healed. Then, in a voice like the whisper of a thousand winds, Alarielle spoke.

They had little choice, she said. This day, the armies of Azyr and Ghyran would fight together, or die apart.

**M**orbidex Twiceborn was having the time of his life. The deluge had spilled through the river portal, carrying the plague legions with it. To the flank, his old allies Bloab Rotspawned and Orghotts Daemonspew rode their maggoths down the vale, racing to be the first to find Alarielle. The Glottkin followed, only to be intercepted by three towering tree spirits; Morbidex chuckled as Ghurk picked one of them up with his arm-tentacle and used it as a club against the other two.

A barrier of thick, thorny vegetation sprung up before Morbidex, his maggoth recoiling and his Nurgling swarm coming to a tumbling halt. 'Up-then, Tripletongue,' he burred. The maggoth was quick to obey. Leaping up, it grabbed at the stout branches overhead and swung, ape-like, over the thorns. Morbidex flicked his scythe toward the tree-shaman behind the wall, decapitating her with a splintering crack. The barrier withered and fell apart. His Nurglings swarmed the sylvaneth nearby, scampering up their bark-like exteriors and vomiting in their boles. This day got better by the moment, thought Morbidex. He put out a hand, palm upwards, and his eerie smile grew wider still. It was beginning to rain.





Across Rotwater Blight, the pregnant clouds that had haunted the Floating Isles of Talbion grew thick, turning from off-white to brooding, greyish-green. Rain fell in squalls – not the sparking blue water of Azyr, but oily fluids that pelted the Blight in such great measure that the River Vitalis burst its banks. Those same dolorous clouds trailed behind the Glotts, drawn through the aqueous portal the flood had forced wide.



**The daemon flies of Nurgle buzz loud around his favourite minions.**

That dire fug boiled across the landscape, corrupting swathes of lush vegetation. Pox-raddled skaven scampered through the gloom, their smoking censers adding to the foulness in the air. The priest Kratsik lived on through these verminous disciples, for his ragged soul was tied to the fat daemon maggots in their brains. When the sylvaneth emerged to bar their path, the Plague Monks charged in, smashing oak-hard limbs to flinders and driving rusted blades into wooden hearts.

Whilst Nurgle's Deluge bathed the repulsive legions in its pale liquids, the energies of Azyr crackled over the phalanx of Stormcast Eternals descending into the vale. Each chamber's Lord-Relictor chanted loud, invoking the energies of the tempest. Their prayers were soon answered, for the thunderheads of Sigmar's Tempest gathered thick. The cloudscape seemed to be fighting against Nurgle's Deluge, ebbing and flowing as the battle raged

below. Tendrils of foul cloud inveigled into the tempest, only to be evaporated by blasts of pure blue energy. The boom of thunder echoed down the valley like the battle cries of the gods themselves.

Across the vale, thousands of warriors clashed. Wherever the tempest roiled thickest, twin-tailed comets of celestial lightning hurtled out of nothingness to blast into the fight at the heart of the vale. Each left in its wake a retinue of Stormcast Eternals, voices raised in strident battle cries as they charged the Chaos worshippers pouring down the mountainsides. Astral Templars, Hallowed Knights, Hammers of Sigmar and a dozen more Stormhosts raced to fight alongside their brothers as the fury of Sigmar's Tempest intensified.

To the east, the cursed host of Torglug the Despised trampled a field of emerald roses on their way to the front lines. The Treelord Thellembhol jumped from the capstone of a nearby

## PLAGUESWORDS

From the least important bubo-licker to the most vaunted herald of disaster, every one of Nurgle's Tallymen has a plaguesword to call his own. Forged of ancient iron, yet badly rusted and festering with a thousand diseases, the slightest cut from one of these corroded weapons can damn a mortal in an instant. Some contract the dreaded soul-blight known as Nurgle's Rot, and gradually morph into Plaguebearers themselves. So virulent are these slimy contagions they can even cause supernatural creatures to wither and fade. At the Battle of Athelwyrd, many a sylvaneth Dryad was turned to powdery white ash by Wrech Ga'blarr and his fellow heralds. So strong were the energies of Nurgle coursing above that conflict that even those Stormcast Eternals struck by such blades became wracked with disease. Many a herald looked on in morbid interest as the bodies of their victims convulsed, the warring energies of storm and plague tearing the warriors apart in explosions of blue light and greenish-white fluid.





cairn, the impact of his landing stamping Putrid Blightkings into squirting piles of viscera. Then came another Treelord, escorted by a swathe of thorn-skinned sylvaneth, shrieking as their wooden claws ripped open spoiled flesh and punched through jellied eyeballs. Torglug was unfazed. Skirting around the Treelord's flank, he hacked at its legs over and over again, felling it as a forester would an oak. Dryads raked and stabbed, but Torglug, inured to pain by endless plagues, felt nothing. He bisected his assailants one by one, axe rising and falling as he used the fallen Treelord's body as an executioner's block.

The sickly rainclouds thickened further still, their fat raindrops growing fist-sized, then even larger. Here and there a shower of Nurglings fell from the skies, bouncing and sliding down the vale like a rockslide of suppurating flesh. Morbidex howled in delight. Leading a swarm of his diminutive allies in a flank attack, the champion joined the daemon host fighting the Hallowed Knights. Gardus was there at the fore, white flames crackling around him as he crushed cyclopean heads with each sweep of his hammer. Plague Drones flew in, hurling scooped-out heads full of daemon pus into the ordered ranks below. Gardus took a few long steps; a moment later he was boosted from the upturned shield of a kneeling Liberator comrade, pushed up with impetus enough to slash his glowing sigmarite blade through rot fly and rider alike.

Then came Bolathrax.

The greater daemon burst from the flooding river above to roll like an immense boulder down the side of the vale, arms flailing. He carved a bloody, slimy swathe through the ranks

of the Stormcast Eternals before righting himself with a bellowed challenge, a flail made from the skulls of giants whirling through the rain.





