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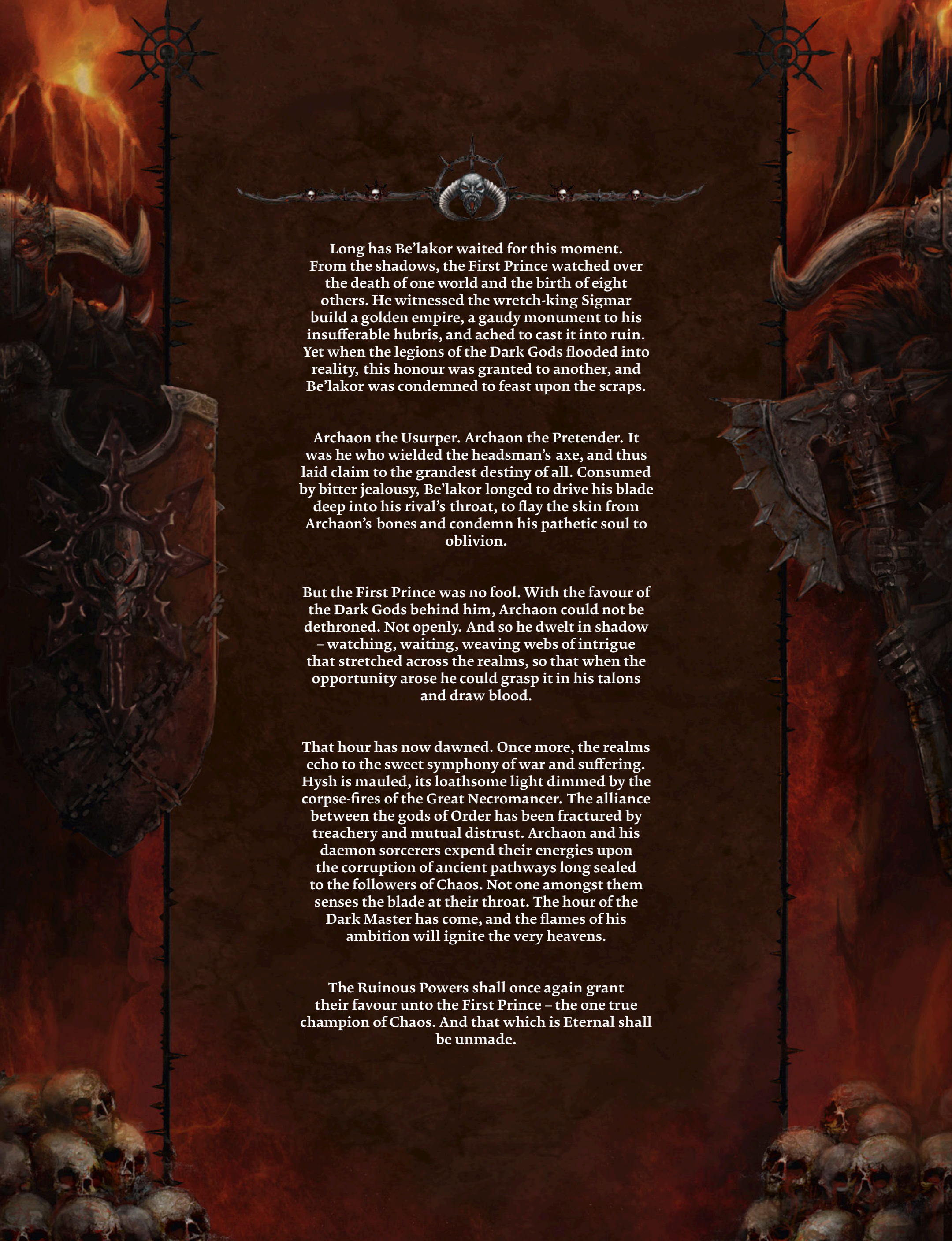
AGE OF SIGMAR

BROKEN REALMS

BE'LAKOR



Long has Be'lakor waited for this moment. From the shadows, the First Prince watched over the death of one world and the birth of eight others. He witnessed the wretch-king Sigmar build a golden empire, a gaudy monument to his insufferable hubris, and ached to cast it into ruin. Yet when the legions of the Dark Gods flooded into reality, this honour was granted to another, and Be'lakor was condemned to feast upon the scraps.

Archaon the Usurper. Archaon the Pretender. It was he who wielded the headsman's axe, and thus laid claim to the grandest destiny of all. Consumed by bitter jealousy, Be'lakor longed to drive his blade deep into his rival's throat, to flay the skin from Archaon's bones and condemn his pathetic soul to oblivion.

But the First Prince was no fool. With the favour of the Dark Gods behind him, Archaon could not be dethroned. Not openly. And so he dwelt in shadow – watching, waiting, weaving webs of intrigue that stretched across the realms, so that when the opportunity arose he could grasp it in his talons and draw blood.

That hour has now dawned. Once more, the realms echo to the sweet symphony of war and suffering. Hysh is mauled, its loathsome light dimmed by the corpse-fires of the Great Necromancer. The alliance between the gods of Order has been fractured by treachery and mutual distrust. Archaon and his daemon sorcerers expend their energies upon the corruption of ancient pathways long sealed to the followers of Chaos. Not one amongst them senses the blade at their throat. The hour of the Dark Master has come, and the flames of his ambition will ignite the very heavens.

The Ruinous Powers shall once again grant their favour unto the First Prince – the one true champion of Chaos. And that which is Eternal shall be unmade.

CONTENTS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE 3

THE REALMGATES UNDER THREAT 6

ACT I – THE TOWER FALLS 8
- The Bloodwind Spoil 10
- The Eightpoints Burn 12
- Defenders of the Genesis Gate . 14
- March of the Cosmic Host . . 16
- Cold-blooded War 18
- Flight of the Tower 20
- Stampede of Scales 22
- Amongst the Ruins 24

ACT II – DEATH PACT 26
- Empire of Anguish 28
- Be'lakor, the Dark Master . . . 30
- An Infernal Plan 32
- In the Court of Death 34
- Chain Reaction 36
- A Malign Pattern 38
- Trouble in the Heavens 40
- Shadow War 42
- Fell Alliance 44
- Ruination 46

ACT III – CURSED SKIES 50
- Chamon Aflame 52
- A City on the Brink 54
- The Siege of Vindicarum 56
- Death Under Darkening Skies 58
- Oblivion Beckons 60
- On Wings of Iron 64
- After the Storm 66

THE RULES 68

BROKEN REALMS 70
- Campaign Rules 71
- Realms of Battle 72
- Realm of Battle: The Genesis Gate, Ghyran 72
- Realm of Battle: Dolorum, Shyish 73
- Realm of Battle: Prosperis, Chamon 74
- Siege Warfare 76
- Coalition of Death 77
- Battleplan: Defenders of the Genesis Gate 78
- Battleplan: Stampede of Scales 80
- Battleplan: In the Court of Death 82
- Battleplan: The Gate of White Gold 84
- Battleplan: Disaster at Armsgate Zul 86
- Battleplan: On Wings of Iron . 88

BATTLETOME UPDATES 90

CHAOS 94
- Be'lakor, the Dark Master . . . 94
- Legion of the First Prince . . . 96

NIGHTHAUNT 98
- Nighthaunt Processions 98
- The Emerald Host 98
- Reikenor's Condemned 99
- Dreadscythe Harridans 100
- Krulghast Cruciator 100
- The Sorrowmourn Choir . . . 101

KHARADRON OVERLORDS 102
- Kharadron Overlords Guild Triumphs 102
- Drongon's Aether-runners . 103

SERAPHON 104
- Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker 104
- Bound Soulscream Bridge . . 104
- Bound Horrorghast 105
- Bound Shards of Valagharr . 105
- The Celestial Stampede 106

DISCIPLES OF TZEENTCH 107
- Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade 107

FYRESLAYERS 108
- Doomseeker 108
- Grimwrath Berzerker 109

STORMCAST ETERNALS 110
- Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul 110

PITCHED BATTLE PROFILES 112

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Be'lakor's grand bid for power would unleash a great tide of anarchy across the Mortal Realms. Mighty heroes and warlords from many different factions would find themselves caught up in the ensuing bloodshed, from the darkest entities of Chaos to the strange, cosmic entities known as the Seraphon.

FORCES OF CHAOS

- **Be'lakor, the Dark Master:** First and most terrible of the Daemon Princes.
- **The Eater of Tomes:** Gaunt Summoner and master of the substance known as varanite.
- **Kazarkos:** Wrath-fuelled Bloodthirster bound to Be'lakor against his will.
- **F'tanax:** Lord of Change leashed to Be'lakor's service.
- **Gebbolax:** Horrifically bloated and foul Greater Daemon of Nurgle.
- **Atra'zan the Immolator:** Pyromaniac Herald of Tzeentch.
- **Deathmaster Crixxit:** Opportunistic assassin-for-hire of the Clans Eshin.

SERAPHON

- **Lord Kroak:** Impossibly ancient slann Relic-Priest.
- **Starmaster Kuoteq:** Leader of the Seraphon assault upon the Eater of Tomes' lair.
- **Scar-Veteran Quar-Toc:** Kuoteq's champion, and master of his elite Saurus Knights.
- **Starwarden Iq-To:** Skink Chief of the Thunder Lizard and master of the Celestial Stampede.

CHAMPIONS OF SIGMAR

- **Gardus Steel Soul, Lord-Celestant, Hallowed Knights:** Incorruptible hero of the Realmgate Wars.
- **Lorrus Grymn, Lord-Castellant, Hallowed Knights:** Gruff but loyal companion of Gardus Steel Soul.
- **The Steel Souls, Warrior Chamber, Hallowed Knights:** Legendary company commanded by Lord-Celestant Gardus.
- **Axemar Diocis, Lord-Celestant, Sigmarite Brotherhood:** A storied champion of his noble Stormhost.
- **Kostos Volkar, Lord-Celestant, Celestial Vindicators:** Ruthless commander charged with the defence of Vindicarum.
- **Cerdimun Ghorle, Freeguild General:** Ruthless yet brilliant commander from the free city of Vindicarum.

LEGION OF GRIEF

- **Lady Olynder:** Mortarch of Grief, ruler of the Nighthaunt.
- **Reikenor the Grimhailer:** Sorcerer-wraith and reaper of souls.

KHARADRON OVERLORDS

- **Drongon Humboldsson, Endrinmaster:** Intrepid engineer from Barak-Zilfin, and master of the prototype Arkanaut Frigate *Redoubtable*.
- **Gromthi:** Grizzled Arkanaut aboard the *Redoubtable*.
- **Imoda Barrasdottr, Arkanaut Admiral:** Master cartographer and rising star of the Kharadron sky-empire.
- **Grubda Klarsdottr, High Admiral:** Stubbornly traditionalist elder of Barak-Thryng.

Turmoil tears at the cosmic conjunction. The stars scream in protest.

Once more, the threads of the Astromatrix are weakening, the anchors linking the grand tapestry frayed in turn by the cold malice of the Unraveller, or warped by the hateful will of the Eternal Enemy.

'Realmgates', the mortals call these vital cogs in the Great Plan. A childish, prosaic term for sites of such cosmic import, fitting only for ignorant minds.

Always do the warm-bloods seek to destroy what they cannot understand. In the lands of the cursed nexus, the worshippers of ruin twist and despoil the foundations of their own reality, pouring corruption and foul magic into these sites of power.

In doing so they pursue only their own destruction.

The results of their meddling have been foreseen. The death. The anarchy. The unbound sorcery that would rage across the realms, spilling through breaches in the Astromatrix and consuming one continent after another. They would bring about the ruin of everything.

It cannot stand.

The armies of the stars march to war. The vengeance of the Old Ones shall be delivered with blade and claw and blessed engine.

Order shall be restored.

THE REALMGATES UNDER THREAT

Ever have the arcane portals known as realmgates been contested by warring factions. Some seek to control them, whether for defensive reasons or to aid in their wars of conquest. Others seek something far darker still: to corrupt and twist these ancient structures, so that they become beacons of Chaos energy.

The Age of Sigmar dawned with the realmgate Wars, that titanic struggle between the God-King and the hosts of Chaos for control of vital passageways that connected the Mortal Realms. After unimaginable slaughter and loss, many realmgates were secured by the Stormcast Eternals and their allies, though more remained in the clutches of the Dark Gods' armies. Around those that had been secured were constructed cities and fortresses: glorious echoes of the Age of Myth, when Sigmar's folk had colonised great spans of the Mortal Realms. In time, the realmgate pathways became the arteries of Sigmar's new empire, the means by which his mortal armies travelled and through which trade flowed.

Though driven back, the enemies of order and civilisation did not cease their attempts to unravel this network, for they knew that in doing so they would destroy any hopes of a second era of unrivalled splendour for mortalkind. Archaon the Everchosen, the greatest champion of the Dark Gods, had more ambitious plans still. He sought a way to tear open a path to Azyr itself, so that he might lay siege to the very heavens and the seat of Sigmar's power. So it was that Archaon tasked the Gaunt Summoners of Tzeentch – his foremost daemonic sorcerers – to discover a method of corrupting the realmgates through a combination of change-sorcery and dark alchemy.

It was through the extraction and use of varanite, a molten realmstone unique to the Eightpoints, that the Gaunt Summoners planned to fulfil their master's demands. This bubbling, blood-like substance, redolent with the mutative properties of Chaos, warped and twisted anything that it came into contact with. A single drop of the stuff could turn a mortal into a gibbering Chaos Spawn, or transform the stones of a fortress wall into gnashing, drooling mouths. Perhaps, the Gaunt Summoners theorised, it could also unmake the aeons-old frameworks that contained each realmgate portal – in particular the Meteoric Gate, the gigantic Arcway leading from the Eightpoints to the heart of Azyr that had been sealed by Sigmar upon his retreat from the other realms.

Within the Skullpike Mountains of the Eightpoints, the Gaunt Summoner known as the Eater of Tomes oversaw the processing of a vast reservoir of varanite that had been discovered beneath the forge-complex of Varanthax's Maw. He gladly spent the lives of thousands of thralls for each precious handful of molten realmstone, for the stuff was vanishingly rare and tremendously difficult to extract. Then, the great corruption of the Meteoric Gate began in earnest. It might have succeeded too, had not the God-King been alerted to the growing threat by the leader of the Khainite cult, Morathi, and hurled a vast host of Stormcast Eternals into the Eightpoints, their task to destroy the infernal industry that was developing there and cast Archaon's plans into the flames.

Even as this was happening, Nagash, the Great Necromancer, was launching his own ferocious assault upon those realmgates linked to his domain in Shyish. Nagash's foremost generals – the Mortarchs – had been tasked with saturating the ancient structures that framed each of these portals with vast quantities of necromantic magic, bringing about the end of the realmgate and opening in its place a yawning, eldritch void. These magical sinkholes would each be connected to the Shyish Nadir, channelling the dread hunger of that vast maw at the heart of the underworlds, and thus spreading its all-devouring malignancy far across the realms. In Invidia, the Great Bewilderness of Chamon and even the Ymetrican wilds, these dread plans were enacted to various extents of success, further weakening the fragile arcane matrix that held the cosmos together.

It seemed that the war for control of the realms had entered a sinister new phase. Once again, the realmgates had become the focus of malicious campaigns of sabotage and corruption. Yet there were those who opposed this wanton destruction. The slann – those primordial creatures that had survived the death of the World-that-Was to continue their eternal war against Chaos – observed these disturbances with mounting concern. They alone knew the true significance of the geomantic ley lines upon which each realmgate was situated, and the catastrophic chain reaction that might result if enough were to be corrupted.

The greatest of the slann, the mummified husk known as Lord Kroak, had been troubled by visions of impending disaster: of cities and empire swallowed up by a rising storm of sorcery and savagery, and of the Old Ones' great plan unravelling in the wake of this terrible cataclysm. It was a grim prospect, and one that could not be allowed to come to fruition. Assembling his Seraphon hosts, Kroak began his own preparations. The slann judged that the most pressing threat came from the Gaunt Summoners. The daemonic sorcerers' lairs, the fabled Silver Towers, were mystically attuned to the realmgate network. This allowed them to pervert the flow of energy from many of the arcane portals, so that gates leading to distant lands instead deposited travellers inside the fractal labyrinth of the Silver Tower itself. Far too many realmgates had been corrupted by such means during the Age of Chaos.

Though the risks would be great, Lord Kroak aimed to put an end to the Summoners' schemes and ensure their dark science was not taken one step further. His wrath would first be directed at the lair of the Eater of Tomes, for that being above all had wrought the greatest damage upon the Astromatrix. Destroying the Silver Tower would be no simple task. Each of the Silver Towers was an infernal fortress defended by potent magic and populated by vast hordes of daemonic abominations. Worse still, the structures were not rooted in physical reality but could in fact travel between the realms seemingly at will via arcane means. The Gaunt Summoners would certainly not hesitate to flee at the first hint of their impending doom. The Seraphon would have to strike without warning, as swiftly and mercilessly as the bite of Sotek.

Little did even the greats of the slann know that there was another entity observing these fractious events from afar, a being of darkness and malice that had haunted mortalkind for centuries beyond counting. The Daemon Prince Be'lakor, known by his few surviving enemies as the Dark Master, had his own plans for the realmgates. From his shadow-wreathed stronghold, he awaited the hour when his unwitting foes would clear the path for his glorious ascension. Come that long-anticipated moment, he would unleash a new and terrible disaster upon the unsuspecting realms.

ACT I

THE TOWER FALLS

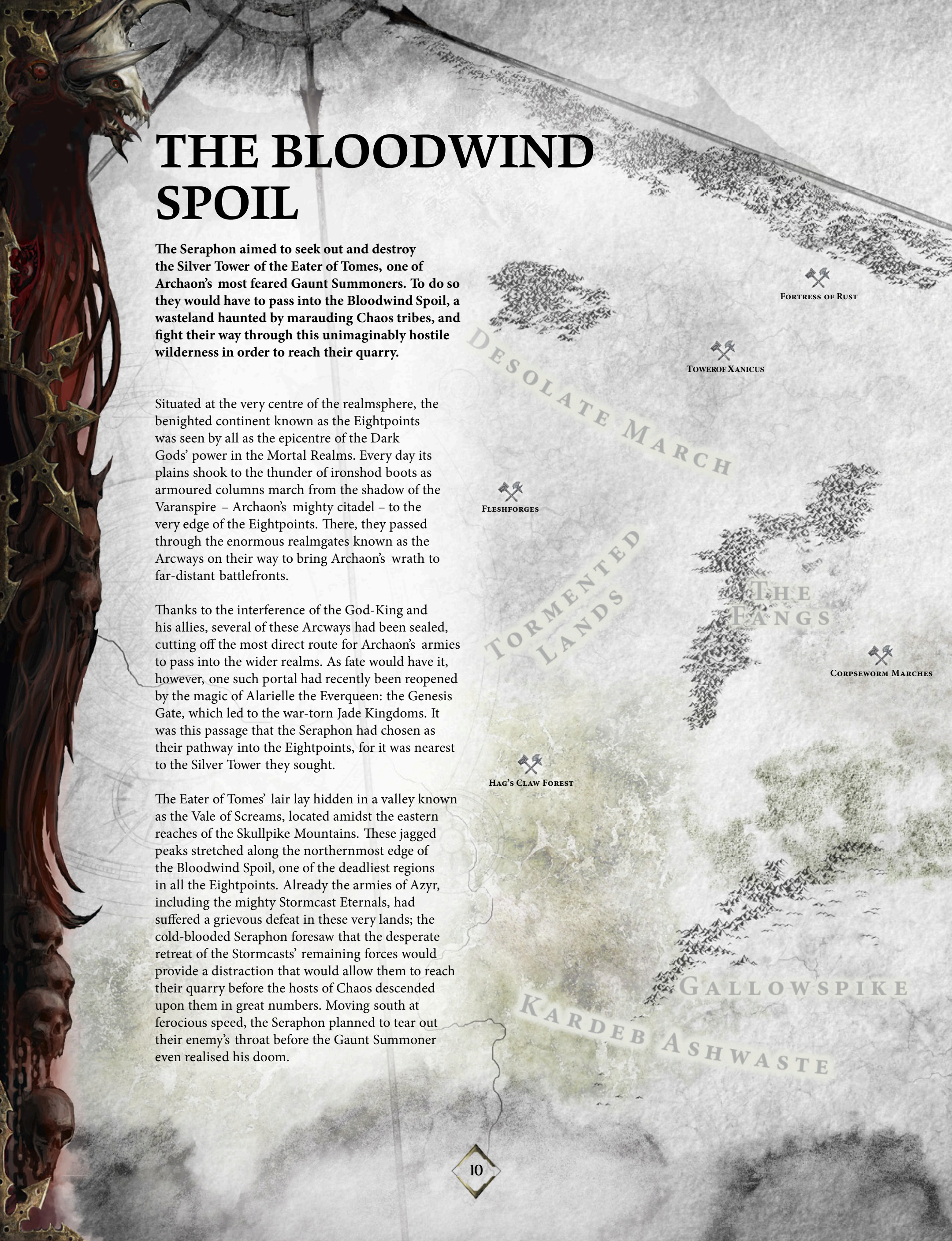
THE BLOODWIND SPOIL

The Seraphon aimed to seek out and destroy the Silver Tower of the Eater of Tomes, one of Archaon's most feared Gaunt Summoners. To do so they would have to pass into the Bloodwind Spoil, a wasteland haunted by marauding Chaos tribes, and fight their way through this unimaginably hostile wilderness in order to reach their quarry.

Situated at the very centre of the realmsphere, the benighted continent known as the Eightpoints was seen by all as the epicentre of the Dark Gods' power in the Mortal Realms. Every day its plains shook to the thunder of ironshod boots as armoured columns march from the shadow of the Varanspire – Archaon's mighty citadel – to the very edge of the Eightpoints. There, they passed through the enormous realmgates known as the Arcways on their way to bring Archaon's wrath to far-distant battlefronts.

Thanks to the interference of the God-King and his allies, several of these Arcways had been sealed, cutting off the most direct route for Archaon's armies to pass into the wider realms. As fate would have it, however, one such portal had recently been reopened by the magic of Alarielle the Everqueen: the Genesis Gate, which led to the war-torn Jade Kingdoms. It was this passage that the Seraphon had chosen as their pathway into the Eightpoints, for it was nearest to the Silver Tower they sought.

The Eater of Tomes' lair lay hidden in a valley known as the Vale of Screams, located amidst the eastern reaches of the Skullpike Mountains. These jagged peaks stretched along the northernmost edge of the Bloodwind Spoil, one of the deadliest regions in all the Eightpoints. Already the armies of Azyr, including the mighty Stormcast Eternals, had suffered a grievous defeat in these very lands; the cold-blooded Seraphon foresaw that the desperate retreat of the Stormcasts' remaining forces would provide a distraction that would allow them to reach their quarry before the hosts of Chaos descended upon them in great numbers. Moving south at ferocious speed, the Seraphon planned to tear out their enemy's throat before the Gaunt Summoner even realised his doom.



THE NIGHTMARE WASTES

Surrounding the Skullpike Mountains is a Chaos-corrupted wilderness populated with all manner of unspeakable horrors.

THE EATER'S LAIR

For centuries, the Gaunt Summoner known as the Eater of Tomes has dwelt within this Silver Tower, half-buried in the Vale of Screams.

SKULLPIKE MOUNTAINS

VARANTHAX'S MAW

BLOOD LAKE BASIN

LOST VELORUM

THE CRYSTAL HEART

THE HUNGRY MARSH

SOULFLAYER DESERT

ROTMIRE

FIELDS OF SORROW

The battlefields around Varanthax's Maw are littered with corpses and marked by great Chaos shrines proclaiming victory in the name of the Dark Gods.

THE EIGHTPOINTS BURN

The Eightpoints lies at the centre of the cosmos, an island continent connected to each of the Mortal Realms. It is the domain of Archaon the Everchosen and his legions, a mighty stronghold of Chaos that for centuries seemed immune to invasion. That accepted truth was torn asunder by the cataclysmic events that occurred in the wake of the Soul Wars.

It was Katakros, Mortarch of the Necropolis, that first forced a beachhead in the corrupted lands of the Eightpoints, and established there a great fortress of polished ivory. This devastating invasion was to be swiftly followed by a second. Alarmed by Archaon and his Gaunt Summoners' use of the molten realmstone varanite – a substance capable of corrupting the ancient Arcway that led directly to Azyr – the God-King joined his forces with Morathi, High Oracle of Khaine, to smash the Everchosen's centre of infernal industry.

Striking into the Eightpoints via the Genesis Gate in Ghyran, a combined force of Khainites and Stormcast Eternals led by the grim Lord-Celestant Andrus Nihilat marched upon the subterranean forge-complex of Varanthax's Maw. There, a terrible battle was joined, while Morathi led a separate host deep into the mines beneath the Maw in search of an enormous reservoir of varanite, the destruction of which was the allied host's true objective. Or, at least, that was what Morathi had promised. In truth, the High Oracle had no intention of disposing of such a precious bounty. Instead, having seized it for herself in order to fuel a sorcerous ritual that would finalise her ascent to godhood, she fled the Eightpoints, abandoning her supposed allies to their doom.

Lord-Celestant Nihilat of the Hammers of Sigmar and his strike force found themselves surrounded on all sides by the baying hordes of Chaos. Worse still, the enemy – under the direction of the cruelly ingenious Gaunt Summoner known as the Eater of Tomes – had employed cursed shrines forged from solidified varanite to trap the souls of the Stormcast Eternals upon their deaths, preventing

them from returning to the palace of Sigmaron in Azyr in order that their bodies might be Reforged. Even in the midst of battle, the daemonic sorcerer was continuing to conduct his warped experiments, delighting in the horrific results of his meddling with molten realmstone.

With no hope of reinforcement, Lord-Celestant Nihilat dispatched a last, desperate message to Azyr, calling for aid. Summoning what remained of his embattled forces, he then struck away from Varanthax's Maw in an attempt to break clear of the encircling enemy and enact a fighting retreat across the plains of the Eightpoints to the Genesis Gate – one of the few Arcways whose counterpart in the Mortal Realms lay under the control of the forces of Order, and which led to the relative safety of Alarielle's territory in Ghyran.

The breakout succeeded but at a hideous cost. The shattered remnant of Nihilat's forces numbered fewer than a third of those that had entered Archaon's territory. Pursued relentlessly by Chaos worshippers who scented blood, the Stormcast Eternals were in dire risk of being wiped out entirely. This was a form of war that Sigmar's chosen had rarely been asked to wage, an all-or-nothing fighting retreat without hope of reinforcement, respite or even the prospect of Reforging. Even so, they battled with their customary skill, launching daring counter-attacks to slow down the enemy's pursuit and sacrificing small bands of warriors in holding actions. There were countless acts of bravery carried out during that headlong flight, most of which would go unrecorded by history, but which kept alive a flickering ember of hope that the Eightpoints assault force might yet escape obliteration.

The task of holding open the Genesis Gate had been given to the warriors of the Hallowed Knights and the legendary Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul. A living embodiment of faith and purity, Gardus had sworn an oath to keep the way open for his comrades or die in the attempt. It was not a promise lightly given, for even as enemies converged on the Eightpoints side of the Arcway, so too did the forces of Chaos in the Realm of Life move to assault the opposite side of the portal.

Even as the Stormcast Eternals arranged their shieldwalls and prepared to sell their lives to keep the way open for their comrades, other forces, too, were on the march. The bloodshed in the Eightpoints was in no danger yet of coming to an end.

DEFENDERS OF THE GENESIS GATE

The Stormcast survivors of the ill-fated assault upon the Eightpoints were forced to flee through the treacherous maze of the Skullpike Mountains towards the safety of the Genesis Gate – their sole remaining route to salvation. As long as this Arcway remained in the hands of the Hallowed Knights, disaster could be prevented from becoming catastrophe.

The defence of the Genesis Gate fell to two chambers of the Hallowed Knights, commanded by Gardus Steel Soul. They had prepared well for the task. The Ghyran side of the gate was not a construction of metal or wood, but a waterfall located atop the largest island in a floating archipelago. Each of these islets was leashed to the ground by a trailing pathway formed from vines as thick as watchtowers, and heavily fortified by ironoak bulwarks covered in dagger-sized thorns and poison-spitting plants. It was a superior defensive position, but the vascular pathways linking the floating isles to the Thyrian grasslands offered an achievable, albeit difficult, method of ingress for an invading army – such as the host now bearing down upon the gate.

First came the flies, yellow and bloated things. In their millions they droned up from the lowlands, swarming across the armour of the Stormcasts. All present knew what this presaged, and so the strident trumpet-calls of Knights-Heraldor soon echoed above the dirge of beating wings. Then, the waters of the falls began to clot with foul-smelling slime that tried to thicken about the Stormcasts' boots. Steel Soul and his warriors started to chant as one, reciting canticles of purity that had girded their spirits through many a fight against the hordes of the Plague God. Their plate glowed like silver sunlight, and where the foul sludge had crept up greaves, it was sloughed clean, leaving no trace of its presence.

'Only the faithful!' came the battle cry, ringing through the glades. It was answered by the woeful groaning of thousands of rotting, horned forms that came shambling up the bridge-like vineways, ascending the steep incline to the Arcway itself. Plaguebearers marched alongside swollen figures clad in rusted green armour marked with the tri-lobe and fly. The Blessed Sons, most favoured of the Plaguefather's mortal followers, had sensed the presence of the Hallowed Knights, and came forth to slaughter and despoil. These lands, though much purified by Alarielle's children, were by no means restored to their ancient splendour. In Thyria, as everywhere in Ghyran, the stain of Nurgle yet remained. Drifting up the clotted waterways of the Questing Reek to join the fighting came plague-hulks of the Drowned Men, and so too could be seen the slimy banners of the Rothearts, the Tatterflesh Brethren, and even mouldering beastmen from the depths of Verdia's jungles, all trudging their way up the treacherous incline beneath a vicious barrage from the Stormcast defenders at the summit.

Despite the terrible losses they suffered in the ascent, the Plague God's faithful came on relentlessly. Battle was joined on the floating isle, and soon Steel Soul and his warriors were outnumbered two to one. The Sylvaneth had not appeared, doubtless embroiled in their own struggle amidst the jungles surrounding the gate. As his warriors were hewn down all about him, Gardus and his loyal comrade, Lord-Castellant Lorrus Grymn, fought back to back, prepared to meet this new death with solemn fortitude.

Then, new forms spilled from the undergrowth to the east of the gate, not those of slender Sylvaneth but robust, scaly beings clad in golden armour and with fangs that gleamed in the fading light. They marched in lockstep, stone-headed spears punching out to skewer daemons and bloated Chaos-worshippers. This reptilian host smashed into the flank of the Chaos position with the force of a crashing meteor. More appeared at the very foot of the Genesis Gate, manifesting out of thin air in bursts of starlight. Looking on in bewilderment, Steel Soul recalled the tales he had heard of the Seraphon, eternal nemeses of Chaos. Perhaps the day could yet be won.

Though even as the dwindling forces of the Stormcasts rejoiced in their newfound allies, the Seraphon drove past the Hallowed Knights' position, plunging into the shimmering depths of the Genesis Gate without pause. Steel Soul looked on helplessly as his hoped-for salvation disappeared from sight. The staggered Chaos forces began to regroup and come on again, emboldened by the Seraphon's abandonment of their supposed allies. Steel Soul muttered a prayer, raised his blade and hammer, and prepared to die another death in service of the God-King.

The last of the Seraphon passed through the sacred waters of the Genesis Gate and were lost amidst a cloud of vapour and refracted colour. Gardus Steel Soul watched them depart, trying to quash the tide of bitterness that threatened to overwhelm him.

'Why do they forsake us?' he said, his words audible only to Lord-Castellant Grymn, who, as always, was at Gardus' side. 'What purpose can it serve to abandon their allies to disaster?'

'I do not pretend to know the minds of the star-lizards,' said Grymn.

'Cowards!' roared Retributor Trallas. 'The battle hangs in the balance and they flee?'

'Focus your mind,' snapped Lorrus Grymn. 'They come again.'

Gardus watched as the enemy surged forth once more on his rightmost flank, wading through the crashing waters and hauling their bloated carcasses up onto the narrow promontory upon which the Stormcasts fought. The Steel Souls were few now, bloodied and exhausted after many days of bitter fighting. Their enemy was legion: countless lumbering, fleshy horrors, daemons and mortals alike, all droning their praise to the Plaguefather as they advanced. Clouds of thumb-sized flies whirled and soared about the Genesis Gate, their murmurations forming the hellish impressions of leering faces in the skies above.

'This ground must be held,' Gardus roared, so that all his remaining warriors heard every word. 'The Genesis Gate must remain open, lest our comrades be lost. Who will stand with me now?'

'Only the faithful!' came the full-throated roar of the Steel Souls.

The first foes to clamber up the slick rocks were met with the edge of Sigmarite blades. Gardus slit the throat of a horned creature slathered head to hoof in foul-smelling moss, and kicked the dying thing back in the river. Grymn's halberd was a flashing blur of silver, carving the heads from heathen filth by the score. And so it went on, a brutal grind of slaughter that thickened the sacred waters of the Genesis Gate with pustulent corpses and unclean blood. Time lost its meaning, as day turned to night and then the golden glow of sunrise filtered through the storm clouds. Every wave of enemy attacks cost the lives of another handful of Knights.

At dawn on the third day, the flood of the enemy host became an unstoppable tidal wave. Drawn by the slaughter, immense shapes dragged their pestilent bulk along the river bed, visible even amidst the teeming mass of bodies: greater daemons of Nurgle, sensing a chance to befoul the Arcway in the name of their repellent deity. One such beast rolled towards Gardus, crushing a number of helpless Liberators beneath its heaving bulk. Its leering, too-wide mouth chortled idiotically. Gardus charged, plunging his blade into the monster's belly, driving it deep into its cascading guts.

The Great Unclean One gave a great booming laugh as it seized Gardus about the chest and squeezed. The Lord-Celestant felt his armour giving way beneath the daemon's unnatural strength. He slammed his hammer into the Great Unclean One's arm over and over again, but the power of his strikes ebbed with each blow. Through a haze of agony, Gardus saw Lorrus Grymn struggling to reach him, blocked by a mob of baying beastmen.

At that moment, the clear peal of war-horns split the air. Beyond the Lord-Castellant, Gardus could see the mists of the Genesis Gate part to reveal a phalanx of golden-armoured warriors, marching beneath tattered banners of gold and blue: the remnants of Lord-Celestant Nihilat's army of the Eightpoints, ravaged yet unbroken. These newcomers surged from the realmgate, reinforcing those few Hallowed Knights still standing.

