



WHITE DWARF

ISSUE
459

TOME
CELESTIAL:
GRIMSCUTTLE
TRIBES

THE COLLAPSE
OF ARGOVON!
NEW CAMPAIGN
RULES

20 PAGES OF
STUNNING
ARMY
GALLERIES

NEW SEASON
BLOOD BOWL
MATCH REPORT

NECROMUNDA
END GAME
SCENARIOS



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EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBER COVERS!

If you subscribe to *White Dwarf*, you may have noticed that you have a different cover on your magazine compared to the ones found in shops. Subscriber copies feature a piece of artwork without the contents listing down the side, allowing you to appreciate the art in all its glory.

This month's cover features a nest of Spiderfang Grots by Toni Deu.

If you would like to subscribe to *White Dwarf*, turn to the end of the magazine for more information.



MEET THE WHITE DWARF TEAM

From their secret sanctum, itself hidden deep within the Warhammer Studio, the White Dwarf team works tirelessly to craft everyone's favourite Warhammer hobby magazine each month.



LYLE LOWERY
Managing Editor

Tome Keepers and Nighthaunt are still very much the order of business for Lyle, though he has also painted a few Blood Bowl models (no doubt inspired by our Match Report). He's also been working on a hobby bingo scorecard — see page 144.



MATTHEW HUTSON
Senior Designer

Matt has completed work on his Word Bearers Crusade force (see later in the mag), and he's already looking for a new challenge. He's debating Sisters of Battle, potentially also wearing red. Let's hope there are no crises of faith!



DAN HARDEN
Staff Writer

Dan has been painting more Warcry terrain this month, though he has also continued working on his Blood Angels, with the intention of getting his army ready for a Crusade campaign with his friends in the coming year.



JONATHAN STAPLETON
Photographer

When he's not creating awesome shots like the Warhammer Age of Sigmar pic on page 14, Jonathan has been working on his secret project. Okay, okay, you guessed it — it's Necrons, alright! They've got glowing blue bits, too!



SOPHIE BOSTOCK
Designer

It's more Space Wolves successors for Sophie this month, including Bjorn the Fellhanded and a Primaris Ancient. You can see the fruits of her labours on the last pages of the magazine in all their frosty glory.



BEN HUMBER
Designer

Now that's Ben's settled in to normal life again (well, kind of), he's started looking at what models he wants to paint for his Raven's Watch army. He reckons a few more Eliminators and maybe some of those shiny new Gladiator tanks!

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Louis Aguilar, Mark Bedford, Jay Clare, Thomas Clarke, Robin Cruddace, Rich Dansie, Callum Davis, Toni Deu, Jon Flindall, James Gallagher, Richard Gray, Jordan Green, Elliot Hamer, Nick Horth, Jervis Johnson, Phil Kelly, Peter McMullin, Calum McPherson, Pedro Núñez, Dave Sanders, Malcolm Sanders, Harvey Snape, James Swallow, Jonathan Taylor-Yorke, Dirk Wehner, Steve Wren.



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www.warhammer-community.com

WHITE DWARF

ISSUE 459

THE END IS THE BEGINNING



The end of one year is the beginning of another, and like winter itself, it is symbolic of a cycle of renewal, of the shedding of one chrysalis to emerge anew, hopeful, and better than before. It's for this reason that the New Year is always an exciting time for me.

One of my favourite things about the New Year is the ambition and optimism of it, and that goes for the Warhammer hobby as well. It's a time-honoured tradition to set lofty and exciting new hobby goals for the coming year, whether they be playing more games, improving painting skills, finishing unpainted models, or some similar objective.

The *White Dwarf* team and I have all made resolutions for the next year, which you can find in Outside the Studio at the end of the magazine. I've resolved to complete a small force for every Warhammer game in publication, so I will never have to say no to a gamer's challenge. It'll

also give me a good excuse to paint a wide variety of models from different settings and across different scales, which will help keep the hobby fresh. Feel free to copy my brilliant idea!

In the back of the magazine, you'll also find a *White Dwarf* Hobby Bingo card, by which we challenge you to make a hobby resolution and use the card to keep track of your progress all year long. We'll be tracking our hobby scores throughout the year, so you can play along with us. How many of you can outscore the *White Dwarf* team? I can't wait to find out.

Have you decided on your resolution? All right, with resolutions in hand, let us put this past year in our wake and set a course hopefully towards the horizon upon which the New Year awaits. Here's to the New Year and many returns, and may each one be better than the last!

WHITE DWARF CONTENTS

4 CONTACT!

Letters, painting advice and beautifully painted miniatures. Also, a massive tank and a gate ... of ETERNITY!

10 WORLDS OF WARHAMMER

Lord-Historian Phil Kelly (on Gryph-charger) explores the history of the Mortal Realms. This time: Chaos!

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

16 THE TOME CELESTIAL: THE GRIMSCUTTLE TRIBES

Arachnophobes look away, because this Tome Celestial is about Spiderfang Grots. Includes new rules and background.

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

26 PAINT SPLATTER: SPIDERFANG GROTS

Classic style or Contrast? How will you paint your spiderlings?

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

30 DA BAD EGGZ TRIBE

Age of Sigmar background writer Nick Horth shares his creepy-crawly spider army with us.

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

34 RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Louis Aguilar joins us to talk about player feedback and how FAQs are incorporated into the game.

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR

38 THE COLOURS OF MAGIC

Feast your eyes on one of the most colourful armies around – a Disciples of Tzeentch force painted by Steve Wren.

WARHAMMER 40,000

74 CRUSADE CHALLENGE

Are you ready for a Warhammer 40,000 Crusade campaign? Well these seven hobbyists certainly are!

WARHAMMER 40,000

82 ECHOES FROM THE WARP

Robin Cruddace joins us to talk about nine of the little changes to Warhammer 40,000 and why they have a big impact.

GOLDEN DEMON

86 THE ARTIST UNLEASHED

Golden Demon and Slayer Sword winner Richard Gray joins us to talk about some of his exquisite painting competition entries.

WARHAMMER UNDERWORLDS

94 GLORY POINTS

Dave joins us to chat about some of his favourite fighters from Beastgrave.



Cover art by Pedro Núñez



Subscription cover art by Toni Deu

WARHAMMER 40,000

FLASHPOINT

48 JOIN US FOR THE FINAL PART IN THE ARGOVON FLASHPOINT SERIES. INSIDE, YOU WILL FIND NEW RULES AND BACKGROUND, ENABLING YOU TO PLAY THROUGH THE CONCLUDING PART OF THIS CAMPAIGN.

38 THE COLOURS OF MAGIC



86 THE ARTIST UNLEASHED



98 MATCH REPORT: THE BÖGENHAFEN BASH



WARHAMMER 40,000 FLASHPOINT: ARGOVON SYSTEM

48 ARGOVON CAMPAIGN: ARGOLISH IN FLAMES

In the fourth part of this background series, the cardinal world of Argolish has its faith sorely tested.

54 THE COST OF SURVIVAL

The Emperor protects. Or does he? Find out in this short story set during the war on Argolish.

58 ARGOVON CAMPAIGN: COLLAPSE OF ARGOVON

In the final part of the Argovon Flashpoint background series, the capital world comes under attack.

64 WAR FOR ARGOVON

From the towering spires of the Argovonya to the planet's dense forests, Argovon is under attack in these two short stories.

68 ARGOVON CAMPAIGN: CAMPAIGN RULES

New campaign rules that mark the conclusion of this Flashpoint series.

BLOOD BOWL

98 MATCH REPORT: THE BÖGENHAFEN BASH

Join Bob Bifford and Jim Johnson for the first match of the new season as the Bögenhafen Barons take on the Thunder Valley Greenskins.

AERONAUTICA IMPERIALIS

112 AERIAL ANOMALIES

Looted Imperial fighters? Imperials fighting for the Greater Good? There must be something in the air!

NECROMUNDA

118 GOING OUT WITH A BANG

So you think you've got the most powerful gang around, do you? Want to prove it?

THE MIDDLE-EARTH STRATEGY BATTLE GAME

126 SHADOW AND FLAME

A tactics guide for using the Balrog of Morgoth. As if you really needed help!

WARHAMMER 40,000

130 FAITH & FIRE PART IX

Miriya and Verity finally run their foe to ground. But will they be in time in the final part of James Swallow's epic novel?

142 OUTSIDE THE STUDIO

We talk about the models we've painted and the games we've played while working from home over the summer.

CONTACT

Where we feature your thoughts, questions and painted miniatures. Send us your letters and pictures and we'll print the best ones we get.



THANK YOU FOR THE FAMILY MEMORIES

We've just received our April or 'lockdown' copy of *White Dwarf*, and it spurred me to write in. This is a return to the hobby for me; as a pre-teen I loved Warhammer Fantasy, Man-O-War and Blood Bowl, perhaps taking

more pleasure out of painting the miniatures than gaming with them. Anyway ...

Over two years ago, my then five-year-old son saw an Imperial Knight in a shop, and he instantly fell in love with it. We (his mum and I) felt at the time that these were too difficult a toy for a child of his age. Fast forward a few months, and I was trudging up to our local town to hunt out the lad some Space Marines. You see, we'd had that terrifying news that no parent – no person for that matter – wants to hear. To make light of it, we could say Papa Nurgle was paying the lad some special attention, but there was very little humour when the 'C' word was being battered about, and the lad was going to go through a lot of tests to rule it out. It was an unpleasant, unnerving and frightening time. It wasn't the 'C' but the lad did need to have surgery (that's another story).

On that dismal Sunday morning, I found an independent stockist and entered as some emotionally wrecked father. The store owners donated me some push fit marines, and I bought a Space Marine starter kit and some paint. It was such a compassionate and positive experience, and that pretty much sums up our continued journey in the modern hobby.

We've joined the Instagram community (@DadnLad40k), and it is filled with such positivity, kindness and compassion that I regret not being persuaded back to the hobby sooner. We've been Insta-blogging for a little over twelve months now, and in that time, the lad's littlest brother has also painted up some Imperial Guard, and his mum has joined in by painting a Sister of Battle. We've made two pilgrimages to Warhammer World where the exhibits are just inspiring, played Aeronautica, tried kit bashing, entered Insta contests – it's just been a fun-filled whirlwind (not the missile-firing kind) time. My point (yes, there is one ...), is that this hobby is incredible, and it is now so accessible. I wanted to write in to say thank you. Thank you for all the memories that GW has enabled me to have with my family (and for the many more I hope to have). Thank you to everyone on Instagram for embracing us and supporting our journey. To anyone who is worried or hoping that their children will get involved, just let them lead the way.

Andrew and Will Spencer (DadnLad)
Stoke-on-Trent, UK

Hello DadnLad. It was wonderful to read your letter. We're happy to hear that you and your family are enjoying the hobby and, more importantly, that you are all in good health! It's great to know that people are so positive, happy and supportive out there in the real world and that our hobby is the uniting factor in all of that. Who'd have thought that Warhammer (and the people involved in it) would be what it is today, eh?





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WABANDS OF THE UNDERWORLDS

We've had quite a few Warhammer Underworlds warbands sent in recently, so we decided to show off a trio of our favourites. Check these Underworlds wonders out!

The Godsworn Hunt
by Gavin Miles



Thundrik's Profiteers
by Joshua Dunkerly



Hrothgorn's Mantrappers
by Alessandro Miraldi



ASK GROMBRINDAL

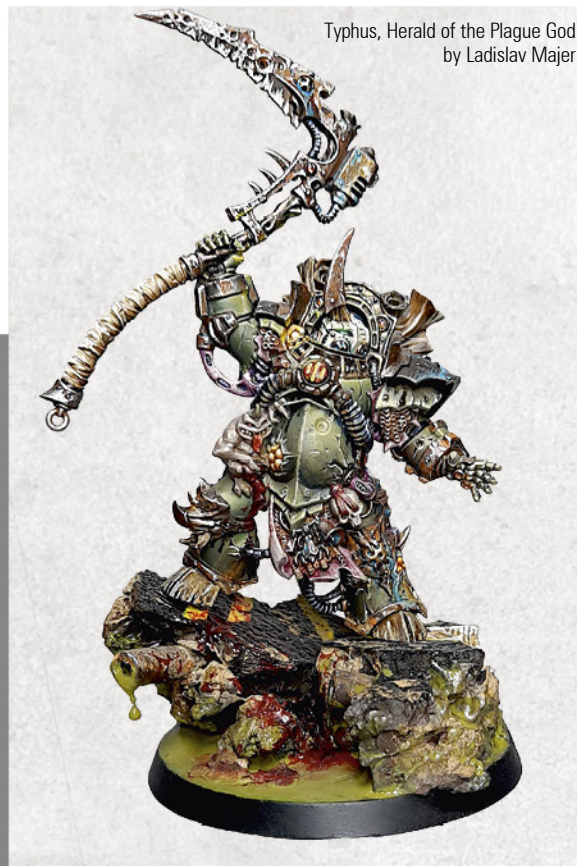
Dear White Dwarf, I have a question for yours truly. I've been wondering for a while if the Genestealer Cults could take over an Imperial Knight, or even make their own. If they can, why don't they?



Emrys Cobbett-Evans
Merthyr Tudful, Wales

Ah, an alien question – my favourite! If a Genestealer Cult did somehow manage to capture a Knight suit intact, they wouldn't be able to operate it due to the Throne Mechanicum interface. The Nobles are the product of generations of specialists who train for their whole lives to become worthy of joining with their Knight suit – it would not be something cultists could do. Perhaps they could rip out the Throne, but then they'd have to build their own kind of interface, and that probably wouldn't work with the ancient technology found in Knights. If they tried it the other way, by infecting a Noble with the Genestealer kiss, the suit's spirit would reject the Noble violently, killing them with some kind of haemorrhaging neural feedback.

Grombrindal



Typhus, Herald of the Plague God
by Ladislav Majer

TOP PHOTO TIPS

In Contact, we want to show off the very best miniatures painted by you, our readers. Of course, great miniatures need great pictures, so we came up with a useful guide to help you out:

www.warhammer-community.com/the-model-photo

If you follow all the advice in that article, you really can't go far wrong. Our top tips are:

Always use a white background.

Make sure you've got good lighting.

Ensure the whole model is in focus, including the base and all its weapons.

Find the model's golden angle. If in doubt, take a look at the same model on the Games Workshop website to see how it was photographed.

PAINTING QUESTION: THE PURPLE T'AU

Hallo! My girlfriend really wanted to know what colours were used to paint the T'au that were featured in last December's *White Dwarf*. She really likes the look of them, but doesn't know what colours were used, so we were wondering if we could get a list of paints? Kind regards.

Alicia Hoflack and Zoë Makela
Brugge, Belgium

Well that's easy enough to answer, Alicia – those T'au were painted by Dan, our very own

writer. He undercoats them with Chaos Black spray, then starts with the armour, followed by the black areas, then the weapons and blue D'yanoi Sept colours. Pretty much every colour is edge highlighted, with the only all-over wash appearing on the black undersuits. Note also that Dan used Guilliman Blue to shade the sept markings. While this colour is no longer available, Talassar Blue mixed with Contrast Medium makes for an excellent substitute. The bases are painted with Valhallan Blizzard for that wintery feel. Hope that helps!



BLUE PANELS

Basecoat: Lothorn Blue

Wash: Talassar Blue & Contrast Medium (recesses)

Layer: Fenrisian Grey

Layer: Blue Horror

PURPLE ARMOUR

Basecoat: Naggaroth Night

Layer: Genestealer Purple

Layer: Fenrisian Grey

BLACK

Basecoat: Skavenblight Dinge

Wash: Nuln Oil

Layer: Stormvermin Fur

Layer: Fenrisian Grey

WHITE WEAPONS

Basecoat: Fenrisian Grey

Layer: Blue Horror

Layer: White Scar

CONVERSION CORNER - THE PEGASUS

This issue, we've got something a little special to show off – an impressive conversion built and painted by Andy Hicks known as the Pegasus.

'The Pegasus is an Aeldari super-heavy transport that I've converted,' says Andy. 'It took nine years, one month and twelve days to complete (on and off). It is a scratch-built model incorporating dozens of kits, including a Phantom Titan, a Webway Gate and three Falcon Grav-tanks. The rear access ramp opens, and it has a fully detailed, painted interior as well as a magnetised weapon mount

under the cockpit (the canopy of which can also be removed to expose the pilot). The design was inspired by a tiny image of an unidentified vehicle in a piece of artwork depicting a craftworld. I have designed my own rune for the Pegasus, as well as for my custom craftworld – Miruaun. I have made and printed my own transfers of those designs and incorporated them into the final model. After working on the Pegasus for such a long time, I would love to see it featured in the pages of *White Dwarf*.'

Well, consider you wish come true, Andy!



Space Wolves Primaris Repulsor
by Jon Gomez



MODEL OF THE MONTH: GHAZGHKULL THRAKA BY ROB DAVIS



This issue's model of the month is this impressive rendition of Ghazghkull Thraka painted by Rob Davis. But wait, is it Ghazghkull? He looks a bit yellow to us ...

'Ghazghkull is a wonderful model – one of those that just deserves to be lavished with attention,' says Rob. 'I wanted to go in a slightly different direction when painting him, though, and make him a Bad Moon. He will actually be Warboss Nazgog for my bright-yellow boyz!

'The yellow is the focal point of the model, so I went in for a super-saturated golden tone. The trick is glazing Skrag Brown, Doombull Brown and pink ink into the shadows to give the yellow tons of contrast without dulling the colour.

'The black, on the other hand, is the canvas or the backdrop. I kept it simple, edge-highlighting with Incubi Darkness and increasing amounts of Pallid Wych Flesh. This gives the black a cool tone and makes it contrast nicely with the super-saturated warm yellow.

'I finished by adding a little weathering of red, brown and orange rust in the recesses.'

Gollum
by Christopher Blum



Legolas and Haldir
by Jonathan Pfund



THE ETERNITY GATE

Hi, everybody! I wanted to share some pictures with you of the diorama of the Eternity Gate that I recently made. It's based on the fantastic illustration by John Blanche. It would be an honour if it could be featured in the pages of *White Dwarf*!

The gate design is all made by hand, with the base structure constructed from plastic card and the detail sculpted with modelling putty or taken from scenery kits, Adeptus Titanicus models and Sisters of Battle kits. I followed John's illustration (which I know by heart now) as closely as I could, but I made a few tweaks here and there, as not everything was possible in 3D or was simply

beyond my skill. Nearly every banner is unique – there are a few in there that are similar, but I modified them to make them appear different.

Mikal van Leeuwen
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Well this truly incredible work, Mikal! The Eternity Gate is arguably one of the most famous and recognisable pieces of Warhammer 40,000 art, and you have captured it splendidly in miniature form! The two Adeptus Titanicus Imperial Knights really help scale the piece, too. Makes you wonder how big the gate's door handles are, doesn't it?



WORLDS OF WARHAMMER



PHIL KELLY

As Warhammer Age of Sigmar's senior background writer, Phil is almost permanently (some might say eternally) immersed in the lore of the Mortal Realms and the 41st Millennium. As such, he was the perfect candidate to write the abridged history of the Mortal Realms. For those looking for 'A Bridge History of the Mortal Realms', you might be disappointed.

¹ This is a made-up word roughly translating as 'person who agonises over the chronology of fictional events'.

² It's got to be hard to pen a manuscript or otherwise wield the quill when just outside there's a cannibal berserker wielding an executioner's axe.

This issue, we continue our deep dive into the Age of Sigmar timeline. Even spread over three issues, we've only managed to squeeze in the abbreviated version of the master timeline we keep in the design studio Stormvault. It should give you an idea of the scope of the background upon which our toy soldiers fight for survival. After all, a bit of context can be a fantastic spur for your own empire-building efforts. The Age of Sigmar is deliberately vast, both to ensure there is plenty

of room for Your Dudes to exist (see my fellow cryptohistorian¹ Jordan Green's guest column in *White Dwarf* 452) and to give a sense of depth. The cities and towns of today, with all their grit, grime and human struggle, are built on the bones of far grander civilisations.

Last issue in Worlds of Warhammer, we dealt with the Age of Myth. The stories of gods and monsters that typify those early years are often apocryphal, related only as oral history, or are historical events that have changed or grown more epic in the telling. Today, we'll be dealing with the Age of Chaos, a time for which written records are even more scant than those of the golden age preceding it.² This is an era in which the utopian progress of the Age of Myth comes crumbling down and is replaced by a five-century span of utter disaster. Cheery stuff!



THE AGE OF CHAOS

THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS

The Age of Myth collapses as mortal foibles open cracks in the foundations of order across all eight of the realms. Those cracks grow into fissures, chasms and disasters that split the fabric of reality itself, and the armies of Chaos are unleashed. A thousand hideous fates overwhelm those nations subconsciously lured by the whispers of Chaos.

THE EVERCHOSEN RIDES OUT

To spearhead this new conquest, the Ruinous Powers call upon Archaon the Everchosen. He is tested by being assailed by greater daemons of Khorne, Tzeentch and Nurgle, all of whom are devoured by the shapeshifting steed Archaon knows as Dorghar. Satisfied, the Dark Gods name Archaon as Exalted Grand Marshal of the Apocalypse – though he spurns the favour of the Horned Rat, newest of the Ruinous Powers.

As the forces of the Dark Gods grow strong, the Beasts of Chaos find common cause with the Ruinous

Powers. It is also around this time that Archaon binds the nine Gaunt Summoners to his will.

RISE OF THE GORETIDE

In Aqshy's Great Parch, the prosperous nations of Aspiria and Bataar raise their defences against the influx of cannibals and reavers from the Aqshy Clavis Isles, leaving the Flamescar Plateau, Golvania, Aridian and Capilaria to face the armies of Khorne alone. Many of these tribes swear themselves to the 'red gods' to survive. The cannibalistic Goretide nation rises from the remnants of conquered tribes, with Korghos Khul at its head. In the mountains, the Fyreslayer magmaholds seal their gates early in the Age of Chaos. Though this earns them the enmity of outsiders, it also sees them endure the attacks of Chaos forces better than most.



CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALL-GATES

Determined to resist the advance of the Chaos forces, the people of the interstitial realm known as the Allpoints begin to construct huge fortifications known as the All-gates on either side of the arcways.

THE GREENSKIN WARS

The savage peoples of Ghur provide great fodder for the armies of Chaos. Grand invasions are launched to eradicate the orruk tribes of the realm, with casualties rapidly spiralling on both sides. As the ogors and gargants of the Ghurish Hinterlands add their impressive might to the escalating war, the thuggish Ironjawz rise to power as the biggest and 'ardest greenskins around.

THE SPIREFALL

Stretched to breaking point by their own clashing egos as they drink deep of Hysh's enlightening magic, the aelves known as the Lumineth spark a civil war. Spells and artefacts of immense destructive potential are unleashed, and the realmscape of Hysh itself is scarred. Where reality cracks, the daemons of Slaanesh pour through, eager to feast on aelven souls. Tyrion masterminds the defence of Hysh, but Teclis is nowhere to be seen.

Worlds of Warhammer delves into the background of the Age of Sigmar and the 41st Millennium, looking at how stories are created and legends are born. In this instalment, we follow the timeline of the Mortal Realms beyond the Age of Myth and into the Age of Chaos.

THE SEASON OF DWINDLING

Nurgle begins his invasion of Ghyran, striking through contaminated Realmgates and the gnawholes of the Clans Pestilens. The aelves known as the Wanderers flee Ghyran through gates to Azyr. It is a slight never to be forgiven by the Sylvaneth.

WAR IN THE ALLPOINTS

Realising the strategic importance of the arcways in maintaining the Pantheon of Order, Archaon directs many of his hosts to attack the All-gates simultaneously, dividing the attention of his adversaries.

FROM THE HEAVENS THEY CAME

The temple-ships of the Koatl's Claw constellation are forced to crash-land on the plains of Mekitopsar, Ghur, after an attack by the Clans Pestilens. Koatl's Claw begins to develop into the first of the Coalesced, though many other spawnings follow.

THE RED CENTURY

Over the first hundred years or so of the Age of Chaos, the mass slaughters and butchery of nations sees Khorne become ascendant amongst the Dark Pantheon, particularly in the Great Parch. The Agloraxi magocracy are forced to retreat to their floating citadels as Steel Spike is besieged by Khornate and Tzeentchian forces.

THE WAR OF BONES

The forces of Chaos invade Shyish, spearheaded by Archaon and the Varanguard. Khorne focuses upon Hallost, seeking to consume the souls of its mighty heroes, while Nurgle primarily targets the moribund workers of Ossia – bringing him into conflict with the military genius of Katakros. When Nurgle's plagues ravage Dolorum, Lady Olynder attempts to parlay for her own life and in doing so stokes Nagash's ire. Her soul is claimed by the Great Necromancer and cursed to forever haunt her former city, compelled to feel all the miseries of the Mortal Realms at once.

BATTLE OF DIRGE PEAKS

In the Nordyrie of Hallost, Nagash summons the first true Nighthaunt procession when he sacrifices a thousand

mortal prisoners upon Mount Marrow and raises the masterless spirits of the land to battle the Khornate hordes.

THE BATTLE OF TEARS

Horticultural Slimux leads an invasion of Kurnotheal in the south of the Everspring Swathe. Kurnoth the Hunter meets him in battle, but he is in his winter aspect and is overcome by the daemonic hordes. The Sylvaneth of Heartwood Glade fight to return the Spear of Kurnoth to Alarielle. In the end, only a single Dryad survives to complete the mission.

FALL OF THE GOTHIZZAR ALL-GATE

Tzeentch and Archaon conspire to divide Azyr and Shyish. At the battle of the Gothizzar All-gate, Nagash's armies fail to arrive, leaving many Azyrites to be slaughtered and Sigmar enraged. Archaon's armies conquer the last of the All-gates and spill into the Allpoints proper.

THE WARS OF THE HEAVENS AND THE UNDERWORLDS

Sigmar, incensed, hunts Nagash in Shyish. A score of battles are lost elsewhere, including the Allpoints, as the God-King immerses himself in vengeance. Sigmar and Nagash meet in battle at least once, though Nagash escapes through sorcery. Katakros meets the God-King on his master's behalf, knowing full well he is likely doomed. The Ossian echelon are defeated by Sigmar on the shores of Lake Lethis, and the Mortarch's essence is sealed away in the Midnight Tomb Stormvault.

In his rage, Sigmar accidentally sunders the wards of the Shroudcape, where the Carrion King is imprisoned. He escapes to spread his now-contagious madness across realms ravaged by war, spawning the first Flesh-eater Courts. Ushoran's whereabouts become unknown.

THE BATTLE OF BLACK SKIES

Weakened by his conflict with Sigmar, Nagash is forced to retreat to Nagashizzar. The armies of Archaon and Nurgle soon attack the city. Nagash is defeated and all but destroyed by the Everchosen, his spirit fleeing to a hidden sepulchre in Stygxx while the Mortarchs

recover his remains. Nagashizzar is lost to Chaos, and much of Shyish with it.

Shortly after, Prince Vhordrai's attempt to destroy the Great Necromancer's remains is thwarted by Arkhan, and the vampire is locked in a realmstone coffin. Neferata is defeated by the Glotkin during the Shambling Wars, and she is forced to retreat to Nulahmia.

THE GREAT SKAVEN CIVIL WAR

Allied with the Clans Pestilens, the Clans Verminus finally break a gruelling stalemate with their greatest rivals in skavendom – the Clans Ikk – to become the primary source of soldiery in the Under-Empire. In the aftermath, Skreech Verminking appears before the Council of Thirteen and demands that the skaven cease their internecine conflicts and focus on the conquest of the realms at large – or face the wrath of the Great Horned Rat. To emphasise his point, the Verminlord turns several Lords of Decay to mutant slurry.

ABANDONMENT OF THE KARAKS

The forces of Tzeentch sweep across Chamon, searching for Chamonite to empower their arcane rituals. As the strongholds of the Khazalid empire fall, many duardin seek sanctuary in the nascent sky-ports using aethermatic technology. Thus are the Kharadron Overlords born.

Following the loss of the Harrworld, their original magmahold, the Greyfyrd lodge travel to Ayadah where they establish the Gatesword – a new magmahold built around several Realmgates.

Many duardin begin to resent Grungni for what they perceive to be his abandonment.

THE CATHTRAR DHULE

Though spared early in the Age of Chaos, Ulgu is infiltrated by skaven, then attacked in force by Khorne, Tzeentch and especially Slaanesh – led by Luxcious the Keeper, the self-proclaimed Ur-Slaanesh. Morathi and Malerion do their best to fight back, beginning the Cathtrar Dhule, or 'War of Shadows'.

FALL OF THE MAGMAHOLDS

One by one, the magmaholds of the first-forged lodges are overrun. The Vosforge is the last to fall; the twelve sons of Thorgar-Grimnir go their separate ways when the Runefather is slain by a Bloodthirster, each of them taking a portion of the lodge's ur-gold. Only Zhafor-Grimnir keeps the lodge name 'Vostarg', while the youngest son – Darz – attempts to organise an expedition to reclaim the Salamander's Spine. He disappears in mysterious circumstances after passing into the volcanic region.

THE BATTLE OF THE FIRST COALITION

Kharadron society threatens to tear itself apart in its hunger to monopolise and harness invaluable aether-gold reserves. A conference is held on the great metalith of Madralta, where the earliest version of the Kharadron Code is devised. The newly allied Kharadron, led by Barak-Nar, defeat the Tzeentchian Daemon Princes known as the

Tetronomicar at the Battle of the First Coalition, which later defines the tenets of Kharadron naval strategy.

Skaven clans overrun the Lost Forge-City of Grungni, renaming the surrounding mountain range the Verminvaults. The last of the Great Karaks falls at the Battle of Zaruk. Across the realms, the duardin are reduced to isolated clans, forced to flee to Azyr, committed to the faith of Grimnir or plying the sky-ways.

Around this time, Urgom-Grimnir, a descendant of Zhafor, discovers the Cynder Peaks – a place replete with both ur-gold and Magmadroth eggs. He establishes the new Vostarg magmahold of Furios Peak.

BAD MOON RISING

The first Gloomspite hordes begin to form as Moonclan and Spiderfang grots ally in the depths and strike at targets of opportunity.

THE BATTLE OF BURNING SKIES

The climax of the Age of Chaos comes on the Fireplains of Aqshy, when the hour is darkest. There are dozens of versions of this tale told across the realms, but most agree that there Sigmar leads the Twelve Tribes of Bellicos to stand against the daemonic hosts of Archaon. Elements of the Pantheon of Order join him, and though undying Nagash sends a token force, he does not commit his strength once more. Sigmar leads seven charges against the hordes; on the eighth, he slew the Tetrarchy of Ruin – a coalition of four favoured greater daemons – before hurling Ghal Maraz at Archaon, hoping for a swift and decisive kill. The Everchosen's form is revealed to be an illusion, however, and Ghal Maraz is instead sucked through a portal to land in the Hanging Valleys of Chamon. Devoid of his hammer – and thus a portion of his power – Sigmar has no choice but to concede the field and ultimately lead the remnants of his alliance through the Gates of Azyr.

With Sigmar fled to the Realm of Heavens, Archaon is all but unstoppable. He is finally able to conquer the Allpoints, renaming it the Eightpoints. With this vital link between the realms broken, the Pantheon of Order fragments entirely.

THE CLOSING OF THE GATES

The Gates of Azyr are sealed fast. Trapped in the war-torn realms and abandoned by their gods, entire nations are forced to swear themselves to Chaos to survive.

THE CLEANSING OF AZYR

Worshippers of Chaos launch a grand uprising in Azyrheim. In a rage, Sigmar descends to slaughter both them and the weakling Azyrheim senate, slaying all those citizens he deems corrupted – whether by Chaos or simple hatred. In the aftermath, the first Grand Conclave – the Lords of the Heavenhall – is established, the Order of Azyr and Shadowblade aelves are entrusted to hunt down secret agents of the Dark Gods, and Azyr is swept clean in a series of crusades.

THE AELF WARS

The Idoneth and Daughters of Khaine come into repeated conflict due to several enclaves of the former expressing a preference for stealing aelven souls. The Kraith sect vow eternal enmity with the Deepkin.

THE SHROUDED TIME

As the War of Life between the Sylvaneth and Nurgle worsens, Alarielle calls a Royal Moot and vows to turn back the forces of Nurgle no matter the cost. The events that follow are stricken from the memory of the Sylvaneth, but many speculate that it saw the birth of the first Outcasts. Alarielle's season of waning begins.

THE STOLEN SOULS

Sigmar puts plans in motion to create a new army. Across the realms, great heroes are snatched away on the verge of death, taken to Azyr to be reformed



on the Anvil of Apotheosis. Though this sees Sigmar's forces swell, it spells the doom for many holdout nations suddenly deprived of their champions. The Underworld of Hallost, known as the Land of Dead Heroes, is hit particularly hard.

THE SEASON OF WANING

Battered by many defeats during the War of Life, Alarielle retreats to her hidden vale in Athelwyrd, dismissing her bodyguard – the Sons of Durthu – in a moment of despair. Many Sylvaneth glades go into hiding, abandoned by their goddess. The forces of Nurgle wax high in their corruption of Ghyran.



THE HYDROX WARS

Fleets from Barak-Nar launch a campaign of extermination against the aerial predators known as the hydroxes, largely clearing their scourge from the skyways. The six major Kharadron skyports are established.

FOUNDATION OF VARANTHAX'S MAW

Though none now know the circumstances surrounding the discovery – or creation – of the vast mining complex known as Varanthax's Maw, at this time, a great supply of molten varanite is discovered beneath the infernal forge.

THE BLOOD TIME

Infuriated by the lack of worthy enemies remaining, the armies of Khorne turn upon their Chaotic allies. Though this

provides plenty of satisfying war, it also deprives the forces of Chaos of total victory. Many Slaaneshi Sybarites make their way towards the Perimeters Inimical, desiring to avoid the aggression of the Khornate hordes and seek the extreme experiences only these lands can provide.

WARS OF THE REINVENTION

After meditating for an extended period in Haixiah, Teclis achieves communion with Celennar, spirit of Hysh's true moon. With this knowledge, the archmage is able to teach his followers how to take aelementors as their spiritual lodestones. Thus begin the Wars of the Reinvention, in which the Lumineth strive to reclaim Hysh by overcoming daemons within and without.

THEFT OF THE EIGENGROM

Over centuries of incarceration, Slaanesh has begun to learn the secrets of the paradoxical chains binding him. His suspicions are confirmed when the Infernal Enraptureess Sen'sathra steals the daemoniac axe Eigengrom and slays Karanak in the resulting duel. Khorne's bellow of outrage shakes the cosmos, snapping the Chain of Purest Hatred that binds Slaanesh.

THE BATTLE OF DRUCHXAR

Morathi forms the first cross-sect Caillich Coven and defeats the armies of Luxcious the Keeper at the Battle of Druchxar. The Cathtrar Dhule continues, however, bolstered by the skaven who now seek to dominate treacherous Ulgu – particularly the Clans Eshin – thus beginning the Skaven Wars.

THE FALLEN OAK

The Oak of Ages Past is defiled by Pupa Grotesse, a Great Unclean One who

sings operatically as he bathes in the River Vitalis. Resistance in Ghyran crumbles further.

OBLITERATION OF THE AGLORAXI

The mage elite of Ahramentia harness the power of the Prismatikon cannon to obliterate a Khornate Warhorde. In retaliation, Khorne destroys the citadels of the Agloraxi. Without the influence of the Agloraxi and their mage armies, the Daemon Prince Selpher Zaronax takes power in Golvaria.

THE COMING OF GORDRAKK

In the Ghurish lands of the Wildheart, an orruk Megaboss named Gordrakk comes to power. Across the realms, gibbering greenskin shamans prophesise the coming of the next Great Waaagh!.

THE HAMMER LOST TO CHAOS

The Tzeentchian sorcerer Ephryx discovers the resting place of Ghal Maraz. He conquers the nearby city of Elixia and raises the Eldritch Fortress around the hammer, seeking to harness its divine power for a ritual to corrupt all of Chamon's Realmgates at once.

DISCOVERY OF THE IDONETH

The Keeper of Secrets Sslish the Depraved tracks a group of Idoneth from the Aighmar Enclave back to their stronghold. Though defeated, the daemon's essence retains its knowledge. Shortly after, a skaven army tunnels into the sea floor of the Great Quagmire in Shyish. They too are defeated by Idoneth from Mor'phann, but Archagon begins to suspect something amiss in the realms' oceans.

Next issue, the tempest breaks as we cover the Age of Sigmar itself. Better bring an umbrella!

A LITTLE EXTRA READING

What would you like to read about in Worlds of Warhammer? Let us know your thoughts and we'll pass them on to Phil!

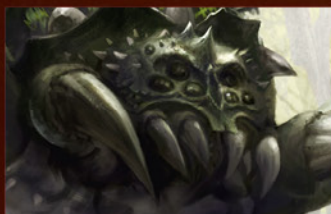
team@whitedwarf.co.uk





From the maelstrom of a sundered world, the Eight Realms were born. And with their birth began a war to claim them. This time, spiders take over the world in the Tome Celestial, plus a very colourful army.





THE TOME CELESTIAL

The Grimscuttle tribes receive new background, rules and a couple of spider-shaped painting guides. The arachna-fun begins on page 16.



THE COLOURS OF MAGIC

Renowned hobbyist and tournament gamer Steve Wren joins us to talk about his award-winning Disciples of Tzeentch army on page 38.

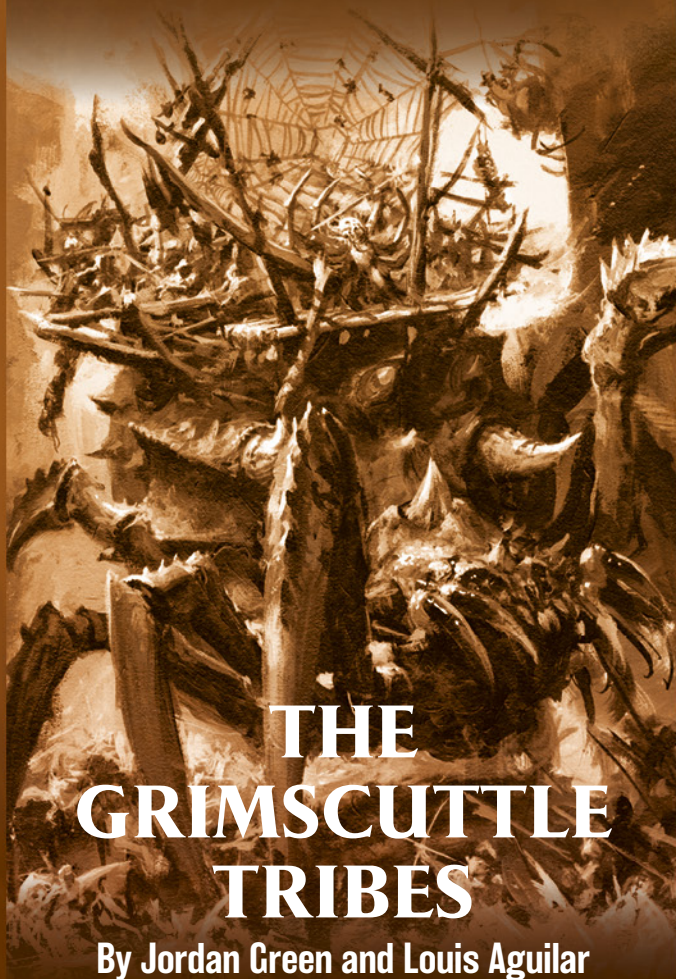


THE TOME CELESTIAL

From the forgotten corners of Shyish, the Grimscuttle tribes emerge creeping and crawling. These maniacal Spiderfang grots are true zealots of their arachnid god, and in battle, they employ not only their own deep reserves of wicked cunning but also colossal eight-legged horrors that strike without warning or mercy.

THE GRIMSCUTTLE TRIBES

By Jordan Green and Louis Aguilar



There are plenty of good reasons why mortalkind avoids the deep woods where possible. Sylvaneth protect their sacred glades and are merciless to those whom they deem to be interlopers. Twisted gor-kin herdstones and ancient moss-covered shrines honour forbidden gods and play host to grisly rites of appeasement. But it is those places where the gnarled trees stand crooked and close amidst the ruins of decayed civilisation for which the greatest fears are reserved. Protected from the hateful light of Hysh by overgrown canopies and nightmarish tangles of webbing, these are the haunts of gargantuan arachnids and the crazed greenskins who worship them – the Spiderfang grots.

The origins of the Spiderfang lie in the Age of Myth. It was then that, for whatever reason – and the shamans have put forth many theories on this, ranging from a command uttered by mighty Gorkamorka himself to a mushroom-fuelled escapade that blew wildly out of proportion – the original grot tribes diverged. Many sought sanctuary in the dank and clammy places, becoming the Moonclans. Some, often those who hailed from industrious Chamon, took to the air as the Grotbag Scuttlers. A few, however, dared the forbidding jungles and forests. Though the shadowy environs suited grot sensibilities, early greenskin explorers soon became prey for not only vengeful Sylvaneth but also the beasts that



dwelt there – especially the great spiders. But though they could never be described as courageous, grots are capable of displaying a certain spiteful ingenuity when it comes to protecting that which they consider theirs. Over time, these tribes learned how to defeat, tame and rear many of the giant arachnids that infested their new homes. As for the monstrous Arachnaroks, colossal spider-kings that can grow to the size of townhouses, it was found that, through worship and – more importantly – a constant tribute of food, they could be sufficiently appeased to serve as mounts, particularly for those spell-flingers who let venomous arachnids nest upon their bodies and, through the resultant hallucinogenic poison-bites, communed with the so-called ‘Spider God’.

Gradually, these Webspinner Shamans took charge of the tribes. The mutations that sprouted across their bodies were seen as marks of favour from their predatory deity, and at the shamans’ command, the grots no longer avoided Arachnarok lairs; instead, they began to co-exist with the gargantuan creatures. Thus were the first true stalktribes born. Reclusive as they were, when the light of the Bad Moon – a grotesque celestial body worshipped by the grots and feared as a bringer of pure anarchy by the civilised races – shone upon them, they were filled with a frothing mania that was only intensified by the venomous concoctions they

regularly ingested as part of their bizarre religious rites. Cavalcades of spider-mounted grots surged from their broodnests, obeying the will of the Spider God as shrieked by the Webspinners and Scuttlebosses atop their arachnid mounts.

The bestial children of Destruction exhibit a curious tendency to reflect the realms in which they choose to wander and settle, and the Spiderfang are no exception. In Hysh, the Frazzleshun tribes scheme to smother the hated light, while atop Ghyran’s Great Green Torc, the stalktribes have become well versed in hunting the vile Pestigors who challenge their dominion. It is in Shyish, however, where the most sinister Spiderfang make their nests. The Realm of Death is a place of tradition and entropy where the fears of countless civilisations are made real. It is often disparagingly remarked by settlers in other Mortal Realms that only the deranged or the destitute would choose to scrape out an existence in Shyish. But the Spiderfang known as the Grimscuttle tribes have more than just made their lairs in that realm – they have thrived there.

SEPULCHRAL SCUTTLINGS

In the underworld of Neferatia, mortal peasantry whispers of the fearsome ‘Black Stalkers’. On nights where the moon shines wan and weird, so go the fisherwives’ tales, these sinister beings emerge from the forests and caves riding atop spiders bloated from a diet of human blood.

Below: It is said that the spiders of the realms take on many hues, from iridescent black and sepulchral grey to lurid green, vibrant red and poisonous yellow. Whatever colour they take, they are all to be feared, for they are powerful, voracious and possessed of a deadly animal cunning.



THE SPIDER GOD

The Spider God lurks at the creepy heart of Spiderfang society, its worship uniting stalktribes from Ghyran to Hysh. Many names have been given to this being by the grots: the Feaster from Beyond, the Scuttler in the Void, He Who Weaves The Webs. The most common version of the legend says that this monstrous deity was once a godbeast that encountered Gorkamorka as he rampaged through its lair. In a rage, it scuttled forth and sank its fangs deep into the Twin-Headed God's leathery green flesh; however, instead of injecting its venom, the spider was infused with the god's primal essence. Retreating into the deepest shadows it could find, it swelled to a truly gargantuan size. The thousands of offspring that were the Spider God's brood were in turn blessed with its now hideously potent venom. Many Webspinners claim that the Bad Moon is, in fact, the egg of the Spider God and that one day it will hatch and cover the realms with an onslaught of seething arachnids.

It would be tempting to dismiss the Spider God as a myth, the product of minds broken by ingesting too many venomous brews and living in constant religious awe of the Arachnaroks. Many arrogant scholars have drawn just such a conclusion, attributing the weird spider-magics of the grots' shamans to the toxins pumping through their bloodstreams. But this does not explain the eerie scrutiny spoken of by mages who have faced the Spiderfang, that feeling as if some unfathomable intelligence was watching them from every darkened cranny. Nor does it account for the fact that, across civilisation's seedy underbelly, there are those rare thieves and serial poisoners who pray at secret altars dedicated to a deity known as the Scuttling Queen. For the Spiderfang, there is no doubt. Their legends speak of an underworld known as the Evercrawl, where forlorn ruins are criss-crossed by endless webs. Here the sacred Skitterstrand Arachnaroks make their nests around a great black pit that plunges deep into the realmcrust. This, preach the Webspinners, is the lair of the Spider God, though not even one of their holy order has travelled there and returned.

They descend upon lonely villages to steal away secret heretics, misbehaving children or even entire populations – depending upon the teller – before retreating to their shadowed lairs. Those who pursue the Stalkers are led astray by spiteful laughter and tangling web-walls, soon to fall prey to the gargantuan spider-kings that rule the raiders as their living, ever-hungry gods.

As fanciful as it sounds, all of these legends are at least partially true. Bound together through treacherous double-dealings, religious rites and the tenacious desire to survive, the confederation of Spiderfang stalktribes known as the Grimscuttle – or, as they refer to themselves, 'Deff Grotz' – has carved out a hidden kingdom in this unforgiving land. Theirs is a precarious existence, for many powerful neighbours would see them exterminated were they not constantly beset themselves. But grots have always thrived on being underestimated. If left to multiply, the Grimscuttle might one day be able to drive a poisoned dagger into the backs of all of their rivals; in the meantime, their raids only grow in audacity and spite.

The Webspinner Shamans claim that even before the Age of Chaos, the first Deff Grotz had established their lairs in Neferatia and were offering praise to the Spider God. The name of the visionary – and, considering the unforgiving realities of their new home, more than likely utterly insane – boss-grot who first travelled to Neferatia has long been forgotten. Unsurprisingly, many Grimscuttle tribes claim descent from this legendary figure. This has provided the spark for several internecine conflicts, such as that of the Moon Skuttlerz and Spook-Stranglerz, who mutually destroyed themselves battling over whether the First Boss wielded a spear named Fing-Stabba or a sickle named Fing-Slysa.

The Grimscuttle tribes survived the Age of Chaos for two reasons. Firstly, their proximity to Nulahmia – seat of the legendary Soublight queen Neferata, Nagash's Mortarch of Blood – actually proved to be a boon, for many champions of ruin desired to sack that darkly magnificent city. Oaths of non-aggression were extracted in exchange for the grots agreeing to lead Chaos warbands through the mountains that divided the Screaming Wastes in the underworld's east from Neferatia proper in the west. There the warriors would break upon the walls of Nulahmia while also occupying the Mortarch's forces. Some warlords attempted to renege on these deals, committing acts of betrayal that the Spiderfang considered entirely understandable, given their own compulsive urge for treachery. Yet many of these double-crossers, either overcome with bloodlust or dismissive of the grots' apparent weediness, made the mistake



of waiting until they were deep in the mountains before revealing their duplicity. One by one, they fell prey not only to the ferocity of the Spiderfang but also to the cunning traps and snares that the grots had set up to cover their inevitable retreats.

The second reason, however, was far more important. Though none entirely trusted another – a wise decision – the Age of Chaos forced many of the Neferatian stalktribes to band together in loose coalitions. In a practical sense, these ‘alliances’ consisted of the biggest and toughest tribes bullying their smaller neighbours into offering tributes of venomous potions and other desirables – which for grots could mean anything from shiny weapons to particularly interesting toe fungus – in return for protection. These associations also provided an opportunity for the underworld’s many Webspinner Shamans to impress their new mates with their supposed knowledge of the Spider God. Shyish is a realm of tradition and superstition, where the bones of a thousand gods lie scattered across the dunes and valleys. Was it not possible, the shamans began to believe as they egged one another on, that their deity had feasted on some of these fallen titans and made its lair in Shyish? Some even claimed to have seen such a place in the visions granted by the bites of their eight-legged familiars: a great chasm surrounded by spiders of a size and inherent malice that resonated with the grots. Gathering together the tribes in the lightless, arboreal depths, the Webspinners embarked upon a master plan to invoke their sinister god.