# ALARIELLE, QUEEN OF THE RADIANT WOOD

**Alarielle is the embodiment of all natural life. A goddess of incredible power, she was once a vital member of Sigmar's pantheon. Since the Dark Gods invaded Ghyran, however, she has become withdrawn and cold.**

Alarielle has existed in one guise or another for aeons. She is the nurturer of worlds, the mother of all life, who brings the endless potential of nature to glorious fruition. It is her children that raise the greatest life forms to maturity, that fashion beautiful worldscapes from the simplest seeds, and that sing the songs of paradise as the great cycles wind ever on.

Some mortal seers say Alarielle was born from the humblest of beginnings, others that she has always existed, but in Ghyran, the first depictions of her bounty date back to the Age of Myth. Those who walk the living branch-

tapestries of Oyrha first see the barbarian king Sigmar waking Alarielle from a long hibernation, winning her gratitude, and the two hurling back a tide of darkness. Later Alarielle is shown as a plant queen surrounded by a court of glowing tree-spirits, then as a wandering nymph distributing soulpods throughout the Mortal Realms. The last tableaux, wiry and barren, show a weeping goddess curled in her private kingdoms, sealed away in a paradise besieged on all sides by scenes of anarchy and destruction. In these times of strife, it is these latter images that ring truest of all. Most of the Jade Kingdoms have been stolen

from Alarielle's guardianship by the rapacious armies of the Dark Gods.

And yet there is still hope for Ghyran. Alarielle's mournful introspection has availed her little; even the roots she has put down into her last haven have proved brittle and dry. The seeds of her vengeance are sown, awaiting the light that will see them grow to deadly fruition once more. She is already working her life-giving magics to aid those who fight in the realm's cause. With the forces of Order working as one, a new dawn may yet rise upon the Jade Kingdoms – an era that sees Chaos banished from her realm.



## THELLEMBHOL THE BEREAVED

The Treelord Thelleshbol was once supple as a willow, content to blow this way and that with the prevailing wind. Since the coming of Chaos, he has become as sharp and deadly as a splinter. He cannot bear to see his native forests defiled by Nurgle, nor to see his queen so distraught at what has befallen her realm. Worse still, she has of late grown distant and morose. It is not merely tainted flesh and steel that Thelleshbol fights every new day, but the corruption of the soul that leads to apathy and despair.

Thelleshbol recently left Alarielle's side to strike hard at the invaders of their realm. By joining forces with the Lady of Vines, he intended to win his mistress the gift of hope. However, in the ensuing battle, Thelleshbol lost his twin brother Lorhaldh to the poisons of Clan Pestilens. Since that day his rage has been incandescent, and he has grasped every opportunity he can find to strike back at the Chaos invaders.





Gardus cried out, half in fear and half in outrage as Bolathrax barrelled towards him. The greater daemon swept ranks of Hallowed Knights from his path, crushing those who ducked each swipe in rolls of his rotting fat. Gardus ran up a fallen oak's trunk, leaped into a spin, and with a tremendous backhand blow smashed his flaming hammer into Bolathrax's chest. The blow simply bounced off as if it had struck a wall of rubber. Bolathrax laughed long and loud as he swatted Gardus into the muck.

To the east, the pall of foul smog had spread to cover skaven and beastman alike. Two baleful green eyes shimmered within, a long-nailed claw beckoning to the beastmen skidding down the scree of the valley wall and pointing to the forest of glowing trees. Bullgors and Bestigors hefted their greataxes and took them to the arboreal citadels. Sap sprayed like blood as they hacked away at the ancient forest.

An ethereal screech echoed through the valley as a glowing manifestation of Alarielle coalesced in the twilight, glittering seeds cast from her outstretched hands. Within a matter of a few heartbeats, a hundred green shoots had burst from the ground and grown into giant carnivorous plants that snapped up the nearest Bestigors and broke their bones to powder.

Sighting his quarry, Vermalanx gave a cry of triumph. He loped from the smog, snatching Skurrik from the fallen Stormcast Eternal the Grey Seer was flaying alive. Skurrik squealed as he was thrust towards Alarielle, squirting the musk of fear as the Verminlord Corruptor whispered terrible threats in his ears. Shaking fingers stretched towards Alarielle, Skurrik began the incantation known as the Dread Thirteenth Spell. His fur stood on end across his body, eyes glowing green-black whilst his body was consumed by the energies pouring through it.

Alarielle remained oblivious, her long fingers glowing as she tore a herd of bullgors into bloody shreds. A beam of unclean light shot out from Skurrik towards the goddess' back. In a blur of silver, sharp-eyed Tegrus dived down. The magical beam caught the Prosecutor-Prime full in the chest, and he shrank into himself, horribly changing, face elongating. Wreathed in warping energy, he mutated from a glorious warrior hero to a screeching, mangy man-rat with bat wings hanging limply from his shoulders.

Alarielle span, her face a mask of indignation. She extended a hand, and a tendril of emerald energy connected her to Vermalanx, the rat-daemon screeching as he rose into the air. Shaking her head in sorrow, Alarielle flicked a silver acorn into the Verminlord's maw. Shoots, then branches, then boughs burst through him in great profusion, tearing him apart in a stink of sulphurous musk.



## SLAUGOTH, SUMMONER OF VILE RAINS

The sorcerer Slaugoth Maggotfang is usually a merry and jocular fellow, for he long ago made his peace with the bone-deep diseases that enable him to channel Nurgle's power. However, since the intrusion of the Stormcast Eternals into what he sees as his master's rightful domain, Slaugoth's good humour has drained away. At the Rotfane, the sludge-walled keep the sorcerer used as his power base, Slaugoth fought against Gardus and the Lord-Relictor Morbus. The storm of filth he brought upon the invaders was thwarted by the power of Sigmar's Tempest, and the Rotfane was torn down. Slaugoth escaped, seething with hatred. Before long he had allied with Ethrac Glott, a sorcerer of surpassing power. Together the twisted disciples of the Plague God have summoned Nurgle's Deluge, an unholy monsoon so powerful it has breached the river gates of Athelwyrd and even contested Sigmar's divine thunder for control of the skies. If Slaugoth has his way, the entire Hidden Vale will fill with noisome fluid, claimed forever in the name of Nurgle's infinite putrescence.



