



WHITE DWARF

ISSUE
457

**GALACTIC WAR
ZONES: FORGE
WORLDS**

**THE TOME
CELESTIAL:
TROGGOTHS**

**GOLDEN DEMON
WINNER'S
INTERVIEW**

**WARHAMMER
HORROR SHORT
STORY**

**NEW QUEST FOR
BLACKSTONE
FORTRESS**

**AND MUCH
MORE FOR**



**WARHAMMER
40,000**
FLASHPOINT
ARGOVON SYSTEM
NEW CAMPAIGN RULES
AND BACKGROUND



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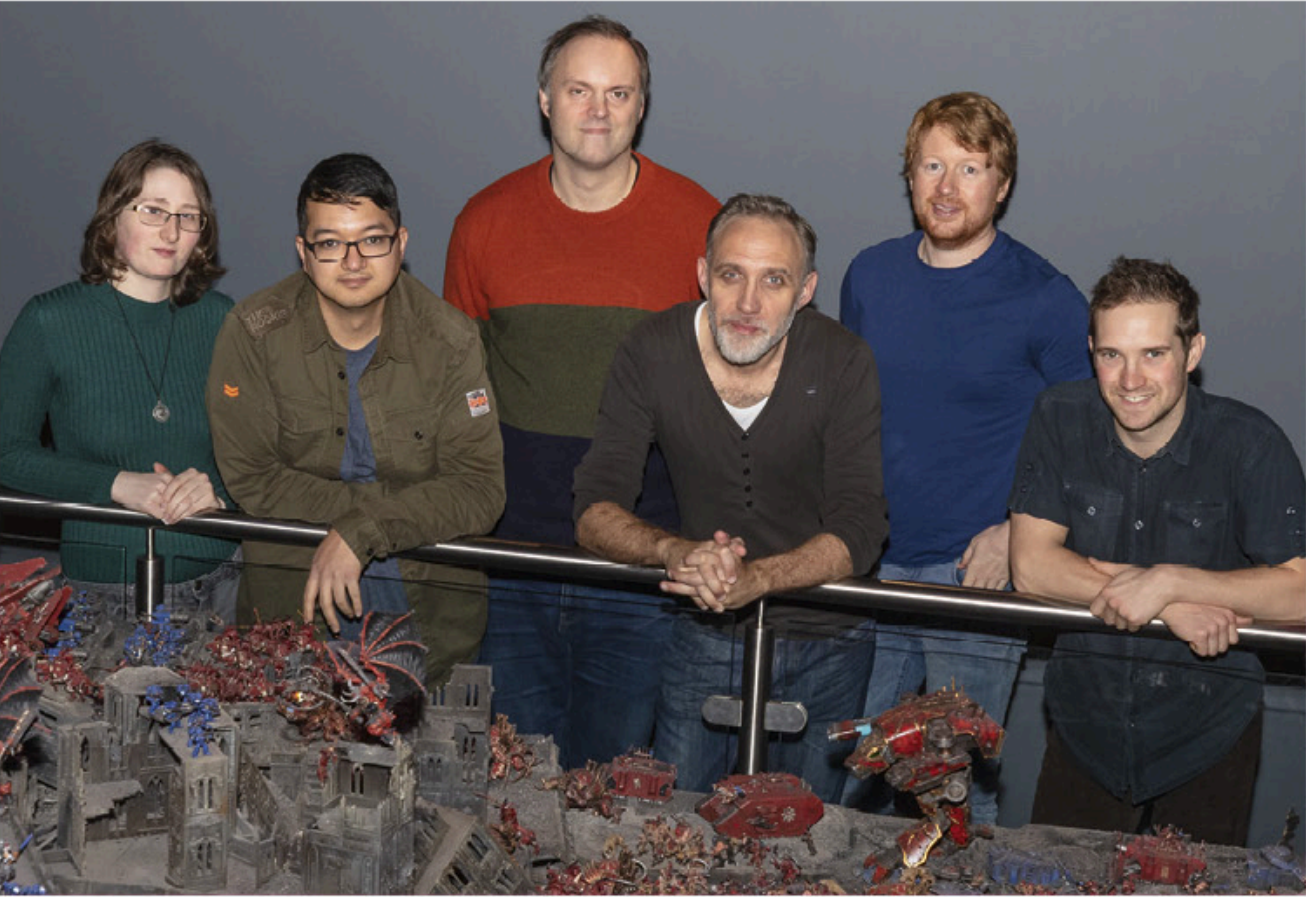
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MEET THE WHITE DWARF TEAM

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.



From left to right: Sophie Bostock (Designer), Lyle Lowery (Managing Editor), Matthew Hutson (Senior Designer), Shaun Pritchard (Reprographics), Jonathan Stapleton (Photographer) and Dan Harden (Staff Writer).

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

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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 the Necrons of the Sautekh Dynasty by Paul Dainton.

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



The home of Warhammer on the web, the Warhammer Community website brings you the latest news on Warhammer 40,000, Warhammer Age of Sigmar, the Horus Heresy, Forge World, Black Library, and more!

www.warhammer-community.com

WHITE DWARF

ISSUE 457

WHAT'S A FLASHPOINT?



I am excited to tell you about a new feature for *White Dwarf*: Flashpoints. It's an idea that has been marinating for a long time now, and it makes its first appearance in this issue. I wanted to create a system by which we could group sets of articles that share a continuous through line and together are greater than the sum of their parts. It would also be a way for us to make 'sandboxed' rules that sit apart from each other, resulting in unique and varied play environments that each stand alone. Each different Flashpoint will offer its own unique set of rules that delivers a different play experience from other Flashpoints. The concept has gone over well in the studio; I'm told a version of it has even been adapted and repurposed into the Warhammer 40,000 Core Rules.

Flashpoints are collections of content about a specific area or conflict at a given point in time. This issue has the Warhammer 40,000 Flashpoint: Argoon System. Every article so tagged is about this important war zone

in the Pariah Nexus. Flashpoints will span multiple issues of *White Dwarf*, so you can expect to explore Flashpoint: Argoon System for the rest of the year.

From a gameplay perspective, the way Flashpoints work is pretty simple. If you and your opponent agree to play with Flashpoint rules, you agree to a particular Flashpoint (like Argoon System). Then, all rules with Flashpoint: Argoon System are in effect. Any rules belonging to other Flashpoints are *not* in effect. We're kicking off Flashpoints with a complete campaign set in the Argoon System, along with a series of background articles and short stories about the Argoon System.

In time, Flashpoints may grow to encompass other game systems, articles, and types of rules. In the meantime, let us know what you think and what you'd like to see in future Flashpoints by emailing us at team@whitedwarf.co.uk

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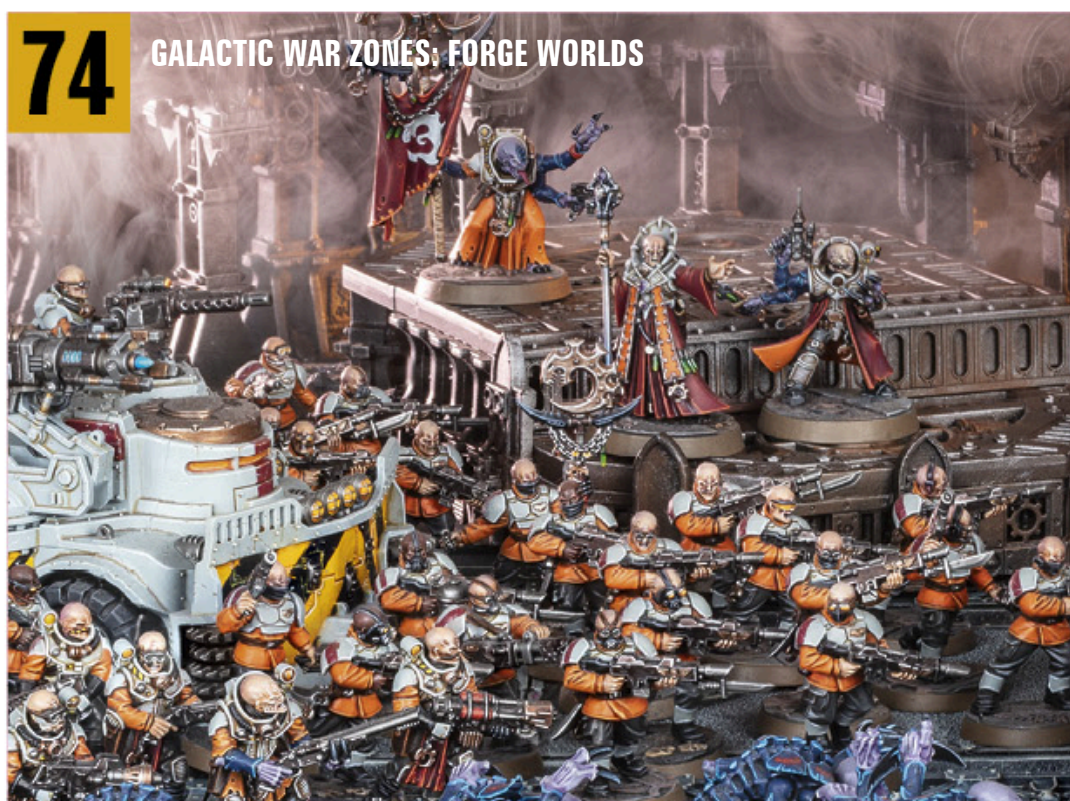
Power up your mechadendrites, because this month's painting and modelling article is all about forge worlds.



Cover art by Phil Moss



Subscription cover art by Paul Dainton



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TODAY!
SEE INSIDE
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THE SCENES OF BATTLE



**WARHAMMER
40,000**

FLASHPOINT

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JOIN US IN THE ARGOVON
SYSTEM FOR THE FIRST
FLASHPOINT ARTICLES!

INSIDE, YOU WILL FIND NEW
BACKGROUND AND RULES TO PLAY
THROUGH AN EPIC CAMPAIGN. SEE
PAGE 1 FOR MORE ON FLASHPOINTS.



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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.



FUTURE TERRAIN BUILDER IN THE MAKING

Hi *White Dwarf* team,

I wanted to email you to show you how proud a father I am. As a family of five, we all got into Warhammer in August last year after starting a no-technology game night. We are now all hooked on it! We've already got another box on the way from Games Workshop containing Kill Team and Blood Bowl, and I will categorically say that this hobby has saved our sanity as a family. Being able to build, paint and play has given us so much variety! But onto the real reason I am emailing ...

Not only do we all play Warcry and Warhammer Age of Sigmar, but now my eleven-year-old daughter Brenna has taken it to the next level by using up all our leftover sprues and recycling them into buildings. I have attached a picture of the two buildings she has made so far, and they look amazing on our boards. (Also, and don't tell the family, but by giving her all the blank sprues it means I can buy new figures for myself first!)

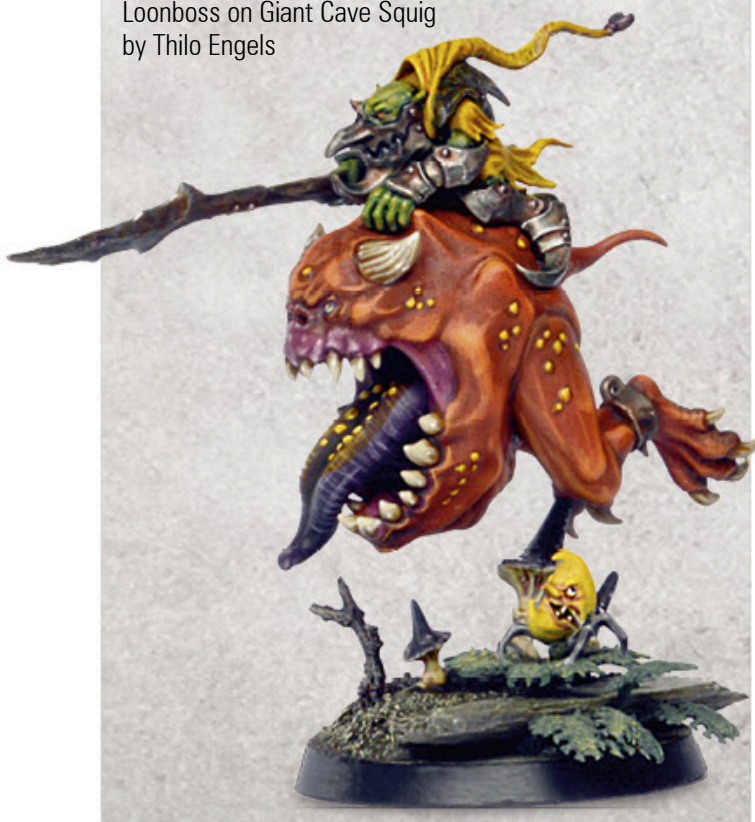
And just so you know, I can't take any credit for these – Brenna made them 100% herself, and she's not allowed us to get involved at all. Other than to take the £5 she charges me for each one ...

Paul Christie
Southampton, UK

Welcome to the hobby, Paul! We hope you and your family are having a great time getting into Warhammer. It certainly sounds like you are all enjoying yourselves. We are also really impressed with Brenna's buildings. They look fantastic! We get a lot of emails from people asking what to do with their leftover sprues, and now they have an answer. We especially like the sprue boss that's been used as the centre of the windmill's arms – absolutely ingenious! Brenna is definitely earning her pocket money with this project!



Loonboss on Giant Cave Squig
by Thilo Engels



Carcharodons Intercessor Sergeant
by Antonio Procino



Kor'sarro Khan
by Francesco Olivieri





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www.games-workshop.com

HOME SCHOOLING, WARHAMMER STYLE!

I just wanted to say a massive 'thank you' to Warhammer and *White Dwarf* for solving our home schooling challenges during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic! Epic games of both Warhammer Age of Sigmar and Warhammer 40,000 have provided plenty of opportunities to teach my two sons numeracy, literacy and problem solving, while painting our way through an ever-growing collection of models using the helpful tips in *White Dwarf* has ticked the box nicely for art on the home school timetable.

I'm not sure whether my improvised syllabus would pass an OFSTED inspection, but as you'll see from the attached photo, my sons Edward and Matthew are delighted. Whether they will show the same enthusiasm for a return to school when we all get through this remains to be seen ...

We'd also like to say a very special thanks to Steve, Ash, Jason, Connor and all the staff at the Leeds Warhammer store for encouraging and helping us in this hugely enjoyable hobby.

Very best wishes, take care and stay safe.

Kersten Hall
Leeds, UK



We're glad we could help out, Kersten, though surely you're the one doing all the hard work. It can't be easy keeping a family entertained day in day out while being stuck in the house!

Educating with Warhammer must be pretty good fun, though. We're guessing you start the day with History of the Mortal Realms, followed by double Tactics. Then, after break (in which discussion of the hobby is encouraged), Army Building and History of the Imperium, followed by lunch. Practical Application of Knowledge takes up the rest of the afternoon in the form of a game. Then painting for homework, right?

PAINTING QUESTION: A VOID IN MY KNOWLEDGE ...

Dear *White Dwarf* team, I've been interested in the Void Tridents Primaris Space Marine Chapter ever since their appearance in the October 2017 edition of *White Dwarf*. I've searched the vast reaches of the internet but cannot find the exact colour scheme used. Please can you reveal it so that I can build an entire army of them? Many thanks.

Will Hahn
London, UK

Hey Will, thanks for writing in and good question! We got in contact with 'Eavy Metal painter Aidan Daly, who came up with the colour scheme for the Void Tridents, and he was kind enough to share the colours with us. It's worth noting that Aidan mixes quite a few of his paints to get the colours just right. Most of them are a 50/50 mix, but the basecoat for the white armour is a 50/30/20 mix! Aidan really doesn't like to make life easy for himself ...



BLUE ARMOUR

Basecoat: Night Lords Blue

Shade: Night Lords Blue & Abaddon Black

Layer: Night Lords Blue & Macragge Blue

Layer: Altdorf Guard Blue

Layer: Calgar Blue & Fenrisian Grey

Layer: Blue Horror

WHITE ARMOUR

Basecoat: White Scar, Fenrisian Grey & Grey Seer

Shade: Fenrisian Grey

Shade: Dark Reaper (recesses)

Layer: White Scar

COPPER DETAILS

Basecoat: Hashut Copper

Shade: Cygor Brown & Contrast Medium

Layer: Hashut Copper

Layer: Hashut Copper & Stormhost Silver

Layer: Stormhost Silver

Wolf Guard Terminator
by Florian Danner



Astreia Solbright
by Shane Hickman



TURBULENT TIMES

Dear *White Dwarf*.

I'm an NHS worker, and I have to say I have really been enjoying the Warhammer Age of Sigmar content in the magazine. The campaign rules, Rules of Engagement and The Tome Celestial all grab my attention and let me escape from these turbulent times. Thank you!

Adam Hollings
Skipton, UK

I think it's us lot that should be thanking you, Adam! While we're sitting at home painting miniatures, it's you brave healthcare workers that are putting your lives on the line to look after us all in these strange times. Who knows what would happen if the Space Marine Apothecaries of the NHS (and all the other incredible healthcare staff around the globe) weren't there to fight Papa Nurgle's latest creation? We'll make sure there's plenty more Age of Sigmar content in the magazine for you. Trust us when we say there are some big things on the horizon. Really big things ...

Delaque Gang
by Ben Porter



MAKE YOUR OWN RULES

I've been having a great time reading issue 452 – I especially enjoyed the Galactic WAAAGH! Zones article, and I loved the Breach the Stormvault Battle Report. When I was reading Inside the Studio, I saw Sam Pearson's custom warscrolls for Ben's squig army, and I would love to hear what rules or methods he uses when creating custom rules.

Noah Hyde
Bath, UK

That sounds like a reasonable request, Noah! Here's what Sam has to say:

'My recommendation is to find an existing rule or warscroll that you can use as a 'template'. I modelled most of the Squigapalooza warscrolls on their counterparts in the Gobbapalooza, giving them the Squig keyword, an extra Wound and a Move characteristic of 2D6". For the Squig Herder with Mini-mangler, I also took rules from the Mangler Squigs and toned them down so that they were comical but puny versions of those rules. For example, its Huge Fang-filled Gob became the Not-so-huge Fang-filled Gob and went from Damage D6 to Damage 2. Hope that helps!'

ASK GROMBRINDAL

Do Genestealers birthed from the fourth generation of a brood connect psychically to the Patriarch, or are they independent and start separate cults?

Winston Dudzic
Rossville, Georgia, USA



Oh, I see, no pleasantries today, eh? What is the world coming to? And it's another question about these Genestealer creatures – they seem to be everywhere at the moment! I will, grudgingly, see what I can find out.

So it seems that the answer is yes, they do have a connection to the Patriarch. Every Genestealer in a brood comes under the control of the Patriarch until the point that the Patriarch dies or the Genestealers leave the planet in search of a new world to colonise. At that point, one of the new brood will become a new Patriarch to lead that cult, and all the others will fall under their sway. It's something to do with hypnotism or magic. Space magic-hypnotism. Yeah, that'll do ...

Grombrindal

Poxwalkers
by Antonio Procino



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.

Stealth Panthers Intercessors
by Hiroshi Saeba



Blood Bowl Ogre
by Julián Gómez



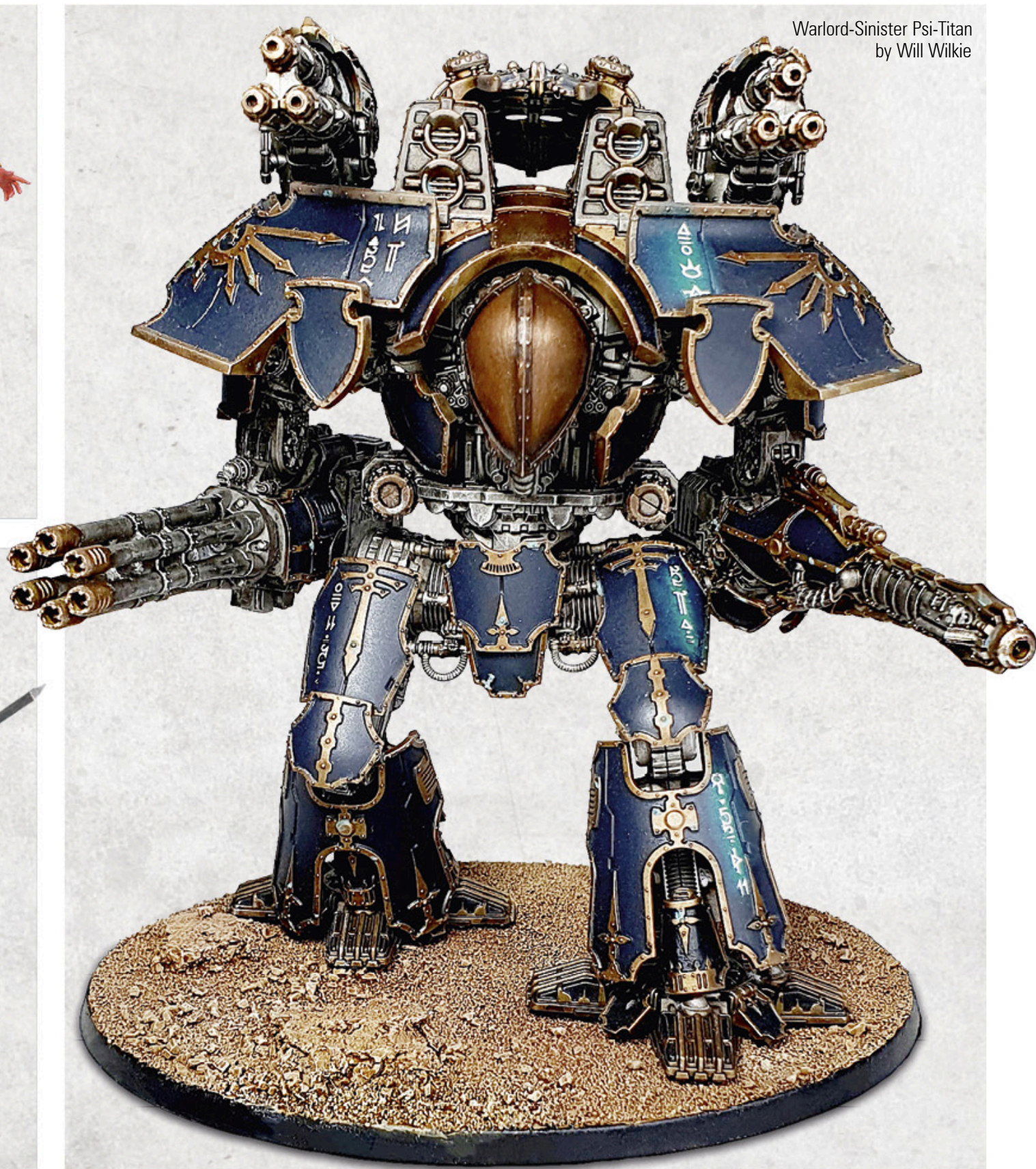
Shadowseer
by Mateusz Sztraf



Drazhar
by Jacob Solomon-Hughes



Warlord-Sinister Psi-Titan
by Will Wilkie



Blood Angels Terminators
by Walter Nunziati



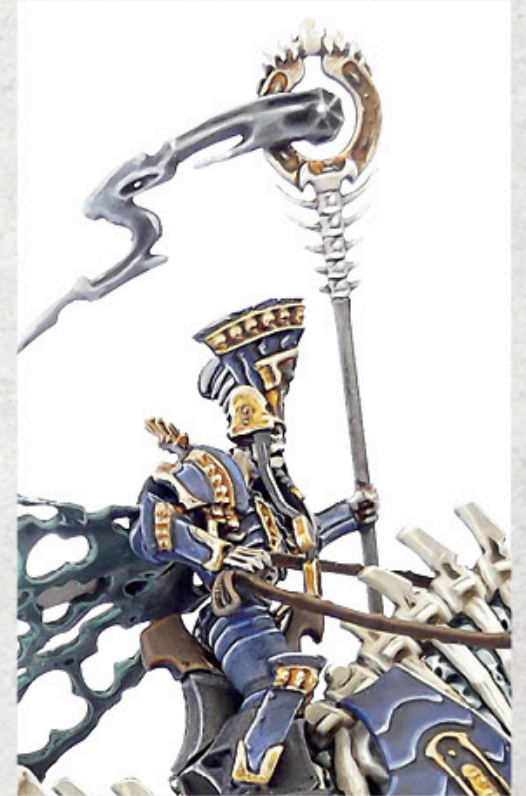
MODEL OF THE MONTH

This issue's model of the month is this fantastic rendition of Arkhan the Black, which was painted by Daniel Jackson. We asked him how he painted Nagash's favoured lieutenant.

'I painted all of the bone areas on the model using Rakarth Flesh as a basecoat,' says Daniel. 'Then I washed the whole thing with Agrax Earthshade before highlighting back up with Rakarth Flesh, Ushabti Bone and Screaming Skull. The final highlights are pure White Scar. The darker patches of bone use the same colours, but with more

sparing highlights so they appear darker. I then painted the spirits and skulls using Celestra Grey as a base and mixing in Sybarite Green to get the ghostly effect. The highlights are Ulthuan Grey and White Scar.

'As for Arkhan's armour, I started with a basecoat of Kantor Blue base, then shaded it with Druchii Violet to get that deeper blue/purple tone. I then layered it up with Kantor Blue again, before edge highlighting with Alaitoc Blue and Hoeth Blue. The very final edge highlights are a very thin coat of Blue Horror.'





THE TERMINUS



Local myth has it that a mysterious train runs on moonless nights, taking people to untold treasures. But are the myths true, and what awaits at the terminus? A Warhammer Horror story by David Annandale.

The wind sighed over iron wreckage. It whistled through rusted pipes. Metal creaked against metal, the notes scraping up and down – a desultory song in the wastelands.

The ruins were a hard yet shapeless black mass in the night. Hills of jagged shadow leaned over Vazya Reinhardt as she and her brother made their way towards the abandoned maglev station. There was no moon. The only light came from the glow of the decaying outskirts of Carchera, one of the city's old satellite industrial sectors. Carchera's long decline had eroded its edges first, and the manufactories here had closed centuries ago. The land was slowly reclaiming the region. The lengthy siege by the forests had sunk roots between the fallen rockcrete walls. Vazya thought she could hear the waving of ferns and struggling shrubs, a green susurrus beneath the dying groans of metal.

Bakhin risked turning on his torch. Its beam caught the base of a rockcrete staircase, crumbling and stained, a hundred yards ahead. 'We're almost there,' he said.

Vazya sucked on her lower lip. 'This might be a waste of time.'

The Enforcer stopped walking. 'What? Did I hear you right?'

'Just wanted to say it. You know it's true.'

'Are you changing your mind?' Bakhin asked. 'This was your idea.'

'I know. And no, I'm not changing my mind.' But if they *did* turn away from the shell of Ciego Station, she could live with that decision.

'I don't believe this,' said Bakhin.

'I said I hadn't changed my mind.'

'So, we're going?'

'We're going.' She made herself walk on.

Coming here *had* been her idea. She was the one who had urged Bakhin to help her prove the reality of the Valgaast Train. She was the one who had been fascinated by the stories since childhood. She was the one who had lived and breathed the legend all her adult life, the effort to track down its existence her obsession that kept her sane through the monotony of her days as Third Junior Cataloguer, agri-sub-directory secundus, in the city's Adeptus Administratum halls.

The Valgaast Train. The myths that ran through Carchera were bundles of contradictions, and what was consistent was also vague. The train ran only on moonless nights, stopping only at disused stations. So, no one had ever actually seen it. The train ran through dreams. It travelled in the shared tales of children and bored adults searching for something about Carchera that was extraordinary. The worn city edges had hundreds of miles of abandoned tracks and dozens of abandoned stations. Of course a phantom coursed through the metal graveyard.

Where did it go? Where did it take its passengers?

To Valgaast.

Where was that?

No one knew. The name did not show up on any of the maps of Ossorian. If there had been such a place on the planet, it was now gone.

Bakhin kept his torch on, aimed low, until they reached the stairs. Through unspoken agreement, he and Vazya kept their presence in the ruins hidden. They were breaking no edict by being here. It was intuition that prompted their actions, the sense that their quarry would not appear if they were visible.

The steps rose above heaped debris, climbing into the dim light of the city. Vazya could see well enough to place her feet, but there was no longer any handrail, so she and Bakhin kept to the centre. Rockcrete crunched quietly beneath their feet. Fragments crumbled away and skittered down into the dark.

'Does this feel steady to you?' Vazya asked.

'No. Do you know another way up?'

'No,' she admitted.

Cracks covered the platform like old veins. The song of the wind had a deeper tone here, as if the elevated track was a massive tuning fork, its vibrations going on and on, a somnambulist hum in the night. There were no shelters. The station was a bare surface, a utilitarian construct that had lost all meaning.

Vazya and Bakhin advanced to the edge of the platform. They looked up and down the track. Vazya saw only night. The track curved off into the darkness in both directions. It ran from nowhere to nowhere. The abyss concealed anything Vazya could imagine. Dreams or nightmares could emerge from this black. She half-hoped nothing at all would come.

Half-hoped. More than thirty years of wondering would not be satisfied with absence.



An hour passed. Then another. The wind sang. Tedium took the edge off anxiety.

'When will it come?'

Bakhin's mournful tone told Vazya that his words were more an expression of despair than a question. She answered anyway. 'No one knows. It might have come earlier. It might not come at all. It might not be real.' *Though it is. I know it is.* 'Did you want to give up?'

'No. We stay until dawn.'

His debts must have been worse than she thought. His need for the train sounded greater than hers. Even a few hours ago, she would not have thought that was possible. 'Are things really that bad?' she asked.

'Yes,' Bakhin said after a long silence.

'You can't know that the train leads to wealth, even if it turns out to be real. That's just a story.'

'The train itself is a story.'

'I'm sure it's more than that.'

'Then so is the treasure. It has to be.'

'Throne, what have you done?'

'Nothing new. Just more of it. Too much. The debts are due now. My creditors are *insistent*. I think they're about to make an example of me.'

‘But you’re an Enforcer.’

‘That’s the point.’

‘How would they dare?’

‘That’s what I thought. That was my mistake. They dare,’ Bakhin said, tired, and sounding disgusted with himself. ‘They have political power that I don’t. I need this, Vazya. I need this to be real.’

The wind picked up. It had been an east wind, blowing from their right. Now it came from the left, a strong blast and growing stronger, the air rushing ahead of something massive, as if the night were a tunnel. Then, darkness within darkness took on direction and form. It became a shape, rushing towards the station. Vazya and Bakhin jerked back from the edge of the platform.

The train was huge, bigger than should have been possible on the narrow maglev track. Blasts of steam erupted from the locomotive as it braked suddenly at the platform, yet except for the creaking and rattling of the cars as they leaned back and forth with the train’s motion, it was almost completely silent. There was no headlamp. The train was a mass of iron night that crawled towards them like a predator. In the faint light, Vazya made out ornate metalwork on the locomotive. It bulged and twisted, shaped like the movement of the steam. She had never seen an engine like this. It seemed ancient – an entity emerged from a tomb of a forgotten age.

Though there was no illumination from within the locomotive, a dull red shone inside all but the first of nine passenger cars. The train came to a stop with the middle car in front of Vazya and Bakhin. The doors hissed open directly before them. The rest remained shut.

‘An invitation,’ Vazya whispered. She stared at the train, heart hammering, the reality of the legend too huge, too heavy. She had imagined many things over the years, some sinister, some hopeful, all of them pale, shrunken and vague before the thing itself. She could not move. She could barely think. Awe held her fast.

Bakhin cleared his throat. ‘An invitation,’ he echoed with a hoarse croak. ‘Then we should accept,’ he said, his voice stronger. He stepped over the threshold into the passenger car.

‘Bakhin,’ Vazya said. ‘Wait.’

He turned around, faced her, but stayed in the train. ‘No.’

‘The doors opened for us. For *us*. The train knew we were here. What if this is a trap?’

‘Then I’m no worse off than I was before. Are you coming with me or not?’

She hesitated. Low ticks and creaks came from the train as it idled. It was waiting for her.

She should go home. She had her proof. She didn’t need to know more.

If I walk away, will I always wonder?

She boarded the train. There was never any real choice.

The doors closed behind her. With a lurch, the train started moving.

‘To Valgaast, then,’ said Vazya.

‘To Valgaast,’ said Bakhin.



The passenger car was a shell. There were no seats, no decor of any kind. There was only the black iron of the hull, and dull, flickering lumen strips. Their red light did little more than create shadows.

There were scratches on the walls, some of them deep, like clawed flesh. Vazya ran her fingers over them, tracing the way they ran into each other. She snatched her hand away before she felt a pattern.

‘What’s that smell?’ Bakhin asked.

Vazya wrinkled her nose. The tang in the air made her think of insects, and age.

The train picked up speed, the car rocking slightly from side to side. Vazya looked out the window. The track was curving away from Carchera, and the lights of the city were fading. They were travelling deeper into night, deeper into the void. The train hit a sharp bend, and the car jerked. Vazya almost fell, and Bakhin reached suddenly for his shock maul. He was not in uniform but had slipped his weapon through his belt. He pulled it out now and looked towards the next car back.

‘What is it?’ Vazya asked.

‘I thought I heard voices.’

They peered through the narrow windows of connecting doors between the cars. There was no one there. Bakhin slid the doors open, moved into the other car, and prowled forwards, shock

maul at the ready. Vazya followed, keeping a few steps back in case he started to swing.

They were halfway down when the far doors opened. Two women and a man entered. When they saw Bakhin, they stopped dead and raised their hands.

'We aren't here to fight,' one of the women said.

'There will be plenty for all of us,' said the man.

'We won't make trouble,' said the other woman.

Vazya came up beside Bakhin. She touched his shoulder, and he lowered the maul. 'Who are you?' she asked.

'Darra,' said one woman. She was older than her two companions. Squat, clean-shaven, she had the hard appearance of a manufactory serf, one who had worked the forges long enough to be tempered by them into a hardened alloy of flesh. 'This is Krent.'

The man looked like another refugee from the forges, one who hadn't been there as long. He had been badly burned recently. The left side of his face and his arm were shiny with scar tissue.

'And Nevi.' The other woman, who looked about the same age as Krent, was more slightly built than her two friends and wore a soiled valet's uniform. A servant from one of the noble families of Carchera, Vazya guessed. One who had been dismissed and was scrambling to survive.

Vazya introduced herself and Bakhin, keeping to first names only, like Darra. Bakhin tensed for a moment, but worrying about being identified was a concern that belonged back on the platform. They had entered the world of a legend. Everything, Vazya thought, was different now. For better or worse.

'How many are you?' Bakhin asked.

'Just the three of us,' said Krent. 'We had a fourth, but she stayed behind...' He paused when Nevi shuddered and shook her head sharply.

'What is it?' said Vazya.

'She's dead.'

'We aren't sure,' said Darra.

'She is,' Nevi insisted. 'I know what I saw.'

'It was dark,' said Krent. 'Too dark to tell.'

'No. No it wasn't. Not that dark. She tripped.

Somehow, she tripped, and she fell under the train.'

Vazya's mouth dried. *If I had stayed behind, would I have tripped too?*

'Then she tripped,' said Darra. 'She should have been more careful. She should have come with us.'

'To Valgaast,' Vazya said.

'That's right,' said Krent. 'And its riches.'

Darra nodded.

'You all believe that?' Vazya asked.

'We do,' Darra said emphatically.

'Yes,' Nevi said, sounding like someone who was rapidly losing her faith. 'I *have* to.'

'She's alone,' Darra explained to Vazya. 'Four children, all ailing, dead husband. She needs this.'

'And you?' Vazya asked.

'I'm tired of being hungry,' Darra said, fury barely suppressed.

'What about you?' Vazya said to Krent.

'I just... I just want my life to be something better than survival.' His hope sounded worn out from years of pointless use. 'Isn't that why you're here?'

'I just want to know the truth,' said Vazya. She wondered if she should have used the past tense.

'Have you seen anyone else aboard?' Bakhin asked the others.

'The last two cars are full,' said Krent. 'There must be twenty or thirty people. They came on in small groups, like us. The train has been circling Carchera.' He glanced at the window, and the blackness outside. 'This is the longest we've gone without a stop,' he added.

'So, we're going to Valgaast,' said Bakhin. 'We're all agreed, though that tells us nothing. Does anyone know what way we're heading?'

'No,' said Darra. 'No one does. Too dark to see, and we can't open any of the windows. We volunteered to go forward to the locomotive. Maybe there's someone there... who can tell us.'

Vazya noticed Darra's pause. *Maybe there's someone there... Maybe there's no one.* There was a doubt that Darra feared to express, even to herself.

‘Good,’ Bakhin said. ‘Let’s go.’

He turned and led the way towards the front of the train. The others fell in behind, deferring to his leadership without question. If he wanted the responsibility, he was welcome to it.



The light in the car forward of the one that Vazya and Bakhin had entered was even dimmer. There was only one lumen strip functioning, and it kept flickering off altogether. Vazya peered through the doors at the same time as Bakhin, and she jerked back.

‘What?’ Bakhin asked.

‘Didn’t you see? There was someone there.’

He looked again. ‘No one there now. What did you see?’

‘At the far end. Someone in robes, I think. Their skin was so pale.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes.’

‘So, they came on board before you,’ said Krent. ‘At one of the earlier stops.’

‘Are any of the others robed?’ Vazya asked him, sceptical.

‘No,’ he admitted, looking uneasy too.

‘Whoever it was, they’re gone now,’ Bakhin said. ‘We’re not accomplishing anything by staying here.’

‘I don’t think we should go on,’ Nevi said.

‘And what would you do instead?’ Darra asked her.

‘I just want to leave.’

Darra snorted. She pointed to the door, and the rushing darkness beyond. ‘Go right ahead. Let me know how that goes.’

‘The rest of you do what you want,’ Bakhin said. ‘I’m going on.’ He shoved the doors aside and entered the next car. Vazya followed close behind. She had committed herself to seeing the truth through to the end when she came on board. There would be no hiding from it, so it was better to be active and seek it out. That was what she told herself. It was a way of keeping the paralysis of growing fear at bay.

They walked slowly down the length of the car. The insectile sourness of the air grew stronger. The lumen strip’s stuttering rhythm of light and darkness made it hard to walk. Vazya’s balance was precarious. When night bloomed before her eyes, it tried to make her pitch forward into it. Halfway to the next doors, she looked back, and caught a glimpse of Nevi, bringing up the rear. She felt a wave of sympathy. She wanted to tell the other woman that she understood, that she wished all of them were off the train.

There were a lot more scratches on the walls here. The marks were converging towards the front of the train. Vazya could see the patterns now. They looked like how the air smelled.

Bakhin reached the end of the car and stopped. He was still looking into the next carriage, the last before the locomotive, and had done nothing to reach for the door handles when Vazya caught up to him. ‘You were right,’ he said softly. He stepped aside so she could see more easily.

Her breath caught. There was no light at all inside the next car, but the flickering lumen strip in theirs cast a penumbral illumination a few yards ahead. The carriage was full of people. They were standing in rows, motionless, silent, all of them robed, their skulls hairless, their flesh maggots white. They were all facing forward, towards the locomotive.

Vazya’s flesh crawled. She was staring at statues. She was staring at corpses. She was staring at neither and worse.

She backed away with Bakhin.

‘What did you see?’ Darra asked, much too loud.

‘Shhhhh,’ Vazya hissed.

Darra pushed past to have a look for herself. Then she, too, moved away from the door, her eyes wide, her steps careful and quiet.

They all retreated two cars back.



‘Who... What do you think they are?’ Krent asked.

‘I don’t want to know,’ said Nevi.

‘I think she’s right,’ Vazya said. Her curiosity was more than sated. She cursed it for ever having existed.

'Agreed,' Bakhin said. He was sweating, and his anxiety did nothing for Vazya's state of mind. 'All right, then. We don't want to have anything to do with them, whatever they are. I'm not staying put and waiting for them to take notice.'

'What choices do we have?' Darra asked.

'I think we should head back and join all the others you were with,' said Vazya. 'Strength in numbers.'

Bakhin tapped his shock maul. 'Did anyone else bring a weapon?'

'No,' said Darra. 'Not that I saw.'

'And we don't know if those robed corpses are armed. I'm going to assume they are.'

'They might not be dangerous,' Nevi said, pleading for someone to agree with her and soothe her fears. No one did.

Bakhin moved to the right-hand window. He gave it an experimental rap. 'Armourglass,' he muttered.

'What are you thinking?' Vazya asked, unwilling to believe he was going to try something this mad.

'I'm leaving this train.'

'How?'

'Not through the window, at any rate. We can't smash that.' Bakhin went to the exit in the middle of the car, Darra following at his heels.

'You can't get out at all,' Vazya said.

'We won't if we don't try.' Her brother had the fixed look in his eyes that came when he was set on a goal, no matter how ill-advised, and would not listen to reason. He examined the doors. There were handles for opening them manually if they failed to function during a stop. He grabbed the right-hand one and nodded to Darra, who took the other. They pulled, leaning hard to pit all of their strength against the doors.

'This is madness,' Vazya said.

They didn't listen. Nevi and Krent drew closer to them, as if effort were the same as a plan. Vazya didn't think the doors would open, but then, as Bakhin and Darra strained, they parted a fraction of an inch. Wind came into the car with a high-pitched scream.

'Pull!' Bakhin urged.

Bit by bit, the doors opened. Nevi and Krent backed away as the wind roared in with greater strength. Vazya held herself against the hull on the opposite side. The wind buffeted her. It tried to scoop her up in its grip. She pictured herself hurled out into the night, and she stood fast.

Bakhin and Darra straightened. The doors were open all the way. A gale battered the interior of the car. Bakhin kept a firm grip on the handle and leaned his head past the threshold, looking down.

'You can't jump,' Vazya called. 'We're at least fifty feet up.' And if the tracks were passing over a gorge...

'If there's water, I'll take my chances.' He kept staring down. He made no move to leap.

'And?' Vazya asked. 'Is there water? Can you even tell?'

Bakhin and Darra exchanged a look. Bakhin grimaced. 'No,' he said. 'I can't see anything at all.'

They pushed the doors closed again, shutting out the gale. Vazya let her body relax enough to breathe. Bakhin wasn't going to jump, and she wasn't going to be swept out of the carriage by the wind.

'What are we going to do?' Nevi pleaded.

'There's nothing we can do,' Vazya said. 'We're here to the end of the line.' There was no question that the only stop would be the last one. Their city was far behind, and with it, she knew in her heart, the hope of any stations.

Bakhin punched the door in frustration.

'Is she right?' Nevi asked him, and he nodded.

'We should go to the rear,' said Vazya. 'Join the others.'

'Strength in numbers is all we have,' Krent added.

'Better than nothing,' Bakhin said, and he started down the car, leading the way as if this had been his idea.



When they reached the crowd in the rear carriage, they were greeted by expressions that went from hopeful and back to frightened in moments. Nevi described the robed figures, and fear spread through the carriage like a heavy mist. No one suggested that all would be well, that the treasure

of Valgaast was what waited at the terminus. No one believed that story any longer, least of all Bakhin.

‘When we stop,’ he said, ‘when the doors open, we leave as a group, in force. There are enough of us to be hard to control. Don’t be docile.’

‘What if we’re met by weapons?’ someone asked.

‘We’ll deal with that if and when it happens.’

He sounded confident, Vazya thought. Her brother had always been good at projecting assurance and the impression of forward momentum. She saw the illusion clearly enough. His strategy wasn’t the best option available to them. It was the only one. She could have easily suggested the same course of action.

‘The treasure might still be real,’ said Krent.

Bakhin nodded. Even Nevi did.

We all have to know, Vazya thought. All of us.



Hours later, with dawn still distant, the train slowed down, then came to a stop. The doors rattled open. Cold air blew into the car. There was a collective hesitation. Vazya started moving first. She wanted to get off the train. By starting forwards, she jerked Bakhin into action, and he hurried to step out onto the platform just ahead of her. The others followed quickly.

Outside the train, irregularly staggered torches burned on iron columns, illuminating the surroundings with a wavering, shifting glow. Shadows jerked back and forth over a confusion of metal constructs. The platform was in what had once been a large maglev station. A dozen other disused tracks converged here, feeding into the ruins of a conglomeration of manufactories. A fragment of rockcrete wall stood next to one of the torches, and on it was a sign that read BOGARDUS COMPLEX.

‘Not Valgaast,’ Vazya said, looking at the sign. The name faded away into the fog of myth. The Bogardus Complex was a name with a different resonance, one of loss, of the long crumbling of a civilisation. It had been centuries since the manufactories here had shut down. The Bogardus Complex lived on only in Carchera’s fading sense of history. It was a thing that had been, and was no longer, and its memory was flakes of rust.

At the other end of the train, the robed beings had also disembarked. Still they did not face back.

‘They’re ignoring us,’ said Bakhin.

‘Good,’ said Krent. ‘Then we can leave.’

‘And go where?’ Vazya asked. They were hundreds of miles from Carchera. ‘Are you planning to walk back on the track? Can you see in the dark?’

‘They’re leaving,’ Nevi said.

The figures were retreating, heading deeper into the ruins, following the line of torches.

‘We should follow,’ said Bakhin.

‘Are you mad?’ Nevi exclaimed.

‘They haven’t attacked us. We haven’t been captured. There may be something worth finding here after all.’

‘Then we have to see,’ said Darra.

‘Do we?’ Nevi asked.

‘Could you go back, knowing you hadn’t tried everything for your children?’

‘No,’ said Nevi.

‘And if we can’t go back?’ Vazya asked, but she started walking with Bakhin anyway. There was nothing else to do.

Everyone else followed. Vazya even heard some hopeful whispers, people trying to convince themselves that Bakhin was right. They tried to cling to the dream that had brought them to this spot. She tried to feel resigned instead. She was going to find out the truth of the myth whether she wanted to or not.

Beyond the platform, the rubble of the station and the manufactories had been rebuilt, and repurposed. The passengers of the Valgaast Train descended a slope of battered iron and rockcrete, and it led into a vast tunnel. Chimneys and shattered façades leaned against one another to create an angular roof. Torn, twisted metal reached out of the walls like arms. The torches carried on ahead, and the floor kept sloping deeper into the gloom.

From somewhere deep in the structure came the sound of low chanting.