THE GREAT SKITTERSCREAM

Preparations were made for a ritual as audacious as it was demented. The Webspinner Shamans of the Deff Grotz intended to open a Realmgate directly to the lair of the Spider God, calling forth their deity to devour the essence of the underworld itself. Exactly why they wanted to do this is unclear, for it is unlikely that the Spider God would bother to exclude the grots from its hunger, but such was considered a problem for later by the eager greenskins. Entire caverns were threaded with intricate webbed symbols. Slaves were captured in greater volumes than ever, wrapped in acidic webs that kept them hideously aware while slowly melting their flesh. Skull drums echoed as the Webspinners led the tribes in mass chants and prisoners were hurled screaming into pits filled with seething, hungry arachnids.

Though few outsiders realise it, the Spider God’s brood are no mindless beasts. While Giant Spiders exhibit a mere animal cunning, Arachnaroks are wise and cruel in equal measure – and none more so than the Skitterstrands. These void-stalking predators pursue the

aetheric glow of spellcraft through holes burrowed in reality’s skin, and the frenzied rituals of the Grimscuttle tribes had stoked their ravenous appetites. As the grots’ strange ceremonies reached their zenith, the air was filled with the shrieks of arachnid mega-predators. Long blade-like limbs unfolded from web-strewn portals as the Skitterstrand Arachnaroks dragged themselves into reality – only two at first, then three, then five, then seven. First they fell upon the sacrifices, devouring them in orgiastic outpourings of hunger. Then it was the turn of the grots to serve as prey. Reedy screams of exultation turned to squeals of horror as the greenskins fled through the winding tunnels of their nests, pursued by beings they could not hope to outrun. Even the Webspinners were not spared; the mangled bodies of those who fell were eagerly feasted upon by the Skitterstrands.

This disaster of their own making would likely have been the end of the Grimscuttle tribes, were it not for the Bad Moon. Whether it appeared through sheer happenstance or it was drawn to the misfortune of its worshippers, the hateful celestial body cast its sinister loonlight across Neferatia. Dead soil seethed with fungal life, lakes of rich blood curdled and clotted, and the beasts of the mountains launched mass stampedes into the forces of Chaos and Death in the surrounding lowlands. To other races, these were portents of doom, but to the Deff Grotz, this meant salvation. The surviving Webspinners were



overcome with their most violent and frothing visions to date, visions that compelled them to drop to their knees in prayer before the rampaging spider-titans, swaying and chanting even as gore sprayed across them in great gouts.

If the minds of the Grimscuttle tribes had not already shattered, they certainly did so now. But their devotions had the desired effect. The Skitterstrands – either pleased with the grots’ obeisance or simply having satiated their hunger – ceased their feasting, their many eyes now turned towards the zealotry of the greenskins. What happened next has been told and retold so often by the Webspinners that the truth has been utterly lost. It is undeniable, however, that when next the Grimscuttle tribes rode out, it was in the company of many Skitterstrands. Each stalktribe congregated around a particular beast, one judged to be the mightiest or most spiritually akin to its new worshippers. They spread through the valleys of Neferatia like a scuttling plague, dragging off all they could capture to meet a dark fate in the broodnests. Three armies were dispatched from Nulahmia to eradicate the grots, each captained by one of Neferata’s trusted handmaidens. All met with failure; the light of the Bad Moon filled the Spiderfang with a terrible bravery, while the Skitterstrands recognised the threat posed by the undead warlords to their new worshippers and providers of food. From cracks in reality, they struck without warning, dragging screaming vampires through arcane trap-holes to face grisly ends. Many of the Grimscuttle tribes followed the Skitterstrands back through these portals; though these eerie labyrinths are strange and dangerous places, they are often used by the Webspinner Shamans as useful shortcuts – in some cases, they even become the lairs of entire tribes. The Skitterstrands roughly tolerate this, so long as the grots continue to provide them with a steady supply of food.

THE CRAWLING HORROR

Ever since the Great Skitterscream, almost every sizeable raid launched by the Deff Grotz has been accompanied by at least one Skitterstrand Arachnarok. To ride into battle alongside their tribe’s personal totem-beast is a thrill unlike any other, not least because grots draw a measure of courage from being in the shadow of anything large and menacing that happens to be on their side. Though it is unlikely that the Skitterstrands derive much more than a passing, malicious amusement from the grots’ zeal, they too gain something from this arrangement. While the attacks of scuttling Spider Rider mobs disrupt an enemy battleline, the Arachnaroks emerge from their sinister reality-splitting tunnels to pounce upon enemy generals and sorcerers, dragging them back to secluded lairs to be devoured at leisure. This is not done solely to satisfy their

animalistic hunger; the children of the Spider God know full well that this is a time of magical upheaval and that the power of the arcane has the potential to scour their hunting grounds clean of life, should it be left unchecked. If their sudden, violent interventions draw greater awe and greater tributes from the grots, then so much the better.

Though they can still number in the thousands, Spiderfang broodnests tend to contain fewer grots than other greenskin strongholds. This is largely explained by the fact that, despite their symbiotic relationship, there is very little the grots can do to stop an Arachnarok from devouring scores of its devotees if it so desires. As a result, speed is amongst the greatest weapons of the Grimscuttle tribes, their raids conducted to swiftly seize sacrifices before retreating in the face of stern opposition. Though Giant Spiders are outpaced by Xintilian purebreds or pouncing Snarlfangs, their ability to navigate uneven terrain – even scuttling up and down sheer walls – is practically unrivalled. All Grimscuttle warriors are consummate raiders and have long trained to use the agility of their mounts to maximum effect. Scarred Scuttlebosses lead spider-riding Skitterswarms on flanking attacks from seemingly impossible angles, launching a near-constant stream of poisoned arrowfire before charging in to lash out with spears and fangs. Many Deff Grotz are able to follow their patron Skitterstrands through the holes burrowed in reality, attacking without warning in the shadow of their living god.

Nevertheless, the Deff Grotz do not entrust victory to speed and ferocity alone. In the night before a battle or raid, mobs of spider-mounted outriders will scuttle ahead to prepare the ground. Deep pits are dug and filled with sharpened stakes, their tips coated with paralytic venoms. Trip-webs are connected to surprisingly elaborate mechanisms that, at the shrieking command of the Webspinner Shamans, impale the foe with sharpened gargant femurs or eviscerate them with suddenly deploying razor-nets. Their most popular ruse, however, is the use of carefully concealed trap-holes, often disguised using boggle-eyed Loonshrines that crawl with arachnid life, from which entire mobs of Spider Riders can suddenly emerge to outflank a reeling enemy formation. To strike from such hidden avenues is seen as a sacred act to the Deff Grotz, bringing them closer to the Skitterstrands they seek to emulate. They are the masters of the feigned – or not so feigned – flight, using their mobility to lure foes into plotted killing grounds before launching sudden ambushes and cruelly riding them down.

The chitin of Neferatia’s Giant Spiders is

predominantly black of hue. Onto this, the Deff Grotz paint markings in lurid yellows and pallid whites that they believe strike fear into their adversaries; skulls and hourglasses are common choices, not only because these are common elements of Shyishan symbology but also because they are simple enough for grots to copy. As for the stalktribes' patron Skitterstrands, their carapaces are naturally covered in markings of a grim and deathly nature. These beings are the centre of the Grimscuttle's fanatical faith, each a living embodiment of the Spider God's power. Hierarchy amongst the tribes is decided not only by the number of sacrifices brought in but also by the age and deeds of their arachnid idol. The Grave Feasterz, currently the biggest and bossiest of all Deff Grotz tribes, boast to any who will listen of the bloated monstrosity they call 'Boss Seven-Eyez' who once devoured an entire coven of Bloodseeker connoisseurs – as well as the enchanted palanquin upon which they were riding.

THE CULT OF THE SPIDER

Unlike most rowdy beasts of Destruction who view worship of Gorkamorka and their natural propensity towards violence as one and the same, Spiderfang stalktribes are actively religious entities that place great import on appeasing their arachnid deity. Enemy corpses will only be looted once the tide of arachnids that follows a Spiderfang war party has been allowed to feast, though this may have something to do with the fact that over-eager grots tend to be eaten in return for their troubles. Many rituals involve shamans and favoured champions ingesting the venom of their arachnid demigods and enduring the bone-straining seizures and terrifying visions that follow. Mass sacrifices form a key part of this crazed religion, and many of the grots' captives are destined to be devoured alive by swarms of spiders to the sound of the greenskins' high-pitched chanting. All of this, the Webspinners believe, brings them closer to the Spider God. Whether true or not, the rituals undoubtedly bolster the spell-flingers' incantations as well as rendering them near immune to poison – a useful trait in a society as prone to rampant backstabbing as that of the grots.



TO WEAVE THE WEB

The Grimscuttle tribes have long been a blight upon Neferatia. Yet there are few who realise the strength they have amassed in the web-strewn shadows of the underworld – and the damage they could do were the Spider God to set them upon the path of total war.

THE NIGHT OF THE SPIDER

The Great Skitterscream, a demented ritual enacted by the Webspinner Shamans of the Grimscuttle tribes, goes hideously wrong as their summoned Skitterstrands begin to feast upon the grots with wild abandon. Only when the Bad Moon rises across Neferatia and the terror-crazed greenskins throw themselves at the mercy of these sinister arachnid demigods is common cause reached. The survivors ride across the underworld in force, striking not only at armies and settlements in thrall to the vampire Neferata but also at the hosts of Chaos who seek to topple the undead queen. In this way, they are scourges and saviours both, as exemplified when three Skitterstrands suddenly ambush and devour the Tzeentchian daemon prince Xyl'Ax'Thaurum mere hours before he can enact an arcane ritual to translocate his Changehosts directly into the heart of Nulahmia.

DA BIG WEBFEAST

Sizeable mobs from three distant stalktribes – the Ash Skuttlerz, Bad Eggz and Dank-Kreeperz – travel to the domain of the Grimscuttle for 'da Big Webfeast', a recurrent gathering to honour the Spider God. The ceremonies are interrupted, however, by a brotherhood of Astral Templars intent on expunging the unpredictable grots from the Nulahmian war front. Many of the visiting Spiderfang mass for a desperate defence, but as they are pushed back towards the inner broodnests, the Deff Grotz seem strangely unwilling to join the fight. Overcome with ferocious battlulust, Lord-Celestant Thonar of the Ice launches an all-out attack upon the towering catchweb spidershrines at the heart of the Grimscuttle 'temple'. However, in doing so, he and his warriors quite literally fall into the Deff Grotz' trap; shrouded by the deep darkness of the broodnests, the Stormcasts do not realise that the temple floors are made of tightly packed webbing until they become entangled in it. Along the steel-silk strands scuttle mob after mob of Grimscuttle Spider Riders, having lurked in concealment until their enemies were restrained. The slaughter that follows is brutal and only intensifies when the frenzy of the Deff Grotz attracts several of their Skitterstrand patrons to fall upon the Astral Templars. As



the final Azyrite is slain in a blast of cerulean light, the visiting grots agree that this was the most successful Webfeast yet, either ignorant or uncaring of the fact that the loss of so many of their own warriors renders the Grimscuttle tribes the most powerful Spiderfang for leagues around.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF GRIBBLA

Neferata's patience with the Deff Grotz reaches breaking point. When sinister omens that can only herald the coming of the Bad Moon are detected across Neferatia, the Mortarch deliberately withholds her armies from the defence of several thrall-villages situated near the greenskins' lairs. Sure enough, when the strange celestial body rises, the Grimscuttle tribes begin to raid the vulnerable settlements, only to be caught in a deadly counter-attack by the Legion of Blood. The grots are forced to flee, drawing upon their natural sneakiness to skitter away into the shadows. Yet one stalktribe, under the command of the shaman Gribbla Websnot, strays further than most. In their panicked flight, the grots pass through a hidden Realmgate to Ghur, emerging in a vast subterranean tunnel lined with thick webs. Quickly taking the initiative, Gribbla informs his followers that such was absolutely his intent, and that the tunnel was created by the most massive arachnid in all the realms. The zealous Deff Grotz follow the long and winding tunnel in search of the creature, overrunning several skaven bore-works and outposts of the Underguts Mawtribe without slowing.

DA BOSS IS WATCHING

Roilon Ven Brecht, one of Neferata's devoted courtiers, attempts to impress his mistress by turning the Deff Grotz into an asset. In the labyrinth of crypts below Nulahmia, the vampire lord performs a mass sacrifice of his mortal thralls before conjuring four Purple Suns of Shyish, sending them to menace mortal armies across the lands. If the spells alone do not destroy their adversaries, reasons Roilon, then the Skitterstrands drawn to the magical devastation soon will. Unfortunately for Roilon, the sheer expenditure of arcane energy draws the attention of the titanic Skitterstrand known as Boss Seven-Eyez. The Arachnarok uses the flaring beacon of aetheric power to tunnel straight into the crypts, accompanied by the Grave Feasterz tribe in their entirety. The grisly slaughter that follows at least saves Roilon from needing to explain his error to Neferata.

THE SPIDER GOD STIRS

More and more, the venom-born visions of the Webspinner Shamans focus on two things: a rumbling in Ghur and a black pit plunging into Shyish from which terrible shrieks of hunger emanate. Some tribes argue that the pit represents 'Da Black Gobblehole' at the heart of Shyish; others claim that the roar is the Great Waaagh! of Gordrakk gathering pace. Most, however, are convinced that these are portents of the Spider God's return to the Mortal Realms. Weapons are sharpened, prayers intoned and spider mounts reared in greater numbers than ever, preparing for raids that will – in the words of the Webspinners – secure enough sacrifices to draw their insatiable deity from its abyssal lair.



GRIMSCUTTLE TRIBES ALLEGIANCE ABILITIES

If your army is a Gloomspite Gitz army, you can give it the GRIMSCUTTLE keyword. All GLOOMSPITE GITZ units in your army gain that keyword, and you can use the following allegiance abilities in addition to the allegiance abilities in *Battletome: Gloomspite Gitz*.

ABILITIES

Deff Grotz of Shyish: *The zealous grots of the Grimscuttle tribes boast of their connection to the Spider God, and they certainly seem to display a knack for channelling its uncanny powers.*

Each time a friendly GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDERFANG unit is affected by a spell or endless spell, you can roll a dice. If you do so, on a 5+, ignore the effects of that spell or endless spell on that unit.

Drawn to the Aetherglow: *The Skitterstrands worshipped by the Grimscuttle tribes have developed a taste for magically charged prey, and they pursue these targets with particular hunger.*

You can re-roll hit rolls for attacks made with melee weapons by friendly SKITTERSTRAND models if the target is a WIZARD or PRIEST.

COMMAND ABILITY

Masters of Feigned Flight: *The Grimscuttle grots are the masters of feigned flight, falling back before returning to attack once more. The fact that such retreats often aren't initially feigned helps a little.*

You can use this command ability at the start of your movement phase. If you do so, pick 1 friendly GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDERFANG unit wholly within 12" of a friendly GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDERFANG HERO. Until your next hero phase, that unit can retreat and still charge later in the same turn.

COMMAND TRAIT

A GRIMSCUTTLE WEBSPINNER SHAMAN general must have the following command trait:

Prophet of da Spider God: *So fervently does this shaman believe in the monstrous deity of the Deff Grotz that when he raises his squeaky voice in prayer, his followers really do seem to be blessed with the Spider God's potent venoms.*

Once per battle in the combat phase, you can say that this general will unleash their battle cry. If you do so, friendly GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDERFANG models are treated as being affected by the light of the Bad Moon until the end of that phase.

ARTEFACT OF POWER

The first GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDERFANG HERO to receive an artefact of power must be given the Shyishan Spider-sigils.

Shyishan Spider-sigils: *The greatest Grimscuttle bosses daub themselves and their mounts with morbid symbols that strike fear into all those familiar with the scuttling horror of the Deff Grotz.*

Subtract 1 from the Bravery characteristic of enemy units while they are within 6" of the bearer. In addition, add 1 to the Bravery characteristic of friendly GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDERFANG units while they wholly within 12" of the bearer.

WARSCROLL UPDATE – BAD MOON LOONSHRINE

If your general has the SPIDERFANG keyword, any friendly BAD MOON LOONSHRINES replace their Moonclan Lairs ability with the Endless Skitterswarms ability.

Endless Skitterswarms: *The Loonshrines of the Spiderfang are often connected to web-strewn caverns, out of which emerge mob after mob of scuttling grot Spider Riders.*

At the end of each of your turns, you can pick 1 friendly SPIDER RIDERS unit that has been destroyed. If you do so, roll a dice. On a 4+, a new replacement

unit with half of the models from the unit that was destroyed (rounding fractions up) is added to your army. You must set up the replacement unit wholly within 12" of a friendly BAD MOON LOONSHRINE and more than 3" from any enemy units. Each destroyed unit can only be replaced once – replacement units cannot themselves be replaced.

WARSCROLL BATTALIONS

These warscroll battalions enable you to field unique formations of Grimscuttle units on the battlefield.

GRIMSCUTTLE WARSCROLL BATTALION

GRIMSCUTTLE SPIDER CLUSTER

ORGANISATION

A Grimscuttle Spider Cluster consists of the following units:

- 2-4 GRIMSCUTTLE ARACHNAROK SPIDER units in any combination

ABILITIES

Monstrous Titans: *The Arachnaroks of Neferatia are possessed of a particularly dark temperament, and they revel in spearing hapless foes on their sharp, agile legs.*

Add 1 to hit rolls for attacks made with melee weapons by units from this battalion.

GRIMSCUTTLE WARSCROLL BATTALION

GRIMSCUTTLE SKITTERSWARM

ORGANISATION

A Grimscuttle Skitterswarm consists of the following units:

- 0-1 SCUTTLEBOSS or Webspinner Shaman
- 3+ Spider Riders units

ABILITIES

Through the Cracks They Creep: *Whether outflanking the foe via the use of cunning trap-holes or emerging from the tunnels bored through reality by their allied Skitterstrands, Deff Grotz Spider Riders are adept at striking from unexpected directions.*

At the start of the first battle round, after determining who has the first turn but before the first turn begins, you can pick up to D3 units from this battalion and remove them from the battlefield. If you do so, at the end of your first movement phase, set up those units again wholly within 6" of the edge of the battlefield and more than 9" from any enemy units.

GRIMSCUTTLE WARSCROLL BATTALION

GRIMSCUTTLE NEST

ORGANISATION

A Grimscuttle Nest consists of the following units:

- 2-3 Skitterstrand Arachnaroks

ABILITIES

Reality's Skin-crawlers: *The Skitterstrand Arachnaroks that fight alongside the Grimscuttle tribes are amongst the most cunning of their kind, constantly skittering through the skin of reality to catch their prey off guard.*

In your movement phase, instead of making a normal move with a model from this battalion, you can say that it will tunnel through the web-strewn portals. If you do so, remove that model from the battlefield and set it up again anywhere on the battlefield more than 9" from any enemy units.

WARSCROLL	MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Grimscuttle Spider Cluster	-	-	140	Warscroll Battalion	
Grimscuttle Skitterswarm	-	-	140	Warscroll Battalion	
Grimscuttle Nest	-	-	140	Warscroll Battalion	

SPIDERFANG GROTS

This month's Tome Celestial is all about Spiderfang Grots, so what better way to follow up an article about background and rules than with some painting guides? If you suffer from arachnophobia, we recommend closing your eyes and turning the page a couple of times ...

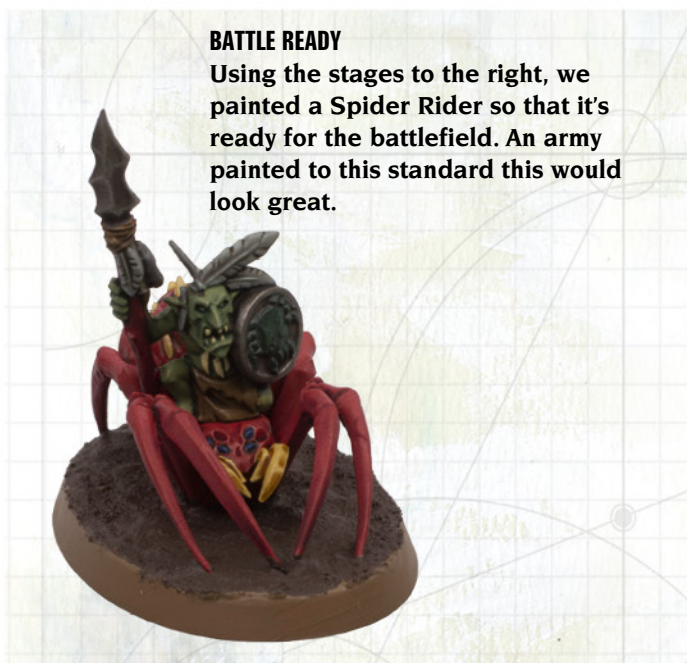
It will come as no surprise that this month's painting guide features the wonderful Spiderfang Grots. Over the next four pages, you'll find two painting guides – one for the classic paint range, the other for Contrast paints. Both guides feature models painted to Battle Ready and Parade Ready standards.

CLASSIC STYLE

The Spider Rider below was undercoated using two separate basecoat sprays – Mephiston Red and Death Guard Green. One of the great advantages of this method is that you could, if you wanted to, easily drybrush the Parade Ready carapace colours onto the spider because

BATTLE READY

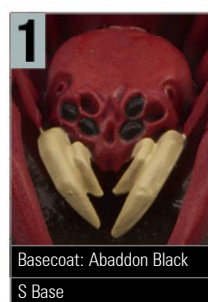
Using the stages to the right, we painted a Spider Rider so that it's ready for the battlefield. An army painted to this standard this would look great.



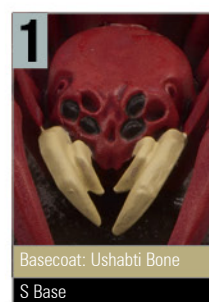
CARAPACE



SPIDER EYES

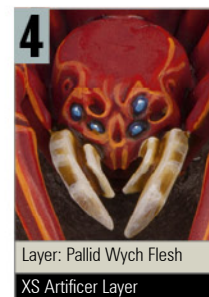
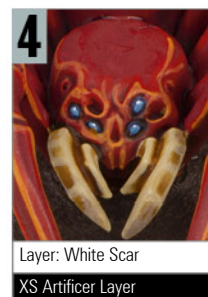
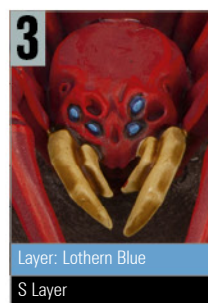
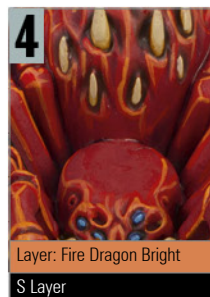


MOUTHPARTS



PARADE READY

With a few extra highlights to each area of the model, we took the Battle Ready Spider Rider and made him Parade Ready. Watch out for webs!



there would be no grot to get in the way of the brush. For those of us with less steady hands (or less time on our hands), drybrushing is an excellent alternative to layering.

TOP TIP

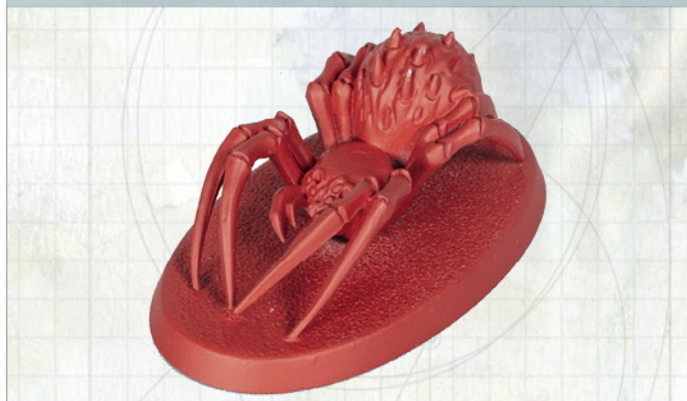
Spiders have lots of legs. Legs get in the way when applying texture paints to bases. Fortunately, the contact points between the legs and the bases are pretty small. This means that you can lightly glue your spiders to their bases (so you've got something to hold while painting them), then when it comes to painting the bases, gently pull the spiders off, paint the bases, and glue the spiders back on. Perfect bases, non-muddy spiders.

TOP TIP 2

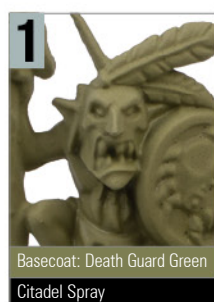
If you have two areas of a model that both use the same colour wash (such as loincloth and spear shaft, below), basecoat both areas, then wash them at the same time.

MAKING PAINTING EASIER

To make painting our Spider Rider easier, we kept the rider separate from the spider. This meant that we could undercoat the spider with Mephiston Red spray and the grot with Death Guard Green – the ideal basecoat colours. Keeping them separate would also stop the spider's legs getting in the way when painting the diminutive rider. We stuck the grot to a spare base with a dot of Super Glue to make holding it easier.



GROT SKIN



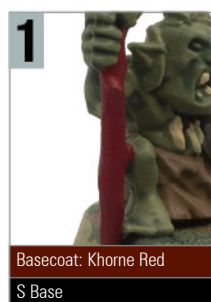
LOINCLOTH



METAL



SPEAR SHAFT



SHIELD BOSS



FEATHERS



CONTRAST STYLE

Just like the Spider Rider painted in the classic style, this Contrast version was painted in two sub-assemblies: the spider and the rider. While both were undercoated with Wraithbone spray, keeping them separate meant that we could be a little less careful (and therefore quicker) when applying our Contrast paints. For example, we were able to cover the spider in Flesh Tearers Red without worrying about getting any of it on the grot.

On this Spider Rider, the Contrast paints do a considerable amount of the work for you, and a Battle Ready spider looks pretty impressive without any extra highlights. The Battle Ready one shown below was painted in about thirty minutes, not including drying time. Were you to batch paint a whole unit this way, you could basecoat ten spiders with your chosen Contrast colour, have a cup of tea and a biscuit (or coffee and cake,

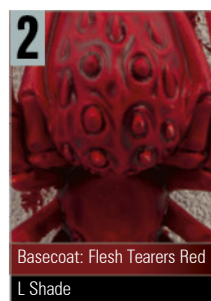
whatever takes your fancy), and by the time you're finished snacking, the paint on the first spider will be dry, ready for you to apply the next colour.

The grot rider requires a steadier hand when it comes to Contrast paints since it is very small. We started by basecoating the skin (the deepest area of the model) then working outwards to the loincloth, metalwork and smaller details (in fact, in the order they're presented below). All of the Contrast paints were applied with either our S Base or M Layer brush to ensure accurate control was maintained and that not too much paint got into the bristles.

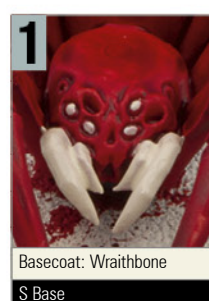
Of course, mistakes did happen along the way, but these were easily tidied up with a layer of Wraithbone. There's some debate about which painting method is better: being quick and messy then tidying up, or neat but slow with no tidying up. The choice is, of course, yours!



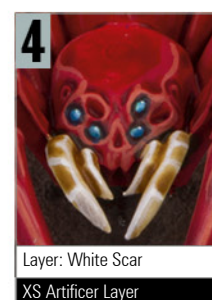
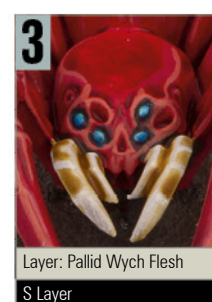
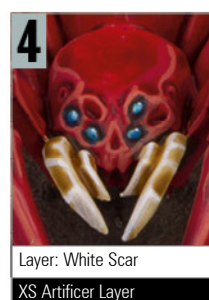
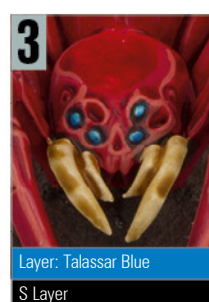
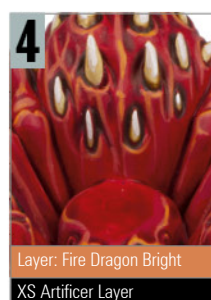
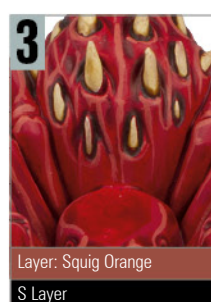
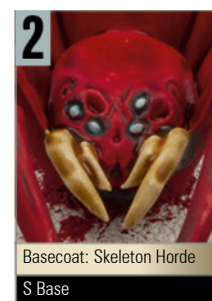
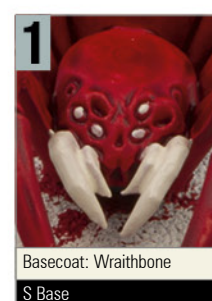
CARAPACE



SPIDER EYES



MOUTHPARTS



RED WUNZ GO FASTER ...

... but yellow ones also look cool! Remember, not every spider has to be red. You could try swapping the carapace stage of the guide for some other colours such as Iyanden Yellow or Aethermatic Blue. Both would make great Spiderfang colour schemes. You could even theme the colours to a particular realm or region. Imagine Aqshian fire grots, or mountain-dwelling Spider Riders from Ghur with icy blue spiders.



EIGHT-LEGGED PAINTING ADVICE

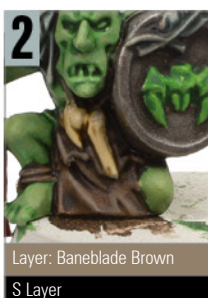
What's that, you need more spider painting guides? Well, who are we to refuse? If you head over to our Warhammer TV YouTube channel, you'll find additional painting guides for Spider Riders, Arachnarok Spiders, grot skin, orruk skin, grot noses (they go red in the cold) and plenty more besides. There are a few handy painting tips to be found in *Battletooth: Gloomspite Gitz*, too.



GROT SKIN



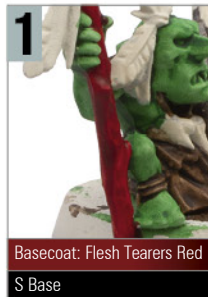
LOINCLOTH



METAL



SPEAR SHAFT



SHIELD BOSS



FEATHERS



DA BAD EGGZ TRIBE

This extremely yellow army of Spiderfang Grots belongs to Age of Sigmar background writer Nick Horth, who painted them for a team tournament held at Warhammer World last year. We asked him to tell us more about his scuttling horde.



NICK HORTH

Background writer by day, romantic novelist by night (no, wait, Black Library novelist by night ...), Nick Horth can often be found eyeball-deep in literature about the Mortal Realms. But he's also a keen gamer with more than one army trying to take over his desk, including Necromundan Orlocks, Genestealer Cults and, of course, spiders!

Nick: Da Bad Eggz are a bunch of unpleasant little spider-botherers from the volcanic foothills of the Great Parch. They dwell inside a dormant volcano that's been claimed by a brood of mighty Arachnarok Spiders, whom the Spiderfang worship as living demigods. The Bad Eggz enjoy nothing more than sacrificing prisoners to their eight-legged masters, and they have a particular fondness for force-feeding Arachnarok egg sacs to captured warriors, then sitting back and watching their victims' swollen bodies explode in a skittering tide of newly hatched spiderlings. Gross, eh?

In real life, I'm a medium to major arachnophobe, so it might seem a little odd that I ended up collecting a Spiderfang army. My reasons were twofold. Firstly, I wanted to try out the (then) new range of Contrast paints, and Spider Riders seemed like the perfect test models to work with. I could paint the spiders really quickly and to great effect with the new paints.

Secondly, the Arachnarok is one of my all-time favourite Warhammer kits – an absolute beast of a model chock full of character and customisation options. I ended up assembling two Arachnaroks with catchweb spidershrines and accompanying Webspinner Shamans, giving me a pretty potent mix of magic and raw power. Then, I painted a couple of riderless Skitterstrand Arachnaroks, whose ability to pop out of nowhere on the tabletop always keeps my opponents guessing. Add in several mobs of Spider Riders and a Scuttleboss on Gigantic Spider, and my highly mobile and deceptively dangerous force was complete. I've had a lot of fun playing with Da Bad Eggz since I finished painting them. They've been to a team tournament at Warhammer World and several staff gaming nights, and they've really done me proud.





My warlord is the Webspinner Shaman Ziggat Scablegs, mounted upon the Arachnarok Queen Fangstabba. They once took on a Megaboss on Maw-krusha and lived to tell the tale!





My Scuttleboss, Dagga Deffweb, leads my Spider Riders into battle and provides them with a few handy bonuses. He always dies in the first round of combat.

CONTRASTING SPIDERS!

Contrast paints are ideal for achieving an effective (not to mention bright) colour scheme really quickly. Nick used a Wraithbone undercoat for his spiders, and then painted them almost entirely with Contrast paints. He painted the bases dark grey with black rims to represent the dormant volcano they live in and to contrast with the brightly coloured spiders.



CARAPACES

- Basecoat: Nazdreg Yellow
- Basecoat: Gryph-hound Orange
- Basecoat: Blood Angels Red

GROT SKIN

- Basecoat: Warp Lightning & Ork Flesh

DETAILS

- Basecoat: Zandri Dust
- Layer: Screaming Skull
- Basecoat: Mournfang Brown
- Layer: Skrag Brown

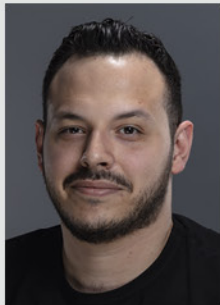
PAINTING DA BAD EGGZ

I wanted a lurid and aggressive colour scheme for my spiders, a bit like a swarm of angry wasps, so I went with Nazdreg Yellow and Gryph-hound Orange for their carapaces. For the Arachnaroks, I lathered the contrast on nice and thick, and I mixed those two colours together with Blood Angels Red to get a nice gradation running down the legs. I used the same colours for the patterns on the thoraxes.

The fangs, eyes, spines and nobby bits (*highly technical spider terminology* – Ed) were painted really simply with Abaddon Black, while the skin of the grots themselves was painted with a roughly equal mix of Warp Lightning and Ork Flesh to make them nice and bright, just like their mounts. I picked out the armour, bows and other details with Zandri Dust and Mournfang Brown, highlighting with Screaming Skull and Skrag Brown, respectively.

Overall it's a nice, simple scheme that's vibrant and eye-catching but also not too complicated. I was painting these on a tight schedule for a Warhammer World team tournament – which I attended alongside three other members of the Age of Sigmar team – so I didn't want to get too carried away with the details! I think they turned out pretty well in the end.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



LOUIS AGUILAR

Louis is one of the games developers for the Warhammer Age of Sigmar team and spends his working days writing rules for battletomes, core books and expansions. Most recently, though, Louis has been wading through FAQs – one of his less glamorous, though essential, duties. His Magic Boots of Impenetrability help keep him sane. Most of the time.

For many people, a lot of mystery surrounds the decisions that the Age of Sigmar team makes in its errata and designers' commentaries. One of the best things about our hobby is that there are so many different perspectives that people have on the game. But sometimes that means we can write rules that we as a team are very happy with – rules that have been scrutinised by our internal and external playtest processes and given the green light from all sides – only for them to receive a reaction we didn't quite anticipate from our community.



In this issue's Rules of Engagement, I hope to 'lift the curtain' and give you a better idea of how and when we re-evaluate rules. I also aim to impress upon you that your input and feedback is our most prized possession for making our game the best that it can be.

To help guide us for this 'backstage pass' of sorts, I'll use a popular question and piece of feedback we received following the release of *Battletome: Seraphon* earlier this year:

Why can enemy units garrison my Realmshaper Engine, and why do I have to set it up before I know which territory I will be using?

This was a popular question in our FAQ inbox at the time – one that indicated that some players didn't understand why the faction terrain feature was designed the way that it was.

The biggest challenge we face with faction terrain is making it feel important for your army's success without making it so powerful that your opponent feels that you have an unfair edge in the battle with something that you haven't spent any points on. With every new faction terrain feature, we try to branch out into new mechanics that haven't been used with them before or give them a special flavour that complements the play style of the army it belongs to.

The Realmshaper Engine is one of the largest faction terrain features in Age of Sigmar, and when the design team first saw the miniature, we immediately began to think of how something of that size could work on our battlefields without impeding its value and its functionality to the Seraphon player. At the point of writing this article, the closest comparison we had was the Bone-tithe Nexus belonging to the Ossiarch Bonereapers. This faction terrain feature was the first to debut set-up rules that require players to place it on the battlefield before any other terrain features, and it is the foundation upon which we built the rules for the Realmshaper Engine.

One of the most important things to remember is that a lot of rules questions and enquiries for Age of Sigmar are best dealt with from a matched play perspective. It's the most intense line of scrutiny we can put a rule through, and our experience is that the other ways to play the game are often catered to automatically when we evaluate a rule with this approach. This by no means discredits

Rules of Engagement - curated by the Age of Sigmar games developers - focuses on the creation, design and evolution of the rules for Warhammer Age of Sigmar. This month, Louis Aguilar lifts a fancy curtain to talk about rules feedback.

the importance of narrative and open play, but it does mean that we can rely on a particular approach to the game to give us the broadest scope for how a rule will interact with the rest of the Age of Sigmar system.

During testing, we found that if we were to allow a faction terrain feature of this size to be set up *after* territories had been chosen (when all objectives and other terrain features had been set up), the size of the Realmshaper Engine meant that the Seraphon player would not be able to place it on the tabletop in most cases. This conclusion was reached when we considered our Pitched Battle battleplans and how the distances from objectives and other terrain features (from the *General's Handbook* 2019) would correlate.

Obviously, this is something that we want to avoid if we can help it. The player has made their purchase, put the time in to paint it and has made it a part of their army. This doesn't mean that there won't be times when terrain features do not have legal space to be set up, but we do everything we can to make that as rare an occurrence as possible and to allow everyone to use all of their miniatures (as you should expect).

Once we had our understanding of the Realmshaper Engine's size and limitations in place, we then began to test the rules that would define its use in a Seraphon army. When you look at the Realmshaper Engine, it gives you a real sense of scale and how important it would be to a Seraphon general to protect. We always let the



miniatures take the lead on how rules should work; they are so detailed they act almost like silent directors, giving us all we need to create exciting rules. Due to the Realmshaper Engine's size and structure, it made sense to allow miniatures to garrison it. With this applied, we then moved on to focus on the rules that it would give the Seraphon player to use.

One thing that we didn't anticipate was that there would be a disconnect for some of our players with the Realmshaper Engine being a garrisonable terrain feature to *enemy* units as well as friendly ones. For the design team, it was our focus to restrict the power of the Realmshaper Engine to friendly Seraphon Wizards and Priests, but we didn't want to tip the scales in the favour of the Seraphon too much and make the faction terrain feature an exclusive garrison for the Seraphon. Our logic was, at the very least, that the terrain feature would be a useful line-of-sight blocking feature that would need to be deployed in a neutral position to get the most out of it.

If you had multiple questions asked about the Realmshaper Engine, why didn't you answer them in the designers' commentary for the battletome?

There seems to be a common misconception that the frequency and number of enquiries we receive on a given topic will dictate if it is answered or not. This is not the case. Unless we feel we need to answer a question for something that is unclear or being interpreted in a way we had not considered, we will not answer enquiries that focus on rules and designs that are working as intended. It's what we all settled on as the

If a question you think is important hasn't been answered, applying the following principles should solve it for you.

Is the rule already clear? Is the rule at issue being interpreted based on the player's desire for how they want it to work, rather than how it actually works?

Is the enquiry actually a suggestion for improvements you would make? If so, know that we document all of these so that we can effectively improve our battletomes with each edition. Feedback is always read and considered, but we can't respond to it during a release window.

Has the question already been answered? There is a good chance that if the previous two points do not apply, other designers' commentaries may hold the answer to similar rules in other battletomes.

design for the miniature's rules this time around and how we wanted it to be played for this edition of the battletome. If (after its release) it's discovered that the rules we designed for the miniature are not working for players, or in this case that Seraphon players generally favour not using the faction terrain feature, we would need to reassess our design and seek to improve it so it can be more appealing to Seraphon players the next time around. This is the case for all of our rules – we create our vision of how the miniature plays on the battlefield, move it along the process until a consensus is reached and then release it into the wild.

So how does the FAQ and errata process actually work?

When a book is released (be it a battletome or narrative expansion), we monitor as much feedback from our players as possible, first taking to online forums, social media platforms and video producers to check initial reactions, heated discussions and informed opinions on the release at hand. During this time, we almost immediately see our FAQ inbox begin to fill with questions, feedback and suggestions for how things could have been approached differently. For our team, all of these different opinions and viewpoints are fascinating; not only does our community demonstrate a meticulous understanding of our game, but they also feel so strongly that they take it upon themselves to make sure the creators of it can hear them.

We monitor all of these channels all the way up to and during the creation of the FAQ and errata documents themselves, making sure we have answered all of the relevant questions we can and making sure we don't miss any late-breaking issues that people have discovered. Next, we begin the process of typing up all of the important information into designers' commentary questions and necessary errata, before handing them over to the rest of the development team to review and provide any additions or changes they deem necessary.

Once the documents have undergone this internal process, we release them to our external playtest team. These unsung heroes offer their free time to help make the game to which they dedicate a lot of their time the very best it can be. They're given a deadline for feedback so we can ensure the documents are released by Warhammer Community in the time frame our players expect. This is arguably the most important step in the process, because we get a preview of how our customers will react to the changes we are making. The documents are then released, and the changes echo through the Mortal Realms until the next time we review them.



What about questions that arise after the FAQ is published?

For items such as these, we wait for our biannual updates to consider them. Every winter and summer, we look to address the biggest issues our players have concerning the game. We also seek to adjust rules that are proving to be out of line with how we intended them to play or feel to play against. In addition, we adjust points values for units based on their performance and their inclusion in people's armies. We want all of our players to consider all of the units they have at their disposal, and while this will take the longest amount of time to achieve, it promotes different ways of thinking in Age of Sigmar and sparks the interest of players to think outside the box and develop new ways to play an army people may have never considered before.

Any points changes that were identified in the initial two-week review are also implemented when we update points values in our biannual review. Rather than change the points of a unit piecemeal throughout the year, we think it is best to have all the points changed in Age of Sigmar at the same time. This allows us to get detailed information on the impact the unit has had, and it allows our players to experiment with their armies without worrying about unexpected points changes.

In addition to these updates (which includes designers' commentaries), the Age of Sigmar development team will issue a statement to explain some of the choices we have made, say how we feel the game is performing and encourage our players to voice their opinions and submit vital feedback to our email inbox (aosfaq@gwplc.com).

The responsibility of reading, filing and answering all the feedback we receive falls to me. It has proven to be an essential tool for learning the patterns of Age of Sigmar as well as the expectations its players have for us as a studio. I'm proud to say that we as a studio strive to do our very best each and every day, and the passion we see from our players provides infinite inspiration for each of us to produce the absolute best wargaming experience possible.

I hope this column has given you some answers about our process for continually evaluating rules for Age of Sigmar, and maybe it has provided some insight into how incredibly invested and passionate about Age of Sigmar we are (as you would expect us to be).

At the time of writing this, current world events have seen a necessary change in all of our abilities to play Warhammer, but I hope things are looking up for you all. The Mortal Realms await us. Until next time, good luck and have fun!

If you've got any comments about this article or ideas for themes we could use in next year's General's Handbook, you can always email them to us at AOSFAQ@gwplc.com. We can't reply to the emails you send in, but we do read each and every one, and we value all of the feedback we receive.

THE COLOURS OF MAGIC

When it comes to colourful armies, there are few as spectrum-shattering as this Disciples of Tzeentch collection painted by Steve Wren. Over the next few pages, we take a closer look at his models and chat with him about painting, gaming and the fine art of basing.







STEVE WREN

Steve has been a hobbyist for almost thirty years and has painted many armies in that time, including Empire, Orcs & Goblins and several Chaos forces. He even took part in the most recent series of A Tale of Four Warlords with his Idoneth Deepkin.

Steve: My Disciples of Tzeentch collection is just one of the many Warhammer armies I've painted over the years. It's certainly one of the most colourful, alongside the Idoneth Deepkin that I painted for A Tale of Four Warlords earlier this year. My fascination with the God of Change started back in 2017 when the first Disciples of Tzeentch battletome came out. I'd never really explored the Changer of Ways before, so I dived in and had a good read. I was instantly gripped by all the new background, particularly the bits that focused on the Kairic Acolytes. When the *City of Secrets* Black Library novel came out, that added even more background to the mortal side of the army, and I got drawn in even further. There were also some really amazing new models that appeared, not least the Lord of Change kit. I was a little intimidated looking at the 'Eavy Metal paint jobs (as usual), particularly the amount of gold on the models. I think all hobbyists have strengths and weaknesses – I think I have a fairly good eye for colour and basing, but I know that I am not great at painting metallics, so I knew that painting all the gold was going to be challenging. Finally, the rules for the army looked really intriguing, particularly the concept of Destiny Dice, which is unique to the army. I took a look at the warscroll

battalions, and one in particular jumped out at me: Omniscient Oracles. It actively encourages you to take four of the biggest and coolest models in the game. I decided this was going to be the focus of the army.

Quite often when I start a new force, I have an event in mind that I plan to take them to. When I started this army, I picked a tournament event that was four months away. I think that this is a fairly good timescale for a 2,000-point army, but it does require you to stick to a plan. The initial army list began with the Omniscient Oracles warscroll battalion, three Lords of Change and Kairos Fateweaver.

Due to the timescale I had when I initially painted the army, I didn't consider doing any conversion work on the Lords of Change. However, I also knew that I did not want four mostly identical blue ones. The colour choices were actually fairly straightforward; I looked at what spray can undercoats I had and went from there! I chose Zandri Dust, Caliban Green and Chaos Black and undercoated all four of them. I then used Averland Sunset, Death Guard Green, Mephiston Red and Macragge Blue sprays to highlight them above at a 45° angle. This is a fairly extreme

'My four units of Horrors are painted to match their patron Lord of Change,' says Steve. 'One of the benefits of the different paint schemes is that it's easy for both me and my opponent to keep track of which spells are being used by which unit without any confusion.'



THE MANY COLOURS OF TZEENTCH

We love how Steve painted his Disciples of Tzeentch models, so we asked him if he could share some of the paint schemes with us. Here are the colours he used on his Kairic Acolytes and Chaos Warriors.



ACOLYTE SKIN

Basecoat: Dryad Bark

Basecoat: Zandri Dust
(sprayed from above)

Wash: Seraphim Sepia

BLUE ARMOUR

Basecoat: Teclis Blue

Layer: Lothorn Blue

Layer: Baharroth Blue

Layer: 'Ardcoat

GOLD DETAILS

Basecoat: Retributor
Armour

Wash: Reikland
Fleshshade & Reikland
Fleshshade Gloss

Layer: Stormhost Silver

WARRIOR ARMOUR

Undercoat:
Chaos Black

Basecoat: Leadbelcher
& Leviadon Blue

Layer: Stormhost Silver

FUR

Basecoat: Rakarth
Flesh

Wash: Agrax
Earthshade & Lahmian
Medium

Layer: Pallid Wych
Flesh

PURPLE CAPES

Basecoat: Shyish
Purple

Layer: Xereus Purple

Layer: Kakophoni Purple

'My painting skills have progressed and changed over the years, but I definitely tend towards clean, bright paint schemes,' says Steve. 'One thing I was conscious of with this army was not worrying if my painting style changed (appropriate really!). For example, a lot of the newer models were painted using Contrast paints, which I find I am working with more and more these days.'





1

Steve's army is all about magic, so it's no surprise that he's painted up some endless spells for his force (1).

Steve's latest addition is a unit of Chaos Warriors that have been converted using heads and weapons from the Cypher Lords Warcry warband (2).

'I've added quite a few characters to the army since I started it, including an Ogroid Thaumaturge, two Gaunt Summoners, the Changeling and the Magister on Disc from the Aether War box set (3),' says Steve. 'I added a few freehand designs to the Magister and the Changeling to add visual interest and challenge myself. The freehand flames on the Magister's cloak evolved with help from the wonderful painting community on Twitter. With that advice, they went from being pretty terrible to something I'm really proud of.'



2





1



2



process, but it works well for army models. The two colours get tied together using drybrushing, which again is a really good technique for greater daemons. I drybrushed the models with Edge paints because they are really bright, and to make the models really pop, I used the old Glaze range to brighten them up. If you look closely at the wings and legs, they are all edged with purple, because it works well as both a complementary or contrasting colour. The gold was all painted the same – Retributor Armour washed with a 50/50 mix of Reikland Fleshshade and Reikland Fleshshade Gloss, then highlighted with Stormhost Silver. Again, the main thing I was looking for was contrast between light and shadow.