Even as his spirit was crushed from his physical frame, an exhausted Gardus felt a surge of relief. He had not failed his God-King, even in death. His shattered body transformed into forks of silver lightning, and he was carried home upon the storm.

'Upon my honour, I shall never forget the bravery of the Steel Souls, nor the sacrifices they made for me and mine. I swear it now, with the God-King as my witness; I will repay this debt if it takes me a thousand years.'

- Lord-Celestant Nihilat of the Hammers of Sigmar, speaking after the battle for the Genesis Gate

MARCH OF THE COSMIC HOST

Leaving the beleaguered Hallowed Knights in their wake, the scaled hosts of the Seraphon plunged into the Eightpoints, led by their slann Starmaster upon his floating throne. Their target was the Silver Tower of the Eater of Tomes, and they advanced upon that cursed structure with unerring focus.

The scaled hosts that now surged across the blasted plains of the Eightpoints did not once slow their pace. These creatures bore the mark of Dracothion's Tail and were charged with the celestial energies of High Azyr. Possessed of inhuman stamina and further bolstered by the magic of their slann overseers, they marched on, knowing that only haste would allow them to reach their quarry before the hosts of Chaos realised the threat at their back and descended in ever greater numbers.

In another time or place, the slann Kuoteq would have simply summoned his warriors directly from his constellation's temple-ships, unleashing them upon the enemy at the appointed time in an eruption of blinding light. Such precision was not possible in the Everchosen's domain, so thick was the pall of Chaos energies that lay over it. Thus, Lord Kroak – the impossibly ancient slann Relic Priest – had bid Kuoteq make his attack through the Genesis Gate. The stellar alignment foretelling the lightning men's invasion via that same portal had come to pass, and their actions provided the perfect diversion for a greater cause. Starmaster Kuoteq's true task was to besiege a sorcerous edifice that lay buried amidst the Vale of Screams, far to the east of the Varanspire. No ordinary citadel, this crystalline structure was in fact a Silver Tower and the lair of one of Archaon's enslaved Gaunt Summoners.

For too long had these daemonic sorcerers been allowed to conduct their depraved experiments, corrupting the very roots of the cosmos-spanning Astromatrix – the unimaginably complex web of geomantic energy that underlaid reality itself. The Gaunt Summoners' work threatened everything the Seraphon strove to protect. The tower was to fall and its master erased from memory.

As beings highly attuned to the natural order of the cosmos, each second in this twisted and Chaos-saturated place was agony to the Seraphon, but none shied from their sacred duty. Scampering masses of skink skirmishers and Terradon-mounted hunters surged ahead of the great reptilian host, guiding the winding body of Dracothion's Tail across soul-flaying wastelands and toxic rivers of blood. Hundreds of these intrepid little creatures were slain, snatched away by many-limbed horrors or claimed by the hungering wilds, for every blood-red thorntree, mire of sulphurous filth and shadowed lair seemed to possess a malicious sentience.

Just as the celestial host suffered with every step, the cursed land recoiled at the presence of the Seraphon, whose collective auras burned like a newborn star. Enraged, the Eightpoints roused itself to war, vomiting forth its unnatural denizens against these interlopers. Yet whenever the Seraphon encountered monsters that could not be felled by the sacred poisons coating the skinks' missiles, up came formations of gargantuan reptilian warbeasts and mounted Saurus Knights to drive away each new threat, their talons and lances tearing through warped hides and hell-forged armour.

Yet for all the Seraphon's fury, they too suffered greatly on this desperate march. Even the death of a single skink – sucked down into a pit of grinding teeth or snatched into the air by a shrieking, winged abomination – was a significant loss, for Starmaster Kuoteq knew he would not be able to replenish such casualties before reaching his objective. Worse, the slann could feel his own flesh withering and blistering; as a being so intimately connected to the purifying energies of Azyr, every moment that the Starmaster lingered in this nightmarish land was one of profound torment.

Thus it was that Kuoteq did not hold back even a fraction of his starhost's might. The continuation of the Great Plan depended upon their swift victory.

RAGE OF THE SUMMONER

Distracted by his desire to hunt down the battered Stormcast Eternals now in full flight towards the Genesis Gate, the Eater of Tomes was slow to realise the scale of the threat descending upon him. At the direction of Starmaster Kuoteq, congregations of skink Starpriests had worked complex star-rituals as the Seraphon advanced, cutting off the Gaunt Summoner's network of augur-towers and arcane spying devices with pulses of cosmic energy. Had the Eater of Tomes not been preoccupied with eradicating one set of foes, he would likely never have been caught off guard.

As it was, by the time the Gaunt Summoner became aware of this new enemy, the Seraphon of Dracothion's Tail had almost reached the forest of silvered impaled corpses that served as the gateway to the Vale of Screams. Avian messenger-daemons alighted upon the tip of his changestaff to jabber warning of the enormous, saurian army bearing down upon the Silver Tower. At first, the Eater of Tomes was overcome with anger, though this was swiftly followed by a flood of self-pitying outrage. It seemed to the sorcerer that he had earned the mercurial enmity of the Change God, for just as he had secured one victory it seemed as though another desperate battle was destined to begin. Charging his mortal underlings with the elimination of the remaining Stormcast Eternals, the Eater of Tomes uttered a spell of translocation, summoning about him a spiralling shoal of Screamers. As the vortex of shrieking daemons enveloped him, his manifold, unblinking eyes blazed with sorcerous fury as he imagined what horrors he might wreak upon these impudent intruders.

Though the Gaunt Summoner had left the majority of his mortal thralls behind to guard Varanthax's Maw, the Vale of Screams would be far from undefended. Hidden amidst the eastern peaks of the Skullpike Mountains, this valley of polished crystal, dotted with lakes of molten silver, was home to throngs of Tzaangors who had sworn allegiance to the Gaunt Summoner. Not only that, but should the enemy stray close to the Silver Tower, they would be set upon by hordes of capering daemons, for the arcane fortress was more than a mere stronghold; it was also a conduit to the roiling madness of the Realm of Chaos. That was not to mention the Gaunt Summoner's own wards and arcane defences, which could flay the soul or melt the bones of a trespasser in an instant.

Yes, let the enemy come, the Eater of Tomes thought with hateful eagerness. Already he had scattered one army of star-blinded fools. A second would prove no greater challenge.

THE SILVER TOWERS

Legends abound of the mysterious, crystalline structures known as the Silver Towers, which descend from the skies on trails of sorcerous fire to visit insanity and magical devastation upon the realms. Each of the nine Gaunt Summoners claims dominion over one of these eldritch citadels, which functions as their stronghold and arcane laboratory, its every labyrinthine passageway filled with capering daemons of Tzeentch. A Silver Tower might lie amidst a cluster of mountains for decades, even centuries, before suddenly shooting into the sky upon a column of fire at the whim of its capricious master.

The Silver Towers are maddeningly complex structures far beyond the ken of mortals. Within their twisting corridors can be found paths that lead all across the Mortal Realms, to Chaos-corrupted realmgates and even the heart of Tzeentch's own domain, the Crystal Labyrinth. Creations of magic far more than they are physical structures, the Silver Towers maintain a direct connection to the arterial pathways that link the realms. Anyone attempting to travel by such means might find themselves instead awakening within the glass-smooth walls of one of these puzzle-fortresses, a prisoner of its sorcerous overlord. The Gaunt Summoners take great pleasure in the travails of such unfortunates, who must brave the monsters and devious traps of their gaol if they ever wish to escape. The vast majority, needless to say, meet an agonising end without ever again seeing the open sky above their heads.

COLD-BLOODED WAR

Their cerulean scales sparkling with golden markings, the Seraphon host of Dracothion's Tail proceeded into the Vale of Screams, where the landscape was moulded from twisted, silver-embalmed corpses. Their coming had not gone unnoticed; daemonic eyes watched the saurian army approach, and malformed mouths dribbled blue-white flames and smiled expectant smiles.

Kuoteq and his saurian warriors, commanded by the fearsome Scar-Veteran Quar-Toc, had expected the enemy to swarm down upon them as they entered the glassy lowlands of the Vale of Screams. Here the ground was pitted with treacherous swamps of bubbling mercury, and the horizon was shrouded behind trees shaped from contorted bodies encased in silver, captured eternally in the moment of their agonising end. The stench of the Change God suffused the place, causing Quar-Toc's scarred snout to burn and itch. Periodically, bands of pink-skinned Tzaangors had emerged to exchange arrows and javelins with the skink vanguard, but each sortie was driven back into the corpse-forests by flights of Terradon-riding skinks.

Scar-Veteran Quar-Toc growled, and beneath him his mighty Carnosaur, Kokatla, roared its displeasure and clawed at the ground with its powerful hind-limbs. Something was amiss. The enemy was close, but yet did not show themselves in any great number. Quar-Toc's fury rose with every feigned attack; the saurus existed solely to spill the unclean blood of daemons and their worshippers, and a war of strike and fade was not an appealing prospect. Still, Starmaster Kuoteq seemed serene atop his floating palanquin, and so the battle-hardened saurus held his legendary rage in check. The two had shared a hundred-thousand battlefields and more, and Quar-Toc would serve his master as he always had; without question or comment, and with brutal efficiency.

Finally, after many hours of arduous travel that would have sapped the strength and will from any mortal army, the lowlands narrowed into a valley where the air fizzled with the touch of magic. Geysers of cursed metal spat from the ground, and rained back down as drifting motes of silver and gold. At the far end of the valley rose the Silver Tower itself, its upper battlements thrusting out of the earth like some gleaming crystal blade.

SCALES AND SORCERY

Gibbering with delight, the Fateskimmer known as Atra'zan the Immolator, watched the strange, scaled army draw nearer, their speartips gleaming dully in the silvery haze cast by the Silver Tower. It was just as Atra'zan's true master – not the Eater of Tomes, but another, more powerful being entirely – had foreseen. The threads of fate were tangling about, and an event of great importance was soon to happen. With a garbled blurt of arcane syllables, the Herald ordered his Blazing Cavalcade forth.

A shimmering heat haze surrounded the distant tower, and its translucent surface glowed blue-white as thousands of rippling bodies spilled from its crystal gateways. With an insane, babbling cry, the daemonic hosts of the Silver Tower swept down upon the scaled warriors of Dracothion's Tail. Flamers bounded crazily across the shattered earth, spewing gouts of iridescent fire that melted scales and sacred armour to bubbling liquid. Screamers and skink beast-riders duelled in the skies above, crashing together in a blur of fangs and bladed fins, whirling and jockeying for position in a whirling cloud of leathery bodies.

This aerial battle would prove both bloody and vital. Despite their fearless assault, many skink riders were sent hurtling from their leather-winged mounts, wreathed in unnatural flames. Flying daemons spilled from the upper spires of the Silver Tower in their hundreds. For each such fiend smashed out of the sky by a celestite javelin, or torn to bloody ribbons by the jaws and talons of Ripperdactyls, ten more seemed to launch themselves into the fray. Yet when Starmaster Kuoteq exerted his will, the tide soon turned. With a flick of its webbed fingers, the slann summoned trails of celestial energy that limned Scar-Veteran Quar-Toc and his elite Saurus Knights in a silvery glow. Freed from the dictates of gravity, these riders kicked their mounts and soared into the skies, given the power of flight by the slann's spell. They crashed into the Screamer shoals with devastating force, impaling dozens of the daemons upon their lances and driving the rest before them. Quar-Toc hacked and swiped with his celestial warblade, as beneath him the Carnosaur Kokatla unleashed its terrible fury upon the daemon-tide, snatching Screamers out of the air with its mighty jaws and shaking them apart.

With the skies so dominated, the Terradon Riders of Dracothion's Tail were freed to loose their fury

upon the daemonic hordes below. Squadrons of the aerial warriors swept over the heads of jabbering Horrors, dropping meteoric rocks that pulverised everything that they struck, or hurling bolas that engulfed swathes of the enemy in purifying flames. Kuoteq too lent his formidable arcane might to the fray, manifesting clusters of comets and sending the deadly missiles crashing down upon the enemy. Though more daemons poured from the Silver Tower by the moment, the momentum of the Seraphon assault did not slow.

With a wave of his withered hand, Starmaster Kuoteq ordered forward his sacred Bastiladons. Dozens of the ancient beasts, their blue-green scales splattered with blood and mud, lumbered forward under the guidance of their skink riders, and as one the Solar Engines mounted atop their backs glowed with the fiery power of a newborn star. Beams of light erupted forth, blazing across the battlefield and slamming into the pillars and blister-like growths of the Silver Tower. Chaos-forged crystal shrieked and bubbled under the onslaught. Cracks spider-webbed across its sheer surface. Hulking Kroxigors smashed and hacked their way to the walls of the structure, and there set their huge mauls against the crystal surface, hammering great rents in the sections that had been weakened by the solar beams.

At this climactic moment, all present heard a scream of purest outrage and the shadows of a thousand swooping forms fell across the battlefield. The Eater of Tomes had returned to his domain, and he had brought with him a vast number of Disc-riding Tzaangor champions and another great wave of Screamers. This dread host fell upon the flank of Kuoteq's army, and most deadly of all was the figure at its head. The Gaunt Summoner was no mere war-mage but a daemonic master of sorcery unrivalled by any mortal, and each screeched incantation turned a host of saurus to obsidian statues or trapped a lumbering warbeast in a pool of boiling metal.

For all his power, however, the Eater of Tomes was not a creature to risk disaster merely to salve his ego. The star-lizards were many, and their magic powerful – the slumped and swollen form of their toad-like ruler radiated a might that unnerved even the Gaunt Summoner. To think that they could do any true damage to his Silver Tower was inconceivable, of course, but as he observed the savage enemy hammering upon his very door, the daemon felt a shudder of unease. Even if they could not destroy the fortress, they could breach the walls and reach the core where his personal chambers lay, along with his last, precious reserves of processed varanite. It was time to depart. Ordering his Tzaangor subjects forward to drive the Seraphon from the foot of his fortress, the Eater of Tomes snapped his fingers and disappeared in an eruption of purplish flame.

FLIGHT OF THE TOWER

Starmaster Kuoteq and his Seraphon had carved a gory path to the very foot of the Silver Tower, but for all their fury they could not breach its magically shaped crystal gateways. More daemons seemed to surge about their flanks by the moment.

In a burst of flame, the Eater of Tomes appeared in the teleportation circle of his Silver Tower. Spitting a multitude of curses, he strode across his chambers and placed the coiling head of his changestaff into a crystalline repository on the wall. The translucent skin of his abode began to pulse with shimmering energies as the Gaunt Summoner recited incantations long ago revealed to him by his master Tzeentch.

Starmaster Kuoteq raised his heavy-lidded eyes to the Silver Tower as a thunderous tremor rippled across the battlefield. The jagged earth cracked apart, plunging rifts opening up to swallow hundreds of saurus, who tumbled into boiling channels of magma and bottomless crevices. The air became thick with sorcery, and the slann grimaced in pain as his mottled skin began to burn. With a thunderous roar, the Silver Tower emerged from the earth in its full splendour, its vast length cracking free from the rocks of the Vale of Screams and sending a deadly hail of shrapnel whipping through the air to eviscerate daemon and Seraphon alike. The Starmaster closed his eyes and focused his mind, tracing glyphs of protection in the air to summon shields of force above his battling servants. Debris rained down upon the energy shield, and the ancient wizard trembled as he strove to maintain control over unthinkably powerful forces.

The Silver Tower tore clear of the earth. It loomed over the vale like a mighty spear as shimmering trails of magic played across its surface. Its underside blazed with a fearsome light that blinded those who beheld it fully and scorched the scales from those Seraphon closest to it. Then, in an explosion of sound and fury that levelled trees and boiled rivers to nothing, the Silver Tower raced towards the sky trailing sorcerous fire. When the dust settled, Starmaster Kuoteq opened his rheumy eyes. Perhaps a few hundred of his warriors still survived, from an army of many thousands. They stood atop a plateau of charred and melting stone, all that was left of the Vale of Screams. Around them, the land had been burned away. Motes of celestial energy drifted through the air. At the slann's side, Scar-Veteran Quar-Toc let out a roar of primal fury, an atavistic sound of a predator denied. Yet Kuoteq raised a webbed hand to silence the saurus. Such losses were expected, and this result was the very same that had been prophesied by his munificence, Lord Kroak. The Great Plan rolled onwards, inexorable and unstoppable. And the Eater of Tomes was helpless in its spokes.

BATTLE IN THE LIGHTLESS VOID

The Eater of Tomes thought to flee the wrath of the Seraphon by plunging into the Aetheric Void. Here, he thought, amidst the inky blackness, he might evade his foes – for a time, at least. Little did the Gaunt Summoner know that he would find no sanctuary at all in the vast and featureless expanse between the realms. As the Silver Tower punctured the sky above the Eightpoints like an immense spear and passed out into the lightless reaches, the Eater of Tomes slumped back in his crystal throne, his nine eyes narrowing in frustration and tendrils of sorcerous energies playing about his steepled fingers. Yet the Gaunt Summoner had little more than a few moments to brood.

Arcane ward-sigils screamed, and the Silver Tower rocked as if struck by a comet. With a gesture, the Eater of Tomes turned the crystalline wall of his lair translucent, opening a window to the great blackness beyond. There, suspended in the void, were a dozen gleaming ziggurat-ships encircling the Silver Tower. As the Gaunt Summoner watched in horror, light flared atop each of the strange vessels, illuminating the vast nothingness so that for a brief moment he thought that he caught a glimpse of an immense serpent wrapping its coils around his Silver Tower. Then, the energies emitted by the ziggurat-ships coalesced into a single beam of blinding white light that lanced into the Tzeentchian fortress. Somehow, the Seraphon had anticipated his flight. Now, he was cornered once more.

The largest of the Seraphon ships was a many-tiered behemoth whose bow was fashioned in the image of a golden serpent. This was the temple-ship *Itza-huitlan*, which had the honour of bearing the eldest of their kind – venerable Lord Kroak, first amongst Starmasters. The slann's mummified corpse sat upon its holy palanquin in the viewing orrery of the temple-ship, yet his spirit blazed with arcane power beyond even that of the Gaunt Summoner. With a mental impulse so powerful it sent scrying

mechanisms in arcane sanctums across the realms momentarily haywire, Lord Kroak ordered his armada forward. Detaching from *Itza-huitlan* came dozens of golden barges, decorated with leering reptilian faces and glyphs in a tongue long ago forgotten. These lesser vessels screamed across the emptiness of the void and slammed into the Silver Tower, disgorging phalanxes of shield-bearing saurus and hulking Kroxigor into its labyrinthine halls. There they met the Tower's garrison of daemons in furious battle, primal strength and cold fury set against raw arcane might.

The fortress of the Eater of Tomes was far from powerless, even against such a host as was arrayed against it. From the uppermost parapets of the Silver Tower issued cascades of sorcerous fire that engulfed the nearest Seraphon temple-ship, melting through enchanted stone to open great gouges in the vessel. Torn from their feet by the voracious pull of the Aetheric Void, hundreds of skinks and saurus were dragged into the endless nothingness, screaming silently as they drifted to their doom. The stricken temple-ship listed out of control, a blazing torch amidst the dark. Sensing one last opportunity to escape, the Eater of Tomes guided the Silver Tower towards this gap in the Seraphon fleet.

Careening madly, the shattered Silver Tower hurtled into the boiling chemical stratosphere of Chamon, Realm of Metal. Smashing through the peaks of cloud-scraping mountains and sending up a vast curtain of superheated steam as it roared in low over chromatic oceans, the Tower came to a crashing rest on the coast of the Rusted Wastes. By some miracle, the enchantments of the Silver Tower still held as it lay in the cavernous furrow it had bored into the reddish sands of the Rusted Wastes. Breaches in the surface of the Tower spat forks of chaotic energy that spawned twisted growths wherever they struck. Soon, a raging tempest of magic roared and circled above the crash site.

Aboard the *Itza-huitlan*, Kroak's desiccated form was as impassive as ever but his skink attendants blinked and chittered nervously. They wondered whether some disaster had befallen the Great Plan, for had not the enemy once again escaped their wrath? Though quick-witted, their intellects could not grasp a plan of such immensity as that which the Relic Priest had woven. The lumination torches in Lord Kroak's chamber flickered as he exerted his will, and with a thought he set the vast mass of the *Itza-huitlan* into motion. The next stage of the grand work would fall to one of his most trusted acolytes.

STAMPEDE OF SCALES

The Silver Tower of the Eater of Tomes lay shattered and smoking across the Rusted Wastes of Chamon. This mountainous land was notable for the acid rains that lashed it each season, turning the bright silver of its highest peaks to a pitted reddish-brown. Now it was ravaged by another storm, a magical tempest unleashed by the devastated arcane fortress.

The Eater of Tomes stood and surveyed the wreckage of his beloved tower, imagining the potent torments that he would wreak upon the lizard-things when next he encountered them. Sending out hovering, disembodied eyeballs to survey the crash site, he discovered something that sent a shiver of horror down his spine. The three wyrdflame fonts that powered the Silver Tower's arcane weapon-spires were exposed, the bulbous chambers that had contained them cracked open by suspiciously surgical blasts from the Seraphon temple-ships.

Each of the chambers was lined with pulsating glyphs and housed a throbbing mass of crystal-laced flesh at its centre, a hideous conglomeration of mortal and immortal beings that had been fused together in an unspeakable ritual. All three now lay exposed like raw nerves and spasmodically ejected bursts of iridescent flame into the sky. The wards containing the wyrdflame fonts still held, just barely, but they were sparking and groaning as they strained to suppress the sorcerous power leaking into reality. In time, they could be repaired and the Silver Tower restored; it was a thing that had been crafted aeons before the Mortal Realms had come into being, after all, and not easily destroyed. Yet even as the Gaunt Summoner began to work his sorcery upon the wreckage, a terribly familiar sound was heard in the distance: the deep-throated roaring of reptilian beasts and the rolling thunder of stampeding bodies.

THE THUNDER LIZARD STRIKES

Emerging through realmgates long forgotten to all but the loyal servants of the Old Ones came lumbering, scaled forms, snorting and grunting as they carried the heavy gold-and-stone howdahs upon their backs. Each of these enormous creatures bore a relic of a time that not even the slann could recall, devices crafted by the hands of beings mightier than gods, and powerful enough to obliterate a fortress wall or slay a drake outright.

The Seraphon were led to war by Iq-To. No creature of High Azyr was he, but an honoured skink elder of the Thunder Lizard, a Coalesced constellation from the outerlands of Chamon whose task for centuries had been to maintain the technology of the Old Ones, and who stood watch over a vast hoard of cosmic artefacts. The Starwarden rode atop Ancient Talepotec, one of the most fearsome of the constellation's Stegadon warbeasts, accompanied by a cadre of his most trusted warriors. Behind Talepotec came yet more gigantic Stegadons, and then a formation of lumbering plate-armoured Bastiladons carrying golden contraptions that opened up like the petals of a flower to reveal a golden crystal within; these were Solar Engines, weapons that radiated the fearsome power of a sun. The venerable Iq-To gazed down upon the ruins of the Silver Tower, at the riot of daemonic horrors spilling from its broken interior and the change-storm whirling above it. It was time for the Thunder Lizard to ride forth. An avalanche of scaled flesh thundered down the mountain slopes towards the crashed fortress, a great cloud of red dust billowing in its wake.

Ravaged as it was, the Silver Tower had no shortage of daemons within its fractal interior, which obeyed no laws of physical reality. They poured now from every breach and tear, a carpet of babbling Pink Horrors and grotesque, amorphous Flamers surging across the valley floor. Atra'zan the Immolator oversaw the procession, his Burning Chariot blazing a path across the tortured sky as the Herald summoned a ball of unnatural fire and hurled it into the path of Iq-To's onrushing stampede. It detonated with a rushing roar and a Stegadon went up in flames, burning skinks toppling from its back like fluttering sparks as the great beast crashed to earth. Then the reptilian behemoths were amongst their daemonic foes, stomping, goring and crushing.

Leaving the slaughter to his saurus commanders, Starwarden Iq-To led his war machines on a charge to the foot of the stricken tower, smashing a path for the Bastiladons and their deadly engines of war. Atop the beasts' howdahs, skink retainers swarmed over the cosmic devices, aligning crystals and glyphs. The Old Ones' relics could be unpredictable in their workings, but Lord Kroak's attendants had given Iq-To exacting instructions as to how they were to be attuned this day. Motes of golden light coalesced around each of the devices, so bright that even Talepotec growled and stamped in protest. The building energies focused into a single, brilliant

beam that lanced towards the crown of the Silver Tower, where the Eater of Tomes stood observing the battle. The projection effortlessly pierced the arcane wards hastily thrown up by the Gaunt Summoner. He screamed as his nine eyes burst under the heat of the barrage; his robes were incinerated, his flesh sloughed from his bones, and then his body exploded in a splatter of ichor and sorcerous discharge.

The nearest wyrdflame font was also caught in the path of the beam, and it began to glow and warp under the onslaught. Its pellucid surface splintered, and there was a great roaring, sucking sound as the arcane pressure that had been building within it was suddenly released. The vessel erupted in a blizzard of multicoloured shards. Its destruction initiated a violent chain reaction as the next font exploded, and then the next. There was a second of terrible silence as the world turned white. Then, the Silver Tower detonated.

Those in distant lands who had the misfortune to be gazing in the wrong direction were blinded by an intense flare of light. The shockwave caused by the Tower's demise struck with the force of a god's fist. It shattered the nearest mountains and launched their splintered peaks into the stratosphere. Lakes were turned to boiling mist in an instant. Continental plates were shunted like slipped tiles, and the free city of Tansis was swallowed by a tsunami of liquid metal, its fifty-thousand inhabitants wiped out in a single, horrific moment.

Later, when the vast clouds of dust and debris thrown up by the event began to settle and dissipate, it became apparent that the Rusted Wastes were no more. In their place was a crater a thousand miles or more across, glowing with the after-effects of the magical cataclysm. But the devastation reached far further afield, across Chamon and beyond. The Silver Towers were not simply floating fortresses, but arcane constructs directly linked to many of the primordial pathways between the realms, and indeed to the Crystal Labyrinth itself. When the Tower was destroyed, a magical blastwave issued forth from the site of its demise, rushing along those connective arteries. This destructive tide swept across the Aetheric Void, causing realmgate after realmgate to explode and turning others into howling vortices of Chaos magic, a side-effect that had been accurately predicted by Lord Kroak, but judged an acceptable loss in exchange for the destruction of so potent a target as the Tzeentchian fortress.

Of the Seraphon host, not a trace remained. Starwarden Iq-To had done his sacred duty, and by his and his warriors' sacrifice would the Great Plan proceed. It was a deed worthy of remembrance. On the arc-bridge of the *Itza-huitlan*, venerable Lord Kroak delved into his deeper consciousness, and in a flickering burst of star-stuff the image of Iq-To manifested. The aged skink dropped to his haunches before his master. This was no crude revenant but something far stranger, an echo of the Starwarden that would continue to serve the ancient Relic Priest.

AMONGST THE RUINS

The Silver Tower was no more, destroyed in a terrifying cataclysm that had forever scarred the surface of the Realm of Metal. As the fires rescinded and the tremors ceased, explorers and profiteers came forth, eager to inspect the aftermath of the great disaster and seek out any gains to be made.

Endrinmaster Drongon Humboldsson was aboard the Arkanaut Frigate, the *Redoubtable*, on its maiden voyage when the Rusted Wastes were annihilated in fire and fury. From six thousand leagues distant, the crew saw the skies turn the colour of burning aether-gold, and several minutes later a shockwave rattled their hull. Weather-beaten Arkanauts muttered to one another darkly, for all present had lived through the Garaktormun, the Great Gale of Death that had swept out of Shyish and inflicted untold damage upon the Kharadron empire.

Humboldsson's home sky-port of Baraz-Zilfin had been struck as hard as any of its rivals, yet so too had the Windswept City weathered the worst of the crisis and in fact emerged the stronger for it; the sky-port's master shipwrights had constructed new, lighter vessels capable of withstanding the worst spirit-gales and gheistwaves, aethermatically shielded against ethereal attacks and fitted with souped-up engines. With more of these vessels pumped out of the Zilfin sky-docks every day, the Windswept City had claimed a significant portion of the dispersed aether-gold streams swept across the skies by the Garaktormun, and gained much ground on its foremost rival – the mighty Barak-Nar.

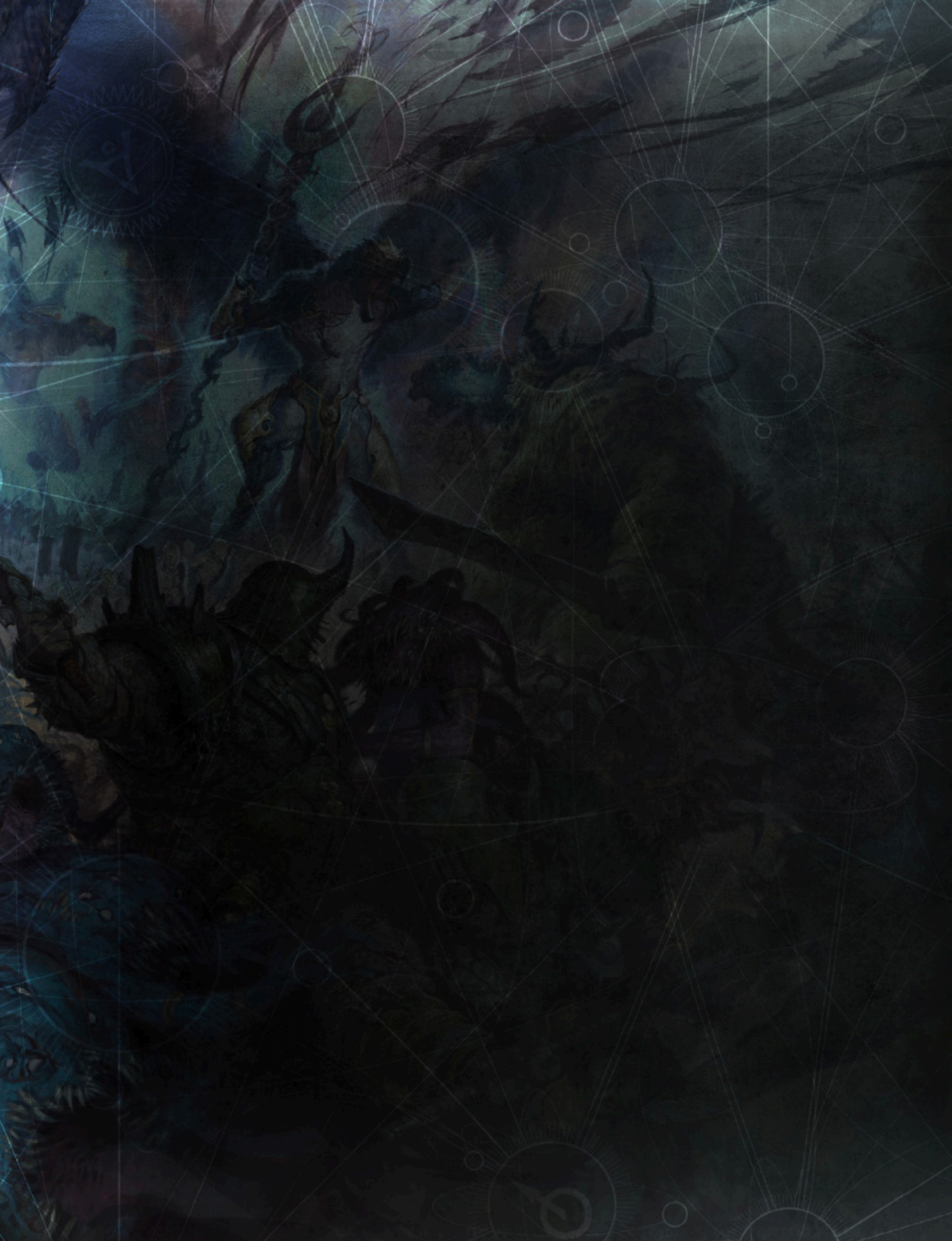
The *Redoubtable* was one such vessel, fresh from the Grammtok-Rahl yards and with not so much as a blemish on its paintwork. Equipped with the latest in aethermatic surge-injection technology, and with bracing plates and stabilising fins the length of its hull, the Frigate was able to maintain a high speed of over ninety wind-knots for as long as its aether-gold reserves lasted. It was a vessel built for a single purpose: beating Barak-Zilfin's enemies to the prize.

Indeed, the number of untested modifications the ship bore was the very reason Humboldsson, an Endrinmaster of no small repute, had been put in charge of the vessel rather than a Captain.

Currently, the *Redoubtable* was following the western edge of the Arable Heartlands, tracing a fresh slipstream of aether-gold as yet unclaimed by any sky-port. It was a lucrative discovery, all but unprecedented for a vessel embarking on its first journey. The wise thing to do, Endrinmaster Humboldsson knew, would be to turn back towards Barak-Zilfin. The vessel was lightning swift and armed with devastating cannons, but the Admiral's Council had been clear: the *Redoubtable* was not to be risked on unsanctioned operations. Yet there was enough wiggle room in the contract to justify a diversion, if the rewards were worthwhile.

As Humboldsson looked out across the burning horizon, weighing their options, he felt a presence at his shoulder. It was the Arkanaut Gromthi, a recent addition to the crew. Ancient as the Code and covered in tattoos of archaic rune-script, the Arkanaut looked for all the world like the most hardline Barak-Thryng grudgecaller. Humboldsson frowned, trying to remember where and when the old whitebeard had signed on for the voyage. Usually he could recall every pertinent detail about any crew to which he was assigned. Peering out towards the strange conflagrations in the distance, Gromthi leaned on the gunwhale and produced an antiquated pipe filled with cloudweed, which he inserted into the atmosphilter of his sky-suit's mask. Where there was strife, there was profit, the Arkanaut said in a warm, deep voice cracked with age and experience. It might be worth the *Redoubtable*'s while to see just what manner of fresh disaster was brewing.

Humboldsson found himself in agreement. This event, whatever its nature, was worth investigating. If the Garaktormun had taught the Kharadron anything, it was that great disasters were often followed by great opportunities for profit. Shouting for the Redoubtable's grizzled helmsman, Bokki Karling, to plot the swiftest course towards the distant fires, Humboldsson began bellowing instructions to his Arkanauts, and within moments the *Redoubtable* was gunning for the horizon at full speed, the deck groaning beneath Endrinmaster Humboldsson's mag-locked boots as the wind whipped and whistled across his armoured bodysuit.