‘Do you hear that?’ Vazya asked Bakhin.

'Yes. I can't make out what they're saying.'

'It doesn't sound like any prayer to the Emperor I know.'

'And? Does that change our options?'

'No.' She glanced at the shock maul in Bakhin's hand and wished for a weapon.

The floor levelled off. Vazya saw now that some of the fissures in the walls of wreckage looked like passages. She guessed this tunnel was a major artery cutting through a web inside the wreckage. She didn't like where her imagination went, because there was still nothing she could do about it.

The chanting grew louder, and at last the train passengers crossed a huge, angular threshold. They entered a circular chamber at least a hundred feet across. The ceiling must have been fifty feet up. It was shrouded in darkness, barely touched by the torchlight. Sharp angles glinted, and the shadows of a weave of iron made Vazya think again of a web. This was its heart. The centre of the roof was utterly dark. There was nothing there to pick up the light of the torches.

Is that a shaft?

There were hundreds of robed people here, all chanting, all looking upward. They all had the same decayed pallor, but the shapes of some of the skulls disturbed Vazya. She was too far away to see them clearly in the dimness, but there was something inhuman about their silhouettes.

As the passengers arrived, the chanting ceased. Still looking up, the worshippers nearest the entrance drew apart, creating a path that led to the centre of the chamber.

'No,' Vazya said.

'Exactly,' Bakhin agreed.

They turned around, even though Vazya knew the gesture was an empty one. There was nowhere to go. She knew she was going to die.

The rest of their company turned too, but there, back up the sloping path, were many more of the robed beings. They began walking slowly towards the passengers. There was movement next to the walls, the swift and angular movement of *things* coming down through the shadows, things that snarled, things whose claws clicked and scratched against the rockcrete and iron.

And from above, from inside the ceiling shaft, came a hissing, echoing roar.

Bakhin raised his shock maul and looked up, ready to fight – until the thing dropped to the floor with rockcrete-shattering impact, and he dropped the maul, his body going slack with terror.

The worshippers chanted again, and the passengers screamed. The creature, both reptilian and insectoid, towered over them on its massive hind legs. Two of its four legs were bony scythes. The other two resembled arms, and at first Vazya thought that was the most horrible thing, the way the utterly inhuman mimicked the human and made it monstrous, with one limb seeming to become a hand wielding a serrated blade, and the other holding a whip of flexible cartilage.

The limbs were not the worst thing, though. She saw the worst thing when she stared, mesmerised by monstrous awe, at the elongated, horned skull, emerging from a shell of chitinous armour. The worst thing was the expression forged by the narrow eyes and the jaws that gaped wide enough to swallow a man. The horror looked down at Vazya. Its gaze was mindless predation, but it was also all-knowing. Something as old as night looked out at her through those eyes. It knew her as she knew an insect.

Her old faith disintegrated before the truth behind myths.

Bakhin's scream was short and sharp as a scythe pierced his chest and lifted him to the jaws. There were many other screams as the being waded into the passengers and began to feed.

Vazya did not scream. She fell on her knees, her vision filled by the sight of the divine in all its monstrosity. She was still on her knees when one of the clawed beings, an emissary of the god, seized her.



Much later, when she found herself disembarking the train in Carchera once more, she rejoiced in her new faith, and in the knowledge that her own being had been altered, and that she was part of the true divine. Made new, made a prophet, she walked into the city, ready to tell a story of mythical trains and wealth to whoever would listen. There was a legend to spread. There were curious minds to lure.

There was a world to harvest.

WORLDS OF WARHAMMER



JORDAN GREEN

Jordan has been a member of the Warhammer Studio for a little over a year now and he's already settling in well, having worked on both the Seraphon and Slaves to Darkness battletomes. We're pretty certain that sitting next to Phil Kelly every day has started to rub off on him, too. For a start, he seems to be listening to a lot more rave music.

When you think of the Chaos-ravaged expanses of the Mortal Realms or the grim darkness of the far future, several phrases likely come to mind. 'Barrel of laughs' probably isn't one of them.¹ But amongst all the misery and grit that defines our settings, it can't be denied that a very bleak, very 'Warhammer' style of humour remains an ever-present ingredient. It's this that I'd like to delve into a little in this column.

I am not as long of beard as some of our wiser and more esteemed loremasters. My introduction to Warhammer began around the early 2000s, and I jumped in whole-hog around 2007.² As such, I'm not best placed to chart the development of Warhammer humour over the last few decades – indeed, different 'eras' of our lore could make for a fine article in its own right. Instead, I'm going to discuss the importance of the more amusing – though rarely wholesome – side of our settings, and how we tend to approach it from a writer's perspective.

LAUGHING THROUGH THE TEARS

There's a few reasons why maintaining a sense of – admittedly very unhinged – humour in our settings is so important. Not least of these is our role as custodians. It's important that we maintain and respect what has gone before – that we keep Warhammer 'Warhammer', so to speak. There's a personality that runs throughout our worlds that can't be found anywhere else, an essential spark that has burrowed its way into the minds of hobbyists around the globe.

This unique quality is hard to define. But if I did have to give it a definition, I'd say that it's perhaps the pervasive sense of bleakness combined with the folly of mortal endeavour. To borrow a particularly famous bit of Warhammer 40,000 parlance, 'The universe³ is a big place, and whatever happens, you will not be missed.'

Against the backdrop of such vast, hostile settings, where thirsting gods and inhuman terrors constantly strive to tear everything we recognise and relate to asunder, the resistance and courage of the common man can seem hilariously futile. And, indeed, the more human factions are regularly revealed to be amongst the greatest monsters of all.

How do the Stormcast Eternals keep true to their oaths when they are forced to die over and over in Sigmar's name? Why does the humble Guardsman hold the line with trusty lasgun in hand, knowing that his body and soul alike are at risk of eternal torment? There's undeniably something commendable and heroic about these acts, but also something profoundly dark. We laugh at the sheer horrific immensity of it all, because the only alternative is to scream.

There's a refuge in audacity – a notion that many factions in our settings have taken to their most illogical, darkly comedic extremes. In this can be found both humour and tragedy alike, for the dangers our characters and factions put themselves in or the decisions they make are sometimes so easily avoided. Yet they either do not know – or refuse to acknowledge – any other way. The Hallowed Knights, for example, are so certain of their own purity that they carry around Chaos-tainted relics, exposing themselves to possible corruption through their single-minded obsession with protecting the souls of the innocent. The Holy Ordos of the Inquisition are so convinced of their own divine mandate that they will waste time and resources waging petty campaigns against those within the Imperium who slight them⁴ rather than focus all their efforts on the true enemy. The Aeldari might find things a bit easier if they didn't treat potential allies as dim-witted oafs.

It would be easy to become overwhelmed in the face of this constant parade of self-defeating insanity, but it's a vital ingredient of Warhammer that has stood the test of time. We chuckle despairingly at the horrors willingly invoked by the 'heroes' – perhaps more accurately, the protagonists – of our tales, but at the back of our minds we know that it could never be any other way. The insidious, ever-present taint of Chaos, not to mention the demands of survival in these bleakest of environs, makes such darkly comic insanity not only inevitable, but perhaps necessary. In a setting filled with madness, only the most insane can hope to rise to the top.

¹ Unless you're one of Nurgle's Sloppity Bilepipers, in which case you don't get much choice.

² My very first issue of this most estimable magazine was *White Dwarf* 327, March 2007, with the *Interrogator-Chaplain* on the front. Over a decade later I'm still *Dark Angels* mad.

³ Or *Mortal Realms*, if you prefer.

⁴ Sometimes through the use of 'Ork snipers', as the poor old *Celestial Lions* found out.

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. This month, Age of Sigmar background writer Jordan Green joins us to talk about something funny.

THE DEVILS YOU KNOW

One of the great strengths of our settings is the swathe of themes and personalities to be found across them. No matter what you look for in a faction, be it from an aesthetics, gameplay or lore point of view, there will inevitably be at least one that appeals to you. With that in mind, it's no real surprise that some of them can be perceived to fall under the loose status of 'comic relief'. This can seem like something of a derogatory term, but rest assured that all are potent players in their own right – albeit possessed of a unique, and usually utterly bizarre, take on their lot in life.

There's a good few examples I could hone in on here. The nefarious skaven, deluded Flesh-eater Courts and, to an extent, even the more deranged Necron nobles all have the capability to inspire amusement with their supervillain-like tendencies or sheer idiosyncratic nature.⁵ But there's one particular mob of factions that, whether they're smashing and bashing through the Mortal Realms or a grim dark galaxy, exemplify this concept better than any other. I'm talking of course about the greenskin races.

The orruks, and their distant space-faring cousins the Orks, have a world view that can seem

completely unfathomable to our modern sensibilities. There is little discernible motive behind their rampages, no desire for territory or conquest beyond the passing fancies of warlords. The greenskins fight because they love fighting, simple as that. Amusingly, of all the inhabitants of our settings, they are perhaps the only ones who can truly be said to be enjoying themselves; their merry brand of blunt brutality is rich material for some of our more darkly humorous stories. Indeed, all the darkness and horror we were just talking about in the previous section is almost directly responsible for the greenskins having a whale of a time – their only fear is running out of things to smash! This makes their destructive antics both a delight to write and to read about. But make no mistake – there's a balancing act to keep the terrifying nature of these barbarous marauders intact even while revelling in the curious spot of levity they represent.

Writing for greenskins allows us to inject a bit of comedy into the Warhammer universe, but we never want these hooligans to become nothing more than light relief. Thus, even their most madcap excesses must have a sort of self-contained 'Orky logic', which – to your average human in the Warhammer universes – is

⁵ I've always found Trazyn the Infinite's slightly dorkish, largely disturbing desire to 'collect' other living beings for his grand gallery to be especially charming.



⁶ Though, if armed with a trusty pokin' stick, surprisingly pointy.

absolutely horrifying. What sort of idiotically brilliant schemes fill the minds of their hulking bosses? How do they trample over the plans of their more civilised adversaries, intentionally or otherwise? The uncomplicated philosophy of the greenskins, not to mention their simple joy in the reality of their savage and brutal lives, is another key ingredient in the chaotic alchemy that forms our settings. Proud warrior races are nothing new in fiction, but the hooliganistic lust for battle felt by the greenskins is instantly recognisable. Indeed, for many people their loud and boisterous personality makes the faction somewhat relatable, as the shaking of tables around the world to bellowed cries of 'Waaagh!' attests!

Let's not kid ourselves here. For all of the humour that can be drawn from the orrukish demeanour – not to mention their distinctive speech mannerisms – they are still terrifying monsters by most reckonings. To borrow from 40K, the story of Tuska the Daemon-killa is a fine example of how we can use this conflict of horror and humour to really dive into the nature of a faction.

Tuska's story, for the uninitiated, is that of an Ork Warboss who enjoyed fighting daemons so much he decided to move into the business full time.

Barrelling through Imperial defences around the Eye of Terror, he and his boyz plunged into the warp. Finding themselves on a daemon world, Tuska slew so many foes before perishing that he drew the eye of the Blood God. The next day, as far as such things can be judged in the immaterium, Tuska and his ladz were resurrected once more – only to be locked in eternal battle against the daemonic legions of Khorne.

The more humorous elements of this tale communicate several things about the Orkish mindset without outright stating as much, cleaving to that old writerly maxim of 'show, don't tell'. Firstly, when an Ork decides to attempt something, they almost invariably do it in the most brutally straightforward manner possible. Often, this brings with it distinctly hilarious results. Secondly, what constitutes a rip-roaring time for a greenskin is anything but the sort for most other beings – perfectly fitting for these terrifying monsters. There are also little details scattered throughout the story that explore the character of the Orks, not least of which is passing mention of a particularly rude dying gesture from Tuska (the naughty boy). This isn't something that you would find in most codexes. Each book we write reflects the subject faction's culture in some way; aelven books often use long, almost poetic sentence constructions, while books about undead and Necrons invoke a sense of ominous dread. Greenskin books tend to be cruder, with more colloquial language and humorous asides, which is in keeping with the personality of the race. It may not be something you recognise consciously, but your brain does, and in doing so it cements an overarching image of what greenskins are in Warhammer.

BETTER YOU THAN ME

There's another general rule we tend to keep in mind when writing humour in Warhammer. It is one I've touched on in this article a few times already: write about things that are funny at first glance, but would be absolutely, nightmarishly horrific if they were to happen to you.

Once again the greenskin races are a great example of this rule. This time I'm going to focus on the vindictive little blighters known as grots. To us, as real-life people towering over the tiny plastic hordes, the average grot is not exactly intimidating.⁶ Gork knows we've seen them stabbed, shot, blasted apart, stepped on or otherwise eviscerated plenty of times. But let's imagine, just for a moment, that we are in fact average Freeguild soldiers battling for survival in the Mortal Realms. All of a sudden, grots – the spiteful little devils from Azyrite fable that ransack whole towns and have a mean streak a mile wide – just got a lot more terrifying. That's before you take into consideration the sight of





deranged grots swinging a huge iron ball round and round as if it were nothing, gibbering and cackling as they unleash strange lingering spells, or ride to battle on the backs of the bounding horrors known as squigs.

The worlds of Warhammer are undoubtedly an unpleasant place for the common man. That's a large part of their appeal; danger lurks around every corner, in the shadow of brooding trees or in the dark spaces between the stars. It would never do to forget this reality. Humour is a useful window into these worlds, but not at the cost of making the inhabitants appear wacky or overtly comical. The best possible result, at least in my opinion, is that you laugh at the humorous elements endemic to our settings – and then feel just a little uneasy for doing so. As soon as you empathise with the 'viewpoint' characters, the foes they face suddenly stop being quite so amusing. Of course, there are going to be those players who enjoy taking on the role of the grots and unleashing all manner of madcap mayhem on the enemy – and more power to them! Even then, however, it's hard to argue that part of the appeal of the Gloomspite Gitz is this balance of comedy with the nastier, more spiteful elements of their background.

It's partially for this reason why stories focusing on the Freeguild regiments, the Astra Militarum and even the simple inhabitants of Sigmar's cities or the underbelly of the Imperium are so important and impactful. What seems humorous to our detached, almost omniscient point of view is downright horrific to our closest points of reference in the settings themselves. Reconciling these facts, putting ourselves in the shoes⁷ of

these average everymen, forces us to confront the harsh realities of day-to-day living in the Imperium or Sigmar's empire. To these people, the many enemies they must face are no laughing matter. What we perceive as off-the-wall gallows humour is often a fact of life to these unfortunates. It's grim stuff, but it's the essence of Warhammer – and it wouldn't be possible without the context provided by its 'lighter' side.

STAND-UP TRAGEDY

However we choose to enjoy Warhammer, I think most of us can agree that it wouldn't be the same without its unique sense of humour and charm. From the Goblin-flinging Doom Divers of yore to the modern-day ravages of Murkthudd's Troggherd,⁸ the kooky cavalcade of horrors we subject the poor old denizens of our settings to has stuck in the minds of hobbyists around the world. Yet we don't do it because we simply have a deranged sense of humour ... at least, that's not the only reason we do it. Through clever use of humour we can explore in greater depth both our factions and wider settings, as well as give some idea of just how terrifying it would be to live in these worlds. Unless you're an orruk, I suppose – in which case, you're having a (literally) smashing time.

If you've been a hobbyist for any length of time, you no doubt have your own favourite example of Warhammer humour. If you're of a newer generation, then I'd highly recommend reading through the background sections of our books with an eye for the more bizarre, darkly comic or straight-up funny tales from the worlds of Warhammer. Who knows – you might even learn a little something to boot!

⁷ Or perhaps not, if you're a humble Freeguilder.

⁸ In which the Troggherd Murkthudd, for no apparent reason, led a bunch of his oafish mates on a rampage through the settled lands surrounding the city-fortress of Azyrvale, straight through its walls, out the other side and finally off the pier into the depths of the Ferrus Sea.

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 the writers!

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From the maelstrom of a sundered world, the Eight Realms were born. And with their birth began a war to claim them. This month: a whole load of troggoths! Plus award-winning painting advice.





THE TOME CELESTIAL
Don't look under that bridge – there be troggoths under there! Turn to [page 24](#) for new rules and background for these lumbering brutes.

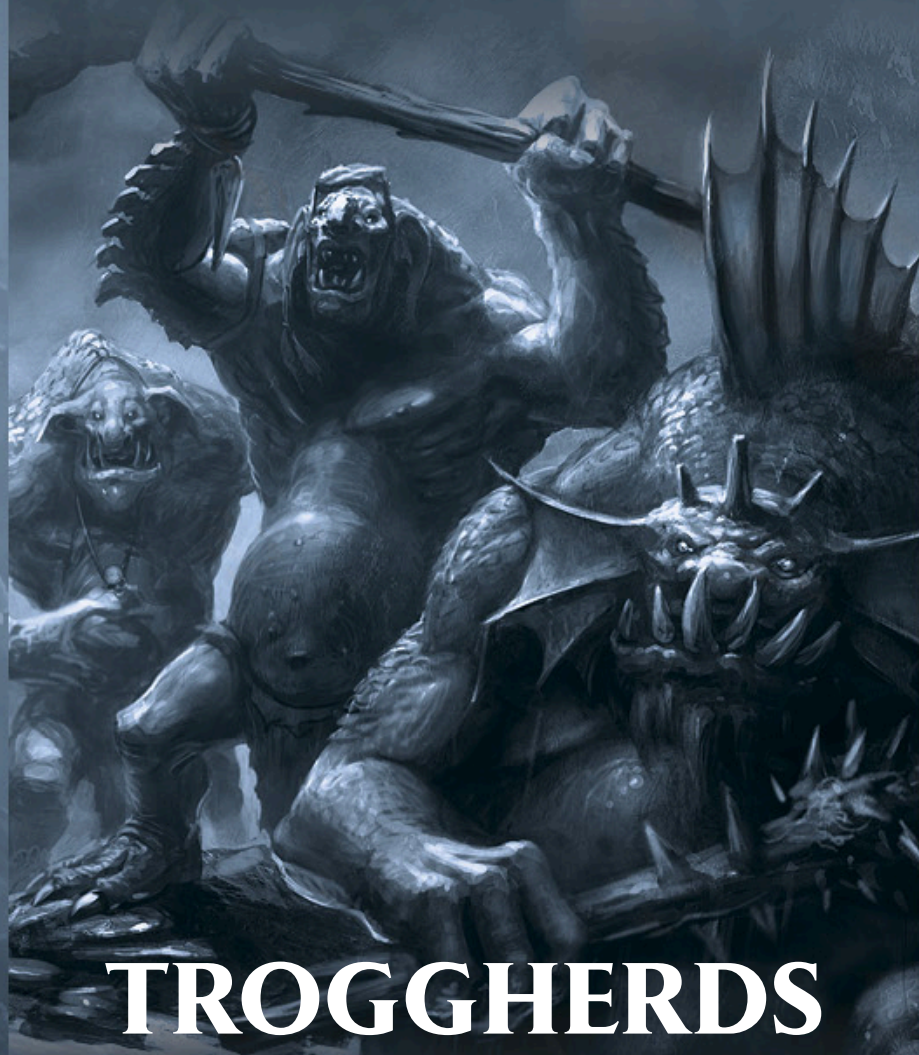


THE MONSTER SLAYER
Slayer Sword 2019 winner Maxime Penaud joins us to talk about miniatures painting on [page 44](#). His Dankhold Troggboss is a wonder to behold!



THE TOME CELESTIAL

Huge, stupid and extremely dangerous, troggoths are anathema to all that is reasonable and ordered. Though most commonly found lumbering to war alongside the grot hordes of the Gloomspite Gitz, on rare occasions these idiot beasts will suddenly come together to form the walking disasters known as Troggherds. Woe betide any caught in the way of their brutish onslaught.



TROGGHERDS OF THE REALMS

By Jordan Green and Louis Aguilar

Of all the loathsome beings that dwell in the deepest, dankest reaches of the realms, the troggoth race must surely be the most thick-headed. Odious, ugly, flatulent beasts that habitually make their lairs in filth-strewn rivers or fungal caves, the only thing that outweighs the average troggoth's dearth of intelligence is its capacity for violence. They are dim-witted creatures possessed of such poor reactions that it can take them upwards of several minutes to realise their head has been parted from their body. But once a troggoth gets going on a proper rampage, it is almost impossible to stop. It will smash its way through trees, fortress walls and entire ranks of enemy soldiers without breaking stride, shrugging off or outright regenerating from the puny blows of its adversaries as it lumbers forwards on paths none can readily divine.

Despite their many repugnant traits, troggoths remain a fascinating species that many scholars would relish the chance to study – if only they could get close enough without being crushed into paste. It may seem improbable that a species so impossibly stupid could survive in the harsh environs of the Mortal Realms, but troggoths possess many qualities that allow them to do just that. First and foremost, they have a remarkable ability to adapt to their environment, no matter how inimical to life it might appear. Resilient Rockgut Troggoths roam the sparse and freezing peaks of the realms, noxious Fellwater Troggoths wade through ancient swampland – as well as the polluted waterways that run through industrial Sigmarite strongholds such as Greywater Fastness – and Sulphurbreath Troggoths lurk in the Caverns of Fulminax, their foul secretions enough to overpower even the hulking ash-scaled lizards that contest their subterranean lairs. Perhaps the most infamous are the Dankhold Troggoths, huge beasts of destruction whose diet of realmstone-touched fungi has granted them the weird ability to shrink – or, more unsettlingly, to grow – in order to fill any space in which they decide to sleep off the long years.

The second quality that has allowed the troggoth race to thrive is its strange connection to the Bad Moon. All creatures that skitter, scurry and stomp through the clammiest corners of the realms seem to be touched in some fashion by this most ominous of celestial bodies, and troggoths are no exception. When the leering moon-god casts its unsettling mushroom magic across the land, even the most dullard beast feels a strangely coherent urge for violence flicker in their souls. It is at such times that troggoths, by nature solitary and territorial creatures, most commonly band together into packs. If a single troggoth can smash its way

through a traveller's way station or Sigmarite temple with relative ease, then three or more are more than capable of reducing a small reclaimed town to rubble whether they realise they are doing so or not. The Bad Moon not only fills troggoths with an appetite for wanton ruin but also stimulates their natural regenerative abilities. Under its maddening loonlight, their flesh reknits itself with a terrible swiftness. Many brave warriors have succeeded in driving a true and telling blow into the hide of a troggoth, only to find themselves trapped as the wound closes around their blade, leaving them to be crushed by the brute's idiot strength.

Owing to their shared living space and similar lack of hygiene, troggoth packs often make common cause with the various grot subspecies that infest the Mortal Realms. The Moonclans have long coexisted with troggoths. Many of their ramshackle lurklairs are built near troggholes, and the grots take great reassurance from being able to huddle in the shadow of the beasts when spells and arrows start flying. When the frenzied urge to rise up and despoil the surface world – known as the Gloomspite by the

spore-addled greenskin shamans – descends upon the grots, it is common to see packs of troggoths following the shrieking hordes, drawn towards battle by the promise of easy meat and stranger, deep-seated imperatives that they cannot explain.

'It's not so much that they're out to get you. 'Can't hate an avalanche, can't hate a tidal wave, and you can't hate a trogg' – that's what me pa used to say. If you can catch one as a whelp and chuck it in a pit with some starving hounds, you've even got a decent night's entertainment. Still, you try telling that to the Jadebloods after a bunch of the brutes smashed down the old temple to the Lady of Leaves and decided to use her walking woodspawn as toothpicks.'

- Arvik Yorn, Toll Warden of Heldenhammer's Triumph

Far rarer are those occasions when it is the troggoths who form the core of a Gloomspite horde, but that is not to say that it does not happen. In these circumstances, such ponderous

Below: Grots are sneaky and kunnin'. Troggoths are stupid and violent. Combined, they are extremely dangerous and unpredictable. Many generals have vastly underestimated them, their cleverly concocted battleplans left in ruin by the erratic behaviour of a Gloomspite horde.



but unstoppable avalanches of living destruction are led by the irascible Dankhold Troggbosses. It is these creatures, and these creatures alone, that are capable of asserting some manner of instinctive authority over their lesser brethren. The lingering touch of the deep'n'dark swathes them like a foetid mantle, and in their wake scuttles a seething carpet of repugnant, troglodytic beasts who have never known the caress of Hysh's light. Troggbosses do not make for natural generals and certainly possess no inkling of strategy or tactics. With that said, their bellowed commands are sufficient to focus the wandering minds of other troggoths just long enough to deliver a proper smashing to their adversaries, while grot mobs drawn to the migratory warpath will redouble their efforts in order to avoid the beast-king's grunted displeasure. So it is that the ravages of many Troggbosses and their attendant Troggherds have become cemented in the legends and folklore of the Mortal Realms, cautionary tales to ward off those who would dare stand in the path of such oblivious destruction.

GLOGG'S MEGAMOB

The Trogghorde (a term used to describe the largest Troggherds) of Glogg is perhaps the greatest of these migratory armies to blight the realms to date. This is not due to any particular strategy or subtlety on the part of its leader – indeed, the hulking beast known as Glogg earned his name from his repeated monosyllabic grunts. Nevertheless, what the Troggboss lacks in nuance, he more than makes up for in raw appetite – both literally and in terms of destructive capability. Whilst most Troggherds eventually run out of steam once enough of their members are slain, wander off or stand around forgetting that they are alive, Glogg's Megamob has been in constant motion since the waning years of the Realmgate Wars. Their coming is marked by a terrible grinding that fills the air. This stems not only from the advance of the troggoths themselves but also from the huge, leering Loonshrines dragged along in their wake on great iron chains. None know exactly when or why the troggoths decided to start transporting these unsettling effigies of

Below: The Dankhold Troggboss known as Glogg leads his Trogghorde into battle. Rockgut Troggoths make up the vanguard of his force, crushing all before them in an avalanche of stone. Repeated consumption of realmstone-tainted fungi has turned their skin a pale, phosphorescent shade of purple.



the Bad Moon across the realms, and none can predict where the horde is going. But from the trail of crushed cities, flattened Dreadholds and slaughtered armies that litter the lands, it is certainly possible to tell where they have been.

Glogg's Megamob is not bound together by a shared heraldry, or even a common purpose, but by rather simple bestial instinct. Decades of war, regeneration and stuffing his face with strange fungi has seen Glogg grow to a truly formidable size. His hulking body is criss-crossed with deep welts and scars, and his craggy hide glimmers with chunks of realmstone and other magically charged artefacts that he has jammed into it over the years. Like all creatures of Destruction, troggoths tend to follow the biggest and most boisterous of their number, and so, as he wanders, the Trogg boss has been joined by a considerable menagerie of monsters and beasts from the clammy corners of the realms. Foremost amongst these are the greatest concentration of Trogg bosses and Dankhold Troggoths assembled outside of Skragrott the Loonking's



MURKY ORIGINS

Like many of the belligerent creatures that make up the hordes of Destruction, troggoths have inhabited the Mortal Realms for almost as long as there have been Mortal Realms. Those priest-scholars of Azyr who have had the opportunity to dissect troggoth carcasses and examine their bizarre biology have concluded that the first of their number were formed from arcane gunge that pooled and festered in the deepest caves – the foetid effluvium of creation, as it were. This magical origin would certainly explain the troggoth race's small-minded fascination with realmstone. Though they are far too dull-witted to exploit its mystic properties, there have been plenty of examples of troggoths forcefully studding their hides with realmstone. This invariably grants them all manner of weird powers, not least of which being the unnatural resistance to hostile spellcraft evidenced by the Dankhold Troggoths.

The tribes and clans of Destruction have a strong tradition of oral histories, and as a result, they have plentiful variant tales regarding the genesis of the troggoths. Unsurprisingly, many of these legends stem from the grot tribes that dwell alongside them. The Badsnatchers of Ulgu believe that troggoths were once a race of shamans who drank too deeply of the hallucinogenic brews found throughout the Realm of Shadows. The Undersnapperz, a Moonclan Skrap that has fought regularly alongside the gargants of Rhondol, claim that the first troggoth was shaped from the noisome gunk that a bored Gorkamorka scraped from between his colossal green toes one day. The strangest legend, however, belongs to the Lunar Grinz of Chamon, who believe that troggoths do not come from the Mortal Realms at all; instead, their original home is the Bad Moon itself, which they vacated long ago in rickety scrap-vessels that are now lost beneath the mountains. Though this sounds bizarre, such a connection would explain why troggoths seem compelled to travel paths that the Bad Moon has already forged – or, as some suggest, to walk where the lunar menace is yet to go.





skulkmobs – who see a winning bet in Glogg’s unabating determination – but also the many scuttering beasts of the realms’ dankest depths. These hordes of bloated arthropods and skittering creatures swarm up around the dragged Loonshrines. Though individually no match for a seasoned warrior, in great numbers, this tide of scuttling horror can disrupt even the sturdiest of formations, rendering them easy prey for the unstoppable advance of Glogg and his mates.

THE STOICAL GOBBLEMAWS

The soaring peaks known as the Stoical Vast lie towards the coast of Ymetrica, most mountainous of Hysh’s Ten Paradises. As with much of the rest of the land, the Alarith – those Lumineth aelves who have forged the strongest connection with the wise mountains of the realm – have established many temples here, protecting their aelementor peaks even as they meditate upon the nature of the earth spirits in search of enlightenment. There are many threats to be found lurking across Ymetrica, from marauding Chaos warbands to wandering gargants, but in the Stoical Vast, it is the Troggherd known as the Gobblemaws that has proved the most consistent danger to the aelves.

Owing to the inherently symmetrical nature of Hysh, Ymetrica is as much a land of plunging chasms as it is of sky-skewering summits. It is from these depths that the first troggholes of the Stoical Gobblemaws were formed. Hysh is not typically a realm favoured by the anarchic forces of Destruction, on account of its orderly and rational nature, and is particularly avoided by those who voluntarily choose to dwell in the gloomiest crannies they can find. Troggoths, though, can adapt to almost anything. Those who reside in the Stoical Vast tend to have large ears and long, flapping tongues – their other senses heightened as the painful light sees their eyes grow smaller and more useless over time – as well as craggy flesh that can turn aside a blow from even the diamondpick hammers of the Alarith Stoneguard.

Packs of Gobblemaw troggoths have been sighted across the realms, having traipsed through subterranean gateways unknown to even the aelves. The majority, however, remain in Hysh, where they live up to their moniker by attempting to chew straight through the mountains of the Stoical Vast. The core strength of the Gobblemaws is provided by Rockgut Troggoths, half-blind beasts who are amongst the sturdiest of their kind, but an increasing number of Dankhold Troggoths has also been observed wandering up from the echoing chasms beneath the Vast. As the decades pass,

own horde. Either in imitation of their monstrous lord or through simple herd mentality, many of these beasts have taken to gorging themselves upon fungal strains that thrive close to realmstone deposits – Spark o’ the Pyres, Mutterer’s Cap, Leering Hob and others besides – with an even greater fervour than others of their brutish ilk. The results of this arcane diet are regenerative powers that work with a sickening speed, as well as a resistance to harmful magics that can confound even the most learned of mages.

Many of the Troggbosses of Glogg’s disorderly army choose to wander off, accompanied by those beasts who get it into their tiny minds to follow. Yet should they survive, these breakaway groups always seem to find their way back to the main body of the greater Trogghorde eventually. Glogg is surrounded by the toughest and meanest Dankhold Troggbosses of the Megamob; in battle, these form a living battering ram whose sweeping blows and incredible resilience sees them belligerently smash their way through even the most determined of shieldwalls without slowing. In their wake comes not only lesser troggoth packs and shrieking grot

Opposite: The Troggboss known as Gorp has been a plague on the lands of Ymetrica for decades. Just when the Lumineth Realm-lords believe him defeated, he returns with yet another Trogghorde stomping in his wake. The Stoneguard maintain a constant vigil for Gorp and his troggoth kin.

they have grown as tough of hide as their lesser kindred. The Alarith temples of the region have, on occasion, mustered in force to descend into the catacombs and cull the troggoths' numbers, and they have even won mighty victories against the Gobblemaws, but these never last. It is as if the deep darkness spews forth an endless procession of monsters; more than one questing Stoneguard patrol has simply disappeared without a trace, each meeting a gruesome end to sate the appetites of the troggoths.

The Troggboss of the Gobblemaws, Gorp, leaves his abyssal lair only on those rare occasions when the Bad Moon is at apogee over Ymetrica. Each time, the Troggboss's loose aim has been the same: to devour his way into Tjenaka, most imperious of all the Stoical Vast's peaks. Thus far, the Lumineth have successfully turned him back each time, but should the venerable Troggboss succeed in reaching the heart of the mountain – and, inevitably, consuming it – then the mountain would likely crumble away, and an entire region of Ymetrica would be subjected to a miserable decline.

THE OLD LADY OF THE BOG

Most troggoths are simple beasts, implacably lumbering along in search of food or something to crush beneath gnarled fists. But there are those rare few, secreted in the isolated and forlorn regions of the realms, who display a glimmer of something darker behind their beady eyes. Deep in the swamps of Verdia, where hag lights flicker and evil things crawl, intrepid frontiersmen pray for the graces of the Old Lady of the Bog. This hideous creature is a troggoth matriarch of unsurpassed cunning and malice. Never has she been recorded leaving her abode at the heart of the great swamps, but her brood of Fellwater offspring traipse all across through the Verdian marshes. The luminescent glow of their bodies – a by-product of the peculiar concoctions brewed by the Old Lady – and angler light-stalks have drawn more than one unwary traveller deeper into the foetid shadows, never to be seen again. Many Verdian swamp dwellers believe that the Old Lady of the Bog has an accord with the twisted Sylvaneth who dwell within the marshes, trading them captured intruders in return for arcane trinkets, while others claim that she sacrifices her captives in strange rituals by the light of the Bad Moon to open gateways to Droogrind, the shadowy troggoth underworld where there roam spirits as ancient as the realms.



AGES OF UNTHINKING DESTRUCTION

No one knows for certain how many Troggherds are stomping their way across the Mortal Realms at any given time. The first inkling of their approach is typically a distant rumbling and a foul scent drifting on the winds. By the time the troggoths have focused their limited attention on destroying all before them, it is too late for those who dare stand fast in the face of such an unstoppable force.

AGE OF MYTH

BIRTH OF THE BEAST

As the Mortal Realms coalesce into being, primordial gunge pools into the deepest and dankest caverns. From these festering pits emerge the troggoths, who immediately set to wandering about aimlessly and devouring everything they see. The coming of Sigmar and the civilisation he brings drives the troggoths deeper into the darkness, but their numbers continue to multiply and grow out of sight.

AGE OF CHAOS

WRATH OF THE DARK GODS

Reality screams as the Chaos Gods make their play for dominion of the Mortal Realms. The walls of unreality are rent asunder as the daemoniac legions spill forth. Vaunting empires and ancient civilisations fall like wheat before the infernal scythe, and after the disastrous Battle of Burning Skies, Sigmar has little choice but to seal the Gates of Azyr and safeguard as many of his people as he can. Those left behind – as well as those seeking an easy road to power – turn to Chaos for survival and glory. The troggoths steadfastly ignore all of this in favour of grunting at one another, stuffing armoured Chaos Warriors into their gobs, and vomiting over icons of fell power they have smashed into the dirt.

STRENGTH IN IGNORANCE

Chamon writhes under the mutative assaults of Tzeentch. The Hosts Duplicitous, a powerful daemoniac convocation of the Change God, lay siege to the duardin stronghold of Karak Thain. Though the doughty clansmen fight hard, the bedazzling illusions and arcane pyrotechnics of the daemons see them driven back inch by bloody inch. When the daemons attempt to infiltrate the deepest tombs of the Karak, however, they unearth more than they bargained for. The Troggherd of Brug emerges blinking into the light and is swiftly entranced by the chromatic capering of the daemons. The Hosts unleash all manner of mirages and subterfuges in an effort to divert the troggoths, but all crumble before their raw stupidity. The troggoths' rampage leads them right into the heart of

the daemon army, with Brug throttling the greater daemon known as the Phantom Lord until it dissolves into arcane mist. Though the troggoths are ultimately overwhelmed through sheer numbers, the havoc they cause gives the duardin time to evacuate from the mountain fastness to the nascent sky-port of Barak-Thargar. In time, these Kharadron will become the menace of aerial Tzeentchian enclaves.



THE WALKING WASTING

Though many Sylvaneth look to their own defences as the War of Life rages, the Daereth-Har Glade are of a more noble breed, offering sanctuary to many mortals fleeing the depredations of Nurgle. Yet the children of the Plague God are not so easily denied. The great River Yaethon, a lapping crystal stream that winds beneath sun-dappled mountains into one of the glade's primary enclaves, is soured with clotted plague-stuff brewed from daemon blood. As Maggotkin forces launch a series of diversionary assaults to stretch the Sylvaneth thin, a cohort of mounted Blightlords lures a pack of Fellwater Troggoths into the Yaethon. With a blind determination, the troggoths continue to lumber along the waterway even as it curdles around them and the plagues of Nurgle slowly take hold. Though their flesh begins to slough off their bones and their boil-studded bellies distend beyond even the norm, their regenerative capabilities prevent them from succumbing entirely. By the time the infected Fellwater Troggoths reach the stronghold of the Daereth-Har, they have become incubators for maladies of incredible potency. Though the diminished Sylvaneth fight fiercely to turn them back, the woods themselves – as well as many who sought shelter with the Sylvaneth – swiftly blacken and die purely through proximity to the corrupted creatures.

AGE OF SIGMAR

COMETH THE GOD-KING

Lightning strikes and thunder roars as Sigmar announces his return to the realms. Carried upon the bright bolts of the tempest are his chosen warriors – the Stormcast Eternals, celestial champions who bear weapons of holy provenance and are reformed upon death so that they may war eternal. The Stormhosts

strike at the tyrants of Chaos on a thousand fronts, beginning the titanic conflict known as the Realmgate Wars. Ancient powers rise, godbeasts fall, and the fate of entire nations is altered in these cataclysmic battles. The troggoth race steadfastly ignores all of this in favour of picking their noses, headbutting mountains and smashing apart anyone – be they devoted to Sigmar or the Dark Gods – who infringes upon their territory.

A STOMPING REVENGE

Though the realms are still mired in war, civilisation begins to take root in isolated enclaves. The freshly founded free city of New Harrazan in Aqshy declares a grand pageant to celebrate, in which the remnants of defeated enemies are to be displayed within the Mirror Hall of Triumph for the citizens to marvel at. Amongst these treasures are the carcasses of an offshoot of Glogg's Megamob that was recently blasted apart by a Kharadron flotilla, as well as a vial of mystically captured light said to be 'stolen from the Cursed Loone'. When a bungled theft sees the vial smashed, however, the released light is soon contained and focused within the Mirror Hall. Beneath its concentrated glare, a monstrous regeneration takes place: limbs, heads and even organs begin to regrow, and a slow but murderous fury sparks in sunken eyes. With chilling, rattling roars, the reanimated troggoths – trapped somewhere between life and death, and in many cases still hideously mutilated by their former demise – smash their way out of the Mirror Hall and into the streets of New Harrazan. The Freeguild garrison musters a desperate defence, but the troggoths are now more difficult to slay than ever. By the time morning comes, much of the city has been trampled flat, while a trail of monstrous footsteps leads out of the shattered walls and towards the distant Flamescar Plateau.

DEATHSCREAM

Nagash's master plan to drown the realms in deathly magic is sent awry at the last moment, but the resultant Necroquake still unleashes a shockwave of amethyst energies. As the very laws of magic are remade, hordes of Deadwalkers and storms of vengeful gheists rise en masse to assail the living. Cities of Sigmar and strongholds of Chaos alike come under siege from the undead armies. The troggoth race steadfastly ignores all of this in favour of staring blankly into the tortured skies, bashing one another over the head with the limbs of sundered skeletal titans, and ignoring the incorporeal nature of the many Nighthaunt spirits they batter into submission.

RISE OF DA LOONKING

In the Chamonic land of Ayadah, the Gloomspite hordes win perhaps their grandest victory to date

when they rise up and conquer Skrappa Spill – a huge mountain of accumulated scrap metal and discarded weaponry formerly held by the most powerful Ironjaw warclans of the region. They are led by Skragrott, the self-proclaimed 'Loonking', who has bound a truly vast horde of troglodytic terrors to his banner. Troggoths play a key part in the Loonking's strategy. Bolstered by the glare of the Bad Moon, packs of the dullard beasts are sent wandering straight through walls of rusted scrap, shrugging off the impaling impacts and opening up new passages through which the Moonclan hordes can spill forth. Any orruk who attempts to stop them is unceremoniously crushed by the monsters. In the aftermath of the battle, Skragrott employs a group of armoured troggoths to serve as unblinking guardians for his Fungal Asylum, as well as inducting the five biggest and toughest Troggbosses he can find into his 'Konkererz' as 'Eavies.



SLAUGHTER AT SUNDERED STONES

The Hjar, a warband of the Slaves to Darkness, are charged by Krosar of the Bane Sons with recovering the cursed lance Dreadfang. The weapon is said to lie beneath the lost Ghurish township of Sundered Stones, and so the Hjar are granted a cohort of Fomoroid Crushers to excavate the place and find Krosar's prize. Upon beginning to dig, the ruinous forces disturb a sizeable pack of Rockgut Troggoths who have been slumbering beneath the shattered masonry. Incensed by the rude awakening, the troggoths waste no time in slaughtering the mortals. The fomoroids, however, prove a harder target. Battle erupts throughout the ruins as the beasts wield broken columns as mauls and smash their way through the remnants of toppled cathedrals to surprise their foes. In the end, both the troggoths and fomoroids are mutually annihilated, Dreadfang remains unclaimed, and neither side achieves anything of lasting value.

THE MONSTROUS MARCH

Without any obvious impetus, Troggherds from far and wide divert their wanderings to head for realmgate that grant passage to the Heartlands of Ghur. None can say why this is so, and any who attempt to halt them are soon smashed aside. Soon, the predatory wilds echo to the tread of countless troggoths, and they show no sign of leaving any time soon.

GLOGG'S MEGAMOB ALLEGIANCE ABILITIES

If your army is a Gloomspite Gitz army, you can give it the GLOGG'S MEGAMOB 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

Monstrous Regeneration: *The arcane fungal diet of Glogg's Megamob has boosted the regenerative powers of the troggoths to new heights.*

Add 1 to the dice that determines if a friendly GLOGG'S MEGAMOB TROGGOTH unit heals any wounds when it uses its Regeneration ability.

COMMAND ABILITY

Oblivious to Sorcery: *A meaningful grunt from one of Glogg's Trogghosses can compel its followers to shrug off even the most potent magical assaults.*

You can use this command ability in your hero phase. If you do so, pick 1 friendly GLOGG'S MEGAMOB FELLWATER TROGGOTH or GLOGG'S MEGAMOB ROCKGUT TROGGOTH unit wholly within 12" of a friendly GLOGG'S MEGAMOB DANKHOLD HERO. Until your next hero phase, each time that unit is affected by a spell or endless spell, you can roll a dice. If you do so, on a 4+, ignore the effects of that spell or endless spell on that unit.

COMMAND TRAIT

A GLOGG'S MEGAMOB general must have the following command trait:

Shepherd of Idiotic Destruction: *The many Dankholds of Glogg's Megamob are capable of acting with something almost approaching cohesion when led by one of their brutish bosses.*

If this general is part of your army and on the battlefield at the start of your hero phase, roll a dice. On a 4+, you receive 1 extra command point.

ARTEFACT OF POWER

The first GLOGG'S MEGAMOB TROGGOTH HERO to receive an artefact of power must be given the Aetherquartz-studded Hide.

Aetherquartz-studded Hide: *On their travels, this troggoth has picked up many prisms of aetherquartz and stuck them into its tough flesh. Though it almost certainly has no idea why it did so, the power of the Hyshian realmstone nevertheless lends it surprising resilience.*

Roll a dice each time you allocate a mortal wound to the bearer. On a 5+, that mortal wound is negated.

WARSCROLL UPDATE – BAD MOON LOONSHRINE

If your general has the TROGGOTH keyword, any friendly BAD MOON LOONSHRINES replace their Moonclan Lairs ability with the Hidden Troggholes ability.

Hidden Troggholes: *Under the gaze of their alpha beast, troggoth mobs emerge from the shadowy subterranean depths to smash apart the foe.*

At the end of each of your turns, you can pick 1 friendly FELLWATER TROGGOTH or ROCKGUT TROGGOTH 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 Glogg’s Megamob units on the battlefield.

GLOGG’S MEGAMOB WARSCROLL BATTALION

STOMPING MEGAMOB

ORGANISATION

A Stomping Megamob consists of the following units:

- 1 GLOGG’S MEGAMOB Dankhold Troggboss
- 3-9 GLOGG’S MEGAMOB Dankhold Troggoths, GLOGG’S MEGAMOB Fellwater Troggoths or GLOGG’S MEGAMOB Rockgut Troggoths units in any combination
- 0-2 GLOGG’S MEGAMOB Aleguzzler Gargants

ABILITIES

One-track Minds: *When the troggoths of this belligerent horde get going, they can prove incredibly difficult to stop.*

Units from this battalion can retreat and still shoot and/or charge later in the same turn.

WARSCROLL	MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Stomping Megamob	-	-	160	Warscroll Battalion	



GLOGG'S MEGAMOB

This issue's Tome Celestial was inspired by the Troggherd army of Jes Bickham, erstwhile Grombrindal and the Warhammer Age of Sigmar Studio Manager. Here we take a closer look at the army itself, in all its dank, clammy and very hitty glory.





Far right: Glogg is the biggest and, arguably, the most intelligent of the Megamob. His burly chums Blogg and Clogg will often accompany him to the surface world for a spot of recreational head smashing.

Below: The core of my army (or should that be bedrock?) is composed entirely of Rockgut Troggoths. As yet, no Fellwater Troggoths have joined the Megamob, my reasoning being that Glogg's Troggherd is a subterranean cave-dwelling army that has emerged, blinking, into the light of the realms above ground.

However, with the addition of Big Mudda to the army, I can see some Fellwater Troggoths in my future as they are drawn to her and the impressive feats of destruction wrought by her kin.

Jes: It all started with the glorious models, of course. When the wizards down in the miniatures department first showed us the new troggoth kits, I knew I had to collect an army of them. It also helped that in the Age of Sigmar studio, we knew we wanted collectors to be able to run any of the sub-factions in the Gloomspite Gitz battletome as a proper army in their own right, from Moonclan to Spiderfang to squigs to, well, troggoths. And so Glogg's Troggherd was born!