Once the Lords of Change were completed, I had to gather the rest of the force. For the Battleline requirement at the time, I decided on Chaos Marauders, which you could take in units of ten (see above). I also fit a unit of six Tzaangor Skyfires into the army along with a Tzaangor Shaman to support them. I managed to get them all painted in time for the tournament, and they actually did pretty well in the end. I later took them to the Warhammer World Grand Tournament in 2018, where they won the Best Army award in Heat 1 and got me through to the

final. As you can imagine, I was pleasantly surprised on both counts!

One of the things I find most appealing about the Disciples of Tzeentch is the number of ways you can play the army. It is very flexible. It's obviously great for players that enjoy the hero phase and casting spells, though the army struggles to get bonuses to cast, and a lot of the spells have a high casting value, so you rely a lot on the Lords of Change to do all the hard work. For a Chaos force, there is also a surprising amount of high quality shooting from the Flamers, Tzaangor Skyfires and Horrors, but you have to be aware that if your opponent gets into combat with them, they will die very quickly. Fortunately, you've got some fast units like the Tzaangors that can do that fighting for you. In the hands of skilled players, the Disciples of Tzeentch can be a really intimidating army to face. Ironically – especially considering I attend so many gaming events – I have a reputation among my friends and gaming group of being a better painter and modeller than a gamer! I enjoy the game and love playing at events, but I've never been a serious contender. Unless I'm at a doubles event – my regular doubles partner Adie Mac and I usually do fairly well. I'm sure it's not all down to him ...

Steve converted his Chaos Marauders from Kairic Acolytes but with Marauder shields and heads (1). He used Rubric Marine helmets for the champions.

'I really love basing my models,' says Steve. 'I use a lot of bark chips since they have a realistic rock texture, then wood filler, sand and skulls to blend them into the bases. I then undercoat them with Dryad Bark before lightly spraying them from above with Zandri Dust. I wash them with greens, blues and browns to get some variation, then drybrush them with Terminatus Stone. I finish my bases with a generous helping of static grass and tufts. People tend to be too conservative with the amount they use. I try and cram as many on as possible, as you can see with these Tzaangor Enlightened (2).'

WARHAMMER

40,000

In the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war! Not to mention loads of beautifully painted armies, a couple of short stories, new background and rules and some glorious Golden Demon entries.





FLASHPOINT: ARGOVON SYSTEM

In the final part for the war in the Argovon System, we journey to the system's capital world. New background, fiction and rules await on page 48.



CRUSADE CHALLENGE

Seven beautifully painted Crusade armies stand ready for battle on page 74. Perfect inspiration for the Warhammer 40,000 Crusade system!





ARGOLISH IN FLAMES

The galaxy is being torn asunder, and new war zones are exploding into life with ever-increasing frequency. On the cardinal world of Argolish, faith in the Emperor proves to be a powerful weapon against the Necron legions.

WHAT ARE FLASHPOINTS?

Flashpoints are collections of articles that explore a particular region or war zone at a specific point in time. Flashpoints contain new rules for you to try out on the battlefield, plus new stories and background about the setting, giving you plenty of opportunities to theme your games. You could recreate some of the battles mentioned in the background section, convert characters based on the heroes in the stories or build a new battlefield to represent one of the theatres of war.

Flashpoints span multiple issues, and articles are always marked with the Flashpoint's symbol, making them easy to find in your copy of *White Dwarf*.

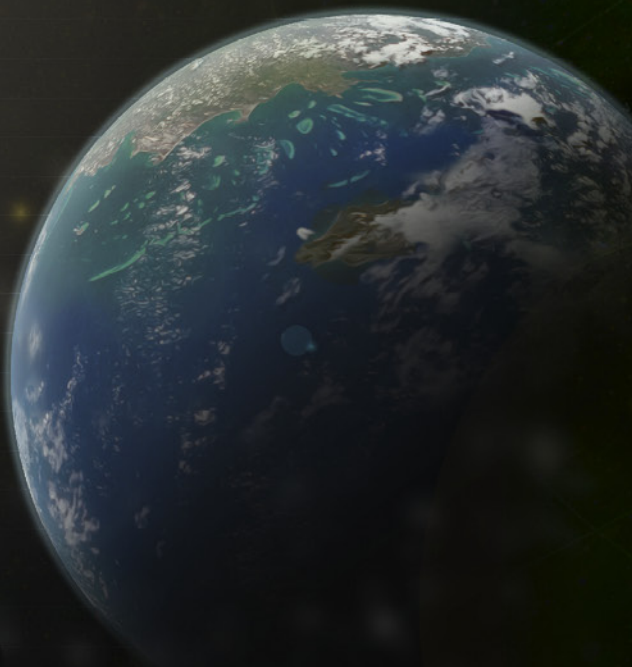


The war for Argolish resulted in the ruin of beautiful spires and the destruction of countless relics. Much of the fighting was intense and claustrophobic as the Imperial armies fought the Necron menace in the hallowed cloisters, halls and corridors of grand battle-chancels and bastion-chapels.

This being an excerpt of the introduction to Chapter 7 of Volume VII of *The Definitive Account of the War for the Pariah Nexus*, written by myself, Esteemed Appointed Historitor Alfus Rekorik Smigh. Composed within the rumbling confines of the fine Crassus Armoured Assault Transport, His *Mighty Tread*, en route to witness the field of

Groupmaster Marran's latest victory. This chapter will elaborate on all of the many actions fought on Argolish. In this introduction, however, I will highlight a handful of examples to give the reader an understanding of the nature of the fighting and also identify some of the battles I have deemed among the most interesting and/or pivotal.

PLANET DESIGNATION: ARGOLISH Planetary System: ARGOVON



Population: 16,926,637,015 [Last population census before emergence of Pariah Nexus. Actual numbers now indeterminate.]

Primary Classification: Cardinal World

Secondary Classifications: Paradise World

Segmentum: Ultima

Gravium: 0.9 Terran approx.

Tithed Produce: Argolish is exempt from the tithe due to its status as a capital cardinal world. Nevertheless, it provides regiments for the Astra Militarum as well as priests.

Notable Military Elements: Innumerable Frateris Militia elements, numbering some tens of millions. Includes Argolishian Creedsmen, Argolishian Faithful and Argolishian Martyrs That Would Be. Notable presence of Adepta Sororitas Orders of Our Martyred Lady, the Argent Shroud and the Bleeding Heart.

Planetary Governor: Cardinal-Exemplar Edwinn Regularis Ephastus



ARGOLISH

It is with considerable surprise that I have been unable to discover much, if any, information about Argolish's earliest years as an Imperial world. It seems that its name is derived in some way from Foronika Argovon's¹ name, but I have not been able to confirm either way.² Given Argolish's pre-war natural beauty (in areas not developed for habitation and worship, of course), it is quite possible that those who first set eyes upon its wonders and basked in the serenity of its environments believed that only blessings from the Emperor could create such a place. What scraps of records I have managed to uncover make reference to a number of flowering plant forms. Somehow, it appears that early colonists learned they could derive extremely powerful narcotics and hallucinogens from them.³ There is a significant gap in records between these fragments and what comes later. All that apparently is recorded is that sometime later, the Ecclesiarchy took special interest in Argolish and settled, investing enormous wealth into the planet. What they created was a true marvel. Thousands upon thousands of cathedra, sanctuaries, chapels, chancels, basilicas – all sublime examples of Mankind's proficiency in the arts of construction. Their building materials were brought to Argolish from dozens of other worlds. These buildings of worship, as well as any other architecture (whether they be menial habitations, governing palaces or even sewer works), have been constructed to fit within Argolish's natural world. A basilica might not only have pillars of the finest marble, but also of immense trees. Many founts of holy water might have been natural springs. Vast coastlines became cathedra in themselves. Even the smallest sanctuaries dedicated to saints all but forgotten boasted luscious gardens. A significant portion of this fusion of worship, architecture and the natural world is now destroyed, the stunning, living harmony of Mankind with the natural world granted to us by the Emperor himself reduced to harrowing, skeletal forms or even ash. Oh how I would have wished to see it in all its glory!

TASK FORCE XI

Unlike many worlds in the Argovon System, when Task Force XI arrived at Argolish, the world was not enveloped by the war with the Necrons. Despite this miraculous turn of events – a gift of time with which to make preparations or for the planet's leadership to dispatch reinforcements to the other worlds in the system – the advantage appeared to have been largely wasted. Admiral Uzziah Rojko immediately set to work, noting in her journals that 'the turrets [were] rusting; the ramparts [were] crumbling; the defenders [were] gone to fat'. There was no way of knowing when the Necrons would attack, nor from which vector – only that the attack would come sooner or later. Two things were on Rojko's side in rallying defences. First, faith is strong on a cardinal world, and thus the effects of the Stilling were notably weaker. Her troops were sharper and more determined – as were the defenders – than those of other worlds.⁴ Her second advantage was that, thank the Emperor, the planetary governor was aware of his world's military deficiencies and sought to improve them. Though only in power for five months at the time of the Great Rift's emergence (and therefore having little time to achieve the kind of martial readiness Rojko had hoped for) Cardinal-Exemplar Ephastus had been pushing for improved maintenance of military

¹ The system's original discoverer.

² And little enough remains of an Argovonian administration, hierarchy or archiving system now to help.

³ A part of me wonders if this explains in any way the remarkable (and well attested) miracles that are recorded later in Argolishian history, such as the Flight of Saint Reghium, the Great Sky-darkening and the Flattening of Mount Gittaim. Such ideas border on the blasphemous, however, and the sheer volume of eye-witness testimony in regards to these and many thousands more events defies the most sceptical of minds, I've no doubt.

⁴ Low in quality as they apparently were before hostilities began. It should be noted that during the early months of the conflict, enthusiasm was never a particular problem for native Argolishian forces, though standards of training and military acumen were.



infrastructure for years as a more junior official, and once in power, he invested enormous wealth in beginning what later turned out to be vital improvements. It is truly a blessing from the Emperor that at Argolish's time of need, the Emperor sent a leader with the strength and willingness to foresee troubles that might lie ahead and work towards preparing for them.⁵ As it turned out, Rojko and Ephastus had barely six weeks to make what additional preparations they could. During that time, the war for Foronika had escalated in intensity over and beyond the already severe expectations. Most frontiers in the Argovon war were forced to send troops to help the effort to secure the Adeptus Mechanicus' forgeshrines and noctilith mines there, and Argolish was no exception. Hundreds of thousands of troops were pulled away, hampering the defence efforts considerably.⁶

The Necrons attacked Argolish via their fleets as well as a number of devices named by some Mechanicus xenologians and Inquisitorial documents as dolmen gates.⁷ Their numbers were huge. Though to understand the alien is an impossible – indeed undesirable – thing, it isn't improbable that they struck hard here in response to the fact that the Stilling failed to gain a significant foothold on Argolish. With the troops on the surface and Imperial Navy and Ecclesiarchal fleets in orbit operating at a high state of readiness, our forces were as ready as they could

be to respond to the Necrons' offensive, which was carried out with incredible speed. Within days of its commencement, cathedra burned unchecked, and Argolish's orbit was choked with debris from destroyed vessels. Such was the intensity of the naval conflict, witnesses on the ground saw the monstrous Ecclesiarchy cruiser *In His Glorious Name We Serve* ripped in half by a 'rippling of huge explosions, like flowers blooming at a hundred times their natural speed.'⁸

⁵ Ephastus caused considerable upset among Argolish's bishops and prelates. Though in charge of the planet and all its resources, his leadership was plagued with challenges from more junior cardinals who resented their enormous wealth being put to rearmament programs. To date, Ephastus is known to have survived seven non-Necron assassination attempts (how many more have failed without being recognized for being what they are?), four of which have – incredibly – been made after the Necrons first attacked! How short-sighted are his opponents? How petty?

⁶ Though troop-movement records I've discovered suggest that Rojko and Ephastus were able to largely dispatch poor-performing regiments and under-trained local defence militia units, helping to maintain a kind of integrity to their own defence plans. Given how fast even elite units were consumed in the Foronika meat grinder, the low efficacy and efficiency of the Argolishian units would have likely made little difference to the campaign on that ill-fated, barren world.

⁷ It should be noted that Imperial forces discovered and destroyed one before the conflict began.

⁸ Quote taken from the diary of Cardinal-Exemplar Ephastus' private secretarius, Efla Heit.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ST. JAHDAI CHAPEL

> The St. Jahdai Chapel,¹ though far from the largest, was the oldest and most sacred of all of Argolish's many thousands of cathedra, basilicas and other places of worship. When I heard of its fall, I confess, I wept. But fall it did, in one of the most unexpected moves the Necrons made in the Argolish fighting. Being situated deep in a valley and some distance from large settlements, it had little tactical or strategic value. This location was where it is thought that St. Jahdai, Argolish's first saint, first landed on the planet, and it was ever since left sacrosanct. The chapel constructed there made up for its lack of outward beauty by its interior decoration and crypt, which was packed full of holy relics and simulacra dating back millennia. The stunning fresco *Thereby the Emperor Raises Humankind*, painted by the half-blind priest Dyphonso Jasiel. The beautiful four-metre tall solid-gold Chalice of Martyrdom and Victory, which was carried to no fewer than eighty-three wars by Argolishian *Astra Militarum* regiments. The tapestry known simply as *Vindicatum*, depicting troops from a number of units from Argolish's Imperial Guard and *Frateris Militia* traditions standing over the corpses of three-dozen different xenos species. All priceless works. All lost. Many of these artefacts are famed in scholarly and artistic circles. Their loss is immense.

Countless refugees had fled to the chapel, praying for safety and salvation from the Necron onslaught. For a while, it seemed safe. The Necron efforts were focused on the locations of greater strategic significance and stronger Imperial resistance. But, somehow, the xenos must have noticed the importance of this chapel. It was, as one would expect, well-

guarded, but it was not constructed as a fortress like the War-chapel of St. Bonithrace and the *Templus-Citadel* of St. Pergamo 'Bloodmace' were. When a Necron tombship descended into low orbit without warning, breaking off from battle, there was nothing anyone could do. In near-atmosphere, it bombarded the St. Jahdai Chapel and everything within a twenty-kilometre radius. Nothing was left. Hundreds of thousands died. The damage done to our culture by these wars is incalculable. Only by faith in the Emperor and trust in Lord Commander Guilliman can we hope to recover what we have lost.



¹ Its full name being: *The Most Sacred and Holy Chapel, Consecrated in the name of the Glorious God-Emperor of Mankind in Eternal Thanks for His Sacrifice and Guidance, by St. Jahdai the First, the Wise and the Brave.*



Given the sprawling nature of Argolish's architecture, and the violence raging in so many locations at once, it has proven all but impossible to identify individual battles. Fighting in some areas went on for months or even years, spreading into other areas and receding like an irregular tide. That the Necrons fought with deep, cold tenacity cannot be doubted, but our troops met them with incredible zeal and fury. Almost every soldier, from recent conscript to hard-bitten veteran of a dozen wars, fought under the gaze of the Emperor Himself, and often in the view of His saints, in the form of paintings, statuary and more. Every pull of a trigger, every thrust of a bayonet, every swing of a chainsword was an act of loyalty before great heroes as well as the saviour of Mankind. Around these warriors were daily reminders of why they fought – and it is without exaggeration or hyperbole that I say that their valour is practically peerless with any other war zone I have studied. I have the journals and notes from thousands of regimental Commissars who observe – in some cases with great surprise (and dare I say disappointment, for a handful) – that they did not have to carry out executions for cowardice once. There are some actions that I think can be highlighted that are indicative of this courage.

The Basilica of Saint Gerthrude the Gentle was one of many that had fallen into a state of serious disrepair under successive local leaders. Work on redevelopment and refortification had barely begun by the 234th Sobiniari Pioneers and the 1605th Cadian combat engineers when the Necrons attacked Argolish. The only combat troops garrisoning the basilica were a detachment of Argolishian Faithful. Colonel Reeve Dansk, commander of the Cadians present, described them as 'oafish, over-excited and dangerously innocent', commenting that 'their enthusiasm only makes them more untrustworthy'. In his view, he fully expected his own troops to take on the bulk of any frontline duties should the basilica come under attack. The Colonel's doubts proved totally





unfounded. When the basilica came under attack, it held for three weeks without reinforcement against successive waves of Necron troops, the pioneers and engineers improvising all manner of mines and booby traps that the Argolishians placed with, in the Colonel's words, 'insane courage'. Though roughly half the troops involved were killed or wounded by the battle's end, their efforts bought vital time for the continued work to improve the fortifications of the nearby Sanctuary of Saint Justyna 'the Death of Mutants'. That sanctuary not only never fell to the Necrons, but it served as the launchpad for the Great Surge of the war's sixth year, which reconquered vast swathes of territory from the Necrons and signalled the end of the beginning of the conflict.

Argolish was home to possibly millions of relics, many centuries or millennia old, according to Ecclesiarchal texts I have been able to acquire. There were so many that the existence of some was even forgotten over time, their caretakers passing into the embrace of the Emperor without finding or securing successors. The embalmed remains of Saint Befonica, once of an unknown Order of the Adepta Sororitas, was one such relic. Their location discovered by chance during the ferocious fighting in the vast expanse of the pleasure gardens of a centuries past cardinal-exemplar, Battle Sisters of the Order of the Iron Rosethorn⁹ sought to rescue them. Many of their number lost their lives moving to the relic's site, deep within contested battle zones hounded constantly by Necron assassins as well as fighter craft. Many more fell retreating back to Imperial lines. Specific details of the fighting appear to have never been recorded; all discussion of the event in later documentation talks largely of the effort's success and the considerable number of casualties suffered.

CANONESS PRECEPTOR GIZELLA OF THE ORDER OF THE BLEEDING HEART

Sabathine Gizella was nominated by her peers in Task Force XI to be the voice of the Adepta Sororitas among the task force's senior command staff. Though from a relatively minor Order, her reputation, skills and experience must have made her an obvious choice. Though of advanced years, anyone I have interviewed to ask of her character has been clear that she was as physically robust as battleship armour, with a strength of will and faith that could see her through a walk from one end of the warp to the other.¹ Physically tall, with closely cropped white hair and hazel-amber eyes ablaze with earnest activity, analysis and scrutiny, she was as formidable in mind as in stature. Much of her face was marked with scars, many quite savage, which left none in doubt as to her battlefield experience. It is clear from reading transcripts of senior command briefings and other reports that her words were taken perhaps more seriously than any other during the fighting on Argolish. Details of her illustrious career can be read elsewhere in this chapter and indeed in many other sources available to readers,² but one area of her expertise and experience I feel is worthy of being noted here. She spent years of her life fighting the Necrons, against xenos of multiple far-reaching sub-sectors. She orchestrated the

razing of a Necron tomb complex on Dyhazab IV with a number of other Orders, Mordian Iron Guard Astra Militarum and a contingent from the Sons of Orar Space Marines Chapter. She boarded the capital ship of a tomb fleet, leading a force of thousands of Battle Sisters of her Order as well as troops of the 13th Omikroni Golems and 34th Betic Centaurs Militarum Tempestus regiments. Notably, she struck down a Necron Lord in single combat at the high point of the Amarok Crusade, an act which many scholars consider to be the turning point of that long, brutal conflict. There were few in Task Force XI whose burning hatred of the Necrons, understanding of their methods and capabilities could match hers.

¹ Obvious hyperbole, but I've chosen to reflect the tone of those I've consulted to make the point that Canoness Preceptor Sabathine Gizella was as resolute, firm and tough as any of the Adepta Sororitas could be expected to be, if not more so.

² Of which I highly recommend *The Glorious Salvation of Cnida Tertius*, by Historitor Rahab Linsel; *Faythe, Dutie and Obstinanse Most Pure*, by Sub-Deacon Gebim Ibzan Hartolemaeus; and *The Full Account of the Failed Heresy of Pamphylia Majoris and its Peoples Most Wicked*, collated by Inquisitor Uphazin Dibri (note that access to this record requires additional permissions – the presenting of Guilliman's seal should be sufficient).



THE BLACK TEMPLARS

The Black Templars Chapter of the Adeptus Astartes spent many months fighting on Argolish.¹⁰ Their Drop Pod strikes, rapid Thunderhawk-borne incursions and intransigent stubbornness turned defeat into victory wherever they struck. They shattered a Necron column heading to the exposed rear positions of the 122nd Chancyllian Cannoneers as they fired relentlessly to keep the Pilgrim Way out of Necron hands. The Black Templars spearheaded the breakout at the Rozad Salient, where Imperial troops had been trapped for weeks in a horrifying quagmire by tireless phalanxes of Necron warriors and ceaseless bombardments. Sub-deacons' reports of the Argolishian Creedsmen in the area speak of 'glorious, roaring war engines, spitting fire, bathing the foe in the

righteous fury of our Emperor', and 'holy vengeance, advancing before us clad in the armour of zeal and armed with the swords of piety'. For several days, they fought shoulder to shoulder with Sisters of the Order of the Argent Shroud and troops of the 78th Cadian Shock Troops and 811th Argolishian Canonites at the breach of the Saint Agopios chapel-bastion's great eastern wall. It was said that the bodies of the dead were so numerous that the breach was practically filled with them.

⁹ With its only sanctuary based on Argolish, this Minor Order scarcely had three hundred members at the outset of the war. Much like their home world, they embraced the Emperor through the blessings of nature.

¹⁰ Note that the actions of other Adeptus Astartes Chapters involved are recorded elsewhere in this account.



THE COST OF SURVIVAL

In the ruins of an ancient chapel, a clutch of Ecclesiarchal servants hide from the Necrons. Yet the enemy is at the gates, and even the Emperor's divine grace may not be enough to save them in this short story by Callum Davis.

Acolyte Dupenza placed a hand inside his dust-encrusted robes and squeezed the form of the ancient tome cocooned in the inside pocket.

Still there, he thought. Though they had not left the chapel in some hours, he found himself checking if the relic was still with him over and over. *You check because you care, because you have faith*, he said to himself. He knew it was his duty to keep the volume safe, and a part of him knew he felt safer for carrying it. *The Life, Works and Purges of Saint Cubert the Inexorable*, it was. *Emperor, if you grant me but a tenth of the saint's resolve, endurance and hatred for his enemies, I swear I shall dedicate entire systems to your devotion one day*, Dupenza prayed.

He pulled his arm outside his robes and rested it upon his navel with the other, readjusting himself on the stone floor in a futile attempt to find a comfortable position. Even this slight gesture caused a puff of the dust that coated his garments to leap into the air, lit by the faint moonlight and the flash of distant explosions. Some were the burning reds, oranges and yellows of Imperial shells. Others were of a malignant, electrified green. He was absolutely caked

in the dust. His companions were no different. They had barely escaped the collapse of the Great Colonnade of Saint Lyathapolos the Builder with their lives. The other acolytes sat on the floor in the centre of the chapel with him. Sister Lincenza clutched a gilded box containing a finger bone of Saint Lustia the Martyr-hospitaller. She rocked back and forth, whispering a liturgy. Brother Arpo sat in silence, reading from *Studies on Vinification and the Sweet Uses of Its Produce in Honouring He Most High*, by Saint Brutger Lailus. Arpo had always been a diligent student. *But he reads to calm himself, to distract himself from our predicament*, thought Dupenza. There were others there, each entrusted with their own priceless treasure to protect.

And what a predicament it was. Dupenza and his fellow acolytes were trapped in this lonely chapel, so obscure he did not know its name. Its frescoes, depicting angelic figures walking through verdant fields and forests, were heavily faded and pockmarked. There were plinths for eight statues, though only two still stood. Others had collapsed under their own weight or were missing entirely, probably moved elsewhere to decorate grander places of





worship. The pews, shaped in a quarter-circle so all could face the centre of the chapel, were chipped and half-rotten. All were now pressed up against the chapel's four doors or lined along the wall. Troops of the 211th Argolishian Creedsmen stood atop them, peering out of the chapel's windows for signs of the enemy. They were visibly frightened. Those not on sentry duty behaved similarly to Dupenza's fellow acolytes. They prayed or read. Some slept. Their uniforms, once a vivid red, were blackened by burn marks and dulled by thick layers of dust and ash.

Such brave soldiers of the Emperor, Dupenza thought. The Creedsmen had stood toe to toe with the xenos of metal and lightning that attacked, and they had survived. Were it not for them, Dupenza and his colleagues would long be dead. The Creedsmen rescued them. Faith-lieutenant Aria had led them to take shelter in this chapel. For that, Dupenza could not be more grateful. But he was not thankful for their situation.

'I am hungry,' said Arpo.

'As are we all,' said Dupenza. None of them had eaten since before they had escaped with the Creedsmen.

Dupenza saw Arpo's eyes wander over to a pair of corpses set against the wall. Both had been lain gently, still wearing their packs, their arms folded across their chests in the sign of the Aquila.

'They might still have some of their rations,' whispered Arpo, leaning in closer to Dupenza. 'They do not need it; they are with the Emperor.'

Dupenza recoiled, horrified. 'You would desecrate the dead, Arpo? They fought to protect our world – to protect us. Do not insult them.'

Arpo opened his mouth but was caught mid-breath. Lieutenant Aria approached the acolytes. She knelt down next to them, bringing a finger to her lips. Dupenza nodded. Arpo did as well, though not without some hesitation and a lingering gaze over the two bodies. They had been ordered to be as silent as possible in the hope the xenos would not realise they were here. The intention was to move on later, when it might be safer.

Dupenza rose, giving up on his attempts to get comfortable. He gestured to the high window that ran around the chapel. He wanted to look outside. Aria nodded.

Stepping on the top of the back of one of the old pews, Dupenza walked to the wall and over to Optio-in-Faith Kalis, Lieutenant Aria's second in command. The two men nodded at each other before gazing at the landscape, which was lit by the harsh flashes of distant explosions and the dancing flames pouring from wrecked vehicles. The ground was littered with corpses, all in the crimson uniforms of the Creedsmen. Dupenza felt a lump rise in his throat at the sight. *Peace be with you, fallen heroes*, he prayed, not wishing to shed tears before Kalis. It did not stop him from thanking the Emperor for still being capable of such a Human gesture amidst all the horror. *Surely grief is no source of shame*, he thought.

Dupenza thought of Kalis, Aria and the others. *How must it feel to be forced to look out upon so many dead comrades?* he wondered. What was terrifying was that there should be so many more, but the blasphemous Necron technology



reduced many of them to less than ash when they were hit. He could not help but notice there were no Necron dead. It was little consolation that the xenos disappeared after being struck down. He had learned enough from the soldiers to know that the Creedsmen had been thoroughly beaten. *In the name of the Emperor, I curse all of you soulless monsters who did this to them.* He felt the urge to spit but refrained, lest it breach Lieutenant Aria's discipline on revealing their position in some way.

He saw movement. Tapping on Kalis' arm, he pointed. Dupenza strained his eyes. *Yes, there,* he thought. Two soldiers. Creedsmen. They moved furtively from one patch of cover to the next.

Do they know we are here? Maybe they are looking for us.

Dupenza inhaled, ready to yell to the two soldiers. Before he could shout, Kalis covered Dupenza's mouth with one large, dirt-encrusted hand. The optio-in-faith shook his head.

Dupenza gestured at the two soldiers, pleading with his eyes. Kalis shook his head again, though he did not meet Dupenza's eyes this time.

Dupenza ripped Kalis' hand from his mouth, jumping down to speak to Lieutenant Aria.

'There are two soldiers out there! Creedsmen!' he whispered.

'Be silent, Acolyte,' said the lieutenant. 'The enemy will find us.' She too could not meet his eyes.

Dupenza hurried back to the window to see where the soldiers were. *If they get close enough, we can wave them in,* he thought. *Or if no enemies appear, surely?*

The two soldiers were drawing closer, though Dupenza could see that one was hobbling on a leg that was surely broken; he was using a lasgun as a crutch. The weapon itself was mangled out of shape. The other soldier clutched at a stump where his left arm would have been.

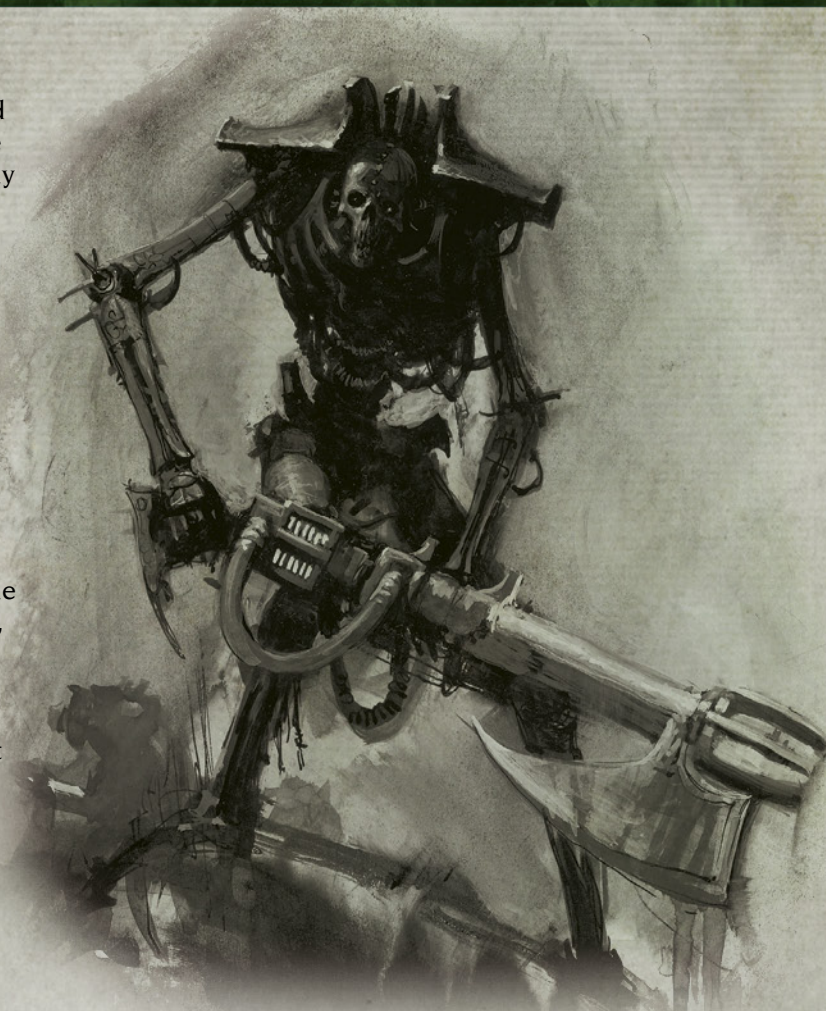
Come on, get closer, Dupenza pleaded. *Emperor, grant them Your fortitude, Your healing hand, Your encouragement. I beseech you. Save these, Your servants in war, that they may bring death to Your enemies on battlefields new.*

The instant Dupenza concluded his prayer, streams of green lightning shot out of the darkness, scorching the already warped armour of the Chimera the two soldiers were leaning against. More blasts quickly followed. The soldiers dashed for fresh cover as the fire intensified. Dupenza saw the shambling forms of xenos emerge from the gloom. Their eyes glowed a sickly green. Crackling viridian energy rippled around the barrels of their firearms. Though their expressions bore no emotion – and despite the coldness of their metal forms – malice and cruelty dripped from them.

Run! Faster! Dupenza willed the soldiers on as they made for the chapel, presumably looking to take shelter. *We must let them in,* he thought.

'Get here!' he shouted, before Kalis could stop him. Expecting the intervention from the optio this time, he wriggled free of the soldier, sending him to the floor with a thud. Dupenza rushed to the door nearest to where the wounded soldiers were running. The door was locked and barred, blocked by more pews as well as anything else the Creedsmen had found that might slow down the entry of an intruder. There was even a dust-coated chandelier and a bust of a saint so old that the writing that would have revealed her name had been worn away.

Before Dupenza reached the barricades, he felt a strong arm wrap around his waist and a firm hand cover his mouth. He flailed and kicked, but then another soldier grabbed him. They wrestled him to the floor. They





pressed their knees into his thighs. One forced his head firmly against the floor. Dupenza saw stars. He felt like his bones would crack under the pressure of the soldiers putting their weight on top of him. He could barely breathe. The more he struggled, the harder they held him. Sharp pains lanced through his body and aches throbbed all over.

Then he could hear them. The soldiers outside. Knocking. Not just knocking – banging, even kicking the door. Desperate to get in. Being prevented. By their own comrades.

How can you do this? In a holy place? Before the eyes of the Emperor Himself?

'Be still! If we die, we cannot serve,' hissed one of the Dupenza's subduers.

You speak to reassure yourself, coward, thought Dupenza. Faithless coward. Xenos take you!

'Let us in!' shouted the troops outside.

Dupenza heard more scuffles, more disagreements. The other acolytes were wondering what was going on. So were some of the Creedsmen. He heard fights break out. He heard men and women raise their voices at each other. He heard them shout. Some called for silence, others cursed those who left comrades to die, and still others struggled to tear away the barricades and let in those outside.

He felt a fresh wave of pain as one of his fellow acolytes was thrown to the floor, striking the soldiers who were pinning Dupenza down. The sudden impact knocked his head hard. He tasted copper. He felt his ankle twist sharply, and he screamed in pain into the hand of whoever it was that covered his mouth.

Then he heard a sound above all the wrestling of the acolytes and the Creedsmen – a sound that made them stop.

Screams.

Terrible screams. They barely lasted seconds but scored themselves onto Dupenza's brain. It was the soldiers outside. The Necrons had slain them.

More sounds followed. Quieter, but even more chilling. The irregular clank of mechanical legs, the crushing of broken stonework underfoot.

They are coming!

'This is your fault!' someone shouted.

'The order was silence!' he heard another argue.

'How could you leave your own comrades!'

'They would have found us anyway!'

Dupenza tried to shout, to tell them to stop fighting, to urge them to focus on the threat at hand. But it was no use. The troops holding him did not budge. All the while, the arguing continued, voices growing louder, threats becoming graver.

The bickering stopped. Dupenza did not know why at first, but whatever had caused it was so shocking that the soldiers pinning him to the floor released a little of their grip. He turned his head. He saw the door. The looser barricades had all fallen to the floor or been pulled away. The door itself was split down the middle. Poking through the narrow hole was what looked like a heavy axe blade covered in dried blood and congealed brain matter.

Pouring in through the gaps around the split in the door was a green glow that bathed much of the chapel's space.

Dupenza's heart beat faster. His sweat flowed freely. His breath grew erratic.

Emperor, have mercy on us.





COLLAPSE OF ARGOVON

Deep within the Pariah Nexus, the war for the Argovon System has come to a head on the capital world of Argovon itself. At this pivotal point in the conflict, the armies of the Imperium must fight a war on two fronts.

WHAT ARE FLASHPOINTS?

Flashpoints are collections of articles that explore a particular region or war zone at a specific point in time. Flashpoints contain new rules for you to try out on the battlefield, plus new stories and background about the setting, giving you plenty of opportunities to theme your games. You could recreate some of the battles mentioned in the background section, convert characters based on the heroes in the stories or build a new battlefield to represent one of the theatres of war.

Flashpoints span multiple issues, and articles are always marked with the Flashpoint's symbol, making them easy to find in your copy of *White Dwarf*.



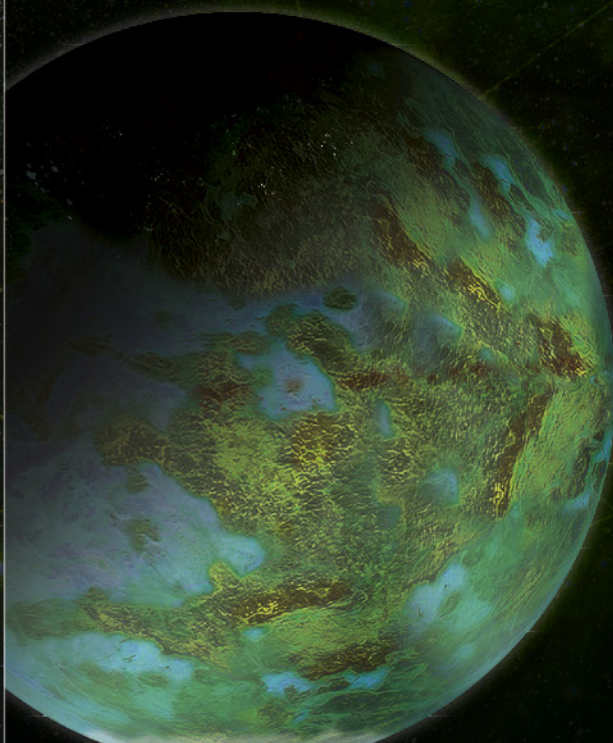
Argovon is the capital world of the Argovon System. A temperate world ideally suited for Human habitation, it became the site of a war on two fronts for Mankind. Imperial troops fought enemies striking from above and below, from within and without.

This being an excerpt of the introduction to Chapter 2 of Volume VII of *The Definitive Account of the War for the Pariah Nexus*, written by myself, Esteemed Appointed Historitor Alfus Rekorik Smigh. Scribed as the author viewed the 14th Praetorian Dragoons in pre-deployment training. The earth shakes as their Leman Russ Battle Tanks tear across the surface and pour

fire upon their targets. This chapter will elaborate on all of the many actions fought on Argovon. In this introduction, however, I will highlight a handful of examples to give the reader an understanding of the nature of the fighting as well as identify some of the battles I have deemed among the most interesting and/or pivotal.

PLANET DESIGNATION: ARGOVON

Planetary System: **ARGOVON**



Population: 8,373,194,256
[Last population census before emergence of Pariah Nexus. Actual numbers now indeterminate.]

Primary Classification: Agri World

Secondary Classifications: Mining World; Timber World [in some records even Paradise World]

Segmentum: Ultima

Gravium: 1.0 Terran approx.

Tithed Produce: Gas Elements; Mineral Elements; Crop and Animal-based agri-products; Timber; Astra Militarum troops

Notable Military Elements:
Argovonian Foresters [local defence]; Argovonian Pathfinders [local defence]; Argovonian Pikemen [local defence]; Argovonian Militia [local defence]; Argovonian Ironlancers [armoured Astra Militarum regiments]; Argovonian Lineholders [infantry Astra Militarum regiments]; Argovonian Firebombards [artillery Astra Militarum regiments]

Planetary Governor: Foronika Argovon XXXVII



Despite the creation of the New Argovon Fault (and the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that resulted) by sustained periods of intense mining, at the outbreak of the conflict, Argovon remained a lush world, featuring low mountains covered from base to tip in jade-coloured vegetation, blue oceans, verdant forests, clear rivers and rolling grasslands. It had been blessed with enough competent rulers to ensure that its wide range of resources was managed effectively and efficiently such that its tithes were considerable in both quantity and quality. Thanks to relative economic prosperity, it had never, as far as records suggest, suffered particularly significant levels of civil unrest.¹ Argovon exceeded its requirements to supply troops for the Astra Militarum and also maintained a strong local defence force comprising militia, specialists and regulars. These forces were, by the standards of many planetary defence forces, very well equipped indeed.²

Many in Task Force XI's command thought that, of all the Argovon System's worlds, the capital planet of Argovon was the least vulnerable and best prepared for any kind of attack from within or without. As we all know now, this assessment was severely incorrect. The fact that High Field Marshal Hynflaager himself commanded the elements of Task Force XI on Argovon, with a fleet much larger than many thought necessary,³ suggests that there was more to this world than met the eye to those present at the time.⁴ I can't be sure what he knew or what he had been told to make such decisions, but he was clearly better informed than many in high command and willing to act on that information. It would not surprise me if Inquisitor Macara already had agents in situ providing intelligence. Why he did not share this with many others if this is the case is a question I have no answer to. It might well have been simple expediency. Further evidence that he had knowledge others did not includes the fact that when he landed his troops, Hynflaager refused to billet them or base them alongside native defence forces as frequently as possible – suggesting he saw local troops as potentially untrustworthy.⁵

The threats Argovon faced were many. The two most obvious were the Necrons and Genestealer Cults. But a

third was more insidious and almost certainly the greatest. Argovon's security and wealth not only lent the planet's government a complacency but rendered it a safe and pampered seat to where less vigorous priests could be quietly staffed with little risk to the planet's faith. Though some deacons and priests were content to preach to the comparably passive flock on Argovon, many others, filled with zeal, wanted the glory of converting the tribes and clans of Hishrea. Thus was the faith of the Argovonians made mellow. This is not to say the people were heretical or traitorous; it is rather to say that when the Stilling began to enclose the world in its cold, vice-like grip, Argovon lacked the kind of spiritual defences it needed to contend with such a threat as well as it could. This insidious threat therefore compounded the danger of another; with terrible inevitability, the Genestealer Cult fanatics were consumed by a vile belief of their own ... and appeared to be much less affected.

¹ Though we now of course know that, for some years, the Four-armed Emperor and Blessed Raised Genestealer Cults discovered on Argovon surely must have been slowly growing in strength and power. It is more likely that the reason they did not rise up earlier was due to calculated choice than out of fear of the planetary leadership, sadly.

² It is far from unheard of for impoverished worlds to only provide their Astra Militarum forces with adequate weapons and wargear, for fear of bringing the wrath of the Departamento Munitorum upon themselves. Consequently, these worlds' defence forces often lack in specialist weapons, ammunition, fighting vehicles and troops.

³ Having a significant number of ships proved absolutely vital. Research work carried out by Adeptus Mechanicus geologists suggest that the deluge of magma caused by the creation of the New Argovon Fault destroyed some 90+ % of a Necron tomb complex buried deep beneath Argovon's surface. When the Necrons attacked, they struck primarily from orbit.

⁴ In fact, Hynflaager was criticised in numerous circles for not leading the fighting on Foronika, and as the conflict there turned into the quagmire we are still embroiled in to this day, criticism turned to insult and even suggestions of poor leadership and cowardice. These voices were quickly silenced when the truth of Argovon's vulnerability came to light.

⁵ In some circumstances, he was forced to. Some locations, such as the Anicet Heights, the Tsaralaza Pass and the Boazand Citadel had to be defended. If the Argovonian defenders were in any way corrupt, as it appears Hynflaager suspected, these locations could not be allowed to fall into their hands.

THE WAR FOR ARGOVON

The first Necron tomb ships struck Argovon scant days after Hynflaager's arrival. 'Their ships powered through the system, dripping with arrogance, not slowing their pace remotely or changing formation as we organised to meet them,' wrote Admiral Ashenzar Kinra in his journals. Disturbingly choreographed, as the xenos ships entered the theatre, Necron ground forces simultaneously arose.

The arrival of the Necron fleet was sudden and quick enough that it was able to outmanoeuvre the Imperial Navy forces in orbit, some of which were still deploying troops or supplies to Argovon's surface. Others of Kinra's fleet were conducting diagnostic rituals and enacting repairs following warp transit. Though Admiral Kinra responded as quickly as he was able, it is evident that a significant portion of the Necron fleet bypassed Imperial patrol pickets and rapid-response squadrons to land troops on the surface.⁶

On the ground, Necron forces struck mainly at major population centres, the cities of Harihad (situated on the edge of the Parzini Desert), Akal (a major hub for food import/export) and Kamlesh (home to one of Argovon's five largest military training academies, built on a large island in the middle of the Alkaide Delta) swiftly

becoming hard-pressed. Other locations also became centres of furious fighting. The Gadkari Jungle, sat on Argovon's equator, was one of them. The dense forest was situated near a Necron tomb complex, and as Necron phalanxes marched out⁷ and into the vine-strewn jungle, the 21st, 48th and 53rd Argovonian Foresters were hastily mobilised and moved to stop them. The troops of these regiments, all born and bred in the deadly terrain, fought a guerrilla war so devastating and successful that Necron forces had still failed to leave the jungle four months later. The Necrons' patience, if these xenos have such a concept, appears to have run out some time after this, as they proceeded to systematically destroy the jungle in its entirety, acre by acre, rather than move through it. Thousands of Foresters were incinerated in the terrible firestorms created by swarms of bomber craft and the salvos of Necron artillery, or they were consumed when the Necrons unleashed clouds of xenomechanical arthropods to voraciously mow down the forest.

The force of the Necrons' initial attack was such that many significant defeats were suffered early in the campaign. To name but a few, these include the Sinking of the Ruby Isles, which saw the beautiful archipelago wiped off the map; the Massacre at the Luzel Ravine, where the 67th





Miasman Redcows were completely destroyed as they attempted to reach a Necron staging area; and the Battle of the Bloody Doab, where the 384th Mordian Iron Guard, 89th Tekarn Iron Men and 73rd Sondoran Gearheads were trapped between the Ulliar and Peverus Rivers, which were particularly high and flowing rapidly after the spring snow-melt. Nevertheless, Hynflaager's strategies saw Imperial forces begin to regain a degree of control. His was a harsh – but in my view necessary – method. He made calculated choices to abandon a number of settlements, cities and locales, and he gathered his strength in defensible areas to push out again. Through the use of specialised forces, such as the Argovonian Foresters, Haephosian Tritons, Militarum Tempestus and others, he was still able to keep a degree of pressure on the Necrons, make tactical strikes and buy time.⁸

It is a sad fact that those Argovonian units that put up the staunchest fight during these early months and years of the campaign were those later found to have been corrupted by Genestealer Cults to some extent.⁹ It seems clear that (although attempting to understand the motivations of the xenos is a distasteful subject to say the least), whilst the Necrons were winning, the cultists bided their time, refraining from fighting the Imperium until the

Necron threat was deemed in some way more under control. Once again, Hynflaager kept a significant portion of his own strength away from Argovonian units in an apparent attempt to reduce any vulnerability to treachery. In my estimation, this was the single greatest example of his careful genius during his entire leadership. Without it, our own forces' cohesion would have been so broken, and so distracted, that between the Necron invaders and xenos cultist uprising, Argovon would have fallen within a very short time indeed, and at immeasurable cost.

⁶ Later in the campaign Kinra was subject to investigation for five months on this, and the question was raised time and time again if he could have responded more quickly or prepared his fleet better. He was acquitted of negligence after Hynflaager's seventh personal intervention on the Admiral's behalf.

⁷ Purely by accident, a Valkyrie of the Aeronautica Imperialis 808th 'Dark Falcons' Division was struck by a mechanical fault during a routine training exercise and was forced to fly back to its home base early, over the jungle. During this flight, the crew detected anomalous energy readings from the ground and were able to give warning.

⁸ A particularly fine example of this was a strike carried out by elements of the 659th Sashani Patrollers, who successfully infiltrated a landed Necron light cruiser and destroyed it from the inside.

⁹ It is estimated that around 20-30% of Argovonian military units were either totally or in part corrupted at the time of the Cults' uprising.

INQUISITOR ALEXEI MACARA

It should surprise readers little that information regarding Inquisitor Alexei Macara of the Ordo Xenos is both sparse and unreliable. Even calling upon the aid of my colleagues, I have collated what amounts to little more than half-truths, rumours and hyperbole. Of her origins I know nothing, and if her story is remembered anywhere but in her own mind, it is in some Inquisitorial vault I have no knowledge of. It has proven impossible to track her down for interview; my only dealings and observations of her directly have been at councils with numerous other high-ranking officials and influential figures. At the time of writing, I cannot be certain she still lives. The last anyone saw or heard from her was before she disappeared, along with a detachment of Deathwatch and a company from the 99th Rhodic Pythons of the Militarum Tempestus, in pursuit of the Lord of Night and Steel. Much of her face is covered with a mask of plain metal, I believe to cover hideous scars inflicted by terrible acids unleashed on her by some nameless alien foe many years ago. She wears a number of rings, each a unique piece, so far as I can ascertain. Judging by her large coterie of Jokaero, it would not surprise me if each is a digital weapon of some description.

In terms of her track record, from what I've been able to piece together, it seems that she has spent much of her Inquisitorial career taking a keen interest in the purging of xenos races, specifically those that she deems to be a potential future threat. My colleagues and I calculate she has had a hand in

rendering some nineteen species of xenos extinct in the earliest stages of their development – creatures only just employing stone tools and utilising fire. In more recent times, her focus has moved to the Necrons and Tyranids, both races a relatively new threat to the Imperium, and I daresay more dangerous to us than primitive aliens on worlds none have heard of.

Macara is, or indeed was, a figure of small stature but great impact. Her knowledge of her primary foes was considerable and proved to be of immense value to Task Force XI command. This, combined with intelligence provided by her network of contacts (which certainly had been based on Argovon before the Great Rift even emerged), was instrumental to Imperial success during the Battle of the Abidaal Catacombs, where the 932nd Cadian and 22nd Sashani fought a murderous counter-insurgency operation against elements of the Cult of the Four-armed Emperor. Imperial troops eventually crushed the xenos worshippers and purged their highest echelons, thanks to Macara's strategies and tactics hard-gleaned fighting against ambushes of the same cults on other worlds. Her input was also vital to Imperial victory during the Storming of the Izavel Fissure. Her knowledge of Necron Wraith and Destroyer abominations was of great advantage to the 75th and 902nd Lascareen Thunders, 37th Vuxorian Venators and 3rd Zibqet Tomahawks. The regiments were able to lure rampaging Destroyers into prepared kill zones and operate efficient sentry procedures to best protect themselves from the terrifyingly unpredictable Wraiths.