ACT II

DEATH PACT

EMPIRE OF ANGUISH

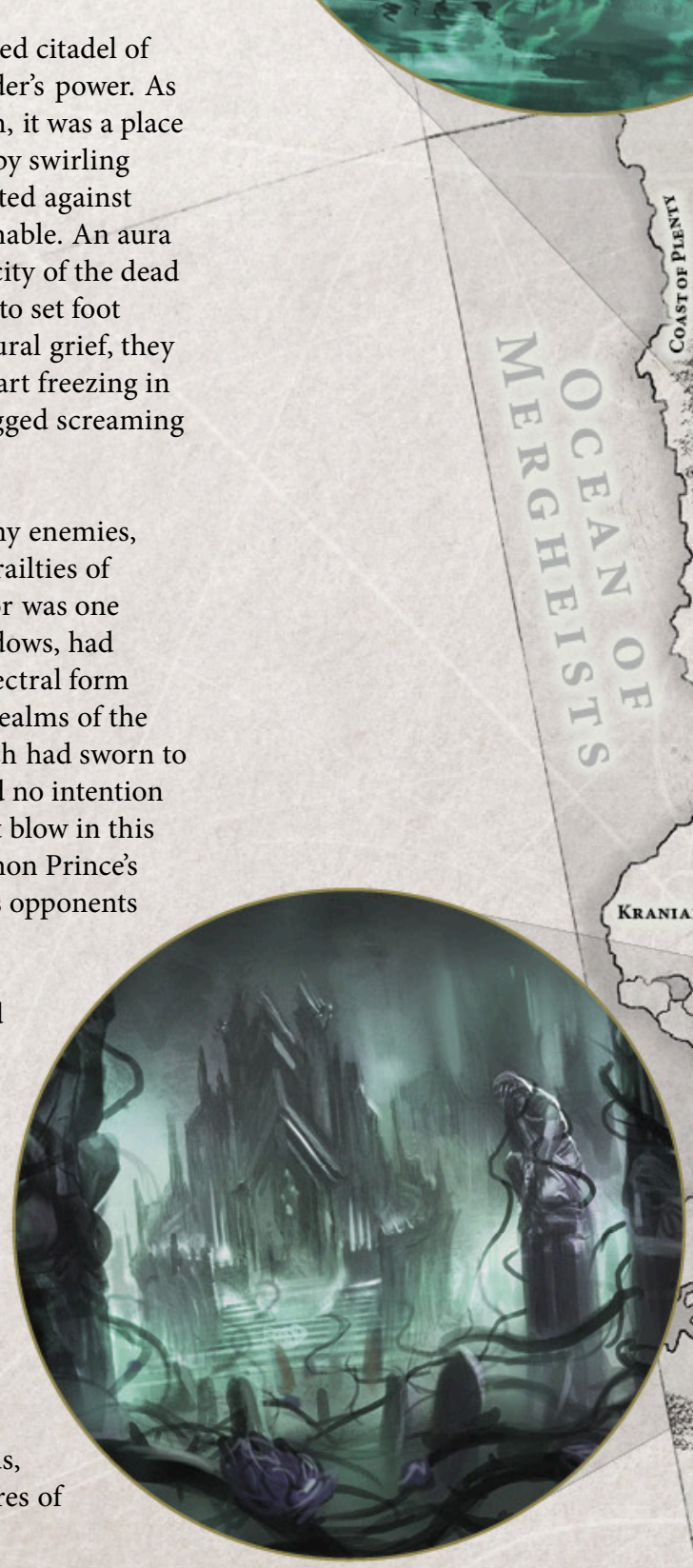
The cursed empire of Dolorum was a place of depthless grief and terror, a monument to Lady Olynder's doomed ambition. Since the ruler of the Nighthaunt assumed the title of Mortarch, it had never once been put to siege, for only the damned could set foot in such a place without succumbing to a hideous fate.

The capital of Dolorum was the ill-fated citadel of Sylontum, the true seat of Lady Olynder's power. As befitting the stronghold of a Mortarch, it was a place of dark and terrible glory, populated by swirling hosts of ethereal warriors, and protected against trespassers by the vilest curses imaginable. An aura of such utter desolation lay over this city of the dead that it would be death for any mortal to set foot within its walls; stricken by supernatural grief, they would collapse in an instant, their heart freezing in their chest even as their soul was dragged screaming from their body.

Amongst the Mortarch of Grief's many enemies, however, not all were limited by the frailties of mortalkind. The Dark Master Be'lakor was one such foe. His sword, the Blade of Shadows, had already bitten deep into Olynder's spectral form once before, banishing her from the realms of the living. It was a slight that the Mortarch had sworn to repay a hundredfold. Yet Be'lakor had no intention of allowing Olynder to strike the next blow in this simmering feud. It was ever the Daemon Prince's strategy to attack when and where his opponents least expected him to.

The Dark Master had at his command an entire legion of unnatural horrors whose very nature rendered them resistant to Sylontum's enervating aura. Centuries ago, Be'lakor had secured several secret passages into the Realm of Death, for he know that one day the hosts of Chaos and Death must fight for the right to feast upon the souls of the living. It was through one such realmgate that the Legion of the First Prince would pass in order to reach the underworlds, and march upon the gloom-laden spires of Sylontum itself.

DOLORUM
The fallen empire of Dolorum is a lair of the spectral dead, and the seat of Lady Olynder's power.

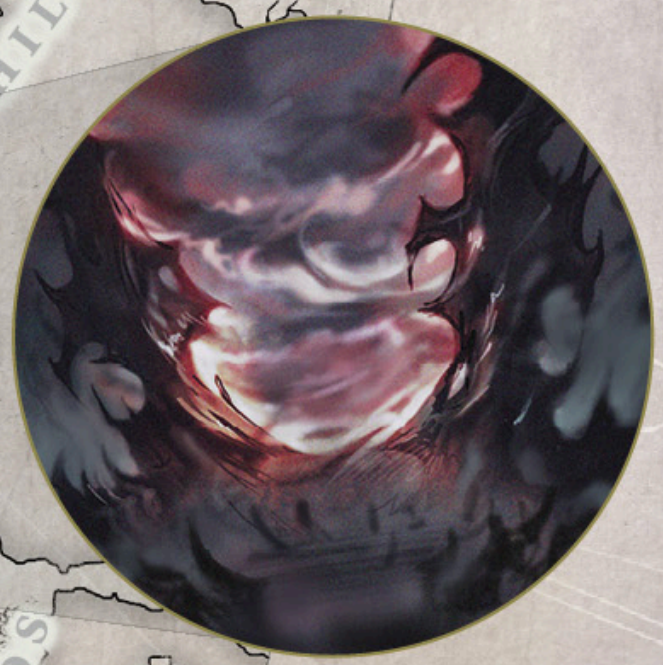


THE SANCTUM OF ANGUISH
Covered in thorny black roses, this ornate mausoleum-garden contains the physical remains of the Mortarch of Grief.

THE PRIME INNERLANDS

THE GREAT INVERSION
Since the great cataclysm of Nagash's making turned Shyish inside out, the Prime Innerlands have been drawn irrevocably towards the mouth of the Shyish Nadir.

The Amethyst Princedoms
Cutter's Forest
Hopetide
Thanator's Manse
Sea of Best Hauls
Warmsoul Uplands
To the Starless Gates
Dead Man's Folly
Honour's End
Homestead
Booming Scar
Coast of Bliss
Deific Mons
Land of Forgotten Gods
Knucklebone Coast
Betrayer's Barrier
Modrhavn
Plains of Flesh and Blood
Morrsend
Sendport
Lake Lethis
Bacchanalia
Endless Boneyard
Valour Fjords
Glittering Marsh
Assassin's Rest
Land of Dead Heroes
Driftwood Beaches
Cripplecoast
Satyr's End
Glymmsforge
The Sea Maw
The Wailing Wind
Desert of Bones
Sea of Fading Hope
Shadespire
Tzlid
Skelt
Buried Sea
Lock and Key Isles
Isle of Last Sighs
The Banelands
Cape Ghoul
Shyish Hook
Gloomtribe Haunts
Mute Island
Rapid Rush
Morthaven
The Skull Isles
The Slaves
Abandoned Isles
Moss Spike
Bottleneck Coast
The Splinters
Null Island
Thrice-Cursed Islands
Odt
Dhûmi
The Gullet
Land of Living Bone
Spuria
Gothizzar
Cadavaris
To Nagashizzar and the Shyish Nadir



THE NOCTIS SHROUD
A cloaked and hidden shadow-portal leading to the Realm of Death.

BE'LAKOR, THE DARK MASTER

The malevolent being known as Be'lakor is the first and greatest of Daemon Princes, an iron-willed tyrant that has preyed upon mortalkind since long before the Mortal Realms came into being. By his hand have countless heroes met their end and mighty civilisations been consumed by shadow and terror.

The fell legend of the Dark Master begins in the mist-shrouded prehistory of the World-that-Was. Be'lakor was once a mortal warlord of great renown, whose ruthlessness and lust for power caught the gaze of the Chaos Pantheon. Recognising Be'lakor as a potential vessel through which they could achieve dominance over all mortals, the Dark Gods raised him up to become a Daemon Prince – the first living being to ever receive such a dark blessing. Invested with a portion of each god's might, Be'lakor represented the true power of Chaos Undivided.

It is not known how or why Be'lakor lost the favour of his patrons. Some say that he attempted to rebel against the Dark Gods, seeking to claim their power as his own. Others say that he was defeated in a cataclysmic battle by an ancient hero of the light, and condemned to an eternity of ignominy for his failure. Whatever the truth, his time as the foremost champion of Chaos was over; the Dark Gods would instead put their faith in a series of mortal warlords known as the Everchosen. Most humiliatingly of all, Be'lakor was cursed never to receive that profane title himself, but instead would be forced to inaugurate each new Everchosen with the artefact known as the Crown of Domination – a helm currently worn by Archaon. What truth there is in such stories is unclear. Myths and rumours surround Be'lakor like coiling wisps of shadow, for the Dark Master knows better than any the power of deception. If any creature in existence has surmised the truth of his origins and motivations, it is only because their knowledge somehow suits Be'lakor's purpose.

Despite his fall from grace, Be'lakor remains one of mortalkind's most implacable foes, a tyrant and manipulator whose fell influence can be felt across the vast expanse of the Mortal Realms. Though robbed of the status his towering ego craves, Be'lakor is nonetheless one of the most powerful of the Dark Gods' agents, who through sheer, dominating force of will has assembled the enormous host known as the Legion of the First Prince to do his bidding. Consisting of daemons of all aspects and allegiances that have been coerced, lured or forcibly leashed into obeying the Dark Master's will, this personal army has scoured entire continents at the Daemon Prince's behest.

Given their fractious history, it is little surprise that Be'lakor does not bother to conceal his outright hatred for Archaon the Everchosen. The two warlords may have fought alongside one another more than once against the armies of the God-King and the other great powers of the realms, but each would gladly see the other humiliated and broken. Likely, their mutual enmity amuses the Dark Gods, who delight in playing the two off against one another. While Archaon meets his enemies with direct and catastrophic violence, Be'lakor is a subtler creature. He weaves his plots and realm-spanning schemes from the darkness, sowing seeds that will lead to the destruction of civilisations and the ruin of kings. Shadow and terror are his weapons, confusion and uncertainty the poisons he employs to weaken his prey before the kill.

Not all battles can be won from the shadows, however. When the Dark Master deems it necessary, he will take to the field in all his fell glory, wielding the Blade of Shadows with skill honed across centuries of slaughter. Possessed of the full might of a Daemon Prince, Be'lakor can tear an armoured knight in two with a flex of his corded muscles, and soar over a castle wall with but a beat of his leathery wings. For all his unnatural potency, Be'lakor cares nothing for honour. A masterful sorcerer, he delights in humiliating his opponents, hurling hexes and shadow-curses to sap their strength, bind their limbs or strike them dumb with crippling visions of loss and despair.

RISE OF THE FIRST PRINCE

Throughout the early centuries of the Age of Sigmar, Be'lakor was content to allow Archaon and his endless legions to bear the brunt of the war against the God-King and his allies. The Dark Master took to the battlefields of the Mortal Realms only when he deemed it beneficial, or when to not do so would have angered the Dark Gods beyond reason. All the while, his network of daemonic and mortal spies

laid the groundwork for his eventual rise to power, identifying weaknesses in his foes that might be exploited, and seizing artefacts and rare troves of arcane lore that might prove vital in the wars to come. While his rivals' armies were diminished by a cycle of ceaseless, attritional battle, the Legion of the First Prince slowly expanded its influence, a shadowy corruption spreading its way through the armies of Chaos inch by inch.

It was a great daemonic host acting under Be'lakor's orders that smashed the great prophetic engine of Tepok's Eye, blinding the slann to his machinations. It was by his design that the location of the Eater of Tomes' Silver Tower was revealed to the Seraphon, for the Dark Master's plans rested upon the obliteration of that eldritch structure. And it was his shadowy agents that freed the Lord-Veritant Keiser Ven Brecht from his imprisonment at the hands of the newly risen goddess Morathi, thus ensuring that word reached Azyr of the Khainites' betrayal, and their brutal annexation of the free city of Anvilgard.

When word came that both Hysh and Shyish were aflame, the ancient grudge between Teclis and Nagash once more spilling over into outright war, Be'lakor knew that the decisive moment had at last arrived. With the great powers of the realms distracted and embroiled in bitter fighting and recriminations, there would be no one to oppose Be'lakor's schemes. By the time that the weakling deities of Order realised their doom, it would be too late. The Dark Master would claim his rightful inheritance as the foremost champion of the Dark Gods, and the skies themselves would burn in the fires of his ambition.

AN INFERNAL PLAN

The entity known as Be'lakor had plagued mortalkind since before the formation of the Eight Realms, plotting from the shadows to murder kings and send empires toppling into ruin. Yet the daemon's latest plan was on an altogether more ambitious scale: he sought nothing less than to cripple the armies of Sigmar by cutting them off from the Realm of Heavens.

From his shadow-wreathed throne, the daemon Be'lakor looked down upon the teeming masses of his legion. All the hideous panoply of Chaos was represented there. Sulphur-spitting cohorts of Bloodletters stood beside languorous daemons of Slaanesh – hated foes who would have gladly flayed one another, were it not for the shadow-brand stitched into their flesh. This was the mark of Be'lakor, a dark sigil powerful enough to bind even the children of the Ruinous Powers into his service. Even several greater daemons had sworn fealty to the Dark Master, though their allegiance had been acquired through manipulation and coercion rather than force, for such beings could not be bound as easily as their minions. Many others, such as the feared Daemon Princes of Orb Infernia, had temporarily set aside their mutual hatred and answered the summons of the First Prince, further swelling his power.

Be'lakor rose from his throne and unfurled his wings to their full span, the rattling of the hooked chains that festooned them silencing the anarchic horde arrayed beneath him. When he spoke, his voice dripped with the malice of aeons. Archaon, the False King, had failed, Be'lakor proclaimed. Where was he now, even as the enemy ravaged his domain and the armies of the Great Necromancer seized lands long promised to the Dark Gods? The Three-Eyed King's absence betrayed his weakness. He had known victory in his grasp and allowed it to slip away. For all his fire and fury, said Be'lakor, Archaon was still a mortal, lacking both the desire and the power to break the realms to his will. A true chosen of the Dark Gods would never fail so terribly. It was time for the command of the great apocalypse to fall into worthier hands. Be'lakor had watched and he had waited, and now he would strike, cutting the throat of the God-King's armies in a single, devastating blow.

Long had the Dark Master desired to unpick the foundations of the realms. Nagash's efforts in Hysh to collapse realmgates into life-draining vortices had proven that these ancient edifices could be destroyed, as had Archaon's attempts at corrupting them using varanite. Yet it was the obliteration of the Silver Tower in Chamon that had proffered the final part of the puzzle. It was possible to not just destroy a realmgate by exposing it to tremendous arcane forces, but to cause a chain reaction that would overload and detonate other realmgates linked to that same mystical pathway. A series of such massive implosions occurring simultaneously would tear open the skin of the Mortal Realms and spill the energies of Chaos into reality, turning the very skies into a churning maelstrom of cursed magic. This would choke the God-King's empire to death, for such would be the trauma caused that it would sever the connections between Azyr and the other realms, leaving the Stormcast Eternals stranded in the field. There, they could be worn down and destroyed at leisure.

Unwittingly, the Seraphon had unlocked the final gate barring the way to Be'lakor's ascension. No doubt they had judged the damage caused to the realmgate network by their destruction of the Eater of Tomes' lair as a price worth paying to end his experiments. Little did the star-beasts know that Be'lakor's armies stood ready to exploit this trauma, to pull apart the wounds in reality and let the Realm of Chaos spill across Chamon and beyond.

It was a risky stratagem. The Dark Master's plan called for his forces to destroy some of the corrupted portals that had for so long granted daemonkind access to mortal lands. Archaon would never have countenanced it, for he was a warlord above all – he would never willingly sacrifice his armies' main routes of conquest that had served them so long and so well, let alone sanction the destruction of such powerful assets as the Towers themselves. But the Dark Master was gambling that with Sigmar's armies so gravely disrupted, the balance of power would be shifted dramatically in the great war. Daemons would run rampant once more, and a second age of Chaos would surely dawn.

Be'lakor had a task for each daemonic warlord present, a pattern of attacks so complex and devious that only a being of his ancient malevolence could have come up with it. It would begin in Chamon, for there the membrane separating the realm from the roiling tides of madness was weakest. The Legion of the First Prince was to set the Realm of Metal aflame. When the time was right, Be'lakor would reveal his hand and join the fight in person, but for now he had another wheel to set in motion.

DEATH'S VENGEANCE

It had been during the great battle for the Eightpoints, when Be'lakor fought alongside his hated rival Archaon, that he first battled the gheist-empress Lady Olynder, Mortarch of Grief. In that climactic duel, the Dark Master had banished his foe's spectral form back to the underworlds of Shyish with the Blade of Shadows. Yet in recent days, he had been afflicted by sensations that were quite unfamiliar to him: a cloying paranoia and a bitter cold that he could not quite dismiss. Further still, it seemed to the Dark Master that the colour had drained from the world around him, save for a sinister, emerald glow at the edge of his vision. Be'lakor was far from a stranger to malign magics. He knew the touch of a curse when he felt it, though he was surprised and impressed by the strength of the rage that so plainly gave the hex its potency. Such lingering enmity could prove most useful, he thought.

Be'lakor knew that if he did nothing but wait for Lady Olynder's wrath to fall upon him, even his most powerful sorceries would likely serve only to send her or her agents back to their lightless afterlife for an indeterminate span. With the Mortarch of Grief as an enemy, his careful plans were at risk of being thrown into turmoil without warning if she were to seek vengeance. Yet perhaps there was a way to remove her as an enemy.

So it was that the Legion of the First Prince laid siege to Dolorum, spilling out of ancient shadow-gates known only to Be'lakor. The Dark Master himself led the assault, guarded by a quartet of greater daemons who all bore his brand upon their flesh. Holding high the Blade of Shadows, the Dark Master ordered his lesser minions forward, and a tide of daemons poured down the ashen slopes of the Screaming Wastes towards the crumbling walls and austere mausoleum-palaces of Sylontum – Dolorum's ancient capital. They were met by a shrieking horde of wrathful spirits, roused by ancient bonds of servitude to defend their mistress's homeland for eternity. Plaguebearers trudged into storms of howling gheists, swiping with rusted blades, while wedge-shaped stampedes of Bloodletters atop snorting Juggernauts smashed their way through mortuary fields the size of settlements. In response, a thousands-strong host of Chainrasps swept out from the morbid spires of Dolorum's great capital, led by soaring columns of Hexwraiths and clattering Black Coaches.

And while total anarchy played out across Sylontum, Be'lakor and his most vaunted daemonic champions plunged into the depths of the capital, seeking Olynder's most closely guarded secret.

IN THE COURT OF DEATH

At the heart of Sylontum lay the Sanctum of Anguish. Here, in this profane chamber, Lady Olynder's skeletal remains were stored within a crystal coffin and protected by the vilest curses that the Mortarch could devise. Yet even these terrible wards could not keep the Dark Master at bay.

The inner sanctums of Sylontum were twisting and treacherous, guarded by the fiercest spirits in thrall to Lady Olynder. The aura of tragedy that hung over the place was choking in its intensity, and a heart-stopping chorus of wailing banshee-song echoed through its crystalline spires. Any mortal army setting foot in such a dread place would find itself overcome with grief, its soldiers sinking hopeless to the floor to be raked to death by the talons of outraged gheists. Even the daemonic host of the Dark Master was not entirely immune to such potent horror: many of Be'lakor's lesser servants faded into nothingness as emotions that gave them physical form were entirely suffocated by grief. Time, Be'lakor knew, was not on his side. The great assault upon the gates of Sylontum would only divert the Nighthaunt's ruler for a short while.

As Be'lakor advanced, the Mortarch of Grief was battling before the walls of her palace alongside the Sorrowmourn Choir, the most favoured of Dolorum's many Dreadscythe Harridans and Myrmourn Banshees. Her fury at the brazenness of the attack was absolute. With a curling fist she choked the animus from the invaders; with deathly curses she withered their unnatural flesh to ash and sent their essence screaming back to their hellish realm. The Choir joined their voices in a terrible refrain, and as the keening notes of their song swept across the battlefield, Be'lakor's minions writhed and collapsed in agony. The infernal spells hurled by daemonic wizards sputtered and died, before flocks of Myrmourn Banshees swept down to assail the casters with a terrible hunger, for they feasted on arcane energies as vultures do on carrion.

What was the reason for this doomed assault, the Mortarch wondered? Even the Lady Olynder had not believed any foe foolish enough to strike her here, where she was at her most powerful. What need did the Nighthaunt have to repair Sylontum's time-worn walls when the very aura of the dead city would suffice to repel any army? True, the daemons had caused much damage, breaking into her seat of power to rampage and desecrate, but their hopes of victory were as naught. Yet it was at that moment she felt a tremor of unease, the first she had felt in many centuries. Her unliving essence was linked inextricably with the city of her rise and her fall, and in a sudden rush of insight, Olynder could feel a potent daemonic presence drawing nearer to the Sanctum of Anguish: the one place where she might, in fact, be vulnerable. How had the enemy known to strike her there? She had thought the location of her mortal remains to be a secret known only to her and her master, Nagash. With a scream of outrage that echoed across the battlefield and froze the ichor of even raging Bloodletters, the Mortarch of Grief took to the skies, her entourage flocking after her.

DARKNESS ALIGNED

A banshee's bitter scream was cut short as Be'lakor thrust the Blade of Shadows through her chest, the cursed weapon cleaving her spectral form as easily as it would plunge through solid metal. The Daemon Prince sneered in satisfaction as the spirit juddered and twitched, and then burst apart in a cloud of ectoplasmic motes. The grounds of the Sanctum of Anguish echoed to the sounds of a most unnatural battle. Be'lakor's daemons fought tides of gheists swooping down from the spires of Sylontum in their hundreds, battling the deathly spells and grave-blades of the Nighthaunt with untrammelled ferocity.

The Dark Master stepped to the wrought-iron gates that sealed the resting place of the Mortarch's bones, and began to hiss an incantation of unbinding. This spell of banishment had been sought out at great cost by the Dark Master's most cunning agents: shadow daemons from Ulgu, who had breached the halls of Sylontum to spy upon the rituals of Olynder's court. Be'lakor's cadre of daemonic Heralds joined his chanting, save for the Bloodmasters of Khorne, who snarled and howled in contempt at the scent of such powerful magic. Hopelessly bound in servitude to the First Prince, they nonetheless turned their rage against the spectral dead as the Dark Master's magic bored through the wards that protected the Mortarch of Grief's resting place. The gates of the sanctum warped and groaned beneath the arcane torrent.

Just then, a chilling green glow flooded the battlefield. Forth came the Mortarch of Grief and her Sorrowmourn Choir, at the head of the dreaded Emerald Host. As the Nighthaunt queen surged towards Be'lakor, sweeping aside all in her path, he

spat the words of a spell of duplicity. The Daemon Prince split into four shadowy mirror images of himself, each of which rushed the Mortarch with its claws outstretched. Olynder struck down the illusions one by one, but the distraction had already bought Be'lakor the time he needed.

With a single beat of his wings, the Dark Master leapt up the marbled stairway of the sanctum to the sarcophagus at its summit, which rested upon a great bier of black crystal and lacquered bone. It was surrounded by a thick nest of black roses, which lashed out at the Daemon Prince as he stepped close, seeking to bind him in their deathly embrace for daring to intrude in this place of sorrow. Yet the Blade of Shadows swept out, first shearing the plants at the root and then shattering the sarcophagus. Inside, withered and horrible, lay the remains of the Lady Olynder, her waxy skin kept from rotting by Sylontum's master embalmers. Here, then, was the Mortarch's fatal weakness and the very source of her tortured being, her sole link to the past and the mortal regent she had once been. With but a single stroke, Be'lakor might free the Mortal Realms of her cursed existence for all time. Up came the Dark Master's blade, and the Mortarch gave loose to a scream of such bitterness that it caused all of the Nighthaunt in Sylontum to wail in despair.

Be'lakor swept the Blade of Shadows down. Its edge came to rest upon the crown worn by the Mortarch's corpse.

'With a single blow I might end you, spirit,' hissed the First Prince. The Blade of Shadows pulsed, bleeding pure darkness from the runes graven on its surface. 'Would that be a mercy, I wonder?'

Almost imperceptibly, something beneath the Mortarch's veil writhed and quivered, then the fabric settled upon the ridge of her eyeless sockets once more. With a raised hand, she ordered her handmaidens to halt. Their outraged screeching was immediately silenced.

'Death is inevitable,' the Lady whispered, her voice the scraping of glass on stone. 'And my curse upon you will not end with my doom. Do as you will, abomination. And pray you can strike your blow before I turn you to ash and grave soil.'

She drifted towards her foe, frost blanketing the ground before her approach.

Be'lakor smiled, his fangs ice-white in the gloom of the chamber. 'You mistake me, Queen of Sorrow. I did not come here seeking your destruction. I merely required you to hear my words. A change is coming to the realms. The world of mortals is crumbling. A black clot spreads in the heart of Hysh, thanks to your own master's work. By my order, the last survivor of Morathi's insurrection has been freed, and even now brings word of her betrayal to the court of the whelp Sigmar. It is but the dying ember of a foolish hope that keeps the dream of civilisation alive. With your aid, I shall snuff out that pitiful light.'

Lady Olynder circled the daemon. The mention of hope filled her with revulsion: it was the antithesis to grief, and an emotion she despised with all her cursed being.

'You wish for an alliance,' she said. If the Mortarch had been capable of humour she would have found the thought amusingly preposterous. 'But our feud is not done, creature. I remember the touch of your sword. And you, in turn, surely feel the curse I have laid upon you.'

'You and I are immortal,' said Be'lakor. 'What meaning does time have, for creatures such as we? Our quarrel can surely wait until the doom of mortals has been decided. And I have one more thing to offer in return: join your cause to mine, and Sigmar's champions will no longer escape your master's clutches. They will soon lose what renders them "eternal", for even now my armies strike at the gates between realms. When my work is done, their connection to Azyr will be severed, their spirits yours to do with as you wish.'

Silence stretched across the Sanctum of Anguish for many moments. Then, the Mortarch began to trace a symbol in the air with her fingers. She wove into being a spectral hourglass, which loomed over the head of the Dark Master.

'You have until the sands run dry to do as you say,' Olynder said, and even as she spoke the first specks of ethereal sand trickled from the upper chamber of the hourglass. 'Until this hour, the Legion of Grief will fight at your side, to shatter the spirits of all mortals. Then, you and I shall have our reckoning, shadow-thing.'

Be'lakor's eyes did not even glance to the apparition above him, which now faded into nothingness. Instead, he gave a solemn bow and drew his blade away from Olynder's remains. Wrapping his wings about him, he summoned a whirling vortex of umbral magic, which yawned open in the still air of the Sanctum of Anguish.

'Until we meet again, spirit-queen,' he said.

Then, he stepped into the darkness, and was gone.

CHAIN REACTION

Even as Be'lakor and Lady Olynder formed a tentative alliance, the Dark Master's vast personal army – the Legion of the First Prince – was striking out across Chamon, attacking those realmgates identified by Be'lakor as weak points along the geomantic network that linked the Mortal Realms.

The assault upon the realms enacted by the Legion of the First Prince was no grand offensive, but a series of strikes and betrayals of such complexity that to the majority of onlookers they would seem random in nature. This had ever been the nature of Be'lakor's malignant designs. Never did the Dark Master seek to attack his foes on equal ground. Instead, he relied upon the subtle blades of confusion and shock to deal a mortal blow before the enemy knew they were endangered. Though Be'lakor's armies would be dispatched to wreak ruin across the realms, his prime targets remained those realmgates that had been significantly destabilised by the detonation of the Silver Tower in the Rusted Wastes.

These portals, all of which lay within the boundaries of Chamon, close to where the disaster had occurred, were uniquely vulnerable. Their ancient foundations had been sorely weakened by the immense arcane forces released by the death of Silver Tower. Some were already in the hands of the Dark Gods' followers; others were fortified by Sigmar's agents or their allies. All were to be destroyed at any cost. When these sites were sabotaged and corrupted beyond recovery, then would the cascade of Chaos energy spill forth to stain the realms' skies and sever their link to the Realm of Heavens.

Be'lakor's alliance with Olynder had not been formalised beyond their fleeting covenant in the Sanctum of Anguish, and the two would not join their forces as in the manner of trusted allies. Instead, the Dark Master sent word to the court of Olynder through his messengers: the flocks of bat-

like Furies that haunted the spires of Mordikar in their thousands. The Nighthaunt would sow fear and confusion, as was their nature, diverting the God-King's armies away from the key sites that Be'lakor had marked for destruction. When the skies burned in the aftermath of Be'lakor's triumph and the time came for the final blow against the God-King's champions, Lady Olynder would fight beside the very being she had sought to end – an event that Be'lakor knew no Stormcast Eternal would ever anticipate.

It began without warning, across the ever-shifting expanse of the Realm of Metal. Sometimes, the corruption of the land was so potent that it allowed the daemons passage to assault their quarry. When necessary, the way was opened by mortals loyal to the Dark Master, through rituals of the most repulsive kind. The skies darkened and soured with sinister magics, and the scent of brimstone and burned blood filled the air as daemons in their thousands surged forth to obey the will of Be'lakor.

At the Shining Portal of Guttica, three Lords of Change led a rout of its Lumineth guardians, burning the aelves in their watchtowers and collapsing the realmgate in a storm of mutative magic. The Viridian Pathpools were taken, their waters befouled with such horrendous toxins that the underwater gateways imploded, causing a tsunami that engulfed an entire enclave of Ironbark Sylvaneth. In the lands bordering the crater that had replaced the Rusted Wastes, many realmgates were terribly vulnerable due to the magical fallout around the epicentre of the Silver Tower's destruction. Be'lakor's daemonic sorcerers channelled volatile magic into their fractured foundations, pulling apart their ancient enchantments and setting off yet more chain reactions that rippled out across reality.

Not even fellow entities of Chaos were safe from the Daemon Prince's treachery. Be'lakor's plan called for daemon to turn against daemon, a grand anarchy that transcended all hierarchies of command and servitude. Bloodletters wet their blades with the sulphurous ichor of their kin, and then turned their fury upon the very corrupted realmgates that had for so long allowed them ingress to the realms. Daemonettes turned upon their mortal sycophants, exulting in the agonised shock of their victims.

Everywhere, it seemed, Lady Olynder's Legion of Grief was on the attack, sweeping down from on high to fall upon mortal garrisons and unprepared settlements, delighting in the terror writ across their prey's faces as spectral talons sliced them apart from the inside. Forth came nightmares from the deepest, darkest places of the Shyishan underworlds: blade-limbed wraiths, banshees that gorged themselves upon magic, and skeletal masters of excruciation bound to the very tools they used to torment their victims.

Unlike the Legion of the First Prince, the Mortarch's spectral hosts did not concentrate upon vulnerable realmgates, but instead struck at isolated outposts, strongpoints and columns of troops marching at desperate speed to relieve their besieged comrades. So thick and fast came the predations of the spirit armies that many mortals were convinced a second Necroquake had been loosed upon the realms. Free cities closed their gates, and Fyreslayer lodges made ready to defend their sacred forges. Had the daemonic assaults not coincided so perfectly with this Nighthaunt surge, likely the followers of the God-King would have identified the true threat building in Chamon.

As it was, confusion and paranoia ruled. Such had been Be'lakor's plan all along. From his seat of power, Mordikar, the Dark Master observed the spreading anarchy with a satisfied leer, and hurled fresh hosts into the field.

A MALIGN PATTERN

At the command of Be'lakor, the Legion of the First Prince had been unleashed upon the realms and tasked with the destruction of those realmgates destabilised by the detonation of the Silver Tower. Despite the sudden storm of daemonic fury, only an observant few recognised a terrible synchronicity at play.

Endrinmaster Humboldsson, travelling between a series of Kharadron outposts crippled by the shockwave that had emanated from the Rusted Wastes, was initially taken aback by the sudden increase in daemon aggression that was being reported by Arkanaut surveyors across Chamon. At first, the Endrinmaster put it down to the aftermath of the explosion that had rocked the realm, which had stirred up aether-storms like the Garaktormun before it. Yet as the *Redoubtable* journeyed through the devastation left in the wake of the blast, it became clear that something more nefarious was afoot.

At the heavily defended aether-mining outpost of Ghrum-Zunfar, in the magic-wracked skies above the Coast of Fine Barter, Humboldsson liaised with Admiral Imoda Barrasdottr. The master cartographer had recently been promoted to that prestigious rank after successfully charting several routes through the arcane maelstrom of the Spiral Crux. As up-and-coming aeronauts of Barak-Zilfin, Humboldsson and Barrasdottr had served alongside one another before on several voyages, and the Endrinmaster knew there were few duardin alive who better understood the swirling eddies of the Chamonic skies.

Barrasdottr's tone was grave indeed as she talked Humboldsson through her findings. According to the information she had gathered from her own investigations, the strife occurring across Chamon was not random in nature. Indeed, it seemed to affect the skies above every major realmgate in the region, summoning tempests of magic that had already caused untold damage to Barak-Zilfin assets. Still unsure of the cause of the building storm, Humboldsson and Barrasdottr resolved to uncover the truth by any means necessary. The Admiral immediately set a course for Barak-Zilfin, promising to use her newfound prestige to alert the Geldraad, the highest political body of the Kharadron empire. The Endrinmaster, meanwhile, would head further west and seek answers.