The collecting, painting and gaming I'd done with the army in turn inspired this month's Tome Celestial. We wanted to give this sub-faction a little more punch and a little more depth. Playing a lot of games with the force had given the AoS games development team and me plenty of things to consider about what troggoths needed, while preserving their obvious weaknesses; the army should be slow but hit like a tonne of bricks, and be able to soak up a lot of damage. Nothing says 'fantasy wargame' more, after all, than an army of shambling subterranean fungus-encrusted dimwits smashing everything they can. (Of course, the Tome Celestial needed to be a bit grander than 'just' a Troggherd – and so, in turn, Glogg's Megamob came into being!)

Glogg himself is my Dankhold Troggboss, the inspirational leader of Glogg's Troggherd. He is barely conscious by the reckoning of other beings, but for a troggoth he is something of a renaissance man – he's given himself a name and everything, and he's realised that hitting things really hard will make other troggoths follow you. Glogg's brace of Dankhold Troggoth chums are enforcers, bodyguards and possibly family too (it's hard to tell with troggoths). They go by the names of Blogg and Clogg. Troggoths are not naturally drawn to the complicated business of naming things, even themselves, but inspired by the great intellectual feat of Glogg calling himself Glogg, they copied him with a minimum of effort. Also drawn to the army was the Troggoth Hag known as Big Mudda. I've always wanted to paint this terrifically characterful Forge World miniature, and collecting the Troggherd was the perfect excuse. Whilst not technically part of the Megamob, she is easily added to the army, as we gave her the Gloomspite Gitz keyword.

To me, an army like this is quintessentially Age of Sigmar – fantastical and characterful, possessed of a resonant look and feel, and great fun to build, paint and play games with. From here, the Megamob can only get bigger!





PAINTING GLOGG'S MEGAMOB

We love the colours that Jes used on his troggoths, so we asked him how he painted them. Here are the paints he used for the skin, shrooms, bases and uvver bitz so you can have a go yourself!

'I wanted my troggoths to have pale, purple-pink skin, like things that have lived in the dark for far too long,' says Jes, squinting in the bright sunlight. 'I painted the various fungus outcroppings a deep blue to contrast with their skin. The insectoid creature held by Glogg is painted just like my Tyranids, but don't tell anyone.'



PALE SKIN

Basecoat: Corax White

Wash: Druchii Violet & Lahmian Medium

Drybrush: Pallid Wych Flesh

TEETH AND CLAWS

Basecoat: Baneblade Brown

Wash: Agrax Earthshade

Layer: Screaming Skull

LEATHER

Basecoat: Skrag Brown

Wash: Agrax Earthshade

Layer: Deathclaw Brown

GLOGG'S BEASTIE

Basecoat: Caliban Green

Layer: Warpstone Glow

Layer: Warboss Green

Layer: Skarsnik Green

FUNKY SHROOMS

Basecoat: Thousand Sons Blue

Wash: Drakenhof Nightshade

Layer: Ahriman Blue

Layer: Baharroth Blue

BASES

Technical: Astrogranite

Wash: Nuln Oil

Drybrush: Terminatus Stone

Right: Though Mollog is not technically part of the Megamob, he has wandered out of Shadespire for a good scrap when the occasion calls for it, and he is often found leading a unit of Rockgut Troggoths into the fray.

Far right: Big Mudda in all her grotesque glory! There is a familial connection between her and Glogg, Blogg and Clogg, as Glogg has quite taken her eye ... but it's best for one's sanity to not dwell any further on the personal lives of troggoths!





RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



JERVIS JOHNSON

Jervis has been a staple part of the Warhammer Studio for many decades, and he's been instrumental in the design of a multitude of great games during that time. In a previous issue, we mentioned that Jervis's points cost is 220. That has been changed to 240 following a recent errata. Apparently his spellcasting capabilities exceeded expectations.

One of the very first Rules of Engagement articles published in *White Dwarf* (March 2019) was about the points values for units in Warhammer Age of Sigmar.

Since then, the way we go about calculating the points values has become increasingly sophisticated, so much so that I feel it's worth reprising the earlier article and bringing it up to date. If you read the earlier Rules of Engagement, then some of what follows will be familiar, but there is plenty of new information here about how we go about balancing our games, so I am sure that you'll find this 'updated' article of interest.

However, before I get started on the ins and outs of the system that we use and how you can help, I think it's important to address one issue, which is that the variables in a complex game like Age of Sigmar make it almost impossible to come up with a points value that will be accurate in every single game of Age of Sigmar that you play. This is best illustrated with an example. Imagine you have a unit armed with a highly effective and long-ranged missile weapon, and you need to work out the points

value for it. The first time it is used, the battlefield is open and clear of terrain, and your new unit mows down countless enemies – it is awesome! So you assign it a high points value. However, your next battle is fought in dense terrain that limits lines of sight, and the new unit is charged and destroyed before it gets a chance to shoot at all – it is useless! So you assign it a low points value, and so on. In the long run, you'll end up giving the unit a points value roughly halfway between these two extremes, and that will do a perfectly good job, but it doesn't change the fact that in most games that are played the points value will probably be slightly off, because it is so dependent on things like the amount of terrain being used, the types of units being shot at, the other units in your army, the victory conditions for the game, and various other factors.

Nonetheless, in order to allow for matched play games, we need to provide points values for all of the units in the game. Coming up with the points system in the first place proved to be a monumental task that was only made possible with the help and feedback of members of the Age of Sigmar playtest team and tournament organisers from all around the world. At the end of the rather long-winded process, I had a set of points values for all of the units that were in the game at the time (the summer of 2016). I then took this information and used it to construct a spreadsheet that could be used to work out the points values of new units we wanted to add to Age of Sigmar.

The resulting spreadsheet quickly came to be called the Points Calculator. Actually, this being



Rules of Engagement – penned by veteran games developer Jervis Johnson – focuses on the creation, design and evolution of the rules for Warhammer Age of Sigmar. This month, Jervis wants to make a few interesting points ... about points.

Games Workshop, I should probably have called it the Blood-skull Totaliser of Doom, but too late now! Anyway, the points calculator uses a rather complex formula, but at its heart it works out the expected damage output of a unit, the survivability and manoeuvrability of a unit, and the value of the abilities a unit has, and it combines them to create a points value. The calculator has gone through quite a few iterations, both to make it more accurate and to make it more user-friendly. (My first version could only be used by me, and although the latest is not an elegant piece of design, at least the rest of the rules team can use it too!)

To help give some idea of what is involved, we've included some of the main sections of the calculator in this article. The first table below shows the part of the calculator that determines the points value of the characteristics on a warscroll. You can see that it also takes into account if the warscroll is for a HERO (which adds

to the cost because the HERO has access to command abilities, command traits, artefacts of power and so on); if they are a named character (which decreases the cost since they will not be able to use things like artefacts of power); if they have a damage table (which decreases the costs because characteristics are lowered as the unit suffers damage); if the unit can fly (which increases the value of the unit's Move characteristic); its minimum unit size; and its base size. The minimum unit size is used in conjunction with the '# Models' entry on the weapons characteristics line – for example, if a unit has a minimum size of five models, but only one could carry 'Weapon 1', then the Minimum Unit Size would be '5', the # Models for Weapon 1 would be '1', and the value of weapon 1 would therefore be reduced to 1/5th of its normal value. Base Size is compared to the range of the weapon, to take into account that models on smaller bases can get in more attacks than models on larger bases.

Name	Hero	Named Character	Damage Table	Fly	Move	Minimum Unit size	Bravery	Base size	Wounds	Save
Test	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	0	mm	0	7+
Weapons	# Models	Range	Attacks	Hit	Wound	Rend	Damage	Value		
Weapon 1								0.00		
Weapon 2								0.00		
Weapon 3								0.00		
Weapon 4								0.00		

1. POINTS CALCULATOR: WARSCROLL CHARACTERISTICS

Next, all of the abilities on the warscroll are given a value, as shown in the diagram to the right. We have a master list of different abilities, all of which are rated based on the feedback and experience of using them. So a typical ability (say, inflicting D3 mortal wounds on a 4+) will add 'X' to the cost of a unit, while a powerful ability (such as inflicting D6 mortal wounds on a 4+) will add '2X', and so on. The actual value of X varies depending on the survivability of the model, because a model that can survive longer will get more use out of an ability than a model that gets slain quickly. As you can see, the ability to cast spells or chant prayers is also taken into account at this stage, along with a value for any spells that appear on the model's warscroll.

Ability 1	0
Ability 2	0
Ability 3	0
Ability 4	0
Total Abilities	0
Wizard or Priest?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Number of Casts (1 if Priest)	0
Number of Unbinds (1 if Priest)	0
Spell/Prayer 1	0
Spell/Prayer 2	0
Total Magic	0
Points Cost	0

2. POINTS CALCULATOR: WARSCROLL ABILITIES

These first two parts of the calculator appear on a single page, and we create a page for each warscroll/unit in the same battletome. So, for example, we have a large file that has a page for every unit in *Battletome: Stormcast Eternals*. This allows us to refer back to the values we assigned to a unit, and modify them when we write a new version of the warscroll for the unit. In addition, there is one further calculator page, which is used to calculate the value of the allegiance abilities a unit has access to. So the Stormcast Eternals file has a page for every unit, and one extra page for the allegiance abilities in *Battletome: Stormcast Eternals*.

The allegiance abilities page works in a similar fashion to the abilities section on the warscroll calculator pages, except that we assign a value to each allegiance ability that appears in a battletome. These values are then used to calculate an additional cost for all of the units that can use them. The value of battle traits, sub-factions and faction terrain will affect the cost of every unit in the battletome, while 'enhancements' like artefacts of power only affect **HEROES**. In this way, the units in an army that have access to powerful allegiance abilities, such as summoning rules, will cost more than a unit with a similar warscroll but less powerful allegiance abilities.

Allegiance Ability	Type	Value
Battle Trait 1	Battle Traits ▼	0
Battle Trait 2	Battle Traits ▼	0
Sub-faction 1	Sub-factions ▼	0
Sub-faction 2	Sub-factions ▼	0
Sub-faction 3	Sub-factions ▼	0
Sub-faction 4	Sub-factions ▼	0
Command Traits	Enhancements ▼	0
Artefacts of Power	Enhancements ▼	0
Mount Traits	Enhancements ▼	0
Spell Lores	Enhancements ▼	0
Unique (Name)	Enhancements	0
Faction Terrain	Faction Terrain	0
	Total	0
	Total Excluding Enhancements	0



3. POINTS CALCULATOR: ALLEGIANCE ABILITIES

So, the first thing we do when we have written a new warscroll or updated an existing one is to run it through the points calculator. This gives us a fairly accurate points cost for a unit, but of course more work still needs to be done. The work in question is playtesting, playtesting and then more playtesting! We try to make sure that we get as many games in as possible with a new unit, both in-house by the rules writers and out of house with our external playtesters. These games give us a pretty good idea if the way a unit actually performs in the game conforms to the points value assigned to it by the calculator. What we tend to find is that while most units perform much as expected, some don't, mainly because the performance of a unit can change a lot depending on how well it aligns with the core rules and the other units and allegiance abilities for its army. This is especially true of units that do something that no other unit from the same army is able to perform. As a simple example, imagine an army that has only one unit that is a **WIZARD**; such a unit is going to be much more useful to the army it is a part of than it would be in an army that has lots of units that are **WIZARDS**. Because of this, the points for the lonely solo **WIZARD** needs to be artificially increased, in order to avoid them becoming a no-brainer choice that is always taken for their army.

Once playtesting is finished, the final version of the warscrolls and points values are sent to a second group of external players that we call 'the breakers'. Their job is to pick the most powerful, over-the-top, tournament-winning armies that they can from the material we've sent them. Each breaker works on their own, submitting the lists they come up with to us, and then we look through what we've been sent to see if there are certain units or types of builds that appear more frequently than any others (called 'over-indexing'). For example, if a certain unit appears in every list, then we know we need to increase its points cost, while if a certain sub-faction is taken in preference to all of the others, then we know we need to tone down the impact of the abilities that it has, and so on. As you'd expect, playtesting and breaking always leads to some points adjustments. In general – and proving the benefit of the hard work that went into making the calculator as accurate as possible – the majority of units get through playtesting with their points values completely unchanged, and most of those that do get changed only go up or down by a small amount (usually about 10 or 20 points).

There is one final thing about points values that is worth discussing in more detail, which is the relationship between the Pitched Battle rules that appear in the General's Handbook and the points



values we provide in the Pitched Battle Profiles section of the book. In a nutshell, the points values we provide are designed specifically for use in games that use the Pitched Battle rules. This is important, because the Pitched Battle rules apply restrictions to some of the things that I mentioned earlier that can have a profound effect on the value of a unit, like the amount of terrain being used, the number of some types of units allowed in an army and the victory conditions for the game. This means that the points calculator is built on the premise that the number of **HEROES** and **MONSTERS** in an army will be limited, and that you will have to take certain rank-and-file battleline units as part of an army, and that Pitched Battle rules for terrain selection and placement will be followed, and so on.

Now, you might think that after all of this intense calculation and playtesting, when the points values are finally published they would be perfect. But the truth is that they still benefit from periodic review and modification. Because of this, we have a biannual review process to look at all of the points values in Age of Sigmar and make any adjustments that are necessary. This involves a series of feedback sessions with our external playtesters, with tournament organisers and by gathering information through social media (more on that in a minute). The feedback sessions are used in turn to generate biannual reviews roughly six months apart, split into an interim review and a full review. In the

interim review, we only make adjustments to points values if something has come up that is causing fairly serious problems in terms of play balance in Pitched Battle games, and any changes we make are published as a set of errata for the points values in question. The full review also deals with issues like this, but is also an opportunity for us to fine-tune points values by making minor adjustments where we feel they are needed. The results of the full review are used to generate the Pitched Battle profiles section in each Generals Handbook.

As I hope you can tell, we take the points values for units in Age of Sigmar very seriously, and we put a huge amount of work into making them as accurate as we possibly can. However, we can always improve, and if you are one of the people that read the previous iteration of this article, you'll see that the process has evolved and changed in a number of areas in just that short period of time. Nothing is ever perfect, however, least of all things created by an absent-minded games designer like me, and this is where you can help us out. To do so, all you need to do is let us know which points values you feel we have not got right by emailing the rules team at **AoSFAQ@gwplc.com**. By telling us where we may have gone wrong, and what you think the right points value should be for the unit(s) in question, we can include your feedback in our next biannual review, and you can help us to keep on improving the points values in Age of Sigmar.

THE MONSTER SLAYER

Golden Demon is the most prestigious Warhammer painting competition in the world, with countless painters from across the globe taking part. Here, we chat to Slayer Sword winner Maxime Penaud about his love of painting and his winning entry from Golden Demon 2019.



**MAXIME
PENAUD**

When he's not winning Golden Demon Slayer Swords, Maxime runs his own art school in Paris, France. There, he helps teach over a thousand students to draw, paint and sculpt. Sometimes he even teaches them how to paint miniatures!

White Dwarf: When did you get into Warhammer?

Maxime Penaud: It was when I was six. I saw my neighbour painting outside in his garden. He was painting a beastman. I looked at them and thought, 'Wow, they are amazing – I want to do the same.' I asked my father if I could have some models to paint, but he told me I would have to wait until I was nine. So, three years later, I asked again and my mother bought me the Lizardmen and Bretonnians box set. I painted every model. In my head, I was convinced they were as good as the ones in the pictures, but they really weren't!

WD: Did you play games, too?

MP: The weird thing is, I've never played a game of Warhammer. When I was younger I was very

much the introvert, and painting was a great way for me to entertain myself without having to talk to people! For me it was not a social thing, it was about my minis and me.

My workshop was in the attic, and I spent most of my school holidays painting. I would say that painting miniatures is one of the best hobbies to have when you're younger because it introduces you to painting, creativity and precision, and it's a really good gateway to drawing, sculpting and design. When I was twelve, I started to convert my models. When I was fourteen, I started sculpting. This was a new world for me – sometimes I would sculpt all day! When I was fifteen, I started working on my drawing skills. Now I am a painting and drawing teacher. Everything started with miniatures – it really is the best hobby.

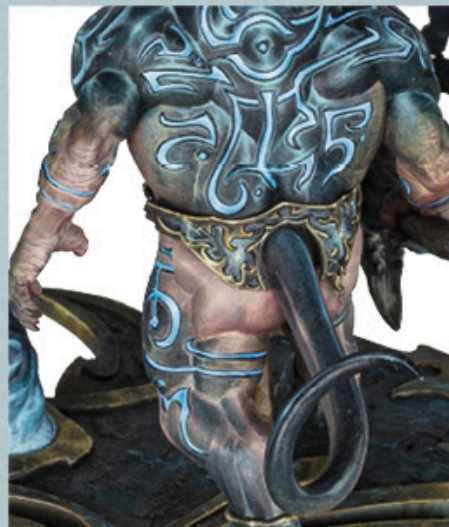
LATEST WORKS

When Maxime came along to the Golden Demon Winners Day at Warhammer World last year, he brought along this stunning Ogroid Thaumaturge for us to look at.



The Ogroid Thaumaturge is a fine example of Maxime's painting style, which combines traditional 'Eavy Metal techniques with a more natural approach inspired by historical miniatures painters and even classical artists.

Maxime favours a lot of contrast on his models and has opted for a powerful countershading effect (seen on real-life animals such as sharks) on his Ogroid. The darker skin on the model's back blends in perfectly with the lighter underbelly despite the difference in both tone and hue. Maxime further enhanced the effect of both colours by painting the Ogroid's hair bright orange to complement the underbelly, while the magical runes are bright blue to complement the Ogroid's back.



WD: How did you find out about Golden Demon?

MP: I've been reading *White Dwarf* since I was nine, and once a year there was a Golden Demon review in it. This was like my bible. Golden Demon has always been my favourite part of the magazine, and it was always open on my desk while I was painting, normally covered in paint. I tried to reproduce the Golden Demon miniatures that I admired so much. Then I became aware of the Youngbloods category. I was thirteen by this point, and I worked really hard on my entry, but when I went to buy a ticket, I found that they'd sold out! So the next year I bought a ticket first, then worked on my entry. I won a bronze, which was really something for me. This gave me the motivation to do better and better.

By 2005 I wasn't a Youngblood any more, but I managed to make the first cut with a Pink Horror. The next time I entered was in 2008 with a Death Korps of Krieg officer that I'd converted. That time I won a silver. Then, in 2010, I entered a forest

giant that I sculpted almost entirely from scratch. It may look like Brian Nelson's Gargant, but it's all sculpted by me apart from one of the feet, which I needed to keep so that it was still technically a Games Workshop miniature (*This is all true – we've seen the pictures.* – Ed). Brian Nelson is my favourite designer at Games Workshop, and it was really interesting mimicking his work. I had his model on my desk and used it as a reference for the piece. That entry won me my first Slayer Sword, which was a real surprise and a huge honour.

WD: What keeps you entering Golden Demon?

MP: I've entered Golden Demon as an adult five times and won trophies four times, and every time I worked as hard as I could on my entry. I am really committed when I enter things like this. But it's not just to win a painting competition, it's also about pushing my boundaries to become a better painter. I deliberately pick projects that I know I can't achieve so that I have to push my skills. I have to learn, then learn again so that I can

THE FIRST SLAYER SWORD – 2010

Maxime's first Slayer Sword-winning entry was a mutated forest giant, which he sculpted almost entirely from scratch.



'The Gargant was one of the projects where I learned the most about sculpting and painting,' says Maxime. 'I'd never sculpted a miniature that big before, and it took over three hundred hours of work. I put a lot of work into the freehand patterns on the fabric and the textures on the metal areas. I wanted the judges to look at it and think, 'He knows his stuff.'

THE SECOND SLAYER SWORD – 2019

Maxime's latest creation is this stunning Dankhold Troggboss, which he lovingly converted and painted for Golden Demon 2019 at Warhammer Fest.



deliver something that I'm happy with. And when I got to the other side of the project I was like, 'Wow, that was crazy – look what I've achieved.'

WD: Do you enter a project with an idea in mind, or do you change things as you go along?

MP: I normally have a pretty strong idea from the start, but sometimes things change. The Dankhold Troggboss, for example, is a fabulous model, and I really didn't want to change it that much, but I did end up altering its pose quite a lot. Initially I was going to add a few armour plates to provide another level of contrast between flesh and metal, but I soon realised I didn't have enough time, so I stepped away from that idea.

WD: What elements do you feel are most important in a Golden Demon entry?

MP: Golden Demon is about showing off your technical painting skills and about demonstrating your understanding of colour, texture and light. If you want to win, you need to find the right balance between all these different elements on

the model. You have to create a strong impact – people have to like it instantly. In the past, people didn't think so much about texture on a tabard or reflections on armour, but that's become a big consideration of Golden Demon in recent years. There's been a shift in style from super-clean to realistic, which I really like.

WD: Do you have any particular influences on your style?

MP: I have two main references. The first is the 'Eavy Metal style. When I was young, people like Dave Thomas and Martin Footitt were my heroes. I spent a lot of time trying to emulate their work. When I was about fifteen, I discovered the world of historical miniatures and a painter called Raúl García Latorre. He's a really famous Spanish painter whose style is close to that of classic painters like Diego Velázquez. Light is a really key element of his work. Everything is so carefully lit with zenithal highlighting around the top of the model so the face is illuminated and the lower areas of the model appear darker. His textures are superb. When I was learning to paint

'One of the big features of the paint job is that I painted the skin on the front and the back of the model differently to represent different light hitting it,' says Maxime. 'The front is lit up by sunlight – yellow like the dawn of the day – while the back has a much colder, purple-blue light on it (1-2).

I then added in another colour to the top of the Troggboss (3-4), lighting him from above with green to represent the glow of the rocks and fungi on his back. This was the most fun part to do, because it's magical light rather than natural.'

From above, you can also see the effect of light on the model's scenic base (5).



1



2



3



4



5

WORK IN PROGRESS

Having chatted to Maxime about his Dankhold Troggboss, he then offered to send us a load of work-in-progress shots of his entry. How could we possibly refuse? Below, you can see the incredible work that Maxime put into re-posing his Troggboss, how he resculpted parts of it to

match that new pose (not many people can say they sculpted a troggoth's armpit ...) and the display base that he created for it. Opposite, you can see some work-in-progress pictures of the painting process that Maxime went through to create his award-winning piece.

Maxime started by re-posing the model's legs **(1)** and left arm **(2)** so that it was able to hold the new hammer staff.

The whole base was sculpted by Maxime, including the two duardin statue heads **(3-4)** that show the eternal enmity between troggoths and duardin.

Maxime then resculpted the troggoth's armpit, heels and left knee **(5)**, followed by his right hand and staff **(6)**. Finally he sculpted a new left hand for the Troggboss **(7)**.

Below, the finished Dankhold Troggboss ready to be painted.



miniatures, I tried to mix the two styles. I tended to paint the model like 'Eavy Metal would, but focus more light around the head and shoulders.

WD: We're guessing you used all these techniques on your Dankhold Trogg boss, then? Can you tell us more about how you painted it?

MP: I started with a dark basecoat and then added in a lot of light, working from dark to light to establish the skin tones. Then I tried something new – I painted all the areas as if there was no ambient light to begin with. I wanted to focus on adding new volume and information to the model on the flat surfaces, to really push the definition so it felt like you were looking at a 4K image. Then, once everything was highlighted, I took my airbrush and with it created ambient light across the model. I applied really translucent layers from the top of the miniature, creating zenithal highlights that helped to flatten down the textures that I'd already applied and make them look more realistic. I then took painting inks and started to glaze the model to give it a more satin finish before adding dots, cracks and veins to the skin.

WD: That is a lot of contrast between light and dark. What about textural contrasts?

MP: The great thing with miniatures painting is that you really can do what you like, but there are limitations, the main one being that they are very small! If the viewer can't read the model – as in understand what they're looking at – then perhaps you need to rethink the colours, textures or effects you're using. Textural contrast is very helpful for this as it helps define areas on a model and indicate that they are different from each other. Wood and leather can both be brown, but the way you paint them helps explain that they are made of different materials.

WD: We're guessing you practiced on something first before attempting all this.

MP: No, no practice, I just went straight in. The model took about two weeks to convert, leaving me less than a month to paint it. I had a lot of new painting ideas that I was able to try out, but a lot that I wasn't, too. Maybe next time. I reckon I spent at least four hours a day painting it and twelve to fifteen hours on weekends. My girlfriend wasn't best pleased ...

WD: If you could give one piece of advice for an aspiring Golden Demon entrant, what would it be?

MP: Be ambitious. But if you're going to be ambitious, take your time. You can't be better than you are in just two weeks. You have to look at your model so critically all the time. You have to be exhausted by it.

A FEW USEFUL TIPS

'When I start a project I, like to test out colours on small areas to figure out which ones I want to use,' says Maxime. 'I started by painting the right side of the troggoth's face (1) and testing out some colours for the rock on his back (2). I usually choose a colour for the main area of the figure first, then find suitable colours for the other parts. On the troggoth, all the mushrooms are orange (3), which is a declination of the main skin tone on the front of the body. The back of the body is lit by a bluer light (4). All the rocks and tiny shells are greenish (5-6), which is a tone more on the complementary side of the main one. The combination of complementary and harmonious colours is very important.'



WARHAMMER

40,000

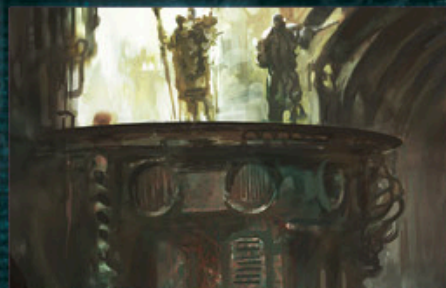
In the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war! This issue features the first part in a three-part series with new campaign rules and background for the ongoing war around the Pariah Nexus.





THE ARGOVON CAMPAIGN

The first part of a new campaign system for battles in the Pariah Nexus, plus new background and fiction, all starting on page 52.



GALACTIC WAR ZONES

Oil up your bionic legs and praise the Omnissiah, because this month's modelling and painting feature is set on a forge world. Page 74 awaits.





ARGOVON CAMPAIGN



The galaxy is being torn asunder, new war zones exploding into life with ever-increasing frequency. In this inaugural Flashpoint article, we present new background, rules and fiction for one such engagement: the Argovon Campaign.

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 the Pariah Nexus was a gargantuan undertaking, and one of enormous importance. The Necrons had unleashed a new weapon against the galaxy, one that threatened its very soul. The Argovon System was but one of many systems in the Pariah Nexus, and the war for it was as apocalyptic, revelatory and costly as any other.

This being an excerpt of the introduction to *Volume VII of The Definitive Account of the War for the Pariah Nexus*, written by myself, Esteemed Appointed Historitor Alfus Rekorik Smigh. Written aboard the indomitable *In Honour of His Sacrifice*, may she ever course the stars to smite the Emperor's foes.

The Argovon System lies to the galactic southwest of the Pariah Nexus, this fell region created by the blasphemous magicks of the Necron race. Even as I write, the xenos' hideous pylons still tower over the sector's worlds. Officially it is still known as being part of the Nephilim Sector, though few now call it that. A tragic state of affairs





– but one the glorious warriors of His Imperial Majesty's armed forces fight – even as I put quill to parchment – to reverse on so many worlds.

When Battle Group Kallides pierced the borders of this region, none knew what to expect. The effect known as the Stilling – called by some the 'soul death' – was among the most horrifying discoveries. Those so afflicted lose all hope and motivation. They are wracked by paranoia, lethargy and exhaustion. How this takes root in an individual we still do not understand. There is but one apparent safeguard – faith in the Emperor.

We suffered many losses in those early days. But, Emperor be praised, the battle group was able to rally, consolidate and achieve important victories. The tales of these – the Battle of the Gates, the Death March of Paradyce II and the Vie Almus Counter-push – can be read in other accounts. As his efforts yielded military results, Groupmaster Marran planned for the wider reconquest of the Pariah Nexus. Argovon is many light years to the galactic south of the north-west frontier where the battle group first arrived. It was Groupmaster Marran's intention to advance methodically through the region, not committing to significant drives unless he could be sure systems and worlds to the rear were purged of the Necron presence.¹ Due to the effects of the Necrons' arcane technology, there were no calls for aid coming from elsewhere in the Nexus, save from one system – Argovon. It was this that led Marran to dispatch a task force to it. A quick assessment revealed that one of the system's worlds had a very significant Ecclesiarchal presence, meaning it could very well serve as a vital staging post or relative safe zone for refugees fleeing other systems. When Archmagos Archeogeologor Akuminor

Xor revealed that the Adeptus Mechanicus had a noctilith extraction site on the world of Foronika in the system, securing the region became a necessity to prevent the Necrons securing this vital resource.² Task Force XI was quickly formed.³ It was only later discovered, and at great cost, that not all of the calls for aid were from loyal citizens desperate for salvation. The Hive Bhorik Consumption, where a dozen Astra Militarum regiments disappeared in the city's underhives, the Collapse of the Ingaard Bridge which saw thousands of armoured vehicles of the Touzen Tank Korps plunge into a miles-deep ocean and the Night of Gnashing Teeth are but a handful of examples of terrible treachery that were suffered.

¹ Though it is certain that the Bullgrox, as he was known by many, wanted much to advance swiftly, he knew that a sure but steady approach had to be the way forwards. Reinforcements from elsewhere in the Imperium were far from likely if the bulk of his forces were surrounded by Necrons after diving too deeply into the Nexus without gaining secure footholds first.

² Why the Adeptus Mechanicus representative chose only then to reveal such vital information remains a mystery as well as a source of frustration to both the senior officers of the task force as well as those of us recording events.

³ The number of bureaucratic and administrative errors that arose because of this is impossible to ascertain. The effects of many were disastrous. At least twelve cruisers and their escorts were deployed with only ten percent of their required munitions. Scores of Astropaths and Navigators were killed through the sheer strain of demands placed upon them. Dozens of regiments of Astra Militarum troops and preceptories of Adepta Sororitas were abandoned on battlefields as ships were withdrawn from contested war zones. We can only pray to the great God-Emperor that they made the vile Necrons pay a heavy price for their lives. Contrastingly, on occasion mistakes were a boon. The defenders of the Cathedrum of St. Zoneris the Purger of Heathens Many on Argolish withstood and threw off a two-year siege thanks to being supplied with twenty times the food, ammunition and water rations they should have received.



THE ARGOVON SYSTEM

The Argovon System has been in Imperial records for approximately eight thousand years, first mentioned by name only in fragments of the Katalogue of the Regions of the Galaxie Sowthward. Local myth talks of a great hero called Foronika Argovon, who discovered the system determined to bring new worlds into the Emperor's domain. She is described in the Canticles Of Our System's Discovery as 'tallest of the tall and strongest of the strong, bravest of the brave and truest of the true'. Many other texts my researchers and I have prised from the system's ruined archives and libraries echo similar ideas. My research has concluded that is far more likely the case that she was in fact a Rogue Trader from a long disgraced, heavily indebted and impoverished family. By sheer fortune she happened to stumble across the region and the enormous mineral wealth on the world she so humbly named directly after herself. It takes little imagination to think that she might have wanted to 'correct' her story and restore some regard to her family name. Though these accounts are terribly transparent in their lies and hyperbole, I have not shared my discovery. The great unwashed always need their stories – now, I daresay, more than ever.



FORONIKA

No worlds in the system have as sparse a population as Foronika, but none are more strategically significant. The battles that raged here for the noctilith deposits are easily among the most savage and brutal in the entire Argovon conflict. Here Adeptus Mechanicus forgeshrines sat built atop or alongside ancient Necron extractio-arcana, and millions died among them and around countless other objectives. One forgeshrine sat at the base of a series of low rolling hills known locally as the Humps of Kafusa. It took eight months for Imperial forces to seize this high ground from the Necrons, and it cost some two million lives. Even this was only possible thanks to the direct involvement of the Tome Keepers 3rd Company and a decisive charge by multiple lances from House Boros. I give this as an example of the uncompromising nature of the battles here – anything offering the slimmest tactical advantage to aid in the capturing, saving or holding of the Adeptus Mechanicus noctilith extraction sites was fought for with fanatical intensity. And rightly so! It is of little doubt that if we are to save this part of the Nephilim Sector and beyond, then the secrets of blackstone must be revealed, and we must not allow the Necrons to secure any more of it.

SARRONIK

Sarronik is a strange world of contradiction. On one hand, its population is poor, nomadic and the prey of the extreme fauna that top the planet's food chain. On the other hand, it has been a favourite of the entire sub-sector's nobility to travel there to hunt and claim pelts, claws and skulls of the largest creatures for display. Thus

part of it is designed for the rich – well protected and luxurious. In other parts, day-to-day life is an almost impossible struggle for the populace, the remotest of which are developmentally still little more than flint-wielding savages. A particularly unusual geographical feature of Sarronik is its very large lakes of high-alkaline liquids. Once thought to be devoid of life, it came as a great surprise to the troops of the 19th Irikidan Hastati and 3rd Irikidan Ballistas, as well as Battle Sisters of the Order of the Ivory Blade, when Necrons appeared on the shores of Lake Chirel from a dolmen gate that must have been on the lake's bottom. The Battle of the Chirel Shore was an act of containment that went on to involve dozens of Astra Militarum regiments as well as elements of several Adepta Sororitas Orders as they attempted to stymie the never-ending flow of Necrons on the scores of miles-long shorelines.

ARGOVON

Here is where Argovon's fortune was made so many millennia ago. A temperate world ideal for Human habitation, Argovon has rare mineral wealth. While few in number, its deposits are unusually rich in materials found on barely one in a thousand systems – materials the Adeptus Mechanicus have sought avidly. That being said, extensive mining has created a man-made fault line through the middle of the planet, known as the New Argovon Fault, or Gorias's Fault.⁴ The surrounding area is beset by serious earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions on a regular basis that in the past have cost millions of lives. It was upon this world that Task Force XI encountered significant Genestealer Cult presence.⁵



ARGOLISH

Argolish is the Argovon System's Ecclesiarchal capital. Huge portions of its land are given over to colossal basilicas, cathedrums, chapels, chancels and sanctuaries. Even structures not directly dedicated to the worship of the Emperor, such as hab-blocks and administratum offices, have been designed to resemble sacred sites. The mightiest of the cathedra are city-sized and heavily fortified, great citadels raised up to honour the God-Emperor's name. It was here that the effect of the Stilling was its weakest, so it was here the Necrons' struck hardest. Colossal hosts marched from dolmen gates, and tomb fleets darkened the skies. The 811th Veolan Black Guard won renown for their one-hundred-day running battle through the Great Gardens of St. Bartholema the Pure of Heart. I write in awe recollecting the daring strike of a host of Terminator-armour-clad warriors of the Adamantine Lions, who slew a Necron lord and a number of his council. The confusion this caused undoubtedly bought the time needed for the 82nd Varkhian Jackals of the Militarum Tempestus to evacuate the priceless mosaic of The Most Glorious Emperor While He Yet Walked Among Us from the small chapel that held it.

IASO

Iaso is a failing agri-world. Production has fallen to 10% of levels from four decades ago. The cause itself is claimed to be highly mysterious. Three successive Planetary Governors have been installed and executed for incompetence. It is vital for the Imperial war effort in the region that the world's productivity is restored. When Task Force XI arrived in-system, Iaso was the planet closest to being completely stilled. Battle Sisters

of a number of Orders, including the Order of the Argent Shroud, Our Martyred Lady, the Wounded Heart and the Sublime Adoration deployed to the planet in droves alongside frateris militia brigades and regiments of Astra Militarum with thousands of attached Ministorum Priests. These forces, inflamed with righteous faith, were dropped onto a world in the grip of a Necron tomb world's awakening.

HISHREA

Farthest from the system's star, Hishrea is in a state of never-ending winter. Its surface is laced with jagged mountain chains; vast, inhospitable tundras; dark seas and hyperactive cryovolcanoes. The majority of the planet's population is nomadic, following megashoals of helikoprioids over the freezing oceans on large hunting vessels. Most of the remainder live in one of the dozens of hive cities that sit atop the world's thermal vents, suffering a life of severe harshness. Most are committed to work in extremely dangerous gas mines, or guard the tunnels from horrifying frostwurm incursions.⁶ Despite its remoteness, many Argolishian missionaries have travelled here to preach. The populace is thus hardy, strong-willed and faithful. The Planetary Governor, Oponidas Phlax, was quick to respond to the Necron incursions as well as to provide as much aid as possible to Task Force XI. In one notable engagement, the local Hishrean Mountainmen set explosives on the underside of the ice of a frozen lake. With great discipline and courage, they lured thousands of Necrons on to the surface before springing the trap, detonating the charges and sending the xenos automatons into the depths.

⁴ Named for Phrancheska Gorla, the former planetary governor who was warned of the damage being done to the world's geology. The name is a deliberate pun, invented by the world's sardonic population of prospectors. Needless to say, it was only after her death that the name became more widely used.

⁵ Symbols, slogans and markings found daubed in public areas suggest the presence of both the Cult of the Four-armed Emperor and a previously unidentified cult known as the Blessed Raised. Their numbers have been impossible to ascertain, the margins of error in their calculation so wide as to render them meaningless.

⁶ Though only four inches in length on average, frostwurms move in colonies through the ground many hundreds in number, and they can strip a person of flesh in less than a minute.



FORCES OF THE ARGOVON CAMPAIGN

STRENGTH OF TASK FORCE XI

No complete and fully accurate record was ever made of the forces that made up Task Force XI, due to the hasty nature of its formation and the disorder in the early stages of the Pariah Nexus campaign. There were also the logistical and bureaucratic challenges of the Indomitus Crusade as a whole. Elements of battle groups and task forces were lost in transit to a battle zone. Individual ships and refugees from around the galaxy found themselves within task forces having encountered them by chance and

accompanied them on their missions. Other forces were given additional missions that were never logged, whether by accident or design. Those fleets and battle groups that exist today do not closely resemble those that set out from Terra years ago, as some of their constituent elements have been destroyed and others have joined them. Forces of the Adeptus Astartes have generally come and gone as they pleased, nor is the situation dissimilar for the Adepta Sororitas, Adeptus Mechanicus and the forces of Knight worlds and Knightly households.

> The following is the estimated disposition of Task Force XI, at the outset of the Argovon Campaign, as recorded by Officio Logisticarum Metascrivener 3rd Class Thodensia Plunthar in the name of the Almighty Emperor, the Primarch Reborn, and Groupmaster Marran. Disposition collated approximately seven months into the Argovon Campaign.

+++ SENIOR TASK FORCE COMMAND STAFF +++

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ASTRA MILITARUM

- High Field Marshal Janred Remko Hynflaager — in his command is the task force placed
- Major General Oyer Valdu
- Lieutenant Commander Hansk Yurne

Note: Only the most senior Astra Militarum officers were considered to be among the command staff. Those besides High Field Marshal Hynflaager were responsible for multiple army groups.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ADEPTA SORORITAS

- Canoness Preceptor Gizella of the Order of the Bleeding Heart
- Canoness Preceptor Celiya of the Order of the Argent Shroud

Note: Other Canoness Preceptors were a part of the task force from several Orders. Those listed above were included in the command staff by vote of their peers to serve as representatives.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE QUESTOR IMPERIALIS HOUSEHOLDS

- Baron Polonius of House Terryn
- Lady Rozalind of House Boros
- Baroness Maryanna of House Miranor

Note: No single Baron or Baroness agreed that another could represent them at senior command briefings. The High Field Marshal allowed for this in the name of expediency and also in light of the reality that the Questor Imperialis elements of his task force did not sit under his authority.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ADEPTUS MECHANICUS

- Archmagos Archeogeologor Akuminor Xor of Mars, Tech-Priest Dominus
- Baron Pendrus of House Vulker

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ADEPTUS ASTARTES

- Captain Nasiem bal Tergu of the Tome Keepers
- Captain Xiopa Ahuitz of the Obsidian Jaguars
- Lieutenant Auxitius Palamas of the Atlantian Spears
- Watch Captain Argustus Kastor of Deathwatch Fort Prescience

Note: More than any element of the Imperial forces fighting throughout the Pariah Nexus, the Adeptus Astartes were most likely to move in and out of different war and battle zones at their own whim, carrying out missions before moving on.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HOLY ORDOS OF THE INQUISITION

- Ordo Xenos Inquisitor Allexei Macara
- Ordo Machinum Inquisitor Selen Thakra
- Ordo Astra Inquisitor Tholome Marcs

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NAVIS IMPERIALIS

- Admiral Ashenzar Kinra [Flagship: Oberon-class Battleship Doom of His Foes, colloquially known among task force personnel as 'the Doom'.]
- Air Commodore Lord Balak Surpara [Overall commander of Aeronautica Imperialis elements.]



+++ Thought for the Day +++
The victor lives in honour;
the vanquished dies in shame.



HIGH FIELD MARSHAL JANRED REMKO HYNFLAAGER

The fifth son of a noble family, High Field Marshal Janred Remko Hynflaager joined the 56th Ghobyan Assault Guards of the Astra Militarum during his adolescence, serving as a cadet on the staff of mid-ranking officers. Assessment reports from his seniors state that even in his youth he had a remarkable grasp of the *Tactica Imperium*, and committed swathes of it to memory. He was a member of the 56th Ghobyan for thirty-seven years, eventually rising to command the entire regiment. During this time, he was involved in numerous rebellion suppressions as well as wars against xenos forces. He earned the Imperial Medallion for commanding his company in a successful assault on a traitor headquarters which had withstood an eight-month long siege on the world of Diadok. After promotion to commander of the regiment's 17th Battalion, he orchestrated the masterful defence of Bulwark IX during the height of Waaagh! Snakrat. There he organised a perfect strategy of feinting and rapid counter-attacks whilst fighting in the front lines alongside his battered troops.

Though by the time of the Argovon campaign he had long since been promoted above the rank of a regimental commander, the 56th always served alongside him, unofficially calling themselves 'Janred's Own'. It is a sign of the extraordinary bond between the High Field Marshal and his old regiment that he permitted the insubordination in the use of his first name. It is certain that other senior officers looked down upon such a practice as improper, but Hynflaager's combat record speaks for itself. The campaign was a further forty years after he last directly commanded his old regiment, yet so very rarely was he found remotely wanting. His tally of victories was enormous. He was responsible for the Salvation of Langarus and the Third Purge of Areetes – wars taught in Imperial academies throughout the Imperium that I have known since I was young. I take no shame in stating that I shed many a tear upon hearing of his death, when it came. Not a day goes by that I do not beseech the Emperor to grant us vengeance. The Lord of Steel and Night will pay.

> The following is an extract from the estimated disposition of the Astra Militarum of Task Force XI, as recorded by Officio Logisticarum Metascrivener 3rd Class Thodensia Plunthar in the name of the Almighty Emperor, the Primarch Reborn, and Groupmaster Marran. Disposition collated approximately fourteen months into the Argovon Campaign. Note that the task force officially inducted much of the local forces soon after arrival in the system.¹ Additionally, some elements were lost or destroyed early in the fighting, and due to the hurried nature of Task Force XI's assembly, no complete list of the entirety of its strength exists or can be compiled. The intention of the inclusion of this information is to indicate to the honoured reader the breadth of Astra Militarum forces engaged.

INFANTRY ELEMENTS

- 27 regiments of Vuxorian Venators
- 3 regiments of Cadian Shock Troopers
- 15 regiments of Valhallan Ice Warriors
- 23 companies of Haephosian Tritons
- 41 regiments of Miasman Redcows
- 19 companies of Sashani Patrollers
- 4 rangings of Anvarsian Ice Rangers
- 32 regiments of Nunciar Chevlariks
- 26 sabot groups of Vastadt III Expedrines

ARTILLERY ELEMENTS

- 6 regiments of Chancyllian Cannoneers
- 11 regiments of Dremian Carronademen
- 14 regiments of Formund Scorpions
- 37 batteries of Xomoni Blasthounds
- 22 regiments of Klighayan Mangonels
- 19 gunhosts of Sarronikan Trebuchets

ARMoured ELEMENTS

- 32 regiments of Touzen Tank Korps
- 4 regiments of Praetorian Hussars
- 9 regiments of Sondoran Gearheads
- 12 echelons of Dragoons Exemplar
- 27 spearheads of Lascareen Thunderers
- 15 regiments of Nunciar Chevlariks

OTHER

- 213 formations of Censerhosts
- Unknown numbers of Pilgrims of Foronika the Brave
- ~~Bhorik Underhivers~~ PURGATOS
- c. 2,000 faith battalions of Argolishian Creedsmen
- 47 squadrons of Iasoni Outriders
- 389 brigades of Argovonian Militia
- 14 brute regiments of Tagax XIII Ogryn Auxilia
- 219 scratch battalions of Hishrean Mountainmen



+++ Thought for the Day +++
The only necessary reaction to treachery
is vengeance.

¹ Though in practise it would take some time for any of these forces to make contact or be unified in any way.





XENOS FORCES OF THE ARGOVON CAMPAIGN

What I could learn of our enemies' strength in the Argovon System has been pieced together from after-action reports, servo-skull pict recordings and other fractured information sources. It is not impossible that the presence of certain Necron dynasties has never been noted, or that those Imperial forces to encounter them were destroyed entirely before they could fully log the identity of their enemies in a given zone of battle. The Necron order of battle – if such a thing is even used by the Necrons – is virtually impenetrable, in terms of one's ability to understand how it functions. It has only been possible to formulate some idea of the strength of some Necron dynasties through the careful analysis of ritualistic boasting some appear to indulge in at the outset of particularly large engagements⁷ (cf. the Megalith Ice Ravine Massacre – see the full account of the fighting for Hishrea for the complete telling of this abysmal disaster). It is clear without any doubt that the Szarekhan Dynasty and Oruskh Dynasties are present in force, with the Szarekhan by far the most

widespread and dominant. There is some confusion around the presence of others due to the extreme reverence in which they hold lords of the Szarekhan Dynasty. Some are so intertwined with this dominant force it is nigh impossible to distinguish them.