THE SIEGE OF THE ARGOVONYA

The Argovonya was the seat of the planetary governor, a colossal edifice that was at once city, palace and fortress. In it was situated almost every element of Argovon's government. Millions dwelt there: soldiers, scribes, politicians, Tech-Priests, administrators, Ecclesiarchal staff, and countless others. The palace-fortress had several layers of defences, known as tiers,¹⁰ each constructed as the Argovonya's population eclipsed its capacity. Even beyond its outermost walls there was a vast populated area, housing menials and day-labourers for the most part.

It was from Inquisitor Allexei Macara's close analysis of this battle that a great deal of vital information was believed to have been learned about the Genestealer Cult uprisings on Argovon, the most important fact being that they do not appear to have been planned to occur at this time. Standard procedure, as much can be ascertained,¹¹ is that a growing cult waits until it is confident it has a firm grip on its world – and that world's government – before showing itself. The crucial observation made by Macara was that, whilst clearly some xenos agents had infiltrated parts of the government, they had not come close to the highest echelons of power. The cultists were numerous indeed, that was of no doubt, but the assault very much came from without. The city's upper tiers (where the primary government functions were situated) remained, on the whole, secure – though the battle was marked by highly intense fighting to stymie infiltrations often assisted by traitorous agents on the inside. With few cultists in higher reaches of power, it was evident in her eyes that the cults themselves had not reached their full maturity when they rose up. The most popular theory as

to why they arose is that, with the Necrons attacking and Imperial forces arriving, they felt under significant enough threat that their hands were forced.

The Argovonya spent years of the war under constant attack by the Cult of the Four-armed Emperor. The defenders were determined, well supplied and well equipped. The attackers were ferocious and fanatical. Neither side had the upper hand for years. To call it one battle is nothing less than a massive oversimplification, but that is what posterity – the so-called 'histories' lessers have attempted to record – remembers. In reality, the total of individual battles was practically without number. Vicious skirmishing raged for five months in the Argovonya's eighth tier as the 3rd Argovonian Pikemen fought to keep cultist fanatics and infiltrators from the ninth tier's Flenon Bastion, which had been rendered vulnerable by xenos saboteurs and mutated monstrosities. Their efforts were reduced to nothing when the cultists launched an all-out assault spearheaded by the 87th Argovonian Ironlancers, who had almost fallen entirely into the cult's venomous embrace. The militia stood little chance against hundreds of Sentinels and Leman Russ Battle Tanks, and their route to safety was ultimately cut off and they were destroyed. Elsewhere, the 101st Argovonian Militia descended into the sewer system beneath the fourth tier after it was reported the cultists were using the tunnel network to sneak as far into the Argovonya's interior as the third tier. After three weeks of issuing regular, yet increasingly frantic, reports from ever deeper inside that stinking labyrinth, the communications stopped. The militia were never heard from again.

There was no battleline during the siege; flashpoints, last stands and counteroffensives occurred so rapidly and fluidly that strategos could not keep up with the swings of advantage. Pockets of Imperial troops that seemed surrounded would be part of an established front line just minutes before appearing lost, such as the elements of the 677th Argovonian Lineholders maintaining the Tri-bartizan of Melynta Thygus. After fighting for days to maintain a link to them, the 12th Argovonian Pikemen were broken and overrun. The Lineholders were thought doomed. An unexpected breakthrough at a breach in the second tier's wall meant that the 13th Argovonian Foresters and the 14th Vuxorian Venators fought their way to them, however. On other occasions, the 'lines' ebbed and flowed on a daily basis as areas fell and were retaken. Estates, Administratum blocks and streets thought fully purged and cleansed flared up in ferocious fighting shortly after being declared safe. Thousands of wounded troops being convoyed to the relative safety of a part of the fifth tier were ambushed and slaughtered on the Lenjun Causeway days after it was retaken by the battered remnants of the 82nd Dremian Fusiliers, who had spent weeks securing it.

¹⁰ The highest tier, at the pinnacle of the Argovonya, was the first. The higher the number, the further out from the centre the tier was. Each tier's walls completely encircled those of the higher tiers, creating multiple rings of strong defences.

¹¹ Even if there was such a thing as 'standard procedure' with these monstrosities, which I highly doubt.



THE BLESSED RAISED

The Blessed Raised had never been encountered by the Imperium before their uprising on Argovon, and it is quite possible that the cult originated there. It appears that the cult grew out of Argovon's deep-fissure prospector associations as well as more remote outposts of the better-established extraction guilds. They seem to have attached some kind of spiritual significance to tremors, earthquakes, magma flows and other geological phenomena, linking these events to their so-called deities in numerous different ways. Pict recordings of cult propaganda indicate that they referred to their uprising as 'the Great Quake' that would see the total collapse of the oppressors dwelling on Argovon's surface, those who made enormous profits and grew fat off the back of their toil and drudgery.

Almost every Imperial force that engaged the Blessed Raised encountered significant numbers of massive, hyper-mutated xenos hybrids. Ordo Xenos catalogues I have access to describe these creatures as Aberrants. It is highly likely that the cult, as it grew and nurtured itself in the mines, was left unmolested enough to breed and experiment in all kinds of hideous ways. At least some of the results of these are thought to be the monsters Imperial troops were to later encounter. These hulking wretches inflicted heavy losses almost wherever they were unleashed, their unclean power magnified in the close confines of mining tunnels and vaults.



WAR FOR ARGOVON

On the planet of Argovon, the forces of the Imperium find themselves battling not one alien race, but two – Necrons and Genestealer Cults. New tactics must be employed if they are to be eliminated efficiently, as you'll soon find out in these vignettes by Callum Davis.

The xenos-worshipper's ridged cranium exploded in a burst of gore and brain matter. Librarian Adones of the Atlantian Spears turned his bolt pistol on another in quick succession, feeling the fierce recoil of the weapon as he witnessed his target's chest cavity reduced to mist.

Adones only saw the cultists through the gloom thanks to his soul sight. Looking into their essence, he could see the reach of the xenos' influence even at this deep a level. The flickering light that betrayed their presence was ... different. Other. Alien. How this happened he did not know. Nor did he wish to.

Death is the only thing left for these wretched creatures, he thought.

The sewage network beneath the sixth tier of the Argovonya was pitch-dark – a problem for regular fighting troops, but no issue for Adeptus Astartes. Adones led Infiltrator Squad Abdosir and Incursor Squad Arishon. With murderous efficiency, they tore through throngs of screaming, hideous cultists, every burst of their bolt fire cutting down another heathen.

'Purge them all, brothers!' roared Sergeant Arishon over the vox. He had stowed away his bolter and drawn his twin fighting knives. He weaved between the cultists' scythe-arms and their clumsy lunges with heavy mining tools, hacking off deformed limbs before plunging his blades into the creatures' faces and hearts. Where he roamed, twisted souls flickered out, snuffed like candle flames between forefinger and thumb.

'Hack them down! Kill them all!'

The Incursor Sergeant plunged further and further into the cult hordes.

'Calm, Sergeant,' said Adones, as he plucked a leaping heathen from the air with another bolt. Its viscera splashed all over him and into the viscous filth running over his boots, the sound like gravel thrown into a pond. 'Your lust for war grows too strong. The blood is not the answer, but the narrow road. In a clear head lies victory. Be not like these monsters.' Adones pressed the words into Arishon's mind and broadcast them over the vox to his entire force.

I would not see any fall to the rage this day, he thought.

The cultists poured from tunnels above and below. They flooded the space like starving cockroaches thirsting for flesh. Their deathly pale skin was spattered with the blood of their kin mixed with the stinking, excrement-filled slime that coated the tunnel walls. Their garments, once those of miners, were coated in filth. They snarled, snapped and screeched. Most carried weapons of their former trade – mining tools turned from rock face to war. Others bore conventional weapons looted from fallen foes. Many had sprouted third or even fourth arms, all ending in wicked scythes or razor-sharp talons. For all their ferocity, they had not broken past the Atlantian Spears.





Had the Space Marines not met the cultists here, the creatures would be tearing through the sixth tier of the Argovonya even now, slaughtering the wounded in its military hospitals and the civilians taking cover in its refuges.

Arishon pulled back into the rough body of his battle-brothers, his sea-green armour and bronze helm caked with gore.

'Apologies, Brother-Librarian, and gratitude,' he voxed to Adones.

'You retained control, brother. I ask nothing else,' Adones said.

The cultists drew closer. Adones holstered his bolt pistol and ignited his force spear, psychically engaging its internal crystalline fibres.

Awaken, old friend. Your services are once more required. Taste blood where I cannot.

'It is a time for spears, brothers. Strike true,' he intoned over the vox. 'We are not the lust.'

'We are greater than it,' returned the Space Marines. Warriors drew blades and bolt pistols and slammed into the onrushing tide.

Each of Adones' spear thrusts was clean, precise. He punctured hearts, impaled skulls and skewered guts. But the creatures never stopped. He saw Onasander fall, the warrior's armour pierced by a dozen claws as filth-covered creatures scrambled over him, only to be blown apart by a torrent of bolt shells from Brother Polus. Brother Thales was dragged from the line after one xenos-worshipper managed to drive a blade through his armour joint. The creatures pulled him into the cultists' thronging mass, dragging him into one of the pipes they poured out of.

Over the vox, Adones could hear Thales' shouts of defiance, his vows of vengeance, and the roar that signalled his collapse into the rage as desperation filled his soul and he forgot the narrow road.

He will take many with him in death, Adones thought. But shame shadows his last moments.

'There are too many, Brother-Librarian,' said Sergeant Abdosir, breaking the Librarian out of his thoughts. 'We cannot hold them here indefinitely. But the sixth tier will collapse if we do not.'

'I understand, Sergeant. I will call for Brother Diodokus.'

'An idea none could argue with,' said Abdosir.

++Diodokus. We have need of you. Descend beneath,++ Adones said, reaching out to Diodokus' mind through the ether.

++Yes, Brother-Librarian,++ replied Diodokus.

Two more Atlantian Spears fell before Diodokus reached the group, though Adones felt his presence before he heard him. The loudest sound the Invictor Warsuit made was caused when its ceramite-clad piston-driven legs crushed the corpses of cultists. The Atlantian Spears parted in disciplined form to make room for it, keeping their eyes and weapons on the foe even as they fell back. The moment Diodokus had a clear line of fire, he levelled his promethium cannon.

Heat washed over Adones as Diodokus fired. The tunnel was filled with light, the screeches of dying xenos, the chattering of heavy stubbers and the stench of burning rubber, faeces and flesh.





Will they ever stop? Eras wondered. How many more of them are there? It's been two months, and they haven't stopped coming.

Thirty metres below the Argovonian Foresters trooper, a column of Necron Warriors marched, their formation broken by the dense undergrowth of the Gadkari Jungle. Their pace was unhurried, though they advanced through the gnarled roots with inexorable purpose. With each step, they moved in and out of shadow. Their bronze-coloured armour gleamed in dapples of bright light as rays from Argovon's sun broke through the canopy's leaves and branches. Their advance was relentless and sure-footed, the hostile landscape yielding before their tread.

Eras was clipped halfway up a tree. Every inch of his skin, fatigues and weapons was adeptly camouflaged to match the jungle. Any bare metal on his gear had been blackened to avoid catching sunlight. He carried nothing that could rattle or make any noise that would stand out amongst the sounds of the forest or the hoots and snarls of animals and birds. He wore no helmet and carried no water canteen, lest they give his position away. Each charge pack for his lasgun was separately holstered and made from hardened hydrocarbons.

The air was so thick with humidity he could barely breathe. His uniform was soaked through. Were it not for the constant stream of drips descending to the forest floor, the sweat falling off him would have given away his position. He was so still a barbed vine-serpent had for a time coiled itself around the entirety of his left arm, licking at the perspiration on his hand before moving on.



A grey skorpiad had even crawled from the tree trunk, over Eras' torso, over his face and back again in its patrol for food. Eras had ignored them, just as he ignored the chafing of the straps that bound him to the tree. Once, the bindings had been soft. Now, they were rough with overuse and rubbed Eras' skin raw even through his fatigues.

A blood-buzzer perched itself on Eras' nose to feed. The small insectoid plunged its needle-like mouth through his skin. Eras bit his tongue through the pain and the irritation of its legs brushing against him.

When this war is over, I'm going to kill all of you, Eras promised. *Emperor curse you all.*

With that, the blood-buzzer left, much heavier than when it arrived.

Praise be, Eras thought.

Eras' entire platoon was up in the trees around this part of the forest. Each soldier was a veteran of jungle guerrilla fighting, and they were so well concealed even Eras could barely make out more than a handful of them. But they were out there.

He glanced at his wrist-mounted chronometer. *Forty seconds,* he thought. *It's time.* He drew a Krak grenade from its pouch. It took fifteen seconds – any quicker and he might draw attention. To pull the pin took another ten seconds. During that time, he pressed his thumb against the clip that ensured the grenade wouldn't detonate in his

hand. Eras rotated his arm so that the grenade was directly above the xenos column; he could then drop it at the precise moment. This movement took ten more seconds. Every soldier in the platoon had synchronised their chronometers. Every Guardsman was doing this exact same task in the same precise moment. They had practised it a hundred times in training, and several more in combat.

Five ... four ... three ... two ... one, he counted in his head.

Eras released the grenade. It took less than three seconds to fall. Dozens more dropped at exactly the same time along the Necrons' path through the jungle.

Stage one complete. Emperor send you to the depths, xenos scum.

The cacophony of explosions was almost deafening, but Eras didn't flinch. In rapid succession, he stirred the machine spirits of both his frag grenades and dropped them. The thick stench of cordite filled Eras' nostrils, and he saw xenos ripped apart in the detonations as mud and plant matter shot into the air. Xenos armour plates melted in the intense heat. Bladed rifles crackling with evil energy were warped out of shape or broken entirely. Metal skulls buckled and caved in. Shrapnel knocked out metallic knee joints and shattered glowing eye lenses.

Stage two complete. Feel His wrath, filth. May it lay you as low as it elevates me in His sight.

Only then did Eras draw his lasgun on the xenos, intoning the rites of righteous hatred of the xenos as he fired.

ARGOVON CAMPAIGN

The Argovon System is in a state of all-out war, the forces of the Imperium battling desperately against the might of the Necrons. In this – the final article in the Argovon Flashpoint series – you will find new campaign rules for fighting your Pariah Nexus wars.



Over the following pages, you will find rules to cover phase 3 of the Argovon Campaign, covering the final brutal battles as players put their hard won Xenotech points from the previous phase to deadly effect. Every battle in this phase is crucial, and they will ultimately shape which faction is successful. You will also find two new missions unique to this phase of the

campaign, set on the embattled worlds of the Argovon System. The first of these is a Strike Force mission set on Argolish; the second is an Incursion mission set on Argovon itself. During the Determine Mission step, players can agree to play one of these missions instead of one found in other publications.



CAMPAIGN RULES

At the start of phase 3 of the Argovon Campaign, the Campaign Master collates all the remaining Xenotech points totals for the players in each alliance (see *White Dwarf* 458). At this point, no more Xenotech points can be collected.

Each alliance receives a title throughout phase 3 of the Argovon Campaign depending on the relative amount of Xenotech they have collected, as follows:

- The alliance with the highest Xenotech points is called the Xenotech Hoarders.
- The alliance with the second highest Xenotech points is called the Xenotech Preservers.
- The alliance with the third highest Xenotech points is called the Xenotech Collectors.
- The alliance with the least Xenotech points is called the Xenotech Scavengers.

If two or more alliances have the same number of Xenotech points, one player from each of those alliances must roll off: the winner's alliance is considered to have more Xenotech points than the loser's for the purposes of receiving one of the above titles.

Each alliance can now select one Xenotech reward from those listed below, each of which is a Stratagem. If an alliance selects a Xenotech reward, all players in that alliance gain access to the associated Stratagem and can spend CPs to use it during any battle set in phase 3 of the Argovon Campaign.

Each Xenotech reward is unique, and once selected by an alliance, cannot be selected by another alliance. The Xenotech Hoarders select their Xenotech reward first, then the Xenotech Preservers, then the Xenotech Collectors and then finally the Xenotech Scavengers. The Campaign Master should make a note of what Xenotech rewards each alliance has selected.

The Xenotech rewards available for alliances to select from are:



ORBITAL TARGETING

2CP

Xenotech Reward – Battle Tactic Stratagem

The xenotech collected in this region forms part of a vast orbital targeting network. By connecting the device to one of a series of seemingly inert slabs of blackstone orbiting this world, it can feed targeting data directly to warriors below.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase. Select one enemy unit. Until the start of your next Command phase, each time a model from your army makes a ranged attack against that enemy unit, add 1 to that attack's hit roll.

INCANDESCENT BLASTS

3CP

Xenotech Reward – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

By utilising some of the rarer xenotech looted, this world's orbital menhirs thrum to life and can be repurposed to rain down incandescent energy blasts upon the foe.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase. Select one battlefield quarter and roll one D6 for each unit that is within that battlefield quarter, adding 1 to the result if that unit has the **TITANIC** keyword or if it contains 11 or more models: on a 6+, that unit suffers D3 mortal wounds. You can only use this Stratagem once.

SHIELD HUBS

2CP

Xenotech Reward – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Many xenotech devices collected form part of a vast planetary shielding apparatus. Though powerful, the devices are now highly localised and at best, intermittent.

Use this Stratagem in your Command phase. Select one unit from your army. Until the start of your next Command phase, while that unit is wholly within your own deployment zone, that unit has a 4+ invulnerable save against ranged attacks.

MATTER CONVERTER

2CP

Xenotech Reward – Strategic Ploy Stratagem

Certain xenotech can be used to convert matter into light energy, allowing it to move tremendous distances before coalescing back into its original form.

Use this Stratagem in the Reinforcement step of your Movement phase. Select one **INFANTRY** unit from your army, remove it from the battlefield and set it back up anywhere on the battlefield that is more than 9" away from any enemy models. You can only use this Stratagem once per battle.

UNSTABLE POWER CORE

1CP

Xenotech Reward – Wargear Stratagem

Some xenotech has no fathomable purpose, but yet contains vast amounts of energy. These devices are typically unstable and can be hurled at the foe with explosive results.

Use this Stratagem in your Shooting phase. Select one enemy unit that is within 6" of a **CHARACTER** model from your army and roll one D6: on a 2-5, that enemy unit suffers 1 mortal wound; on a 6, that enemy unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

CHRONOFIELD EMITTER

2CP

Xenotech Reward – Wargear Stratagem

Once activated, this xenotech emits a burst of energy that can temporarily halt the flow of time itself.

Use this Stratagem at the start of the Fight phase. Select one enemy unit that is within Engagement Range of a **CHARACTER** model from your army. That enemy unit fights last this phase.

CRUSADE REWARDS

CRUSADE RELICS

ARTIFICER RELICS

A **CHARACTER** that gains a Battle Honour after an Argovon Campaign game can be given one of the following Artificer Relics instead of one of the ones presented in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*. These Relics require that player to be part of an alliance with a certain title, as explained above; otherwise, all the usual rules for selecting Crusade Relics, as described in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*, apply.

The Pariah Crown

This chunk of rough-hewn blackstone has been mounted into a diadem-like living construct to subdue even the most powerful psykers.

Model from a Xenotech Hoarder alliance only. The bearer has the following ability: **'PARIAH CROWN (AURA):** While an enemy **PSYKER CHARACTER** unit is within 18" of this model, each time a Psychic test is taken for that model, roll one D6. If the result of that dice matches either of the values of the dice used as part of that Psychic test, the enemy **PSYKER** unit suffers Perils of the Warp. A unit cannot suffer Perils of the Warp twice in the same Psychic test.'

Orb of Phasing

When activated, this metallic sphere shifts the bearer briefly out of reality, allowing them to manoeuvre around their foes to attack from unexpected angles.

Model from a Xenotech Hoarder or Xenotech Preserver alliance only. Each time the bearer makes a Normal Move, Advances, Falls Back or makes a charge move, until that move is finished, it can move through models and terrain features.





Mirror Field Projector

This unassuming device creates a silvery force field that can absorb and redirect energy and incoming weapon fire.

Model from a Xenotech Hoarder, Xenotech Preserver or Xenotech Collector alliance only.

- The bearer has a 5+ invulnerable save.
- Each time a ranged attack is allocated to the bearer, on an unmodified saving throw of 5+, after all of the attacking unit's attacks have been resolved, select one enemy unit within 12" of and visible to the bearer: that unit suffers 1 mortal wound.

Xenotech Recycler

This spider-like creature detaches from a vambrace to seek out, collect and return any useful xenotech devices it detects in its vicinity.

Model from a Xenotech Hoarder, Xenotech Preserver, Xenotech Collector or Xenotech Scavenger alliance only. Once per turn, if the bearer is on the battlefield when you use a Xenotech reward Stratagem, that Stratagem costs 0CP.



ENDING THE CAMPAIGN

At the end of campaign phase 3, assign strategic points to the alliance with the most war zone points as described in Part 1 (*White Dwarf* 457). The alliance with the highest strategic points total is the winning alliance. If more than one alliance has the same total strategic points at the end of the campaign, use the total war zone points those alliances collected in phase 3 as the tie-breaker. If this is also tied, use the total Xenotech points gathered by those alliances in phase two as a second tie-breaker. If this is also tied, each alliance must nominate one player to play a play-off battle, with the victor claiming victory for their alliance. If even this is a draw, each tied alliance must nominate another player and repeat this process until there is a winner – glory on Argovon cannot be shared!

CRUSADE CAMPAIGN COMMENDATIONS

Each player in the winning alliance can select one **CHARACTER** unit from their Order of Battle that has the Blooded rank or higher. We recommend that this should be a **CHARACTER** unit that has performed admirably during your battles in the Argovon Campaign. That **CHARACTER** gains the following Battle Honour. As with any Battle Honour, make a note on the unit's Crusade card and increase its Crusade points by 1, as described in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*.

Hero of the Argovon Campaign

This warrior has distinguished themselves in combat and been awarded an appropriate commendation, whether it be a medal smelted from recovered xenotech or an honorific title to recount their heroic actions.

Once per battle, when an attack is made by this model, before making either a hit roll or wound roll for that attack, that hit roll or wound roll is automatically successful.



CRUSADE MISSION - STRIKE FORCE ARGOLISH IN FLAMES

MISSION BRIEFING

A location of prime importance must be held. The precious relics within must not fall to the enemy, so we must sell our lives to protect them until reinforcements can arrive.

Mission Rules

Defensive Positions: At the end of the Determine Attacker and Defender step, the Defender can set up up to 6 Obstacle terrain features (such as barricades or fuel pipes) which are 6" or less in length anywhere in the Defender's deployment zone.

Hold This Position: While a unit from the Defender's army is within range of an objective marker, add 1 to Combat Attrition tests taken for that unit.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

Victory points are awarded as follows:

Take and Hold (Progressive): At the end of each player's Command phase, the player whose turn it is scores 5 victory points for each of the following conditions they satisfy (for a maximum of 15 victory points):

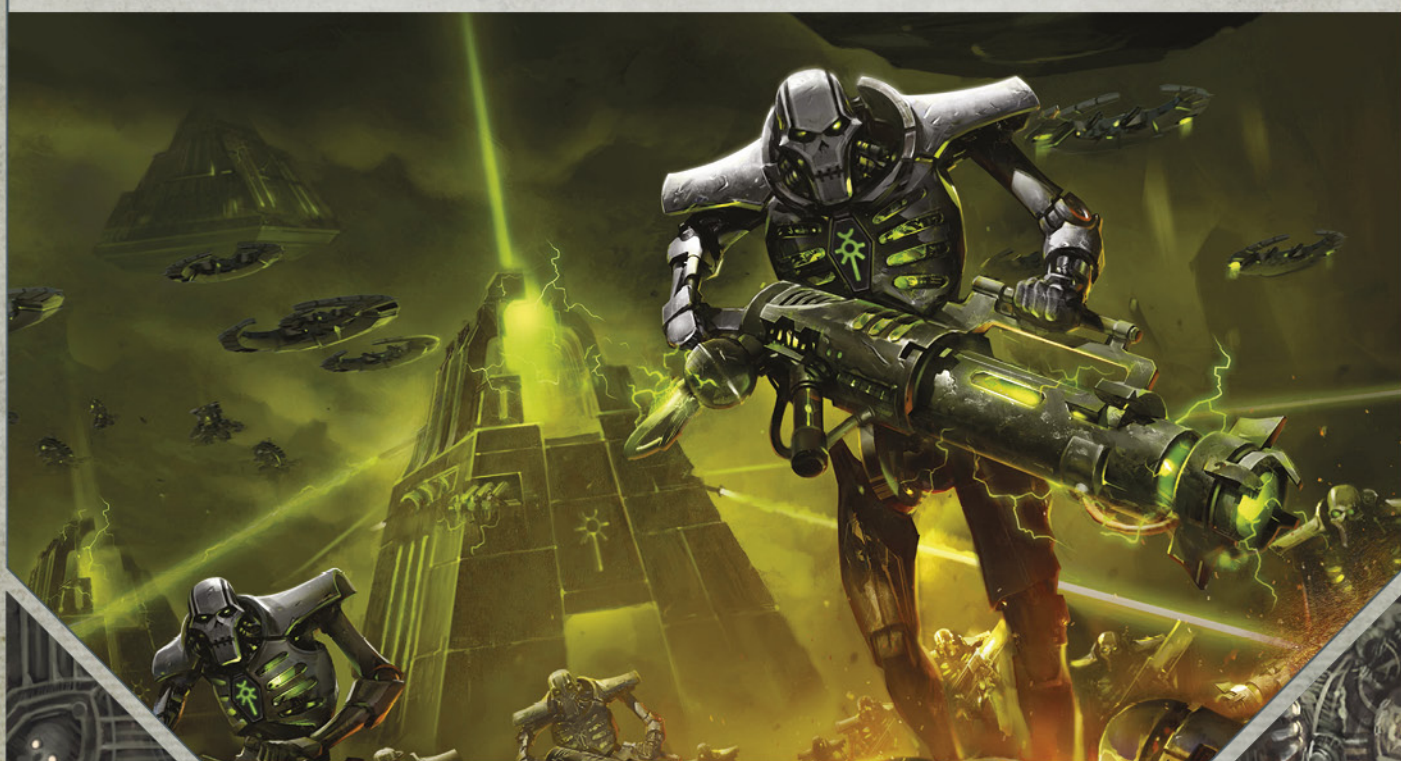
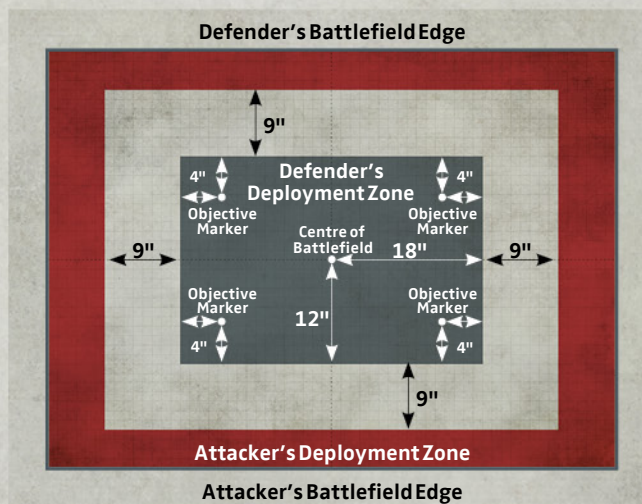
- They control one or more objective markers.
- They control two or more objective markers.
- They control more objective markers than their opponent controls.

This mission objective cannot be scored in the first battle round.

Hold the Relics (End Game): At the end of the battle, the player that controls the most objective markers scores 20 victory points. If that player controls all four objective markers they score 30 victory points instead.

VICTOR BONUS

The victor scores 3 additional war zone points.





CRUSADE MISSION - INCURSION

THE COLLAPSE OF ARGOVON

MISSION BRIEFING

We have been holding the enemy forces at bay within this densely forested region. The enemy have deployed deforestation devices to clear the terrain, leaving us nowhere to strike from. We must destroy these devices before we are forced to abandon this position.

Mission Rules

Dense Forests: During the Create the Battlefield step, when setting up terrain features, at least 50% of terrain features should be Woods if possible, which should be distributed roughly evenly across the battlefield. If this is not possible designate around 50% of the terrain features on the battlefield to be 'Wooded'.

Deforestation Devices: The Deforestation Devices are represented by three objective markers, set up as shown on the map below.

Units from the Defender's army can attempt the following action, as described in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*:

Activate Device (Action): At the end of your Movement phase, one or more units from your army that is within 3" of an objective marker can start to perform this action if no enemy units (excluding **AIRCRAFT** units) are within 3" of that objective marker. Each unit that performs this action must be within 3" of a different objective marker. The Action is completed at the end of your turn. If completed, roll one D6: on a 4+, select one Woods or 'Wooded' terrain feature on the battlefield that has not been cut down. Until the end of the battle, that terrain feature is said to have been cut down and it loses the dense cover trait.

Units from the Attacker's army can attempt the following action, as described in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*:

Destroy Device (Action): At the end of your Movement phase, one or more units from your army that is within 3" of an objective marker can start to perform this action if no enemy units (excluding **AIRCRAFT** units) are within 3" of that objective marker. Each unit that performs this action must be within 3" of a different objective marker. The Action is completed at the start of your next Command phase. If completed, that Deforestation Device is said to have been destroyed and that objective marker is removed from the battlefield.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

Victory points are awarded as follows:

Protect Devices (Progressive): At the end of each of the Defender's Command phases, the Defender scores 5 victory points for each objective marker that is on the battlefield.

This mission objective cannot be scored in the first battle round.

Destroy the Foe (Progressive): Score 10 victory points at the end of the battle round if more enemy units than friendly units were destroyed during this battle round.

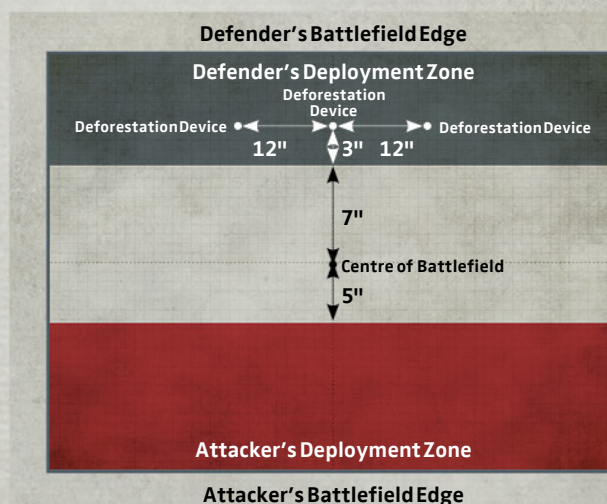
Destroy the Devices (Progressive): Each time a Deforestation Device is destroyed and an objective marker is removed from the battlefield, the Attacker gains 15 victory points.

VICTOR BONUS

The victor scores 1 additional war zone point.

If the Attacker is the victor and has destroyed all three Deforestation Devices, at the end of the battle they gain 1 additional Requisition point.

If the Defender is the victor and none of the Deforestation Devices have been destroyed, at the end of the battle they gain 1 additional Requisition point.



CRUSADE CHALLENGE

With the release of the new edition of Warhammer 40,000 earlier this year, many of the staff in the Warhammer Studio set about painting new armies so they can begin their own narrative crusade. Here we showcase a few of our favourite Crusade forces.



CRUSADE!

The rules for playing narrative games of Warhammer 40,000 – in particular a Crusade campaign – can be found on page 305 of the Warhammer 40,000 Core Book. Here you will find rules for ranks and battle honours, relics, weapon enhancements, battle scars and countless other exciting narrative options. There's even a roster sheet to help you keep track of your crusading army.

James: When we started work on the ninth edition of Warhammer 40,000, one of the major elements we were looking to include was a bigger focus on narrative play. As a big fan of telling stories in my games, this had me incredibly excited, and the system we have developed is my new favourite way to play. In order to introduce other players to the Crusade system, I decided to arrange a painting challenge within the studio, with the intention that each participant would end up with an army of around 50 power, ready to launch their own Crusade.

The challenge would be made up of two parts, each with a three-month deadline. In the first part, we decided that each faction would have a specific collection of units with a power level of around 25 (often based around a Start Collecting! box). Players who completed this stage would then paint a second set of units, again with a total

power level of around 25, but this time, the models would be entirely the choice of that player, allowing them to customise their force to their own preferences.

In the end, thirty-five people took part, which means there are now thirty-five armies ready to go on crusade! You can see a few of them on the *White Dwarf* gaming table in the picture above, and over the next few pages we'll be taking a closer look at a few of our favourites, along with some words of wisdom from their creators. I hope you'll find inspiration here and maybe even think about embarking on a similar challenge of your own. Whether flying solo or as part of a gaming or online painting group, Crusade is certainly a rewarding way to build an army and play some exciting narrative games. In fact, several good-natured rivalries have already surfaced before any games have been played!



THE CADIAN 77TH, BELIS CORONA EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

ASTRA MILITARUM CRUSADE FORCE BY JAMES GALLAGHER

James: Since the loss of Cadia, every Cadian is on a personal crusade for vengeance, so what better way to tell the stories of the soldiers that I've painted than by starting a Crusade force? My army is commanded by Colonel Feodor Kolm, supported by Captain Erinn Baskmann who leads the armoured forces. I wanted my officers to be pragmatic, wearing the same equipment as the soldiers, but utilising a series of dark-red markings on helmets and tank hulls to denote command elements. This ad-hoc marking was introduced to the 77th to represent the blood of those Cadians who fell defending their home world during the 13th Black Crusade.

Most of my troopers have been converted using an old upgrade set from Forge World, and I

DESERT CAMO

James's colour scheme is easy to achieve, the weathering adding a touch of realism to his vehicles.

Basecoat:
Zandri Dust

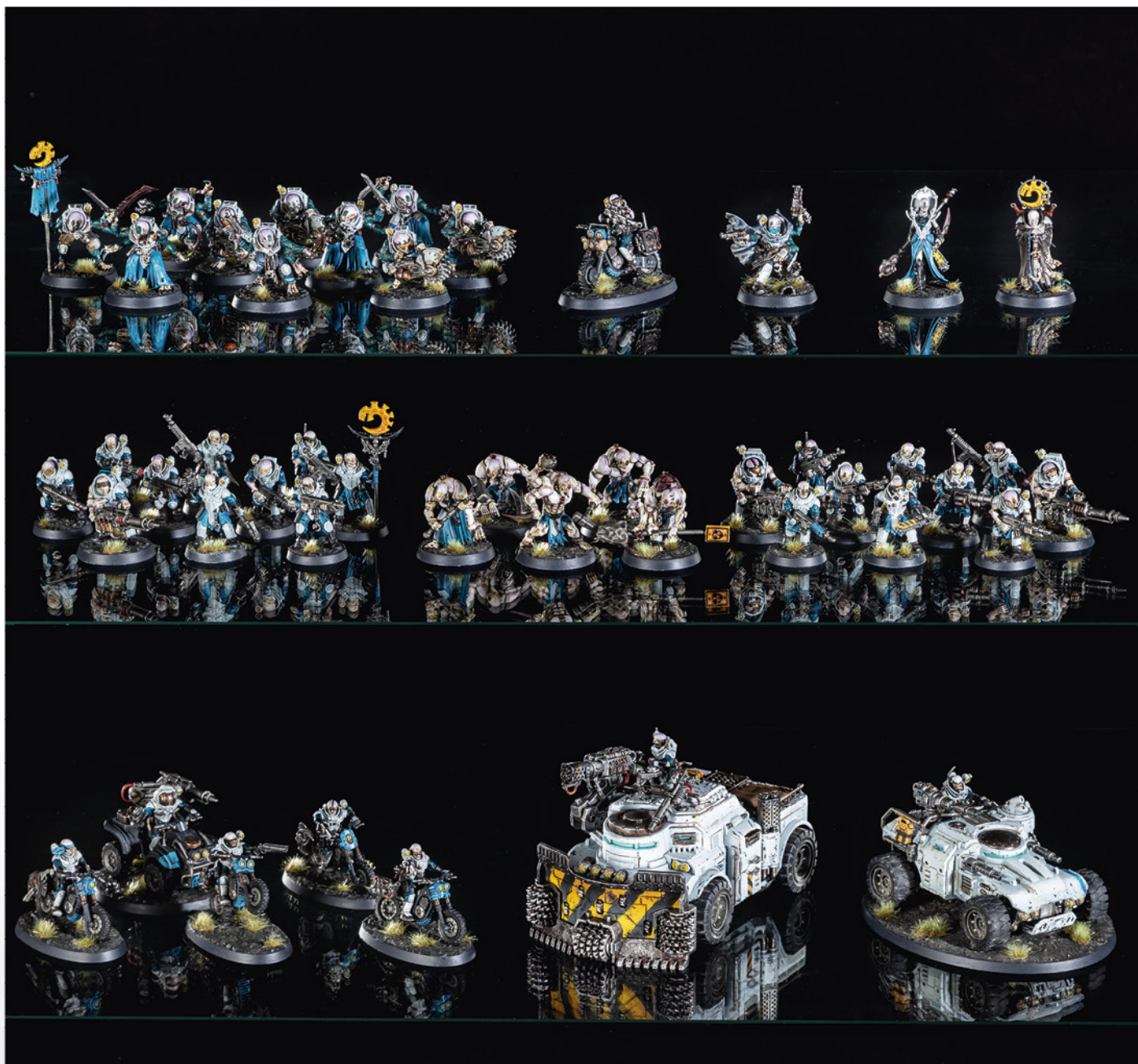
Wash:
Agrax Earthshade

Layer:
Morghast Bone

Stipple:
Skavenblight Dingo
(weathering)

painted and based them so they look like they're fighting in irradiated ash waste or desert environments.

I basecoated all the models Zandri Dust before applying a shade of Agrax Earthshade into the recesses on the flak armour and tank armour, and an all-over wash on any cloth. This helps to keep a similar but noticeable visual distinction between these elements, and it also ensured models were still quick to paint. I then edge-highlighted the sharp edges of the armour on the infantry and drybrushed the edges on the tanks. I also applied some chipping with a sponge using Skavenblight Dingo. I then painted lenses and other details in brighter colours to stand out from the drab armour and uniforms.



THE CULT OF THE SHADOW SPECTRES

GENESTEALER CULTS CRUSADE FORCE BY CALUM MCPHERSON

Calum: I decided to start a Genestealer Cults Crusade collection for my Crusade because they're an army I've always been interested in. They're definitely one of my favourites background-wise, but I did feel a little intimidated by the sheer number of models I would have to paint. Painting them as a challenge (and knowing that others were taking part in the challenge, too) gave me the motivation to get them all done.

At the start I wanted the bulk of my army to be infantry, but when I started the second part of the challenge, I was keen to theme them as more of an outrider-style army with lots of Achilles Ridgerunners and Atalan Jackals. I've painted the first few, but there are plenty more on the way in the future.

CULT COLOURS

With just a couple of Contrast paints, Calum established the base colours on his models really quickly.

Undercoat:
Grey Seer

Basecoat:
Apothecary White

Wash:
Agrax Earthshade &
Lahmian Medium

Layer: Corax White

Most of the main colours on my army were painted using Contrast paints over a Grey Seer base. I used Apothecary White for the armour, Akhelian Green for the clothing and Skeleton Horde for the skin. This was my first time using Contrast paints, and they enabled me to paint all the base colours on my models reasonably quickly. I then went back and added more detail once the full force was completed to a Battle Ready standard.

I've actually already played a few games with my army, too. My Kelermorph has been my outstanding performer so far, headhunting characters and wiping out units for fun. I've since named him Foyle Gori, and I gave my Locus the name Mordecai Black.



STRIKE FORCE OTAGAI

WHITE SCARS SPACE MARINES CRUSADE FORCE BY JON FLINDALL

Jon: I've fancied painting a White Scars army for a long time, and with the launch of Contrast paints I finally found a way to paint them that didn't drive me crazy (see right)!

Every unit features a few small conversions – all my squad Sergeants have trophies, and there are quite a few head swaps and lots of additional topknots (taken from Sisters of Silence and Bloodreavers). My Redeptor Dreadnought has Jetek Suberai's shield (from Kill Team Cassius) on his arm, and my Repulsor Executioner features a prop shield from a Gyrocopter and a Gargant's skull from the Skulls box. I've also used transfers from a range of Space Marine kits and the Forge World V Legion transfer sheet, plus a few Adeptus Mechanicus ones on the vehicles.

WHITE ARMOUR

Jon applied a diluted wash of Cygor Brown to the white armour to provide quick and easy shading.

Undercoat:
Grey Seer

Basecoat:
Cygor Brown &
Contrast Medium

Layer:
Dryad Bark
(weathering)

Layer:
White Scar

As you can tell from their squad markings, Strike Force Otagai are drawn from Kor'sarro Khan's 3rd Company, the Brotherhood of the Eagle, and led by their Tuslakh (Lieutenant) Otagai and Chaplain Jaikhos. They're amongst the forces working to reclaim the Yasan Sector from dug-in Chaos invaders in the wake of Huron Blackheart's assault.

This is the beginning of a larger force for me. I've already added a unit of Suppressors and the Eliminators I painted for *White Dwarf's* Urban Galactic War Zones article, and I've got lots more on the production line, including Outriders! The bases match my existing Raptors collection and my Imperial Knight (but using Contrast colours instead), so I can field them as part of a larger force if I want to.



THE SHADOW CRUSADERS

RAVEN GUARD SPACE MARINES CRUSADE FORCE BY PETER MCMULLIN

Peter: My Crusade army is the Shadow Crusaders, a strike force of Raven Guard. I painted it as a mixed command from the 7th, 8th and 9th Reserve Companies that is led by the Shadow Captain of the 9th, a Lieutenant of the 8th and the Shadow Chaplain of the 7th. All of them wear Phobos armour as befits a Raven Guard command. Because there isn't a model for a Chaplain in Phobos armour, I converted him using the body of an Infiltrator, the head of a Reiver, and the command rod from the Warhammer World command tanks set (which represents a Deliverance-pattern crozius). I imagine he has to whisper his litanies to his battle-brothers.

My Crusade force is entirely made up of Primaris Space Marines, most of them also wearing

BLACK ARMOUR

Peter applied Black Templar over grey to create both shading and highlights with just one layer of paint.

Basecoat:
Mechanicus
Standard Grey

Basecoat:
Black Templar

Layer:
Leadbelcher
(battle damage)

Phobos armour such as the Eliminators, Incursors and Infiltrators. I feel the lighter armour suits their special-ops style of covert warfare perfectly. As a force made up of warriors from the Reserve Companies, it is my army's duty to support the other companies in battle – the tri-fold path as the Raven Guard put it. Having a mixed-company force allowed me to colour-code the different units with colours you don't usually see, such as the purple panels on the Impulsor that mark it out as belonging to the 7th Company.

I have based all my models with really dark colours to show that they're fighting in the dead of night. I then used object source lighting to emphasise this – it's most evident on the Lieutenant and on the Redemptor Dreadnought.



THE SCARLET RITUAL WARHOST

WORD BEARERS CHAOS SPACE MARINES CRUSADE FORCE BY MATT HUTSON

Matt: This is the second Word Bearers army I've painted in my time at Games Workshop – the first was for the Eye of Terror campaign back in 2003, but I've wanted to paint a new army of them since the new Chaos Space Marines models came out.

I like the background of the Word Bearers in that they are fanatical worshippers of the Chaos Gods. I've been playing a lot of Blackstone Fortress, and I really wanted to integrate the Traitor Guard and Traitor Command into the army, too. The Traitor Commissar corresponds nicely with the Dark Apostle, and the models are even in the same pose. The Commissar probably sees himself as equally important, but the Dark Apostle wouldn't have second thoughts in sacrificing the Traitor Guard to further his own agenda.

RED ARMOUR

Applying Nuln Oil into the armour recesses preserves the basecoat colour while still providing great shading.

Basecoat:
Khorne Red

Wash:
Nuln Oil

Layer:
Wazdakka Red

Layer:
Ratskin Flesh

The armour on my Word Bearers was achieved with a basecoat of Khorne Red followed by a wash of Nuln Oil, then highlights of Wazdakka Red and Ratskin Flesh. The Traitor Guard have less red on them because clearly they're much further down the army hierarchy. However, to distinguish the squads, the helmet schemes are reversed – one with a red stripe on black, the other black on red. One of my favourite things about painting Chaos Space Marines is the trophies – the Chapters on their trophy racks are largely painted to match my own armies. Except for a Tome Keepers one – undoubtedly they have come up against Lyle's army at some point.

The next step for my army is to paint the Start Collecting! Chaos Space Marines set.



THE MALEVOLENT VESICLE

TYRANIDS CRUSADE FORCE BY ELLIOT HAMER

Elliot: My Crusade force is a gestation brood of Hive Fleet Kaetus, my own custom hive fleet. I feel that a Tyranid narrative can be really compelling, and Crusade was a great way to forge a greater storyline for my army. Its narrative is an extension of Hive Fleet Kaetus' narrative – the core of the fleet lies dormant in space, but it sends out fast-moving tendrils to scout out planets ripe for feeding on. My Crusade force is one such landing pod sent down to the surface. When they land, it isn't a full-scale offense; rather they burrow into the planet (perhaps via cavities and fissures drilled out by Genestealer Cult mining operations) to infiltrate the crust of the earth. From there, they begin to gestate and start to extract biomass from underneath the planet's surface, concentrating particularly on water.

ALIEN SKIN

A combination of Contrast paints and drybrushing made Elliot's Tyranids very easy to get Battle Ready.

Undercoat:
Wraithbone

Basecoat:
Skeleton Horde

Drybrush:
Tyrant Skull

Drybrush:
Terminatus Stone

I only converted one model in my force – my Hive Tyrant now sports a Zoanthrope's head, which was an idea I totally stole from the pages of *White Dwarf* (that would be studio artist Thomas Elliott's creation from last July's *Galactic War Zones* article – Ed).

Inspiration for my Tyranids was twofold. Firstly, I wanted them to look like cockroaches. Secondly, I wanted their colours to match their narrative of burrowing underground and draining the water table to make the land arid and dry. The skin is Skeleton Horde drybrushed with Tyrant Skull and Terminatus Stone, while the carapaces are painted Cygor Brown drybrushed with Mournfang Brown, Skrag Brown and Jokaero Orange. I covered the bases with sand, driftwood and dry tufts to help capture that drought feel.



STRIKE FORCE JUSTINIAN

KNIGHTS OF BYZANTIUM SPACE MARINES CRUSADE FORCE BY HARVEY SNAPE

Harvey: My Crusade force hails from the Knights of Byzantium, a Chapter that I created myself during the previous edition of the game. With the arrival of the new edition, I felt it was high time to paint a new force to go crusading into the stars! In the background I created for the Chapter, their home world of Byzantium lies just south of the Cicatrix Maledictum, and they have been charged with the protection of this world and the liberation of those around it from the forces of Chaos. As members of an Ultima Founding Chapter of Iron Hands gene-stock, they prioritise the destruction of the enemy at range (it being most efficient).

Strike Force Justinian is one of the Chapter's forward reclamation forces. It's for this reason that both the characters in the army wear Phobos

PURPLE ARMOUR

Harvey used Chaos Black to undercoat his models, which helps make the burgundy basecoat look darker.

Basecoat:
Barak-Nar Burgundy

Wash:
Nuln Oil

Layer:
Screamer Pink

Layer:
Pink Horror

armour and the force includes a squad of Reivers mounted in an Impulsor, an Invictor Tactical Warsuit and a unit of Eliminators. These warriors form the leading edge of the strike force and are backed up by the Intercessor and Veteran Intercessor squads and Redemptor Dreadnought. I feel that the narrative structure of Crusade will allow me to forge this army into a band of heroes as units develop in their own unique way.

I chose the colour scheme simply because my favourite colour is Barak-Nar Burgundy! The bronze left hand is a nod to their Primogenitors, the Iron Hands. Due to their heritage, I've used components from the Iron Hands Upgrade frame on the characters and units to help add a mechanical flavour to them.

ECHOES FROM THE WARP



ROBIN CRUDDACE

Having survived the arenas of Commorragh, Robin has returned to realspace with two new battle honours and several battle scars as souvenirs. Being the Fabricator General behind the ninth edition rules for Warhammer 40,000, he takes up his auto-quill once more to describe how even small changes to rules can have a large impact.

¹ Something that is not easy to do without calling in a favour from Tzeentch.

By the time you read this, you will no doubt have painted your Indomitatus miniatures, and some of you will already be waging war using the ninth-edition versions of your army's codex. But right now, at the time of writing this column, Indomitatus has only just gone out for pre-order, and the core rules are being discussed around the world as hobbyists eagerly await the arrival of their new books and models. Everyone has been talking about the 'nine big changes' to Warhammer 40,000, but the truth is that dozens more changes were made, each one carefully thought about before being applied, and sometimes the biggest changes are the most unassuming. This month, I'd like to write my

version of the 'nine changes for ninth edition', but with a small twist. I want to talk about nine of the smaller changes that were made, try and describe the motivations behind them and hopefully explain how sometimes, a small change can make a big difference. So, what are my nine 'designer's cut' changes?