It was as the *Redoubtable* rose above the summit of the Grymmpeaks, on its way to dock at the sky-port of Barak-Urbaz to refuel and renegotiate a bevy of aether-gold probing arrangements, that he saw the sky itself had soured. His aether-gauge was screeching and rattling, insisting that nearby aether-gold seams had been blown several leagues off course. Such drastic fluctuations had not been seen since the darkest days of the Garaktormun. Was it possible that the Great Necromancer's meddling had unleashed a second wave of devastation? As Humboldsson pondered the ramifications of such a disaster, a call came up from the *Redoubtable*'s Navigator.

They had sighted unnatural flames raging above the Vondite Pass, where stood the ancient realmgate of Kostarg's Way. This portal was of great value to Barak-Nar's merchants, who had negotiated a costly trade agreement with the nearby Fyreslayer

magmahold of Gulgrymstok – home to a vassal lodge of the Vostarg – in order to make use of it. As the *Redoubtable* drew closer to the realmgate, however, it became clear that any agreement was now null and void. Not only were the stone rings of the portal shattered and smoking, and belching iridescent flames high into the sky, but so too was Gulgrymstok nothing more than a smoking ruin blanketed in ash. Duardin corpses were strewn about the narrow valley, charred and twisted into unnatural configurations by what could only be the vilest sorcery. The sounds of battle to starboard drew Humboldsson's eye. There, amidst the devastation of their mountain home, a small band of Fyreslayers fought on, surrounded on all sides by a whooping horde of pink-skinned daemons. The duardin hewed down their attackers with fiery axes, and the sound of their death song echoed through the ruins of Gulgrymstok. They were no more than two-dozen in number, but the runes emblazoned on their flesh glowed bright and strong.

Humboldsson ordered the *Redoubtable* down into the ruins, cannons blazing a furrow through the mob of Horrors. As the Frigate levelled, Grundstok Thunderers attached to drop-line cables leapt over the gunwhale, aethershot rifles blazing. Endrinmaster Humboldsson himself made for the beleaguered Fyreslayers in his dirigible suit, unleashing the full fury of the tools built into his rig. Horrors were riddled with glowing holes by the sheer weight of fire levelled at them, their ruined bodies splitting apart and reforming into lesser, blue-skinned simulacra, or even smaller fire-sprites that hurled tiny bolts of flame. Only a dozen of the Fyreslayers could be rescued before the daemons overran their location, hauled up to the safety of the *Redoubtable*'s deck as the Grundstok Marines provided covering fire, mowing down the foe in droves. The rest of the Fyreslayers made the ultimate sacrifice to keep the mass of daemons at bay while their kin escaped, an oath upon their lips as raking claws tore open their flesh.

'They came at dawn, two days past,' said the Fyreslayer with the burned face. His voice was as dead as his eyes, but Humboldsson wondered how the warrior could even speak. The Endrinmaster could see the pale white ridge of a cheekbone beneath the blistered ruin of the duardin's jaw.

'For a time, we held the pass against all that the filth could hurl at us,' the Fyreslayer went on. 'Then Runeson Graegni fell, turned to glass by foul magic and shattered into a thousand pieces. That's when I knew the hold was lost.'

'They came for the gate,' said the old white-beard, Gromthi. Humboldsson had not even heard the Arkanaut approach.

'Aye. Three daemon-kings there were, beasts as tall as uzgronti, with silver wings and beaks of black gold. Where they walked, the stench of sorcery was thick enough to choke upon. We thought they came to make an end of us, but instead they conjured flames that engulfed Kostarg's Way, poured their magic into it until it burst like a shattered magma-dam.'

At that, the dark clouds above loosed a crackling roar. Foul, crimson lightning spat across the sky, casting the deck of the Frigate in a blood-red glow.

The Fyreslayer continued, unblinking. 'The first eruption destroyed the face of Gulgrymstok and buried two thousand of my kin. The second claimed the rest. By the time the skies were boiling, only I and my kinband remained. All else is ashes.'

'There's craft to this,' muttered Gromthi, stroking his braided chin. 'Crude work, but clever. You must warn the Geldraad. Warn the sky-ports. A fell wind blows, and we are all caught in its swell.'

Humboldsson bristled, irritated by Gromthi's tone. He was in charge of this expedition, and it was not for a crewmate to offer unasked-for counsel. Yet as he turned, he was struck by the solemn surety of Gromthi and the strange sense of familiarity and trust that the elder duardin inspired in him. After all, was he not correct? There was a terrible plan in motion, that much was clear. These strikes across Chamon were not simple chance, of that he was now certain. The Geldraad must indeed be warned of this brewing disaster, so that another Garaktormun – or worse – could be prevented. Fortunately, the Redoubtable *was the only ship in the empire fast enough to spread word across the high airs.*

'Charge the endrins,' he roared to his watching crew. 'Fire all aether-thrusters. Make a bearing for Barak-Urbaz, at full speed.'

'We shall follow,' said the wounded Fyreslayer, hauling himself to his feet. 'For my kinband and I have taken the oath of barazakdum, and lit our axes upon the dying flames of Gulgrymstok. There is nothing left to us but death and vengeance. Bring us to our doom, sky-kin.'

TROUBLE IN THE HEAVENS

In Ghyran, the Hallowed Knights battled on bravely against the forces of Chaos, holding open a path of retreat for the survivors of the Eightpoints campaign. One by one, the silver-armoured warriors were cut down until no more than a handful remained. It was a desperate engagement that would take a dreadful toll upon the Steel Souls chamber of the Hallowed Knights, and most of all upon their Lord-Celestant.

The defence of the Genesis Gate would be forever counted amongst the most noble endeavours of the Hallowed Knights. Despite the monstrous horde arrayed against them and their apparent abandonment by the Seraphon, they had held on long enough for Lord-Celestant Nihilus and his small force of survivors to escape from the Eightpoints, and for Sylvaneth reinforcements to arrive from the Never-vales to the east. By the time that forest spirits from the Ironbark and Harvestboon glades had made their way to the base of the Arcway, there were no more than four-score Hallowed Knights remaining, covered in blood and filth and surrounded by mounds of slain Nurgle worshippers. Victory had been earned, but at a great cost. It would take many long and painful Reforgings before the Hallowed Knights could return to their full might.

Lord-Celestant Steel Soul had been amongst those to fall, slain alongside his Paladin retinue by one of Nurgle's grossly swollen greater daemons. His spirit was sent screaming back to Azyr upon the storm. Reforging had followed, a confusion of agony, noise and blinding light, no less terrible for the fact that Steel Soul had suffered through it so many times before.

Remade in flesh and striding the avenues of Sigmaron while preparations were made for his chamber's return to the Mortal Realms, the Lord-Celestant pondered the events of the battle. The willingness of the Seraphon to abandon the Stormcast Eternals to their fate ate at him. Why had they done so, and what had they sought in the Eightpoints that was worth potentially sundering a most potent alliance? In truth, Steel Soul still understood little about the strange creatures. He knew only that they, too, revered Dracothion, the godbeast ally of Sigmar. Perhaps that was a commonality that might forge deeper bonds of comradeship.

Unable to rest, the Lord-Celestant resolved to converse with the scaled ones himself in an attempt to understand their actions, or rather the lack of them. He travelled alone to the summit of Mount Celestian, where snow-capped peaks scraped the lowest reaches of the celestial tapestry. There stood an ancient shrine to Dracothion, on the edge of a mirror-smooth lake of pure starwater. Steel Soul knelt amidst the silent enormity of that sacred place for many days, praying for guidance.

At last, his lonely vigil bore fruit. There was a sudden, searing light from on high, so fierce that even the Lord-Celestant had to avert his gaze lest he be struck blind. As his eyes adjusted to the sudden glare, the Lord-Celestant witnessed a shining spear trace a path across the heavens, illuminating the peaks of Mount Celestian with a silver glow and turning night to day. Not a spear, Steel Soul realised as he peered up at the awe-inspiring sight, but a great serpent, its scales glistening with the power of the cosmos.

It was a sign. Gardus felt the call, even if he did not know who or what had summoned him, and he knew instinctively what he must do. The Lord-Celestant stood and slowly waded into the lake, letting the icy waters swallow him up. He felt the weight of ages upon him as his soul slipped from his mortal frame and out into the infinite expanse of the heavens.

How long he travelled, Gardus could not say. Time had become meaningless, a faltering attempt by mortal minds to process the infinite complexity of the cosmos. He watched the birth of stars and walked amongst meteor showers unharmed. He felt the hunger of primordial beings as their attention was drawn to his infinitesimal essence, entities unknown to all but the gods and terrible in their immensity and madness. Yet these things shied from the light of the silver serpent that guided him ever onwards.

At last, the journey came to an end at the summit of a floating golden ziggurat, surrounded by glittering constellations and orbited by azure and turquoise comets. Above him sat a masked figure upon a throne of ancient stone, glowing so brightly with magical power that Steel Soul could not look directly at it. Yet he knew at once what manner of creature had summoned him to this place.

'Long have I listened in awe to tales of the mighty Seraphon,' said Gardus, as his spirit climbed the last step to the summit of the ziggurat.

The creature before him was little more than a silhouette against a backdrop of bright stars, but he could feel its scrutiny.

'All falsehoods, it seems,' he continued, not bothering to keep the anger from his voice. 'For I was told they were enemies of Ruin in all its forms, and allies of Sigmar in this terrible war. And yet when my warriors' need was greatest, you abandoned us.'

Silence, stretching on for what seemed like centuries. Steel Soul waited. He would get his answers, or he would never leave this place. There was no motion from the shadowed thing, which lay as still as a corpse. Yet as the Lord-Celestant's impatience approached its limit, the grey slabs that formed the being's throne began to shift and spin, reforming into a whirling halo of stone. A crystal aperture atop this assemblage began to glow fiercely, and then issued forth beam of pure, white light that enveloped Steel Soul. Gardus roared in pain as his skin blistered and lancing pain stabbed through his skull, sure in that moment that the creature sought to unmake him utterly.

The pain faded swiftly, and was replaced by visions immeasurably more troubling that flooded unbidden into his mind. Suddenly he was gazing down upon a city of perfect, geometric beauty amidst a crystalline desert. This splendour was despoiled, for the city was engulfed in a terrible firestorm that rained from stormy skies the colour of an infected wound. He heard the whooping cries of daemons, and smelled blood and brimstone on the air. Then the city was gone and another appeared in its place, one which Gardus was all too familiar with. The walls of Excelsis, City of Secrets, lay crumbled and smoking. Blood-splattered orruks and towering gargants poured through these great breaches in their hundreds of thousands, drowning the God-King's city in a tide of brutish violence.

More horrors were to come. Gardus witnessed scores of free cities burned, sacked and broken, their people slaughtered. He watched his comrades, brave Stormcast Eternals, giving their lives fighting against daemons. But as each warrior fell, there was no arcing burst of lightning returning them to the heavens. Instead, their bodies lay there, cracked and mutilated, as the skies above rumbled to the sound of dark and ominous laughter. Somewhere beyond his visions, obscured by coiling shadows, he saw the outline of a winged figure, darkly majestic and filled with an age-old malice.

As soon as the visions had come, they were gone, and Steel Soul once more found himself standing before the strange, masked creature.

'What is this?' he gasped. 'Is this disaster what is to come?'

There came no answer, but he knew in the foundations of his very being that what he saw was no lie. It had seemed so real, so tangible.

'I must return,' Steel Soul said. 'The Hallowed Knights must march for Excelsis at once. If the Spear of Mallus was claimed by another, or shattered by greenskin savagery… You must accompany me, star-born one. Together we might prevent—'

The creature spoke not a word, but Steel Soul felt the force of its answer nonetheless.

~No.~

Another blaze of light, and Steel Soul found himself looking on the caldera-city of Vindicarum, ward of his brother host, the Celestial Vindicators. It too was under siege, daemons rampaging through its narrow, ash-strewn streets. Dead Stormcasts were scattered all about. There were thousands of them, their turquoise armour smeared with blood and soot. Only a handful of living warriors fought at the city's centre, surrounded on all sides by flame-belching nightmares. These daemons poured forth in their multitudes, howling as they sensed the climactic moment at hand. Steel Soul felt icy horror clasp at his soul and knew that he was watching the annihilation of an entire Stormhost.

The sensation came not through words, but in a wave of clarity and purpose that flooded into Steel Soul's very being. Vindicarum was where he was required. One way or another, all would be decided there.

The vision faded. So too did the floating ziggurat and the masked being upon its palanquin of stone. Steel Soul closed his eyes, and when he opened them he felt the cool caress of water soaking through his robes. He was once more in the temple of Mount Celestian, alone and troubled, yet with clear course in mind. His storm-kin needed him. The Hallowed Knights would make for Vindicarum at once, to break the siege of darkness. Yet how could even the full power of his Stormhost triumph against an enemy so powerful? Who could hope to stand in the face of such all-encompassing darkness, knowing that death would mean an eternity of torment in the court of the Dark Gods?

'Only the faithful,' Gardus Steel Soul whispered.

SHADOW WAR

The alliance between the Legion of the First Prince and the armies of Dolorum not only strengthened Be'lakor's forces, but added an additional layer of subterfuge to his plans. Now it was not only daemonic forces striking at weakened and vulnerable realmgates, but also great hosts of spectral dead, attacking in numbers not seen since the height of the Necroquake.

After forming his pact with Lady Olynder, the Dark Master returned to his shadow-fortress of Mordikar, where he oversaw the movements of his armies. Spies and sorcerous agents dispatched his orders near and far, and everywhere Be'lakor's great flocks of Furies swept across the tormented skies, gleefully observing the growing disorder and bringing word back to their master. These diminutive but cruel daemons were formed from shards of Chaos energy in its purest form. They were unaligned to any particular Chaos God, a trait they shared with the starkly individualist Be'lakor, who had spent millennia leashing and coaxing them to his will. Loathed and dismissed as nothing more than craven scavengers by most who encountered them, they were the perfect conduit through which he could observe both his enemies and his supposed allies; neither gave the hateful carrion daemons so much as a second thought.

It was a flock of these bat-winged wretches that brought word of ill tidings to the Dark Master's court. Of those unstable realmgates that Be'lakor had ordered to be assaulted, only one remained intact: the Gate of White Gold, located amidst the ruined city of Prosperia. This portal granted passage between the city of Vindicarum and its northern frontier holdings, and as such was of significant strategic value to the God-King's armies in Chamon.

Be'lakor, his ire raised by the demands of organising a realms-wide campaign carried out by breeds of daemons that took every opportunity to torture and kill one another, was not pleased. Time was running short. If his machinations were not seen through to completion swiftly, then surely Sigmar and his allies would realise the true danger they were in. Not even the predations of Olynder and her Nighthaunt would divert his enemies' eyes forever. Even now the Dark Master could glimpse the phantom image of the Mortarch's hourglass whenever he closed his eyes, its ghostly sand trickling away moment by moment.

Be'lakor would suffer no more delays. The Gate of White Gold would fall, even if he must negotiate

with the most unsavoury allies in order to see it done. Thus it was that he called forth the skittering, shadowy forms that lurked in the darkest corners of his lair, their cruel eyes bright with greed and eager malice, and set them about their task.

THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN GATE

The Gate of White Gold was surrounded by the ruins of a Sigmarite civilisation lost during the Age of Chaos. Over the years, the shattered skeletons of palaces and forums had been coated with a metallic crust, the result of centuries of chemical rains and floods. These ruins had been fortified by Freeguilders from Vindicarum, transformed into static defences interspersed with cog-forts and lined with Helblaster batteries, which protected the archway of the realmgate itself: an oval of pristine white metal that enclosed a shimmering veil of magic. The destruction of so many portals linked to the Gate of White Gold had taken their toll, and the arcane pathway shuddered and groaned unceasingly, to the great unease of its defenders. Seismic ruptures emanating from the realmgate had already caused the deaths of several dozen soldiers, who were swallowed by the yawning cracks as they opened or disintegrated by gouts of energy that spat from their depths.

Nevertheless, the Freeguilds of Vindicarum knew that their duty was to hold here, no matter the cost in lives. Commanded by the ruthless General Cerdimun Ghorle, they counted amongst their number such august companies as the Steel Sanctors, the Lost Souls, the Penitent Legion and the thousands-strong Flagellant warhost of the Gildmarked. The ranks of the latter consisted of wide-eyed Sigmarite zealots who splattered their flesh with boiling metals and sought nothing more than a violent death in the service of their God-King. Present too were duardin of the Dispossessed, along with a cadre of Chamonic battlemages, who were together responsible for creating the murderous defences that had long held the gate against the forays of avian beastmen and rust-armoured orruks.

To seize this formidable target, the Dark Master had chosen a force commanded by three of his foremost generals. At the head of the host's Khornate daemons was the rabid Bloodthirster Karzakos, recently summoned from banishment by Be'lakor to once more unleash bloody terror upon the realms. The main body of the force comprised daemons of Nurgle in the hands of Gebbolax, a Great Unclean One of a girth and foulness notable even amongst his own hideous kind. Finally, there was the Lord of Change F'tanax, whose task it was to lead a cabal of Tzeentchian Heralds to oversee the destruction of the realmgate. Though these generals shared a mutual hatred of one another, far greater was their desire to torment and prey upon mortalkind.

The daemon followers of this fell triad had thrown themselves against the gate's defences no fewer than six times already. Faithful sons and daughters of Vindicarum had beaten back each assault with thunderous artillery bombardments and desperate counter-charges. Throngs of Flagellants had surged down the slopes of the fortified outpost to hurl themselves upon the claws and blades of their foes, smashing their flails into the faces of howling Bloodletters and pus-dripping Plaguebearers. Thousands of their number were slain, but still the Vindicarians did not falter. When the outer walls were taken, gunnery crews made makeshift barricades out of their dead comrades, maintaining their deadly cannonade. After the dual cogforts known as the Silver Martyrs were overrun by a charge led by Karzakos, who hewed apart three Steam Tanks in the process, hundreds of gunners and engineers took up spears and muskets and began bellowing war hymns. With selfless bravery, they deliberately threw themselves into the meat grinder as their comrades fell back to the final perimeter and its duardin-forged defences.

The fury of the daemon invaders grew by the moment. They had not anticipated such a vigorous defence, and the near-tangible faith of the Vindicarum Freeguilds was a constant, lancing pain in their skulls. Karzakos and his Bloodletters, their crimson hides caked in the gore of butchered pilgrims, finished their orgy of slaughter, and without pause charged for the inner defences ringing the realmgate itself. Gun batteries answered the assault with hails of blessed shot, and mage-engineers turned the silvery ground into a boiling quagmire, but the daemonic tide was too vast. The Bloodthirster's attack was soon bolstered by squadrons of fly-riding Plaguebearers and the wild sorcery of F'tanax, who enveloped the Gate of White Gold in a raging arcane vortex, causing its metallic surface to scream and glow as it contorted under the roaring mutative energies.

It was then, when disaster seemed inevitable, that the dark clouds overhead were illuminated by a blinding flash of lightning. With a great boom of thunder, towering figures in white and royal purple smashed to earth, landing in perfect formation with their shields interlocked, steam rising from their armour as residual electricity crackled around them. The Stormcast Eternals of the Sigmarite Brotherhood had arrived to stem the flood of the unclean.

FELL ALLIANCE

The newly arrived Sigmarite Brotherhood defended the Gate of White Gold with formidable resolve, beating back wave after wave of hell-spawned horrors. Yet for all their bravery, they were caught in the webs of a plan beyond their comprehension. As the battle raged on, the true scale of the nightmare arrayed against them slowly became clear.

The free city of Vindicarum had been caught unawares by the confusion sown by the multi-fronted attacks of the Legion of the First Prince, but its military leaders had acted with decisive swiftness. Those mountain trade routes targeted by Be'lakor across the Spiral Crux and beyond were of incalculable value to the caldera-city, which relied on food shipments from Ghyran and Ghur to feed its teeming populace and enormous armies. Thus, as soon as rumours of destroyed realmgates reached the ears of the city's Grand Conclave, they had dispatched the entirety of the Sigmarite Brotherhood, under the command of Lord-Celestant Axemar Diocis, to reinforce the Gate of White Gold. This greatly respected Stormhost had maintained a military presence in Vindicarum ever since the city's foundation. Despite lacking the sheer numbers or storied history of the Celestial Vindicators, who were seen by all as the true overlords of Vindicarum, the Brotherhood was nonetheless an august company. The Stormhost had partaken in many glorious campaigns, including most recently the defence of the Prosperian Deserts against rampaging greenskins. Each member of the Stormhost was a native of Chamon, attuned to the ebbs and flows of this mercurial realm, and veterans of fighting Tzaangors and orruks across its ever-shifting battlefields.

The Brotherhood fought with simple, brutal efficiency. They established seven Liberator shieldwalls in the instant that they slammed down from on high, having ridden Sigmar's Tempest to the very foot of the Gate of White Gold. Such an impenetrable form of defence was a favoured tactic

of Vindicarian forces, and the surviving Freeguild garrison was swift to coordinate with Lord-Celestant Diocis' five-thousand warriors. They unleashed disciplined musket-fire from their parapets, shooting over the heads of the Stormcasts and whittling down the swarming mass of daemons before it reached the shieldwalls. When the two forces crashed together, sigmarite hammers swung down with bone-shattering force.

Forth came Lord-Celestant Diocis astride his faithful Stardrake, Raxastemes, along with a spearhead of Dracothian Guard. They charged through an opening in the Stormcast line, crushing scores of daemons into the ground, their hammers and glaives wreaking bloody carnage in the tight quarters of pitched battle. The Bloodthirster Kazarkos met this advance head-on. His grossly outsized axe hewed through mounts and riders both, bisecting two Fulminators in the blink of an eye. Yet the riders of the storm did not yield, and soon the hammers of Concussors were battering the greater daemon's black hide. As Kazarkos howled and raged, Lord-Celestant Diocis crashed his own hammer into the beast's face with a sickening crunch. At the same time, Raxastemes bellowed and spat a torrent of celestial energy that engulfed the Bloodthirster, incinerating his leathery flesh and scorching his bones. With a roar that promised unending vengeance upon Diocis and his company, Kazarkos fell. The Bloodthirster's winged form burst apart in a shower of boiling blood as his essence was dragged back to the Realm of Chaos.

Inspired by this defiant heroism, the soldiers and zealots of Vindicarum fought all the harder. They had begun to believe their deliverance to be a miracle. To the Dark Master, observing the battle from afar, their delusion was as sweet as the finest wine. The mortals' doom had already been sealed, in the far-distant depths of a Silver Tower.

The beaked beastman swung its sword clumsily, and received Crixxit's dagger in its chest in return. It gurgled, choked and collapsed. The Deathmaster pulled his blade free and launched into a backwards somersault, neatly sailing over the edge of a second beastman's gilded sword.

Landing, Crixxit spat a curse. It was now or never. They had reached the Silver Tower's heart: a sea of rippling rifts in reality that stretched as far as Crixxit could see. This was the true horror of the fortress, for within its walls could be found paths to all corners of the realms. It was from this very chamber that its overlord snatched unwary travellers from distant lands, to trap them in the tower for his own amusement.

Blue-skinned daemons and more bird-like beastmen flooded in and out of the passageways in their thousands, swarming across twisting bridges of crystal that criss-crossed the glittering cavern from every direction. All were making for the dozen Eshin assassins left alive.

'Follow quick!' the Deathmaster shrieked, and bounded along the wall of the cavern on all fours, claws skittering across smooth crystal. He leapt over the heads of a band of grumbling daemons, tucked into a roll and landed on all fours, scrabbling at his belt for a choke-bomb. As his comrades skittered past, they hurled their own discs of pitted brass, which belched clouds of noxious black gas to obscure their progress.

'Here-here,' Crixxit said. They had reached a narrow platform at the centre of the cavern; all around hovered clefts in reality, magical connections from the depths of the Silver Tower to the wider realms. Through one, he could glimpse the fractured image of a battle: a wall of warriors in white and purple armour, battling a tide of hideous monstrosities amidst the ruins of a silver city. This was the place.

In a sudden roar of flames, a robed figure appeared, his features twisted in rage. With a snap of his fingers, the daemonic sorcerer reduced half of the skaven to pools of bubbling gore.

'Bring-bring the package,' the Deathmaster shrieked. 'Quick!'

'It burns, Nightlord,' whimpered Nibskutt, staggering forward with the Skryre device strapped to his back. The package – concealed in a drakeskin sack crudely stitched with runes of dampening – was glowing a violent green and thrumming ominously. There was the distinct smell of scorched fur in the air.

Crixxit's head cocked in an expression of mock sympathy, then he whipped his tail dagger across Nibskutt's hind legs, neatly severing both of his hamstrings. The carrier fell to the floor, howling, and the warpstone bomb rolled out of its harness and began clanking and spitting green lightning.

'Skitter!' shouted Crixxit, and then he and the remaining skaven ran to the edge of the platform and hurled themselves into the air. Crixxit swivelled his body as he plummeted towards the portal directly beneath him, through which could be seen a red desert, baked to stone by multiple burning orbs in the sky. Just as he plunged through the skin of the portal, Crixxit saw the bomb detonate in a mushroom-shaped green fireball. The flames roared through the chamber, causing untold devastation to the Silver Tower's interior.

The client would be most pleased.

RUINATION

Be'lakor's machinations had drawn an entire Stormhost to the beleaguered Gate of White Gold. For a time, it seemed as though the Sigmarite Brotherhood would be the last wall of defence, preventing the Dark Master from seeing his plans to completion. Yet for all their valiant resolve, the Brotherhood had no concept of the true fate that awaited them.

It had cost Be'lakor much to engage the master assassins of the Clans Eshin in his schemes. The Daemon Prince despised the cowardly and unpredictable skaven, but they had proven again how valuable they could be. Not even the Dark Master's own agents could have breached the magical wards of a Silver Tower, much less inveigled their way into its depths, to the vital connection points between the daemonic fortress and the Mortal Realms. The warpstone bomb – acquired at ruinous cost from the Clans Skryre – laid waste to much of the interior of the Silver Tower, but as Be'lakor had desired, it stopped short of destroying it. He was not so rash as to consign a second Silver Tower to its doom – at least, not yet. Rather, as with the destruction of the first Silver Tower, the act sent an arcane blast roaring through the portals connected to it, including the Gate of White Gold. This time, however, those portals had already been severely destabilised.

Already hammered by realm-wide fluctuations in the realmgate network and further destabilised by the magic of F'tanax, the Gate of White Gold finally collapsed in on itself with a deafening scream. It became a howling vortex, spewing the raw stuff of Chaos into the skies. The same eruption was occurring across Chamon and beyond, from every realmgate targeted by the Legion of the First Prince. Above the Gate of White Gold, the clouds for miles around were soon soured with chaotic energies that billowed into the open air like blood in a crystal-clear lake. The light of the High Star, Sigendil, was smothered. Leering, daemonic faces could be seen within the tortured firmament, and booming laughter rolled across all the lands of Chamon. Lord-Celestant Diocis and the warriors of the Stormcast Eternals faltered in that moment, for perhaps they felt in their souls the true horror of their sudden isolation.

Be'lakor's features twisted into a cruel smile. Everything had fallen into place, just as he had anticipated. It had taken centuries of plotting and scheming, of lurking in the shadows while the acclaim of the Ruinous Ones was granted unto lesser creatures, but at long last his moment of glory had arrived. He signalled for the final assault to begin. There would be no last minute reinforcements for the Sigmarite Brotherhood, nor would any of their number leave this battlefield alive. Let it start here, he thought: the era of the Cursed Skies, and the hour of his ascension. It was time to prove the Stormcasts Eternals' precious immortality as the pathetic delusion it had always been.

THE BROTHERHOOD FALLS

Lord-Celestant Diocis saw one of his warriors topple, his body split near in two by the sword of a Bloodletter. As the man collapsed, his flesh and armour turned to lightning and his essence leapt towards the sky. Yet to the Lord-Celestant's horror, it did not spear a path through the clouds on its path back to Azyr. Instead, he heard an otherworldly scream as the warrior's spirit was engulfed and pulled apart by the maelstrom in the sky. More fallen Stormcasts soon faced the same fate as their souls were snatched up by the ruin-storm. The air was full of lightning-gheists, racing helplessly back and forth across the skies but unable to escape the devouring darkness.

The momentum of the battle changed in an instant, as the daemon-tide surged forth, scenting their foe's weakness. Even then, the Stormcast Eternals may have held, at least some amongst their thousands-strong number battling their way to freedom. Lord-Celestant Diocis and his brethren did not cede to panic, despite the horror of what they were witnessing. Little did they know that their souls had already been bargained away by the Dark Master, and the bill was due.

Led by the sorcerer-wraith Reikenor the Grimhailer, the Nighthaunt came sweeping in across the silver wastes of Prosperis, casting a chilling emerald light over the land even as the skies above were stained the colour of clotting gore. As the Legion of the First Prince pressed the Sigmarite Brotherhood and their few remaining allies back towards the carcass of the Gate of White Gold, the spectral army struck from above, chain-wrapped horrors sweeping down over the shields of the Stormcast Eternals to rake at them with spectral talons. Spirit Torments seized lightning-spirits within their shacklegheist chains, while galloping Dreadblade Harrows rode down fleeing Freeguild soldiers, who were finally driven to frenzied terror by the horrors they had beheld that day.

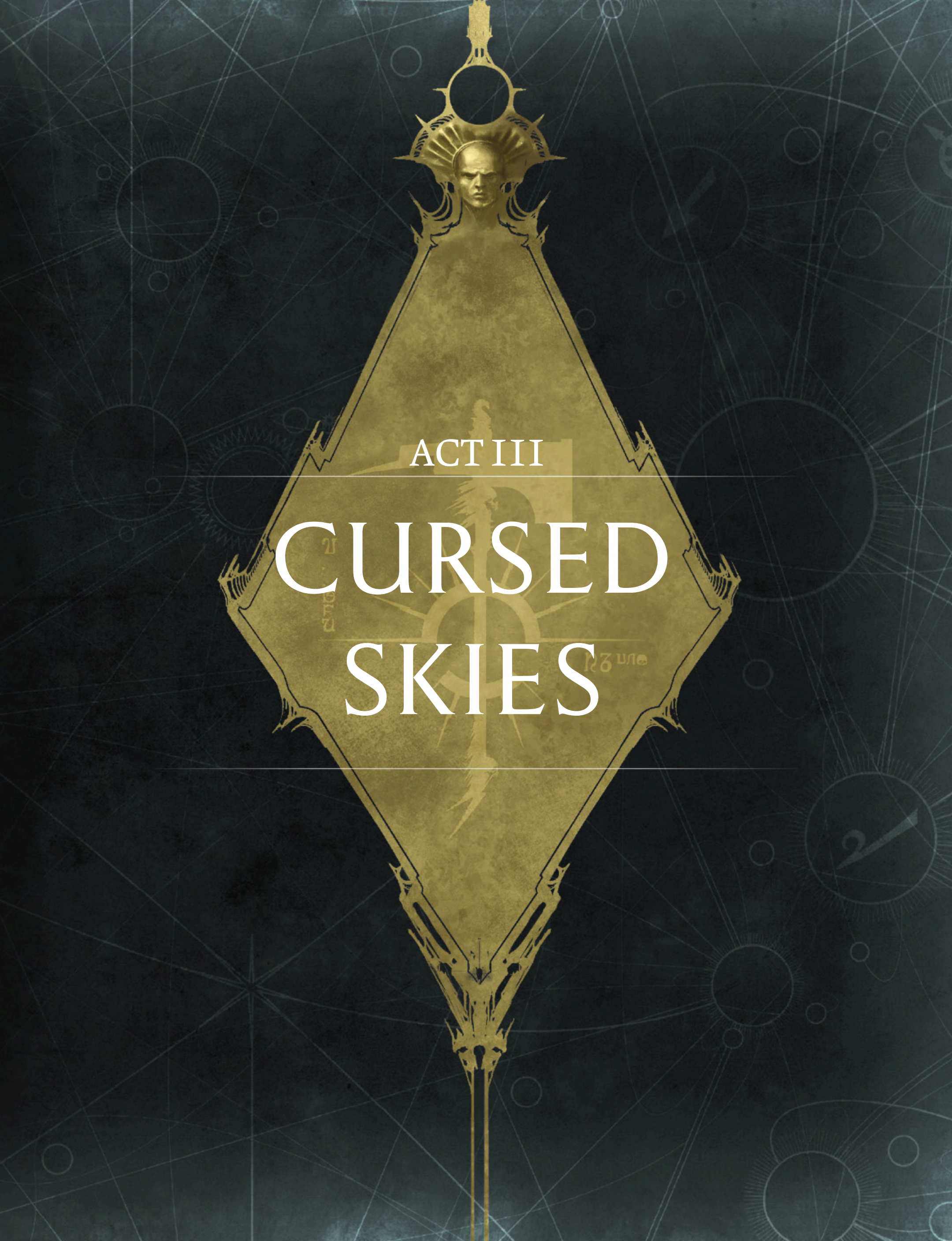
Worst of all were the Krulghast Cruciators. These entities Lady Olynder had summoned from the darkest recesses of the underworlds, hidden dungeons and oubliettes where the living and the dead alike were kept in lightless prisons and tormented for eternity. In life, the Krulghasts had themselves died upon the rack or the flensing table, and in death they desired only to share their agony with the living. Stormcast Eternals were snatched by these spindle-limbed nightmares and worked upon with archaic torture implements, their flesh pierced and flayed even as their souls were drawn out of their bodies and entrapped. The suffering of their victims seemed to imbue the Cruciators with a terrible potency, causing their spectral forms to radiate death magic. This fell aura enveloped nearby Nighthaunt, rendering them apparently immune to the desperate strikes of the Stormcasts. Indeed, the Cruciators unleashed such a wave of anguish that where they struck, the resolute battle line of the Sigmarite Brotherhood finally wavered and began to crumble.

Reikenor – who had been promised by Lady Olynder a glut of secrets from those Stormcast spirits captured during the battle – sliced his way through the now disordered ranks of the Sigmarite Brotherhood, making for their leader. Diocis and his retinue still fought with all the fury they could muster. Many a gheist and daemon met its end that day, smashed to ruin by the Lord-Celestant's warhammer, or impaled upon the glaives of his Fulminator elite. Yet when Reikenor struck from the skies, blasting the Dracothian Guard with flesh-withering hexes even as his scythe, Fellreaper, descended in an overheard strike, Diocis could not bring his weapon to bear in time. A single blow from the Grimhailer's weapon cut the Lord-Celestant's soul from his body, and the lifeless commander of the Sigmarite Brotherhood toppled to the ground.