Scattered reports also told of the presence of the Aeldari. Records suggest between four and five thousand officers and troops of the Astra Militarum were executed for 'spreading malicious rumours', 'lying to a superior', 'wasting a superior's time' and 'gross negligence' for reporting the sighting of these enigmatic creatures.⁸ Through painstaking research, with much gratitude due to my colleagues and no doubt the intervention of the Emperor himself, I was able to ascertain that the sightings of the Aeldari were of troops from Alaitoc Craftworld and a Masque of Harlequins known as The Dreaming Shadow. What their agenda(s) were – or indeed, are – in the Argovon System have yet to be revealed. I doubt little that whatever goals they seek to achieve are little in line with our own, and are to our detriment.

⁷ Of course, such sources are by definition unreliable in extremis, and should only be listened under supervision of the Ecclesiarchy. I conducted nine hours of continuous prayer after listening to but one such speech. Only the strongest of faith should consider sourcing these recordings.

⁸ Though it is easy, with the benefit of hindsight – and especially after the total annihilation of the 3rd and 12th Vuxorian Venators at the Cirque of Ullavian on Hishrea – to criticise those who ordered these executions, after examining the events I am quite convinced they were right to do so. Battles can be lost by but a clause of information, or by hesitation caused by uncertainty. The vague and unhelpful testimony of the executed cannot lead to sound conclusions, and I am sure that a great many of the accounts some have linked to Aeldari sightings are in fact the phantoms of the imaginations of exhausted troops who should have known better.

ARGOVON CAMPAIGN

As the Necrons awaken from their hibernation, the Argovon System is plunged into all-out war. But the Necrons are not the only alien race making a bid to claim this valuable system. Read on to find out how you can fight this epic campaign set in the Pariah Nexus.



Over the following pages, you will find an in-depth campaign system that allows you to fight the conflict embroiling the Argovon System in this period of strife. Players will form alliances and then play a number of games, split across several phases, as the armed struggle wears on. Each phase is scored separately, meaning that everything is to play for, right up to the very last game of the campaign. This is the first of three parts.

FLASHPOINTS

Flashpoints represent specific areas of conflict at particular moments in time. Some of the rules content found within the following pages is tagged with the Flashpoint that it belongs to. Rules that are labelled as belonging to one or more Flashpoints, in this case the Argovon conflict and that of the wider Pariah Nexus, are thematically linked to them and are not intended to be combined with rules from different locales.

When playing a game, if both players wish to use any Flashpoint rules, they should agree ahead of time which Flashpoint their battle is set in. After this choice has been made, the only Flashpoint rules that can be used in that game are ones labelled with that Flashpoint.





CAMPAIGN RULES

CAMPAIGN MASTER

This campaign is best run with a Campaign Master. The Campaign Master can take part in the campaign just like any of the other players, but also bears the responsibility of organising the campaign, keeping track of ongoing progress and acting as a point of contact for any questions the players may have as the various alliances struggle for dominance. The role of Campaign Master can be passed from one player to another as peoples' available free time changes across the course of the campaign, but we recommend that this be done at the end of a phase, rather than in the middle of one, in order to ensure an easy handover of responsibilities.

FORMING ALLIANCES

After a Campaign Master has been chosen, it is time to split the players into the alliances that they will play in over the course of the campaign. The number of alliances to use in the campaign is down to the Campaign Master to decide, but a good starting point can be found in the table below:

NUMBER OF PLAYERS	NUMBER OF ALLIANCES
2-10	2
11-15	3
16+	4

Where possible, it is best to balance the number of players in each alliance as equally as can be achieved, taking into account how often each person is able to play. For example, it might be inadvisable to place all of your group's most active players in the same alliance.

We recommend players come up with their own narrative hooks and motivations behind their alliances. In the direst of circumstances, even the most hated of foes can become allies ... for a time.

WAYS TO PLAY

Once players have been organised into alliances, the Campaign Master should determine the type of play for the campaign – open, matched or narrative. It is important for the Campaign Master to specify the type of play from the outset, so that each player's army can be organised accordingly. Whether the players are looking for a deep narrative experience using Crusade forces, or a test of minds in the crucible of battle that is matched play, this campaign will support them and will work with any of the available mission packs.

CAMPAIGN LENGTH

This campaign is split into three phases, each corresponding to a one-month period, and which will be supported with new content found in that month's issue of *White Dwarf*. At the end of each phase, the alliance that was victorious is determined based on the battles that were fought during that month. And then, at the end of the campaign, the alliance that has performed the best across all three phases is crowned victorious.

Within each issue of *White Dwarf*, there will be new campaign rules, such as Theatres of War, exploring more of the varied locales found within the Argovon System, alongside new Crusade content that will further expand upon the trials and tribulations of the forces fighting in this war zone.





CAMPAIGN PHASES

During each campaign phase, players are free to arrange games with one another just as they normally would, using any mission pack they choose. Only games fought between players from rival alliances will factor into the campaign results, however, with both players earning war zone points that will determine the victorious alliance for that phase.

WAR ZONE POINTS

Each time you play a game against a player from a rival alliance, it is about more than just personal glory. Based on the outcome of the battle, your alliance will earn a number of war zone points, as shown in the table below:

GAME RESULT	WAR ZONE POINTS EARNED			
	COMBAT PATROL	INCURSION	STRIKE FORCE	ONSLAUGHT
Lose	1	1	1	1
Draw	1	2	3	4
Win	2	3	4	5

After the game, players report their results to the Campaign Master, who will keep a record of each alliance's war zone point total. At the end of each phase, the victor of that phase is the alliance with the most war zone points. In the event of two or more alliances tying for top place, all of those alliances count as the victor. The victor of a phase will earn a number of strategic points that will count towards the overall campaign winner.

At the beginning of each campaign phase, the war zone point totals for all of the alliances are reset to zero, putting everyone on an equal footing for the next phase of the campaign.

WINNING THE CAMPAIGN

Each alliance starts the campaign with 0 strategic points. The number of strategic points an alliance earns for being victorious during a campaign phase is shown in the table below:

CAMPAIGN PHASE	STRATEGIC POINTS EARNED
1-2	1
3	2

At the end of the third campaign phase, the winner of the campaign is the alliance that has the most strategic points.





ARGOVON THEATRES OF WAR

If you are playing a Flashpoint, you can, when selecting your missions, choose to set that mission in a Theatre of War that is found within that Flashpoint; these are themed locations that will provide you with new rules to represent the battlefield conditions within that locale. Theatres of War are a fantastic way to add an extra level of narrative to your games as well as add new and exciting challenges to your battle. You and your opponent can either select an Argovon Theatre of War to use for the battle, or you can randomly select one from those available.

ARGOVON FAULT ZONE

It is a desperate commander indeed who seeks to pass the Argovon Fault Zone, for it is a place in constant turmoil, rife with tectonic activity that has wracked its battlefields for millennia. The rumbling ground can crack and split without warning, rending great chasms that can swallow battle formations whole.

Flashpoints: Argovon System, Pariah Nexus

When fighting a battle in the Argovon Fault Zone, the following rules apply:

Fracture Tokens

This Theatre of War uses fracture tokens to represent weak points in the earth caused by the local populace's mining activities. Over the course of the game, fault lines will open between these fracture tokens, endangering those lying along their path.

Before the battle, after the battlefield has been created, the players roll off. Starting with the winner, players alternate placing fracture tokens on the battlefield until each has placed three tokens. Each fracture token must be placed more than 9" away from any other fracture token. Each player assigns the numbers 1-3 to the fracture tokens that they placed.

Fault Lines

At the start of each battle round, the players must determine which, if any, fault lines have opened up on the Argovon surface. The number of fault lines that open at the start of that battle round is based on the battle round number, as shown in the table below:

BATTLE ROUND	NUMBER OF FAULT LINES THAT OPEN THIS BATTLE ROUND
1	0
2-3	1
4+	2

When a fault line opens, each player rolls one D3 to determine one of the fracture tokens that they placed at the start of the battle. The fault line that opens up then runs between these two points.

Draw a straight line from the centre of one of these fracture tokens to the centre of the other. Each unit (excluding **TITANIC** units or units that can **FLY**) that lies beneath this line falls foul of the fault line and becomes affected by it. If a **TITANIC** unit lies beneath this





line, roll one D6: on a 4+, that unit also falls foul of the fault line and becomes affected by it. Each unit can only fall foul of one fault line per battle round. Each time a unit becomes affected by a fault line, roll on the Tectonic Effect table to see what happens to it.

Open fault lines then remain open for the remainder of the battle (if, when rolling to see if a new fault line opens, an open fault line already runs between the two fracture tokens rolled, then roll again to see if the units on the line fall foul of the fault line, as described above).

Each time a model in a unit (excluding **TITANIC** units or units that can **FLY**) makes an Advance move or charge move across any open fault lines, roll one D6: on a 1 that model's unit suffers 1 mortal wound.

D6

TECTONIC EFFECT

1	Catastrophic Collapse: <i>The ground cracks and a chasm yawns wide. Warriors who do not plummet to their doom must clamber back to relative safety.</i> This unit suffers 2D3 mortal wounds. Until the end of the battle round, halve the result of any Advance or charge rolls made for this unit.
2	Deadly Fall: <i>A fissure splits the ground. While many warriors jump out of harm's way, not all are so lucky.</i> This unit suffers D3 mortal wounds. Until the end of the battle round, halve the result of any Advance or charge rolls made for this unit.
3-4	Unsteady Footing: <i>The ground trembles with pent-up fury, knocking warriors from their feet and rattling crews within vehicles.</i> Until the end of the battle round, halve the Move characteristic of models in this unit.
5-6	Shaken: <i>The battlefield shakes with rage, and whilst some can keep their footing, their aim is thrown off by the tectonic upheaval.</i> Until the end of the battle round, each time a model in this unit makes an attack, subtract 1 from that attack's hit roll.



SARRONIK LAKES

The battlefields known as the Sarronik Lakes are marshy and water-logged, the skies above wracked by dark storms and forever lashed by torrential rain. Rumoured to be resting within the half-submerged ruins are lost archeotech, but many treasure seekers have been lost to the murky depths of hidden water-sinks and fast flowing rivers, never to be heard from again.

Flashpoints: Argovon System, Pariah Nexus

Designer's Note: If playing using this Theatre of War, we recommend that the battlefield features plenty of pieces of water-based Area Terrain, such as rivers, water-logged woodlands, flooded ruins, etc. to represent the battlefields surrounding the lakes of Sarronik.

When fighting a battle around the Sarronik Lakes, the following rules apply:

Treacherous Waters

Before the battle, after the battlefield has been created, the players must agree what pieces of Area Terrain are water-based. Then, the Attacker must roll one D3 and consult the Treacherous Trait table that follows. The result is an additional rule applied

to all water-based Area Terrain features on the battlefield. Alternatively, the players can choose to roll for each water-based Area Terrain feature individually, or they can simply agree to ascribe one of the following traits to apply to each water-based Area Terrain feature based on what they feel is most narratively suitable.

D3	TREACHEROUS TRAIT
1	<p>Alkaline Waters: <i>The waters here bubble with strong alkaline chemicals that weaken the strongest armour.</i></p> <p>Each time an attack is made against a model that is receiving the benefits of cover from this terrain feature, improve the Armour Penetration characteristic of that attack by 1.</p>
2	<p>Deep Water: <i>The waters here are unusually deep, and not traversable by regular troops.</i></p> <p>Unless they can FLY, models cannot be set up within or move over any part of this terrain feature.</p>
3	<p>Sinking Sands: <i>This area is a boggy quagmire of quicksand that will suck armoured vehicles down to their doom.</i></p> <p>Unless they can FLY, VEHICLE models cannot be set up within or move over any part of this terrain feature.</p>

Miserable Weather

At the start of each battle round, the player with the first turn rolls one D3 and consults the table below to determine the current weather effect. That weather effect lasts until the end of the battle round.

D3	WEATHER EFFECT
1	<p>Eye of the Storm: <i>Dark clouds gather ahead, but they do not yet release their fury.</i></p> <p>No effect.</p>
2	<p>Sheeting Rain: <i>Torrential rain lashes the battlefield, reducing visibility and soaking the already sodden and grumbling warriors below.</i></p> <p>Subtract 6" from the Range characteristic of all ranged weapons of all models on the battlefield, to a minimum of 6".</p>
3	<p>Strong Gales: <i>Howling winds buffet every warrior, gales of such strength they cause them to stumble and falter in their stride.</i></p> <p>Each time an Advance roll is made for a unit on the battlefield, subtract 1 from that roll. Each time a charge roll is made for a unit on the battlefield, subtract 2 from that roll.</p>

Mysterious Objectives

If you are using any objective markers, before determining deployment zones, the Attacker must roll one D3 and consult the Mysterious Objective Effect table over the page, or agree on the most suitable option. The result is an additional rule applied to all objective markers for the battle. Alternatively, the players can choose to roll for each objective marker individually, or they can simply agree to ascribe one of the following effects to each objective marker on the battlefield based on what they feel is most narratively suitable.



D3 MYSTERIOUS OBJECTIVE EFFECT	
1	<p>Ancient Archeotech: <i>Fragments of water-logged archeotech remain on this site. Such treasures are valuable beyond comprehension, and will not lightly be abandoned.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">While a unit is within 3" of this objective marker, add 1 to Combat Attrition tests taken for that unit.If your WARLORD is within range of this objective marker at the start of your Command phase, you receive 1 Command point.
2	<p>Submerged Statuary: <i>The marshy ground around this objective actually hides ancient fallen statuary. Warriors can take cover behind these submerged slabs of masonry in order to prepare an ambush.</i></p> <p>While a unit is within 3" of this objective marker, each time a charge is declared against that unit, if it is not within Engagement Range of any enemy units, it can either Hold Steady or Set to Defend.</p> <p>If a unit Holds Steady, any Overwatch attacks made by that unit this phase will score hits on rolls of 5+. If a unit Sets to Defend, it cannot fire Overwatch this phase, but you add 1 to hit rolls when resolving attacks made with melee weapons by models in that unit until the end of the next Fight phase.</p>
3	<p>Unnerving Sigils: <i>Strange lights and symbols radiate from the murky waters surrounding this objective, unnerving even the most stalwart soul.</i></p> <p>While a unit is within 3" of this objective marker, subtract 2 from that unit's Leadership characteristic.</p>

HISHREA MOUNTAIN VALLEY

The Hishrea Mountain Valley is an inhospitable place, wreathed in blood-freezing fogs and assaulted by blizzards that can strip flesh from bone. Waging war in this locale is particularly dangerous, especially when a single grenade can trigger an avalanche and bury the battlefield in tonnes of snow, ice and rock.

Flashpoints: Argovon System, Pariah Nexus

When fighting a battle in the Hishrea Mountain Valley, the following rules apply:

Frozen Blizzards

Before the battle, after the battlefield has been created, the Attacker must roll one D3 and consult the table below to determine the current weather effect. That weather effect lasts until the end of the battle.

D3 WEATHER EFFECT	
1	<p>Deep Powder: <i>The snow continues to pile high, hampering warriors' efforts to advance quickly into position.</i></p> <p>Each time a unit that cannot FLY Advances, no more than 3" can be added to the Move characteristic of models in that unit.</p>
2	<p>Frozen Fog: <i>A bone-chilling fog descends on the battlefield, closing around the warriors and dropping visibility to a mere fraction of what it was.</i></p> <p>Units that are more than 24" away cannot be seen and cannot be targeted by any attacks.</p>
3	<p>Ice-shard Blizzard: <i>Razor-edged hail pelts the battlefield, slicing open flesh and even punching through light armour. Such a blizzard is particularly dangerous for aerial units, the shards damaging engines and turbines with ease.</i></p> <p>Each time a VEHICLE model starts or ends a move within 6" of a terrain feature, roll one D6, adding 1 to the roll if that model can FLY: on a 5-6, that model's unit suffers 1 mortal wound; on a 7+, that model's unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.</p>





Avalanche Risk

With frequent heavy snowfall, this Theatre of War is at constant risk of avalanches. Over the course of the game, each time any models fire particularly devastating (and loud) ranged weapons, there is a chance that they will cause an avalanche.

In the Shooting phase, each time a model makes an attack with either a blast weapon (e.g. a weapon with the blast ability) or makes an attack that inflicts 4 or more damage to its target, make a note of the table quarter the attacking model is within (we recommend you keep a tally). If the attacking model is within more than one table quarter, both player's roll off: the winner selects one of those table quarters.

At the end of each battle round, roll one D6 for the table quarter that has the biggest tally (if there is a tie, then roll for each of the tied table quarters). Add the current battle round number to the roll: on a 6+, each unit in that table quarter suffers D3 mortal wounds. Note that the same table quarter can be hit by multiple avalanches over the course of the battle.



ARGOVON CAMPAIGN AGENDAS

If you are playing a Crusade battle as part of an Argovon Campaign, you can, when selecting Agendas, use one of the Agendas from the Argovon Campaign Agendas category shown here to represent the unique motivations and goals of your faction in the Argovon System. This is a new category of Agendas, and it follows all the normal rules for Agendas (for example, when you select Agendas, you cannot choose more than one from each category).

Scavengers

Even amidst the carnage and chaos of battle, you must take every opportunity to salvage the secrets left behind on the war-scarred surfaces of Argovon's battlefields.

At the end of the battle:

- For each objective marker you control: select one unit from your army within range of that objective marker. That unit gains 1 experience point.
- If you control more objective markers than your opponent does, and your **WARLORD** is within range of an objective marker that is wholly within your opponent's deployment zone, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Defensive Bulwark

The Astra Militarum have established several vital installations throughout Argovon and have sworn to defend them from all aggressors.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **ASTRA MILITARUM** keyword. Before the battle, identify the objective marker that is closest to your battlefield edge (if there is more than one such objective marker, select one of them).

At the end of the battle:

- If that objective marker is controlled by **ASTRA MILITARUM** units from your army, each **ASTRA MILITARUM** unit from your army within range of that objective marker gains 1 experience point.



- If your **WARLORD** is in range of that objective marker, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Sacred Realm

The Sisters of Battle will defend the Emperor's holy realm of Argovon from all trespassers with lethal force.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **ADEPTA SORORITAS** keyword. At the end of the battle:

- If there are no enemy units (excluding **AIRCRAFT** units) wholly within your deployment zone, select up to three **ADEPTA SORORITAS** units from your army that are wholly within your deployment zone. Each of the selected units earns 2 experience points.
- If there are no enemy units remaining on the battlefield, or the only enemy units remaining on the battlefield are wholly within the enemy's own deployment zone, and your **WARLORD** is wholly within your own deployment zone, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Knightly Rivalry

The worthiness of an Imperial Knight during the Argovon Campaign is measured only by their epic deeds on the battlefield.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **IMPERIAL KNIGHTS** keyword. Before the battle, select one enemy unit. At the end of the battle:

- If that unit was destroyed by an **IMPERIAL KNIGHT** unit from your army, that **IMPERIAL KNIGHT** unit gains the number of experience points shown in the table below:

ENEMY UNIT POWER RATING	EXPERIENCE POINTS GAINED
1-10	1
11-16	3
17+	4

- If that unit was destroyed by a melee attack made by your **WARLORD**, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Forbidden Xenotech

The Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus will fight with zealous ferocity to recover xenos technology left on the battlefields of Argovon – but whether they seek to destroy or study it is not known to outsiders.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **ADEPTUS MECHANICUS** keyword. If you selected this Agenda, then after both sides have finished deploying, your opponent must set up one objective marker anywhere on the battlefield that is not within their own deployment zone. This objective marker represents the forbidden xenotech, but does not count as an objective marker for any rules purposes other than for this Agenda. At the end of the battle:

- If that objective marker is controlled by **ADEPTUS MECHANICUS** units from your army, each **ADEPTUS MECHANICUS** unit from your army within range of that objective marker gains 2 experience points.



- If your **WARLORD** is in range of that objective marker, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Flee the Sinking Ship

Even in the midst of destruction and disaster, the Argovon Genestealer Cults sense an opportunity to stow away aboard fleeing transports and spread the word of the Four-armed Emperor to the wider galaxy.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **GENESTEALER CULTS** keyword. At the end of the battle:

- Each **GENESTEALER CULTS** unit from your army that is wholly within 6" of your opponent's battlefield edge gains 1 experience point.
- If your **WARLORD** is wholly within 6" of your opponent's battlefield edge, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Activate Dolmen Gate

A handful of solitary dolmen gates reside on the planets of the Argovon System, and only when all the required power nodes are realigned will they activate.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **NECRONS** keyword. **NECRONS CHARACTER** units (excluding **C'TAN SHARDS**) from your army can attempt the following action, as described in the *Warhammer 40,000 Core Book*:

Activate Power Net (Action): At the end of your Movement phase, one unit from your army that is within 3" of the centre of the battlefield can start to perform this action. This action is completed at the start of your next Command phase. This action cannot be completed more than once.

A unit gains 3 experience points if it completed this action. If your **WARLORD** completed this action, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

Loose Ends

An enemy agent has a stolen Necron artefacts from an Argovon tomb complex. Elimination of this individual as soon as possible will prevent that tech, and any information they have gleaned from it, from spreading.

You can only select this Agenda if your **WARLORD** has the **DEATHWATCH** keyword. Before the battle, select one enemy **CHARACTER** unit. At the end of the battle:

- If that unit has been destroyed by a **DEATHWATCH** unit from your army, that **DEATHWATCH** unit gains the number of experience points shown in the table below.
- If that unit was destroyed by your **WARLORD**, you gain 1 additional war zone point.

BATTLE ROUND ENEMY UNIT WAS DESTROYED	EXPERIENCE POINTS GAINED
1-2	4
3	3
4+	1



CRESCENT RISE

With their armoured support in tatters, a squad of Tempestus Scions is tasked with the destruction of a seemingly unprotected Necron gun emplacement. But not is all as it seems in this short story by Callum Davis.



Squadrons of Leman Russ battle tanks vanished with a bang of displaced air and a flash that left afterimages across Emmerik's retinas and oculabes. There was no colossal eruption of raging fireballs. No teeth-jarring squeal of rent and torn metal. Their destruction was so complete that no trace of them remained besides stains of blackened ash on the frozen ground.

Throne, thought Emmerik. He watched as the other tanks of the Bergundian 63rd broke formation and spread out in an attempt to reduce the impact of further attacks.

Emmerik and the rest of his squad of Tempestus Scions were running to stop the column's attackers, their boots

crunching on the permafrost that covered this region of Hishrea. A number of crescent-shaped artillery pieces lined the rise a few hundred metres away. Giant crystals throbbed with bright green light at their centres. Lightning crackled and rippled over their surfaces.

'They're getting ready to fire again,' said Tempestor Kaithus over the squad-wide vox. 'Faster!'

These Necron constructs had come out of nowhere. Emmerik's squad had been flying on patrol over the armoured regiment with the rest of their company when the devastating cannons appeared. The battery Emmerik's squad was attacking wasn't the only one that had attacked. Several more had appeared, the rest of the company



rushing to take them down. Other squads were making for the same battery as Emmerik's squad. The Bergundians, though spread out and making what evasive measures they could, were still in the valley and therefore vulnerable. Some of the Scions' squads claimed they had seen the cannons materialise out of thin air. Others said they saw them rise up from beneath the ground. Emmerik hadn't seen either way.

It matters not. We will destroy them regardless, Emmerik thought.

'Be advised,' said Kaithus. 'Contact lost with Squad Rhyvan. Once we've finished here, we may be assigned to destroy their target battery.'

Another, thought Emmerik. He gripped his hellgun more tightly, clenching his teeth. 'More lost to those abominations,' he muttered to himself. 'God-Emperor, grant me the strength to purge them.'

He felt strengthened by the prayer. Ever since they had arrived in the sector, he had felt a malaise and paranoia at the back of his mind. Remembering the Emperor and praying to him helped. Emmerik's weapons and armour felt lighter whenever he offered praise or gave thanks to Mankind's saviour and protector. The prayers reminded him of his righteousness in doing the Emperor's work and the strength of the power he fought for.

The squad approached a series of boulders and crags.

'Watch for ambush,' ordered Kaithus. The squad slowed to a stride, weapons raised. Each of their number covered a sector of the squad's perimeter. Those at the rear strode backwards, pointing their weapons to the squad's rear. No matter which direction an enemy attacked from – if the enemy attacked – one of the Scions would be in a position to cut them down.

No one was ready for a foe who could materialise amongst them. Yet that is exactly what happened. The creatures emitted a keening of shrill madness as they hacked and slashed immediately after appearing.

Nythar was the first to die. The Necron who killed him strode out of thin air and drove the talons of one of its hands through his back, and another through the base of his skull. Where his visored face had been there was now a wicked blade, dripping in blood and brain matter sprinkled with shards of shattered faceplate.

Nythar had made it through Schola Progenium training and had fought and won against traitors, Orks and T'au in over a hundred missions. In a heartbeat he was gone, having never even seen the foe who cut him down.

Falyl was next. It was too dangerous for him to fire his meltagun at such close quarters with his comrades all around. By the time he drew his hellpistol to open fire, the Necron he was going to aim at removed his head with a single blow. Still in its helm, his head bounced on the hard earth and landed with a wet thud.



Emmerik raised his hellgun and poured fire into the metallic beast. Blood dripped down the Necron's armoured exoskeleton, and it was wearing a cloak of what looked like decaying flesh and skin. It made for Emmerik, but the storm trooper kept firing, sheer weight of hot-shot las bringing it down.

The air was full of the stench of hot-shot las discharge, and all Emmerik could hear were the shouts and screams of men and the Necrons' piercing shrieks.

Within less than a second, Emmerik identified his next target. *Emperor guide my aim and calm my soul,* he thought as he levelled his weapon at another of the hideous creatures, which was stuffing the meat of what was once Falyl into its metallic jaws. Blood and hastily chewed fleshed dripped and flopped through the Necron's body. Emmerik curled his lip in disgust. He kept firing until he brought the creature down. Its cloak of flesh was scorched and burned before the monster faded away completely. 'Back into the hell whence you came,' Emmerik spat.

Sergeant Kaithus hacked down the last of the Necrons with a ferocious blow of his power sword, cleaving the insane creature in half, shoulder to waist.

Five of the squad were dead. Their lopped off body parts were scattered everywhere. Sprays of red blood stained the rocks, which before had been white with frost.

'Take what you need,' said Kaithus to his squad. 'Take all the melta bombs.'

Emmerik went over to a torso. It had no head and had three vicious wounds where the Necrons had driven their blades right through it. He took the Scion's grenades and melta bomb. Lenith hefted Falyl's meltagun in addition to his hellgun. Ruutger replaced his hellgun for Pinther's volley gun. All the remaining Scions were loaded down with spare grenades and weapons.



The top of the rise was bathed in the eerie green glow from the Necron cannons. As Emmerik drew close, he could see the light ooze faintly from grooves all over the metal of the cannons' framework. Though the amount of energy pulsing through the weapons must have been enormous, which instinct told him should be warm, he felt even colder, exposed as he was to Hishrea's biting winds on this high ground.

He and the rest of the squad advanced more cautiously, expecting to find defenders. There was no sign of any amongst the rubble, boulders and crags. There was no sign that these artillery pieces were built here or dragged into position. It was if they had materialised out of nowhere, or had somehow been there all the time. He had no idea. Tactical readouts on his in-helm display showed

no signs of any enemy presence at all, save the cannons themselves.

Maybe they were right, Emmerik thought as he was reminded of the claims made by some of the other Scions.

They were barely fifty metres from the first of the crescent cannons, and Emmerik could get an idea of their sheer size for the first time. He wasn't even as tall as the multi-legged platform on which the cannon's crescent was mounted. The concave frame was clamped firmly in place to a part of the platform that looked capable of turning around in a full circle.

No matter what the Bergundians do, they won't be able to fight again unless we destroy all of these, Emmerik thought. The reach of these constructs was immense.

'We'll need to plant the bombs strategically. It won't come down otherwise. The clamps look too strong,' said Kaithus. 'Emmerik, set the charges. The rest of you, give him your melta bombs and stand guard. We've seen what the xenos can do. They can come out of anywhere at any moment. Full alert at all times. Maintain spacing, don't make it easy for them to get more than one of us at once. For the Emperor.'

'For the Emperor,' Emmerik echoed, along with the rest of his squadmates.





He took the melta bombs from the rest of the squad. Just one was an unwieldy device, but he now had many. He hobbled awkwardly to the first cannon and heaved himself onto the platform. Making contact with xenos technology like this sickened him to the core, but he continued.

Nothing matters besides carrying out His work, he thought.

The cannon's crescent was held in place by four clamps, two on each side of it. He had a dozen melta bombs. There were three more artillery pieces on this rise, and he had no idea if the other squads survived to destroy their assigned cannons. And there might be others elsewhere they'd have to destroy. He would have to be sparing. He decided to plant a melta bomb on two of the clamps, both on the same side of the crescent.

Emperor, let that be enough to bring it down, he prayed. He had no idea if it would work. He knew nothing about Necron metallurgy. Nor did he want to know anything about it. Its evil was self-evident.

He primed the devices.

'With these devices I bring Your wrath to our foe, God-Emperor,' he intoned.

He adhered the first bomb to its clamp. 'May their fire be Your divine fury.'

He heard a noise. A kind of quiet chittering.

He attached the second. 'May the destruction of this monstrosity serve as symbol of Your righteous hatred.'

'Bombs planted,' he voxed to the rest of his squad.

He stood and ran to the next gun, detonating the bombs behind him and reducing the cannon to twisted metal and rubble. He heard weapons fire. When he started fixing bombs to the second cannon, he looked up. There was no sign of his squad. Only a thousand small green lights racing towards him on skittering insect-like things.

Scarabs; drillers; blood-whisps; buzz-bombs.

He had heard enough horror stories to know what they could do. He planted the next bombs hurriedly – knowing he had little time – and ran. As he took off, he rushed through cants of detonation, hoping the destruction of the guns would hold off the Scarabs. He dared not look back to see if his plan worked.

The roar of multiple explosions filled his ears, and fierce heat washed over him after the bombs nearest to him detonated.

Please Emperor make them fall.

He ran.

Still he heard nothing.

Still he could not look back.

Then he heard it. The screech of tortured metal; the groan of the second cannon slowly falling to the frozen ground; the thunderous crash of its impact. The earth shook, almost throwing him off his feet.

'Praise!'

He reached the third cannon. He planted two more bombs in such a way he hoped would make the crescent come crashing down on to the onrushing Scarabs. He hurriedly got to work, racing through the correct intonations and cants, far faster than he should have done.

Emperor, forgive my laxity.

Bombs planted, he looked up. The high-pitched chittering was even louder.

It was too late. The Scarabs were flitting and darting ever closer. He could not reach the next xenos cannon before they were on him. All that was left was to sell his life dearly and honour the Emperor in the best way he could. He rose to his feet.

He raised his hellgun and fired at the skittering creatures, holding the melta bombs' detonator in his hand. He saw a few stopped by the weapon, but only token numbers.

The Scarabs were twenty metres away.

'To you my Emperor, I pledge my soul. To you I pledge my life.'

The Scarabs were ten metres away. He could make out their multi-jointed legs and sheened carapaces.

'To you I give everything, and to you I owe everything. With my final words, I offer gratitude – for Your sacrifice, Your might and Your power.'

He pushed the detonation button, and everything went white.



FORGE WORLDS

Galactic War Zones is an ongoing series of articles showing you how to build and paint your Warhammer 40,000 armies based around the planets on which they live and fight. Praise the Omnissiah - this month's article is all about forge worlds.



From ash-covered plains to smog-choked skies, the forge worlds of the Adeptus Mechanicus are amongst the most densely populated worlds in the Imperium. They are also among the most inimical to human life, for they are perpetually shrouded in toxic fog, the air so foul that it is next to unbreathable. Lakes of bubbling acid stretch for kilometres, while slag piles of irradiated forge-waste dominate the skylines. Acid rain eats away at environment suits and protective gear, while howling winds send scouring dust to clog air filters and rebreathers. There are no trees, for vegetation is of little use on a world designed for industry. Wildlife is scarce, only the hardest and most adaptable creatures able to survive in the rad-wastes outside a forge world's vast manufacturums and industrial hives. Most civilised races would have given up on such ravaged worlds long ago, but to the Adeptus

MARS

Mars is the first and most powerful of all the forge worlds. Though wars have not been fought across its surface for thousands of years, it is nevertheless an inhospitable place steeped in radiation and plagued by corrosive storms. To step outside unprotected would invite a swift death.



Mechanicus and the Imperium as a whole, they are of crucial importance. Without these planets, the Imperium's industrial and military might would be severely compromised, for it is the forge worlds that equip the Imperium's vast armies, that construct their star-faring fleets and that provide the countless tools and machinery required to run and maintain a billion worlds.

The people who live on forge worlds are almost exclusively members of the Adeptus Mechanicus, though such worlds are often invaded and sometimes even overrun by aliens and heretics who wish to steal the Imperium's technology or else prevent it being used against them. Yet these invading armies soon find themselves battling not just the enemy, but the elements themselves on a world that will erode sanity as easily as flesh and bone. Only those who feel nothing can hope to survive on a forge world for long.

INDUSTRIAL WASTELANDS

So what would an army fighting on a forge world look like? Perhaps the Astra Militarum would issue its troopers with rebreathers and fully enclosed helms (and maybe even gloves!). Genestealer Cultists may wear environment suits scavenged from mines and oil rigs, or even steal Skitarii equipment. Invading Orks would likely trawl through the scrap piles and upgrade their Battlewagons and Trukks with the detritus they find. The pragmatic T'au would almost certainly upgrade their tanks and battlesuits with extra support systems to ensure they can still operate in the scrap deserts and rad wastes, while Necrons could be covered in radioactive dust and dirt to show where they have emerged from their stasis tombs. Then there are Chaos-held forge worlds. Would the Cultists and Chaos Space Marines all have bionic upgrades? Perhaps there are unusual types of Daemon Engines there.

We hope this article will provide you with some useful inspiration for how to paint and convert your models to show they come from a forge world. If you have an idea you would like to share with us, send us some pictures of your own creations to: team@whitedwarf.co.uk

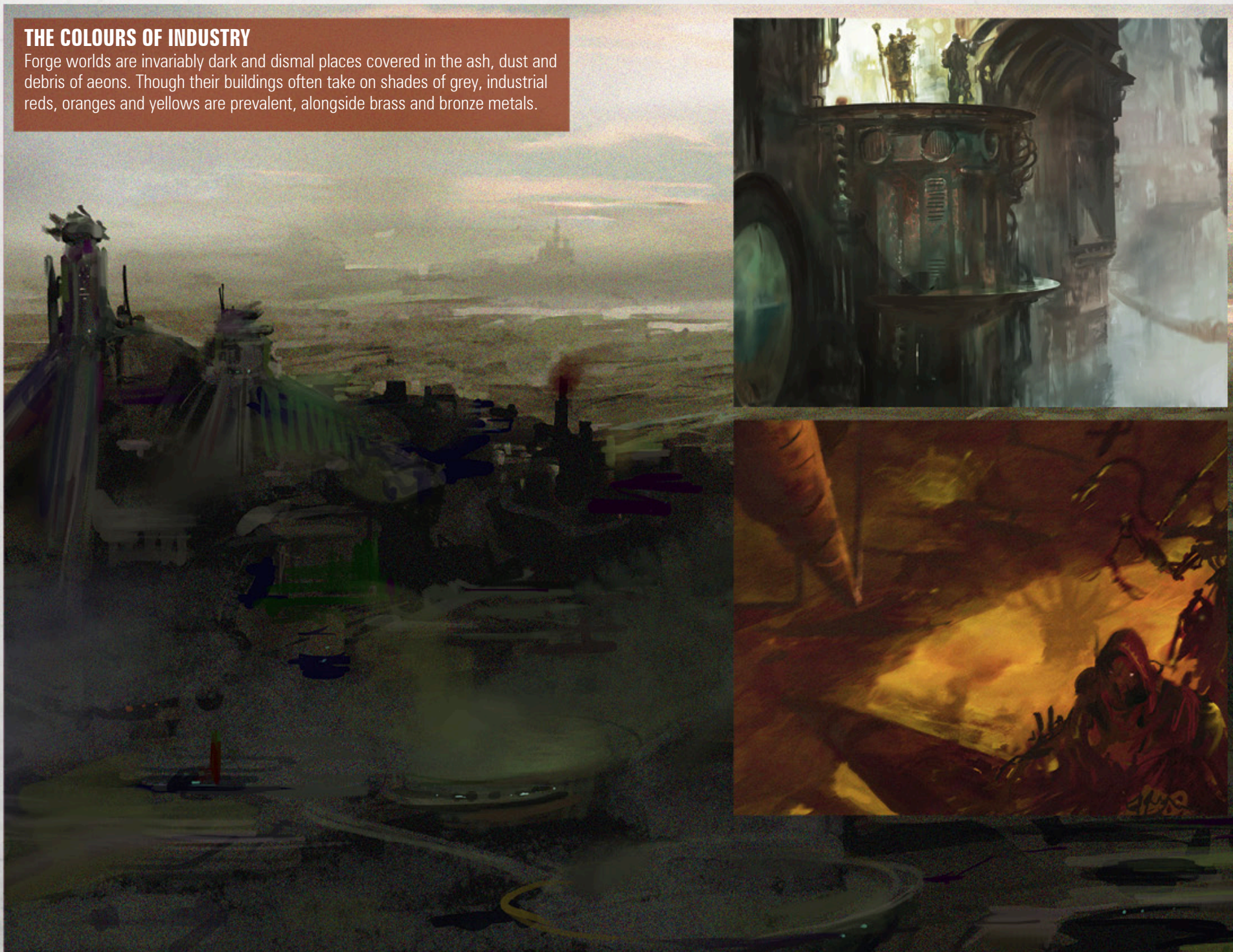
SCIONS OF THE FORGES

This Skitarii Ranger from Stygies VIII (page 18 of *Codex: Adeptus Mechanicus*) is a great example of what a warrior from a forge world can look like. Forge worlds are brutal environments, and their inhabitants are often augmented to better survive the harsh climates. This Ranger, for example, has had his lower legs replaced with bionics so that he can walk across radioactive soil. His wargear includes air purification equipment and a breathing apparatus, a sealed environment suit, a multi-sensory mask, lead-lined robes, rad-sensors and Geiger counters. Though this Ranger is from a forge world, those heretics and aliens fighting on such worlds would no doubt take similar precautions with their wargear. Otherwise, they may not live very long at all!



THE COLOURS OF INDUSTRY

Forge worlds are invariably dark and dismal places covered in the ash, dust and debris of aeons. Though their buildings often take on shades of grey, industrial reds, oranges and yellows are prevalent, alongside brass and bronze metals.



PAINTING YOUR ARMIES

Armies that fight on forge worlds become covered in the dust and dirt of industry, their wargear stained and weathered by the land. Here are a few tips on painting your forge-world-conquering armies.

One of the most common ways to show that your army is fighting on a forge world is to paint their bases to look like a rad-desert or parched wasteland. Industrial bases also look great, with Sector Mechanicus and Necromunda bases being perfect for the job. However, it's worth considering how the colour of your bases will look alongside your miniatures. It's fine to have martian bases, but when the models standing on them are Blood Angels,

they might look a little weird. Consider contrasting colours instead. Perhaps those Blood Angels could have black ash bases instead. Maybe the red bases would look better beneath the feet of silver Sautekh Necrons, Vior'la Sept T'au (they wear white with red markings) or dingy black-clad Goff Orks. Iyanden Aeldari could look especially striking, their yellow and blue colours working alongside the red to create a triadic primary colour scheme.

SCIONS OF THE MACHINE GOD

Every forge world has an associated livery and heraldry. Adeptus Mechanicus warriors from Mars wear deep red robes, while those from Ryza wear muted orange. Skitarii from Stygies VIII wear black robes, while troopers from Metalica wear white.



ORDER OF THE IRON VEIL

This Battle Sister stands on a warm-red martian base, which contrasts well with her cool-silver armour. The Order of the Iron Veil are known for being particularly resilient – useful when fighting on a forge world.



SOULLESS INVADERS

This Necron Immortal also has a red base, which contrasts with its pale-green armour that has been painted to look like chipped ceramic. Weathering is a great way to show that a warrior is fighting in a harsh environment.



T'AU SEPT BATTLESUIT

The T'au are not adverse to changing the colour of their armour to match the terrain they are fighting over. This Crisis Battlesuit has had its armour painted to match the rad-wastes that it is fighting over. Note that it retains its white marking to show that it is from T'au Sept.



IMPERIAL FISTS ELIMINATOR

This Eliminator – painted by hobbyist Adam Staincliffe – wears black armour instead of yellow to reflect his stealthy battlefield role. The inside of his camo cape is painted green to show he is part of the 4th Company, while the outside is painted to match the Martian landscape.



THE CULT OF THE RUSTED CLAW BY NYLE AJINA

The Cult of the Rusted Claw are based on the Imperial mining world of Newseam. They have heavily infiltrated the Adeptus Mechanicus, which is why they tend to wear similar colours to the warriors of the Machine God.

Nyle painted his cult troops using mostly Contrast paints, as he wanted to get his army Battle Ready in short order. He started by undercoating his models

with Zandri Dust spray, then giving them a zenithal highlight from above of Wraithbone spray. Next, he applied a coat of Skeleton Horde to all the models except their heads and then drybrushed them to highlight their work suits. Nyle used Gryph-hound Orange for their fatigues, Black Templar for their guns, Flesh Tearers Red for the red details and Guilliman Flesh for their skin.



CONVERTING YOUR MODELS

Converting your models is a great way to show that they're either from a forge world or fighting on it. Here are a few examples of converted models to get you inspired.

Forge worlds are home to all manner of weird and wonderful weapons, wargear and terrain, making them a great source of inspiration when it comes to converting your miniatures. Adding bionics to native warriors such as Skitarii, Space Marines and Astra Militarum is a great way to show that they've been on a world for some time, while scavenged wargear and patched-up vehicles for Orks and Genestealer Cults suggest that they've been rooting

around in the scrap piles in search of useful components and upgrades. For other races such as Tyranids, T'au and Aeldari, converting your models' bases to look like they're on a forge world is a great touch – rust deserts, ruined manufacturums and scrap piles are all fair game. Consider also what Chaos-tainted forge worlds may look like. The daemon forges of the Eye of Terror could be great inspiration for your models.

WARPSMITH BY DAN HARDEN

Dan's used Feirros as a base for his Iron Warriors Warpsmith. The backpack comes from a Havoc with a Kataphron Breacher's weapons mounted on it, while his actual arms come from a Chaos Terminator. The mechatendrils are from a Forgefiend.



SANCTUS BY ADAM STAINCLIFFE

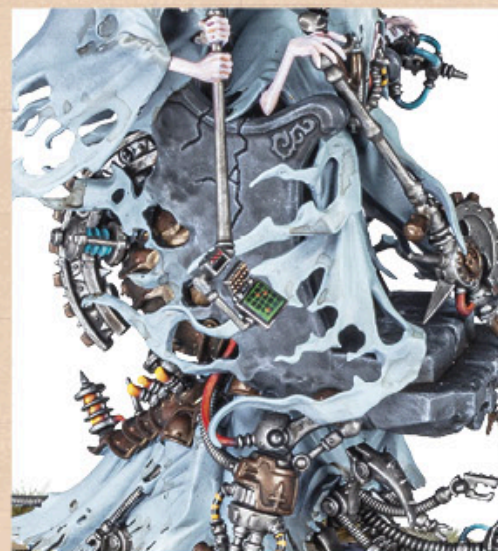
Adam used Dahyak Grekh as the base for his Genestealer Cults Sanctus, who hails from the Cult of the Bladed Cog. He swapped the head for that of a Neophyte and gave him a bionic leg taken from a Sicarian Ruststalker.



TECH-PRIEST DOMINUS BY CALUM MCPHERSON

Calum's Tech-Priest Dominus hails from Gryphon IV and proudly wears the grey robes of that lost forge world. Calum converted him by taking Belisarius Cawl's body and mounting Kurdoss Valentian's throne onto the front of it. He then converted the Craven King using a Tech-Priest Dominus' head and Omnissian Axe. All of the Tech-Priest's other weapons and paraphernalia are mounted on Cawl's lower body or on the servo-cherubs that float alongside him. One carries a data-gathering device on a pole, while the other wields an arc scourge taken from Cawl.