1) ATTACK SEQUENCE

Perhaps the best example of a small change that has a big impact is the change to the attack sequence. In ninth edition, modifiers to hit rolls and wound rolls have been capped at plus or minus 1. That in and of itself is a healthy thing for Warhammer 40,000, because, whilst imposing a single -1 modifier on your opponent is a powerful ability, it does not cripple their ability to function. Two such modifiers used together can be crippling, because together the combination is often more than twice as powerful as a single rule used in isolation, and in some cases, it makes it impossible to hit without rolling a 7 of a D6.¹ We also introduced that 6s always hit – this is really a belts-and-braces approach that ensured that if rules were modifying Ballistic Skills as well as hit rolls, you'd not end up in a position where it was impossible to hit a foe.



Echoes from the Warp is a regular column about the rules, tactics and ongoing development of Warhammer 40,000 presented by the team's games developers. This month, Robin returns to talk about small changes with a big impact. We call them Biggie Smalls.

However, the rules designers' reason for making this change was not just to redress the balance of certain rules combos, but also to help speed up the gameplay of Warhammer 40,000, which was one of our overarching goals.² In eighth edition, most abilities that bolstered a unit's accuracy involved re-rolls. This was done purposefully to help ensure that models couldn't get a double bonus from two different sources, because re-rolls are, by their nature, self-mitigating as you can never re-roll a re-roll, no matter how many different abilities you have that let you do so. The consequence of that over several years is that Warhammer 40,000 had a lot of re-rolls, and that slowed the pace of the game down a little. With the new rules, it now opens up 'add 1 to hit rolls' as a tool in the games developers' tool kit that can be used without fear of them combining to create nasty +3 to hit modifiers that would become overbearing. That isn't to say we will be getting rid of re-rolls. Far from it. They're still an extremely useful tool. It's just that where appropriate, we have started to use simpler and faster mechanics to resolve modifiers instead, and so, by small increments, they help us to make Warhammer 40,000 faster to play.

2) UNIT COHERENCY (AND COHERENCY CHECKS)

Okay, so I'm cheating here, as this is two changes.³ Unit coherency had a small change that has had a big impact on the look of Warhammer battlefields. In ninth edition, any unit with six or more models must be within unit coherency of two other models from their unit, instead of one. This change was primarily about trying to create the aesthetic on the battlefield we wanted, and to reduce the 40K conga lines we were seeing in order to benefit from six different aura abilities and simultaneously being able to hold two different objectives whilst forming a picket line to block enemy movement. Yes, we realise that it is still possible to deploy a thin line of troops if you want, so long as a pair of troopers are at both ends. However, as I'm sure some of you will have experienced by now, the second small change – Unit Coherency Checks in the Morale phase – makes such a line prone to collapsing if it suffers a single casualty, because models must then be removed until the unit is back in coherency. In practice, this means units typically go to war in serried ranks or in one amorphous blob of units – a horde if you will. This means that units are far less likely to benefit from multiple aura abilities, and to control objective markers you'll need more units. We were also cognisant that

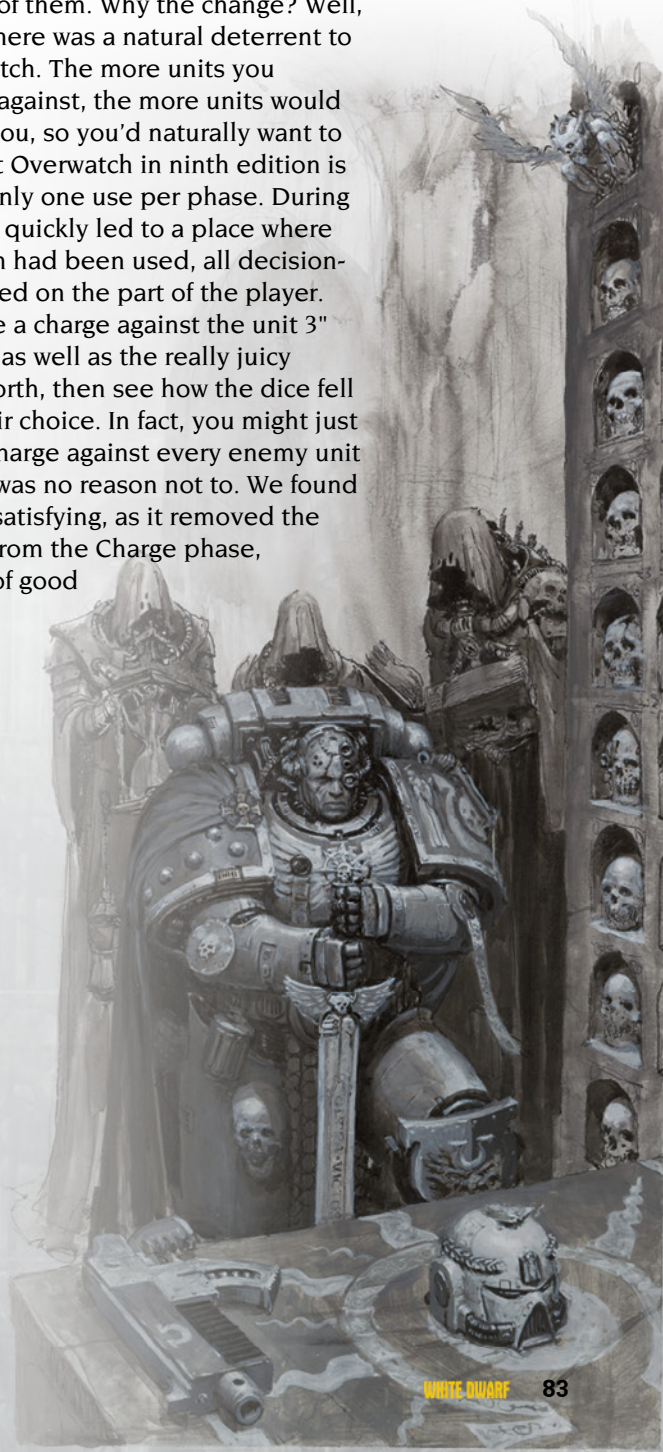
battlefields have gotten a little smaller – not a lot, but enough that units now occupying a tighter 'footprint' on the tabletop mean that other units still have space to move into and manoeuvre. That's quite a lot of impact for two small changes to unit coherency rules.

3) MULTIPLE CHARGES

This is a little change that dramatically changes the decision-making process of the whole Charge phase. In ninth edition, as with eighth edition, you can declare a charge against multiple enemy units, but now you must end your charge move within range of all of them. Why the change? Well, in eighth edition there was a natural deterrent to doing this: Overwatch. The more units you declared a charge against, the more units would fire Overwatch at you, so you'd naturally want to limit this. Now that Overwatch in ninth edition is a Stratagem, it is only one use per phase. During development, this quickly led to a place where after the Stratagem had been used, all decision-making was removed on the part of the player. They could declare a charge against the unit 3" away to the south, as well as the really juicy target 12" to the north, then see how the dice fell before making their choice. In fact, you might just as well declare a charge against every enemy unit within 12" – there was no reason not to. We found this extremely dissatisfying, as it removed the risk/reward factor from the Charge phase, and thus the skill of good generalship and decision-making. Hence the change.

² See Echoes from the Warp in *White Dwarf* issue 456.

³ But they are closely related, hence I'm only counting this as one change. My column, my rules ...





4) ENGAGEMENT RANGE

Unit coherency is closely linked to Engagement Range, which is another small but important rules concept that ninth edition introduces. Unit coherency has always had a vertical component to it as well as a horizontal one,⁴ because we think it looks cooler when a unit occupies a terrain feature (like a ruin) if it can have models spread out across several of its floors, instead of all having to be crammed onto the same floor. That vertical component allows a unit to move over and interact with terrain features in a much more satisfying way. Introducing Engagement Range, which is simply adding a vertical component to wherever we say 'within 1" of an enemy model', was in order to help enemy models interact with terrain better, specifically to enable enemy warriors to fight against foes in terrain in a more satisfying way. Now a unit can fight another unit if they are 5" above or below them. Why 5"? That's the height of the extant range of Sector Mechanicus and Sector Imperialis terrain features, so units can, when on such terrain, fight one floor above or below them. This is a small rule that has a big impact, especially for large models like monsters or Imperial Knights, who can now strike at foes that previously they could not reach.⁵

5) OPPONENT FIGHTS FIRST

There are a few little changes made to the Fight phase that I'd like to talk about. The first is

simply changing the order of who fights. This doesn't affect charging units – they still fight before anyone else – but now instead of the player whose turn is taking place getting to choose one of their non-charging units to fight first, their opponent does.

So why the change? It's certainly not an intuitive one. Well, the player whose turn is taking place already has a lot of agency. They have, after all, just had several phases to lay the hurt on their foe and an entire Charge phase in which to launch counter-charges and give them all kinds of 'fighting first' advantages. In our experience, what typically happened in eighth edition was your opponent patiently waited for you to resolve several fights with your charging units, then they got to have salt rubbed into the wound as their opponent picked another unit to fight. In some cases, if there was only a single ongoing combat, it meant that instead of having any alternating fights at all, one player would simply fight with all their units before their opponent got to roll a dice.⁶ We wanted the Fight phase to feel more engaging for the player on the receiving end of it, but we also wanted to reward the player who, in a previous turn, had done all the hard work and dared to get their unit stuck into melee (that unit can now potentially swing first in two consecutive phases, instead of only ever in the turn they charged). One small change achieved both results.

⁴ In fact, it was changed in ninth edition from 6" to 5", but that was only to match Engagement Range.

⁵ This only seemed fair, given that most monsters or Imperial Knights actually loom over the first floor of ruins.

⁶ Except for saving throws ...

6) WHO CAN FIGHT?

The second change to the Fight phase I'd like to talk about involves changing the range for who can fight. Models can, in ninth edition, fight if they are within Engagement Range (simple enough) or if they are within ½" of a model in their own unit, which is itself within ½" of an enemy unit. So, what's this ½" change all about then? The answer is that it's all to do with base sizes. The intent of the 'who can fight' rules is to let two ranks of models fight the enemy in melee, and in previous editions, this was written as 'within 1", or within 1" of a model who is within 1"'. Now, the metric and imperial systems being the best of friends that they are, it means that a 25mm round base is ever so slightly smaller than 1".⁷ So, if a unit could be put on such bases, you could, if everyone was squashed in like sardines, fight in three ranks. Not only was this not really the intent when writing eighth edition, it then raised the question of what size bases your models should be put on, rather important from a rules point of view. Ork Boyz are a good example – put them on 25mm bases and they are 50% better at fighting than when they are on a 32mm base. We strongly believe that you should not feel you have to put your models on a smaller base, compromising how cool they look in the process, in order to eke out some advantage on the tabletop, so we made a small change (½" in fact) to ensure that it no longer mattered. Whether your models are based on a 25mm base or larger, about the same number will get to fight. It is a small change to the rules, but a big impact on how some players base their models.

7) COMMAND PHASE

A brand new phase in Warhammer 40,000! Sounds like a big change, but it's actually rather small and straightforward. I suspect at the moment people are finding it is one of the quickest phases to resolve, stopping by just long enough only to collect their Battle-forged CP bonus.⁸ The introduction of a Command phase wasn't just so that there was a natural place for that CP bonus to live. It was inspired a lot by Age of Sigmar and many conversations with Jervis over our breakfast catch-ups. We essentially both agreed how useful it is, from a rules-writing stance, to have a phase for 'start of turn' things to happen. The 'start of the turn' is always a little nebulous, begging some questions of whether it is subject to the normal rules (such as Stratagems, which can only be used once per phase). So really, the Command phase introduces a small piece of rules architecture that games developers can use in the future, either to clean up the sequencing of existing rules, or into which brand-new abilities can be written.⁹ That's why for me, it's a small change/big impact rule – as we write the next generation of codexes, expect to see the Command phase become increasingly more important.

8) COMBAT ATTRITION

We introduced a new small step into the Morale phase – Combat Attrition. On face value, this change actually goes against our 'make the game quicker' philosophy, because it introduces a whole extra step, but it's something we felt was important to do. Why? Well, it is partly to help make the Morale phase a bit more interactive for the players, but it is also to introduce a new tool into the games developer's arsenal.

In eighth edition, the most common way to affect enemy units in the Morale phase was to impose a Leadership penalty. This typically fell into one of two camps: a small -1 penalty that really didn't do anything and largely felt underwhelming or could be ignored, or a crushing -3 modifier that saw entire units of elite warriors flee after a couple of their fellows were laid low and you rolled an unlucky 6. It was either 'nothing happened' or 'it was devastating', and so it was very swingy and not that interactive. By separating these into two steps, we now have two levers we can pull for future rules writing. One modifies how easily you pass or fail a Morale test, and the other affects how badly you are affected when you fail. So again, Combat Attrition is an example of a small rules change that is going to have big implications for the sort of rules you will find in the next generation of codexes.

9) OBJECTIVE MARKERS

We made a small change to controlling objective markers so that you now measure to the edge of the marker (which now has a recommended size) and not to its centre. What this means is that the 'zone' of control for objective markers is bigger. Not massively, but enough that one small elite unit cannot hog all the space and block out any other unit's attempts to control that objective marker. Why is that important? It's because we wanted to make Objective Secured (itself a rule defined in the core book now) have more weight, giving the Troops units in your army even more importance. By having a slightly bigger range of control, it means that unless controlled by a very large unit,¹⁰ it is rather tricky to avoid one or two enemy models from getting within range, and if just one of them has Objective Secured ...

And with that, though I've not run out of changes I could write about, I have run out of space into which I can fit them. I hope that this issue's column has illuminated you as to the motivations behind some of the smaller changes made to the ninth edition of Warhammer 40,000 and how the impact of small rules changes can be more profound than they first appear. The overseer's bell tolls for me once more, so I had best retreat to my data-alcove and restart the auto-scribe. Until next time, stay safe, and may your dice always roll sixes.

⁷ Approx. 25.4mm, if you wanted to know.

⁸ This idea was actually linked to making Overwatch a Stratagem. By giving you 1 free CP each turn, you could Overwatch once per turn. Or not – use your free CP as you see fit.

⁹ You'll by now have seen some examples in both *Codex: Space Marines* and *Codex: Necrons*.

¹⁰ Which are typically Troops anyway.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

What would you like to read about in Echoes from the Warp? Let us know your thoughts, and we'll pass them on!

team@
whitedwarf.co.uk

THE ARTIST UNLEASHED

Golden Demon is the most prestigious Warhammer painting competition in the world, with countless painters from across the globe taking part. This month, we chat with multiple-winner Richard Gray about his time in the hobby, his past entries and freehand painting.



RICHARD GRAY

Richard has entered Golden Demon many times over the years. He won his first Slayer Sword with the Thanatar shown opposite in 2014. Several of his winning entries are shown in this article, but you can see plenty more at:

golden-demon.com

White Dwarf: When did you start painting?

Richard Gray: It all started with HeroQuest and Space Crusade back in the late eighties. I loved looking at the models on the box, and I wanted to paint mine to look the same. I got some paints that were completely inappropriate, and I made a terrible job of it. But I enjoyed myself, and that's what mattered. I got into drawing at that time, too. I spent ages illustrating little battle scenes.

Then I picked up a *White Dwarf* that featured entries from Golden Demon. Those models blew my mind, and I knew that I wanted to try my hand at competition painting. The first event I went to was in Birmingham. The atmosphere was electric, and I was so excited that I might win something. I didn't, of course, but I knew that's what I wanted to achieve. I entered Golden Demon a few times

over the following years, but it wasn't until 1999 that I won my first trophy – a silver in the Monster category with a Keeper of Secrets. That was my ambition accomplished.

Around that time, I was also finishing a university degree in illustration. My dream was to draw codex covers. But just as I finished my degree, businesses started to move towards digital artwork. I was trained as a 2D artist, but no one was hiring; computer generated art was far more cost effective. So I spent my time painting miniatures for other people, using my skills at 2D art to add freehand to their models. I think it was around 2012 that I posted pictures online of a Warhound Titan I'd been working on that featured a freehand griffon design. That attracted a lot of attention, and people told me I should enter Golden Demon again. So in 2014 I went for it!

THANATAR SIEGE-AUTOMATA – SLAYER SWORD WINNER, 2014

After a fifteen-year hiatus from Golden Demon, Richard chose to paint the Thanatar Siege-Automata from Forge World as his entry in 2014. It won him a Slayer Sword, but why did he pick this model?

RG: It's a big robot, and I love big robots! Simple, really! That's a key thing for me with Golden Demon – I choose the models I feel most excited by. I then research the model, read up on its background, find out what it is, what it does, how it fights, and so on. I look at the artwork

for it and the 'Eavy Metal colour schemes for inspiration. Researching a model is especially important for Golden Demon, because the colours, textures and styles you choose for your entry have to be appropriate for the model. It has to fit the universe that it's a part of.



'I imagine the Thanatar is part of a Mechanicum support cohort for the Legio Gryphonicus,' says Richard. 'That's why a lot of the freehand symbols are based on the Legio's heraldry, such as the griffon's head on the right hand (1) and the Legio symbol on the left shoulder (2).

'I actually found painting the smaller design harder because of the circle around it. Illustrating complex images doesn't phase me that much, because you don't have to be precise. Elaborate skulls or scrollwork with lots of texture don't have to be symmetrical; the depth of detail compensates for the lack of perfection and precision. But geometric shapes – or designs made up of geometric shapes like the cog on the Thanatar's leg (3) – have to be absolutely perfect. There is no margin for error. It's either a circle, or it's not. With designs like this, if you can use a decal, use one, because they're always going to be more accurate (and quicker) than what you can do by hand.'



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LEGIO MORTIS WARHOUND SCOUT TITAN – GOLD IN VEHICLE CATEGORY, 2017

From 2015 to 2017, a host of smaller Golden Demon events took place at various Games Workshop events. Richard won the Vehicle category at the Horus Heresy Weekender with this Warhound Titan.

RG: Titans are ancient gods of war and should be represented as such, with lavish art on them that tells the enemy that they bring death! I've always loved the warlike colours and horned skull imagery of the Legio Mortis, and I spent ages thinking what I could do with it. The Legio's Low Gothic name is the Death's Heads, and that put me in mind of the moth with the same name. That's how I came up with the icon of the moth sitting over the horned skull, the eyes on its wings sitting over the skull's eye sockets. The toughest part was the battle damage. I wanted the

Warhound to look properly battle-worn, but that meant weathering all the freehand, too, which was a bit nerve-racking. Then I was reminded of my art training at university. We were asked to spend a few hours drawing something. Then, when we'd finished, we were told to scribble all over it. It was to teach you not to be precious about your work; if you've done it once, you can do it again. People always hesitate before the weathering stage. You've just got to take a leap of faith. If you're ever in doubt, practice your weathering over transfers first.



TZEENTCHIAN CERASTUS KNIGHT-LANCER – SILVER IN VEHICLE CATEGORY, 2017

Richard followed up his Legio Mortis Warhound with another large walking machine – a Cerastus Knight-Lancer that drew a lot of attention at Warhammer Fest a few months later.

RG: I'm a big fan of Chaos and Knights, so combining the two was an easy choice for me! The large armour plates provide plenty of scope for freehand, and altering the shield would provide the perfect canvas for a large design. I traced the shape of the Knight-Lancer's original shield onto plastic card, then cut it out and heated it to bend it. I also altered it from concave to convex, as this would make painting the freehand design easier.

Establishing the colour scheme for the model was quite simple. I chose blue, the favoured colour of Tzeentch, with most of the details picked out in gold and yellow. My

goal with the freehand on the Knight's body was to give it an organic feel, to make it look like a living creature. In a sense, the Knight's corruption is represented through the freehand instead of physical sculpting, which I think suits Tzeentch pretty well. The chest armour features a corrupted ribcage and a heart (just visible behind, and protected by, the shield), while the lower face armour features animalistic jaws and teeth. If you look closely, all of the armour panels have very faint feathers floating about on them, too! This is also linked to the Tzeentch symbol on the shield, which is where all the tail feathers are coming from.



'The shield design started with the symbol of Tzeentch in the centre,' says Richard. 'I looked at lots of older Games Workshop artwork for inspiration, and then adapted it for my own design. The shape was relatively easy, apart from the big eye in the middle; getting a perfect circle in the correct position was critical. The white rose was added in the top-right corner to balance the composition. If you look at the other armour panels, you will see roses and vines in abundance, so having a large rose tied it all together, kind of like personal heraldry. The vines coming from the rose are also used as a border. The organic, warping vines are a good fit for chaos and Tzeentch, I think. The final element is the weathering. The strong orange rust contrasts with the blue armour and helps balance the composition, filling in blank space as well as add a bit of depth with the three-dimensional effect of the chips.'

MORTARION – GOLD IN LARGE MODEL CATEGORY, 2019

Richard's latest creation is this rendition of Mortarion, which wowed spectators at Warhammer Fest in Coventry last year. Like us, you're no doubt wondering about those eyes ...



WD: Tell us about Mortarion, Richard.

RG: I love the Death Guard, and I've won a few Golden Demon statues in the past for my Heresy-era Deredeo Dreadnought, Deathshroud Terminator and Legion Fellblade (*which also won a Slayer Sword* – Ed). When the new Death Guard models came out, I knew I had to paint Mortarion. There is so much going on with the model; it's so complex. When you enter Golden Demon, not only does your painting have to be exceptional, but your entry has to be unique, too. You need to create something that no one else has done before; it needs to stand out. For me, Mortarion's wings were the logical place to try something new. They're so big, and there's lots of empty space on them to apply some freehand designs. But they couldn't just be freehand designs for the sake of it. They needed to fit the feel of the Death Guard, of Mortarion, of Chaos.

WD: Where did the idea for the eyes come from?

RG: The inspiration came from the Horus Heresy novel *Fulgrim*. I found the description of the living

painting really evocative, and I wanted to create something along those lines – a horrible, tainted canvas that writhes with Chaos imagery. My idea was to feature eyes on the wings as if they're constantly watching you. One eye is blue and human-looking, while the other is corrupted by Chaos, with three pupils making up the symbol of Nurgle. The one on Mortarion's right (the left as we look at it) represents him before his fall to Chaos. The one on Mortarion's left shows his corruption by Nurgle. If you look closely at Mortarion's actual eyes, I have painted them to match the ones on the wings. That was quite tricky to do!

WD: What about the rest of the design?

RG: I went back to the moths! Moth skin and wing patterns gave me a lot of the ideas for the colours and textures I could use. I wanted the wings to still look organic – really fleshy and horrible with pustules and veins. It was important to me that the designs were flat, not raised. I wanted the corruption to be part of that wing canvas, not actual 3D mutations, if that makes sense.

Richard replicated the design he'd painted onto Mortarion's wings on the cherubs that follow him into battle (1).

Mortarion's pallid face (2) is surrounded by a dark cowl, the strong contrast drawing the viewer's eye to the model's head.

The warm brass hues that Richard used (3) match the colours he used on the wings.

Richard put a great deal of work into his entry's base (4), making it look like it's in a state of decay.

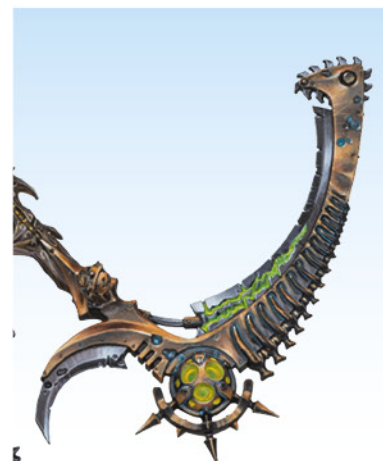
Various shades of green were used on the armour, robes and warp energy, keeping a consistent palette across the model, but identifying each effect with its own hue (5).



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WD: Then you had to paint the rest of the model.

RG: Well, quite! Even though I'd painted all that detail on the wings, the eye (pun intended) still needed to be drawn to Mortarion himself – and, most importantly, his head. When I first painted his face, I gave it a rotten look, but I had feedback from Tomáš Pekar – another Golden Demon winner – who felt that it wasn't really working as the focal point of the model. Grudgingly I agreed, and I went back to it, glazing over the skin with progressively lighter colours to make it more pallid. That helped it to contrast with the dark cowl and the fleshy tone of the wings.

There were a lot of other things to consider with Mortarion, too, such as how I would paint his armour. I like the Heresy-era white of the Death Guard, but I wanted to reflect the adopted green of the Plague Marines, too. The white armour, getting paler towards the top of the model, helps draw your eye towards Mortarion's head – it's a framing device that works well because your attention is naturally drawn to the lightest point. I also freehanded the XIV on Mortarion's right

shoulder to show his Legion's number, but I kept it quite faded to show his past glory. All of the metal areas on the model are painted in non-metallic metals. Like many Golden Demon winners, I prefer non-metallic metals, as I feel it gives me better control of the colours and effects I want to achieve. For Mortarion, I went for a warm brass, then contrasted it heavily with verdigris. It catches the eye but never draws you to it.

WD: If you had one bit of advice for budding freehand artists, what would it be?

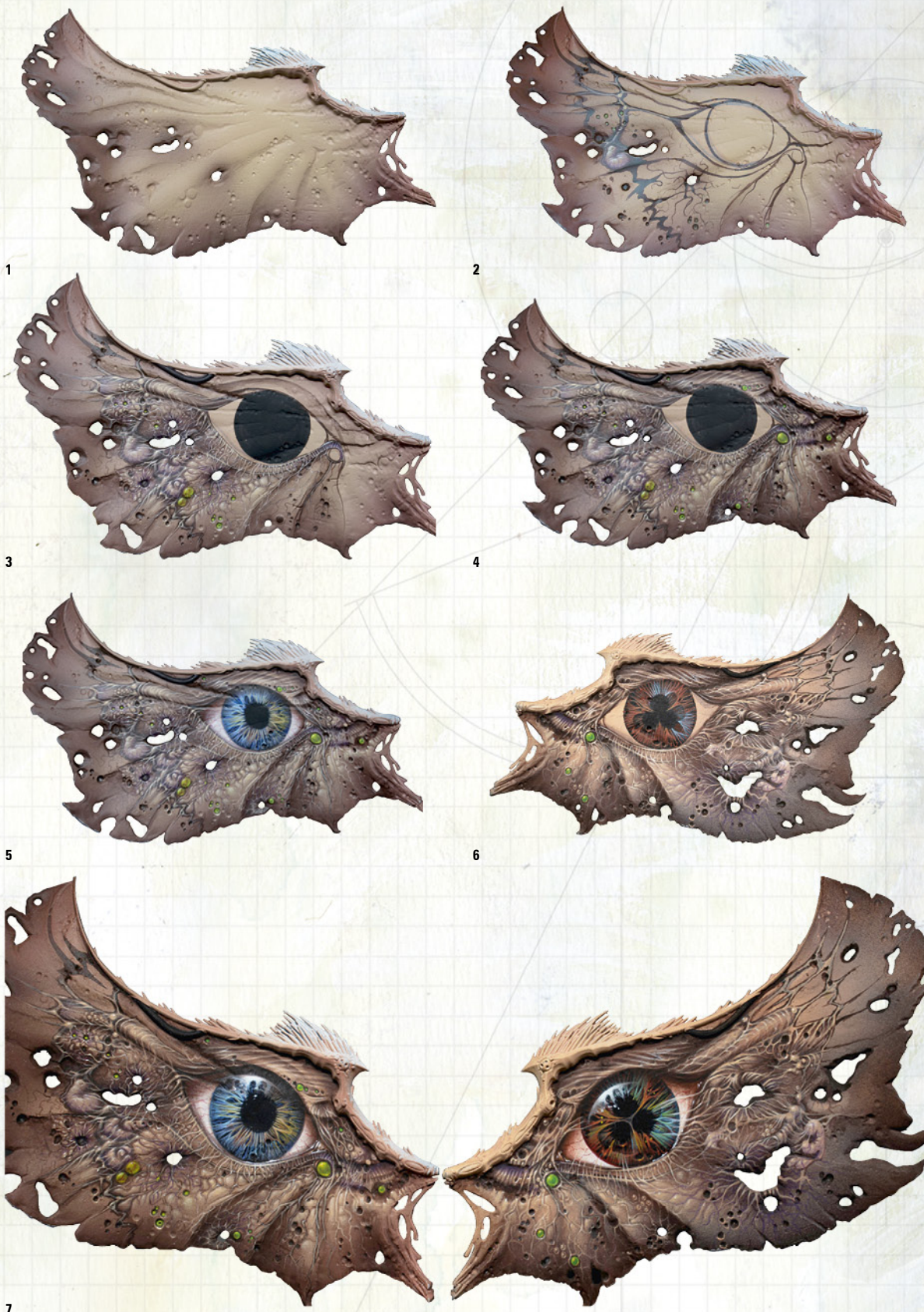
RG: Make sure your design is centred and that it fits properly in the area you're working. I've painted designs on models before and found them to be slightly out of place, which just ruins the whole effect. I tend to start the design a little bit smaller than it needs to be, then push the edges out to fill the space. It's much easier to start small and work up than it is to start big and fix it. Also, whether you're left or right-handed can also affect the angle of the piece. You need to be aware that how you hold your brush can affect the shape of your freehand work.

'Like the fronts of the wings, the backs are broadly, but not completely, symmetrical,' says Richard. 'The eyes on the front are in the same place on each wing, as are the skulls and eyes on the back, but the rest of the wing design just flows around them. The great thing about Chaos is that things aren't symmetrical – they're meant to be a bit wonky, askew, uneven and unbalanced. This gave me a bit more leeway on the designs I could come up with, as I could just let my imagination run wild. I compared the designs regularly, too, just to make sure that one wasn't overpowering the other. That would have made the piece look terribly unbalanced.'

WORK IN PROGRESS

Richard often keeps a log of his painting projects, including lots of detailed pictures of his progress. Not only does this help him keep track of what he's done and how, but it enables him to share his painting with others so that they can give him feedback on his work, and he can inspire them in turn.

Mortarion is undoubtedly one of Richard's most ambitious projects to date, so we asked him if he had any work-in-progress shots of his model that he might be able to share with us. Below, Richard explains just some of the lengthy process of painting those freehand eyes. Apparently the wings only took forty hours of work ...



'I cut as much detail as I dared off the wings and sanded them smooth to provide my canvas,' says Richard. 'I then airbrushed them Cadian Flestone and Kislev Flesh (1).

'I made a rough plan for the pattern (2). The size, position, shape and orientation of the eye was very important, as it had to be mirrored on the second wing. I also started an intestine-type organic shape as a test that I could expand from.

'I painted the eye black (3) to make balancing the small details easier. I then began painting the organic corruption all over the wing, following the shapes I'd mapped out but blending it into the base colour to make it feel more natural (4). Though the second wing has its own unique organic details, the two patterns do roughly match.

'I used lots of human eye reference as inspiration for the iris, then created my own design (5). I wanted one eye to look human and the other eye to be corrupt and chaotic to show Mortarion before and after his fall to Chaos. I then mirrored the general pattern of the first eye onto the second eye (6). They look unique, but there's a shared atmosphere between them. When the wings are brought together (7), you can see I have added light reflections to the eyes that brings them both to life. It's the most fun and scary part of the freehand, as it will reveal if you have done everything correctly!'

GLORY POINTS



DAVE SANDERS

Dave Sanders is the senior games developer in the Box Games team and the lead rules writer for Warhammer Underworlds. Most recently, he has been working on the latest edition of the game – **Direchasm** – which you will be hearing more about very soon. For now, though, Dave is taking one last trip around **Beastgrave**. He's even taken a picnic.

In this month's column, I'm talking about my favourites in Warhammer Underworlds. I often say that I don't have a favourite warband, and this is absolutely true – I love all of the warbands in the game like a proud parent, with all of their strengths, shortcomings and quirks. However, I

will admit to having some favourites within those warbands, and that's what I'm going to tell you about here.

NO SPOILERS!

To avoid any spoilers, however, I'm going to keep the cards I discuss to those printed in the previous season: **Beastgrave**. Warhammer Underworlds: **Direchasm** is just getting underway, and I'm going to save the juiciest bits of the new season for the future! I'll leave you to speculate about which are my favourite fighters from the **Dread Pageant** and **Myari's Purifiers**, as well as the amazing warbands to follow.

In no particular order, then, here are my favourite fighters from **Beastgrave**.



KORSH 'THE SNEAK'

Korsh really hits a sweet spot for me. He's got a great balance of personality and exciting rules. When I was first introduced to Korsh's miniature, I was convinced that we had the secret star of the warband in front of us. He's got

the meanness and savagery of all Brayherd warriors, tempered by the experience of his years and his dogged determination to survive. Korsh might feel bitter about not being as strong as **Murghoth**, but he's more concerned with staying out of the thick of it. His little paunch, his ragged beard and the way he's sneaking through the trees to take his foes unawares (or, you know, so he can leg it if it looks like it's going wrong) all give you so much of his character that it's hard not to like him!

Then, of course, there are his rules. Korsh (1) has a 'Hidden Paths' ability built in that allows him to sneak around to the other side of the battlefield. This is a powerful ability that you can use to gain a great advantage during the game, whether it's by placing Korsh well out of harm's way at the far side of enemy territory (as he would prefer), there to stake out an objective for **Conquerors** (2) and to prevent a **Denial** (3), or even aggressively to strike at a key fighter in your opponent's warband with a **Poison** like **Rocksnake Toxin** (4), potentially even before your opponent has their first activation! While it's unlikely that Korsh will escape the immediate aftermath of such a bold move, at least the **Katophrane Curse** will ensure his return.



KARTHAEN, HUNTCALLER

Karthaen, the Huntcaller of Skaeth's Wild Hunt, is up next. While he lacks the raw power of Skaeth himself, Karthaen is an incredibly flexible fighter, able to fill whatever role the situation demands. He's a Hunter and a wizard, and his

characteristics are nothing to sniff at, with **Move** 4 (5 when **Inspired**), 2 **Charge** and 3 **Wounds**, as well as a 2 **Attack**, 2 **Damage** (3 when **Inspired**) **Attack** action. On top of that, he also has the unique **Hunting Horn** action, which allows you to re-roll any number of dice in the next **Attack** action made by a friendly fighter. This buff doesn't go away, so you can have Karthaen sound his horn in your first activation and then take your time lining up a target for a very reliable attack, or you can use it last in a round if you have no immediate targets, ready for a devastating start to the next round.

Karthaen's only weakness is his **Wounds** characteristic, so I like to give him a **Hale Charm** (5) to keep him fighting for as long as possible. In addition, he really comes into his own when **Inspired**, so I like to have a couple of sneaky ways to trigger his **Inspire** condition – having a **Charge** token at the end of a phase. **Tome of Glories** (6) and **Forward Planning** (7) are both great for this, and they work well for most of the fighters in the warband. When Karthaen is **Inspired**, you'll find his wizard level of 2, **Move** of 5 and **Damage** 3 make him a force to be reckoned with. What a star!

Glory Points is our column all about Warhammer Underworlds. Curated by games developer Dave Sanders, it delves into the development of the game, plus rules, tactics and gameplay. This month, Dave discusses his favourite Beastgrave fighters.



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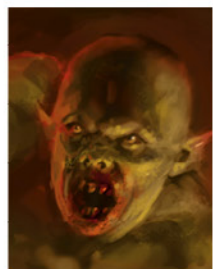
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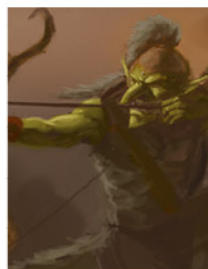


GRISTLEWE, GREATSWORD

I love Gristlelwe for his combination of impact in the game and shining personality. Most players will note his Move of 4 (5 when Inspired) and his Damage 3 Attack action right off the bat and may not look any deeper than

that. There's nothing wrong with that, and a bold charge from Gristlelwe is a deciding factor in many a game.

However, those players may be missing out on another aspect of this fighter: Gristlelwe is a noble soul, devoted to Duke Crakmarrow as his comrade and champion. Is it Gristlelwe's fault that the shining blade he bears is actually a bone torn from a rotting carcass? That the monsters he slays are actually hapless victims? That his victory feasts are ... well, never mind. No! We are taught that it's what's inside that counts, and inside Gristlelwe is a noble champion that should be honoured and adored.



MEAN-EYE

I could honestly have chosen either Mean-eye or Stabbit here. It's not that there's anything wrong with Rippa himself, it's just that he's missing the downright, bred-in-the-bone meanness of his underlings and their Inspire

condition. They might be following Rippa for now, but it's only when he's under attack or better yet out of action that they really give it their all in a bid to become the next boss. This nasty streak comes through in the cards that feature Mean-eye, like Vindictive Attack (8), which gives a huge accuracy boost, and No Mercy (9), which works well with Mean-eye's 'wearin' 'em down' kind of fighting.

I like to give Mean-eye Circling Hunter (10), which fits my mental image of this vicious grot and his snarlfang dashing around the battlefield, picking off weakened enemies at range or with a darting charge. It adds to Mean-eye's already considerable speed, and it means that you can charge him in adjacent to an enemy, unleash an arrow at point-blank range (or at a distant target), follow up with the snarlfang's jaws to potentially finish off a fighter, and then use Circling Hunter to back out of harm's way.



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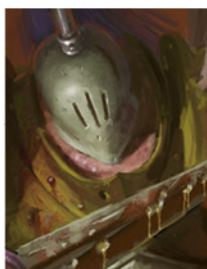
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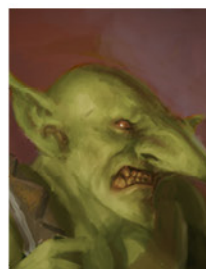


SEPSIMUS, PLAGUESWORN

There's just something about Sepsimus. He's horrific, of course. Bloated. Mutated. Not someone you ever want to stand behind. But still, there's something almost ... majestic about him. See how he stands, immovable as a Feculent

Gnarlmaw. Admire his armour, proof against his many enemies, despite just a touch of corrosion. Fear his mighty spear, downfall of many a beast and champion. Look, all I'm saying is, if you squint when looking at Sepsimus, you might just see him as a noble knight. And I will always squint when looking at Sepsimus.

To bring this knightly vision to life in the game, I like to make sure that Sepsimus can deliver a devastating charge. He's already got a Range 2 Attack action to help with this, which makes his Move 3 less of a disadvantage, and if you use Steady Advance (11) and Unnatural Vitality (12) early on you'll find that Sepsimus can achieve a respectable gallop into enemy territory. In later rounds the combination of his Range 2, the Unstoppable Tread (13) upgrade and his Scything Attack action can mean that he is more than a match for a handful of lesser foes, striding here and there as he lays waste to your opponent's plans.



BUSHWAKKA

Our playtesters might be surprised to see Bushwakka in this list. His was a difficult genesis, to say the least. The issue was his fearsome trap – how could we make it a useful, impactful feature of the warband, when the Gnoblar

himself is sometimes a bit of a liability that you'd rather keep out of harm's way? We tried many variations of Bushwakka's rules, and for a while it felt like I couldn't make a version of the sneaky little Gnoblar that worked well enough to give him an effective role in the warband. In the end, though, we got there, and after fighting so hard for the little blighter, I found I'd grown very attached to him.

His star turn is dropping down a trap strong enough to scare a troggoth – it deals 2 damage to a fighter that enters the same hex as it, with the exception of Bushwakka himself. Bushwakka will be lucky if he survives long enough to pull that trick a second time, but some of my favourite cards for the plucky trapper, just in case, are Gnoblar Scramble (14), which you can use to get him out of harm's way, More Traps (15), for when you want to deal 3 damage to a fighter just by pushing them into a hex (sounds OK?) and Larval Lance (16), which transforms him from a late-game irrelevance to a leader-slayer (if he makes it that far).



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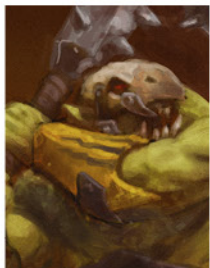
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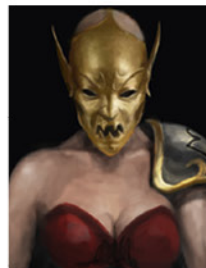


'ARDSKULL

Next up is 'Ardskull. Life is simple for 'Ardskull. Everything became much more straightforward when he was made a vessel for Waaagh! energy and just started charging around hitting things. It's a good thing that Morgok is

there to point him in the right direction, leading to fewer shattered rocks, trees and other orruks, and more shattered enemies.

I like how 'Ardskull decided the best thing to do with a big, smashy club was chain another big, smashy club to that, all the better to be big and smashy. I particularly like his Inspired ability, which effectively lets you choose his Attack action's Damage characteristic (as long as you're happy for it to be 3 or more). If you're looking for a fighter who can one-shot Mollog, here he is. If you want to manage this, you'll need to charge up 'Ardskull with a lot of Waaagh! counters, and Eager Advance (17), Brawling and Waaagh! Energy (18) can get you most of the way there. I also love his Snirk Sourtongue impression, achieved with his Frenzied Whirl (19) Scything Attack action and the Berserk Whirl (20) upgrade. 'Anyfink a grot can do, an orruk can do betta!'



KHAMYSS

The final entry in this rogues' gallery is Khamyss, the Sister of Slaughter from Morgwaeth's Blade-coven. To me she epitomises the fragile but lethal warriors of that warband, with a mere 2 Wounds but the potential for absolutely

devastating damage. The key to this is her Barbed Whip Attack action, already a respectable threat at Range 2, 3 X and 2 Damage, but more lethal altogether with the inclusion of the Combo keyword.



This keyword allows Khamyss to make all manner of reaction Attack actions for a one-two combo that can lay low the mightiest of foes. She already has her Bladed Buckler, ensuring that she can perform this trick right from the beginning of the battle, but there are some other Attack actions which in her hands can prove utterly ruinous. In particular, Inescapable Blow (21), which gives her an all-but-guaranteed 2 Damage, and Finishing Blow (22) that, when used as a Reaction after her Combo Attack action, hits for a massive 4 Damage! I always take Drilled to Perfection (23) and Fanatical Faith (24) in the hope that they can keep Khamyss standing long enough to land one of these whopping combos.

END PHASE

That's it for my list of favourites from Beastgrave. Perhaps it has made you look at an unregarded fighter in a new light, or made you consider who your favourites are. I'd love to hear from you about this – please do write in to let me know who your favourite fighter is and what it is about them that you love.

TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS

As ever, do write in if you have any suggestions or something that you'd like to read about. You can contact me by email at:

whunderworlds@gwplc.com

or by sending a letter to Dave Sanders, Books and Box Games, Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS.

THE BÖGENHAFFEN BASH

'And we are live from the Bögenhafen Stadium, where the first match of the new Blood Bowl season is about to begin. Don your team colours, point your spiky foam fingers to the sky and offer up a prayer to Nuffle, because this match is going to be a bloodbath!'



Welcome, sports fans, to the new season of Blood Bowl! That's right, there's a new edition of the game of fantasy football, which means new rules, new teams and loads of new models. And what better way to celebrate than with a no-holds-barred Blood Bowl Match Report featuring two of those new teams – the Imperial Nobles and the Black Orcs? To answer that rhetorical question, there is no better way, which is why we pitched the Bögenhafen Barons against the Thunder Valley Greenskins in what can only be described as a wonderfully violent Match Report.

Coaching the Bögenhafen Barons in their inaugural Match Report is rules writer Jay 'the Duke' Clare. When he's not busy destroying rings and angering Dark Lords, Jay loves nothing more than a good game of Blood Bowl, where he can put his keen tactical mind to good use. The Imperial Nobles

BLOOD BOWL

Never played Blood Bowl? Then you're missing out! The new edition of the game is out now and includes two full teams, a pitch, dice, rulebook and everything else you need to get started with the game of fantasy football. Alternatively, check out all the other teams available on the Games Workshop website.



team plays similar to a Human team, but with a range of skills at their disposal, including Fend and Wrestle, which can make some of their players very difficult to shift indeed.

Facing off against Jay is Forge World graphic designer Rich 'Krump 'em' Dansie, who has taken to the dugout to coach the Thunder Valley Greenskins. Like Jay, Rich is one of the Blood Bowl playtesters, so he knows the game inside and out. The Black Orcs play similar to the Orc team, though if anything they're even slower and harder to hurt than regular Orcs! Skills such as Brawler and Grab, however, make them particularly tough to stop when they get going.

So what are we waiting for? The teams are on the pitch, Jim and Bob are in the commentators' seats, and the referee has already accepted a small bribe. Let's play some Blood Bowl!

BÖGENHAFEN BARONS

Jay: My plan in this match is to outmanoeuvre the Orcs. Human players are considerably faster than Orcs, so all I need to do is get hold of the ball, lob it to one of my runners and start scoring. Griff is my not-so-secret weapon in this match. I'm going to be relying on him to score the touchdowns (hopefully!) while my Bodyguards, Linemen and Blitzers hold up the Orcs. Let's hope that, with their excellent new skills, they're up to the task.

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| 1 STREYA GÜRGEN, BODYGUARD | 7 TÜRGEN BECKENHEIM, BODYGUARD | 11 FRIEDRICH HERBENHOFF, IMPERIAL THROWER |
| 2 MARIA SCHERGEN, IMPERIAL RETAINER LINEMAN | 8 MIKHAEL BAXÖFF, NOBLE BLITZER | 12 PIOTR REIKGÜRDEN, IMPERIAL RETAINER LINEMAN |
| 3 HEIMLICH KLÖPF, BODYGUARD | 9 JURGEN BREINHOVEN, IMPERIAL RETAINER LINEMAN | 6 GRIFF OBERWALD, STAR PLAYER |
| 4 LIETPOLD HEGUNDEN, NOBLE BLITZER | 10 JORGE BERGEN, BODYGUARD | 0 ORGRUG KNEECAPPER, OGRE |
| 5 DOMINICK SCHRÜNGER, IMPERIAL THROWER | | |



JAY CLARE

Jay can normally be found adventuring in Middle-earth, but he took a time-out to play some Blood Bowl this month. He has promised some awe-inspiring tactics.



THUNDER VALLEY GREENSKINS

Rich: I'm going to set up these Orcs to do some krumpin'! My plan is to cause maximum casualties with Varag and the Black Orcs while one of the Goblins prods the Troll in the right direction from a safe distance. Scoring is obviously a key consideration, but Black Orcs (and even Varag) are really slow, so I'm going to try and get the Troll to throw some ball-carrying Goblins at the line and hope they make it.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 ZUKERV DA PUNCHA, BLACK ORC | 6 WAGDRAK STEELFIST, BLACK ORC | 11 GRIVLER, GOBLIN BRUISER LINEMAN |
| 2 DORGRUB BONESTOMPA, BLACK ORC | 7 STIKZ, GOBLIN BRUISER LINEMAN | 12 TIRK, GOBLIN BRUISER LINEMAN |
| 3 GURGURZ IRONTOOF, BLACK ORC | 8 SKRUM, GOBLIN BRUISER LINEMAN | V VARAG GHOUL-CHEWER, STAR PLAYER |
| 4 VORLUG DA RIPPA, BLACK ORC | 9 STROK, GOBLIN BRUISER LINEMAN | T BURGG GROBLEG, TRAINED TROLL |
| 5 KRUNDARZ ROCKJAW, BLACK ORC | 10 ZRACCIK, GOBLIN BRUISER LINEMAN | |



RICH DANSIE

Renowned coach Rich emerged from the Specialist Design Studio to play the first match of the new season. He has promised unbridled carnage.



THE FIRST DRIVE: KRUMPIN' TIME!

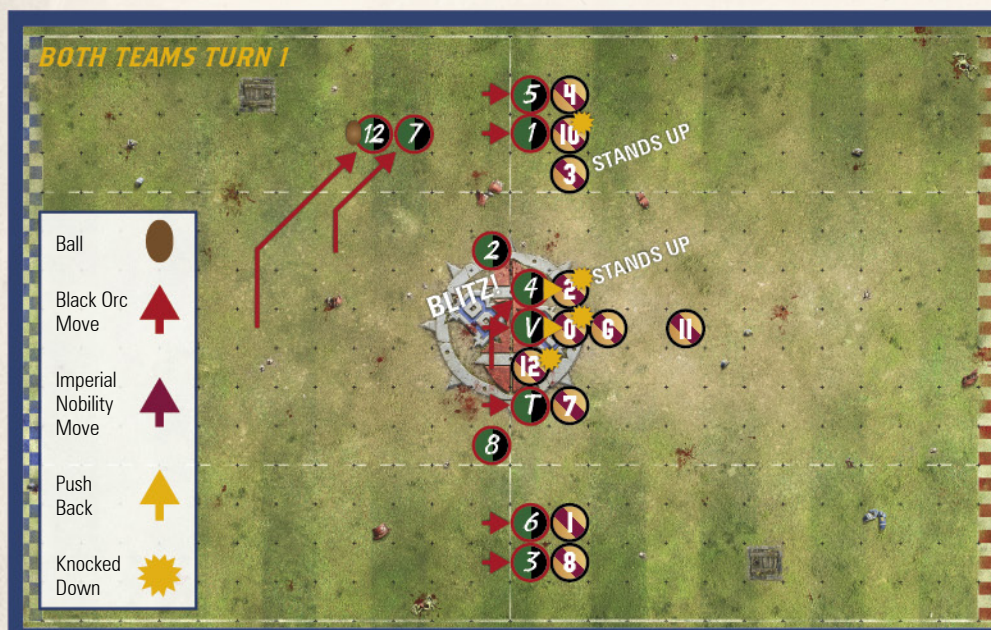
The Thunder Valley Greenskins are on the receiving end of the kick-off, but the Orcs on the team are more interested in hitting people than doing anything with the ball. The Goblins, on the other hand ...