With that it was done, and the end of the Brotherhood came swiftly. Yet their agonies would last eternally, for not a single Stormcast soul escaped the battlefield of the Gate of White Gold. Watching from afar, Be'lakor felt a sudden ripple of cold, and turned to see Lady Olynder and her handmaidens in the distance, their eyeless gaze fixed upon him. So too did the Dark Master see the spectral hourglass appear in the skies above him and slowly turn, its sands refilled. Then, they began to trickle away once more. The curse laid upon him had merely been delayed, and not extinguished.

So be it. That was a grudge that would be settled elsewhere, at another time. As Be'lakor looked to the festering clouds, he felt a thrill of satisfaction. Under the cover of the hell-storm he had conjured, the Legion of the First Prince would march upon Vindicarum itself. For too long this stronghold of the Sigmarite faith had been allowed to endure, its mere existence an insult to the Chaos Gods. With its destruction, the Dark Master would surely regain the Pantheon's favour. The Sigmarite Brotherhood had been the first sacrifice to Be'lakor's ambition, but they would not be the last – nor the greatest.

As the Seraphon of the Thunder Lizard raced towards the stricken Silver Tower, a fire-spewing horde of daemons spilled from its innards to meet them, ushered forth by the Eater of Tomes.



ACT III

CURSED SKIES

CHAMON AFLAME

The cataclysmic eruption of the Eater of Tomes' Silver Tower had unleashed a wave of destruction across Chamon. Panic and confusion followed, only exacerbated by the relentless assaults of the Legion of the First Prince and their Nighthaunt allies. Under cover of the pandemonium he had unleashed, Be'lakor and his forces bore down upon their true target.

Moving swiftly under the cover of cursed skies, the Legion of the First Prince advanced upon Vindicarum, overwhelming everything in its path. The arcane disruption caused by the unnatural stormfront shrouded the visions of Azyrite seers and isolated frontier outposts, leaving the latter entirely unprepared for the sudden waves of daemonic shock troops that fell upon them. Thousands of bewildered and terrified soldiers were torn limb from limb, their leaders seized and brutally sacrificed to further swell the power of the Dark Master's ritual.

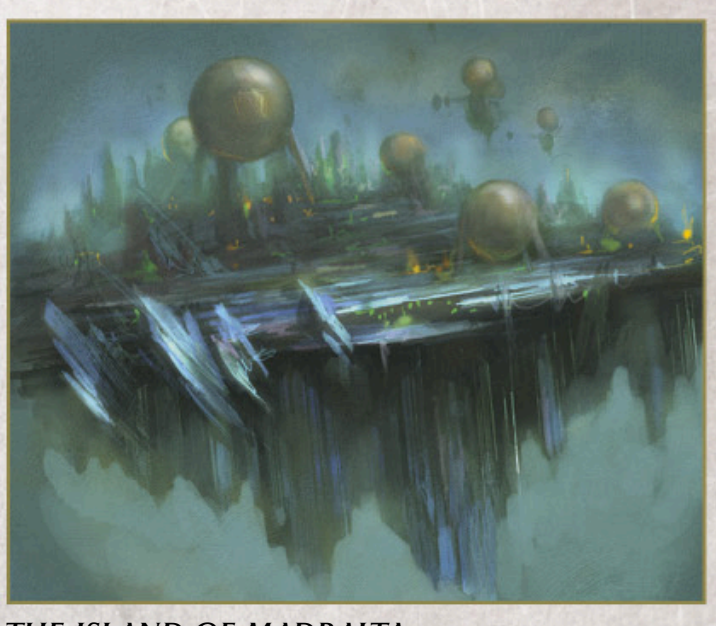
Drunk on bloodshed, the hellish host might have fractured and split apart in search of mortal flesh and souls to feast upon, were it not for the single-minded focus of Be'lakor. There was no thought in the Dark Master's mind but that of Vindicarum's obliteration, and his repeated promises of the orgy of slaughter that would follow the city's fall were more than enough to give the Legion of the First Prince focus. Moving through cursed realmgates and via hidden shadow-paths, the Legion was already plunging deep

DESOLATION OF THE TOWER

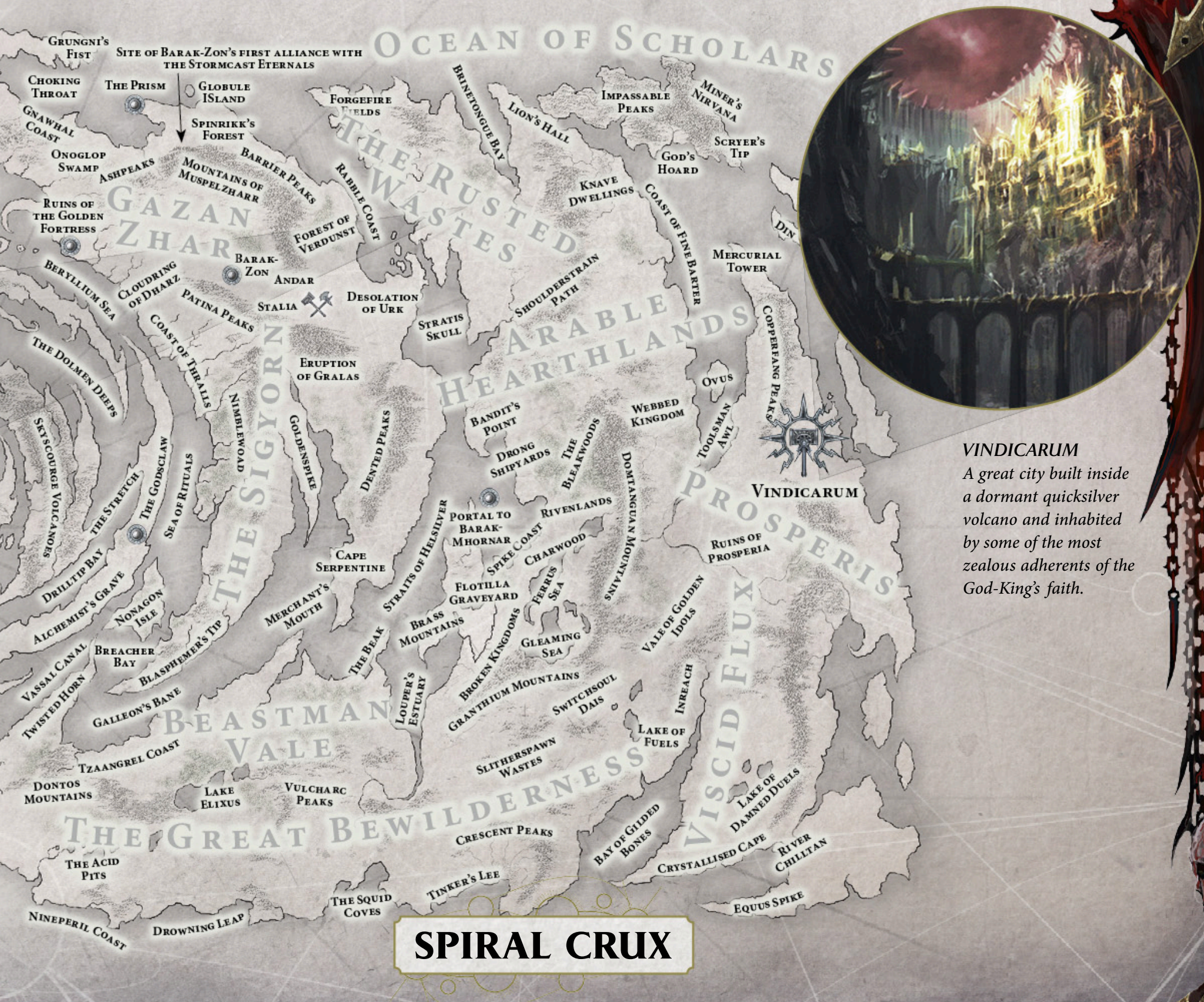
The explosion of the Silver Tower in the Rusted Wastes left behind an immense crater plagued by violent change-storms.

into the Viscid Flux before the first reports of the daemonic threat – and of the tragedy at the Gate of White Gold – reached the caldera-city.

The enemy was almost at the gates, and by all accounts they outnumbered Vindicarum's garrison at least six to one. Messengers were dispatched near and far, seeking aid, but almost all were soon hunted down and torn apart by flocks of bat-winged daemons or swallowed up by the raging storms of sorcery that encircled the Flux. It seemed that Vindicarum would have to stand alone. Yet as the festering wound in the firmament crept ever closer and the lands were cast in shadow, a column of lightning slammed to earth on the slopes of Mount Ketnus. Its blinding afterglow faded to reveal a full company of Stormcast Eternals, pristine in silver armour. Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul and his Warrior Chamber had arrived to fight for the soul of Vindicarum.



THE ISLAND OF MADRALTA
This floating metallic island was the site of the famed Conference of Madralta, during which the basis of the Kharadron Code was first laid down.



VINDICARUM
A great city built inside a dormant quicksilver volcano and inhabited by some of the most zealous adherents of the God-King's faith.

SPIRAL CRUX

A CITY ON THE BRINK

Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul had brought word of the nightmare descending upon Vindicarum to his Stormhost, whose war leaders had received the news of the Seraphon's prophecy in grim silence. Although Steel Soul foretold that many Hallowed Knights might well meet their ultimate doom defending the caldera-city, not a warrior amongst them shied from the task ahead.

When the heavens delivered Gardus Steel Soul and his chamber to the gates of Vindicarum, he wondered if his mission was not a terrible mistake. Towards the northern lands of Prosperia, the skies were a red wound that promised ill fortune. Even as he watched from the lip of the Vindicarum caldera, the enormous storm crept towards the free city, covering the lands in darkness. A fell rain began to lash down – a rain of blood, so thick and heavy that it drowned out even the frenzied sermons of the city's preachers, mounted atop their cogwork pulpits, with throngs of wild-eyed Flagellants bowing and scraping before them. The gunnels and alleyways ran thick with gore.

Vindicarum was not a city that Steel Soul could ever grow to love. For the most part, its people were harsh and violent, and practised a faith so intense and hate-fuelled that it unnerved even the pious Lord-Celestant. Neither could Steel Soul warm to his comrades, the Celestial Vindicators, those whom he had come here to defend. They offered little thanks for his presence and received his warnings of imminent doom with nothing more than eager anticipation of the battle to come. In his opinion, they enjoyed killing overmuch, and cared too little for the mortals they were charged with protecting. Steel Soul had not forgotten the purge they had wrought upon Vindicarum generations ago. Yet they too were worshippers of Sigmar, and he would give his life in battle beside them, whether or not the God-King asked it of him.

The news coming out of Prosperia was grave indeed. Several important realmgates had fallen, including the Gate of White Gold. Contact had been lost with the entirety of the Sigmarite Brotherhood. Vanguard chambers of the Celestial Vindicators sent to scout the aftermath of the battles in the northern continent had confirmed the horrors that Steel Soul had witnessed in his visions: where the cursed skies spread, Stormcast Eternals found their souls trapped upon death. No warrior slain beneath that pall of evil would ever return to Azyr.

Lord-Celestant Kostos Volkar, commanding the city's defence, informed Steel Soul of the ill tidings that the Vindicators had no more than seven chambers present to defend the city. Such was their aggressive war-making that their armies were spread far across the realms, and would not return in time to save Vindicarum from the coming siege. Daemonic armies were already on the march, staining the land with their baleful presence. Their numbers were vast, terrifyingly so, and their progress swift. Freeguild strongholds and frontier outposts as far as the Axiomatic Mountains had been overrun, their garrisons butchered and staked beneath the hideous glare of the cursed storm. The misshapen masses poured into the valleys and lowlands surrounding Vindicarum, holding aloft banners stitched from human skin and emblazoned with the symbols of the Chaos Gods. Not only daemons, but warped mortal worshippers and tribes of avian beastmen exultant at the prospect of slaughter and plunder. By nightfall, they would be at the gates of the city.

As the hour of battle drew closer, Gardus Steel Soul led his warriors in prayer. Their fates were in the hands of Sigmar now.

THE SKY-COUNCIL CONVENES

No less concerned about the terror engulfing Chamon than its human inhabitants were the Kharadron Overlords. Their concerns, however, were as much centred around the ramifications for trade and industry as they were any grander notions. Alerted to the scale of the brewing disaster by the swift and decisive actions of the crew of the *Redoubtable*, the Geldraad, high council of Admirals, had convened upon the time-honoured neutral

ground of Madralta. They met upon the floating gun-platforms where centuries ago the foundations of their empire in the sky had been laid down in the hallowed Kharadron Code. Thus began the Second Conference of Madralta.

If those present had hoped to recreate the spirit of cooperation and shared hardship that had defined that glorious hour in the Kharadron's history, they were to be disappointed. Factionalism and mutual distrust ruled. All of the sky-ports agreed that their empire faced another crisis, perhaps as catastrophic for their profit margins as the Garaktormun, but none could agree on a proper course of action. It seemed obvious from the pattern and momentum of the daemonic disturbances that the enemy was coalescing around the city of Vindicarum, a vital and prosperous source of income and influence for the Kharadron. Grundstok scouting ships reported a vast enemy host bearing down upon the city even now.

Barak-Nar and Barak-Zilfin favoured immediate intervention to prevent the Sigmar worshippers from being overrun. Yet the rest of the council vetoed this initiative, banding together to deny the steering hand of the most powerful sky-ports. They cited the clear danger of the aethermatic disturbances, which had already caused the loss of several mining outposts and exploratory fleets, with Barak-Urbaz particularly affected. The dissenting faction was led by the venerable High Admiral Grubda Klarsdottr of Barak-Thryng, ever the most isolationist of sky-ports and the key swing vote in any debate. Deadlock ensued.

It was as insults were hurled and ancient grudges stoked upon the chamber floor that the doors crashed open. To the shock of the Geldraad's members, in marched Endrinmaster Humboldsson, accompanied by an ancient, white-haired duardin, so weathered and grim that he made High Admiral Klarsdottr look like a mere stripling. There was a predictable outcry at this grievous breach of the Code, but when the ancient duardin raised a gnarled and tattooed fist, the tumult quietened to the astonishment of all present. Though he wore only the wind-lashed leathers of an Arkanaut, this strange newcomer spoke with such authority that he rendered the squabbling councillors silent. He had brought with him the latest aethernautical readings, sourced from the Nav-League of Barak-Nar, and confirmed with its cousins in every major sky-port. All these experts agreed: there was indeed a great convergence of energies gathering around Vindicarum, a stormfront of Chaos magic all but unprecedented since the breaking of the Spiral Crux.

This alone caught the Geldraad's attention. But when Humboldsson explained further that such a cataclysmic event would surely draw in every aether-gold stream within ten thousand air leagues of the free city, even Klarsdottr's bushy eyebrows were raised. If true, this news instantly transformed Vindicarum into the single most valuable asset in the Realm of Metal. Admiral Imoda Barrasdottr of Barak-Zilfin was swift to take advantage of the changing currents, and called for a motion regarding the dispatch of a sky-fleet to relieve Vindicarum. As the votes were cast one by one, all eyes turned to Klarsdottr, for they knew that hers would decide the outcome.

THE SIEGE OF VINDICARUM

When the axe fell on the city of Vindicarum, it did so with all the hellish force that Be'lakor could muster. No longer did the Legion of the First Prince spread itself across multiple fronts, its master employing treachery and misdirection as his primary weapon. Now, the armies of Be'lakor united as one to crush the greatest free city in Chamon to dust.

Standing atop a ledge of polished black stone, Be'lakor looked up at the city he had come to murder. His cursed skies had enveloped Vindicarum, hanging over the great Mount Ketnus like the ash cloud left in the aftermath of some epochal eruption. Such was the corruption in the air that breaches tore open in the skin of reality to allow more and more daemons to claw their way into the world, until their numbers covered the volcanic slopes all around.

Be'lakor could feel the eyes of his minions upon him, waiting for his command. The Dark Master allowed himself a moment to savour the sensation. This was what he existed for. This was the hour of his ultimate victory, a triumph that would prove once and finally the fateful mistake the Chaos Gods had made when they had withdrawn their favour from him and made Archaon their favoured champion – the high and mighty Everchosen.

Their error would soon be rectified. Be'lakor raised the Blade of Shadows and bellowed the order to attack. As one, the Legion of the First Prince howled and charged up the ashen foothills of Mount Ketnus, towards the city at its summit.

BLOOD AND METAL

The grounds below Vindicarum boiled with daemons. Even Gardus Steel Soul, who had travelled the breadth of the realms and battled the horrors of Nurgle's Garden, was stunned by the enemy's sheer numbers. Rarely had he seen the forces of the Chaos Gods – ever the most grudging of allies – move with such unity of purpose. The Lord-Celestant and his loyal friend, the redoubtable Lord-Castellant Lorrus Grymn, were positioned at the lip of the caldera, on the battlements of Fort Venger. This was the primary Stormkeep of the Celestial Vindicators, an unlovely slab of rough, igneous stone replete with ballista emplacements and sally ports. It would be the last bastion, should the city fall, though unlike the Hallowed Knights' own fortresses, there was little concession given to sanctuary for the cityfolk. When Steel Soul raised this issue with Lord-Celestant Kostos Volkar, the Vindicator merely fixed him with a cold glare and replied that if the walls were taken, the duty of the people was to fight and to die in service of Sigmar.

Below, on the lower slopes, screams were already piercing the air. Here, in the shadow of the volcano, lay scattered shanty towns and pilgrim districts, beyond the safety of the city's natural defences. The most faithful of Vindicarum's Devoted, armed with little more than flails, cudgels and a hatred of Chaos, had gathered here, refusing to retreat to safety. They were hacked apart by the blades of Bloodletters or immolated by bounding, flame-spewing daemons of Tzeentch. Hideous, pus-dripping Plaguebearers mounted atop daemonic flies the size of oxen droned down from the thick clouds. Glistening stingers shot out to pump their victims full of unholy toxins, causing many of the Flagellant defenders to swell and rupture like overripe fruit in the midday sun.

One by one, the outer forts of Vindicarum were burned to ashes, and in their corpse-strewn ruins were placed banners bearing the sigil of the Dark Master.

Though their fate was as inevitable as it was gruesome, the warriors of the faith did not break and flee. Their sacrifice earned Vindicarum's Freeguild and Dispossessed defenders precious time, and it was not wasted. Dotted about the steep upper slopes of Mount Ketnus were ingenious defences: fields of spring-loaded scatter mines and giant sluice-gates

connected by duardin minecraft to the boiling quicksilver at the heart of Mount Ketnus. Even as the daemons charged, funnelled between jagged passes and geyser fields that belched sulphurous gasses, these gates opened wide. A tide of searing liquid metal cascaded forth, hissing as it gushed down the slopes towards the enemy. Steel Soul saw howling masses of Bloodletters engulfed by the wave, still hatefully staggering towards the city's walls even as their limbs were reduced to lumps of charred slag. Teams of Freeguild Gunners and duardin Ironbreakers appeared from hidden sally-tunnels, opening fire into the rear of the foe. Overhead, white-winged Prosecutors hurled crackling javelins down at the enemy as Gyrocopters duelled with Rot Flies, their pilots firing gouts of superheated steam that boiled the insectile abominations alive.

And yet, the daemons' numbers did not appear to thin in any appreciative measure, as screaming volleys of Helblaster rockets arced over Lord-Celestant Steel Soul's head, raining down on the advancing horde in a series of blossoming fireballs. The heavy wall-guns opened up with a spine-shaking tremor, sending shells the size of ogors arcing down to detonate on the ashen slopes. Fountains of volcanic soil and billowing clouds of ash were hurled into the air with each deafening impact. Soon, the incline beneath the Lord-Celestant resembled some hellish wasteland, covered with immense craters that soon began to fill with the blood that rained from above. The stench of death and burning flesh pervaded the air. Coiling trails of smoke drifted upwards to churn with the festering skies.

Still the daemons came. The enemy was soon past the outer defences, pursuing fleeing Freeguild Guard and squadrons of Outriders, who fired over their shoulders into the daemon masses even as their sure-footed mounts galloped for the safety of Vindicarum's basalt curtain wall, colloquially known as the Iron Collar, for its multi-tiered battlements resembled the heavy chains of office worn by Vindicarum's Devoted priesthood.

As the forward divisions of Vindicarum's defence forces fell back in disarray, stricken duardin air machines fell from the sky, engines clogged by streams of effluent or set ablaze by gouts of witchfire. One whirling Gyrobomber, swarmed by Tzeentchian Screamers, struck the fortified Armsgate Zul at the southern edge of Vindicarum, and by some ill twist of fortune its sparking munitions set alight an ammunition crawler. The resultant explosion briefly illuminated the sky and created a breach in the wall some two-dozen yards across. Falling chunks of masonry smashed down upon inner Vindicarum, crushing buildings to rubble. In a moment, mage-engineers of the Collegiate Arcane were rushing forward to seal the breach with molten iron, which solidified into an orange-glowing makeshift barricade. But that was not the only weak point in the city's defences, and like hounds scenting blood, the daemon horde flowed towards these vulnerable areas. Lord-Celestant Volkar swiftly dispatched Liberators to stem the tide, but he and Steel Soul maintained their position at Fort Venger, for they knew it too would soon come under ferocious assault.

FORT VENGER

The foremost Stormkeep of the Celestial Vindicators would never count amongst the most beautiful strongholds erected by the Stormcast Eternals, for embellishment is not the way of this grim Stormhost. Instead, Fort Venger is a brutal slab of dark iron built into the caldera of Mount Ketnus, an impenetrable fortress bristling with ballista emplacements, watchtowers and sally ports. At its summit is the Constant Hammer, an immense, percussive engine that beats out a relentless rhythm all day and night, forever reminding Vindicarum's populace of the glory of the God-King. Few besides the Vindicators themselves have walked the gloomy halls of the Stormkeep. Those outsiders who do venture inside emerge ashen-faced, no doubt disturbed by the intensity of the Vindicators' battle rituals. It is even rumoured that within Fort Venger lies a shrine to the 'Father of Blades', an entity formed from the spirits of ancient runic swords, whom the Vindicators supposedly revere as a pitiless avatar of justice.

DEATH UNDER DARKENING SKIES

Despite the hellishly complex defences lining the slopes of Vindicarum, the Legion of the First Prince had ascended to its summit. There, they would meet another formidable obstacle: the Iron Collar, the fortified lip of the caldera, which was defended by thousands of mortal soldiers and units of Stormcast Eternals. Even for a vast host of daemonkind, it was an imposing target.

Be'lakor lounged upon a throne fashioned from the flayed bodies of mortals, observing the progress of his legion. Several luckless souls groaned and mewled in agony beneath him, new additions to the gruesome seat of conquest. The Daemon Prince's piercing gaze flicked back and forth across the apocalyptic scene in front of him, sensing fractures in the enemy line with predatory insight. When he sensed an opportunity to punish the foe, he hurled fresh cohorts into the furnace, uncaring of the staggering losses his legion had already suffered. While the cursed skies raged above and the tortured spirits of Stormcast Eternals continued to fuel the horror he had unleashed, reinforcements were not in short supply.

Yet the Dark Master was also loath to spend many days and perhaps months grinding down his enemy. He could feel the eyes of the Dark Pantheon upon him, could feel their grudging delight at the bounty of pain and suffering he had already offered them. Vindicarum – centre of the Sigmarite faith and a proud symbol of the God-King's defiance – would be an offering of tremendous significance. Surely, when the city was little more than an ashen scar upon the lands, the foul icons of the pantheon standing amidst its smouldering ruins, then his claim to the title of Everchosen would be ironclad. Then he would deal with the usurper Archaon.

But the gods were fickle, and the Dark Master did not care to take chances. He called forth the Herald of Tzeentch Atra'zan the Immolator, whose crackling form fairly blazed in his desperation to join the slaughter and spread the fires of change far and wide. Be'lakor had a task in mind for the daemonic lieutenant that had already served him so effectively.

DISASTER AT ARMSGATE ZUL

Under the direction of Lord-Celestant Steel Soul and with the assent of the Celestial Vindicators, Lord-Castellant Lorrus Grymn had taken charge of the defence of Armsgate Zul. He had shored up the breached wallfort with retinues of Hallowed Knight Liberators, who had managed to force back a wedge of daemonic cavalry mounted atop flame-snorting Juggernauts, which had briefly smashed their way into the city proper. Shoals of Screamers whirled overhead, striking at the gunners atop the Iron Collar, bisecting them in a single swooping pass with their barbed fins, or else snatching them up to drop them screaming down the slopes of Mount Ketnus. Grymn recognised the enemy's strategy: these air-swarms were targeting the artillery batteries and drawing the panicked fire of Handgunner detachments lost to fear and confusion.

As he swung his halberd and sent another moaning Plaguebearer toppling from the battlements, Grymn wondered again what Steel Soul had gotten his chamber into. Every fallen brother or sister was a dagger in the Lord-Castellant's heart, for he could feel their souls being snatched away, torn apart and devoured by the hungry skies that whirled above. Still, Grymn was not a man to question his duty. Stubbornness was a fault of his, or so he was told. Yet in a grim, attritional slaughter such as this siege, perhaps it was a virtue. Another lashing torrent of gore began to fall from the cursed skies, turning the stones beneath his boots to a treacherous slick. Lord-Castellant Grymn bellowed orders to his warriors, and a shining phalanx of Hallowed Knights advanced to clear the ramparts. Then, Tallon, the Lord-Castellant's loyal Gryph-hound, began to growl and snap, the feathers on his nape pressed flat.

The air began to fizzle and shimmer, and Grymn felt his armour grow blisteringly hot. The reddish

gloom was suddenly illuminated by a raging, blue-white inferno as a blazing host of daemons came hurtling over the walls. This assemblage was led by a cackling figure atop a bizarre flying chariot, who hurled spells that engulfed entire Freeguild platoons in flames. Gangling blue daemons scrambled over the shattered masonry and natural slopes of the Iron Collar, hurling themselves upon those few warriors not already alight, stabbing with wave-bladed daggers and adding their own bolts of mystical fire to the rising conflagration.

Despite its ferocity, this attack might have been repulsed, for the Stormcasts' sigmarite shields kept the worst of the terrible heat at bay, and fresh Freeguild reinforcements came rushing towards the fires, bellowing hymns of vengeance. But Atra'zan the Immolator had been given most specific instructions by Be'lakor, and none knew better than the daemon Herald how to set a city to the torch. Daemons with trumpet-shaped bodies and too many faces came springing forward, spewing warpflame from their distorted maws and limbs. Directed by Atra'zan, these Flamers of Tzeentch ignored the mortals that ran to assail them, and instead poured their change-fires into the powder kegs and ammunition carriages that fed the Iron Collar's heavy guns. Deafening detonations could be heard for leagues around as blackpowder ignited, and Helstorm rockets were sent careening down the narrow alleyways of the city, leaving ruin in their wake.

Taking advantage of the madness he had sown, Atra'zan the Immolator plunged deep into the city, setting fires wherever he went, followed by his infernal carnival of Flamers and gambolling Horrors. Even when they were cut down by gunfire, the latter split apart into brimstone imps that scampered into the depths of the city to further spread the flames. Soon, they reached the depths of the duardin-forged armouries of Armsgate Zul. The capering mites flooded into the interior halls, where explosive shells were hauled by cogwork pulleys up to the barricades. There, a desperate detachment of Stormcast battle-wizards attempted in vain to stem the tide, dousing the diminutive creatures with summoned downpours of icy starwater. It took only one cackling fire-sprite to make it through the deluge, however, and hurl itself into one of scores of munition wagons.

Lorrus Grymn was stood atop the Iron Collar when the magazine went up. The world turned blinding white as a thousand tonnes of explosive valchemite detonated at once, lifting a section of the wall the size of a cogfort into the air and sending it crashing down the mountainside. The Lord-Castellant heard Tallon screech in pain and fear as he and his Gryph-hound were sent hurtling through the air. The roofs of buildings spun beneath him, rushing closer by the moment. Then he struck with bone-shattering force, and knew no more.

A league and more distant, Be'lakor stood as he saw the walls of Vindicarum shattered, and a vast, smoking opening left in place of unyielding basalt. He drew the Blade of Shadows and unfurled his wings, brandishing his dread sword as his daemonic legion bayed in triumph. The time had come.

OBLIVION BECKONS

Though their advance had come at terrible cost indeed, the forces of the Legion of the First Prince had broken through the defences of the Iron Collar, and now poured into the city of Vindicarum proper. All turned to madness and slaughter, as the battle fractured into a thousand smaller and more brutal encounters. Still, the Hallowed Knights and the Celestial Vindicators fought on with desperate courage.

Gardus Steel Soul had watched the explosion at Armsgate Zul, and felt his heart plummet. Surely nothing within a mile could have survived such a terrible explosion? The redoubtable Lorrus Grymn was surely dead, and this time there would be no Reforging for the grizzled warrior. Yet there was no time to grieve. The city was aflame, screams now drowning out the sounds of musketry and magical detonations. Even the great battlements of Fort Venger were assailed, as Bloodletters hauled themselves over its ramparts, and Daemonettes of Slaanesh clashed claw to blade with wrathful Vindicators. Far from mourning the damage done to their ward city, Lord-Celestant Volkar and his warriors had fought with a frenzied and unnerving relish, exulting in each daemon they sent screaming back into the Realm of Chaos. Where the Steel Souls sought to combine their might with those mortal auxiliaries still doggedly resisting street by street, their turquoise-clad kin met bile with bile, launching increasingly aggressive counter-attacks into the foe's ranks, losing many of their number but inflicting grievous losses in return.

For all the Vindicators' fury, though, the stark reality of the battle could not be denied. Each Stormcast Eternal that fell was another nail in the coffin of Vindicarum, for with the skies occluded by Be'lakor's curse and the lower slopes thick with daemons, there would be no reinforcements, no further hope of salvation. The daemons, by contrast, could spend their lives by the thousands, and still yet more came bounding into the city, maddened by bloodlust and hatred.

Hallowed Knights were falling all around, dragged down and torn apart with manic glee. Even then their suffering was not complete, for their souls joined the corona of agonised lightning-spirits that wheeled and span above, trapped within the hateful storm that had surrounded the city. Grief almost stole the strength from Steel Soul's arms, for he knew that every death was permanent, and entirely due to his decision to come to this doomed place. And for what? He could hear the slaughter being carried out across Vindicarum, as those he had striven to protect were hunted down and butchered amongst the flaming ruins.

Still he steadied his soul and fought on, exhorting his warriors to ever greater acts of heroism. Only the faithful would triumph against darkness. As he hacked and sliced down foe after foe, spinning and striking with blinding speed, he prayed to his beloved God-King for salvation. Soon, Steel Soul, Volkar and no more than a hundred Stormcast Eternals found themselves cut off and surrounded alongside fewer than eight-score Freeguild Guard, the latter exhausted but still defiant. They made their stand before the gates of Fort Venger, and prepared to sell their lives dearly.

Yet even as the daemon-tide surged around them, the shadows seemed to lengthen, coiling about their boots and the corpses piled in the streets. Flocks of Furies whirled overhead, shrieking and jabbering in the Dark Tongue. As one, the enemy horde halted, opening a path for their lord and master as they began to chant his name: 'Be–la–kor! Be–la–kor! Be–la–kor!'

DARKNESS FALLS

The Dark Master strode from the shadows, eyes blazing with murderous delight. Even now he could hear the wretched chatter of the enemy's prayer, their pathetic pleas to their weakling god for salvation. It was painful to the Daemon Prince's ears, but he took pleasure in it nonetheless, for he knew their faith was all for naught. He raised a claw, and forth was dragged a captive Lorrus Grymn, stripped of his armour and bound in chains of darkness, surrounded by shrieking Daemonettes that lashed his flesh with barbed scourges. Steel Soul's heart skipped a beat as he looked upon his oldest companion. Grymn's eyes met those of his friend. The Lord-Castellant offered a single, stern nod. Then Be'lakor turned and drove the Blade of Shadows into his heart.

As Grymn's corpse slumped to the ground and turned to lightning, Steel Soul roared with anguish. With one last appeal to Sigmar to grant him the strength to slay this abomination, the Lord-Celestant of the Hallowed Knights charged forwards to face the Dark Master. Lord-Celestant Volkar, at last sighting the source of the daemonic filth that had brought ruin to his city, followed suit with every warrior he could muster. So too did the brave mortal defenders of Vindicarum, abandoning all thoughts of survival and choosing to die with honour.

Despite his towering frame, the Dark Master was swift, and with a single beat of his massive wings he leapt into the fray. His shadow-wreathed blade swept out to cleave the skulls of two Retributors before they had made it ten paces. Then, he uttered a curse that sent a dozen more Celestial Vindicators collapsing to their knees, weapons slipping from their trembling limbs. Volkar managed little more than a few desperate strikes before he too was cut down by Be'lakor, the beast's shadow-sword plunging through his chest. Gardus Steel Soul's gaze was locked upon the Daemon Prince as the Hallowed Knight punched and hacked his way through the confusion of battle. Be'lakor barked a command, and his minions fell back to grant the Lord-Celestant passage. He wished this kill for himself.

On the steps of Fort Venger they duelled, the lord of shadows and the paragon of the Sigmarite faith. The Dark Master called the night in close, wreathing his hide in an umbral shield. Every time one of the Lord-Celestant's blows seemed destined to sink into the Daemon Prince's flesh, it instead found nothing but air. In response, the Blade of Shadows lashed out like a viper, seeking gaps in Steel Soul's defence even as its wielder spat hexes that siphoned the strength from his enemy's limbs.

Beneath the glare of the cursed skies, Be'lakor's power was too much for even Gardus Steel Soul to resist. Again and again, the Blade of Shadows swept down, driving the Lord-Celestant to his knees. Steel Soul's blade and hammer were crossed, his face locked in a grimace as he tried in vain to repel the huge sword driving ever closer to his neck.

'Arrogant fool,' hissed Be'lakor, his hot and rancid breath blasting into Steel Soul's face. 'You marched willingly to your doom, and for what? Did you think you could deny me?'

'You know nothing of honour or sacrifice, monster,' said Gardus through gritted teeth. 'And you have not triumphed yet.'

As he spoke the words, a spear of light shot down from above. Be'lakor snarled and turned his eyes away from Steel Soul, staring up at the solitary patch of white in the nightmare storm that had descended upon Vindicarum. There, descending fast, was an armada of airships, silhouetted against the radiance of a new dawn.

With guns blazing and bombs raining down upon their daemonic foes, the sky-ships of the Kharadron Overlords raced to relieve Vindicarum's beleaguered defenders.