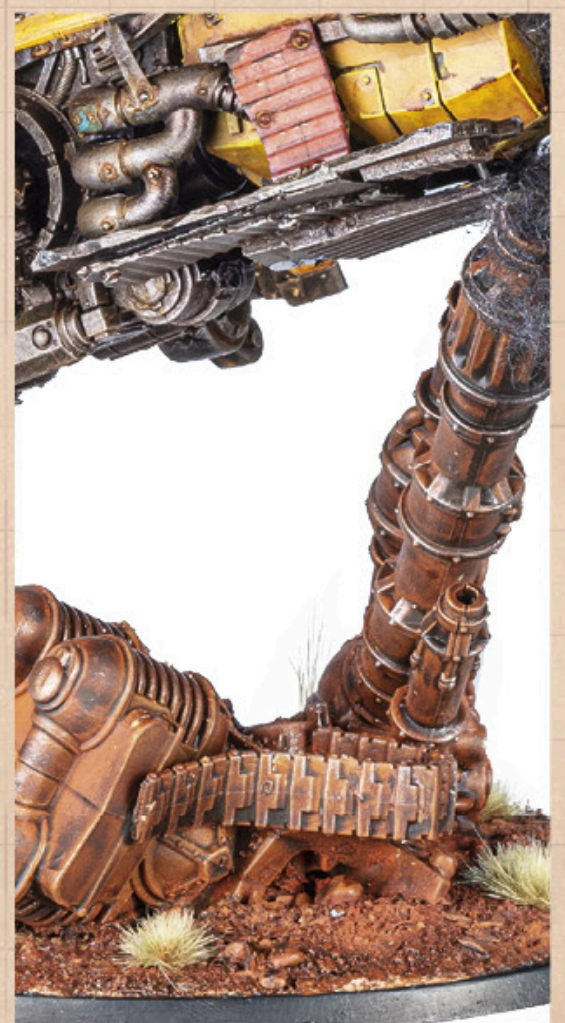
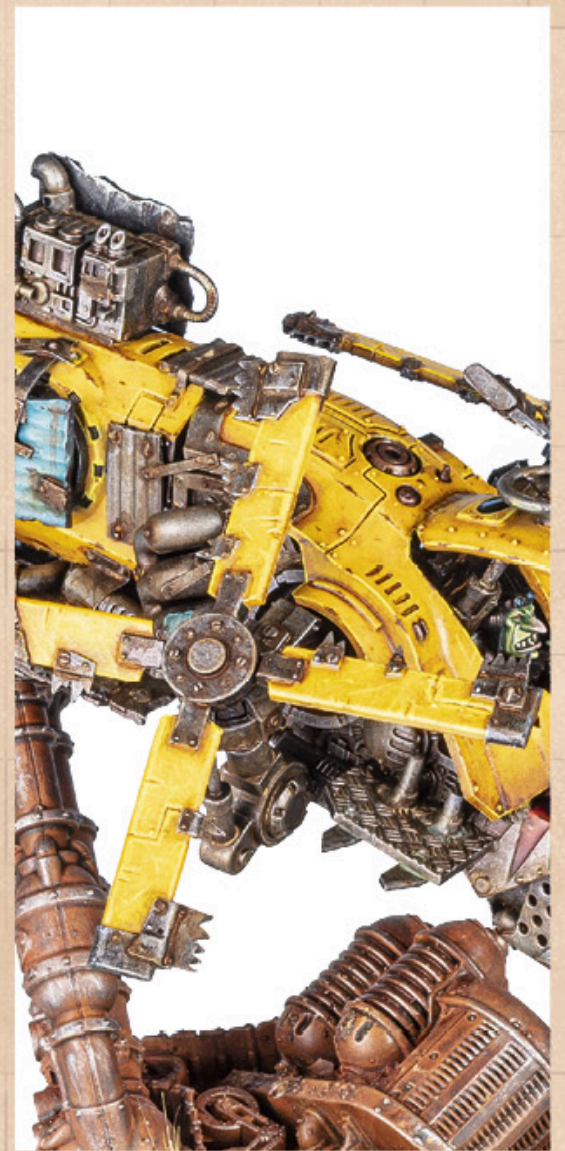
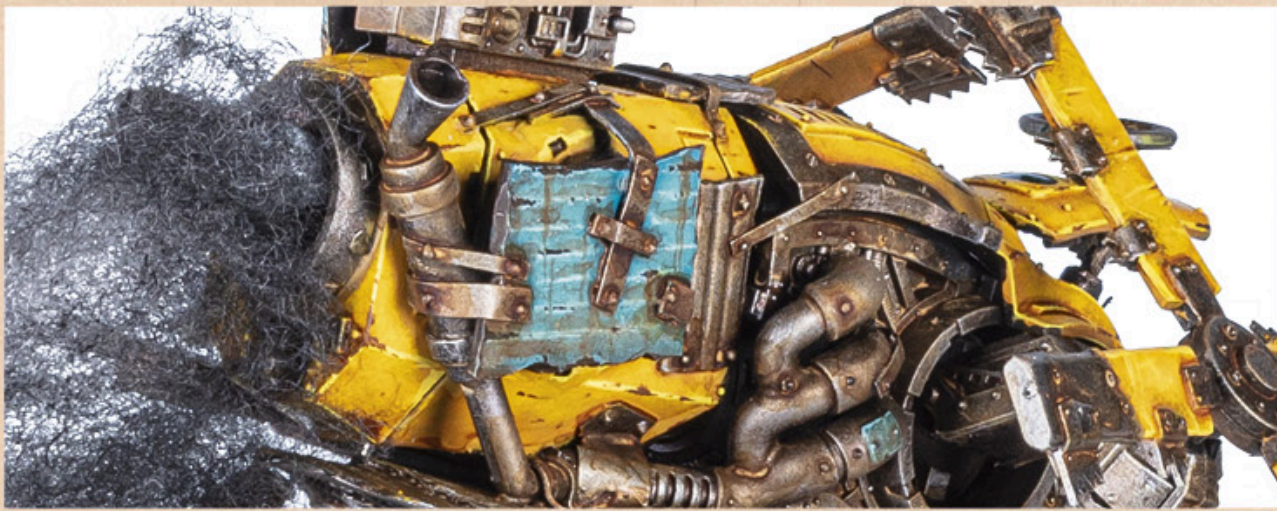
To paint his Tech-Priest, Calum used Fenrisian Grey as a basecoat, then airbrushed it with Blue Horror, adding in Wraithbone to get the pale blue-grey tone on the robes. He used patches of Wyldwood to represent dirt and grime.



ORKSHROUD BOMBER BY LEWIS COLLINS

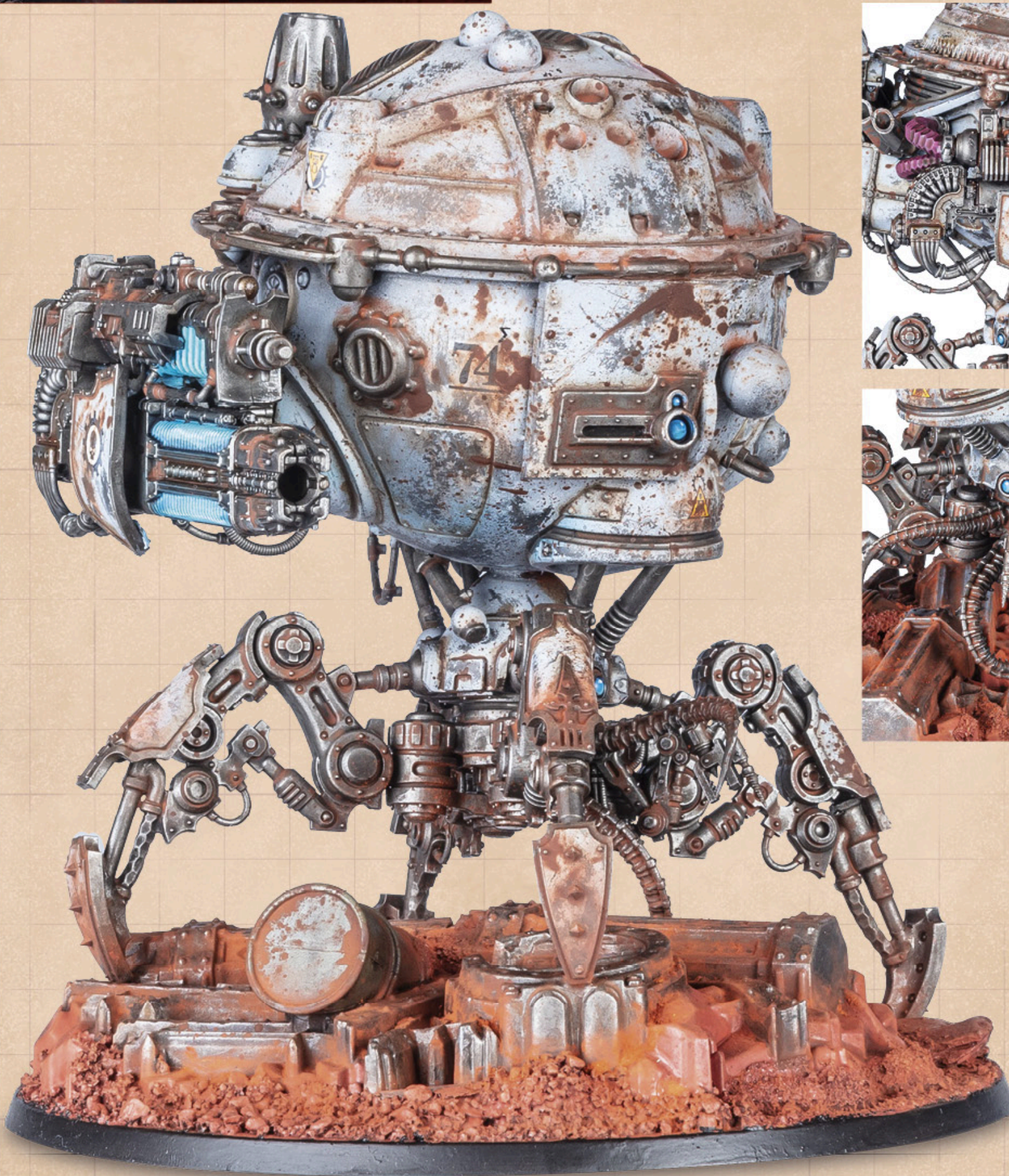
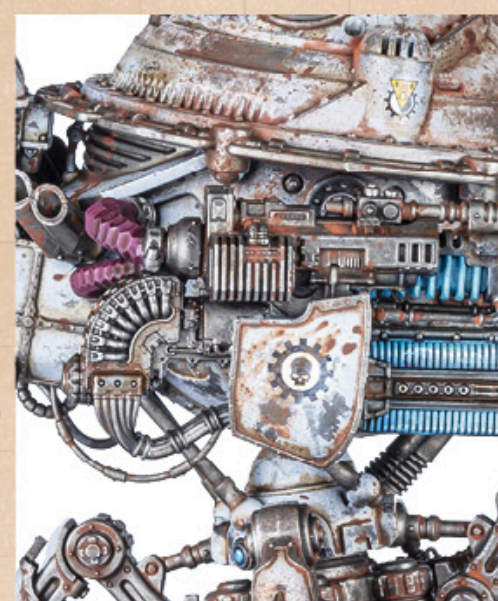
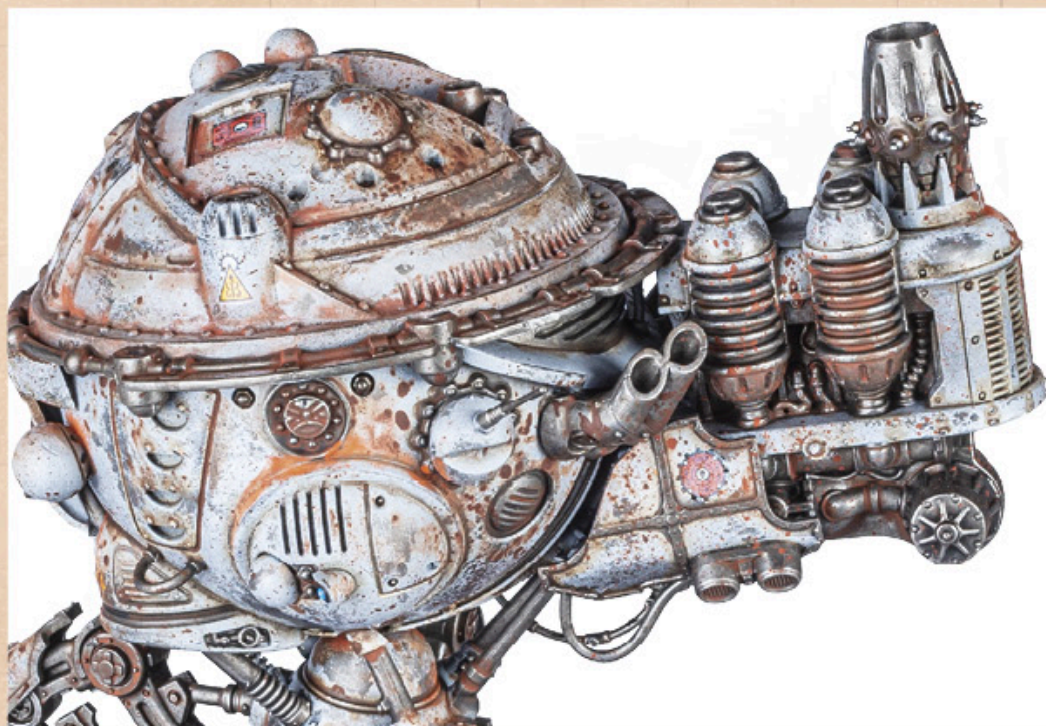
Lewis converted this grot Deffkopta (nicknamed the Orkshroud on account of it being the same yellow as House Hawkshroud) using a Knight Armiger as the cockpit, with the engine of a Stormtalon rammed into the back of it. He built the propellers using parts from the old Deffkopta kit, parts from the Armigers legs and even a few parts from the Mekboy Workshop. He then wedged in as many exhaust pipes as possible, which

he looted from the Dakkajet, Killa Kans, Ork Bikers and Galvanic Servohaulers. To paint his Orkshroud, Lewis used Averland Sunset as the basecoat, highlighted it with Yriel Yellow, then shaded it with a mix of Mournfang Brown and Air Caste Thinner. While the wash was still wet, he rubbed some of it away with a cotton bud to create the weathered effect. He then finished it off with a highlight of Phalanx Yellow.



HUNTER-KILLER WAR ROBOT BY THOMAS ELLIOTT

Hunter-Killer robots are semi-autonomous war machines sent out by the Adeptus Mechanicus to hunt down hereteks. Thomas built this one using the legs of an Onager Dunecrawler and the aether-endrin from an Arkanaut Ironclad. The power plant is from a Galvanic Servohauler, while the guns are from a Dunecrawler and an Adeptus Titanicus Titan. The armoured blisters on the upper hull represent sensor nodes, while the mechanical tentacles on the front (from a Talos) are used for collecting data. Thomas used a hairspray weathering technique to paint his war machine, starting with a silver basecoat, then applying the grey armour colour before chipping away at it to reveal the metallic paint beneath.



PAINTING FORGE WORLD SCENERY

You've built and painted your forge-world-themed army. Now you need to build a battlefield for it to fight over. Here's a quick and simple guide to painting industrial terrain.

THERMIC PLASMA REGULATORS

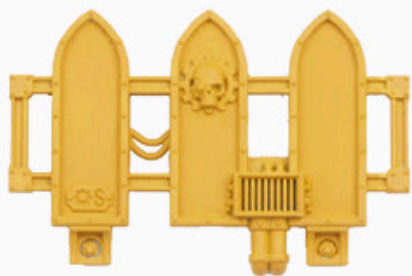
A great-looking terrain collection can really help you set the scene for your battles. A lot of people tend to favour dark colours for industrial scenery, leaning more towards grey and black, but there's no reason why you couldn't paint it a more vibrant colour, such as red, white or yellow. Yellow in particular is featured on a lot of industrial equipment in the real world, and it's a colour that's often associated with danger. What could be better for a Thermic Plasma Regulator?

The yellow on the Thermic Plasma Regulator to the right was painted using the stages below. The real secret to this scenery piece is not worrying about being too neat. After all, this regulator has probably been around for hundreds if not thousands of years, and it will have accumulated some dirt and grime along the way. The regulator was undercoated with Wraithbone spray and then airbrushed Averland Sunset, but you can easily paint it with your XL Base brush if you don't have access to an airbrush. Why not try painting one of your own, but in another colour entirely, such as red or grey? Just substitute the colours shown below for the ones you want to use.



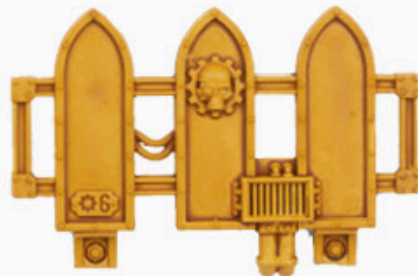
WEATHERED YELLOW METAL

1



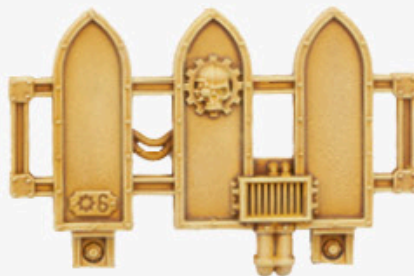
Basecoat your scenery piece with Averland Sunset. Be sure to get into all the gaps so the Wraithbone undercoat is covered.

2



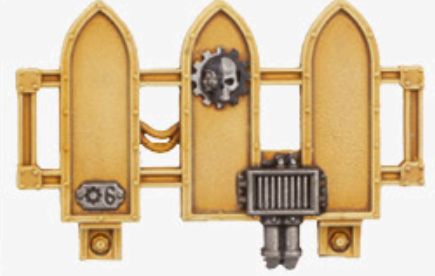
Apply your shading to the yellow panels. In this example, we used Seraphim Sepia, as it helps to desaturate the yellow in the recesses.

3



Drybrush the panels Averland Sunset to re-establish the colour. Then, drybrush them a couple of times with Screaming Skull to pick out the raised edges.

4



Pick out any details on the panels. All the metal areas were painted using a coat of Leadbelcher followed by a light wash of Nuln Oil.

5



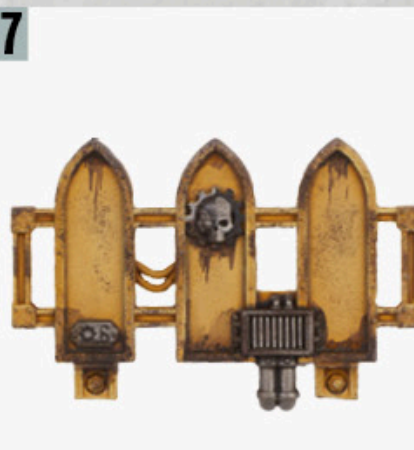
Dab a small piece of sponge into Rhinox Hide. Dab most of the paint off the sponge, then apply it to the edges of the panels to create weathering.

6



Use the same technique to create paint chips using Leadbelcher. If you feel you've applied too much Leadbelcher, go over it with more Rhinox Hide.

7



Using your S Layer brush, paint Typhus Corrosion into the lower recesses of the panels to create a rust texture that you can then paint over with ...

8



... slightly watered-down Troll Slayer Orange. This will create the effect of wet rust that has accumulated due to many years of neglect.

ECHOES FROM THE WARP



ELLIOT HAMER

Robin has struck off on his own, no doubt on another crusade for the glory of the Emperor and the salvation of the Imperium. Meanwhile, it falls to Battle-brother Elliot Hamer to carry the Warhammer 40,000 team's banner to war. In this month's article, he talks about honing your tabletop skills through the tried and tested method of trial and error.

This month I want to talk about the joys and benefits of experimenting in games of Warhammer 40,000, primarily for the matched play mindset, but appropriate for anyone who wants to further their understanding of the game we all love.

To start with, I'll take you down memory lane. Many years ago, when I returned to Warhammer 40,000 from the not-uncommon teenage hiatus, most of my gaming took place at a local club in Lincoln, UK called Gobstyks. Every week I would rush home from work, grab my models and head on over for some grim dark escapism. Everything was pre-arranged, so I'd meet my opponent with a prepared list and we would battle it out for a

few hours. When I got home that evening, I'd be so excited for Warhammer 40,000 that I would reflect on the game, go over what was good and bad and consider what tweaks I would like to do for next time – change tactics, field a new unit, try a different weapon, tweak my army list, etc. The next week would roll around, and I would repeat the process again, and again, and again.

What this meant was that win or lose, I was having a tremendous amount of fun, but also learning the game on my own terms, through experimentation and trial and error on a regular basis. No matter the outcome of the game, I would always reflect and ask myself what went well, what didn't and what would I change. From this I got a detailed understanding of the rules, how to tweak my army to effectively work within them, and how to make decisions as a general.

In today's world, many of you may take a different approach on your gaming journey. Rather than experimenting with your gaming, you may decide to go straight at it with an army list or playstyle you have seen used elsewhere, sometimes even a carbon copy of the latest and greatest from a prestigious event. For some people, this is a perfectly valid route to take.



Echoes from the Warp is a regular column about the rules, tactics and ongoing development of Warhammer 40,000, hosted by games developer Robin Cruddace. But Robin has been supplanted by games developer Elliot Hamer, who's here to talk about trial and error.



Time is the only resource we cannot make more of, so if you can skip that experimentation and creation process to jump straight to the element of gaming that you love, that is a perfectly valid option. However, my aim for this article is to show you the valuable experience you may be missing out on by taking this approach, and if you want to become an accomplished Warhammer 40,000 player and/or someone with a detailed knowledge of the game, it's not the most constructive way to direct your hobby energy.

So what are the benefits of experimenting with your gaming and learning things for yourself? Well firstly, your knowledge of the game will multiply exponentially. By experimenting, you will be interacting with different rules of the game you might not ordinarily have experienced and understood. For example, if you usually play with a static gunline army, introducing a combat unit as a counter-charge threat or pressure deterrent will allow your army to perform in an area it would

not normally have been able to do. Now a more effective layered defence, additional movement from charge, pile-in and consolidation, and 'wrapping' enemy units by trapping them in combat are all tactics you can implement, as well as a hefty punch in the Fight phase! What's more, now that you have experienced it for yourself, you can take steps to avoid it if your enemy threatens your lines with assault units.

By extension, you will have opened up avenues in gameplay that you never thought possible. Continuing the above example, now that you've seen the capabilities of a well-placed charge, there may be an occasion when a unit not taken for its combat potential can forgo its usual role in order to engage the enemy in melee, perhaps sacrificing their usual offense in order to mitigate the enemy's. Brave Guardsmen sacrificing their lives to slow down a terrifying advance or prevent a mighty war machine bringing its guns to bear is a heroic story told across countless battlefields of the 41st Millennium!



If you play with a set army in a set manner, it's a little bit like running a computer program. You deploy your program, press play, and away it goes. The problem with that, however, is that the program can't cope when it encounters variables outside of the equation. This might be unlucky dice, no line of attack to the enemy, an enemy unit or rule you've never experienced before, unusual tactics from your opponent or any other variable you haven't yet encountered. If you have a detailed understanding of the game, however, you can rummage through your tactical toolbox to find the right tool for the situation. Being able to adapt can get you a victory from certain defeat, and often these are the greatest ones you can achieve.

In the future, you may need to write a different army list as the game changes and evolves. If you find yourself relying on other people's experiences, you will be back to square one. However, if you've learnt and understood the game yourself, you will be in a much better position to make the necessary changes, and you will be ahead of the curve in implementing them. What's more, if you've experimented with different units, you'll have plenty on your shelf ready to go, no painting time required! If you play at tournaments, this also means you are largely unaffected by the waxing and waning of the tournament meta. A few tweaks here and there, and you're good to go in the next chapter of the game.

Linked to this, in the modern world, an abundance of information is at your fingertips, and a wide variety of opinions can be seen across social media platforms. Quite often this information can get bottle-necked, and only the strongest voices will squeeze through, creating a set narrative for us all to see. This information is then viewed as an absolute, when in fact it is just the experiences of certain circles. By all means read this information, but use it to inform your opinions rather than set them. The most valuable experience you can have is to put some models on the table and roll some dice for yourself. It's informative, you'll understand it better, and it's way more fun.

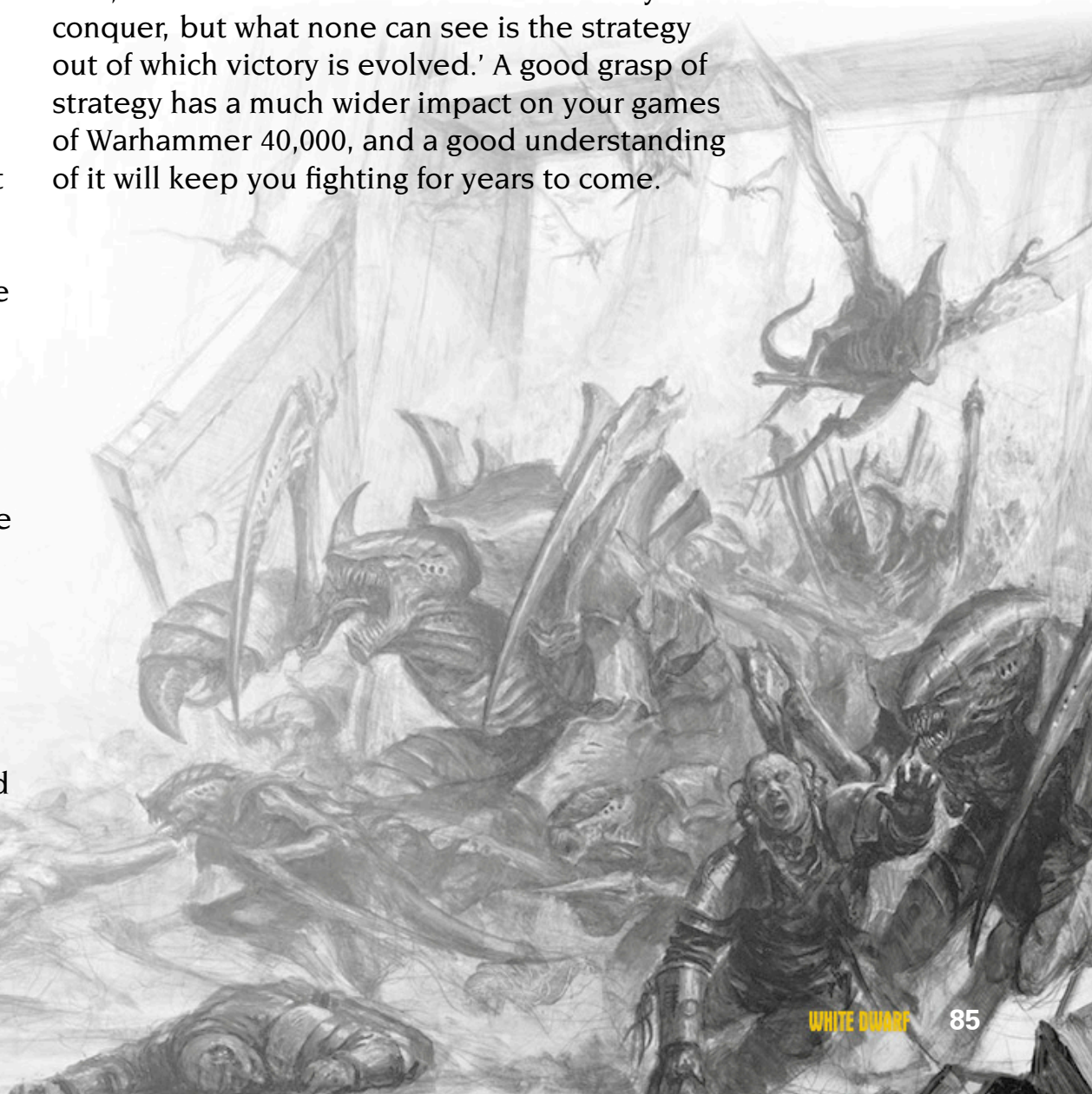
Focusing on the personal experience from game to game, variety is super fun, for you and your opponent. Trying new units, tactics and rules is an exciting experience itself – a feeling of discovery and 'shiny new toy' syndrome¹ you can't get if you play the same army week in and week out. Things won't get stale, as different scenarios play out on the tabletop, and you and your opponent will be forced to make meaningful decisions as you both learn the impact of your new experiment. What's more, it adds so much narrative potential to your game.

Even if players are using the same faction, a one-off bunker-assault mission involving defensive units equipped with heavy weapons can be completely different to a recon mission with fast-moving units. Similarly, in linked games such as a campaign, there is so much more storytelling potential and tabletop narrative by building your armies around the scenario and previous games, all only achievable if you are willing to experiment and dip into a larger collection.

Outside of the game, experimenting with your gaming journey fits in really well with the hobby element of miniature wargaming, as you get to build and paint an entirely different unit each time. We all know that feeling of working through a large unit to get it done and how nice it feels when you can freshen it up with a completely different unit. As a Tyranids player, I've worked my way through large batches of termagants, and I've always been rejuvenated when the following project is a big scary monster! Similarly, when my army is displayed in full, it's much more visually compelling to see a large army with a variety of units arrayed before me, a collection that I have nurtured and refined myself.

Overall, by experimenting, you will be able to have more fun for longer through maintaining the variety in your hobby. What's more, you will become a greater general, being able to wield your warriors no matter the situation or opponent rather than relying on the brute strength of a powerful list time and again. A wise man once said, 'All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.' A good grasp of strategy has a much wider impact on your games of Warhammer 40,000, and a good understanding of it will keep you fighting for years to come.

¹ That'll kick in after the first few games, though. We all know that a brand-new unit often gets taken down pretty fast in its first outing!



GLORY POINTS



JOHN BRACKEN

John has been a member of the studio for a little over a year now. In that time, he has worked on Warhammer Quest: Blackstone Fortress, Blitz Bowl, Crypt Hunters, Arena Mortis and several other things that are just too secret to talk about at the moment. John said he's willing to divulge any and all information in exchange for cake.

What is the Arena Mortis? Arena Mortis is the ultimate Warhammer Underworlds multiplayer experience. Want to play Warhammer Underworlds with three or more players? We think this is the way. Simply pick any fighter, build their decks and then begin your rampage! Want to know more about the Arena Mortis? Read on to find out.

The Arena Mortis is a mind-blasting magnification of the Katophrane curse – a terrible affliction that traps its victims in a brutal cycle of death and rebirth, with no known release.

When the effects of the Arena Mortis take hold, the curse goes into overdrive. Resurrection occurs in fractions of seconds and fighters are forced to relentlessly cut and maim, desperate to finally land a truly killing blow. There are few battlefields in the Mortal Realms where the violence is so fiercely concentrated, and the survivors inevitably have their sanity somewhat eroded by the experience.

Now that you know what the Arena Mortis is, let's talk about where it came from.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Most ideas start out as 'what if ...', and Arena Mortis is no exception. *White Dwarf* enthusiasts will have seen a previous iteration in July 2019's issue, which was our first attempt, born of an idea-bash of 'different ways to play'. We had many ideas, some of which were bright and beautiful, and others of which were horrible, twisted, mewling things which we have locked away forever from the light of day. Luckily one idea was, 'What if you could play a game with just one fighter?' We liked the concept, and I put the first draft together, the final version of which was eventually rolled out as the *White Dwarf* article many of you will be familiar with. The game itself was tremendously popular here in the box games

studio, so much so that even before it was published in *White Dwarf*, we began work on the finely honed version you may even now be holding in your hands.

So what made Arena Mortis so popular? There are a few key notes that made it a lot of fun. The first is that your chosen fighter becomes superhumanly powerful, as each time they activate, they are given one upgrade from your upgrade deck. In addition, your fighter (who is loaded for bear) can attack every single activation. Every round is exciting; there is the anticipation of what upgrade you will get next, and you are constantly engaged with the board as fighters/targets come and go. Finally, there is a central objective token called a Mortis Lens that is worth glory to whoever holds it at the end of the round, making clever deck-building and maintaining control over the positions of fighters vital.

That's the overview. Let's look at some details.

CHOOSE YOUR FIGHTER

The first thing you need to do is choose which fighter you plan to take, instead of a warband. This is a simple process because you can play any fighter in the game. Blue Horror? Yes. Rippa Narkbad? Sure! The Stalagsquig? Well I'm not sure why you would, other than to prove a point, but in short: yes!

BIG OR SMALL?

Generally, the higher a fighter's Wounds characteristic, the better the fighter is. While there is some nuance, it's a pretty good indication of a fighter's prowess.

So why not choose the biggest, baddest and gnarliest fighter you can? Well, read on!

STARTING UPGRADES

When a fighter is set up, they gain a number of upgrades based on their Wounds characteristic. A 2-Wound fighter gains a whopping three upgrades, a 3- or 4-Wound fighter gains two, a 5-Wound fighter gains one upgrade, and anything beyond that gains none.

DYING DOESN'T MATTER

Surviving an attack is great, but being out of action is not forever. Once your turn to take an activation comes around, you put your fighter back on a starting hex and then get fighting. Keeping your fighter alive is advantageous, as it

Glory Points is our column all about Warhammer Underworlds: Beastgrave. Curated by games developer Dave Sanders, it delves into the development of the game, plus rules, tactics and gameplay. But wait, Dave's not here! He's been usurped by John Bracken.



prevents others getting glory points, but as you'll see, even mighty fighters won't last long in Arena Mortis once the upgrades stack up.

ALL ABOUT DAMAGE

Having a high Wounds characteristic doesn't gain you glory points – and that's what you need to win. This means that dealing massive damage is the order of the day. Keeping this in mind, while most high-Wound fighters have a decent amount of damage in their Attack action profiles (around 3 or 4), there are plenty of other fighters who have the same. Logically, then, it makes sense to find the lowest-Wound, highest-damage fighter you can, to make best use of all the upgrades you get at the start of the game, hoping to draw Great Strength or Incredible Strength (or both!) so you can start one-shotting other fighters with your attacks. Of course, this strategy is countered by fighters with Scything Attack actions, which is countered by higher Wounds characteristics, and so on – thus does the meta cycle of Arena Mortis spin.

After choosing your fighter, it's time to build your decks.

BUILD YOUR DECKS

To play, you must build two decks – a gambit deck and an upgrade deck. When building these decks, you must make sure that both decks have at least ten cards and that your gambit deck includes at least as many cards as are in your upgrade deck (it can include any number of additional gambit cards). Objective cards are not used in Arena Mortis.

UPGRADE DECK

You can have ten upgrades in your upgrade deck, but this is the minimum amount, not the absolute amount. As you play more games, you'll almost certainly want more! Ideally you should look to have ten upgrades, plus a number based on your fighter's Wounds characteristic and any gambits you have that gain you more upgrades. Twelve is a pretty good starting point.

As you play more games, you'll notice that certain upgrades are very powerful in Arena Mortis compared to

regular games. Here is a short list of some popular cards from players' decks in playtesting.

Army of One (1)

Duellist's Speed (2)

Horrifying Armour (3)

As anyone familiar with the game can see, when there is only one fighter in your warband, and that fighter's death doesn't matter, certain upgrades become absolutely fantastic. Army of One works straight away, as it is 'active' as soon as it is given to your fighter. Duellist's Speed is bonkers, as the same fighter will usually be attacking each round, allowing you to position yourself perfectly and grab the Mortis Lens with impunity. Finally, Horrifying Armour has a pronounced effect since every other fighter on the battlefield is an enemy fighter, so the dice penalty is astonishingly irritating to deal with (cue evil laughter).

Of course the Arena Mortis set comes with no less than forty brand new cards, designed for both Arena Mortis and Warhammer Underworlds, and here are some of my favourites.

DESERVED CONFIDENCE (4)

Fighters often end up with a huge stack of upgrades – so why not take advantage of it? Even if this card comes out early, it will still provide useful stats, and by game's end your fighter will become an absolute killing machine!

INVIGOR MORTIS (5)

What you will find is that many upgraded fighters are hard to kill in one blow. This upgrade helps by providing targetable, inescapable, 'chip' damage. Invaluable in games with five or more players, this upgrade will deal a lot of damage over the course of the game.

GRAND OFFERING (6)

This gambit is very powerful and can give you a glory point lead at pretty much any time. In Arena Mortis, you will have plenty of glory to spend, and being able to capitalise on a kill will definitely give you the edge you need.



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CHIP DAMAGE

No, it's not a food reference. It describes damage that 'chips' away at an opposing fighter's health a bit at a time, rather than taking them out of action in one blow.

MIX IT UP

Variety is the spice of a horribly twisted immortality. In order to encourage players to stray from the well-beaten path of reliable, 'auto-pick' upgrades to take, we introduced the 'Rule of One' – if you give your fighter an upgrade, and an enemy fighter already has that upgrade, the enemy's upgrade is discarded! This means you need to think carefully about what upgrades to put in your deck and accept the fact that the most popular ones (Great Strength for example) probably won't last long, unless you are very lucky indeed!

This is a great time to mention that fighter-restricted cards have become more valuable as a result – cards like Whirlwind of Death (7), Hulking Physique (8) and Hunting Aspect (9) all become even more powerful because you are guaranteed to be able to use them, and they are virtually guaranteed to remain unbroken by the Rule of One.

WOUNDS CHARACTERISTIC MARKERS (10)

In Arena Mortis, you will see fighters carrying around more upgrades than would ever be possible in a regular competitive game of Warhammer Underworlds. To help manage this and keep the game flowing, we have produced Wounds characteristic trackers that will help you know at a glance what a fighter's Wounds characteristic is.

NOT-SO-GREAT GAINS

Finally, it's worth mentioning that powerful items like Tome of Offerings and Crown of Avarice only work once and are then discarded. These were excessively powerful, and not even the Rule of One could keep them in check!

GAMBIT DECKS

Building a gambit deck for Arena Mortis has proven to be a very interesting experience. What follows are some basic tips we have discovered after building lots of decks!

As you might imagine, gambits that get you more upgrades are tip-top. Spoils of Battle (11), Ghoulish Pact (12) and Divine Reward (13) are great examples of this, gaining you two precious upgrades at little to no cost and allowing you to get all your upgrades in play earlier, increasing your early hitting power.

In addition, being able to break those pesky upgrades that are ruining your plans (see Horrifying Armour earlier) is very important, so you may want to include Shattershard or Shattering Howl.

Beyond those, push cards such as Sidestep or Distraction are vital to shove a fighter into a lethal hex and set them up for a killing blow, or pop your character on to the Mortis Lens.

Finally, Arena Mortis contains a set of gambits which require you to spend glory points in order to activate them, providing powerful effects and giving your glory points another use. Examples of these cards are At Any Cost (14) and Distracting Wealth (15), both of which give you a potentially game-winning combat boost.

THE MORTIS LENSES (16)

When Nagash learned of the Arena Mortis, he commanded that his Mortarchs fashion great mirrors to redirect and contain the baleful energies so that he might study, and in the end, harness this great power. Each of these mirrors, known collectively as Mortis Lenses, promptly went missing, only to reappear later anywhere the effect of the Arena Mortis was taking place. If this was intentional remains unknown, and as not even a Rockgut Troggoth would be so mind-bogglingly foolish as to question the ineffable plans of the Supreme Lord of the Undead, it is likely to remain so. What is known is that where a Mortis Lens manifests, the Arena Mortis is surely in effect. Whoever stands in the shadow of these darksome mirrors is granted great power, but at a cost currently unknown.

There are six Mortis Lens, each of which has its own unique effect. One example is the Bone Iris, which places any fighter holding it on Guard (not to mention scoring glory points at the end of each round). Crafted by Orpheon Katakros, the Mortarch of the Necropolis and Commander of the Ossierarch Bonereapers, this Mortis Lens follows one of his many styles of warfare – that is to become an immovable object from which devastating counter-attacks can be launched whilst maintaining a superior position to the enemy.

It then follows that in order to shift a fighter holding this Mortis Lens, you'll need to take the fighter completely out of action or use clever gambits to remove them. This in turn means that deck-building becomes more interesting, as push cards gain value and cards that place a fighter on Guard become less so, which gives each player lots of



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THE BONE IRIS



If a friendly fighter is holding this objective in any end phase, gain 1 glory point.

In addition, while a fighter is holding this objective, they are on Guard.

16

interesting choices to make pregame. Of course you won't know which Mortis Lens will be in play before you build your decks ...

BATTLE YOUR FRIENDS!

Arena Mortis is a great way to play multiplayer games of Warhammer Underworlds. It is also an amazing way to introduce your friends to the wider game. If you own a core set and even a single warband expansion, you can immediately build enough decks and have enough choice of fighters to ensure a varied, fun experience for all players. If you have been collecting for longer, you'll have enough cards to make dozens of unique and exciting decks for your friends to use, and you'll have a huge array of fighters to choose from. In addition, the rules for Arena Mortis are firmly based in the core rules and will give your friends a firm foothold on how to play Warhammer Underworlds. This sets them up to easily pick their favourite fighter's warband and transition seamlessly into regular games of Warhammer Underworlds.

Arena Mortis can be played nearly anywhere and is a fine way to round out an evening of playing games. Grand Clashes and Grand Skirmishes are full of potential players, and one of the great strengths of Arena Mortis is that you can have a variable number of players take part, making it even easier to set up no matter how many people want to play.

VICTORY!

Of course, even though Arena Mortis is a more light-hearted affair, most players are eager to give their rivals a friendly drubbing, so let's talk about how to win. This involves taking enemy fighters out of action and controlling the Mortis Lens in the middle of the board. This is easier said than done, and clever manipulation of both upgrades

and glory points will be required to win – not to mention a dose of good old-fashioned luck.

What is worthy of note is that taking enemy fighters out of action and holding the Mortis Lens, while straightforward in principle, aren't all that easy. Here are some tips to help you out.

CHOOSE YOUR TARGET CAREFULLY

Choosing your target is important. While many fighters will be stacking damage upgrades, many more will cleverly weave in a few defensive upgrades. Any upgrade that reduces damage will return your investment in it tenfold, as will upgrades that increase a fighter's Wounds value. So keep a weather eye on who you can and cannot take out of action.

SURVIVE

Following on from defensive upgrades, making your fighter a less tempting target is also quite valuable. Defensive upgrades will allow them to have a better chance to stay on the battlefield, which is what you will need to do in order to reliably control the Mortis Lens, which in turn is worth a valuable glory point every single round to the fighter who holds it. If you expect to take one enemy fighter out of action per round (and you will be lucky to do so), then an extra glory point is definitely worth considering when you build your deck. You could even build a deck that focuses entirely on controlling the Mortis Lens and weathering all attacks that come your way ...

In addition, one of the tiebreakers is being on the battlefield at the end of the game, so staying alive even if you go first in a round is definitely a worthwhile endeavour.

FINAL NOTES

When all is said and done, Arena Mortis is a quick, easy-to-set-up option that allows a group of Warhammer Underworlds players to battle in the dank caverns and sinkholes of Beastgrave around a single table. It's great to finish off a night of gaming at a club or to round out a tournament day with some relaxed, fun games of high damage and a lot of high-stakes rolls!

Who will your fighter be?



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 Dave by email at:

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

THE BEASTS WITHIN

In the depths of Beastgrave, Morgwaeth the Bloodied leads her Daughters of Khaine in an impossible quest. Yet the living mountain will always offer up sacrifices to those willing to fight in this short story by Phil Kelly.

Morgwaeth the Bloodied wrinkled her nose at the sheer stench in Beastgrave's amber depths. As a priestess of Khaine, she was not squeamish; in fact she was about as far from that notion as it was possible to get. Spilt gore gave her life, and someone's death usually followed soon after. Still, this place's miasma of death got to her. Say what you would about the Great Peak, its underbelly reeked to Azyr and back.

'Deeper,' she whispered, motioning Kyrssa and Lethir down the rightmost passage with her long, weighted glaive. Its glinting blade was reflected in the wall's clammy resin. The place was a morass of tunnels, each humid and slightly warm, as if the Blade Coven were in the guts of some titanic beast rather than a mountain that speared the Ghurish skies. The truth of the place was sickening, that much they had uncovered since their exile here – and it was exile, despite Morathi's claims that they were sent on a mission of vital importance to find something of Khaine himself in the depths. Some artefact, perhaps, or ancient tome. The High Oracle had been vague on the detail. Morgwaeth was beginning to think that the only aspect of the Murder God they would find down here was the experience of a violent death.

Not for the first time since venturing inside, Morgwaeth fantasised about a long, hot salt-bath in the ritual cleansing spas of Hagg Nar. The swilling, petal-scattered water would soothe the aches and pains in her body, the blood laced with anticoagulant literally taking the years from her otherwise-ancient frame. She felt her guts twist. Some certainty within her told her she would never bathe again – that her skin, already showing the tiniest signs of decrepitude, would soon enough be sallow and grey. There was no escape from Beastgrave.

For a moment, she found herself thinking that perhaps it would be better to die and leave a beautiful corpse than drag out her survival until she was a haggard wretch. Then her eyes settled on the half-decayed remains of some nameless centauroid, its substance seemingly blending with the rock around it, and with a shudder she put the thought from her mind. She was no beast. None of them were. The aelves were a higher order of being, and they certainly did not belong here. Then Kyrae slithered past, the archer's serpentine lower half leaving odd ripples in the scattered silt, and she found herself scowling hard.

'Mistress?' said Kyrae, the Blood Stalker lowering her bow as she intuited her leader's irritation.



‘It’s nothing,’ Morgwaeth said, gesturing forward once more. ‘Slink onward, dear heart.’

Rounding the corner, Morgwaeth saw a cavern open up, its roof ribbed like the ribcage of some great beast. Spattered across it were the remains of scores of dead creatures, each looking more semi-digested than rotted away by the vivid slew of reds, oranges, pinks and whites that covered the cave’s floor. Kyrssa and Lethir were picking their way across it. Lethir held up a sticky, offal-slicked knife, pinching it by the hilt with her face twisted with disgust.

‘Are we truly to find Khaine’s treasure here, my lady?’ said Lethir.

‘Beyond, perhaps.’ Khaine this, Khaine that; it was all Lethir talked about. As firm a devotee as the High Oracle could wish for. It was very convenient that Morathi was the sole interpreter of Khaine’s wishes, and never to be gainsaid. It was an observation Morgwaeth had made in public more than once. She could not shake the sneaking suspicion that her being sent to scour Beastgrave had something to do with that.

A scrape of metal in the corridor across the other side of the cavern interrupted her thoughts. ‘Assuming no nasty surprises lurk in this cave,’ she said to Kyrae, the warband’s gladiatrix, ‘it should make a defensible position. But given our experiences thus far ...’ She rubbed absently at the handspan-wide bite mark on her shin; it was still red raw, and getting more painful instead of less. At least skinning the would-be predator alive had made her feel better afterwards.

‘As the victor of a thousand duels, I fear no creature of the dark,’ said Khromys, her gargoyle’s mask glinted in the darkness as she stepped daintily forward, ‘whether it come for me on four legs, two, or three-score and five.’

‘A thousand duels?’ hissed Kyrae. ‘Really?’

‘Well,’ said Khromys, inclining her head a little. ‘Some of those were duels of words.’

‘What is it with you and numbers, gladiatrix?’

‘I wouldn’t expect a Melusai half-beast to understand.’

‘Khaine tests me this day,’ replied Morgwaeth. Kyrae shot her a questioning look. ‘I mean, tests us.’

‘You are not wrong,’ said Kyrssa, shaking some offal from the toe of her boot.

‘To find the highest truths, one must sometimes plumb the lowest depths,’ intoned Morgwaeth, peering into the gloom.

‘Compared to the depths of That Which Came Before,’ said Kyrae, a shudder running from the tip of her serpent’s tail, ‘this is a paradise.’



‘It’s a blimmin’ paradise is wot it is,’ said Thugg, banging a fist against his chestplate just for punctuation. ‘Kill and kill again. No end to it.’

Morgok nodded, pursing his scar-ravaged lips in appreciation. Thugg certainly had a point. Since he’d followed his instinct and led the lads across the bone fields into the sky-scraping wedge of rock he’d heard called the Beastie’s Grave, they had a solid fight every day. More than one, sometimes.