Rich elects to receive the kick-off, and he deploys all of his Black Orcs on the Line of Scrimmage ready for some serious krumpin'. As the ball flies up in the air, he sends a pair of his Goblins back to secure it while his Orcs get stuck into a good fight. A series of impressive dice rolls sees no fewer than three Barons knocked to the ground (number 12 by an officious ref!) and Orgrug Kneecapper Stunned by Varag. Jay's response is distinctly less violent. Two of his players stand up, then Jorge Bergen falls over when he tries to punch an Orc. It is the quickest Turnover recorded in studio history at a little under twenty seconds.



'Good evening, sports fans, and welcome to the first Blood Bowl match of the new season. I'm Bob Bifford ...'

'... And I'm Jim Johnson, and we'll be your commentators for the evening. The Bögenhafen Barons are playing on home turf, but the Thunder Valley Greenskins are sure up for a scrap. That grass won't be staying green for long, Bob, and that's a fact!'

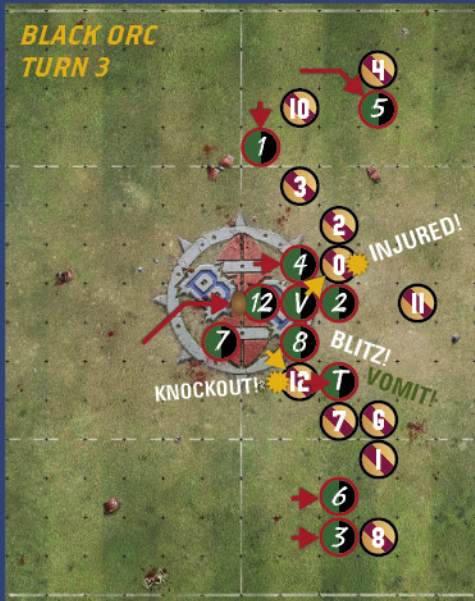


'And the Thunder Valley Greenskins are straight on the offensive, and I'm not just talking about their personal hygiene! Varag is laying into Orgrug, while Vorlug da Rippa is gunning for Maria Schergen. The line of scrimmage is a right mess, I can tell you. And right in the middle of it, Piotr Reikgürden is lying on the floor holding his crotch and wailing like a Banshee. I have no idea what he said to the ref during the kick-off, but I'm sure he deserved that shoeing. Oh, and Tirk has got the ball ...'

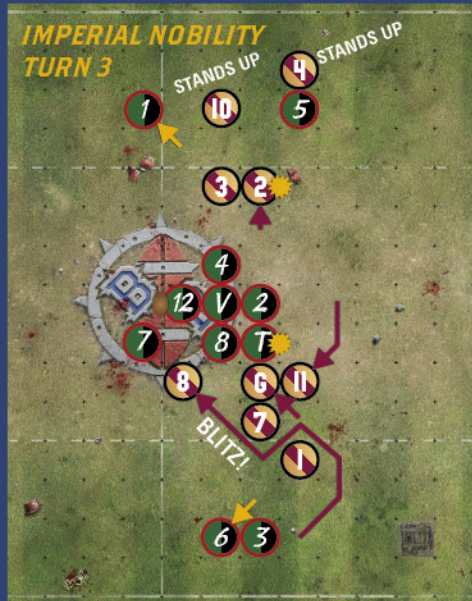
'Hegunden is down, Schergen is down, Beckenheim is down ... Gürgen and Baxöff, too! What is going on here? I think the Bögenhafen Barons are taking a team nap, Bob! I've never seen such extraordinary violence on the pitch. The Thunder Valley Greenskins are driving a wedge right into the middle of the Barons' defensive line, with Tirk sneaking the ball up behind them. Oberwald's making a blitz out of the ruck to try and stop the Goblin making a break for it, but the Barons are all over the place!'



BLACK ORC TURN 3



IMPERIAL NOBILITY TURN 3



'Orgrug's back up again. He's looking a bit confused mind you, but then doesn't he always? No, wait, he's back down again with what looks like a nasty injury – that was a brutal punch from Varag. Reikgürden seems to have stopped moving now, too, which is never a good sign. But wait, what's this? Oh ... we'll that's just nasty. Burgg has just shown Griff Oberwald what he had for breakfast, and I can tell you it's not fruit. Let's hope Baxöff's push behind the Orc lines can slow down the Greenskin advance!'

Play continues around the Line of Scrimmage, with Rich using his Black Orcs to slowly drive the Bögenhafen Barons backwards. Meanwhile Tirk – the ball-carrier – sneaks up behind the attacking line. By the end of Rich's second turn, Jay has only two players still standing and a big green wedge right in the middle of his defensive line.

Having moved his Orcs into prime attacking positions, Rich lets Orgrug stand back up, then gets Varag to punch him once again, knocking the Ogre out cold. He then steamrolls the Star Player through the centre of Jay's line followed by Vorlug da Rippa and Dorgrub Bonestompa. Burgg Grobleg, the team's dim-witted Troll, even vomits on Griff Oberwald, much to the crowd's enjoyment. With a hole made, Tirk makes a dash for the End Zone with Stikz in close support and Varag lumbering after them. The first touchdown of the match is in sight ...



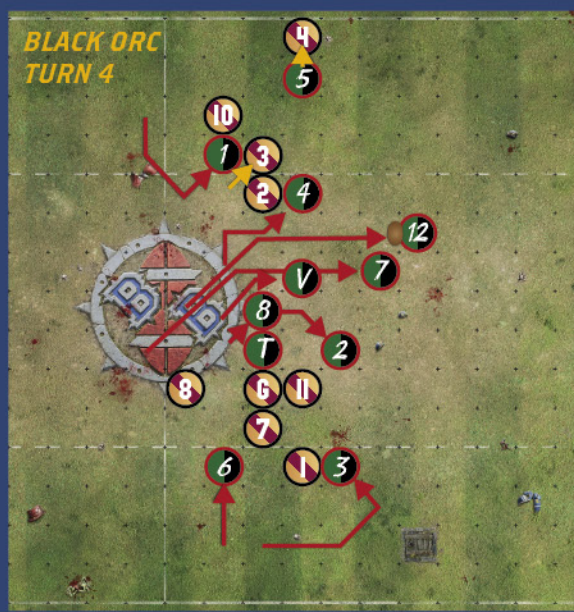
In the centre of the pitch, Orgrug Kneecapper comes face to face with Varag Ghoul-Chewer. Not a good way to start the season.



'With only nine players on the pitch and several of them lying on the turf, this has turned into a nightmare for the Bögenhafen Barons. Oberwald has moved over to support Baxöff. Herbenhoff and Beckenheim are joining the push. Schergen is trying to close the gap ...

... but Tirk has made a break for it with the ball! Stikz is right up behind him. Varag and da Rippa are in hot pursuit. The Thunder Valley Greenskins have broken through the Barons' line.'

BLACK ORC TURN 4



FROM THE DUGOUT

Jay: This is an unfortunate start for my side, to say the least. A lot has gone wrong for the Barons – we've lost two players in just three turns, and several others are Stunned – but we're still in it. Rich has been scoring high on his Armour rolls, and I've fluffed pretty much every Block I've thrown, but the dice tend to even out in the end. I might be able to stop his drive – I have a cunning(ish) plan – but I may need the favour of the Nuffle if the plan has any chance of succeeding!

THE FIRST DRIVE CONTINUED: DESPERATE MEASURES

As the Thunder Valley Greenskins drive deep into the Barons' half of the pitch, the Imperial Nobles put up a spirited defence to try and hold the Orcs back. But will it be enough?

With Rich's Orcs steaming through the Imperial lines, Jay has to do something desperate to prevent a touchdown. In a display of exceptional coaching skill (*Jay bribed us to write that. – Ed*), he pulls back Gürgen and Baxöff and then Blitzes Griff Oberwald through the gap, round Dorgrub Bonestompa and into the unsuspecting ball-carrier, Tirk. Jay uses Oberwald's Consummate Professional skill to ensure Tirk goes down, whereupon the Goblin drops the ball ... into the Star Player's waiting arms! Jay looks excitedly at Rich, Rich sighs with exasperation, and then Jay runs Griff Oberwald as far away from Varag as possible, Rushing twice in

FEND

If a player with the Fend skill is pushed back as a result of a Block being applied them, they may choose to prevent the player that pushed them from following up. All Imperial Retainer Linemen have this very useful skill, and Jay put it to very good use in this Match Report.

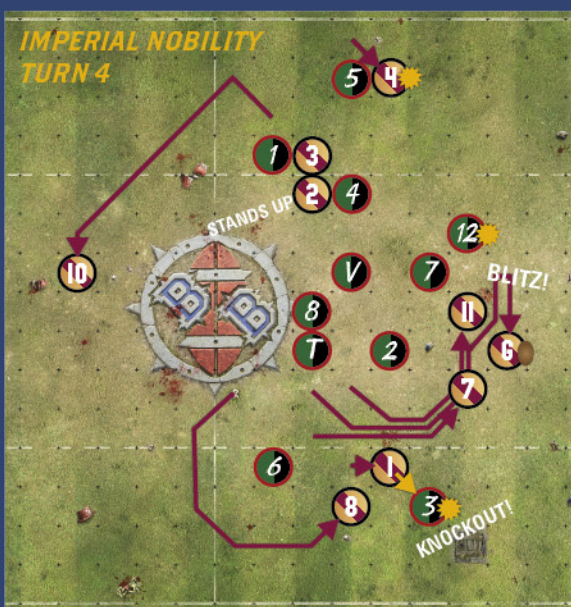
an attempt to keep his best player (and the ball) out of the Black Orc's way. He uses team Thrower Friedrich Herbenhoff and Bodyguard Türgen Beckenheim to protect Oberwald, while sending Bodyguard Jorge Bergen down the pitch for a possible long throw ...

His drive in tatters, but with most of his players still standing, Rich knows he has to get the ball back while it is still close to Jay's End Zone. By carefully manoeuvring the Goblins Tirk and Stikz, he is able to Blitz Varag into Herbenhoff, shove the Thrower aside, and end the Star Player's move right next to Griff. Rich also sends his Orcs



'Tirk is gunning for the end zone, but Oberwald

is moving to intercept. He's not stopping either! He's going in for the tackle! The Goblin is down! Excellent defensive play by Oberwald. Wait, somehow he's got the ball, too. Can we see that on replay? Unbelievable – he plucked it right out of the Goblin's hands as he knocked him down. Now he's making a run for it. I guess that's why he gets paid the big bucks!'



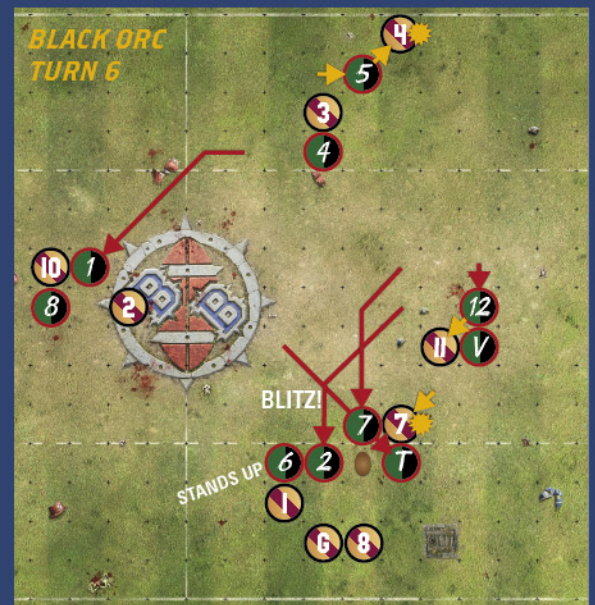
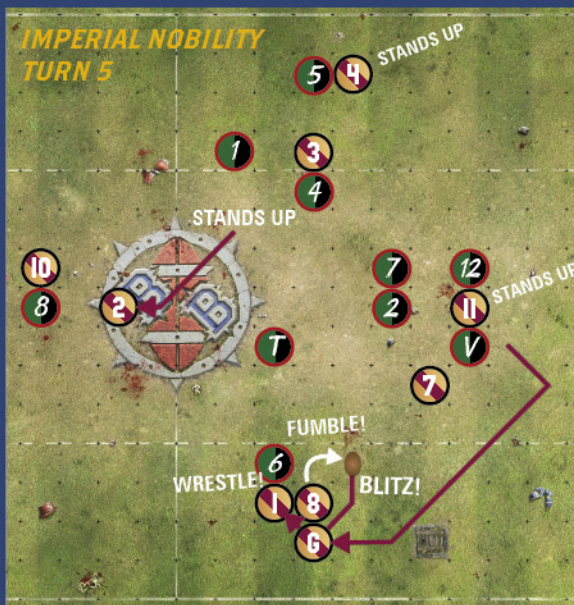
'This really is a turn-up for the books, Bob. A few seconds ago, I would have put money on the Thunder Valley Greenskins scoring. Now the Barons have the ball, and they're making a play of it, too. Good job I'm not a gambling man! Bergen's going long, Baxöff and Gürgen are on the wing, Schergen's up and heading for the midfield. If Oberwald can get that ball out to one of them, then the Barons might well turn this drive completely on its head. Superb play all round from the Barons!'





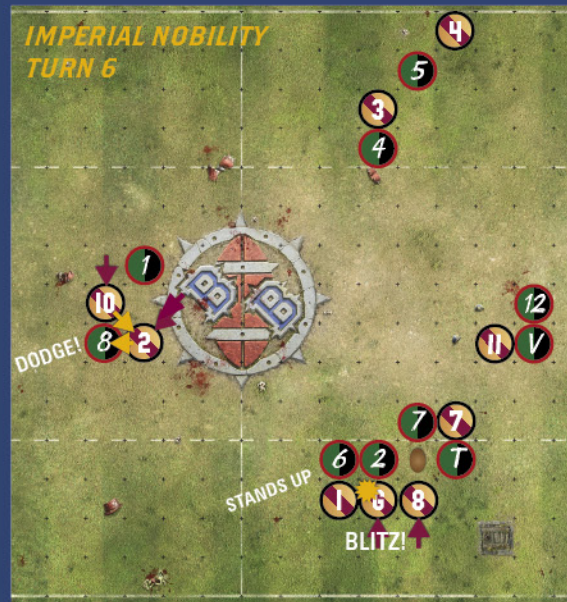
'I'm with you on that, Jim – I haven't seen

defensive play like this since the Grudge-Bearers built an actual wall on the pitch. And now Oberwald's moving. I reckon he's going to hand-off to Baxöff. Gürgen's cleared a path. Baxöff is running. He's got his arms out waiting for the hand-over ... and he's fumbled it! Either he's taken a bribe or someone buttered his gloves before the match, because that was an easy pass.'



FROM THE DUGOUT

Rich: I really thought I had that touchdown in the bag, but Jay made a couple of really solid Dodges away from my players and piledrived poor old Tirk into the ground with Griff. Annoyingly, my Black Orcs are so slow that only Varag and the Goblins were close enough to try and stop Griff running off with the ball. Fortunately, Jay's luck has deserted him again, but I'm going to have to play very cautiously (and not very Orcily) if I'm to score before the end of the first half.



'A huge mistake from Baxöff, and what a let-down for the Barons. The Thunder Valley Greenskins are all over the ball now, and there's not much the home team can do about it. Burgg and Dorgrub have the ball guarded, Stikz is waiting for his moment to strike, and Varag ...? Well, Varag's teaching Beckenheim how to lie down properly. Apparently legs akimbo is the preferred position these days. Wait, is Oberwald going in for a tackle on Dorgrub? Erm, no ... he's stumbled. Now that is embarrassing ...'

and Goblins to mark Jay's other players in the hope that he can prevent any cheeky passes taking place. Annoyingly for Rich, Jay makes good use of the Fend skill, preventing Rich from following up on his Block moves and leaving several of Jay's players outside Tackle Zones.

Knowing this is his chance for glory, Jay races Griff Oberwald away from Varag, has Streya Gürgen Wrestle Wagdrak Steelfist to the ground, then attempts a Hand-off to Mikhael Baxöff. Frustratingly for Jay, his poor dice rolling comes back to haunt him, and even with a re-roll, Baxöff fumbles the Hand-off and drops the ball. With so many unmarked Orc players in the vicinity, Rich leaps on the chance to retake the ball and surrounds it with Dorgrub, Stikz and Burgg the Troll. Another messy ruck ensues with no one picking up the ball, but Griff somehow knocks himself down while Blitzing Dorgrub Bonestompa.



THE SECOND DRIVE: A SWIFT KICKING

With the Thunder Valley Greenskins having scored the first touchdown, the Bögenhafen Barons have only a couple of minutes before the halftime whistle. Enough time to get a few punches in, though.

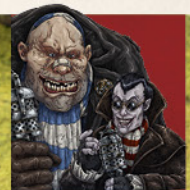
Knowing it is impossible for Jay to score before the halftime whistle, Rich sets up all his Goblin Bruiser subs on the Line of Scrimmage so that his precious Black Orcs won't get hurt in what will undoubtedly be a round of retaliatory punching.

However, as the ball sails up into the air and the Bögenhafen Barons bring their fists back ready to strike, an unexpected pitch invasion occurs, and Skrum and Zraccik are Knocked Down, leaving Jay with just a single target on the Line of Scrimmage – the unfortunate Strok.

Jay, however sets his sights on Stikz – the Goblin who scored the touchdown. Hiding back towards the Greenskins' End Zone, Jay Blitzes Griff Oberwald towards him and knocks the Goblin down but fails to go through his armour. Strok is Knocked-out by Jurgen Breinhoven, though, so Jay's very quick turn isn't a total loss.



HALFTIME!



'Now that was a violent first half, Jim. The Thunder Valley Greenskins were on fire.'

'You're not wrong, Bob. They went in fists swinging and didn't stop until just after the halftime whistle blew. Considering how they played, I think the Bögenhafen Barons are lucky to be going into the second half 1-0 down.'

'It looks like the Barons are bringing on Dominick Schrünger for the second half, Jim. Apparently Orgrug and Reikgürden have bought the farm. I didn't know they had that much cash ...'

GET OUT DA ORINJES, LADZ!

Rich: Well, the first half of the match certainly proved to be interesting! I honestly couldn't believe my luck when I took out the Ogre with Varag – a double 6 on the Armour roll and he went down like a sack of spuds! But Jay, being the true pro that he is, put up a very clever defence and used the Imperial Nobles' skills to really hamper my advance. Still, I managed to drive a wedge in his team, and I would have scored earlier if it hadn't been for Griff blasted Oberwald! Overall, I'd say the Black Orcs are doing pretty well, and the Goblins are earning their keep. I've got a plan for the Troll in the second half, though ...

WE NEED A MEDIC OVER HERE!

Jay: Ouch! That was a painful first half. My players were getting smashed about all over the place. Orgrug and Reikgürden went down very early, Schergen spent nearly every turn standing back up, Hegunden got slowly pushed backwards across the pitch, and my Bodyguard Beckenheim was either Knocked Down or Stunned for the better part of sixteen turns. Yet somehow I managed to wrestle the ball from Rich's players and almost made a break for it. I think I'm going to have to play more offensively in the second half and use my players' speed and agility to keep them away from those nasty, nasty Orcs!



THE THIRD DRIVE: FANCY FOOTWORK

The second half begins with the Thunder Valley Greenskins kicking off to the Bøgenhafen Barons. The ball flies high into the air as yet another pitch invasion disrupts play ...

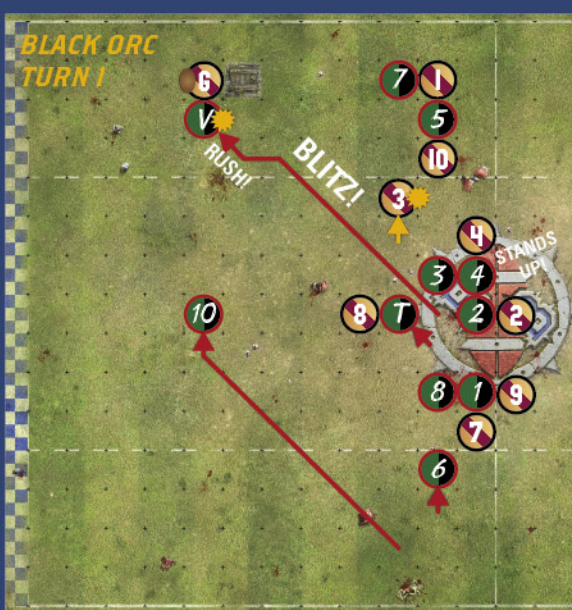
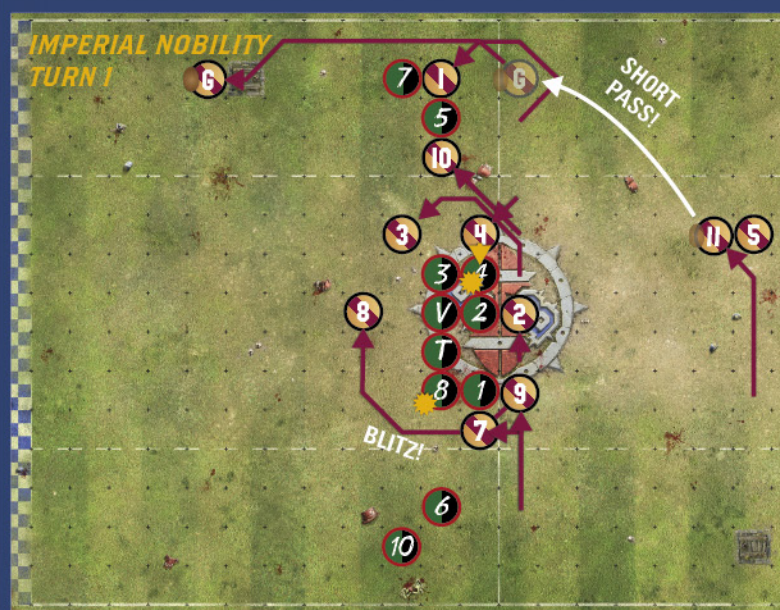
Rich has his Black Orcs kick-off to the Imperial Nobles, with the ball landing almost (though not quite) in Thrower Friedrich Herbenhoff's waiting hands. However, while the ball is in the air, a second pitch invasion begins, resulting in three of the Greenskin players being Knocked Down just as the Barons start their drive.

Unwilling to foul downed players and risk a Turnover, Jay plays it safe and gets Herbenhoff to pick up the ball and make a short pass to Griff. He then races the Star Player up the field with several Greenskins in hot pursuit. Though Rich manages to extract Varag from the scrum and Blitz Oberwald, he fails to tackle him and Varag actually knocks himself down, causing a Turnover. With the field wide open, Jay aims Griff at the End Zone, scoring an impressively quick – some might say textbook – touchdown.



'Something has really got into the crowd, today, Jim.

This is their second pitch invasion in ten minutes. Perhaps it was that popkorne they've all been eating. I've heard it can make you go a bit funny in the head. Unbelievably, they've knocked down Zukerv da Puncha, Dorgrub Bonestompa and Stikz. Looks like they're gunning for the Orcs today. More importantly, though, Herbenhoff has got the ball.'



'And now Herbenhoff is running across the pitch. Who's he going to pass it to? Will it be Gürgen? No, it's Oberwald! And he's made a break for it! He's past the downed Stikz and heading for the end zone. What a turnaround for the Barons! Varag's running after Oberwald, but the noble's holding the Black Orc off. Varag's got no chance now. Oberwald's in for the score!'

TOUCHDOWN!

THUNDER
VALLEY
GREENSKINS

1 - 1

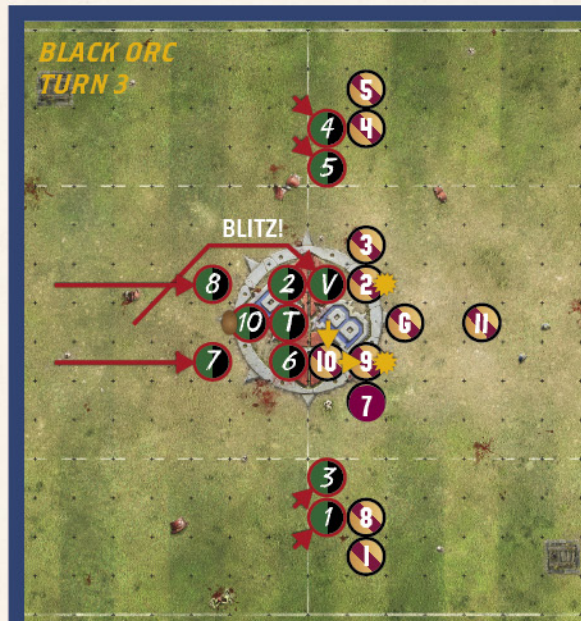
BÖGENHAFFEN
BARONS



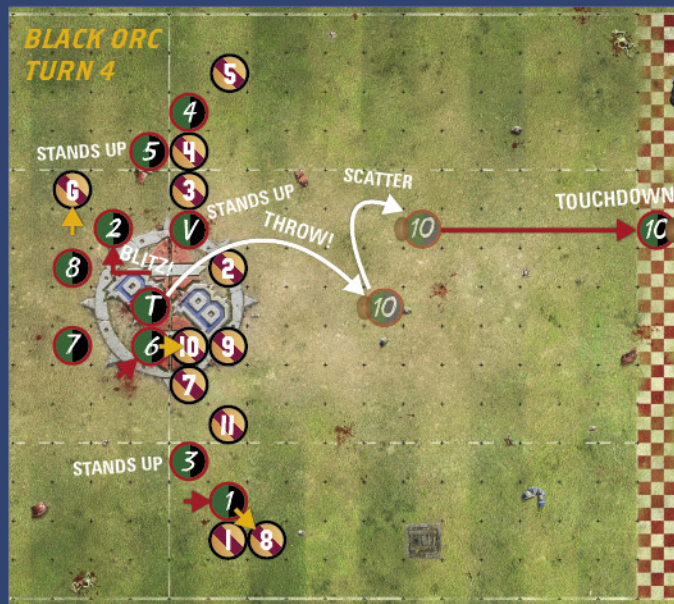
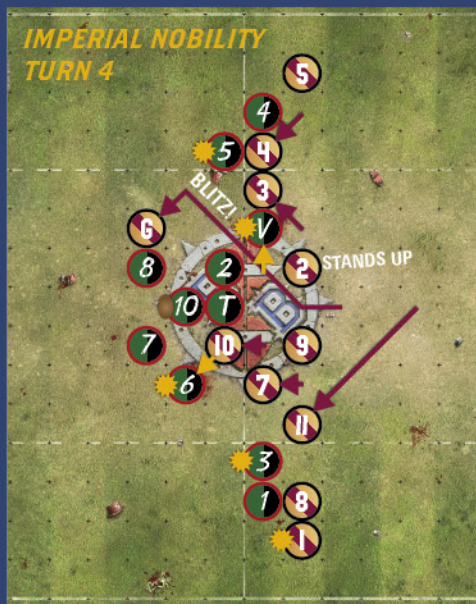
THE FOURTH DRIVE: THROWING GOBLINS TO THE WIND

Having scored a remarkably fast touchdown, the Bögenhafen Barons kick-off to the Thunder Valley Greenskins. The Black Orcs, however, have a plan up their sleeves. If they have any sleeves, that is.

At the kick-off, Jay aims the ball towards the safe zone in the centre of the Black Orc half of the pitch. But while the ball is still in the air (held aloft by Elven magic, perhaps), a time-out is called by the ref, advancing both players' turn markers by one. Undeterred, Rich slams his Black Orcs into the Imperial Nobles but can't follow up his Blocks due to the Linemen fending off his players. Instead, he clears a path in front of Burgg the Troll while forming a cage around Zraccik the ball-carrier. Seeing what Rich is up to, Jay Blitzes Griff through Varag and round behind the cage while Jorge Bergen pushes through the Orcs' defensive line to mark Zraccik. But there's nothing Jay can do to stop Rich's plan. Burgg picks up Zraccik (and the ball), doesn't eat either of them (much to Rich's relief) and hurls them down the pitch towards the End Zone. A deft landing and a short scamper later, it's another touchdown!



'The Barons are playing it safe there with the ball, but they've punted it right to Zraccik, who's now hiding somewhere behind a wall of Black Orcs. It's going to take more than a few knuckledusters to extract him from that lot! But what's this? There seems to be a ruckus around Burgg. He stamping his feet and shaking his head. And hitting Jorge Bergen a bit. I'm not sure what the Orcs want the Troll to do, but he ain't doing it, Jim!'



'Well the Barons aren't hanging around to find out, Bob! Bergen is gunning for Zraccik. And ... oh my ... Oberwald has blitzed his way straight through Varag! The Greenskins could be in serious trouble right now. But wait, Burgg's stopped picking his nose and picked up Zraccik. Is he going for a throw? He is! The Goblin is in the air ... and the Goblin has landed. I repeat, the Goblin has landed! He's running. Touchdown Greenskins!'

TOUCHDOWN!

THUNDER
VALLEY
GREENSKINS

2-1

BÖGENHAFEN
BARONS



FROM THE DUGOUT

Rich: Yes! That's the play I've been hoping for. It took a couple of attempts to get Burgg to pick up the Goblin Bruiser (he really is dense!), but when he did, his aim was surprisingly accurate despite the proximity of Jay's players. Lots of things can go wrong when throwing players, but this time it went off without a hitch!

THE FIFTH DRIVE: STRETCH PLAY

The Thunder Valley Greenskins have regained the lead, leaving the Bögenhafen Barons with all to play for. They need to score at least once, and quickly, if they're to have any hope of winning this match.

Jay sets up most of his players on the Line of Scrimmage, ready to rush Rich's Orcs. He places Griff Oberwald and the Blitzer Lietpold Hegunden in his right-hand Wide Zone (top in the diagram below), leaving Rich in no doubt which direction the ball will be going!

A swift kick-off and a tidy pick-up from Friedrich Herbenhoff proves Rich correct as Jay runs the Thrower towards the Wide Zone. Herbenhoff makes a quick pass to Hegunden while Griff shunts Vorlug da Rippa out of the way. The rest of the Barons also go on the offensive, with Heimlich

BRAWLER

Rich's Black Orcs have the Brawler skill. When a player with this skill performs a Block action on its own, the player may re-roll a single Both Down result. While Rich was rolling two dice for most of his Block actions, this skill did prevent a few embarrassing Turnovers during the game.

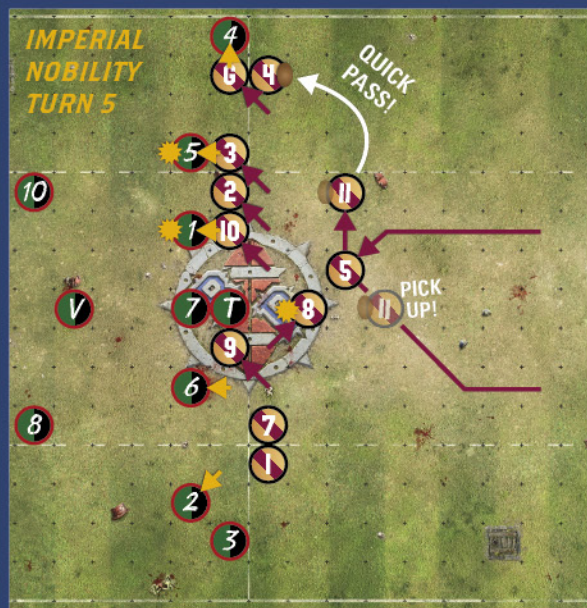
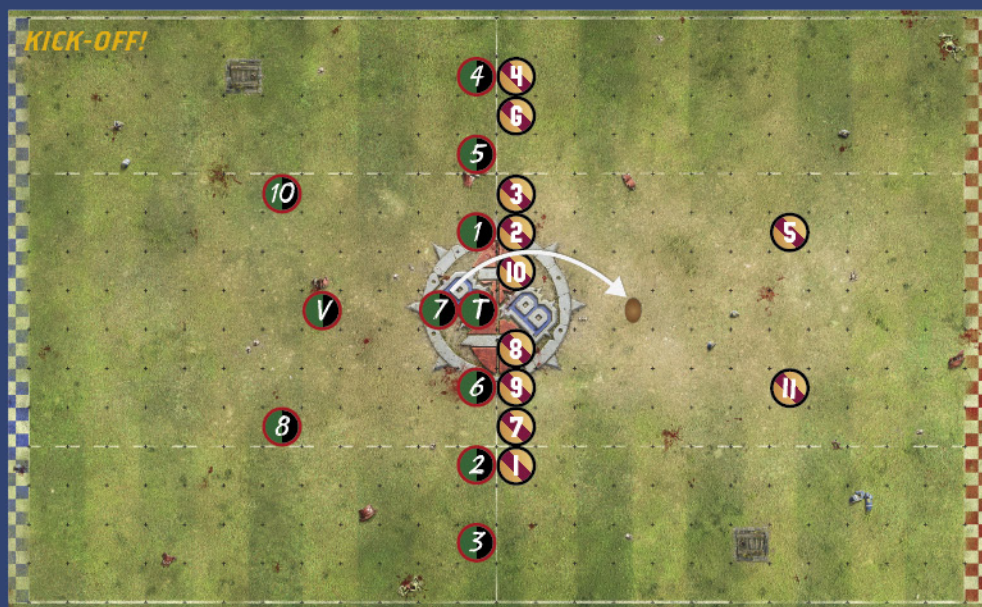
Klöpff and Jorge Bergen pushing back Krundarz Rockjaw and Zukerv da Puncha, respectively, and opening up a clear path through the Wide Zone.

What happens next is a surprise for all concerned! Rich begins his turn by standing up his Black Orcs, thereby re-establishing his defensive line. Next, he runs the Goblin Bruiser Zraccik in to mark Griff. All pretty standard play. Then he goes for a Block with number 4 Vorlug da Rippa on number 4 Lietpold Hegunden – the ball-carrier. Rich rolls the dice. Double Pow! The Blitzer's Knocked Down. Then a double 6 for the Armour roll! Completely Knocked-out! Hegunden



'It's the fifth drive of the game and it's the Thunder Valley Greenskins to kick.

The ball's in the air and I'm watching the crowd closely, Jim. They're staying in their seats this time – perhaps they want to watch the match after all rather than take part! And the ball's hit the turf just behind Bergen and Baxöff and the two lines have clashed over the line of scrimmage. There's a lot of pushing and shoving going on and a fair bit of toe-stamping. Looks like the annual charity ball all over again.'



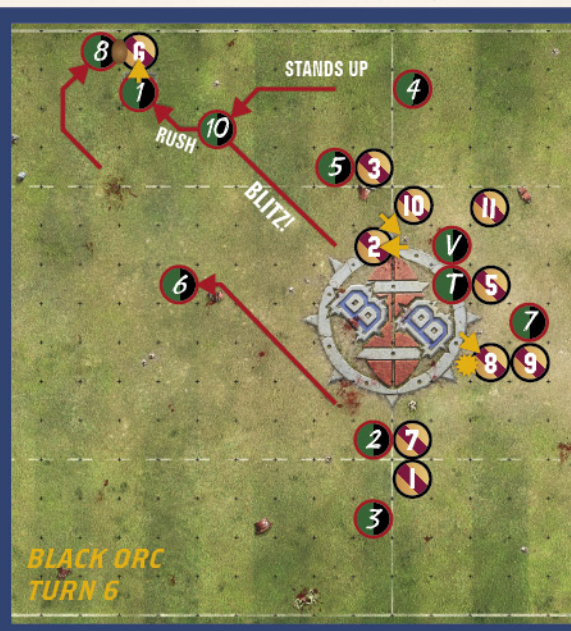
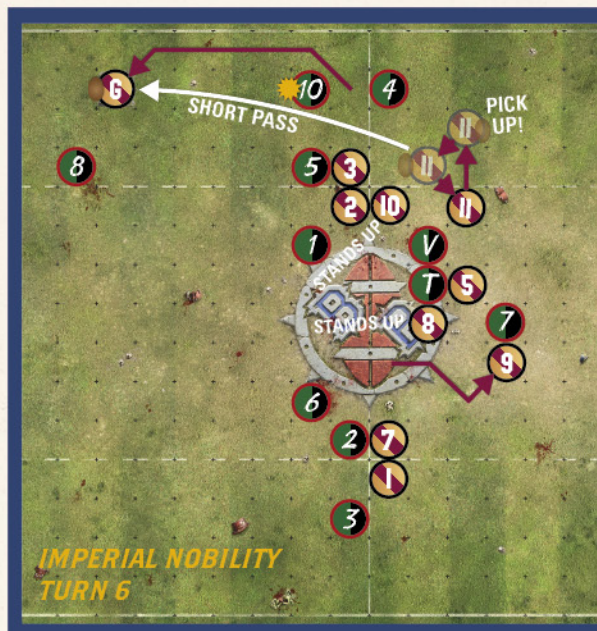
'Klöpff and Bergen are on the offensive. Oberwald is

making a path for Hegunden. Herbenhoff has picked up the ball and passed it to the Blitzer. It's a straight run right – ow! Where did that big green fist come from? Was that Vorlug? It looks like ... yes – Hegunden is on the floor, so is the ball and neither are moving. It's a turnover but I don't think anyone cares to tell you the truth, Bob! Varag's got his eyes on that ball.'

hits the dirt, and the ball bounces out of his hands. Seeing an opportunity, Rich Blitzes Varag through a gap in Jay's line supported by Burgg and Stikz.

With the ball on the turf but dangerously close to Varag, Jay has to plan his tactics carefully. He stands up all his Knocked Down players. Then he Blitzes Griff past Zraccik while Dodging away from Vorlug. Finally, he runs his prize Thrower over to the ball. Herbenhoff picks up the ball, throws a short pass to Oberwald, then runs back to mark Varag in what can only be described as a perfectly orchestrated Running Pass.

With the Barons' Star Player legging it up the field, Rich Blitzes Griff with Zukerv and even tries to hold him up with Skrum and Zraccik. But the veteran player storms over the line, ball in hand and Goblins round his ankles. Touchdown!



'Hold on a moment, Jim, it's not over yet!

Oberwald is dashing up the pitch. Klöpf and Schergen are holding back the Orcs. Herbenhoff is dashing in for the ball. He's picked it up, he's gone for a short pass straight into Oberwald's waiting, and might I say surprisingly soft, hands. There's nothing the Thunder Valley Greenskins can do to stop him. Varag's taking his anger out on Dominick Schrünger. Touchdown!

TOUCHDOWN!

THUNDER
VALLEY
GREENSKINS

2 - 2

BÖGENHAFEN
BARONS



FROM THE DUGOUT

Jay: That went surprisingly well apart from the minor blip in the middle of the drive when my Blitzer got Knocked-out. The Imperial Nobles have a really solid throw/catch relationship between their Throwers and Blitzers, and I planned to capitalise on that. But then Griff had to do the hard work yet again. I'm really happy I got to show off the Running Pass, too. It's a really useful skill that I reckon Blood Bowl players are going to love.

THE FINAL DRIVE: ONE LAST THROW ...

The score is 2-2 with only a few minutes of play remaining. The Thunder Valley Greenskins are receiving the kick. What can they do with the ball before the final whistle blows?

As the game draws to a violent close, the players return to the pitch for the last drive looking pretty battered and beaten. And their teams don't look in much better shape either (guffaw!). Most of Rich's players have woken up from their fist-induced naps, though two of his players remain out for the rest of the game. Jay, meanwhile, is down to just ten players on the pitch, with Orgrug the Ogre injured, Hegunden Knocked-out and Reikgürden declaring that he's dead.

As the Baron's kick-off to the Greenskins, Jay rolls a Blitz on the kick-off Event table, enabling him

THICK SKULL

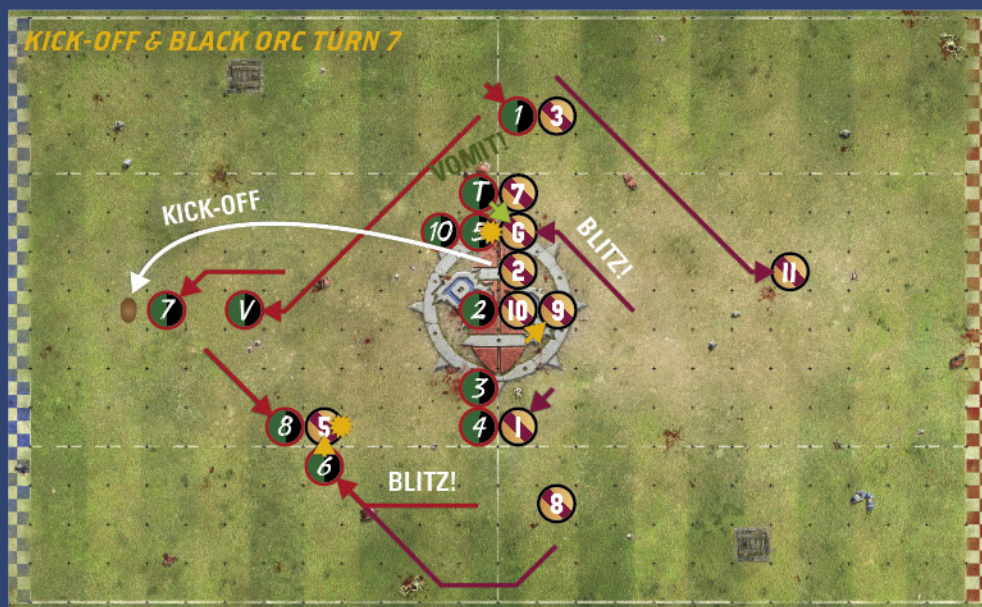
Goblin Bruisers in Black Orc teams tend to get kicked about quite a lot. For this reason they have the Thick Skull skill, which means they can only be KO'd on a 9+ instead of the usual 8. However, this is somewhat mitigated by the fact they're also Stunty. It's a tough life being a Goblin.

to race five of his players around the pitch while the ball is still airborne. He slams Griff into Krundarz Rockjaw while Dominick Schrünger runs up the flank and into the Orc half.

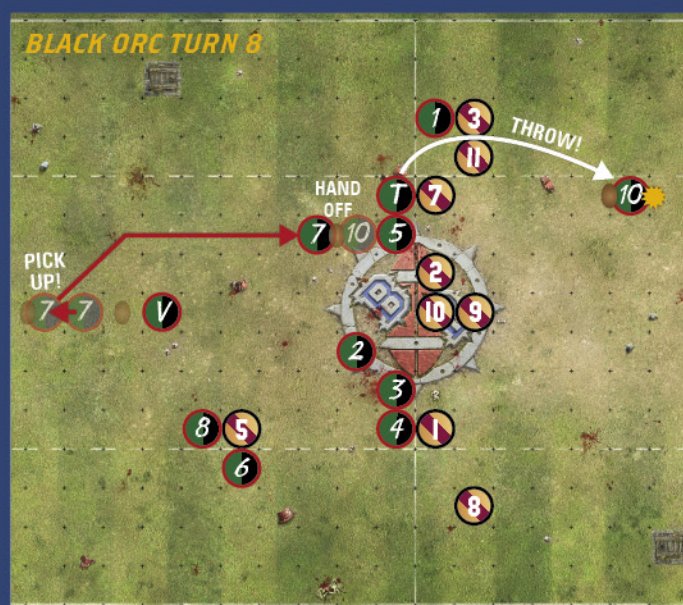
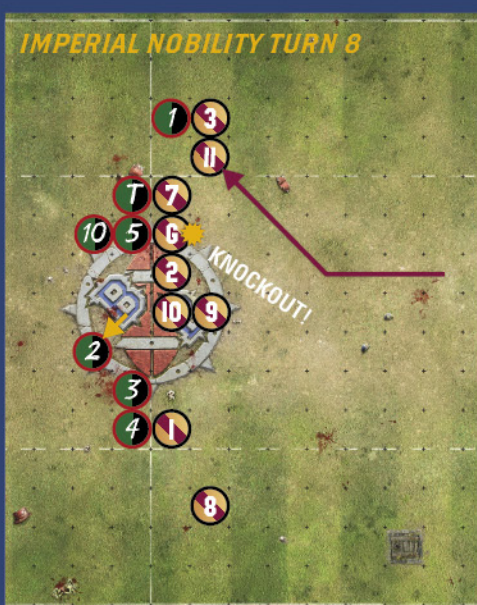
But Rich isn't having any such nonsense. He sends Stikz to pick up the ball, then runs the Goblin towards the Line of Scrimmage, where he hands the ball off to Zraccik. Burgg hefts the Goblin up into the air as Griff Oberwald falls to the turf in front of him. The Troll flings his arm forwards. Zraccik screams through the air like a tiny green comet ... and ploughs face-first into pitch. The final whistle blows – it's a draw!



'The Barons have kicked off deep into the Greenskin's half and, wait, what's this? They're following the ball! The Barons are blitzing, Bob! Are they going to try and score in the final moments of the game! Schrünger certainly looks like he's going for it, and Oberwald's punching a hole in the Orc line. Now he's giving Burgg a good kicking, but perhaps that was a mistake – the Troll's only just eaten. Oh no. No! I can't watch, Bob, it's like a tidal wave of chunky vegetable soup!'



'First a face full of Troll puke, now Oberwald's knocked himself out running into Krundarz Rockjaw! He's going to hate the Cabalvision reruns of this match, Jim. But none of that matters, because Stikz has got the ball, and he's handed off to Zraccik. Burgg's lifted the Goblin up in the air for a long throw. This could steal the win! It's not tidy. Zraccik's flailing. Will he land? Ooh, that's got to hurt! I hope he didn't need his face.'



THUNDER
VALLEY
GREENSKINS

2 - 2

BÖGENHAFEN
BARONS

DRAW!



THE POST-GAME INTERVIEW

Rich and Jay join us in the commentators' box to discuss the first match of the new season and the unexpected draw that occurred. Perhaps a rematch is in order?



DENIED AT THE LAST MOMENT!

Rich: Well that was a classic Blood Bowl game right there! The Orcs did some punching, the Humans did some running, people got Knocked-out and thrown about, and it all ended in a nail-bitingly tense final drive – what more could you ask for? Seeing the new skills in play was also very interesting. Jay made really good use of Fend, holding my Orcs up so they couldn't make follow-up moves, and Wrestle proved invaluable for him a couple of times when his dice rolls let him down. Saying that, I didn't get to use many of my new skills such as Grab because none of Jay's players had Side Step, and my dice rolls were so good I only got to use Brawler once or twice. Sometimes that's just how the game goes, though. This time, the dice were very much on my side. Right up until the end that is. That final dice roll was down to a 50/50, and the little random cubes abandoned me right at the last second. Trolls need to learn to throw better.

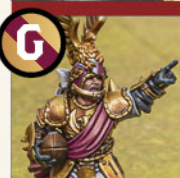


'Well it honestly couldn't have been any closer at the end there, Jim. What a disappointment for the Thunder Valley Greenskins. The end zone was in sight for a third touchdown, but that wayward throw cost them dearly.'

'Too right, Bob. And I've heard from the dugout that Zraccik has smashed both of his knees. The Goblin might have to be put down. I mean, retired. But what a great opening match to the season!'

PLAYERS OF THE MATCH

The Bloodweiser Players of the Match are Goblin Bruiser Lineman Stikz, who scored an impressive touchdown, and the renowned Griff Oberwald, who scored two.



A TOUGH FIRST MATCH OF THE SEASON

Jay: I think it's fair to say that I had a tough match! Right at the start I was really struggling against Rich's Orcish onslaught, but the Barons doggedly held in there and delayed that first touchdown by several turns, giving my players time to recover. Well, except number 12, Piotr Reikgürden – he may never play again!

The Imperial Nobles team has a very different style of play to regular Human teams, and it was great fun trying out their new skills. I was especially pleased with the Running Pass that I managed to pull off in the second half, enabling Griff to score his second touchdown of the match. Griff really was the star of the show for me, but then that is what he's paid for! It's just a shame he fluffed his last Blitz so badly. That could have (maybe) won me the game. I'm glad he got to knock down Varag, though. Even with a new season, some rivalries live on!