ON WINGS OF IRON

With cannons firing and aether-endrins blazing, the Kharadron Overlords arrived to lift the Siege of Vindicarum. After long and intense argument, the historic Second Conference of Madralta had ended in consensus: the sky-ports would rescue the God-King's armies from their grim predicament, and, ancestors willing, earn themselves a tidy sum in the process.

It was Endrinmaster Humboldsson that earned the honour of leading the Second Madraltan Armada into battle at Vindicarum, purely by virtue of the *Redoubtable* being the fastest vessel in any sky-fleet in the empire. The prototype Frigate dropped out of the sun's glare like a hunting hawk, aethercannons roaring and bombs spiralling down to crash amongst the daemonic horde below. Such was the size of Be'lakor's host that much of its bulk was still pouring into the city through breaches in the Iron Collar, presenting a training ground target for the *Redoubtable*'s gunners. The old white-beard Gromthi triangulated each salvo with exacting precision, and soon great explosions were rippling through the packed enemy, sending a rain of fire and splattering body parts high into the air.

However, this was but the overture in a symphony of ruin. Following close behind the *Redoubtable* came hundreds of Arkanaut Ironclads, other Frigates and heavy, wide-platformed Carriers. From the latter came squadrons of Gunhaulers and single-pilot fighter craft, swarming like angry glowjackets from a stirred-up hive. The colours of nearly every sky-port could be seen amidst the shining wall of endrins: the burgundy of Barak-Nar, the azure and gold of Barak-Zilfin, and the proud heraldry of a hundred other imperial trading posts besides.

Combining their firepower with devastating accuracy, each ship unleashed a thunderous broadside. Hulking greater daemon perished alongside hundreds of their lesser kin in that cannonade. No sooner had the storm ceased than the sky-vessels came sweeping in low, disgorging Grundstok Marines and Arkanauts from rapid-descent lines into the city, where they laid down fields of fire around the few, isolated pockets of defenders still fighting amidst the inferno of Vindicarum. Well-placed salvoes of aethershot cut down daemons by the score, while aetheric fumigators were employed to clear thicker concentrations of the daemonic foe.

The Legion of the First Prince counter-attacked with great fury. Atra'zan the Immolator, outraged by this interruption of his city-wide arson, sent his Blazing Cavalcade to burn the sky-duardin to ash.

From atop his flame-wreathed chariot, the Herald of Tzeentch hurled bolts of witchfire and summoned serpents of living flame to drag passing gunships out of the sky. Yet the Kharadron had brought to the battlefield enough guns, bombs and torpedoes to level a kingdom, and even the massive host that had conquered Vindicarum withered before their overwhelming firepower.

Atra'zan's flames were finally quenched by the Ironclad *Goldhammer*, flagship of High Admiral Grubda Klarsdottr. When her fore-cannons proved insufficient to breach the daemon's arcane shield, the immense vessel simply rammed the Immolator's chariot with her 'Grudgebreaker' prow-ram, crushing both the rider and his disc-like conveyance.

'If we stay at this range there won't be a city left by sunrise, and this whole enterprise won't earn us a whiff of aether-gold. Damn the flames! Take us in, full speed ahead!'

- High Admiral Grubda Klarsdottr, during the Relief of Vindicarum

While Klarsdottr's shock-fleet cleared the streets of Vindicarum with aethercannon barrages and grudgesettler bombardments, the task of reclaiming the skies went to Admiral Imoda Barrasdottr of the *Intaglio*. Fresh from her fabled exploits in Hysh where she unearthed clandestine activities of the Great Necromancer, the master cartographer had helped chart a course for the Kharadron armada through the tormented sky-lanes of Chamon. Now, she brought those same expert skills to bear in battle, as only a daughter of Barak-Zilfin could. Her squadron of swift Arkanaut Frigates braved the treacherous currents of sorcery that swirled above the caldera-city. They hunted the flights of wretched Plague Drones and undulating shoals of Screamers that had caused so much devastation during the opening stages of the Siege of Vindicarum, and one by one brought them down with displays of pinpoint gunnery. Charred daemonic corpses rained downed across the city in their hundreds. It was a display of verve and skill that would only increase Barrasdottr's standing in the eyes of the Geldraad.Amidst the thunder

and madness of the engagement, Endrinmaster Humboldsson sighted the last of the surviving Hallowed Knights and Celestial Vindicators, trapped before the wreckage of Fort Venger. They were encircled by a throng of slavering daemons, led by a monstrous, winged figure wreathed in shadow. Humboldsson ordered the *Redoubtable* on a full attack run, as a squadron of Gunhaulers dipped their keels and followed in behind.

THE SIEGE BROKEN

Be'lakor's brief distraction allowed Gardus Steel Soul a moment of opportunity. He seized it, summoning a surge of strength to drive his foe backwards, and strike a grievous blow with his runeblade. The enchanted sword sliced deep into the Daemon Prince's wing, but Be'lakor merely growled in pain and hurled a bolt of shadow that slammed into the Lord-Celestant and sent him flying backwards.

The Dark Master had no intention of admitting defeat. He still had enough thralls at his disposal to finish slaughtering Vindicarum, and to crush the duardin. The cursed skies still burned. Indeed, more than one Kharadron airship was snatched by a treacherous coil of Chaos magic, sent spinning and tumbling out of control to crash upon the slopes of Mount Ketnus. Forgetting his wounded Stormcast opponent for a moment, Be'lakor leapt into the air, his great wings carrying towards the Kharadron vessel that was now dispatching gun-wielding warriors and roaring Fyreslayer Berzerkers to form a protective perimeter around the few surviving Vindicarians.

Delivered by their sky-bound cousins to those who had destroyed their home and slaughtered their kin, the warriors of Gulgrymstok repaid their losses in kind. They sought the most terrible of daemons to slay, welcoming death in return for the chance to drive their scorching axes into unclean flesh. One such fiend was the Lord of Change F'tanax – the very being which had overseen the destruction of the Fyreslayers' magmahold. Though the sorcerous monster blasted a score of grim-faced slayers into nothingness, more leapt atop the daemon's feathered back, hacking at its spine and neck, their bodies glowing with the power of their ur-gold runes as they drew upon all their remaining might to see their sworn enemy destroyed. Thus it was that the fallen of Gulgrymstok were avenged.

Be'lakor's rage was terrifying to behold. The Daemon Prince slammed into the *Redoubtable*, claws tearing through its iron struts, wings spread wide and a look of murder on his face. Endrinmaster Humboldsson and his Skywardens launched themselves at this new foe, their long-hafted skyhooks lowered and vulcaniser pistols blasting away. Be'lakor sliced the aether-endrin of the first duardin in two, sending the unfortunate sailor spinning away to his death. Another two were seized by constricting coils of shadow-magic, the life strangled from their bodies. Humboldsson unleashed the full fury of his weaponised harness, firing at the daemon with white-hot welding beams as he swung his aethermatic saw to sever Be'lakor's wing – already seeping black blood where Steel Soul had struck a telling blow.

Be'lakor's smoke-wreathed form shifted, becoming as insubstantial as mist, and one of his shadowy claws closed about Humboldsson's skull, driving the Endrinmaster onto the deck of the *Redoubtable*. Tendrils of darkness crept into the stricken duardin's mind, and Humboldsson felt all his bullish defiance ebb away as visions of terror and despair overcame him: his beloved ship in ruins, his sky-port aflame and, worst of all, his expulsion from the Endrineers Guild for cowardice and negligence and a resultant fall into ale-sodden disgrace and poverty.

As Humboldsson sat slumped and grief-stricken on the deck of his ship, propped up only by the bulk of his rig, he prayed for his enemy's sword to descend and put an end to his anguish. Yet through a swirling haze of horror, he saw the Daemon Prince's eyes locked upon another. The Arkanaut Gromthi advanced across the deck of the *Redoubtable*, wielding nothing but a crude riveting hammer, narrowed at one end like a miner's pick. Was that a flicker of fear that briefly appeared in the monster's coal-black eyes? Gromthi seemed to stand a foot taller, all his weathered ancientness replaced by a fiery strength that seemed to glow from within him.

With a snarl, the daemon Be'lakor beat his wings once more, releasing the Frigate and spiralling up into the air to be swallowed up by the raging skies. It was the last thing Humboldsson saw before darkness overcame him.

AFTER THE STORM

Vindicarum had been overrun, its walls breached and thousands of its citizens slaughtered. More than half of the Celestial Vindicators had fallen in battle, along with nearly all of the city's mortal regiments. Yet thanks to the Kharadron Overlords' timely intervention, the Legion of the First Prince had been beaten back and the city saved from total destruction.

There was little time for convalescence for the heroes of the Siege of Vindicarum. Gardus Steel Soul had been gravely wounded during his duel with Be'lakor, and had only narrowly avoided the fate of his friend Lorrus Grymn: total obliteration wrought by the cursed skies that still swirled and crackled above the caldera-city. The Steel Souls chamber had been ravaged, losing more than half its number. Yet for all the tragedies that he had witnessed, Steel Soul's faith in the God-King remained resolute. He knew that Sigmar had been with him in those last, desperate hours. The Hallowed Knights would avenge this outrage, and Steel Soul swore that he would again cross blades with the abomination Be'lakor.

Vindicarum itself was a ruin. Barely a building still stood, and fires still raged throughout the city. Great gusts of ash smothered everything, further stoked by the impacts of Kharadron aether-cannons. Though much of Be'lakor's great host had been destroyed in the latter stages of the slaughter, isolated bands of daemons were still at large, rampaging and murdering at will. Having purged the districts surrounding Fort Venger, the survivors of the Celestial Vindicators and their few remaining mortal auxiliaries had begun the hard, bloody work of cleansing the rest of their ward city. Steel Soul could not help but wonder what face the free city of Vindicarum might wear once this was done. So much had its people suffered since its founding, yet those who had lived through the nightmare of the siege still went about their work with stern focus.

The skies above had not cleared. It seemed that whatever horror had been unleashed by Be'lakor was spreading fast. As far away as distant Ayadah, there were reports of settlements isolated and ravaged by churning storms. Whether the phenomenon had reached other realms besides Chamon, Steel Soul had no idea. With the light of the heavens still smothered by a malignant pall of Chaos magic, communication with Azyr was impossible. Yet the Kharadron delegation – represented by no fewer than five Grand Admirals of the Geldraad – offered to provide him and his warriors with passage anywhere the Lord-Celestant desired. For a fitting price, of course. As he stood on the prow of the Ironclad *Goldhammer*, Gardus Steel Soul stared up at the baleful tempest that marred the firmament, and feared that there were darker times yet to come before the dawn.

Meanwhile, Endrinmaster Humboldsson, still recovering from his own encounter with the Dark Master, occupied himself with overseeing the reparation works of the Iron Collar, as well as the construction of several cloud-mining platforms above Mount Ketnus. As part of their payment for coming to the city's rescue, the Geldraad had been sure to negotiate a claim to the sky-lanes from the Flux to Prosperis' northern coast. Any losses that the sky-ports had suffered would be softened most agreeably by the rich streams of aether-gold already flooding into their coffers.

THE SPOILS OF VICTORY

The Dark Master brooded in his throne-room within the shadowy labyrinth of Mordikar, taking out his rage upon the flesh of prisoners captured from the battle with all the cruel ingenuity he could muster. He had been so close to delivering Vindicarum to the Dark Gods, the capstone of his designs. Yet through ill luck and the unforeseen unity of the Kharadron, he had been denied – that and the appearance of the duardin whitebeard, whose true nature Be'lakor had instantly recognised despite the creature's crude disguise. That had been a shock indeed, to see a power he had long thought lost suddenly return to the realms. For all the Dark Master's power, he could not risk everything on an encounter in which he did not know all the variables. His retreat, however necessary, left a blemish upon his grand victory that was like bile in his throat. The mocking laughter of the Dark Gods had chased him from the slopes of Vindicarum, their contempt obvious at his failure to deliver their promised prize.

Be'lakor soothed his ego with the knowledge that there were powers at play that he could not have anticipated. A being of immeasurable potency had returned to the realms and succeeded in the impossible: uniting the fractious sky-ports of the Kharadron, albeit briefly. This might prove beneficial, however, for there were many bitter enemies of that ancient who would be most intrigued, no doubt, to hear of his return.

And had not Be'lakor's achievements been great indeed? The Steel Souls had been gravely mauled, their allies the Celestial Vindicators savaged. The Sigmarite Brotherhood had been obliterated. An entire Stormhost destroyed, root and stem; not even the usurper Archaon had managed such a feat. Vindicarum had been reduced to a smoking ruin, inhabited by no more than a few hundred scarred and broken survivors. And, most importantly of all, the cursed skies still raged above Chamon. The corruption of the firmament had exceeded Be'lakor's most ambitious predictions, and even now the unnatural storm front was expanding, spreading across the other Mortal Realms like a virulent infection. Sigmar's champions might call themselves 'Eternals', but he, Be'lakor, had revealed that sobriquet as the lie it had always been.

There would be other cities to fall, and other sacrifices to offer. The Dark Master's ascension had merely been delayed. A cruel smile played across the daemon's face as he began to consider the opportunities that now lay within his grasp. Yes, these would prove most interesting times indeed.

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With Be'lakor's retreat, the cohesion and ferocity of the Legion of the First Prince was sundered. Still, the daemons fought on, their connection to the mortal plane bolstered by the fury of the tainted skies, but no longer did the mighty will of the Dark Master bind them in common purpose. Though weary and bloodied, the Stormcast Eternals fought in concert with the Kharadron sky-fleets to purge the taint of Chaos from the burning city, street by street. The Siege of Vindicarum was finally lifted, yet the cost had been unimaginably high.

The Arkanaut Gromthi sat perched upon a pile of scattered debris, puffing away on his pipe as he looked out over the mountainous valleys of the Spiral Crux. Endrinmaster Humboldsson trudged up the winding, shell-damaged stairway to the battlements, and approached the whitebeard.

'Grim days ahead, beardling,' said Gromthi. 'But you came together here in common cause, and that's a beginning. Mayhap there's hope for the dawi yet.'

Humboldsson puzzled at that word. Dawi. An archaic term, and not one that he had often heard spoken in Barak-Zilfin. He studied the strange duardin. Gromthi had removed his mask, revealing a weather-beaten face tattooed with archaic scripture and an unruly crown of snowy hair. His skin was the colour of an oak and as craggy as that of a rock troggoth.

'Aye,' Humboldsson said. 'Every sky-port prospered here today. With the leverage we have over the Vindicarians after this, we'll be masters of every skyway from here to Ayadah.'

Gromthi shot him a frown so full of disappointment that, to his surprise, the Endrinmaster felt a stab of guilt. He'd not felt the like since he was an apprentice back in the shipworks, with old Master Khronkaz breathing down his neck and pointing out the shoddy joining in his ventwork.

'What's that look for, Arkanaut?' he blustered, angered by the intractable veteran. 'Is this not what you wanted, after all? It's just business.' He turned his back on Gromthi, railing as much at the skies as the tattooed duardin. 'By the Code, you think we should have fought and died here for nothing but empty gestures of solidarity? How would that keep the Redoubtable *afloat? Or the sky-ports themselves, for that matter?'*

The sound of frenzied chanting interrupted his diatribe. Below, amidst the rubble of the city street, a band of wailing Flagellants was shuffling back and forth, lashing themselves so furiously that their blood poured freely to stain the earth.

'Let these foolish land-sloggers put their trust in gods and faith,' Humboldsson muttered, more to himself than to Gromthi. 'I put mine in a freshly fuelled ship and an open horizon.'

'Suppose I cannot grudge you that,' came Gromthi's voice, suddenly very old and tired. 'I only hope it's enough to get you through what's to come. Seems there's nothing I can teach you. Good fortune, beardling. Mayhap we'll meet again, in time.'

There was a soft, rushing sound, like wind sweeping across a sky-ship's hull. When Humboldsson turned, the old Arkanaut was nowhere to be seen. Only the faintest scent of pipe-smoke remained, the sole, swiftly vanishing proof that Gromthi had ever been there at all.

THE RULES

BROKEN REALMS

This section of *Broken Realms: Be'lakor* contains exciting new rules for open and narrative play games. You can use the rules in this section to recreate the battles that were fought during the build up to the siege of Vindicarum by the Legion of the First Prince, as well as the climactic final conflict itself.

CAMPAIGN RULES (pg 71)
This section includes a set of rules that allow you to link together the battleplans in this book, so that the result of each battle has an impact on the subsequent battles.

REALMS OF BATTLE (pg 72-74)
This section includes Realmsphere Magic, Realmscape Features, Realm Commands and Realm Artefacts rules that allow you to fight battles set in the locations described in the narrative section of the book. These rules have been designed for open and narrative play.

Also included in this section are the Siege Warfare rules (pg 76) and the Coalition of Death rules (pg 77), which are needed to play some of the battleplans in this book.

BATTLEPLANS (pg 78-88)
This section includes new battleplans that allow you to recreate the pivotal battles described in the narrative section of the book.

CAMPAIGN RULES

This book includes six battleplans, each based on a critical battle that was part of Be'lakor's scheme to destroy the caldera-city of Vindicarum and win the favour of the Chaos Gods. The rules on this page allow you to play a series of linked games that recreates what happened as the Dark Master's plan unfolded.

THE ARMIES

This campaign is fought between two players. One player is the Be'lakor player and the other player is the Enemy player. Some of the battleplans have been designed to incorporate three or four players (see below). The Be'lakor player must be able to field the following armies from the battleplans on pages 78-88:

- **Defenders of the Genesis Gate:** Nurgle army
- **Stampede of Scales:** Tzeentch army
- **In the Court of Death:** Legion of the First Prince army (pg 96)
- **The Gate of White Gold:** Legion of the First Prince army*
- **Disaster at Armsgate Zul:** Eternal Conflagration army (see *Battletome: Disciples of Tzeentch*)
- **On Wings of Iron:** Legion of the First Prince army**

The Enemy player must be able to field the following armies:

- **Defenders of the Genesis Gate:** Hallowed Knights army (see *Battletome: Stormcast Eternals*) with Seraphon allies
- **Stampede of Scales:** Thunder Lizard army (see *Battletome: Seraphon*)
- **In the Court of Death:** Emerald Host army (pg 98)
- **The Gate of White Gold:** Stormcast Eternals army*
- **Disaster at Armsgate Zul:** Hallowed Knights army with Cities of Sigmar allies
- **On Wings of Iron:** Stormcast Eternals Army**

*A third player with a Nighthaunt army and a fourth player with a Cities of Sigmar army will be needed in order to fight this battle.

**A third player with an Eternal Conflagration army and a fourth player with a Barak-Zilfin army (see *Battletome: Kharadron Overlords*) will be needed in order to fight this battle.

THE BATTLES

The players must fight each battle in the order in which they appear in this book.

CONSEQUENCES OF BATTLE

Any named characters that are slain in a battle are assumed to have been hurt but not killed, and will be fully recovered in time for the next battle. This aside, the result of an earlier battle may have an impact on subsequent battles that are fought, as explained below. If you are allowed to add units to your army, they must each conform to any Unit Selection restrictions for the battleplan being used.

Defenders of the Genesis Gate, Stampede of Scales, In the Court of Death: No changes.

The Gate of White Gold: Reduce the number of units in the Nighthaunt army by 2 if the Be'lakor player lost In the Court of Death. In addition, if Lady Olynder was slain in In the Court of Death, she does not take part in this battle.

Disaster at Armsgate Zul: Reduce the number of units in the Defender's Army by 2 if the Defender lost Defenders of the Genesis Gate. Reduce the number of units in the Attacker's Army by 2 if the Be'lakor player lost Stampede of Scales.

On Wings of Iron: Add 1 unit to the Legion of Chaos Ascendant Army for each **major victory** the Be'lakor player has won so far. Reduce the number of units in the Legion of Chaos Ascendant Army by 1 for each **major victory** the Defender player has won so far.

CAMPAIGN VICTORY

If one player is victorious in Defenders of the Genesis Gate, The Gate of White Gold and On Wings of Iron, they win a **total campaign victory**. If one player is victorious in On Wings of Iron and either Defenders of the Genesis Gate or The Gate of White Gold, they win a **strategic campaign victory**. In any other circumstances, the victor in On Wings of Iron wins a **tactical campaign victory**.

ALTERNATIVE ARMIES

If you don't have all of the units or armies needed to fight a campaign, just substitute suitable units that you do have for the ones that you don't. It's up to you to decide what you think would be appropriate replacements!

REALMS OF BATTLE

On the following pages you will find three new sets of Realms of Battle rules that allow you to fight battles set in the regions of the Mortal Realms described in the narrative section of this book. These rules are suitable for narrative and open play games but are not intended for matched play.

REALM OF BATTLE: THE GENESIS GATE, GHYRAN

REALMSPHERE MAGIC
ORDER WIZARD only.

Shield of Thorns: *At the wizard's command, snaking brambles burst from the ground, forming a living barrier around their allies.*

Shield of Thorns has a casting value of 5. If successfully cast, pick a friendly unit within 18" of the caster that is visible to them. Until your next hero phase, any enemy unit that finishes a charge move within 3" of the unit you picked suffers D3 mortal wounds.

REALMSCAPE FEATURE
Ironwood Bulwarks: *The wyldwoods near the Genesis Gate have been shaped by the Everqueen into defences covered with impaling thorns and poison-spitting flowers.*

Roll a dice for each unit that finishes a run move or charge move within 1" of any Citadel Wood models. On a 4+, that unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

Designer's Note: *If the Citadel Wood models are part of an* **AWAKENED WYLDWOOD**, *this realmscape feature applies in addition to the Wyldwood scenery rule, allowing you to roll twice to see if a unit that does not have the* **SYLVANETH** *keyword that finishes a charge move within 1" of the* **AWAKENED WYLDWOOD** *suffers any mortal wounds. If the charging unit finished their charge move within 3" of a unit protected by a Shield of Thorns, it would suffer D3 mortal wounds in addition to any mortal wounds inflicted by Ironwood Bulwarks and Wyldwood. Ouch!*

REALM COMMAND
ORDER HERO only.

Command the Land: *In the Realm of Life, even the landscape can be bent to your will.*

You can use this command ability at the end of your hero phase. If you do so, pick 1 friendly **HERO**. That **HERO** can attempt to cast the Shield of Thorns spell (see left), even if they are not a **WIZARD**, and even if a casting attempt for the spell has already been made in the same phase.

If the **HERO** you picked is a **WIZARD**, then they can attempt to cast Shield of Thorns in addition to any other spells they have already attempted to cast, and even if a casting attempt for the spell has already been made by themselves or another **WIZARD** in the same phase.

REALM ARTEFACT
ORDER HERO only.

Seed of Rebirth: *Should its bearer ever fall, the Seed's rejuvenating energies will pour into its host to grant them new life.*

The first time the bearer is slain, before removing them from the battlefield, roll a dice. On a 1, the bearer is slain. On a 2+, the bearer is not slain, you can heal up to D3 wounds allocated to them, and any wounds that remain to be allocated to them are negated.

REALM OF BATTLE: DOLORUM, SHYISH

REALMSPHERE MAGIC
DEATH WIZARD only.

Quickening Doom: *The caster utters a chilling curse that withers their victims' flesh to ash and sends their souls screaming away into the night.*

Quickening Doom has a casting value of 7. If successfully cast, pick 1 enemy unit within 9" of the caster that is visible to them. That unit suffers D3 mortal wounds. If any models in a unit are slain by the mortal wounds inflicted by this spell, that unit's Bravery characteristic is reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1) for the rest of the battle. The same unit cannot have its Bravery reduced by the spell more than once per battle.

REALMSCAPE FEATURE
Aura of Ancient Tragedy: *The pall of despair that hangs over these lands is choking in its intensity.*

Terrain features have the Sinister scenery rule (see the *Warhammer Age of Sigmar Core Book*), in addition to any other scenery rules that they have. In addition, at the start of your hero phase, roll a dice. Add 2 to the roll if your general has the **DEATH** keyword. On a 6+, pick an enemy unit that does not have the **DEATH** keyword. That unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

REALM COMMAND
DEATH HERO only.

Soul-force Sacrifice: *Your general can siphon soul-force from their minions to extend their life.*

You can use this command ability at the start of your hero phase. If you do so, pick 1 friendly unit other than your general that is within 3" of your general. Allocate any number of wounds to that unit that you wish – you can heal 1 wound that has been allocated to your general for each wound that you allocate.

REALM ARTEFACT
DEATH HERO only.

Banshee Blade: *This screaming blade can kill its victim even before they feel its keen edge.*

Pick one of the bearer's melee weapons. If the unmodified hit roll for an attack made with that weapon is 6, roll 2D6. If the roll is equal to or greater than the target's Bravery characteristic, that attack inflicts D3 mortal wounds on the target in addition to its normal damage.

REALM OF BATTLE: PROSPERIS, CHAMON

REALMSPHERE MAGIC

CELESTIAL VINDICATORS or **CITIES OF SIGMAR WIZARD** only.

Final Transmutation: *With a wave of their arm, the wizard transforms foes into immobile golden statues.*

Final Transmutation has a casting value of 6. If successfully cast, pick 1 enemy unit within 18" of the caster that is visible to them and roll D3 dice. For each roll that is greater than that unit's Wounds characteristic, 1 model from that unit is slain.

REALMSCAPE FEATURE

Ironclad Buildings: *Many structures in Prosperis – particularly the ruins of old Prosperia – have become encased in thick crusts of metal, the result of chemical downpours and floods.*

Worsen the Rend characteristic of attacks that target units in cover by 1 (to a minimum of '-').

REALM COMMAND

Exult in Battle: *The mortal inhabitants of Prosperis are infamous for their zealotry and eager anticipation of battle.*

You can use this command ability at the start of the combat phase. If you do so, pick 1 friendly unit wholly within 12" of a friendly **CELESTIAL VINDICATORS** or **CITIES OF SIGMAR HERO**. If the unmodified hit roll for an attack made by that unit in that phase is 6, that attack inflicts 2 hits on the target instead of 1. Make a wound and save roll for each hit.

REALM ARTEFACT

CITIES OF SIGMAR HERO only.

Gildenbane: *This armour negates the properties of magical artefacts nearby.*

The rules for an artefact of power (other than Gildenbane) cannot be used while its bearer is within 3" of the bearer of Gildenbane. If a weapon was picked when the artefact of power was selected, the weapon's normal profile is used instead.

SIEGE WARFARE

Fortresses of all different shapes and sizes can be found throughout the Mortal Realms. Only a sizeable and highly motivated force has any chance of capturing such an objective and the spoils that lie beyond its walls, and then only at a terrible cost in blood and lives.

If a battleplan says to use the Siege Warfare rules, then it will define one player as the attacker and the other as the defender, and the following rules apply to that battle.

THE FORTRESS

All Warhammer Age of Sigmar sieges require a fortress for the defender to occupy. If the battleplan instructs the defender to set up their fortress, they must set up at least 5 terrain features (but otherwise as many terrain features as they wish) wholly within their territory.

THE SIEGE PHASE

The siege phase takes place after the armies are set up but before the first battle round begins. Both the attacker and the defender must secretly pick a siege tactic. The attacker does this by hiding a dice showing 1, 2 or 3 behind their hand, while the defender does this by hiding a dice showing 4, 5 or 6 behind their hand. Each number corresponds to a different siege tactic, as shown in the table below.

Once both players have chosen their numbers, the dice are revealed and the numbers are cross-referenced on the table below to determine the modifiers that will apply to the siege rolls (see opposite).

SIEGE ROLLS

The attacker now makes a series of rolls to determine the effects that their siege methods have had on the defenders. Make the batter rolls first, then the starve rolls, and finally the tunnel rolls. After all of the rolls have been made, the first battle round starts.

Batter Rolls: The attacker rolls a dice for each terrain feature wholly within the defender's territory, applying the modifier from the Siege table (if there is one). On a 5+, if the terrain feature could be garrisoned, then it can no longer be garrisoned, or if it could not be garrisoned, then it no longer provides cover.

Starve Rolls: The attacker rolls a dice for each unit in the defender's army, subtracting 1 from the roll if the unit is a **HERO** and applying the modifier from the Siege table (if there is one). On a 5+, that unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

Tunnel Rolls: The attacker and the defender each roll a dice. The attacker applies the modifier from the Siege table to their roll (if there is one). If the attacker's roll is higher, they have completed a tunnel. They can pick 1 **HERO** that does not have a mount and is not a **MONSTER**, and 2 other units that do not have mounts and are not **MONSTERS**, to send into the tunnel.

Units sent into the tunnel are removed from the battlefield. At the start of any of the attacker's movement phases, all of the units sent into the tunnel can be set up on the battlefield. They must be set up more than 3" from all enemy units and within 3" of each other. This counts as their move for that movement phase.

SIEGE TABLE

Defender's Tactic	Attacker's Tactic		
	1 – Cut Off Supplies	**2 – Demolish**	**3 – Mine**
4 – Gather Supplies	-1 Starve	+1 Batter -1 Starve	+2 Tunnel -1 Starve
5 – Rebuild	+1 Starve -1 Batter	-1 Batter	+2 Tunnel -1 Batter
6 – Counter-mine	+1 Starve -2 Tunnel	+1 Batter -2 Tunnel	-2 Tunnel

COALITION OF DEATH

Broken Realms: Be'lakor **is not simply a tale of two forces set against one another. There are many factions involved, each with their own agendas. At crucial points in the story, some of these factions join forces with each other in epic confrontations – the Coalition of Death rules let you fight these battles on the tabletop.**

One of the quickest ways to arrange a multiplayer game is for two or more players to join up and fight as a team. The Age of Sigmar is, after all, an age of grand alliances, and the Coalition of Death rules in this section are a great representation of this. Every new alliance brings with it a host of fresh challenges, from making the most of army composition by selecting complementary forces, to seeing that the armies fight in a mutually supportive manner.

COALITION OF DEATH RULES

A Coalition of Death battle is fought between two sides, each consisting of a team of players. All of the players in the same team combine their models and units into a single force, and must try to defeat the opposing team's combined army.

To play a Coalition of Death game, you must have three or more players. The battle can be fought using any of the battleplans for Warhammer Age of Sigmar – all you need to do is split the players into teams, with each team taking one side in the forthcoming battle. Two of the battleplans on the following pages are designed for use with these Coalition of Death rules.

The Armies

Split the players into two teams, using any method you prefer. The two teams can be made up of different numbers of players. Each of the players then chooses an army as described in the core rules. Each player commands the models they have provided to the coalition, and is allowed to decide what they do, how they move and so on, and they make all of the dice rolls for their own units. Any command abilities a player uses will only affect the units in their own army, not the rest of the coalition. Despite this, the armies belonging to the players on the same team are treated as a combined force during set-up and during the battle.

Generals and Warlords

Each player picks a general for their army as normal. You must also pick one player from each coalition to be the warlord. This is often the player fielding the largest force. If, at any time during the game, the coalition cannot decide in what order to carry out actions, then the warlord has final say on the order of events. In addition, if a dice needs to be rolled for the whole team, the warlord makes that dice roll. Finally, any victory conditions from a battleplan that apply to an army general only apply to the warlord's general unless specifically noted otherwise.

Fighting the Battle

Instead of each player taking a turn during a Coalition of Death game, each team takes a turn. The teams' warlords roll off against each other to see which team has the first turn each round. Where individual players would normally alternate taking actions, the teams alternate taking actions, with each player in the team being allowed to carry out their actions. For example, in the combat phase, each player on one team can attack with one of their units, then each player on the other team, and so on.

The same principle applies during set-up. For example, if you are fighting a battle where the players take it in turns to set up units, then in a Coalition of Death battle, the teams would take turns to set up, with each player in a coalition setting up a unit when it is their side's turn to do so. Finally, it is worth noting that attempts to unbind a spell are limited to one attempt per team, rather than one attempt for each player on the team. There is only ever one chance to unbind a successfully cast spell!

BATTLEPLAN

DEFENDERS OF THE GENESIS GATE

The Stormcast survivors of the ill-fated assault upon the Eightpoints were forced to flee to the safety of the Genesis Gate. As long as this Arcway was in the hands of the Hallowed Knights, disaster could be prevented from becoming catastrophe. The defence fell to two chambers of the Hallowed Knights, commanded by the famous Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul. The gate was heavily fortified, but the enemy force arrayed against the Stormcasts was formidable indeed.

SIEGE WARFARE

Use the Siege Warfare rules from page 76.

Designer's Note: *The defender must use Citadel Woods for their stronghold if they are available.*

REALMS OF BATTLE

This battle uses the rules for The Genesis Gate, Ghyran (pg 72).

THE ARMIES

One player is the attacker. Their opponent is the defender.

Attacker's Army

The attacker must use a Nurgle army. It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalion:

- Invidian Plaguehost (see *Broken Realms: Teclis*)
- 16 other **NURGLE** units

Defender's Army

The defender must use a Hallowed Knights army. It must consist of the following units:

- Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul (pg 110)
- 1 Lord-Castellant (Lorrus Grymn)
- 8 other **STORMCAST ETERNAL** units
- Up to 12 **SERAPHON** allied units (see 'The Seraphon', on the next page).

Unit Selection

The allied units and 'other' units in each army must each conform to one of the types in the following list. You can double the size of a unit if you wish, but it then counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

Regular Unit: A unit of up to 10 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 1.

Elite Unit: A unit of up to 5 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 2 or 3.

Guard Unit: A unit of up to 3 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 4 or 5.

Champion: A **HERO** with a Wounds characteristic of 8 or less.

SET-UP

First, the defender sets up their fortress (pg 76). Next, three different terrain features in the defender's territory are picked to be the attacker's siege targets: the attacker picks the first terrain

feature, the defender picks the second, and the attacker picks the third. The armies can now be set up.

The defender must set up their army first. All of the **SERAPHON** units must be set up in reserve and will arrive during the battle. The rest of their units can be set up anywhere wholly within their territory.

The attacker sets up their army second. Their units must be set up wholly within their territory, more than 6" from the defender's territory.

THE SERAPHON

The defender rolls 2D6 at the start of each of their turns to see if the Seraphon arrive. Add the battle round number to the score. On a roll of 11 or more, the Seraphon arrive. The defender rolls another dice. On a 1-3 the Seraphon arrive from the narrow table edge to the right of the defender's territory. On a 4-6, they arrive from the table edge to the left of the defender's territory (see map).

At the start of their next movement phase, the defender must set up all of their **SERAPHON** units wholly within 9" of the table edge they arrived from and more than 3" from any enemy units. This counts as their move for that movement phase.

At the start of the defender's next turn, all **SERAPHON** units that are on the battlefield are removed from the battlefield – they have moved through the Genesis Gate.