For a fraction of a second, Bolathrax's attention had been broken by the screams of the thwarted Verminlord. His coup de grace missed Gardus, sword tip thunking deep into the earth. Gardus took his chance, running up the daemon's blade to thrust his blazing sword into his foe's eye socket. Bolathrax bellowed in pain, swiping his flail blindly around his head. Infernal luck was with the daemon, and he battered Gardus to the ground. A splayed foot lifted and fell, breaking Gardus' spine and crushing his sword hand to splinters. The skull flail came down, jaws chattering, and crunched Gardus' legs to twisted ruin.

Chortling evilly as the hellish rain pelted down, Bolathrax picked the Lord-Celestant up by the ankle. The daemon lifted his belly folds wide to expose the swirling vortex within.

Gardus was in agony, gasping out the sacred phrase of his Stormhost as he stared an eternity of visceral torture in the face. Nearby, Lorrus Grymn shouted an oath of denial. Dropping his halberd, he yanked a Judicator's thunderbolt crossbow from his hands and took aim. The bolt sizzled gold through the rain, striking Gardus in the back of the neck. A blaze of blue light, and Bolathrax found his hand and the prison of his vast gut empty and cold.

Alarielle drifted in close, green fire in her eyes. She chanted a strange rhyme, and a thick net of ironthorns erupted from the vale to enfold Bolathrax's vast girth. The daemon struggled, roaring, but could not break free. That same verse Alarielle chanted backwards, and the cage of briars constricted, lacerating Bolathrax, then slicing him apart entirely so he collapsed into gory ooze.

The leader of the daemon host had been slain. Everywhere the Stormcast Eternals fought, their enemies died in droves. But they were few indeed, and the greater battle, that of the magical forces clashing in the sky, was slowly being lost. Athelwyrd was flooding, inch by inch. Those Stormcast Eternals and sylvaneth still battling in its midst were forced to retreat to the valley walls or drown in diseased slurry. With painstaking slowness the vale was claimed. The armies of Alarielle and Sigmar were forced to its upper reaches, then back through the breached portal of the River Vitalis, for none but a servant of Nurgle could survive in the vale now. Alarielle's screams of denial echoed loud across Ghyran's near-infinite scope, her anguish so intense it drove uncounted souls mad. There was no safe haven or sanctum left in all the Jade Kingdoms. Only war remained.



### HALLOWED KNIGHTS

The war for Rotwater Blight forever changed the Hallowed Knights. When first hurled into battle they were fresh, clean of limb and mind, but their long battle against the foulness of Nurgle has left its mark. Though none of the Stormhost's number have fallen to Nurgle's plagues, the sights they saw in Rotwater Blight will haunt them forever.

On several occasions their blazing zeal guttered in the face of the horrible sights and fates that awaited them, but the fires of their faith can never truly be extinguished. Wiser, sterner and all the deadlier for their experiences, these steel-souled knights of Sigmar would fight through a thousand infested battlescapes if it meant securing victory for their God-King.









A Lord-Castellant marshals his warriors, holding fast against even the direst foes.



Protectors form a barrier of unyielding sigmarite that deflects arrow and blade alike.

# HALLOWED KNIGHTS

None shine with such burning purity as the Hallowed Knights. Clad in silver sigmarite, armour and weapons crawling with skeins of pure white lightning, these warriors bear the light of Sigmar into battle against their foes. No unclean creature can stand before such righteous ire and live...



In an explosion of silver light, the shining heroes of the Hallowed Knights descend from Sigmar's Tempest to bring vengeance against their foes. Every single Hallowed Knight was raised up from the Mortal Realms for the purity of his faith, his strength of belief in Sigmar as the God-King of all. Like a blade folded again and again in the heat of the furnace, the Reforging has only served to strengthen the Hallowed Knights' faith a hundredfold. Now they are a shining beacon of light that illuminates even the darkest and most terrible places.

This glorious purity is reflected in their panoply of war. Every curving plate of sigmarite armour gleams, shimmering silver interspersed with rich gold. Their shoulder guards are the deep, regal blue of the heavens, as are the sigmarite shields borne by the Stormhost's Liberators. Against these dark colours the Stormcast Eternals' noble devices are proudly displayed. These are emblazoned in untarnished silver and purest white, reflecting the holy fire that burns in each Hallowed Knight's heart.



This Liberator readies his warblade to impale his foes. You can assemble your models in a variety of poses to create a dynamic collection that comes to life on the battlefield.



These Liberators all belong to the same retinue, as is shown by the blue trim on their tabards and the gold of their belt clasps.



After carefully clipping your model from its sprue and assembling it with Citadel Plastic Glue, undercoat it with Chaos Black Spray. Take care to ensure an even coat.



Next, use Leadbelcher followed by a layer of Ironbreaker for the armour, Celestra Grey for all white details, and Kantor Blue for the blue areas.



Apply a generous wash of the colours in the Citadel Shade range to add contrast and bring out the detail. Use Nuln Oil on the armour and Reikland Fleshshade on the gold areas.



To add further definition to the raised areas, layer the shoulder guards with Kantor Blue, and the white details with Ulthuan Grey.



Next, highlight the model's edges. Use Runefang Steel on the armour and gold areas, Calgar Blue on the shoulder guards, and White Scar on the white detailing.



Glue sand and stones to the base, then paint the sand Zandri Dust, adding patches of Agrax Earthshade and drybrushing with Screaming Skull. Paint the rim Steel Legion Drab.





**THE**  
**HEART** OF  
**CHAMON**



# RETURN TO THE FORTRESS

**Having fought across the Great Crucible to reach the Eldritch Fortress, the Heldenhammer Crusade neared its nigh-impossible goal. Warpflame lit the skies and around the Stormcasts a hurricane of magical energy raged – the battle for Ghal Maraz was reaching its bloody conclusion...**

With a roar that echoed through the mist, the Stormcast Eternals pounded up the frozen promontory of silver that led towards the craggy plateau above. It was treacherous going. The silver was soft enough that blades could be dug into its surface to afford a better grip, but in places the solidified wave was little thicker than a breastplate. Here and there armoured feet plunged straight through, in places sending warriors tumbling down to break upon the unyielding sea of metal beneath.