It was good living. He’d lost most of the Fist-Punchas en route to the mountain, some to the lightning-riding humans and some to a two-headed bird thing the size of a boss gargant. But since he, Thugg and ‘Ards skull had made it into the caves, they had survived everything the monster-haunted mountain guts could throw at them. The strong always survived, that was the truth of it.

Even when they didn’t.

‘Yeah,’ nodded Morgok, putting the strange thought from his mind. ‘Reckon it’s a bit like the Relm o’ Deff, here. Ya die in a proper scrap, bad luck to ya, but you can rest easy knowing there’s plenty of fight to be had on the uvver side.’

‘You fink we died proper, boss?’ said Thugg. By his tone, he didn’t seem that bothered either way. ‘That we’re in an uvver-world or whatever?’

‘Could even be that half-realm the shaman was gibberin’ on about. That one where his old mate got trapped in, Big Yella he called him. Said it woz a city made of mirrors an’ glass, and he’s been breakin’ stuff good ever since.’

‘Ards skull sniffed. ‘Nah, this ain’t that.’ Muscles flexing, the brute whirled his gore-basha – two massive pig-iron cylinders linked in the middle

by a chain – in a great figure of eight, like he liked to do. He always said it kept his war-spirit sharp, and stopped his arms from getting cold. More likely, thought Morgok, he was just doing it to show off. ‘This ain’t the Deff Relm,’ the Brute said, his voice half-muffled by his metal face mask. ‘It can’t be.’

Thugg took the bait, like usual. ‘Wot is it then?’

‘Still Ghur, innit. Ya can tell, cos it smells like a nephrodile’s tail crack.’

Thugg guffawed, banging his axes together by way of appreciation.

‘Ghur’s da best ...’ Thugg started saying it, but by the end of it, they had their voices joined. ‘... if ya like the best fight!’ They clashed their weapons on the amber walls of the tunnel as if attacking the mountain itself, the impacts sending a burst of amber shrapnel flying in all directions. It made Morgok feel good when they did that.

Then he caught the scent of something, a scent somewhere between blood and flowers. His thick brows furrowed. A smell like that didn’t belong in Beastgrave’s musky cocktail of scents. His good mood was inflamed, becoming a fierce lust for battle.

‘Look lively,’ he growled. ‘The Beast-Peak served us up some dinner.’

‘Gork!’ shouted ‘Ards skull, whirling his gore-basha over his head. ‘Gork! Gork! Gork!’ The sound was harsh, like a rogkorilla’s territorial barking. Thugg added his voice to the chant, and Morgok found himself joining in. ‘Gork! Gork! Gork!’ He felt the green energy fill him, making his fingers ache with the need for violence. He strode forward, burning with the need to kill.



‘Ards skull was already pounding down the slope into the cavern, skidding on some spilt guts before turning the stumble into a headlong run. He was charging straight for something moving in the middle of the arena, bathed in light by the faint amber glow from the crystals studding the walls. Morgok set off to join him, but something stirring on the cavern floor caught his eye.

From the corpse-mulch underfoot a pair of red-slicked skeletons were hauling their way from the morass. ‘Ards skull swung his gore-basha and broke them both in two at the spine, a scattering of bone clattering in all directions. Thugg wasn’t far behind him, barrelling shoulder-first into a clutch of half-standing corpses before lashing out with his crude iron smashas. He got a rusted blade in the neck for his trouble, but it glanced off his collarbone. His plate-clad elbow took the skull from his attacker. ‘Ards skull bellowed in sheer violent joy. The lads were in the throes of the Waaagh! now. They would kill everything in their path, or die in the attempt.

Morgok too felt the call of Gork upon him, but he still had the presence of mind to look beyond the immediate fight to the gloom at the back of the cave. There were more things moving out there, slender-limbed and pale, fighting against another clutch of skeletons that were pulling themselves from the muck.

‘Pointy-ears,’ growled Morgok. They could fight, those aelves. They danced around and stabbed and danced away again, but get a good solid hit in and they went down like a sack of grunta-dung. Shame they were so thin. Morgok could eat three at a sitting and still have room for more.

He strode forwards to back up Thugg – never a good idea to get in the way of ‘Ards skull when the rage was on him – whilst keeping half an eye on the aelves fighting beyond. As he watched, one of the slender figures leapt into the air, span head over heel and kicked the skull from a skeleton’s neck even as her bladed shield smashed another cranium neatly in half. ‘Not bad,’ he grunted, absently kicking a grasping corpse back into the muck.

Another of the she-aelves, one with a snake’s tail for a lower body, shot an attacking skeleton through one eye socket, and as it was still reeling, bullseyed the other. Shrill war cries punctuated the roaring of orruks in mid-fight. Thugg and ‘Ards skull were smashing their undead assailants to flinders of broken bone. Morgok smiled, all fangs and tusks. The scene before him was turning into utter anarchy.

‘Two fights in one, looks like,’ shouted Thugg, battering his way through two red-slicked

skeletons as Morgok smashed his own choppas into a knot of slopping, squelching corpse matter. 'Let's hope they fight better'n this lot!' called back Morgok. He saw a skull-faced cadaver lurch fast on his left and batted it away with the flat of one axe before bringing around the other to smash it into a hundred scattering bones. Another skeleton rose from below, piercing his knee with a bejewelled dagger. There was a flicker of pain, but then he felt a surge of violent enthusiasm at the sight of his own blood that washed it away. He let loose a roar that seemed to come more from the ground below him than from his own throat.

'You'll have to do better than that, mate!'

Kill or be killed, he would make his mark this day.



'Orruks!' shouted Lethir. 'On the other side of the cave!'

'A good sign,' called back Morgwaeth, lancing her glaive out to snip through the neck of a skeleton and send its bald, blood-slicked skull tumbling away. 'Khaine values the murder of a strong foe.'

'Strong but stupid,' snorted Khamyss, placing her shield on the ground to spin-kick a booted foot through a skeleton's ribcage. She flipped over in a tight somersault and brought the bladed aegis down straight through the sword-arm of another. Her whip lashed out, its tip punching through the eye socket of a third skeleton; she yanked it into a roundhouse kick, sending it reeling away to shatter on the floor. 'I have killed seven of these meagre things, and I have a good claim on Lethir's last kill to boot. I doubt three orruks will last much longer.'

'As you say,' replied Kyrssa. 'My blade thirsts for a proper foe.' Morgwaeth curled a lip at the witch aelf's empty bravado. Kyrssa was holding a wound in her side, the blood spilling from it near black in the darkness. She moved fast nonetheless, the hilt of her dagger smashing a skeleton's temple into broken shards before her other blade took its jaw. The undead thing stumbled as if drunk, then went down in a heap of blood-slick bone.

The stench of rot and gore in the place was acrid, so thick in Morgwaeth's throat it felt like a physical substance. 'What is the curse upon this place?' she said, stifling a cough as she swept her glaive's pole through the shin bones of a tottering skeleton. 'Ghur does not yield its feasts so easily. The dead should be still here.'

'And so they are.' Khamyss slashed left with her whip to pull a skeleton's feet out from under it just as Kyræ shot another in the neck. Suddenly, there were no more.

Morgwaeth took stock of the carnage around them. The orruks on the other side of the cavern had finished off their assailants, too, and they were stamping with murderous intent through the mulch towards them. 'Oi!' bellowed the largest of them. 'Them bony lads were ours to kill!'

'Now we'll have ta slaughter you lot instead!' shouted one of his subordinates, a bare-chested bruiser with a horned mask hiding his hideous features. 'Gork! Gork! Gork!'

'Wonderful,' said Kyrssa. 'Ironjaw tribe.'

'Get around the flanks,' said Morgwaeth, motioning Lethir left and Kyrssa right. 'They'll go for Kyræ and me first to prove dominance.' She whirled her glaive and stamped hard as its pommel hit the stone, crying out in challenge. 'Let them come.'

The Orruks broke into a charge, weapons raised.

This, thought Morgwaeth, would be a good day for Khaine.

If he existed at all.



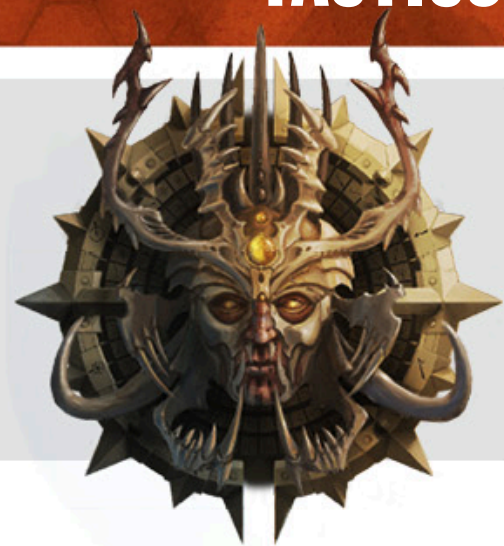


PATH TO VICTORY

In this fourth Path to Victory article, Dave Sanders - torn between wielding an extremely killy choppa or a keen-edged sacrificial dagger - presents an in-depth tactical guide to two more of the warbands from Warhammer Underworlds: Beastgrave.



Beastgrave got off to a strong start with two flexible, aggressive warbands in the form of Skaeth's Wild Hunt and Grashrak's Despoilers. No sooner had you got to grips with them when the deranged Grymwatch burst onto the scene, followed closely by Rippa's Snarlfangs and the Champions of Dreadfane. The next two Beastgrave warbands were Hrothgorn's Mantrappers and the Wurmspat. In this issue, I'll be giving you some tips about fielding the final two warbands in the Warhammer Underworlds: Beastgrave season – Morgok's Krushas and Morgwaeth's Blade-coven.



MORGOK'S KRUSHAS

Morgok's Krushas are a warband of Ironjawz Brutes with a very simple purpose – smash everything up (and I mean everything!). With a strong aggro focus supported by a unique Waaagh! mechanic, but only three fighters, you'll need to learn about their strengths and weaknesses to get the most out of them.

WAAAGH!

Let's start with a look at the warband's Inspire condition, which is the same on each of the fighters: There are two or more Waaagh! counters on this card.

This introduces you to the warband's unique mechanic – Waaagh! energy – which is represented by counters that each fighter can amass. To help them in this, each fighter has this ability:

After this fighter's activation in which they made one or more **Attack actions**, place one Waaagh! counter on this card.

Essentially, your fighter will get one Waaagh! counter each time they use their activation to attack or Charge, meaning that their route to getting Inspired is straightforward: get smashin'. As each fighter Inspires individually, how you spend your activations is an important consideration – a Brute that doesn't make Attack actions is unlikely to get fired up.

As you'll see when we go through the fighters and the warband's cards, however, there's more to the Waaagh! counters than simply getting your fighters Inspired, and learning how to manage this unique resource will be key to your success with this warband. Let's have a look at the fighters to get a better idea of what I mean.

MORGOK

The biggest and baddest orruk to be unleashed in Warhammer Underworlds, Morgok is the leader of the

Krushas and a bit of a monster. He starts each game with a Move of 3, 1 and a hefty 5 Wounds. He's armed with Boss Choppas: a Range 1, 2 and Damage 3 Attack action which will give the toughest fighter pause for thought. When Morgok is Inspired, this Attack action goes to 3 with the ability to re-roll one dice, and Morgok gains a point of Move to help him close with his targets.

So far so simple – Morgok is a bruiser tough enough to take a hit and strong enough to go toe-to-toe with any fighter in the game. However, he does have a bit of a weakness shared by each fighter in the warband: before he's Inspired, he's pretty slow, which can be quite the handicap for a warband that wants to get stuck in.

This is where his Waaagh! counters come in. As well as using them to get Inspired, Morgok has a way to 'spend' Waaagh! counters to get his boyz movin'. As an action, you can remove one Waaagh! counter from Morgok to push each friendly fighter two hexes. With an aggressive three-fighter warband, you know that there's a chance of one activation each round potentially going to waste – once each fighter has Moved or Charged, what are you going to do? Morgok's ability lets you keep the momentum up – and the earlier you can use it in the game, the better.



There are some great cards for helping you get the most out of Morgok. Since you want him to get stuck in, cards that increase his mobility, resilience and damage output are the order of the day. Inured to Pain (1) is a fantastic card for Morgok, increasing his already impressive resilience by reducing the damage he takes. Brute Charge (2) will make his Attack actions on the charge extremely



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reliable, particularly when Inspired. You can get more Attack actions out of Morgok by taking Brutal Kunnin' (3), Brutal Reprisal (4) and Jealous Defence (5), all great inclusions in a Krushas deck. Finally the ever-popular Spectral Wings (6) will help you get a surprise Charge action in.

'ARDSKULL

Next up is 'Ards skull, a gore-basha-wielding berserker. 'Ards skull's Move, Defence and Wounds characteristics are the same as Morgok's, but 'Ards skull's signature weapon is a bit different. Before he is Inspired, the gore-basha is Range 1, 2 ✕ and 3 Damage – frightening, if a bit

unreliable. Once 'Ards skull is Inspired, it gains an additional dice, and 'Ards skull also gets a **Scything** Attack action with 2 ✕ and 2 Damage. In addition, when Inspired, he gains the ability to spend Waaagh! counters to increase the damage of his gore-basha Attack action, ensuring that he's always hitting hard enough to get the job done.

'Ards skull is almost as good at getting stuck in as Morgok, and once Inspired, he has great options for tackling both very big targets with his Waaagh! ability and clusters of enemies with his **Scything** Attack action. However, his poor accuracy can hold him back, so it's best to

WAAAGH! WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

Many of the warband's cards let you harness the power of the Waaagh! There are a few key cards that the Krushas should never be without:

Brutal Attack (7), Eager Advance (8) and Waaagh! Energy (9) are all gambits that give you ways to get that Waaagh! energy flowing. Extremely valuable early on in the game, they all still have uses throughout the game and ensure that you can get the Waaagh! where you need it.

Vengeful Glare (10) and Vessel of the Waaagh! (11) are upgrades that do the same. Using Vengeful Glare is very straightforward, but Vessel of the Waaagh! takes a bit more thought – you want to make the most of each activation, and you'll need to work out when it's better to charge up some Waaagh! energy rather than taking the fight to your opponent.

Of course, there's always the simplest method for generating Waaagh! counters – make Attack actions! If you're finding that it's difficult to get to grips with your enemies to make those all-important swings, you might consider taking some Range 2+ Attack action upgrades to help your fighters out. Some of my favourites are

Guardian Glaive (12), Seeking Stones (13) and Nullstone Arrows (14), at Ranges 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Once your fighters are Inspired, you can safely spend all that Waaagh! energy that you've accumulated for a variety of game-changing effects. Each Inspired fighter has a way to spend Waaagh! counters, but there are some great power cards as well. Berserk Fortitude (15) and Berserk Strength (16) are staples; one allows you to spend Waaagh! to mitigate damage, and the other lets you spend Waaagh! to deal damage. These cards can be used in a surprisingly precise fashion to ensure your fighters stay on their feet and deal the optimum amount of damage.





include cards that make his Attack actions more likely to hit. Once you've done this, he'll go through your opponent's warband like a rampaging Maw-krusha!

I've already mentioned Brutal Attack and Brute Charge, both of which can help 'Ards skull a great deal. There are also the universal gambits Bloodscent (17) – which gives an impressive +2 Dice to an Attack action that targets a wounded fighter – and Sitting Target (18), which gives an Attack action +1 Dice and **Ensnare** when it targets a fighter with no Move or Charge tokens. If you're using either of these with 'Ards skull's **Scything** Attack action, remember that the buff will only last for the first Attack action made as part of that superaction. There are a couple of universal upgrades which can dramatically increase 'Ards skull's accuracy as well: Predator's Trinket (19) and Claws of the Ur-Grub (20), granting his Attack actions **Cleave** and **Ensnare**, respectively.

THUGG

The final member of the warband is Thugg, who wields a pair of smashas. His Move, Defence and Wounds characteristics are the same as those of the other fighters in the warband, while his smashas have a very respectable profile of Range 1, 3 \times and 2 Damage. This Attack action doesn't improve when Thugg is Inspired, but he gains the ability to spend Waaagh! tokens to add dice to the attack roll, making the smashas potentially very accurate indeed.

Don't dismiss Thugg just because he doesn't naturally reach 3 Damage. He's a solid fighter by any measure, and with just an upgrade or two, he becomes an absolute terror. His unique upgrade, Seething Hatred (21), makes it incredibly unlikely that an Attack action he levels at a fighter with 4+ Wounds will miss. He's also a great choice for Bloody Axe (22), which will become Damage 4

when he has two or more wound counters. Since he's very unlikely to be taken out of action by a single Attack action, he's likely to find himself in this situation, which makes Thugg ideal for taking out your opponent's best fighters.

ONE SIDESTEP AT A TIME

It's time to address the main weakness of the warband: mobility. Before Morgok's Krushas become Inspired, their Move of 3 can be very limiting. You'll want to set up your fighters as close to enemy territory as possible, and find ways to get them stuck in right away.

The best way to do this is with a combination of gambits and upgrades. I've mentioned Morgok's ability to push friendly fighters, which certainly has its place but relies on you having at least one Waaagh! counter to spare. I've also mentioned Eager Advance, a staple for getting your fighters fired up and stuck in. Add to that some combination of Sidestep (23), Distraction (24), Nightmare in the Shadows (25) and the Krushas' own Kunnin' Brutality (26), and your opponent will find that objects in enemy territory may be closer than they appear. A slightly less conventional suggestion is Malkyn Grace (27), which gives a fighter +2 Move until the end of the round, at the cost of -1 Wounds. If any warband can afford to take this card, it's the Krushas, and it's as good as a second Spectral Wings. On the upgrade side, Great Speed (28) is a given, but you might also consider Sprinting Charm (29), despite its third-round downside.





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WHAT'S THE PLAN?

The plan is fairly straightforward – get in their face and smash 'em – although you'll find as you play more games that your decisions about when to activate each fighter will have a significant bearing on your success. Bear in mind that with three fighters you may have one or more activations per round where you cannot activate a fighter. Plan ahead and make sure that you're making the most of each activation.



The Krushas have some great objectives that fit well with their strategy: Brutes is da Best (30), Good Day's Work (31), Might of the Orruk (32) and Proppa Rumble (33) all reward you for doing what you would expect (make sure that Morgok survives to score Brutes is da Best, and if you're feeling bold take Victorious Duel (34) to double down on this plan). Proppa Rumble in particular is very reliable – your own fighters can count towards this if it's not going so well!

In addition, the Krushas have a few other objectives that are nearly always worth including: Got It, Boss (35) is a surge objective you score by holding an objective in enemy territory. You can double this up with Plant a Standard (36) if you take the objective with Morgok, offering excellent efficiency. If you go for this, you may

want to ensure that there is an objective within easy reach in enemy territory when setting up the battlefield (it also makes Guardian Glaive and Jealous Defence, already mentioned, even better choices). You're also likely to score Orruk Kunnin' (37) in every game, simply for playing your gambits. In Their Element (38) is also quite reliable, and it is likely to become easier as the battle goes on.

There are some universal objectives that work nicely as well: Team Effort (39) and The Great Hunt (40) are easily scored with this warband as you only have three fighters, and Show of Force (41) and Conquest (42) make plenty of sense given your likely trajectory into enemy territory. Meanwhile, Gathered Momentum (43) is quite achievable given the strong surge objectives and Move buffs that I've suggested earlier. Trading Blows (44) is a nice fit for the Krushas – they are resilient enough to survive most Attack actions, meaning that you can score this with cards like Brutal Reprisal. You could even include the Prescient Blow (45) upgrade in your deck if you're going down this route.

There are a couple of gambits that I've not yet mentioned. Divine Reward (46) and Overkill (47) are both great for this warband; with Divine Reward you can get a free upgrade, and Overkill (easily achievable with 'Ards skull's ability) can give you a cheeky extra glory point.

Finally I think it's worth mentioning The Avatar Risen (48). The Ur-grub Aspects are upgrades that work well for any fighter in this warband, and each fighter is tough enough to make a good candidate to become the Avatar of the Ur-grub (49). Equipping one fighter with the three aspects and awaking the monstrous avatar could well be a part of your strategy, and a fun objective to aim for in each game!



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WHERE TO START



When setting up the warband, if you're choosing a board first I'd recommend something like the Mirror Well, which makes it as hard as possible for your opponent to create a battlefield that can keep your fighters away from their warband. If you're choosing a board second then something like Living Rock works well, allowing you to set up your fighters aggressively.

I'd usually suggest setting up Thugg first, unless your opponent has a lot of 2-Wound fighters, in which case I'd suggest 'Ardukskull. There's not a lot of subtlety to be employed – you know what your plan is, and in all likelihood so does your opponent. I'd set up Morgwaeth last, and then look forward to the roll-off to see who goes first!

MORGWAETH'S BLADE-COVEN

Morgwaeth's Blade-coven are also an aggressive warband, determined to drench the hollows of Beastgrave in blood in Khaine's name. However, their approach is very different to that of Morgok's Krushas, allowing for more subtlety and a flex play style if you prefer. The Blade-coven numbers five fighters, each a proven killer, and though they lack resilience, they make up for it with speed and vicious attacks, striking like serpents whenever they perceive a weakness. Let's take a look at the fighters.

MORGWAETH THE BLOODIED

Morgwaeth is a proud Hag Queen and the leader of the Blade-coven. She is an impressive fighter, starting with Move 4, 2  and 4 Wounds, and boasting a Range 2, 2 , 2 Damage Attack action with **Cleave**. This puts her amongst the best fighters in the game even before she is Inspired. When she is Inspired, she gains another point of Move, and her Attack action gains an additional point of Damage. Although she's far from invincible, she's tough enough to hold her own, and she can certainly give at least as good as she gets with her fearsome glaive of Khaine.

Like all the fighters in the warband, Morgwaeth becomes Inspired at the beginning of the third round. However, in her role as Hag Queen, she gives you another way to Inspire your fighters: whenever an enemy fighter is taken out of action, as long as Morgwaeth is on the battlefield, you can choose and Inspire one friendly fighter. The order in which you Inspire your fighters is likely to change from battle to battle, but don't forget that you can choose Morgwaeth herself!

Morgwaeth's role in Inspiring your fighters and as leader of your warband makes her indispensable, but that doesn't mean that you should shy away from committing her to a fight. Her relatively high Move characteristic and her Range 2 Attack action mean that she can usually strike where she wants to, and with reduced risk of reprisal. With that said, it's always worth considering taking power cards that can help her stay on her feet, such as Buried Instinct (1), Survival Instincts (2) or Tight Defence (3), Crimson Rejuvenation (4) and Fanatical Faith (5). You can augment her already excellent damage output with cards like Crimson Shard (6), to give you a re-roll on her Attack actions, and Great Strength (7).





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KYRAE

Kyrae is Morgwaeth's second, a demi-serpentine Blood Krone. She is fast, with Move 5, 2 and 3 Wounds, and has an excellent ranged Attack action in the form of her heartseeker bow, which has Range 4, 3 , 1 Damage and **Ensnare**. This gives Kyrae incredible reach and accuracy, if not raw power. She also bears a sacrificial knife with a more modest set of characteristics including only 2 , but its Range 1 means that it's easier to boost its damage.

When Kyrae becomes Inspired, either because it is the third round or because Morgwaeth has bestowed a blessing on her, her heartseeker bow becomes 3 and gains **Cleave**, making it astonishingly accurate. Her sacrificial knife also becomes 3 and 2 Damage, making her much more capable as a front-line fighter.

Kyrae is the warband's only **Hunter**, which gives her access to a number of universal cards to increase her power and utility. Snare (8) is probably the best of these, which when coupled with her heartseeker bow will strike fear (and 2 damage) into most enemy fighters, but Tracking (9) also works well. Other cards which help you make the most of Kyrae's abilities are High Oracle's Butcher (10), which gives you an additional glory point when Kyrae gets up close and personal, and Steady Assault (11), which is easily scoreable given Kyrae's great range.

KHAMYSS

Next up we have Khamyss, a masked Sister of Slaughter. She is markedly more fragile than the previous two fighters, with Move 4, 1 and 2 Wounds. However, she strikes like an elite fighter with her barbed whip, a Range 2, 3 and 2 Damage Attack action with **Combo** (the first

fighter to feature this keyword on their fighter card). She can follow up her successful barbed whip Attack action with her bladed buckler, which while not all that impressive is still an additional Attack action. Khamyss also cannot be driven back, which can be very handy for avoiding lethal hexes and for players aiming for a flex play style that balances aggression with objective-grabbing. When Khamyss is Inspired, she gets Move 5 and 2 , and her bladed buckler becomes a Range 1, 2 , 2 Damage Attack action, far more respectable as a follow-up. Note that to use Khamyss' bladed buckler follow-up, she must be adjacent to her target, which is a bit of a commitment – if her Attack action doesn't take the target down, Khamyss may be left face to face with her intended target, with not a lot to protect her.

Using Khamyss takes a bit of practice, because she poses such a threat but can be taken out of action so easily. The same cards that can improve Morgwaeth's durability are useful for Khamyss as well, and how you use them is likely to depend on the situation you find yourself in. If you can keep Khamyss fighting, you'll find her more than pulling her weight. It's worth remembering that when you give Khamyss an upgrade that increases her Damage, it will affect both of her Attack actions, and if all goes well, she can make both of those Attack actions at once. This means a +1 Damage upgrade can potentially be more of a +2 Damage upgrade on Khamyss.

Some stand-out cards for Khamyss are Death Dancer (12), which will let you react to her Attack action to improve her position; Whirling Whip (13), a **Scything** Attack action upgrade unique to Khamyss; and Finishing Blow (14), an Attack action upgrade that is more powerful



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when used as a follow-up to an Attack action with **Combo**. This last card lets Khamyss hit like a whole slaughterous Sisterhood, given the opportunity. You could also consider Fancy Footwork (15) to help you draw cards and The Old One-Two (16) to help out when her Attack actions simply have to hit.

KYRSSA AND LETHYR

Last up are Kyrssa and Lethyr, two Witch Aelves. They are fragile fighters, with Move 4, 1 ♣ and 2 Wounds, and initially they do not deal a whole lot of damage with their Range 1, 3 ✕, 1 Damage Attack actions. However, each of their Attack actions has the potential to become very dangerous indeed, and they each gain an extra point of Move and Defence when Inspired.

Kyrssa has a unique ability that means that she deals +1 Damage on a critical hit with her sacrificial knives, giving her the edge over Lethyr early on in the game. Lethyr, meanwhile, gains a different ability when she is Inspired: if you roll two or more successes for her sacrificial knives Attack action, and that Attack action succeeds, you resolve the Deal Damage step of the combat sequence twice – effectively doubling the damage of her weapon. This means that Great Strength or a similar upgrade on Lethyr Inspired raises the amount of damage she can deal in a single Attack action from 1 to 4!

Both of these fighters benefit greatly from power cards that increase their Dice characteristic, as their special abilities effectively mean that an accuracy buff is also a damage buff. Invigorated Attack (17) is a good example, as is the universal Strength of Terror (18). Cards like Bloodscent, Sitting Target, Perfect Precision (19) and Shadeglass Band (20) can also help you get the successes or critical successes you need. You can of course augment their damage as well: Rune of Slaughter (21) can be absolutely devastating if you have increased their Dice characteristics, and Hunting Companion (22) also works well. Finally, it's well worth taking Rapturous Defence (23) to improve the survivability of one of these fighters. You might also consider Substance Siphon (24) if you expect to be Inspiring these fighters later in the game.

WHAT'S THE PLAN?

As I mentioned earlier, the Blade-coven are an aggressive warband that can also employ a flex play style very well, and that's what I'd recommend. A flex play style will help you in match-ups where it's more difficult to take enemy fighters out of action, and will help you get more value out of your fragile fighters. You'll be trying to strike a balance between aggressive objectives that reward you for taking enemy fighters out of action and objectives that you can score for holding objective tokens.

BLOOD SACRAMENT

Morgwaeth's Blood Sacrament ability allows you some control over when the fighters in your warband Inspire, but it does take some practice before you will know the best way to use it in each situation. Here are some pointers.

First, consider the number of fighters in your opponent's warband. You only get to use Blood Sacrament once for each time an enemy fighter is taken out of action, so if there are only three or four enemy fighters, one of your five fighters may well get left out. If you're against a tough three-fighter warband like Morgok's Krushas or the Wurmspat, you may only get a chance to use it once or twice, depending on how aggressive both players are.

The next thing to consider is what each fighter gets from Inspiring. All of the fighters in the warband become more deadly when they Inspire, and aside from Kyrae they all get faster. However, Khamyss, Kyrssa and Lethyr each also gain 1 Defence from Inspiring, which can significantly boost their survivability.

Now, look at the situation each time you get an opportunity to use Blood Sacrament. Inspire the fighter whose improved characteristics will have the greatest impact on the game in that moment. Bear in mind that, if you have activations left in the current phase, it is likely to be more valuable to Inspire a fighter who has not yet made a Charge action, even if that means Inspiring one of your weaker fighters.

Finally, I would always recommend including Catechism of Murder (25) in your deck. This play lets you Inspire one of your fighters just like that, making your task a bit easier.





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The Blade-coven have some unique objectives to reward you for this strategy: Blood Rite (26) and Consecrate to Khaine (27) are a pair of surge objectives that are scored very simply after an enemy fighter is taken out of action – the only condition is that the attacker or target, respectively, are holding an objective. Purposeful Strike (28) is an objective that you score in the end phase if a friendly fighter with a Charge token is holding an objective – you can score this naturally at the same time as Blood Rite, or if you're sneaky, you can push a fighter that charged onto an objective with Sidestep, or even use Forward Planning (29) to score the objective without charging at all!

You can also consider one of Proof of Devotion (30), Ritualised Formation (31) or Triumphant Stance (32) – I'd recommend only one as these objectives don't necessarily work very well together. Proof of Devotion is the most aggressive and ambitious of these, and it should be paired with cards that help you move or remove objectives in enemy territory like Unexpected Peril (33). Ritualised Formation is the warband's own version of Supremacy, and it works best if you anticipate playing a bit more of a cagey game. Finally, Triumphant Stance is an objective which requires that only one objective is held, and that objective is held by a friendly fighter. Your matchup will have a significant impact on

how easy this to score – sometimes it will seem trivial, and at other times it will be challenging, but it is a solid end-phase objective.

Then there are the universal objectives popular in flex builds, such as Bold Conquest (34), Hidden Purpose (35), Swift Capture (36) and of course Path to Victory (37). All of these reward you for mixing aggressive activations with objective grabbing, and they suit this warband very well. There are several other objectives that fit into this category, and it's worth playing around with them and working out which you like best.

There are a few power cards I've not mentioned yet that can help you with scoring these objectives. Headlong Fury (38) can help you grab an objective that would otherwise be out of reach. Drilled to Perfection (39) can put two friendly fighters on Guard, which will help them survive and prevent them being driven back – very handy for holding onto objectives. Victor of a Thousand Duels (40) can also help a fighter to stay on an objective while increasing their damage output, though it is quite reliant on the dice. I should also mention Glorious Triumph (41) – this unusual card increases the number of objectives that your warband is considered to hold. This can help you score cards that simply count the number of objectives you hold, like Hidden Purpose, Path to Victory and Ritualised Formation, though not cards like Swift Capture that require you to hold particular objectives or objectives in particular parts of the battlefield.

For the more aggressive portion of your deck, Blessings of Khaine (42), Daughters of the First Temple (43), Perfect Kill (44) and Swift Sacrifice (45) are all good fits that you can expect to score in most games. You could also include Proof of Devotion (46), although this can be tricky to score with your fragile fighters without exploiting a



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handy lethal hex, and a bit of a risky prospect then! On the universal side of things, Gathered Momentum, Skilled Duellist (47), Unexpected Pitfall (48) and Victorious Duel all work well (although Skilled Duellist relies on Khamyss surviving, making it a bit more risky).

Again, there are power cards to support you in scoring these objectives. Zealot's Rage (49) should be in almost every Blade-coven deck, giving you an extra Attack action. Jealous Defence does the same, while Collapse (50), Rocksnake

Toxin (51) and Spinetoad Toxin (52) can all help to deal those crucial extra points of damage to enable you to take enemy fighters out of action. Damage upgrades like Great Strength are fantastic on Khamyss and Lethyr, and they will turn Morgwaeth into a fighter who can do anything (make sure the upgrade you choose benefits Attack actions with a Range of 2!). Finally I'd recommend including Carve a Rune (53) in your deck. In all likelihood you'll be able to meet the condition for this power card in every game, and another glory point is always welcome!

WHERE TO START

When setting up Morgwaeth's Blade-coven, you need to consider the capabilities of the enemy fighters, as well as your opponent's likely play style. If you are against a tough, aggressive warband, you may want to set up your fighters further back, making it easier for you to control the pace of the combat. If you are against a numerous, objective-holding warband, it's likely to benefit you to set your fighters up closer to the action, though do try to make sure that your most vulnerable fighters aren't at risk of being taken out of action in the first activation!

As far as the order of setting up is concerned, I'd be tempted to start with Kyræ. With her high speed and range, enemy fighters can't do much to avoid her. Then I'd set up Kyrssa and Lethyr, your most expendable fighters, though I'd still try to make sure to place them in as advantageous a position as possible. Next would be Khamyss – her Range 2 Attack action gives her a greater threat range than your Witch Aelves, so she can be a little bit further back (or she can be ready to strike deeper into enemy territory if you've spotted a juicy

target). Finally, set up Morgwaeth last. It might be to your benefit to set her up a little further from the action, as she is key to the warband's success with her fearsome prowess and Blood Sacrament ability, and you want to make sure that she survives long enough to show this off!



HUNT'S END

That brings me to the end of this tactical guide. I hope that you've found it helpful, and I'd love to know what you think. Do you have some favourite cards or tactics that you think I've missed? Is there a warband you'd like me to feature in a future article? Let me know at whunderworlds@gwplc.com and you might see your suggestions appear in *White Dwarf*.



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THE SCENES OF BATTLE

Gareth Etherington has been blogging about Warhammer for over a decade, and in that time he has taken many stunning photographs of his miniatures, including the atmospheric scenes featured in this article. We asked him all about this interesting aspect of his hobby.



GARETH ETHERINGTON

Gareth has been a hobbyist for over twenty years, and there are few armies or game systems that he hasn't turned his hand to at one point or another. You can find his work on Twitter, Instagram and the Tale of Painters blog by searching for Garfy.

Photography has always been a passion of mine, and the pictures of miniatures in *White Dwarf* and Games Workshop publications have had a big influence on me over the years. My first experience with photography was when my Uncle Gary took some photos of my models with his SLR camera. When I saw him a few weeks later, he had developed the film and gave me the pictures. I was instantly hooked on that gratifying feeling of seeing

models I'd painted captured in a picture. This led to me studying photography at college.

Combining Warhammer and photography was an obvious step for me. When I'm playing a game and one of my painted models pulls off an impressive feat, I can easily picture them doing it in a cinematic way in my mind. My photography is a visual outlet for this – I really enjoy seeing the models in a dramatic environment.





A PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Gareth puts a lot of time and creativity into his photography, using whatever resources he has available to bring his vision to life. Here's a glimpse of what his set-up can look like.

Gareth: When it comes to putting it all together, I usually grab whatever I have available. Terrain I have collected over the years gets used again and again in different settings. In this piece, there are Citadel Woods, Warcry barricades, and craters with a ruined Rhino embedded in it, and they're all sitting on top of a Blood Bowl board. Here I've used a couple of large rocks from my garden as a backdrop.

I also purchased a cheap smoke machine, which can just be seen in the right of the picture. The smoke is an interesting challenge. It's not like dry ice that falls to the ground; this stuff is warm and rises (eventually cooling and falling if there is enough of it). So I have to shoot it on a fast shutter speed to capture it before it floats off.

When I started taking photos like this, I used an entry-level camera that I could set for a longer

exposure. During that long exposure, I would use a mobile phone and a tablet with a solid colour on the screen (and the screen brightness turned up as bright as it would go) to light up parts of the scene with different colours. This goes back to having the final image in your head and then figuring out how you're going to put that picture together with the things you have available.

I've invested in my kit a little more since then, and I now use flash photography. I use my four flashes (including a ringlight flash mounted on the camera lens) arranged around my composition, each lighting a different part of the scene. The flashes allow me to shoot fast shutter speeds, which capture smoke patterns better.

You can see what the final piece looks like in the picture opposite.





Above: *Infernal Conflict.* My Slaves to Darkness army uses the Damned Legion (Ravagers) battle trait, which means it has lots of characters vying for leadership. I wanted to show that in this composition. I placed the Ogroid Myrmidon, Darkoath Warqueen and Chaos Lord on Karkadrak in the centre, almost like they're fighting for your attention in the middle. The sunset (or Realmgate) is to draw your eye to the centre. The title *Infernal Conflict* is a play on internal conflict.

Below: *Desecration of the Wyldwoods.* In this scene featuring my Chaos Sorcerer Lord and Kurnothi, I played on the classic themes of light versus dark, life versus death and good versus evil. I lit the Kurnothi with a bright golden light and I placed green trees full of life behind them. The Chaos half of the picture is cold and unforgiving with lifeless trees. You can almost hear the sound of the warhorn interrupting the Sorcerer's ritual, although I think the real battle here is the Sabretooth pouncing on the charging Malkyn.





Above: *Bio-Titan Takedown*. A picture's composition can have a subliminally pleasing effect. A couple of compositional tricks inspired this image. The first is called the 'rule of thirds'. You tend to see it on horizontal landscape shots, but here I split the subjects vertically into three with the centre column being the lightest to catching your eye. The second composition trick is called a Fibonacci curve. If you drew what looks like a snail's shell over the image, you'll see that the Dark Angels roughly follow the path of it.

Below: *Toxic Troggoth*. Mollog and his entourage are covered in mushrooms, the purple fungus emitting a toxic cloud that pollutes and kills the forests. I pumped a lot of fog into this shot with a smoke machine, and, using purple and pink translucent plastic over my lights, I was able to light the fog with really vivid colours. Using a fast shutter speed captures the smoke with defined patterns. A longer shutter speed would capture the motion of the smoke and make it look softer.





Above: *Path of the Myrmidon*. For this picture, I wanted to show the Ogroid as a product of his environment. Using coloured light, I lit the scene to match his skin tone. Then, I dressed the scene with pieces of crumbling wall painted the same way as his base. The twisted trees hint that the area has been corrupted by Chaos. Despite his paint scheme matching the scene, the Ogroid's face stands out with his bright horns and fiery orange hair. The purple background complements the green terrain.

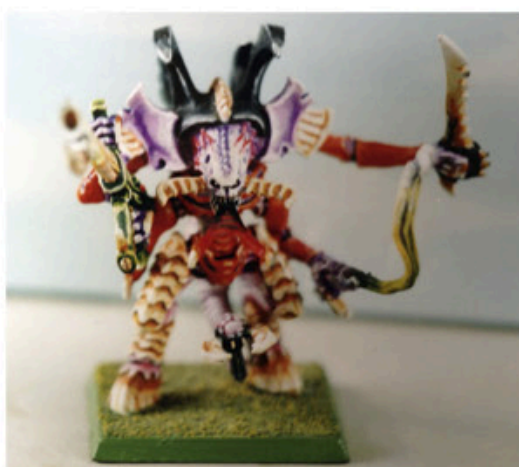
Below: *Harbinger of Woe*. Using Promethium Pipes and Armoured Container kits, I was able to create my own version of the iconic Deathwing versus Genestealers imagery from the classic game Space Hulk. I used red light and dark shadows to represent emergency lighting and to give the terrain the same colour. I then took another picture under normal lighting conditions and, using photo editing software, blended the two pictures together so the Deathwing appear to be lit by their power weapons and armour lamps.





Above: *The Hunt*. When I finished painting my Raptoryx, I had the idea of them hunting in a pack. Who better to be hunted than some inexperienced young hunters from the Untamed Beasts? I really like the irony of that. For this shot, I used a trick that landscape painters use, creating a path of wooden bridges that leads into the picture. As you follow the path into the picture, you can see the line of Raptoryx emerging from the fog.

Right: *Battle of Stone Horn Pass*. My Stormcast are called the Primal Kings, and they wage war against Sigmar's foes in the Realm of Ghur. I wanted them heroically fighting to the last man against the hordes of Chaos, so I positioned them in the centre and raised them up above the enemy. I added a bright yellow light behind them, almost like Sigmar is lighting their darkest hour. The rocks behind them show there is no escape.



THE FIRST PHOTO

This was where it all began – with a picture of a classic Tyranids Hive Tyrant. I took this picture around 1996 or 1997. I was fifteen years old, give or take. My uncle showed me how to take the picture on his SLR. It was my first exposure (pun intended) to a proper camera with all the settings.



READERS' MODELS

Way back in issue 396 (December 2012), we hosted our very first Readers' Models section in the magazine, featuring photographs of miniatures taken by you, our readers. It just so happens that those first pictures were taken by none other than Gareth! His pictures exemplify what we look for in a reader's submission – they're well lit, in focus and shot on a plain white background from the golden angle. And, of course, the models are really well painted! It's no wonder that we've featured so many of them over the years! If you want to learn how to take pictures like this, head over to warhammer-community.com and search for The Model Photograph article.



MEN OF METAL

Technoarcheologist Daedalusus is on a quest for knowledge. Assisted by Imperial Robot UR-025, he enters the fortress in this new quest to discover how the Spindle Drones that defend the Blackstone Fortress work. But deadlier foes await him in the darkness ...



Spindle Drones are one of the many mysteries of the Blackstone Fortress. Universally hostile to all who enter the ancient structure, their purpose appears to be cleansing the ancient structure of foreign matter – from debris to living beings. What makes them even more interesting to those of an investigative nature is the impossibility of removing a Spindle Drone from the fortress itself. If a Spindle Drone's wreckage is left where it falls, it is absorbed by the tessellating floors and walls of the Blackstone Fortress. Similarly, if a damaged drone is picked up, the maglev chambers that allow the explorers to travel within the Blackstone Fortress are rendered inert while the drone's remains are within, making further travel impossible.

When he arrived at Precipice, Daedalusus, one of the galaxy's foremost experts on Blackstone Fortresses, was determined to discover the drones' secrets. There were few volunteers for his proposed expedition into the fortress – only UR-025 agreed to accompany him, stating that the proposed expedition fell within the parameters of its data-gathering subroutines. Daedalusus was both intrigued and suspicious. UR-025 was clearly a valuable ally in combat, but its claim of being an autonomous Imperial Robot demanded further investigation. This investigation could be undertaken as the pair delved deep into the fortress, and so bringing UR-025 along would be efficient in more ways than one.

ASCENSION!

The Guardian Drones used in this quest can be found in the Blackstone Fortress: Ascension boxed set – an expansion for the main game. This set contains two of these deadly adversaries, plus all the associated cards and rules. Ascension also includes two new game modes that will test your survival skills in this thrilling narrative conclusion to the Blackstone Fortress saga!



As for UR-025, it knows that any amount of time spent in the company of a member of the Cult Mechanicus carries great risk. Nonetheless, it has deemed this mission worthwhile, weighed as it is against discovering a way to communicate with the Spindle Drones, or even the fortress itself. Furthermore, should the situation turn, the Man of Iron knows any potentially lethal confrontation with the magos would be deeply in its favour.

In this quest, which takes place before the events of Ascension, Daedalusus and UR-025 will venture deep into the Blackstone Fortress in an attempt to discover the true nature of Spindle Drones and their provenance. Each explorer has their own reasons for doing so, and neither suspects the other or knows anything regarding their true motives ...

This quest allows players to play through a specific narrative – a story of Daedalusus and UR-025 exploring the fortress, each searching for their own answers, unbeknownst to the other. This limits the choice of explorers to just these two, which in turn limits the number of players to three – two to control each explorer, and one potential hostile player.

STARTING THE QUEST TO CAPTURE A SPINDLE DRONE

The quest to capture a Spindle Drone is a standalone quest that can be attempted by 1 to 3 players if the explorers have completed the quest for the hidden vault and are not currently on another quest, such as the quest for the Black Shrines. Before starting the expedition, the explorers can choose to undertake the quest to capture a Spindle Drone. If they do so, follow the rules presented here to set up an expedition for this quest. Once the explorers have started this quest, they may not start another until it has been completed. The quest to capture a Spindle Drone uses some new rules and some existing rules from those presented for the quest for the hidden vault on pages 12-13 of the *Blackstone Fortress: Rules* booklet. Use the existing rules for New Expeditions, along with the following new rules. You will also need a copy of the Escalation expansion and the Ascension expansion for Blackstone Fortress to be able to play this quest.

SETTING UP THE EXPEDITION FOR THE QUEST TO CAPTURE A SPINDLE DRONE

During Step 2, Daedalus and UR-025 must be picked to take on this quest. No other explorers or retinue characters can be picked.

During Step 3, do not create a deck of exploration cards as normal. Instead, the explorers will be taking part in

a set series of combats and challenges unique to this quest. These combats and challenges comprise a single expedition. If they fail, they will need to start this quest again as a fresh expedition.

Each combat or challenge is resolved in the same way as an exploration round, following the rules on page 11 of the *Blackstone Fortress: Rules* booklet with the following additions.

In the exploration step, the leader reads aloud the text in italics at the start of the next stage of the expedition, and then the players resolve the challenge or combat as appropriate following the rules on page 11 of the *Blackstone Fortress: Rules* booklet.

In the leader step, the explorers can exchange with each other (or give away) discovery cards, resource cards and/or stronghold artefact cards.

MEN OF METAL EVENT TABLES

When called upon to make an event roll during this quest, use the following table. Note that result 11-14 changes depending on which part of the quest the explorers are on.