SIEGE TARGETS

A siege target is controlled by the last player to have any models in or on the terrain feature. If both players have models in or on the terrain feature, it is controlled by the defender.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts for 5 battle rounds.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

The attacker wins a **major victory** if they control all three siege targets. The defender wins a **major victory** if the attacker controls fewer than two siege targets. If the attacker controls two siege targets, use the tiebreaker below.

Tiebreaker

Each player adds up the number of enemy units that were destroyed during the battle, excluding units that were added to the armies after the battle started. Double-sized units count as 2 units instead of 1. Do not include **SERAPHON** units that moved through the Genesis Gate. If one player has the higher total, they win a **minor victory**. If neither player has the higher total, the battle is a **draw**.

BATTLEPLAN

STAMPEDE OF SCALES

Following his defeat at the hands of the Serephon, the Eater of Tomes' Silver Tower crashed back to earth in Chamon. Although terribly damaged, the Gaunt Summoner knew he could still restore it, given enough time. Yet even as he began to work his sorcery upon the wreckage of his stronghold, he heard a terribly familiar sound: a distant, primal roar, and the thunder of stampeding beasts.

THE ARMIES

One player is the Tzeentch player. Their opponent is the Seraphon player.

Tzeentch Army

The Tzeentch player must use an Eternal Conflagration army. It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalion:

- 1 Gaunt Summoner on Disc of Tzeentch (the Eater of Tomes)
- Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade (pg 107)
- 14 other **TZEENTCH DAEMON** units

Seraphon Army

The Seraphon player must use a Thunder Lizard army. It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalion:

- The Celestial Stampede (pg 106)
- 12 other **SERAPHON** units

Unit Selection

The 'other' units in each army must each conform to one of the types in the following list. You can double the size of a unit if you wish, but it then counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

Regular Unit: A unit of up to 10 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 1.

Elite Unit: A unit of up to 5 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 2 or 3.

Guard Unit: A unit of up to 3 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 4 or 5.

Champion: A **HERO** with a Wounds characteristic of 8 or less.

Stampede Unit (Seraphon player only): An Engine of the Gods, Stegadon, Stegadon with Skink Chief, or Bastiladon. Engines of the Gods count as 3 choices instead of 1; the rest count as 2 choices instead of 1.

SET-UP

The Tzeentch player must set up the Eater of Tomes within 3" of the centre of the narrow battlefield edge that adjoins their territory (see map.)

The players then alternate setting up units one at a time, starting with the Seraphon player. Players must set up units wholly within their territory and more than 20" from enemy territory.

Continue to set up units until both players have set up their armies. If one player finishes first, their opponent must set up the rest of the units in their army, one after another.

FIRE AGAINST FURY

All **HORRORS** units count as being part of the Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade warscroll battalion, and Stampede units are treated as being part of the Celestial Stampede warscroll battalion, in addition to the other units already in those battalions.

THE UNMAKING RAY

The Eater of Tomes is not allowed to move, cast spells, use command abilities or attack. However, any wounds inflicted on the Eater of Tomes are negated unless they are inflicted by the Lance of Cosmic Power ability (see the Celestial Stampede, pg 106).

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts for 5 battle rounds or until The Eater of Tomes is slain.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

If the Eater of Tomes is slain, the Seraphon player wins a **major victory**. If the Eater of Tomes has not suffered any wounds at the end of the battle, the Tzeentch player wins a **major victory**. In any other circumstances, use the tiebreaker below.

Tiebreaker

Each player counts up the number of enemy units that have been destroyed. Each reinforced unit and each **MONSTER** counts as two units. The Seraphon player adds to their total the number of wounds currently allocated to the Eater of Tomes. The player with the higher total wins a **minor victory**. If neither player has the higher total, the battle is a **draw**.

BATTLEPLAN

IN THE COURT OF DEATH

At the heart of Sylontum lay the Sanctum of Anguish. Here, in this profane chamber, the Lady Olynder's skeletal remains were stored within a sarcophagus protected by the most terrible curses that the Mortarch of Grief could devise. Yet even these vile wardings could not keep the Dark Master at bay.

REALMS OF BATTLE

This battle uses the rules for Dolorum, Shyish (pg 73).

THE ARMIES

One player is the Be'lakor player. Their opponent is the Lady Olynder player.

Be'lakor's Army

The Be'lakor player must use a Legion of the First Prince army (pg 96). It must consist of the following units:

- Be'lakor, the Dark Master
- 12 other **DAEMON** units*

*Must include at least 1 **KHORNE**, 1 **TZEENTCH**, 1 **NURGLE** and 1 **SLAANESH** unit.

Lady Olynder's Army

The Lady Olynder player must use an Emerald Host army (pg 98). It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalions:

- The Sorrowmourn Choir (pg 101)
- 12 other **NIGHTHAUNT** units

Unit Selection

The 'other' units in each army must each conform to one of the types in the following list. You can double the size of a unit if you wish, but it then counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

Regular Unit: A unit of up to 10 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 1.

Elite Unit: A unit of up to 5 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 2 or 3.

Guard Unit: A unit of up to 3 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 4 or 5.

Champion: A **HERO** with a Wounds characteristic of 8 or less.

SET-UP

The Be'lakor player sets up their army first, wholly within their territory. The Lady Olynder player sets up all of their 'other **NIGHTHAUNT** units' second, wholly within their territory and more than 6" from enemy territory. The Sorrowmourn Choir is set up in reserve and will enter as described below.

FIRST TURN

The Lady Olynder player takes the first turn in the first battle round.

THE PALACE GATE

Units cannot move on sanctum territory until the gate has been breached (see map).

At the start of their second and subsequent hero phases, if **BE'LAKOR** is within 3" of the gate objective marker, the Be'lakor player can attempt to

breach the gate. If they do so, they must roll 2D6. Add 3 to the roll if Be'lakor is within 3" of the gate objective marker, and add 1 to the roll for each **TZEENTCH**, **NURGLE** and **SLAANESH WIZARD** within 3" of the gate objective marker. If the roll is 9 or more, the gate is breached.

Once the gate is breached, units are free to move into sanctum territory.

THE SORROWMOURN CHOIR

At the end of their first movement phase, the Lady Olynder player must set up the Sorrowmourn Choir wholly within their territory and more than 9" from enemy territory.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts either for 5 battle rounds, until **BE'LAKOR** is within 1" of the sarcophagus objective marker, or until either **BE'LAKOR** or **LADY OLYNDER** has been slain.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

If **BE'LAKOR** is slain, the Lady Olynder player wins a **major victory**. If **BE'LAKOR** is within 1" of the sarcophagus, the Be'lakor player wins a **major victory**. If **LADY OLYNDER** is slain, the Be'lakor player wins a **minor victory**. In any other circumstances, the Lady Olynder player wins a **minor victory**.

BATTLEPLAN

THE GATE OF WHITE GOLD

Of those unstable realmgates that Be'lakor had ordered to be assaulted, only one remained intact: the Gate of White Gold, located amidst the ruined city of Prosperia. Be'lakor would suffer no more delays. The Gate of White Gold would fall, even if he must negotiate with the most unsavoury allies in order to see it done.

COALITION OF DEATH

Use the Coalition of Death rules on page 77. This battleplan is designed to be played by 4 players in 2 coalitions.

REALMS OF BATTLE

This battle uses the rules for Prosperis, Chamon (pg 74).

THE ARMIES

One coalition are the attackers. The other coalition are the defenders. One player in the attackers coalition is the Daemons player and the other is the Reikenor player. One player in the defenders coalition is the Sigmarite Brotherhood player and the other is the Vindicarum player.

Daemons Army

The Daemons player must use a Legion of the First Prince army (pg 96). The army cannot include **BE'LAKOR** or **SLAANESH DAEMON** units and must consist of the following units:

- 1 Bloodthirster of Insensate Rage (Karzakos)
- 1 Lord of Change (F'tanax)
- 1 Great Unclean One (Gebbolax)
- 16 other **DAEMON** units*

*Must include at least 2 **KHORNE**, 2 **TZEENTCH** and 2 **NURGLE** units.

Reikenor's Army

The Reikenor player must use a Reikenor's Condemned army (pg 99). It must consist of the following units:

- Reikenor the Grimhailer
- 12 other **NIGHTHAUNT** units

Sigmarite Brotherhood Army

The Sigmarite Brotherhood player must use a Stormcast Eternals army. It must consist of the following units:

- Lord-Celestant on Stardrake (Axemar Diocis)
- 4 **LIBERATORS** units
- 12 other **STORMCAST ETERNAL** units

Vindicarum Army

The Cities of Sigmar player must use a Cities of Sigmar army (even though the army is from Vindicarum in the story, for rules purposes, treat it as a **HAMMERHAL** army). It must consist of the following units:

- Freeguild General (Cerdimun Ghorle)
- 4 **FLAGELLANTS** units
- 8 other **CITIES OF SIGMAR** units

Unit Selection

The 'other' units in each army must each conform to one of the types in the following list. You

can double the size of a unit if you wish, but it then counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

Regular Unit: A unit of up to 10 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 1.

Elite Unit: A unit of up to 5 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 2 or 3.

Guard Unit: A unit of up to 3 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 4 or 5.

Champion: A **HERO** with a Wounds characteristic of 8 or less.

SET-UP

The Daemons player sets up their army first, wholly within their territory and more than 12" from enemy territory. The Sigmarite Brotherhood player sets up their army second, wholly within their coalition's territory and more than 24" from the Daemons player's territory. The Cities of Sigmar player sets up their army third, wholly within their coalition's territory and more than 12" from Daemons territory. The Reikenor player sets up their army last, wholly within their own territory and more than 9" from enemy territory.

FIRST TURN

The attackers take the first turn in the first battle round.

TROUBLE IN HEAVEN

Subtract 1 from the Bravery characteristic of all of the defenders' units, and add 1 to the Bravery characteristic of all of the attackers' units.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts for 5 battle rounds.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

The attackers win a **major victory** if all of the defenders' units that were set up on the battlefield before the start of the first battle round have been destroyed. The defenders win a **major victory** if less than half of their units that were set up on the battlefield before the start of the first battle round have been destroyed. In any other circumstances, use the tiebreaker below.

Tiebreaker

Each coalition adds up the number of enemy units that were destroyed during the battle, excluding units that were added to the armies after the battle started. Double-sized units count as 2 units instead of 1.

If one coalition has the higher total, they win a **minor victory**. If neither coalition has the higher total, the battle is a **draw**.

BATTLEPLAN

DISASTER AT ARMSGATE ZUL

Lord-Castellant Lorrus Grymn of the Hallowed Knights had taken charge of the defence of Armsgate Zul, shoring up the breached wallfort with retinues Liberators. Be'lakor was confident that the Stormcast Eternals posed little threat to his vast Legion, but still he did not care to take any chances. He called forth Atra'zan the Immolator, for he had a task in mind for the flame-obsessed Herald…

SIEGE WARFARE

Use the Siege Warfare rules from page 76.

REALMS OF BATTLE

This battle uses the rules for Prosperis, Chamon (pg 74).

THE ARMIES

One player is the attacker. Their opponent is the defender.

Attacker's Army

The attacker must use an Eternal Conflagration army. It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalion:

- Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade (pg 107)
- 12 other **TZEENTCH DAEMON** units

Defender's Army

The defender must use a Hallowed Knights army. It must consist of the following units:

- 1 Lord-Castellant (Lorrus Grymn)
- 12 other **STORMCAST ETERNAL** units
- 4 **CITIES OF SIGMAR** allied units

Unit Selection

The allied units and 'other' units in each army must each conform to one of the types in the following list. You can double the size of a unit if you wish, but it then counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

Regular Unit: A unit of up to 10 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 1.

Elite Unit: A unit of up to 5 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 2 or 3.

Guard Unit: A unit of up to 3 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 4 or 5.

Champion: A **HERO** with a Wounds characteristic of 8 or less.

SET-UP

First, the defender sets up their fortress (pg 76). Then, they set up their army. Their army is split into two contingents: the garrison and the reinforcements. There must be at least one reinforcements unit for each garrison unit. The army's general must be in the garrison, and all **CITIES OF SIGMAR** units must be in the reinforcements.

Before the battle, the defender can only set up their garrison units. All of their reinforcements units must be set up in reserve and will arrive during the battle as described opposite. The defender must set up their units wholly within their territory.

The attacker sets up their army second. They must set up their units wholly within their territory and more than 6" from the defender's territory.

REINFORCEMENTS

From the second battle round, at the start of each of their movement phases, the defender must roll a dice for each of their reinforcements units. On a 5+, that unit arrives on the battlefield.

When a unit arrives, all of its models must be set up within 6" of the table edge that is wholly within the Duardin Armouries area, as shown on the map, and more than 9" from any enemy units. This counts as their move for that movement phase. Set up the unit before rolling to see if the next reinforcements unit arrives.

THE ARMOURIES

At the end of each of their turns, the attacker must roll 2D6. If the roll is less than or equal to the number of models from Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade that are within 6" of the Munitions Store objective marker, then it explodes and the game ends. Atra'zan the Immolator counts as 7 models.

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts for 5 battle rounds or until the Munitions Store explodes.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

The attacker wins a **major victory** if the Munitions Store explodes. The defender wins a **major victory** if the Munitions Store does not explode and all of the units in Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade have been destroyed. In any other circumstances, use the tiebreaker below.

Tiebreaker

Each player adds up the number of enemy units that were destroyed during the battle, excluding units that were added to the armies after the battle started. Double-sized units count as 2 units instead of 1. If one player has the higher total, they win a **minor victory**. If neither player has the higher total, the battle is a **draw**.

BATTLEPLAN

ON WINGS OF IRON

With cannons firing and endrins blazing, the Kharadron Overlords arrived to lift the Siege of Vindicarum. After a long and intense debate, the historic Second Conference of Madralta had ended in consensus: the sky-ports would rescue the God-King's armies from their grim predicament, and, ancestors willing, earn themselves a tidy sum in the process.

COALITION OF DEATH

Use the Coalition of Death rules from page 77. This battleplan is designed to be played by 4 players in 2 coalitions.

REALMS OF BATTLE

This battle uses the rules for Prosperis, Chamon (pg 74).

THE ARMIES

One coalition are the Forces of Chaos. The other coalition are the Forces of Order. One player in the Forces of Chaos is the Be'lakor player and the other is the Tzeentch player. One player in the Forces of Order is the Stormcast Eternals player and the other is the Kharadron Overlords player.

Be'lakor's Army

The Be'lakor player must use a Legion of the First Prince army. It must consist of the following units:

- Be'lakor, the Dark Master
- 16 other **DAEMON** units*

*Must include at least 1 **KHORNE**, 1 **NURGLE** and 1 **SLAANESH** unit.

Eternal Conflagration Army

The Tzeentch player must use an Eternal Conflagration army. It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalion:

- Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade (pg 107)
- 12 other **TZEENTCH DAEMON** units

Stormcast Eternals Army

The Stormcast Eternals player must use a Stormcast Eternals army. It must consist of the following units:

- Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul (pg 110)
- 12 other **Stormcast Eternal** units

Barak-Zilfin Army

The Kharadron Overlords player must use a Barak-Zilfin army. It must consist of the following units and warscroll battalion:

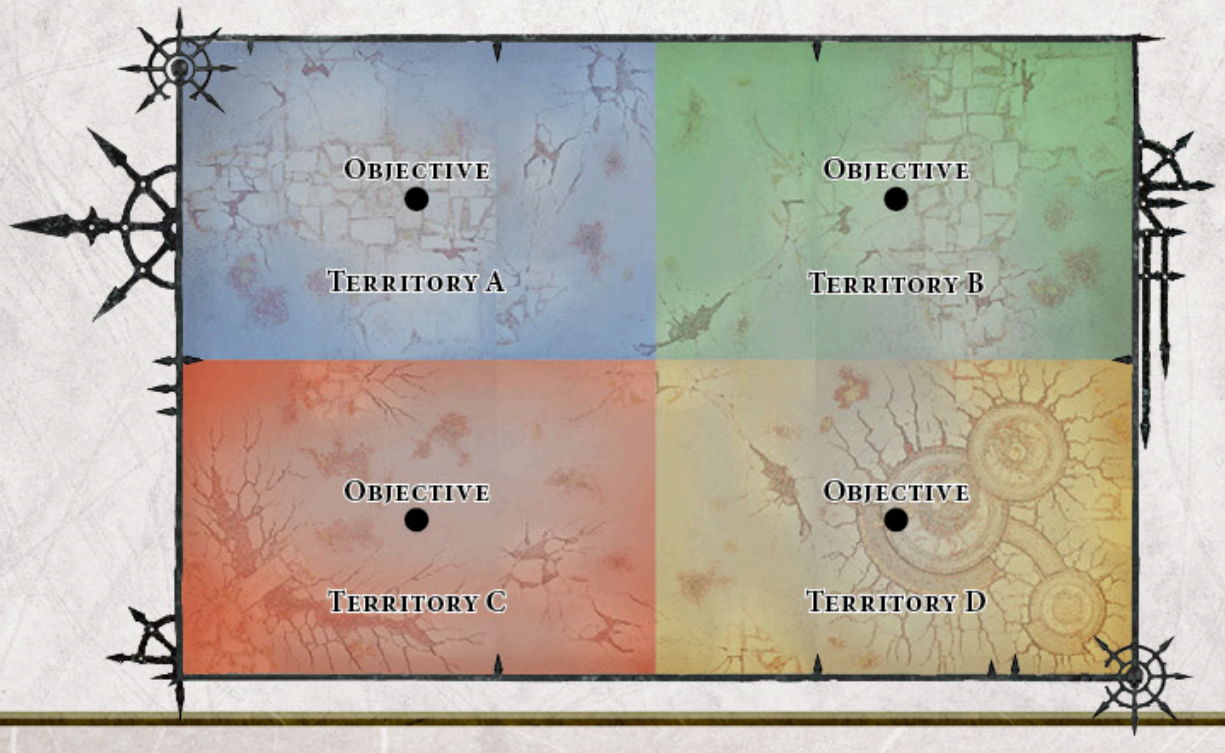
- Drongon's Aether-runners (pg 103)
- 16 other **KHARADRON OVERLORDS** units

Designer's Note: *The Barak-Zilfin army represents just one part of the huge Kharadron armada sent to relieve Vindicarum.*

Unit Selection

The 'other' units in each army must each conform to one of the types in the following list. You can double the size of a unit if you wish, but it then counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

Regular Unit: A unit of up to 10 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 1.



Elite Unit: A unit of up to 5 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 2 or 3.

Guard Unit: A unit of up to 3 models, each with a Wounds characteristic of 4 or 5.

Champion: A **HERO** with a Wounds characteristic of 8 or less.

Armada Unit (Kharadron Overlords player only): An Arkanaut Ironclad, Arkanaut Frigate or Grundstok Gunhauler. Each Arkanaut Ironclad counts as 5 choices instead of 1, and each Arkanaut Frigate counts as 2 choices instead of 1.

SET-UP

The teams' warlords roll off. Starting with the winning team, the teams alternate picking a territory and setting up one of their armies wholly within that territory and more than 9" from any enemy units. Each army must be set up in a different territory.

Players can set up any of their units in reserve instead of setting them up on the battlefield. Each reserve unit can be set up on the battlefield at the end of its coalition's second, third or fourth movement phase. Reserve units must be set up wholly within the territory that was picked for their army, wholly within 9" of the battlefield edge and more than 9" from any enemy units. At the end of the fourth battle round, units still in reserve are destroyed.

GROMTHI

At the start of each combat phase, the Kharadron Overlords player can roll a dice if Be'lakor is within 6" of any **SKYFARER** models that are not **HEROES**. If they do so, on a 6, Be'lakor is removed from play but is not slain. On a 1-5, the closest **SKYFARER** model to Be'lakor that is not a **HERO** is slain (if several are equally close, randomly determine which is slain).

BATTLE LENGTH

The battle lasts for 5 battle rounds.

GLORIOUS VICTORY

If Be'lakor is on the battlefield at the end of the battle and the Forces of Chaos have scored more victory points (see below), the Forces of Chaos win a **major victory**. If Be'lakor is not on the battlefield at the end of the battle and the Forces of Order have scored more victory points, the Forces of Order win a **major victory**. In any other circumstances, the coalition that scored the most victory points wins a **minor victory**. If neither coalition scored more victory points, the battle is a **draw**.

VICTORY POINTS

Each coalition scores victory points as follows:

- 1 victory point is scored each time an enemy model that has a Wounds characteristic of 10 or more is slain.

- 1 victory point is scored each time a reinforced enemy unit is destroyed.

- 1 victory point is scored at the end of a coalition's turn for each objective in friendly territory that they control.

- D3 victory points are scored at the end of a coalition's turn for each objective in enemy territory that they control.

BATTLETOME UPDATES

BATTLETOME UPDATES

This section of *Broken Realms: Be'lakor* includes a variety of updates to eight books, including new allegiance abilities, battalions and warscrolls. The updates are designed to be used with the battleplans in this book, and can also be used in matched play.

SLAVES TO DARKNESS (pg 94)
This update to *Battletome: Slaves to Darkness* contains the new warscroll for Be'lakor, the Dark Master.

WRATH OF THE EVERCHOSEN (pg 96-97)
Here you will find updated allegiance abilities for the Legion of the First Prince from *Wrath of the Everchosen*.

NIGHTHAUNT (pg 98-101)
The *Battletome: Nighthaunt* update consists of allegiance abilities for the Emerald Host and Reikenor's Condemned, an updated warscroll for the Dreadscythe Harridans, the warscroll for the Krulghast Cruciator, and the Sorrowmourn Choir warscroll battalion.

KHARADRON OVERLORDS (pg 102-103)
Battletome: Kharadron Overlords receives updates in the form of Guild Triumphs, for use with the Aether-gold battle trait, and the Drongon's Aether-runners warscroll battalion.

SERAPHON (pg 104-106)
The endless spells from *Forbidden Power* receive their own 'bound' versions, which you can add to those found in *Battletome: Seraphon*. You will also find in this section the Celestial Stampede, a new warscroll battalion.

DISCIPLES OF TZEENTCH (pg 107)
If you wish to spread the fires of change, then here you will find the warscroll battalion for Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade, an update for *Battletome: Disciples of Tzeentch*.

FYRESLAYERS (pg 108-109)
Battletome: Fyreslayers receives updated warscrolls for the Doomseeker and Grimwrath Berzerker.

STORMCAST ETERNALS (pg 110)
Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul returns to Warhammer Age of Sigmar with his very own miniature and accompanying warscroll, for use with *Battletome: Stormcast Eternals*.

WARSCROLL

BE'LAKOR

THE DARK MASTER

A winged nightmare wreathed in darkness and redolent with terrible power, Be'lakor strides forth to subjugate the Mortal Realms and bring them under his tyrannical rule. With shadow magic and daemonic might he obliterates his foes, revelling in their agonised death throes.

MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Blade of Shadows	2"	✹	3+	3+	-2	2
Fell Claw	1"	1	3+	3+	-1	2
Spearing Tail	3"	1	2+	✹	-3	2

DAMAGE TABLE			
Wounds Suffered	Move	Blade of Shadows	Spearing Tail
0-3	14"	8	1+
4-6	12"	7	2+
7-8	10"	6	3+
9-10	8"	5	4+
11+	6"	4	5+

DESCRIPTION

Be'lakor, the Dark Master, is a named character that is a single model. Be'lakor is armed with the Blade of Shadows, a Fell Claw and a Spearing Tail.

FLY: This model can fly.

ABILITIES

The Dark Master: *Many puppets dance on Be'lakor's infernal strings, though few realise as much until their fate is sealed.*

Once per battle, at the start of the enemy hero phase, you can pick 1 enemy unit on the battlefield. Until your next hero phase, at the start of each phase (including the phase in which the unit was picked), you can roll a dice for that unit. On a 3+, that unit cannot move, shoot, fight, use command abilities, chant prayers, attempt to cast spells, attempt to dispel endless spells or attempt to unbind spells in that phase.

Lord of Torment: *Be'lakor is invigorated by the suffering and terror of mortals.*

If an enemy unit fails a battleshock test while it is within 12" of this model, you can heal up to D3 wounds allocated to this model.

Shadow Form: *Be'lakor's can shift his physical form to be as insubstantial as the mists of Ulgu, and just as hard to land a telling blow upon.*

Ignore modifiers (positive or negative) when making save rolls for attacks that target this model.

MAGIC

This model is a **WIZARD**. It can attempt to cast 2 spells in your hero phase and attempt to unbind 2 spells in the enemy hero phase. It knows the Arcane Bolt, Mystic Shield and Enfeeble Foe spells.

Enfeeble Foe: *With a series of hissed incantations, Be'lakor instils visions of loss and despair in the minds of his enemies to drain them of their fighting spirit.*

Enfeeble Foe has a casting value of 6. If successfully cast, pick 1 enemy unit within 18" of the caster and visible to them. Subtract 1 from wound rolls for attacks made with melee weapons by that unit until your next hero phase.

KEYWORDS	CHAOS, DAEMON, DAEMON PRINCE, SLAVES TO DARKNESS, UNDIVIDED, HERO, WIZARD, MONSTER, BE'LAKOR

LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE

The Daemon Prince Be'lakor is a being of ancient evil who claims to have the favour of all four Chaos Gods. Be'lakor commands the Legion of the First Prince, a vast host of daemons that he has led into battle countless times to crush empires to dust.

When you pick the Chaos allegiance for your army, you can say that it will be a Legion of the First Prince army. If you do so, you can only include units with the **CHAOS** and **DAEMON** keywords in your army, all of the units in your army gain the **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE** keyword and you can use the Legion of the First Prince allegiance abilities on these pages. These allegiance abilities replace the Legion of Chaos Ascendant and the Legion of the First Prince allegiance abilities in *Wrath of the Everchosen*.

BATTLE TRAITS – SERVANTS OF THE DARK MASTER

FIRST-DAMNED PRINCE

Be'lakor claims to be the first entity to earn the combined favour of the Dark Gods.

You can re-roll hit rolls for attacks made by **BE'LAKOR** while he is within 18" of at least 1 friendly unit from each of the following warscrolls: Bloodletters, Horrors of Tzeentch, Plaguebearers, Daemonettes.

In addition, before you allocate a wound or mortal wound to **BE'LAKOR**, pick 1 friendly unit within 9" of him from one of the following warscrolls and roll a dice: Bloodletters, Horrors of Tzeentch, Plaguebearers, Daemonettes. On a 4+, that wound or mortal wound is allocated to that unit instead.

THE CURSED SKIES

The storms of Chaos energies released by Be'lakor's disruption of the realmgates make it easier for daemons to pierce the skin of reality and invade the Mortal Realms.

At the end of the battleshock phase, if **BE'LAKOR** is your general and on the battlefield, roll a dice for each friendly unit on the battlefield from the following warscrolls: Bloodletters, Horrors of Tzeentch, Plaguebearers, Daemonettes, Furies. On a 3+, you can return D3 slain models to that unit, but if it is a **HORRORS** unit, you can only return 1 model to that unit.

INFERNAL REALMWALKERS

The Legion of the First Prince is anchored to the material realms by the collective will of the Dark Gods.

You can roll a dice each time you allocate a wound or mortal wound to a friendly **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE** unit. On a 6+, that wound or mortal wound is negated.

UNYIELDING LEGIONS

In battle, the overlords of the Legion of the First Prince can call upon near-infinite reinforcements from the Realm of Chaos.

At the end of your movement phase, you can pick 1 friendly **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE HERO** that is on the battlefield and roll 3D6. On a 10+, you can summon 1 of the following units to the battlefield and add it to your army. The unit that you can summon is determined by the **HERO**'s keyword as shown:

- **Khorne:** 10 Bloodletters
- **Tzeentch:** 5 Horrors of Tzeentch
- **Nurgle:** 10 Plaguebearers
- **Slaanesh:** 10 Daemonettes
- **Be'lakor:** Choose any 1 of the above units or a unit of 6 Furies.

The summoned unit must be set up wholly within 12" of the **HERO** you picked and more than 9" from any enemy units. If the unmodified roll included a double, that **HERO** suffers 1 mortal wound. If the unmodified roll was a triple, that **HERO** suffers D3 mortal wounds instead.

SPELL LORE – LORE OF RUINOUS SORCERY

Each **WIZARD** in a **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE** army knows the following spell in addition to any others that they know.

The Master's Command: *Invoking the will of Be'lakor, the caster orders their daemonic warriors to fight on with relentless fury.*

The Master's Command has a casting value of 7. If successfully cast, pick 1 friendly **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE** unit wholly within 12" of the caster and visible to them. Until the end of the battle round, if a model from that unit is slain by an attack made with a melee weapon, that model can fight before it is removed from play.

COMMAND TRAITS – SCIONS OF THE RUINOUS POWERS

LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE general only.

D3	Command Trait
1	**Primordial Commander:** *This daemonic general has fought for the Dark Gods since time immemorial.* If you pick this general to summon a unit using the Unyielding Legions battle trait, add 1 to the roll.
2	**Ruinous Aura:** *A potent aura of unreality surrounds this warlord.* Add 1 to rolls for the Infernal Realmwalkers battle trait made for friendly **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE** units wholly within 8" of this general.
3	**Infernal Charge:** *This warlord is an unstoppable force of destruction.* You can re-roll charge rolls for friendly **LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE** units wholly within 12" of this general.

ARTEFACTS OF POWER – GIFTS OF THE DEVOTED

LEGION OF THE FIRST PRINCE HERO only.

D3	Artefact of Power
1	**Fourfold Blade:** *This fell blade has been blessed by each of the Chaos Gods.* Pick 1 of the bearer's melee weapons. If the unmodified hit roll for an attack made with that weapon is 5+, that attack inflicts D3 mortal wounds on the target and the attack sequence ends (do not make a wound or save roll).
2	**Armour of the Pact:** *Saturated in the raw stuff of Chaos, this hellforged armour makes a mockery of mortal weapons.* You can re-roll save rolls for attacks made with melee weapons that target the bearer.
3	**Saintskin Banner:** *This terrifying standard is woven from the flayed skins of priests and holy warriors.* Subtract 1 from the Bravery characteristic of enemy units while they are within 9" of the bearer.

NIGHTHAUNT PROCESSIONS

Most Nighthaunt processions are ghastly assemblages of tortured spirits that are summoned as the need arises. However, some are more permanent in nature, having been eternally bound to the will of particularly powerful revenants. The Emerald Host and Reikenor's Condemned are amongst the most infamous.

After you have chosen the Nighthaunt allegiance for your army, you can choose either the **EMERALD HOST** or **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED** Procession keyword. All **NIGHTHAUNT** units in your army gain that keyword, and you can use that Procession's allegiance abilities on these pages in addition to the Nighthaunt allegiance abilities.

If a unit already has a Procession keyword on its warscroll different to the one you chose, it cannot gain another. You can still include that unit in your army, but you cannot use the allegiance abilities for its Procession.

THE EMERALD HOST

When Lady Olynder seeks the utter annihilation of a foe, she will inflict upon them the dreaded Emerald Curse. Forth from the citadel of Dolorum will ride the Emerald Host, a force of Nighthaunt whose sole purpose is to enact ghastly retribution, and who will not cease until their lady's nemesis has been destroyed.

ABILITIES

The Emerald Curse: *Once a being is marked with the Emerald Curse, their doom is all but assured. Whether it takes mere days, months or years, the riders of the Emerald Host will find their prey.*

After armies are set up but before the first battle round begins, you can pick 1 enemy **HERO**. For the duration of the battle, subtract 1 from save rolls for attacks that target that **HERO**.

Knights of Regret: *Each of the cruel spirits in the Emerald Host was once a member of the Dolorum household knights, responsible for protecting their liege lord upon the battlefield and riding down the enemies of the empire. Death has not freed them from these responsibilities.*

Add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of melee weapons used by **EMERALD HOST HEXWRAITHS** units that have made a charge move in the same turn. In addition, roll a dice before you allocate a wound or mortal wound to your general if they are within 3" of any friendly **EMERALD HOST HEXWRAITHS** units. On a 2+, you must allocate that wound or mortal wound to one of those units instead.

COMMAND TRAIT

An **EMERALD HOST** general must have this command trait instead of one from *Battletome: Nighthaunt*.

Lord of the Host: *In life, the leaders of the Dolorum knights inspired their warriors to great acts of valour in the name of their prince and his betrothed. In death, memories of those glory days have been supplanted by a soul-staining hatred, though their mere presence still drives their spectral brethren to hack down the foe with unholy vigour.*

Once per battle, you can use the command ability on this general's warscroll without a command point being spent (if the general does not have a command ability on their warscroll, this command trait has no effect).

ARTEFACT OF POWER

The first **EMERALD HOST KNIGHT OF SHROUDS** to receive an artefact of power must be given the Traitor Knight's Blade.

The Traitor Knight's Blade: *This artefact fills the bearer with a rage and self-loathing that can only be relieved by using it to cut down foes by the score.*

Add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of the bearer's Sword of Stolen Hours.

REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED

Prior to the Necroquake, Reikenor often hunted the Mortal Realms alone. Following the rise of Lady Olynder, the wraith wizard has led Nighthaunt processions on her behalf when duty demands her attention elsewhere. As her proxy in such circumstances, the Grimhailer's power is greater than ever before.

ABILITIES

Unrelenting Taskmasters: *The spectral overseers of Reikenor's Condemned push their tormented charges hard, never letting up whilst there are living foes yet to slay.*

You can re-roll failed hit rolls for attacks made by friendly **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED CHAINRASP HORDE** units and **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED GLAIVEWRAITH STALKERS** units while they are wholly within 15" of any friendly **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED SPIRIT TORMENTS** or **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED CHAINGHASTS**.

In addition, each time a friendly **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED CHAINRASP HORDE** unit or **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED GLAIVEWRAITH STALKERS** unit is affected by the Spectral Lure or Temporal Translocation spell cast by a **GUARDIAN OF SOULS**, you can return D6 slain models to that unit (in addition to any models returned to the unit by the Spectral Lure spell).

Acolyte of the Grimhailer: *Reikenor commands his procession using a network of acolyte-spirits, each of which is bound inextricably to his will.*

If **REIKENOR THE GRIMHAILER** is included in your army, he is treated as a general in addition to the model that is chosen to be the army general.

COMMAND ABILITY

Death Comes Swiftly: *The overseers of Reikenor's Condemned drive their wretched minions towards the foe with terrifying swiftness.*

You can use this command ability at the start of your movement phase. If you do, pick 1 friendly **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED CHAINRASP HORDE** unit or **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED GLAIVEWRAITH STALKERS** unit that is wholly within 12" of a friendly **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED HERO** or wholly within 18" of a friendly **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED** general. Add 6" to that unit's Move characteristic until the end of that phase.