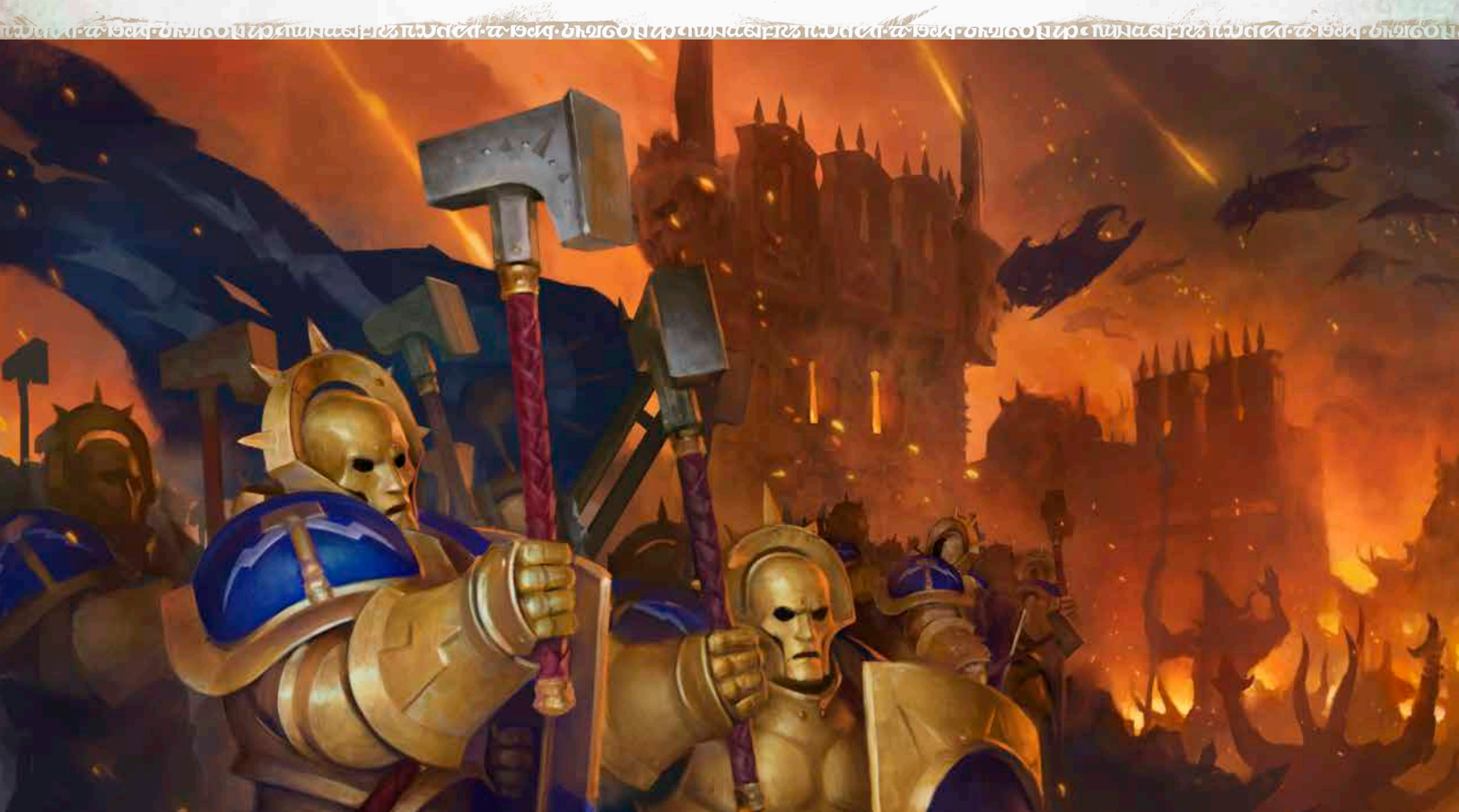
And still, energised by the prospect of reclaiming Ghal Maraz, the Stormhosts pressed on. With every minute, a

hundred more successfully made the climb to muster in the shadow of the Eldritch Fortress. And still Vandus and Thostos were torn; with every heartbeat they tarried, the sorcerer Ephryx had more time to concoct his spells and gather his armies. Yet only by holding fast and delaying their assault could the Stormcast Eternals gather a force strong enough to assail the fortress.

An eerie whine came from the crystal-studded Realmgate hanging above the citadel's highest point. Every one of the Stormcast Eternals could feel baleful energies behind it, their skin crawling as if a thousand hateful eyes

were gazing down upon them. The gate traversed reality itself, leading to a realm of crystallised insanity. In translocating the Eldritch Fortress from the Shattered City to the Great Crucible, Ephryx had intended not only to keep it from the reach of Sigmar's fresh-forged armies, but also to place it near a portal that already led to Tzeentch's labyrinthine domain.

Vandus and his warriors stood before the forbidding wall of skulls that formed the outer perimeter of the Eldritch Fortress, the Shardgate pulsing bright above them. Faster and faster it strobed, the piercing whine





quickly growing into a shriek, then a cacophony of a thousand screams.

The crystals encrusting the Shardgate splintered free in an instant. They stuttered through prismatic flourishes of light, of darkness, of blazing warpfire – before finally coalescing into new and strange physical forms. The terrible howling grew louder as the portal yawned wide, fanged with serried splinters of crystal like the ridged maw of some unknowable sky-beast.

From within the Shardgate came a howling gale of ethereal force. Gusts of raw mutation curdled the sky, leering faces gibbered as they vomited forth the spawn of madness. Tzeentch's legions had entered the fray. The Heldenhammer Crusade would face not only the mortal denizens of the Eldritch Fortress, but also the daemon hosts of a Dark God.