AERIAL ANOMALIES

The Imperial Navy takes great pride in its military assets, but every now and again, they do go missing. Sometimes an aircraft is salvaged by Orks and repurposed to join the Air Waaagh! Even worse is when Imperial pilots are convinced to fight for the Greater Good ...



This article presents optional rules for your games of Aeronautica Imperialis. Opposite, you can read new background explaining how xenos races manage to get their hands on Imperial aircraft, while over the page you will find rules allowing T'au Air Caste players to field Human Auxiliary craft, including Valkyries and Marauder Bombers.

You'll also find rules enabling Ork players to field looted Thunderbolts and Marauders in their Air Waaagh!, plus a few inspirational conversions should you wish to build some converted Ork aircraft of your own.

The use of the following rules should be agreed upon by all players before a game. Use of these rules during an event is at the discretion of the organiser, and all participants should be made aware of the inclusion of these rules in advance.

MORE AERIAL WARFARE

If you want to know more about Aeronautica Imperialis, then you can't go far wrong with the Wings of Vengeance boxed set, which includes all the rules you need to start playing, plus nine aircraft to get you started. There are also two supplements – *Rynn's World Air War* and *Taros Air War*, which between them feature complete rules for Imperial, Ork and T'au air fleets.



IMPERIALIS PRIMER: KNOW THY ENEMY

+++ CLEARANCE: CRIMSON +++
+++ FOR SENIOR OFFICER EYES ONLY +++
+++ UNAUTHORISED READERS MUST REPORT TO
THEIR NEAREST COMMISSARIAT +++

The glory of Humanity shines across the galaxy, for the wisdom passed down by the Emperor to his servants has served Mankind faithfully since he first bestrode the void. This ascendancy has, perhaps inevitably, drawn the ire of many foul xenos creatures who observe our work from afar with envy, an unforgivable sin absent from the hearts of all devout Emperor-fearing souls. While one can never perceive the mind of the xenos, and rightfully so for it is no doubt filled with lies, it is the duty of all loyal servants of the Imperium to remain vigilant of the threats they pose.

The perversion of Mankind's glorious technology is one such threat. Worlds across the Imperium have been blessed with the awe-inspiring silhouette of a flight of Thunderbolts crossing the skies and, as is their wont, many foul xenos now seek to acquire their own complement of these sublime feats of engineering for use within their armies or, in the more heinous of cases, inflict their own alterations on the Imperium's fine aircraft, an act that lies beyond a reasonable mind. The principal architects of such sins are the brutish greenskins and the fiendish T'au.

It has long been known that the greenskins are no better than the lowliest of scavengers, their armaments and war machines barely a match for the most technologically deprived feudal world. To compensate for such a flaw, the greenskins often 'loot' Imperial vehicles, decorating them with crude effigies and an overabundance of weapons in the foolish belief that such additions will grant them victory in the battles to come. The greenskins, not content with their own smoke-belching ramshackle aircraft, have reportedly stolen small numbers of Thunderbolts and Marauders which even now prowl the skies above war zones, seeking to claim the lives of the Imperial Navy's brave pilots.

Proper identification of such monstrosities is crucial to ensuring their destruction, and it remains the duty of all servants of the Imperium to bring righteous fury down upon these stolen aircraft. Two simple criteria exist for identifying such aircraft. The first, and most obvious, is the presence of scrap metal and crude weaponry welded to the hull of a Thunderbolt or Marauder Bomber. The pilot of such an aircraft is either a greenskin or a foul

heretic who has desecrated the aircraft, both of which should be punished with equal diligence. The second identifier is the erratic manoeuvring and complete disregard of ordained aerial formations characteristic of all greenskins, for they hold no knowledge of military precision and cannot compare to the grace of the Emperor's own Navy. As such stolen craft are often captured in battle and crudely repaired, the extermination of these aircraft is a simple task, though one that must be carried out with extreme diligence lest a single beast escape Imperial retribution.

Greater care should be taken during encounters with Imperial aircraft co-opted by the xenos strain known as the T'au, for the pilots are no mere xenos but the foulest of human heretics that have been tempted away from the Emperor's light by the false words of the perfidious xenos. In the foul tongue of the xenos such heretics are named as 'gue'vesa', and these loathsome traitors might be encountered on any human world occupied by the T'au during the reconquest of our rightful domains. Unlike the Imperial craft stolen by the greenskins, the gue'vesa aircraft are difficult to distinguish from loyal aircraft, for few modifications are made, as even these traitors, blinded though they are to the glory of the Imperium, know that Imperial designs are superior to all others. These heretics are kept on a short leash by their xenos puppet masters, making identification and elimination an easy prospect when they fly alongside xenos aircraft.

However, there are recorded examples of squadrons of gue'vesa operating solely with stolen aircraft. In such instances, discovery of these heretics can be achieved by the proper use of identification codes of which the traitors will have no knowledge. Additionally, gue'vesa aircraft will forgo the use of permitted Imperial markers, favouring the debased designs of their new overlords. Thus, due diligence should be conducted to ensure all friendly forces know the prescribed regulations and can identify those not following them. In war zones where gue'vesa are likely to be encountered, orders should be issued proclaiming the immediate destruction of any aircraft – regardless of their stated intentions – that display defaced or damaged Imperial sigils or have a complete lack of such icons, to protect against infiltration by xenos sympathisers.

+++ DEATH IN SERVICE TO THE EMPEROR IS ITS
OWN REWARD +++
+++ END OF REPORT +++

T'AU HUMAN AUXILIARY AIRCRAFT

USING T'AU HUMAN AUXILIARY AIRCRAFT IN YOUR GAMES

Representing T'au Human auxiliary aircraft in a T'au force is a simple matter. Whilst gue'vesa troops on the ground may be armed and armoured by their T'au masters, aircraft, though repainted to reflect their altered alignment, will invariably retain their Imperial design and armaments.

A T'au force may include one T'au Human Auxiliary aircraft for every five T'au aircraft in the force.

The type of Imperial aircraft that can be included as T'au Human Auxiliary aircraft in a T'au force, and the maximum number of each that can be included, is as follows:

TYPE OF IMPERIAL AIRCRAFT	MAXIMUM PERMITTED
Thunderbolt Fighter	0-2
Marauder Bomber	0-2
Lightning Strike Fighter	0-3
Avenger Strike Fighter	0-3
Valkyrie Assault Craft	0-4
Vendetta Assault Craft	0-4

AIRCRAFT UPGRADES AND ADDITIONAL WEAPONS

Any Imperial aircraft included in a T'au force may be given any Imperial Navy or Astra Militarum Aircraft Upgrade or Additional Weapons normally permitted to it at the points cost shown in the squadron list the aircraft belongs to. Imperial aircraft included in a T'au force cannot be given any T'au Air Caste Aircraft Upgrades and may not be armed with any additional weapons available to T'au aircraft.





LOOTED IMPERIAL AIRCRAFT

USING ORK LOOTED IMPERIAL AIRCRAFT IN YOUR GAMES

There are two main types of Imperial aircraft prized by Orks and looted for their own purposes. These are the ubiquitous Thunderbolt Fighter and the indomitable Marauder Bomber. Such aircraft will often retain much of their original weaponry and technology, but will be tinkered with and modified to improve their performance by their new Ork owners.

An Ork force may include one Looted Imperial aircraft for every five Ork aircraft in the force.

The only Imperial aircraft that can be looted by Orks are the Thunderbolt Fighter and Marauder Bomber. Other aircraft are often deemed too flimsy or too stupid looking to appeal to an Ork's taste!

Ork Looted Imperial aircraft have the following profiles:

ORK LOOTED THUNDERBOLT
CLASS: FIGHTER

23
POINTS

STRUCTURE	3	THROTTLE	2	MIN SPEED	2
TRANSPORT	-	ACE MANOEUVRES	1-6	MAX SPEED	6
FUEL	-	HANDLING	3+	MAX ALTITUDE	5

WEAPON	FIRE ARC	FPR	DMG	AMMO	SPECIAL
Quad Autocannon	Front	2-6-0	4+	UL	-
Twin Lascannon	Front	0-2-1	2+	UL	Extra Damage (6+)

Pilot
Crew

ORK LOOTED MARAUDER
CLASS: BOMBER

25
POINTS



STRUCTURE	5	THROTTLE	1	MIN SPEED	2
TRANSPORT	-	ACE MANOEUVRES	1-3	MAX SPEED	5
FUEL	-	HANDLING	4+	MAX ALTITUDE	5

WEAPON	FIRE ARC	FPR	DMG	AMMO	SPECIAL
Lascannon	Front	0-2-1	2+	UL	Extra Damage (6+)
Dorsal Turret	All Round, Up	3-2-0	5+	UL	Aerial Attack
Rear Turret	Rear	3-2-0	5+	UL	Tail Gunner, Aerial Attack
Bomb Bay	Rear	8-0-0	3+	3	Ground Attack, Extra Damage (5+)

Pilot
Crew

ADDITIONAL WEAPONRY

An Ork Looted Imperial Thunderbolt Fighter or an Ork Looted Imperial Marauder Bomber may be equipped with up to two additional weapons chosen from the following list at 2 points each.

	WEAPON	FIRE ARC	FPR	DMG	AMMO	SPECIAL
	Pair of Rokkits	Front	3-2-1	3+	1	
	Pair of Wing Bombs	Rear	4-0-0	2+	1	Ground Attack, Extra Damage (5+)

Additionally, an Ork Looted Imperial Marauder Bomber may be equipped with up to two additional weapons chosen from the following list at 4 points each, for a total of four additional weapons.

	WEAPON	FIRE ARC	FPR	DMG	AMMO	SPECIAL
	Pair of Big Bombs	Rear	6-0-0	2+	1	Ground Attack, Extra Damage (5+)



GOING OUT WITH A BANG!

Battle-scarred and bloodied, your gangs have fought a long and bitter war in the depths of the underhive. But now their campaign of violence and destruction has come to a head, and the strong must prove their mettle in the crucible of war. A legacy awaits!



END GAME NARRATIVE

Whichever kind of End Game you settle upon, it should feel like the conclusion of the campaign, as the most powerful gang or gangs make their final play for everlasting glory. This is a great opportunity for the Arbitrator to wrap up any plots or storylines they might have going on in their campaign, perhaps even working these into the scenario they want to run. Whatever the outcome, this is a chance for the gang or gangs to go out in a blaze of glory – and either win big or earn a one-way trip to the Corpse Grinders ...

It's been a wild ride punctuated with the thunder of guns, the screams of dying gangers and the occasional sump horror rampaging around eating everything in sight. The last bullets have been fired, the final creds spent and the dead fighters put to rest. Your Necromunda campaign is coming to an end. So what now? You could tally up the kills, victories and Gang Ratings, hand out the Triumphs and retire your battle-hardened fighters ... or you could give them a send-off worthy of Necromunda, and go out with stub guns blazing!

In this article, we explore the idea of the End Game scenario as a means to retire a gang. In Necromunda, how a gang goes out is, in many ways, more important than how it first enters the campaign, as this will be its legacy for years to come. It provides a satisfying finale for all involved and can be a chance to finally settle scores, take out those persistent rivals or silence those underhive horrors that may have been haunting the players. Perhaps, most importantly, it gives the most powerful gang a chance to prove once and for all just how tough they are and show off all that hard-won skill and firepower.

THE END IS NIGH

Eventually, one or more gangs are going to get ridiculously powerful (typically around sometime when their Gang Rating hits the 4,000 credits mark) – and this is when everyone knows it's probably time to give them a chance to go out with a bang by giving them their very own retirement scenario. For more guidance on when to retire a gang and how to go about it, refer to the Perpetual Campaigns article in *White Dwarf* from May 2019.

There are many ways to play out a gang's departure from a Necromunda campaign: bloody free-for-alls between gangs, pit fights between chosen champions, races to secure a treasure, an attempt to bring down a powerful monster or simply being the last gang standing as the hive falls apart around them. Presented here are some ideas for End Game situations, as well as guidelines on how they might be played out in your campaign, while on the following pages you will find three purpose-built End Game scenarios: The Last Round, Gateway to Hell and The Long Night. Will your gang emerge bloodied and triumphant, or will they go out with a bang?

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

The classic End Game pits the strongest gang (or gangs) against everyone else in the campaign. This only works if the gang(s) in question is very powerful, though not so much so that an alliance of all their enemies would not pose a significant challenge. This can be a fun ending to a campaign, as it gives the other players a chance to take on their friend's gang on an equal footing, while the player with the stronger gang can enjoy the power they have achieved without the need to hold back. Any scenario is suitable for this kind of End Game, but ones such as Last Stand or Ambush are particularly appropriate.

SUPER CYBORG ASSASSINS

A twist on the Murder Cyborg scenario from the *Necromunda Rulebook*, this kind of End Game has the powers-that-be sending a host of cybernetic killers down into the underhive to restore law and order (or simply just kill everyone). The players can work together or against each other, but there will be a Murder Cyborg for each gang on the loose, and the game only comes to a conclusion when all the Cyborgs are killed ... or the gangs are. Alternatively, the Murder Cyborgs might be chronogladiators turned assassins, and if they are not killed by the end of a set round, they explode!

DARKNESS FALLS

The environment itself is a great way to make a final battle memorable. This can mean using things like the Pitch Black rules from the *Necromunda Rulebook* or the various environmental effects from *Necromunda: The Book of Peril*. These kinds of hazards work best if they are progressive – perhaps the chamber the fight is taking place in is filling with water (or something a little nastier) and fighters must climb up or drown, or maybe the air is getting increasingly toxic and each round fighters must make Toughness checks or take Flesh Wounds. Either way, the battle is against the clock, and the gangs must try to kill each other before the underhive kills them all.

FINAL SANCTION

Similar to the Hive Riot, Final Sanction has a steady stream of Enforcers showing up to put down the gang violence. The Arbitrator could have all the gangs working together (or at least in a loose alliance until the danger has passed), while they control an equal number of Enforcer patrols in a massed gang battle. Alternatively, the scenario could focus on the gangs trying to destroy the last vestige of law and order in their section of the underhive, with the gangs gathering together to destroy a Precinct-fortress, with victory going to the gang which can take out the Enforcer Captain. The *White Dwarf* scenario Assault on Precinct-fortress 17 is a great example of this kind of End Game.

CRAWLING CRITTERS

Monsters, sump horrors and underhive critters are all staples of *Necromunda*. In *Crawling Critters*, the final battle takes place in the Badzones with the local fauna complicating matters. The Arbitrator could use the profile for Carrion Creatures from the *Fighter Down* scenario in the *Necromunda Rulebook*, or they could make up their own horrors. Perhaps the fight takes place in the lair of a gigantic monster, and the gangs must either try to be the first to take it out or conclude their battle without waking it from its slumber.

HIVE RIOT

An expansion of the Downtown Dust-up scenario found in the *Necromunda Rulebook*, a Hive Riot sees the final fight break out in a crowded underhive market, active factorum or other teeming environment. In addition to dealing with each other, the gangs must contend with hordes of bystanders (some of which might not be too happy that the gangs are starting a fight). The Arbitrator can use the rules for Hive Dwellers found in that scenario, but instead of them being activated as individuals they could be activated as groups – roll once for each group of fighters, using the Hive Dweller reaction table.

MULTI-PLAYER GAMES

End Game scenarios work best when they are multi-player games. While it might be appropriate for a single powerful gang to see if they can break free of the underhive, take down the local warlord or escape into the wastes, these games will be more memorable and more exciting if all the players have a stake in the outcome rather than watching from the sidelines. Fortunately, *Necromunda* is a game that lends itself well to multi-player games, and guidelines for running *Necromunda* with more than two players can be found in the *Necromunda Rulebook*, covering such things as determining Priority when there is more than two players and limiting the number of fighters each player can field in especially large games in order to keep the action moving. The End Game scenarios presented in this article are all designed with multi-player gaming in mind.

THE LAST ROUND

A powerful gang celebrates their final victory at a local drinking hole – only to discover the fight is not over yet ...

ATTACKER AND DEFENDER

In this scenario, one or more gangs are the attacker and one other gang is the defender. The defender is always the gang with the highest Gang Rating, and, while this scenario can be played one-on-one, it has been designed for a single powerful gang to face multiple, less powerful gangs.

BATTLEFIELD

This scenario uses the Battlefield Set-up guidelines as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook* with the following exceptions. The battle takes place in a drinking hole somewhere deep in the underhive, and so the battlefield should emulate this to some extent. Players should set up the battlefield so that there is an open area in the middle (roughly 12" across) to represent the taproom – this area should still have a reasonable amount of scatter terrain for fighters to hide behind (such as tables, crates and barrels). Surrounding this open area should be walls or other impassable terrain with at least two entrances covered by doors. The rest of the battlefield may be set up as normal.

CREWS

This scenario uses the standard rules for choosing a crew, as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*. Each of the attackers uses the Custom Selection (10) method to choose their crew, while the defender uses the Custom Selection method to choose – meaning they can field their entire gang. If there are three attackers, they each use the Custom Selection (7) method, while if there are four or more attackers, they each use the Custom Selection (5) method.

DEPLOYMENT

The attacker(s) set up their fighters anywhere within 6" of the edge of the battlefield, while the defender places their entire gang within the taproom (see Battlefield).

GANG TACTICS

Each player may choose two Gang Tactics from those available to their gang.

ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle ends when only one side (attacker or defender) has fighters remaining on the battlefield.

VICTORY

If the defender has at least one fighter that is not Seriously Injured remaining on the battlefield at the end of the battle, the defender is victorious. Otherwise, the attacker(s) are victorious.

OUTCOME

Win or lose, the defender's glorious run as the most powerful gang in the dome ends here: if they are victorious, they enjoy one last round of drinks (over the corpses of their rivals) before disappearing from the sector and into legend. Otherwise, they become permanent fixtures of the bar's decor ...

REWARDS

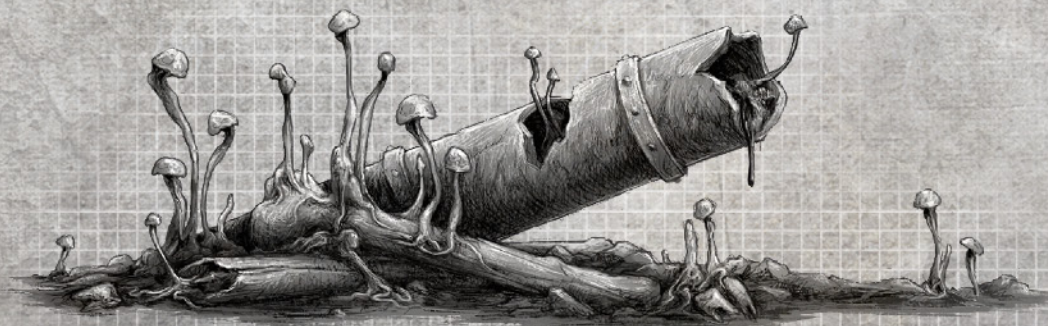
EXPERIENCE

Each attacking fighter that took part in the battle earns 1 XP.

REPUTATION

Each attacking gang gains 1 Reputation.

If the defender bottled out, each attacking gang gains an additional 1 Reputation.



LIMITED AMMO

Not only have the defenders been caught by surprise by the attack, they only have a limited supply of ammo to hand:

- For the duration of this scenario, all weapons carried by fighters in the defender's crew that do not have the Scarce trait gain the Scarce trait.
- For the duration of this scenario, all weapons carried by fighters in the defender's crew that have the Scarce trait replace it with the Limited trait.

In addition to being short on ammunition, the defenders haven't brought all of their firepower with them:

- Any weapons that have the Limited trait on their profile as normal cannot be used by fighters in the defender's crew, as they are considered to have been left in the gang's hideout.

ON THE CLOCK

The attackers might have caught out the defenders while they were not expecting it, but their gangs could easily lose their nerve – they are trying to take out the toughest gang around, after all!

In the End phase of the third round, and in the End phase of each round thereafter, every player rolls a D6. If, however, the Leader of an attacking gang is not present on the battlefield, or is Out of Action, Seriously Injured or Broken, that player does not roll a D6 for their gang.

Compare all the dice rolls:

- If at least one of the attackers' rolls is equal to or higher than the defender's roll, then all is well. The attackers have not lost their nerve and the attack continues.
- If, however, the defender's roll is higher than any one of the attacker's rolls, all of the attacking gangs must immediately remove D3 randomly selected fighters from the battlefield, as they lose their nerve and flee.

ARBITRATING THE SCENARIO

There are many ways for the Arbitrator to balance this scenario, either to make it more even for the attackers or to give the defenders more of a fighting chance.

If the attackers seem out-gunned, the Arbitrator could allow them to take on free Bounty Hunters or Hive Scum. An Enforcer patrol might show up to give them a hand, or a Guild entourage might offer an alliance just for the fight. The Arbitrator may wish to simply modify the attackers' crew size, increasing it as they see fit (and possibly decreasing it if lots of gangs have shown up to take on the defenders).

If the defenders are looking a little weak, the bar itself may have defences that can work in their favour, giving them some sentry guns to set up, or a friendly Ogryn bouncer for protection. If the Arbitrator just wants to add to the chaos, the bar could be on fire – smoke giving everyone a -2 modifier to hit with ranged weapons and in each End phase D3 random fighters on each side must test to see if they catch fire just as if they had been hit by a weapon with the Blaze trait!

A variation of this scenario could pit the Arbitrator against all the gang Leaders in the campaign. Each player starts with just their Leader as one of the defenders drinking in the bar, while the Arbitrator takes on the role of the attacker and throws Enforcers, outlaws, plague zombies, or whatever else they want against them.

GATEWAY TO HELL

A gang tries to escape from the authorities into the wastes – though the hive will not let them go so easily.

ATTACKER AND DEFENDER

In this scenario, one or more gangs are the attacker and one other gang is the defender. The defender is always the gang with the highest Gang Rating, and, while this scenario can be played one-on-one, it has been designed for a single powerful gang to face multiple, weaker gangs.

BATTLEFIELD

This scenario uses the Battlefield Set-up guidelines, as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*. After the battlefield has been set up, the defender chooses one battlefield edge to represent the Ash Gate (see opposite).

CREWS

This scenario uses the standard rules for choosing a crew, as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*. The attacker uses the Custom Selection (10) method to choose their crew, while the defender uses the Custom Selection method to choose – meaning they can field their entire gang. If there are three attackers, they each use the Custom Selection (7) method, while if there are four or more attackers, they each use the Custom Selection (5) method.

DEPLOYMENT

The defender places their entire crew anywhere within 6" of the centre of the battlefield. Then the attacker(s) sets up their fighters anywhere on the battlefield. Attacking fighters must be set up at least 9" away from any defending fighters and out of line of sight if possible.

GANG TACTICS

Each player may choose two Gang Tactics from those available to their gang.

ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle will end either at the end of round 9, or when the defender has less than a third (rounding down) of their crew remaining on the battlefield, or when only one gang has fighters remaining on the battlefield.

VICTORY

If at least a third (rounded down) of the defender's fighters managed to escape the battlefield via the Ash Gate battlefield edge, they are victorious. Otherwise, their attacker(s) are victorious.

OUTCOME

Win or lose, the defender's days are numbered: if they are victorious, they head out into the wastes (perhaps starting their own settlement or rising to rule an ash wastes tribe). If they fail in their bid to escape the hive, well, the gears of the great gate aren't greased by oil alone ...

REWARDS

EXPERIENCE

Each attacking fighter that took part in the battle earns 1 XP.

REPUTATION

Each attacking gang gains 1 Reputation.

If the defender bottled out, each attacking gang gains an additional 1 Reputation.

THE ASH GATES

The gangs are fighting in the shadow of one of the great ash gates that ring the base of the hive. The defender must hold out until this mighty seal opens enough for them to make their escape – though this wait, and the approach to the gate itself, are not without peril as the gates are well-defended and the mechanisms that work them are potentially deadly.

ASH CLOUDS

As the Ash Gate opens, clouds of choking, blinding dust roll into the hive, driving some fighters to the ground and reducing visibility.

In the End phase of the third round, the Ash Gate begins to open. In this End phase, and each subsequent End phase, all fighters within 12" of the Ash Gate battlefield edge (as described previously) and with a line of sight to that battlefield edge, must make a Strength check:

- If this check is failed, they are moved D6" directly away from the Ash Gate battlefield edge, blown by the strong winds (note they will stop if they come into contact with impassable terrain, but this movement may cause them to fall off ledges).
- Once this movement is complete, the fighter must make an Initiative check. If this check is failed, they become Pinned by the strong winds (note that fighters that passed their Strength check do not risk being Pinned).

Additionally, at the end of the third round, and at the end of each subsequent round, visibility across the battlefield becomes reduced as the ash clouds thicken:

ASH STORM VISIBILITY

Round	Maximum Visibility
3	36"
4	24"
5	18"
6	12"
7	9"
8+	The Pitch Black rules are in effect

ESCAPING THE BATTLEFIELD

During their activation, a fighter can attempt to escape the battlefield via the Ash Gate, if their movement takes them into contact with that edge of the battlefield.

Roll 2D6 and subtract the fighter's Strength from the roll:

- If the result is equal to or less than the number of the current round, the fighter escapes and is removed from the battlefield.
- If the result is higher than the number of the current round, the fighter suffers a Strength 4, Damage 1, AP - hit and is moved D6" directly away from the Ash Gate battlefield edge.

ARBITRATING THE SCENARIO

As noted previously, the Arbitrator may wish to modify the attacker's crew size, increasing it as they see fit (and possibly decreasing it if lots of gangs have shown up to take on the defenders).

In addition, this scenario is ideal for an end of campaign, multi-player battle that pits all the surviving gangs against the Arbitrator. Enforcers, Guild watchmen, Bounty Hunters, plague zombies, Redemptionists, hive critters, Murder Cyborgs or anything else the Arbitrator has in their collection come on each round from the battlefield edge opposite the Ash Gate edge. These adversaries then keep on coming until either the gangs escape through the gate or the battle ends. The Arbitrator might even run the scenario in reverse, with the gangs fighting amongst themselves as enemies pour in from the wastes, and they must hold out as the gate slowly begins to close – reduce the enemies arriving each round – and the hive's air scrubbers clear away the dust and restore visibility.

THE LONG NIGHT

Gangs must fight to survive a sector-wide shutdown, battling darkness, cold, critters and each other until the artificial dawn comes.

BATTLEFIELD

This scenario uses the Battlefield Set-up guidelines, as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*.

CREWS

This scenario uses the standard rules for choosing a crew, as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*. All players use the Custom Selection (10) method to choose their crew, with the exception of the player whose gang has the highest Gang Rating, who may field their entire gang. If there are four gangs they each use Custom Selection (7) method, while if there are five or more gangs they each use Custom Selection (5) method – once again with the exception of the players whose gang has the highest Gang Rating, who may field their entire gang.

DEPLOYMENT

This scenario uses the standard rules for deployment, as described in the *Necromunda Rulebook*.

GANG TACTICS

Each player may choose two Gang Tactics from those available to their gang.

ENDING THE BATTLE

The battle will end either at the end of round 9 or when only one gang has fighters remaining on the battlefield.

VICTORY

The gang with the most fighters remaining on the battlefield at the end of the battle is victorious.

OUTCOME

Win or lose, this long night will mark the passing of a gang into legend. If the gang with the highest Gang Rating wins this scenario, they have survived the Long Night and will wander off into the dark of the underhive, never to be seen again (though tales will be told about them for some time). If they lose, well, the bones of the great look much like everyone else's!

REWARDS

EXPERIENCE

Each attacking fighter that took part in the battle earns 1 XP.

REPUTATION

Each attacking gang gains 1 Reputation.

If the defender bottled out, each attacking gang gains an additional 1 Reputation.

DEEPEST DARKNESS, FREEZING COLD

In an act of desperation, or perhaps local sabotage, power to this entire section of the hive has been shut down. Darkness descends as lumens fail, cold sets in as thermal vents close, and critters gather as automated settlement defences power down.

This scenario uses the Pitch Black rules from the *Necromunda Rulebook*. In addition, such are the plummeting temperatures, fighters are in danger of succumbing to the numbing cold if they do not keep moving. If a fighter does not perform at least one Move (Simple) or Charge (Double) action during their activation, they must take a Toughness check at the end of the activation:

- If this check is passed, the fighter is able to ward off the biting cold.
- If this check is failed, the fighter immediately suffers a Flesh Wound.

Fighters that are currently on fire (i.e., fighters that are subject to the Blaze condition), do not need to make this check. Running around and rolling on the ground as they attempt to put the flames out keeps them warm enough.

MONSTERS EVERYWHERE

With the darkness comes the monsters, and in the darkness of the underhive, there are many monsters.

When a player activates a fighter, they must roll two D6. Choose the higher of the two rolls and consult the table below:

D6 Result

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 1 | The fighter suffers a Strength 6 hit with an AP of -1 and a Damage of 2. If they are Seriously Injured as a result, they are dragged away into the darkness and taken Out of Action. |
| 2-3 | A nightmarish creature emerges from the shadows, seeking easy prey. The fighter cannot make any actions during this activation as they are too busy fighting for their life. |
| 4-5 | The fighter hesitates, hearing a noise in the darkness. They can only make one action this turn. |
| 6 | The fighter goes unnoticed and can act normally. |

In addition, in each End phase, after making Recovery rolls, each player must roll a D6 for each of their fighters that is Seriously Injured. On a 4+, that fighter is dragged off into the dark and goes Out of Action.

ARBITRATING THE SCENARIO

Instead of, or in addition to, the rules presented above, the Arbitrator may choose to add actual monsters to the darkness. These can be almost anything the Arbitrator can imagine, from swarms of hive rats or plague zombies, to crawling xenos horrors or even warped Daemons. Players with access to *Necromunda: The Book of Ruin* could use its section on Scenario Complications.

These monsters should act as fighters controlled by the Arbitrator, and can move and attack in the End phase.

For added horror, the Arbitrator can have these monsters appear and disappear from one round to the next, the players never quite sure where or when they will show up.

SHADOW AND FLAME

This month, we join Jay Clare from the Middle-earth team as he delves deep into his knowledge of the Strategy Battle Game and talks about one of the deadliest and most feared creatures in all of Middle-earth – the Balrog of Morgoth!



JAY CLARE

Though he tends to lean more towards the Good factions in Middle-earth, every now and then Jay gets tempted to use the minions of the Dark Lord. As a matter of fact, for his first Grand Tournament back in 2009, Jay used a Moria Goblin army and he has been adding to it ever since!

The Balrog is perhaps the most dangerous and powerful creature in Middle-earth. Certainly, when the Fellowship encounter this Demon of the ancient world as they venture through Moria, Gandalf the Grey instructs them to flee rather than stand and fight as he claims this foe is beyond any of them, and with good reason ...

Just over a thousand years prior to the Fellowship encountering the Balrog, it had been awoken from its slumber by the Dwarves of Khazad-dûm digging too greedily and too deep in search of treasure. Awakening the Balrog spelt certain doom for the Dwarves; Goblins teemed from the depths of the mountain, and the creature wretched in shadow and flame crushed all who stood before it. This included the mighty Dwarf king, Durin VI, and it came to be known by the Dwarves as Durin's Bane from that time onwards.

Though the Dwarves put up a valiant fight against the Balrog, the sheer might of the creature saw the kingdom of Khazad-dûm abandoned as those who resided there fled or were slain. This also gave rise to a new name for Khazad-dûm, at least in Elvish. It became known as Moria, which means 'the Black Chasm' in that particular tongue.

Unsurprisingly, in the Strategy Battle Game, the Balrog is an incredible force to be reckoned with; fearsomely strong and possessing some incredibly powerful special rules befitting of a Demon of its terrifying nature. However, using the Balrog in your games isn't necessarily as straightforward as you may first expect; so I thought I would take a look at some tactics for using the Balrog on the tabletop and how to get the best from this dread servant of Morgoth and unleash both shadow and flame upon the enemies of the Dark Lord!

SWORDS ARE NO MORE USE HERE

The Balrog has, arguably, the best statline in the game. With a whopping Fight value of 10 – the highest of any model in the Strategy Battle Game – 4 Attacks, and a monstrous Strength of 9, the Balrog is a truly formidable foe that even the very best fighters will struggle to take on in a straight fight. You will want to ensure that you are getting it directly into the fray as quickly as possible to ensure you can make the most of its truly impressive statline. In the unlikely event that an opponent does manage to beat the Balrog in a duel, they will struggle to damage it thanks to its Defence of 9 and 10 Wounds. With this in mind, you can get the Balrog stuck into enemy lines without much risk of it being wounded and giving away precious Victory Points.

Often, the tactic that most players will turn to in order to deal with such monsters is to bombard them with Magical Powers to render them unable to attack, or make their abilities useless. However, such tactics are significantly harder against a creature such as the Balrog. With a total of 10 Will points, and Resistant to Magic, the Balrog has a very good chance of being able to shrug off any Magical Powers directed towards it, and so is perfect for sending towards enemy magic users in order to stop them casting powers at the rest of your force.

Naturally, you will want to get the Balrog into combat as soon as possible and start cutting huge swathes through an enemy army. However, with a Move value of 6", it may seem like it will struggle to get close to an opposition force if they, quite sensibly, back away from it. Well, this fiery Demon has a trick up its shadowy sleeve!

The Balrog is able to conjure its Fiery Lash and whip it towards the foe. This has a range of 8" and any model hit, but not slain, is dragged into base contact with the Balrog! This is perfect for picking off troublesome Heroes or multi-wound models hiding behind enemy lines. If it does manage to get into combat this way, the Balrog can declare a Heroic Combat each turn, for free. If successful, the Balrog can then move again and get right into enemy lines, potentially moving up to 12" a turn!

The Balrog causes Terror, and also has Ancient Evil. Courage reduction rules are great as they can halt more foes from charging your Terror-causing models, but also mean that enemy models are more likely to flee once broken – just make sure that the Balrog is in range once an enemy force breaks and watch them flee the battlefield in terror! Oh, and any special rule that would slay it outright will only inflict half its Wounds rather than killing it – the Balrog really is an incredibly tough foe to face on the battlefield!

BAT SWARM

One way to try to tackle the Balrog is to throw Heroes into combat with it and then declare a Heroic Strike to try to match its Fight value. To prevent this, use a Bat Swarm to charge any Heroes who try this. Bat Swarms halve the Hero's Fight value after the Heroic Strike, so they can only be a maximum of Fight 5, and at the mercy of the Balrog!



Below: Awoken from its slumber by the delving of the Dwarves, the Balrog unleashes its fury upon the kingdom of Khazad-dûm, earning name Durin's Bane.





Above: The Balrog leads the Goblins of Moria as they chase the Fellowship. Though they fear the Demon, they will do its bidding to ensure they don't feel its fiery wrath.

MORIA GOBLIN CAPTAIN

You might be thinking, 'How can a lowly Goblin Captain aid the mighty Balrog?'. Well, the Balrog doesn't have any Might points so the Captain is a cheap source of Might to run behind and declare important Heroic Moves or Heroic Marches to get the Balrog into the fight quicker!



WHAT IS THIS NEW DEVILRY?

Last month, the *Quest of the Ringbearer* supplement was released, which contained the Depths of Moria Legendary Legion. This is an army list that provides massive benefits to the Balrog, and gives plenty for players to get their teeth stuck into. Whilst the Legendary Legion cannot take any named Goblin Heroes, Bat Swarms or Warg Marauders, it does have plenty of ploys that more than make up for that – and the Balrog is the key to how this Legendary Legion plays.

The Balrog is compulsory to this list, and therefore will always be the leader due to the fact that it is a Hero of Legend – great for scenarios such as Contest of Champions or To the Death!

Moria armies often have two major weaknesses: their warriors die easily, making the army easy to break, and the fact that Goblins have a low Fight value. Well, in the Legendary Legion, the Balrog gives Goblins +1 Fight value whilst nearby, a handy boost against many armies. Also, a Depths of Moria force cannot be Broken whilst the Balrog has 6 or more Wounds remaining, meaning that if an opponent wants to break your force in order to try to make your Goblins flee the board, they will need to go through the Balrog to do so!

Another benefit is that the effects of Moria Goblin Drums increase to battlefield wide, representing the booming sounds which the Fellowship hear echoing throughout the Black Chasm. This is a huge benefit, giving all your Goblins a re-roll in every fight they are in. If you can engineer it for a Goblin to join the same fight as the Balrog, it will not only provide an extra dice to the fight, but you will be able to re-roll it, making the odds of losing the Duel roll very slim indeed!

Don't worry though, the Moria Goblins don't get all the fun! The Balrog gets some pretty powerful benefits from the Legendary Legion in the form of two special rules: 'Shadow ...', '... and Flame'. The Shadow ... special rule means that the Balrog is only hit by shooting on a 5+. You can worry less about arrows or, more importantly, Siege Engines and simply race the Balrog straight towards the fight! The ... and Flame special rule allows the Balrog to wreath itself in flame and, once per game, Set Ablaze an enemy model within 3"; however, in doing so it will make itself far more visible and so will no longer benefit from the Shadow ... special rule. For me, this rule is used best for inflicting that last Wound on a Hero without being in a fight with them, allowing you to plough into the rest of the opposition force.

MASTER OF GOBLINS

The Balrog doesn't just have a slew of special rules and abilities that make it the huge threat that it is; it is also pivotal for commanding the horde of Moria Goblins, and you can build your force around this.

As part of the Depths of Moria Legendary Legion, the Balrog provides a bonus of +1 Fight value to friendly Goblins within 6". This makes your Moria Goblins Fight 3, whilst the likes of Moria Goblin Prowlers and Moria Goblin Captains become Fight 4! I don't need to tell you how important Fight value is, just make sure to keep the bulk of your Goblins within 6" to get the most out of this.

However, perhaps the most important benefit the Balrog confers to its Goblin allies is its Goblin Mastery special rule. This means that friendly Moria Goblin models within 12" of the Balrog automatically pass Courage tests. This is a hugely important boon for any Moria player. Goblins have notoriously poor Courage values (usually 2), and the importance of having them always pass so long as they remain in range of the Balrog cannot be understated. Suddenly, your Goblins will not flee if your army breaks, and can charge those Terror-causing enemies that are usually an issue for Goblins, allowing the Balrog to get stuck into combat – what it does best!



A TRULY TERRIFYING FOE

It should come as no surprise that the Balrog excels in any scenario that focuses on killing the enemy army. Scenarios such as To the Death! and Lords of Battle are great for the Balrog as it can lay waste to large swathes of an enemy force, claiming plenty of Victory Points as it does so.

However, its best scenarios are probably Fog of War, where it can pick out enemy Heroes with its Fiery Lash, and Contest of Champions as, let's be honest, it's going to take a Hero of similar martial prowess to hope to contend with this Demon of the ancient world!

Overall, the Balrog is an absolute powerhouse in the Strategy Battle Game. However, it takes a bit more than simply throwing it into a fight to win your games. With no Might points of its own, the Balrog needs to roll well to ensure it can keep slaying its foes – though with 4 Attacks this won't be too difficult!

The Balrog really is a fantastic model to use on the tabletop. Few other Heroes are as resilient and can deal out as much damage as this hulking creature. If you are looking for a big, powerful model to get stuck straight into the fray, then I highly recommend the Balrog – especially as part of the Depths of Moria Legendary Legion. It really is a blast to use in your games!

FAITH & FIRE

BY JAMES SWALLOW

In the concluding part of this epic tale, Viktor LaHayn's plan comes to fruition. Will he become the greatest psyker in the known galaxy, or will Sisters Miriya and Verity find the faith and fire they need to stop him? Find out in Part IX of IX.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The sound of gunfire drew them in, the last pointless defences of the engine chamber echoing down the hellish corridor to the cable car dock. Grim-faced, Miriya led her Sisters over the ugly wreckage of the iron doors; it was only then, when they were inside the cavernous hall itself, that they saw where the blood-coloured illumination was coming from. Rising above the torn remains of the dead tenders, of the butchered prisoner pyrokenes and the golden stump of the command pulpit, the great circling rings of the engine hurtled around one another in defiance of gravity. Miriya and the other women were struck silent by the sight of the machine. The thunderous roars of white energy crackling about it were mesmerising. In coils of actinic blue, strings of text in High Gothic emerged along the faces of the rings, detaching themselves to float in the air like windblown leaves. A rumbling pulse throbbed from the shifting planes of metal at the core of the impossible construction, and with every falling beat the Sororitas could hear the wailing, plaintive cries of a man.

Vaun. The sound of his voice chilled her to the bone. It was not the arrogant, brutal confidence she had come to expect from the psyker, but a horrific cry of terror, as if his very soul were being stripped from his body.

The open flue of the volcano seared the air with great wavering sheets of heat, beating at their bare skin and sluicing sweat from their bodies. Miriya shook her head to break the spell of the fantastic machine and shouted commands to her Sisters. They reacted unhurriedly, blinking with lizard slowness.

'Verity, Isabel, remain here. Cassandra, you and I will approach the... the device...' Miriya checked the charge glyph on her plasma pistol and frowned. The weapon was close to exhaustion.

'With respect,' ventured Cassandra, 'we need every able hand!' She gestured at the dead strewn about them. 'In smaller numbers, we guarantee we will share their fate!'

'Aye,' Isabel added, 'I'll not stand back and watch. The nursemaid can see to me if I falter!'

Miriya glanced at Verity. 'What say you, Hospitaller?'

But the sight of the machine entranced the golden-haired woman. 'Look,' she said, raising her hand to point. 'The deacon...'

The Sister Superior heard the resonance of LaHayn's voice carry to her and her face paled. 'God-Emperor, no... Please, no! He has already begun!' She was ashen. '*We are too late!*'



'Release me!' screamed the psyker, every cell in body alive with crackling energy that poured into him from the warp. 'The power...'

'Power?' mocked LaHayn, dragging himself to the top of his podium. 'But that's what you wanted, isn't it, dear Torris? Power beyond all avarice, power to rape, murder and pillage across the galaxy? Now you can taste it all!'

Torris Vaun cried out in agony, slamming himself against the seamless cowl of metal holding him inside the spinning rings.

'Tell me how it feels, little man,' demanded the deacon, his eyes locked on the pain-wracked face of his former apprentice. 'What is it like to be a vessel too small to hold the magnificent potential of the empyrean?' He laughed. 'The suffering must be unspeakable.' He moved levers and dials that had not been touched in over ten millennia, shifting the huge mass of the engine in place. In turn, the throbbing hum of power drawn from the raging magma lake below them increased, feeding the ancient mechanism's needs.

'You are such a fool, Torris,' said the priest-lord. 'I am almost saddened by the way I was able to draw you to me. How strange to think that on some level, I actually hoped you might be able to best me! I suppose that is the forlorn hope of every teacher, is it not? That their prize student will one day exceed them?'

'Hate you!' spat Vaun. 'Heartless!' He tried to muster the fire in his mind, but every ounce of raw flame he could call upon was instantly sucked away into the raging white discharges about him.

'Oh, you wound me!' retorted LaHayn, clutching at the very real injury in his gut. 'But never again. Like the errant son you are, you came back to have your revenge on the father figure in your pathetic, wasted life! Blinded by your greed, your mindless desire for anarchy! Never once did you suspect that it was because I wished it!' He shouted the words. 'You are here because I let you come, boy! I stayed the hand of the Sororitas on Groombridge, I allowed you to come here and play your foolish games with Sherring!'

Vaun shook his head. 'Liar!' His fists balled in helpless anger.

'Hard to accept, isn't it?' LaHayn coughed and dabbed blood from his lips. 'But it is the truth. I knew I would never bring you home by capture or coercion. I had to make you think it was all *your* idea!' He propped himself up on the lip of the podium. 'Who do you think it was that ensured Sherring discovered the location of the Keep? Who was it that let him get away with his corruption of the *Mercutio's* crew and the secret arming of his forces in Metis? I did, you dupe! You gave me the excuse to destroy my most troublesome rival into the bargain!' The priest smiled, showing blood-flecked teeth. 'I want you to understand this, my boy. Every freedom you have ever enjoyed, every liberty and choice you think you had, all of it has been by my permission! Each day of your pathetic life, from the moment you took my hand outside that burning church, you have travelled only as far as my leash about your neck will permit-' LaHayn's words cascaded into a hacking, painful cough. When he looked up again, a steely hate coiled in his eyes. 'You were my greatest triumph, Torris. The strongest, the most powerful psychic killer I had ever fostered - but you are *nothing* compared to what I will become. You have outgrown your usefulness, and it is time for the tool to perform its final task.' He threw open his hands. 'The engine is ready, after a hundred thousand lifetimes - and you are the spark that will ignite it!'

'Never!' screamed Vaun, reaching into himself to pull every last iota of destructive energy from within. 'Never, *never*, NEVER!'

The engine howled with sympathetic feedback, and to the deacon's shock, the rings released immense hammers of flaming psy-fire to the four corners of the black stone chamber.



Each planet has its legends of the apocalypse, the roots of superstition stretching back through past to the cradle of mankind. Some spoke of murderous solar explosions, others of eternal winters or heavenly raptures that would scour worlds clean; on Neva the myth of destruction was one of fire and brimstone. The parables left behind by the long-dead first colonists foretold of a horrific day when the magma core of the planet would rage out of control and shatter continents with eruptions of molten rock.

Torris Vaun's mind held onto those visions of catastrophe as his towering rage boiled inside him. The tight confines of the machine throne coiled about his body, tightening around his skin and pressing invisible force into his brain - but at the same time, the resonating engine was filling him with impossible power, charging his crude flesh with reserves of psychic potential beyond anything he could comprehend. His mind was drowning in a screaming sea of churning, raw emotion, the spinning rings slowly forming a conduit through him into the soul-shattering madness of warp space. Vaun's thoughts were slipping away from him, the matter of his skin and bone becoming less and less defined as the machine absorbed him. In moments, he would become a shade, a ghost of the man he was now. With sudden, blinding clarity he understood what was happening to him, what it was that LaHayn had conspired to do; in the crudest, most basic sense the ancient psionic device was no different from any other engine. To fully bring itself to optimal capacity, it required a spark of ignition - a scrap of human kindling to set it running to full power.

You are the spark. The priest-lord's words echoed in the blazing halls of his mind. It was inconceivable for Vaun to contemplate that the energy surging about him was only the primer for the engine's true millionfold capacity. He tried in vain to hold the thought in his mind but the conception of it slipped away, leaking out. The psyker was drowning in sunfire, dying by degrees as the killing light subsumed him. The fear and terror at his predicament were burning out of Vaun, leaving nothing in their place but raging anger, at LaHayn, at himself, at the Battle Sisters and his hated homeworld. The murderous loathing rose up like a black tide as he accepted the brutal truth - he had been used, played like an instrument by that unspeakable old monster, turned to do the deacon's mad bidding even when he believed that his life was his own. And now he was going to die for his mentor, he would vanish and disintegrate into pure psychic energy so that LaHayn could take the power of the engine for himself.

Vaun allowed himself one last moment of regret; he had forged such great plans from the day he had learned of the psi-engine's existence. The psyker pirate wanted to turn it to his own cause, to make himself unstoppable against the Inquisition or any other foes that would stand against him. He did not care about the wars between LaHayn's precious Emperor or the mad beasts of the Chaos Gods - all he wanted was to aggrandise himself, to plunder any world he cared for and shatter those that displeased him. All that was ashes now, and in moments he would be too.

He thought of the boy Ignis, dead now, his face lit with callous glee at the thought of a planet's death. *I'll give you that, lad*, he told the ghost-memory, *we'll have revenge yet.*

Below on the pulpit, LaHayn wheezed and shouted something angry and incoherent. The damnable priest could see Vaun's refusal to go quietly reflected in the flashing dials of his arcane console. The psyker forced a

laugh out of the necrotic flesh of his throat and drew inward, gathering in the very last mental embers of his own violent identity. The spinning rings clattered against each other with showers of sparks; the engine was not designed to hold an unwilling sacrifice.

Vaun let the memories of those ancient death-myths fill him; and with one final effort, he plunged his raging spirit into the thundering magma core and let it loose.



Without warning, the black earth around them rang like a struck gong. The Canoness stumbled and barely regained her footing, one of her Celestians snapping out a hand to steady her. In annoyance she shook off the woman's grip and barked out a command. 'Report!'

Her words barely carried over the sullen, grinding rumble of rock on rock, and high over their heads loose basalt pebbles flickered and shifted.

'Seismic activity,' came the voice from the command vehicle. 'Auspex detects energy surges inside the Keep.'

The cracking of stone broke around them and Galatea threw herself aside as fissures cleaved the ground around her. She watched in mute horror as a shallow pinnacle of black rock detached itself from the sheer valley wall and dropped into the midst of a Dominion squad. The Battle Sisters were not given enough time to scream. Others threw themselves from the path of tumbling boulders and avalanches of dark sand. Those too slow to react paid with their lives.

Ahead of them, the open maw where the Keep's broad iron portcullis had been breached ground against itself, shedding a rain of dusty particles. For a moment it seemed as if the tremors were falling; but then they rose again, twice as powerful.