MEN OF METAL EVENT TABLE	
RESULT	EVENT
1	Spindle Menace: The leader picks one Spindle Drone that is on the battlefield. That Spindle Drone takes an Advance action.
2-3	Unfulfilled Destiny: Do not make a destiny roll at the start of the next turn.
4-6	Not Dead Yet: The leader must pick one hostile that was slain during the combat and has not returned to the battlefield, and then deploy them as close to an explorer as possible.
7-10	Changing Conditions: Draw an encounter card. If the card has a twist, it applies for the rest of the combat. If not, there is no effect.
11-14	<p>Drone Abduction - Escape Chamber: The leader replaces the portal furthest from any explorers with a maglev transport escape chamber. If more than one portal is equally far from the explorers, the leader can pick which one to replace. If this event has already been rolled, or if an explorer has used a Summon action, there is no effect.</p> <p>Tracking the Signal, The Signal's Source - Ambush!: If there are no slain Awakened Spindle Drones, there is no effect. If there is at least one slain Awakened Spindle Drone, then the leader picks one of them. That Awakened Spindle Drone is deployed as reinforcements from the portal nearest to Daedalus.</p>
15-17	Skittish Scuttler: The leader picks one Spindle Drone that is on the battlefield. That Spindle Drone takes a Fall Back action. If there are no Spindle Drones, or only Awakened Spindle Drones on the battlefield, there is no effect.
18-19	Heroic Effort: The leader picks an explorer that is out of action. Deploy the explorer in the same hex as another explorer or as close to another explorer as possible, and then make a vitality roll for them. If no explorers are out of action, the leader picks an explorer. Make a vitality roll for that explorer.
20	Data Gathering: The leader picks an explorer. That explorer can make one Move (1+) action – this does not cost an activation dice.

STAGE 1: COMBAT

DRONE ABDUCTION

The two explorers venture into an area that has a strong Spindle Drone presence. When the pair find their quarries, they discover that the drones are on high alert, having just finished dealing with a different band of foolish interlopers.

Set up the combat map as shown.

VICTORY

If all explorers are out of action, or if all of the explorers that are not out of action are in the maglev transport escape chamber in the event phase, the combat ends. If UR-025 and Daedalusus are in the maglev transport escape chamber and inspired, they have succeeded in this part of the quest and can continue to stage 2. Otherwise the expedition is failed and the explorers must restart this quest.

COMBAT RULES

Sterilisation Protocols: The threat level for Spindle Drones in this combat starts at 3. Treat all reinforcement rolls made for hostile groups during this combat as having rolled a 1 – do not roll the dice.

Pretence of Obedience: When UR-025 would inspire, if he has line of sight to Daedalusus, he does not.

Warning Subroutines: When Daedalusus would gain an inspiration point, if he does not have line of sight to UR-025, he does not.

HOSTILE GROUPS

1 1 Spindle Drone

2 1 Spindle Drone

3 1 Spindle Drone

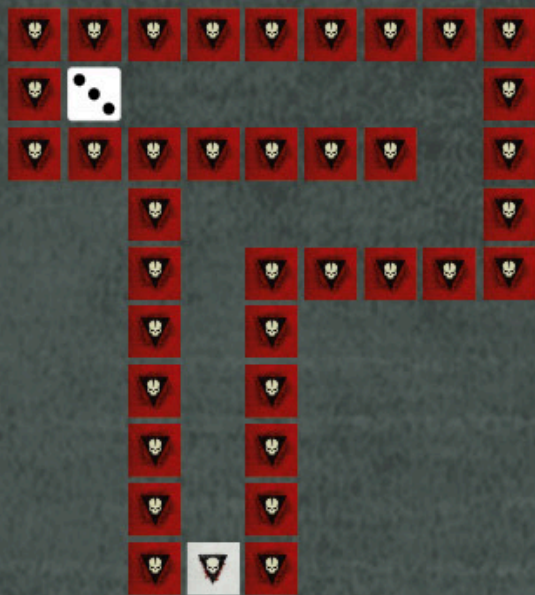
4 1 Spindle Drone



STAGE 2: CHALLENGE

DRONE DISSECTION

As UR-025 stands sentinel, Daedalusus begins a technological dissection of a nearby Spindle Drone. This process is extremely difficult and requires great delicacy, as the magos tries to isolate what he believes to be a signal emanating from the construct before it is subsumed by the fortress itself.



Arrange a series of grievous wound counters, a wound counter and a single activation dice on a flat surface as shown in the diagram. This is the dissection tracker.

The leader then picks one player. That player must move that activation dice along the dissection tracker so that it touches the wound counter at the end. No player can touch the activation dice once it is placed. It can only be pushed along using the line of sight checker (which cannot be bent or broken).

VICTORY

If the activation dice touches a grievous wound counter, or a grievous wound counter is moved for any reason, the explorers have failed – replace all Spindle Drones in the next combat with Awakened Spindle Drones. If the activation dice touches the wound counter at the end of the track without touching any grievous wound counters, the dissection is at least partly successful, and there is no penalty. In either case, the explorers then continue to stage 3.

STAGE 3: COMBAT

TRACKING THE SIGNAL

Satisfied with his findings, Daedalusus moves on, tracking the signal he believes will lead him to a location that will unveil the Spindle Drones' secrets. Before long, the pair reach a forking path, one length of which appears to contain a few drones standing sentinel over a control device. The other route is barred by a glowing blackstone shard. The Technoarchaeologist postulates that activating the device will shut the shard down, granting access to a further chamber beyond. Even as he announces this theory, the Spindle Drones notice the interlopers ...

Set up the combat map as shown over the page. Set up Daedalusus and UR-025 in the hex marked D and U.

HOSTILE GROUPS

1 2 Spindle Drones*

2 2 Spindle Drones*

3 1 Guardian Drone

**If the previous challenge – Drone Dissection – was failed, these are Awakened Spindle Drones instead. All rules specific to this combat that apply to Spindle Drones apply to Awakened Spindle Drones instead.*

VICTORY

If all explorers are out of action, or if all of the explorers that are not out of action are in the maglev transport escape chamber in the event phase, the combat ends. If UR-025 and Daedalusus are in the maglev transport escape chamber, they have succeeded in this part of the quest and can continue to stage 4. Otherwise the explorers have failed and they must restart this quest or start another quest.

COMBAT RULES

Hostile Groups: The two Spindle Drones that are set up next to discovery marker 1 are hostile group 1. The other Spindle Drones are hostile group 2.

Endless Swarm: Halve all reinforcement rolls made for hostile groups during this combat (rounding up).

Control Panels: When a discovery marker is removed from the board, the obstructed hex or hexes that are marked with the matching discovery marker on the combat map are also removed from the board.

Watchful Sentry: Until discovery marker 4 is removed from the board, do not make behaviour rolls for the Guardian Drone. Instead, it takes the 'Hold' action when it activates. After discovery marker 4 is removed from the battlefield, make behaviour rolls for it as normal.

One Exit: The Summon (4+) action cannot be made by explorers during this combat.



STAGE 4: CHALLENGE

FLEEING THE SWARM

As the Guardian Drone falls it emits a piercing whine, a high-pitched version of the Spindle Drones' alert tone. Daedalus and UR-025 have no time to investigate the downed construct as a vast swarm of Spindle Drones scuttle from a nearby corridor, their weapons flashing. Heavily outnumbered, the explorers beat a desperate retreat. Daedalus moves as quickly as his bionic enhancements will allow him to, while UR-025 steps in to provide covering fire when the magos appears to be in danger. While the Man of Iron has no intention of sacrificing itself, UR-025 is aware that if it wishes to glean any information from this expedition at all, the Technoarchaeologist's skill and knowledge will be vital.

Make one agility roll for Daedalus. If the roll is failed, Daedalus suffers 1 wound. When Daedalus suffers that wound, UR-025's player can choose for UR-025 to make a weapon action as if the target was visible and adjacent to it. If the weapon action is successful, Daedalus does not suffer the wound. If the weapon action is failed, UR-025 suffers the wound instead. Continue to make agility rolls and any subsequent weapon actions until Daedalus has successfully made 3 agility rolls.

If either explorer is taken out of action, the explorers have failed and cannot make a vitality roll in the next recovery step. In either case, the explorers then continue to stage 5.

STAGE 5: COMBAT

THE SIGNAL'S SOURCE

The explorers finally escape the Spindle Drone swarm, though not without cost. Led by the strange signal, they find themselves in a large chamber. Here, Spindle Drones are extruded from a glowing panel, and then swiftly absorbed by the fortress to be transported to parts unknown. Could this be where the constructs are formed? Or is it possible that the fortress has subsumed an entire race to serve it? The answers to such questions may lie within arm's reach, but as the pair draw closer, the familiar whine of approaching Spindle Drones once again assaults their aural receptors. Worse still, these drones are moving with a noticeably more aggressive gait, and the heavy tread of Guardian Drones is audible in the distance. The explorers' questions must go unanswered for now, as there are surely few places in the fortress as well defended as this chamber. Sabotage and then escape are the only option, and one that must be pursued with utmost urgency.

Set up the combat map as shown

Set up Daedalusus and UR-025 in the hexes marked D and U.

VICTORY

If all explorers are out of action, or if all of the explorers that are not out of action are in the maglev transport escape chamber in the event phase, the combat ends. If all of the explorers that are not out of action are in the maglev transport escape chamber, and both Drone Extruders are destroyed, they have succeeded in this part of the quest and completed the quest. Otherwise the explorers have failed and they must restart this quest or start another quest.

COMBAT RULES

Drone Extruders: Each Drone Extruder is a portal that is marked with a red outline. When an explorer is adjacent to a Drone Extruder they can make a Disrupt (5+) action. When this action is taken, place a wound counter on the Drone Extruder. When a Drone Extruder has 4 wound counters on it, it is removed from the battlefield.

One Exit: The Summon (4+) action cannot be made by explorers during this combat.

Drone Factory: While there are one or more Drone Extruders on the battlefield, treat all reinforcement rolls made for hostile groups during this combat as having rolled a 1 – do not roll the dice.

HOSTILE GROUPS

- 1** 2 Awakened Spindle Drones (A)
- 2** 2 Awakened Spindle Drones (A)
- 3** 1 Guardian Drones (G)
- 4** 1 Guardian Drones (G)



THE PALE ORC COMETH

The Middle-earth team's rules writer, Jay Clare, is back this month to impart his wisdom on using another of Middle-earth's mightiest Heroes in your games. But just who is he here to talk about this month? None other than the fearsome Azog the Defiler!



JAY CLARE

The Middle-earth team's rules writer is known for his exceptional grasp of tactics when it comes to events for the Strategy Battle Game, much like Azog on the field of battle. However, that's where the similarity ends – we imagine Jay smells a bit nicer than the Pale Orc!

Of all the race of Orcs, there are few with as fearsome a reputation as that of the Pale Orc, Azog the Defiler. A huge, hulking creature from the fortress of Mount Gundabad, Azog has been the scourge of the Dwarves for many generations. The Pale Orc has sworn to wipe out the line of Durin – something that he nearly achieved.

At the Battle of Azanulbizar, Azog led his legions of Orcs against the army of Thrór. The Dwarves were determined to take back the lost Dwarven kingdom of Moria from the clutches of the Orcs, and the cost was great. Thrór was slain by Azog, and his son, Thráin, was presumed captured or killed. With victory in his grasp, Azog turned his efforts to slaying the last of the line of Durin – Thorin. However, the young prince proved to be more than a match for Azog, severing the Pale Orc's arm from his body.

For over 140 years, Azog was presumed dead, believed to have fallen victim to the wounds he suffered at the hands of Thorin. Yet this was not true. Sustained by the power of Sauron, Azog returned to lead the Dark Lord's legions in the Battle of the Five Armies. Here, Azog continued on his crusade to eradicate Durin's line, slaying both Kíli and Fíli before dealing a mortal wound to Thorin – but it would cost Azog his life. Though Azog came close to his goal, and he managed to wipe out the descendents of Thrór, Durin's line endured through Thorin's cousin, Dáin Ironfoot.

Azog is a mighty force in the Strategy Battle Game – one capable of taking out the Dwarven kings he so famously did. That said, getting the best from Azog isn't as easy as just pointing him at an enemy battleline and charging straight in. In this article, we are going to have a look at how best to use the Pale Orc on the battlefield.

SO YOU THINK HIS DEFILING DAYS ARE DONE, DO YOU?

As you might expect from the leader of Sauron's armies, Azog has a very impressive set of characteristics. The most stand-out of these is his monstrous Fight value of 7. That's higher than the likes of Thrór, Thráin and Thorin, but, then again, he does best them all in battle with relative ease, and it was only a lucky strike from Thorin that managed to earn the Dwarves victory.

This makes it hard for enemy Heroes to beat Azog in a duel roll. After all, the group of Heroes in the game that have a Fight value of 7 or higher is a rather select club! So, to best Azog in a fight, you just need to use the tried and tested method of declaring a Heroic Strike, increasing your own Hero's Fight value, and then beating the Pale Orc in the duel, right?

Well, that will prove to be slightly tricky when you consider that the Azog's Legion Army Bonus gives Azog the Master of Battle special rule, allowing him to copy enemy Heroic Actions within 6". If an opponent does decide to charge Azog and then declare a Heroic Strike against him, then the Pale Orc can simply counter by declaring a Heroic Strike of his own, for free! This means that you can be pretty confident that Azog can take on enemy Heroes in combat, without needlessly risking himself in a fight.

Once Azog has won the fight, which will happen more often than not, he has a very high chance of causing some serious damage to whatever poor soul he just bested in combat. With a Strength of 5 and 3 Attacks, Azog can pack a serious punch and leave devastation in his wake.

It is not simply his characteristics that make Azog the terrifying fighter he is, however. The Pale Orc also has a series of special rules that drastically increase his killing potential.

Firstly, Azog can carry his huge stone flail. This counts as a two-handed weapon and can Whirl without reducing Azog's Fight value (allowing him to potentially hit every model in the fight once). In addition, each unsaved Wound becomes D3! The only drawback is Azog becomes Fight 6 when using this weapon, regardless of if he declared a Heroic Strike. Though if he would still have the higher Fight value anyway, then this weapon can be devastating! Did I also mention that Azog is Burly, and anyone hit is knocked Prone?

Azog also has his I am the Master special rule, meaning he will never need to roll more than a 3+ to Wound an enemy Hero – regardless of Defence! Send Azog at an opponent's toughest Hero and watch them get crushed as if they were never wearing armour in the first place!

BOLG

The spawn of Azog, Bolg is every bit as terrifying a foe as his father. With a Fight of 7, Strength 5, 3 Attacks and Burly, Bolg can smash through enemy lines with ease. Having both Azog and Bolg in your army can be a real problem for your opponent. Even if they can stop one, the other will still be able to cause mayhem in their ranks!



Azog's Hunter Orcs burst forth from their lairs in search of manflesh. With the Pale Orc leading them, there are few foes that can stand against such brutality.





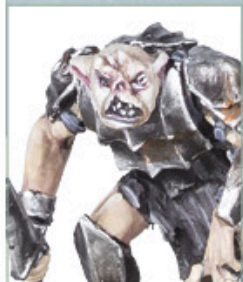
Atop his fearsome White Warg, and wielding a huge mace, Azog the Defiler leads the legions of the Dark Lord as they begin their assault upon the Lonely Mountain.

COME FORTH MY ARMIES!

The Pale Orc is not just a hugely impressive character in combat, but he also brings plenty of generalship qualities to the forces he commands. This makes him an ideal leader on the battlefield during your games.

GOBLIN MERCENARIES

One thing that an Azog's Legion force can struggle with is mobility, particularly in Scenarios such as Reconnoitre, Hold Ground or Storm the Camp. Having a small warband of Goblin Mercenaries can help massively with this, popping out of a terrain piece near an objective to win you the game!



Firstly, Azog is a Hero of Legend. This allows him to take up to 18 models in his warband, which helps pack out your army full of Orcs, Trolls, Ogres or War Bats – whatever models you need to improve your force. Being a Hero of Legend means that, should your army be Broken, Azog will automatically pass the first Courage test for being Broken. Though he is Courage 5 and has 3 Will points, there is still a chance he could flee, and so being able to guarantee he sticks around that little bit longer is a huge boon.

This also couples well with his General of the North special rule, which gives Azog a 12" Stand Fast! that will also affect friendly Orc Heroes. The benefits of this are huge. Should you find yourself Broken, then you will not need to panic about your models fleeing the board. Azog will automatically pass, which will then make General of the North kick in to make the rest of your army within 12" stick around as well.

When playing a game, it is usually a good idea to make sure that your leader is tough to take down. We've already mentioned that Azog is unlikely to lose many Fights, but if he does, he is only Defence 5, making him a bit fragile. Luckily, you can purchase heavy armour for Azog to raise this to Defence 7, making him far more survivable.

Azog has a wide selection of Heroic Actions, all of which are very useful when needed. Heroic March can help reposition your army or move up the board. Heroic Strike helps against a particularly skilled Hero, and Heroic Strength is great against tougher opponents. Heroic Challenge comes in handy when he comes up against another Hero of Legend; there aren't many Heroes that will accept a challenge from the Pale Orc, so this can be a good way of removing their ability to affect their allies with Heroic Actions or Stand Fast!

However, it is Master of Battle that really sets Azog apart as an exceptional leader. Often, games are won by those who can keep their store of Might running longest, and being able to counter any Heroic Action, particularly Heroic Move, within 6" means that Azog can systematically drain the opposition of Might. Just make sure you keep him close to enemy Heroes!

THE WHITE WARG

The White Warg is perhaps the most important of all the options available to Azog. Not only does it provide all the benefits of a normal mount (cavalry charge, extra movement, etc.), but it also has some incredibly powerful rules that will aid its master in battle.

Unlike other mounts, the White Warg is a Hero, which means it has its own store of Might, Will and Fate. Its Deadly Union special rule means that, so long as Azog is mounted, the Might, Will and Fate of both can be shared as if they were one profile. This is a huge benefit to Azog, as it allows him to use up to 6 Might! A good way to get the most out of this is to use the White Warg's Might first, that way if they become separated, then Azog still has all of his own left to use.

Whilst Deadly Union is a great special rule, the White Warg has a few others that are often overlooked. It causes Terror, which is always great, and it also has Fell Sight. This means it doesn't need line of sight to charge. You can hide Azog safely away from enemy bows or Magic users within 10", and then charge the next turn. Many players forget about the applications of this and get caught out when Azog – who they thought couldn't charge them, as he didn't have line of sight – suddenly smashes into their lines!



SEND FOR REINFORCEMENTS!

Whilst a pure Azog's Legion force has pretty much everything you want from an army list, there are some Historical Allies it can utilise effectively: Azog's Hunters and Dark Powers of Dol Guldur.

Azog's Hunters can provide a front line of 2 Attack Hunter Orcs, which can then be backed up with Gundabad Orcs with spears from Azog's Legion. This means more attacks across your lines from the Hunter Orcs, whilst still retaining the benefit of Master of Battle on Azog and the spears from the Azog's Legion list.

If you want a more survivable Hero while retaining the ability to use Hunter Orcs, then you could ally with the Dark Powers of Dol Guldur to add a Nazgûl to your force; the Witch-king is a good choice, as it brings the most Might. Also, if you need something to assassinate enemy Heroes, then perhaps consider a Castellan of Dol Guldur with Morgul Blade.

Well, there you have it. An in-depth look at arguably the most powerful Orc in all of Middle-earth. If you are looking for a Hero that can go toe to toe with the very best characters in the game, then I would highly recommend Azog. There is nothing more satisfying than watching as Azog dismantles an opponent's toughest Hero with terrifying ease!



THE DUST FALLS CAMPAIGN

On the benighted world of Necromunda, far beneath the sprawling hive city of Hive Primus, lies the settlement known as Dust Falls. Here, amongst the debris of aeons, rival gangs battle for supremacy. We caught up with the campaign Arbitrator to find out what it's all about.

Dust Falls is the name of both a well-known settlement in the underhive of Hive Primus and (by some remarkable coincidence) the setting for an ongoing Necromunda campaign that has been taking place here at Games Workshop headquarters. It all began way back in 2018 when a group of friends – some of them staff here at HQ – decided it would be great fun to run a Necromunda campaign. There was just one problem: the participants all lived in different parts of the country ...

But as we all know, hobbyists thrive on challenges, and so they set about creating a campaign that everyone could take part in with

NECROMUNDA

Fancy starting your own Necromunda campaign? The Necromunda: Dark Uprising box set is always a good place to start. Or why not pick up the Necromunda Rulebook and a gang box? Both options provide you with plenty of options for starting a campaign. The world of underhive warfare awaits!

minimal effort and join in if and when they were able to. We caught up with David Delgado – the driving force behind the campaign and appointed Arbitrator – to find out all about it.

David Delgado: It all began following the release of the new edition of Necromunda in 2017. Veteran artist and conceptualiser John Blanche was keen to revisit the underhive, and when the Great Illuminator wants to play some games, it's only right that some games be played! Everyone involved was keen to learn the new rules for the game and paint a new gang, and John's enthusiasm was the incentive we needed to get it underway. So we decided to play a campaign.

HOUSE CAWDOR GANG BY JOHN BLANCHE

John: I've wanted to join a campaign since the release of the new edition of Necromunda, so when the opportunity came to meet up with friends from around the country for the occasional game, I leapt at the chance. I don't remember rules or characteristics particularly well, but playing games in a campaign like this, surrounded by eager friends happy to help out, and with a strong focus on the unfolding story as much as, if not more than, the eventual victory, I was in my element. It's been a wonderful way to pass the time, and I look forward to the next time we can all meet together and lay waste to the underhive!

My gang comes from House Cawdor. Being the most dirty, deranged and fanatical gang in the underhive, and with a strong medieval vibe to their appearance,

they were a natural fit for me. They capture all the elements of Warhammer 40,000 that inspire me the most. Most of the models are pure Cawdor kits, but with a few Grey Knights tilting shields added on. A couple have Flagellant heads, and one of them carries the flamer of Pious Vorne (from Blackstone Fortress). I particularly love the pole-mounted autoguns, both for their look and for the ability to whack an enemy fighter without fear of reprisal! Being fanatics, my gang had a particular feud with the various foul cults active in Dust Falls, and a great many heretics were burned by their righteous fury. And not just the heretics, if I'm honest. On several occasions, I was able to set fire to allies I deemed not righteous enough and even, on one memorable occasion, large sections of the battlefield itself! I love fire; let the galaxy burn!



UNDERHIVE SURVIVORS BY NICOLAS GRILLET

Nicolas: My gang is called the Eolles – a matriarchal community that made their home in a gigantic vent in the underhive. The leader – Adept Morcisa – is the old woman with the Enginseer legs in the foreground. The gunslinger behind her is one of her faithful followers. The others are hired guns gathered for the purpose of hunting down a prophetic servitor. The big one with the Putrid Blightking body and the one with the stilt legs are scavengers from the radioactive wastelands, while

the others are members of a Rogue Trader's crew that got abandoned. The floating warrior was an Adeptus Mechanicus assassin, maybe still working for their old masters, but offering their skills in exchange for repairs. So far they've done quite poorly in games. The big guy never reaches close combat, and the agile floating assassin somehow killed herself after jumping from a ladder. Only the leader was really impactful, as grenades seem to be pretty powerful in Necromunda.

**VAN SAAR GANG BY KEV WHITE**

Kev: I wanted to make a Van Saar gang because I love the models, but I wanted them to be a combat-focused gang. I had a vision of them becoming more violent and bloodthirsty over time, perhaps even falling to Chaos. This idea came to fruition during our first multi-player battle, in which the gangs were fighting for possession of a mysterious artefact. I imagined it was some tainted technology that my gang desired and that would speed up their damnation.

What I didn't do was look closely at the model profiles. If I had, I might have noticed that Van Saars excel with ranged weapons, not up close. But I wasn't put off, and in early games my Leader proved to be a tank, taking on and defeating much bigger and tougher opponents! Sadly that changed when he fell foul of a meltagun at close range. He was replaced by a more sensible, though no less corrupt, Champion armed with a rad cannon who went on to lead the gang to greater glories.



INSPIRATION POINTS

The first difficulty we had to overcome was distance, since we're scattered all over the UK! I set up a chat group, which we used to discuss ideas and talk about the gangs we were painting. We knew early on that meetings were going to be infrequent, so we needed to find ways to keep each other motivated. I believe a big part of the Arbitrator's role is to keep the players excited about the campaign, and to keep them involved even when they aren't playing a game. I encouraged the participants to show photos of the models we were all working on (which you can see throughout this article) and to talk about the background and themes for our gangs.

The stories that people were coming up with for their gangs gave me loads of ideas for the narrative campaign that I was starting to put together. I already had a few broad overarching stories that I wanted to play through, but gathering everyone's ideas meant that, even before the first meeting, there was a feeling that

these gangs belonged together and had history within the setting. Chatting through the setting as a group really helped us come up with a great foundation for the campaign.

BREAKING THE RULES

For the first meeting, I planned a big, multi-player battle to get all the players interacting and everyone's gangs off the mark. By the end of the day, it was obvious that everyone taking part really liked that format – it brought us together as a group and meant we all knew what everyone was doing rather than splitting down into smaller one-on-one games. Rivalries and alliances developed as the gangs worked together or against each other to complete their missions, and the players began to develop the stories around their gangs. John's Cawdor gang, for example, quickly earned a reputation for setting everyone and everything on fire!

I originally planned to run the campaign by the book, but right from the start some of the players had other ideas! When we got to the post-battle

HOUSE DELAQUE GANG BY MAXIME CORBEIL

Maxime: I chose a House Delaque gang. Back when we decided to run the campaign, these models hadn't even been released, but from the moment I first saw them on a colleague's desk, I knew I had to paint a gang of them! I am particularly happy with my colour scheme. I wanted my gangers to look menacing and almost identical, like clones, which is why they are all painted exactly the same. Also, because I didn't have much time to paint them before the campaign began, I needed a quick and effective recipe that would be easy to replicate for the next batch of recruits. The glow emanating from within their collars creates a nice contrast with their black coats and makes the faces stand out as focal points. The effect is created using Nihilakh Oxide technical paint in the shading of the lower parts of the faces.

My gang has also been joined by a couple of hired guns. Ramona Vex is an assassin that I converted from Knosso Prond with the head of a Sicarian Ruststalker. The Chainsaw Warrior was made for our Halloween game. He's quite evasive regarding who he is, but there are two things for certain: he's got an attitude and he really hates zombies! He's converted from Voidmaster Nitsch's legs with Straken's torso and a Darkoath head.

Sadly, my gang has gained quite a reputation for treachery, having made numerous alliances and betrayed every single one with a knife in the back. I would argue that this is simply me accurately roleplaying the nature of House Delaque. Besides, I can't be blamed if the rest of the guys are daft enough to keep accepting my offers of alliance!



CHAOS CULT BY ALEXANDRE DUMILLARD

Alexandre: My gang is a group of Ash Wastes miners who have been tainted by the corrupting touch of Chaos. But rather than use the Helot Cult rules, I actually use the Genestealer Cult list to represent the gang. This gives me access to mutants in the form of Hybrids and Aberrants, which I feel better represents the touch of Tzeentch on the fighters.

The gang is converted from all manner of Chaos and Genestealer Cult models. There's a Chaos Sorcerer with a stole taken from a Thousand Sons Exalted Sorcerer and a Champion converted from a Slaughterpriest whose helm now features an Exalted

Sorcerer's bird-skull staff top. Four of my gang members are converted from Kairic Acolytes, some of whom have been given Cawdor weapons, while three of my gangers are made from Tzaangor. One of them has three arms to help him carry a Genestealer Cults mining laser into battle.

During the campaign, my gang has made many alliances, always pretending to act charitably towards others. In truth, their actions have always furthered their own agenda, allowing them to stand victorious in several scenarios after tricking their 'allies' into making sacrifices.



sequence, some of them were already talking enthusiastically about additions to their gang and replacements for fatalities. Over the course of that first hectic battle, many fighters had simply died as players decided they weren't particularly concerned about the fate of a lowly Ganger. In some cases, Injury rolls had been made for characters and emerging heroes to see what had befallen them, but in others the nature of the combat and the weapons used were informing the injuries as the players imagined the action taking place before us. At the end of the game, John, Mark (Bedford) and Kev (White) were all planning to make new models to represent fighters that had suffered injuries, and they were talking about how those injuries would affect their gangers' abilities.

And, just like that, our campaign became what would best be described as an 'open play' campaign. I'm glad that it happened, because

with so many talented participants, there was never going to be a shortage of cool conversions and models around. I decided to relax many of the rules around injuries, and I simply decided not to worry about credits and normal gang composition rules to allow for everyone's awesome ideas. We decided to do the same with experience and advancements, too. Fighters improved in ways that we all thought best suited their performance. So a fighter that had proven their worth in combat was awarded an appropriate combat skill, for example. A fighter that made a particularly impressive shot would no doubt become a formidable marksman. All in all, this worked wonderfully for the narrative, open style of play, and everyone began to really enjoy the unfolding stories we were telling. I think it's important for an Arbitrator to have the confidence to allow such changes to happen in a campaign and alter their plans if required.

ABHUMAN WARBAND BY JAMES GLENDINNING

James: I've played Warhammer 40,000 and collected Astra Militarum for so long that I have fond and clear memories of fielding squads of Beastman abhumans in my army. When I saw the Gor Half-horn model, I knew I had to create a gang of abhumans around him; perhaps they're a forgotten Astra Militarum platoon, wandering the underhive. Every model is converted using Beastman legs, arms, weapons and heads, plus Cadian torsos and arms. I used a few Goliath weapons

too, such as the rivet cannon and a power hammer wielded by Gor.

Using the House Goliath rules, the Goat Fellas have proven to be the scourge of Humanity throughout Dust Falls. The gang has grown to become a small army, complete with a wide variety of Leaders, Champions and Hangers-on. I've even made a Stimmer from a Bullgor and a Sumpkroc from a Gore-grunta.



VENATORS GANG BY DAVID DELGADO

David: This campaign gave me the perfect excuse to paint some classic Confrontation miniatures (*for those who don't know, Confrontation was the precursor to Necromunda back in the nineties. It first appeared in White Dwarf of all places!* – Ed) from my collection and to use them as a Venators gang. The models were modernised with plastic arms from Genestealer Cult Neophytes, Skitarii Vanguard and House Orlock kits, with extra details sculpted from modelling putty. The weapons

include a plasma caliver, a radium carbine, a harpoon launcher, a power pick and a servoclaw, plus the more typical autoguns and shotguns.

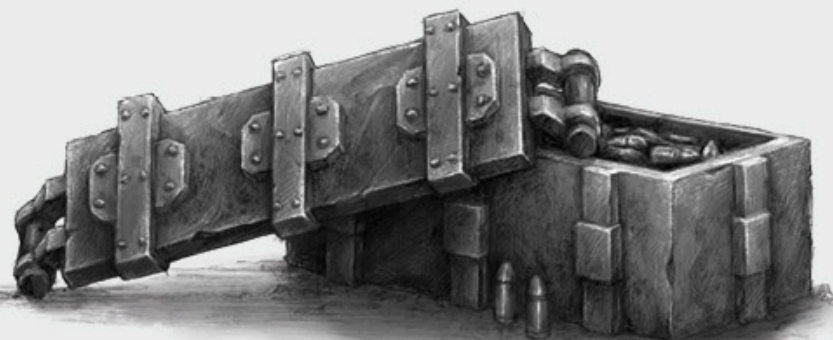
In the campaign I use them as protagonists to help tell the different stories. They have acted as bodyguards for crime lords, security detail in an underhive jail, even patrons of an arena when the gangs converged there to steal exotic beasts!



RUNNING YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN

Arbitrating an open play Necromunda campaign is easier than it might sound, and it is incredibly rewarding, both for the Arbitrator and the players. To get the most out of the experience, here are our top tips for Arbitrators looking to run a narrative campaign.

1. **Start early.** Schedule a start date a month or two in the future to provide time for participants to build and paint their gangs and to gather terrain. Use this time to encourage them to create background for their fighters, name them, think about where they come from and their Leader's goals, and so on.
2. **Involve the players.** The best resource for ideas available to any Arbitrator is the players themselves. They don't need to be involved in every detail. In fact, keeping them out of some of the planning is to be encouraged to keep some events a surprise. Some players might be shy about vocalising the story they've created for their gang; others might not know where to start. By getting them talking before the campaign begins, an Arbitrator can get them to inspire one another.
3. **Listen to the players.** Once the players are enthused and talking freely, they will give the Arbitrator loads of ideas and narrative plot devices without even realising it. Maybe there's a past rivalry between two players, or perhaps there's an alliance forming between a group. Listening to them will give the Arbitrator ideas to explore during the campaign. Keeping a close eye on grudges, alliances and acts of generosity and treachery will provide the Arbitrator with no end of plot lines to explore.
4. **Think about the setting.** Is the campaign set in an established underhive settlement like Dust Falls, or is it one of the Arbitrator's own creation? Does it have specific industries that can be reflected in the terrain and that can be used as plot points? Is there a corpse starch processing plant here, or perhaps a lot of metal working? Maybe it's a distribution hub where goods move between levels and hives? Thinking about such things helps make the setting evocative and gives ideas for scenarios and the power struggle set to unfold.
5. **Plan the battles.** Come up with scenarios that place the gangs in unusual situations. They could be converging on a warehouse that underhive gossip says holds something valuable. Maybe several gangs are hunting a xenos lifeform that's escaped. This can be escalated by introducing unexpected enemies such as Guild Watchmen or broods of xenos more powerful than anticipated. Encouraging a bit of cooperation between deadly rivals adds an extra level of interest, and it's always fun to see how quickly some players stab their friends in the back!
6. **Fight multi-player battles.** This is easy to do, and it encourages more group interaction. One-on-one battles are great fun, but bringing together several players or even the entire group can really help to build excitement and intrigue.
7. **Don't worry about the details.** It's fine not to worry about certain rules – rolling for Lasting Injuries, for example. These rules exist to make the game fair, but sometimes it's okay to let the action dictate the injuries rather than a roll of the dice. Similarly, if the players have an idea of how they want to develop their gang, facilitate that. The gang composition rules and the way gangs earn and spend credits are there to keep things neat and balanced. In an open play campaign, if a player has a narrative reason to include something, or they've won something from a scenario, or they want to promote a Juve to a Champion based on their heroics in battle, let them. If everyone taking part is committed to telling a story rather than winning a game, balance issues can easily be smoothed over.
8. **Arbitrate the battles.** Make spur-of-the-moment rulings during games based on the unfolding narrative. Perhaps the fighter that climbed onto that utility vehicle can indeed make it move and use it to block a door. Maybe that Rogue Ambot one gang managed to take control of can use its melta-fist to destroy a crucial walkway. The Arbitrator has the power to change the rules and to make decisions. Don't be afraid to do just that. The reactions of the players will indicate if it is the right thing to do or not, and if they enjoy it, it's probably worth doing.
9. **Have fun.** The Arbitrator plays the role of fate in a campaign (predestined or otherwise), of luck (both wonderful or terrible) and, sometimes, of an uncaring universe out to get the gangs. They are also playing the role of director, ensuring the action continues and that everyone in the story gives the best performance possible. Embrace and enjoy that role!



FAITH & FIRE

BY JAMES SWALLOW

The pyrokene Torris Vaun reveals the extent of the heresy on Neva to Sisters Miriya and Verity. But are they now too late to stop Lord Deacon Viktor LaHayn from enacting his grand scheme? Does he truly want to create an army of psykers? Part VII of IX.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

It was a gallery of obscenities.

The window slit looked out across the inside of a wide-open chamber, criss-crossed with the webwork of a hundred catwalks and pipeways. Complex loops of cabling went this way and that, similar to those in the streets of Noroc but far more sophisticated. Dangling from them were hooked arms, some empty, some bearing the weight of platforms or aged metal cubes as big as a tank. Many hung suspended, while others moved in trains toward unknown destinations. Among the constant rumble of activity there were odd sounds that might have been screams or electric discharges – it was hard to be sure. As far as Sister Miriya could see, the outer walls of the decks that dropped away into the depths were ringed with cell after cell of greenish, murky glass, the same sort of capsule that Vaun had been sealed in when he was brought to the *Mercutio*. An irritable sensation crawled over her skin and she tasted an indefinable tang on the air, a thick, greasy aroma. She wrinkled her face in a grimace.

‘You can sense it, can’t you?’ Vaun asked in a low voice. ‘The despair and pain of a thousand psychics, living and dead. The walls of the citadel are imprinted with it, stained by their anguish.’ He shook his head. ‘Imagine how it feels to me.’

‘My heart bleeds for your suffering, witchkin,’ she said with disdain.

Human shapes moved on some of the levels; Sister Miriya craned her neck to get a better look, but she was too high up for proper scrutiny. She could make out the doddering metal-meat amalgams of servitor drones, blinded men in what might have been mechanicus robes; but most of the figures wore habits of drab grey, loose garb that swaddled them and became a blank moon-face mask over their heads.

Vaun saw where her attention was directed. ‘The tenders. Such a horrible joke, a soft and compassionate appellation perverted by these heartless cretins.’

The Sororitas considered the witch at her side. Now was the time to be the most watchful of him. By his own admission he had wanted to gain entry to this place, and she had facilitated that for him. Vaun’s need to remain in her company was likely waning by the moment, and when the opportunity presented itself, she had no doubt that he would attempt to flee.

The other women had taken water and a brief moment for prayer. Cassandra approached, her face conflicted. ‘Sister Superior, is there any sign of alarm? I am concerned, even though Portia found nothing to indicate any sense-engines that might alert the... the inhabitants.’

‘Delicate machines do not last long in the humidity of the tunnels,’ answered the psyker, ‘and besides, the Null Keep’s lines of defence are designed to keep people from leaving, not entering. Unless you decide to clatter about on the lower levels or deliver a sermon, we should remain undetected.’

Miriya gestured to her Sisters to ready themselves. ‘We are intruders in this place, so be wary. Until we are sure of what practices are at hand within these walls, we must conceal ourselves.’ She holstered her pistol. ‘If the need comes, silent weapons only, clear?’

‘Ave Imperator,’ chorused the women.

The Sister Superior shoved Vaun in the back, toward the door. ‘Come, then, heretic. Let us see what spectacle you were so eager to lay your eyes upon.’

The psyker gave her a venomous snarl in return. ‘My pleasure. I’m sure you’ll find it most educational.’



Verity let herself be shepherded between Isabel and Cassandra, moving with all the care she could muster

through the myriad pools of shadow on the upper tiers of the chamber. Her mind flashed back to Iona and the Sister Repentia at Metis; they had done the same, protecting her with calm and flawless skill. But Iona was dead, a torched skeleton, and the rest of the Repentia had fallen alongside her. The Hospitaller felt a hard stab of guilt in her chest. She did not want the same fate to come to these women as well.

Part of her railed at herself from within. Why could she have not simply remained behind on the aeronef? Or back in Noroc? Better still, why had she not paid her respects to Lethe and then returned to her order's works on the outer moons? Verity felt empty and incomplete, grasping for some intangible form of closure that would heal the wound left by her sibling's death; but as events continued to unfold around her, more and more she was beginning to realise that nothing, not even the contrition and execution of Torris Vaun, would close that void. *Emperor, grant me guidance*, she prayed silently, *I beg of you, deliver me from this*.

'Observe,' Isabel said, pointing. 'The open area below. It appears to be an exercise yard...'

An actinic green flash blinked down in the enclosure and Verity shuddered as a thin screech filtered up a moment later. 'They killed someone.'

Miriya brought them to a halt and observed the area through her magnoculars. She was silent for a while, as if she were trying to make sense of what she was seeing. Verity strained to look with the naked eye, but all she could determine were ant-sized dots moving and swarming – and once in a while the blink of a lasgun discharge.

'A training quad,' said Miriya at length. 'There are... helots, perhaps? They are being used as targets for the ones in chains. Those robed in grey are directing the proceedings.'

'The chains are made of phase-iron,' said Vaun, his hand straying to his opposite wrist, rubbing at the site of an old injury in recollection. 'It sears the skin when psychic energies are used.'

Verity nodded. 'I have heard of this material. It is a rarity, a relic from the Dark Age of Technology.'

Vaun sniffed. 'It is not a rarity here, nursemaid. LaHayn has it in abundance.' He gestured around at the walls. 'Imagine acid boring into you every time you tried to speak, or breathe, or eat. That's what that damned metal feels like.'

The Sister Superior put away her scope and drew back from the edge of the deck. 'We move on.'

'What is going on down there?'

'A live fire exercise. The captive witches are being taught to kill with their minds.' The thought of such a thing clearly disgusted her.

Deeper in the shadows, Vaun pointed toward a section of the chamber walled off into compartments. 'This way. There used to be laboratories and surgeries on this level, before the fire.'

'Fire?' echoed Cassandra.

Vaun just smiled and kept walking.

On they went, trailing behind the amoral corsair in a wary line. Verity fingered her silver rosary chain, tracing the careworn letters etched into the surface of the bright metal. She ducked to step through a distorted hatch that had been warped by a massive discharge of heat. The carved black stone and steel plate of the outer chamber gave way to the same kind of design the Hospitaller had seen in dozens of space vessels and Imperial buildings. The crenulated columns and arched, rivet-dotted beams would have been just at home on a Navy starship as they were here.

She caught glimpses of disused laboratories, some with patches of dark colour spattered about the walls and the moribund air of decay within. Weaves of gauzy spider webs coated much of the objects inside, sealing them in the past. Other doors were of heavier gauge metal than the hatchways and set with oculus slits and heavy, ponderous gates; confinement cells. The woman found herself unwilling to peer inside, for fear of what she might see there.

Ahead of her, Isabel's body language altered slightly. The Battle Sister was on more familiar ground now, the shape of the corridors known to her. Verity had no doubt that Isabel, Portia and the others had been trained to fight inside such confines. Parts of the floor were uneven, deformed by the same heat-blast as the hatch, and her arm shot out to grab a stanchion to stop her from tripping over. The Hospitaller's hand came back to her coated with a thick layer of slimy ash; she knew at once that it was organic residue from an immolated body. With exaggerated care, she wiped the matter away and shot Vaun a disgusted glare. If he sensed it, he gave no indication.

Portia held a small beam lantern in her fist like a club,

using the stark yellow ray it cast to probe into places where the overhead biolumines could not reach. Some of the side compartments of the corridor were pitch dark. The light glittered off things made of glass, sometimes across sluggish pools of stagnant liquid. Verity's impression was one of neglect, of abandonment.

'The witch spoke truthfully,' said Portia, 'I see operating tables and medicae devices. Perhaps the Hospitaller could tell us more?'

Verity bobbed her head in acknowledgment and stepped forward. 'If you could bring your lamp-' A scrape of metal on metal silenced her with a start, and the Battle Sisters froze.

'Someone there,' murmured Vaun in faint anticipation.

Portia pressed the lantern into Verity's trembling fingers and gave Miriya a questioning look. The Sister Superior returned a nod and the other woman slid out of the corona of light and into the darkness. There was another noise, and this time it was unmistakable; the sound of human footsteps, a dithering, unsure movement.

An indistinct outline, no more than the Hospitaller's height, wavered at the corner of Verity's eye, there in the gloom of the surgery chamber; her automatic reaction was to turn the torch beam upon it. A blank, doll-like face blinked into solidity before her, with black circles for eyes and a slot for a mouth. The white mask merged into the figure's shabby grey over-robos. Caught in the light, the tender threw itself across the room at a panel on the far side of the chamber.

Startled by the apparition, Verity could do little but track the robed shape. One hand was within a finger's length of touching the console when Portia faded out of the dark and caught the tender. It happened so quickly the Hospitaller had only flashes; the wet snap of bone as the tender's arm was ruined; a rustle of clothing and the glint of a weapon; glossy black Sororitas armour glittering like an insect carapace; the ripping crack of a neck breaking, a coughing gasp and a falling body.

'Forgive me,' said Portia to the Sister Superior, 'he was attempting to reach this vox lectern. I reacted to stop him raising an alert.'

'You acted properly,' noted Miriya.

Verity swallowed hard. The moment of death had taken hardly a blink.

Portia took the beam lantern back from her rigid grip and turned it on the dead man, using her free hand to peel back the blank mask. A rather ordinary face looked back up at them, the expression of faint surprise still there on his face.

'Hmph. Nobody I know,' Vaun interjected, 'good kill, though. Very nice technique.'

Portia did not look up from her examination of her victim. 'It would be my pleasure to demonstrate it to you at close quarters, maleficent.' She pulled at a line of buttons and the over-robos fell open. 'This mantle is lined with a ceramite weave.'

'Body armour,' offered Cassandra, 'in case their charges get too boisterous.'

'The clothing beneath...' Portia fingered a garment in rich red material. 'This is the attire of a cleric!' She found the dead man's necklace; it was a string of onyx beads ending in a golden aquila, an affectation of the Nevan branch of the Imperial Cult.

Vaun laughed softly. 'How troubling! Now, what would a pious servant of the God-Emperor be doing here, I wonder?'

Miriya rounded on the criminal. 'You knew! You knew and yet you let her end the life of a priest and said nothing!' She spat. 'His blood is on your hands!'

'Along with hundreds of others,' retorted Vaun, his amusement gone in an instant, 'not that I care.'

'You'll be made to,' vowed the Celestian, 'you have my word on it.'

The man made an annoyed snarl. 'Ach, look beyond that, woman!' he snapped, pointing at the corpse. 'Don't you understand what it means?'

Isabel was examining the consoles in the chamber. 'I am no tech-adept, but I believe he appeared to be attempting to perform a prayer-diagnostic on these devices.' She ran her hands over a set of tarnished brass dials and a wavering hololith screen hummed to life. The image was leached of colour, but it clearly showed the activities of a group of similarly dressed figures working at a body on an operating dais. Verity watched for a moment before realising two things; the body was a person still alive, conscious and unanaesthetised, and the display was a visual record of something that had taken place in this very room. The screen threw more light about the

chamber, illuminating the white porcelain dais and the dark stains of dried vitae about the blood gutters.

Vaun craned his neck to get a better look at the activity on the hololith. 'Now, her I do know,' he noted, 'or rather, I did. Kipsel, her name was.' He looked away. 'She died of that.'

'Of what?' Verity asked, in a dull voice.

Vaun tapped the lump behind his ear. 'Of this.'

Isabel scrutinised a ticking display rotor in High Gothic. 'Kipsel. That name is here in the recording. Dates, as well.'

The Hospitaller looked over her shoulder. The dates fell squarely in the time period where Vaun's librarium files were empty. She looked up at the screen and her eyes widened. 'Can you halt the progress of the image?'

The Battle Sister turned a control and the recording slowed down to a stop. 'What is it, girl?'

Verity pointed at the corner of the hololith, her finger breaking the surface of the ghost image. 'It's him. It's both of them.'

'Holy Terra... Yes, I see it.' Isabel worked the controls again, making the image shift to bring that section of the picture forward.