**‘Leave the one named Vandus to me,’ rumbled the skull-faced figure.**

**‘He’s all yours,’ said Ephryx. ‘You must hold them back, Khul, whether your daemon allies join you or not. But you will not do so alone. Thron’d; take your chariots to the breach and kill as many as you can.’**

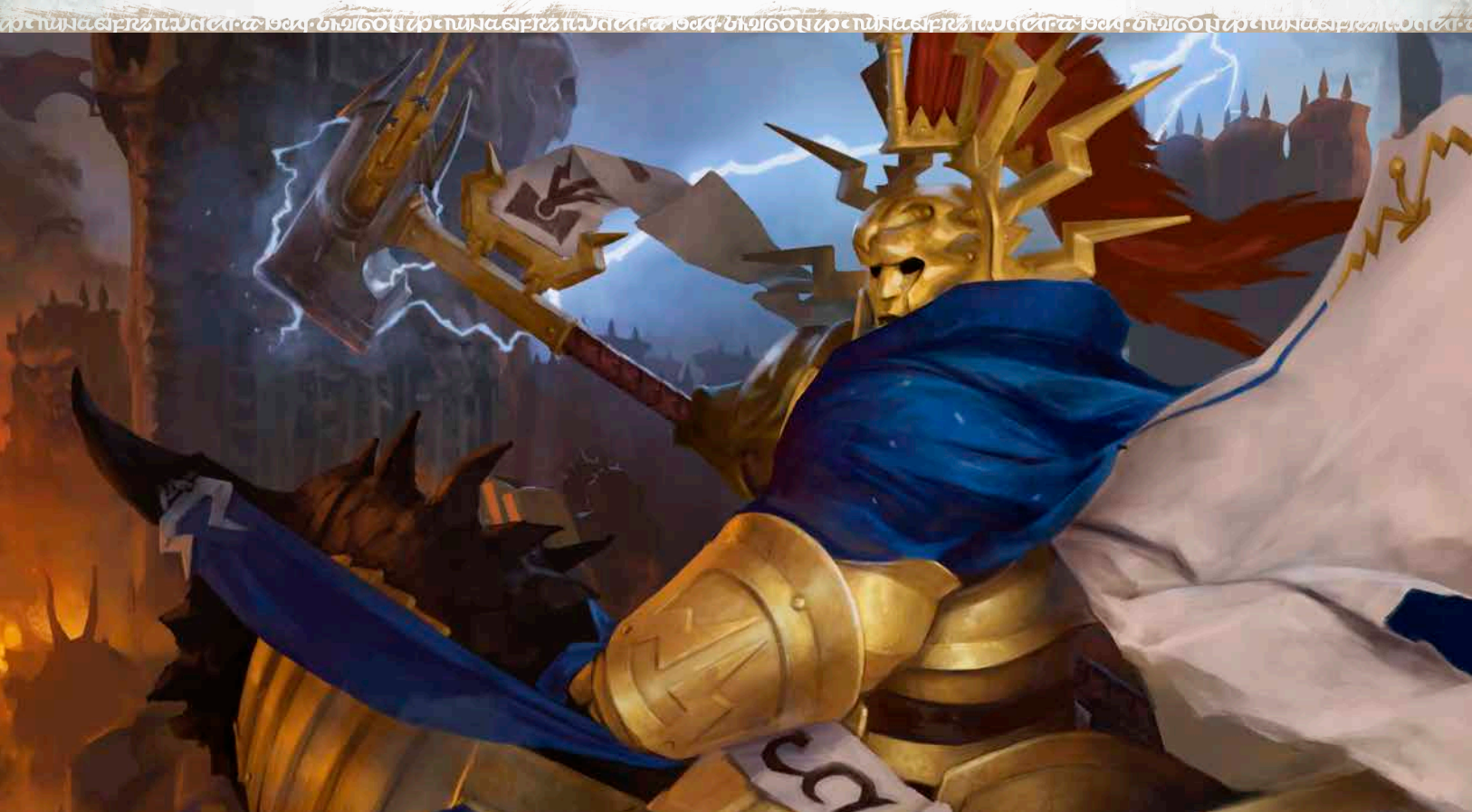
**King Thron’d nodded in assent. The warrior lords, eyeing each other in contempt, strode from the room. In the gloom, feathers rustled.**

**‘Distractions,’ said Ephryx. ‘The daemon gale should slow our guests.’**

**‘It should,’ said the two-headed daemon emerging from the shadows, ‘for it was I that summoned it, just as I shall summon the Arcanabulum. You will use it to cast the Lunar Reversal, that we may escape the silver’s grip.’**

**‘The Lunar... Will its power not kill me? What have you seen, Oracle?’**

**‘Sigmar once learned that even he is not beyond Tzeentch’s influence,’ said Kairos Fateweaver, pushing a long talon into Ephryx’s left eye. Both of the sorcerer’s eyes suddenly glowed with a wan green light. ‘It is high time we reminded him.’**





The Stormhost phalanxes plunged into the daemon gale, every step a new trial. The Shardgate's magic pushed and plucked at them with ethereal claws, raining down daemons that hurled blasts of warpfire from the battlements or fell burning into their ranks from on high. Sigmar's Tempest rumbled above but, without the focus of the Lord-Relictors to channel it, the thunderstorm could offer no aid. Even the Eldritch Fortress itself took a grave toll. Daemon carvings called in guttural voices to those Stormcast Eternals who hailed from Chamon, driving them to the edge of insanity with tales of the tortures wreaked on their people. Those warriors who died did not ascend to the Celestial Realm, but instead found their spirits drawn into the copper skulls, which served as conduits for their master's dark magic. Here the fell energies of Chaos reigned supreme.

Atop the spined keep at the fortress' heart, more devilry was afoot. Ephryx the Ninth Disciple invoked dark magics to conjure creatures from beyond, his hidden master Kairos always lurking in the shadows, working rites more insidious and subtle still. Within sight of the inner keep walls, the land upon which the fortress was built began to bubble and seethe. Rising from the metallic morass came the rings of an Arcanabulum, glowing with the heat of the spell wrenching it from the unseen mechanisms of reality.

The Daemon Oracle snapped an order, and Ephryx stepped so close to the Arcanabulum that his robes began to smoulder and burn bright. The sorcerer did not shrink from his allocated task, for with danger so close, Kairos had entirely usurped his pawn's will. Ephryx began the casting of the Lunar

Reversal, his spine hunching and his limbs withering as the spell siphoned his life energy.

In the skies above, the Alchemist's Moon was caught by the grand spell's emanations. Its crawling advance across the firmament slowed, stopped, and – though it made reality scream to witness it – began to reverse.