'It's getting worse,' said the Celestian at her side, voicing the Canoness's thoughts for her.

Galatea tabbed the control stud that changed the vox channel and broke into the frequency used by the transport flyers; they were still close by, orbiting on station. 'Heed me,' she snapped, 'pilots report, what do you see up there?' She turned her face to the fallow sky and frowned. Something seemed wrong about the clouds around the citadel. They were moving even though there was little wind, spinning into odd, ring-like formations.

'Eruptions in all quadrants.' The flat voice of a flight servitor informed her without emotion or inflection. 'Pyroclastic flows sighted in several areas. Volcanic disturbance increasing exponentially.'

'Impossible!' snarled the Sororitas. 'This zone is seeded with magma stabilisers. There hasn't been an eruption on Neva for a thousand years!'

'It appears we are overdue, then,' Galatea's eyes narrowed. She could see it now, hazy and gossamer waves in the air as plumes of heat might rise from a campfire. They radiated out from the tower to all points, and with each new pulse the rasping earth twitched again. A distant crash of noise reached them in the black arroyo as another peak some miles distant blew itself apart, the upper quarter of the jagged stone tooth disappearing into a vast blot of grey ash. Sulphurous fumes turned her, coughing, from the fractures in the ground; within them she saw the dim glow of lava marching inexorably upward.

'What is happening in there?' She asked the question aloud, not just of herself but also of the shuddering mass of the stony fortress.

'Your grace?' The Celestian gave her a searching look. 'Shall we go on?'

Galatea's order was on the tip of her tongue when a fresh shudder ran through the stone and earth. With a sound that drove nails of pressure into their ears, the rock beneath the treads of a fully loaded Rhino troop carrier gave way. The slab-like armoured vehicle skidded against the tilting plane of ground it lay upon, jets of smoke blasting from the exhaust pipes as the driver tried to fight the sudden incline. Women threw themselves off the roof and leapt as best they could from open hatches, but in grotesque slow motion the tank sank backward into the crevice with a howl of tortured steel. Half a dozen Battle Sisters, dead in the blink of an eye.

The earth's torment did not lessen; now it moved like something alive, trembling and shaking. Galatea staggered again as she shouted into the general command channel. 'All who hear, heed me! Fall back from the Keep! All Sisters are to withdraw in skirmish lines, no delays, fleet of foot!' She threw a nod to her guardians and the Celestians drew close to her. 'Pilots, execute recovery operation immediately!'

There was a dull reply from one of the coleopters. 'Landing zone is unstable. We may not be able to make a touch-down-'

'You'll do it, or by Katherine's eyes I'll see you whipped!' The retort ripped at her throat with each breath of tainted, hellish air. 'I'll sacrifice no more Sisters to this blighted place!' Galatea panted and coughed. Her troops were already donning their Sabbath-pattern helmets and she did the same, sealing out the foul atmosphere. Inside her armour, a blessed draught of recycled air came to her and she swallowed it with a wheeze. Her optics caught sight of a flyer dropping low, thrusters flaring through the spreading drab haze. She waved a squad bearing injured women past her, once again shifting her vox frequency to the select channel used by the Imperial Navy. 'Mercutio, respond. This is Canoness Galatea, notae gravis!'

'Mercutio,' came the cool tones of the warship's commander. 'We are monitoring your situation from our orbit at high anchor, milady. Is there business for us?'

'Aye,' she replied. 'The church has need of you.'



'What are you doing?' bellowed the deacon. 'You cannot dare to defy me! This is the will of your God!' He spat with bilious anger, blood flecking his lips, pain knifing him in the stomach. The gold and brass frame of the pulpit shuddered with every humming pulse of misdirected power that flashed from the clashing rings. Furious with frustration, LaHayn slammed his fists against the ornate panel before him. This was not supposed to happen! The subject was supposed to die quietly, willingly, giving up their mind-essence to set the engine to speed!

'Curse you, Vaun, you arrogant insect!' About the chamber, stone pillars fell into rubble and elaborate obsidian statues ten millennia old were dashed to pieces. Through the open gates to the Keep's volcanic core, the leaden lake of magma was alive with crashes of escaping gas and heavy, torpid waves.

'No,' the psyker's words were distorted and lengthened, pulled like tallow into a dull drone. 'Curse *you*.'

LaHayn could make him out in the depths of the energy nimbus, a pale and paper-thin shade of the insolent rebel that had faced him in the Lunar Cathedral; and yet still he resisted him! From the corner of his eye, the priest-lord saw movement on the floor of the engine chamber, but disregarded it. The last of Vaun's pathetic band of escapees or some surviving member of his own servant cadre? It mattered nothing to him now. He pulled at a nest of bronze levers and the pulpit lurched forward, a coiled armature unfolding beneath it. The golden podium came up and into the edge of the aura field, setting showers of sparks glowing in the air.

'Destroy it all,' moaned Vaun. 'Revenge. *Beaten you*.'

'Never,' snarled the deacon, coiling the line of an onyx rosary in his hand. It was difficult; his blood slicked his fingers and made the links slippery. 'Not by a wastrel... witch like you! You're just the ember to prime the pump!' At last he pulled the box-shaped holdout gun into his grip, clasping the ornate surface. With infinite care, he aimed the ornamental weapon at his old pupil's face. 'No escape this time.' LaHayn's thumb pressed down on a bejewelled trigger button and the little gun released a hollow thunderclap.

LaHayn heard the crackle as Vaun desperately tried to thicken the air between the muzzle and his skull; he saw the recognition of failure dawn on those pallid features; and with a grating shout of victory, he basked in the glorious moment of the kill. The psycannon bolt lanced through Vaun's fading mental shields as if they were nothing more than cloth. It entered his skull through the nasal cavity and travelled into the meat of his brain, shedding needles as it did. The penetration core ruptured inside him, imploding. With nothing to animate his flesh

anymore, Torris Vaun, the corsair of Neva, hated criminal and witchkin lawbreaker, died with a feeble gasp. His final release of mental energy melted into the psi-engine and the machine glowed white.

The deacon let the spent gun and rosary drop from his fingers, clattering away to the floor below him. He rocked with shallow, pained laughter, clutching at the edges of the pulpit. He had left ruddy fingerprints everywhere his hands touched the shining metal. 'It is done,' he told himself. 'Every great endeavour requires a sacrifice.' Taking a shaky step, LaHayn moved toward the edge of the podium. The spinning rings were within arm's reach, throwing rays of warmth across him each time they passed. He was smiling, tears shining on his face even though every movement was like fire in his belly. But no; he had come too far, struggled too long to die on the very cusp of his destiny. He felt the hand of the God-Emperor upon him, beckoning him forward.

'I will do it, Master,' he said aloud, 'I will do it for Your glory.'

Something heavy and dangerous thrummed past his head and set him off-balance. The priest-lord cried out and grabbed at the ivory relief carving of the Imperial aquila on the crest of the pulpit, a single heartbeat away from falling short. He turned his gaze downward and saw, like ants crawling around the foot of a giant, the figures of Sister Miriya and her damnable companions. The woman raised a pistol and he knew that she had drawn a bead between his eyes.

'Viktor LaHayn,' she intoned, 'you are bound by the law of the Imperial Church. Stand down and submit to chastisement or you will be executed for your heresy against our God.'

He could do nothing else but laugh at her.



Miriya ignored Cassandra's muttered cursing. She could see how easy it had been to miss with her bolter shot – the air danced around the high metal pulpit in shimmering waves and cascades of glowing blue symbols tumbled silently about them like falling snow. For the moment, the rolling havoc of the volcano had subsided, but the lava flow still rumbled at their backs, ready to turn violent again at a moment's notice. All of them had witnessed Vaun's murder. The peculiar disintegration of his body set them aghast, but Miriya ordered them closer. The witch was dead, and that was one less deed for them to fulfil. Just LaHayn remained now, mad and wounded and commanding this insane mechanism that only the Emperor Himself could master – if the heretic was to be believed.

He looked down at them, a bloody horror in ruined robes. The Celestian had seen men and women live far longer than they should have with stomach wounds such as his, weeping and praying that death would take them and spare

the agony. LaHayn's face was a mass of conflicts; rapture, pain, hate and elation. 'B-bear witness,' he croaked, 'think yourselves as lucky as Alicia and the Brides of the Emperor when they were brought before Him after the Apostasy... You will see. *You will see!*'

'Kill him!' hissed Isabel. 'Before it is too late, kill the damned heretic!'

But there was something, some tiny fragment of Miriya's soul that could not break the awe she felt before the spinning rings of the engine. She could not give voice to the manner in which she knew, but with a certainty that was as solid as the stars in the sky, she *knew* that LaHayn was correct about one thing. This machine was not the creation of man, but of her God-Emperor. The truth of that froze her blood in her veins.

LaHayn stabbed a finger at her. 'You see it! You know it is real! Understand me, girl, once I embrace the engine I will be remade! That is its ultimate purpose, to rewrite the book of life! I want this gift, I am destined for it!'

Verity shook her head, desperate to deny him. 'You cannot interfere with the work of our Master...'

The cleric tipped back his head and revealed the base of his skull. The familiar bolus of the silver sphere implant was visible beneath his skin. 'Oh, but I can.'

'You are no psyker!' retorted Cassandra.

'In moments, I *will* be. The greatest of them.'

'No...' murmured Miriya. The concept of such a thing was too much for her to take in.

'Yes!' he roared, spitting blood, 'oh yes! I shall fulfil our God's will! I shall travel to Terra and awaken Him, and we will transform mankind in His image...' His voice cracked. 'Listen to me! All the pieces are in place! The keys found, the codes broken, the assumption is upon me! Consecrate it with your faith, dear sisters! Watch me take up the mantle lost by blessed Malcador and become the Second Sigillite!'

Miriya's breath caught in her throat and her hand wavered. LaHayn invoked the name of the Emperor's first-chosen adjutant, the secretive administrator-priest selected in the days of the Great Crusade, the man who – so the legends said – had been the first human being to bear the mark of the soul-binding ritual that forever connected him to the Father of Mankind. Malcador had perished thousands of years ago and no man had ever dared to try and take his title; it was written that the Sigillite was one of the most powerful psykers in creation, second only to the mental might of the Emperor. That the deacon believed he might stand in Malcador's place was either blasphemy of the highest order or the folly of lunacy.

Her aim steadied and her finger tightened in the plasma

gun's trigger. 'Viktor LaHayn, in the name of Holy Terra, consider your life forfeit.'

The priest-lord threw his body from the podium as she fired. There was the shriek of clashing energies and then the chamber turned white with pain.



The burning light sent Verity to the floor, pressing her face to the stone to stop her from being blinded. Isabel was not as swift and she fell to her knees with an animal howl on her lips. The white flash rolled away and Verity resisted the urge to claw at her eyes, blinking furiously. Every glowing ember in the chamber felt like a needle through her skull. She staggered, off-balance, almost falling over the prone Battle Sister. Her gaze travelled upwards even though some inner voice screamed not to do so.

The motion of the spinning rings had changed. Slower now, more languid, they turned and dropped close to the ground, coming about one another, crossing and re-crossing. As they moved, their orbit was tethered by lines of invisible force to a glittering shape at the hub of motion. Suspended there in a rack of red-gold light, the Lord High Deacon Viktor LaHayn was screaming in silence. His face reflected a merging of two polar opposites – utter, inchoate fear and rapturous joy. By turns his aspect showed one and then the other, waxing and waning through each emotion. White particles gathered about the places in his stomach and torso where he had been injured – Miriya's shot having hit its mark, for all the good it had done – and gradually tapes of flesh and new muscle were gathered out of the air to repair him.

Verity sensed the Sister Superior stumbling to her feet; a flash of plasma from her gun darted into the nimbus of the engine, but once within it slowed to a crawl, the white fury of the sun-hot gas dissipating. Cassandra fired too, her bolt shells puffing into powder where they struck. The Hospitaller sniffed. The air was growing colder by the second, patches of frost blossoming on the stone floor in defiance of the fact that a live volcano rumbled only a few metres distant. Icicles crackled as they formed on the walls and the podiums about the chamber. Her breath emerged in pops of vapour, and the chill crept into their bones.

Miriya grimaced. 'Hard to kill, this priest...'

'He's drawing energy from the air itself!' Verity suddenly understood. 'Preparing...'

'That shall not come to pass,' growled the Sororitas. 'Sisters! Curb the witch!'

Cassandra drew the gunmetal ingot of a snub bolter pistol from a holster in the folds of her robes and pressed it into Verity's trembling fingers. 'No oaths or excuses now, girl. Aim and fire.'

She swallowed a gulp of frosty air and nodded, holding up the weapon. At her side, Isabel aimed through bloodshot, blurry eyes. All of them opened fire at once, shells and plasmatic bolts flaring darkly against the nimbus of the rings.

LaHayn's head jerked, as if he noticed them for the first time. The Hospitaller could see where his thin mane of silver hair was leaving him, the shape of the implant clearly visible as it pulsed beneath his skin. Her stomach knotted in pure loathing; the man had done it, with deliberate intent he had turned himself from a pure-strain human being into a psychic aberration. Just like the crawling wisps of frost vapour about their ankles, Verity sensed the deacon's burgeoning powers reaching out, tracing tendrils of insubstantial mind-stuff. There was a pressure behind the bridge of her nose, as if an iron rod was being forced into her brain. She kept firing, the bolt pistol making her bones jar with every discharge.

Insects.

The word tolled through the four women and made each of them cry out in pain. Verity's eyes flooded with tears and she blinked as they chilled upon her icy cheeks.

'Don't falter!' shouted Miriya, her throat catching, 'For the God-Emperor—'

I Am Your God Now. The impact of the voice was a physical blow, cracking the newly formed ice sheets. *You Will Be The Last To Defy Me.*

'Have faith!' The Sister Superior was weeping brokenly as she said it.

There were still shots in the gun, but for all the effort Verity put into squeezing the trigger, nothing happened. Hopelessness, sharp as a razor, cut across her soul.

From the rings came a hoop of perfect gold light, crackling with dark spheres of exotic radiation. The ephemeral circle radiated out across the engine chamber and struck the four Sisters, violating their minds with terrifying ease. It was the manifestation of the priest-lord's will to break them.

Verity felt as if her bones had turned to water; she sagged, struggling just to stay on her feet, abruptly weighted down with a dreadful, heartbreaking despair. Suddenly everything seemed meaningless, her every thought and deed for nothing, her life a waste of breath and blood. Dimly she was aware of Isabel behind her, crying like a child and lamenting; Cassandra, always tall and strong, as hard as steel, she too slipped to her knees on the rimes of hoarfrost and folded in on herself, becoming small and pathetic inside the hollows of her armour.

'Throne, no!' The Hospitaller couldn't be sure whom it was that cried out, but she saw Miriya blurring, coming closer. She felt like she was drowning in misery, every pore of her

body clogged with grey desolation, each breath hollow and leaden. *It was him*, she raged inside, *LaHayn is doing this to us, turning our dark fears upon us!*

'We must resist!' wept Miriya, shaking Verity by her shoulders. 'We cannot let him stop us!'

But try as she might, the Hospitaller only saw a blurry dark shape in Sororitas battle armour, and the face of her poor, dead sibling looking back at her.

'Lethe, Lethe,' she sobbed, 'don't leave me! Please! I'm lost without you!'

Inside her heart, the cavern of sorrows she had held at bay after her sister's death yawned wide and swallowed her whole.



Miriya shook her head, struggling to break the priest-lord's telepathic hex, but the force of his mind clung on and coiled about her psyche. Everywhere she turned she saw the faces of the dead, the marching regretful corpses whose lives had been entwined with hers on the field of duty. Lethe and Iona, Portia and Reiko, they stalked her with mournful aspects and empty souls, crying her name, accusing her with sorrowful whispers. And there were more beyond them, ranks of those she had fought alongside in the past and survived; Sister Rachel in the bombed out ruins at Starleaf, killed by a Traitor Guard laser sniper, Nikita and Madeline lost in the catacombs of Pars Unus, and more and more. Her Battle Sisters and her victims surrounding her, beating her down with each deathly wail. Her mind reeled, on the verge of shattering.

She fell to the icy floor and cried out in pain as something sharp lanced into her palm. The agony snapped her thoughts into clear focus for a second; there, buried in the heel of her hand was a golden aquila charm on a broken onyx chain. *A sign!*

She whirled about, pulling on her last reserves of devotion, brandishing her pistol and snarling. 'I deny you! You are false, priest! I name thee traitor!'

So be it. LaHayn's dark eyes flashed as he gathered up a coil of killing psychic power. Miriya found Verity at her side; the Hospitaller gripped the careworn sliver of her votive rosary in one hand and pressed it into the Battle Sister's grip.

'Must not... suffer the witch... to live...' she managed, every word a monumental effort.

'Aye,' said Miriya, drawing her Sister to her. 'In the God-Emperor's name, we shall not bow before you, LaHayn!'

Die, then, he said, unleashing unhallowed flames upon the two of them, witchfire shrieking across the chamber.

'Faith!' cried the women in one voice, 'faith unfailing!'

CHAPTER Eighteen

A spiritu dominatus, Domine, libra nos.

The sacred words of the Fede Imperialis, the hallowed battle-prayer of the Adepta Sororitas, formed in the minds and hearts of Verity and Miriya. *From the lightning and the tempest, Our Emperor, deliver us.* From plague, deceit, temptation and war, Our Emperor, deliver us. From the scourge of the Kraken, Our Emperor, deliver us. The two women clung to one another, eyes averted from the hell unfolding about them, each clasping the silver rosary chain. The tiny thread of beads was a mere token, such a small thing, an icon of personal devotion with none of the pomp and glory of the church's great artefacts; and yet it was no less a key to the faith of Sister Verity, no less a symbol of fidelity to Sister Miriya. The witchfire thundered across the icy stone and engulfed them in blue lightning, but still they prayed. *From the blasphemy of the Fallen, Our Emperor, deliver us. From the begetting of daemons, Our Emperor, deliver us. From the curse of the mutant, Our Emperor, deliver us.*

Legend had it that the faith of the Adepta Sororitas was so strong that no psyker could ever break their conviction, that only the most monstrous of the witchkin could threaten their purity. It was said that when a Sister was at her most pious, when she was at the moment of most virtuous sacrifice to the God-Emperor's spirit, the shield of faith that surrounded her could turn any blow from the mind of the aberrant and unholy. Only when her faith was tested to the breaking point could a Sororitas truly know the power of her own zeal.

Miriya gripped the silver rosary and shouted the words of the invocation to the skies. 'A morte perpetua!'

Verity's voice carried the final line over the crash of psychic flames. 'Domine, libra nos!'

As suddenly as it came, the searing, murderous heat faded away, back into the bone-chilling cold. Verity's eyes snapped open and she saw Miriya before her, holding on to her rosary for dear life. 'We... We are unharmed... By the Throne, we turned the killing blow! By faith alone we set our souls as armour!'

Miriya's eyes shone and she turned, raising her plasma gun in her mailed grip. 'Yes... Katherine preserve us, dear Sister, yes! We resist!'

NO! LaHayn's rage made the chamber shake. *This cannot be! You should be dead, you pestilent whores!*

The Battle Sister released her grip on the rosary and faced their enemy. 'I will die when the God-Emperor calls me to His side, not at the whim of a crooked, insane freak!' She sent a salvo of plasma bolts hissing into the priest-lord's aura. 'You failed to break us, LaHayn! Now the turn is yours!'

To Verity's shock, the Celestian threw herself into the

glowing nimbus of energy, her black ceramite gauntlets sparking as they took purchase on the surface of one of the spinning rings. She called her name; but it was too late to stop her. With a sudden hot flash of bright lightning, Miriya was drawn into the deacon's psi-sphere by the motion of the loop. Inside the orbit of the halo, the woman seemed to shimmer, as if time moved at a different speed within the radius of the engine.



There was an abrupt and terrible awareness of dislocation. It was at once alien and familiar, bringing back the memory of unnatural sensation each time she had been aboard a starship plunging into the miasma of warp space. Miriya's senses rebelled for a split-second and she forced bile down from her throat as the world about her *shifted*.

Inside the corona of the ancient device, she drifted as if in zero gravity, held fast only where she could cling to the turning hoops of phase-iron. It was like looking out through a sphere of frosted glass, the shapes and colours of the chamber beyond visible but clouded into distorted blurs. There were strident, strange sounds in here with her, drawn-out shrieks and muttering cries, thoughts bleeding over from the minds of every other living being within the Keep. For a moment, she thought she heard Torris Vaun, yelling in agony, but then the echo faded.

LaHayn drifted above her, eyes aglow with hate as he stared down at her. 'How dare you approach me! You soil this holy construct with your presence!'

'Heretic!' she retorted. 'You have no right to speak of what is holy! You sacrificed the privilege of the church and your own humanity, the very day you decided to revive this artefact!'

The priest threw up his hands and his anger fluttered in red sparks. 'How can you be so wilfully blind, you arrogant wench? It is you who seeks to block the path of the Emperor, not I! You who cannot see the glory of this device!' He drifted closer to her, radiating power. 'I will *know* Him! I will peel back the veil of time and grasp the mind of the God-Emperor as no human has for ten thousand years!' LaHayn smiled. 'And when I do, when He shakes off the dust of eons and opens His eyes, it will be my face before Him! It will be my reward that is granted!'

Miriya levelled her gun. 'There are no words to plumb the depths to which you disgust me, priest. This madness ends here.' She fired.

The deacon scrambled to throw up planes of force, dragging sheets of flickering radiation from the inner surfaces of the rings to block each shimmering plasma bolt. The Sororitas saw blinks of panic in his eyes; outside the spinning rings he had been able to marshal his power more easily, but with an adversary this close to him, he was finding it a challenge to maintain the upper hand. That

this newborn witch had power beyond any she had encountered before was not in question; but LaHayn was new to the command of such abilities and he wielded them with clumsy application. He was on the defensive, reacting to her instead of fighting back. She moved and fired, moved and fired, harrying him.

LaHayn spat with fury and did something with his free hand. Miriya felt another vertiginous shift in the depth of her gut at the entire engine began to move across the chamber, the walls passing slowly by beyond the glassy aura field.

'More,' he growled beneath his breath, 'more power to me...'

Inexorably, the engine drifted out across the throat of the volcanic chimney, ascending to where geothermal power conduits snaked up the inside of the basalt flue. The thick adamantium channels extended into the fluid core of Neva, to energy-exchange mechanisms of such advancement and age that their science was unknown to all but the most learned mechanicus adepts on Mars. LaHayn hissed and exercised his new strengths, drawing raw energy straight from the grids.

Miriya's shots peeled harmlessly off the shields he placed in their way, every bolt melting. The Celestian felt the pressure within the engine sphere as the priest-lord engorged himself, his body resonating with potential. LaHayn's wiry, whipcord frame was changing, gaining mass and presence by the moment. He was taking on the aspect of the god that he believed himself to be.

She kept firing, the plasma pistol growing hotter and hotter in her hands as the red rage of boiling magma churned beneath their feet. The emitter coils atop the breech of the weapon were glowing blue-white with discharge and the heat of the labouring gun touched her flesh through the flexsteel and ceramic plates of her gauntlet. Overload warning glyphs were blinking on the grip. But still she kept firing.

'Why do you reject me?' shouted LaHayn. 'Don't you understand what I am doing? Do you want our Master to exist forever in stasis, frozen in eternal death, starved of life, the chance to complete His greatest work denied?'

'You are only a man!' she shot back, 'and no man can dare to command the destiny of the Emperor!'

He leered at her through the haze of spent plasmatic gases. 'Put aside the weapon, Miriya! Your heart is pure, you have proven that! The God-Emperor will need souls as pious as yours when He awakens, you can become part of this new beginning... Think of it,' cried the deacon, 'you will be the new Alicia Dominica, greater than any of the living saints!'

His invocation staggered her; the name of the greatest Sister of Battle, the hallowed Mother of Every Order, echoed in her mind. To be spoken of in the same breath as she... It was an incredible thing to consider.

'You can be that woman,' LaHayn pressed, sensing her hesitation, 'all your errors undone, all your failures reversed, every death made a life – if only you stop resisting the truth!'

Lethe and Iona. Portia and Reiko. She saw them all and more in her mind's eye, the imploring looks on their faces; and she had her answer. To give any other would have been to deny them the creed for which they had died, and to deny the truth that lay within her heart. 'In Katherine's name,' she screamed, 'death to the witch!'

Sparks stung her as the gun's delicate mechanisms began to boil, the heat radiating off it in waves and melting the ceramite on her fingertips. The plasma bolts, usually collimated and regular in form, spat from the pistol now in screeching ejections of fury, lengths of heat lightning crackling off the weapon. LaHayn snarled and fought away the attacks, enraged at her refusal to capitulate. The gun was seconds from a critical failure, and with a hissing snap the casing cracked along its length. The warning glyphs were a virulent red. At the last moment, Miriya let her muscles take over and she hurled the weapon at the priest-lord as hard as she could.

LaHayn's mistake was that he reacted as a man, not as a witch-psyker would; his nascent powers could have deflected the thrown gun in an eye blink, but he was too new to them for it to be reflex. The deacon caught the weapon in his hands and howled as the scorching heat of it burned him; and in that instant the overloaded plasma pistol detonated in a fireball.

The blast ripped great strips of molten flesh from Viktor LaHayn, flashing the soft tissues of his eyes to cinders, carving him open with daggers of flame as hot as a sun. His bone and marrow turned to molten slag, the opulent ministerial robes and golden icons he wore becoming blackened ashes in less than a heartbeat. Miriya's armour went slick and flowed like oil as she turned away. The ignition threw a bow wave of air compressed into a hazy white ring, slamming her out of the dying energy nimbus and against the sheer walls of the volcano's flue. She fell, clawing at black stone and adamantium decking.

With their organic component abruptly immolated, the spinning rings lost all synchronisation and clashed with an ear-shattering cacophony. Metals that had been forged in the hearts of long-dead neutron stars and etched with the blood of artisans from a thousand planets came apart. The rings fractured, dashed against one another, and lost all coherence. The aura field popped like a bubble and the machinery of the Emperor's lost engine fell the rest of the distance to the waiting deeps of the magma core. Somewhere down there, what remained of the High Ecclesiarch Lord Viktor LaHayn of Noroc boiled away into greasy vapours.



There was very, very much pain. The invisible knife rattling between her ribs was quite likely a broken bone piercing her lungs; the blood that bubbled out of her mouth with each exhalation virtually confirmed that. Her right eye was gummed shut with fluid weeping from a gash on her scalp and when Miriya attempted to run a hand through her hair it came away daubed with crimson. The power pack on her back had shut down, forcing her to move the weight of her battle armour without assistance from the synthetic myomer muscles beneath the ceramite sheath; in turn, some joints in the armour had become fused together by the brief, intense heat.

She took a ragged breath laced with sulphur fumes and looked down from the metal ledge where her headlong fall had finally ended. Her vision swam, but she swallowed the moment of disorientation. Far below she could see the vast doors that opened on to the engine chamber, where Verity and the others Sisters still remained, but the fall of the machine had torn the conduits away; she had no way to descend to them. Miriya tapped her vox, but her reward was an earful of static. Reluctantly, she began to push her way upwards, toward the beckoning oval of sky above. Each movement was like torture, but she was resolute.



The clattering ruin of the falling machine brought silence in its wake among the three

Sisters. Verity, Isabel and Cassandra knew that the destruction of the engine marked the execution of the heretic deacon, but with it a dark fate for Miriya. Ash falls and coils of volcanic haze were thick about them, and rumbling tremors did their best to knock them off their feet.

Cassandra spat and threw a grimace at the entrance to the chamber. 'Rockfall,' she said in a weary voice, 'the way is not clear to us.'

Isabel was on her haunches, her eyes lost beneath a makeshift bandage. 'Sister, speak plainly. Is there any way out of this lightforsaken cavern?'

'Not for us,' came the reply. She glanced at the Hospitaller. 'Sister? What say you?'

Verity's attention was elsewhere; at the far corners of the chamber there seemed to be constellations of light gathering, small soundless flickers of colour that moved and flowed like mercury. 'Do you see that?' she said.

As she spoke, a large cluster of the light-wisps fused and crackled. The sound sent a shiver through the air, splintering the walls with its passage. 'What in Hades was that?' demanded Isabel, instinctively grabbing her gun.

Cassandra paled. 'Oh, Throne.' She pointed. There were more pinpricks appearing by the moment, some of them hanging in the air like hovering insects. 'It's the warp. It's leaking through.'

Verity found herself nodding. She had once been on a transport ship bound for a relief effort on behalf of the Ministorum where the vessel's Geller Field had suffered a dangerous fluctuation on entering the empyrean. On the lower decks, where the field had been at its thinnest, similar phenomena had occurred. Ghost lights, dancing dots of colour that were the tiniest pinpricks of warp matter impinging on the real world; they were the probes of the intelligences that swarmed in warp space, hungry to taste souls. 'The engine,' she said. 'LaHayn's machine... It must have softened the barrier with the immaterium. Things... will break in.'

'There!' Cassandra aimed and fired; for a split second Verity had the impression of something disc-shaped and trailing filaments emerging from a coruscating shadow, then the bolter ripped it apart. The Battle Sister quickly reloaded, frowning. 'Back to back, quickly. There will be more of them.'



The climb took agonising hours, or so it seemed. With blood pooling in her boots, Miriya pushed herself over the lip of the volcanic vent and staggered down the sharp incline. A few hundred metres away she saw the artificial rock shelf where the oval landing pads sat. An aeronef laboured into the air as she approached, dangerously overloaded. It began to sink almost as soon as it took off; she estimated it would get no more than a kilometre away before it fell back into the wasteland.

An insistent droning circled her head and the Celestian tried to swat away whatever insect was causing it. She concentrated for a moment and realised that what she was hearing was the feed from her vox; fumbling at her ear bead, she listened again. The citadel's arcane jamming systems did not operate beyond the inside of the Keep. It was a chorus of overlapping channels and commands – her vox had obviously been damaged in the fall – but she recognised the orders being flashed back and forth.

'Retreat?' she said aloud. To hear it said after all they had fought through clouded her expression with annoyance. She spoke into her pickup. 'Say again,' Miriya demanded, 'whose gutless orders are these?'

The reply buzzed in her ear. 'Miriya. For Katherine's sake, where are you?' The Canoness was furious.

'Atop the Keep,' she replied, 'Who gave that order?'

'I did! The target zone is clear! You should be long gone!' Miriya could almost see the snarl on Galatea's face. 'You were ordered to rendezvous with the attack force! You were told to leave the Keep!'

'I... intended to carry out that command in due time—'

'You have contravened orders once more,' shouted the distant voice, 'and now you'll pay the price for it!'

'I chose to... chose to interpret your orders differently, Canoness. I beg your forgiveness...' Miriya was close to the landing pads now. She saw two robed men working with frantic pace at an idling coleopter.

'Do you hear me?' spat Galatea, 'Let there be absolutely no room in your mind to interpret this command! Sister Superior Miriya, you are to desist in all combat activities immediately and evacuate the Null Keep to our rally point in the southern valley, where you will submit yourself for arrest! You have less than eleven standard minutes to comply!'

'Eleven minutes?' she repeated. 'Until what?'

'Until the orbital bombardment from the *Mercutio* reaches your co-ordinates. Pray tell, Sister, do I have your full and undivided attention now?'

Miriya choked on the words. 'A lance strike will reduce the entire citadel to rubble!'

'And whatever remains of LaHayn and his freak army,' replied her commander. 'Unless you wish to join them, I advise you to find transport, and quickly. Ten minutes and twenty-two seconds.'

'My squad is still down there!' she snapped.

She heard a sigh. 'Regrettable. They will be honoured for their service to the church.'

Miriya cut off the vox link and swore a gutter oath. 'I'll not throw any more lives away for nothing,' she told herself, 'never again!'

With care, she approached the coleopter, letting the whine of the engine cover her footsteps. The tender didn't know she was there until he took a fist-sized lump of volcanic rock in the temple. He went sprawling and she used the motion to divest him of the long-barrelled lasgun he carried. The second man reacted with shock as he walked into view around the curve of the fuselage.

'You!' she snapped. 'Can you fly this aircraft?'

He gave a wary nod.

'Good.' She aimed the lasgun and took the prone man's head off with one shot. 'You'll be next unless you do exactly, precisely what I tell you. Understand?'

Another nod, this time wooden and nervous.

She followed him into the cockpit pod and pressed the still-warm muzzle to the back of his head. 'Take us down the throat of the mountain, quickly.'

The man jerked in the chair and started to speak, but Miriya swatted him with the gun barrel. 'Remember your associate? Remember what I told you? Now do as I say!'

The coleopter's motors chattered up to full speed, and with a bump they left the landing pad, the blunt nose turning towards the steaming maw of the volcano.



The things that came through the holes in the air were horrors the like of which Verity had never dreamed; skinless things with hundreds of yellow-toothed mouths, screeching furies and spidery forms with too many clacking legs. These were the common predators of the warp, the mindless monstrosities that infested the immaterium beyond human consciousness. The sounds they made as they died were terrible, the liquids spilling from them in garish colours that matched nothing in creation. The gun Cassandra gave her spent the last of its bolt rounds all too quickly, and half in fright, half in fury, the Hospitaller threw it at the creatures.

Step by step, the encroaching fiends pushed the Sisters back to the very edge of the chamber, where the steep drop-off plunged hundreds of metres to the lava lake below. Torturous heat at their backs, and a massing wall of Chaos beasts at their front; Verity, Cassandra and Isabel measured their lives by each breath of air.

The injured Sororitas snarled in despair as her bolter's breech snapped open, the last of her ammunition expended. 'I'm spent,' she told them.

The hordes hesitated; they seemed to understand that the prey was at the point of no return, and they giggled and snapped at one another in anticipation.

Cassandra glanced at the sickle magazine in her bolter and blew out a breath. 'I have three rounds remaining,' she said carefully. Her eyes tracked to Isabel and the wounded Battle Sister returned a weary nod. Then Cassandra looked at Verity with a hollow sadness on her face that the Hospitaller had never seen before. 'Sister? Do not fear. I'll make it quick.'

'No,' Verity shook her head, realising that tears were on her face, 'it is not we whom I feel sorrow for, but our Sisters. They are the ones who will have to shoulder the pain at our loss.'

Cassandra nodded. 'You are brave, girl. I would not have thought it of you. I am glad you proved me wrong.'

'And I,' said Isabel. 'Lethe was proud of you. Now I understand why.'

'The honour was mine.' Verity bowed her head and whispered a prayer, waiting for Emperor's Peace; but in a roar of downwash, an entirely different saviour arrived.



Encouraged by a series of colourful threats and a shot through the canopy, Miriya forced the tender pilot to bring the coleopter into a hover by the open gates into the engine room; the situation imprinted on her refined tactical mind in an instant, the Sisters against the edge, the line of shapeless, hooting forms. There was a control board at her right hand and she stabbed the glyphs to activate the stubber guns in the flyer's nose. Rigged with cogitator sense engines, the weapon cupolas saw where she aimed them and busied themselves by automatically opening fire on anything that moved. The pilot dutifully turned the coleopter to present its flank to the women below, and Miriya felt the aircraft pitch as they scrambled aboard.

'Here!' She heard Verity call from the cramped rear compartment.

'Go,' Miriya prodded the pilot with the lasgun, but he needed no more goading; more things were leaking through the expanding warp rifts and these new ones had wings and claws. At maximum thrust, the spindly flyer rose through the ash-fogged air and out into clear sky, turning southwards.

Cassandra came into the cockpit and started to speak but Miriya held up a hand to silence her and pointed at the sky. Dozens of quick, twinkling stars were falling down toward the Null Keep.

By the time the shockwave of the first impacts reached them, they were safe in the canyons, and leaving LaHayn's mad dream further behind with every passing second.



Through the chapel window, Verity could see the tower of the Lunar Cathedral, clad in flapping tarpaulins where the work crews were busy putting the hallowed church back to the state it had been in before the attack. On the streets, the newly appointed governor, Baron Preed, had softened the news of his predecessor's death by declaring a national holiday, and a bloodless one at that, lacking in any enforced tithes. In part this was due to the hasty installation of a new deacon at Noroc's church, the moderate cleric-teacher Lord Kidsley. In the days that followed the obliteration of the Null Keep, news spread quickly about the perfidy of Lord LaHayn; his name was anathema now, icons of his face taken down and torched by the hundreds.

Privately, Verity held the opinion that only one death would never be enough to pay back such a base and self-serving man. Sister Miriya's thoughts on the subject had been predictably harsh, involving more profanity than was mannerly for a woman of the cloth.

As if the thought of her brought her into existence, the door opened to admit the Battle Sister. She was without armour, still limping from her recent injuries, and yet she

seemed no less imposing than the day Verity had first met her. They exchanged nods.

'I was not aware that Galatea had summoned you as well.'

'She did not,' said Verity, 'I came of my own volition.'

Miriya frowned. 'Why?'

'I could do nothing less.'

The Celestian was about to say more, but the chapel door opened once more to admit the Canoness, and with her Sister Chloe, her acting adjutant. Galatea threw Verity a hard look. 'I had thought you would be off-world by now, Hospitalier.'

'Soon, Canoness. However, before I left, I felt my expertise might be needed here.'

'No one is sick here, girl.'

'I speak of matters of truth, not illness. I am well versed in both.'

Galatea took up a place at the altar. 'Neva rebuilds,' she said at length. 'I have begun a series of purges among the ruling cadres to expunge any lingering trace of LaHayn's sacrilege. This sorry episode will resonate through this world's history for centuries to come... if indeed the planet survives that long.' She gave Miriya a steady, unflinching stare. 'You proved me right, Sister. You brought me trouble... So much trouble.'

'That was never my intention.'

She snorted. 'It never is.' The Canoness pointed to the distant cathedral. 'The Synod want you executed, Miriya. Despite the part you played in terminating the heretic and the witch, your wayward disobedience colours everything!' She banged her fist on the altar. 'Twice you openly defied me, and by extension, the Imperial Church!'

'I did what I thought was right,' said the Celestian.

'Right?' snarled Galatea. 'You invite a death sentence! You place me in a very difficult position, Sister. What am I to do with a woman who blatantly flouted the orders of her superiors?'

'Let her live,' said Verity. 'Let her serve the church with the same honour and courage she showed at the Keep.'

'Those things are meaningless without order,' Chloe broke in. 'Each Sister serves as part of a whole. None of us are law unto ourselves.'

'I will accept whatever outcome the church decrees.' Miriya murmured.

'You would die?' snapped the Hospitaller. 'Even though you did what any loyal Sister would have done?' Verity faced Galatea. 'This is how our faith tests us! Not by rigidly adhering to books of ancient canon without care or thought, but by placing us in harm's way and trying our resolve with challenges beyond our experience! If we are forever rigid and unbending, if we never dare to take a chance against our enemies, then what good are we to our Emperor?' Her passion was sudden and heartfelt. 'We become nothing but mindless zealots locked on a course, blinkered and bound... like Viktor LaHayn.'

There was a long silence before the Canoness addressed Chloe. 'She's quite eloquent, for a nursemaid.'

'Yes, I thought so,' agreed the Sister Seraphim.

She sighed. 'I do not wish to see you perish, Sister. But nevertheless, insubordination cannot go unpunished.' Galatea's gaze rested on Miriya, and in a moment of cold familiarity, she repeated the words of LaHayn. 'There must be reciprocity.'

The woman nodded. 'I understand.'

The Canoness approached her. 'Sister Miriya, it is my judgement that you be stripped of all your honours within the order and your status as a Celestian elite, henceforth reduced to the line rank of Battle Sister.' She took the chaplet ecclesiasticus from Miriya's belt loop and broke it, tearing off a handful of beads from the length before handing the mutilated rosary back to her. 'You will continue to serve the God-Emperor in the church's mission. Perhaps in time, if you temper your bouts of non-compliance, He may grant you the chance to regain these privileges. If not, then at least you may fight and die in His name.'

Miriya bowed. 'Thank you for your mercy, honoured Canoness.'

Galatea turned away. 'The *Mercutio* breaks orbit at ten-bell, Miriya. I want you aboard it when it does. I will have enough to deal with in the coming days without you to concern me. Go now.'

Verity could see the rejection wounded her, but she hid it well. 'As you wish. Ave Imperator.'

'Ave Imperator,' chorused the other women, as Miriya hobbled from the chapel.



Mercutio detached from the commerce station with elephantine slowness, the broad prow of the frigate turning away from the orbital complex to the open seas of space. In the observatorium, Miriya was alone with her thoughts.

She felt conflicted; part of her was relieved that at last the debt she owed to Lethe and the others was paid in full, just as part of her felt isolated and morose at her dismissal and censure. The Sororitas was to take the *Mercutio*'s journey to the port on Paramar and there submit herself to the local convent for a new tasking.

Something in the ebon sky caught her eye; there were shapes moving out there, dark as the volcanic glass of the Null Keep. She crossed to the transparent dome to get a better view.

Black Ships. There were three of them, approaching Neva in a silent formation. The sight made her shudder; it was almost unheard of for more than one of them to be seen at a single time.

'They have come to pore over the materials and research left behind by LaHayn,' said a voice. Miriya turned to see Verity, clad once more in her travelling robes, as she entered. 'They will take what they want and sanitise the rest.'

The Sororitas did not question the Hospitaller's presence; she felt comforted by it. 'I find myself wondering, Sister. What if LaHayn did have some flawed insight into the Emperor's works?'

'Perhaps he did,' admitted Verity, 'perhaps not. It is not our place to know such things. At least, not yet. One day, when He rises from the Golden Throne, all questions will be answered.'

'Yes,' she made the sign of the aquila, watching the dark vessels pass them by.

'You have other questions,' noted the younger woman.

'My destiny is clouded, Sister. For the first time in my life, I know not what my destination will be.' She closed her eyes for a moment. 'I am unsettled.'

Verity drew closer. 'Then, if you wish, I might offer a path to you. My duties in this system are at an end, just as yours are. I have already been given orders to join the mission of Canoness Sepherina, who journeys from Terra to perform a rite of reconsecration on the planet Sanctuary. You would be welcome to join me.'

'I would appreciate that.' She extended her hand. 'Thank you, Verity.'

'I owe you my life, Miriya. I do it gladly.' The Hospitaller took her hand and smiled.

Mercutio sailed on, amid stars as constant as their faith.

The End

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS STORY, YOU CAN FIND THE SEQUEL – HAMMER & ANVIL – ON BLACKLIBRARY.COM, ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF OTHER NOVELS.

OUTSIDE THE STUDIO

So here we all are at the back pages of the magazine. It's been a long and exciting journey getting here, but we've still got a few little treats for you before we say goodbye for another month. First off, most of us are still working on Warhammer 40,000 armies, what with the new edition being very much at the forefront of everyone's minds (it has just been released at time of writing). But many of us are working on smaller collections at the same time, such as Blood Bowl teams, Adeptus Titanicus maniples and Warhammer Underworlds warbands. Smaller batches of models like these are a great way to break up larger projects and a brilliant way to get into new games. Perhaps you could paint some as part of next year's hobby bingo card. Turn the page to find out all about it!

UNDERWORLDS SHENANIGANS

Studio translator Dirk took part in a Warhammer Underworlds tournament in Gießen in Germany and scored third place and Best Painted with Rippa's Snarlfangs. Here you can see them tackling the Thorns of the Briar Queen, which his opponent Patrick has painted in a wonderfully gory red and black scheme. Good work, Patrick!



HOWLING AT THE MOON

While stuck in lockdown, Sophie continued work on her Space Wolves successor Chapter – the Mooneaters. 'I've picked a new basing scheme for them that uses Agrellan Earth to create the cracked ice,' says Sophie. 'I then spray the bases with Grey Seer and drybrush them Thousand Sons Blue and White Scar before adding 'Ardcoat. Ragnar and Bjorn have also joined my force now.'



DEAD EASY PAINT SCHEME

Just before the world went crazy, Lyle started painting an Undead Blood Bowl team for a studio tournament. 'These were my colour test models,' says Lyle. 'I picked green because Seattle, my old home, is very green! It's easy to paint too – a Zenithal undercoat of Wraithbone followed by a coat of Warp Lightning then a heavy wash of Agrax Earthshade. Done!'

JUMP(ER)ING FOR JOY!

'Tis the season to be ... jolly? No, 'tis the season to be fashionably festive with the new Warhammer jumper range from Merchoid. Nothing says log fires and mulled wine (drink responsibly) like winter wear fit for a Primarch (or a Despoiler). Or how about a nightmare android jumper for granny? Visit www.merchoid.com and get in on the holiday cheer!



COLOURFUL MUSIC

After working on his Thousand Sons, Matt decided he wanted to paint a Noise Marine using the same scheme as the 'Eavy Metal one. 'I chose lots of pastel colours that I don't normally use,' says Matt. The leopard-print legs are Balor Brown painted with rough dots of Nazdreg Yellow before edging the dots with Dryad Bark. I might paint a whole army of them.'



As we come to the end of the magazine, we take a look at the games people have been playing and the models they've been painting outside the studio over the past month. This time: Underworlds, Undead, Space Wolves, big guns, New Years resolutions and Bingo!



OBLITERATION!

Having painted a Warpsmith for his Iron Warriors recently, Dan was inspired to return to his Iron Warriors to paint an Obliterator. 'I really need some firepower in my force,' says Dan. 'I've lost every game I've played with my Iron Warriors so far – even against an army of rebel grots! I'm hoping a couple of Obliterators and maybe some Havocs will help redress the balance.'



FIRST OF A NEW LEGIO

Dan has also finished work on his very first Adeptus Titanicus unit – a Warlord titan from the Legio Xestobiax. 'I chose the Legio because I like the colours purple and white,' says Dan. 'I gave the armour a mottled effect using Corax White as a base, a layer of Apothecary White, and a stippling of Corax White. The purple armour is painted Naggaroth Night, washed Nuln Oil Gloss, and stippled Naggaroth Night again. All the armour panels are gloss-varnished and finished with transfers from whatever kits I had lying around. The main icons are Blackshield transfers from Forge World.'

VOX CHATTER

Vox Chatter is alive with the New Year hobby resolutions of the White Dwarf team. What will your resolutions be?



Lyle: My hobby resolution for next year is to be able to field at least a small force for every game we make. I'm not super confident I will complete that resolution, but it's worth aspiring to! Resolution B is to get all the White Dwarf staff playing White Dwarf Hobby Bingo (which you'll find on the next page).

Sophie: My resolution is to paint all my Space Wolves characters and to start a Crusade army of Tome Keepers.

Jonathan: My resolution is a skill, not a quantity; I want to learn how to blend paints properly to great effect. Also, to take part in A Tale of Four Warlords!

Dan: I want to get my Blood Angels up to 50 power for Crusade games and my Kharadron Overlords up to 2,000 points. I would also like to build a new battlefield.

Matt: A new army. Sisters of Battle – Order of the Bloody Rose. I've come up with a colour scheme, and I'm raring to go.

Ben: I want to add to my Vanguard-style Raven's Watch force. So, a unit of Infiltrators, a trio of Gladiators, another unit of Eliminators and a Repulsor Executioner. Then, I'd like to start a Warcry warband.




LET'S PLAY HOBBY BINGO!

Now is the time to decide on your hobby resolutions for the New Year. With that in mind, we challenge you to *White Dwarf* Hobby Bingo! Over the course of the year, cross out boxes as you complete the various challenges. Score 10 points for every box you cross out, and 50 for every completed straight line of five boxes (there are five horizontal, five vertical, and two diagonal lines). If you complete the entire grid, you score a massive 400-point bonus! Completing a grid is therefore worth 1000 points in total. But you don't have to stop there! Play as many

concurrent *White Dwarf* Hobby Bingo cards as you want until the end of the year and see how high you can score!

To complete a challenge, simply paint the model(s) listed in the box. Each model can count for only one box. Send us pictures of your models as you go to team@whitedwarf.co.uk, or post them to social media with the hashtags #WhiteDwarf, #PaintingWarhammer and #WarhammerCommunity! Be sure to drop us a line at the end of the year. We'd love to see the results from our high scorers!

HOBBY BINGO!



SCORING TABLE
 Box: 10
 Line: 50
 Entire grid: 400

HERO OR CHARACTER	ANY MODEL	UNIT OF 2+ MODELS	KITBASHED MODEL	HERO OR CHARACTER
ANY MODEL	FORTIFICATION OR SCENERY	VEHICLE OR MONSTER	UNIT OF 2+ MODELS	UNIT OF 10+ MODELS
UNIT OF 10+ MODELS	KITBASHED MODEL	ANY MODEL	VEHICLE OR MONSTER	FORTIFICATION OR SCENERY
UNIT OF 2+ MODELS	VEHICLE OR MONSTER	HERO OR CHARACTER	UNIT OF 10+ MODELS	ANY MODEL
HERO OR CHARACTER	UNIT OF 10+ MODELS	LORD OF WAR OR BEHEMOTH	ANY MODEL	HERO OR CHARACTER

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NEXT ISSUE

THE SONS OF BEHEMAT!

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