ARTEFACT OF POWER

The first **REIKENOR'S CONDEMNED HERO** to receive an artefact of power must be given a Corpse Candle.

Corpse Candle: *Reikenor gifts his most capable commanders with a single corpse candle. The bearer can snuff out the candle's flame, draining their own essence or that of a victim to fuel their sorcery.*

Once per battle, in your hero phase or the combat phase, the bearer can snuff out the corpse candle. If they do so in your hero phase, pick the bearer or 1 enemy model within 12" of them. The model you picked suffers 1 mortal wound. If the mortal wound was suffered by an enemy model, add 1 to the bearer's next casting roll; if the mortal wound was suffered by the bearer, add 3 to their next casting roll.

If the bearer snuffs out the corpse candle in the combat phase, pick the bearer or an enemy model within 12" of them. The model you picked suffers 1 mortal wound. If the mortal wound was suffered by an enemy model, add 1 to hit rolls for attacks made by the bearer in that phase; if the mortal wound was suffered by bearer, add 1 to hit and wound rolls for attacks made by the bearer in that phase.

WARSCROLL

DREADSCYTHE HARRIDANS

In life they were healers, yet in spirit form they are cursed with the uncontrollable urge to kill, their hands morphed into scything instruments of slaughter. Shrieking as they swoop in for the attack, Dreadscythe Harridans crave only carnage.

MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Scythed Limbs	1"	3	4+	3+	-1	1

DESCRIPTION

A unit of Dreadscythe Harridans has any number of models, each armed with Scythed Limbs.

SLASHER CRONE: 1 in every 5 models in this unit can be a Slasher Crone. Add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of that model's Scythed Limbs.

FLY: This unit can fly.

ABILITIES

Ethereal: *Creatures whose bodies have rotted away are difficult to harm with ordinary weapons.*

Ignore modifiers (positive or negative) when making save rolls for attacks that target this unit.

Harrowing Shriek: *Even the bravest might quail upon hearing the unnerving shriek issued by the bloodthirsty Dreadscythe Harridans.*

Subtract 1 from hit rolls for attacks made by enemy models with a Bravery characteristic of less than 7 while they are within 3" of any units with this ability.

Murderous Bloodlust: *The more blood that flows, the more aggressive the Dreadscythe Harridans become, recklessly slashing and stabbing in a flurry of violence.*

If the unmodified hit roll for an attack made with Scythed Limbs is 6, that attack scores 2 hits on the target instead of 1. Make a wound and save roll for each hit.

KEYWORDS	DEATH, MALIGNANT, NIGHTHAUNT, SUMMONABLE, DREADSCYTHE HARRIDANS

WARSCROLL

KRULGHAST CRUCIATOR

Krulghast Cruciators were once mortals that met a gruesome end on the torture rack. In death, their bitter souls have been twisted by Nagash into ghastly manifestations of torment, replete with instruments of excruciation possessed of a wicked animus.

MISSILE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Phantasmal Torture	12"	4	3+	3+	-2	1
MELEE WEAPONS	**Range**	**Attacks**	**To Hit**	**To Wound**	**Rend**	**Damage**
Talons and Flensing Knives	1"	4	3+	3+	-1	1

DESCRIPTION

A Krulghast Cruciator is a single model armed with Talons and Flensing Knives, and Phantasmal Torture.

FLY: This model can fly.

ABILITIES

Ethereal: *Creatures whose bodies have rotted away are difficult to harm with ordinary weapons.*

Ignore modifiers (positive or negative) when making save rolls for attacks that target this model.

Empowering Excruciation: *Krulghast Cruciators draw power from the suffering they inflict, becoming beacons of death magic that make nearby Nighthaunt more difficult to banish.*

If any wounds inflicted by this model's Phantasmal Torture are allocated to an enemy model and not negated, this model becomes empowered until your next shooting phase. The Deathless Spirits battle trait negates wounds allocated to friendly **NIGHTHAUNT** units wholly within 12" of any friendly empowered **KRULGHAST CRUCIATORS** on a 5+ instead of 6+.

KEYWORDS	DEATH, MALIGNANT, NIGHTHAUNT, HERO, TOTEM, KRULGHAST CRUCIATOR

WARSCROLL BATTALION

THE SORROWMOURN CHOIR

The most favoured spirits of Lady Olynder's court are 'honoured' with a place in her Sorrowmourn Choir, a gathering of keening banshees and grief-stricken harridans whose aura of life-draining anguish greatly pleases the Mortarch of Grief.

ORGANISATION

- Lady Olynder, Mortarch of Grief
- 1 Dreadscythe Harridans unit
- 2 Myrmourn Banshees units

ABILITIES

Eternal Handmaidens: *The spectral horrors of the Sorrowmourn Choir are forever bound to protect their lady.*

Roll a dice before you allocate a wound or mortal wound to the **LADY OLYNDER** from this battalion if she is within 3" of any other units from the same battalion. On a 2+, you must allocate that wound or mortal wound to one of those units instead. Wounds and mortal wounds that are allocated in this way cannot be negated.

The Unrequited Queen: *As the Mortarch of Grief, Lady Olynder's authority over the Nighthaunt is second only to that of Nagash himself.*

If this warscroll battalion is included in a Nighthaunt army, **LADY OLYNDER** is treated as a general in addition to the model that is chosen to be the army general.

KHARADRON OVERLORDS GUILD TRIUMPHS

If you have a Kharadron Overlords army, when you pick a triumph, you can choose from the triumphs in the following tables in addition to any other triumphs you can choose from.

GUILD TRIUMPHS – AETHER-KHEMISTS GUILD

Overcharged Aetheric Augmentation: Once per battle, before a friendly **AETHER-KHEMIST** uses their Aetheric Augmentation ability, you can say that it is overcharged. If you do so, you can instead pick 1 friendly **SKYFARERS** unit wholly within 18" of that model. If that model has the Khemist Supreme command trait, you can instead pick 2 friendly **SKYFARERS** units wholly within 18" of that model. In both cases, the ability can be used even if the **AETHER-KHEMIST** is part of a garrison but only on **SKYFARERS** units that are part of the same garrison as the **AETHER-KHEMIST**.

Large-calibre Augmentation: Once per battle, when a friendly **SKYVESSEL** that has an **AETHER-KHEMIST** in its garrison is picked to shoot, you can say that they will perform large-calibre augmentation. If you do so, pick 1 missile weapon that the **SKYVESSEL** is armed with. You can re-roll wound rolls of 1 for attacks made with that weapon until the end of that phase.

GUILD TRIUMPHS – NAV-LEAGUE

Focused Aethersight: Once per battle, before a friendly **AETHERIC NAVIGATOR** attempts to dispel an endless spell or unbind a spell, you can say that they will focus their aethersight. If you do so, you can re-roll that dispelling roll or unbinding roll.

Ride the Storm: Once per battle, before a friendly **AETHERIC NAVIGATOR** that is in a **SKYVESSEL**'s garrison uses their Aetherstorm ability, you can say that they will ride the storm. If you do so, add D6" to that **SKYVESSEL**'s Move characteristic until the end of that turn, and you can re-roll run and charge rolls for that **SKYVESSEL** until the end of that turn.

GUILD TRIUMPHS – ENDRINEERS GUILD

The Gaffer's Motivation: Once per battle, in your hero phase, you can pick 1 friendly **ENDRINMASTER** and say that they will 'motivate' their apprentices. If you do so, that **ENDRINMASTER** can use their By Grungni, I Have My Eye On You! command ability without a command point being spent, and you can add 1 to the number of wounds healed by the **ENDRINRIGGERS** unit.

Blow the Magazine: Once per battle, when a friendly **SKYVESSEL** that has an **ENDRINMASTER** in its garrison is destroyed, before you roll to see if models in its garrison are slain, you can say that the Endrinmaster will blow the magazine. If you do so, roll a dice. On a 1, nothing happens. On a 2-3, each enemy unit within 3" of that **SKYVESSEL** suffers 1 mortal wound. On a 4-5, each enemy unit within 3" of that **SKYVESSEL** suffers D3 mortal wounds. On a 6, each enemy unit within 3" of that **SKYVESSEL** suffers D6 mortal wounds. Then, roll to see if garrisoned models are slain, set up survivors and remove the **SKYVESSEL** from play, as described in the Flying Transport rules.

WARSCROLL BATTALION

DRONGON'S AETHER-RUNNERS

Endrinmaster Drongon Humboldsson is one of the most admired technical minds in the sky-empire, a proponent of cutting-edge aether-propulsion technology who has assembled a retinue of like-minded innovators to ensure the continuation of Kharadron supremacy across the clouds.

ORGANISATION

- 1 Endrinmaster with Dirigible Suit (Drongon Humboldsson)
- 2 Endrinriggers or Skywardens units in any combination

All units from this battalion must have the **BARAK-ZILFIN** keyword. The Endrinmaster with Dirigible Suit from this battalion is a Unique named character.

ABILITIES

Fastest Vessels in the Fleet: *Endrinmaster Humboldsson has perfected techniques that wring every ounce of power from the endrins of any skyvessels he or his apprentices work upon.*

Add 3" to the Move characteristic of units in this battalion. In addition, at the start of your movement phase, for each unit in this battalion, you can pick 1 friendly **SKYVESSEL** that is within 3" of that unit. You cannot pick the same **SKYVESSEL** more than once in the same phase. Add 3" to the Move characteristic of that **SKYVESSEL** until the end of the phase.

ENDLESS SPELL WARSCROLL

BOUND LAUCHON THE SOULSEEKER

The splintered echo of an ancient underworld deity, Lauchon the Soulseeker sails the swirling tides of death, drawn by the lure of powerful spirits. Spellcasters can join his macabre odyssey, if they are willing to offer a fitting sacrifice.

DESCRIPTION

Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker is a single model.

PREDATORY : Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker is a predatory endless spell. It can move up to 12" and can fly.

MAGIC

Summon Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker: *A longboat of yellowed bone erupts from the earth, its sole occupant a skeletal boatman wreathed in purple flames.*

Summon Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker has a casting value of 6. Only **SERAPHON WIZARDS** can attempt to cast this spell. If successfully cast, set up a Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker model wholly within 12" of the caster.

ABILITIES

Navigate Deathly Tides: *Lauchon the Soulseeker knows well the swirling currents of Shyishan magic.*

When this model is set up, the player who set it up can immediately make a move with it.

Empowered by Shyish: *An entity of pure amethyst magic, the Soulseeker is greatly empowered whilst in the Realm of Death.*

If your battle is taking place in the Realm of Death, this model can move up to 18" instead of up to 12".

Soul Price: *The Soulseeker can sense the lingering essences of all dead things, and other warriors can follow in his wake if they are willing to pay a grim toll.*

Before a player makes a move with this model, that player can pick a friendly unit wholly within 3" of this model. Remove that unit from the battlefield and place it to one side. After this model has moved, set up that unit again wholly within 3" of this model and more than 9" from any enemy units. After that unit has been set up, 1 model from that unit is slain. The unit you set up cannot move in the following movement phase.

KEYWORDS	ENDLESS SPELL, SHYISH, BOUND, LAUCHON THE SOULSEEKER

ENDLESS SPELL WARSCROLL

BOUND SOULSCREAM BRIDGE

A nightmarish fusion of bone and tortured spirit-stuff, a Soulscream Bridge disintegrates and consumes the souls of the fallen in order to tear open a makeshift pathway across reality.

DESCRIPTION

Bound Soulscream Bridge consists of 2 models (if it is dispelled, remove both models).

MAGIC

Summon Bound Soulscream Bridge: *A chorus of agonised screams fills the air as an osseous bridge rears up from the earth like a skeletal serpent.*

Summon Bound Soulscream Bridge has a casting value of 6. Only **SERAPHON WIZARDS** can attempt to cast this spell. If successfully cast, set up the first Bound Soulscream Bridge model wholly within 6" of the caster, and then set up the second Bound Soulscream Bridge model wholly within 12" of the first.

ABILITIES

Deathly Passage: *Those who pass across a Soulscream Bridge travel the tides of deathly magic, bypassing physical obstructions.*

At the start of your movement phase, friendly units wholly within 6" of one of the models from this endless spell can travel across the Soulscream Bridge. If they do so, remove that unit from the battlefield and set it up again wholly within 6" of the other model from this endless spell and more than 9" from any enemy units. That unit cannot make a normal move that phase.

Nightmarish Construct: *The screams of those souls obliterated to fuel this endless spell are terrible to hear.*

Subtract 1 from the Bravery characteristic of units while they are within 6" of a Bound Soulscream Bridge model. This ability has no effect on **DEATH** units.

Empowered by Shyish: *Spirits are abundant in the Realm of Death, and so there the reach of a Soulscream Bridge is greatly increased.*

If your battle is taking place in the Realm of Death, the second Bound Soulscream Bridge model can be set up wholly within 24" of the first instead of wholly within 12" of the first.

KEYWORDS	ENDLESS SPELL, SHYISH, BOUND, SOULSCREAM BRIDGE

ENDLESS SPELL WARSCROLL

BOUND HORRORGHAST

Arcane predators that feast upon fear, Horrorghasts haunt the deathly wilds of Shyish, taking on the appearance of whatever will most terrorise their prey – most often the pitiless gaze of Nagash, the Great Necromancer.

DESCRIPTION

Bound Horrorghast is a single model.

PREDATORY: A Bound Horrorghast is a predatory endless spell. It can move up to 9" and can fly.

MAGIC

Summon Bound Horrorghast: *A shrieking cloud of spirit-stuff twists and reforms, shaping itself into the Great Necromancer's hateful visage.*

Summon Bound Horrorghast has a casting value of 6. Only **SERAPHON WIZARDS** can attempt to cast this spell. If successfully cast, set up a Bound Horrorghast model wholly within 12" of the caster.

ABILITIES

Prey on Fear: *Horrorghasts devour the terror of their victims, growing more powerful as fear and panic spread like wildfire.*

Subtract 1 from the Bravery characteristic of units while they are within 12" of this model. Subtract 2 instead from the Bravery characteristic of units while they are within 6" of this model.

Empowered by Shyish: *Though they can manifest across the realms, the most powerful and voracious Horrorghasts are found in Shyish.*

If your battle is taking place in the Realm of Death, this model can move up to 12" instead of up to 9".

KEYWORDS	ENDLESS SPELL, SHYISH, BOUND, HORRORGHAST

ENDLESS SPELL WARSCROLL

BOUND SHARDS OF VALAGHARR

These cracked prisms of black stone orbit the battlefield in pairs, necromantic energy spilling from their breached surfaces in a sickening stream, sapping the spirit and life force of all those it passes over.

DESCRIPTION

Bound Shards of Valagharr consists of 2 models (if it is dispelled, remove both models).

MAGIC

Summon Bound Shards of Valagharr: *Pyramids of onyx rise into the air and circle ominously, amethyst magic bleeding from breaches in their surface.*

Summon Bound Shards of Valagharr has a casting value of 5. Only **SERAPHON WIZARDS** can attempt to cast this spell. If successfully cast, set up the first Bound Shards of Valagharr model wholly within 6" of the caster, and then set up the second Bound Shards of Valagharr model wholly within 12" of the first.

ABILITIES

Ensnaring Soul-drain: *The foul energies of the Shards of Valagharr link one prism to another, ensnaring nearby creatures in a web of animus-draining magic.*

At the start of the movement phase, draw an imaginary straight line 1mm wide between the closest parts of the bases of the two models from this endless spell. Each unit passed across by this line is ensnared until the end of that turn. Halve the Move characteristic of a unit that is ensnared. In addition, subtract 1 from hit rolls for attacks made by units that are ensnared.

Twilight Translocation: *The Shards of Valagharr never cease their circling motion, orbiting one another like lifeless celestial bodies.*

At the start of the battle round, after determining who has the first turn, you can remove one of the models from this endless spell from the battlefield and set it up again anywhere on the battlefield wholly within 12" of the other model from this endless spell.

Empowered by Shyish: *Those Shards of Valagharr summoned into being in Shyish are tied together by an even stronger bond.*

If your battle is taking place in the Realm of Death, the first Shards of Valagharr model can be set up wholly within 12" of the caster instead of 6".

KEYWORDS	ENDLESS SPELL, SHYISH, BOUND, SHARDS OF VALAGHARR

WARSCROLL BATTALION

THE CELESTIAL STAMPEDE

Few skinks possess as much knowledge of the Old Ones' strange technologies as Iq-To, master of the Celestial Stampede. At the command of the slann, the venerable Starwarden leads forth thundering hosts of weapon-bearing warbeasts to purge the Seraphon's foes.

ORGANISATION

- 1 Stegadon with Skink Chief (Starwarden Iq-To)
- 1 Engine of the Gods or Stegadon
- 1 Bastiladon

The Stegadon with Skink Chief from this battalion is a Unique named character. All units in this battalion must have the **THUNDER LIZARD** keyword.

ABILITIES

Ancient Talepotec: *Iq-To is carried into battle by Talepotec, a belligerent old Stegadon greatly revered by the Seraphon of the Thunder Lizard.*

Starwarden Iq-To has the Prime Warbeast command trait from *Battletome: Seraphon* even if he is not your general.

Lance of Cosmic Power: *When Iq-To gives the command, the most potent weapons in the Celestial Stampede fire as one, their beams coalescing into a devastating lance of cosmic power.*

Once per battle, at the start of your shooting phase, you can say that this battalion is going to shoot a Lance of Cosmic Power. If you do so, you cannot make cosmic engine rolls for units from this battalion in that phase, and you cannot use the Trove of Old One Technology command ability in that phase. Instead, pick 1 enemy unit within 24" of Starwarden Iq-To and roll 1 dice for each **ENGINE OF THE GODS** from this battalion that is within 24" of that enemy unit, and roll 2 dice for each **BASTILADON** armed with a Solar Engine from this battalion that is within 24" of that enemy unit. For each 2+, that enemy unit suffers D3 mortal wounds.

WARSCROLL BATTALION

ATRA'ZAN'S BLAZING CAVALCADE

Atra'zan the Immolator seeks to engulf the Mortal Realms in an arcane firestorm. To see this done, he has assembled a troupe of daemonic pyromaniacs who surge into battle like a living inferno, delighting in the agonised screams of burning mortals and the stench of charred flesh.

ORGANISATION

- 1 Fateskimmer, Herald of Tzeentch on Burning Chariot (Atra'zan the Immolator)
- 1-3 Horrors of Tzeentch units with a combined model count of no more than 30 models

The Fateskimmer, Herald of Tzeentch, on Burning Chariot from this battalion is a unique named character. All units from this battalion must have the **ETERNAL CONFLAGRATION** keyword.

ABILITIES

Gleeful Immolation: *As Atra'zan's summoned flames whirl about his Cavalcade, the daemons become a living conflagration that spreads the fires of change with reckless, joyful abandon.*

Add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of melee weapons used by units from this battalion that made a charge move in the same turn. If you intend to complete the Reckless Abandon agenda from *Battletome: Disciples of Tzeentch*, you cannot pick units from this battalion to complete the agenda.

The Opus Infernus: *Atra'zan's devotion to immolating the enemies of anarchy has earned him the boon of wielding the Opus Infernus.*

Atra'zan the Immolator knows the Tzeentch's Firestorm spell from the Lore of Change in *Battletome: Disciples of Tzeentch* in addition to any other spells he knows, and you can add 2 to the casting roll when he attempts to cast that spell.

WARSCROLL

DOOMSEEKER

It is said of the Doomseeker that his axe scorches the air with every swing, that he spits glowing cinders with every war cry, and that the wrath of the forge burns in his glare. This is no dishonourable mercenary, but a religious crusader whose word is his bond.

MISSILE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Fyresteel Throwing Axe	8"	1	4+	4+	-1	1
MELEE WEAPONS	**Range**	**Attacks**	**To Hit**	**To Wound**	**Rend**	**Damage**
Doomseeker Axe	1"	3	3+	3+	-1	1
Runic War-iron	1"	3	3+	3+	-	1

DESCRIPTION

A Doomseeker is a single model armed with a Runic War-iron, Doomseeker Axe and Fyresteel Throwing Axes.

ABILITIES

Oathbound: *A Doomseeker chooses his quarry and shouts vows to Grimnir, fell oaths to either destroy the enemy or die trying to do so.*

At the start of the first battle round, pick 1 enemy unit for this model to swear to destroy. At the end of the combat phase, if this model is within 3" of that unit and has fought no more than once in that phase, this model can fight but can only target that unit.

In addition, in the combat phase, if this model is slain while it is within 3" of the unit it has sworn to destroy and has fought no more than once in that phase, this model can fight before it is removed from play.

Runic Power: *As a Doomseeker gets closer to his fate, he calls upon the power of all his many ur-gold runes, ensuring either victory or that he goes down in a final blaze of glory.*

Add 1 to the Damage characteristic of this model's melee weapons if it has 1 wound allocated to it. Add 2 to the Damage characteristic of this model's melee weapons instead if it has 2 or more wounds allocated to it or when it fights when it is slain (see Oathbound).

KEYWORDS	ORDER, DUARDIN, FYRESLAYERS, HERO, DOOMSEEKER

WARSCROLL

GRIMWRATH BERZERKER

The power of Grimnir burns strongest in the hearts of the Grimwrath Berzerkers. Covered in glowing runes of ur-gold, they are avatars of destruction and endurance, hurling themselves through battle in a living storm of blood and flame.

MISSILE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Fyresteel Throwing Axe	8"	1	4+	4+	-1	1
MELEE WEAPONS	**Range**	**Attacks**	**To Hit**	**To Wound**	**Rend**	**Damage**
Fyrestorm Greataxe	1"	4	3+	3+	-2	2

DESCRIPTION

A Grimwrath Berzerker is a single model armed with a Fyrestorm Greataxe and Fyresteel Throwing Axes.

ABILITIES

Battle-fury: *As a Grimwrath Berzerker hews left and right with his greataxe, felling scores of foes, he enters a state of single-minded frenzy.*

At the end of the combat phase, if this model is within 3" of an enemy unit and has fought no more than once in that phase, roll a dice. On a 2+, this model can fight.

Dead, But Not Defeated: *Tales abound of mortally wounded Grimwrath Berzerkers fighting on, determined to wreak destruction upon whichever fools had the temerity to seal their fate.*

If this model is slain in the combat phase and has fought no more than once in that phase, it can fight before it is removed from play.

Grimwrath Oath: *Before each battle, every Grimwrath Berzerker swears a sacred oath to Grimnir about what deeds they will achieve in his honour that day.*

At the start of the first battle round, you can pick 1 of the following oaths for this model to swear. The rule for that oath applies until the end of the battle. If your army includes more than 1 model with this ability, you cannot pick the same oath more than once.

'I will cut down the priests of Grimnir's enemies!': Add 1 to hit and wound rolls for attacks made by this model and add 1 to the damage inflicted by those attacks if the target is a **PRIEST** that does not have the **FYRESLAYERS** keyword.

'I will guard them with my life!': When you pick this oath, pick 1 friendly **FYRESLAYERS HERO** other than this model that does not have the **MAGMADROTH** keyword. If that **HERO** is within 3" of this model and not within 3" of a friendly **AURIC HEARTHGUARD** unit, roll a dice before you allocate that wound or mortal wound to that **HERO**. On a 2+, that wound or mortal wound is allocated to this model instead. In addition, add 1 to hit rolls for attacks made by this model while it is within 3" of that **HERO**.

'I will let nothing stand in my way!': This model can run and still charge in the same turn. In addition, you can re-roll run and charge rolls for this model.

'I will prove Grimnir's might to our allies!': Add 1 to hit and wound rolls for attacks made by this model while this model is within 12" of a friendly allied unit (including this model if this model is itself taken as an allied unit).

'I will not be stopped!': Roll a dice each time you allocate a wound or mortal wound to this model. Add 1 to the roll if there are any enemy units within 3" of this model. On a 6+, that wound or mortal wound is negated.

'I will strike hard and true in Grimnir's name!': If the unmodified hit roll for an attack made by this model is 6, that attack inflicts 1 mortal wound on the target in addition to any normal damage.

KEYWORDS ORDER, DUARDIN, FYRESLAYERS, HERO, GRIMWRATH BERZERKER

WARSCROLL

LORD-CELESTANT

GARDUS STEEL SOUL

Gardus Steel Soul is the most revered Lord-Celestant of the Hallowed Knights and a living beacon of hope in the face of the most terrible adversity. In battle, he focuses his faith as a weapon with which to safeguard the innocent and smite the enemies of Order.

MELEE WEAPONS	Range	Attacks	To Hit	To Wound	Rend	Damage
Sigmarite Runeblade	1"	4	3+	3+	-1	1
Warhammer	1"	2	4+	3+	-	1

DESCRIPTION

Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul is a named character that is a single model. He is armed with a Sigmarite Runeblade and a Warhammer.

ABILITIES

Aura of Purity: *Gardus' faith is so strong that even Nurgle's garden was unable to corrupt him.*

Roll a dice each time you allocate a mortal wound to this model. On a 5+, that mortal wound is negated. In addition, roll a dice each time you allocate a mortal wound to a model from another friendly **HALLOWED KNIGHTS** unit wholly within 12" of this model. On a 6, that mortal wound is negated.

Martyr's Strength: *The Hallowed Knights will not fall until their foe is slain.*

Roll a dice if this model is slain in the combat phase. On a 2+, this model can make a pile-in move and then attack with all of the melee weapons it is armed with, before it is removed from play.

Saintly Assault: *Calling upon the celestial power of Sigmar, the lords of the Steel Souls engage the foe with righteous wrath.*

Once per battle, at the start of your charge phase, you can declare that this model and other friendly **HALLOWED KNIGHTS HEROES** within 12" of this model will launch a saintly assault. You can re-roll charge rolls for those models in that phase. In addition, add 1 to the Attacks characteristic of melee weapons used by those models until the end of the turn.

Sigmarite Warcloak: *Lord-Celestants can unleash the lethal storm magic stored in the sigmarite adornments of their cloaks.*

In your shooting phase, this model can make D6 storm magic strikes. For each strike, pick 1 enemy unit within 16" of this model that is visible to them and roll a dice. On a 4+, that unit suffers 1 mortal wound.

COMMAND ABILITIES

Furious Retribution: *Lord-Celestants lead their brethren in assaults upon the enemy lines, breaking the foe beneath their immortal fury.*

You can use this command ability at the start of the combat phase. If you do so, pick a friendly model with this command ability that is within 3" of an enemy unit. Add 1 to hit rolls for friendly **STORMCAST ETERNAL** units wholly within 12" of that model when they attack in that combat phase. The same unit cannot be affected by this command ability more than once per phase.

KEYWORDS	ORDER, CELESTIAL, HUMAN, STORMCAST ETERNAL, HALLOWED KNIGHTS, STEEL SOULS, HERO, LORD-CELESTANT, GARDUS STEEL SOUL

PITCHED BATTLE PROFILES

The table below provides points, minimum and maximum unit sizes and battlefield roles for the warscrolls and warscroll battalions in this book, for use in Pitched Battles. Spending the points listed on this table allows you to take a minimum-sized unit with any of its upgrades. Understrength units cost the full amount of points. Larger units are taken in multiples of their minimum unit size; multiply their cost by the same amount as you multiplied their size. If a unit has two points values separated by a slash (e.g. '60/200'), the second value is for a maximum-sized unit. Units that are listed as 'Unique' are named characters and can only be taken once in an army. Updated April 2021; the profiles printed here take precedence over any profiles with an earlier publication date or no publication date.

DISCIPLES OF TZEENTCH WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Atra'zan's Blazing Cavalcade	-	-	*150*	*Warscroll Battalion*	

FYRESLAYERS WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Doomseeker	1	1	90		
Grimwrath Berzerker	1	1	110		

KHARADRON OVERLORDS WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Drongon's Aether-runners	-	-	*120*	*Warscroll Battalion*	

NIGHTHAUNT WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Krulghast Cruciator	1	1	120	Leader	
Dreadscythe Harridans	5	20	90/320		
The Sorrowmourn Choir	-	-	*120*	*Warscroll Battalion*	

SERAPHON WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
The Celestial Stampede	-	-	*140*	*Warscroll Battalion*	
Bound Horrorghast	*1*	*1*	*60*	*Endless Spell*	
Bound Lauchon the Soulseeker	*1*	*1*	*70*	*Endless Spell*	
Bound Shards of Valagharr	*1*	*1*	*40*	*Endless Spell*	
Bound Soulscream Bridge	*1*	*1*	*110*	*Endless Spell*	

SLAVES TO DARKNESS WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Be'lakor, the Dark Master	1	1	380	Leader, Behemoth	Unique

STORMCAST ETERNALS WARSCROLL	UNIT SIZE MIN	MAX	POINTS	BATTLEFIELD ROLE	NOTES
Lord-Celestant Gardus Steel Soul	1	1	110	Leader	Unique

EXPLORE THE DIGITAL RANGE

RULES AND BATTLETOMES

The Age of Sigmar is an epic setting populated by myriad armies, powerful heroes and magnificent monsters. It plays host to vast, realm-spanning wars between the forces of Order and Chaos, Destruction and Death. Read on to explore these battle-torn landscapes and learn of the many peoples and creatures of the realms.

WARHAMMER AGE OF SIGMAR CORE BOOK

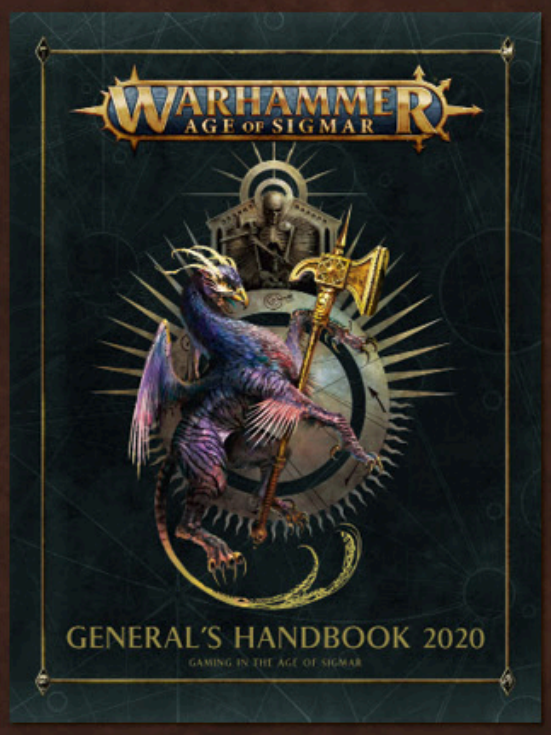
The Mortal Realms have been ground beneath the iron heel of the Dark Gods. These monstrous deities once believed their final victory to be near, yet they have underestimated the forces of Order that stand against them. Across the realms, bolts of energy deliver Sigmar's heroic Stormcast Eternals into battle as the Pantheon of Order gathers its strength. With new cities and fortresses raised in the wake of each conquest, civilisation takes root once more. Yet from the shadow of progress, new and deathly evils come into the light…

This book tells the epic story of the Age of Sigmar, from mythic beginnings to an arcane apocalypse, and provides you with exciting ways to forge your own legends. Inside you will find showcases of Citadel Miniatures, epic stories, and detailed maps of the Mortal Realms – as well as rules that bring your Warhammer Age of Sigmar battles to life on the tabletop.

ORDER BATTLETOME: STORMCAST ETERNALS

By Sigmar's will they are reforged, heroes locked in a hellish war without respite.

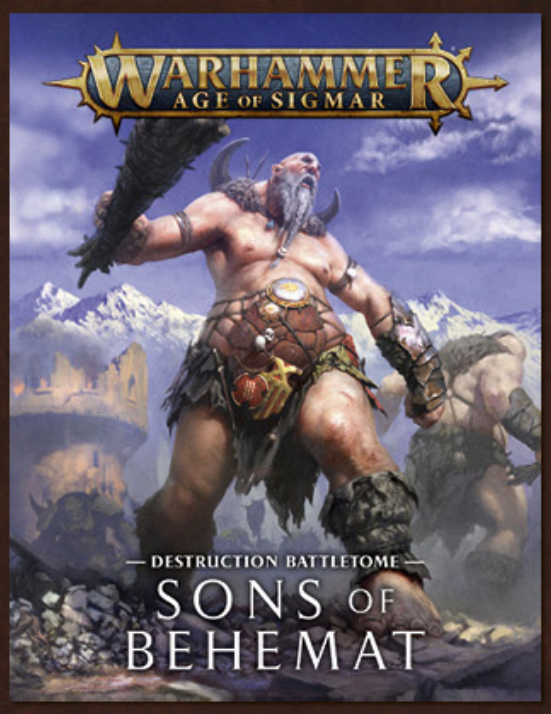
Each Stormcast Eternal was once a mortal who sought to defy the dominion of Chaos. Taken to Azyr by Sigmar and reforged in the fires of the God-King, these warriors have become living weapons that wield the power of the storm. Thundering down to the Mortal Realms in blasts of lightning, the Stormhosts take their bloody revenge on the hordes of Chaos over and over again. But of late, there are those brave enough to ask – at what cost?



GENERAL'S HANDBOOK 2020

This book expands on the Warhammer Age of Sigmar core rules to support an array of gaming styles that suit all hobbyists, from casual collectors who play occasional games with their friends to veteran warriors who spend years honing their forces for competitive tournaments.

Everyone enjoys the Games Workshop hobby in different ways. Some are avid painters who collect stunning centrepiece models, while others immerse themselves in gripping tales of the realms. For some, though, using their collections to play games against like-minded opponents across the tabletop is at the very heart of their hobby. If you fall into the latter category, then this book is for you, as it focuses on that aspect of the hobby where the miniatures meet the battlefield.



DESTRUCTION BATTLETOME: SONS OF BEHEMAT

The gargants stride the Mortal Realms without fear, smashing aside everything in their path.

The titanic Sons of Behemat have might enough to throttle dragons, barge down castle walls and tear elder oaks from the ground. When they attack as a tribe they become unstoppable, stamping the enemy's infantry flat and pummelling rival monsters to death. Any who oppose their rule are battered with hurled boulders before the gargants charge in, each towering hulk roaring in savage triumph as he seizes victory through brute force and ignorance.

DEATH BATTLETOME: OSSIARCH BONEREAPERS

The undead of the Ossiarch Empire are fearsome indeed, each soldier made from the bone and souls of their foes.

The Ossiarch Bonereapers do not slay all those they encounter, but conquer them, only to bind their vassals into a hideous bargain. In return for a tithe of skeletal remains they will leave their mortal prey alone. But should any defy the will of the military genius Katakros or his master Nagash, they will soon face giant constructs, heavy cavalry, living artillery and endless ranks of undead revenants intent upon their death.