Manic laughter echoed throughout the keep. When the moon turned the sea to liquid metal once more, the plateau would be freed from its silver claws. By harnessing the storm magic that crackled through the spirits of Sigmar's chosen, the fortress had claimed enough aetheric energy to rise up into the yawning Shardgate. In a matter of hours, Ephryx would transfer his prize to the Realm of Chaos, beyond the reach of the God-King forever.



Through fire-hurling daemons and skyborne chariots, the Stormhosts fought on, fearing their time was running out. Though the daemons of Tzeentch were no match for the Stormcast Eternals at close quarters, many warriors were burned to bubbling corpse-stuff by the mutating flames they wielded. Lord-Castellant Kanlaus of the Celestial Vindicators met a painful death when, in leaping sidelong to batter a daemon herald from its flying disc, he passed through a blast of warpflame. Bellowing in agony, the warrior lord exploded into splinters of bloodglass. Within the stake-lined Gallery of Punishment, the Stormhosts were beset by a horde of leaping, curve-bodied creatures that belched torrents of warpfire, their flames reducing a Decimator retinue to gold-flecked ash. A dozen Hammers of Sigmar were cut down when King Thron and a trio of Gorebeast Chariots hurtled from an open portcullis, ploughing through the ranks to emerge in a spray of blood.



**When a manic Pink Horror dies, two Blue Horrors lurch from its remains.**

Even as the heavy iron contraptions hurtled past, the spirits of the dead Stormcasts were claimed hungrily by the gargoyle-skulls of the fortress walls.

As the war raged on, the ranks of the Stormcast Eternals grew ever thinner. Energised by the Rite of Translocation, the Eldritch Fortress shivered like a living thing under the feet of Vandus' diminishing vanguard. When the entire plateau wrenched itself free of the silver, dripping molten metal as it ascended towards the Shardgate, there were less than two score Stormcast Eternals forging on through the daemon hordes. When the Lord-Celestants hammered a red path to the fortress' inner circle, only a few dozen warriors were at their side. In their hearts, they knew it was not enough.

And then, with a cry of hate audible even over the daemon gale, Lord Korghos Khul and his Goretide came charging from the central keep.

## KAIROS FATEWEAVER

Kairos Fateweaver, known to mortals as the Daemon Oracle, has gazed upon aspects of the universe that even Tzeentch himself has never dared witness. In many ways that is Fateweaver's entire reason for existence; he was flung by his master's ineffable will into the Well of Eternity, where he learned dire truths that Tzeentch only draws upon in times of extreme need. Since his passage through the well, no scheme has been hidden from Kairos' two-headed gaze. His rightmost head sees the future; the infinite possibilities of tomorrow are his to unpick. The eyes of his left head gaze upon past, perceiving the entirety of history, uncoloured by perspective or bias. Yet despite his cosmos-spanning prescience, Kairos is oblivious to rapid acts and evolutions that occur around him – the future does not unfold for him quickly enough to predict the ebb and flow of battle. Because of this, the greater daemon manipulates his pawns from a safe distance. Only in times of grave importance does he stoop to personally intervene, but when he does, the results are spectacular.





Lord Vandus, his fears and doubts transformed to fury, bellowed for his tattered brotherhood to form up. The first wave of Bloodbound was met by a barrage of arrows. Stricken tribesmen fell to the ground, the smoking craters in their chests filling the air with the stink of cooked meat. A tribe of Blood Warriors, leaping over the corpses of their fallen kin, slammed home into a wedge of Liberators. The Stormcast Eternals stood their ground. Retributor hammerblows blasted apart even the most heavily armoured of the Bloodbound, and Judicators picked off the foe whenever the Liberators pushed their assailants back.

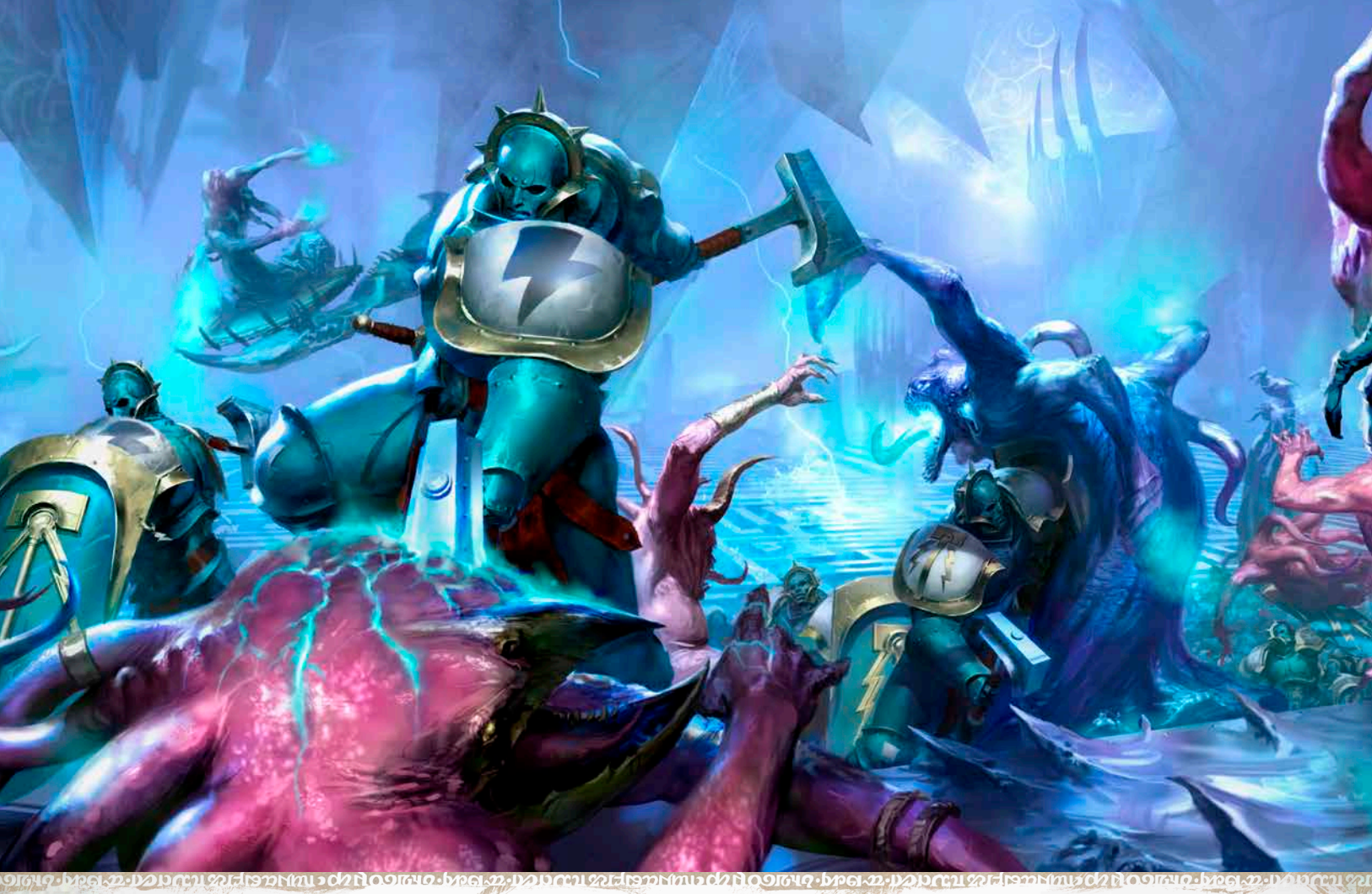
From above, Prosecutors rained death upon the hordes of Chaos. They were met by the suicidal charges of helmeted madmen that sprinted from the