Verity and the other women saw several men, garbed in the same robes as the dead priest, but with their hoods down. Two men in particular were at the core of the group, the others around them showing obvious deference. Their profiles were unmistakable, even though time and the poor recording marred the likenesses.

Vaun indicated the men with a theatrical sweep of his hand. 'Honoured Sisters, may I present his most loathsome self, the Lord Viktor LaHayn and his lickspittle Venik.'



Miriya ordered her Celestians to sweep the operating theatre and the anterooms that spread off from it. It appeared that the dead priest had been in the process of surveying the contents – perhaps in preparation to return them to use, she wondered – and one of the rooms contained a wheeled cargo lighter, stacked with spools of glittering wire. Verity identified it as a variety of datum

storage media, the same as the hololithic screen used to replay the images of LaHayn and the ill-fated Kipsel. There were uncountable hours of footage here, and Emperor-knew how many recordings of witches undergoing the same brutal violations. The Sister Superior considered the spools with dispassion; she had no sympathy for the psykers, but the eager, almost wanton manner in which the woman Kipsel had been desecrated struck a wrong chord in her mind. The church did not torture and maim without good cause, and it gnawed at her that she knew not what motivated Lord LaHayn.

'This must have been going on for decades,' murmured Cassandra, 'and yet I have never heard of the like.'

Miriya wondered if the Imperial Inquisition might have had a hand here, but there was nothing to indicate the presence of the Ordo Malleus or any other branch of the God-Emperor's inquest; in her experience, Inquisitors were only too pleased to trumpet their deeds to the church. No, the studied and careful concealment of what was taking place in the Null Keep made her seasoned warrior's mind taut with suspicion.

Verity examined the operating dais. There were tools, now rusted and dull, still stored in drawers set into the cracked porcelain frame. From a tray connected by a corroded servitor-arm, she plucked out a slivery orb and held it up to the torchlight. Miriya exchanged a look with the Hospitaller as they both recognised the same design of implant device from the inside of Ignis's skull. In another anteroom there were objects that were undeniably of inhuman origin. Suspended in tanks of thin oil, Portia turned her torch to illuminate steely constructs mated with rods of green-hued glass, all long lines and right angles. Next to this, a curved hollow of yellowed bone marked with purple eldar runes, its purpose unguessable, and finally a grotesque hydrocelaphic ork skull, bloated beyond normal size by the touch of mutation.

'Viktor always had eclectic tastes,' noted Vaun archly. 'There's no avenue of investigation he won't venture down.'

Something inside Miriya's iron-hard resolve snapped and she backhanded the psyker with a savage, lightning-fast blow. Vaun stumbled away, clutching as a bleeding cut in cheek as she drew her plasma pistol. 'I have reached my limit with your games, creature. I want no more of your half-truths and obfuscations!'

Vaun spat blood on the tiled floor. 'You pull that trigger, wench, and the whole Keep will know it. You'll never get out of here alive!'

'I'll take that chance.' The collimator coils atop the gun hummed and glowed. 'No more games, no more wordplay, no more circumlocution! You'll tell me the truth now, or else I will gun you down and tear it from these black walls myself!'

The psyker dabbed at the wound on his face, measuring the moment. 'Very well. It seems I have no choice.' He sighed. 'It's an interesting story.'



Torris Vaun had been no more than a youth when he discovered that the cleric in his settlement had contacted the capital and told them of his 'talents'. In a fit of directionless anger, the boy had burned the church to the ground with the humming, electric potency that lurked behind his eyes. The cleric, his dirty old habit smouldering, had made it into the graveyard before he set him alight too, and Vaun had stood and listened to the crisping crackle of flaming human meat.

Not a single soul in the town would come near him as he waited by the chapel arch, watching his handiwork. They were too scared to approach for fear he would do the same to them. As he listened to them point and whisper, Vaun decided that he would have to leave this place and strike for bigger, greater things. Of late, the settlement had grown stifling, the challenge of terrorising the little township growing ever less interesting.

Presently a man arrived, a swift coleopter depositing him on the hill. Another priest, Vaun noted. He began to muster his powers in preparation to kill again. But when the newcomer came close enough, Torris could see he was laughing. The black humour was infectious; soon the youth was laughing too. And there, in the glow of the burning church, the new arrival offered him his hand and a chance for fortune and glory the likes of which Vaun had only dreamed.



'You know the story of the Wound, of Saint Celestine and the Passing of Her Glory?' Vaun waved his hand. 'Of course you do. But Neva's past holds more to it than that, or the ridiculous games fought by the nobles with assassins and cat's-paws. You just have to look deeper. Much deeper.' The psyker righted a fallen chair and sat upon it, warming to his subject. 'Celestine's coming cleared the warpstorm that had shrouded this planet and for that she was duly

enshrined in its miserable annals. But that occurrence was not the first time the clouds of the empyrean had converged on Neva. You see, such a thing has happened here dozens of times, as far back as the Age of Strife.' He paused, fishing a battered tin box from his pocket. 'May I take a cigarillo?' Vaun asked Miriya, 'It's been a while—'

Cassandra reached down and slapped the box from his hand, sending it skittering away into the shadows.

'Ah. That would be a no, then?'

'Keep talking,' growled Miriya.

'Very well. The storms. While some worlds that felt the touch of the warp were destroyed or worse, fell bodily into the realm of Chaos, Neva was not one of them. No, instead the caress of the immaterium was subtler, more insidious. Like a taint upstream flowing down a river, the warp left a mark on this world. It turned the bloodlines of every living soul upon it just a little.' The man held up his thumb and forefinger a few centimetres apart. 'But just enough. Tell me, Sister Superior, how many psykers are there for every normal human in the Imperium?'

'One or two in every hundred thousand births, perhaps less.'

Vaun nodded. 'On Neva the number would probably be closer to five times that.' He ignored the looks of incredulity on the women's faces. 'Neva's brush with warpspace means that its people are more attuned to the psychic realm. Most of them never know it, they just get "feelings" or have strange dreams. But many of us exhibit the more, shall I say, *unique* properties.'

'Impossible,' snapped Portia.

'Short-sighted as ever,' retorted Vaun. 'Think, dullard! Neva is not the only world to have such a blessing. What of Magog, or Prospero, the holdfast of the Thousand Sons? Those planets were rich in preternatural power.'

'Magog obliterated itself,' said Verity, 'and the Space Marines of the Thousand Sons turned to Chaos. Prospero vanished into the Eye of Terror.'

Vaun dismissed her words with a wave of the hand. 'Details, mere details. The fact remains. The bloodlines of Neva are laced with metapsychic potential. I am living proof.'

'What does this mad theory have to do with LaHayn and this place?' demanded Miriya.

'Everything.'



The cleric – he was an arch-confessor then, of high rank among the diocese and not yet the *Lord* Viktor LaHayn – took him to a dark castle and made him play with his ability. Vaun excelled, untroubled by moral concerns and other petty things, and LaHayn saw potential in him for greatness. He hadn't known it at the time, but now Vaun understood; LaHayn, a normal, pathetic dead-mind like all the others, was jealous of him. He craved the power that came so easily to Torris, and when he couldn't engender it in himself, instead he worked to make himself master of those who had it.

LaHayn had his pet adepts place things inside him, opening up his brain and doctoring it. The agonies were so fierce, worse than any thing a non-psyker could ever have imagined, but they also opened the floodgates to stronger wells of burning power within him. Vaun's mindfire blossomed, and in the service of his new master, he was compelled to fight in the secret wars that raged beneath the placid surface of Neva's society. But as Vaun's ability and prowess grew, so did his resentment.

The day came when Vaun crossed paths with an avaricious baron named Holt Sherring; the baron had only fragments of the story of the Null Keep and Neva's dark secret, but it was enough to make him a player in LaHayn's game. When Vaun was sent to kill him, Sherring offered the psyker a way to smash his enforced habituation and set himself free. There was no hesitation in Vaun's agreement – but he no more wanted to be a pawn of the baron than the deacon, and as soon as he was able to break free, Vaun fled to the stars to carve a reputation for himself, and brood on a reprisal.



'The Null Keep was created in the deep past as a bulwark against the daemons of the warp, and LaHayn took it for himself. It was an ideal location for his works, isolated, invisible. He kept his dark machinations concealed here so they could not taint his public image, just as Neva's people moved their polluting industry to the outer moons.' Vaun tap-tapped his knuckles on the wall, remembering. 'This was my home, my prison, my torture-house. All of us, the pieces in the lord deacon's games. After I broke free, I swore I would come back to obliterate this place. And bless poor, stupid Holt, but he found it for me.'

'I do not understand,' said Isabel, 'if you were held here for so long, why did you need Baron Sherring to find the location for you?'

He pointed at the implant. 'Viktor's magis biologis are very talented. The implants they created place blocks on the mind. I can no more hold the location of this place in my head than I can count the number of stars in the galaxy.' He snorted. 'All there is are blurs. A clever way to stop any escapees from returning to plague him. Or so he thought.'

'You learned to break your conditioning?'

A nod. 'You see, LaHayn learned of the secret of Neva as an initiate, from a secret sect of Gethsemenite monks. He told me that it was a revelation for him.' Vaun smiled coldly. 'Years later, he had me hunt down and kill every one of them, burn their monastery, destroy their manuscripts.'

'You were his weapon...' mused Miriya.

'I was his slave!' The brittle ice of his smile shattered. 'He compelled me, made me kill for him, all so that he could cement his position in the hierarchy. I helped keep this secret, you see. If an Inquisitor got too close, or some cleric who knew too much grew a conscience, it was I that barred the way. The burned dead in the name of LaHayn's grand scheme grew large in number.' He looked at the floor. 'For a time I liked it. I was his red right hand, his sly agent of menace. But I knew that one day I would outlive my usefulness to him.' Vaun took a long breath. 'While I guarded his secrets, LaHayn worked diligently at his endeavours. He gathered those with the psychic gift and made sure that the tithes to the Black Ships were just as they should be. He threw them the weak ones, the lesser and broken minds, all the while skimming off the cream for his own private cadre here at the Keep. Slowly and surely, he has been experimenting on my kind, peeling back the secrets of the mind with ancient technology and callous resolve. All the while, building an army, keeping them asleep until he needs them. For when his invasion begins.'

'Invasion?' echoed Cassandra. 'What do you speak of, criminal?'

'The invasion of Terra, of course. The lord deacon intends nothing less than to destroy the Golden Throne of Earth.'



The *Aquila*-class shuttle carved a supersonic path through the roiling black clouds of the wastelands, tipping up on the edge of a wing to skirt about the plumes of toxic gas issuing from the muttering chains of volcanoes. Designed to resemble the Imperial Eagle with its wings outstretched, the craft was swift and capable; an icon of the Emperor's will made manifest in steel and ceramite. There were only a few of the ships in service on Neva, and only one dedicated exclusively to the use of a single man. In the passenger compartment, Lord LaHayn ignored the buffeting of the flight and replaced his empty amasec glass in a receptacle before him. An enunciator on the bulkhead shaped like a choral mask gave a peep of sound. 'Great Ecclesiarch,' came the voice of the pilot servitor, 'we are approaching the Keep. Please prepare yourself for landing.'

'Good,' replied the deacon with a nod, and he pressed himself back into his sumptuous acceleration chair. His outwardly calm demeanour masked the churn of his inner thoughts. The course of events was in serious danger of spiralling out of control, and LaHayn feared that the tighter he made his grip, the more threads would slip through his fingers. It was imperative for the Great Work that he personally took command of things – and there was no place better suited than his sanctum sanctorum, his perfect retreat and workshop here in the Null Keep. The lord deacon had left Venik behind, preening at his new role as Neva's interim governor. The haughty dean would give the nobles and the people something to focus on while LaHayn worked behind the scenes. With luck, he would have everything on an even keel in time for the state funeral of poor, stupid Emmel.

At the edges of his thoughts, a doubt unfurled. Who was to blame for this turn of events? In the cold light of truth, the blame could easily lie at his feet. Had he not been so rigid in his orders, had he been willing to let the Battle Sisters terminate Vaun on sight, then none of his carefully wrought schemes would be so close to discovery. He dismissed the thought with a grimace. This was not the place for uncertainty! No, the woman Miriya, it was she where the blame rested. Her stupidity in letting the witch escape to wreak havoc... The priest glanced out of the viewport as the Keep hove into view and smiled thinly. Still, some good had come of this comedy of errors; Vaun's covert contact with Sherring had become obvious and that had allowed him to eradicate a rival. Now all that remained was to complete the circle with Vaun himself.

The shuttle dipped toward the peak of the towering volcanic cone, passing through dark, ashen smoke, and LaHayn mused on the matter of his former protégé. Vaun would come to the Keep, of that he had no doubt. From the moment he had heard of the escape and flight to Neva, he had known what destination Torris sought. It was

only a matter of time until teacher and student faced each other again.

'And this time, there will be an end to it,' he said aloud.



A cloister bell tolled through the decks of the Null Keep and reached to the upper tiers where the Sisters concealed themselves.

'Perfect timing,' grinned Vaun. 'Viktor does have an excellent sense of theatre. I've always admired that about him.'

At the hololithic lectern, Isabel manipulated the controls to gain some sense of what was transpiring. 'A general alert, Sister Miriya,' she said reading the glyphs, 'a ship is landing at one of the docking platforms.'

'I could show you,' offered Vaun. 'The screens link into a central nexus web. The tenders used them to broadcast those dreary hymns. With your permission, of course.'

'Do it,' ordered Miriya.

'Excuse me...' The psyker moved around Isabel and altered the setting of the device. The image changed to become an exterior view of a flat, glassy landing pad. After a moment, an honour guard of robed tenders marched up in a line as an *Aquila* shuttle dropped into view. There was no sound; the aircraft's wings folded upward and claw-like landing skids deployed before it settled to the ground. Miriya looked closer. The man descending the ramp from the shuttle was unmistakably Viktor LaHayn.

'Now do you accept the veracity of what I told you?' demanded Vaun. He drifted away from the console, moving slowly out of the nimbus of light.

'There may be some truth in it.' Cassandra's admission was grudging.

Miriya glanced at the witch, and then back at the hololith; it was the moment that the man had been watching for, the single instant when all the Sisters had turned their attention from him. Finding such a point in time was the mark of a true genius, Viktor had always told him. 'The key to greatness,' he had pontificated, 'is to know patience, to know when tipping point is before you. Strike then, and you will leave your adversary in disarray.'

Just so. Vaun had let them push him about, abuse him and deride him since the moment they found him in the

wreckage, and all of it had been a play leading to this instant. Even the watchful, shrewd Sisters of Our Martyred Lady were not infallible; and it would be his pleasure to show them that fact.

Two things happened at once. The mindfire that Vaun had been carefully marshalling for the last few hours erupted into the room, the air igniting. The women were punched down by the backdraft; at the same time, he was at the vox lectern, slamming home the punch-switch that sounded the alert klaxon.

Shot and shell came snapping at his heels as he threw himself out of the derelict operating theatre and into the ruined corridors. Vaun ran and found his old hiding places, laughing silently as the tenders came swarming upward.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Miriya's rage knew no limit. Howling like a wildcat, she stood in the throat of the oncoming firestorm and sent streaks of killing fire back toward the aggressors. Her fury was a terrible thing to see unleashed, and her anger – directed at herself as much as the enemy – lit the corridor around her with plasma flames.

The Battle Sisters left the decrepit medicae lab behind as the tenders came to suppress them. The initial group deposited by the cable-lifts fired first, unwilling to do anything but attack these group of intruders; they were easily dispatched, no match for the Sisters of Katherine when their blood was up. But these were only the first. More men in grey robes came, and this time they brought bloodhounds. The brains of the bound psy-slaves had been reduced to animalistic levels, and they scuttled on all fours, howling as they threw wild darts of psychokinetic force about them.

The tenders were well armed for priests; what they lacked in the cold application of soldiery exhibited by the Sisters, they made up for with their rare bolter-crossbow weapons, glittering with artificer filigree. Humming electro-stakes as long as Miriya's arm rained down the open hallway, rebounding off the steel walls in sparks of searing blue light. The Celestian heard an irate curse behind her as Isabel took a stake in the shoulder, spinning her about like a top. The priest-troopers and their cohorts came on, pressing the attack, pushing the women deeper into the iron compartments.

Portia was at her side, snarling over the noise of her bolter. 'What now, Sister Superior?' she demanded, placing a scathing emphasis on Miriya's rank. 'Our means of entry is cut off, and these clerics outnumber us more and more with each passing moment!'

Miriya ducked behind a burning console to collect her thoughts. The plasma weapon in her hand was glowing cherry red with discharge, and she could feel the heat of it through her gloves. *Damn Vaun!* she railed at herself, *damn the witch and his lies! My foolish curiosity has led my cohort to ruin!*

'Sister!' snapped Portia, 'what are your orders?' The smell of hot metal issued from the breech of her gun as she retreated into the lee of a stanchion to reload a spent sickle magazine.

Miriya glared at her. 'We quit this place. A higher authority must intervene here. I will contact the Canoness!'

Another electro-stake whistled through the air above them. 'Vox signals. Blocked,' came Isabel's voice, each word tight with pain. 'Can't get a message out.'

'Even if we could get a communication through the walls of this blighted tower, Galatea will execute us for disobeying her orders!' retorted Portia.

'There will be a transceiver array in this place. We will find it and sound a clarion.' Miriya stared at her gun, metering her rage. 'I will take whatever punishment the Canoness decrees – but she will see my transgressions as miniscule when she understands what we have discovered here!'

'Aye, providing she's willing to take the testimony of a corsair over the lord deacon! We have only Vaun's word–'

'You saw the same as I!' snapped Miriya. 'LaHayn has a secret agenda in this place, and that cannot be denied!'

'*Mercutio* should blast this crag from orbit!' spat Isabel, returning fire with her uninjured arm. 'Accursed pastors! You dare attack the Daughters of the Emperor?'

Shot and stake crossed each other in the enclosed space; the stink of spent cordite and scorched steel cut the women's throats with every breath. Miriya glanced back at Isabel, and saw Verity tending to her injury even as the Battle Sister worked at her bolter, reloading the weapon one-handed. Behind them, Cassandra stabbed at finger into the melee. 'Something's coming...'

The words had barely left her mouth before the deck plates beneath their feet began to shudder with dozens of heavy footfalls. Miriya turned back to see the tenders and their hound-psykers parting to allow a trio of heavy gun servitors to approach the firing line. Almost the size of Dreadnoughts, the flesh-metal amalgams stomped dead clerics into slime beneath their clawed feet as they shouldered forward. Meltaguns whined up to full capacity

and oily snaps of sound announced the unlocking of multi-barrelled stubber cannon. 'Fall back!' she shouted, hurling herself from her cover just as the machine slaves filled the passageway with a screaming riot of gunfire.

She saw Cassandra grab a handful of Verity's cloak and bodily throw the slight-framed girl back down the corridor. Portia tossed a krak grenade at the servitors and then joined Isabel in shooting. Miriya paced shots into the stumbling, inexorable man-shapes, her plasma pistol cooking off a drum of battery acids in an acrid slam of concussion that doubled with the blast of the grenade. One of the servitors tripped and fell, making the deck plates twitch again with the force of its collapse; but there were more than just these three. The Celestian saw four more piston-legged monstrosities lurching out of the gun smoke.

'Back! Back! Find a branch corridor, a vent grille, anything!'

'Nothing!' came Verity's panicked voice, 'this is a dead end! We are boxed in!'

Isabel growled with every step she took, the stake still embedded in her arm clearly grinding against the bone as she moved; Miriya felt a sting of pride as her Sister did not let it slow her chastisement of the enemy. Isabel had always been one of the keenest shots in the Celestians, an elite among the elite. As if in acknowledgement of this, there came a death cry from one of the grey robes as a careful bolt shell cleaved in a tender's ribcage. The Sister Superior stepped past Portia, firing again and again at the marching servitors.

'Ah!' Portia cried in desperation, 'I'd sell my virtue for a storm bolter!'

Despite the onrushing threat, a peculiar amusement rippled out among the women, the charged emotions so close to death turning to black humour. 'Offer it to the servitors!' retorted Cassandra, 'it would kill them quicker than any gunshot!'

Miriya's face split in a fierce grin; if this were to be the end of them, then in the name of Katherine, Celestine and the Thousand-Numbered Saints, the Sisters of Battle would make the end a costly one for LaHayn's lackeys.

Something in the walls shifted and banged against flat plates of metal, and without warning the floor lurched to one side. Iron clasps as big as her head snapped open on the walls and ceiling. The gun servitors shrank back as the women lost their footing.

'What in Hades...?' cried Cassandra, grabbing at an iron pillar.

Suddenly the corridor down which they had been forced was drifting away from them, a gap widening with each passing second. Miriya's perception was confused for a moment before she realised that the dead-end corridor was nothing of the kind – it was a trap, an open-ended box at the end of a conduit, suspended on chains like the phase-iron cells they had seen from the maintenance gantries. There was little to gain purchase on and the Sororitas skidded on the sheer metal deck as a crane arm pulled the captive chamber away, swinging it over the wide open void between the Keep's inner tiers.

Portia teetered close to the edge and her boot slipped out from under her. Isabel was near and she tried to grab her; but habit made her offer her bloody, numbed arm and the limb refused to obey. Portia fell backwards out of the lurching box and plummeted down. Isabel turned away as a sickening crack of bone and shattered ceramite briefly joined the tide of clamour inside the Keep.

Another Sister lost. Miriya allowed herself one tiny moment of anguish at Portia's ending and then sealed it away inside her heart. There would be time to mourn later, when candles could be lit and canticles to the fallen recited. 'On your guard!' she snapped, 'Be ready!'

With a swift jerk, the motion of the container was arrested and the box hung for long seconds in midair. The women could see nothing outside except the glitter of lights on the far tier and coils of dark vapour; then the chains above squealed and the metal box went into freefall. Miriya was slammed against the side of the container and clung to it, watching the levels of the Keep flash by, watching the flat expanse of the lowermost tier rise up to meet them at a frightening speed. She screwed her eyes shut and called the God-Emperor's name.

When the impact came, she feared her neck would be snapped; instead she was thrown into Cassandra and the women collapsed in a heap, tossed around inside the box like gambler's dice in a chalice. The headlong fall of the container had been halted mere feet from the ground, deliberately to shock and disorient them. Blood gummed her right eye shut as Miriya struggled to get to her feet and failed. Every joint in her body sang with pain. She made out the blurry forms of robed men advancing on the box, shock-staves in their hands. Like the power mauls of the Adeptus Arbites, the weapons delivered punishing electrostatic discharges that could cripple and maim; Miriya managed only to croak out a denial before the tenders swarmed into the container and beat the Sisters into senselessness.



Consciousness, when it returned, did not come in a slow trickle or gentle awakening. It forced itself into Verity's perception like a violent intruder, hammering jagged chunks of painful wakefulness into her. She felt sick and gasped as she failed to prevent her stomach from ejecting thin, watery bile. There was the coppery metallic taste of blood in her mouth, and the acidity of raw ozone. The stink of air ripped open by electricity filled Verity's nostrils and she suppressed another gag reflex. The action made her head loll, her neck rubbery and loose. The Hospitaller blinked owlshly, and tried to take stock. The cool, clinical portion of her mind ran through a checklist of injuries, finding contusions and cuts, but thankfully nothing that would indicate broken bones or internal bleeding.

How long? How long was I unconscious? Labouring, she drew in a breath of tainted air and attempted to look about her. There were iron manacles circling her wrists and ankles, linked by chain to a strange pulley device above. More chains and more pulleys connected to the slumped forms of Sister Miriya and the other Sororitas.

'Miriya?' She managed, pushing the slurred word out of her mouth, her tongue like a lump of old leather, 'Cassandra? Do you hear me?'

When no reply came, she tried to turn in place, but the exertion was like shifting a sack of wet sand. Verity let herself sink to the chilly black flagstones beneath her feet and massaged the painful places in her arms and legs. Looking about, she could see that the chamber they had been placed in was not a holding cell, but a large workshop. Banks of benches with quiet tech-adepts and servitors surrounded them, hard at work on unfathomable tasks beneath the sickly light of ancient biolumines. There were tall, indistinct objects at the edge of her perception, but the Hospitaller couldn't begin to grasp their purpose.

A groan drew her attention back to Sister Miriya. The Battle Sister righted herself. 'My weapons... equipment. Taken?'

'It appears so,' said Verity, her voice croaky. 'My medicus ministorum has been removed from my person, even my holy tome.'

'Mine as well,' replied the Sororitas, searching the pockets in her robes. The Hospitaller had heard it said that the copies of the scared texts carried by Sisters of Battle held kill-needles and memory-metal knives concealed in their

pages along with the God-Emperor's wisdom. The woman glanced up as footsteps approached them.

Verity followed Miriya's gaze and felt ice form in the pit of her stomach as Lord LaHayn emerged from the shadows. A group of tenders followed him in tight escort, and one marched with his hood back and a device in his hand trailing cables behind it. The deacon wore a peculiar aspect; he seemed distressed, in the manner of a parent disappointed with a misbehaving child.

'Sister Verity, Sister Miriya. You cannot know how unhappy it makes me to find you here.'

The furious Sister Superior was suddenly on her feet. 'What in Holy Terra's name are you doing in this foul place, cleric?'

LaHayn threw a nod to priest at his side, and the man turned a dial on his control unit. The pulley over Miriya's head ground its cogs and she was hauled upward with a jerk, just enough to take her a couple of centimetres off her feet. She hung there like a puppet painted in black enamel, cursing the deacon.

'Show some respect for my rank, Sister. Now, tell me, how did you get here?' he asked calmly, his voice carrying. 'Tell me how you found the Null Keep.'

'Go to hell, traitor!' barked Cassandra, and for daring to speak she too was hoisted upward with a painful wrench.

'Traitor...' LaHayn rolled the word around his mouth, as if it were some rare delicacy to be sampled. 'Perhaps in the eyes of a fool. But a true servant of the God-Emperor would understand I am anything but seditious.' He studied Verity. 'Will you answer me, Hospitaller? I know I could put these Sororitas to the question for days and nights before they broke – but you? I think you would not be so strong.'

'T-test me, if you will,' Verity managed, fighting down her fear.

LaHayn nodded. 'Perhaps another query then, something easier. Torris Vaun. Where is my errant witch?'

'Don't answer him!' snapped Cassandra, 'he knows where his lackey is! He's playing games with you!'

Cold amusement bubbled up in a frosty chuckle. 'My lackey? Ah, perhaps Vaun was that once upon a time, but those days are long gone, mores the pity. Perhaps if I had not allowed my attention to wander...' LaHayn snapped his fingers, putting an end to his reverie. 'No matter.

What's done is done.' He watched Verity's face, musing. 'Yes. I think I can answer my own questions. He brought you here, didn't he? Vaun found his way back and he used you to get here.' Another nod. 'Cunning. He's lost nothing of his skills.'

The unhooded tender spoke for the first time. 'There was no sign of the pyrokene on the upper tiers, Ecclesiarch. If he is indeed within the perimeter of the Keep--'

LaHayn snapped out orders. 'Triple the guards at the engine hall. Draw weapons for all adherents. Vaun is to be captured intact.'

The priest frowned. 'My lord, that will deplete numbers in the dungeon tiers.'

'I am well aware of that, Ojis,' retorted the deacon, 'now do as I say! He'll try to breach the chamber. We'll take him there.' Ojis turned to relay the commands to the other tenders as LaHayn brought his attention back to the women. 'I suppose I should thank you. In your own muddling way, you have fulfilled the decree I set you; to bring me Torris Vaun alive.'

'That creature should have been terminated when the Argent Shroud found him on Groombridge!' snapped Isabel, nursing her injured arm.

LaHayn sneered. 'Do you know how rare he is? You can't begin to comprehend the investment he represents, the effort I have spent. His value is a thousand times that of your lives.' He looked away. 'I want him to live, woman. He is the last piece in a puzzle I have spent a lifetime assembling.'

'So it is you we should blame for Vaun's rampage, then?' Verity asked, finding a reserve of defiance inside her. 'All this leads back to you, lord deacon. You sent the killer to the librarium! You're the spider in the web, not that witch.'

'Your fortitude against my shadow was quite unexpected, I admit. As for Vaun, his time runs thin. I might say the same about you,' he frowned.

'You would spill the blood of the Daughters of the Emperor?' spat Cassandra, 'you would be dead at Vaun's hands if not for us! We saved your life at the Lunar Cathedral!'

'You did,' nodded LaHayn, 'and that is the only reason why I have not executed you out of hand. Sisters, you present me with a conundrum; what am I to do with you? I do so object to the waste of material with such promise.'

'If you will end us, then do it now,' demanded Miriya, 'the stink of the witch about you fills me with repugnance!'

He approached her. 'You are mistaken if you believe that this is a matter of collaboration, Sister Miriya. No, this is about *control*. My Great Work is dedicated to the harnessing of the psyker gene, just as the magis biologis craft germs for a virus bomb or the mechanicus construct a cogitator.' Verity could see the deacon warming to his subject, the same arrogant poise he showed when he addressed the people during the Games of Penance moulding his manner. All he lacked was a pulpit from which to hold forth from. LaHayn gestured to Ojis and the tenders. 'Many have been brought into my fold, Sisters. Dedicated adherents to the God-Emperor, one and all. If only you understood my vision, you would see the perfection of it.'

Verity saw the opportunity and seized it before the others could take a breath to decry him. 'Then tell us, lord deacon. Explain what possible prospect could compel you to craft a secret opus, hidden from the eyes of the Imperium.'

He laughed. 'Oh, how arch. Do you think me so venial that an ill-worded taunt would make me spill my secrets to you?'

'But you will,' growled Miriya, 'because you crave an audience! You and Vaun are alike in many ways, deacon. Your egos drive you, you're compelled by the belief in your own rightness. You both live to prove that those who deny you are wrong.' Miriya's eyes narrowed. 'So do it, then. Attest to us how right you are.'



The ancient man-made halls of the Null Keep were just as he remembered them. The floors of old black basalt slid past and recollections crowded in on him. Sense-memory of his youth came forth, still dull at the edges with the lingering effect of the neuropathic philtre. The feeling of the cold stone against the slaps of his bare feet, the tenders watching the young prospects as they made them play hunt-and-seek in the service tunnels. He halted in the half-dark, licking his dry lips, working the wire binding off his wrists. The psyker felt a peculiar sense of elation, perhaps even a little fear. He let himself toy with it for a few moments, before purging it from his mind. This place; it had been the site of his awakening, but also of his greatest betrayal. Vaun's face twisted in anger. He hated himself for the way that he had admired LaHayn in the early days, the way that he had been only too happy

to do the priest's bidding. But then, he had been immature and unschooled. Now he knew far better, and so he nurtured his hate of the man who had betrayed him. He wondered how he could have missed something in his former mentor that seemed so obvious to him now. Like all the others LaHayn had covertly recruited from the tithes destined for the Black Ships, Vaun had only been a means to an end – a wager against the deacon's grand plan for glory. He reflected on this, and sensed there in the stone around him the faint traces of despair. So much had been done, so many horrors turned upon the minds and bodies of psykers in this place. Their collective misery stained the walls, it leaked like glutinous oil into the mentality of any who had the preternatural sense to feel it. Vaun shored up the opaque thought-walls inside him and blotted it out. It took much of his will to bring silence once more.

Gingerly, for the first time in months, the psyker allowed himself to think of the engine. He saw the device in vague, ghostly sketches, half-glimpsed, and faintly remembered flashes. The thought of the machine and its impossible geometries threatened pain. Conjuring it in his head was like probing a newly scabbed wound; and yet, it was the end goal for everything that transpired here. As much as Vaun feared it, he wanted it, but to lay his hands upon the device would not be an easy task. He drew himself into an inky pool of shadow as two tenders raced past him. To get what he wanted, Vaun mused, he would need to do that which he did best; engender anarchy and disorder.



As Miriya spoke, Verity watched the deacon carefully. 'Vaun showed us evidence of your experimentation on the witchkin. Show us why you are marshalling an army of freaks!'

LaHayn's face darkened with anger. 'Not freaks, you insolent nun. Enhancements. Improvements. My subjects are stepping stones on the road to the Emperor's destiny!'

'You dare to speak his name in this temple of horrors?' spat Isabel.

'Be quiet, girl,' he sneered, 'your dogmatic order understands nothing of the Lord of Man's machinations.' LaHayn took a breath. 'I will indulge you, because it will amuse me to see your minds struggle to comprehend the awesome reality.' He dragged Verity to her feet. 'You know the story of the Heresy, of how He was felled by the archtraitor Horus and confined forever to the stasis of the Golden Throne.'

Reflexively, Verity made the sign of the aquila, the still-loose chains on her manacles clanking as she did so. 'And from there, the God-Emperor watches over us.'

'Yes...'. LaHayn looked away. He seemed genuinely moved by the scale of the sacrifice made by the Master of Mankind. 'But what you do not know, what is recorded only in the most secret and arcane places, is the nature of the Great Work that He was about when Horus's perfidy drew him away.' The deacon's voice dropped to a low, reverent whisper. 'I have dedicated my life to that knowledge. I have found scraps of datum from across the galaxy, collated and sifted them, and drawn together a piecemeal vision of what I believe to be the Emperor's lost labour. That is what I continue here, His works.'

'By cutting up psykers and stuffing them in bottles?' mocked Cassandra through gritted teeth. 'You'll have to do better than that!'

The deacon stalked away in annoyance, his voice rising to echo about the stone chamber. 'With each passing century, more and more psykers are born within the Imperium, far more than the Adeptus Ministorum would admit to! These are not mutant throwbacks, they are the hand of human evolution struggling to exert itself! The fools of the Ordo Malleus try to stem the tide but they are blind to the truth! That the progression of mankind's psychic potential is inevitable, that it was the will of the Emperor to shepherd it, not destroy it!'

'Madness!' retorted Miriya, 'how can you claim to know the God-Emperor's mind? His intentions are beyond those of normal men! You've made some patchwork ideal from half-truths and rumour, then trumpeted it as fact! This is delusion, priest, *delusion!*'

He shook his head fiercely. 'Don't you see?' LaHayn hissed, 'He knew that one day all mankind would develop the power of the mind! It is our destiny! Think of it, imagine a time when every man is a god himself, a subject in an Imperium that spans the universe! Can you even begin to comprehend the glory of it?' The deacon's eyes glittered. 'Had He not been wounded so grievously by Horus, that destiny is where we would be now! He would have led us there! But instead He lies trapped on the Golden Throne, hobbled and frozen!'

Cassandra went pale. 'All humans, to become psykers? It sickens me to contemplate such a thing.'

'Bah!' roared LaHayn. 'If the psyker is such a canker, then why do we rely on them to light the way for our starships, to carry our communications, to fight on our battlefields? Where is your answer to that dichotomy? The Empire of

Man would be in ruins without their kind, and if we could become them, we would know no boundaries!’

‘The witch opens the gates to the Ruinous Powers–’ began Verity.

‘Only those who are weak!’ insisted the deacon. ‘The Ruinous Powers would be shattered if every human being could match them on their own ground!’ He let out a gasp, suddenly spent with the effort of his argument.

Verity broke the silence that followed, her mind still whirling with the echo of the Ecclesiarch’s tirade. ‘There are no words to contain the scale of heresy that you have uttered, lord deacon. This is... It is madness beyond all reason.’

‘The colour of Chaos is on him,’ spat Isabel. ‘He must be tainted to believe such lies.’

LaHayn looked at her sadly. ‘So limited in vision. So afraid to go beyond your rigid canon. If it is not written in your books of rules, then you cannot comprehend it happening, can you? You are afraid of anything that challenges your narrow views. It is easier for you to call me a heretic and claim I am loyal to the warp gods, than to accept I might be right.’ He sneered at her. ‘I pity you.’ The priest-lord beckoned Ojis forward. ‘I see now my breath has been wasted. I had hoped to offer you a place at my side, but none of you have the scope of vision I require.’

‘If you kill us, more Battle Sisters will come,’ blurted Verity. ‘If we found the Null Keep, then so will Galatea.’

‘If you are thinking of your little mechanicus friend and that battered aeronef of Sherring’s, don’t waste your time,’ said Ojis. ‘Both were obliterated by our pyrokenes but an hour ago.’

‘I will not kill you out of hand,’ LaHayn turned away. ‘The tenders are always short of fresh test subjects, psychic and latent. You’ll serve them.’

Ojis worked the control in his hands and each of the chained women was hoisted up, a train of pulleys dragging them toward a cable lift.

‘Even if you are right,’ cried Verity, ‘even if you are following the work of the Emperor, what can you possibly do? He lies in state on the Golden Throne, millions of light years from here! Will you make a militia of witches and have them tear His body from the heart of the Imperial Palace?’

‘Terra was not the only place where He performed His experiments, child.’ The deacon’s voice faded as he wandered into the shadows of the workshop. ‘Neva’s connection to the warp was no happenstance. It was His doing. This planet is an experiment; and before He fell, the Emperor left something here.’ LaHayn looked up to watch them vanish through a slit in the chamber wall. ‘I’m close to unlocking the last secrets, and when I do, I will remake mankind in His image.’



The rough conduits of the mountain’s lava tubes predated the arcane constructions within the confines of the Null Keep. Many of the tubes still connected to the murmuring, quiescent core of the volcano, funnelling hot air and steam throughout the ashen cone. There were others, like this one, choked with collapsed stone and forgotten. Vaun used his hands and feet to ease himself down the angled tunnel, pressing his weight to the walls to drop metre by metre. It pleased him to see that the map he kept in his head had changed little; there was a kind of secret amusement that came to wandering freely within the very heart of LaHayn’s castle.

Alone, the psyker could admit to himself that his scheme had not unfolded in the manner he had expected, but then this greatest skill had always been his ability to improvise. That was why LaHayn had selected him as his personal pyrokene assassin, it was the reason why Vaun had only ever been sent on the most dangerous, most problematic missions for his teacher. The irony that this was also the factor that had led to Vaun’s ultimate rebellion was not lost on the psyker.

He dropped onto a shallow ledge. In the stone wall nearby there was a shuttered grille and beyond it – if his memory served him correctly – the uppermost tiers of the place the tenders called ‘the sty’. Heavy bolts held the vent in place, but they were nothing more than simple steel. With care, Vaun applied his fingers to the first of them and concentrated; in moments, the metal was glowing cherry red. Gradually, the bolts began to sag and distend.



They were not cells, not in the sense that Miriya would have described them. Rather, the confinement that the gun servitors had forced them into were square pits sliced out of the volcanic rock, sheer-walled with phase-iron grates closing off any means of escape. The Battle Sister peered

up and made out the shapes of a monorail line crossing the ceiling far above; no doubt sustenance was lowered in and cradles were used to hoist out the luckless when the tenders had need of them.

They had been kicked into a pit two at a time, Cassandra and Isabel in one, and Miriya here with the Hospitaller girl in another. After the machine-slaves had retreated, the Sister Superior called out to her comrades and was rewarded by a faint reply. Cassandra seemed angry and determined by the sound of her voice; her strength by example would bolster poor injured Isabel.

Miriya completed a circuit of the chamber, probing each corner for anything of use, and at last sat heavily upon a rusted bedstead. Bruises were already forming in the places where her flesh had been slammed against the inside of her armour, first in the fall of the trap container, and now again from being tossed into this room.

'Any bones broken?' ventured Verity. Her face was dim in the gloom. 'Are you in pain?'

'Constantly,' frowned the Battle Sister. 'My trigger finger aches from lack of use.' She probed gingerly at her neck where the flesh was visible. 'Curious. I expected them to strip us naked.'

Verity coughed. 'Thank the God-Emperor for small mercies.'

Miriya shrugged. 'Merely an oversight on the part of that priest, Ojis. You know servitors, they will do only what they are told to do. He bade them bring us to the dungeons, and so....' She gestured around at the black walls.

The Hospitaller came a little closer. When she spoke again, her voice was low, so as not to carry to the next cell. 'I am concerned for Sister Isabel's welfare. The wound upon her was quite severe. She may not last more than a day, perhaps two.'

'The Sisters of Katherine are resilient,' said Miriya, 'Isabel has known far worse than that. Mark me, she once took a glancing blow from the plague knife of a Death Guard and lived to tell of it. A week of fevers and delirium, but still she returned to the battle and gained honours.'

'I will pray for her, then. It is all I can do if I cannot minister to her injury.'

'I am sure she will thank you for that.'

Verity gave her a sideways glance. 'Truly? I am not so sure. In these days past in the company of you and your Battle

Sisters, I have felt like an impediment. I fear Isabel, Cassandra and their like measure piety by martial prowess alone.'

'Then you are mistaken,' insisted the other woman. 'None of us doubt your dedication to the church, not after the strength of character you have shown, Sister. We are blessed to have you in our company. You may bear no weapon, but you have the soul of a Celestian.'

'Thank you.' Verity looked away. 'You have my sorrows on the passing of Portia. First Lethe, then Iona...'

'Each died in Terra's service,' said Miriya, 'we should all pray for an end so noble.'

'You have fought many battles together?'

A nod. 'On countless worlds. Insurrections and Wars of Faith. Witch hunts and castigations. We have spent much blood and ammunition together since our noviciate days at the Convent Sanctorum.'

Memory clouded Verity's eyes. 'My order also draws from the schola on Ophelia VII.' She gave a wan smile. 'I recall the day that Lethe was chosen for the Order of Our Martyred Lady. She was alight with joy.'

'Lethe was a good friend and a steadfast sister-in-arms. Know that I do not exaggerate when I say the squad felt her loss as keenly as you did.'

Verity nodded. 'I understand that now. To be Adepta Sororitas... No matter which order we give fealty to, we are all defenders of the faith in our own way.'

'And your Sister, and Portia, and Iona are worthy to be named among them.' Miriya leaned close and placed a hand on Verity's shoulder. 'You understand that after what we have heard, we cannot suffer LaHayn to live a moment longer?'

Verity nodded again, the cold truth of the words lying heavy upon her. 'What must we do?'

'Purge him, Sister, or perish in the attempt.'

Continued next month



OUTSIDE THE STUDIO

And so we come to the article normally known as Inside the Studio. But in reality few of us are actually in the studio at the moment – we're all working from home as we ride out a global pandemic! Hopefully the crisis will all be over by the time you read this and things will be back to normal (whatever that is). So what have we all been up to? Well, painting models has been the pastime of many over the last few months, but incredibly some games have still been played. Desperate to roll some dice and slay some foes (on the tabletop), the ever-industrious Phil Kelly organised a weekly Warhammer Underworlds gaming session with Nyle Ajina via the internet. You can just about see Nyle's cheeky little face on the screen of Phil's laptop as he checks out the board.

LOCKED IN THE UNDERWORLD

Unable to escape the Mirrored City, Age of Sigmar background writer Phil Kelly and Mortal Realms editor Nyle Ajina have been playing weekly lockdown clashes via video link. This time, Phil's Chosen Axes just beat Nyle's Thundrik's Profiteers in a gripping 12-11 duardin-on-duardin duel. Trying saying that fast!



WAILING DOOM

'I wanted my Nighthaunt to look ghostly, ethereal and spooky,' says Lyle. 'I drew inspiration from movies and art as I wanted them to look formless, like wisps of smoke or mist emerging from the darkness. I painted my Banshees to look like corpse brides by airbrushing them White Scar, which fades into black. I washed them with thinned-down Aethermatic Blue and Nihilakh Oxide to get the ghostly glow.'



LORD OF DEATH

Dan has painted Mephiston for his ever-so-slowly growing Blood Angels force. He used Barak-Nar Burgundy for Mephiston's robes and Troll Slayer Orange blended into Tuskgor Fur for his force sword. An interesting note: the original Mephiston model was the first special character Dan ever painted way back in 1994.



SEE YA LATER, SHAUN!

We're sad to announce that after three-and-a-half years of service, our reprographics operator Shaun has decided to leave us for pastures new and set up his own design company. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours. His tardy tea runs and bangin' drum and bass tunes (yes bruv!) will be sorely missed.



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 over the past month. This issue: unquiet spirits, a blood drinker, bigs guns, little games, underhive scum and silver saviours.

HE BRINGS WAR!

The latest addition to Matt's Legio Ignatum Titan Legion is this Warbringer Nemesis Titan. 'I built it in sub-assemblies, and it's fully magnetised,' says Matt. 'The base uses some of the resin terrain pieces from Forge World, which are perfect for Titan bases. The red armour is Mephiston Red highlighted with Evil Sunz Scarlet, then weathered by stippling on Abaddon Black and Leadbelcher. The yellow was painted using the same technique, but with Zamesi Desert, Yriel Yellow and Dorn Yellow. I painted the hazard stripes with narrower stripes than on my Warlord Titans because the Warbringer is slightly smaller. I shot the photo at home using a spare kitchen tile and the end paper of one of the Horus Heresy books as a backdrop.'



FORMLESS EVIL

'My Guardian of Souls is more representative of the rest of my Nighthaunt force,' says Lyle. 'I basecoated it Chaos Black, then used an airbrush to pick out areas in light grey. Then I airbrushed white to push the colour transition from black to grey to white, and finally I used a regular brush to add white highlights to key features. Then I glazed the whole model with thinned-down Nighthaunt Gloom. The flame is painted white and blended to black, then painted with Iyanden Yellow and washed with Hexwraith Flame.'



THE TUNNEL JACKS

The Tunnel Jacks are Nick Horth's Necromunda gang. They're a band of ex-Necromundan Guard deserters who are now in the service of House Orlock. He's painted them with olive camo-style jackets to accentuate their military feel and added a few extras from Astra Militarum kits such as medi-kits and Scion berets. His leader, Doc, is the chap on the right with the flamer, chainsword and fancy moustache.

SILVER SKULLS BY DARREN LATHAM

Miniatures designer Darren Latham has been working on his Silver Skulls Space Marines for several years now, slowly adding new units to his force as they come out. With the release of the Indomitus box set, Darren painted a trio of Blade Guard and a new Chaplain for his force. The Blade Guard wear the matt silver armour of the Chapter, which Darren paints using a basecoat of Leadbelcher spray followed by a wash of Nuln Oil mixed with a tiny bit

of Black Ink (a really old paint for all you younger hobbyists out there). However, he's recently discovered that Basilicanum Grey applied over Leadbelcher looks almost identical. Darren has also painted a Librarian for his force, though they're known as Prognosticators to the Silver Skulls. Apparently he's already performed a few psychic miracles in the staff tournament that Darren took part in not too long ago.



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