battlements to hurl themselves, flails whipping, into the air. Many crashed to their deaths, but here and there a chain-flail would connect, tangling wing and breaking armour to bear both Prosecutor and Wrathmonger to a messy death.

Even as Blood Warriors were hacked down by the swords of their Liberator foes, the last Protectors gave their lives to hold back Khul's mutated elite. Thostos and Vandus took full advantage of the reprieve. Thostos' sigmarite flesh was proof against any mundane blade, and even the most blood-maddened brute dared not raise his weapon against Vandus with Khul close by. The two Lord-Celestants hacked and bludgeoned their way through the Goretide, leaving a path of obliteration behind them.

Suddenly Lord Khul surged from the warband's ranks, axe blazing with flames of pure hate. His flesh hound Grizzlemaw leapt for Thostos, the daemon's scaled bulk slamming into him. The Lord-Celestant toppled back onto the blood-slicked flagstones. Seizing his chance, Khul leapt, his flaming axe cleaving the air at insane speed. Desperate, Vandus parried the furious assault, the hammer Heldensen barely keeping the dread weapon from his neck. Khul's aggression and speed rendered thoughts of counter-attack irrelevant. A cold dread seized Vandus' heart as he realised that he and Thostos were alone in a sea of crimson.

A rattle of iron wheels filled the courtyard as King Thron'd led his chariots into the fray. Thostos, having regained his feet, caved in the skull



of the leading yoke-beast. The royal chariot of Thrond himself followed, hurtling into the melee. Thrond barked in triumph as his greataxe whirled towards Vandus' back. Khul roared his defiance, heaving Calanax aside and levelling a backhand blow at Thrond.

Lord Vandus sprawled from the saddle as the two fought. He scrambled away, shouting for Calanax and Thostos to join him as the castle walls rang with the metallic clangs of the Chaos lords' duel. Incredibly, none moved to stop him; even the most frenzied Bloodbound would not lightly risk the wrath of Khul. Thostos made to rejoin the fight, but Vandus grabbed him roughly by his shoulder; their duty lay elsewhere. Reluctant to retreat but grateful to be alive, the lords made for the gate and the inner keep beyond it.

**'Through here!' roared Thostos, barrelling under a portcullis. Vandus followed atop Calanax. They were so close now, he could almost taste the indomitable spirit of Ghal Maraz.**

**A clatter of metal, and a chariot burst from the gate to the left. A heavily muscled figure stood in its carriage, his icon banner held high; the same man who had summoned Khorne's own wrath to the battlefield. Bloodbound warriors boiled by the hundred from the gate behind him.**

**'We sell our lives dearly, then,' said Vandus. Thostos merely snarled.**

**'Sigmar is weak,' said the Bloodsecurator. 'I will take your heads to prove it.' He shook his banner. 'Can you hear me, craven one? You are nothing!'**

**The sky split apart, and a dozen blazing comets of light slammed down with such force that a section of the castle wall fell away to reveal the silvered horizon. In their wake stood hundreds of incandescent Stormcast Eternals, Ionus Cryptborn in their midst. A column of electricity shot from his hammer, slamming into the Bloodsecurator and pitching him through the crumbled wall to flail into the Silver Sea beyond. Vandus cried in raw exultation as he led the charge. There was hope yet.**



The crusade fought on, its numbers swollen once more by Sigmar's beneficence. With Ionus at Vandus' side and warrior brethren from a dozen Stormhosts at their command, they fought through gibbering daemons, walls of living crystal and raging Bloodbound warriors to reach the innermost keep. The layered walls of the Eldritch Fortress seemed endless, folding back on themselves like the most complex of mazes. Thostos alone had experience of them, and even then could claim only passing knowledge of their convolutions. Nonetheless, he led the crusade unerringly through the daemon gale; Vandus believed he was likely guided by vengeance itself. Soon enough, the Celestial Vindicators stood before the breach they had forced when the fortress had blighted Anvrok.

In the courtyard of the inner keep, the ground bubbled lazily around the cog-like workings of an Arcanabulum. The forbidden device plinked and

pinged as it cooled in the ethereal winds raging around it, its magic spent in the titanic feat of wrenching the Alchemist's Moon backwards in the sky. Standing haggard by its side was a long-limbed, horned sorcerer – bent with age, yet still recognisably Ephryx, Ninth Disciple of Tzeentch. Thostos gave vent to a bellow of rage and charged, head lowered. Eyes lambent green, the sorcerer moved back inside the inner keep, waving for his army of halberd-wielding guardsmen to bar the Stormcast Eternals' path. In less than a minute, the broken cadavers of the Chaos Warriors were strewn across the courtyard, and eight hulking Retributors were taking their hammers to the wall of flame that formed its gate.

Cerulean shafts of light poured outward as widening holes appeared in the warfire barrier. Thostos lifted his voice in thanks, and a thousand strident cheers echoed him – they saw the light of Ghal Maraz. All those struck

by it found their tired limbs imbued with strength anew. The Retributors redoubled their efforts – their prize was within reach. Fell chanting in the dark tongue drifted from within, a sign that the trickery of Tzeentch was not yet over. The curtain of flame finally vanished, revealing glory and horror alike. The Great Shatterer was found.

Held suspended by fetters of pure magic, the ancient relic was surrounded by a coven of nine greater daemons of Tzeentch. Each was chanting syllables so foul they made the ears of the Stormcast Eternals trickle with blood. The bird-like monstrosities turned to face the intruders, their wizened visages twisted with hatred. At the head of the ritual cabal was a two-headed Lord of Change clutching a tall staff, its elongated features leering cruelly.

Rippling and burning, the Shardgate descended through the domed roof of the keep. Time had run out.



## LORDS OF CHANGE

The avian greater daemons known as Lords of Change are feared by man and daemon alike. They have power over reality itself, and can turn a foe to sludge or swathe him in magical warplame with the twitch of a hooded eyelid. Though their frames are wiry and sparse, they loom over mortal men, and have strength enough to shatter walls or sweep aside whole ranks of warriors with their spellcrafted staffs. More commonly, though, Lords of Change revel in covert manipulation, trickery and transformation. They are attracted in great number to the mutable kingdoms of Chamon, though their labyrinthine schemes cross the bounds of space and time. They stitch careful tapestries of cause and effect that bind their playthings tight and squeeze their lives into ever more surreal incarnations until nothing is left but madness. Truly it is said across the Realm of Chaos that to come under the beady gaze of one of these horrors is to invite a thousand fates, each as twisted and deadly as the vulture-like daemons themselves.





# BETRAYAL AND TRIUMPH

**The Great Shatterer was finally within Sigmar's reach, though it was far from undefended: a cabal of nine Lords of Change stood between the Stormcast Eternals and their prize. The gods looked on, unable to tear their gazes away as the fate of Chamon was decided.**

The dome-capped chamber burned as bright as the noonday sun as magical energies clashed and roiled within. With the Eldritch Fortress rising unstoppably and the Shardgate closing in, the fiercely-glowing warhammer was soon but a lance's length from the portal that would see it stolen into the Crystal Labyrinth forever more.

Spells seared and crackled from the Lords of Change even as they laid about themselves with staff and claw. Stormcast Eternals met one grisly fate after another; some were burned alive, some hideously transformed, some set against one another, others torn open or banished in droves. On they came regardless, the Lord-Celestants

at their head, fighting the illusions and mirages that the greater daemons wove. Only the Celestial Vindicators forged a true path, however, for their rage was pure and hot enough to burn away the glamours sent against them.

Vandus fought blind, knowing that to trust his senses was folly – his foes were giants, and in such cramped confines Heldensen found its marks with ease. Calanax bore his master in Thostos' wake, focussing only upon the Lord-Celestant's back as he bludgeoned a path towards Ghal Maraz.

The great artefact was but a few feet from Stormcast and Shardgate alike when Kairos Fateweaver sent a searing

column of multicoloured flame into Thostos. Its unnatural fires were so hot they ate away at even the living sigmarite beneath the Lord-Celestant's battered armour, setting his metal skin aflame. Fateweaver cackled manically at the sight. He hurled every one of the Stormcast Eternals backwards with a pulse of magical force and cried out that Tzeentch's favour was his alone.

In his shadow, Ephryx the Ninth Disciple blinked to his senses, released from Kairos' mental grip whilst his master was engaged in battle. His face twisted in fury, Ephryx picked up a fallen Staff of Change and, with a great overarm blow, struck the Daemon Oracle along the length of its spine.

**T**he daemon's twin screams rose above the din of battle as it lost control of the magical energies coursing around it. Its form flickered, becoming a pink-skinned horror, a tusked skyray, a pair of blue grotesques, a moon-faced puppet.

Vandus was already in motion, leaping from the back of Calanax to soar over the spasming daemon. A saw-beaked terror lunged at him, only to be struck by a bolt from his steed's maw. Another was blasted away by Ionus, his reliquary held sidelong like a wizard's staff.

Shouting in triumph, Vandus grabbed Ghal Maraz, tore it from its aetheric chains, and landed in a rolling crouch. A corona of power crackled through him,

burning his hand with its intensity. The daemon lord, having regained control of its wild transmutation, span to point a crackling finger at Vandus' head. The Lord-Celestant cried out and swung Ghal Maraz, his hand on fire as energy blazed through his veins. A thunderous impact, and the daemon's arm was ripped away. Vandus swung again and struck its screaming heads – one into the other, then both into the ground. The daemon's body shrivelled to become a glinting crystal in the dust. Vandus swiftly crushed it under his armoured heel.

The entire fortress lurched violently, and Chamon resounded to godly thunder. As the roof of the keep tumbled apart, Vandus looked up to see a twin-tailed comet burning down towards him. Then all was light.



**A**nd so it was that the hammer Ghal Maraz returned to high Azyr, and the Eldritch Fortress was snatched into the Realm of Chaos, its curse lifted from the Hanging Valleys forever.

Many were the sagas and feasts that followed. The Lord-Celestants that had led the crusade were feted by all, their wounds healed in the Chambers of Renewal and their deeds praised. New legends were already being sung throughout the Mortal Realms; tales of saviours that struck from above, and of heroes that never turned back, no matter the horrors arrayed against them.

As for the God-King Sigmar, he did not rest, for there was much to be done. The retrieval of his hammer had reunited him with much of his storm-borne power, and his tempest raged stronger than ever. Sigmar knew well, however, that the purpose of a weapon is to be wielded. On the twelfth day of celebrations, the God-King made his way to the Chamber Extremis, opened the gates, and wakened the numinous being inside.

The War for the Allpoints was about to begin.









